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This paper investigates a crucial time in the development of song lyric (cí 詞) and observes the formation of the aesthetics of cí as we know them today. The genre of cí is one of the most personal utterances of private emotions in public; its early performances come from the mouths of desirable women who sing of private feelings that are often erotic in content. By the late Northern Sòng, the status of cí had risen gradually due to its popularity among the literati-officials, and the elevation of cí was achieved through the disappearance of women as a desirable object in cí. By studying the removal of desire of the poet vis-à-vis Schopenhauer’s theory of aesthetics, this paper takes an old literary trope – woman as flower – and studies the linguistic dissolution of the physical woman into figuration and metaphors, as the cí matures into a literary art and develops an aesthetics of opacity and obscurity.

One abandons normal empirical consciousness by … losing oneself completely in the object, i.e. forgetting precisely one’s individual, one’s will, and remaining only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object; so that it is as if the object alone were there, without anybody who perceives it.1

— Arthur Schopenhauer

Introduction

When one thinks of the early stages of development of cí 詞 from tunes sung at the pleasure quarters of the Táng 唐 to a fully recognized literary genre through which poets could lament the fall of the Sòng 宋, central cí figures such as Wēn Tíngyún 溫庭筠 (812-866), Liú Yǒng 柳永 (987-1053), and especially Sū Shì 蘇軾 (1037-1101) come to mind, each of them credited with expansions of theme, form, diction, and the subsequent elevation in the status of cí. The scholarship of cí in the past few decades pushed back its origins from Late Táng to as early as Xuánzōng’s 玄宗 reign (712-756), and is wont to view Sū Shì as the poet par excellence who raised the song lyric up to the level of classical poetry as a formally recognized literary genre.2 Consequently, in standard literary history, cí is often seen as having reached its maturity during the late Northern Sòng, when the appearance of cí literary criticism indicated approval of a newly established genre.3

It remains an indisputable fact that Sū Shì expanded the favorite topics of cí from “boudoir sentiments” and “amorous feelings” to almost anything.4 Sū Shì’s contribution to cí can be aptly summarized in the words of the Qīng 清 scholar Liú Xīzài 劉熙載: “as for [Sū’s cí …] there is no sentiment that he cannot bring into [his cí], no event that he cannot speak about”.5 While this holds true for the best and best-known of Sū Shì’s song lyrics6, this paper takes him instead as a point of departure rather than culmination, and examines Sū Shì as the beginning of the poiesis of the aesthetics of cí – as distinct from classical poetry and prose – inherited by and matured in the lyrics of Zhōu Bāngyàn 周邦彥 (1056-1121), and in the hands of Wú Wényīng 吳文英 (1200-1260), transformed into linguistic exercises that challenge the boundaries of language and imagination. By taking up the issue of the object of desire in cí, I will trace diachronically, through the aforementioned lyricists, the disappearance and displacement of women and flowers as metonymical signifiers of desire.

Before delving into the world of cí, I find a helpful frame of reference in Schopenhauer’s theory of the aesthetic experience – stated briefly – as the subject’s temporary abandonment of will and interest toward the object.7 In other words,
again in grossly simplified terms, we can speak ofeauty in art only when we can view a desirable
object not with desire, but with disinterested in-
tellect. This concept of pure mental engagement
with an object can be more easily understood in
the context of art collection rather than ci writing
in the late Northern Song, reflected in Su Shi’s at-titude of “possession without possessiveness” toward paintings. However, the develop-
ment of ci, starting from the 35-year-old Su Shi, also exhibits gradual transference and displace-
dent of desire of the poet not unlike the aes-
thetic experiences of Schopenhauer, while the poetic language of ci evolved so that the linguis-
tic representation of an object and the object it-
self became confused. Subsequently, the relations
between the world represented poetically in the
ci and the real world also became confused, so
that a century and a half later, a ci poet like Wu Wenying was able to create a poetic world that
retains only the immediate impressions of expe-
riences, and leaves out the events in the empiri-
cal world that triggered these experiences. This
is close to what Schopenhauer calls the “suspen-
sion of the laws of connection between represen-
tations […] in a state of being a ‘pure’, will-less subject [who] is not conscious of oneself at all, only of present experience as it flows in.”

I am not suggesting that 19th-century Ger-
man pessimism can be found in the song lyrics
of the late Northern Song; nor am I using the
evolution of ci as an anachronistic proof of Scho-
penhauer’s theory of aesthetics. With this paper,
I intend to look at the poetry through the poet’s
treatment of desire, one of the many vectors in
the development of ci, and Schopenhauer’s the-
ory of the aesthetic experience is merely one of
the many ways of interpreting the transforma-
tion of the poet’s desire in ci. My references to
Schopenhauer, therefore, demonstrate not the
applicability of 19th-century German philosophy
to ci, but rather the latter’s capacity for univer-
sal aesthetic appreciation. The lyrics of Su Shi,
Zhou Bangyan, and Wu Wenying will be treated
diachronically, with careful attention paid to the
expression of desire of the poet through women
and flowers.

Su Shi 1: resisting seeking a dream

The early ci can be seen as one of the most
intimate and personal utterances in public. Of-
ten written ad lib at banquets in mixed com-
pany, ci resembles a speech act, performed from
the mouths of women other than wives, who
temporarily personify both the object and the
host of desire. Their instantiations of the ci are
much like the performances of a piece of music,
with an added element of suggestion, request, or
promise. To say that desire is a main theme of ci
is perhaps an understatement. It hardly comes as
a surprise, therefore, that in Su Shi’s conscious
break with the ci tradition we can detect a ban-
ishment of erotic desire along with the very ob-
ject of desire – the figure of the woman. In the
following lyric, Su Shi’s removal of the woman
as a subject sidesteps the familiar technique of
focusing metonymically on her paraphernalia,
seen in earlier “boudoir lament” (guiyuan 閨怨)
poetry, and avoids writing about the woman by
writing himself into her place – despite the os-
tensible attribution in the subtitle.

To the tune of Always Encountering Fun
Lodging at Swallow Tower by night, written upon waking from a dream of Panpan

1 Luminous moon like frost, fair wind like water.
2 This clear scene is boundless!
3 At the winding creek fish leap, from round lily pads dews seep.
4 In solitude and quiet, no one sees.
5 Boom – drum of the third watch, clang – a leaf rustles.
6 In the gloom my cloudy dream shatters with a start.
7 The night is vast and murky, with nowhere to recapture.
8 Awaking, I pace all over this small garden.
A weary traveler at world’s end, a road home through the mountain –
Staring at the homeland until the mind’s eye becomes blind.
The Swallow Tower is empty; where is the Fair One?
The swallows, locked away in the empty tower to no avail.
Past and present are all like a dream: when have we ever awoken?
There are but old joys and new sorrows.
Upon another time, when facing this night scene at the Yellow Tower,
Someone will heave a sigh, on my behalf.

永遇樂
夜宿燕子樓，夢盼盼，因作此詞。

明月如霜，好風如水，清景無限。
曲港跳魚，圓荷瀉露，寂寞無人見。
紞如三鼓，銑然一葉，黯黯夢雲驚斷。
夜茫茫，重尋無處，覺來小園行遍。

天涯倦客，山中歸路，望斷故園心眼。
燕子樓空，佳人何在，空鎖樓中燕。
古今如夢，何曾夢覺，但有舊歡新怨。
異時，對黃樓夜景，為餘浩歎。

Inscribed within the first stanza are two opposite worlds, separated by light and sound. The dreamscape of the first half-stanza is well lit, brimming with “clear scene[s]” (l. 2) so high-definition in quality that even rolling dewdrops can be seen – although Sū Shì admits that this world of unearthly beauty is seen by no one because it is a dream (the very gesture of using vivid details to describe a world that cannot be seen suggests a strong sense of subjectivity, experienced only by the poet and no other human being, except possibly Pànpàn’s ghost?). In stark contrast with the “luminous” and “clear” (ll. 1-2) dreamscape is the “murky” gloom (ll. 6-7) that Sū Shì awakes in, disturbed by sounds that come from both the human world (drum) and the natural world (leaf) – a familiar dichotomy (l. 5), now unified into simply the “real” world against the “unreal” dream-world. Although Sū Shì shies away from giving any clues to the presence of Pànpàn in his dream, the word choice of mèngyún, translated as “cloudy dream” above (l. 6), is an unmistakable allusion to somnial sexual union. This can be read as a clue to the unmentioned dimension of the “clear scene” that Sū Shì experiences in his dream.

Although it is through erotic vocabulary – a familiar treatment of dreams in the poetic tradition – that Sū Shì conjures Pànpàn, this cí is much more than a sexual fantasy about her. If the tension in the first stanza lies in the transition from dream to waking state, as the “clear scene” gives way to the gloom of reality, then Pànpàn is already gone when she first makes her appearance. What remains is only the waking moment, the vanishment of her presence. This is found in the second stanza as well, in which the emptiness of Swallow Terrace is indicative of the former presence of the “Fair One” (l. 11). Sū Shì
uses an old generic convention – woman in the
tower longing for her absent beloved – to express
a multitude of sentiments (loneliness, homesick-
ness, reflections on mortality), and turns the
vague eroticism in the first stanza into empathy
in the second stanza.

By empathy I mean Sū Shì’s identification
with the now-absent Pàn pàn. If the first stan-
za is nothing but empirical descriptions of scenes
imagined and real, then the second stanza is
overwhelmed with a multitude of sentiments as
Sū Shì mulls over Pàn pàn’s absence and imagines
himself in her stead. The desire to “recapture” the
erotic dream lost is now diverted into a series
of identifications with Pàn pàn’s loyalty, loneli-
ess, and ephemeral beauty. The dream world, like
Pàn pàn herself, is gone and nowhere to be found,
so Sū Shì replaces it with a familiar double: the
distant homeland (l. 9). His erotic desire, there-
fore, also turns into homesickness. A lesser cí
lyricist, or one from the older generation, might
have successfully recaptured the dream, and turn
the dream into reality by recalling an intimate
moment in the past or imagining one in the fu-
ture. However, Sū Shì freezes the moment when
the object of his desire is lost (although he does
regret her departure (l. 7)), and expands her ab-
sence into the timeless future as he plugs himself
into her place and imagines someone looking at
himself from a distant future.

The focus on a particular moment, and its
subsequent expansion into timeless concerns, can
be viewed vis-à-vis Schopenhauer’s notion of a
Platonic “Idea” (Idee) that is essential to aesthetic
objects. When we look at an object aesthetically,
I.e. without desire, we engage in an Idea – a uni-

versal that he calls a “better consciousness op-
posed to the inferior empirical consciousness, the
consciousness of particular objects”21. If we view
Pàn pàn as a particular object of desire, then Sū

Shi’s abandonment of empirical consciousness,
i.e. his desire for her, in favor of a “better con-
sciousness” – which takes the form of the various
sentiments in the second stanza – can be seen
as an aestheticization of desire expressed through
the song lyric. In other words, when Sū Shì re-
sists seeking after the lost Pàn pàn, and turns his
desire for her into contemplations of home, past,
and future, he comes very close to having a Scho-
penhauerian aesthetic experience.

Sū Shì 2: the trouble with flowers

Flower as a metaphor for women or femi-
ninity is one of the most common topoi of cí;
very few poets wrote about women without us-
ing some kind of flower vocabulary. Gradually,
certain flowers took on the personalities of the
type of women that they are wont to adorn. Thus
the metaphor of women as flowers evolved, as
poets grew discontent with the unidirectional
description of women in terms of flowers. Their
desire, of course, is directed toward the woman;
yet what happens to the poem when the object
of desire is removed, and all that is left is the
metaphor?

In the poetic tradition, metaphorical sub-
stitution, or the trick of replacing the tenor of
the metaphor with the vehicle (to borrow I. A.
Richards’ terms) is hardly new. For example, in-
stead of saying “cloudy tresses” the poet simply
says “clouds” and expects it to be understood as
hair. Plenty of ink has been spilled on the issue of
whether Chinese poetry can be read metaphori-
cally22; for the present purpose, it is sufficient to
suppose that by the late Northern Sòng, conven-
tional metaphors have been established for so
long that Sū Shì would hardly consider himself
as doing something new with imagery in the fol-
lowing cí, a pure jeux d’esprit:

To the tune of Water Dragon Song23
Matching the rhymes of Zhāng Zhīfū’s cí on Willow Catkins

1 Like a flower, yet also unlike a flower.24
2 No one cares for it – just let it fall on its own.
3 It abandons home, clings to the roadside;
4 But think it over – in this indifference there are feelings.
5 Torn floss, like a tender heart twisted,
6 Like lovely eyes heavy with wine, as if opening, yet shut again.
7 Dreaming of flying with the wind for ten-thousand miles, seeking the whereabouts
8 Of a young lad – only to be called awake by the oriel’s tweet.
9 I do not regret these flowers, flying off to the very last;
10 But this I regret – in the west garden, fallen red blossoms cannot be put back.
11 Dawn approaches as the rain ceases; where are the traces that they left behind?
12 Only a full pond of shattered duckweed.25
13 The Color of Spring has three parts:
14 Two parts dust, one part flowing water.
15 Looking closely, I see
16 Not specks and flecks of catkins, but tears of the departed.

On a semantic level, this song lyric is filled
with poetic renderings typical of Sū Shì’s style:
the “not A but B” (ll. 1, 10-11, 16) pattern,
which Kang-i-Sun Chang calls “explicit rhetoric”26, and the use of quantitative proportion (ll.
14-15) to give numerical “precision” to unquantifiable qualities. The notes to the title provide
both the purpose for composition and the key
to reading this song lyric. The topicalization of
willow catkins immediately brings to mind a
set of associations: the transience of spring, the
sorrows of parting, and most of all, women of
a specific type who “abandon home [and] cling
to the roadside” (l. 3).27 Thus the old woman-as-
flower trope takes on multiple variations in this
cí, the most basic one of which is obvious but
still should be mentioned: Sū Shì has reversed
the order of the metaphor and writes flower as
woman – but only fragments of a woman, which
is not the innovation of this cí (metonymical use
of women’s body parts or belongings was already
flourishing as a poetic device in the “palace-style”
poetry (gōngtǐ shī 宮體詩) of the Liáng 梁). The
vitality of this cí, therefore, lies not in the ca-
price with which Sū Shì goes through the various
metaphors, but in the visible resistance against
the conventional associations that the genre of cí
demands of willow catkins.

Some scholars have suggested that good
poets give life to hackneyed metaphors by put-
ting them in new contexts.28 Take a look, for in-
stance, at the torn floss that resembles a contort-
ed heart and languorous eyes in lines 5-6. When
read as a line taken out of context, it would ap-
pear to describe a bedroom scene á la Liú Yǒng
– against whom Sū Shì consciously defined what
came to be called the “heroic abandon” (háofàng
豪放) style.29 However, in this particular song
lyric, Sū Shì conjures a sexually-charged image
often found in Liú Yǒng’s cí – a woman torment-
ed with longing and drowsy with wine – only
as a metaphor, and one that is broken apart im-
mediately in the following line. The erotic desire
that drives this poem is taken away in the same
manner as in the previous lyric, through waking
from a dream disturbed by sound. Sū Shì treats
his desire in this cí even more obliquely than in
Always Encountering Fun by projecting his de-
sire into not his own dream, but the dream of a woman who only exists as the metaphorical representation of willow catkins. This double-mediation of desire suggests that Sū Shì is well aware of the danger of giving into the lure of writing about flowers in terms of women.

As if rousing the metaphorical woman from an amorous dream is not enough, Sū Shì explicitly renounces his desire through an act of self-interpretation at the beginning of the second stanza, in which the hint of disdain in line 2 toward such a woman is explained in full. The desire in the first stanza is redirected toward a different kind of flower, the type that stays put in gardens instead of wandering on the road (ll. 10-11). We can read this as a correction of misplaced desire in the first stanza. The removal of Sū Shì’s poetic gaze of the woman’s languorous eyes implies that there is tension, perhaps in the form of forbidden allure of these willow catkins that wander on the road, which in turn necessitates callous denunciation in the second stanza. In Sū Shì’s dissection of the sensuous colors of spring into dust and water – things of insignificance and constant change – we can see an attitude of resignation toward possession and erotic desire, not unrelated to the Buddhist discourse of “giving up” (shě 捨), by which Sū Shì was greatly influenced.30

Similar to the transformation of desire for Pànpàn into universal contemplations at the end of Always Encountering Fun, Sū Shì concludes with musings on the passing of spring and sorrows of parting – sentiments that are derived from, yet transcend erotic desire. Because the issue of genuineness is not a concern of this cí, being an exercise in pure figuration, Sū Shì takes pleasure in going through the many variations of the woman-as-flower trope with a spontaneity often found in his cí. The willow catkins are at once hearts, eyes, duckweed, and tears; it wanders on the roadside, flies away with the wind, and falls into the pond – there is an often-noted element of theater and impromptu in the associations that Sū Shì draws between the signified and the many signifiers.31 In this lyric there are clear signs of struggle with the history of the cí genre, as Sū Shì attempts to get away from the traditional associations of women and flowers. His insistent disturbing of the amorous dream, his rather heartless castigation of the catkins’ promiscuity, and his reduction of sensuality to dust and water are all indicative of his awareness of the problem of desire in cí. At the same time, only a genre with a history of disrepute such as cí could offer Sū Shì the pleasure of indulging in extended metaphors, in order to capture not a particular woman or flower, but the essence of willow catkins.32

When the poet looks at a flower and sees not a particular flower, but its essence – or in terms of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics, the Idea that relates to the flower as its eternal form or prototype33, then the poet has aestheticized the flower as an objet d’art.

Zhōu Bāngyàn: a rose is a rose is a rose

Sū Shì’s song lyrics undoubtedly opened new territories, but he may have done so at the expense of musicality. In discussing the nature of cí, both Lǐ Zhīyí 李之儀 (1035-1117) and Lǐ Qīngzhào 李清照 (1084-1155), writing roughly at the same time, stressed the importance of observing musical prosody in cí writing. Lǐ Zhīyí credited Liú Yǒng with expanding the length of cí from short lyrics (xiǎoliàng 小令) to long (màncí 慢詞) yet also being “deficient in resonance”, while Lǐ Qingzhào famously castigated Sū Shì for writing “nothing more than [shī] poetry with aberrant prosody”34. Text and sound seemed to have found unity one generation after Sū Shì, in the lyrics of Zhōu Bāngyàn, whose appointment as Director of Bureau of Music (dà shèng fǔ 大晟府) attested to his expertise in music. A lyricist as well as a composer, Zhōu Bāngyàn wrote cí to tunes of his own original composition, such as the following tune Six Ugliness35.
To the tune of *Six Ugliness*  
*In the key of Zhōnghǔ, on fallen flowers*

1 Right at the time for wine-tasting and light clothes,  
2 How I regret being a traveler away from home, wasting time in vain.  
3 I wish that spring would tally a bit more, yet  
4 Spring’s return is like the passing wings of a bird: once gone it leaves no trace.  
5 If you ask, where are all the flowers? Wind and rain of last night  
6 Buried them like the kingdom-toppling beauties of the Chǔ palace.  
7 Sweet aroma is left  
8 Where their flower hairpins had fallen.  
9 Dotting randomly the peach grove,  
10 Lightly fluttering in a lane of willows.  
11 Like a lover filled with longing;  
12 But who will remember after they are gone?  
13 Yet only the matchmakers – bees and butterflies that  
14 From time to time come knocking on my window pane.

15 All is silent in the eastern garden,  
16 Slowly it is overgrown with dark jade-greenness.  
17 A quiet stroll around; a stop under the flower bush  
18 Turns into a sigh.  
19 It is their slender sprays  
20 That attracts the passer-by.  
21 As if tugging at my shirt waiting for me to speak  
22 Of my boundless parting sorrows.  
23 What remains of a broken blossom is too small:  
24 I try to force it on my hair scarf,  
25 Yet it is still nothing like a full blossom that  
26 Quivers delicately at the tip of a hairpin, leaning toward the onlooker.  
27 Where you drift in water  
28 Shan’t take advantage of the morning and evening tides,  
29 For the fear that, if in the scattered redness there are still letters of longing,  
30 How can they be seen?

六醜
中呂落花

正單衣試酒，悵客裡、光陰虛擲。
願春暫留，春歸如過翼，一去無跡。
為問花何在，夜來風雨，葬楚宮傾國。
釵細墮處遺香澤。
亂點桃蹊，輕翻柳陌。
多情為誰追惜。
但蜂媒蝶使，時叩窗隔。

東園岑寂，漸蒙籠暗碧。
靜繞珍叢底，成嘆息。
長條故惹行客。

Contemporary scholars often cite this *cí* when praising Zhōu Bāngyàn for his highly subjective *yòngwù* 詠物 lyrics, and sometimes juxtapose it with Šū Shì’s *cí* on willow catkins to observe the development of *cí* on objects during the late Northern Song. In contrast to Šū Shì’s flashy linguistic display of the many metaphors of catkins, Zhōu Bāngyàn’s *cí* on fallen flowers
speaks through a much more personal voice of the poet. The direct description of time and occasion that opens this poem, and the sequential narration of the poet’s actions in the second stanza encourage biographical readings of this cí. The present point of interest, however, is the ease with which Zhōu Bāngyàn uses traditional vocabulary of flowers to express candidness of emotions that give no more than the slightest hint at erotic desire. The poetic nature of fallen flowers remains the same in both poems: there is a similar flippancy in the primroses’ frolicking in the “peach groves” and “willow lanes” (ll. 9-10) as the catkins’ wandering by the roadside. In addition, like Sū Shī, Zhōu Bāngyàn also sees feelings in these seemingly careless flowers (ll. 11-12), yet he is much more sympathetic toward their promiscuity. He allows himself to sigh for what Sū Shī treats callously.

Like Sū Shī, Zhōu Bāngyàn also turns the woman-as-flower trope into multiple variations, yet connects them by moving spatially across boundaries, from literary allusions to the physical present of the poet himself. He begins with expressions of standard emotions: homesickness and regret for the passing of spring – with such a direct statement of intent, there is no other way to interpret the figure of fallen flowers, except as a symbol of the transience of spring that we may see as an objective correlative. The traditional associations of women with flowers is twisted into pairing fallen flowers with dead women (l. 6), allowing the poet to turn naturally to their fallen hairpins, perhaps blossom-shaped, that resemble fallen primroses. Next, the flowers start moving (ll. 9-10), and the poet states his subjective feelings toward the flowers through the facile transformation of their physical movement into fond remembrance, or “chasing the past” (zhūixī 追惜, l. 12) with one’s mind. Lastly, the visual resemblance of the flying flowers to insects darting into the windows again brings attention back to sound and movement of the immediate present (ll. 13-14).

Although Zhōu Bāngyàn also writes the primroses in terms of feminine beauty, the metaphors are removed from sensuality. The struggles and dramatic gestures of Sū Shī are absent in this cí. Zhōu Bāngyàn writes about promiscuous flowers without the eroticism of Liú Yǒng’s bedroom scenes and the dramatic denunciation of Sū Shī, but with subtlety of language that allows smooth flow from one metaphor to the next (ladies of Chū, hairpins, bees and butterflies). The go-between function of the pollinators suggests that the poet may be separated from a beloved, who could be the dedicatee or inspiration of this cí; yet she is not the protagonist. If Sū Shī writes the catkins in terms of a metaphorical woman, then Zhōu Bāngyàn permits the primroses to remain flowers. The ladies of Chū palace are conjured not to describe desirable physical aspects of the primroses (cf. Water Dragon Song, ll. 5-6), but merely to name a category of women who exist only in lore as literary correspondence to these short-lived flowers, in order to bring out the transience and fragility of beauty in spring.

The poet’s physical interactions with the primroses in the second stanza are enabled by the absence of desire. Although the slender branches initiate contact with the poet, like the flirtations of bees in the previous stanza, we need not read into it as more than the intermingling of the natural and human worlds. There is an innocence of metaphor in the anthropomorphization of the branches: the poet does not see its tugging of his shirt as solicitation (l. 21), because he is not attracted to it. In other words, there is no need for the poet to distance himself from the aesthetic object, because he does not view it as an object of desire, but simply as a thing-in-itself, even while it functions poetically as a signifier of the poet’s feelings. If we agree with Wai-lim Yip that in Chinese poetry, objects are not “metaphorical vehicles because in fact the ultimate substitutive act has occurred before the writing of the poem”43, then Zhōu Bāngyàn’s refusal to fetishize primroses as an object of desire allows him to write about flowers as if they were women – a conventional trope that certainly predates the writing of this poem – but without referring to a substantive woman. This is something rather
new in \textit{ci} literature; flowers have always been bound in various metaphorical relationships with women, often with a connotation of sexuality. It is only through the removal of the poet’s desire that flowers attained autonomy from their poetic counterpart. What Sū Shì struggled to banish in his \textit{ci} disappeared with ease in Zhōu Bāngyàn, whose lyrics exhibit an effortless sophistication that signals the maturation of \textit{ci} aesthetics.

The final lines of this \textit{ci} can be seen as a testament to the aestheticization of \textit{ci}. If in the first stanza there may have been an absent beloved suggested by the ladies of Chū, then by the end of this \textit{ci} she has been reduced to derivative signs. The woman is completely replaced by substitutions that exist only in the poet’s memory of her; his feelings are attached not to her, but to representations of her. The allusion to letters on red leaves, in fact, confirms the dissolution of the absent beloved in \textit{ci}: Zhōu Bāngyàn ends with a fictional anecdote not because of lack of originality, but because as the woman disappears, the \textit{ci} also gradually detaches itself from what Schopenhauer calls “empirical consciousness”\textsuperscript{44}, and becomes increasingly engaged in a non-specific, wholly privatized aesthetic vision of the poet. From the woman’s drowsy eyes in Sū Shì’s \textit{ci} to fallen hairpins and fragments of literary anecdotes in Zhōu Bāngyàn’s \textit{ci}, objects and allusions used to conjure the woman grow increasingly distant from her physical form. The severance of the ties between a specific woman in the poet’s life and the lyrics that may have been inspired by her happened in tandem with the poiesis of the aesthetics of \textit{ci}. It comes as no surprise, then, that Zhōu Bāngyàn is traditionally seen as the ultimate craftsman who “professionalized” \textit{ci} aesthetics (dāngháng běnsè 當行本色) into its own literary art.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Conclusion: Wú Wényīng as a preview}

When we come to the Southern Sòng, the aesthetics of \textit{ci} had already developed self-consciously into what came to be criticized by early 20th-century scholars as decadence and artificiality\textsuperscript{46}, or the art of “opacity” (gé 隔).\textsuperscript{47} The self-awareness of the \textit{ci} genre of its particular aestheticism can be seen in contemporary \textit{ci} treatises that advocate the avoidance of directness in diction at all costs. According to contemporary \textit{ci} treatises, vulgarity is defined as the antithesis of elegance; it undermines the poetry through allusions to names that are not subtle enough, or overwrought lines that are written under passion of the moment.\textsuperscript{48} Although these two criticisms are indeed directed at some of Zhōu Bāngyàn’s worse lines, it nevertheless indicates that by the Southern Sòng, the craft of indirection has been firmly established as an aesthetic standard in \textit{ci}.

The sophistication of text and music of Zhōu Bāngyàn is traditionally seen as having found a successor in Wú Wényīng a century and a half later.\textsuperscript{49} The contemporary poet Shĕn Yìfù 沈義父 (c1237 - after 1279) praises Zhōu Bāngyàn as the poet \textit{par excellence} who does not have “an iota of lowbrow air” (wú yìdiǎn shìjǐng qì 無一點市井氣) and Wú Wényīng as the lyricist who has truly inherited his essence. While the art of Southern Sòng \textit{ci} is beyond the scope of this paper, I will conclude with a preview into the development of the kind of \textit{ci} aesthetics established through the gradual removal of woman as an object of desire:

\begin{quote}
To the tune of \textit{Cold Filigreed Windowsill}\textsuperscript{50} \hfill
\textit{Taking Shāng to be Wúyè, commonly known as the key of Yuè,}
\hfill
\textit{with a modulation to Gōng in Zhōnglū, and another modulation in Zhènggōng}
\hfill
\textit{On the Magnolia}
\end{quote}

1. Deep mauve strands heaped into clouds, clear cheeks of balmy jade,
2. The Water Nymph is first seen.
3. Raw smell from the South not yet washed away,
4. The seafarer has a bosom full of sad regret.
5 On the traveling raft faint in the distance, riding off on high winds;
6 She ranks first among the rarest fragrances in the kingdom, unfolding her secret heart.
7 leaves other flowers behind and pales their colors with
8 Her true form, still and demure; a resurrected soul from the acres of Li Sāo.
9 One glance
10 In exchange for a thousand pieces of gold.
11 Then with a smile she accompanies Master Wine-sac
12 Together they return to the gardens of Wú.
13 Amidst mists of parting and waters of regret,
14 Deep in a dream of the southern skies on an autumn night.
15 Her emaciated flesh, now even more wasted than when she came;
16 Cold aroma seeping into her bones as she laments her home far away.
17 What saddens my heart above all is seeing off the guest at Xiányáng,
18 Tying a pendant of plaint to the west wind.

The fact that there is a woman behind this yōngwù lyric is no secret. Many aspects about her can be gathered from this cí, such as that her provenance might be in the South, like the magnolia, and that the poet might have encountered her while traveling by water. The laws of representation between the magnolia and the woman, however, are completely suspended. In the cí on flowers of Sū Shì and Zhōu Bāngyàn, a single object is turned into multiple paraphernalia or aspects of the woman; yet Wú Wényīng’s portrayal of the magnolia is lost in the total confusion of the signified and the signifier. For example, the strands and cloud in the first line are as obscure in their relation to the woman as they are to the magnolia: they could be the cloud-shaped coiffure of the woman, or the cloud-like petals of the magnolia. The connection between this image and either woman or flower is so tenuous, that one suspects Wú Wényīng is not only describing his impressions of a woman, but also using his impressions of a flower to do so. Similarly, the anecdote behind lines 2-4 temporarily shifts the focus of description from the magnolia to the Water Nymph51, and once again we are baffled as to whether the “raw smell” refers to the magnolia, the Nymph, or an actual woman. In other words, what this cí gives us is not the image of a woman or a flower, but an account of the poet’s private consciousness as he immerses in the artistic appreciation of the magnolia. Incidentally, as the poet loses himself in the mental engagement with the object, the cí that he produces is also devoid of the woman’s physical attributes and paraphernalia, i.e. signifiers of her existence in the real world. The difficulty of reading Wú Wényīng’s cí thus derives precisely from the distance the poet has placed between himself and his objects, and the disconnect between his lyrics and the empirical world.

Upon returning once more to Schopenhauer’s theory of aesthetics discussed briefly at the beginning of this paper, it appears that the central idea of world as representation has found an apt homology in the linguistic world created...
by *cì* beginning in the late Northern Song. If we presume that aesthetic experience is achieved by suspending the laws of connections between representations so that one beholds an object of art with disinterest⁵, then what has been gradually taken away in *cì* is not only the desire of the poet for his objects, but also the organizing principles of the empirical world, so that we as readers are pushed to reconnect the signifiers with their signified objects. Therefore, the strength of this kind of *cì*, disconnected from reality, no longer comes from the craftiness of the metaphors or the subtlety of the allusions, but the various valid ways of interpretation, individualized by the aesthetic experiences of each reader.

*The four songs were translated into English by the author, Vivian D. She.*

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**Endnotes**


4 Ibid., p. 18.


6 In the 362 song lyrics attributed to Sū Shi in the *Quán Sòng cì* [全宋詞], there are many conventional lyrics as well, especially from his early *cì* writing. For explanations, see Ronald Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 332.


8 Ronald Egan gives an illuminating discussion of Sū Shi’s denouncement of physical attachment to things such as paintings in chapter 4 of *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 170-193, 230.


10 Janaway, pp. 9, 276.


12 Pànpàn 郎照 (735-800), who built the Swallow Tower for her. After Zhāng passed away, Pànpàn spent the rest of her life in solitude at the Swallow Tower. For the source of this anecdote, see Zēng Zào’s *Gānzài shīhū* 高齋詩話, in: *Sòng shīhuà jíyì* [全宋詩話集] compiled by Guō Shàoyù 郭紹虞 (Beijing: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1937), vol. 2, pp. 129-137.

13 I decided to follow the translation of the lyric in two-row lines, with the second row slightly indented, in an attempt to reflect the unity of a line in the original, which has three phrases per line. The line numbers to the left are purely for counting purposes and do not have structural meaning.


16 Chang, p. 166.


18 The combination of the human and natural worlds as the “real” in opposition to the “unreal” world can be further seen in the use of 鳳 (kēng), an onomatopoetic character originally used for the clanging of metal bells, to describe the rustling of a leaf. In addition, the quietness of the dream scene is such that even the rustling of a leaf is amplified to a “clang”.

19 Ronald Egan interprets this identification as loyalty: “The conventional trope of loyal minister as dutiful female has a dim presence in this poem”, *Word, Image, and Deed*, p. 341.

20 Chang sees in Sū Shi a tendency to transfer feelings to others, and calls it the “projection of feelings”, pp. 187-188.

21 As paraphrased by Janaway, pp. 10, 27.


24 This line echoes a famous love song by the poet Bái Jūyì 白居易 (772-846): “The flower is not a flower, the mist is not mist. / It comes at midnight, and leaves by dawn. / It comes like a spring dream and does not stay long, / It leaves like the morning clouds, with nowhere to be found.” in: *Quán Táng Shī* 全唐詩, 768.8724.

25 Sū Shi’s own note on this line refers to the popular belief that when willow catkins fall into water, they turn into duckweed floating on the surface. See Egan, *Words, Image, and Deed*, p. 349.

26 Chang, p. 191.

27 Ronald Egan sees in the willow catkins of this poem a “most unusual” type of women, i.e. the demimonde; however, when one thinks about the types of
women who appear regularly in early \( c_i \), then one will realize that concubines, courtesans, and singers are conventional choices of topic. Egan, Word, Image, and Deed, p. 349.


29 For example, see Šu Ši’s letter to Xiàn Yì 绢子信, in which he declared the style of his \( c_i \) as distinct from Liú Yòng’s, and spoke about giving his \( c_i \) on hunting to a burly man to sing for a spectacle. Quoted in the preface to Cáo Shìmín 曹詩民, Dōngguó cí (Hong Kong: Universal Book Co., 1968), p. 22.

30 Šu Ši’s detachment to what he considers physical “things” (\( wù \)) figures much more prominently in his classical poetry rather than \( c_i \). For Šu Ši’s strictures against attachment to material things, especially to art works, see Egan, Problem of Beauty, pp. 228-230.

31 For a translation and discussion of Šu Ši’s frequently quoted Zìpíngwén 沛音文 figures much more prominently in his classical poetry rather than \( c_i \). For Šu Ši’s detachment to what he considers physical “things” (\( wù \)), see Egan, Word, Image, and Deed, p. 350. The notion of Zìpíngwén can be located in Kang Fanlì (ed.), Šu Ši wénjí 蘇軾文集 [Sūn Hóng's Selected Works] (Beijing: Zhōngguó Shìjì 中國史籍 [Chinese History], 1982), 66.2069.

32 In her discussion on metaphors, Pauline Yu comments on the “rarity of truly extended tropes of comparison or substitution in Chinese poetry” and observes that metaphor is a phenomenon that involves many lines or couplets, rather than entire poems. However, it appears that she did not include \( c_i \) in her discussion. See Yu, Metaphor and Chinese Poetry.


34 For example, see Sūn Hóng's letter to Xiānyú Zú 現遇祖, in which he inquired about the title of the tune, Zhōu Bāngyàn 王邦彥 answered that this tune makes six temporary modulations (\( Fàn liù diào \)) figures much more prominently in his classical poetry rather than \( c_i \). For Sūn Hóng’s detachment to what he considers physical “things” (\( wù \)), see Egan, Word, Image, and Deed, p. 350. The original text of Zìpíngwén can be found in Kang Fanlì (ed.), Šu Ši wénjí 蘇軾文集 [Sūn Hóng's Selected Works] (Beijing: Zhōngguó Shìjì 中國史籍 [Chinese History], 1982), 66.2069.

35 According to Zhòu Mì's 趙敏 (1232-1298) miscellany Hàoránzhāi Yúnxī yǔlùn 豪然齋云溪論, when Emperor Huízuò 徽祖 inquired about the title of the tune, Zhōu Bāngyàn 王邦彥 answered that this tune makes six temporary modulations (\( Fàn liù diào \)). For a compilation, see Táng Guīzhāng 唐圭璋 (ed.), Cíhuà cóngbiān 词话丛编 [Collection of Notes and Commentaries on Classical Chinese Poetry], Taipei 淡nián 明 (1599-1659), a first-year student at the University of California, Berkeley. She received her BA in Music, Legal Studies, and Chinese at the University of California, Berkeley. Her main research interest is in Classical Chinese literature, with an emphasis on musical aesthetics, the interaction between text and music, and the transcribability of music in ancient and medieval Chinese poetry. She also has a special interest in the conventional evocation of “sadness” as an aesthetic goal in early Chinese music.

**Vivian D. She**

Vivian D. She is a second-year PhD student in the East Asian Languages and Civilizations Department at Harvard University. She is interested in the conventional evocation of “sadness” as an aesthetic goal in early Chinese music.
China and the Financial Crisis

Stimulating and Understanding Household Consumption

Growth in China’s economy has become too dependent on investment and exports, and it has been argued that the current model for economic growth is unsustainable. This article argues that China should promote the household consumption share and that, in the wake of the financial crisis, strong adjustments are needed to enable consumption to grow faster than the GDP. There are many possible measures the government can take, including fiscal and macro policies, price and tax measures, and financial reforms. Due to China’s current high growth and low income, there is large potential for consumption growth.

Consumption — to repeat the obvious — is the sole end and object of all economic activity.
— John Maynard Keynes

To boost domestic demand is a long-term strategic policy for China’s economic growth and the way for us to tackle the financial crisis and stave off external risks.
— Wên Jiābào 温家宝

Introduction

In recent years, China’s economy has become increasingly investment-led. The consumption share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined on an almost annual basis since the beginning of the reform period in 1978, falling below 50% in 2007 and 2008 after having exceeded 67% of GDP in 1981.¹ Consumption’s share of annual GDP growth has also contracted, falling from almost 80% of growth at the beginning of reform to less than 40% between 2003 and 2006 (in 2007, the share edged slightly above 40% again). In this decline, household consumption has led the way; government consumption as a share of GDP has stayed relatively constant between 13-16% of GDP, while household consumption fell from a share of over 50% in the early 1980s to only 35.3% in 2008.²

Dependence on investment- and export-led growth will not be sustainable moving forward, and it is essential that China rebalance by increasing the household consumption share of GDP. Despite being outpaced by investment, Chinese consumption has grown at one of the fastest paces in the world. From 2000 to 2007, China’s household consumption nearly doubled in real terms. However, over this period real GDP grew by a whopping 153%.³ With a decreasing share of GDP, lagging consumption (or, rather, surging investment) contributes to global imbalances, inefficient domestic growth, and concerns of environmental sustainability. Consumption promotion is therefore important for reducing growth volatility, enabling households to share in gains from growth more fully, and balancing international relationships and trade. The current global economic crisis provides a potential opportunity to move towards a consumption-led growth path. As Paul Romer presciently said in 2004, “A crisis is a terrible thing to waste.” China has rebounded quickly from the crisis, and overheating may now be a greater concern than recession. This paper will demonstrate that household consumption has held up well over the past year but that more dramatic adjustments will be necessary to enable consumption to grow faster than GDP for any extended period. These adjustments will have to focus both on increasing household income and on decreasing household saving rates.

Crisis strikes

The global financial crisis hit China hard,
but consumption has remained strong due to a combination of proactive government responses as well as advantageous preconditions. China's economy began to slow at the end of 2007, well before the Lehman collapse. The subsequent global recession made matters worse, triggering a trade contraction and resulting in a negative contribution of net exports to China's GDP growth so far in 2009. Nevertheless, China's economy has already rebounded. Having bottomed out in the first quarter of this year, GDP expanded 7.7% year-on-year (YOY) in the first nine months of 2009. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), consumption contributed 4.0 percentage points of this growth, investment contributed 7.3 percentage points, and net exports had a negative contribution. This consumption contribution (52%) is large compared to its 40% level in recent years, implying that the recovery has not been entirely investment-led. About two-thirds of this consumption growth was from households, with one-third from the government. Indeed, China's household consumption growth has proved very resilient during the downturn as a result of low leverage and high savings, government direct and indirect stimulus measures, a rapid expansion of consumer credit, and sustained growth in household income and employment.

There are many indications that Chinese consumption has continued to grow despite the global recession. As one indicator, retail sales have been remarkably resilient. Having lagged GDP growth through 2007, nominal retail sales outpaced GDP over 2008 and have continued to outpace GDP so far in 2009. While headline numbers on nominal retail sales seem to indicate a sharp decline from the end of 2008 through the first half of 2009, much of this apparent decline was actually a result of high retail price inflation in the first half (H1) of 2008 and a decline into retail price deflation in H1 2009. In real terms, Chinese retail sales barely hiccuped in the first quarter of 2009 before resuming an extremely rapid pace of growth, as seen in chart 3.

Retail sales are a questionable proxy for household consumption growth. They include government purchases and are collected by provincial-level statistics offices from reporting enterprises and farmer surveys. For valuable comparative purposes, it is useful to look at NBS household consumption data that is compiled quarterly from direct household surveys. This data excludes government purchases as well as construction materials (which are included in retail sales if they are purchased by individuals), counting them as investment instead. Therefore, when housing purchases are high, as they are now, retail sales are likely to exceed household survey-based consumption data. On the other hand, retail sales do not include spending on many services, so there is a chance of underestimation. Historically, the two statistics have closely tracked one another, as seen in chart 4 below. That said, in crisis, government spending has increased, as have fears of inventory explosions and hoarding, all of which could potentially drive up retail sales without actually boosting household consumption.

The household survey data also demonstrates resilient, albeit not as rapid, consumption growth. Through the first half of 2009, year-on-year rural per capita consumption grew by 8.1% in real terms while urban per capita consumption grew by 11.2%. Growth continued in the third quarter: rural per capita consumption was up 9.2% while urban per capita consumption was up 10.5% (again in real terms). While slower than retail sales growth, these growth figures were still well above real GDP growth, as seen in chart 5 below. Resiliency is also reflected in consumer confidence indices. Consumer confidence began to fall as early as December 2007, bottoming out in March 2009 before beginning to rise again. According to CLSA's own consumer confidence index, the share of families who believed their income would decline over the next six months peaked at 38% in December 2008 before falling steadily to 16% by May 2009. Clearly, consumption growth has remained strong, surprising many analysts.

Several factors have enabled this consumer
spending resilience. Perhaps most importantly, Chinese consumers were in a strong position coming into the crisis: income growth was robust, debt was low, and household savings were high, providing a solid cushion. These preconditions were extremely important, and are not new in China’s case; previous business cycles in China have led to high volatility in GDP and GDP proxies (including the Purchasing Managers Index, electricity production, etc.), but retail sales and household income growth have remained relatively steady in these cases as well. For instance, in 1999, as net exports shrank in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis, consumption accounted for over 88% of GDP growth. However, preconditions are not the entire story. A strong government response, a rapid increase in consumer credit, and policies promoting income and employment growth have enabled Chinese consumers to continue to expand their spending behavior even as the economy has slowed down.

The government response to domestic contraction and international recession has been swift and aggressive. While investment has been the predominant focus of stimulus, there is some truth to Premier Wen Jiabao’s assertion that “China’s stimulus package focuses on expanding domestic demand and is aimed at driving economic growth through both consumption and investment”. The stimulus package and additional government spending have come in many forms. In rural areas, the government has moved to boost consumption, both directly and indirectly. The minimum purchasing price of grains was raised by 15%. Farmer subsidies were increased, resulting in a transfer of about CNY [RMB] 123 billion. Subsidies amounting to CNY 40 billion were given to rural households for purchases of home appliances, agricultural machinery, automobiles and motorcycles. This included a CNY 20 billion, 13% subsidy to purchase home appliances in rural areas and a “bring automobiles to the countryside” program which was meant to contribute CNY 5 billion between March and September.

Regulatory and tax policies have also been changed nationally to boost consumption. Beyond rural areas, many policies were established to promote consumption throughout the country – in particularly, policies to promote car and housing sales. With regard to housing, the government exempted the stamp tax and land value-added tax on individual housing purchases, lowered the minimum mortgage rate, and lowered the minimum down payment to 20% of the house’s value (from 30% previously). Vehicle taxes for low-emissions vehicles were lowered, and a “cash for clunkers” program was established to provide CNY 5,000-15,000 for old automobile trade-ins. The efficacy of these measures is clear, with much of the growth in retail sales led by housing-related items and automobiles. In the first three quarters, furniture sales jumped 34% YOY, building and decoration materials jumped 30.2%, and automobile sales jumped 44.5%.

In addition, many government efforts have been made to increase the breadth of the social safety net. A trial rural old-age insurance program has been established in 10% of China’s counties, covering 90 million people. The government is spending CNY 12 billion to increase teacher salaries, and has allocated CNY 43 billion to provide health insurance for retirees of closed or bankrupt SOEs. In April, a health care reform package was announced that will involve CNY 850 billion through 2011. Two-thirds will be spent on patients and one-third on hospitals. Outside of these new programs, the 2009 budget for “education, medical and health care, social security, employment, government-subsidized housing and other programs related to people’s well-being” will be 29.4% higher than in 2008. As part of the CNY 4 trillion stimulus package, there is a CNY 40 billion allocation for medical services, culture, and education, as well as a CNY 280 billion allocation for affordable housing. All of these programs to boost social welfare should increase consumption both by increasing current expenditure on the relevant items (i.e. health care, education) and by decreasing precautionary savings.

These government measures add up, and in
combination amount to hundreds of billions of CNY directed at increasing consumption. If one assumes that household consumption increases 10% in 2009 (reasonable given the above figures through Q3), this would mean an increase of CNY 1.1 trillion – clearly, much of the increase could potentially be accounted for by government measures. This policy response is in stark contrast to the one taken during and after the Asian Financial Crisis, when state-owned enterprise (SOE) restructuring led to rapid growth but also reduced job security, income growth, and the public provision of health, education, and housing, all of which led to a decreasing share of consumption in GDP.

The government investment stimulus has also had positive effects on income and employment growth: as long as income growth and employment growth are resilient, one should expect consumption growth to remain strong as well. The CNY 4 trillion investment stimulus package has done much to reignite Chinese growth. While it is investment-focused and in the long run may promote further imbalance, in the short run it has and will continue to create jobs and boost incomes, thus helping keep consumption resilient. Coming into the crisis, per capita income growth was growing rapidly. Chan estimates that nominal growth in per capita urban and rural incomes far outpaced GDP in 2008. This trend continued in 2009. Through the first three quarters, real urban income had grown at 10.5% and real rural income had grown at 9.2% (compared to GDP growth of 7.7%). Transfer income was up 16% for urban households and 31.4% for rural households, indicating the proactive government response. Beyond government measures, including a CNY 370 billion allocation for rural infrastructure and programs to boost rural income, part of the reason for this resilience is that wage growth is more highly correlated with services than industry, and China’s service industries have been far less affected than manufacturing and heavy industry during the crisis. Another part of income resilience is that employment has been relatively strong. Sun calculates that a 15% drop in exports implies a 2.3% increase in unemployment in 2009 (equal to 17.5 million jobs). This squares well with reports of job losses of 20 million in Q4 2008 and Q1 2009. However, employment growth picked up again and turned positive in the first half of the year – through August, eight million new jobs had been created. Moreover, job losses in the first half of the year were concentrated among migrants who contribute a small share to consumption growth.

Much has been made of the explosion in Chinese bank lending in 2009. Not enough has been made of the explosion in bank lending to individuals. Consumer lending has increased dramatically. In December 2007, with the housing boom, consumer loans accounted for over 80% of the increase in total net lending by Chinese banks. The vast majority of this was mortgage lending. Consumer loans then declined as the government tightened monetary policy at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008. In March 2009, consumer loans again began to grow rapidly and by July accounted for over 50% of new net lending, reaching over CNY 200 billion in net new monthly loans over the summer months, as shown in chart 7 below. The massive growth in consumption loans squares with the increased purchases of autos and housing-related purchases. Growth was not confined to mortgages: through September, banks in China had issued 175 million new credit cards, 33.3% more than during the same period in 2008. Rapidly growing consumer credit can of course be dangerous, and there are indications that consumer lending has begun to overheat. Despite these concerns, consumer lending growth has been important for sustaining high Chinese household consumption this year.

Understanding the relative decline in household consumption

Chinese household consumption has proved resilient over the past year, outpacing GDP growth. Does this signal a new trajectory in China’s growth pattern? Has the household con-
Consumption share of GDP reached its nadir? Or will things return to the way they were before as China shrugs off the lingering effects of the crisis? To adequately confront these questions, it is necessary to understand why China’s household consumption has declined as a share of GDP. First, to state the obvious, the household consumption share of GDP declines because consumption growth is outpaced by GDP growth. China’s household consumption constituted a mere 35.3% of GDP in 2008. Real private consumption growth has tracked real GDP growth fairly consistently over the past 30 years, as seen in chart 8 below. China’s low proportion of private consumption is a result of sharp declines in 1989-1994 and 2001-2008. The more recent decline is particularly shocking, especially from 2001 to 2006. It is therefore important to look for elements of China’s economy that changed in this period.

Household consumption growth can be outpaced by GDP either because consumers save a larger portion of their disposable income or because the economy grows faster than does household disposable income. Identifying whether declining disposable income or rising savings rates are responsible for the overall reduction in household consumption is important for determining appropriate policy responses. Too often, there is a tendency to assert that it is one of these factors and not the other, when in reality the answer seems to be that both factors are involved. Household savings as a proportion of disposable income demonstrated no clear pattern from 1992 to 2004, fluctuating around 30%. Since 2000, however, household saving rates grew rapidly, rising from 27.5% to 37.9% in 2007. Household disposable income as a share of GDP exhibits a similar trend. This ratio hovered around 65% from 1992 to 1999 and then fell sharply from 2000 to 2006 (from 64.1% to 57.3%). Given these patterns, it follows that the household consumption share of GDP also saw its sharpest decline since 2000 (falling from 46.4% to 35.3% by 2008). Looking at some counterfactuals, if disposable income had stayed at its 2000 level of 64.1% of GDP for the past eight years, household consumption as a share of GDP at the end of 2008 would have been 39.7%. If, on the other hand, the savings rate had remained at its 2000 level of 27.5% over the past eight years while household income followed its actual trend, household consumption as a share of GDP would be 41.3%. Instead the ratio fell to 35.3%. These hypothetical cases are shown in chart 10 below. The conclusion is clear: both elements explain part of the truth.

**Determinants of lower household disposable income to GDP ratio**

The household disposable income share of GDP in China has fallen sharply in recent years as corporate profits have risen rapidly without a commensurate rise in employment or wages. This is not a long-term phenomenon: the household income share of GDP grew for the first five years after reform in 1979, rising from 54% to 64% before plateauing and then beginning to decline in 2000. Most explanations for the declining income share of GDP focus on structural issues – particularly a shift towards an excessive focus on investment as well as increasing productivity and profitability. Industry, and particularly heavy industry, is capital- rather than labor-intensive, leading to relatively slow employment growth. Additionally, as China has a large surplus of rural under-employed labor, wage pressures have remained low, preventing wage increases from keeping pace with profits. Beyond structural issues, China’s repressed financial system has prevented households from directly reaping the rewards of high corporate profitability, thus suppressing a major potential non-wage source of income. Back-of-the-envelope calculations below indicate that of the 8.6 percentage point decline in the income share of GDP from 1998 to 2007, about 6 percentage points appear to be a result of the declining wage share of GDP while the rest is attributable to relatively lower interest income.

In the past ten years, Chinese firms have become remarkably profitable. Since 1998, profits
as a share of GDP have climbed from 1.7% to over 10% in 2008, likely as a result of productivity gains arising from SOE restructuring in the late 1990s as well as greater access to international markets enabled by WTO accession in 2001. Direct and indirect government subsidies have also enabled this transformation. Current value-added tax policies create distortions by subsidizing and stimulating manufacturing relative to consumption. Lending interest rates have been artificially held down by deposit interest rate caps, under-pricing the true cost of capital. Additionally, government savings increased dramatically after the 1994 fiscal reforms, and much of this saving was used to finance investment rather than current spending. Government capital injections to SOEs are a large source of free capital for these firms (free in the sense that dividend payments to the government only began to be collected in 2008).

Yet while profits have soared, growth in employment and wages has, in relative terms, stagnated. In the decade from 1998 to 2008, while profits rose at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 35.6%, employment grew at only 3.6% (referring to the same NBS industry sample as above). He and Kuijs calculate that, from 1993 to 2005, around 85% of industry growth came from increased labor productivity rather than new employment. Urban employment growth slowed from 5.4% per year during 1978-1993 to less than 3% during 1993-2005. This is not surprising given the capital-intensive nature of the rapidly growing industries: steel and other investment goods employ fewer workers than light industries and especially the service sector.

The service sector share of GDP has fallen in the past eight years after rising rapidly through the first two decades of reform, while industry has reached its largest share of GDP in Chinese history (48.6% in 2008).

As employment has declined in relative terms, wages have also decreased (again, in relative terms): in other words, low employment growth has not been offset by higher wages for those already employed. Surplus agricultural labor and minimal rights for migrants have helped to keep wage costs low. According to calculations based on flow of funds data, the wage share of GDP reached 53.7% in 1999 before falling to 47.6% by 2007. Based on these numbers, the employment and related wage decrease explain 6.1 percentage points of the 8.6 percentage point decrease in the household income share of GDP from 1998 to 2007.

The consequences of relatively slow wage and employment growth are compounded by Chinese households’ reliance on wages – financial investments yield little return and account for only a small portion of income. In the last five years of data (2003-2007), the wage compensation share of disposable income has averaged over 83%, while government transfers have made up an additional 10%. Less than 6% of household disposable income came from interest and dividend payments. Household interest and dividend income declined as a proportion of GDP from 5.5% in 1994 to 2.4% by 2005 despite growth in household saving deposits as a share of GDP, as seen in chart 12 below. Including the “other” category that likely includes sales of financial assets (i.e. stocks), financial income amounted to 7.1% in 2007 (the latest year with flow of fund data). To put this in comparison, in Korea, this share is over 30%; in Japan it is over 20%. This low share of financial income is mainly a result of deposit interest rate caps – these caps increase the profitability of industry by lowering the cost of capital, while at the same time decreasing potential household income. The declining share of interest income was exacerbated by the 1999 introduction of a 20% tax on interest income. Consequently, the real return on financial assets in China is only 0.5%, compared to 1.8% in Korea and 3.1% in the US. Declining interest income appears to explain several percentage points of the relative decline in household disposable income. If interest income had grown in line with savings deposits from 1998 onwards, it would have accounted for 4.8% of GDP by 2006 (instead of just 2.8%).
Determinants of high household savings

Not only are Chinese households receiving a smaller share of GDP as disposable income, but as a result of a confluence of factors, including demographic change, rapid income growth, constrained consumer credit markets, and the lack of a social safety net, households are also consuming a smaller portion of this income. Chinese high household savings are a key contributor to the extremely high national savings that have arguably led to global imbalances.42, 43, 44, 45 While Chinese saving rates rose for much of the early part of the reform period, they were largely steady over the course of the 1990s and actually reached their 1992-2007 low in 2001 (at 27.0%). High Chinese saving rates have long been a topic for analysis. One popular theory relates to cultural values. While it is impossible to conclusively discount the cultural values hypothesis, little evidence exists. The Chinese themselves had average household saving ratios under 5% until the 1980s.46 High saving rates in Korea and Japan fell dramatically as the countries developed, and both share similar Confucian ethics. While cultural values may, all other things being equal, result in higher savings rates, development and policy changes seem to easily overcome these cultural barriers. Other theories hold up much better, including the effects of demographic change, precautionary saving due to an insufficient social safety net, and underdeveloped consumer credit markets. In reality, there is no single silver bullet that could lower Chinese saving; rather, many factors contribute, with the most important factor perhaps simply being time and further growth in per capita income.

To discuss saving behavior it is necessary to calculate savings; unfortunately, this presents more difficulties than one might hope. Macro (flow of funds) and micro (household survey) estimates do not always match. This is a problem globally, although perhaps especially so in China.47 One problem is that individuals tend to systematically under-report income in survey-based methods.48 Additionally, non-response is a large problem, and survey methods are likely to under-sample richer households that have a higher opportunity cost of being surveyed. In China, as the top quintile has increased saving rates the most and now accounts for over half of all savings, this under-sampling would drive down the micro saving rates estimates.49 Moreover, gray and black markets are large in China, and much “illegal” expenditure and income may not be reported. Chart 13 below shows the discrepancy in China between micro and macro estimations. Flow of funds data indicate that saving rates fluctuated around 30% until 2000, when they began to rise steeply, while household survey estimates indicate a steadily rising urban savings rate and a rural savings rate that has declined since 1998. The aggregate household survey data suggests a larger and more gradual increase in the household savings rate. For the reasons noted above, except where noted, the subsequent analysis focuses on the macro flow of funds data.

Precautionary savings

Perhaps the most frequently cited argument for China’s high savings are that households undertake precautionary savings to offset the disappearance of a government-provided social safety net; there is some validity to this argument, but it cannot explain the entire increase in household savings. Market-driven structural reforms have decreased government involvement in the safety net, with potentially unintended consequences. Pension reform in the mid-to-late 1990s increased personal saving for retirement, while SOE restructuring stunted employment growth and lowered health coverage. There is no doubt that the government share of pension and health coverage has declined.50 For instance, private household health spending rose from 1.5% in 1990 to 7.0% in 2008.51 Feng, He, and Sato52 find that in China, pension reform in the mid-to-late 1990s boosted the savings rate by 6.3 percentage points for those aged 25-29 and 2.8 percentage points for those aged 50-59. This follows from their finding that “pension wealth”, defined as the present value of expected future pension payouts, declined during the period.
54%, depending on age and gender, as the pension system was restructured. In Taiwan, Chou, Liu, and Hammitt\(^5\) find that the introduction of public coverage through National Health Insurance in the 1990s reduced household saving rates by 8.6-13.7 percentage points on average. Also lumped into “precautionary” savings could potentially be thrown saving for education and housing. While not necessarily “precautionary”, housing and education services were previously provided by the government – the privatization of these important markets has likely had as large an effect on rising saving rates as any other factor. Education and recreation spending as a percentage of total urban per capita household expenditure rose from 5.3% in 1990 to 12.3% in 2008.\(^5\) There are two student loan financing schemes currently in place, but they are still only at a small scale.\(^5\) If, as McKinsey’s China Urban Consumer Savings Behavior Survey finds, 97% of urban parents expect their children to go to college, this saving would vastly outpace the future expenditure on education for those students who actually do end up attending college. According to McKinsey’s survey, education was the top reason that people saved, with 60% of households in the survey claiming to save for education.\(^5\) Given that the average annual cost of university education is nearly 50% of average household disposable income, these savings must be high.

With regard to home purchases, housing market privatization in the late 1990s created an incentive to save for better housing. Increased spending on housing is clearly evident. According to flow of funds data, household gross fixed asset investment rose from 10% of income in the mid 1990s to over 16% by 2003 – the vast majority of this fixed asset investment is likely for housing purchases. Chamon and Prasad\(^5\) calculate that housing-related motives could account for three percentage points of the increase in household savings rates. Precautionary savings likely explain much of the increase in China’s saving rates. A problem that many have noted is that they fail to explain exactly what shifted around 2000 to lead to a spike; saving rates have increased dramatically in the past five years as the government has improved social welfare systems. Also, as Anderson notes\(^\)\(^5\), considering its low per capita income, China does very well in terms of pension coverage and publicly funded schools. There is clearly something to these arguments. However, there are many potential explanations. On the one hand, saving for housing purchases is a new phenomenon. Additionally, saving is a luxury, and China’s household income in the 1990s may not have been sufficient to allow “optimal” savings levels for health, retirement, and education. This is supported by the data – although the government safety net has again expanded in recent years, the share of private spending on health and education has continued to increase.

**Demographics**

Demographic shifts also help to explain China’s high household saving. Globally, many econometric models have relied on demographics to explain saving rates, with perhaps the most famous and widely used being the Modigliani\(^5\) life-cycle hypothesis (LCH). The LCH predicts that saving rates increase with a rising proportion of the working-age population in combination with long-term per capita growth trends. Given a sharp decline in fertility, largely due to the one-child policy, China’s dependency ratio has declined dramatically over the past 30 years, from 70% of the working-age population in 1979 to less than 40% in 2008.\(^6\) Having fewer dependents to support should decrease current expenditure and increase savings. Using data through 2000, Modigliani and Cao argue that this demographic shift, along with high sustained per capita income growth, explain the entire increase in savings. The chart below shows the performance of the LCH as it relates to China, using Modigliani and Cao data through 2000 and then bringing forward their methodology through 2008 using NBS data.\(^6\) Clearly, the LCH does a good job at explaining the growth in savings rates through the beginning of the reform pe-
Aside from shifts in age structure, other demographic arguments focus on rising sex imbalances and increasingly unequal income distribution. In China, the per capita income gap between rural and urban areas increased from 2.8 to 3.3 times between 2000 and 2008, with inequality also increasing within rural and urban areas. The propensity to consume for poorer households and households in rural areas is higher than for richer households and households in urban areas, as seen in chart 15 below. This implies that redistributive policies could have a large effect on national household saving rates. At the extreme, assuming unchanged propensities to consume, a hypothetical reallocation of CNY 100 from a top quintile rural household to a bottom quintile rural household would induce additional consumption of CNY 39.3. In urban areas, the same top-to-bottom quintile reallocation of CNY 100 would result in additional consumption of CNY 16.6. Wei and Zhang recently proposed a novel hypothesis: China’s growing sex imbalance has led families with sons to boost their savings in order to make their sons more attractive as grooms. They argue that this competitive saving behavior accounts for 50% of the increase in household saving rates. This analysis relies on the high correlation between regions with high sex imbalances and high saving rates, so an alternative explanation for their results could be that parents value education more for male children or that males are the buyers of houses and thus have to save for these future purchases (in other words, an interaction between sex imbalances and precautionary saving behavior).

Similar to the precautionary savings rebuttals, it is not clear what trend changed with regard to demographics in the past eight years. Post-reform trends (increasing inequality, lower dependency ratio, sex imbalance, urbanization) continued, but seemingly without any structural break or increased rate of change in recent years. It is of course possible that some inflection point was reached in terms of coming-of-age of one-child-policy children or higher life expectancy for the elderly, but it is also likely that demographics are not the whole story behind rising saving rates.

Financial repression

Financial repression, particularly constrained consumer credit markets and the lack of investment opportunities, also contribute to high household saving. Low levels of household debt constrain consumer spending. Household debt to disposable income in China is 30%, while in Japan, Korea, and the US this level is over 120%. As a share of GDP, consumer credit stands at only 13% in China, compared to 70% in Korea and 48% in Malaysia. Clearly, compared to its neighbors, China’s low level of household borrowing serves as a constraint on consumption. The problem with this explanation for high savings is that financial liberalization has increased in recent years as the saving rate has climbed. Lending to households, particularly for mortgages, has grown dramatically. Credit cards outstanding have grown from 3 million in 2003 to 130 million by 2008. However, there is not a culture of debt. As of the end of Q3 2009, credit card debt accounted for 4.4% of total consumer debt and in 2008 credit cards accounted for 15% of retail sales, yet the amount of overdue debt is still small (despite growing during the crisis, as discussed above). This indicates that credit cards seem to be used more as a convenient method of payment or as a status symbol, rather than as a means of increasing current income/consumption. Despite rapid increases in debt, most houses are still paid for in cash and there are high restrictions on loan-to-value ratios and mortgage interest rates. Additionally, in a recent survey, 58% of banks saw accessing/using credit bureaus and historical data as a major challenge, indicating one reason for a continued unwillingness to issue cards. This lack of a debt culture is not set in stone: in Korea, household debt exploded in the past decade, and savings rates declined dramatically.

Interest rate caps and a dearth of other investment opportunities may also contribute to
higher savings rates. Many studies have found that in time-series data, saving rates are negatively correlated with net financial worth. The wealth effect generated by sustained improvements in alternative investment opportunities could lead to greater consumption in China. China now has the second-largest stock market in the world by market capitalization, having surpassed Japan in July 2009. Invested value in the free float on the stock market grew by over CNY 8 trillion in 2006 and 2007, with much of this investment made by Chinese savers. However, to date the stock market has perhaps been too volatile to contribute to increased perceptions of individual wealth – sustained gains and confidence could have large effects on consumption. While many economists argue that lower deposit rates should drive down savings/deposits, the reverse argument may be closer to the truth in China: if saving for a specific future outlay (e.g. house, education), then lower interest rates that stunt income growth require higher savings. Raising (or eliminating) deposit interest rate caps could therefore boost consumption.

Other factors also contribute to high savings. In particular, supply side issues should not be ignored. There is a lack of retail infrastructure in third-tier inland cities as well as rural areas. A 2007 study by the China Consumers Association found that 30-60% of rural households were unsatisfied with infrastructure for consumption (availability of retail outlets, transportation, etc.). The service industry is also underdeveloped and many services are unavailable. According to estimates by Wang and Zhang, services represent only 26% of total personal consumption, compared to 57% in Japan and Korea and 56% in Taiwan. Some of these services may come with time, including legal and financial services.

China in comparison

Given the difficulties in pinpointing the exact causes behind high saving rates, it is valuable to look at the development experience of other nations, particularly China’s East Asian neighbors; doing so provides some optimism that China’s high saving and low consumption may be temporary phenomena associated with a low per capita income development path. China’s savings rates and disposable income share of GDP are low in a global comparison. As seen in charts 16 and 17 below, China’s household savings rate is much higher and its household income/GDP ratio much lower than in other nations; the combination of the two leads to China’s unprecedentedly low household consumption share of the GDP.

Looking at the historical development of other countries sheds light on China’s experience. It is common for the consumption share of GDP to undergo a U-shaped trajectory during the development process. In theory, at a low level of income, household marginal propensity to consume is high as families need to meet daily expenditure levels; at a certain level of income they are able to start saving to balance out current and future consumption; at an even higher level of income, they have saved sufficiently and have great enough wealth through property and financial investment to refocus income on current consumption. This has played out globally. In the United States, the consumption share of GDP fell through the first half of the 20th century and then began to rise in the 1950s. Savings rates in the teens then disappeared over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Japan provides a more similar story to China. From 1955 to 1970, Japan’s investment share of GDP rose from 20% to 35% while household consumption decreased from 60% to 48%. The trend reversed in 1970, with the household consumption share of GDP again rising to 60%. Notably, Japan’s household saving rate peaked at 19% in 1976 before falling rapidly to less than 2% by 2006.

Like Japan, the similarities with China are striking in other East Asian nations that have also experienced investment-led growth accompanied by a falling share of household consumption in GDP during their early stages of development. These countries all eventually shifted their growth patterns, providing more optimism for
a shift than the above analysis of savings rates would indicate. South Korea and Taiwan provide particularly interesting and relevant examples, given cultural, geographic, and historical similarities, as well as the recent time frame in which they reached a high state of development. Taiwan’s household saving rate declined gradually over the past 20 years, from over 30% in 1992 to just over 20% in 2008.79 In South Korea, from 1970 to 1988, the household consumption share of GDP fell from 75.0% to 50.7% between 1970 and 1988 – it has since climbed back to 55%. The household savings rate increased during the early stages of development, peaking at 25% in 1988, the same year that household consumption reached its lowest share of GDP. The household savings rate then rapidly fell, and by 2003 was just over 2%.80

Similar trends have been seen in other countries, as chart 18 below demonstrates. Apart from East Asian countries, the U-shaped household-consumption-to-GDP development path has also been witnessed in South Africa and Mexico (and likely many other countries as well). The chart shows the decline in the household consumption ratio for 25 years prior to reaching a low and then beginning to rise (or at least flatten out).81 It is very interesting to note that in the period in which household consumption again began to grow, per capita incomes in these countries were very similar. Using constant international (2005) dollars, per capita GDP at purchasing-power parity (PPP) in the reversal years were: Japan (US$11,060), Korea (US$9,977), Malaysia (US$9,651), Taiwan (US$9,400), South Africa (US$8,597), and Mexico (US$10,059).82 In 2008, by this metric, China reached US$5,510. This implies that China may still have some growing left to do before reaching its own inflection point.

Conclusions83

While the global comparison hints that time alone might give Chinese consumers their day in the sun, many policy measures could spur this process while beneficially easing other inefficiencies and imbalances in the economy. The need to rebalance has not been denied by the Chinese government. As early as December 2004, during the Central Economic Work Conference, the government acknowledged that China’s current growth model was not sustainable. The financial crisis has added a sense of urgency to the need for rebalancing/restructuring. Prior to the crisis, China had already moved forward on several fronts, including increased expenditure on the social safety net, eliminating the agriculture tax on farm income, raising the cut-off for income tax exemption, initiating dividend collection from large SOEs, and building a “new socialist countryside”.84 More steps would be beneficial.

Macro and fiscal policies, in particular lowering government explicit and implicit subsidies for industry and expanding the social safety net, should remain a high priority. This paper has focused predominantly on household consumption. However, government consumption and in particular government non-investment could help China rebalance. The large volume of Chinese government savings that is transferred to lower-level governments and industry for investment comes at the expense of household consumption. Increased government expenditure on social welfare and redistributive measures would have multiple benefits by reducing government investment/savings, effectively increasing household income, and lowering the need for precautionary savings. In a related vein, rural land reform, oft-discussed, could have very beneficial wealth effects in China’s countryside. Service sector development can take a long time, but would have very beneficial effects on both household income, for reasons discussed above, as well as consumption, because it would provide better infrastructure for spending. Household registration (hùkōu, 户口) reform could increase urbanization through the elimination of constraints on internal mobility while also increasing urban migrant wages through enhanced workplace legitimacy and bargaining power. Education reform through better public funding for universities would diminish a major need for household
savings.

Price and tax measures are also important. Progressive and redistributive policies can have a large effect by targeting money at those with high propensities to consume. The government could again raise the cutoff for income taxes and could enlarge the share of pension and welfare payments to the household sector. A higher minimum wage could be set, and VAT policies could be amended to stop subsidizing industry.

Financial reforms would also help. Consumers should have more options for investment, and a removal of interest rate caps would increase household interest income while also leading to better pricing of the cost of capital, ostensibly lowering this implicit subsidy to investment. More consumer loans, particularly for education, would help expand current consumption. Additionally, further liberalization would help ensure that capital flowed efficiently – firms would have more leeway to hire staff and increase employment.85

This is a brief, and far from exhaustive, list of steps that China could take to increase the consumption share of GDP. While many of these policies have been rhetorically supported by the government, actual reforms have been slower in coming about. The response to the crisis, as described above, has been extremely proactive, but measures do not appear sustainable; increasing consumer subsidies and providing tax breaks are very useful at stimulating demand in the short term, but as China removes these government measures in 2010, it seems likely that the economy will move back to an investment-led growth pattern. In the end, a reduction in investment will be a necessary component in any rebalancing. Many methods of decreasing investment will naturally increase consumption, meaning that lower investment will not necessarily lead to lower GDP growth than China has become used to.

With its current combination of low income and high growth, China’s consumption growth potential is huge. McKinsey argues that with the right policies, the household consumption share of GDP could rise from its current share of 36% to as high as 50% by 2025.86 That would bring China more in line with the consumption shares of its East Asian neighbors (although still below their current levels and far below Western or Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development levels). However, quick calculations show that this shift will not be easy. To bring household consumption as a share of GDP above 50% by 2025, assuming annual GDP growth of 8%, China would have to increase the household disposable income share of GDP by almost one percentage point annually and decrease the household saving rate by almost one percentage point annually. This would require that income grow at 9-9.5% annually and consumption grow at 10-10.5% annually – a formidable challenge, to say the least. In other words, even assuming significant rebalancing, it will take a long time for China to become a true consumption-driven economy.
Financial Crisis


Source: NBS, author’s calculations

Chart 2: Share Contribution to Annual GDP Growth

Source: NBS, author’s calculations

Chart 3: Retail Sales Growth

Source: NBS, author’s calculations

Chart 4: Retail Sales vs. Household Consumption

Source: NBS, author’s calculations

Chart 5: Retail Sales, Household Consumption, and GDP

Source: NBS, author’s calculations

Chart 6: Consumer Confidence Index

Source: NBS, author’s calculations
**Financial Crisis**

*Chart 11: Wages vs. Profits*

- Wage share of GDP (RHS)
- Industrial profit share of GDP (LHS)

*Source: NBS, author’s calculations*

*Chart 12: Deposits vs. Interest Income*

- Savings Deposits/GDP (LHS)
- Interest Income/GDP (RHS)

*Source: NBS, author’s calculations*

*Chart 13: Calculating Chinese Household Saving Rates*

- Household Survey: Urban
- Household Survey: Rural
- Household Survey: Combined
- Flow of Funds: Combined

*Source: NBS flow of funds and household survey data, author’s calculations*

*Chart 14: Modigliani & Cao (2004) Saving Rate Specification*

- “Actual” Savings Rate
- Predicted Savings Rate

*Source: Modigliani & Cao (2004); NBS, author’s calculations*

*Chart 15: Propensity to Consume (Consumption/Disposable Income), by Income Quintile, 2008*

- Rural
- Urban

*Source: NBS household survey data, author’s calculations*
Greater China

ENDNOTES


2 Consequently, there has been an increase in the overall government share of consumption, from a post-reform low of 20% in 1988 to over 27% in 2008. To put this growth differential in perspective: if household consumption as a share of GDP had stayed constant over the last two decades (instead of falling by 15.8 percentage points), personal consumption would have been 45% greater than it was at the end of 2008, assuming that GDP growth followed its actual trajectory. (If, instead, the additional consumption added to GDP while government consumption, investment, and net exports stayed the same, yielding the same proportion would have resulted in 92% greater household consumption and the GDP being CNY 10 trillion higher than it is today.)

4 NBS.

5 The retail price index is produced monthly by the NBS and differs from the more commonly used Consumer Price Index CPI, although the numbers tend to be similar.


8 NBS, 2009.

9 Rothman.

contribution was from government consumption.
14 These data are compiled from government speeches: Sun, Consumption Outlook | China and Liu. The values represent government intentions – it is unclear how much of the proposed expenditure has actually taken place.
15 NBS, 2009.
16 Sun, Consumption Outlook | China.
17 Liu.
18 Wen.
20 Mingchun Sun, China: Uncut through the Global Financial Tsunami, China & World Economy, vol. 17, no. 6 (2009).
22 Wang and Zhang.
23 Sun, China: Uncut through the Global Financial Tsunami, pp. 24-42.
25 People's Bank of China, Quarterly Statistical Bulletin (Beijing). The loan data is from the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) website. Consumer loans are defined as “consumption loans” under the “loans to residents” category.
26 Net new lending is defined as the monthly difference in the value of outstanding loans.
28 Credit card debt 6 months overdue rose 126.5% YOY in the first three quarters to CNY 7.4 billion, accounting for 3.4% of total outstanding credit card debt. This prompted the PBOC to set quotas for credit card sales and prohibit card issuance to people younger than 18. However, the overdue rate is still low compared to the United States, and with a small volume of total outstanding credit card debt, poses no apparent systemic problem for the banking system (Xinhua News Agency, 2009).
29 Household savings rates are calculated from the NBS flow of funds, which is only available from 1992-2007. The differences between this data and calculations based on household survey data are discussed below.
30 This is calculated from NBS industry statistics. These statistics include only those firms “above a designated size”. While this means that a number of smaller firms are not included in the sample, the sample is still large and fairly representative, covering over 400,000 enterprises and representing 88 million employees in 2008.
32 He and Kuijs.
33 Nicholas Lardy, China's Consumption Driven Growth Path, Conference on China's Agricultural Trade: Issues and Prospects, July 2007. According to Lardy, government capital transfers accounted for 8% of all fixed investment in 2003.
34 He and Kuijs.
35 Lardy.
36 Jahangir Aziz and Li Cui, Explaining China's Low Consumption: The Neglected Role of Household Income, IMF Working Paper WP/07/181, July 2007. Aziz and Cui find that the wage share fell from 67% of GNP in the mid 1980s to a 2005 level of 60%. It is not clear where they got their data from.
37 This was calculated based on flow of funds data, so information is not available yet for 2008.
38 Aziz and Cui.
39 Lardy.
41 Interest income data is unavailable for 2008. 2006 is used because of the one-time decline in household saving in 2007, likely due to explosive stock market investment. (Having grown by CNY 2.1 trillion in 2006, savings deposits grew by only CNY 1.1 trillion in 2007. As the market crashed in 2008, individuals shifted rapidly out of the stock market and back into savings deposits, which grew by CNY 4.5 trillion.)
44 IMF, Asia With Cash: Why are Corporate Savings So High?, World Economic Outlook, April 2006, ch. IV, pp. 135-159.
45 China’s Corporate Savings is Not a Key Driver for Its Current Account Surplus: A Cross-country Firm-level Comparative Perspective, IMF Working Paper, Preliminary Draft, October 2009. Many recent articles have asserted that high Chinese household saving is not as much of a problem as high corporate saving. In 2008, 19 percentage points of China's national saving rate of 55% of GDP were contributed by households while 25 percentage points were contributed by the corporate sector. The remaining 11 percentage points were contributed by the government. Household saving previously represented a much higher portion of savings. As He and Cao note, the share of household saving in national saving was as high as 52.3% in 1992 (it was 35% in 2008). The government and corporate shares have both grown to offset this decline. However, China’s corporate saving patterns are more in line with global trends than its household saving patterns. Corporations throughout the world have witnessed higher undistributed profits over the past two decades. In the US, according to Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis data, gross government saving has been negative since 2001 and household saving has been close to zero – gross corporate savings, on the other hand, have consistently stayed above 10% of GDP for over three decades and contributed over 100% of gross national savings from 2005-2008. As Bayoumi, Tong, and Wei show, from 2001 to 2005, China’s corporate savings over GDP increased 2.7 percentage points, lower than in Japan (4 percentage points), Korea (3 percentage points) and the UK (3.6 percentage points). In general, the world has seen a rapid increase in corporate savings in the past decade. As the International Monetary Fund (IMF) writes: “In stark contrast to the secular decline in household saving, corporate saving in the G-7 countries has increased strongly over the last decade, and now accounts for about 70% of total private (household plus corporate) saving, compared to 50% in the early 1990s.” Consequently, many countries have gross corporate saving rates that do not differ dramatically from China (Bayoumi, Tong, and Wei). Therefore, even though corporate savings in China have grown as a share of overall savings, the anomaly remains the high share of household (and government) savings.
46 Modigliani and Cao.
47 Chamon and Prasad.
49 Chamon and Prasad.
50 This is the case if one assumes that health and pension coverage through SOEs is a form of government, rather than private, coverage. The privatization of
SOEs in the 1990s eliminated pension and health coverage for tens of millions of Chinese employees.
51 NBS, 2009.
54 NBS, 2009.
55 Woetzel et al.
56 The survey only represents urban areas, and the sample size was only 783 people.
57 Marcos Chamon and Eswar S. Prasad, Why are Saving Rates of Urban Households in China Rising?, IZA Discussion Paper no. 3191.
60 World Bank, World Development Statistics. This data is taken from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators database.
61 It should be noted that the “actual” savings rate used by Modigliani and Cao (and carried forward through the 2008 data to maintain continuity) is based on a proxy calculation for aggregate household savings that uses savings deposits, government bonds, and fixed asset investment growth. This proxy matches the flow of funds data well through the 1990s, but begins to fall apart over the past 10 years.
62 Charles Yuji Horioka and Junmin Wan, The Determinants of Household Saving in China: A Dynamic Panel Analysis of Provincial Data, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Working Paper Series, January 2007. The LCH is not without its detractors. Horioka and Wan utilize provincial variation and find that the lagged saving rate, income growth, and the real interest rate have determined China’s saving rate and that age structure and dependency ratios have had no significant effect. By this logic, inertia is the most important factor in China’s high saving rate, implying that these high rates could persist for a long time (unless growth slows markedly, in which case the savings rate will rise). Perhaps more condemningly, Chamon and Prasad find a U-shaped pattern of savings over the life-cycle, with young and old households saving most, while the LCH predicts higher savings for middle-aged people.
63 This calculation was inspired by a similar exercise conducted by Chi Hung Kwan at the Research Institute for Economy, Trade and Industry on his China in Transition blog: <http://www.rieti.go.jp/en/china/09062901.html>.
65 Sun, China: Unscathed through the Global Financial Tsunami.
66 Woetzel et al.
67 Woetzel et al.
71 In this framework, inflation could also counter-intuitively boost savings rather than current consumption, as in a low-debt society inflation reduces household wealth. Indeed, in the life-cycle regression framework for China discussed above, the coefficient on inflation is positive, implying greater savings when inflation is high.
72 The empirical evidence on the relationship between deposit rates and saving is inconclusive. Evidence in favor of the latter hypothesis would be those analyses that find a negative coefficient on deposit rates. Norman Loayza, Klaus Schmidt-Hebbel, and Luis Servén, in their 2000 survey of saving in developing countries (What Drives Private Saving Across the World, The Review of Economics and Statistics, MIT Press, vol. 82(2), pp. 165-181), find an ambiguous relationship between interest rates and saving – one study in their sample found a positive relationship, one found a negative relationship, and four found no significant relationship.
73 Woetzel et al.
74 Sun, Consumption Outlook | China.
75 Wang and Zhang.
76 Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Database. The Economist Intelligence Unit data for the real disposable income share of GDP seems to underestimate this parameter by 10-15%. However, given the consistently low estimates, it is probably safe to assume that a similar calculation is being used across countries. As the chart only intends to provide a comparison, the data therefore remains useful.
77 Liu.
80 Bank of Korea ECOS, 2009.
81 The data, drawn from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators, only goes back to 1960 – for countries whose relevant development periods extend before 1960, data is therefore missing.
82 These GDP per capita values are constant 2005 international dollars. With the exception of Taiwan, the data were taken from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators database. Taiwan’s data was taken from the IMF World Economic Outlook – the value is equal to the current price GDP (PPP) per capita (US$7,159.38) multiplied by the inverse of the GDP deflator index (76.125).
84 The “new socialist countryside” policy was initiated in 2006 as a means to boost farmer incomes and rural economic development through a program of rural investment, agricultural subsidies, and improved basic social services.
85 For instance, Aziz and Cai find, using World Bank Enterprise Survey data, that firms in China that list access to finance as a major constraint also have lower employment growth, implying that greater credit access could have positive effects on employment.
86 Woetzel et al.
DAVID JANOFF BULMAN

David Janoff Bulman is a second-year MA candidate in International Economics with concentrations in China Studies and Quantitative Economic Methods and Theory at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He received his BA in Economics from Columbia University. His current research is focused on the Chinese economy and China-US economic relations, with a special interest in Chinese macroeconomic developments related to domestic rebalancing, as well as international prospects for the renminbi. He has worked previously as a consultant in China for two years.
Voices of Identity in a Selection of Stories by Lu Xun

In My Old Home, The New Year’s Sacrifice, and A Madman’s Diary, Lu Xun reveals some striking commonalities within the identities and identity formations of the narrators. By examining their roles and experiences, this essay treats several fundamental questions in an attempt to uncover the most common formulations of “selfhood” in these stories: What is the nature of this modern Chinese identity? What are its characteristic features? How is it constructed? How do Lu Xun’s formulations relate to Chinese tradition? In response to these questions, I argue that the narrators’ voices of personal identity and identity formation in My Old Home, The New Year’s Sacrifice, and A Madman’s Diary enunciate radical tones of doubt, separation, and moral creativity that guide them through the nascent stages of their new personal identification.

The greatest success of the May Fourth Movement should be considered the discovery of the “individual” [gérén 個人].
— Yú Dáfū 郁達夫

Introduction

Yu Dafu as well as other scholars of Chinese literature regard the triumph of the May Fourth Movement as “the discovery of the individual”. Far from a triumphant discovery by any means, the newfound role of the individual in modern Chinese literature actually uncovers voices of alienation and despair. Tracing notions of identity and its nuances amidst this quagmire of subjectivity is a complicated enterprise because of how the contexts and conditions of each story vary. However, in My Old Home, The New Year’s Sacrifice, and A Madman’s Diary, Lu Xun reveals some striking commonalities within the identities and identity formations of the narrators in each story. Similar themes and motifs continue to surface, highlighting the strong impulses within the narrators to depart from the traditional roles and values of traditional China. Fragments of a new personal identity begin to supplant vestiges of traditional identity. By examining the roles and experiences of narrators, this essay addresses several fundamental questions in the attempt to uncover the most common formulations of “selfhood” in these stories. The questions are as follows: What is the nature of this modern Chinese identity? What are its characteristic features? How is it constructed? How do Lu Xun’s formulations relate to Chinese tradition? In other words, this essay explores the aforementioned questions in the examination of the mental geography of Lu Xun’s narrator so as to map the terrain of personal identity and its agency in a conflicted modern Chinese society. In response to the questions, I argue that the narrators’ voices of personal identity and identity formation in My Old Home, The New Year’s Sacrifice, and A Madman’s Diary enunciate radical tones of doubt, separation, and moral creativity that guide them through the nascent stages of their new personal identification.

Defining a modern identity in terms of philosophy and psychoanalysis

The theoretical angles of philosophy and psychoanalysis are fundamental to this article insofar as both reveal the moral agency and interiority of Lu Xun’s narrators. Charles Taylor’s understanding of identity and its formation elucidates the moral implications of how the “authorial personas” of narrators associate with society as well as how the identity fields of these authorial personas are conditioned by a complicated relationship to history. As a result, Taylor uncovers the exterior dynamics of the narrators’ moral agency. Since this only comprises a portion of the complex and involved process of
identity construction, Lacan’s theory of “the mirror stage” is used to clarify how the interior dynamics of identity construction inherently function. In reference to the overarching argument of this essay, Taylor clarifies doubt, separation, and the foundations of moral creativity, while Lacan, on the other hand, intensifies doubt, separation, and moral creativity as these accompany the generation of a self. This crisis-ridden formation is all the more true in a modern Chinese narrator who attempts to dissociate from the symbolic structures of the past as well as formulate a new system of associations. Both interpretations of identity offer insight into the barren, dislocated, and yet seemingly hopeful nature of each narrator’s struggle to make sense of existence and form an autonomous self that is capable of overcoming history.

Charles Taylor suggests that any formation of identity – regardless of its affiliations or cultural heritage – includes two vital and inseparable variables: a sense of morality and a sense of community. Thinking critically about identity for Taylor, therefore, requires the evaluation of moral decisions and the intricacies of the individual’s relationships to social groups. While morality provides the ontological framework for an individual to assert himself within a very specific “moral space”, the social dynamic of identity formation explains how the individual conditions himself by collective “commitments and identifications” or relationships to “webs of interlocution”. An individual’s affirmation of self and orientation within society thus depends upon the moral language of the individual as well as on uses of that language by the individual to consciously or unconsciously converse with society.

Moral guidance and group identification offer essential reference points for unpacking the complex relationships individuals share with both society and history. William Lyell explains the primary features of the majority of Lu Xun’s characters in the following quote, elucidating their traditional qualities: “Many of the people who appear in Lu Xun’s stories are readily identifiable traditional types with deep roots in Chinese society; their countenances would have been as familiar to a reader of 1720 or 1820 as to one of 1920.” Since the narrators of this selection of Lu Xun stories generally operate as emissaries of a new Chinese experience, the already complex relationships between narrators and other characters logically contain departures from one another. Serving as representations of change, the narrators attempt to enunciate radical tones of identity formation in a new voice. Much like the context for the modern Western identity that Taylor refers to, whereby the original unity of the theistic horizon has been shattered, and the moral sources of individuals can now be found on unique frontiers, which naturally include personal powers, the contexts for the narrators of these stories have dramatically shifted. Each narrator approaches the conflicts of the story with a unique moral vision, self-understanding, and relationship to society. While the identities of the narrators remain much more intricate than this, this essay also draws from psychoanalytic theory to probe the depths of the interiority of identity and its formation.

Jacques Lacan, a Neo-Freudian structuralist theoretician, approaches identity and its formation in a different light than Charles Taylor. Basing the majority of his theories of human subjectivity on the models of Sigmund Freud, Lacan diverges in his clarification of the role that language, as the structuring stratum of the psyche, plays in the construction of selfhood. Lacan asserts that three different, yet interdependent registers of the human psyche characterize the individual’s relationship to himself and society. These are known specifically as the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Lacan’s tripartite model of the human psyche as well as how it relates to the mirror stage of an individual’s psychological development provides the mainstay of his contributions to identity studies in this essay. The Imaginary refers to that dimension of the psyche that participates in the creation and self-narration of an image that the individual relies on for personal identification. According to Lacan, the founding
moment of the Imaginary is the infant’s recognition of its image in the mirror. Identification with a specular image, or the image reflected in the mirror, depends upon the individual’s psychological process of creating a correspondence with the image. The creation of this image is only made possible by the activity of the Imaginary register. The Symbolic denotes the dimension of the psyche that participates in the symbolization that the individual performs when he speaks and translates himself within a social context. As the realm of articulation that structures the individual’s relations to society, the Symbolic register of experience is marked by its status as the station by which individuals also make the language of their psyche accessible to the public realm. As the Real denotes the realm of psychic material that remains “un-symbolized”, in the sense that it constitutes that which is beyond an individual’s experience, it assumes a relatively minor role in this essay.

As previously mentioned, personal narration in the Imaginary dimension of the psyche transforms the self and delivers it over into the realm of the Symbolic. This is not to say, however, that by taking on language the narrator leaves the Imaginary behind. Transforming, or narrating, the self and creating an integrated specular image defines the most fundamental aspects of identity formation for Lacan. To see oneself in the mirror depends upon an existential creativity that attempts to generate an image. In other words, the act of seeing an image is contingent upon a mental construction of an image in the first place. According to Lacan, the translation of this mental construction of the self into the Symbolic realm occurs by way of language. What Lacan offers to an analysis of identity and identity formation is the role that the language of the psyche plays in the specific ways that individuals structure themselves within symbolic fields. Or, in the case of this selection of stories by Lu Xun, Lacan locates the functional breakdown that occurs between the Imaginary and the Symbolic registers of each narrator’s psychological experience.

Referring generally to early May Fourth literature (which, of course, envelopes the short stories of Lu Xun), Cyril Birch delineates several hallmark features of this corpus of literature, thus distinguishing it from traditional literature. As he explains, “the most startling new feature of the fiction published [at this time …] was not its Westernized syntax nor its tone of gloom but the emergence of a new authorial persona”. In the short stories of Lu Xun, this authorial persona emerges in the activation of the narrator as a living contributor to the discursive space of each story. In reference to Charles Taylor’s understanding of identity and formation, Birch’s notion elucidates the moral implications of how this authorial persona associates with society as well as how the identity field of this authorial persona is conditioned by a complicated relationship to history. As a result, Taylor helps uncover the exterior dynamics of the narrator’s moral agency. Since this only makes up part of the complex and involved process of identity construction, Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage will be used to clarify how the interior dynamics of identity construction tend to function. In reference to the overarching argument of this essay, Taylor clarifies doubt, separation, and the foundations of moral creativity while Lacan, on the other hand, intensifies doubt, separation, and moral creativity as these accompany the generation of a self. This crisis-ridden formation is all the more relevant in a modern Chinese narrator who attempts to dissociate from the symbolic structures of the past as well as formulate a new system of associations. Both interpretations of identity offer insight into the barren, dislocated, and yet seemingly hopeful nature of each narrator’s struggle to make sense of existence and form an autonomous self that is capable of overcoming history.

Doubt

In *My Old Home*, the narrator’s doubt surfaces in response to imagery, memories, and traditional ideologies. Doubt is inseparable from the creation of the conditions for the life of Jun-t’u – the narrator’s best friend from childhood who suffers extreme hardships due to the
traditional life he leads. It takes further form in the rational disapproval of the tradition as well as its role in the future. Ultimately, doubt adds momentum to the narrator’s process of dislocating himself from society.

After spending twenty years away from home, the narrator of *My Old Home* returns with an abundance of new experiences. To his bewilderment, visiting home creates a seemingly insurmountable impasse between his new life and the past. Lu Xun establishes the context for this identity crisis by first introducing the alienating nature of the story’s setting. From the outset, the narrator illustrates the bleakness of the past by focusing on natural imagery and using it as a contrastive mechanism to highlight the narrator’s opposition to its windswept nature. The way that the narrator reacts to this terrain reveals his internal moral quandary. By voicing his doubt in the following tone, he foreshadows an extreme disconnect: “As we drew near my former home the day became overcast and a cold wind blew into the cabin of our boat, while all one could see through the chinks in our bamboo awning were a few desolate villages, void of any sign of life, scattered far and near under the somber yellow sky.”

Based on his initial reaction, the narrator struggles with not only recognizing any “signs of life” in his old home but also his personal connection to it. Thus, in the Lacanian sense, pressure within the Real and the subsequent dubiety collectively issue forth a shattered mirror image for the narrator even in the first scene.

Doubt exists on multiple planes in his experience, though. The most direct expressions of the narrator’s new existential orientation are that he doubts whether or not the past, including traditional ways of life, embody any life and validity in the modern world. When the narrator sees Jun-t’u, his childhood friend, for the first time in twenty years, he immediately realizes that this is not the same individual he remembers from his youth. Jun-t’u’s former invincibility appears to have waned considerably. The narrator explains: “But although I knew at a glance that this was Jun-t’u, it was not the Jun-t’u I remembered.”

He continues to illustrate Jun-t’u as a caricature of himself, as an exaggerated corruption of his former, indomitable self. The narrator questions the former ideal image that he once associated with Jun-t’u. As a corollary to this act of reinterpreting the ideal image of his friend, the narrator also critically evaluates the role that traditional values played in Jun-t’u’s disconsolate life. As a result, the narrator’s fond memories of childhood rupture in the act of encountering his long time friend, Jun-t’u. Taken as a whole, this meeting adds a harrowing momentum to the narrator’s already extant fissures within the Real.

An important feature of this doubt is that although it exists, the narrator lacks the ability to fully express it in an intelligible moral language. He never explicitly describes its rationale. Among the clearest representations of this doubt are his visions of Jun-t’u as a statue made of both stone and wooden. Regarding the first example, the narrator states: “although his face was lined with wrinkles, not one of them moved, just as if he were a stone statue”. The second example occurs in the narrator’s reference to Jun-t’u’s life being so difficult that he “seemed a wooden image of a man”. As stone and wooden statues typically serve as representations of dead individuals, the narrator’s choice of words and images reveals his opinion of Jun-t’u as a dead victim of tradition. If he did not doubt him, he would not see him in this light. While the narrator never explicitly describes this doubt, he at least acknowledges its presence in his illustration of him. Therefore, this acknowledgement indicates the extent to which he, nonetheless, cogitates the role tradition plays in shaping his unfortunate life.

More radical experiences of doubt stem from the narrator’s inability to make sense of the apparent lack of meaning he finds as he returns home. Powerful barriers between new understandings of reality and those of tradition cause him to eventually question the accuracy of his memory of home, a sign of his extreme alienation. While comparing his past memories to the actual reality of visiting home, he writes: “The old home I
remember was not in the least like this. My old home was much better. But if you asked me to recall its peculiar charm or describe its beauties, I had no clear impression, no words to describe it. And now it seemed this was all there was to it. Then I rationalized the matter to myself, saying: Home was always like this, and although it has not improved, still it is not so depressing as I imagine; it is only my mood that has changed, because I am coming back to the country this time without any illusions.”

While the narrator voices his understanding of the past in the rhetoric of now being “without any illusions”, the narrator articulates radical expressions of doubt. According to Taylor, when individuals lose the “commitment” to moral ideals and the social support of this particular “identification” with others who share similar world-views, the identity of a given individual begins to disintegrate. He writes: “And this situation [...] is what we call an ‘identity crisis’, an acute form of disorientation which people often express in terms of not knowing who they are, but which can also be seen as a radical uncertainty of where they stand.” Clearly, the narrator’s identity crisis stems from his inability to find meaning as well as himself in the past. If the narrator did not experience doubt in this manner, he would not question his involvement.

According to Lacan’s theories of the pre-mirror and mirror stages, the earliest traces of conflicts like this within one’s identity field arise when there are conflicts between internal ideals and external reality. In comparison to the experience of the narrator returning home, much like Lacan’s pre-mirror stage, where the infant is fully dependent on the mother, the narrator is fully dependent on a mental construction of his home. As ruptures of meaning wash away the ground upon which he once found secure footing, the narrator’s mental construction likewise erodes. Lacan further describes the pre-mirror stage as a period in which an infant experiences its body as fragmented parts and images. So just like the child during this stage of psychological development, the narrator’s identity is most accurately thought of as a collection of pieces and images, all of which share imaginary relationships to each other. That the narrator’s experience of doubt upon returning home submerges him in a fragmented state of uncertainty his ability to formulate a new identity is thereby hindered. Fragments of the narrator’s self thus appear in a shattered formation. However, the narrator’s return home, his doubt of what the past entails, and Jun-t’u’s disappointing presence in his life all ensure that the separations between the shards of his memory and experience are maintained.

Lu Xun arranges a scenario for the narrator in The New Year’s Sacrifice. Doubt also arises in response to imagery and traditional ideologies, but assumes further form in the narrator’s rejection of tradition. In reference to characters embodying tradition, doubt plays a similar role. Although the narrator acknowledges the meaninglessness of the life of Hsiang Lin’s wife, the protagonist of The New Year’s Sacrifice that closely resembles Jun-t’u from My Old Home, he also never explicitly denounces the traditional patterns in society that issued forth the outcomes of her life. Both narrators in these stories fail to directly confront the issues of tradition that inspire the suffering of Jun-t’u and Hsiang Lin’s wife, such as poverty, and patriarchy, respectively.

A striking feature of doubt clearly arises in reference to Hsiang Lin’s wife, a woman who was married twice, widowed twice, raped, bereft of her child, and suicidal. After hearing of her death, the narrator struggles to discern any kernel of purpose from her existence. He thinks: “in the present world when a meaningless existence ends, so that someone whom others are tired of seeing is no longer seen, it is just as well, both for the individual concerned and for others.” Admitting to the inconsequential nature of her existence coupled by the sense of relief that he conveys in his dismissal of her life clearly speak to his doubt. Obviously, if the narrator believed in the inherent worth of her life, he would not even question whether her life was meaningful or not. In addition, although, as Leo Ou-Fan Lee explains, “Lu Xun […] makes it quite clear
that her ostracism and eventual death are caused by her fellow villagers,” the narrator never explicitly deals with this issue. Similar to the narrator from *My Old Home* in this regard, the language of doubt never consistently assumes a pronounced tone with regard to the protagonist of the story, Hsiang Lin’s wife. Clearer examples surface, however, with regard to tradition.

Also returning home again for the first time in years, the narrator of *The New Year’s Sacrifice* likewise refuses to identify with tradition. The first clash of this nature occurs when the narrator encounters his “Fourth Uncle”, who, upon seeing the narrator, immediately calls attention to the erroneous ideas of reform thinkers. He struggles with knowing how to engage with his uncle on this topic, implying that he struggles to relate to individuals still conditioned by the traditional value systems. The apparent absurdity of his family’s attachment to tradition clearly causes him to doubt tradition and eventually separate himself from its “moral horizon”.

Lu Xun reveals even more obvious details about the narrator’s doubt of tradition. Upon returning to his uncle’s study, he notices the classical Chinese character 壽 (shòu) signifying longevity. Lu Xun uses this classical Chinese character as a device to imply a comparison between the character for longevity as a signifier and the actual state or quality of the scene, which, according to the narrator, signifies the opposite meaning of ephemeral (夭 yāo): “The room also appeared brighter, the great red temple-rubbing hanging on the wall showing up very clearly the character for Longevity written by the Taoist saint Ch’en Tuan. One of a pair of scrolls had fallen down and was lying loosely rolled up on the long table, but the other was still hanging there, bearing the words: ‘By understanding reason we achieve tranquility of mind.’ Aimlessly, I went to leaf through the books on the table, but all I could find was a pile of what looked like [traditional and Neo-Confucian literature]. At all events, I made up my mind to leave the next day.”

Overwhelmed by his submersion in the cultural language of tradition, the narrator is unable to withstand its presence. The perusal of his uncle’s books reminds him that the ideological footfalls of tradition appear to have no intrinsic reliability in his life anymore. As a result, the narrator consciously decides to take flight from such conditions, fearing otherwise that his new moral orientation will be compromised.

For Taylor, the lack of identification with a certain moral space is a product of moral decisions. It is clear that the narrator and his uncle simply operate differently. Moreover, the narrator radically questions what his uncle’s “moral horizon” really offers himself, as a modern individual. As Taylor explains, “to know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary.” Since the narrator doubts the efficacy of traditional worldviews so emphatically, he separates himself from that which stifles his identity. Taylor would submit that the activity of his new “moral space” depends upon the use of a very specific “moral terminology”. The use of specific “moral terminology” orients the narrator within his environment. According to Taylor, “our value terms purport to give us insight into what it is to live in the universe as a human being […]” Although the “moral terminology” he uses is not voiced explicitly, the terms “freedom” and “courage” most accurately correspond to his rather abrupt decision to take flight.

More extreme forms of doubt characterize the narrator’s interpretation of society and tradition in *A Madman’s Diary*. Doubt emerges so strongly that the narrator’s inability to trust other people transforms into the equation of the entirety of Chinese history and culture to a terrible story of ethical cannibalism.

The ominous presence of doubt creeps into the narrator’s worldview in the first passage of the Madman’s thirteen-part diary entry. Regarding the moon, the narrator writes: “I begin to realize that during the past thirty-odd years I have been in the dark.” As the moon reminds him of his
overpowering instincts, the narrator voices this doubt because he starts to realize his new orientation in the world. The moon calls the conditions of the last thirty years of his life into question. Thus, the moon foreshadows the narrator’s future realization. While doubt appears to seep into the narrator’s life and influence him to think critically about the nature of his orientation in the world, clear examples of this doubt begin to surface in the narrator’s plane of intellection from the depths of his unconscious life.

In the second diary entry, when the narrator leaves his home one morning, doubt entirely overwhelms him and prevents him from finding any figments of morality in the world around him. Fearing for his life, his reaction to other people is a state of panic. His doubt is so extreme that he even convinces himself that everyone he encounters is working together in a plan to kill him. He writes: “The fiercest among them grinned at me; whereupon I shivered from head to foot, knowing that their preparations were complete.”24 As the diary entries progress, these references continue: “They eat human beings, so they may eat me.”25 Joined with this conception of humanity, the narrator blames tradition as the source of this social infection. More detailed expressions of doubt with regard to traditional culture occur in allusions to classical literature. Drawing from quotations in such classical texts as Běncǎo Gāngmù (本草綱目, The Catalogue of Flora and Fauna, an examination of the medicinal properties of herbs) and Zuǒ Zhuàn (左傳, The Zuǒ Commentary), the narrator attempts to reveal the abject moral poverty and cannibalism of traditional Chinese society. In reference to Zuǒ Zhuàn and its influence on his own brother, he writes: “And once in discussing a bad man, he [his brother] said that not only did he deserve to be killed, he should ‘have his flesh eaten and his hide slept on’.”26 As Yitsi Mei Feuerwerker describes, the narrator’s references to classical Chinese literature embody great significance. “The madman’s literary rebellion will continue to draw on texts from the tradition if only to reinterpret their meaning and undermine their authority.”27 In this regard, the narrator’s doubt of tradition includes a holistic reinterpretation of traditional culture.

As each diary entry adds momentum and clarity to the narrator’s rebellion against and rejection of tradition, by the final passage, the narrator has mustered the courage to identify the supposedly true nature of traditional Chinese culture. He writes: “I have only just realized that I have been living all these years in a place where for four thousand years they have been eating human flesh.”28 The gravity of the narrator’s doubt of tradition in this story culminates in his final realization that four thousand years of Chinese history boils down to that of ethical cannibalism. The entire story hinges upon this statement.29 As doubt in A Madman’s Diary assumes much stronger and extreme forms than the doubt of My Old Home and The New Year’s Sacrifice, it therefore inspires a complete reevaluation of society and tradition. Similar to the experiences of all narrators in these stories, doubt is also directly linked to the narrator’s sense of separation and isolation.

**Separation**

In each of these stories, separation predominately serves as the end product of the narrators’ awakening to the grim reality that the freedom of everyone in the story continues to be shackled. The isolation that each narrator experiences is amplified by the company of certain characters like Jun-t’u, Hsiang Lin’s wife, and the Madman’s brother. However, despite the obviously destructive aspects of separation, creative elements of separation provide the narrator with the conditions to invent a new moral agency.

Upon seeing Jun-t’u for the first time since his youth, the narrator immediately recognizes the heart-rending qualities of his life. Jun-t’u addresses the narrator as “Master”, which is apparently a remnant of the power differential that once characterized their duty-based relationship. The narrator responds morally: “I felt a shiver run through me, for I knew then what a lamentably thick wall had grown up between us. Yet
I could not say anything.” Lee describes the “lamentably thick wall” growing between the two childhood friends in the following quote: “the narrator himself has turned into a protagonist as he wrestles with the problem of Runtu’s [Jun-t’u’s] entrapment in a world which he can no longer reenter and from which he has no way to extricate his former friend.” Lee locates the expanse of the impasse between the narrator and Jun-t’u, but also suggests that any possibility for the two characters to identify with each other remains abortive.

Further examples of separation between the past and present ripple throughout the narrator’s experience. As he leaves, tormented by the lack of meaning and the moral sense that surrounds him, he locates his internal separation: “I was leaving the old house farther and farther behind, while the hills and rivers of my old home were also receding gradually ever father in the distance, but I felt no regret. I only felt that all around me was an invisible high wall, cutting me off from others, and this depressed me.”

Serving as another powerful recognition of the separation he experiences, this comment expresses a radical confession: the narrator is completely separate from others and his own past. The narrator candidly experiences relief because he decides to jettison the past, suggesting that the narrator’s departures from tradition are not simply depressing.

Similar to My Old Home in its deepening of doubt, the narrator’s separation from tradition in The New Year’s Sacrifice signifies the disintegration of a former identity. It also fuels the pattern that the narrator’s identification is specifically not in accord with the traditional identity of other characters.

In The New Year’s Sacrifice, the narrator’s separation is first evident in his inability to use language to engage with other characters in the story. A vivid example of this inability occurs when Hsiang Lin’s wife asks the narrator lofty existential questions about the nature of life and the afterlife. Contrary to how most characters in his hometown would answer her questions, the narrator simply fails to formulate any proper response. As William Lyell explains, “as her questions increase in tempo and emotional intensity, the narrator becomes less and less confident.” The gravity of the narrator’s indecision reveals his separation from traditional worldviews and thus his separation from other individuals insofar as everyone else would irrefutably support the traditional answers to such questions. His uncle, for example, would answer her questions with a pre-formulated arrangement of cultural language. The narrator suggests: “I thought to myself: ‘I’m afraid my answer will prove dangerous to her.’” His tone in this passage speaks to the barrier between the narrator and everyone else.

The narrator’s sole identification with other characters takes form in his attachment to the story of Hsiang Lin’s wife. As the only character in the story who lacks both a name as well as any fragments of an identity at all insofar as she is referred to as the wife of Hsiang Lin, Hsiang Lin’s wife is stranded in similar ways to the narrator. The most poignant exchange between them, as explained above, causes echoes throughout the void of his character during the remainder of the story. While trying to field her questions, the narrator reveals his own indecision. Comparing himself to how other people his age would interpret these kinds of questions, the narrator explains: “Inexperienced and rash young men often take it upon themselves to solve people’s problems for them […] and if by any chance things turn badly, they are probably held to blame; but by simply concluding with this phrase ‘I am not sure’, one can free oneself of all responsibility. At this time I felt even more strongly the necessity for such a phrase.”

The simple avoidance of the narrator suggests a lot about his character. From this passage, it is evident that the narrator rejects the typical response to such questions and instead relies on something else entirely: uncertainty. The explicit comparison of himself to his peers, the narrator reveals his differences, and thus his separation from them.

According to Taylor, the ability to answer for...
oneself is based upon self-knowledge. He writes: “To lose this orientation, or not to have found it, is not to know who one is. And this orientation, once attained, defines where you answer from, hence your identity.” The causes of the narrator’s indecisiveness are ambiguous during his discussion with Hsiang Lin’s wife. The narrator, nonetheless, displays an orientation in stark contrast to those of tradition. Comparing the narrator to other individuals in his former community, therefore, reveals tangible features of his separation and alienation.

Separation assumes a severe form in A Madman’s Diary. The existential and moral differences that create this narrator’s schism with society differ from the other narrators inasmuch as he clearly voices why he dislocates himself from others. Due to the narrator’s radical inability to identify with any aspect of the tradition, his separation not only takes form as a moral necessity but also as a survival mechanism – fearing otherwise, that the horrific cultural machinery of tradition would swallow him in a fever of moral cannibalism.

Barriers between the Madman and society are related to morality. The Madman’s orientation in the world directly opposes his perceptions of other people’s existential orientations. His feeling of intense separation combines with his irrational fear, causing the narrator’s life to be characterized by a constant state of emergency. While conversing with his brother who, apparently, also represents the morally abject majority of society, the Madman attempts to explain the nature of his separation and alienation from society. Referring to people in society, he claims: “they want to eat me, and of course you can do nothing about it single-handed; but why should you join them? As man-eaters they are capable of anything. If they eat me, they can eat you as well; members of the same group can still eat each other.” The narrator’s assessment of society’s moral depravity locates the dual nature of the cause for his intense separation – moral necessity and personal survival.

The closest bond that the narrator shares with his brother. Since the status of his brother’s moral agency is the same as other members of society, the narrator fears for his life, and appears wholly dislocated from society. Referring generally to the separation of narrators in Lu Xun’s short stories, Lee explains that “lone individuals are […] the ones who swung the historical pendulum of ‘cultural extremities’ by reacting against the material cravings of the masses.” The Madman’s decision to oppose “the material cravings” of society thereby implies an opposition to his brother as well. Upon realizing his brother’s dangerous connections to society, he writes: “In cursing man-eaters, I shall start with my brother, and in dissuading man-eaters, I shall start with him too.” Unfortunately, the Madman fails to find agency in even his relationship to family members.

Taylor argues that human agency always rests upon an individual’s moral evaluations. Even though the narrator in this story is mentally unstable, his agency within society also depends upon his radical moral reckoning of society’s ills and the way the present state of affairs has been influenced by Chinese tradition. In order to explain the nature of human agency, Taylor further delineates the presence and activity of different orders of moral evaluations, which he refers to as first-order and second-order evaluations, or strong and weak evaluations. The difference between an individual’s strong and weak evaluations revolves around his concern with the quality of motivation and the concern with outcomes, respectively. On the one hand, the narrator’s moral agency fails to include everyone else in society. On the other hand, society’s moral agency doesn’t include the narrator. Therefore, an obvious conflict ensues between these two basic orders of evaluation for the narrator and society. This suggests that the narrator’s strong evaluation or what Taylor refers to as “a language of evaluative distinctions” formulates his separation from others, which by default includes tradition.

Lu Xun uses Jun-t’u, Hsiang Lin’s wife, and the Madman’s brother as reference points for highlighting the narrators’ unique individua-
tion. In spite of the narrators’ separations from these characters and clear attempts to assemble a new self, their identity formations still share a relationship to tradition. As Taylor suggests, “because we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it and hence determine the direction of our lives, we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a ‘quest’.” The intimations that the narrators make in establishing new identities distinct from those of other characters are more accurately stages in a process of self-narration that share direct correspondence to the conditions of society. Therefore, the manner in which the narrators measure their own agency in relation to Jun-t’u, Hsiang Lin’s wife, and the Madman’s brother respectively, reveal how their identity formations depend upon, in the form of direct opposition, that which these characters identify with as individuals with very different narrative “quests” for an identity. Despite the obvious degrees of separation, they are still related to each other in distinction.

In the Lacanian sense, all formulations of selfhood in the Imaginary order of experience also require self-narrating or theorizing. Acts of personal narration depend upon the use of language to theorize about the self and thereby orient the individual within a community. The narrators’ comparisons of their lives to the lives of other characters rely on this very process of narration that Lacan calls to our attention. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan accounts for Lacan’s explanations of this in terms how the infant perceives objects and images outside of itself and subsequently aligns itself in response to the external stimuli. She writes: “before a sense of identity begins to confer the unified shape of the moi during the mirror stage, the elemental structure of the subject has been diacritically woven in terms of heterogeneity.” Ragland-Sullivan thereby explains that the most preliminary experience of the self occurs in fragments, and differences. The narrators’ relationships to Jun-t’u, Hsiang Lin’s wife, the Madman’s brother and other characters embody this “heterogeneity”. Although the narrators find no identification with others, they still align themselves in discordance with their images.

**Moral creativity**

Moral creativity provides the narrators of these three stories with a new moral vision of reality that inspires two very distinct yet interrelated types of observation: on the one hand, it escorts the narrators through a re-examination of the past and guides them through the process of rationally approaching and evaluating the efficacy of tradition; on the other hand, it encourages the narrators’ imagination of a future distinct from the past as well as the decision to hope that the future will be more promising. As a result, moral creativity not only figures in the narrators’ moral reinterpretation of tradition, but also the narrators’ ethical decisions to hope that the future will be better for everyone. In these stories, moral creativity assumes the most fundamental and productive role in the narrators’ existential projects of formulating new, fully integrated identities – however incomplete these attempts may be.

As previously established, the doubt and separation of the narrator in *My Old Home* responds to both tradition and Jun-t’u. In a conversation with the narrator, Jun-t’u catalogues all of the hardships he and his family have endured since the narrator’s departure years before. The narrator’s new moral vision of reality, itself born of moral creativity, allows him to understand the qualities of tradition in a new light. For example, the narrator now views the suffering of Jun-t’u as a byproduct of living a traditional lifestyle and subsequently prompts him to reflect on this issue in the following passage. Regarding Jun-t’u, the narrator writes: “After he had gone out, mother and I both shook our heads over his hard life: many children, famines, taxes, soldiers, bandits, officials, and landed gentry, all had been so hard on him that he seemed a wooden image of a man.” Carved into a caricature of himself, Jun-t’u resembles a petrified prisoner to the narrator. The new critical faculty of the narrator thus
enables him to see Jun-t’u for what he has really become – a dead, wooden image of a man victimized by tradition.

When the narrator looks on to the future, in *My Old Home*, he finds that moral creativity, as well as the moral vision thereof, provide him with the energy to imagine a new reality. While the narrator’s nephew and Jun-t’u’s son become friends, just like the narrator and Jun-t’u once did, the narrator evaluates the collision of tradition, complete in its current vestiges as social and economic malaise for Jun-t’u, and modernity in this instance and thinks wistfully about the future. He explains: “I thought: although there is such a barrier between Jun-t’u and myself, the children still have much in common […]. I hope they will not be like us [the narrator and Jun-t’u], that they will not allow a barrier to grow up between them. Then again, I wouldn’t want them, because they want to be alike, to have a treadmill existence like mine nor to suffer like Jun-t’u until they become stupefied, nor yet, like others, to lead a cruel life of dissipation. They should have a new life, a life we never experienced.”

In this rich stream of consciousness, the narrator entertains an ethical formulation of a future that defines itself in opposition to the past. Moral creativity inspires the reflection upon the past as well as the evaluation of new alternatives for both children. The courage to affirm this new worldview in the face of adversity, without question, is also a product of a new ethical orientation.

Clear manifestations of moral creativity continue throughout the story, though Lu Xun illustrates the narrator’s hope as merely a flicker of the flame it could be. As he explains, “the thought of hope made me suddenly afraid”46. The reason that hope instills fear in the narrator is that trusting such a desire for change demands courage, and the narrator appears to lack the necessary courage to trust his hope. Continuing to think seriously about the tension between hope and hopelessness47, the narrator describes his outlook on the future in the final passage of the story: “As I dozed, a stretch of jade-green seashore spread itself before my eyes, and above a round golden moon hung in a deep blue sky. I thought: hope cannot be said to exist, nor can it be said not to exist. It is just like pathways over the land. For actually there were not paths originally, but when many people traveled one way, a road was made.”

The narrator struggles with trusting his hope because he lacks the gumption to affirm his new moral orientation in the world. Nonetheless, moral creativity inspires the narrator to wrestle with the opposing issues so as to imagine a new future disentangled from the past. By unpacking the implications of what hope and despair entail in this final passage, Ban Wang explains that “whether or not hope and despair exist in reality, […] is beside the point”.49 He also suggests that hope serves as the motivating force of the narrator’s imagination.50 In this sense, the narrator’s imagination is simply another form of moral creativity. Moral creativity figures prominently on several levels in this story. Thus, in addition to allowing the narrator the ability to reevaluate the past, moral creativity inspires the narrator’s decision to hope amidst the pressure and threats from tradition.

In *The New Year’s Sacrifice*, moral creativity provides the narrator with a new ethical lens with which to more accurately observe the relationships between the past and the present, tradition and modernity, as well as the life experience of Hsiang Lin’s wife. It also guides the narrator through the evaluative process of attempting to derive meaning from her meaningless existence. In addition, moral creativity encourages the narrator’s decision to hope for change.

In *The New Year’s Sacrifice*, examples of moral creativity surface in his doubt and new understanding of tradition. As an example, consider the narrator’s perusal of his uncle’s Neo-Confucian literature and subsequent decision to leave home the very next day. Obviously, the narrator views the past and being home again with a critical eye. As with *My Old Home*, that the narrator even questions traditional systems of meaning reveals the functionality and presence of a new
moral agency and guides him away from the trappings of traditional life. Naturally, the narrator's new moral vision, itself a product of his moral creativity, enables him to view the story of Hsiang Lin's wife with a new eye as well.

When Hsiang Lin's wife asks the narrator the series of deep existential questions about the nature of the spirits and the afterlife, she appears to struggle personally with her traditional beliefs. She asks: “after a person dies, is there really a soul that lives on?” Her question, sending a shiver through the narrator's spine, causes him to struggle with the courage to tell her his view on the matter, though his instinct is to answer in such a way that outmodes traditional beliefs. The gravity of this occasion revolves around questioning the status of traditional values in a modern context. That is to say, he uses moral creativity to recast tradition. Whether the narrator intends to or not, he questions the traditional religious beliefs of his villagers. Lyell describes the narrator's reaction in the following way: “Backing off even further, he says that he is not certain about the survival of the soul after death”. The narrator's act of partially deferring, or “backing off even further”, in this instance can be seen as a product of moral creation because something within his moral code prevents him from wholly engaging. Furthermore, it is precisely this occasion where Hsiang Lin's wife primarily avoids an unwitting acceptance and regurgitation of the traditional belief system. By the same token, something within this same moral code inspires him to look upon the future with a creative sense of hope about Hsiang Lin's wife as well as the villagers themselves.

In *The New Year's Sacrifice*, the hope born of moral creativity plays a more subtle role in comparison to *My Old Home* and *A Madman's Diary* because the ambiguity of the narrator's moral agency makes him difficult to identify at times. Whereas hope is entertained and wrestled with in *My Old Home*, hope can be read as already partially confirmed in the final sentences of this story. The confirmation of hope hinges upon the reader's interpretation of her death on the eve of the Lunar New Year as the New Year's sacrifice itself. Lee conflates the two events in his statement: “the coincidence of her death on the eve of the lunar New Year pinpoints further the tragic irony of the story's title: she has become, in fact, the villagers' first 'sacrifice' of the new year.”

Taken symbolically, the narrator's closing statement reveals a creative moral understanding of her death in light of what traditional understandings of this coincidence would be. He explains: “the doubt which had preyed on me from dawn to early night was swept clean away by the atmosphere of celebration. I felt that the saints of heaven and earth had accepted the sacrifice and incense and were all reeling with intoxication in the sky, preparing to give the people of Luchen boundless good fortune.”

Diametrically opposed to traditional views of her death, which would posit her as a woman severed in half and subjected to several hells based on her two previous marriages, the narrator doesn't simply hope that he achieved salvation. The narrator appears to already be convinced that she was accepted by the heavens, which is a very creative way of reinterpreting the status of a twice-widowed woman upon death. Moreover, he posits a causal link between her sacrifice and the “boundless good fortune” that will thereby befall the people of the community. The radical nature of his reckoning of her death stems from moral creativity.

Moral creativity is much more obvious in *A Madman's Diary*. In spite of the narrator's apparent madness, his moral creation incites a new vision of reality, and one that is solely based upon ethics. It supplies the narrator with the courage to entertain alternative outlooks on society and history. Much like the other stories, the moral creativity of the Madman gives rise to his decision to hope that the future will be different for everyone in China.

The unique moral vision of the narrator yields new observations about Chinese society and history, just like the other narrators. This surfaces in the narrator's powers of observation and insight into the nature of individuals, society, and tra-
dition. For example, in the third diary entry of the Madman, he states: “I see that woman’s ‘bite several mouthfuls out of you’, the laughter of those green-faced, long-toothed people and the tenant’s story the other day are obviously secret signs.” The ability to perceive the obvious fault and moral degeneration of people in society as well as the “secret signs” stems from the narrator’s moral creativity. He uses these observations to convince himself of the utter separation that characterizes his existence. This pattern of behavior continues throughout the story and reaches its quintessential example in his ultimate realization about the nature of Chinese history being the story of four thousand years of cannibalism. However, moral creativity includes other vital aspects as well.

The courage to critique the past and stand for a moral orientation in society that clashes with the majority of individuals is also a product of moral creation. As another direct manifestation of it, courage gives the narrator the power, in a way very similar to the narrator of My Old Home, to imagine a future very distinct from the present circumstances of Chinese society. While speaking to various other characters in the story, the narrator asserts the following: “You should change at once, change from the bottom of your hearts! You must know that in [the] future there will be no place for man-eaters in the world …” In this example, the courage to entertain moral alternatives clearly incorporates the narrator’s public promotion of a worldview separate from tradition and society. This feature takes courage born of moral creativity beyond mere criticism. In My Old Home and The New Year’s Sacrifice, the past was viewed with a critical consciousness, but the future was never promoted with such vigor.

Hope, for the Madman, shares the same level of intensity and a similar relationship to courage. Overcome by his realization that the history of Chinese culture is more accurately a four thousand year history of cannibalism, the narrator cultivates and maintains the courage to hope that the future for the children of China will be separate from the past. He writes: “Per-

haps there are children who have not eaten men? Save the children […] .” In his final plea, the Madman not only reveals the presence of his hope, but also asserts that the world’s potential for a future without moral corruption and cannibalism is plausible. Thus, he pleads “save the children”. The presence of hope in the closing line of the story is a prime example of moral creativity. In this example, moral creativity inspires the narrator’s critical assessment of tradition, imaginative treatment of moral alternatives for society, as well as the decision to hope that the future will be more promising for all of China.

**Interfacing the identities of narrators**

Doubt, separation, and moral creativity operate as the fundamental nodes in each narrator’s attempt to forge an identity against the grain of tradition. Each node, though operating differently and mutually influencing each other, provides the narrator with the existential force to identify themselves as dislocated entities, yet fully capable of a new moral agency. Ban Wang suggests that “the identity of an individual can be seen as the end result of successful meaning-production. In securing meaning, the individual subject is able to unify past, present, and future and thus assure temporal continuity and correspond to the flow of cultural signs and language.” Framed in this way, the narrators of these stories lack successful meaning-production and the human agency thereof. The personal identities of narrators in these stories, as previously evidenced, cannot be understood as fully autonomous and integrated selves. Rather, the only inklings of identity take form in the intimations they make based upon their moral creativity to establish a new self, disentangled from tradition. Moral creativity proves to be the guiding force and primary means by which a fully autonomous self can be made possible in the future.

Making sense of the narrators’ identity crises in these stories, or their inability to clearly recognize the past or themselves within the past, in terms of Lacan’s theories of the mirror stage provides deeper insight into the disintegration
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of their former identities. Society and history act as the mirror in Lacanian understandings of the mirror stage. As the narrators look into the mirrors of society and history, their doubt is so strong that they struggle to recognize any semblance of a reflection. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan explains Lacan’s theory of early-identity formation by delineating the ways that the individual finds meaning in the external world. “In other words, perception begins with the linking of the corporeal being that is the infant to the signifying or meaningful material outside it: i.e. images and language (part-objects) in tandem with their effects of sensory-perceptual being. The result […] is that the Real of the infant, the maternal body and objects, signals confusion for the infant.”

So what happens when the narrator fails to perceive anything meaningful outside the self? According to the pre-mirror stage of Lacan, as previously explained, the individual undergoes a crisis of meaning and fails to identify with the external world. The narrators’ expressions of doubt, or failures to neither recognize themselves nor identify with others, yield their personal experiences of méconnaissance. For Lacan, méconnaissance suggests that the recognition of a personal image in the mirror is impossible. Activation of the narrator’s Imaginary register is contingent upon fully generating an imago, or projected self. If a functional breakdown occurs within either the Symbolic or the Imaginary registers individually or between them, the creation and narration of a self-image is simply unfeasible.

Although the narrators’ experiences of doubt in My Old Home and The New Year’s Sacrifice are not as vehement as in A Madman’s Diary, the narrators nonetheless begin formulating images of themselves in rejection of the past. Lacan explains the mirror stage as a narrative that unfolds within the subject in a psychological dance between “insufficiency to anticipation”: “The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of fantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality.”

The narrators are definitely “caught up in the lure of spatial identification”, but questions clearly arise about whether or not the narrators ever discover the transformation of the “fragmented body to a form of its totality”. Transformations into fully autonomous selves depend upon functional relationships between the narrator’s Imaginary and Symbolic registers. Since doubt for these narrators still takes such strong forms in these stories, their abilities to manipulate what Lacan refers to as “insufficiency” in the prior passage and transform it into grounded manifestations of “anticipation” appears to be strained. In addition, compounded by the functional breakdown that exists within the Imaginary, the generation of each narrator’s imago as well as its subsequent translation into society appears to be preliminary at best. Thus, a proper identity cannot be narrated nor used as existential currency within society.

Separation in Lacanian psychoanalysis is really only a temporary state whereby the subject fails to master their trauma of self-fragmentation. With regard to the mirror stage, separation can also be thought of in terms of a functional breakdown between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Or as Lacan phrases it, the purpose of the mirror stage, which is to generate a functional relationship between the subject and his environ, “is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history”. This lack of projection, this subjective failure to launch an identity into history characterizes an individual’s separation. Closely linked with the radical experiences of doubt for each narrator, separation figures most prominently in accord with a destructive relationship to tradition. In other words, narrators simply break the pattern of perpetuating the typical identity formations of everyone else in society. In addition, since their identities, egos, or constructed edifices of individuality are not being transmitted into society, nothing confirms or supports their moral agency. They only have themselves. As Lacan writes, “to break out of the circle of the
between Innenwelt into the Umwelt (that is to say from the organism to its reality) generates the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego’s verifications.” Although these narrators simply lack “the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego’s verifications”, as Lacan refers to it, a generative element to separation still exists. However primordial and basic it is, an individual’s existential creativity remains the lifeblood of identity formation.

Moral creativity, though failing to provide narrators with the holistic ethical connections to society that weave them within the moral tapestries of history, still serves as the foundation for each narrator’s conscious attempt to form and verify a new identity. Doubt, separation, and moral creativity, as the three variables of identity and its formation in the experiences of these narrators most plausibly locate and situate each of them within their unique contexts. However, it is moral creativity, alone, that most exactly defines the developing nature of each narrator’s identity within this context. In spite of these narrators not having social networks, nor formulations of personal imagos with which to identify, they all make intimations of moral agency that stem from an identity in the nascent stages of development.

Lu Xun makes the nascent stages of identity formation a centerpiece in his short stories – a centerpiece that, according to many, constitutes the primary hallmark of May Fourth literature in general. The new stress on a modern projection of a self, which takes pride in the individual and autonomous identity, permeates May Fourth literature. Lu Xun, as the spokesman for this literary development, accounted for the disintegration of social networks joining individuals to society by casting a spotlight on the experience of narrators. According to a widely held sentiment among scholars of modern Chinese literature, “the destruction of these networks in an important sense also destroys the possibility of representing any entity beyond the writer’s own tortured self-consciousness.” What this essay unveils within this “tortured self-consciousness” is the trickling proliferation of moral creativity, perhaps the most important aspect of what would become later integrations of modern Chinese identity. Thus, when Yu Dafu suggests that “the greatest success of the May Fourth Movement should be considered the discovery of the ‘individual’ [ghérén 個人]”, he must be partially eliciting this pattern among Lu Xun’s narrators and the manner in which it perpetuates itself throughout the language and cultural forms of the May Fourth Movement writ large.

ENDNOTES

1 “Personal identity” in this essay refers to the nature of each narrator’s individuality and relationship to society. The specifics of their agency will be thoroughly explained in this analysis. However, whether or not the “personal identity” of the narrators can be considered a complete, fully developed entity is, of course, arguable. This essay explores the stages of each narrator’s recognition that they are individuals removed from traditional understandings of selfhood.

2 The use of “creativity” in this essay suggests that each narrator’s use of and reliance upon special “moral terminology” inspires narrators to engage in a process of self-narration that recasts and redefines their relationship to tradition and the past. The assumption is that their roles serve as very vivid and creative alternatives to the seemingly stifled personal narrative processes of other characters.

3 “Nascent stages” is used here to refer to the partially formed identities of narrators. Although each narrator displays the courage to affirm some semblance of a new identity that departs from those of tradition, each of their processes of identity formation are preliminary and incomplete, as we will see.

4 Charles Taylor uses these titles to clarify social confirmation of an individual’s identity (see pp. 29 and 36 of Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of a Modern Identity, resp.).


7 Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 1281.


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12 Ibid., p. 15.
13 Ibid.
15 Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 27.
17 Lu, My Old Home, p. 20.
19 Assuming the narrator has already been conditioned by the radical ideas of reform thinkers like Kang Yuwei, the narrator’s uncle attacks these views, implying that such ideological orientations are destructive and simply worthless worldviews.
20 Lee, p. 74.
21 Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 28.
22 Ibid., p. 59.
24 Ibid., p. 8.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 12.
28 Hsün, Selected Stories, p. 18.
29 Ibid., p. 55.
31 Ibid., p. 81.
32 Ibid., p. 15.
33 Lyell, p. 177.
34 Lu, My Old Home, p. 19.
35 Ibid.
36 Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 29.
37 William Lyell (in Lu Hsün’s Vision of Reality), suggests that the indecision of the narrator is stemming from a lack of confidence (see p. 177). On the other hand, Leo Ou-Fan Lee (in Voices from the Iron House), suggests that the narrator’s indecision may stem from a disengaged apathy with regard to the suffering of Hsiang Lin’s wife (see p. 62 and p. 75). In this paragraph, I suggest that either reading indicates an extreme example of separation and thus a differentiation in the narrator’s field of identity relations.
38 Lu, Selected Stories, p. 16.
39 Lee, p. 70.
40 Lu, Selected Stories, p. 13.
42 Taylor, Sources of the Self, p. 52.
43 Ragland-Sullivan, p. 22.
44 Lu, My Old Home, p. 15.
45 Ibid., p. 16.
46 Ibid.
47 Ban Wang denotes this dichotomy in terms of “hope and despair” (see his Illuminations From the Past, p. 56 (cited below)).
48 Lu, My Old Home, p. 16.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 18.
52 Lyell, p. 177.
53 The coincidental nature of these two events has produced a great deal of comment. In Voices from the Iron House, Leo Ou-Fan Lee suggests that the New Year’s sacrifice is to be taken in direct relation to the death of Hsiang Lin’s wife, which suggests an extreme triumph of a female liberated from a world of suffering in the strictures of a society fraught with androcentrism and patriarchy.
54 Lee, p. 74.
56 Lyell, p. 162.
57 Lu, Selected Stories, p. 10.
58 Ibid., p. 17.
59 Ibid., p. 18.
60 Ban Wang views the hope of the narrator as fragile (see Illuminations from the Past, p. 34). Yitsu Mei Feuerwerker understands this hope in terms of “an anguished plea to save the children” (in: Widmer and Wang, p. 171). Regardless of how the reader interprets the final line of this story, I argue that moral creativity makes the new critical understanding of the past and tradition, the ability to imagine new moral alternatives, as well as the moral decision to hope possible given the moral depravity of modern Chinese society according to the narrator.
61 Ban Wang, The Sublime Figure of History (Stanford University Press, 2004) p. 40.
62 Ban Wang, personal interview, 2006-11-06.
63 Ragland-Sullivan, p. 20.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
DAVID LAWS

David Laws is a recent graduate of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Stanford University. He has examined the history of Chinese literature with a primary focus on the May Fourth Movement. In particular, his studies enveloped an interface between psychoanalysis and a selection of short stories by Lu Xun, a relationship between trauma and memory studies on the one hand and modern Chinese literature on the other, as well as issues of aesthetics, critical theory, and intellectual history during this period of Chinese history.
Introduction

A common meme in recent international relations media commentary and scholarship is that of Japan’s “Return to Asia”. Last year’s historic elections gave this meme a new lease on life as the new DPJ government seemed more willing to show deference to nations in East Asia than had previous Japanese governments. A key point of discussion around this meme is whether Japan’s recently renewed interest in Asia is opportunistic from the perspective of political economy, or is reflective of a more emotive, identity-based disposition, where Japan “returns” to the “East Asian fold” after a 150-year “hiatus”. This paper outlines the context of these discussions by touching on Japan’s historical identity in the context of borrowing from both Eastern and Western civilizations. It then examines contemporary developments in East Asian regionalism and details Japan’s involvement in these developments. It concludes by asking: Is Japan’s recent re-engagement with East Asia part of an inevitable process of integration that will culminate in Japan committing to a comprehensive East Asian identity in the future?

Historical context

Japan’s historical relationship with both the “East” and the “West” has been of great fascination for historians and social scientists. In historical narratives, Japan is described as a country that has a penchant for borrowing from other cultures and adapting culture, language, ideas, and technologies for its own use. The earliest of these “borrowings” is the influence the ancient Chinese culture had on the Japanese archipelago. It is well known that the Japanese written language since 600 CE has borrowed heavily from the Chinese written language. The Confucian familial orientation is also known to have heavily influenced Japanese societies, as did Buddhism and Taoism. Much of the linguistic, cultural, and
religious knowledge inherited from Chinese civilization was in fact mediated through the Korean peninsula throughout ancient East Asian history. Even architecture, such as the construction of ancient Heian (modern-day Kyoto), was based on Chinese norms of the time, specifically from the Tang Dynasty capital Chang’an.

Japan inherited much of this knowledge both from official missions received or sent by various rulers such as the scholarly missions from Japan to China between 607 CE and 894 CE. Informal contacts from East Asian politicians, scholars, priests and artists that Japan inherited from Paikche on the Korean mainland during the wars around the Taika 大化 reform period, were probably even more important in terms of their contribution to the development of early Japanese civilization and culture. However, these East Asian knowledge systems were very seldom accepted passively. Often they failed to match local conditions and were adapted or abandoned. Japan’s early experience with Chinese-influenced agricultural and administrative reform and Confucianism and Buddhism both fall into this category. This led to the development of Japanese institutions, which while “East Asian” in inspiration, can only be recognised as uniquely Japanese.

The Mongolian invasions of 1274 and 1281 strongly influenced the uniting of mainland Japan, and thus helped shape Japanese national identity. Prior to this, while there was a sei 天征夷大将軍, responsible for national defence, it was a role mainly dedicated to expanding the boundaries of the Japanese state on the archipelago itself, which included battling the Ainu in the North and suppressing other rebellions at the outskirts of the limits of the then Japanese empire. The Mongolian invasion was the first threat from a non-Japanese actor to the Japanese mainland. Before these invasions, central government control was often challenged by local interests, and individual and group identity was formed along socio-economic and familial lines rather than nationalistic lines. However, helped by natural causes, a weak Japanese state repelled the Mongol threat. Meeting this first external threat enhanced the sense of sacredness of the Japanese mainland and added to the mystique of the emperor who had been kept on the throne for centuries by the nation’s power brokers as a symbol of spiritual, political, and sovereign authority. While Shōgun 将軍 and dominant political families’ influence waxed and waned during this period, this concept of a singular Japan was to survive the Warring States period of the 15th and 16th centuries and eventually be further cemented in the Japanese imagination by Tokugawa Ieyasu’s famous victory at Sekigahara in 1600.

Japan was not overwhelmed by Western cultural influence despite initial interactions with traders and missionaries in the 16th to 17th centuries. This was mostly attributable to the introduction of diplomatic isolationist policy (sakoku 鎖国) (1633 - 1853), which, with some minor exceptions, ensured there were few interactions between Japanese and foreigners. The Tokugawa Shogunate did allow and even promoted Chinese studies (kangaku 漢学), and to a lesser degree Dutch studies (rangaku 蘭学), which ensured that Japan was not completely isolated from the outside world. However, the manner in which this knowledge came to Japan during this period was inconsistent. While Chinese thought in particular had an impact on the social order of the time, adaptations to local conditions of foreign knowledge and cultural customs during the mostly peaceful Tokugawa era lead to the development of some very recognizable “Japanese” institutions, values and cultural artifacts that are still symbolically important today.

During the Tokugawa period, we see the Japanese attempt to balance traditional Eastern and Western knowledge. One of the earliest such examples was the Japanese receiving a medical text from Holland in 1774 (named the Tafel Anatomia) which to Japanese scholars better approximated human anatomy than did Chinese medical wisdom. This was but one example of knowledge transfer that led to the gradual questioning of Chinese knowledge. Around this time Chi-
Chinese learning started to lose the prime position it occupied in Japanese knowledge systems and as a key foreign cultural referent, and this was not simply because of the supposed “superiority” of Western knowledge in contrast with Eastern ideals and values. Around the mid-to-late Tokugawa period, the study of kokugaku (国学, National Study) amongst Japanese elites became more common. Scholarly reflections in the field of kokugaku explicitly imagined that the “natural” Japanese community was a pre-Chinese community which existed in a mystical “divine age.”

Chinese knowledge systems, especially Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism, were seen by the “disillusioned” late Tokugawa elite to be corrupt Chinese influences that underpinned the increasingly problematic Tokugawa social order. Special attention was paid to the uniqueness of Japanese language, religion (especially Shintō 神道), literature, history, and aesthetics (such as mono no aware 物の哀れ), and kokugaku scholars enjoyed some prestige in the early Meiji Restoration period. This is important for later discussion as it shows that modern Japanese social and political identity was not a matter of switching between an East Asia–influenced worldview to a Western one, but was part of a conscious process of modernizing through identification with a nation-state on Japanese terms.

The impact of the West became much more forceful in the 19th century with the pivotal event of the arrival of Admiral Perry’s Black Ships in 1853. The political and symbolic impact of Admiral Perry’s arrival set off a chain reaction during the bakumatsu 幕末 interlude that, by destabilizing Japan and undermining the Shogunate’s authority, eventually led to the Meiji Restoration in 1868. While kokugaku scholars were not successful in intellectually displacing the influence of Confucian and other “Chinese” influences from Japanese culture, the rise in national consciousness in an increasingly complex international environment meant that the Japanese became more conscious of what they were appropriating during the years leading up and subsequent to the Meiji Restoration. Embodied in the slogan wakon yōsai 和魂洋才 (Japanese learning for essence, Western learning for practice), the Japanese believed they could, in the same way they had with Chinese culture in previous centuries (previously embodied in the concept wakon kansai 和魂漢才, adapt and improve upon Western learning for local conditions.

Areas where the Japanese did not accept wholesale Western knowledge include the political conceptualization of sovereignty. The place of the emperor as a Japanese Shintō spiritual authority within a communitarian cultural paradigm was not disputed. Despite this, Western-style political administration was well-received, as was a parliamentary system of government. In the development of a Western-style civil code, there is another divergence from “Western Learning”. While the Meiji-era criminal code was influenced by Western ideals of jurisprudence, the reformers appealed to Neo-Confucian values to maintain the family as the basic societal unit in the civil code, rather than the individual. To this day, Japan still maintains the kōseki 戸籍 system to track movements in births, marriages and death within families. Education was another area where Western methods were studied and employed, but the meaningfulness of education was connected to national, rather than individual, goals to appeal to Japanese communitarian values.

Japan made a promising start in building a strong, independent nation in the Meiji period. Fukoku kyōhei 富国強兵 (rich country, strong army) was the rallying cry of the early Meiji period, and Japan appeared to have met these initial modernizing expectations. It had implemented a parliamentary system of government backed by a civil administration with many democratic features, and it had made progress in modernizing its economy. Japan’s military accomplishments in the mid-to-late Meiji period were especially significant for the development of national identity as, within ten years, Japan defeated both the historical “older brother”, China (1894-1895), and an increasingly menacing European imperialist power, Russia (1904-1905).
However, Japan is often seen going from combining the “best” of both civilizations to the “worst” of both, in the space of only thirty to forty years. The culmination of this process is seen in Japanese expansion into East Asia during World War II. A strong reform-minded state with a unified population governed by a “balanced central government” in terms of the relationship between the citizen and the parliamentary, executive, and judicial organs of state could be seen in early Meiji Japan. However, from the 1890s onwards, Japan became more unstable over time and authoritarian control manifested itself in public life among more liberal periods such as the Taisho Democracy period after World War I. Authoritarian control was eventually consolidated in the events subsequent to the Manchurian incident in 1931.

Prior to this, there was much borrowing from Western, particularly German, models which offered the Japanese ways of reconciling some of the trickier issues of the Eastern-Western value trade-off that beguiled Japanese scholars of economics, politics, and philosophy. A new national polity was formed and strengthened to a point where Japan could match Western colonial powers – which was a government goal as embodied in a oft-heard rallying cry *oitsuke, oikose* 追いつけ、追い越せ (catch up, overtake). However, eventually this evolution came full circle and certain elites and factions in society began to invoke traditional motifs against the West and in favor of greater authoritarian control and expansion into East Asia. These motifs included obviously native ones such as Shintō and Bushidō (武士道), but also appeals to Confucianism and East Asian solidarity were not uncommon. Japan came to strongly (re)associate its international identity with that of being an East Asian nation. Japan's rapid development gave it the confidence to propose a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in the 1930s with Japan as the self-appointed leader and defender. The military actions ostensibly taken to support the creation of this Sphere were considered essential to resist colonial Western powers’ incursions into Asia. Ultimately the aim was to defend Japan’s, and the rest of Asia’s, cultural, political, and economic interests against aggressive colonial powers that did not understand nor respect the cultural traditions and history of East Asia.

However, as can be seen in the sometimes divisive debate between scholars in the post-Meiji Restoration era, there was no clear consensus on where Japan’s cultural future lay. East Asia was often considered backwards compared to Japan by Nativist and Shintō scholars. Even supposedly enlightened individuals such as Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉, an important post-Restoration cultural elite in the 1880s, often referred to the backwardness of the Asian mainland, saying: “Our immediate policy, therefore, should be to lose no time in waiting for the enlightenment of our neighbouring countries in order to join them in developing Asia, but rather to depart from their ranks and cast our lot with the civilized countries of the West.”

Later in 1937, (Prince) Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿, another important cultural elite, would also bring up Asian backwardness in the context of Japan’s own national mission. In articulating the idea of an *East Asian* Japan, Japanese elites often simultaneously embraced and disparaged an East Asian identity.

Nevertheless, the superior essence of collective “Eastern” morality and emphasis on the family was overtly emphasized at the time, as were specifically Japanese cultural memes and traditions such as *yamato-damashii* (大和魂) and Bushidō. Like similar movements of the time in China, traditional values were considered superior to Western ways of thinking. Despite cultural and political elites having trumpeted the need to “leave” Asia for Europe (datsu-a nyū-ō 脱亜入欧) in the late 19th century, discourse seemed to go back, reemphasizing entry back into Asia through the *kō-a ron* 興亜論 (thought about staying with Asia) discussions in the early 1900s. Amidst increasing nationalist sentiment surrounding the acquisition of Taiwanese and Korean colonies from Russia and the Qing dynasty in China, there was also significant reac-
tion against the West’s political and ideological hypocrisy. This was due to the actions of colonial powers in colonized nations, or the actions on the international stage of these powers, best embodied in the offense caused to Japan during the Paris Peace Conference when Japan’s racial equality clause was rejected.

These strategic and philosophical debates seem to be a reflection of often incoherent developments in Japanese society in the post–Meiji Restoration period up to World War II. Starting from the parliamentary Meiji period, proceeding through to the pluralistic Taisho Democracy period, up to the eventual dictatorial World War II government, Japan was unstable. There was much scholarly “anguish” and debate in this period, which reflected the anguish of society as a whole, and which was beset by uneven economic development and political disempowerment as well as intellectual disunity. There was significant disagreement over how to best address “in a Japanese way” the developing social and foreign policy problems, which presented a challenge to the ongoing development of a coherent Japanese national identity. The intellectual, socio-economic and spiritual malaise, combined with perceived international threats (and disparagement), and the impact of the Great Depression on an already export-dependent society led Japan to seek comfort in the dictatorial and militaristic developments of the 1930s. Japan believed it could not trust the Western world completely, and soon found out that the West’s overbearing and often brutal treatment of its East Asian “siblings” (as well as its own) was going to create seemingly irreconcilable problems in the East Asian region after the end of World War II.

World War II and the Cold War: Japan as a Western country?

In addition to Japan’s patronizing attitude towards East Asian peoples prior to World War II, Japan’s actions during the war introduced a problematic historical element into Japan’s relationship with the East Asian mainland. Japanese soldiers committed various atrocities during the war which were etched into the historical memories of peoples throughout Northeast and Southeast Asia. The Korean “comfort women” and the Nanjing Massacre are some of the most enduring flashpoints for Japanese political and cultural relations with Korea and China. While Japan justified its intervention in East Asia by way of an obligation to help its “underdeveloped” neighbours, the outcome was anything but helpful for Japan’s relations with East Asian nations in the post–World War II period.

The post–World War II period introduced an additional variable into Japan’s ongoing positional dilemma between East and West. After the war, Japan came under the occupation of the US Allied Forces until the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed in 1951. Even after the occupation, however, Japan could still be counted a loyal ally of the United States and, together, they served as a powerful bulwark against the “Cold War’s East”, be it the Soviet Union or Communist China. Japan’s vital positioning in the Cold War theatre was problematic because it aligned Japan with the US and other former colonial powers directly against communist countries in Asia, such as North Korea, China and Vietnam. Japan became vitally dependent on the US security guarantee while it rebuilt its economy, a strategic arrangement that came to be enshrined in the Yoshida Doctrine.

The post–World War II era was an unusual period for Japan’s broader international identity. For much of this time, Japan had economically been considered part of the developed nations of the West by both Western and Japanese scholars. Japan however did not merely follow Western models for modernization and development as can be seen in the “Japanese Economic Miracle” which started with the income doubling plan of 1960. The narrative of post–World War II development in Japan heralds the successful combination of Western style capitalist and constitutional political systems with a strong centralized state apparatus. Collectively-orientated labour relations and a hard-working “nationalist spirit” also purportedly enabled the
Japanese to prosper in the immediate post-war period. For some time, this Japanese model was seen as an admirable confluence of Eastern social values and Western political economy.

Western, Japanese and many East Asian elites came to see Japan as the desired model for civilizational progress in East Asia. Although economically Western and acting in line with Western security interests during the Cold War, Japan was defined as an inherently Asian society that could be an inspiration to other Asian countries. However, these definitions of Japan’s cultural dispositions were often opportunistic. For example, in the 1960s Western and Japanese modernization theorists argued that Japan due to its success was more culturally Western than other Asian countries. However, when Japan started suffering economically, its “Asianness” came to be the causal explanation for its deterioration due to the collective, inefficient and socially immature nature of Asian nations, including Japan.

1990s and beyond: the return to Asia?

These discussions over Japanese identity would radically change due to the combined effects of three major developments in the late 1980s and early 1990s. First, the popping of the “bubble economy” following 30 years of remarkable societal and economic development led to the end of the Japanese economic miracle and undermined Japan’s status as an economic superpower. This limited Japan’s capacity to influence world events through its economic clout alone. Second, the post–Cold War transition to a US-dominated international security order after the unification of Germany and dissolution of the Soviet Union took away Japan’s pivotal importance (to the US at least) in global security politics and its attendant benefits. Lastly, the economic rise of Singapore, Hong Kong, and newly democratic Taiwan and South Korea and later a market-orientated China, in addition to a developing East Asian “regional” consciousness, has forced Japan to reconsider the value of having closer ties with East Asian nations.

There is a growing sense that Japan’s future is inextricably linked to East Asia politically, economically, and culturally. Japan, rather than being a global economic superpower, is now imagined to be a regional middle power within East Asia by foreign policy elites and citizens. A 2006 Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs poll found that 77.9% of the public favored improved relations with China despite the tension between the two countries at the time. Prime Minister Hatoyama has recently proposed an East Asian community with China, South Korea, and Japan at the center. There have also been considerable attempts through multilateral institutions to promote “confidence building” exercises in the form of joint military exercises. The next section goes into further detail on some of the changes in Japan’s political, economic and cultural posture towards East Asia.

There have been major political and economic developments in Japan’s relationship with East Asia since the late 1980s, particularly in the regional geopolitical and geoeconomic domains where South Korea, China, Taiwan, and the ASEAN countries have risen in economic and political power. Japan also is increasingly questioning US willingness or ability to address those security concerns most important to the Japanese government and the public, such as the North Korean nuclear program and the kidnapping controversy. Japan has also turned its attention to supporting the development of an East Asian regional order, and importantly, one that might exclude the US. Japan has traditionally been reluctant to enter into any regional political or economic grouping that did not include the US, preferring broad supra-regional mechanisms such as APEC. Recently however, Japan has been an active supporter of multilateral institution-building in the post–Cold War era in East Asia, as best embodied in the East Asian Summit which is based on the ASEAN+6 grouping. Financial collaboration and trade and investment between countries in the East Asia area and Japan have in particular been of great importance.
Economic integration in East Asia

Aside from the interactions between growing financial and stock markets in the East Asia area, a couple of key initiatives demonstrate Japan's dedication to creating a stable and strong financial order in East Asia. The most notable recent Japanese intervention in the East Asian economic sphere was the Miyazawa Plan, a policy produced by Japan and coordinated by the IMF to help countries suffering from financial liquidity issues during what was called the 1998-1999 East Asia financial crisis. Japan provided up to US$40 billion in aid and loans to adversely affected countries in the area, including South Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand. It has been recognized that Japan's intervention, along with China's discipline, was a major reason that the crisis did not worsen for both East Asia and the world beyond. It also showed that countries in East Asia could resolve their own issues, and emboldened some countries to put forward an idea of an Asian Monetary Fund outside of the ambit of the IMF where "East Asian" models of social, political and economic development could be more flexibly applied. While the US successfully pressured Japan not to go ahead with this idea, this has not stopped East Asian countries from pursuing other financial collaborations. In particular, currency default swaps have become popular. The expansion of the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI), which was originally set up after the East Asian Financial Crisis is another notable example of increased financial cooperation.

In terms of trade relations, Japan's imports and exports with ASEAN+3 countries have increased rapidly over the last 15 years. Imports from East Asian developing economies continue to flow into Japan, but now Japan no longer only accepts imports from East Asia, it also produces high quality products for the growing middle class in East Asia. Indeed, China now receives more Japanese exports than does the US, signifying the crucial importance of the Japan-China trade relationship. While the "decoupling" theory of potential East Asian economic independence from the US economy was shown to be exaggerated by the recent recession, it is interesting to note that it took a rare financial collapse for the impact of the financial crisis to be fully felt in Asia.

Japan, along with other countries in the area, is not stopping at merely increasing the volume of trade either. There is a legitimate push to liberalize trading regimes within East Asia by removing many tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade. Japan's own flagship proposal, CEPEA, was approved for further study at the 2007 East Asia Summit. Other studies for an East Asian Free Trade Agreement (EAFTA) have suggested that GDP returns to all countries due to increased efficiency in trading would be significant and the Economic Research Institute for Asia (ERIA) have also reached the same conclusion. Currently, Japan has signed or concluded FTAs with Singapore, Malaysia, Chile, Brunei, Mexico, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Switzerland. Samuels, in describing Japan's re-orientation towards East Asia, makes the argument that the Japanese government and large Japanese companies have been very deliberate in reforming their economy after the brutal 1990s by making Japan East Asia "ready" to take advantage of rising opportunities while maintaining Japan's economic security.

Finally, due to Japan's significant positive private asset balance (both consumer and corporate), Japan has been of extreme importance in the economic development of East Asia through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In addition to development loans through the East Asian Development Bank, the amount of private-investment FDI which Japan has poured into Asia in the last 15 years has been a significant factor in the creation of regional production networks: parts of Japanese goods may be made in one country, refined in another, assembled in yet another, and then sold in Japan, or under a Japanese brand to overseas markets. Not only are regions becoming economically connected, but various joint ventures have been initiated. With ownership of factories and service companies being increasingly shared, this suggests that human
resources are being transferred as well as skills and technology.54

Social issues coordination and the environment

Japan has an extensive “shadow ecology” in East Asia where environmental impacts of activities undertaken in Japan are felt beyond its own borders.55 This is not just air pollution, but also domestic consumption demands that have an impact on the environment in other countries through fishing, mineral extraction, deforestation, and shrimp farming. If Japan wishes to be viewed as genuine in its re-engagement with Asia, then it is essential that it be seen to take the impact of its economy on other countries seriously. Climate change is of great concern to the East Asian region, with many of the countries being islands or littoral in nature. These environmental problems have been given more importance over the last few years in particular, and at fora like the East Asian Summit there have been joint declarations on climate change, energy security, and alternative energies to try and address these issues.56 Japan has been working with China, whose own shadow ecology is an environmental challenge for the region, by increasing Overseas Development Aid (ODA) and technology transfer to China to help increase the environmental efficiency of their economy.57 In addition, the Japan-Vietnam relationship is developing well, with Japan pledging to support the construction of a high-speed rail network and nuclear power plants in Vietnam.58

Another dimension to Japan’s relationship with East Asia is the “human security” aspect. Illegal immigration, and drug trafficking have been problems for the region. Since the late 1980s, Japan has taken on a greater and more nuanced role in engaging with East Asian countries to limit the damage. The National Police Agency, through such commitments as the US$95 million to anti-trafficking activities between 2002 and 2006, has shown Japan to be taking unprecedented steps to coordinate with police organizations in other countries to tackle these issues.59

Furthermore, anti-piracy efforts in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand have become a genuine concern for Japan, which is heavily dependent on maritime trade.60 To address this issue in 2006, under the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships (ReCAAP), an information sharing center was set up in Singapore. The Japan Coast Guard, operating within Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, has been dispatched to the area and has added to the capacity and effectiveness of these anti-piracy efforts.

Recently, Japanese ODA has also shifted its strategic focus to East Asia. Through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, Japan has attempted through its ODA to invest in smarter ways than before, often aligning its ODA with private-sector efforts to ensure the desired success for the regional communities is achieved, particularly in environmental protection.61 Two specific examples are Japan working with China to improve its air quality through monetary and technical assistance, and with Thailand, who have expertise in reversing deforestation, in order to address the deforestation problem in Indochina. Japan’s ODA in Asia has been strategically designed to not only improve and save lives, but also to build infrastructure and sustainability.62

Cultural connections in East Asia

Increased cultural interactions between Japan and East Asia are also important. They are an essential prerequisite for Japan to develop an East Asian identity, as well as an essential part of resolving some of the lingering distrust and antipathy towards Japan. Pan-Asian NGOs have increased over time, as have educational exchanges to and from Japan, in addition to a marked increase in scientific and technological collaboration and Track II activities since the 1990s.63 Popular Japanese cultural productions such as manga, anime, convenience stores, food and movies have also found lucrative niches in the wider East Asian market, especially since South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and China have relaxed censorship around references to Japan or
Japanese culture since the 1980s. At the same time we have seen a rise in Japanese interest in popular culture from Taiwan, South Korea, and even China. Asian languages such as Chinese in Japan have also seen an increase in popularity at universities and high schools. Japanese television also shows that interest in East Asia has broadened beyond elite diplomatic and academic circles, as stories on East Asia are abundant, and many popular tarento (on-screen entertainers) have East Asian heritage or are actively learning East Asian languages.

Up until now I have described a number of ways in which Japan is trying to increase its engagement with the East Asian region. We see a number of political, economic, and social networks developing between East Asia and Japan. We also see Japan begin to rethink its relationship with the US and enter into dialogue with other East Asian countries on how to address pressing economic, social, environmental, and security concerns. Furthermore, concepts such as “Asian Values” have been discussed by scholars and East Asian elites, with many of these values derived from Confucian, Buddhist, or simply communitarian features of East Asian societies. These developments show that there may be potential for a set of common values to develop in the East Asia region, which some scholars and East Asian elites hope may underpin a regional identity in the future.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there is a prevalent scholarly and media meme that suggests Japan will continue to re-engage with East Asia in the future. Based on the above discussion it would seem that there is good justification for taking notice of this meme. Real world developments show that Japan is genuinely starting to integrate into the region. Furthermore, there have been explicit statements from the government and from Japanese elites on the need for further engagement with East Asia for strategic reasons. The rational self-interest component for Japan increasing its integration into East Asia is clear. With its economic problems, the US losing leverage in East Asia, and the rising influence of China, on a geopolitical level it is in Japan’s interests to manage both of these two key relationships, preferably with other middle powers in the region. This will ensure that there are ways of mediating conflicts between the superpowers so that one is not forced to choose one side or another as happened under the bipolar Cold War system. Also, as many ASEAN countries are now rapidly developing, Japan has a chance to help shape the development of these countries to create a more stable political and economic security environment. Related to this, social and cultural exchange may help Japan and nations in the area go beyond the divisive disputes over historical culpability. Japan also has a strategic opportunity to revitalise its own economy through economic integration.

Together with the already noted increases in intellectual and cultural exchange, is it therefore inevitable that Japan will again identify with East Asia and rely on it for its political, economic, and cultural wellbeing? While there has been conscious appropriation of East Asian elite and popular culture since the early Yamato period in Japan, the relationship between Japan and the mainland in the Japanese imagination has been one of intermittent collaboration, conflict, and disinterest. It is undeniable that Japan is growing economically and politically closer to East Asia, that its national identity was originally shaped by interactions with the East Asian mainland, and that Japan also has many interests in common with its East Asian neighbors. However, Japan’s national identity is imagined in a way that its international identity is unlikely to affiliate itself strongly with either an “Eastern” or “Western” world. Indeed, Iwabuchi argues that “Japan’s modern national identity has always been imagined in an asymmetrical totalizing triad between ‘Asia’, ‘the West’, and ‘Japan’.”

As discussed earlier, the field of kokugaku had a significant impact on the early “imagination” of the Japanese nation-state and identified the “original” Japanese community as being “pre-
Chinese” in origin, and disillusioned Japanese elites actively disassociated Japan from East Asia in the early Meiji era. However, through the late Meiji and Taisho eras we see similar misgivings around Westernization and the cultural malaise it brought with it, best embodied culturally in the work of Natsume Soseki 夏目漱石, and politically in the outrage around the rejection of the racial equality clause at the Paris Peace Conference. While Japan swung back towards an East Asian identity leading up to World War II, it was solidly aligned political and economically with the West in its aftermath.

Since the Japanese recession in the early 1990s it is not at all unusual to hear both Japanese and Western commentators again lamenting the moral and economic problems that has taken hold of contemporary Japanese society. This is important because discussions of moral and economic problems in Japan have traditionally led to vigorous discussion of Japan’s international role, national identity, and strategies to reinvigorate Japanese society. It may appear that a panacea for these problems may be found in Japan embracing East Asia and taking on a more explicit East Asian identity. However, I would argue that Japan is actually re-engaging with its traditionally ambiguous and sometimes ambivalent relationship with East Asia. Japanese have always considered themselves as “existing at the outer fringes of a world cultural sphere”. Perhaps the distinct modern challenge for Japan will not be full integration into one region or another, but the ability to exist on the outer of two dominant world cultural spheres instead of one.

Scholars should remember that Japan has always had an adaptable and flexible approach to the process of political, economic and cultural absorption, and its national identity is based on a strong sense of internal connectedness and external difference. Not only will Japan forge connections where it is advantageous, it will also readily adapt social, economic and political models where they are shown to be successful, while abandoning those that it sees as practically or morally bankrupt. This is not to argue that traditional or modern Japanese national identity is simplistically calculating. Rather, when considering the role national identity plays in its international identity, we need to consider the “constructive” but independent nature of this identity, and its desire to use and adapt that which will enrich its own culture and society. This should give scholars pause as, while Japan owes much to East Asia, there are significant limitations on trying to bring Japan into that regional grouping through the cultivation of an East Asian identity. Rather than be overly concerned that Japan is “returning to Asia”, and turning away from the West, we should watch with interest as Japan re-engages with its historically ambiguous and inconsistent identification with the mainland, and navigates new territory between two civilizations that have contributed so much to its own.

ENDNOTES


John Nathan, *Japan Unbound: A Volatile Nation's Quest for Pride and Purpose*


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.


Leheny, p. 221.


Iwabuchi Koichi, *Contesting Soft Symptomatic Transformations: Japan in the Media and Cultural Globalization*


China Cooperation to Target Smog


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.


Evans, pp. 209-211. Owada, p. 234.
Memory and Memorial

How the Hiroshima Bombing and its Korean Victims have Shaped and Challenged Postwar Japanese Identity

This paper addresses Japanese national memory of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as portrayed in memorial sites including the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Such memorials typically have two missions: to educate visitors about the facts of the atomic bombing and its aftermath and to emphasize the need to eliminate nuclear weapons throughout the world. The former mission can be seen as an act of memorialization, as it attempts to pay tribute to those who lost their lives or otherwise suffered from the bomb. The latter is a moralizing mission in which Japan uses its historically unique experience of the bomb to endow it with moral and diplomatic authority in calling for world peace. This paper looks specifically at the purpose served by this vision of Japan as “victim” in the country’s historical memory, and how this victim mentality is bolstered by claiming the bombings as a uniquely “Japanese” tragedy. Next, it uses the dominant representations of Hiroshima to address Japan’s official attempts to include Korean atomic bomb victims in the memorial discourse of Hiroshima. The fact that Korean victims of the bombing did not enter public displays commemorating the bombings until virtually the 1990s underscores the social and ideological importance of portraying the atomic bombings as exclusively Japanese experiences.

Introduction

The A-Bomb Cenotaph in Hiroshima Peace Park, designed in the shape of a clay house to protect from rain the souls of those who perished in the bombing, stands behind a stone coffin that contains a register of the names of victims of atomic bomb diseases. This coffin is inscribed with the words “Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil”. Professor Tadayoshi Saika of Hiroshima University, who composed this inscription, later wrote: “The worst sin committed in the twentieth century is the dropping of the atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, but the citizens are not brooding on the past, but seeking for light toward the future, attempting to do what has not yet been done. It is the privilege of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to resolve that we shall not repeat this evil. If the efforts of Hiroshima brighten the future for all human beings, then the sacrifice made by the victims has not been in vain.”

Professor Saika makes several assertions here. First, he rates atomic bombings as the “worst sin committed in the twentieth century”. He thus asserts the ascendance of the bombings over every possible alternative, such as numerous ethnic genocides, the Nanjing Massacre, and Japanese mass raping of Korean “comfort women” in an imagined hierarchy of state-sponsored evils, marking Japan as the ultimate victim. He then specifically commends the citizens of Hiroshima for looking forward rather than focusing on the past, suggesting “seeking for light toward the future” as the appropriate model of recovery from national crisis. Hiroshima and Nagasaki are then identified as bearing the “privilege” of ridding the world of the “evil” of the atomic bomb, and Hiroshima is assigned the particular role of “brighten[ing] the future for all human beings”. These sentiments are emblematic of official postwar representations of Hiroshima, in which Japan is asserted as the only country to have suffered from nuclear bombs and is thus endowed with a moral responsibility to advocate for world
The specific remembrance of Hiroshima as the site of exclusively Japanese victimization is a common theme in public memorials, and there are a number of reasons for its persistence. Perhaps most importantly, the victim trope of the atomic bombings has lessened the need for Japan to identify itself as past colonizer of Korea, China, Taiwan, and other Asian states, and as the present oppressor of Koreans in Japan. This selective public representation of Japan as victim rather than aggressor is often divorced from the question of why Japan had been a victim and why Japan then allied itself with the United States, the country responsible for bombing it. The victimizer, then, is imagined as war itself, replacing both Japanese imperialism and the US as aggressor. This construction obviates the need to question ties with the US or to turn inward and renounce those aspects of Japanese prewar history, such as imperialism, that gave rise to the Fifteen Years War which ultimately resulted in Japan’s defeat. By designating Hiroshima an “international city for peace”, Japan presents itself to the nation and the world as a victim of wartime atrocities.

In the first part of this paper, I look at the representation of the Hiroshima bombing in official accounts and memorials to its victims. Focusing on the Hiroshima Peace Reader put forward by the municipal Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation and materials of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Hiroshima Peace Park as instruments of national memorial, I argue that Japan’s dominant national postwar identity has been that of victim rather than aggressor. More specifically, in spite of the country’s defeat and atomic bombing at the hands of the United States, these representations importantly point to Japan as a victim not of the US but of war and atomic bombs. This official opposition to war, codified in Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, and failure to identify the US as the enemy have led to the postwar construction of Japan as a pacifist state.

Next, I use these dominant representations of Hiroshima to address Japan’s official attempts to include Korean atomic bomb victims in the memorial discourse of Hiroshima. Although the inclusion of Korean victims in public memorials took many decades, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum includes displays on the Korean hibakusha (atomic bomb victims), the mayor of Hiroshima acknowledges Korean victims in his annual memorial speeches, and the memorial monument to the Korean victims of the bomb was moved inside Hiroshima Peace Park in 1999. Although theses representations only superficially situate Korean victims within the context of Japanese colonialism, their very inclusion in public sites of memory challenges the pervasive narratives of Hiroshima. Memorializing Korean victims disrupts the framing of the bomb as a uniquely Japanese experience, undermines the tightly held notion of Japan as victim, and forces Japan to confront its own discriminatory attitudes toward Korean hibakusha, which ultimately undermines Japan’s moral authority in purporting to be a voice of international peace.

**Japanese memorialization of Hiroshima: Japan as “atomic victim”**

1. *Japan as victim rather than aggressor*

Lisa Yoneyama writes: “That the Japanese do not remember themselves as aggressors and only remember their victimization in the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has become almost a cliché.” The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, in a vivid representation of this trope, exclusively depicts Japan’s (more specifically Hiroshima’s) victimhood and emphasizes Japan’s special call, as the only country victimized by atomic bombs, for international peace. The museum is divided into an east building which focuses on the city of Hiroshima and Japan’s antinuclear movement, and a west building whose exhibits graphically depict the human damage caused by the bomb. The east building contains permanent exhibits entitled “Hiroshima until the Atomic Bombing”, “The Atomic Bomb”, “Hiroshima in Ruins”, “War, the A-Bomb, and People”, “Nuclear Age”, and
“Walking Toward Peace”. The exhibits of the west building reconstruct the physical destruction of Hiroshima when the atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945 and include drawings and testimony by atomic bomb survivors, as well as the “Message for Peace” signed by heads of state. While the exhibits are certainly moving, they posit Japan as a victim by focusing only on the effects of the atomic bomb and the domestic effects of the war. In doing so, they preclude the recognition of Japan as aggressor by failing to situate “Hiroshima” in the historical context of Japanese wartime aggression.

Japan’s emphasis on victimhood in its pacifist approach to history creates a leveling effect by which, as Hyun Sook Kim articulates, “the actual imbalance of power that exist(ed) between the colonizer (Japan) and the colonized subjects (other Asians) is leveled as if they stand as equals.”

The representation of Japan as victim is important because it aligns the colonizer with, rather than in opposition to, the colonized, thereby reinforcing the notion of pan-Asian identity promulgated by the crafters of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”. Japan’s narrow postwar focus on economic development, for example, proceeded largely because Japan was still able to extract economic benefits from its erstwhile colonies in the absence of a post-imperial recognition of the sensitive colonizer/colonized relationship. Thus, the representation of Japan as victim in postwar memory “effectively erases Japan’s position as imperial power and colonial oppressor by eliding Japan with its former colonial subjects.”

Where Kim finds that the representations of Japanese wartime atrocities alongside the suffering of Japanese civilians create a picture of unavoidable pan-Asian suffering, however, the Hiroshima-as-victim trope tends to highlight the uniquely Japanese experience of the suffering wrought by the atomic bombs. For example, the *Hiroshima Peace Reader* published by the municipal Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation begins with a history of the city as a “castle town” constructed by the Mōri family from 1589, thus embedding the atomic bombings in Japan’s unique historical trajectory, separate from the colonialization that violently implicated Japan in the affairs of its regional neighbors. While the *Peace Reader* offers detailed commentary on such issues as the weather following the August 6 bombing and the type of grasses survivors ate to sustain themselves, it makes no mention of the ethnic composition of the bomb victims and survivors. Chinese and Korean “repatriates” are only cited as having reentered Hiroshima after the bombing, thus marking the bombing as a distinctly Japanese event. In this way, official memory can assert that all Asians suffered together during the war but in different ways, and Japan occupies a unique position as the only nation to have experienced atomic bombing. In conservative permutations of this narrative, it is as if Japan was made to bear the ultimate sacrifice for its noble efforts under the guise of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to protect its Asian neighbors from Western incursion.

As I will demonstrate, the infectious appeal of the ban-the-bomb movement stemmed from a national metaphorizing of the atomic bomb to encapsulate the domestic ravages of war. James Orr points out that the Asian victims of Japanese colonialism were not represented in the postwar occupying forces. As a result, average Japanese did not come face to face with the consequences of their country’s colonial policies and generally did not have to engage with Japan’s former colonial subjects. Thus, most Japanese had no basis on which to compare the home front destruction wrought by the atomic bombs and the war in general to the carnage that resulted from Japanese colonialism as enacted abroad.

2. Victimization by “war” and the emergence of peace culture

In the postwar period, Japan has emerged from the ruins of empire, defeat, and atom bombing as a wealthy, constitutionally pacifist country with an international antinuclear agenda. While Japan has largely been figured as a victim in the public memory of Hiroshima, it has in many ways not been viewed as victimized by the
United States, the country responsible for dropping the atomic bombs. Instead, the dominant postwar messages that war, particularly nuclear war, is evil and destructive serve as universalized constructions in which the aggressor/enemy is neither the colonial, militaristic Japanese state nor the US but “war” itself. As such, Japan can avoid both self-identification as an aggressor vis-à-vis the rest of Asia and the denigration of the United States as an enemy, a move that Japan’s political leaders have sought to avoid in light of the country’s economic and security dependence on the US. In the absence of an entity “responsible” for wartime suffering, Japan has positioned itself as the ultimate victim and articulated a role for itself as international spokesperson for world peace.

In the immediate postwar period, political conservatives feared that widespread acknowledgement in Japan of the atomic bombings’ human toll would turn popular sentiment against the United States, then Japan’s primary ally in the Cold War. However, by the logic of “Hiroshima ending what Pearl Harbor began”, Japanese conservatives and their American counterparts could overlook the past and forge ahead with a robust economic and security partnership.10 Japan was able to quickly rebuild its economy due in no small part to Korean War-induced demand in the US, and went on to become the world’s second largest economic power. The US did not take hold in popular memory as a victimizer because, in addition to the benefits it provided Japan in the postwar period, Japanese citizens were not permitted to express anti-American sentiments during the seven years of American occupation under the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP).11 In addition, Edwin O. Reischauer points out that the popular fear of “rape and pillage by their [American] conquerors” during the occupation worked to foment enthusiasm for and cooperation with the US authorities in whom these fears did not materialize.12 Thus, Japan’s wartime “enemy” became not the West or the United States in particular, but the disembodied concept of war itself.

James Orr notes that one of the most widely embraced postwar narratives posited the atomic bomb as “more or less an unexpected natural calamity with little (or at least suppressed) acknowledgement of either American or Japanese agency in causing it”13. Eriko Aoki finds that passages in postwar textbooks on national language often discuss “how sad and awful the Second World War was” but make no mention of militarism, nationalism, or the emperor.14 Because, according to this reckoning, the country was fundamentally victimized by war rather than by the US or even by the militaristic Japanese leadership (although the latter was widely blamed for miring the country in a devastating war), Japan positioned itself against war in defining its new role in the international arena.

While the dominant postwar Japanese identity as a democratic, pacifist state was constructed under the American occupation, national memorialization of Hiroshima did not take root at this time. According to John Dower, SCAP suppressed most writings by atom bomb survivors as well as scientific information related to radiation and other effects of the bombs. Documentary footage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the months following the blasts was confiscated. In the absence of media that would spread the realities of the bombs to regions not immediately affected by them, most Japanese remained unaware of the extent of the damage wrought by the bombings. The public was first allowed access to photographs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki only in August 1952, seven years after they were bombed.15

Because knowledge of the effects of the atomic bombs was largely suppressed by the US occupying forces under SCAP, Hiroshima was only transformed from a localized event into a national symbol after the occupation. James Orr locates the genesis of the national anti-nuclear movement in the Lucky Dragon Incident of March 1, 1954, in which a Japanese fishing boat was inadvertently contaminated by nuclear fallout from a US hydrogen bomb experiment at Bikini Atoll. The boat’s radio operator later died.
from radiation sickness, and the Suginami Ward Assembly in Tokyo passed a resolution protesting the hydrogen bomb the following year. Energized by widespread national fears of radiation poisoning, the “Suginami Appeal” had garnered 30 million signatures by August 1955. Thus began the nationalization of Hiroshima as a Japanese tragedy. Orr notes: “The Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings privileged the Japanese nation with an exclusive claim to leadership in the global ban-the-bomb movement and provided the country with its first powerfully unifying national myth after defeat.” In the moral void of postwar devastation, the public seized upon the horrors of the atomic bombings to imbue them with a sense of purpose.

Once the sense of victimization and moral mission engendered by Hiroshima had reached national proportions, the Hiroshima government endeavored to make the city an international symbol. In the foreword to the Hiroshima Peace Reader, Chairman Takeshi Araki of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation refers to Hiroshima as “the city which rose from the ashes as a phoenix after the A-bombing, the city which has been rebuilt as an international peace city.” Chairman Takeshi Araki of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation refers to Hiroshima as “the city which rose from the ashes as a phoenix after the A-bombing, the city which has been rebuilt as an international peace city.”

Shinzō Hamai, Hiroshima’s first postwar mayor, established the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Service Committee, issued a Peace Declaration, and began in 1947 to hold annual Peace Memorial Ceremonies on August 6. The city was rebuilt under the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law, which aimed to reconstruct Hiroshima, literally and figuratively, as “a symbol of the ideal of making peace a lasting reality.” This designation of Hiroshima as a city of “peace” is especially salient in light of its position as a “military city” since the Sino-Japanese War, and as Second General Headquarters (Tokyo was the First General Headquarters) during the Second World War. Interestingly, even after the August 6, 1945 bombing, when survivors could barely feed themselves, the Peace Reader recounts that “it was urgent” that Hiroshima restore its military bases. After its postwar rebuilding, however, the Peace Reader asserts: “Hiroshima is no longer merely a Japanese city. It has become recognized throughout the world as a Mecca of world peace.” In this way, Hiroshima was not just rebuilt but was transformed from a site of war into an international emblem of peace. According to the Peace Reader, Mayor Shinzō urged the national government to undertake the city’s reconstruction by arguing that the image of “new peaceful Japan” would be useful in gaining credibility abroad. Without seriously reflecting on the wartime atrocities that had eventually led to the bombing of Hiroshima, Japan attempted to construct an identity in the international arena as a peace-loving country that would never again threaten its regional neighbors. Drawing on the singular example of its constitutional proscription of warfare, politicians urged all nations to renounce nuclear weapons so that there would be “No More Hiroshimas”.

By selectively representing the past, official memorials helped to build a new image of Japan. By identifying Hiroshima as the pinnacle of victimization and the starting point for a new Japanese society, leaders were able to reconstruct a sense of national pride. This salvaged nationalism from the humiliation of defeat, the horrors of the atomic bombings, and the moral depravity of and revulsion at the atrocities committed by Japanese troops overseas. However, the dominant narrative does not speak for the nation or for all of the victims of the Hiroshima bombing. Assertions of victimhood and pacifism have been marked by tensions between the national government and the Hiroshima City government.

The appropriation of the “Hiroshima trope” by the Japanese state has required some degree of silencing in the formation of the national pacifist discourse. Just as Hiroshima’s municipal memorials often fail to juxtapose the bombing with the colonial context in which it occurred, so do national articulations of pacifism fail to reconcile Hiroshima City’s vehement antinuclearism with national security dependence on the nuclear United States.

In the annual “Peace Declaration” speech delivered on the anniversary of the Hiroshima
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of marginalizing the non-Japanese victims of the bombing in the service of highlighting its singular victimization, its positionality is different from that of the national government. Hiroshima has at once been appropriated as the symbol of a nonnuclear, pacifist Japan in the international sphere and marginalized when it makes demands on the national government. In the next section, I will address Hiroshima’s memorialization of Korean victims of the bombing, which in some ways mirrors the selective framing of Hiroshima by the national government. The situation of Korean victims has been incorporated into the official discourse when required by the exigencies of regional diplomacy, but it has also been marginalized when deeper attention threatens the popular tropes of Japanese memory of the Hiroshima bombing.

Memorialization of Korean victims of Hiroshima

A vast number of Koreans died in Japan as a result of Japanese colonial policies. Between 1939 and December 1944, 634,093 Korean men were brought to Japan as recruited labor, and tens of thousands of women were sexually enslaved as “comfort women” serving Japanese troops. Many Koreans lost their lives fighting in the imperial army. After the war, 23 were executed as Japanese war criminals and 125 served postwar sentences as war criminals.27 According to Lisa Yoneyama, at least 45,000 of the 350,000-400,000 directly impacted by the Hiroshima bombing were Korean28, and it is believed that Korean residents perished in greater proportion than Japanese.29 However, until 1990, the memorial speeches of politicians at the annual Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6 in Hiroshima never referred to Korean victims of the atom bombs. The only physical memorial to the Korean bomb victims in Hiroshima Peace Park is the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the A-Bomb (Kankokujin Genbaku Giseisha Irei Hi) built by the Republic of Korea-affiliated Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan).

Mayor Akiba ends his speech by voicing his expectation that the Japanese government will “respect the voice of the world’s cities” and calls for the government to “provide the warm, humanitarian support appropriate to the needs of all the aging hibakusha, including those living abroad.”26 While Hiroshima City, too, is guilty
ment denied Mindan permission to build the monument inside the park, explaining that park management could not allow the construction of new cenotaphs on park grounds. Although construction of the monument was completed in 1970, it stood outside the park until 1999, a location “symptomatic of the subaltern status of zainichi” in Yoneyama’s view. In response to accusations that the positioning of the monument external to the park was motivated by racial discrimination, the government offered in 1990 to allow its relocation as long as it could be made to honor both North and South Korean victims, but then eventually retracted this position. The monument was finally moved inside the park in 1999.

The various domestic and international pressures at work on Japan in recent years have done much to structure the government’s response to the Korean victims of the Hiroshima bombings. An article in the Daily Yomiuri states that the visit of South Korean President Roh Tae-woo to Japan in May 1990 prompted the idea of moving the monument. However, Roh’s visit was prefaced by calls from zainichi hibakusha for relocation. Sō Tokai, a first-generation zainichi activist, asked in an open letter to the Hiroshima government in 1986: “Discrimination even against the dead? Discrimination even among the victims of the atomic bomb?” Local agitation eventually resulted in opposition party pressure in the Diet on Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama, who in 1990 pledged government cooperation in moving the monument inside the park, bringing pressure to bear on the Hiroshima municipal government. Shortly thereafter, the Korean consul general at Shimonoseki visited Hiroshima and petitioned for relocation by August 6, the 45th anniversary of the atomic bombing. While the consul urged relocating the monument and then resolving the issue of representing the two Koreas, the mayor replied with the city’s long-standing policy that relocation would be possible only after affiliates of both North and South Korea agreed.

While President Roh’s visit to Japan in May of that year neither initiated discussion of relocation nor punctured the stalemate regarding a unified North and South Korean monument, it marked a turning point in Japan-ROK relations. The location of the monument was elevated from an issue of local politics to one of national scale, with great import for Japan’s blossoming diplomatic relationship with South Korea. President Roh’s visit elicited national newspaper columns filled with Japanese apologies for their country’s past aggression and an official, if vague, apology by Emperor Akihito. While the visit brought the marginalization of Korean hibakusha and later generations of zainichi to the fore of national awareness, the Hiroshima government held fast to its requirement of a unified Korean endorsement of the monument. The increasing virulence of Asian voices regarding the position of the monument came as a worrying call to a national government preparing to host the 1994 Asian Games and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing in 1995. Thus began the gradual opening of the Hiroshima victimization canon to include official acknowledgment of Japan’s colonial position as victimizer. However, Lisa Yoneyama notes that the evolution of official memorialization must be read in the context of Japan’s pursuit of international markets and regional political stability. While acknowledgements of Japan’s colonial aggression have entered the national discourse, they have done so “in a manner that would not threaten the present order of knowledge.”

Although the Hiroshima municipal government erected a number of obstacles to the relocation of the monument, it is worth noting that much of the opposition to re-inscriptions that were to precede the move was generated by zainichi Koreans and Japanese sympathizers. The Hiroshima municipal administration had designated a committee of local Japanese luminaries to revise the monument’s inscriptions in order to render them acceptable to both Korean affiliates. However, many people objected to the unilateral rewriting of their memory. This manner of protest perhaps resonates with the sentiments of Sō...
Takai, who asked: “Isn’t it quite natural that the memorial should stand across the river precisely because the zainichi exist across the river?” As Mariko Asano Tamanoi notes, the official appropriation of marginalized memories creates the threat of forgetting the marginalization of the victims. Despite the fact that city officials agreed to the relocation of the monument in response to claims that its position outside the park was discriminatory, Mindan was made to bear the JPY15 million cost of the move. In 1998, Hiroshima Mayor Takashi Hirooka praised the incipient relocation of the monument as a “step forward for the cause of peace.” In this way, he appropriated Korean memories for use in the postwar pacifist canon while forgetting or ignoring the implications of the move for post-imperial Japan, the post-colonial Koreas, and the complex relationships among the three countries.

The fact that Korean victims of the bombing did not enter public displays commemorating the bombings until virtually the 1990s underscores the social and ideological importance of portraying the atomic bombings as exclusively Japanese experiences. Where Korean victims are included, the accounts of their blast experiences in Hiroshima tend to minimize or fail altogether to connect their victimization to Japanese colonialism. For example, the Hiroshima Peace Reader notes that the registers of names of those who died at the time of the bombing and after of A-bomb diseases includes Korean and American names in addition to Japanese. However, the passage then individuates two Americans who died from the bombing but fails to similarly identify any of the Korean victims or to discuss why large numbers of Koreans were present in Hiroshima in 1945 in the first place.

The account of the monument to Korean victims in the Hiroshima Peace Reader devotes a full paragraph to Prince Yi Gu, the only victim singled out in the monument’s inscription (“In memory of prince Yi Gu and the other 20,000 or more souls”), but only one sentence to the rest of the Korean victims: “It is said that between 30,000 and 40,000 Korean people, those who were residents of the city and those who were brought to Japan from the Korean Peninsula as forced labor, were in Hiroshima at the time of the bombing.” This description is noteworthy for several reasons. First, Kosakai begins the sentence with “it is said”, transforming this line from a research-supported and widely accepted assertion to mere hearsay. Second, it does not indicate that any of the 30,000-40,000 Koreans in Hiroshima on August 6 were harmed by the bombing. Next, the designation of “residents” implies that Koreans in Japan at the time were given equal rights. Finally, the phrase “those who were brought to Japan”, lacking an active subject, obscures the fact that Koreans were brought to Japan by Japanese. With the exception of “forced labor”, there is no acknowledgement that Korean victims were in Hiroshima specifically because of Japanese colonialism.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum also minimally acknowledges the Korean victims of the atomic bomb. In the exhibit “War, the A-Bomb, and People”, a plaque entitled “Overseas Hibakusha” notes that Japan “forcefully brought thousands of people to work in Japan from Korea and other countries. Many forced laborers died in the A-bombings in Hiroshima or Nagasaki.” An adjacent plaque, labeled “Korean Hibakusha Medical Center”, depicts Japan as responsive to the needs of Korean survivors: “voices were raised in Japan calling for aid to Korean hibakusha. Through citizens’ groups, hibakusha living in Korea were invited to Japan and medical teams were sent to Korea.” However, this account eclipses the pervasive ethnic discrimination against Korean hibakusha seeking care in Japan. Moreover, the ongoing demands of Korean survivors belie this picture of adequate Japanese care.

The explanation of the Monument in Memory of the Korean Victims of the A-Bomb” on the Hiroshima Peace Park’s website, in contrast, is much more comprehensive. The description of the monument begins with Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910 and discusses the plight of Koreans who were forced to come to Japan out of economic necessity or as forced labor. It then notes
that tens of thousands of Koreans suffered from the Hiroshima bombing. The rare situation of Korean bomb victims in the trajectory of Japanese colonialism in this explanation, however, is limited to the park’s website and does not appear in the park itself.

If we understand the ways in which recognition of the Korean victims works at cross-purposes to Japan’s memorialization project, we can perhaps understand why the inclusion of Koreans in the Hiroshima discourse took so long and is so often superficial when it does appear. First, acknowledging the Korean victims of Hiroshima threatens the Japan-as-victim trope, with its attendant assumption of Japan as victim rather than aggressor, by drawing attention to Japan’s salient and much longer-term role as aggressor and colonizer. Second, the inclusion of Koreans undoes the ethnic exclusivity of atomic victimhood, and in so doing, creates a need for the recognition of the multiple victimizations of Korean atom bomb victims, who suffered from both the atomic bombs and their Japanese colonizers, who continued to discriminate against Korean victims even after colonialism officially ended.

The recognition of Korean victims of Hiroshima undermines the tightly held notion of Japan as victim by forcing Japan to confront the way in which the Japanese state victimized other Asians in its capacity as colonial aggressor. In contrast to the dispassionate narratives of the bombing in the official Hiroshima discourse, the responses of private individuals are more likely to undertake the subversive task of recognizing Japan as victimizer as well as victim. In *White Flash, Black Rain: Women of Japan Relive the Bomb*, survivors and activists memorialize victims of the atomic bombings in poetry, short story, and essay form. A number of themes feature prominently in the writings of these women. In their recognition of Korean victims of the atomic bombings, the writers give voice to the Asian victims of Japanese colonialism, question the sincerity of the postwar pacifist movement as narrated by the Japanese state, and condemn the Japanese and US governments for their treatment of survivors.

One contributor, Ishikawa Itsuko, is a teacher and a prominent writer on issues of atomic bomb survivors. In “Continuous Prayers #15”, she asks in reference to *Kimiga-yo*, the Japanese national anthem: “Do you know the enormous quantity / of blood, of Asian children’s blood, that / spilled with that song?” Kurihara Sadako, another contributor and a survivor of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and writer and activist in the antinuclear movement, recognizes Japan as victimizer as well as victim in “For the Dead of August”. She writes: “Hiroshima did not begin the morning of August 6. / It began with the first charge of the Japanese army in Liuyang Lake. / We received the bomb / as the citizens of the army capital, Hiroshima.” In another example, Lisa Yoneyama notes that the Korean memorial in the Hiroshima Peace Park “stands for the triumph over Japanese aggression and emancipation from colonial injustice.” Thus, the very existence of the monument draws attention to the legacy of Japanese colonialism, disrupting the notion of Hiroshima as a site of Japanese victimization and pacifism.

The fact of Korean victims of the atomic bombings also importantly undermines the idea of the ethnic/national exclusivity of the suffering wrought by the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. In her writings in *White Flash, Black Rain*, Kurihara Sadako draws attention to the non-Japanese victims of atomic bombings. She writes critically of the Japanese claim to atomic victim exclusivity in an essay entitled “The National Responsibility for War and the Victims of Nuclear Radiation”, in which she highlights radiation-exposed veterans in the United States, England, Australia, Russia, and China. In an essay entitled “Hiroshima Being Questioned”, Kurihara writes: “It is said that about 70,000 Koreans were affected by the A-bomb. The Korean survivors ask the Japanese why it was that they were involved and victimized in another country’s war.”

Artists Toshi and Iri Maruki traveled to Hiroshima immediately after the bombing to find
and care for family members there. The couple has painted fifteen murals thematically related to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima that have been widely exhibited in the decades since the bombing. One such mural, a 1972 work entitled “Crows”, depicts the suffering of Korean atomic bomb victims both as a result of the bomb and of the discrimination survivors met with in Japan. The work was inspired by the account of a Korean survivor who described how the bodies of Korean victims, dead as well as some living, were left in the streets, where their eyes were plucked out by crows. The caption accompanying the mural reads “The Koreans were discriminated against, even in death” and notes the 15,000 hibakusha living in Korea.

In coming to terms with the problem of memorializing the Korean victims of the atomic bomb, the Hiroshima municipal and national governments have been forced to confront their own discriminatory attitudes toward resident Koreans as well as repatriated Korean hibakusha. In “Memory Matters: Hiroshima’s Korean Atom Bomb Memorial and the Politics of Ethnicity,” Lisa Yoneyama demonstrates the way in which the relocation debate concerning the Korean monument gave political voice to a segment of the resident Korean population, transforming them into important actors on the nationally and internationally resonant stage of Hiroshima City. One Korean survivor from Hiroshima, Park Cha Jom, is also included in White Flash, Black Rain. In “The A-Bomb Disease I Didn’t Know”, she writes: “I demand the Japanese government appropriately compensate Korean victims of the A-bomb.”

Conclusion

There have been numerous egregious lapses in Japanese national memory of Hiroshima. Japan has, in many ways, failed to remember its non-Japanese victims and the Japanese aggression in Asia and the United States that preceded the bombings, choosing instead to focus on itself as pure victim. However, postwar memory has not completely fallen victim to amnesia. The Korean victims of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima have been publicly remembered in important ways by the government and private citizens, and their recent inclusion in the Hiroshima discourse represents significant progress. James Orr points out that citizens and local governments have agitated with some success for the inclusion of Korean hibakusha in government aid programs, the payment of pension benefits to former colonial subjects in the imperial armed forces, and assistance to Koreans left in Sakhalin at the end of the war. Yet, Tokyo remains loath to compensate Korean survivors in amounts comparable to Japanese survivors, if at all. This policy reinforces the notion of Hiroshima as a Japanese tragedy, demarcated by ethnic and national boundaries. Victim consciousness arguably remains dominant in the national psyche, frustrating efforts to adequately memorialize and compensate Korean atomic bomb victims and to fully come to terms with Japan’s colonial past.

In this paper, I have attempted to explore the ways in which Koreans and Japanese and national and municipal governments have worked against and with each other, albeit often with considerably different motives and at different paces, to memorialize the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. In turning my attention to the Korean victims of the bombing, I write against the homogenizing official narrative elaborated in the first half of the paper that posits Japan as the ultimate victim of the Fifteen Years War. This victim trope generally lacks not only grounding in the imperial history that preceded the bombing but also reference to Japan’s postwar relations with both the United States and the two Koreas. These shortcomings challenge pacifist “Hiroshima diplomacy” by undercutting Japan’s moral authority in the international arena, and this has real political consequences for Japan. For example, in opposing Japan’s bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, China argued that a country unable to face its aggressive history should not be permitted to sit on a peacekeeping body. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao chided Japan: “Only a country that respects his-
tory, takes responsibility for history and wins over the trust of peoples in Asia and the world at large can take greater responsibilities in the international community. As Mariko Asano Tamanoi writes, being a “redeemed mankind”, or in this case a redeemed post-imperial state, requires the courage to remember the past in ways that challenge the dominant narratives of history. In this way, history and memory can liberate the multiple identities of victim and victimizer from the official memorialization of the victims of Hiroshima.

ENDNOTES
4 Ibid., p. 82.
5 Kosakai, p. 5.
6 Ibid., p. 16.
7 Ibid., p. 19.
9 Ibid., p. 11.
10 Ibid., p. 41.
13 Orr, p. 43.
15 Dower, pp. 414-415.
17 Ibid., p. 7.
18 Kosakai, p. 3.
19 Ibid., p. 20.
20 Ibid., p. 17.
21 Ibid., p. 22.
22 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
31 Yoneyama, Memory Matters, p. 503.
34 Yoneyama, Hiroshima Traces, p. 164.
36 Ibid., pp. 165-166.
37 Ibid., p. 166.
38 Ibid., p. 163.
41 Hiroshima OK’s Move for Monument.
42 Kosakai, p. 45.
43 Ibid., p. 69.
44 Ibid., p. 70.
Mindy Haverson

Mindy Haverson received her JD from Stanford Law School in 2010. She graduated summa cum laude from Columbia University with a BA in East Asian Languages and Cultures in 2006 and an MA in East Asian Regional Studies in 2007 and studied at the Kyoto Center for Japanese Studies and at Keio University in Tokyo prior to law school. Her academic and professional interests include Japanese domestic politics, US–East Asia relations, Japanese legal culture, corporate governance, and securities law. Mindy is currently an associate at the law firm of Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy in New York City.
Remixing Murakami
Furukawa Hideo’s Slow Boat, 2002 and Murakami Haruki’s Oeuvre as Double-Scope Stories

Murakami Haruki’s (b. 1949) international popularity surpasses that of any other living Japanese author. However, his success is not limited to an international audience. Norwegian Wood (1987) earned him national superstar status. His latest work, 1Q84 (2009), has been sitting atop the Japanese bestseller lists for most of the year, with its first and second volumes occupying the top two spots. His influence can be discerned in the work of the next generation of writers, and the present paper focuses on one member of the “post-Murakami” generation. Furukawa Hideo (b. 1966) makes frequent nods to Murakami in his fiction. His Slow Boat, 2002 (2002), originally titled A Slow Boat to China RMX, presents the most transparent case, taking Murakami’s short story “A Slow Boat to China” (1980) for inspiration. The allusive scope of Furukawa’s novel, however, transcends Murakami’s short story, pointing to elements of Murakami’s major works through 2002.

The present study implements Mark Turner’s concept of double-scope stories to investigate the layers of meaning resulting from the blending of Murakami’s and Furukawa’s work, finally suggesting the ineluctable nature of the creation of blended meaning, which is inaccessible through an independent reading of the novel.

Introduction

In the world of Japanese letters, Murakami Haruki (b. 1949) is considered an international sensation. His recent acceptance of the 2009 Jerusalem Prize attests to the breadth of his readership. Although he is without a doubt the most internationally well-known living Japanese author, his success is not limited to an international audience. Norwegian Wood (1987) earned him superstar status in his own country, while his latest multivolume novel, 1Q84 (2009), has enjoyed tremendous popularity for most of the year, with its first and second volumes occupying the top two spots on the Japanese bestseller lists. His influence can be discerned in the work of the next generation of writers, and this paper focuses on one member of the “post-Murakami” generation. Murakami’s A Slow Boat to China (1980) was his first published short story and inspired Furukawa Hideo (b. 1966) to compose a novel two decades later. Yet, Furukawa’s Slow Boat, 2002 (hereafter SB2002) does more than simply update the original. Its reach is not limited to that particular Murakami story but rather encompasses Murakami’s major works up to 2002. In SB2002, Furukawa “remixes” – to use his musical terminology – Murakami’s oeuvre by first borrowing the structure of its approximate namesake and then “sampling” elements of Murakami’s fiction to create a new narrative, resulting in a multi-layered work with flexible ranges of meaning. Furukawa himself likens the process to “tilling the soil of Murakami farm with a Murakami hoe and a Murakami tractor, to bring you a special Murakami harvest, produced by Furukawa”2. The manner in which this kaleidoscope of meanings is negotiated depends in large part on how this novel is read. Generally, it may be read in two ways: First, independently of Murakami’s work, and second, through the imposition of Murakami’s work on Furukawa’s. This paper adopts the second reading and uses Mark Turner’s concept of double-scope stories in an investigation of meanings resulting from the blending of Furukawa’s and Murakami’s work.

I begin by briefly describing Turner’s ideas that conceptually inform the methodological approach and implicitly underpin the structure of this paper. I continue by providing a brief summary of the two “slow boat” stories and ex-
plore their structural relationship in the following section. Next, I will discuss the evolution in Murakami’s writing, paying special attention to the transformative year 1995, and establish a thematic “Murakami domain” from which elements will be projected onto Furukawa’s work. This will be followed by an examination of Furukawa’s novel. The final section applies the theory discussed below in illustration of the creation of blended meaning, which I suggest is available only through the blend, and not through an independent reading of the novel.

A cognitive approach

This paper is a comparative hermeneutic investigation of meanings found at the intersection of Furukawa’s and Murakami’s work. Though the manner in which these meanings are decoded is grounded in textual analysis, the framework owes much to recent ideas of cognition, specifically those of cognitive blending. Particularly useful is Mark Turner’s notion of double-scope stories. It refers to the two-fold human ability to first “activate simultaneously, without confusion, two or more different stories that conflict resolutely” and to blend “two conflicting stories into a third story with emergent structure and meaning”. This type of creative blending is characterized by three features: the mapping of elements between stories; a selective projection of these elements; and the structure that emerges from the composition, completion, and elaboration of the blended elements. In other words, we have two readings available to us. In the first, both works may be read independently. In the second, elements from the Murakami domain are mapped onto the Furukawa domain, that is, Furukawa is read through Murakami. What emerges via the second reading is a third “blended” semantic layer. In many ways, this dynamic is unavoidable for a reader of a tribute work who is also familiar with the source to which tribute is paid. Thus, it becomes next to impossible to read Furukawa’s SB2002 independently of Murakami’s oeuvre.

Slow Boats

Murakami’s A Slow Boat to China (hereafter Slow Boat) is a short story divided into five sections. Sections one and five relate the “present time”, and sections two, three, and four deal with the stories of the “three Chinese”, that are linked temporally to Boku’s childhood, late adolescence, and adulthood, respectively, spanning the period of 1960 to 1980. It is a quiet meditation on urban alienation and unpleasant memories. A detailed thematic analysis will be provided below.

Furukawa’s SB2002 is a novel that incorporates many of Murakami’s themes and images that are not limited to the short story that inspired the title. Furukawa’s narrative is ostensibly a record of Boku’s attempted escape from Tokyo. It is a story of three failures at escape and the loss of three girlfriends in the process. The first girlfriend is taken away, the second runs away, and the third Boku sends away. The reader may notice the apparent parallel between Murakami’s three Chinese and Furukawa’s three girlfriends, but the connection exists only to bring attention to structural echoes of Murakami. Unlike the five-section division used by Murakami, Furukawa divides his book into twelve sections: eight chapters (the last of which is a letter), three “chronicles”, and a dream-sequence epilogue. The odd-numbered chapters are “present time” (December 24, 2002) and include dream sequences. The even-numbered chapters contain the stories of the three girlfriends and cover the years 1985, 1994, and 2000, respectively. The chronicles follow chapters three, five, and seven and cover the same years.

Structural relationship

Perhaps the most apt analysis of the structural relationship between Furukawa’s novel and Murakami’s short story comes from Furukawa himself. In a brief essay at the end of SB2002 Furukawa explains this connection in musical terms. Some phrases, he states cooly, are “sampled from a certain work”. He reveals later that this work is indeed Murakami’s Slow Boat, a connection that needs little explanation given the original title of
the novel, *A Slow Boat to China RMX*. This consonant combination, as may be guessed, stands for “remix”, another musical term that Furukawa admits to have conflated here, perhaps inaccurately, with “cover version”, a slip that he cleverly dismisses as appropriate considering “misinterpretation” as one of the themes of his book. To be sure, Furukawa’s novel is hardly a cover version of Murakami’s work, as cover versions do not stray far from the original, but instead like jazz standards they offer only slight variations. However, one is struck by the suitability of the term “remix” to describe Furukawa’s homage to Murakami. A remix goes a step beyond the cover version, often incorporating only a few recognizable, musical or lyrical, phrases, much like sampling. A cover version is an interpretive rendition of the original; a remix is a wholesale re-interpretation. Luckily, Furukawa’s novel falls into the latter category, providing for the present investigation a richer tapestry of meaningful linkage. A remix is at the core precisely the kind of “blended” system discussed earlier. Phrases are appropriated and re-contextualized within a new structure, and the act of interpretive reading necessitates the projection of overlapping elements from one work onto the other.

What Furukawa refers to primarily as being “sampled” in his essay are the chapter titles (labeled “vessels”), which are lifted directly from *Slow Boat*. Chapter one, *Starting from Archeological Inquiries*, can be found in the second sentence of Murakami’s original. Chapter two, *Place Both Hands Firmly on Your Knees*, is originally uttered by the Chinese proctor in Murakami’s story. Chapter three, *Some Characters I Could Read and Some I Couldn’t*, refers to the inability of Murakami’s narrator to make out some of the tree names at the Chinese school. Chapter four, *There’s No Way Out*, appears in the final monologue in Murakami, when the narrator experiences quasi-apocalyptic visions of Tokyo. Chapter five, *Like Some Kind of Irregular Perpetual Motion*, refers to the impression the hundreds of orderly Chinese students make on the narrator. Chapter six, *You Running a Business?*, is first uttered by the “third Chinese”, the encyclopedia salesman. Chapter seven, *This Isn’t the First Time, and It Won’t Be the Last*, is uttered by the “second Chinese” at Komagome station after Boku put her on the wrong train home, though this part is missing from Alfred Birnbaum’s rendition. Chapter eight, *And Be Proud*, is the final part of the Chinese proctor’s instructions.

Furukawa’s ordering of these chapters demonstrates that he is not concerned with simply updating Murakami’s story. The titles are out of order when compared with the plot of Murakami’s original. The first two bear superficial similarities: the title of Furukawa’s first chapter likewise originates in the nameless Boku’s self-searching, and a female school instructor of the boarding school utters the title of the second. However, the third chapter is a dream sequence, and the characters that Boku cannot read are English rather than Chinese. These characters are on a yellow-jacketed cover of a Sonny Rollins CD containing *On a Slow Boat to China*. The title of the fourth, or its permutation, comes from Boku’s second girlfriend, in contrast to Murakami’s original. The fifth refers, once again, to a dream sequence. In a kind of harmonization with Murakami’s plot, the sixth title is uttered by Boku’s high school classmate. The seventh is again found in a dream sequence, while the eighth is found in a letter from the sister of Boku’s first girlfriend. It is apparent that structurally, Furukawa’s “remix” is not constructed as a slavish update.

Despite the transparent influence of Murakami’s short story on *SB2002*, the structure of the novel also indicates that material is drawn from a broader Murakami oeuvre. The presence of three chronicles situated between chapters three and four, five and six, and seven and eight, respectively, indicates a direct link to *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (hereafter *Wind-Up*). These sections are ostensibly magazine excerpts from the fictional *Tokyo Chronicle* series, and are visually set apart from the other sections by design and type, reminiscent of the magazine exposé on the “Hanging House” from the third book.
of *Wind-Up*. These chronicles consist of a brief listing of events for the years 1985, 1994, and 2000, which are then followed by short stories by Nohara Kaku, the above-mentioned high school classmate. The choice of these years is not arbitrary, as they mirror the dates of the even-numbered chapters that precede them. They relate to the rest of the narrative only tangentially, without much significant overlap between the two. However, the importance of time and history for both Furukawa and Murakami should not be understated.

**Time and history in Murakami**

Murakami’s earliest major work, *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982) (hereafter *Sheep Chase*) deals with time, specifically the past, as its central concern. Many of the other constituents of the thematic web of this novel are either subsumed in, or directly related to, the problem of the past. The past is understood as a place where time stands still – a frozen moment of time that can be accessed through the cottage in Hokkaido’s frozen landscape. Here time grinds to a halt, here Boku learns the dangers of letting himself be consumed by the past – by living in the past one fails to live presently.19

Murakami takes up this idea again in his blockbuster *Norwegian Wood*. Faced with the reality of life after his best friend’s suicide, the young Toru muses that “Only the dead stay seventeen forever.”20 Five years later in *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (hereafter *South of the Border*), readers are shown, rather than told, the dangers of backward-looking inertia. The women from Hajime’s past – Izumi and Shimamoto – are symbolic of death.21 Hajime understands his sexual encounter with Shimamoto to have brought him “face to face with death” in a literal sense.22 On a grander scale, *Wind-Up* continues to explore history. It is riddled with intersecting histories: the history of Toru and Kumiko’s relationship, the history of the Wataya family extending to Noboru’s technocrat uncle, the history of the alley, the history of the “Hanging House” and its well, the history of Nomonhan and the Manchurian front, the history of Nutmeg and Cinnamon, the history of 20th-century Japan, and the history of violence. Japan, its nexus “fatally smeared with violence and blood, and […] directly connected to the darkest depths of history”, is the mystery at the heart of the novel.23

The axis of time in Murakami’s fiction is best plotted vertically, so that the past is that which exists below the x-axis, underground. There, below the x-axis of the present, we may find Kizuki, Shimamoto, and the history of violence in Japan. These elements are suppressed, kept below ground, and forgotten, but they do not cease to exist – they merely lie dormant. The notion of “deceptive repose” appears as early as *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (hereafter *End of the World*) in the appropriate image of the pool.24 As if offering a word of caution to the reader, the librarian instructs: “The surface may seem calm, but below is a whirlpool.”25 Moreover, the subterranean INKlings embody this image of danger lurking beneath the surface.

**After 1995**

Though violence, evil, and their latent forms have occupied Murakami’s thoughts from the early days of his writing career, common scholarly consensus considers the Kobe Earthquake and the Aum Shinrikyō bio-terrorism of 1995 to signal Murakami’s newly determined effort to explore “the potential for violence that is hidden below the surface of everyday life in Japan”.26 Murakami himself argues, in an essay on the effect of the Aum attacks, that the main constituents of personal identity are “memories of experiences […] rendered into something like a narrative form”.27 Asahara’s doctrine and its aftermath represent precisely the danger Murakami sees in surrendering one’s personal narrative and taking on another’s. Consequently, as a writer, this powerful notion of narrative is something Murakami vows to take “much more seriously from here on”.28 As an architect of narrative, he senses the danger inherent in his own work.

What are the practical implications of this pledge on his post-Aum fiction? *Kafka on the
words may be found in Murakami’s preface to *A Place that Was Promised in Underground*. Here he expresses his concern that two years after Aum’s terrorism, Japan has failed to deal meaningfully with “the fundamental issues arising from the gas attack. Specifically, for people who are outside the main system of Japanese society (the young in particular), there remains no effective alternative or safety net”. Murakami suggests that people on the margins will now play a main role in his fiction. Thus, we can understand the college dropout (Sumire), the Korean-Japanese (Miu), the teenage runaway (Kafka), and female wrestlers, Chinese mobsters, and fugitives in *After Dark*, as fulfilling that expectation.

**Early beginnings**

We would be mistaken to believe that Murakami had never dealt with the periphery of Japanese society prior to 1995. Yamane Yumie reads Murakami’s *Slow Boat* as the “germination of Murakami’s counter social consciousness”. Dissatisfied with the interpretative relegation of the three Chinese characters to the conceptual realm, in which they are seen as reflective only of Boku’s consciousness, she posits *Slow Boat* as essentially a “narrativization of trauma […] a tale of internalized prejudice”. The crippled proctor, the Chinese girl on the wrong train, and the forgettable encyclopedia salesman all point to the unfavorable treatment of Chinese within the story and out. In other words, Yamane reads this early story as pointing to political realities outside the narrative. Abe Koichi’s structural analysis points to the three Chinese characters as symbols of the human experience in the transition of images from warped to collapsing to fallen: the confident proctor, the coed conscious of the gap in reality and resigned to it, and the salesman who slipped away from reality entirely and leads a shadow of a life. Visions of the crumbling Tokyo at the end may likewise be interpreted as indicative of life generally.

However useful this analysis may be, as Yamane points out, it inevitably falls short in its disregard of the larger context of the work. The
labors of historian Ishida Takeshi help to frame Murakami’s production within the social context of the late 1970s and 1980s. He tells us that this period was characterized by concern, especially in academic writing, with the war and Japan’s wartime responsibility. Two imperial visits abroad in the 1970s, along with the attempts at official denial of Japanese aggression during the early 1980s, sparked an interest in the subject of war responsibility. To Yamane it is inconceivable that Murakami would be unaffected by the winds of history, so to speak, and interprets Murakami’s short story as addressing the problems of minorities in Japan and the Japanese contempt for other Asians. To be precise, she sees the story as the germination of this concern, and groups it with later novels, like Sheep Chase and Wind-Up, that are said to inherit this “counter-social consciousness.”

Yamane’s contentions are well taken. The three Chinese characters in Slow Boat do, indeed, refer to something more than Boku lets on. “Death, for some reason, reminds me of the Chinese”, relates Boku. What would that reason be if not the grim historical realities? The horrors of war and of peacetime discrimination rarely become just “water under the bridge”, in the formulation of Boku’s high school textbook. The three Chinese characters must first be read as Chinese. The symbolism they carry is primarily that of the Chinese experience in Japan not, pace Abe, “symbols of us”. For this purpose it is useful to consider the entire school rather than only the proctor as the “first Chinese” in Boku’s life. Doing so brings the minority experience in Japan into sharper temporal focus. They start life as kids with clean desks, then grow into jaded but hopeful youths (represented by the Chinese girl for whom cruelty from Japanese boys was nothing new), and proceed into middle age beaten and limited by their Chinese registration. The proctor teaches at a Chinese school, the Chinese girl’s father runs a small import business, and the encyclopedia salesman’s potential is limited not by his product but by his clientele: “Next time I’ll be selling life insurance. As long as it’s for Chinese”.

The character of J, the Chinese bartender, from the so-called Rat Trilogy lends further evidence to Yamane’s theory. He is a rather minor character until the end of Sheep Chase (written two years after Slow Boat). Jay Rubin reads the event of Boku’s handing the check from Boss’s secretary to J in terms of “paying war reparations”. Two years earlier, in Slow Boat, Boku asks the encyclopedia salesman for a pamphlet almost as an afterthought, providing his address. This attempt at opening lines of communication (a persistent theme in Murakami’s work) is all Boku can do at this point. Two years later “reparations” may be attempted, and over a decade later a catalogue of Japanese cruelty during WWII emerges in Wind-Up, but at that point, in 1980, only that simple act seems possible.

The above discussion shows a discrete extratextual referential nature of the Chinese characters in Slow Boat. However, the terminology Yamane chooses carries a rather strong impression. “Counter-social consciousness” evokes a highly politicized language à la Paulo Freire’s “conscientization”, which would have readily rolled off the lips of the more revolutionarily inclined members of Murakami’s generation. Yet given Murakami’s opinion of the 1960s student movement that defined his generation, which may be gleaned from the scorn heaped upon it in Norwegian Wood, the criticism of the violence it begot in Kafka, and the soulless products of this generation who, as Hajime observes in South of the Border, readily traded the tirades against late-stage capitalism for its opulent embrace, we must conclude that any kind of consciousness raising is not on Murakami’s radar. If any notions of social responsibility are to be found, they are not readily visible prior to Wind-Up. Yamane’s reading is at heart a retroactive one.

Though I will not deny Murakami’s occasional role as a social critic, social criticism was never his main purpose, nor did it possess any “theory of action”. He wrote about things he saw and things he knew. My impression is that Boku’s connection to the Chinese and to China...
is explained by his feeling of situational kinship. This interpretation is based on the reading of *Slow Boat* as essentially a story of a boy from Kobe who goes to Tokyo for college and settles down in this metropolis. Over the years the urban sprawl continues outward and upward, and Boku is never capable of developing a sense of belonging. Murakami writes of urban despair: “The dirty facades, the nameless crowds, the unremitting noise, the packed rush-hour trains, the gray skies, the billboards on every square centimeter of available space, the hopes and resignation, irritation and excitement [...] That’s the city.”

And this city is not a place for him, just like it was never a place the Chinese girl was meant to be, by her own estimation. The situational kinship mentioned above is born of the feeling of being an outsider, just the kind of feeling a young man coming from Kobe to Tokyo might have. Moreover, it is the feeling of being an outsider in one's own country, a perpetual sense of alienation. Feeling like a foreigner in a strange land he calls home, Boku is naturally drawn to the Chinese as they share this similar experience. It would be too much to say with Tamotsu Aoki that this story “has nothing to do with Chinese people per se” (Yamane produces enough evidence to the contrary), but it would likewise be too much to say that is has *everything* to do with Chinese people. The Chinese were probably chosen due to Murakami's personal background. His father served in China during WWII and Murakami reveals that as a young boy he sensed “the shadow of death hovering around” his father. Otherwise Murakami may have just as well used the Korean minority as he does in *Sputnik*.

We have seen then an interest, however subtle, in the periphery of Japanese society in Murakami’s early work. We must, however, concede that it does not develop substantially until *Wind-Up*, at the earliest, and the first exhibit of evidence that indicates Murakami’s conscious efforts to speak to the fringes is found in the *The Place that was Promised* section of *Underground* quoted earlier. The above discussion has attempted to establish the Murakami “domain”, the hermeneutic core necessary for comparison to Furukawa's novel. Although concern with the periphery, and the importance of history do not constitute an exhaustive list – the this/other world and dream/reality discourse will be explored in the Furukawa sections – it serves as a springboard for the forthcoming discussion of Furukawa’s re-interpretation.

**Furukawa – chronicler of the misfit generation**

“I dedicate this book to the Tokyo of 2002 and the preceding decade”, writes Furukawa in the essay appropriately titled *Explaining My Writing, Explaining Our Times*, setting himself up as a writer of a specific time and place. Murakami has also been read as a writer of a specific generation, a baby-boomer generation that came of age during the student uprisings of the late 1960s, and then helped to build 1980s Japan's bubble economy. Furukawa, born in Fukushima in 1966, was in junior high when *Slow Boat* was published, and in Waseda – Murakami’s alma mater – when *Norwegian Wood* hit the shelves. Not surprisingly the scope of Furukawa’s “remix” covers the years 1985-2002. If Murakami was the writer of the tumultuous 1960s generation, Furukawa is the writer of the “lost decade”.

The difficulty in analyzing Furukawa’s *SB2002* in relationship to Murakami’s original can be largely blamed on the generational difference. As shown in the preceding discussion, and as can be expected, Murakami’s writing has changed since the publication of *Slow Boat*, the major shift occurring in 1995. Furukawa’s version, however, is composed almost a decade later, and it incorporates post-1995 influences, particularly apparent in the importance of dreams and in the focus on the fringe elements of Japanese society.

Furukawa’s narrator, likewise called only Boku, presents an obvious example. In childhood he is sent to a kind of reform school, which he calls “the End of the World”, in a transpar-
in that he is unable to leave the crowded subway car. If the first two attempts involved crossing a border, the third escape attempt centers on creating borders. Noting his previous failures of escape, Boku reasons his only solution is to create a space within Tokyo that is at the same time a Tokyo-free zone. To this end Boku opens a café, referring to it as his “Anti-Tokyo Fortress”, and intends it to be a safe space to keep Tokyo out. This design is also upset by a bizarre destruction of Boku’s “fortress”. If any escape is accomplished at the end, it is much like the escape in *End of the World*, that is a retreat into a dream world, a withdrawal into oneself.

**Furukawa’s dreamer**

Dream sequences are the driving thematic force of Furukawa’s narrative. If the book were a song, the dream sequences would fulfill the chorus function. Boku’s preoccupation with dreams begins at the tender age of ten, as he grows cognizant of his own mortality. This realization at once resonates with readers of *Norwegian Wood* as a reference to Toru’s similar epiphany. Recognizing sleep as mimicry of death, but nevertheless fascinated by the world of dreams, Boku dedicates himself to composing a dream diary after reading Freud. In his dedication, Boku slipped not only into the dream world but also into truancy and was sent off to a special school. At this school he meets his first girlfriend, who fulfills the role of his new dream diary. The forceful separation from her precipitates his first turn to violence, and the string of events that follow. Almost twenty years later this girl’s younger sister sends Boku a letter after her sister’s death, in which his effect on his first girlfriend is detailed. She is said to have been living in a dream world, and by listening to her and understanding her dreams, Boku woke her from that world. Significantly, this awakening carries a positive connotation, suggesting the “real world” is preferable to the “dream world”. The girlfriend went on to marry a Chinese-Japanese man ten years her senior. This letter also contained a CD with *On A Slow Boat to China*. This CD appears repeatedly...
in Boku’s “present day” dream sequences. These dreams, set in what appears to be a hotel room (which is later revealed to be a ship cabin), include a writing desk with a pile of dust, under which rests a yellow-jacketed Sonny Rollins CD with *On A Slow Boat to China*. Readers of *Wind-Up* will instantly make the connection to the mysterious Room 208.

Furukawa weaves these recurring dreams into the narrative of Boku exploring the area around Tokyo Bay on Christmas Eve, 2002. His trek begins at the Hamarikyu Gardens, proceeds through Shiodome, to Odaiba, and ends at Dream Island, the artificial island that was originally a garbage dump. He rides around on the automated train Yurikamome, slipping in and out of consciousness. Thus the “present day” narrative is set in an entirely artificial space, traversed on an automated train, in a city bisected by train and subway lines, highways, and bridges with no human element in sight. Ironically, with all the mass transit available to the Tokyo dweller, Boku cannot find a way out. This is because the boundaries he cannot cross are not physical, but psychological. He cannot run away from himself.

The last words of the dead girlfriend in the above-mentioned letter provide Boku with an avenue for liberation. “Stick out your chest – be proud”, she writes, echoing the sentiment of the Chinese proctor from Murakami’s short story. Boku is thus able to confront himself in the dream world through a mirror:

* A mirror. I look in. It’s clouded. And dirty. I wipe it with my palm and see my reflection. Is that really me? Yes, I answer, as if at the Last Judgment. Yes, this is how I’ve lived my life.
* I won’t run away. I won’t run away from my failed chronicle.
* At that moment, I pass through the wall – through the mirror. Into the “dream” of reality. And I don’t wake up.

This falling into the “dream of reality” is set in contrast to passing through the “wall separating dream from reality”. The dichotomous worlds of dream and reality thus resolve into a synergistic relationship through the cathartic confrontation of the self, described above. The blending of these two realms opens the door for the final dream like scene in which Boku is able to board a freighter to China. In other words, within this new symbiotic world, Boku is able to realize his dream, in which he is on a slow boat, by “actually” purchasing a ticket for the China-bound freighter.

**Blended story**

Even casual readers of Murakami may find themselves involuntarily projecting his pet two-world thematic onto Furukawa’s “remix”. In the brief passage above, the dirty mirror that reflects another reality is originally found in *Sheep Chase*, while passing through a wall into another world is recognizably *Wind-Up*. Experienced readers of Murakami may – and in the case of this reader do – in fact begin to compose the blend of Murakami’s and Furukawa’s dream worlds. But readers are selective in this procedure. They are more likely to project dreams found in *Wind-Up*, *Sputnik*, and *Kafka* on Furukawa’s work than dreams from *Sheep Chase*, for example. This is due, in part, to more “identity connectors” between the former novels that facilitate projection. For example, in Furukawa’s novel, Boku believes he is in a hotel room in his dream. In *Wind-Up*, the pivotal part of the narrative is set in a dream hotel room, in which Toru confronts his nemesis, and “rescues” his wife. Thus the reader is likely to assume Furukawa’s dream space is also a hotel room. We are pleasantly surprised to discover that this space is actually a boat cabin. Furukawa, fully aware of this expectation, exploits it for maximum effect. Of course, those unfamiliar with *Wind-Up* will miss the full impact of this legerdemain. In fact, it may seem perfectly natural for Boku to literally find himself on a (slow) boat. Furukawa is playing a game specifically with readers of Murakami, inviting
them to project analogs from Murakami’s universe onto his work.

The new blended structure is completed when readers fill in the patterns created by earlier projections. The dream world in Wind-Up is a subconscious place in which one can confront problems that manifest themselves in the real world. This is possible because dreams hold a form of psychosomatic power. Thus, the understanding of dreams, per Kafka, as gateways to a world of “reconciliation and restoration” can likewise be projected. Such projections, however, are necessarily selective. One can just as likely project the dream world from Sputnik, for example. Selective projection enables the composition and completion of this blend. The final step is the elaboration of the blended story, that is, the development of meaning accessible only through the blending process. Elaboration allows us to interpret the final dream sequences in Furukawa and its relationship to “reality” in a manner similar to the way Kafka’s entering into a “brand-new world” has been interpreted earlier. This kind of interpretation is not readily accessible for readers who engage Furukawa’s work independently of Murakami, and is at once impossible to escape for readers familiar with Murakami’s work.

**Conclusion**

Cognitive blending theory provides a useful tool of analysis for the kind of related works at the heart of the present discussion. It is also impressive for its breadth of possible application. It can be fruitfully applied to interpret, for example, Murakami’s early work through the prism of the Aum experience. The starred sheep of Sheep Chase, the ambiguous utopia of End of the World, short stories like The Dancing Dwarf all take on a new meaning when read anachronistically. These new semantic domains are born of creative blending outlined above, and may be discussed with that vocabulary. However, it is applied here at the macro level. Though only briefly considered in the current paper, it would be illuminating to explore further the way the “sampling” and “remixing” notions in music are understood to be applied to literary inspiration, which I believe is the product of the same kind of creative blend. The micro blends also merit further discussion, even for the works discussed here. Dozens of connections between Murakami’s work and Furukawa’s weave a complex semantic web, of which only a thread is discussed at length presently. The “End of the World” school, the interpretation of dreams (which can also be translated as “dream reading”, familiar to End of the World readers), the crows, copious references to popular culture, meta-fiction, among others, all resonate with Murakami’s literary production. I have focused on what I believed to be the most important connections: the thematic of time and the implication of the other world and dreams in contemporary Japan, including the suggestion that the cure to psychological damage can be found in the harmonizing of the real world and the world on the periphery of physical experience.

**Endnotes**

8 そ is a counter for (small) boats. In the order that they appear in this paper, the “vessels” are: (1) 考古学的疑問から出発する (2) 肉手はきちんと膝の上に置いておきなさい (3) 僕に読める字もあり, 読めぬ字もあった (4) どこにも出口などないのだ (5) なにかしら不均一な永久運動のような
君が商売をやってるなんてね（7）こんにちはこれが最初じゃないし、きっと最後でもない（8）そして誇りを持ちなさい。

10 Ibid., p. 18.
11 Ibid., p. 16.
12 Ibid., p. 51.
13 Ibid., p. 15.
14 Ibid., p. 44.
15 Ibid., p. 34.
16 Ibid., p. 22.
18 Ibid., p. 63.
21 Ishihara Chiaki, Chiizu no ue no jiga (Self on the Map), Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū, 1998, p. 162.
25 Ibid., p. 122.
28 Ibid., p. 233.
29 Gabriel, p. 130.
32 Ibid., p. 22.
36 Yamada, p. 18.
38 Ibid., p. 24.
39 Ibid., p. 10.
40 Ibid., p. 9.
41 Ibid., p. 25.
43 Murakami, Chugoku yuki no surou bōto, p. 13.
44 Murakami, Chugoku yuki no surou bōto, p. 43.
45 Ibid., p. 28.
46 Ibid., p. 48. Birnbaum provides a wealth of further support in his translation, I mean there’s only so many Chinese families to visit. Maybe I’ll have moved on to insurance for Chinese. Or funeral plots. What’s it really matter? (Murakami, A Slow Boat to China, p. 237).
50 Murakami, A Slow Boat to China, p. 238.
51 Murakami, Boku wa naze erusaremu ni itta no ka (Why I Went to Jerusalem), Bunji Shunju, April 2009, no. 4 (March 10, 2009), p. 169.
52 Furukawa, Kaidai, p. 155.
53 Furukawa, 2002 nen no surou bōto, p. 21.
54 Ibid., p. 54.
55 Ibid., pp. 96-97.
57 Furukawa, 2002 nen no surou bōto, p. 113.
58 Ibid., p. 16.
59 Ibid., p. 33.
60 Ibid., p. 147.
61 Ibid., p. 148.
62 Ibid., pp. 136-137.
63 Ibid., p. 134.
64 Ibid., p. 135.
65 Ibid., p. 152.
67 Gabriel, p. 130.
Michael S. Ignatov is an MA candidate (2011) in Japanese Literature at the University of Arizona. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of Arizona with a BA in East Asian Studies in 2009. He is also the winner of the 2010 Kurodahan Press Translation Prize. His research interests include modern Japanese literature, translation, and the cultural interaction of Russia and Japan. He has recently defended an MA thesis titled *Body in Motion: Furukawa Hideo, Writer for the Multimedia Age*, which intends to serve as a critical introduction of Furukawa’s work to the Anglophone audience.
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South Korea’s Changing National Identity and the Future of Inter-Korea Relations

The ethnic homogeneity of North and South Korea has been considered a constant for over sixty years, and Korean ethnic nationalism has been used to legitimize the unification policies of both the North and the South. As South Korea attracts more immigration, however, the assumption of ethnic homogeneity is being challenged, and ethnic nationalism in Korea is, slowly but definitely, being replaced by a new civic nationalism that emphasizes democratic values. This paper addresses the implications of this change in South Korean national identity for inter-Korean relations. The paper concludes that South Korea’s policies towards the North will be shaped less by ethnic nationalist considerations and increasingly by a calculation of South Korean national interests informed by democratic values rooted in the new civic nationalism.

Introduction

At the 2006 inter-Korean military talks, the North Korean representative Kim Young-chul criticized a South Korean practice that many South Korean rural men are getting married to foreign brides. He expressed concerns that the ethnic homogeneity of the Korean nation would be seriously damaged as such practices continue. When the South Korean representative replied that it is “only like a droplet of ink in the Han river” and will not be a problem “as long as the immigrants can be assimilated into the main-stream of the society”, the counterpart from the North disagreed, saying that “not even a droplet of ink should be permitted”. He further replied that “it is undeniable that the purity of the Korean race has been intact since the beginning of history”. These remarks by Kim attracted much attention from the South Korean public, as the South has been moving toward a “multiracial” or “multicultural” society with an increasing number of foreign immigration as it became one of the most affluent and globalized economies in Asia. These immigrants, ranging from foreign laborers to foreign brides, currently account for more than a million or 2% of the South Korean population.

An editorial published on April 27, 2006 by Rodong Shinmun, the official North Korean party newspaper, provides an explanation why North Korea cares that strongly about the homogeneity of the “Korean race” in South Korea. The editorial heavily condemned South Korea’s recent movement toward a “multiracial” or “multicultural” society as an “unpardonable crime” against the Korean nation. The “crime by pro-American elements in the South”, it wrote, will weaken “the spirit of nation” and will eventually hinder Korea’s independent reunification. The editorial calls upon the people of South Korea to “decisively reject the anti-national moves of the sycophantic traitorous forces to tarnish the lineage of the Korean nation and obliterate it”, as the theory of “multiracial society” is a “poison and anti-reunification logic […] to make the North and the South different in lineages, block the June 15 era of reunification and seek the permanent division of the nation and the manipulation of the US behind the scene”.2

The situation in South Korea is quite different. Unlike the xenophobic North, South Korea, which also once had a very small foreign population, has increasingly attracted foreign immigration as it became one of the most affluent and globalized economies in Asia. These immigrants, ranging from foreign laborers to foreign brides, currently account for more than a million or 2% of the South Korean population.3 This gradual change in demographics inevitably invited new ideas about how to define Korean, and the gov-
ernment started to emphasize the “multicultural” nature of Korean society. The traditional emphasis on ethnic nationalism based on a common bloodline is deliberately being replaced by a new kind of civic nationalism focusing on state-centered values.4

This article aims to demonstrate how such change in the South Korean national identity will affect the country’s policies toward North Korea. In Korea where one nation is divided by two competing states, this kind of change in understanding of the national identity may have important political consequences. As both North and South Korean policies toward each other have been centered on and legitimized by the idea of ethnic nationalism, the changing national identity in South Korea can introduce a new factor in inter-Korea relations. With a new developing identity in South Korea, support for the unconditional engagement policy or the unification policy based on the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism and North Korea’s “within our own nation” argument will gradually lose its appeal in the South, while a more pragmatic approach toward North Korea based on a keen calculation of the South Korean national interests informed by democratic values will become more prevalent.

This article is organized into five parts. The first section will discuss the origin of Korean ethnic nationalism and present some competing views on its origin. The second section will analyze how ethnic nationalism has affected the South Korean policies toward North Korea, especially during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations. The third section will explore the foreign immigration situation and the rise of a new type of nationalism in South Korea that is distinguishable from the ethnic nationalism. Finally, the paper will project how the rise of new state-centered nationalism will influence inter-Korean relations and South Korean policies vis-à-vis North Korea.

National identity and foreign policy

Before discussing the specific case of Korean ethnic nationalism and the changing national identity and its effect on South Korea’s policies toward North Korea, it is important to establish a link between national identity and foreign policy. How would national identity interact with the state actors’ policy outcomes? Realists argue that a state’s policy choice in international relations is responsive to objective and structural realities that are anarchic and competitive. In this sense, the state primarily seeks to maximize its relative power, both militarily and economically, and pursues security vis-à-vis other countries. They see national identities permanently fixed as power politics and understand national interests as a mere by-product of this perceived nature of international relations.5

Constructivists, on the other hand, view that national identities can change, and they focus on how identity politics actually matters in international relations. Alexander Wendt writes that “identities are the basis of interests”, and “actors define their interests on the process of defining situations”.6 In our discussion, thus, national identity defines “the group that the state is supposed to serve and protect”, and the definition of the national identity is associated with national objectives that the state is expected to champion.7 In other words, national identity provides a “cognitive framework for shaping its interests, preferences, worldview, and consequent foreign policy actions”.8 In international relations, a state understands and reacts to other states based on the identity they attribute to them. A state certainly acts differently toward adversaries compared to how they act toward their friends. Therefore, a constructivist would say that understanding national identity will provide a more precise prediction of how a state would make foreign policy choices.

The post–Cold War era has well demonstrated the importance of the link between national identity and international politics. With the demise of the ideological dichotomy between states, we could observe many countries that are redefining their national identities and changing their policy orientations. Korea was not an exception. There have been numerous studies
about Korea’s changing national identity as a result of the end of the Cold War and democratization. These studies focus on Korea’s changing national identity from an anti-communist US ally to a country with a renewed ethnic nationalism which feels closer to North Korea than the US. These studies explained South Korea’s engagement policy toward North Korea in terms of ethnic nationalism. For example, Uk Heo and Jung-Yeop Woo contend that the strong sense of ethnic unity is one of the most important forces that directed South Korea’s continued engagement policy toward the North even when the United States were opposed it.9

As studies have mostly concentrated on the renewal of ethnic nationalism in Korea, however, there is little literature that focuses on the decline of ethnic nationalism, as partly caused by immigration to South Korea, and its possible foreign policy implications. Although many scholars, including Seol Dong-Hoon, focused their studies on the social aspects of immigration and immigrants’ assimilation into the Korean society, the important structural changes caused by immigration, such as the rise of civic nationalism, have been undeservingly excluded from discussions of foreign policy and inter-Korea relations. This paper aims to provide some insights on this issue and hopes to incite more academic discussions on this subject.

**Origins of Korean ethnic nationalism**

Benedict Anderson described a nation as an “imagined community” which is socially constructed by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group.10 However, this notion of nation is unfamiliar to most Koreans who perceive the concept of nation as something fixed and eternal. The latter perception has also been shared by political elites of the two Koreas. They see the Korean nation as having a long history dating back to ancient times and that Korea’s ethnic unity is unquestionable. Although, throughout the Cold War, regimes of both sides of the peninsula had claimed that they were the true representative of the Korean nation (or race, as the corresponding Korean term minjok can be translated in both ways) and criticized each other for being a puppet regime of their respective global super powers, it seemed almost “politically incorrect” to question its historic authenticity.11 Even after the Cold War, the two Koreas have never officially challenged the ethnic nationalist emphasis on unity, as any slight attempt to negate it would be a political suicide. In 2000 and 2007 summits between the North Korean leader and the two South Korean presidents, the two Koreas reaffirmed the principle of **uri minjok kiri** (within our own nation) in managing inter-Korea relations, based on the idea that all Koreans are of one blood line from the ancient times.12

An enormous amount of scholarship has been devoted to understanding how important such emphasis on the shared bloodline is in explaining the Korean identity. In contrast to conventional perception, however, many historians find that the Korean national identity based on the homogeneous blood line is rather an invention of the 20th-century nationalist movement. Carter Eckert notes that there was little collective feeling toward the abstract concept of “Korea” as a nation before the 20th century.13 Instead, it is generally agreed that the modern concept of Korean national identity was constructed in response to the imperial interventions in Korea marked by the Japanese colonial rule. Shin Chae-ho (1880-1936), a nationalist historian and journalist, is largely credited with having accomplished this construction and further shaping the course of the Korean nationalism that was yet to come in the future. Shin was the first historian to focus on the idea of the Korean nation, or **minjok**, as an ethnic identity. He emphasized the ancientness of the Korean nation and narrated Korean history in terms of **minjok** history. He also highlighted an old foundation myth about Dangun to create a history of the patrilineal family records.14

Shin’s interpretation of Korean history greatly influenced Koreans’ view of their nation. Adopting Shin’s ethnicist or primordialist view, many Koreans regard the idea of the Korean ethnic unity as natural, since all Koreans are consid-
ered descendants of Dangun. According to those who hold this view, the Korean nation has been a “unitary nation of common blood, territory, language, culture, and historical destiny for thousands of years”. They argue that the Korean nation existed whether Koreans were aware of it or not. This view has been held by many Koreans including political leaders such as Syngman Rhee (Yi Seung-man) and Park Chung-hee of the South and Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il of the North, and it is still popular among a great number of Koreans.

In contrast, there is a constructivist view that rejects the primordial view of the Korean national identity. The constructivists understand the Korean nation as a product of the imagination of nationalist scholars, such as Shin Chae-ho, of the late 19th and early 20th century. Like many nations of the world, the Korean nation was also created as Korea struggled to fit into the modern world’s system of nations. For example, Andre Schmid argues that Korean ethnic nationalism was a strategic choice of Korean nationalists to separate Korea from China and to find an international status for Korea in the modern world of nations. This group of constructivist scholars focuses on different ethnicities of Korea that assimilated into mainstream Korean society throughout history. They also argue that although Korea has maintained an unusually high level of territorial integrity since at least a thousand years ago, the idea of nationalism would not have come naturally because the Korean elite considered themselves to be members of a larger cosmopolitan civilization centered in China.

Regardless of the different views on the origin of the Korean nation, scholars of both perspectives seem to agree that the modern concept of the Korean national identity emphasizes the ethnic homogeneity, kinship, and common descent of all Koreans. This conventional perception of nation is evident in a wide range of social discrimination against “non-Koreans”. In the past, some Koreans with “mixed” heritage were looked down upon as being of “mixed-blood” and referred to in derogatory terms. Many Koreans see “ethnic homogeneity as a blessing”, and this discrimination, although mitigated, still remains strong. Moreover, from the colonial context, ethnic nationalism in Korea had received overwhelmingly positive assessments by Koreans. In this context, political leaders did not refrain from using ethnic nationalism to boost their popularity or legitimize their policies. The following section will discuss how ethnic nationalism served as the raison d’être for many South Korean policies toward North Korea under different leaders.

**Application of ethnic nationalism: policies vis-à-vis North Korea**

When Korea gained independence from the Japanese after the World War II, the sense of ethnic nationalism and unity was at its highest point. People were in high hopes of establishing an independent nation-state of all Koreans. In contrast to the strong feeling of unity, the nation was divided into two regimes with rival ideologies, and this new political situation inevitably instigated a struggle between the two regimes for national representation of a people who considered themselves to be one group with a common identity. The question of who really represented this unitary nation emerged as the central concern for political legitimacy for both newly established Korean regimes. Ethnic nationalism was, therefore, used as a tool to legitimize regimes in both Koreas, and it was also utilized to make sense of the unfortunate political division of the nation.

The first South Korean president Syngman Rhee, a nationalist, also held a strong view of Korean ethnic nationalism and used nationalist rhetoric to legitimize the Southern government and its policies. He proposed ilmin chuui (one-people-ism) as a platform of the new state and made it the ideological foundation of his North Korea policies. By ilmin chuui, he proclaimed that Korea should always be one because Koreans are a unitary nation with a long history. He also proclaimed that South Korea alone is the true representative of Korean ethnicity and re-
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In the context of the Cold War, South Korea's policies toward North Korea were confrontational. Rhee, the authoritarian military leader who ruled South Korea from 1961 to 1979, proposed the “construction first, unification later” theory, which emphasized economic development over unification. This theory should be considered as an extension of Rhee's policy because Park argued that South Korea should make its first priority to establish national power to overwhelm the North Korean communists in order to liberate Korean people under their regime. In that sense, his North Korea policy is criticized by many leftist scholars for being confrontational and having made division of the nation permanent. However, it must be noted that the Cold War settings undoubtedly constrained any flexibility in the South Korean views on North Korea and, as a result, policy options. In that historical context, to see North Korea as an entity other than South Korea's number one enemy was politically difficult, if not impossible.

However, Park's government, although confrontational, never negated the national unity of the Korean people and the inevitability of reunification of the Korean nation. Park once also declared that “although we are now separated into South and North, we are one entity with a common destiny [...] bound by the same racial origin.” On July 4, 1972, Park's government issued a joint communiqué with North Korea, declaring three principles of unification that became the theoretical basis of the future unification discussions. These guiding principles are “first, unification should be solved independently from foreign powers; second, unification should be achieved peacefully; third, great unity of nation should be sought over any institutional and ideological differences.” In short, although, South Korea's policies in both Rhee and Park governments toward North Korea had been confrontational because of the Cold War context and because of the perspective that the North Korean regime was not a legitimate representative of the Korean nation, the sense of ethnic unity always served as one of the core values in these confrontational policies. In other words, anti-communism and ethnic nationalism went concordantly.

With the end of the Cold War, the traditional paradigm of seeing North Korea as a primary threat began to be challenged in South Korea. The new perspective that regards North Korea as an entity to reconcile and cooperate with started to emerge among many Koreans. The South embarked on adopting engagement policies toward North Korea as a result. For instance, in 1991, the Roh Tae-woo government signed the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement in which both Koreas confirmed the principle of mutual respect and promotion of economic cooperation for the Korean nation's co-prosperity. In the preamble of the agreement, it states that both Koreas will endeavor to promote the Korean nation's common interests. However, this hopeful agreement became futile with the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1994. Since then, inter-Korean relations had been struggling between conflicting identities. The ethnic unity of Korea was to be sought, but North Korea was by all means posing apparent security threats.

The dramatic turn in South Korea's North Korean policies came in 1998 with the election of President Kim Dae-jung. With the change in the leadership, the country also experienced many policy shifts, especially those regarding North Korea. The Kim Dae-jung administration's unification policy was named the Sunshine Policy, and it had four principles: first, South Korea would not allow any kind of military provocation by North Korea; second, South Korea would not seek to absorb North Korea; third, economic, social, and other cooperation and exchanges...
would be promoted; and fourth, the Sunshine Policy would be established upon the principle of reciprocity. Based on the new understanding of inter-Korean relations, the new policy saw some initial successes. In 2000, an inter-Korean summit was held in Pyongyang, where the leaders of the two sides of Korea met to discuss the future of the Korean nation. Reaffirming their national unity, the summit produced a joint declaration in which they declared that Korea's unification problem will be solved independently by “our nation”. However, the anticipated hope for success in the policy was not sustained as the principle of reciprocity was not observed. North Korea did not change its behaviors as it was expected to do, and two military clashes occurred in the West sea of Korea in 1999 and 2002. By the end of Kim's administration, the popular support for his North Korea policy hit the lowest point at 18.6%.  

Nevertheless, the active engagement policy was not abandoned. It was succeeded and further developed by the following Roh Moo-hyun government. In 2002, Roh was elected to presidency with large support from the nationalist populace. A series of events that heightened nationalist sentiments in Korea, such as the 2002 World Cup and the deaths of two school girls in an accident with a US army vehicle, contributed to increasing the popular support for Roh, who carefully positioned himself as a nationalist. While Kim Dae-jung's policy started as an operational scheme to set a new paradigm of inter-Korean relations based on South Korea's confidence, the Roh government's policies that inherited the essensials of Kim's policy were often criticized for being influenced too much by a peculiar form of ethnic nationalism.

One important characteristic of some of his main constituents is that they held more sympathetic feelings toward North Korea while regarding the United States as an obstacle to national unification. This version of nationalism considered South Korea as illegitimate because it did not fully recover its national independence from the imperialist powers. The US military bases in South Korea were often treated as the symbol of national degradation and its political dependence on the imperialist powers. Thus, they were sympathetic toward the “more legitimate” North Korean regime and its nationalist arguments. Students, the 386 Generation elites, studied this version of nationalism which put national unification and anti-Americanism before everything else. Although it is debatable whether the elites maintained the view even when they were in power, it certainly had effects on their general perception of Korea's national interests.

Indeed, Roh Moo-hyun and his administration exhibited what could be easily regarded by the Korean conservatives as a pro-North Korean and anti-American attitude on various occasions. For example, Roh Moo-hyun took pride in the fact that he had never been to the United States before he was elected president. As a presidential candidate, he even said that “he might favor neutrality if a war broke out between North Korea and the United States”. When the North Korean nuclear issue was the Bush administration's highest concern in 2005, Chung Dong-young, then the Minister of Unification, said in an interview that “North Korea should maintain its right to use nuclear energy peacefully”. Throughout Roh's term, South Korea has repeatedly abstained from voting for the UN resolutions on North Korean human rights issues. Even after the 2006 nuclear test by North Korea, the South Korean government reacted to the test within a very limited scope. Although it condemned North Korea initially, it continuously pursued the “expanded economic relations with North Korea through the Mount Kumgang project and the Kaesong Industrial Zone”. According to Kim Dae-shik, the Secretary General of the National Unification Advisory Council, the Roh administration saw economic cooperation between the two Koreas through the nationalist perspective, and it regarded building a pan-Korean national economic community more important than adhering to the international norms. And to build that community, it was important not to provoke the communist regime.
This active engagement policy regardless of North Korea’s behavior was legitimized by Korean ethnic nationalism. Of course, other strategic concerns, such as the liberal idea that economic, social, and political cooperation would bring peace and security, did play some role in carrying on the policy. However, when the administration continued its active engagement with the North even after the nuclear threat against the South became apparent, many people were compelled to think that the nationalist approach was being favored over objective security issues. This “nation first” idea could be also found in the 2007 joint declaration after the second inter-Korean summit. The declaration reaffirmed the principle of “within our nation”, which expressed a version of Korean nationalism that stressed independence from foreign influences. This principle virtually set a framework in which any criticism of “engagement” policy based on international norms could easily be labeled “anti-national” or “anti-unification”. A significant portion of the highly nationalistic Korean population accepted this nationalist argument and supported unconditional support for North Korea.40

Immigration to South Korea and development of civic nationalism

As discussed, one of the main influences on South Korea’s North Korea policies throughout history has come from ethnic nationalism and the idea of ethnic unity. To understand the future of inter-Korean relations, it is reasonable to ask what will happen when the guiding principle, the idea of ethnic nationalism and ethnic unity, changes in South Korea. In the country, an influx of immigrants is gradually causing a transformation in the conventional view of the nation. Although there are other factors that are causing this change, a fundamental change in demographics that constitutes the nation itself certainly deserves close attention.

As it became one of the most economically developed and globalized countries in Asia, South Korea started to attract immigrants from other countries. In 2007, foreigners living in Korea exceeded one million for the first time, and they now account for more than the 2% of the total population of the country. Many of these immigrants came to Korea to seek better economic opportunities, and they fill the jobs that Korean natives are reluctant to take. There is also another prominent category of immigration. Often called “marriage immigration”, many foreign women, mostly from Southeast Asia, move to Korea to marry rural Korean men. Since men in farming or fishing villages find it difficult to find Korean brides, this type of marriage has been popular and increased rapidly in the past few years. In this context, it comes as no surprise that more than 40% of all marriages in rural regions are of this kind.41 The increase is proven by the data as well. Statistics show that 11% of all marriages in South Korea were between a Korean and a foreigner in 2008. Moreover, the number indicates how prevalent this type of marriage is.42

The increase in the number of immigrants is projected to continue due to South Korea’s economic and social necessities. First of all, as Korea is experiencing the lowest birth rate in the world, immigration is becoming an economic necessity. With a birthrate of 1.19 in 2008, South Korea is facing a declining labor force in the years ahead. With the current birth rate, the country can easily lose its economic vitality, and a failure of the social security system is also destined if the current trend continues. To cope with this problem, many policy recommendations were made, and one of them is to increase immigration. According to a study by the United Nations Procurement Division (UNPD) in 2000, South Korea will require a total of over 6 million immigrants until 2050 to maintain its economic vitality.43 More recently, the South Korean government recognized this suggestion as one of the three main principles to cope with the problem of low birth rate. In November 2009, the Presidential Council for Future and Vision proposed plans to cope with the low birth rate crisis and included an “increasing Koreans” project. The project is a plan to increase the number of Koreans by allowing dual citizenship and an having an open
immigration policy.\textsuperscript{44} 

There is also another social cause that may promote immigration: the fact that Korea had an unusually unbalanced sex ratio in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During that time, doctors often informed the parents-to-be of the sex of the baby. In a society where boys are preferred over girls, this led to the practice of sex selection of babies. As a result, the imbalance in the sex ratio intensified. In 1986, the ratio reached 111.7, meaning that there were 111.7 boys for every 100 girls. Throughout the period, the ratio averaged over 110. In simple mathematical terms, more than 10% of the male population in that generation will not be able to find Korean brides. Korea’s \textit{Segye Ilbo} reported in October 2009 that Korea will face a “marriage crisis”, as there will be 382,000 men who will not be able to find Korean brides in 2014.\textsuperscript{45} In a society where marriage and family are highly valued, Korean men are likely to find their brides through international marriages. 

With more immigration, there is an increasing number of Korean children of mixed ethnic heritage. The number of children from multicultural or multiethnic families already exceeded 60,000 in 2009 and is expected to exceed 100,000 in 2010.\textsuperscript{46} In 2020, it is projected that the number will go up to 1,670,000. In rural areas where international marriages are more prevalent, it is already not unusual to find Koreans with clearly “foreign” features. Among farming households, 49% of all children will be multiethnic by 2020.\textsuperscript{47} To the current trend, the United Nations recommended that Korea stop using the term “unitary nation”, as it does not reflect reality anymore. Ethnic diversification of Korea is by no means like a “droplet of ink in the Han river” anymore. The statistics show that it is clearly more than a small droplet. 

How then will this phenomenon affect South Korean identity and the country’s foreign policy outcomes? Some may say that this change will not have significant influence on identity or policy because the immigrants and their children are usually in the lower classes of society. It is true that foreign laborers are mostly filling in the lowest-paid jobs that natives are reluctant to take, and the “marriage immigrants” are wives of rural men who are considered relatively poor by Korean standards. Consequently it is also true that these people will not have direct social or political influence to affect mainstream identity or the policy-making process. 

The doubts on their influence are, however, misled. One way they will have influence is by the immigrants providing a new framework through which Koreans see the concept of nation. Through the introduction of new ideas and perspectives, the Korean identity based on ethnicity can change gradually. In addition, although they may not become the mainstream of Korean society, statistics suggest that they can create social problems of cohesion when they are not incorporated into society. As South Koreans make efforts to incorporate the immigrants into Korean society, these foreign immigrants provide an opportunity for Koreans to see their nation not as an ethnicity but as something with a more inclusive definition. 

Among these progressive efforts is an emphasis on civic nationalism. Kevin Doak, a scholar in Japanese nationalism, defines civic nationalism as “an ideological commitment to liberal democracy and to criteria for citizenship in which ethnicity and cultural identity are explicitly irrelevant”.\textsuperscript{48} In the Korean education scene, the traditional emphasis on a unitary ethnic nation is recently being replaced by an emphasis on a civic nation. This is exhibited by the recent change to the wording of the Pledge to the National Flag. The original pledge that was sent to schools in 1972 reads: “I, in front of the honorable \textit{taegukgi} [the Korean national flag], pledge I will dedicate my soul and body to loyally serve for the sake of the endless glory of the fatherland and \textit{minjok} [ethnic nation].” (translated by the author) 

The pledge was criticized as being too nationalist and not corresponding to the current debates about ethnic identity. Inclusion of the word \textit{minjok} became the main point of the controversy. In 2007, the pledge was eventually re-
worded. The new version of the pledge reads: “I, in front of the honorable taegukgi, pledge I will loyally serve for the sake of the endless glory of the free an just Republic of Korea.”

In the new text, the word minjok (ethnic nation) was replaced by the “free and just Republic of Korea”. It represents the view that liberal values of the republic such as freedom and justice, rather than ethnic identity, should be the guiding principles of the ideal national identity. The change in the text of the pledge represents deliberate efforts by the Korean government to emphasize civic nationalism over ethnic nationalism. It is also an indication that the changing ethnic situation affected the view on Korea’s future national identity.

A 2005 survey conducted by the East Asia Institute in Seoul confirms the rise of civic nationalism and the new civic identity in South Korea. The survey results show that Koreans are significantly more tolerant toward foreign immigrants than before, as 68% of the respondents answered that people without Korean citizenship can be treated as Koreans if they are born in Korea. This level of tolerance is exhibited again when 63% answered that foreigners who lived in Korea for a certain period of time should be eligible for Korean citizenship. On the other hand, maintaining Korean citizenship was viewed as the most important element of being Korean. Interpreting this result, Kang Won-taek contends that Koreans started to regard Korean identity based on modern political identity.49

**Conclusion: the future of inter-Korea relations**

As discussed earlier, many South Korean policies toward North Korea were derived from the assumption of a national ethnic unity. Even though there is a debate whether this perception of ethnic homogeneity “since the beginning of history” was imagined or real, Koreans largely accepted this primordialist view of the nation. During the Cold War, this view resulted in mutual exclusion and heightened tension. Believing in the idea that Korea should be under one unitary government and that they alone were the only legitimate representative of the nation, both regimes aimed at getting rid of one another. During the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations, an overemphasis on exclusive nationalism based on the idea of ethnic unity begot policies supporting the North Korean regime almost unconditionally even when North Korea was posing an apparent threat to South Korea. In both cases, Korean ethnic nationalism was a force that placed a rigid ideological barrier in the way of pursuing a more pragmatic approach to North Korea.

The ethnic diversification in South Korea, however, challenges such a perspective of the nation. As South Korea attracts and is likely to attract more immigrants in the future, it will become politically and socially problematic to keep the traditional view of an ethnic nation.50 In efforts to forge a common identity for new types of Koreans, the traditional emphasis on the common blood line is being replaced by civil values of the Republic of Korea. In this context, some progressive changes in people’s perception of nation are also taking place, making it harder for ethnic nationalism to be influential in South Korean politics.

Some may worry that such change will have negative effects on inter-Korean relations. The concern is based on the assumption that the changing identity can be politically uncomfortable for North Korea to accept. As a highly nationalistic regime, North Korea may continue to criticize the South as it did in the April 2006 Rodong Shinmun editorial. It may also brand every activity by the South Korean government as “anti-national” creating a very uncomfortable relationship between them. The China-Taiwan relationship during the Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) rule of Taiwan is an example of how a highly nationalistic country would react to a changed identity and bring about a major discomfort between states that are supposed to share a common identity and maintain unity.51

The new paradigm in the definition of the Korean nation will, without doubt, have a power-
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ful impact on inter-Korean relations, yet the impact will not be negative. The changing identity will affect South Korea in a way that the country will find more pragmatic and situation-based policies toward North Korea that are compatible with civil values. The East Asia Institute survey shows that 58.8% of Koreans opposed unification should the core values of South Korea, such as democracy and the free market, be damaged. Moreover, 82.1% of respondents showed conscious attitudes toward unification, contrasting the earlier survey where 30.4% supported unification at all costs. Distancing themselves from the sentimental nationalist perspective that prioritizes national reunification over all things, South Koreans will make keen calculations vis-à-vis North Korea to enhance their own state interests and democratic values.

Overcoming rigidity in perspectives and policy options toward North Korea, measures of cooperation and sanctions will be applied with great flexibility. South Korea will express its concerns about North Korea’s human rights abuses and will sanction the North, if necessary, to change its nuclear policies, while keeping the option of economic cooperation always open. In terms of unification strategy, this change in the Korean national identity is also positive because it will allow Koreans to work on measures to reconcile the real differences between the two Koreas that have been separated for more than a half-century. Roy Grinker argued that Koreans tend to “overlook the real differences between North and South Korea because of the imagination of ethnic homogeneity”. The current ethnic nationalism which emphasizes ethnic unity over a long history may cause people to become too confident in fast assimilation of North and South Koreans and overlook the real difficulties that lie ahead at the time of reunification of the peninsula. Decreasing the influence of ethnic nationalism will help Koreans to dissociate themselves from the romanticized ideals of ethnic nationalism and unity and to devote more thoughts to reconciling such substantial differences.

ENDNOTES

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12 These documents are often used by North Korea and leftist civil groups to condemn President Lee Myung-bak’s North Korea policy.
15 Shin, pp. 4-5.
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20 Sang-Han Choe, South Koreans Struggle with Race, New York Times, November 2, 2009.
22 Shin, pp. 151-165.
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25 Ibid.
28 7.4 South-North Joint Communiqué of 1972.
29 Inter-Korean Basic Agreement in 1991.
31 Heo and Woo, p. 158.
33 The term "386 generation" refers to the generation of South Koreans born in the 1960s, went to college in the 1980s, and were in their 30s when the term was coined. They were politically very active as young adults and made a huge contribution to the democratization of South Korea.
36 Heo and Woo, p. 149.
40 Taek Sun Lee.
46 The terms “multicultural” and “multiethnic” are used often interchangeably in South Korea.
47 Choe.
50 Taek Sun Lee.

WON JOON JANG

Won Joon Jang is a senior at the Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service and expects to graduate in May 2010 with a BA degree in International Politics and a Certificate in Asian Studies. His main academic interests include US-Korea relations, East Asian politics, and US foreign policy.
The Changing Role of Chaebol

Multi-Conglomerates in South Korea’s National Economy

The chaebol (財閥, 재벌) multi-conglomerates were instrumental in the development of the South Korean economy and will continue to be a source of great economic strength in the future. However, a weak system of corporate governance has exacerbated past financial failures in South Korea and leaves the Korean economy at future risk. To ensure Korea’s success in an increasingly globalized world the South Korean government should continue to streamline past reform and introduce new legislation to encourage a culture of better corporate governance among the chaebol conglomerates.

Estimations about the future value of South Korea’s massive multi-conglomerate corporations, commonly called the chaebol (財閥, 재벌), tend to be a function of the past roles they’ve played and failures they’ve caused in Korea’s economy. In similar ways, South Korea’s economic system under the chaebol has often been criticized as too corrupt or antiquated for the welfare of Korea’s modern economy. Some chaebol executives have abused the influence of their positions, and financial and structural features unique to the chaebol have created or exacerbated repeated financial failures in Korea. Although useful during Korea’s industrialization and economic development, many agree that now the chaebol are only a hindrance to national progress; speeches by South Korean President Lee Myung-bak have suggested to some that Korea’s economic future relies on the prosperity of small and medium-sized firms, rather than the chaebol. However, the importance of the chaebol for South Korea’s future economy has been too quickly dismissed. Given trends of the international economic system, the chaebol will remain the heart of South Korea’s economic prosperity for a long time to come, so long as the government encourages the continued development of good corporate structure.

This paper will argue that the development and protection of good corporate governance among the chaebol is necessary for South Korea’s successful integration into the increasingly globalized international economy. Past policies intended to encourage better corporate behavior have been piecemeal, with gaps and redundancies, and were enacted only as reactionary reform in specific instances of economic failure. Instead, reform should be part of an ongoing, cohesive effort to create self-governing norms of corporate behavior which encourage good business within and among firms. Such good corporate governance is essential for Korea’s successful integration into the increasingly globalized world. Toward this end, the Korean government should focus specifically on improved implementation of policies meant to ensure managerial and financial transparency and the accountability of firms and individuals within the chaebol.

This paper will present this argument for better corporate governance and the importance of the chaebol in five parts: first, a historical review of Korea’s industrialization and the origins of the chaebol to explain both the strengths and weaknesses that define the chaebol today as well as their central role in the Korean economy; second, a brief review of previous studies and theoretical work related to what defines corporate governance, and exploration of the specific benefits for Korea’s development of good corporate governance; third, the 1997 Financial Crisis and the subsequent reforms passed by the Korean government; fourth, the effects of reforms in restructuring the chaebol and possible areas where further policies could be used to supplement
Chaebol

History of the chaebol and their role in Korea's economic development

Korea at the beginning of the 20th century was an agricultural nation that by choice engaged in little interaction with the nations beyond its borders, stifling the importation of technology and industry necessary for the development of a more modern economy. Following annexation of the Korean peninsula in 1910, the Japanese had to build for themselves all factories and machinery required to exploit the natural resources relatively abundant in Korea. Under the colonial rule of the Japanese, Koreans neither held ownership of Japanese firms nor were allowed to work in the high levels of management and so few had the opportunity learn about the technologically sophisticated methods and machines used by the Japanese. This changed following Japan's surrender after the end of World War II in 1945. Japan withdrew from Korea and Manchuria, leaving behind the factories and machinery it had built without any formal management or ownership. Although most of these industrial and infrastructure facilities were either located in the northern half of the peninsula or destroyed in the subsequent Korean War (1950-1953), assets located in the south created opportunities for some South Korean businessmen to start up new companies. The first of the businesses that eventually developed into the chaebol had their beginnings after the Korean War through these assets left behind by the Japanese occupiers.

The next big step toward South Korea's industrialization followed the military coup that overthrew the First Republic. By the beginning of the 1960s, the Syngman Rhee (Yi Seung-man) administration, elected into office through the United Nations–moderated elections in 1948 and then able to return with the United States' support following the 1953 ceasefire, had become notoriously corrupt. President Syngman Rhee himself was accused of creating ethically questionable financial agreements with the businessmen and industrialists of the post-war period. The few economic plans he did pursue were intended to maintain the flow of more foreign aid into the Korean government and did little to bolster Korean economic development.

The military-dominated government which installed itself after the coup in 1961 quickly announced an end to the corruption of the First Republic and its intention to use economic growth and development through industrialization to legitimize its authority. The following year saw the first of six sequential five-year plans passed by the Korean government to develop South Korea's industrial base, setting the stage for South Korea's economic prosperity. Underlying each of these five-year plans was a long-term course of economic development set in place by the government's economic planners.

The government planners made two decisions that greatly influenced future corporate and financial structure in Korea. First, the government decided it would choose which markets should be developed by Korean firms and allow entry to only a select number of firms. These firms were chosen from a relatively small group of companies cultivated by the government to be used as tools for Korea's state-run development. Financial incentives offered by the government, such as low-interest loans, tax breaks, and other benefits, made it easy to recruit businesses willing to cooperate.

The second significant economic decision made by the government's planners was to focus market development through export-oriented industrialization. Export-oriented industrialization is a method of industrialization that focuses on the production of goods in which a country has a comparative advantage. Rather than investing time and money to build up domestic demand for goods, Korean companies concentrated on exporting products to established markets abroad. As the South Korean government controlled firms' market entry through control of
investment capital in Korea, the exported products were all manufactured by various branches of the chaebol conglomerates. Korea’s economy came to depend heavily on its export industries and, by extension, on the chaebol. This method of industrialization produced magnificent economic growth for South Korea, but export-oriented industrialization by nature also increased Korea’s market vulnerability by creating a heavy reliance on the stability of international markets and external demand for goods. This sensitivity exacerbated the other economic problems of the 1997 Financial Crisis.

Although the social costs of Korea’s path of industrialization were significant, Korea’s economy successfully developed over the course of five short decades into the 14th-largest economy in the world today.1 External factors helped to facilitate Korea’s economic rise, including normalization of relations with Japan, inflow of foreign aid and investment, and the fall of the Soviet Union, which created South Korean construction jobs in many new, formerly Soviet states.10 Close direction by South Korea’s authoritarian government made it possible for Korea to quickly develop its economy over a few short decades, but government planners’ use of export-oriented industrialization to fuel market development had significant effects on the resulting structure of Korean corporations.

Firms that received the government’s preferential treatment were allowed exclusive entrance into Korea’s emerging markets and accumulated enormous wealth and size. These corporations were left to themselves so long as they continued to expand, create jobs, and follow the government’s course of industrialization. They developed with little actual business risk due to various financial safety-nets provided by the government and the state-run banks. Rather than worry about the profitability of business ventures, these firms instead eagerly sought entry into any market possible.11 Firms diversified through a wide range of completely unrelated goods, spreading tentacles into many markets. For example, a ship-building firm might have a branch that produces cosmetics, or a clothing producer could have a branch in pharmaceuticals. When a firm failed beyond what the government judged redeemable, its branches were forcibly divided and distributed among the other chaebol, eager to snap up these assets. In this manner the chaebol conglomerates grew so large that the top fifty chaebol had sales equivalent to almost 94% of the total national GDP by 1984.12

Besides diversification in unrelated markets, the chaebol structure was defined by centralization of ownership around a single founding family. Through either direct ownership of the chaebol and all its branches, ownership of a nucleus company which then owned various subsidiaries, or ownership by which control of one particular member company was granted control of the other companies through interlocking cross-shareholding13, members of the firm’s founding families were able to maintain their positions in ownership if not direct management at the heads of their respective corporations.14 Centralization of chaebol control within a relatively small, cohesive family facilitated the implementation of governmental economic direction; assuring the cooperation of a wide range of corporate managers would have been much more difficult.

A third defining outcome of South Korea’s government-led economic development was the massive amount of debt accumulated by the chaebol to fund their investments. In 1961 the Korean government nationalized all banks, controlling interest rates and loan allocation. The state was able to maintain power over the supply of credit and, therefore, the increasingly large and indebted chaebol. During instances of financial failure the government could adjust the interest rate or otherwise manipulate the financial market to keep important companies from falling apart. Government-led industrialization had meant the chaebol had not developed according to predicted profitability of market entry, but rather to secure investment from the government. Through borrowing from Korean banks, which in turn controlled allocation of all foreign investment that flowed into Korea,
Corporate governance

Corporate governance is composed of the relationships and established norms of behavior between the various agents of a limited liability corporation. Such agents include managers, shareholders, employees, creditors, important customers and other relevant communities, who together determine the strategy of a company. Rules and behavioral standards that frame such interaction can be grouped together under the category of corporate governance.16

The core principle of good corporate governance can be generalized as encouragement toward establishing a healthy, competitive corporate sector, the prosperity of which forms a center of national economic growth.17 As defined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation, goals of good corporate governance fall into five groups: (1) protection of the rights of shareholders; (2) the equitable treatment of shareholders, including minority or foreign shareholders, which includes the ability to challenge decisions that violate their rights; (3) encouragement for shareholders to take an active role in corporate governance; (4) greater disclosure and transparency of all material matters regarding the firm; and (5) protection of this framework through monitoring by management boards, which are themselves held accountable to the company and its shareholders.18

Reflected in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) guidelines is the current popular conception of corporate governance that places primary importance on protecting shareholders’ ability to direct firm behavior. Shareholders are the legal owners of a company, and their interests align with the prosperity of the firm, as firm profitability means larger received benefits. Shareholder interests no matter how diverse must “not only be assured, but also harmonized. […] One organization is likely to create more wealth, for itself and for the whole of society, by an ethical strategy, and this will gain the corporation an integrity reputation.”19 A reputation of integrity is important as trust reduces certain transaction costs between firms; one feels relatively assured of both adequate compensation and a stable partner in future cooperation.

Transparency and accountability are the other two aspects that are key to good corporate governance. Weak governance manifests in financial and managerial information opacity20 which may benefit firms in the short run by protecting businesses from external competition. In the long run, however, this opacity creates a moral hazard that undermines the health and stability of a firm. Shielded from accountability to monitoring individuals and agencies, individual and minority interests can usurp majority interests and the welfare of the firm as a whole. Informational transparency can occur only when no agent can stand as an obstacle to the flow of information between all the agents within a given system.

Managerial boards should be maintained separately from ownership of the actual company in order to maintain the transparency and accountability which protects the interests of shareholders within corporate structures. These boards must be impartial toward the different investors of a company as they provide an important service in monitoring the performance of a firm and interpreting shareholder demands to direct its future actions. By keeping a few outsiders on the board, individual managers can serve as whistleblowers to keep the firm in line.

Good corporate governance is useful in cultivating mutually beneficial relationships among firms and individuals within firms. The imperative for coordinated corporate cooperation through a thoroughly developed system of corporate governance becomes stronger as globalization raises structural interdependence between firms.21 Globalization creates the need for new political and social structures to normalize
behavior, which encourages cooperative efforts between countries and individuals and further creates the need for economic structures to do the same between businesses. Through pursuing greater development of corporate governance within the world market, the significance of comparative institutional advantages is enhanced for all firms.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{The 1997 financial crises}

Korea experienced similar economic troubles in 1972, 1980 and the late 1980s, before the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. In each of these instances, deterioration of firm profitability, over-investment, and worsening financial structures were exacerbated by the internal weaknesses of Korea’s economic structure and external economic shocks, resulting in a Korean economic slowdown.\textsuperscript{23} In response, the Korean government passed policies to superficially patch immediate issues without any cohesive plan of reforming the underlying structures responsible. Heavy-handed measures, such as adjusting monetary policy to reschedule outstanding loans and manipulating interest rates to artificially encourage investment and reduce debt, ultimately deepened the structural weaknesses which had led to the crises, and helped pave the way for yet another in 1997.

The first overt signs of trouble in Korea became evident in 1996. The current account deficit had grown from 2% of GDP in 1995 to 5%, and the rate of growth for exports had slowed from 31% to 15%.\textsuperscript{24} This sudden slowdown was symptomatic of a much larger crisis felt across East Asian nations, which would eventually destabilize Korea’s economy.

In 1997 and 1998, South Korea was drawn into international events that negatively impacted its export markets. Due to the larger East Asian crisis, the Japanese yen (JP¥) declined significantly in value, causing relative appreciation of the South Korean won (KR₩) and giving Japan a competitive edge. Recessions in Japan and Europe caused demand to shrink for Korean exports, and prices dropped for many of the goods South Korea exported, including ships, automobiles and computer chips.\textsuperscript{25}

The 1997 crisis continued to balloon as shrinking exports revealed the financial instability of the chaebol. Since their beginnings, the chaebol had financed their development by borrowing large amounts of money then used to fund risky business ventures to increasing market shares; by 1997, the average debt-equity ratio for manufacturing was estimated, conservatively, at an absurd 458\%.\textsuperscript{26} The sudden market squeeze in 1997 led to a raised interest rate, which put further pressure on the heavily indebted chaebol.

The deterioration of profits exacerbated by internal economic weaknesses and the external shocks that formed the 1997 Financial Crisis in Korea is reminiscent of the economic failures of 1972, 1980, and the late 1980s. During these previous crises, the Korean government had enough autonomous financial influence to fix the immediate causes of economic failure without much difficulty and had not yet undertaken any sort of comprehensive structural revision. By 1997, important social, political, and economic changes in South Korea had made systemic reforms more difficult for the government.

In the decade or so leading up to the 1997 crisis, there had been great strides in Korea’s democratization as well as financial liberalization. This greatly diminished the aspects of authoritarianism which had allowed the Korean government to deal with previous economic failure through forceful corporate restructuring and market manipulation. The movement for democratization in South Korea began in the 1980s, as by this time Korea’s economic prosperity had led to the creation of a middle class in Korean society.\textsuperscript{27} Over the next two decades, the movement for democratization became stronger, and by the 1990s saw real progress despite instances of brutal governmental repression. With the 1992 presidential election of Kim Young–sam, South Korean governance was returned into the hands of civilians, an important moment in Korea’s democratization.

Financial liberalization came partially in re-
response to pressure following the 1980 market failure. Confronted with economic difficulties arising from financial structural problems, the government tried to fix some of the structural problems within Korea’s financial system. The General Banking Act in 1982, along with the launch of a new five-year economic plan in the early 1980s, eased direct government controls over banking practices, and permissible banking activities were expanded.28

The 1992 election and 1982 General Banking Act represent larger trends within Korean society and the waning grasp of economic governmental power. However, within the economy no new method of market discipline existed to replace close government direction. Strong market regulation and supervision of the financial and corporate systems had not had the chance to develop, leaving the chaebol swamped with debt they had no way of paying back.

South Korea’s banking sector found itself burdened with non-performing loans. The chaebol debt from funding aggressive expansions could be neither paid nor supported by the banks; many businesses suffered major failures, either losing subsidiary branches or going bankrupt altogether. The International Monetary Fund quickly provided debt relief at the request of the Korean government,29 but this financial bailout could mitigate only some of the economic fallout; eleven of the chaebol conglomerates were allowed to collapse in 1997, among them being Kia and Hanbo Steel.30 Ten other chaebol from among South Korea’s fifty largest were at risk of bankruptcy. Korean stock values dropped to almost nothing as investors began to withdraw their money, scaring away more investors.31

Public backlash against the incumbent government overseeing the economic failures led to administrative changes: Kim Dae-jung of the Millennium Democratic Party won the 1998 Presidential election, making Kim the first non-conservative head of the South Korean government since the Korean War.32 He was a staunch opposition leader during the previous authoritarian, conservative administrations, and his inauguration marked Korea’s very first peaceful and democratic power transfer from a ruling to an opposition party.33 Under Kim, a number of important reforms were enacted to fix the accumulated imbalances of Korea’s economic structures responsible for the 1997 crisis. Structural issues centered mainly around the financial and corporate sectors34, so subsequent reform focused specifically on these two areas. The chaebol in particular received much of the blame for the 1997 crisis and thus received much scrutiny from reform-minded politicians.

Reform policies enacted under Kim’s administration focused on five goals: (1) increase managerial transparency; (2) pressure corporations to focus on core businesses and divest themselves of unrelated enterprises; (3) improve financial health; (4) end loan guarantees among affiliates; and (5) increase accountability of chaebol leaders for their performances. Three more policy goals were added in 1999: (1) prevent industrial capital from dominating finance, (2) discourage circular investment between chaebol affiliates, and (3) prohibit nepotistic transfer of management or ownership to family heirs.35 This “5+3 rule” of policy goals was based on IMF guidelines given to Korean politicians in charge of reformation.36

The prescribed structural changes reflected the two long-term political objectives of the post-crisis period: moving the Korean economy toward a more liberal, market-driven economy and strengthening financial sector resilience to market fluctuations. Policy implementation followed a moving-target approach, namely policies were changed to respond immediately to problematic structural issues.37

Implicit in these reforms was the effort to create a new form of corporate governance that was less reliant on direct government regulation. In February 1998, the Korean government mandated appointment of outside directors, members of a corporation’s board of directors who are neither employees nor hold operational responsibilities, for listed companies. This increased accountability of majority shareholders and managers in directing the chaebol, as outside directors could
serve as whistle-blowers when inside managers attempted to abuse their influence for personal gain. Increased managerial transparency creates a less uncertain environment for investors and encourages investment. In April 1998, legislators passed a law to reduce the minimum shareholding requirement for actions such as filing lawsuits, requesting the dismissal of directors, or calling for a meeting of general shareholders. This strengthened minority shareholder rights and was an improvement from before 1997, when such power was held almost exclusively by founding families who had retained majority ownership of the chaebol conglomerates.

The government also began a program of restructuring the five largest chaebol groups. Due to development of unrelated market diversification, these corporations had acquired inefficient and unprofitable subsidiary branches that created a dead weight dragging down more successful subsidiaries. Rather than force the discarding of unprofitable branches, the “government asked chaebol to restructure their businesses” themselves. To induce cooperation, government aid was conditional on voluntary reform. The five conglomerates were required to communicate their plans for reconstruction to their creditor institutions to make sure reorganization followed rational market principles. As another safeguard, all exchanges of businesses among the chaebol groups had to be agreed upon by other industry leaders. Samsung, the largest of the chaebol, gave up its automobiles branch to focus on its more established and profitable companies. Though this was ultimately a good business decision and Samsung’s entry into the automobile market had been warned against by other industry leaders from the beginning, the automobile branch had been a pet project of Chairman Lee Kun-hee and was a personally difficult decision to accept.

Post-1997 structural changes and the 2008 financial crisis

Korea’s corporations today look very different; chaebol debt-equity ratios are far lower than their late-1990 levels, Korea’s economy has returned to phenomenal annual growth rates, and chaebol corporate development has changed to reflect sound business decisions. Before 1997, the void following the end of government-led economic development had created a gap between the growing democratization of Korean politics and struggling corporate liberalization. Over the past decade, however, a normalized system of interaction has begun to develop among the Korean chaebol.

The principles of transparency and accountability guided Korean financial and corporate reform following the 1997 financial crisis, and they remain essential to encourage good corporate governance in Korea. However, the reforms themselves have been too piecemeal and reactive to fix all the underlying corporate structural issues they were intended to correct. Also, implementation of reform meant to encourage development of good governing corporate structure has been too weak. “The establishment of a sounder corporate behavior requires not only improving the overall corporate governance and restructuring frameworks but also diligently maintaining the current rules or introducing new direct prohibitions and interventions.” The pre-1997 aspects of corporate structure that reform has failed to fix still prevent good corporate governance. Further reform toward transparency and improved implementation of existing policies is necessary to better protect shareholders’ rights and foster good management.

Toward transparency, more needs to be done to defend the rights and influence of smaller shareholders. Decreasing the minimum percentage of shares required to vote in 1998 was a good start but only the first step. The Korean government must tighten regulations to prevent circular shareholding within conglomerates, as regulations passed after 1997 have been too lax and poorly enforced. Exemptions based on “business needs, industry characteristics and government initiatives, including […] attracting FDI, economic cooperation with North Korea and promoting industries identified as ‘growth engines’” has resulted in only half of the chaebol
Circular shareholding describes the ambiguous and complex web of ownership when different companies buy stock from each other. Founding families have used circular shareholding to obscure the true range of their control by owning a small amount of stock outright through which they hold many shares legally owned by their companies. Managerial structure becomes opaque, leaving an opportunity for abuse by the shareholder who effectively holds control. Circular shareholding also undermines the rights of smaller shareholders by indirectly increasing the influence of controlling shareholders. Stocks might be given to affiliates without requiring cash outlays or other payment, artificially reducing relative voting shares and infringing on the rights of minority shareholders.

Additionally, circular shareholding makes it difficult to hold abusers responsible by removing them from positions of authority within corporations. The reforms of the late 1990s have done little to limit founding families’ control through cross-shareholdings of chaebol affiliates; this undermines good corporate governance as it compromises both accountability of agents and the transparency of corporation management. In the scandal leading to the resignation of former Samsung chairman Lee Kun-hee, the chairman was accused of creating a slush fund through bribed prosecutors and other government officials. Although Lee Kun-hee did resign from his position as chairman, there are reasons to doubt any sort of change in his ability to exercise control within Samsung. As said by Ahn Young-hoe, chief investment officer at Seoul-based fund manager KTB Asset Management, through tangled cross-shareholdings of affiliates “Lee Kun-hee will remain as a major shareholder and his family will wield influence in one way or another.”

Poor regulation enforcement has been another problem blocking the success of the 1998 and 1999 reforms. For example, after the government mandated that corporate boards include a percentage of outside directors, some firms appointed much higher numbers of directors from outside their companies than policymakers had intended. This is problematic because rather than being just monitors of good corporate governance, outside directors gain more influence in managerial decisions than is best for the company. This precludes the initial purpose of these members as minority whistle-blowers.

These issues stand in the way of strong, healthy corporate governance in Korea, which is important for South Korea’s ability to meet the economic challenges of increasing globalization. Globalization in terms of economics describes the process of closer integration of world financial, product, and labor markets. In the past half-century, the pace of globalization increased due to technological and social developments facilitating greater communication and exchange. Good corporate governance guarantees the foundation for corporate success and integrity and is thus critical for reaping the benefits of globalization. “Increased global competition makes continued corporate governance reform necessary” as good corporate governance will be able to maximize the relative competitiveness of Korea’s corporate sector.

By virtue of their size and capital reserves, the chaebol will be Korea’s key asset as globalization brings international firms into constant contact with one another. Although small and medium-sized firms are important for the national economy’s internal stability, their growth and success will not necessarily compete with the chaebol. “In the globalized economy size matters,” and the chaebol conglomerates enjoy the distinction of being among the largest in the world. Where small firms would have difficulty funding the research and development necessary to produce globally competitive goods, the chaebol have ready access to the capital and manpower required to constantly develop new and more efficient ways of manufacturing goods to export. Besides being able to organize the large investment necessary for foreign market entry, chaebol are also large enough to absorb potential market
entry failure; smaller firms might just collapse. As globalization creates increasingly competitive markets and greater interdependency between countries, the importance of the chaebol for Korea’s economy will grow. As in the 2008 global financial crisis, the chaebol have proven themselves able to globalize and take advantage of foreign market openings.

The 2008 financial crisis and “its impact on global economic confidence and growth prospects have highlighted the great relevance of corporate governance, and its key contribution to stability.” More specifically, it has illustrated the ways in which South Korea might benefit if it does pursue better corporate governance through better enforcement and protection of those transparency-inducing mechanisms in place. “While discussing the implications of the [2008] American financial crisis, President Lee Myung-bak […] said that in normal circumstances, it was difficult to catch up with advanced countries, but this kind of crisis provides an opportunity to move up a step in economic rankings”. So long as good governance allows the chaebol to adapt according to market fluctuations, economic downturns can create opportunities rather than just highlight institutional flaws. For example, economic downturns in 2008 can be used to boost Korea’s intra-regional trade as the won drops in relative value.

External economic fluctuations can create openings in foreign markets, which can be exploited by Korean firms, leading to greater diversity in the products and destinations for Korean trade. Hyundai’s performance in the United States automobile market is an example of a financial crisis helping Korean relative competitiveness. Hyundai entered the US market more than two decades ago and has done a much better job weathering the recent financial crisis than American car manufacturers. The failure of the US auto industry in 2008 created an unprecedented opportunity for Hyundai to increase its market share. General Motors and other major US car companies posted billions of dollars in losses, declared bankruptcy and required government bailouts to keep from liquidation in 2009. Meanwhile, Hyundai, as well as Kia, was one of the few car manufacturers that made a profit. For 2010, Korean automakers are both expanding goals and aiming for greater market shares as they introduce more new vehicles.

If South Korea intends to embrace the trends of globalization and seize the benefits offered by greater integration into world markets, corporations must extend Korean products into other countries. They must also permit foreign firms, in turn, to compete within the Korean market, either as rivals or partners. Closer interaction between businesses will lead to further corporate structural changes as mergers and acquisitions (M&A) become more common. “Korea in general has been hostile to mergers and acquisitions […] and corporate restructuring,” but such an attitude will undermine efforts to build up better corporate governance. According to Kang Sung-doo, the president and CEO of Golden Bridge Investment & Securities in Seoul, restructuring corporations through M&As helps maintain the competitiveness of firms when management becomes corrupt and ineffective and undermines the shareholders’ assets. As such, leaving Korean firms open to M&As protects good corporate governance, though it does change some governing agents. According to Lee Won-il, serving CEO of Allianz Global Investors Korea since 2006, Korea’s maturing market will be driven by M&As “over the next decade as more businesses resort to acquiring competitors and promising companies in other sectors to create synergy effects with existing units and emerge as a winner in an increasingly saturated marketplace.”

If this is true, Korea’s continued economic liberalization and good corporate governance among the chaebol are of imminent importance.

Conclusion

South Korea’s brisk economic development through government-directed industrialization of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s created an environment where firms could compete with-
out worrying about their ventures’ profitability. Success in this distorted market meant expansion into unrelated markets, fueled by debt which, if left unpaid, still did not necessarily signal failure. Under this business model, the corporate structures that lead to the disastrous 1997 Korean financial crisis were allowed to perpetuate until the Korean economy could no longer support them.

The structural reforms following the 1997 crisis have benefited the Korean economy as a whole and paved the way for the development of good corporate governance. Although the current body of corporate law in Korea has helped the creation of better governance by creating mechanisms to encourage managerial objectivity, as well as both expand and protect the rights of non-controlling shareholders, still more needs to be changed in order to guarantee Korea’s successful integration into the globalized market. Past reforms have not been able to completely solve issues of corporate opacity because they lack a clear method of moving from policy goals into actual policy. This has rendered ineffective the policies designed to increase shareholder influence and reduce the control of founding families to the shares they hold outright. Such failures create problems of moral hazard, such as the creation of personal slush funds with company money.

The term chaebol should no longer be associated with Korea’s past economic crises, yet because of continued scandals and the failure to pass effective policy, lingering structural issues undermine public opinion and corporate competitiveness. The government should pursue unified policies to supplement the post-1997 reforms. On their own, loopholes in these reforms debilitate protection of minority shareholders and management objectivity necessary for good corporate governance. As the political and economic systems upon which these reforms are based evolve, the government should continually streamline regulation to minimize compliance costs.67

This new policy should include stricter regulations on circular shareholding. Circular shareholding lowers transparency of the corporate system and weakens non-controlling shareholder rights. This opacity creates moral hazard as indirectly powerful shareholders can manipulate companies for personal gain at the cost of other shareholders and the public. Even when individuals are caught breaking the law, like ex-Samsung chairman Lee Kun-hee, circular shareholding makes it virtually impossible to remove corrupt agents from corporate control.

Another part of future policy should be encouragement of greater cooperation between Korean chaebol and other international firms. Lowering some of Korea’s protectionist barriers would incentivize chaebol to seek partnerships with foreign firms interested in entering the Korean market.68 By creating bonds based on mutual efficiency and profitability, the chaebol will avoid outright rivalry with new firms, should the latter decide to enter on their own, and increased competition will only enhance the efficiency of the Korean market.

Good corporate governance guarantees the foundation for corporate success and integrity which is critical for reaping the benefits of globalization. In his inaugural speech, President Lee Myung-bak described the chaebol as the “source of [South Korean] national wealth and the prime creator of jobs”69 since their first inception under the military authoritarian government of the 1960s and 1970s to the present day. By pursuing cohesive, unified policies which protect the basic principles of good corporate governance, the chaebol will be able to continue carrying Korea’s economy into the 21st century, ushering in prosperity even under the burden of growing globalization.
Charlotte Marguerite Powers

Charlotte Marguerite Powers is a senior at Georgetown University graduating in May of 2010 as a Political Economy major with an Asian Studies Certificate. A prominent academic focus of Powers’ is the increasing challenge economic globalization presents to pre-existing social institutions and how policy can counter it. Her interest in this phenomenon has led her to research the influence chaebol conglomerates have had in the shaping of modern South Korea.
Duanwu Festival

National Heritage and Cultural Ownership in East Asia

Is a cultural heritage nationally owned or globally shared? The conflicts between China and Korea over the Duanwu festival (Dano in Korean) clearly exemplify the problems of cultural sharing and cultural ownership in East Asia. This article describes Korea’s registration of Dano in the UNESCO cultural heritage list and its aftermath, including the initial furor in cyberspace and China’s follow-up cultural policies in response. This article investigates contemporary political and economic needs embedded in traditional heritage, which often drive people into cultural nationalism.

Introduction

Duanwu (Duānwǔ jié 端午節) is a Chinese traditional festival that falls on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar. Yet Korea and Japan, also have festivals with the same name (Dano (단오, 端午) in Korean and Tango (端午, たんご) in Japan) and date. As the name suggests, it is evident that the festivals’ origins in Korea and Japan should be found in China. In ancient times, Chinese dynasties and their culture played such a dominant role in the course of Asian history – even more dominant than that of the United States in the contemporary world – that neighboring countries were influenced by, and often forced to accept, many parts of Chinese culture. However, to understand properly the cultural topography of East Asia, it is also important to pay attention to localized developments of and variation in culture as well as to its origin. In fact, despite the similarities in name, the differences in the respective festivals in each country far outnumber their similarities. One might even argue that their only commonalities are their name and date.¹

The registration of Korea’s Gangneung Dano (강릉단오제) festival on the UNESCO list in 2005 (Gangneung is a city along South Korea’s east coast) not only sparked heated debates between Korea and China on the internet but also quickened China’s movement for the protection and promotion of its cultural heritage. The Korean officials who prepared the registration would never have imagined that it would cause the international sensation it did. Although the online furor over the issue has significantly died down, its occurrence provides us with several questions of how conflicts over cultural heritage persist in East Asia, sometimes with such intensity. Why were many Chinese people angry about Korea’s registration of their Dano festival? Is Duanwu or Dano really a national heritage of either China or Korea? And to what extent can culture be owned or “copyrighted” by a country? This article argues that much of the conflict stemmed from a “misunderstanding” that was often forced on people by various other factors. Another important goal of this article is to identify these factors in the hope of introducing a more productive understanding of cultural assets in East Asia.

The Chinese origin of Duanwu and its localization in Korea

In China, Duanwu is closely related to the ancient fifth-month rite (五月祭), often found in ancient agricultural societies, of praying for abundance at seed-sowing time. It is often believed that Duanwu originates from the ancient practice commemorating the patriotic self-sacrifice of poet Qu Yuan, a minister of the Chǔ Kingdom during the Warring States period. Qu Yuan drowned himself in a river to defend his political ideals and mourn the demise of his
Although its zenith falls on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, the Gangneung Dano festival lasts more than a month. Its traditional activities can be divided largely into two categories: the performance of exorcism and folk entertainment. In the former, which begins as early as the end of the third lunar month, several local deities are summoned and worshiped through various ritual performances. The folk entertainment consists of various activities such as mask dances, swings, and traditional wrestling. Jang Jeong-ryong states that although the external features of the Gangneung Dano festival—that is, the name and the date—coincide with the Chinese version, it is local in both myth and practice.5 Furthermore, there are reports of several other locations for Dano festivals around Korea such as the Yongsan Dano festival, the Jain Dano festival and the Beopseong Dano festival. Yet, compared to the Gangneung Dano festival, their size and popularity is significantly smaller, and some have been either extinct or incorporated into other festivals.6

Korea’s registration of the Duanwu festival on the UNESCO list

As mentioned earlier, Korean research on the Dano festival has mainly served to describe the existing local festivals and rites, often neglecting the subject of origin. One Korean researcher admits that research on Dano seems to be brought about by “current [practical] necessities” rather than the pursuit of academic examination.7 Criticizing that there has been no extensive research that encompasses the overall scope of Korean Dano culture, he highlights its recent tendency to focus on single localities, such as the Gangneung Dano festival, the Jain Dano festival and the Beopseong Dano festival. Yet, compared to the Gangneung Dano festival, their size and popularity is significantly smaller, and some have been either extinct or incorporated into other festivals.6

Compared to the diverse explanations for the origin of China’s Duanwu, the range of Korea’s Dano is small. Although there are a few ancient texts which mention the unique Korean origin of Dano, most admit its Chinese origin. In reality, there has been little interest in the origin of the festival, leading to sparse academic research on the subject. It seems that it has been enough to know that Dano originates from China. Instead, there is more research available on the traditions and rites of Dano that are still practiced in localities. Recent research is particularly focused on the Gangneung Dano festival.

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To answer this question, it is helpful to understand Korea’s earlier attention to and preservation policies on cultural heritage. Korean legisla-
tion of cultural property protection began as early as 1962. Although the law primarily imitated that of Japan, which was legislated in the 1950s, it was supported by fairly efficient policies and systems, notwithstanding the then-inferior Korean economy. Now its protective measures on intangible cultural assets are as comprehensive as those of Japan, and Korea is often appreciated as a country of particularly well preserved heritage.

Korea’s early focus on cultural heritage can be appreciated from various historical points of view. The initial efforts to preserve and revive cultural heritage can be understood both as reactionary movement against the previous colonial era and as the very legacy of the Japanese colonial period. The latter aspect, which is less understandable than the former, is well-supported by the fact that the cultural heritage administration of Korea was formerly the office of imperial property, much of whose task was taken over from the Japanese colonial administrative unit for the Korean imperial family and property. In either case, cultural heritage has been treated as property which can be owned and managed. Cultural heritage was especially important to Korea – more specifically the republic of Korea, South Korea – because the successful management of cultural heritage was thought to enhance its legitimacy, newly established in 1948, which was suffering from internal political instability and external rivalry with North Korea. Along with the rapid economic development in the 1980s and 1990s, Korea paid even more attention to cultural heritage, focusing mainly, as was also the case in many other countries, on its economic value.

Again, the registration of the Gangneung Dano festival on the UNESCO list of intangible heritage provides a clear example of Korea’s awareness of cultural heritage. Surprisingly, and quite opposite to the general Chinese assumption, Korea as a whole mostly does not celebrate Dano. Gangneung Dano is no more than a local festival in a mid-sized city in the eastern part of Korea, and many Koreans themselves did not know of the festival before its registration on the UNESCO list. The rise of Gangneung Dano as a piece of world-renowned cultural heritage likely would have been impossible without the well-organized efforts of the government and academia. According to one critical study, it was in the 1960s that the festival that had once disappeared in the early modern period was reborn. Taking advantage of governmental promotion on traditional heritage, some scholars tried to restore the festival based on scanty references in the early 1960s. The successful restoration and formulation of the festival, in turn, facilitated both administrative and economic support for the festival. This mutual cooperation reached its peak in the application to the UNESCO list, which highlighted extended festival activities and international conferences.

Conflicts between Korea and China over cultural property

Although the successful registration of Gangneung Dano in 2005 was indeed good news to the related government officers, scholars, and the local people in Gangneung, it still did not attract much attention from the majority of Korean people because Dano was not a popular custom in Korea any more. Rather, what aroused national attention to the Dano festival was the spirited Chinese reaction to the registration. As we will see later, Korea’s registration of the festival on the UNESCO list, interestingly enough, aroused far more attention of Chinese people to their Duanwu festival than of Koreans to Dano.

Although Chinese public opinion ranged widely, the major reaction was embarrassment and displeasure and the feeling that Korea had stolen Chinese heritage. Many people believed that China would lose its “patent” on the Duanwu festival since Korea already registered its Dano festival on the UNESCO list. Korea’s registration stirred up heated debates most prominently among Chinese internet users who criticized Korea’s “theft” of Chinese cultural assets. As Wang Hui summarized, the prevailing view of Chinese people was that, since the Dano festival originated in China, it was not Korea’s right to file such
an application. On the other hand, there were also more rational and less nationalist voices that suggested China should share the heritage with its neighbor and protect the festival together.11

The negative reactions of Chinese people in turn both angered and worried Korea. Some Korean internet users were offended by the fierce expressions of their Chinese counterparts and immediately fired back abusive language to China. It was the accusation of “theft” that many Koreans could not accept; from their point of view, the registration of Gangneung Dano had nothing to do with the Chinese Duanwu. Although Dano came from China over a thousand years ago, they argued, the present format of Gangneung Dano was not Chinese but Korean because the festival now consisted more of Korean customs and myths.

In fact, such emotional and heated disputes in cyberspace have been continuously occurring between China and Korea over various issues. The topics discussed by some Korean internet users vary from movie star gossip to the academic clash over ancient historiography. These cyber disputes are often facilitated by – or perhaps enabled by – each country’s news media which broadcasts the reactions of the other country due to the language barrier. Mass media thus plays an essential role in the formation of nationalist emotions because they feed people with instant images of the other country. People are exposed to information of other countries selectively arranged by the media. On the other hand, a major driving force that determines the decision of reporters and editorial boards reflects the common psychology of people.

While many Korean users interested in this dispute were as angry as the Chinese counterparts over the cultural heritage issue, the Korean government and Korean companies worried instead about the Chinese reaction. China’s position as Korea’s top trading partner and the biggest source of Korea’s trade surpluses made the Korean government concerned about China’s public sentiment and its possible negative effect on trade. They even made considerable efforts to resolve the “misunderstanding” over this cultural heritage, implementing diplomatic contacts and academic conferences.12 Therefore, at least in Korea, it is not likely that nationalist emotions of Korean people over Dano registration have been induced by the political decisions of the Korean government. As for the recent clash between China and Korea over Goguryeo (고구려 [고구려]) historiography of the so-called Northeast [History] Project (东北工程), the reaction of Koreans was as furious as that of the Chinese over Duanwu; however, the countermeasure of the Korean government in comparison to China’s remained sober and reserved.13

**China’s follow-up action on cultural heritage**

The initial furor over Korea’s registration of Dano eventually died down in China, but the widespread attention paid to the protection of traditional Chinese festivals remained. The Duanwu festival has been the focus of such attention. In June 2006, the Chinese government announced its first national intangible cultural heritage list, which includes **dùānwǔjié 端午节 (Dragon Boat Festival), chūnjìé 春节 (Spring Festival / Chinese Lunar New Year), qīngmíngjié 清明节 (Tomb Sweeping Day), qīxījié 七夕节 (Qixi Festival), zhōngqiūjié 中秋节 (Mid-Autumn Festival), and chóngyángjié 重阳节 (Double Ninth Festival).** In September of that same year, national guidelines for cultural development were prepared, claiming that traditional festivals should be promoted in order to enhance the cohesion of Chinese people and facilitate “building a harmonious society”.14 In the following year, the Chinese government decided to revamp the country’s holiday schedule to focus on traditional festivals at the expense of the Marxist May Day celebration.15 Of course, Duanwu was one of the three traditional Chinese festivals that were added as official public holidays. The other two festivals were Tomb Sweeping Day and Mid-Autumn Festival. In 2009, Hubei province authorities finally submitted an application to UNESCO nominating China’s Duanwu (Dragon Boat) Festival for the
intangible culture heritage list. The application of Duanwu comprises four parts: the Duanwu customs of Qu Yuan’s hometown in Zigui 秭归 county of Húběi 湖北 province, the boat race of Huángshí 黄石 city in Húběi 湖北 province, the Miluo 汨罗 riverbank customs in Húnán 湖南 province, and the customs in Sūzhōu 苏州 of Jiāngsū 江苏 province.16

Compared to the situation in Korea where Dano is not, and is unlikely to become, a public holiday, the efforts of the Chinese government are significant. Considering the situation in 2005, in which one survey conducted in Beijing showed that 60% of people did not know that the Duanwu festival was that very day, it was indeed a dramatic change.17 The effort of the Chinese government to establish the festival reveals how the government is implementing both resolute and swift measures over cultural issues. It is quite evident that the renewed attention of the Chinese government to cultural heritage is closely related to their necessity to re-establish Chinese national identity in the post-Mao era.18 As the Chinese government requires more consolidated national identity than ever to maintain the legitimacy and the stability of its regime with diminished Marxist-Maoist ideology, it has turned to cultural nationalism.19 This, of course, has its own merits: above all, it saved numerous cultural heritage sites which had been endangered under the tyrannical cultural policy of the Maoist era. However, as always, sudden change and hasty efforts also brought about some problems as well. The condition of some cultural sites deteriorated after the reckless promotion of the local government – for example, the development of Zhāngjiājiè 张家界 – and the attempts at preservation sometimes resulted in the suffocation of cultural heritage because they eventually hampered the natural process of practice and succession of the heritage.20

**Cultural ownership in the age of global capitalism**

In the series of happenings between China and Korea over the Dano and Duanwu festivals, we can identify an interesting mechanism of nationalist discourse formation. Above all, it might be problematic to consider Gangneung Dano a “national” heritage of Korea, but this does not mean that the festival is of Chinese heritage either. As mentioned earlier, Gangneung Dano is nothing but a local festival which has been recently revived and “elaborated upon” through academic research and administrative support, while most Korean people do not celebrate Dano in general. How and why has a local (Gangneung) festival become a national (Korean) heritage? Ironically enough, it is in the process of globalization – the registration on the UNESCO list – that nationalization of the local culture occurs. Of course, UNESCO does not require nationality as a prerequisite; it defines intangible cultural heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills, that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage”.22 But, in reality, the actual preparation for the registration is hardly possible without enthusiastic support of a national apparatus.

Moreover, once a cultural heritage is registered on the UNESCO list, it is (inevitably or incautiously) announced as a national heritage by the global news media. Nationality is still such a strong and convenient conceptual unit that many people often apply it hastily to non-national or sub-national matters. One of the important reasons why people regard it as a national matter is that the registration itself appears to coincide with the legal process of granting ownership and patent, in which it is essential to clarify the owner or the patent holder. Thus people anxious to clarify who owns heritage readily choose a nationality.

Although the original intent of the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list should be fully appreciated, the actual efforts of preserving cultural heritage have often deviated over cultural ownership in the middle of registering “global authority”.23 Once the matter of preservation degenerates into conflicts of ownership, each country makes more efforts to highlight the originality
of its cultural heritage, and in the case of similar or shared culture, differences rather than same-ness in cultural heritage are emphasized. Thus, Jiang Qinghe, director of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center of Hubei province, and Cho Jong-seol, director of the Gangneung Dano, said identically that the Duanwu/Dano festivals are celebrated completely differently. Moreover, emphasis on originality and difference sometimes even hampers (rather than facilitates) the preservation and development of cultural heritage. As a way of guaranteeing originality, each country tries to exclude shared or alien features, adhering instead to their “aboriginal” formats. But in this artificial and often partial effort, cultural heritage can be fixed and stagnant instead of dynamic and developing.

Cultural ownership among nations is closely related to another controversial issue – intellectual property and copyright, which allows only the “legal” circulation of ideas and creativity and criminalizes those evading the capitalist order. Indigenous and local communities from many countries increasingly maintain that their traditional knowledge systems and cultural expressions should be protected as a form of intellectual property because their “cultural heritages” have been appropriated by “foreign” and global conglomerate outsiders for economic profit without any “royalty” payments. However, in East Asia, the idea of cultural copyrighting gets much more complicated with the massive amount of shared culture and history in the region. At least two things need to be pointed out clearly: (1) in the pre-modern period, Chinese dynasties played a dominant role in circulating and cultivating East Asian culture, and (2) simultaneously, however, the modern concept of China as a nation-state and its sovereignty did not exist, not to mention Korea and Japan. Copyright on culture, or the ownership of traditional heritage, thus contradicts itself. While exclusive ownership of individual subjects is a modern concept, cultural heritage is the product of the past, or more correctly, of the continuum between tradition and modernity. While the various “original sources” of cultural heritage were already borrowed and exchanged at the time the world was more “copyleft” the recent copyright movement over cultural heritage often tends to be a retrospective claim in the quest of origin and originality. Clarity of the contradiction does not necessarily mean that the solution is also clear. However, it is always meaningful as a first step to identify what brings about contradiction and conflicts. With an understanding of this complexity of cultural copyright, we can at least be more aware of the national ownership claims on Duanwu and Dano, and hopefully more cooperative measures between the two countries in this dispute will emerge.

**Conclusion**

It is both regrettable and intriguing that, while many Chinese people still believe that Korea’s registration of Gangneung Dano was an attempt to steal Duanwu, the majority of Korean people hardly even celebrate Dano. With a small effort to understand the significance of the festival in Korea as well as the overall differences between Dano and Duanwu, people would soon realize the misunderstanding – the registration of a local town festival is never equivalent to claiming the entire shared cultural heritage. However, both in China and Korea, people prefer to use nationality to perceive the world rather than other alternative measurements, due to conceptual limitations, from which this article is not entirely free either.

The registration of both Dano and Duanwu on the UNESCO list reveals the concerns and responses of different agents over national identity and cultural capital. Among the varied active agents are local and central governments, media, commercial enterprises, and individuals. At the state level, government elites often feel the necessity to build a strong national identity for their own sake. For the Chinese government especially, cultural identity is an ideal substitute of the previously dominant Communist ideology and secures authority and legitimacy. Moreover, in the so-called “century of cultural industry”,

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the economic value of cultural heritage is also prominent. The nationalization of cultural heritage also benefits the media and enterprises since many marketable news and commodities are produced out of the process of nationalization. At the individual level, though many people do not normally have much interest on cultural heritage issues, they suddenly become willing to cheer for their country once the issue puts on nationalist colors. This psychological mechanism is hardly grasped by logical reasoning.

We are living in the age of global capitalism, where culture is claimed and competed for at the national level. As Arjun Appadurai once argued, globalization is often, if not always, characterized by “re-localization” or “re-nationalization”. It is “the infinitely varied mutual contest of sameness and difference”. The registration of Duanwu and Dano exemplifies how two different nationalities can compete for cultural ownership, by invoking issues of origin and authenticity; the festival has to be localized and nationalized in order to be globalized, or globally recognized. The issue of cultural ownership has generated international conflict and will continue to do so because cultural heritage is a historical product that transcends the past and touches the present. It traverses modern borders of nation-states. It seems that the national branding of cultural heritage is in a sense almost inescapable; even the first sentence of this article begins with “Duanwu […] is a [Chinese] traditional festival”. However, if we are aware of the limitations and the contradictions of national claims for cultural ownership, there is hope for finding a lessening of emotional international clashes. Emotion, of course, cannot solve political and economic conflicts. But it has always influenced them and sometimes even initiates them.

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Roy Eun Seok Park

Roy Eun Seok Park is a first-year PhD student at the Center for East Asian Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He completed his MA (2007) and BA in (2004) in Chinese Language and Literature at the College of Humanities at Seoul National University in South Korea. Park’s main interests include comparative cultural identities, cultural policy and industry in East Asia, and media discourse in contemporary China.
But Pháp Ông Đô
Mountbatten, Anglo-American Policy, and the Creation of Modern Southeast Asia after World War II

1944-1946

This article discusses the role that Earl Mountbatten of Burma played in the independence movements in Southeast Asia at the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. It consists of a chronological narrative summary of Mountbatten’s work during the period, followed by a short historiographical section and an annotated bibliography. The article concludes that certain events in the region were beyond Mountbatten’s control, but that he succeeded in shaping postwar policies toward independence.

Prologue: Mountbatten

Admiral of the Fleet Lord Louis Mountbatten, First Earl Mountbatten of Burma, played a brief but important role with regard to the independence movements of Southeast Asia after World War II, during 1945 and 1946. Mountbatten was Supreme Commander of the South East Asia Command (SEAC) during World War II. He transitioned from winning the war against Japan to shaping the immediate postwar transformation of power in Southeast Asia at the beginning of the Cold War.

Mountbatten was a socialist at heart but knew that the era of colonialism was coming to an end. He also knew that the war had hastened the independence movements of Southeast Asia, especially in French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies, even though the French and the Dutch – who, unlike the British, did not see the handwriting on the wall at the war’s end – wanted to return to the prewar colonial order.

Mountbatten also played a role in the rift between English and American policies toward Southeast Asia. In the words of his biographer Philip Ziegler, Mountbatten’s goal was “that the colonial power should return but should respect the ambitions of the local independence movements.”1 Where Mountbatten succeeded and where he failed is what makes this short period in the modern history of Southeast Asia both fascinating and important over 60 years later.

The last year of World War II in Southeast Asia, 1944-1945

Mountbatten’s first forty years saw his growth as a great leader. He was known as a playboy in his youth before showing himself to be a good naval officer. He was recognized for heroism by Winston Churchill when his ship, the HMS Kelly, was sunk off Crete in 1941. From 1941 to 1943 he was Chief of Combined Operations and began the planning for D-Day and oversaw the disastrous Dieppe Raid in 1942. After that, he was appointed to the newly created South East Asia Command in the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI) in 1943.

Mountbatten’s job was to retake Burma after the British defeat there in 1942. His victory was the longest and greatest land victory by the Allies in the war against Japan. Mountbatten worked with US General Joseph “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell, who served as Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-shek from 1942 to 1944. Stilwell, despite being an Anglophobe, liked Mountbatten at first and called him “a good egg” who was “energetic and willing to do anything to make it go” and “a nice informal guy.”2 Despite Stilwell’s initial friendly observation, they were never close, and
Stilwell’s Anglophobia led him to dislike Mountbatten. Tuchman’s biography of Stilwell focused mostly on his experiences in China and in CBI during the war and on his difficulties in carrying out several important roles that he could not do as one person. (Stilwell was a good soldier but a poor diplomat.)

Ziegler’s biography of Mountbatten shows that, unlike Stilwell, Mountbatten was a good diplomat and was able to command a coalition of Allies using only limited resources. In SEAC, Mountbatten had a quarter of a million Americans under his command in the Burma Campaign, even though the Indians and Chinese made up the largest percentage of the Allied armies who fought there. Because SEAC was a British theater, it was not a high priority for American wartime strategy, whose main priority in Asia was to keep China in the war. Apart from China, CBI was also a low-priority area in terms of supplies, especially shipping, which was needed for both the Pacific and European Theaters. Moreover, the Americans did not want to help Britain win the war in Burma as a way to reestablish the British empire in Southeast Asia, reflecting Roosevelt’s hostility to colonialism. Ziegler wrote: “Roosevelt was convinced that the British were obsessed by the wish to reconquer Singapore and had no intention of helping them do so.”

Churchill’s main priority was to win the war against Nazi Germany and to preserve the British Empire, but he did not spend much time on Southeast Asia during the war.

After restoring morale in the British 14th Army, the “Forgotten Army”, Mountbatten and his key general, Sir William “Bill” Slim (later Lord Slim), stopped the Japanese advance into India at the battles of Kohima and Imphal, between April and July 1944. That led to the Allied advance into Burma and the liberation of Mandalay and Rangoon in the spring of 1945. By the summer of 1945, most of Burma had been liberated. The next move was the invasion of Malaya.

**The end of the war in 1945**

On August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allies following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet occupation of Manchuria. For Lord Louis Mountbatten, the sudden end of the war brought a welcome relief, because thousands of Allied soldiers would no longer have to fight against the Japanese in Malaya. Although the invasion took place in Malaya as scheduled on September 9, 1945, the landings were unopposed. Between the end of the war and Japan’s official surrender, Mountbatten’s immediate problem in Southeast Asia was to save Allied POW’s in Burma, Thailand, and Singapore, who were dying every day from Japanese maltreatment. Just after Japan’s surrender, aid was dropped into many of the POW camps, but it was not enough. In late August 1945, Mountbatten’s wife, Edwina (Countess Mountbatten of Burma, 1901-1960), who had been a member of the St. John’s Ambulance Brigade since the beginning of World War II, undertook a courageous mission to save Allied POW’s before the Allied forces could reach them. She had nerves of steel in dealing with the Japanese guards and ordered them, unarmed and with only a small escort, to treat the surviving POWs humanely. This included ordering them to dispense desperately needed medical supplies that the Japanese had hoarded. By doing this, she helped save them from certain death and helped arrange for their repatriation after they recovered.

On September 12, 1945, Mountbatten took the Japanese surrender in Singapore (they had already formally surrendered to the Allies on the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2). With the war officially over, Mountbatten faced the challenge of handling 700,000 Japanese military personnel before their repatriation back to Japan, restoring law and order to areas under his control and dealing with the return of the British, French and Dutch to their colonies.

The chaotic situation that British forces under Mountbatten faced in Southeast Asia at the end of the war was summed up by General Slim, who said that “Appeals from our French and Dutch Allies, cries for help, demands for troops, threats of continued Japanese resistance, appre-
hensions of wholesale massacre, forebodings of economic collapse, warnings of starvation of the whole population poured into our headquarters from every quarter.”4

**Malaya (1945 and after) – Mountbatten and Malayan unity**

Mountbatten’s first immediate postwar issue as Supreme Commander was handling Malaya’s complex situation following Japan’s surrender. His first problem was to deal with the bad relationship between the Chinese and the Malays, which had grown worse during the war. His other problem was dealing with the Chinese Communists of the far-left Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Union (MPAJU), which had led the resistance against the Japanese occupation with Allied help during the war while the Malayan police had collaborated with the Japanese. Mountbatten had backed the MPAJU because of their aid to the Allies, but he underestimated how hostile they were to the return of any colonial government.

Mountbatten also had to deal with the new independence movement in Malaya. Before the war, Malaya had no independence movement as such, because it had been ruled by different sultanates under British protection. The war upset the balance of power, because many Malayans felt betrayed by the British defeat and withdrawal in 1942. What Mountbatten wanted was a united Malaya: he didn’t want the largely Chinese population of Singapore to split with the rest of Malaya. The new Labor Government in Britain wanted to unite Malaya into a federation by abolishing the old sultanates, along with the Straits Settlement of Penang, Melaka, and Singapore.

Along with problems related to Malayan unification, the end of the war had brought inflation, near-famine, and strikes against SEAC’s control. The arrest of Soon Kwong, one of the most militant of Malaya’s Chinese leaders, led to the first serious crisis between the colonial government and the Malayan Chinese. Kwong was convicted by a court of British officers, and legally the proceedings were shaky. In January 1946, Mountbatten asked General Messervy, the British Military Governor, to release Kwong because imprisoning him was against Mountbatten’s policy in Malaya. Kwong was released two weeks later.

Mountbatten was at heart a socialist and a democrat (despite being the great-grandson of Queen Victoria), who believed that only the rule of law and order would restore peace in Malaya. Although he was criticized by some of his advisors for his liberal tendencies, General Bill Slim of the 14th Army in Burma thought that Mountbatten was right in his policies. In fact, Malaya later did split along ethnic lines, with Singapore becoming an independent (and mainly Chinese) city-state.

On April 1, 1946, Singapore and the Union of Malaya transitioned from SEAC’s control to civil government. In May 1946, Malcolm MacDonald (the son of Ramsey MacDonald, the first British Labor Prime Minister), took over as Governor-General of Malaya. With that, Mountbatten’s job in Malaya was officially over. After he left in the spring of 1946, the British tried to forge a united Malaya while battling the Chinese Communist insurgency that delayed Malaya’s independence until 1957. Singapore became an independent nation in 1965, and Malaya (Malaysia after 1965) became a member of the British Commonwealth.

**Burma (1945-1948) – Mountbatten and the path to Burmese independence**

Burma was another area of difficulty in SEAC’s area of control. Like Malaya, it had been under British control before the war, but unlike Malaya, Burma already had a growing independence movement when the Japanese invaded in 1941. It had also been the Asian country most devastated by the war outside of Japan and the Philippines. For Mountbatten, Burma presented particularly difficult problems because, apart from restoring order, he also had to rebuild Burma’s economy and government. To help him rebuild Burma, Mountbatten relied on the Civil
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and became Prime Minister of South Africa). Even before Japan’s surrender, Mountbatten had faced opposition for his support of Aung San from Dorman-Smith, the Civil Affairs Service, and other elements within the British government. It’s purely speculation as to whether events would have been better or worse had Mountbatten had complete control of the situation in Burma in 1945.

In October 1945, Mountbatten turned over Burma from SEAC’s control to Dorman-Smith, who retired in 1946 after becoming ill. Mountbatten felt that he had only completed half the job of rebuilding Burma and later said the only mistake in his life was “when he agreed to hand over the government of Burma before the time was ripe.” After the handover of 1945, Mountbatten’s job in Burma was over.

In September 1946, Aung San became Prime Minister and began negotiations with Britain over Burmese independence. After the transfer of power, the situation in Burma grew worse as independence neared. In July 1947 Aung San and eight of his colleagues were assassinated by U Saw, a former Prime Minister. On January 4, 1948, Burma became independent and cut all ties with Britain, unlike India, which remained in the Commonwealth. In the end, Mountbatten’s main goal of having Aung San rebuild Burma was crushed, along with the hope of a united and democratic Burma.

Indochina (1945-1946) – Mountbatten and the return of the French

While Mountbatten was dealing with Burma’s postwar problems, his attention was also demanded by what was then called French Indochina (now Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). At the Potsdam Conference in July-August 1945, it had been agreed that Indochina would be divided at the 16th parallel into two spheres of influence, between the Chinese under Chiang Kai-shek and the British under SEAC, who would take the Japanese surrender before the French returned. Like the division of Germany and Korea, the 16th parallel in Indochina would go from a temporary

Affairs Service (Burma), which had broad powers under SEAC’s control, but which had no sufficient mechanisms to make long-term political decisions. To rebuild Burma, Mountbatten used the Government in Burma under Governor Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, who had spent the war in exile in India, and whom Mountbatten had known since 1944.

While the war was raging, Mountbatten and Dorman-Smith got on well because they had similar liberal leanings regarding the postwar government in Burma after liberation. Mountbatten said Dorman-Smith “has first-class ideas on the future of Burma, and we see eye to eye on all Burma questions.” Following Burma’s liberation and the end of the war, relations between the two changed when disagreements arose over who had real control in Burma. Mountbatten wanted complete independence, while Dorman-Smith was in favor of dominion status. In this power struggle, Mountbatten wrote angrily: “Damn it all, I’m governing Burma – not he, whatever his title.”

The main disagreement was over the Burmese National Army or BNA (similar to India’s INA in Burma during the war), which had been set up by the Japanese to fight the British under Burma’s independence leader, Aung San. At first they had fought for the Japanese, but realizing that the Japanese occupiers were worse than the British (and were also losing the war), they went over to the Allied side in March 1945 when Burma was being liberated. In the last part of the war, they machine-gunned their former allies “with the greatest cheerfulness” (to borrow a phrase from Sir John Keegan), killing thousands of Japanese soldiers who were trying to cross monsoon-swollen rivers.

After Rangoon was liberated in May, Mountbatten met with Aung San and was impressed with him. He later wrote that he “found him a realist, honest and patriotic” and that he “always felt, that with proper treatment, Aung San would have proved a Burmese Smuts” (referring to Jan Christiaan Smuts, the Boer commando leader who later cooperated with the British
Mountbatten’s SEAC took over Saigon with Major General Sir Douglas D. Gracey’s 20th Indian Division, of 1,600 Gurkhas, Punjabis, and Rajputs, as the British occupation force. Gracey overstepped the authority of his mandate by declaring martial law in Southern Indochina in late September 1945, as well as openly siding with the French trying to reestablish control over Saigon by ousting the local Vietnamese leaders. While Ho Chi Minh had established his government in the north, the Viet Minh were sending guerrillas to the south. To maintain order in this tense situation, Mountbatten had to use the Japanese troops who were still there (as well as in Singapore and the Dutch East Indies), since British control was so thin.

When Viet Minh guerrillas killed French civilians in Saigon on September 25, 1945, the Japanese troops did nothing not because “the Japanese were loath to turn against fellow Asians”9 whom they had brutally occupied and killed during the war, but because they did not want to be seen as aiding the British and the French. In October 1945, General Leclerc, who had led the French 2nd Armored Division during the liberation of Paris in 1944, arrived with 1,000 men to reestablish French control in the south after the British left. After crushing the Viet Minh with the Japanese soldiers and air force, the south was “pacified” by early 1946. In January 1946, the British occupation of Saigon ended. In March, Indochina was taken out of SEAC’s control. During this period, Mountbatten’s policy was to play a minor role before the French returned to all of Indochina. In May 1946, Leclerc occupied Hanoi.

When Mountbatten was interviewed in the television program The World at War (1974), he said that before turning over Southern Indochina to the French, he had urged Leclerc to make friends with the local insurgents (Ho’s Viet Minh) and the local Vietnamese as well, by not restoring France’s prewar colonial rule. Leclerc had told him that his instructions were to take over militarily and that’s what he did. Leclerc’s former aide-de-camp told Mountbatten in 1972 that he remembered what Mountbatten had told Leclerc and “that Leclerc had given long anxious thought and then had said that he was a soldier and he had come out to fight, and fight he would”.10 It will always be another “what if” question if Mountbatten could have convinced the French to negotiate or if the Viet Minh would have cooperated with them after the war.

Indochina had been an area of American interest during the war but was not a high priority. Roosevelt had several ideas for postwar Indochina, such as making it a trusteeship, since he did not want the French to come back. However, there was no concrete American policy on Indochina in 1945. In January 1945, Roosevelt told Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius: “I do not want to get mixed up in any Indochina decision […] Action at this time is premature.”11 Ziegler wrote that “Roosevelt in particular disliked the idea of handing Indochina back to the French, and even at the beginning of 1945 would go no farther than to say that it was a matter to be settled when the war was over.”12 In his book on the subject, the historian D. Cameron Watt accused Roosevelt of having “abandoned” the French in Vietnam and said that he ordered the American commanders in China not to provide arms and ammunition to the French.13 After Roosevelt’s death, Truman did not consider Indochina a high-priority until the Cold War began heating up after 1947.

The Dutch East Indies (1945-1946) – Mountbatten and the return of the Dutch

The Dutch East Indies – today’s Indonesia – presented problems similar to those in Indochina. Like the French, the Dutch were determined to reclaim their empire, but they too needed British help. As in Indochina, the Dutch
also faced a strong independence movement, led by Sukarno. As Ziegler wrote, “The Indonesians however, were more firmly entrenched than the Vietnamese; the Dutch weaker than the French. For both these reasons Mountbatten’s problems were to prove more painful and protracted in Indonesia than Indochina.”

When the British occupied Java in September 1945 they expected little opposition from Indonesian nationalists. As in Indochina, Mountbatten’s instructions were to take the Japanese surrender and liberate Allied POWs held in camps on Java. Although Mountbatten tried to have the Dutch, under Lieutenant-Governor van Mook, negotiate with Sukarno, the Dutch refused because they considered Sukarno a traitor for having collaborated with the Japanese. When van Mook finally agreed to do so, his policy was rejected both by the Dutch Government and the Dutch Ambassador in London, who called any negotiation with Sukarno “treason”.

During this time, General Christison, the British commander in Indonesia, was ordered to occupy the major cities on Java but not to run the whole island before the Dutch returned. This was met with hostility both by the Dutch, who saw it as a betrayal, and by the Indonesians, who saw it as a way to thwart independence. Shortly after the British occupied the port of Surabaya, they met savage fighting from Indonesian nationalists in October and November 1945 (this is where soldiers of the Indian Army fought under British command for the last time). At Surabaya, the British commander Brigadier Mallaby was assassinated by Indonesian nationalists during his tour of the city. It was both tragic and ironic that a city that had survived World War II unscathed was destroyed immediately after the war. Indonesians later called it “the Hero City”.

Mountbatten saw Dutch stubbornness as the cause of the problem, while London thought it was better to support them against Sukarno’s nationalists. Edwina Mountbatten tried to raise the matter with the Labour Government and felt confident that they wouldn’t support the Dutch indefinitely. To the British, Indonesia was a low priority. The Americans were against British involvement in Indonesia, and Ziegler wrote that “The Americans added to the pressure by ruling that American vessels not be used to ferry Indian troops from Bangkok to Java.” The United States did not feel that it had to support the Dutch in Indonesia (unlike American support for the French in Indochina), because the Dutch were not as important allies as the French.

In December 1945, the British persuaded the Dutch to agree on semi-dominion status, while the British forces kept most of Java peaceful. By the spring of 1946 the situation had temporarily settled down, with Sukarno withdrawing in favor of Dr. Soetan Sjahrir, another Indonesian leader. During this period, the Dutch began reoccupying Java without many significant incidents. However, by the time Mountbatten left in April 1946, trouble was again brewing between the Dutch and the Indonesians. The war for Indonesian independence would last until 1949, when the Dutch finally admitted defeat in trying to reestablish their colonial empire.

Although Mountbatten was criticized both by the Dutch and the Indonesians for his policies, Ziegler wrote that “The wide range of criticism indicates Mountbatten’s achievement. He did not solve the crisis in Indonesia – no one in his position could have done so – but he did avert disaster. He maintained a measure of peace over a critical period and gave time for passions to calm and for the Dutch and Indonesians to negotiate. That the opportunity was thrown away was not his fault; that it existed at all was a tribute to his statesmanship.”

Conclusion: Mountbatten and the end of SEAC (1946)

By May 1946, Mountbatten’s immediate postwar role in SEAC was over. The end of the war had been a frustrating time because of the lack of coordination after the victory over Japan. Although Mountbatten had sought to achieve a smooth transition of power in Southeast Asia, local politics and the returning colonial powers had ended that immediate postwar hope. On
the whole, however, Mountbatten did an excellent job in restoring law and order, maintaining temporary peace in Indochina and Indonesia, and laying the foundation for independence in Burma and Malaya. He wrote to General Baron Ismay that “I can honestly say that I shall have cleared up my theatre and completed my tasks, with the exception of what looks like a long-drawn-out but ever decreasing commitment in the Netherlands East Indies.” Mountbatten had his faults, and modesty was never one of his virtues, but he was a brilliant leader who understood which way the winds of change were blowing after the war.

SEAC, a wartime organization, was no longer needed. As Ziegler wrote, Mountbatten “was itching for a return to England and the Navy”, which he loved. On May 30, 1946, he sailed from Singapore to London to attend the Victory Parade on June 8. Ahead lay his work as the last Viceroy of British India (and then the first Governor-General of an independent India), First Sea Lord, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, and Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS).

**Epilogue: historiography on Mountbatten and SEAC**

Mountbatten was an important figure in the creation of modern Southeast Asia because he knew that World War II had created a new Southeast Asia that would no longer remain part of the European colonial empires. Mountbatten’s time in SEAC was also the end of British Asia, even though the British came back in triumph briefly in 1945. Although his main achievement was winning the war against Japan, he was able to smooth the transition from war to peace as best he could, with greater success in Malaya and even Indonesia than in Burma and Indochina. The literature on this period generally concludes that Mountbatten’s approach of encouraging a democratic and responsible nationalism was correct, but that it often came too late.

Both Ziegler’s official biography and *Forgotten Armies* are generally favorable toward Mountbatten’s role at the end of the war. Watt’s references to Mountbatten are limited to the latter’s attempts to aid the French in early 1945, before Japan’s surrender, while Rasor presents a straightforward review of the literature. Even Tuchman, who is strongly pro-Stilwell, is not critical of Mountbatten. Watt in particular highlights the Anglo-American differences, and he argues that American anti-imperialism often went too far and assumed that Asian independence movements were more liberal and more democratic than they were in reality.

Mountbatten was also part of the larger issues that divided the United States and Great Britain with regard to how they viewed the region during and immediately after the war. Churchill wanted to restore the British Empire, while Roosevelt did not. Although he was British, Mountbatten was more American in his attitudes, reaching out to nationalist groups in Southeast Asia.

The period between 1944 and 1946 was when World War II became the Cold War, which did not fully develop until after 1947. Most American historiography on Southeast Asia has focused on the US’s eventual involvement in the Vietnam War and the mistakes that we made from 1945 to 1975. Those mistakes began in earnest toward the end of the war, when our official anti-colonialist policy on the one hand and our support for the French and Dutch on the other, sent a mixed message to the people of Southeast Asia.

“Washington publicly supported the concept of self-determination, but when the Europeans rode into battle on American trucks, firing American weapons, Asian nationalists often concluded that the United States was allied with those who would deny them their freedom.”

The British have usually focused on World War II as a “European war”, not an imperial one, and have only recently started looking into how and why British Asia ended. For them, World War II in Southeast Asia was “this sudden and dramatic humiliation of an old and complacent supremacy – the British Empire in Asia.”

Christopher Bayley and Tim Harper put it
this way in their recent study, Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945: “For many months from 1944 to 1946 Allied South East Asia Command ruled a large part of the whole area from the borders of Bengal and Assam to Singapore and on the seas north of Australia. Its writ even temporarily penetrated into south China, Indo-China and Indonesia. This was the first time in history that the region was forged into a political unit.”22 That was the beginning of modern Southeast Asia.

Finally, Ronald Spector recently summed up Mountbatten’s role in these words: “Beneath Mountbatten’s charm and flamboyance was an unsentimental realism. The supreme commander saw more clearly than most of the British ruling class, more clearly than most of his own subordinates, that the world before Pearl Harbor and the fall of Singapore was gone forever. His Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) could not restore the old colonial empires, even if it had the forces to try. Mountbatten believed in the vitality and endurance of the new forces of ethnic and national consciousness sweeping Asia even if he did not completely understand them.”23

Annotated Bibliography


Richard Hough, Mountbatten (New York: Random House, 1981). A sympathetic treatment by the “semi-official” historian of the Mountbatten family, who has also written extensively about the Royal Navy. Not as complete as Ziegler’s official biography, infra, but nevertheless a good introduction to Mountbatten’s life. Two full chapters on his role at SEAC.


Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911-1945* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1971). The classic biography of Stilwell, for which Tuchman won a Pulitzer Prize. The focus is on Stilwell and China, not Mountbatten and Southeast Asia. However, the book does discuss their relationship, which went from Stilwell's description of Mountbatten as a “good egg” to that of a “glamour boy”. Even Tuchman admits that Stilwell's acerbic tongue and Anglophobia sometimes went too far.


(Videocassette) *It's A Lovely Day Tomorrow: Burma – 1942-1944* and *Reckoning: 1945… and After* (*The World at War*, Thames Television, 1974). Period footage of the war in Burma and the aftermath of war in Southeast Asia, with interviews of the veterans and leading military figures, including Mountbatten, who justified his use of Japanese troops to maintain order and described his advice to Leclerc to try and work with the Vietnamese.

**ENDNOTES**

1 Ziegler, p. 330.
2 Tuchman, p. 392.
3 Ziegler, p. 260.
4 Spector, p. 74.
5 Ziegler, p. 317.
6 Ibid., p. 318.
7 Ibid., p. 319.
8 Ibid., p. 322.
9 *The Aftermath: Asia*.
10 Ziegler, p. 333.
11 Karrow, p. 148.
12 Ziegler, p. 330.
13 Watt, p. 239.
14 Ziegler, p. 335.
15 Ibid., p. 335.
16 Ibid., p. 337.
17 Ibid., p. 338.
18 Ibid., p. 338.
19 Watt, pp. 220-252; on p. 252 he uses the term “moral imperialism”.
20 *The Aftermath: Asia*, p. 16.
21 Bayley and Harper, p. xxix.
22 Ibid., p. 463.
23 Spector, pp. 73-74.

**JONATHAN RITTER**

Jonathan Ritter is a graduate student in History at San Francisco State University and a graduate student in Library and Information Science at San Jose State University. He completed his undergraduate education and received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in History at San Francisco State University in 2009. Jonathan's research interests include modern American and European History with special focus on Anglo-American relations.
This paper explores modernization theory, re-examining the argument that economic development inevitably leads to democratization. Using Singapore as a case study, the conditions that allow for the continuance of authoritarianism after economic development is achieved are considered. Analyzing the role of state capacity and mechanisms of state control, the author argues that institutional, rather than cultural, explanations are the determining factors in Singapore's continued authoritarianism.

[E]conomic freedom is an end in itself. [It] is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom.¹

— Milton Friedman

Milton Friedman's view of political freedom is common in the United States and many Western countries. The theory that rising incomes lead to political liberty is embodied in the declaration of the United States government that “only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to […] assure their future prosperity.”² Yet, criticisms of the theory that capitalism and democracy are inevitably linked have increased in recent years. Not least among the critics are government officials from countries such as China, Vietnam, and Russia, which, until the recent financial collapse, experienced record growth rates despite their non-democratic regimes. Do these countries present a new development model with a diminished role for democracy? Should developing countries look to Singapore's experience and reject modernization theory?

The most prominent alternative is based upon the “Asian values” thesis promulgated by Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore, to explain how Singapore was able to develop without political liberalization. The Asian values thesis, as explained by Lee, claims that the cultural inclination to respect authority and hard work allows East Asian countries to pursue liberal economic policies without democracy. However, even Lee is hesitant to call the Singaporean experience a model, for it is unclear that Singapore's development is replicable elsewhere. In other places that followed the liberal authoritarian trajectory, such as South Korea and Taiwan, the ultimate result was a transition to democracy.

It is clear that we need to re-examine these theories in light of the developments of the late 20th century. With that in mind, I will reconsider the argument that modernization inevitably leads to democratization. In particular, what conditions allow for the continuance of authoritarianism even after economic development is achieved? I will look into the case of Singapore to begin to answer this question and attempt to elucidate some of the factors influencing regime type.

Much of the debate on the relationship between regime type and economic development focuses on the argument of modernization theory, an idea that developed out of the work of political sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, but that found its 20th century voice in scholars such as Daniel Lerner and Seymour Martin Lipset. Lipset's work posited that political development is a reflection of the social and economic structure within a state. Though his work examined a variety of other important factors, such as enfranchisement and religious institutions, he focused on the effects of economic development in ensuring stable democracies. Modernization theory posits that as incomes rise,
Asian Values

can enact economic and social reform that leads to political reform once a certain GDP per capita is reached. Some champions of democracy object to sequencing theory, arguing that the popular participation and checks on institutional power exhibited in democracies helps to promote economic growth. Siegle, Weinstein, and Halperin present data disproving the sequencing theory, showing that there is no difference in growth between poor democracies and poor autocracies overall. The finding is even more positive towards democracy if East Asia is eliminated from the data set; in that case, democracies exhibit a 50% higher growth rate on average than poor autocracies.

However, the causal logic and underlying theory about the relationship between economic and political freedom is heavily debated: socio-economic development does not necessarily lead to political freedom. Samuel Huntington famously pointed out that modernization does not necessarily mean political development and that disorder is more commonly the outcome when political mobilization outpaces political institution building. Michael Ross’s research finds an equally disturbing result: democracies perform no better than autocracies in terms of the well-being of the poorest citizens.

In fact, some would argue that autocracies, because they are insulated from political pressure, are better able to improve economic conditions. The Lee thesis, named for the former Singaporean prime minister, maintains that this is especially true in developing countries, because the denial of basic civil and political rights can actually help economic development. Democracy, the argument goes, is a luxury that the poorest countries cannot afford. After all, “capitalism came before democracy essentially everywhere, except in [the United States], where they started at the same time.”

The implication of this theory is that development policies should focus on economic development through authoritarianism and worry about democracy later, if at all.

In contrast, Amartya Sen points out that there is little evidence, and certainly no defini-
tive proof, that authoritarian regimes encourage economic growth.\textsuperscript{13} Dani Rodrik and Romain Wacziarg counter the Lee thesis with a study that shows that the short-term benefits of democratization are especially true for the poorest countries. Democracy tends to follow periods of low growth, they find, which calls into question the sequencing arguments, and does tend to be associated with a decrease in growth volatility.\textsuperscript{14} In empirical analysis, there is much ambiguity, calling attention to the fact that there are many factors influencing political and economic development. The diversity of experience among countries does, however, call for more investigation.

As is evident from this review of the literature, there is no consensus on the relationship between economic growth and political freedom or democracy. Przeworski sums up much of this debate by saying that institutional factors do seem to matter in terms of development, but it is evidently not the regime type that matters.\textsuperscript{15} This raises the question of what does matter. Developing the theory to understand more completely the circumstances that allow political and economic freedom to work together, as well as the factors influencing their separation, is a task left unresolved by the literature to date.

Although most of the world’s wealthiest countries are democracies, there are certainly developed countries that do not fit the democratic mold. Singapore, a seemingly notable exception to modernization theory, will be the focus of this paper. Exploring Singapore’s growth as a non-democracy may provide more insight into the mechanisms of growth, the role of institutions in development, and the prospects for political change in countries that have experienced rapid economic growth.

The extreme disparity between the freedom of Singapore’s economic sphere and that of its political sphere is striking. According to the Economic Freedom of the World Index, Singapore is ranked first in the world in economic freedom.\textsuperscript{16} Singapore did especially well in the freedom to trade internationally and lower regulation, ranking in the top ten. In evaluating political freedom in Singapore, however, Freedom House assigned scores of 5 and 4, respectively, to political rights and civil liberties, classifying Singapore as “partly free”.\textsuperscript{17} Polity IV declares: “over the past forty years [Singapore’s ruling party] has created a hegemonic party system under the guise of democratic governance.” In number terms, on a 21-point scale of regime authority, with -10 being a hereditary monarchy and +10 a consolidated democracy, Singapore rates a 2.\textsuperscript{18} What do these numbers say about our intuition regarding the relationship between economic and political freedom? Is Lipset wrong about the path towards democracy?

Does the case of Singapore defy modernization theory? Before analyzing this case, some background is necessary. Singapore was first a British trading center and then a separate British colony. Following independence from Great Britain, Singapore entered the Malaysian Federation in 1963, and was expelled in 1965 as a result of disputes between Singapore’s ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) and Malaysia’s ruling Alliance Party and high levels of racial tension that included riots. The violence and uncertainty of the years in the Malaysian Federation had a profound impact on fledgling Singapore, and continue in many of the nation’s policies today. With tensions between the Chinese and Malay populations, and a threat of invasion or forced re-entry into the Federation, Singapore’s new government took immediate steps to ensure national sovereignty. In the first year of separation from the Malaysian Federation, Singapore joined both the United Nations and the Commonwealth, and began establishing diplomatic relations with other countries, bolstering the nation’s international recognition.\textsuperscript{19} Two years later, in 1967, Singapore co-founded the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and established mandatory national military service.\textsuperscript{20} All of these steps can be seen as a concerted effort on the part of Singapore’s leaders to establish an international presence and to bolster legitimacy through external recognition.

At the same time, the government embarked
on a strategy to bolster internal legitimacy. To reduce ethnic tension, a Constitutional Commission on Minority Rights and policies integrating schools and neighborhoods was introduced in late 1965. The country’s hardships may have aided in its rapid progress: with the withdrawal of the British, the major economic and security base of the country faced a crisis. This climate of crisis helped the PAP to sweep the legislature, providing an unopposed political climate to introduce drastic reforms. These included strict labor laws, a family planning program, and mandatory savings through the Central Provident Fund. The reforms, and the general global economic upswing of the 1960s, helped establish Singapore as an industrial base and led to its incredible economic growth, which has averaged 9% since independence. Singapore’s GDP growth since independence is shown in the chart below, along with a chart comparing the percentage change in GDP among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

One often-cited explanation of Singapore’s success is the “Asian values” thesis. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s first Prime Minister, is one of the main proponents of this hypothesis. He does, however, explain that Eastern and Western countries are different and what works to promote development in the West will not work in East Asia. Lee says instead that East Asian values emphasize that an individual is not a separate entity, but part of a family, which is then part of society. Mere policy prescriptions, he explains, do not capture the cultural contributions to economic growth. Cultures with less emphasis on scholarship, hard work, and thrift, he says, will grow much more slowly than the countries of East Asia did. Asian values, the thesis goes, created a new path to economic growth that is inconsistent with democracy.

The Asian values thesis is grounded in the ideas that there is a set of Asian values that instills standards such as hard work and discipline, and that these social structures transfer to political structures. Russell Dalton and Nhu-Ngoc Ong have investigated these claims using the World Values Survey and comparing six countries with Confucianism-influenced culture with four.

Chart 1: Rapid GDP growth in Singapore between 1960 and the present.
Southeast Asia

Molly Elgin

the rest of East Asia. Is Singapore more “Asian” than the rest of Asia? Or are there unique institutional factors that shape these attitudes? And can these institutional factors explain the perpetuation of authoritarianism in Singapore? I will argue that Singapore’s particular political climate and institutions play a larger role in explaining Singapore’s preservation of authoritarian rule even as a high-income country than do Asian values. This is not to say that there are no cultural influences on the development process, but that they are not exclusively explanatory.

In seeking to explain Singapore’s seeming defiance of modernization theory, I will first analyze the role of state capacity and mechanisms of state control in maintaining authoritarianism. The idea of state capacity involves not necessarily just what the government does but what it is capable of doing. Michael Mann specifies two aspects of state capacity, despotic and infrastructural. Mann defines despotic power as “the range of actions which the elite is empowered to take without routine, institutionalized negotiation

Western countries. Their analysis of the survey responses shows no distinguishable difference between the East and West on deference towards authority. Singapore unsurprisingly ranks 2nd on the “high authority” index, which measures attitudes towards authority in social structures, but behind the United States. Approval of democracy and the democratic process is high across all of the ten countries studied, though Singaporeans are more lukewarm towards the democratic process than citizens of the other countries. Dalton and Ong find that there is no link between respect for authority in the family and respect for regime type in Asia, calling into question the idea that Confucian values represent a significant cultural challenge to democracy in East Asia. But now that we have rejected the notion that Asian culture provides the basis for authoritarian social and political institutions, let us take the analysis a step further.

According to the World Values Survey, Singapore tends to be more approving of authority and less approving of democratic processes than

Chart 2: Regional context of Singapore’s economic growth. [$ = US$]
(Source: Australia National University Division of Economics, http://rspas.anu.edu.au/economics)
with civil society groups”. Infrastructural power, on the other hand, is the power of the state to penetrate and coordinate the actions of civil society through its own infrastructure, allowing for the possibility that the state is a mere instrument of forces within civil society, as opposed to an organization imposing order from above, as despotic capacity implies.

Singapore has both high despotic and high infrastructural capacity, both of which are very carefully controlled. In Singapore, maintaining a careful balance of despotic and infrastructural capacity ensures the survival of the current regime. Balancing the two types of capacity enables the state to both provide for its citizens and repress them in carefully calculated ways. First, I will look into Singapore's infrastructural capacity, focusing on the intentional development of human capital through the provision of public goods and the process of developing stakeholders in a non-democracy. Then I will explore Singapore’s despotic power with a discussion of institutionalized fear perpetuated through control of information and a lack of independence of the judiciary. Finally, I will return to Lee Yuan Kew’s thesis, looking at some ways in which Singapore has mimicked democracy and refuting the idea that Asian values have given rise to Singapore’s institutions and economic growth.

In discussing Singapore’s infrastructural state capacity, I will utilize not only Mann’s definition of the penetration of society, but also Theda Skocpol’s interpretation of the capacity of the state as an actor to accomplish policy goals. Concerted efforts by the government to improve the quality of life of its citizens have yielded impressive results. Singapore ranks 20th in the world in terms of Gross Domestic Product per capita and 25th in terms of the human development index, which captures important social measures, such as life expectancy at birth, education, and the adult literacy rate. To approximate both Skocpol’s and Mann’s conception of infrastructural capacity, I use the World Bank Indicators of governance, which measure the capacity of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and citizens’ responses to policies. I have included a comparison of government effectiveness among Southeast and East Asian countries to provide a clearer picture of Singapore’s comparative ability to create and implement reform. The bars in the charts indicate the percentile at which the country ranks, meaning that if the bar is close to 100, that country’s governance is rated among the top in the world according to that specific measure. Here we notice that Singapore is rated as one of the top of the world in indicators of stability, lack of risk, and implementation of policy, but in the bottom half of countries in terms of voice and accountability, which is expected for a non-democracy. It is the strength of the other indicators in comparison to the weakness of accountability that puzzles us. According to modernization theory, the social change created by economic growth should lead to democracy, yet as chart 3 makes clear, political reform falls far behind economic and social reform in Singapore.

How is this dichotomy possible? As with most things in Singapore, through very careful control. Government policy has very carefully not only created growth, but also moderated the deleterious effects on the least well-off and prevented the formation of a strong civil society. In the process, the state has created stakeholders, citizens with a direct interest in the state. This is accomplished through several mechanisms. One of the most powerful is the Housing and Development Board. Originally founded in 1960 to combat the housing shortage in Singapore, the HDB has implemented the successful Home Ownership for People Scheme, which allows married Singaporeans to buy houses, aided since 1968 by government subsidies. The result is that by 2003 over 90% of Singaporeans owned their homes. It is important to note that this ownership functions more as a lease, however, as HDB maintains the management and regulates owners rights, including limiting the ability to sublet, resale, or accumulate equity. The HDB housing ownership scheme is important to our analysis for two reasons: (1) It demonstrates Singapore's...
infrastructural capacity. (2) By, in essence, co-opting the middle class, the state is preventing the formation of social groups that could present a challenge to the authoritarian system. (This second point is more subtle.)

Another benefit of the HDB to the per-
petuation of Singapore’s authoritarian regime is that the government closely regulates living arrangements. This control provides two benefits that limit the formation of Lipset’s “cross-cutting interests”. The first and perhaps more obvious one is the neutralizing of ethnic tensions. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the ethnic tension and race riots Singapore experienced in the early days of independence played a profound role in shaping Singapore’s growth and development agenda. One aspect of this included the integration of schools and mandatory education programs so that Chinese children could learn about Malays and Singapore’s other ethnic minorities, and vice versa. Since its inception, the state saw reducing ethnic tensions as one of its primary tasks, accomplished mainly through education and housing “ethnic balancing”. Another potential way that housing regulations restrict the formation of cross-cutting interests is that housing is strictly limited to “nuclear family units”, perpetuating the traditional role of the family and emphasizing family loyalty and lessening the need to develop a strong civil society. This hypothesis would certainly require further analysis, but it is interesting to note the family restrictions in Singapore’s housing regulations and to consider the effects.

We now move to a discussion of Singapore’s despotic capacity. The capacity may not seem as evident as in some other authoritarian regimes where political violence is more common, but it is powerful nonetheless. Rather than resort to violence, Singapore’s despotic capacity is maintained through institutionalized fear, the climate of fear created by Singapore’s strong state capacity, and characterized by its use of what Cherian George has termed calibrated coercion. Institutionalized fear is a difficult concept to explain, but I present it here as a perception of vulnerability, defined by the proximity of invasion, economic disaster, or internal disorder. These are difficult attitudes to measure, but I will do so (imperfectly) through responses to the World Values Survey. Before presenting the survey responses, though, a quick anecdote may help explain the concept of institutionalized fear. Donald Emmerson, an expert on Southeast Asia, tells a story of a late-night arrival in Singapore. On the way downtown from the airport, his taxi driver was speeding a little, setting off the speeding alarm set up in Singaporean taxis. Emmerson jokingly told the driver he could unplug the system, to which the driver responded that if he unplugged the system, all other taxi drivers would follow suit, and mass chaos would reign in the streets of Singapore. The story is a convenient way to portray the feeling of vulnerability in Singapore: that if the carefully ordered society is not preserved, chaos may result. Tellingly, in response to the statement “Most people can be trusted”, only 17.6% of Singaporeans answered that they agreed. In contrast, 36.9% of Taiwanese agreed, 35.5% of Americans, and 45.5% of Indonesians.

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Public Trust</th>
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<td>Singapore</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
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<td>South Korea</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
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Table: Levels of Public Trust

The comparison with other Confucian-valued countries, above, shows us that this fear and lack of trust is not cultural. Also we would not propose that Singaporeans have some sort of intrinsic inclination to fear. Rather, these survey responses and anecdotes allow us a glimpse into the unique political and social environment leading to these attitudes among Singaporeans. To see how this sense of fear is further institutionalized, we look to the courts. Singapore’s ruling party practices a “soft autonomy” which sometimes does not seem all that soft. The favored method of crushing the opposition is through lawsuits, suing opponents until they are bankrupt and thereby stifling the voice of dissent. Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam, the recently deceased leader of the opposition, is one such example – he was sued multiple times, with total
government regulation prohibits material that might threaten the “public interest, public morality, public order, public security, [and] national harmony” or that “offends […] good taste and decency”. Interestingly, though, sites that criticize the PAP have been allowed to continue posting content, provided that the sites register with the government. This strategy ensures that the internet does not become a tool of the opposition, because usage is relatively free, but the government is always watching. As with many other things in Singapore, expression is allowed, but in strictly circumscribed ways.

Given PAP’s widely accepted legitimacy, the PAP’s tactics seem unnecessary. Even if dissent were permitted, it does not seem likely that the PAP would even come close to defeat in elections. Policies promoting the provision of public goods and rapid economic growth have improved the quality of life for most Singaporean citizens, and dissent and revolution are mostly unknown sentiments. So why does the PAP continue to ruthlessly go after its opponents? One possible explanation is that the suppression of dissent (though in non-violent ways) continues the atmosphere of fear. By cracking down on the opposition, disagreement with the government becomes an inherently antisocial activity. The targeted but complete defeat of opponents perpetuates the idea that with political freedom comes chaos – it makes the opposition seem like a more serious threat to society. This idea may seem counterintuitive, but it is part of a very carefully calibrated coercion on part of the Singaporean government.

The development of infrastructural capacity may actually help despotic capacity. By building infrastructure, the state is able to gather more information and monitor more closely threats to its survival. The internet provides an interesting example of how infrastructure can lead to an increase in the growth of despotic capacity. Information Technology (IT) is vital to Singapore’s interest to remain an economic powerhouse. But, with the benefits of IT comes the difficult-to-control internet, and any source of unregulated expression is immediately suspect in Singapore. The leadership’s strategy to deal with the internet is telling of their overall approach to governance. The government has invested heavily in IT infrastructure, and Singapore has one of the highest internet penetration rates in the world. Heavy regulation ensures that the potential for political expression is limited. The government carefully monitors usage; hosts are responsible for content posted to their site, and damages of approximately S$1.6 million. His crime was to openly oppose the ruling People’s Action Party (PAP), which has ruled Singapore since 1959.

The strategy extends to the press and the international press – the International Herald Tribune has been forced to pay fines in order to keep their Singaporean leadership. Media is tightly controlled in Singapore, and even the suggestion of PAP criticism is harshly rebuked. In 1994, an American professor, Mr. Lingle, living in Singapore published an article that did not specifically name Singapore, but mentioned that some Asian countries are in the habit of bankrupting their opponents. When the government sued him, this put the prosecutor in the unusual position of having to prove that Mr. Lingle was in fact talking about Lee Kuan Yew and his son, who replaced Lee as Prime Minister. There is nothing secret, then, about the means that the PAP uses to obstruct opposition. Even the openness with which the PAP goes after its opponents speaks to the desire to maintain stability and order: citizens are aware of exactly how they will be dealt with if they take on the government.

The calibrated part is possible because Singapore has a high level of state capacity. State capacity facilitates Singapore’s method of oppression, “calibrated coercion”. Cherian George coined the phrase “calibrated coercion” to describe the much-nuanced oppression in which the Singaporean government partakes. The use of the judiciary is one example; the control of the media and the internet provides another useful example. Singapore’s breed of carefully balanced policy would not be possible in an autocracy.
with less state capacity. Singapore’s policies depend on the government’s capacity to sanction non-compliance, increasing people’s tendency to defer to the government.

It may be, too, that Singapore’s size and economy enable it to exert control more effectively than other countries might. Singapore ranks 192 out of 251 countries in terms of total area and has a highly homogenous economy that implies less incentive for competing sector interests. With no agricultural sector, and about 2/3 of its GDP composed of services, many of the sector-specific interest groups that arise in more diversified economies seem unnecessary. Combined with the state’s intentional integration of ethnicities, discussed above, this carefully calibrated control may not be replicable elsewhere.

In light of this analysis, let us return to Lee Kuan Yew and the Asian values thesis as a rejection of modernization. The preceding analysis shows that rather than arising from a specific set of Asian values, most of the deference to authority in Singapore is created and perpetuated by the state. Careful balancing of despotic and infrastructural capacity prevents the path to democracy. Rather than cause us to reject the modernization thesis, Singapore may be the exception that proves the rule. Certainly, modernization does not necessarily lead to democracy, but the case of Singapore shows us that maintaining a non-democracy in an advanced economy involves high levels of carefully calibrated control. What we also notice is that some of Singapore’s success can be attributed to the adoption of elements of democracy: creating stakeholders, property ownership, and relatively free flow of information. Singapore even conducts elections, though of course these lack meaningful contestation.

In terms of policy, then, it would be useful to adopt a more nuanced view of modernization theory that incorporates its likely effects on democracy but also is responsive to specific country factors. The prospects for democracy in Singapore are not great, but in formulating policy, we should not fail to recognize the significant human development of which even non-democracies are capable. That being said, the role of voice and accountability that democracy provides is, as Milton Friedman said, a good in and of itself. The discussion above showed that there is a cost to limiting political freedom, even with a high level of public goods provision. Regarding democracy promotion, therefore, we should not neglect the importance of voice and accountability, especially in our efforts towards developing countries. Though Singapore has achieved quite a bit, the analysis here shows that it would be hard to replicate this high level of control elsewhere, and the costs to human development could then be enormous. Given the costs of a lack of voice and political expression, the tradeoff between decision-making ability and accountability embodied in Lee Kuan Yew’s thesis should be decided on the side of democracy.

**Endnotes**

Molly Elgin

Molly Elgin graduated in June 2010 from Stanford University with a Master in International Policy Studies, with a concentration in Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law. She is currently Chief of Staff at the Center on International Cooperation at New York University. Her main research interests include international influences on political development, political transitions, and economic development, particularly in Asia. She earned her undergraduate degree in International Political Economy summa cum laude from Tulane University in 2004.
When I walked into the bookstore and saw the stacks of newly printed books, I thought to myself, “not again …” After the many times I’ve wandered into Singaporean bookstores to be confronted by The Singapore Story, From Third World to First, The Little Red Dot, and others telling and retelling Singapore’s last forty years, I couldn’t help but think that this new book was just one of many. However, unlike other Singaporean histories, Singapore: A Biography takes a detailed look at the confluence of peoples, ideas, cultures, and personalities that shaped the Singapore of old into the Singapore of today.

To be honest, Singapore’s pre-British history has largely been lost. What little was left when the British arrived in 1819 has since largely been destroyed, damaged, altered, or forgotten. The authors cover what is known of pre-colonial history in enough detail to understand modern Singapore’s earliest roots. After a brief treatment of Singapore’s earliest founding, the book explores the successive waves of peoples who came to call Singapore home. Singapore: A Biography details their lives and experiences through an examination of primary source materials. Unlike histories which present a full, concise, and detailed account of the “most important” facts of history, this book links the story of Singapore to a series of individuals who lived through and experienced the island’s history.

The book has its roots in a project at the Singapore History Gallery, which is the national museum of Singapore. The Singapore History Gallery aimed to bring together a vast collection of primary source materials for display in a single venue. Because of this, we are treated to a walk through history, which is at times more akin to walking down an old street than to reading a book.

From the ancient Malay Perahu to the Chinese Junk and later to the European sailing ship

Book Information


Reviewed by Daniel Clayton Greer

Daniel Clayton Greer was a senior at Stanford University majoring in International Relations and minoring in Environmental Engineering, with the main area of academic focus being energy and environmental policy. He also has significant interest in Southeast Asia, particularly in ASEAN and modern regional unity. He has been significantly involved in the Southeast Asian Service Leadership Network (SEALNet), a non-profit organization focusing on youth leadership and community service in Southeast Asia, for five years and spent a year living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and Singapore during a gap year. He was assistant section editor at the Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs and has been involved with the journal for several years.
and Steamer, Singapore is a city built more on the ocean and the trade that it provided than on the island itself. True to this reality, the work traces Singapore’s peoples back to their homelands and frames each new wave of arrivals within the larger narrative. This helps to build a clearer understanding of why the Singapore of today is so unique and much more nuanced than the packaged image of modern Singapore.

By providing this context, the work shows the vast diversity of linguistic and cultural groups that once occupied the island. While today, the government has designated four races – Chinese, Malay, Indian, and “Other” – the Singapore of earlier times had a much more broad and colorful mix of peoples. Because this broad mix has both added much to the modern culture of Singapore and subsequently been played down, a detailed exploration of the layers of Singaporean cultures is one of the greatest contributions of the book.

If you are looking for a dense, analytical, and thorough history of Singapore’s geopolitical and economic path, this is not the book for you. If however, you want to understand the modern city-state and its rich culture within a historical framework, there is no better book. The beautiful pictures, maps, and artifacts that fill the book’s pages bring to life much of the written words and allow the reader to feel greater connection to the past. Most notably perhaps is the conscious avoidance of events since 1965. While the majority of the best-known works on Singaporean history focus almost exclusively on Singapore since nationhood, Singapore: A Biography prefers to leave off where history ends and the present era begins.
A collection of paintings in a gallery can give us a magical glimpse into a far-away world. A gallery condensed into two-dimensional form would be a book that serves the same purpose. The book *Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea*, compiled by Nancy Tingley, with essays by Andreas Reinecke, Kerry Nguyen-Long, Pierre-Yves Manguin and Nguyen Dinh Chien is just such a book. This collection in book form transports the reader on a ride through the long and varied history of ancient Vietnam. Topics range from cuisine, interactions with neighboring countries, tribal cultures, and fine arts to the tools used in everyday life by the many different regions of Vietnam.

The book intersperses pictures with long and detailed descriptions of the background behind each object or painting presented. One particularly interesting section catalogues numerous examples of ceramic art that were used in trade and everyday life through the port city of Hoi An in the 16th through 18th centuries. The pictures are a visual delight to flip through, large and clear, with accompanying descriptions that locate them in the appropriate chronological and social context.

All the sections share the similarity of comprehensive and concise coverage of its area of presentation. This is seen in the ceramic section by the exhibition of ceramic statues, pottery, ornaments, utensils and even royal sculptures. The entries that accompany the pictures not only explain the era and usage of each object, but also their artistic significance. For example, it describes that the statues of the *nghe* – a part-lion, part-dog creature – are designed with lines and spirals along the body to emphasize the *nghe*’s ferocity and create the visual effect of action. Readers can expect the same detailed treatment of the material from all the sections, from the early cultures catalogue to the riverine polities catalogue.

How this collection came to be is important to the appreciation of this book. *Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea* is the first exhibition of objects from museums in Vietnam that relate Vietnamese culture from as early as the 5th century BCE up until the 1700s. The exhibition was able to be realized thanks to the efforts of curator Nancy Tingley and Vishakha Desai (president of the Asia Society) and Emily Sano and Rand Castile (former directors of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco). The project was also supported by nine lending museums in Vietnam, ensuring that the objects presented would be accurate and fair representations of ancient Vietnamese culture. The resulting collection is a rich and varied timeline of Vietnam.

For the casual reader, this book is perfect for enjoying with a cup of tea. The beautiful pictures and fascinating descriptions are a treat to enjoy on a relaxing afternoon. To the reader deeply interested in Vietnam at the intersection of East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, this book also provides in-depth discussions of the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism on Vietnam’s past. Every page provides a new and interesting fact about this region that the reader may not have heard of before. Touring the art world of Vietnam doesn't require visiting a museum or searching through the world. Just open this book and a wonderful journey through ancient Vietnam begins.
Book Information


Reviewed by Lucy (Lu) Yang

Lucy Yang graduated with an MA in Chinese from Stanford University. She is now pursuing a PhD in Translation Studies at the University of Hong Kong.

For many people around the world, Shanghai is a magical name. It is “conceived of as glamorous and exciting, as corrupt and impoverishing, or as a complex synthesis of the good, the bad, and the ugly”. How does the name “Shanghai” gain such a power? What makes it possible for real and literary travelers to immediately recognize the city “with some variation of the words ‘So, this is Shanghai!’ on their lips”? The book Mediasphere Shanghai: the Aesthetics of Cultural Production, addressing these questions.

In Mediasphere Shanghai, Alexander Des Forges contends that Shanghai was “written into existence”, and because of its role as the national media center, Shanghai became the focus for discourses of Chinese modernity. Shanghai novels (hàishàng xiǎoshuō 海上小說) from the 1890s to the 1930s appeared first as installment fiction. Later on, in various editions, they purported to reflect the Shanghai of the period. But, Des Forges argues, they are part of a larger “mediasphere” (e.g. maps, pictorials, newspapers, movies) that construct the “Shanghai myth”. As distinct from the Shanghai modernist (hǎipài 海派) works of the 1930s and 1940s by authors such as Liu Na’ou and Mu Shiying that have been the subject of so much attention recently, these Shanghai novels, which focus on Shanghai’s entertainment industry, have been regarded as being of lesser importance and are criticized as a model not appealing to refined taste. One of Des Forges’ tasks therefore is to trace how the critical paradigm was established.

In a detailed introduction, Des Forges sets out the major theme of the book. He suggests treating Shanghai novels, the production of Shanghai’s media industry, as a distinctive genre and distinguishes four narrative tropes that are associated with it: simultaneity, interruption, mediation, and excess. Key novels examined in this book include Han Bangqing’s Lives of Shanghai Flowers, Sun Yusheng’s Dreams of Shanghai Splendor, Zhu Shouju’s The Huangpu Tides, and Bao Tianxiao’s Shanghai Annals. Throughout the
book, Des Forges argues that the four tropes became pervasive in these Shanghai novels. In his reading, Shanghai novels were “participants in a symbolic economy” that “taught” their “readers to desire an ‘experience’” of “Shanghai modern”, and thereby build up the connection with their modernist counterpart. The attempt to break the frames of modern and traditional, and of China and the West, is an important feature of today’s Chinese studies. By discussing the hybridism of Shanghai and its media industry, Des Forges is able to bridge the theoretical gap and demonstrate the heterogeneity within each of these refined categories.

Des Forges examines questions of “distinction maintenance” in terms of space. He views the Shanghai novel as relating Shanghai in comparison with other cities. In *Lives of Shanghai Flowers*, for example, Shanghai courtesan characters spoke the Suzhou dialect, while the non-dialogue part of the novel is written in Mandarin. Thus neither “voice” in this double-voiced texts was the local dialect of Shanghai. Des Forges indicates that the novel signifies Shanghai as the most visible source of domestic Chinese heterogeneity by grouping two exclusive languages.

Then, Des Forges moves from spatiality to referentiality. He concludes that it is the simultaneity in Shanghai fiction that allows Shanghai to become “Shanghai”. Where realism developed later as a way of not only depicting but also interpreting society, Des Forges sees the referentiality of Shanghai fiction as part of the mediasphere intertext that invokes a larger readership outside the city than the readership of the city to invoke consumer pleasures. Shanghai fiction prefigures how one experiences it and assigns particular narrative actions to specific names and events (parks as places of conflict, alleyways as avenues of connection, and so on). Shanghai novels take into account location details as well. The carefully delineated grid of places and times, Des Forges points out, provides a vital framework for managing the great number of storylines and carrying on the story with somehow unrelated characters.

Then, Des Forges, in his book, moves one step further to show that an aesthetic of simultaneity and interruption with multiple narrative lines that continually converge and diverge constitutes another key characteristic of Shanghai novels. Here, Des Forges understands “simultaneity” as a shared imagination of Shanghai, which is inspired by Benedict Anderson’s concept of the “imagined community”. Des Forges engages in “horizontal reading” of several installment fictions that appeared “literally contemporary with their readers”. By doing so, he shows how the simultaneity, coupled with diversion or interruption, was an integral part of the experience of “reading Shanghai” through the Shanghai novel.

Des Forges further develops these ideas that Shanghai installment fiction “centers on narrative multiplicity”, features “incessant interruption” and embodies “constant challenges to conventional ideas of narrative continuity”. Through close reading of novels both horizontally and vertically, Des Forges articulates how earlier “traditional” novels influenced the aesthetic creation of Shanghai installment fictions. He scrutinizes the multiple ways in which the narrative focus of the Shanghai novel moves easily from one story to the next. This phenomenon becomes an “addictive rhetoric”, both sustaining interest among its readership and embodying Shanghai modernity.

Des Forges also presents the typical characters of Shanghai novels, including the broker who profits from the separation of cessions and other areas within Shanghai, the courtesans, the professional authors, and the “Shanghai person” (*Szahaenin*). This chapter considers the “Shanghai person” as a mediator between East and West and between “tradition” and “modernity”, who profited from the particular structures that Shanghai offered. Whereas “Shanghai personality” was defined as “trendiness, slipperiness, cosmopolitanism, pragmatism, sophistication, astuteness, and opportunistic attention to detail”. The identity, however, was acquired not at birth but largely on the basis of one’s own years of ex-
perience in the city. Therefore, Des Forges argues convincingly that the binary cultural distinctions between Chinese and Western were the “specific productions of Shanghai” rather than simply a result of the treaty-port system.

Finally, Des Forges sheds some new light on the study of Shanghai. By tracing features shared with the so-called “new literature” of May Fourth and modernist fiction that were supposedly against the leisure literature, Des Forges counters the critical paradigm that depreciates Shanghai installment fiction, and sees how it links into today’s “Shanghai” nostalgia that looks forward (as well as backward) to the “Shanghai myth” in the 21st century. This attempt certainly reflects his great ideal and assertion. However, since the literature and films in these chapters were no longer presented in installments (e.g. Mu Shiying’s *Shanghai’s foxtrot* and Mao Dun’s *Midnight*), people may ask whether or not the texts can be compared. What are the choosing standards of these particular examples? On what basis does he say that reader-writer-commentators such as Hu Shi, Liu Fu, and Eileen Chang, if they did so, “radically underestimate the degree to which Wu dialect fiction was popular not only in the 1890s, but even into the 1910s and ’20s”? Does he, to some extent, overcorrect in this process and exaggerate the importance and prevalence of Shanghai installment novels?

Des Forges’ argument is path-breaking and plausible, though it could have engaged more dialogues within the Shanghai mediasphere by putting the Shanghai novel in a web of intertexts that includes advertisements, newspapers, guidebooks, plays, and movies. He surprisingly provides only few examples from other media in this booming research field. As a result, the concept of the “mediasphere” as the core term in the title and in the introduction appears inconsequential in the body of the book. Also, as Chris Berry has pointed out, a much older idea of “ideology”, especially as developed by Althusser, is quite close to the idea of the “mediasphere” which Des Forges attributes to Regis Debray. In a similar sense of constructing (rather than reflecting) our understanding of the world, is it necessary to turn to the “mediasphere” rather than to the well-established concept of ideology?

The focus of Des Forges in this book is on Shanghai installment fiction, which is well done. Of course, discussions of entertainment newspapers and pictorials could be seen simply as promotions for our reading pleasures. Some readers may disagree with its conclusions, some may wish for pictures and maps to illustrate its referential details, and others would want the footnotes to be more specific. Being a massive book, attention is always a good sign for a continuing dialogue and future projections. One step at a time, Des Forges recovers an important piece of the cultural map tracing China’s history through the lens of the Shanghai media.
Kasza contributes to the scholarly debate over whether or not Japan's socioeconomic development is unique by studying Japan's welfare system comparatively in his book *One World of Welfare*. He rejects the conventional wisdom that Japan's welfare model is distinctly different from that of other industrial countries. He also does not accept the portrait of Japan as part of a unique East Asian welfare model. Systematically, he tests other established views such as those claiming that Japan's welfare policies were late and weak.

Comparing Japan with other countries by the timing and effects of their welfare policies, he argues that the development of Japan's welfare system has neither been weak nor lagged behind in its economic development. Besides the comprehensive evaluation of Japanese policies on health, old-age pensions, and employment from a comparative perspective, this book contributes to the understanding of Japan's welfare model by incorporating Japan's experience in the Pacific War as an additional source of influence on welfare policies. It brings necessary attention to the correlation between war and the adoption of modern welfare programs.

Despite the illuminating insights offered by the author, his analysis has certain limitations. For example, it does not discuss the changing impacts on welfare policies brought about by the crises and reforms of Japan's economy and of the Liberal Democratic Party in the past decade. Nonetheless, this book is still a good source for learning how welfare policies are made in Japan and how Japan's policy-making pattern is parallel to other states. Students of Japanese development will find Kasza's nuanced analysis enlightening, and readers who are interested in theories of the welfare state in general will also benefit from his comparative analysis.
The Snow Lion and the Dragon

China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama

Book Information

Reviewed by Victor Liu
Victor Liu is an undergraduate at Stanford University. He is pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in English.

The Snow Lion and the Dragon by Melvyn C. Goldstein attempts to give an unbiased political and historical account of what Goldstein terms “political Tibet”. This is a lofty goal, considering the political sensitivity surrounding the “Tibet Question” but it is a goal that I think Goldstein largely accomplishes. Goldstein splits Tibetans territorially into Tibetans who live in political Tibet (the Tibet Autonomous Region) and those from “ethnographic Tibet”, which includes Tibetans in areas adjacent to political Tibet where Tibetan people and culture dominate.

In his book, Goldstein traces current Tibetan identity using a historical approach beginning in the section The Imperial Era, starting around the 7th century CE and ending with postulations about the future of political Tibet. Goldstein’s historical account can be seen as a standard by which the reader should judge the versions of narrative created by Tibetans and by the Chinese of the unfolding of political Tibet.

The Snow Lion and the Dragon is divided into five sections: The Imperial Era; Interlude: De Facto Independence; Chinese Communist Rule: The Mao Era; The Post-Mao Era; and The Future. These chapters chart the historical development of and interaction in Sino-Tibetan relations. Goldstein shows that large-scale assimilation of Tibet by the Qing Dynasty occurred after 1904, when Britain invaded Tibet and the Anglo-Tibetan Convention was signed. The book largely concentrates on the interactions between Tibetan and Chinese leadership. Many of the key situations, such as the failure of Tibet to modernize, resulted from the decisions that either the Tibetan or the Chinese authorities made. One of the overarching ideas in the book is that the Dalai Lama failed to reach a compromise with the Chinese Communist Party under the leadership of the more accommodating Hu Yaobang. Goldstein describes a shift in Chinese attitude towards Tibet in 1989, when the Politburo decided that previous attempts to accommodate Tibet in ways that stopped short of allowing autonomy had been futile. Instead, the CCP saw greater aspirations towards independence in Tibet that seemed to result from its efforts of “liberalizing” Tibet.

Goldstein suggests that it was at this point that the CCP decided to factor the Dalai Lama out and focus on the “economic integration” of Tibet. Part of this economic integration involves the mass migration of non-Tibetan temporary workers known as the “floating population”. Non-Tibetans now control most of the local Tibetan economy and appear to have fully assimilated into the area. Goldstein then describes possible ways in which the Dalai Lama and the USA could handle this situation in his last section, The Future. What struck me most was the sense that the CCP has the Dalai Lama in checkmate. The CCP is no longer willing to negotiate with the current Dalai Lama, seeming to just wait for him to die, and the Dalai Lama cannot advocate for a violent uprising of the Tibetans in Tibet because of his image and representation of peace.

Although Goldstein does provide a balanced political and historical account of political Tibet, I thought he placed too much emphasis on leadership. The Snow Lion and the Dragon is also listed as an anthropological work, and as such I would have liked more ethnographic research to show what the general Tibetan populace thought.
constituted Tibetan identity and how this identity differs from the official Tibetan (Zàng 藏) identity in China’s mínzú (民族) identification project. However, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon* is a welcome balanced account of the “Tibetan Question” in a field that is fraught with tension and bias.
In the book, *The Rise and Fall of Guangzhou’s Red Flag Faction*, Liu approaches the Red Guards from the perspective of the social roots and personal interests of the participants in the movement. He highlights the divisions of the masses into radical and conservative factions and traces the origins of their factional struggle to their predispositions stemming from their social backgrounds. According to Liu, the conservative East Wind group comprised those from privileged social groups who had a vested interest in protecting the prevailing social order, whereas the radical Red Flag group comprised those from underprivileged social backgrounds who wanted to break the dominance of the privileged in the unequal social system. Liu further argues that, while most researchers focus on the city or province level in studying the power seizure process, they ignore the role of grassroots politics in the intensifying factional struggle. As a matter of fact, the two big warring factions at the citywide level had their foundations in grass-roots units. In other words, the numerous small groupings in schools, factories, government setups, and industrial and commercial enterprises were “cells” of the two big umbrella factions in society.

First, at the middle-school student level, Liu identifies a clear difference in membership and political orientation between the original, more conservative Red Guards and the revolutionary Red Guards. He repeatedly stresses the importance of the bloodline theory, indicating the dominant influence of class labels on students’ choices in becoming Red Guards. The original Red Guards (aka Doctrine Guards) were composed of the children of cadres, party officials, and government bureaucrats. They had the confidence of knowing they were following in their fathers’ footsteps when they acted to condemn the landlord and capitalist classes. In contrast, members of the revolutionary Red Guard were generally from underprivileged strata with very definite and heartfelt grievances against the present system. This also included some from “suspect” background such as small merchants, peddlers, teachers, the urban poor, etc.

Second, at the university and college level, students became split by their different assessments over the work teams. Revolutionary Red Guards attacked the party-sponsored work teams on campuses and tried to get them kicked out. Meanwhile, party authorities mobilized some of the more conservative Red Guards to attack the revolutionary Red Guards to defend work teams and local party committees and to brand the revolutionary Red Guards as “rightist” or even “counterrevolutionary”.

Third, at the factory level, Liu proposes the concept of “high political quality” and “low political quality” to distinguish the radicals and conservatives. Generally, people of “high political quality” were those from five categories of background and consistently rallied around party organizations. Many of them were party members, model workers, officials in lower echelons, and cadres in charge of security, political work, militia, trade unions, and the Communist Youth League. This category of people formed the backbone of conservative groups. On the contrary, people of “low political quality” were those from inferior class origin and usually kept a good distance from party organizations. Some even had
gotten into tense conflict with the factory leadership and might have clashed with the authorities over certain issues. They typically participated in the rebel groups.

Liu also identifies the different mobilization patterns between small factories and big factories. In Guangzhou, Liu notes that the conservative organizations such as Di Zong and Hong Zong were mainly composed of workers from big factories. This was because in big factories the bureaucratic order had held powerful control. From the factory party committee, political department, and public security section down to cadres and staff members of the trade union, youth and women's associations, and even workshop superintendents and shift foremen joined the conservative organizations almost as a bloc. In contrast, smaller factories did not have a large bureaucratic setup and there were fewer cadres in political departments, trade unions, and youth and women's associations, so the majority of factory directors and party secretaries were low-ranking cadres without many followers. It was thus easier to initiate a rebellion in a small factory because the conservative forces were relatively weak. In addition, most of the factory white-collar staff joined conservative organizations because they were closer to factory leadership than ordinary workers and drew better pay and benefits than workers, and so they tended to uphold the existing social order in their factories. This was particularly true among administrative staff, and less so among technical personnel. Without technical skills, administrative staff members were more likely to rely on factory leaders.

Fourth, for art and literary organizations, Liu finds that the conservatives were even weaker than those in small factories. This was because the staff members at those institutions were more politically sensitive than factory workers and knew how to tack their sails in the swinging political winds. When mass organizations mushroomed in November and December 1966, they quickly turned away from the political and security cadres and joined rebel groups.

This book has, however, too much descriptive padding and subjective opinion on part of the author. For example, Liu portrays rebel Red Guards as victims of a repressive communist regime and their rebellion behaviors as anti-communist purge movements and demands for democratic political reform. Though this position challenges the traditional view of the rebels as the associates of the “Gang of Four” and the perpetrators of the ten-year disaster, in many cases the rebel leaders themselves were coming from a red background and their rebellions were actually following the Central line and Mao’s instructions. How could these followers become the anti-regime protesters? Another weakness is that the author does not cite any references or use any footnotes through the entire book, which substantially weakens his arguments.
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