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Notes from the Editors

We are delighted to bring this issue of *ASIANetwork Exchange* to you. We see this issue as a great example of the range of content and the level of quality that we aim to publish.

The issue begins with an outstanding essay by Whitney Webb, now a graduate of Davidson College, and the winner of this year's Marianna McJimsey Award for the best essay by an undergraduate student. Webb's lucidly written "Tua Ji Peh: The Intricacies of Liminality in the Deification of Chinese non-Buddhist Supernatural Beings in Chinese-Malaysian Communities" carefully situates her findings along those of other scholars, namely that of Robert Weller and C. Steven Herell. She finds that intermediate divinities like Tua Ji Peh tend to work toward legitimizing those seeking aid in discriminatory and dynamic environments. The research for Webb's wonderful essay and research was made possible by an ASIANetwork Freeman Foundation Student-Faculty Fellows grant overseen by Dr. Hun Lye.

Stella Xu's historiographical essay "Reconstructing Ancient History—Historiographical Review of the Ancient History of Korea, 1950s-2000s" provides non-specialists, like ourselves, with the opportunity to understand how we might integrate Korea into East Asian survey courses in a manner that does justice to Korean history in its own terms. Making sure that we as non-specialists do not simply "add on" a class here or there, Xu's piece exposes the historiographical trends that may obscure our view of the critical interconnections between societies, which have been divided because of recent political circumstances and/or historical practice.

Sam Pack's essay, "Water Puppetry in the Red River Delta and Beyond: Tourism and the Commodification of an Ancient Tradition," takes up a subject of interest and importance to faculty and students alike. How do we understand traditional arts in their contemporary contexts? How might the revival of such arts today affect their meaning? Working alongside two student co-authors, Michael Eblin and Carrie Walther, this essay explores critical approaches to "traditions" we experience and enjoy as tourists. This article provides an introduction to critical anthropological methods, as well as a model that may be used to prepare students traveling to Asia to recognize both tradition and modernity while they are overseas.

"Negotiating with the Past: The Art of Calligraphy in Post-Mao China" by Li-hua Ying moves us from the other essays both in terms of geographical field and discipline. Ying identifies critical characteristics of this ancient art form in order to consider its flexibility and utility, which she characterizes as resilient. She explores its use and impact on life today through the number of people adapting calligraphy to address contemporary subjects. While she acknowledges that it is difficult to imagine that the contemporary practice of calligraphy will produce the kinds of masterpieces we find in the past, Ying argues that calligraphy will continue to occupy an important niche in the expression of Chinese society.

Adam Cathcart has contributed a wonderful pedagogical piece on a film with his "Love Song of the Foreign Liberator: Teaching Tibetan History to Students in the PRC." Not only do we get a clear sense for the important themes and issues that this particular film addresses, Cathcart provides us with a theoretical framework, as well as complementary resources, that we might use when we integrate this film into our own classrooms. Most

notably, Cathcart shows us how teaching a film and subject such as this can bring to the fore more than contemporary discussion of Tibet, about which students are somewhat familiar. This film and subject lend themselves to linking the PRC's struggle with discussing violence in Tibet to the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward.

The main section of this issue concludes with "Looking Back and Looking Up in Postwar Japan," Hiraku Shimoda's pedagogically minded review of the film *Always: Sunset on Third Street* (2005).

The issue continues with a special section about which we are very excited: three essays, guest edited by Darrin Magee of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, on the theme of *Asian Environments*. This marks the beginning of a series of special sections that Magee is guest editing for the journal. Building upon the momentum of a special symposium funded by the Henry Luce Foundation at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in early March of this year, Magee has assembled a wide variety of scholars working on various regions and themes in environmental studies of Asia. The journal is particularly excited about being able to showcase this outstanding scholarship and bring these essays to our readership as exemplary tools for integrating the study of different facets of sustainability and environmental integrity across courses in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and arts on our respective campuses. Not only do we hope that Asianists will use the essays, but that our readers will bring them to the attention of non-specialists on their campuses. You will find a very helpful introduction by Magee at the beginning of this special section, which addresses the individual articles and themes in greater detail.

Finally, we want to take this opportunity to respond to a very important issue that was raised at the Business Meeting at the annual conference in Portland, Oregon: *the role of the journal as a tool for innovative pedagogy in our respective institutions*. Although we want to encourage members to submit work that is research oriented, we wish to maintain space in the journal for outstanding pedagogical essays and resources for our members. As indicated in our mission statement below, the journal subscribes to the thinking exemplified in Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990):

As a scholarly journal dedicated to peer review, the *Exchange* provides a format and forum for the publication of current research that interrogates Ernest Boyer's four categories of professorial scholarship: discovery (disciplinary research), application (applying scholarship to address societal issues of concern), integration (interdisciplinary collaboration), and teaching (pedagogical innovation).

Particularly at Liberal Arts Institutions, our scholarly lives influence our lives in the classroom and vice versa and this is what the journal provides—a forum for all aspects of our lives as scholar-teachers.

Scholarly work that is expressly about teaching has come to be known as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). And so we take this opportunity to suggest the following as guidelines for authors to use when developing ideas for pedagogical submissions to the journal. Thank you, Tom Lutze, for raising this critical issue so that we can continue to strengthen the journal for the organization.

SoTL submissions to the journal should have:

1. Clear goals
2. Adequate preparation
3. Appropriate methods
4. Significant results
5. Effective presentation
6. Reflective critique

These goals were chosen to be familiar to faculty members in the context of evaluating the scholarship of discovery (what is traditionally called “research”) yet applicable to evaluating the other three types of scholarly work [expressed in Boyer’s definition above]. Thus, by one definition, the scholarship of teaching is teaching that is done in ways that meet these six goals. (<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/reflecting/sotl/#what>)

Authors may also wish to consult the following websites for more information about SoTL:

<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/ResearchAndScholarship/SoTL/>

http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/cet/sotl_info.htm

<https://www.iupui.edu/~josotl/>

We hope you enjoy this issue of the *Exchange*.

*Erin McCarthy (St. Lawrence University) and Lisa Trivedi (Hamilton College),
Editors*

Tua Ji Peh: The Intricacies of Liminality in the Deification of Chinese non-Buddhist Supernatural Beings in Chinese-Malaysian Communities

Whitney Webb

Abstract: The pragmatic, responsive, and syncretic nature of popular Chinese religion is well known and is thought to result, in part, from the religion's close connection to the fluxes of the social system in which its adherents live. These characteristics often result in considerable change when the social fabric is disrupted, such as in the immigration of Chinese to new and unfamiliar places. This process of change is commonly seen among Chinese deities. Tua Peh 大伯 and Ji Peh 二伯 (in Hokkien dialect "First Uncle" and "Second Uncle"), two ghostly deities of popular Chinese Malaysian religion, are understood to have an ambiguous status in the Chinese pantheon as they possess characteristics of both gods and ghosts. In China, these figures were simply part of the otherworldly bureaucracy of the hell realm with a very limited role and were worshipped infrequently. In the past 20 years, their worship has become extremely ubiquitous, with many shrines and temples proliferating. Now a variety of people come to them for wealth, for healings, and for protection. This coincides during a time in which the economic situation of Chinese Malaysians has become more difficult which parallels a significant rise in political tensions between Malays and non-Malays. This has caused a shift towards favorability in the deities' reputation, the demographics of their worshippers, and the reasons patrons seek their assistance. Overall, the elevation of Tua Ji Peh seems to work towards lending legitimacy to those desperately seeking efficacious aid in an increasingly discriminatory and politically unstable environment with harsher realities.

Keywords Malaysia; Mediums; Chinese popular religion

INTRODUCTION

The pragmatic, responsive, and syncretic nature of popular Chinese religion is well known and is thought to result, in part, from the religion's close connection to the fluxes of the social system its adherents inhabit.¹ These characteristics often result in considerable change when the social fabric is disrupted, such as the immigration of Chinese groups to new and unfamiliar places. Thus, popular religion in Chinese migrant communities can evolve dramatically in a relatively short amount of time due to the cultural and social upheaval inherent in adapting to a new land and society. In this case, the religion becomes increasingly localized in many respects, often changing how practitioners relate to recognized supra-human beings. Yet, the general categories assigned to these beings remain largely intact. Localization, however, can influence how these categories are understood, worshipped, and, occasionally, transcended.

Whitney Webb is a graduate of Davidson College, '12. She is the winner of ASIANetwork's Marianna McJimsey Award. The award honors the outstanding service of Marianna McJimsey, the first Executive Director of ASIANetwork and the first editor of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*. This annual prize recognizes the best undergraduate student paper dealing with Asia.

NATURE OF SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

Supra-human beings in popular Chinese religion are generally placed into one of three broad categories: gods, ghosts, and ancestors.² Ancestors are typically only relevant to practitioners with whom they share the bond of kinship. They are generally more private and exclusivist beings.³ Their worship and functionality only extend through a particular kinship group, though the extent and size of this group are variable. Gods and ghosts are figures understood to operate more in the public sphere, though this is the only significant similarity they share. Gods are frequently subdivided depending on whether they are related to on a personal or bureaucratic level.⁴ The gods of the personal model often include gods that cannot be included in the bureaucracy due either to their gender or a foreign origin. The gods of the bureaucratic model parallel figures of the human bureaucracy, possessing both a specific jurisdiction and a specific role. This specificity determines their religious function (e.g., why they are worshipped, who is a worshipper) as worship occurs when a practitioner seeks assistance on a matter they feel cannot be accomplished by their power alone.⁵ Because of the parallels inherent in the bureaucratic model of understanding divinity, the fallibility of the human bureaucracy is also present in the celestial bureaucracy. This potential imperfection in the divine leads to a high degree of variability in the behavior of these bureaucratic gods as well as in how their behavior and roles are interpreted. Ghosts, however, tend to be viewed as either malicious or pitiable spirits and can frequently be viewed as both simultaneously.⁶ In addition, ghosts tend to lack recognizable identities and are regarded as both politically and socially marginal figures as they exist outside of the realms of bureaucracy and kinship. The purpose of their worship tends to be largely directed at their placation and the prevention of their potential mischief.⁷

The most important determinant of worship in Chinese religion is *ling* (靈), which is often translated as efficacy. *Ling* determines the power of a supra-human being to either grant assistance or cause harm to an individual or group. In the case of gods as well as some godlike figures, *ling* directly influences the popularity of a deity's patronage, as there is little practicality in seeking the assistance of an ineffective god. However, there are limits to a figure's *ling*. In the case of deity worship, Chinese notions of predestination limit the aid one can receive, as one's lifespan and financial standing, for example, are predetermined for every individual and, though not rigidly inflexible, are often unable to be altered radically. However, there are some factors that are easily influenced by a supra-human being's *ling*, such as an individual's luck.

DEIFICATION & LIMINALITY

The category of beings related to as gods is hardly static. Mortal beings can be integrated into the divine realm, but only upon their death. If the being or beings in question lack a foreign origin and are male, they are often incorporated into the otherworldly bureaucracy. The Jade Emperor, the highest figure in this establishment, then assigns them a specific role and function.⁸ Occasionally, deification fails to occur this neatly. This often results in supra-human beings who posthumously come to possess characteristics of both gods and ghosts. Such figures typically begin their supernatural careers as ghosts, often as a result of a tragic death, who have become enshrined and, as a result, come to possess a recognizable identity. Some then undergo a "popular apotheosis" that causes them to be transformed into powerful patrons.⁹ This liminality is also incredibly relative, leading to differences among how individuals in a given religious community understand and relate to them. Some may view them as more god-like while others may view them more as ghosts. These figures' most ardent followers tend to be those whose own social status is questionable, such

as those involved in illegal activities like gambling, as such beings are believed to be more sympathetic to the needs and desires that accompany more disreputable professions.¹⁰ The ascent of these intermediate figures is understood by some scholars to end in one of two ways. Either they rise to prominence quickly and then decline again or they may become transformed entirely and take on the status of a god.¹¹ An intermediate being's fate is frequently determined by fluxes in the needs of the community that recognizes the figure. If the external factors that propelled the being into popularity dissipate, then so too will the community's need to worship it.

CHINESE-MALAYSIAN COMMUNITIES & THE RISING IMPORTANCE OF TUA JI PEH

Chinese-Malaysian communities offer unique opportunities to examine the effects of localization on the practice of popular Chinese religion. The Chinese first came to Malaysia in large numbers during the latter half of the nineteenth century as laborers, though Chinese immigrants before this time were frequently traders. However, British colonial rule in Malaysia led to a huge demand for labor as the government sought to expand infrastructure and increase urbanization.¹² Chinese-Malaysians soon grew to become incredibly economically successful and thus powerful despite their minority status. Yet, despite their economic power and their existence as a demographic majority or near majority in several populous areas, discriminatory policies against the Chinese do exist in Malaysia. Nearly all of these measures are focused on hampering their financial strength and redistributing wealth. These policies have existed in some form for approximately the past forty years.¹³ During this time frame, the worship of two beings called "First and Second Uncle" has risen precipitously in Chinese-Malaysian popular religion. First and Second Uncle, often called Tua Ji Peh (pinyin: Dà'èr Bó 大二伯) or Bo Tiao Peh (pinyin: Bǎocháng Bó 保常伯) in Chinese-Malaysian communities, are understood to be of intermediate status as they possess characteristics of both gods and ghosts. Tua Peh (大伯) is the "First Uncle" and Ji Peh (二伯) is the "Second Uncle" and they generally appear as a pair. In China, these figures are understood to be part of the otherworldly bureaucracy of the hell realm. Yet they are conferred intermediate status in Chinese-Malaysian communities. In the past twenty years especially, temples dedicated to Tua Ji Peh as well as the spirit mediums who channel them have increased significantly. This increase is paralleled by a shift in the deities' reputation, the demographics of their worshippers, and the reasons patrons seek their assistance. This study seeks to understand how localization and external factors have and continue to influence Tua Ji Peh's deification in Chinese-Malaysian communities through the examination of the intricacies surrounding their intermediate status.

BACKGROUND ON TUA JI PEH: CHINESE ORIGINS, TRADITIONAL ROLES, AND ICONOGRAPHY

HEIBAI WUCHANG – CHINESE BEGINNINGS

Tua Ji Peh originated in mainland China, where they still exist today. However, they differ significantly from their Chinese-Malaysian counterparts. In China, Heibai Wuchang (黑白無常), as they are colloquially known, are ghosts of the hell bureaucracy charged with escorting souls to the underworld for judgment. Heibai Wuchang roughly means "Black White Impermanence." This name refers to both the dualism of Tua Peh and Ji Peh, who represent *yang* (陽) and *yin* (陰) respectively, and their role as agents of mortality and impermanence.¹⁴ Despite their importance in mortal death and the afterlife, the Chinese

Heibai Wuchang are viewed as fairly lowly figures in the ghostly hell bureaucracy and are venerated as efficacious ghosts who possess the ability to potentially extend lifespans and grant wealth to the deserving.

The origin myths of Tua Ji Peh are numerous, though many accounts are variations of two narratives that can be traced back to China. One narrative focuses only on the origin of Tua Peh and stresses the virtue of filial piety whereas the other deals with the origins of both figures and stresses the virtues of loyalty and fraternity. In the first narrative, Tua Peh was initially a gentleman, though he was very unfilial. He would hit his mother on occasion but, at one point, realized the extent and shame of his unfilial behavior. He was very remorseful and ran to kneel before his mother in repentance. However, his mother was afraid he would strike her, leading her to run from him. While running, she fell down a well and died. Tua Peh dedicated himself after this tragic event to make amends for his filial lapse and remained in mourning for the remainder of his mortal life, an incredible display of filial piety.¹⁵ The only mention of Ji Peh in this first narrative is as the sworn brother of Tua Peh. It is unclear if the pair met in the underworld or during their time as mortals. This narrative will be referred to later as “the unfilial narrative.” The second narrative in which both figures appear tells a different story about two good friends/coworkers whose mortal lives ended in tragedy. One day, Tua Peh and Ji Peh were walking together when it began to rain heavily. Tua Peh told Ji Peh to wait under a bridge and seek shelter while he went to retrieve an umbrella. However, in Tua Peh’s absence the rain became a deluge, causing the river to burst its banks and begin to rise. Ji Peh, loyal to his friend, did not move and drowned as a result. Upon finding Ji Peh dead, Tua Peh was so overcome with grief that he hung himself. In death, they were rewarded for their loyalty to each other and given the charge of leading souls to the underworld.¹⁶ A variation of this second story asserts that the reason for this fateful walk was due to Tua Ji Peh’s occupation as prison wardens who were searching for an escaped prisoner, hinting not only at their loyalty to each other, but also to their duty. This second narrative will later be referred to as “the drowning/hanging narrative.” The reason for existence of two narratives is likely due to different regions, areas, or groups enshrining different mortals as the progenitors of Tua Ji Peh as a means of localizing and relating these well-known figures to their particular community. It is difficult to tell if one narrative precedes the other. Chinese-Malaysian communities likely inherited both of these narratives. An individual’s view of their origin is then likely contingent on the Chinese provinciality from which a particular group or patron originated that shaped the individual’s religious understanding the most.

ICONOGRAPHY

Tua Ji Peh are almost always presented as a duo. Ji Peh is depicted as short and stout, wearing all black, and Tua Peh is depicted as tall and thin, wearing all white.¹⁷ Tua Peh wears a tall white hat emblazoned with characters representing the phrase “fortune at one glance” and holds a fan in his right hand, signifying his ability to remove obstacles. Tua Peh is also portrayed as having long black hair and eyebrows as well as a lolling tongue. The lolling tongue is said to be symbolic of Tua Peh’s death by hanging and, in his worship, serves as a place where opium offerings are placed. Ji Peh, in contrast, wears a tall black hat, though it is noticeably shorter than Tua Peh’s. His hat reads “auspiciousness at one glance.” In his left hand he holds a tablet signifying his authority to take souls to the afterlife and in his right hand he carries a chain used to drag the souls of the dead. Ji Peh is also shown with a lolling tongue though this is generally only seen in temple icons. It is much shorter than Tua Peh’s and is likely extended for the receipt of opium offerings. Ji Peh also has a more

intimidating countenance, as his eyes often seem to be bulging. In contrast, Tua Peh's face is much more serene. As their iconography suggests, Ji Peh is typically considered to be the more fearsome and temperamental of the two figures, in part due to his coloration and his intimidating "props" and features. In practice, this often translates into patrons consulting Tua Peh with greater frequency as it is believed that he is more likely to grant their requests based on his more friendly countenance.

WORSHIP

Before their increase in popularity, Tua Ji Peh were chiefly approached for assistance in issues concerning an individual's lifespan or in issues regarding wealth. The first of these motivations is directly related to Tua Ji Peh's function in the bureaucracy. They are the beings who collect souls and escort them to the afterlife. Thus, by dealing with them directly, one may be able to extend one's own or a loved one's lifespan. In addition to this function, Tua Ji Peh are also believed to be wealth gods. This may be due to Tua Peh's relation to the Chinese wealth god Wuchang Gui (無常鬼) as the two figures are essentially analogous.¹⁸ Tua Ji Peh are understood to be very efficacious in regards to the divination of lottery numbers. Their efficacy in this regard is somewhat related to their lower rank in the bureaucracy compared to more *yang* figures such as highly ranked gods. This lower rank characterizes them as closer to humankind, leading them to be more sympathetic to human desires compared to the loftier, more distant *yang* gods. Thus, they understand the need of the "common man" for some extra income and are more generous in granting wealth to their patrons. Offerings given to Tua Ji Peh in temples and through mediums further illustrate the link between these figures and the ordinary Chinese-Malaysian. For instance, dark beer, such as Guinness, and cigarettes are common offerings to Tua Ji Peh though such offerings would be unfit for *yang* deities. However, offering given to *yang* figures such as incense and sweets are common as well. In some cases, opium is also offered, but its illegality sometimes makes this difficult. However, some temples are able to offer opium to Tua Ji Peh. The opium is usually placed on the effigies' tongues at regular intervals. Opium is almost always absent from Tua Ji Peh medium performances, though some may smoke cigarettes out of an opium pipe as a substitute. These "vices" characterize Tua Ji Peh as much more accessible than other figures who are also generally worshipped in a temple setting. Prior to the recent increase in their veneration, many viewed these offerings as a means of "bribing" Tua Ji Peh, reflecting their fallibility as supra-human bureaucrats.

MEDIUMS

Many temples dedicated to Tua Ji Peh employ spirit mediums. When a medium goes into a trance, he or she is recognized to be in direct contact with the spirit world, as the supra-human being is understood to have possessed the human body that serves as its conduit.¹⁹ This allows the medium to self-inflict bodily injury without pain and to speak with divine wisdom. Most Tua Ji Peh spirit mediums follow the standard medium practices of giving advice, divining numbers, and writing talismans.²⁰ Tua Ji Peh mediums generally dress according to the classical iconography of the particular uncle they are channeling, though some mediums in the present day forgo much of the ritual costume. Mediums' performative styles are incredibly variable, which is likely a reflection of the decentralized nature of Chinese religion.²¹ However, most Tua Ji Peh mediums do attempt to convey their accessibility and similarities to the "common man" in their performances.²²

LIMINALITY OF TUA JI PEH

In Chinese-Malaysian communities, Tua Ji Peh have characteristics associated with both gods and ghosts. Much like gods, Tua Ji Peh are worshipped by those who wish to receive their assistance and are often worshipped in temples. Ghosts, in contrast, are worshipped as a means of placating them and preventing potential harm they may cause. The worship of ghosts usually occurs in large public festivals at certain yearly intervals. In addition, patrons of Tua Ji Peh relate to them via the bureaucratic model of relating to gods. Tua Ji Peh do not then experience the political marginality of ghosts. However, they do exhibit the kinship marginality and thus are intermediate beings in this respect. Also, the hell bureaucracy in which Tua Ji Peh operate is the *yin* counterpart to the *yang* heavenly bureaucracy. Tua Ji Peh are understood to be *yin*, unlike the gods who are *yang*. Thus, Tua Ji Peh are more like ghosts in this regard. Prior to their recent and dramatic rise in prominence, Tua Ji Peh were viewed as having a questionable social status and as being disreputable in their behavior by partaking in drugs and some illegal activities. A god would never participate in such activities. Tua Ji Peh have held such intermediate status since their importation from China into Chinese-Malaysian communities.

COMPLEXITIES IN THE DEIFICATION OF TUA JI PEH

METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork was conducted in Penang, Malaysia during July 2010. Various temples and shrines in a variety of districts were visited. If they were present and willing, patrons, priests, and temple owners/workers were interviewed and generally asked questions involving Tua Ji Peh; their demographic information; and their views of the Chinese-Malaysian economic, social, and political situation over the past few decades.²³ Questions obviously varied depending on the individual being interviewed, as some were more knowledgeable about these figures than others. Overall, fourteen individuals were interviewed, including seven temple workers or priests. The information concerning Tua Ji Peh obtained from these interviews was categorized depending on which aspect of Tua Ji Peh's identity they concerned. These categories include: origin narratives and positions in the otherworldly bureaucracy; motivations for Tua Ji Peh's patronage, reputation and morality; and spirit mediums. Information was also organized based on the individual's age, or in the case of temple workers/priests, the approximate time at which Tua Ji Peh figures were installed in the temple. Temples and individuals whose origins precede 1960 are referred to as "older." Those whose origins fall between 1960 and 1980 are referred to as "intermediate." Those whose origins occurred any time after 1980 are referred to as "newer."

ORIGIN NARRATIVES & POSITIONS IN THE BUREAUCRACY

There was considerable disagreement concerning the origins of Tua Ji Peh and their position in the celestial hierarchy both among and within the three constructed categories. Those in the older category differed in which origin narrative they subscribed to, but drew these narratives from the two "well-known" origin stories previously mentioned. These individuals tended to view Tua Ji Peh as being figures somewhat equivalent to "Chiefs of Police" with their own retinue of minions. Their charge, however, was still viewed as taking souls to the underworld. This places them considerably lower than the King of Hells (Yanluo Wang 閻羅王), the chief deity of the hell bureaucracy, but higher than what would constitute a "lowly" deity.

Many intermediate participants did not know any origin story for Tua Ji Peh. However,

both the drowning/hanging narrative and unfilial narrative were present. The chief temple priest of the intermediate temple Jalan Perlis Tua Ji Peh Temple presented an origin story of Tua Ji Peh that closely resembled the filial narrative with one notable difference. Instead of being unfilial in the beginning and undergoing a transformation, Tua Peh was always considered filial. The only notable part of this story is his premature death from excessively mourning his mother's demise. All intermediate participants viewed Tua Ji Peh as serving directly under the King of Hells. Many also upheld the view of Tua Ji Peh as Chief of Police figures in the bureaucracy. However, some viewed them as either closer or lower to the King of Hells in the hell bureaucracy in comparison to older participants. Some intermediate participants suggested that Tua Ji Peh were lower than locality divinities such as Tudi Gong (土地公) and not very close to the King of Hells in the aristocracy.

Newer temples either presented the origins of Tua Ji Peh as the reimagined unfilial narrative mentioned above or suggested that their origins were no longer known. All newer participants viewed Tua Ji Peh as occupying a position in the bureaucracy directly subordinate to the King of Hells.

The shifts from the older views to the intermediate suggest changes in how Tua Ji Peh's accessibility and morality are understood. Representing Tua Peh as a filial figure suggests that he has always been a figure of upright moral standing. This has important implications for the reputation of Tua Ji Peh, which will be discussed later. In addition, the view of Tua Ji Peh serving a lowly role in the bureaucracy can be viewed as a matter of increased accessibility. Gods lower in the bureaucracy are generally understood to be more open to patron's requests and easier to channel via a spirit medium. Loftier gods are often above granting many of the requests the uncles receive, especially wealth, and are viewed as harder to access. Newer participants and temples either perpetuate the reimagined unfilial narrative, which elevates the deities morally, or regard their origins as unimportant to their function in the popular religious community. The newer view of Tua Ji Peh occupying a very high position in the bureaucracy can also be seen as increasing their *ling*. Individuals in the newer category also view Tua Ji Peh as so compassionate that they will listen to most "reasonable" requests regardless of their bureaucratic status. Thus, by elevating Tua Ji Peh to a higher position, they are able to increase the perceived power of Tua Ji Peh without damaging their efficacy and accessibility.

MOTIVATIONS FOR PATRONAGE

There is also considerable variation in one's motivation for patronage of Tua Ji Peh, though wealth is a constant theme. Older participants tend to uphold the "traditional" reasons for patronage discussed earlier: wealth and mercy concerning an individual's lifespan. Gamblers, prostitutes, and others involved in illegal businesses are recognized as common patrons. However, all older participants did recognize that these illegally involved patrons did not currently dominate Tua Ji Peh worship. Several noticed that more and more "everyday" people have come to worship Tua Ji Peh in the last few decades. Intermediate participants generally expanded the reasons for patronage, adding motivations such as spirit disturbances, medical issues, and luck. One intermediate participant claimed that Tua Ji Peh worship could address multipurpose needs. These expanded reasons proliferate greatly in the testimony of newer participants. Motivations such as health, studies, children, family matters, and jobs were added to those asserted by both intermediate and newer participants.

This proliferation of purposes seems to suggest an expansion of the clientele base for Tua Ji Peh. In addition, it is possible that this proliferation is related to their demonstrated or rumored efficacy as well as to certain individuals or temples seeking to legitimize these

figures. By associating Tua Ji Peh with less illegal business and underworld concerns, their reputation is able to be more effectively elevated, their worship is able to become more widespread, and their temples are able to become more successful.

REPUTATION & MORALITY

According to older sources, Tua Ji Peh had a reputation that characterized them as “scary” or “unsavory” individuals. For instance, the chief temple priest of the older temple Seng Ong Beow (pinyin: Chenghuang Miao 城隍廟) asserted children were, prior to the 1960s, too afraid to enter the temple. He also added that Tua Ji Peh were also considered “fierce” at this time. In addition, during the 1930s in Penang, there were reports of sightings of Tua Ji Peh at opium and gambling dens as well as brothels, leading Seng Ong Beow to chain their statues during this time. However, all older participants that cited this fierceness felt that it had since been relaxed, beginning several decades ago. In terms of morality, older participants viewed Tua Ji Peh as morally ambiguous at best. One older temple priest viewed patronage of Tua Ji Peh as nearly equivalent to bribery. This bribery had no consequence in the afterlife of the briber because the rewards or wealth Tua Ji Peh bestow comes directly from them and thus do not concern other deities. Another older temple attendant viewed such “bribery” differently. Tua Ji Peh will help bribe higher-ranked hell bureaucracy officials than them on the patron’s behalf. Tua Ji Peh may also either help those involved with illegal business by making their business more prosperous or by allowing them to make a better life in another profession, leaving Tua Ji Peh’s moral reputation ambiguous and circumstantial.

Interestingly, most intermediate participants echoed these same views, including the lessening of Tua Ji Peh’s once fierce reputation. However, all intermediate participants doubted whether Tua Ji Peh would participate in illegal activities themselves. Newer temples and participants overwhelmingly understood Tua Ji Peh to be morally didactic and of outstanding moral character. Tua Ji Peh were generally viewed as granting patrons’ requests out of their great “compassion.” All newer participants asserted that Tua Ji Peh try to talk their patrons involved in immoral and illegal actions into reforming their ways and making a better life. If they are unsuccessful, then they help these patrons balance their immoral livelihood with moral deeds, teaching them to use their blessings “the right way.” This shift to direct moral didacticism seems to suggest a more recent trend in how Tua Ji Peh are coming to be understood. This elevation of moral character is likely associated with Tua Ji Peh’s elevation in the bureaucracy, but also with the expansion of their clientele base. Few “everyday” individuals would seek out an “unsavory” god who catered to “unsavory” types as this could impact one’s own reputation in the community.

SPIRIT MEDIUMS & TUA PEH EMPHASIS

At every temple visited that employed spirit mediums, Tua Peh was channeled almost exclusively. There was one exception. In this case, Ji Peh was rarely channeled whereas Tua Peh was channeled several times a week. This is likely associated with the widely held view (by new, intermediate, and old alike) that Ji Peh, though just as efficacious as Tua Peh, has a much shorter temper and is much stricter than his sworn brother. This then limits his potential efficacy. Thus, there seems to be a disproportionate emphasis on Tua Peh. This is further illustrated in temples as well. One intermediate temple, Baosheng Dadi (保生大帝), possessed only a Tua Peh statue and has never had a Ji Peh statue present. A newer temple, Farlim Tua Ji Peh Temple, had dozens of Tua Peh figures but only a few Ji Peh figures, which were also much smaller and placed more peripherally in the shrine. This suggests that effi-

cacy is leading Tua Peh to eclipse Ji Peh in importance. Seemingly, Ji Peh is coming to serve the role of a sidekick rather than a partner of equal standing. In addition, spirit mediums were not present at any of the older temples. Tua Ji Peh mediums then seem a contemporary phenomena, likely owing to their increased popularity in recent years, their renowned efficacy, and the elevation of their reputation.

IMPLICATIONS

These developments in how Tua Ji Peh's divinity is understood resonate with some scholar-noted trends while rejecting others. Robert Weller noticed that the resurgence of popular Taiwanese religion in the past two decades has placed far greater value on deities that undermine the bureaucratic metaphor in some way. These deities, like Tua Ji Peh, are individualistic and tend to lack associations with the community morality typical of more standard divine figures.²⁴ However, I would further argue, based on my findings, that these deities do not necessarily stay individualistic or outside of the greater moral community indefinitely. In the case of Tua Ji Peh, resurgence movements seem to rally around these atypical divinities, later altering them as part of a strategy to legitimize themselves and their worshippers. Thus, based on C. Stevan Harell's discussion of liminality, Tua Ji Peh are becoming increasingly less intermediate as their social status gains security and their worshippers proliferate. They are no longer specialized toward those with a questionable social status. They are instead becoming more and more part of the public Chinese-Malaysian religious community.

In addition, Harell's view of liminality suggests one of two possible outcomes for intermediate divinities: either they rise to prominence and gradually decline again or they are transformed entirely into respectable divinities.²⁵ In the case of Tua Ji Peh, it seems unlikely that they will experience a decline into obscurity anytime in the near future. Their perceived efficacy in granting wealth is common knowledge in Chinese-Malaysian religious communities and it is highly unlikely that the desire for it will lessen, especially considering the continuation of discriminatory Malaysian economic policies against those of non-Malay descent. It also seems unlikely that Tua Ji Peh will ever be able to fully become a standard *yang* god as they are part of the hell bureaucracy and are inherently *yin*. However, the insertion of moral didacticism into Tua Ji Peh worship, especially in newer temples, may help to overcome this in some way. Thus, it seems unlikely that either of these outcomes describes the end result of the elevation process of Tua Ji Peh. Based on the uniqueness of Tua Ji Peh, however, it is difficult to tell if they are the exception to Harell's proposed system of liminality or if they are indicative of its inaccuracy in this regard. Further research could help illuminate this.

Overall, however, the elevation of Tua Ji Peh seems to work toward lending legitimacy to those desperately seeking efficacious aid in an increasingly discriminatory and dynamic environment with increasingly harsher realities.

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Reconstructing Ancient History¹: Historiographical Review of the Ancient History of Korea, 1950s-2000s²

Stella Xu

Abstract: *The ancient history of Korea has been one of the most controversial and difficult phases to incorporate into an East Asian history survey class, not only because there are indeed quite a number of contested issues, but also because very few updated materials are available in English. This essay aims to provide a comprehensive and critical overview of research on the topic of Korean ancient history in the past six decades (mainly in South Korea), so that the ancient history of Korea can be understood first within the broader frame of East Asian history, and then in relation to the intellectual and ideological evolution which has significantly impacted historical interpretations in South Korea.*

Keywords *ancient history; nationalism; historiography; historical disputes; history textbook; founder myth*

I. INTRODUCTION

The ancient history of Korea has been one of the most controversial periods, as the scarcity and ambiguity of historical records as well as various interpretations generated by different scholars have made this an arena replete with complexity and disputes. For a long time, research on ancient history remained a puzzle of fragmentary and sometimes contradictory historical records. Moreover, understandings of Korean ancient history underwent a drastic change in the late nineteenth century, in close relation to Korea's political situation and the rise of nationalism. During the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), Korean nationalist historians focused their attention on ancient Korea as a way of raising the national consciousness. This political inclination toward research on ancient history was carried over to the postwar period after Korea's liberation from Japanese rule in 1945. Outside Korea, Japanese and Chinese historians also became interested in ancient Korean history for its relevance to their own histories.

The controversial connection between ancient history and political legitimacy, combined with the scarcity of English publications on these subjects, makes it hard to incorporate Korea's ancient history in East Asia survey classes.³ This paper traces the historiographical evolution of research on ancient history in South Korea, with emphasis on the most controversial issues and their transformation in relation to ideology and new archaeological findings. Because it appears that all possible written documents have already been found and examined, new findings are limited to what is uncovered by ongoing archaeological studies. Despite decades of effort, the ancient history of Korea is still mostly myth and enigma; nonetheless, studies on ancient history continue to flourish, driven by the enthusiasm of scholars who have embraced their variety and complexity for the past sixty years.

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II. MAJOR ISSUES

A. THE ORIGIN OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE AND CIVILIZATION

Tracing the origin of East Asian people and civilization has been crucial not only in the field of national history, but also in studies of interstate relationships. Since the 1950s, most South Korean scholars have leaned toward a so-called migration hypothesis about the origin of the Korean people. The earliest residents of the Korean Peninsula are said to have been Paleo-Asiatic people who were widely spread across Eurasia, northern China, and the Korean Peninsula. They used cord-patterned pottery and cherished shamanistic and animistic beliefs. This is the period that is tied to the Korean founder myth of Tan'gun. These earliest Paleo-Asiatic people were absorbed and replaced by newly arriving Altai-Tungus people who then evolved into the direct ancestors of the Koreans, known as the *Ye* and *Maek* in Chinese documents.⁴

This widely accepted northern origin hypothesis reflected Korean scholars' effort to overcome Japanese-sponsored scholarship that flourished during the colonial period, a historiography heavily weighted toward heteronomy (i.e., Korea's total reliance on foreign influences, both cultural and political, from China). Korean scholars felt more comfortable connecting prehistoric Korean civilization to the northern areas, such as Altai and Siberia, while identifying Chinese influence as having begun as late as possible (after the third century BCE). Paleo-Asiatic and Tungus were terms used to indicate ancient residents of Altai and Siberia based on Russian ethnographical investigations carried out in the eighteenth century. However, it was the Japanese colonial historian Shiratori Kurakichi (1865-1942) who first claimed that the *Ye* and *Maek* belonged to the Tungus people—a theory aimed at making it seem that the Koreans and Japanese had common ancestors.⁵ These problematic concepts of ethnicity were transmitted from Russian to Japanese scholars, and then accepted by Korean scholars during the colonial period. This intellectual heritage burdens Korean scholars who are still not completely free from politically driven Japanese historiography.⁶ Scholars are still debating the migration hypothesis (from Altai and Siberia to the Korean Peninsula) versus an indigenous origin of early residents in the Korean Peninsula, while continuing to search for better archaeological evidence.

B. KO CHOSŎN OR THE THREE CHOSŎN: TAN'GUN, KIJA (C. JIZI), AND WIMAN (C. WEIMAN)

1) TAN'GUN: FROM MYTH TO A HISTORICAL FIGURE

Among the unresolved issues regarding the early history of Korea, the most controversial is the historical lineage of the Three Chosŏn, especially Tan'gun Chosŏn. In a desperate effort to validate an authentic national ancestor, Korean scholars have spared no effort to learn about Tan'gun, the legendary ancestor of the Korean people and putative founder of the first Korean state, called Ko Chosŏn. Scholars are still far from any consensus on Ko Chosŏn. The debate includes whether Ko Chosŏn was centered in the Liaodong area in China or in P'yŏngyang or whether, according to the migration hypothesis, it was first in Liaodong and then moved to P'yŏngyang around the third century BCE.⁷ Many South Korean scholars commonly agreed upon the migration hypothesis in the 1990s, though it was recently challenged by a young scholar who argued that the center of Ko Chosŏn was always located in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula.⁸

Tan'gun has long maintained unsurpassable significance in Korean history and consciousness. Since the summit meeting between Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Jong Il in 2000 and

the raising of hopes for Korean re-unification, the legend of Tan'gun as a common ancestor has become a starting point for national healing. There have been a number of unprecedented symposiums and events held in North and South Korea for commemorating Tan'gun in the past twelve years, which contributed to the creation of a new term, *Tan'gun minjok chu'ui* or Tan'gun nationalism,⁹ indicating a new phase of Korean nationalism with emphasis on the symbolic meaning of Tan'gun.¹⁰

More recently, the South Korean Ministry of Education decided to make two major revisions in new high school history textbooks. The first is relocating the Tan'gun myth to the historical era, and the second is revising the dates of the Korean Bronze Age to start in 2000 BCE, adding an additional millennium to Korean history. According to one authority, the revisions were made because "there has been criticism from both political and academic spheres, pointing out that the overall treatment of Tan'gun Chosŏn was *too passive*...and upon this request, we plan to make *a more proactive narrative* about our ancient history [author's translation and italics]."¹¹

An additional complication is the rising popularity of so-called amateur historians in South Korea since the 1960s. They have attempted to reconstruct a glorious national history through emotional and arbitrary interpretations of historical documents, replete with ultra-nationalism and irredentism. Believing that the idea of a powerful ancient empire is crucial to Korean national unity and identity, they have contended that the territory of Ko Chosŏn reached as far as the east coast of mainland China and the Maritime Provinces of Russia, in addition to Northeast China and the Korean Peninsula.¹² With the support of the former military government of South Korea, these amateur historians even made the issue of ancient history the subject of a hearing in the Korean National Assembly in 1981 and requested fundamental changes to the narrative of Ko Chosŏn history in textbooks. It is ironic that despite the amateur historians' patriotic hostility toward Communism, their understanding of the country's ancient history is similar to the official stance of North Korea: both argue for a glorious, powerful, and uninterrupted ancient history that includes territory far beyond the normally recognized national boundaries.

2) *KIJA AND KIJA CHOSŎN:*

In contrast to Tan'gun, which shifted from the realm of myth to historical reality, the long-venerated authenticity of Kija has been repeatedly challenged in the twentieth century. Until the late eighteenth century, Kija was highly respected as a most righteous gentleman who brought advanced Chinese civilization to Korea. Indeed, the Kija story enabled the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910) literati to claim with pride that they were the only remaining carriers of civilization in East Asia after the Manchu people established the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in China proper. However, whatever pride there was in being Kija's descendants waned with the weakening of China after the late nineteenth century.¹³

After decades of historical investigation, the essential questions about Kija and his regime in Korea, known as Kija Chosŏn, remain. Was Kija a real figure? Did he come to the Korean Peninsula? Did he establish Kija Chosŏn? Where was Kija Chosŏn located? Setting Tan'gun as the starting point of Korean history, contemporary Korean scholars agree that Kija's emigration to the Korean Peninsula was a fabrication first introduced by Chinese historians during the Han dynasty (second century BCE), and later was uncritically accepted and internalized by Koryŏ and Chosŏn literati.

However, scholars have varied in their alternative interpretations. Some argue that Kija Chosŏn should be renamed as Hanssi Chosŏn¹⁴ or Yemaek Chosŏn,¹⁵ while some assign Kija Chosŏn to areas outside of the Korean Peninsula;¹⁶ some contend that Kija Chosŏn

was just one of numerous coexisting primitive states founded by Chinese refugees.¹⁷ Very few scholars still admit Kija's migration to the Korean Peninsula, but by arguing that Kija belongs to *Tongi* or the Eastern Barbarians (hence, ancient Koreans), Kija Chosŏn has therefore been redeemed as an ancient Korean state.¹⁸

3) WIMAN: A CHINESE EXILE OR KOREAN PATRIOT?

Wiman is one of the most controversial figures in Korean history.¹⁹ There have been numerous attempts to reinterpret Tan'gun and Kija Chosŏn since the 1950s, yet almost all of them were more or less variations that had already appeared from the late Chosŏn period to the colonial period. Interestingly, the most drastic change that occurred during the postwar era was about Wiman Chosŏn.

For almost two thousand years after the Wiman Chosŏn period, no Korean historian had ever questioned that Wiman was a member of the Yan people (and thus a Chinese). From the Korean side, Wiman was first mentioned in *Samguk yusa* or the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*, which was written by Iryŏn (1206-1289 C.E.) and largely quoted from Chinese sources regarding Wiman. Hence, Iryŏn was the first to propose a Three Chosŏn framework, and Wiman Chosŏn was included in the lineage of Ko Chosŏn along with Tan'gun and Kija Chosŏn. However, according to the story, Wiman usurped the throne after betraying King Kijun, the legitimate ruler of Kija Chosŏn, and was thus an illegitimate ruler. Wiman is therefore condemned, and for centuries his role has been minimized or intentionally ignored.

The most drastic change in interpretations of Wiman was proposed by Yi Pyŏngdo (1896-1989), one of the most prominent historians in South Korea in the twentieth century. Calling special attention to Wiman's topknot hairdo and the barbarian dress that he wore when he fled to Korea, Wiman's insistence that Chosŏn be the title of his new state, and Wiman Chosŏn's obstinate resistance against the Han invasion, Yi Pyŏngdo concluded that Wiman was actually a descendant of Ko Chosŏn.²⁰

It is interesting to note that North Korean scholars have concurred with Yi's strikingly new interpretations.²¹ Although it is difficult to find any evidence of communication between scholars in North and South Korea in the 1950s and 1960s, it seemed that the national division did not prevent them from reaching similar interpretations on Wiman.²² Yi Pyŏngdo's revisionist view was widely accepted among South Korean scholars due to Yi's academic reputation and his theory's promising implications.²³ Believing that Wiman was of Korean descent, archaeologists have attempted to bring Wiman Chosŏn into the discussion of state formation in early Korea.²⁴ Contrary to the Japanese scholarship, which uses Wiman Chosŏn as one of the most substantial pieces of evidence for affirming the heteronomous nature of Korean history, the newly invented ethnicity of Wiman makes for a complete reversal. Thus, Wiman Chosŏn has been transformed into a legitimate phase among Korean ancient states, and Wiman himself has been resurrected as a Korean national hero who led his fellow compatriots in fighting against Chinese domination.²⁵ This is despite the fact that the details of Wiman's hairdo and dress, depicted by Sima Qian, were not based on his first-hand observation and thus are dubious as evidence of Wiman's actual ethnicity.

C. DISPUTES OVER FOREIGN INTERVENTION

1) THE FOUR HAN COMMANDARIES

Nangnang (C. *Lelang*) Commandery, established after Wiman Chosŏn collapsed after the invasion of the Han Emperor Wudi's troops, lasted from 108 BCE to 313 CE in the

P'yöngyang area. Post-1945 Korean scholars intentionally avoided the issue of Nangnang because of its nature as a Han colony and the exceptional attention paid to it by Japanese colonial scholars for purposes of making claims about the innate heteronomy of Koreans.²⁶ Nonetheless, the large amount of Nangnang-related archaeological data excavated between the end of the colonial period and the 1990s needs to be addressed in order to understand the ancient history of Korea. Although it has long been held that Nangnang was located in the P'yöngyang area, some extreme nationalist scholars have contended that it was located as far away as to the west of the Liao River in China. They base this on an attribution of Nangnang relics excavated around the P'yöngyang area to an indigenous Korean state named *Nangnangguk*, or the State of Nangnang, which is believed totally irrelevant to the Han Lelang Commandery.²⁷

The issue of the Nangnang Commandery along with the other three Han Commanderies was crucial not only to the history of Korea, but also for the overall picture of premodern East Asian history. There is little written and affirmed archaeological evidence about the other two Han Commanderies, i.e., Chinbön (C. *Zhenfan*) and Imdun (C. *Lintun*), mainly because these two commanderies lasted for a brief twenty-five years. The fourth one, the Hyöndo (C. *Xuantu*) Commandery, has also been neglected for a long time because it moved westward twice and remained outside of the Korean Peninsula thereafter. However, the Hyöndo Commandery was pivotal because of its relationship with the later Koguryö Kingdom (C. *Gaogouli*, 37 BCE?-668 CE). According to *Hanshu* or *The Historical Record of the Han Dynasty*, "After the Emperor Wu of the Han quashed Chaoxian, he made Gaogouli a county subject to Xuantu Commandery. Emperor Wu also invested musicians to Gaogouli."²⁸ This further contributed to the issues of Koguryö's historical sovereignty that are now the subject of passionate debate between Chinese and Korean scholars. Some Chinese scholars insisted that because of the subjugation of Gaogouli to the Han Xuantu Commandery, Gaogouli was always a Chinese vassal state.²⁹ In contrast, Korean scholars would emphasize the independent formation of the Koguryö state and the stiff resistance raised by Koguryö against the expansion and invasion of the Chinese dynasties over the centuries. Despite its demise in 668, Koguryö continues to be remembered as one of the strongest and most prosperous phases of Korean history, especially in the sense of military strength and territorial scope.

The most recent discovery of wooden tablets in North Korea shed new light on the history of Nangnang and Ko Chosön. Some of these wooden tablets were inscribed with census information of the Nangnang Commandery, indicating that the Nangnang Commandery consisted of twenty-five counties and had a population of 280,561 in 45 BCE.³⁰ This is a crucial breakthrough in deciphering not only the history of Nangnang, but also of Ko Chosön. Opinions on the territorial size of Ko Chosön have ranged from viewing it as a huge ancient empire to a small entity on the northwestern Korean Peninsula. Now supported with census documents from Nangnang, scholars have projected the possible size of population of Ko Chosön and drawn the conclusion that Ko Chosön was a chiefdom at an early stage of state formation with a small population.³¹

2) *Imna* (J. *MIMANA*)

The issue of Imna, said to have been located on the southeastern coast of the Korean Peninsula in the fourth century CE, has been utilized for legitimizing Japan's colonization of Korea since the 1890s. Because of the limited and ambivalent written sources regarding Imna, the late nineteenth-century rediscovery of the King Kwanggaet'o (r. 391-413 CE) stele, erected in 414 C.E., attracted tremendous political and academic attention. Japanese

scholars demonstrated intense interest in this stele, which they believed to be the key not only for exploring the early history of Japan, but also the interstate relationships between Japan and Korea. This was also the reason that the research of the stele inscription garnered support from the Japanese Ministry of Army. Indeed, the founder of Japanese modern historiography, Shiratori Kurakichi, once even proposed to smuggle the entire stele to Japan.³²

The importance of this stele centered on a fourteen-character sentence that described the interstate relationships among the Three Kingdoms in the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Based on the conventional reading by Japanese scholars, it reads that “*Wa* (Japan) came across the sea and defeated Paekche, and Paekche and Silla have been the subjects of Japan ever since.” Japanese scholars insisted that *Wa* actively intervened and even dominated interstate relationships in Northeast Asia. In other words, *Wa* came to the Korean Peninsula under the request of Paekche, confronted Koguryō, and invaded Silla. As a result, some Japanese scholars claimed this stele to be the most substantial evidence for the actual existence of Imna Colony and the dominance of Japan over the southeastern part of Korea.

The interpretation of this crucial sentence and some particular characters in it has been hotly debated among Japanese and Korean historians. Some Korean scholars have suspected a conspiracy of applying lime onto the stele so that the overall meaning would be beneficial to Japan, though a Chinese scholar later affirmed that the lime was applied by local Chinese workers in order to produce rubbings with readable quality.³³ Due to its complexity and crucial implication, it is not surprising that Imna has been one of the primary targets for Korean historians since the 1950s. The still controversial issues are about whether Imna really existed, where it was located, and the nature of this entity.

The debate over Imna continues.³⁴ Although the colonial-era theories were consciously eroded, many postwar Japanese scholars still believe in the existence of a Japanese administration/outpost in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula. Some Japanese scholars suggested a much later formation of the Imna, in 429 CE or as late as around 530 CE, compared to the early hypothesis of 369 CE.³⁵ There were also new interpretations of the nature of Imna by arguing that Imna was more of a diplomatic or commercial station. Some Korea scholars further suggested that instead of *Wa* Japan, it was Paekche that had suzerain power over Imna. According to this theory, the ruler of Imna was later mistakenly recorded as Japanese, because the *Nihon shoki* or the *Historical Record of Japan* was written by Paekche refugees who escaped to Japan after the demise of the Paekche Kingdom in 660 CE and consequently presented all Paekche-related records with Japanese protagonists.³⁶ More recently, scholars called for understanding Imna in the context of Kaya history, and proposed that Imna was a branch office of Paekche for securing the trade route to Japan as well as an intelligence outpost.

The issue of Imna has continually been spotlighted, especially when there was a discovery of archaeological sites related to both the Korean and Japanese sides. Interestingly, the fundamental question is always about the authenticity of Imna and the chronology of cultural relics—in other words, which side of the strait created and/or possessed certain items first. The dilemma of archaeology can be perceived in the opposite interpretations of the archaeological data: the Japanese scholars used it to affirm the existence of a Japanese colony in Korea, while the Korean scholars used it to prove the Korean origin of the early Japanese culture and/or royal lineage. It is not surprising that Japanese Emperor Akihito’s comment on the Paekche origin of the maternal side of the Japanese royal lineage aroused opposite reactions in the Japanese and Korean media in 2001.³⁷ The Japanese media allocated minimum coverage, while the Korean newspapers were replete with overjoyed tones claiming that the Japanese emperor had finally admitted historical truth.³⁸

III. CONCLUSION

With the prevalence of modern nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism in the twentieth century, the interpretation of ancient history underwent tremendous changes which can be observed, for example, in the way history textbooks have been revised in South Korea. Tan'gun and Tan'gun Chosön were transformed from myth to historical fact and, by using the vague term *seryök pömwī*, or the scope of power, the map of Ko Chosön was made to cover a wide range from Northeast China to the Korean Peninsula. Despite the prominence of Kija in Korean history until the late nineteenth century, Kija and Kija Chosön completely disappeared from the historical lineage of Korean history. Starting from Tan'gun, the textbook implied a continuity of the Tan'gun lineage in the following period, which was conventionally named the Kija Chosön.

Many South Korean scholars are sympathetic to the new view of Wiman as a former member of Ko Chosön. However, due to the prominence of historical records describing Wiman as Yan Chinese, the textbook revisions made a compromise between the previous definition of Wiman as a Han refugee and Yi Pyöngdo's new definition of Wiman's ethnicity by vaguely depicting Wiman's origin as follows:

at the end of the third century BCE, there were many migrants to Chosön because of the chaotic transition from the Qin to the Han Dynasty. There was a man named Wiman among them who came with many followers, and the King of Ko Chosön [here the textbook uses Ko Chosön to avoid Kija Chosön] enfeoffed him with the western frontier for defense. However, Wiman later used military force to drive King Chun [again, the textbook uses King Chun instead of King Kijun for the same purpose of avoiding Kija Chosön] out and made himself king. He further conquered the surrounding areas and his power prevailed [author's italics].³⁹

The nature and location of the Han Commanderies and Imna became the most contested issues since the late nineteenth century, thanks to their potential implications for the formation of a new East Asian order. Despite the complexity, importance, and sensitivity of these issues, both the Han Commanderies and Imna completely disappeared from the current history textbooks in South Korea.⁴⁰ Although these are ongoing debates and there is room for different and/or opposite interpretations, it seems that revisionist views are still far from sufficient in counteracting the image of the Han Commanderies and Imna as foreign colonies located in the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, without any reference to the installation of the Four Han Commanderies, the textbook revisions emphasized Korean resistance against foreign power and implied the eventual victory of the Korean nation: "Though the Han dynasty extended their power to a certain portion of the former Ko Chosön territory, our nation resisted and was finally successful at driving them [Han troops] out."⁴¹

Nationalist historiography is still prevalent among many Korean historians because of its contribution to counteracting Japanese colonialism and racism during the colonial period. With the disintegration of the Cold War framework and increasing cultural, economic, and political interactions among countries, studies of ancient history have become more complicated. This is because of the still valid burden of affirming a national essence/identity despite the ambivalent boundaries among "national" cultures, especially regarding the early history of East Asia. As a result, the so-called "history wars" have been frequently in the mass media spotlight, drawing tremendous and unprecedented attention not only from academics but also from the general public, and historians have often condemned their counterparts from other countries for "distorting history." Noticing the dilemma of national history and globalization, some contemporary Korean historians have proposed *yöllin*

minjok chuüi or “Open Nationalism,”⁴² attempting to reach a compromise between the felt need for strengthening nationalism in the local context and the overall trend of globalization, though it is unclear how to implement the “Open Nationalism” in the study of ancient history.

NOTES

1. According to common periodization in South Korea, the term “ancient history” refers to the beginning of history through the end of the Unified Silla period in 935. This paper focuses on the first stage of ancient history, and leaves the Three Kingdoms, Puyö, Samhan, Kaya, the Unified Silla, and the Parhae periods for a future opportunity.
2. A part of this essay is revised from the author’s unpublished dissertation, chapter 3, “Ancient History Reinvented: Another Arena for Competing for National Prestige and Political Legitimacy.” See Stella Xu, “That Glorious Ancient History of Our Nation: The contested re-readings of ‘Korea’ in early Chinese historical records and their legacy on the formation of Korean-ness” (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2007), 188-233.
3. Korea Institute at Harvard University started publishing a journal titled *Early Korea* to promote research on early Korean history and archaeology. There are two volumes available: volume one published in 2008 and volume two in 2009.
4. Kim Jung-bae, *Han’guk minjok munhwa üi kiwön* (Seoul: Koryö taehakkyo chulp’anbu, 1973).
5. Shiratori Kurakichi, *Shiratori Kurakichi zenshü* 4 (Tökyö: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 537-38.
6. For a critique of Korean scholars’ migration hypothesis and the paradoxical legacy of Japanese colonial scholarship, see Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing ‘Korean’ Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asian Center, 2000), chapters 1 and 2.
7. No T’aedon, “Ko Chosön chungsimji üi pyönchön e taehan yön’gu,” in *Tan’gun kwa Ko Chosönsa* (Seoul: Sagyechöl, 2002), 75.
8. Song Hojöng, *Han’guk kodaesa sok üi Ko Chosön sa* (Seoul: P’urün yöksa, 2003), 471.
9. This was first proposed by Chöng Yönghun. See Chöng Yönghun, “Han’guksa sok üi esö ‘Tan’gun minjok chuüi wa kü chöngch’ijök songkyök,” *Han’guk chöngch’ihak hoebo* 28 vol. 2 (1994), 34.
10. On the other hand, the worship of Tan’gun also became a matter of dispute for Korean Christians. The South Korean government attempted to establish a Tan’gun statue in some elementary and middle schools; however, this has long been opposed by Korean Christian organizations, and some Tan’gun statues were severely damaged by radical Christians.
11. Yun Tuhyön, “Ko Chosön, sinhwa esö yöksa ro,” *Munhwa ilbo*, February 23, 2007. Interview with Chang Tökjin, the chief director of Committee for National History Compilation. See <http://kr.news.yahoo.com/service/news/shellview.htm?linkid=3&articleid=2007022313465651516&newssetid=746> (accessed Feb. 24, 2007) {{Citation broken[date=June 2012]}}.
12. An Hosang, *The Ancient History of the Korea-Dong-I race: The Korea-Dong-I Race, Creator of East Asian Culture* (Seoul: Institute of Baedal Culture, 1974).
13. Han Yong-u, “Kija Worship in the Koryö and Early Yi Dynasties: A Cultural Symbol in the Relationship between Korea and China,” in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, Wm. Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
14. Yi Pyöngdo, “Kija Chosön üi chöngchë wa sowi Kija p’al’jogyo e taehan singoch’al,” *Han’guk kodaesa yön’gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1976).
15. Kim Jung-bae, *Han’guk minjok munhwa üi kiwön* (Seoul: Koryö taehakkyo chulp’anbu, 1973).
16. Shim Jae-Hoon, “A New Understanding of Kija Chosön as a Historical Anachronism,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62 no. 2 (December 2002): 271-305.
17. Yun Naehyön, “Kija sin’go,” *Han’guk kodaesa sillon* (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1986), 239.
18. Chön Kwan’u, *Ko Chosön sa Samhan sa yön’gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1989), 37-89.
19. Wiman was trusted and favored by King Kijun, and was asked to defend the northwestern border of Chosön. However, Wiman later usurped the power and drove King Kijun out of P’yöngyang, and established Wiman Chosön around 194 BCE.
20. Yi Pyöngdo, *Han’guk kodaesa yön’gu* (Seoul: Pagyöngsa, 1976), 65-94.
21. Li Chilin, *Ko Chosön yön’gu* (P’yöngyang: Kwahak ch’ulp’ansa, 1963), 362-65.
22. North Korean scholars completely denied Kija’s migration to the Korean Peninsula or the existence of Kija Chosön on the Korean Peninsula; therefore, Ko Chosön is synonymous with Tan’gun Chosön. Among South Korean scholars, Ko Chosön can refer to Tan’gun and Kija Chosön and sometimes even include Wiman Chosön.
23. It was Kim Han’gyu who first appealed for a reconsideration of Yi Pyöngdo’s opinion in the 1980s, contending that Wiman’s hairdo was not unique to “Koreans” but was also widely used in the Southern Yue area of China, and that the Southern Yue also used the same state title after Han exiles took power. See Kim Han’gyu, “Wiman Chosön kwangye chungguk chük saryo e taehan chae köm’tö,” *Pusak yödae nonmunjip* 8 (1980): 132-36.
24. Chöe Mongnyong, “The Trade System of the Wiman State,” *Asian and Pacific Quarterly of Cultural and Social Affairs* 15 no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 30-37.

25. The transformation of Wiman into a national hero of Korea is similar to the reputation of Zhao Tuo in Vietnamese national history.
26. Regarding historiography on Lelang, see Pai Hyung Il, *Constructing "Korean" Origins: a Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000). See also, Yi Söngsi, "Tong'asia esö üi nangang—kwaje wa pangpöb e taehan siron," *Han'guk kodaesa yöngu* 34 (2004): 5-18.
27. Yun Naehyon, *Han'guk kodaesa sillon* (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1986), 340.
28. *Hanshu* 85: 2813.
29. Ma Dazheng et al, *Gudai Zhongguo Gaogouli lishi xulun* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003), 61.
30. Son Yöngjong, "Rangnanggun nambu chiyök üi wich'i—Rangnanggun ch'owön hyönbyöl chögu daso t'onggye charyo rül chungsim üro," *Ryöksa kwahak* 198 (2006): 30-33.
31. Jung-bae Kim projects that Ko Chosön's population was 56,297 in 200 BCE, and later had grown to 113,836 in 108 BCE when Wiman Chosön collapsed. See Jung-bae Kim, *Ko Chosön e Taehan Saeroun Haesök (New Interpretations on Ancient Chosön)* (Seoul: Korea University Press, 2010).
32. Geng Tiehua, *Haotaiwang bei yiqina wubai bashi nian ji* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003), 34-35.
33. Wang Jiaqun, *Haotaiwangbei yanjiu* (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1984). Yi Söngsi, *Mandüröjin koda: kündae kungmin kukka üi Tong Asia iyagi* (Seoul: Samin, 2001), 49.
34. Suematsu Yasukazu, *Mimana köböshi* (Tökyö, Öyashima Shuppan Kabushiki Kaisha, 1949).
35. Yamao Yukihisa, *Kodai no Nitchö kankei* (Tökyö: Hanawa Shobö, 1989). Suzuki Hideo, *Kodai no Wakoku to Chösen shokoku* (Tökyö : Aoki Shoten, 1996).
36. Kim Hyönggu, *Imna llbonbu yöngu: Hanbando nambu kyöngyöngnon pip'an* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1993).
37. An interview in December, 2001. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7H98orIMbc&feature=related> (accessed Jan 17, 2012)
38. Sim Kyusön, "Il Chönhwang 'Kanmu tennö' üi saengmo nü Paekche üi huson," *Tong'a ilbo*, December 24, 2001, <http://www.yesu.kimc.net/jarm60.htm> (accessed Jan 17, 2012).
39. National History Compilation Committee, *National History* (Seoul: Middle School National History Textbook, 1990), 15.
40. *Ibid.*, 15, 30.
41. *Ibid.*, 15-16.
42. Kang Chonghun, "chöegün Hanguksa yöngu yisösö t'al minjonchuüi üi kyönghyang e taehan pip'anjök kömtö," *Han'guk kodaesa yöngu* 52 (2008): 57-90.

Water Puppetry In The Red River Delta And Beyond: Tourism And The Commodification Of An Ancient Tradition

Sam Pack, Michael Eblin and Carrie Walther

Abstract: This article seeks to examine the interplay between the rise and development of the international tourism industry and the production of culture in the performance of Vietnamese water puppetry. Although tourism has indelibly altered this traditional art form, it is also responsible for the rejuvenation and continued existence of water puppetry. Rather than simply dismissing contemporary enactments as inauthentic representations, we problematize notions of cultural authenticity. Indeed, increasing global integration does not simply result in the elimination of cultural diversity but rather provides the context for the production of new cultural forms that are marked by local specificity.

Keywords water puppetry; tourism; commodification; cultural authenticity; Vietnam

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Water puppetry (known in Vietnamese as *múa rối nước*) traces its origins to eleventh century C.E. villages in the Red River Delta area of northern Vietnam. These rural populations believed that supernatural forces controlled all aspects of their lives and the natural environment. Water puppetry may have been devised as a way to satisfy these forces, as well as a form of entertainment, using whatever could be found in the surrounding area.¹ Ponds and flooded rice paddies after harvest were the stages for these impromptu shows. The performance of water puppetry reflected how northern Vietnamese villagers adjusted to the landscape through economic as well as cultural practices.

Contemporary performances of water puppetry occur in waist-deep pools of water, which serve both as the stages of the performance and as a means of concealing the control mechanisms.² Performances today occur in one of three venues: ponds in rural villages where staging areas have been set up, portable tanks built for traveling performers, or specialized buildings where pool stages have been constructed. The puppets, carved out of certain types of wood and covered with a lacquer finish, tend to be anywhere from 30 to 100 centimeters in height and typically weigh anywhere from 5 to 15 kilograms.³ A large rod supports the puppet under the water and is used by the puppeteers, who are normally hidden behind a screen, to control them. Thus, the puppets appear to be free-standing figures moving over the water.

The connections between Vietnamese water puppetry and important aspects of religion and spirituality in northern Vietnam have manifested over the centuries in various components and dimensions of the water puppetry performance.⁴ The plays have historically depicted scenes of life in rural northern Vietnam, often featuring fantastic creatures from Vietnamese mythology alongside characters such as farmers, townspeople, and the ever-present emcee/jester “Teu.” From the physical structure of the stage—being tied to the village pond and communal house—to the symbolic meanings behind ritual scenes of performance, water puppetry is deeply rooted in the religious values of agrarian life in

northern Vietnam. As one French critic noted, “Water puppetry is the soul of the Vietnamese rice field.”⁵ As a theatrical performance unique to this region of Asia, water puppetry has come to be a time-honored tradition with deep associations to the culture and peoples of northern Vietnam.

Vietnamese water puppetry belongs to a larger family of object-performance theater common throughout much of Asia, falling in a genre consisting of rod or stick puppets, including the *wayang golek* of Java.⁶ Often tracing their roots back to centuries-old rituals of theatrical performance centered around religious or supernatural contexts, many of these forms of puppetry are thought to have been associated with “animistic worship and community rites, such as the rice harvest festivals.”⁷ Numerous genres of Asian puppetry have undergone varying periods of rise and decline in popularity, with some flourishing greatly as others wane in influence. In modern times, institutions such as puppetry troupes and festivals have been established and perform at local, national, and even international levels with the aim of “preserving” these cultural performances in the context of rapid change brought on through globalization and development.⁸ With similar goals in mind, numerous books, encyclopedias, and other forms of literature have been published, alongside art gallery exhibitions and professional tours on the international level.⁹

Academics have noticed a trend in the development in these forms of puppetry from ritualistic or religious functions to more secular ones, beginning with the influence of powerful Southeast Asian historical figures and continuing into modern times.¹⁰ During the Vietnam War, for example, water puppetry performance was used to promote the communist regime in North Vietnam.

In the ponds of Hanoi, the Vietnamese children may see enemy planes crash in flames, shot down by the heroic men of the Peoples’ Army to the accompaniment of fire crackers. The ancient theme of the dragon and the phoenix now reoccurs in modern garb, defeating enemy soldiers and sending them underground, i.e., under water.¹¹

This trend of development toward more secularized performances continues in the present day. A more recent BBC News report on the water puppetry troupe of Hai Dzuong province in northern Vietnam describes how the performance art has been used to educate villagers about numerous social issues, such as legal codes and ecological preservation.¹² The adoption of new themes in storytelling and increased orientation toward the tourist audience has also led to new representations of a “traditional culture” in this art form.

Vietnamese water puppetry has recently gained worldwide fame for its lively and unique reflection of agrarian life in wet-rice villages of northern Vietnam. As water puppetry has gained popularity among tourists, modern practitioners have altered key components of their performances in terms of both content and format in order to appeal to Western tourist audiences.¹³ For example, stories specifically about day-to-day living in rural Vietnam incorporate or appear alongside other stories featuring more “universal” topics such as romance and courting. The stories have been significantly shortened as well to maximize the number of performances in a day. Popular representations of other cultures have also influenced Vietnamese water puppetry. Cowboy hats have been included as props in some shows, and stories about the war between the Vietnamese and the French have been incorporated into troupes’ repertoires as well.

RED RIVER DELTA

Located within the Hải Phòng province in the Red River Delta area of northern Vietnam, Bảo Hà is a farming village with a celebrated tradition of carving that has recently emerged as a destination appealing to “cultural tourism.” It is thought by some to be the birthplace of puppetry in the region, owing part of this reputation to a venerated statue of unknown antiquity (most informants suggested it to be anywhere between three and seven centuries old) housed in one of the communal temples. This statue is capable of movement via a series of concealed mechanisms, which enable the statue to rise from a seated position to standing when a particular door is opened, and is connected to certain ritual ceremonies conducted in the temple or in front of the nearby communal pond.

Figure 1: Working in the Rice Paddies. Photo by Sam Pack



The people of Bảo Hà derive their primary income from farming, but several among them have looked to other forms of work as alternative or supplementary occupations. Some have turned to commercial endeavors, oftentimes opening shops in a section of their homes, while others have found professional work as teachers or local government officials, and still others have recently started to find some success as artists and performers. This artistic success is mostly found in the carving of wood sculpture and in the performance of Vietnamese water puppetry. In the past, these art forms most likely served more ritualistic or leisurely roles in the village. Today, with the interest from international tourists presenting emerging opportunities, the people of Bảo Hà have also been able to use these arts as both a means to sell locally crafted goods and performances and as a way to attract investments from the government and companies in the tourism industry.

In 2002, the Vietnamese government granted Bảo Hà 800 million dong (VND), or roughly \$40,000, to develop the basic infrastructure necessary to accommodate tourists. This investment quickly followed the organization of the village water puppetry troupe in 1999 and can be considered along the lines of a much larger series of government spending on the “preservation” of intangible culture heritage. Earlier, in 1983, the Vietnamese government began to call for villagers to actively preserve and develop water puppetry.¹⁴ These

efforts often relied upon an image of an “authentic,” “pristine,” or “premodern” culture in order to appeal to cultural tourists from the “modern” world seeking “authenticity.”

Bảo Hà became a tourist destination for both domestic and foreign visitors in 2000. International tourists mostly come from the countries of the United States, France, Great Britain, Russia, China, Japan, and Korea. The foreigners usually do not interact with villagers because they cannot communicate; however, as one informant noted, the villagers and tourists “still love each other.” Community members assert that they are very happy with the influx of tourism and they welcome tourists when they come to the festivals or water puppetry shows. Many think it is a good opportunity for foreigners to learn about festivals in Vietnam as well as cultural activities of community members.

The most obvious effect of tourism on life in Bảo Hà is an increase in the standard of living. Tourists spend money to buy statues, see water puppetry shows, and offer money at the temple. One resident claimed that “this village could not have developed like it has without water puppetry.” When tourists purchase carving statues, they ensure that the craftsmen remain employed, so the local people directly benefit from the service they provide for the tourists.

Water puppetry shows are performed numerous times throughout the year, during certain festivals or as tourist companies schedule them. The troupe routinely performs for local villagers during New Year festivals and anniversary celebrations of the local temple and communal house. During these festivals, performances are enacted that may have upwards of twenty individual stories in them. However, performances arranged for tourists (both domestic and international) are more compact and have fewer distinct episodes. While the Bảo Hà troupe often performs locally in outdoor ponds, temples in nearby villages, or special stages created for tourist performances, they also tour other cities throughout Vietnam and perform in venues such as the Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi.

TOURISM IN VIETNAM

As Vietnam raises its global profile as an economic force, the government is also promoting the country, not coincidentally, as an international tourist destination. Vietnam has developed tourism in recent years due to the new foreign policy, which is to

implement consistently the foreign policy line of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development; the foreign policy of openness and diversification and multi-lateralization of international relations. Vietnam proactively and actively engages in international economic integration while expanding international cooperation in other fields. Vietnam is a friend and reliable partner of all countries in the international community, actively taking part in international and regional cooperation processes.¹⁵

In the 1980s, the country started to open its doors to the international tourism industry and sought to capitalize on the vast potential revenue that could be gathered from foreign travelers. Government funds were used to, and still continue to, facilitate construction projects such as paving roads, building community pavilions, improving existing buildings, and providing villages with more elaborate stages for performances. The objective was to make villages designated as “cultural” or “tourist destinations” (sites recognized by the Vietnamese government as having some form of “traditional culture” that needed to be preserved and could be utilized as features of “culture tours” in the developing tourism industry) more appealing to international tourists from locations such as North America or Europe.

In the early 2000s, water puppetry was becoming a popular tourist attraction for foreign-

ers throughout the country. This coincided with the government declaring in 2002 that water puppetry was a precious Vietnamese art that needed to be cultivated once more. While professional water puppetry troupes had been organized prior to this, it was not until this period, after the era of reform and change in the late 1980s, that the art started to be used to capitalize on a growing tourist market.

Figure 2: Thang Long Water Puppetry Theater in Hanoi. Photo by Sam Pack



Evidence for the growth in popularity of Vietnamese water puppetry on a global scale can be seen in other writings besides those of contemporary academics. International tourists often describe their experiences in foreign countries on popular travel blogs. Certain websites devoted to travel experiences in Asia contain fairly detailed descriptions of travelers' observations and personal research on water puppetry.¹⁶ In reading these accounts, it is clear that the popularity of this art form is spreading among international travelers and "cultural tourists" alike. International tours also contribute to water puppetry's rise in global popularity. Starting in 1984 in France, village troupes from northern Vietnam (gradually becoming more "professionalized" over the years) began touring foreign countries in order to spread awareness of this performance art. Since then, professional troupes have begun attending festivals and going on tours in countries all across the world.¹⁷

Local tourist companies promote "rural tourism," a type of niche-market of cultural tourism that appeals to both domestic and international travelers. A popular option includes day trips to rural areas such as *Bảo Hà*. Clients seek the tranquility of nature, a view of "authentic" agrarian life, and the ancient cultural traditions of local villages, including water puppetry performances. In an era of increased migration to cities, domestic travelers from urban centers are drawn by similar desires, as well as their own childhood memories of life in the countryside or searches for cultural, familial, or spiritual roots.

In the village of *Bảo Hà*, many informants, including the cofounders of the troupe, have stated that the attraction of international tourism is the driving force behind the formation of water puppetry troupes and regular performances of the art. Informants have claimed that without the income generated by performing for tourists, villagers would never have

enough money to sustain the tradition. Local residents have recognized tourism as a viable way to increase their income and thus have more time and resources to devote to the production of water puppetry.

COMMODIFICATION

In recent years, the changes affecting Vietnamese water puppetry have been the cause of some concern for both academics and performers alike. In the past, people performed water puppetry for a variety of reasons serving both spiritual and secular purposes, such as celebrating harvests or honoring various mythological figures.¹⁸ In the present day, however, various troupe leaders, puppeteers, and other authoritative figures have claimed that contemporary performances have lost some of the connections to ancient ritualized performances associated with rural Vietnamese spirituality, such as widespread performances once put on during harvest festivals. Troupes in the present day perform more and more for the economic benefits brought on by performances for increasingly foreign audiences. As researcher Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh notes:

The changes were brought about through the government's policy on "rehabilitation" and "extension" of this unique art. International touring of various troupes helped water puppetry gain worldwide fame and provided a realistic picture of rural life in Vietnam to new audiences. However, these changes also caused some "spiritual degradation" to water puppetry.¹⁹

Linh goes on to describe the "professionalization" of the water puppeteers guild throughout much of northern Vietnam and the targeting of international tourists as an important demographic in audiences as other important factors leading to this sentiment.

Academics studying water puppetry in Vietnam often run into discussions of "authentic" versus "inauthentic" culture, which seem to be related to the rapid changes brought on by engagement with the global community. Indeed, this discussion is in no way limited to Vietnam, or even Southeast Asia for that matter. Many scholars have strived to incorporate the concept of "authenticity" into ethnographic works concerning tourism.²⁰ In fact, authenticity plays a major role in a significant amount of the earlier anthropological and sociological analyses of tourism.²¹

In *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*, Edward Bruner recognizes performance as "constitutive of emergent culture."²² From this general orientation, one is able to examine a specific situation in the anthropological discussion of tourism:

Tourist performances represent new culture in that they have been modified to fit the touristic master narrative, have been shortened to fit the tour schedule, have been edited so as to be comprehensible to a visiting audience, and are performed regularly at set times and usually on stage.²³

Bruner further deconstructs notions of authenticity and inauthenticity as being social constructions of the present, and these terms should not be used in an analysis of culture unless the ideas are explicitly valued and engaged with by the people being discussed.²⁴ Such a dichotomy reduces a cultural production labeled as inauthentic as being inherently inferior to its "authentic" counterpart. This conceptualization enables an analysis of tourist productions, in this case Vietnamese water puppetry, as complex cultural forms that cannot be reduced to an authentic versus inauthentic binary.

In Bảo Hà, performers made several distinctions between performances put on for tourists and those that would be used in ritual contexts, such as New Year festivals. While some

local artists assert that water puppetry performance has not undergone extensive change over time, most admit that the shows performed for tourist audiences tend to be more edited than those put on for local festivals. Featured most prominently in their responses was the recognition that stories in tourist productions were essentially shorter (usually lasting 5 to 7 minutes), denser versions of the ritual productions (which were said to last up to 30 to 40 minutes), often taking what is thought to be the most appealing aspects of the performance in the eyes of foreign tourists and condensing it in order to accommodate the brief period of time the tourists spend in the village. Another frequently mentioned element of distinction is that new stories, songs, and characters are created specifically for tourist productions, whereas ritual productions typically adhered to a fairly consistent cast, score, and scene repertoire.

For the culture tourist, traveling to rural locations such as Bảo Hà in order to witness particular aspects of traditional culture can lead to some unexpected insights. Tourists have the chance to see changes that have taken place in Vietnamese society through the distinction between the portrayal of traditional agrarian life and the very brief glimpse of contemporary rural Vietnam. Water puppetry serves as a static representation of ancient art, culture, and lifestyles, but it is juxtaposed with their visit to a traditional rural village in the dynamic process of seeking to become modern. This portrayal of “traditional-within-modern,” or the “ethnographic surreal” as Bruner puts it, while at the fringe of the touristic gaze and tending to be glossed over by commercial institutions such as travel agencies, is central to the development, production, and marketing of tourist performances in villages like Bảo Hà.²⁵

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, we seek to avoid reducing the various aspects of water puppetry performances within the context of the tourism industry to simplistic binaries of authentic versus inauthentic or real versus fake and instead advocate examining them as new cultural forms being created in the frame of larger forces often associated with the utilitarian term “globalization.” To encompass almost any discussion of this term at length is beyond the scope of this essay. However, the intersection of globalization and local expressions of agency and identity has been reworked by some scholars to produce interesting conceptual tools, such as *glocalization*. Instead of the earlier fear of these broad forces in the global community swallowing and homogenizing local cultures, the changes elicited from the global level can engender new avenues for expression, re-interpretation, or incorporation of local cultural productions into a larger structure.²⁶

The local producers of water puppetry performances in Bảo Hà—the artists, musicians, and troupe coordinators—reaffirmed this notion of glocalization in many of our interviews. These individuals often claim that the influx of international tourists to their villages and the performance of water puppetry shows for foreign audiences have little to no impact on the culture of the villagers themselves. As one puppeteer stated:

Water puppetry reflects the lives and culture of people only in northern Vietnam. It doesn't matter where these performances are put on, they are still representative of traditional northern Vietnam.

This resistance to change from outside forces in the discussion of glocalization is evidence of the producers' ability to express a localized interpretation of identity within the larger frame of the emergence of culture in the international tourism industry. Glocalization readily fits into a constructivist perspective, enabling us to examine the creation and

recreation of culture in a general sense while simultaneously acknowledging the agency of the local producers themselves.

Ironically, globalization appears to engender a form of localism. Increasing global integration does not simply result in the elimination of cultural diversity but rather provides the context for the production of new cultural forms that are marked by local specificity. The “local” is usually considered to be an authentic source of cultural identity as long as it remains unsullied by contact with the “global.” But the local itself is often produced by means of the “indigenization” of global resources and inputs.²⁷ As Barber points out, the global culture is what gives the local culture its medium, its audience, and its aspirations.²⁸

However, the transition from global *versus* local to global *and* local is contingent upon having enough time to absorb and acclimate to outside forces. In fact, Jayasinhji Jhala contends that an authentic indigenous aesthetic is not necessarily located at the point of first contact, but after native groups have already domesticated and internalized new technologies and made them their own.²⁹ To a large and unexpected extent, localism challenges the imperative of globalization by compensating for the standardization and perceived loss of identity that is said to accompany it.

In this article we hope to have provided some insight into the complex processes of cultural construction and reconstruction taking place in the international tourism industry, as well as to give a brief glimpse of the fascinating ancient art of Vietnamese water puppetry as it has appeared in the specific context of Bào Hà village. We eagerly anticipate further research on water puppetry and its interaction with larger global forces such as tourism.

NOTES

1. David Taylor, “Vietnamese Water Puppets,” The Puppetry Home Page. Sagecraft Productions, September 18, 1995, <http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/traditions/Vietnamese.html>.
2. Ha Pham, “Vietnam’s Water Puppet Show Secret Discovered,” ThingsAsian, February 1, 2009, <http://www.thingsasian.com/stories-photos/34411>.
3. Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh, “Water Puppetry And Peasants’ Life In Vietnam,” *Journal of Mekong Societies*, 1 no. 3 (2005): 53.
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Negotiating with the Past: The Art of Calligraphy in Post-Mao China

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Abstract: Chinese Calligraphy, an integrated form that combines language, art, philosophy, and poetry, was considered the highest art in traditional China. Although no longer used for daily communication, calligraphy manages to sustain its presence in Chinese cultural life even in the computer age. The classical forms that were canonized nearly two millennia ago continue to command a large following while new styles and new practices have emerged in response to social, cultural and artistic influences. This paper looks at present trends in calligraphy and calligraphy-inspired practices against the backdrop of tradition. It is apparent that even within the most radical changes that have taken place, whether in the way calligraphy is practiced or evaluated, there are strong indications that the fundamental aesthetic principles passed down from the past are still very much alive today, showing the resilience of this ancient art.

Keywords writing; art; calligraphy; language

Chinese calligraphy, an integrated form that combines language, art, philosophy, and poetry, was considered the highest art in traditional China, “the most fundamental artistic manifestation of the national mind.”¹ Although no longer used for daily communication, calligraphy manages to sustain its presence in Chinese cultural life even in the computer age. The classical forms that were canonized nearly two millennia ago continue to command a large following, while new styles and new practices have emerged in response to social, cultural, and artistic influences. It is apparent that even within the most radical changes that have taken place, whether in the way calligraphy is practiced or evaluated, there are strong indications that the fundamental aesthetic principles passed down from the past are still very much alive today, showing the resilience of this ancient art. What distinguishes recent developments in calligraphy is a trend that favors removing boundaries between high and low cultures and between calligraphy and other forms of human activity.

Since the 1980s, interest in calligraphy has bifurcated generally in two directions: the traditional and the avant-garde, with the former embraced by calligraphy departments of higher learning as well as amateur calligraphy enthusiasts and the latter primarily by art institutions and independent artists. Traditional forms and aesthetics perfected by masters from the country’s venerated past are enjoying a popularity unseen in the Maoist era. Their practitioners put an emphasis on continuing the “grand tradition,”² which stresses rigorous training in fundamental techniques in order to achieve balance and grace. As the most popular forms practiced by amateurs and professionals alike, the classical genres can be found everywhere from temple plaques to shop signs, from prized scrolls hung in conference halls to practice sheets used by senior citizens and elementary school students. Masterpieces from the past are still religiously copied. Wang Xizhi (303–361), Wang Xian-

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zhi (244–386), Ouyang Xun (557–641), Yan Zhenqing (709–984), Huai Su (725–785), Liu Gongquan (778–865), and others up through the Song dynasty (960–1276), remain the most admired master calligraphers. What has endured is not only their calligraphy but also the literary, philosophical, spiritual, and moral qualities these ancient masters and their works embody. Brush writing, as believed in this time-honored tradition, is more than an artistic expression; it is also a form of spiritual cultivation, a practice that has the potential to instill positive character traits in the practitioner. Qi Gong (1912–2005) was arguably the most famous of this school of practitioners in the post-Mao era. His work recalls the elegance of ancient works. In the footsteps of the multitalented Confucian scholars in the past, Qi Gong was also a scholar of Chinese classics, painting, phonology, semantics, and literature as well as a highly respected expert at authenticating ancient relics. A university professor most of his life, Qi Gong is remembered by his students to have been unassuming despite his national fame, espousing traditional values of erudition and moral conduct in addition to his virtuoso skills of calligraphy.

One of the signs of the revival of traditional genres in the post-Mao era is the establishment of calligraphy and calligraphy studies as an academic discipline in universities. Nearly five decades after the first calligraphy and inscription department was established in 1963 at the Zhejiang Art Institute, more than seventy colleges and universities now offer BA degrees in calligraphy and calligraphy studies, most of which have been added in the past twenty-five years. Many of these institutions train students to become future teachers of calligraphy, passing down the ancient heritage from one generation to another. Thus the calligraphy departments act as keepers of tradition, providing a crucial link to the past, while encouraging innovation and scholarly research. At the same time, there has been a proliferation of calligraphy interest groups, particularly among retirees whose regularly held competitions and workshops have helped make calligraphy a popular movement across the nation. Working as if in a concerted effort, the ivory tower of higher learning and grassroots communities have kept traditional calligraphy a living art and made it relevant to contemporary life.

As traditional genres stand their ground among academics and amateur practitioners, new forms have emerged to put calligraphy on the very front of experimental art. The most controversial pieces have been created by the so-called avant-gardes, or modernists or postmodernists,³ as they are variably called, who seem bent on challenging the conventional definition of calligraphy. While garnering fame and fortune abroad, the avant-gardes are yet to be warmly embraced inside China.⁴ By way of distorting and disfiguring characters through novel techniques and compositions, they have produced works violently disconcerting to a viewer with more traditional sensibilities. Not tethered to the past, the avant-gardes consider their mission to be dismantling the aesthetic principles held dear by traditional calligraphers. Like reckless and rebellious children determined to rip apart a cherished family heirloom, they treat tradition as something to be questioned or demolished. The most notable among the avant-gardes is Xu Bing, whose “Book from the Sky” (*Tian shu*) is composed of indecipherable graphs similar in appearance to Chinese characters but of his own creation. Xu also designed a computer program with which a person inputs English words on the keyboard, but receives printouts in character-looking graphs. As far as the avant-gardes are concerned, the brush, ink and paper, fundamental elements required in calligraphy, are expendable. Wang Dazhong, for example, did a piece entitled “Collection of Words by Famous Calligraphers since Ancient Times” (*Cai gu lai neng shu ren yu*), a collage of characters in various scripts and styles originally written by master calligraphers. Clearly, the goal for the avant-gardes is no longer to make beautiful art, as the traditionalists do, but to invite the viewer to reflect on history and culture in the best

scenario or simply to create sensationalism in the worst case. The group that has drawn the most contempt is the so-called performance calligraphers, who have presented a variety of spectacles, such as writing on clothes in a fashion show or two men carrying a woman, one holding her head and the other her feet, and dragging her inked hair over a large piece of paper placed on the ground.

Controversial projects such as these have been the topic of endless debates and turf wars. The more traditionally minded critics argue that rearranging characters written by others in a collage and inventing unreadable graphs cannot, by definition, be considered calligraphy; instead, it should be called conceptual art or abstract art. Performance calligraphy, in their view, is nothing but gimmicks aimed at shocking its audience. The avant-garde exponents, however, insist that their works are composed of the same linear elements found in Chinese characters, even when they are parodying or subverting traditional forms. They see themselves as making important contributions to the art of calligraphy by injecting new blood into an otherwise ossified tradition. To be sure, the avant-gardes are interested in a wide range of artistic possibilities and thematic concerns and traditional Chinese calligraphy is only one of their inspirations. They also have taken lessons from Japanese modernist calligraphy developed in the 1960s, such as works by Inoue Yu-Ichi (1916–1985) and Teshima Yukei (1901–1987), and Western abstract art, conceptual art, installation art, and performance art, which streamed into China all at once in the 1980s. According to the avant-gardes, their attempt is to separate calligraphy from the myth of the so-called “national spirit” and to treat it as a form that needs to be continuously renewed, like any other art.⁵ In their view, the umbilical cord that connects calligraphy to the function of a written language has long been severed and the distinction between “writing” (*shuxie*) and “calligraphy” (*shufa*) has been clearly drawn. The traditionalists, on the other hand, vehemently insist on the intimate relationship of character writing and calligraphy art. The disagreement between these two camps essentially centers on whether calligraphic graphs are still linguistic signifiers and whether the traditional mode of writing with brush, ink, and paper is required to make calligraphy. The fact that such an issue is being hotly debated today, decades after the brush was replaced first by the pen and more recently by the keyboard, is a testament to the powerful hold calligraphy has on the cultural, intellectual, and emotional well-being of the Chinese people.

As performance calligraphy becomes fodder for ridicule, another form of performance inspired by traditional calligraphy is winning wide acclaim. Cloud Gate, a modern dance company in Taiwan, has staged several shows inspired by traditional Chinese calligraphy, including “Trilogy of the Cursive Script” (*Xing cao sanbuqu*) and “Water Stains on the Wall” (*Wu lou hen*). With blown-up images of writings by Wang Xizhi, Huai Su, and others projected on the background, the dancers use their bodies as brushes and the floor as paper and “write calligraphy” on the stage, their deft and graceful movements reminiscent of calligraphy’s free-flowing ink. The Cloud Gate dancers are not calligraphers, although calligraphy practice is included in their daily training regimen. Similar to calligraphy, dance places stress on the application of strength, movement, rhythm, energy, and spirit, so that the mind and the body become one. Lin Hwai-min, Cloud Gate’s artistic director and choreographer, points out that both calligraphy and dance contain “an endless demonstration of energy in circular movement” and both are “organic as nature itself.”⁶

In fact, calligraphy has long been associated with performance. Zhang Xu (675-759), known for his cursive script (*cao shu*) written while drunk, is said to have drawn lessons from Gongsun Daliang’s sword-dance movements, although dance inspired by calligraphy seems to be a modern phenomenon. In some ways the calligrapher is a performer, draw-

ing crowds of admirers, as Huai Su, Zhang Xu, and many other famed calligraphers often did. On rare occasions, a calligrapher could be called upon to perform under rather trying circumstances. During the Wei period (220–265), Wei Dan (179–251), the de facto court calligrapher of the Wei, was ordered to be lifted up to the height of several stories, as the plaque he was supposed to write on had already been installed without inscriptions. For fear of heights, Wei proceeded to destroy his brush and subsequently prohibited his descendants from ever practicing the regular script (*kai shu*), the chosen style for inscriptions at the time.⁷ Presumably, the crowd gathered at the city gate lost an opportunity to watch the famous calligrapher deliver a potentially stunning performance.

Performing voluntarily and in much more comfortable environments, writers of “ground calligraphy” (*di shu*), which turns brush writing into a sort of group dance, are opening a new frontier for calligraphy. An activity favored by retirees attracted to it for its health and social benefit as well as its aesthetic appeal, ground calligraphy has spread like wildfire in Chinese cities and towns. Practitioners are frequently spotted in a park or an open public space, each holding a bucket of water and a homemade, long-handled tool, writing on the cement floor. The best ones among them often draw a large crowd of onlookers. The set of tools and materials they use is a far cry from the required tools and materials of “Four Treasures of a Scholar’s Studio” (*Wenfang si bao*): brush, paper, ink, and ink stone. According to Lady Wei (272–345), the brush should be made from “the hair of hare living on high peaks and precipitous cliffs... harvested in the eighth or ninth months of the year” and the best paper was that of “Dongyang fish ovum” known for its smooth and soft quality;⁸ the ink used by Wang Xizhi is said to have been made of gold and cinnabar and “worth the price of gold”;⁹ and the ink stone had to have perfect grain to produce the right consistency, the kind that when an ink stick was being ground on it, it was like “wax touching a hot iron, soundless but sticky.”¹⁰ The ancient Chinese calligraphers were so exacting about their material that substandard substitutes were considered hindrances to their work. Xiang Mu (1550?–1660?), a Ming dynasty connoisseur, compared a calligrapher given inferior tools to an ill-equipped soldier in a battle: “Writing on paper that is not smooth and fine is like a brave general on a fast horse going through thorns and mud, unable to gallop ahead; using a brush that is not strong and flexible is like a determined and burly soldier holding an old, broken, and dull weapon, unable to attack his enemy; dipping in ink that is not exquisite is like training an army without proper provisions.”¹¹

Occasionally, many famed calligraphers did go for unusual tools and materials. Instead of a brush, Zhang Xu used his own hair or robe, often in a drunken state, to produce fine calligraphy; Pei Xingjian (619–682) dipped his sleeve in ink to write for a temple; Shi Yannian (994–1041) once rolled up a rug and wrote on plaques; Wang Xianzhi opted for an old broom to write on a wall, leaving behind a piece of work that even his famous father couldn’t help but admire. These spontaneous acts with unconventional tools produced works that could not be repeated even by the calligraphers themselves. Clearly, the celebrated tools have been discarded for something less refined. Therefore, there is nothing peculiar about writing on cement floor with a bucket of water and a sponge-tipped instrument.

Ground calligraphy is a grassroots movement, and calligraphers who see themselves as artists or professionals are unlikely to show up in a public square and mingle with amateur practitioners. As the movement is associated with communal activities pursued by retirees for social and health reasons, such as tai chi and various forms of communal dance, it is often seen as somewhat frivolous and low-brow. However, those who practice it love it. From all angles, ground calligraphy is an altogether wholesome exercise. It is environmen-

tally friendly, since it needs no ink or paper, hence, no litter; it is physically gratifying, as it involves coordination of the body and the mind; it is socially beneficial, as it is a shared experience among like-minded people; it is spiritually uplifting, as it is an artistic and cultural pursuit; and it is emotionally cathartic, as concentrating on nothing but producing perfectly aligned characters frees the mind from worldly worries. Zhao Fangping, a respected calligrapher in the city of Luoyang, describes a vivid scene of this practice in his rhymed prose, “Rhapsody of Ground Calligraphy”:

The sun rises and the clouds disperse, brilliant light splashing on the ground. In the recreation square next to the lotus pond, calligraphers arrive one after another, soon forming a sizable crowd. Bustling about in no hurry, they wet their brushes in clean water, a fragrant smell of ink floating in the air; with the spotless ground as paper, they start one stroke at a time. Some bend their legs, leaning forward with heads lowered; some move their arms, now lifting, now sweeping; others, with heads raised in total concentration, maneuver their gigantic brushes to make huge characters; still others, in hops and jumps, paint water dragons. The white-haired in their 70s or 80s write in great delight; the young and dashing hold tight the brushes while a gentle breeze caresses their faces; small children doodle, innocent and attractive as the pictures they create; young women play with their brushes, producing refined and graceful characters. Seen from a distance, they seem to be training in martial arts: up and down, left and right, calm indeed!¹²

This scene of calligraphy enthusiasts of all ages passionately engaged in writing is reminiscent of a famous scene in Eastern Han dynasty (25–220), painted by Zhao Yi (126?–184?) in his scathing essay, “Against the Cursive Script”:

The learners are so focused and work so hard that they don’t realize that they are exhausted. They work anxiously till late at night but still would not rest. They appear stressed and have no time for meals. They ruin a brush every ten days and consume several bars of ink every month. The collars and sleeves of their clothes are dark and their lips and teeth are often black. When among other people, they do not participate in the conversations but instead draw on the ground with their fingers or on the walls with sticks. Their arms are broken, skins scraped, fingers injured, and bones exposed dripping with blood, but they still would not rest.¹³

The passion for calligraphy was so intense then and every literate man and woman seemed to be so obsessed with writing a good hand that they would go to any length to improve their calligraphy. According to one well-known anecdote, when Zhong Yao (151–230) was still a child, he once caught sight of a work by master calligrapher Cai Yong (133–192) on the lap of Wei Dan. He begged Wei for it but was refused. He was so dejected that for three days “he beat his chest black and blue, coughing blood.” Cao Cao, the king himself, had to come and save his life with a magical pill. Later, after Wei Dan died, Zhong secretly had his grave opened and finally laid his hands on the book. From then on, so the story goes, his calligraphy improved in leaps and bounds.¹⁴

Compared with these half-crazed personalities, the group gathered in Luoyang is much more relaxed, as calligraphy for the twenty-first-century practitioners is recreational and fun, whereas for the students in the Han or Jin it was a much more serious pursuit, worthy of sacrificing one’s life for. In today’s Chinese communities, no matter how popular and how ubiquitous calligraphy is, it remains confined within certain circles. Gone are the days when calligraphy was a living, integrated medium, encompassing all aspects of literate societies.

Like all aspects of modern life, calligraphy is compartmentalized as an independent form of art in its own right and as a form of physical and mental exercise popular among the young and the retired. What characterizes the avant-gardes, the Cloud Gate dancers, and the ground calligraphy practitioners is the dissolving of boundaries not only between high and low cultures, but also between different cultural forms and institutions, a typical phenomenon of postmodernism. Interestingly, all these “unorthodox” practices can be traced to their ancient roots, be it writing with unconventional tools or associating calligraphy with performance.

In the same fashion, contemporary calligraphy criticism also retains many of the principles passed down from the past. Generally speaking, the traditional approach judges a work on three different aesthetic levels: “form” (*xing*), which includes execution of strokes, structure and composition; “rhythm” (*lüdong* or *jiezou*), which focuses on the control of movement and the application of strength; and finally “spirit” or “style” (*jingshen* or *fengge*), which deals with the personal quality that informs an artist’s work. Indeed, the Chinese written language traces its pictographic origin to the principle of “resemblance” (*xiang*) or “resemblance of form” (*xiang xing*). The idea of resemblance is further extended from “concrete resemblance” (*shi xiang*) to “abstract resemblance” (*xu xiang*), to include expressions of ideas, emotions, or spirit. It is said that Cang Jie, a legendary figure credited with having invented written Chinese, shaped the characters based on traces and marks that birds and animals left behind on the ground.¹⁵ It is also said that when Cang Jie was creating characters, “grains rained down from the sky and ghosts cried at night.”¹⁶ These legends suggest that the written word in its inception already contained two opposing but complementary aspects of human needs: the material and the spiritual. The written word, originally an image of an object but endowed with a certain mystical power, is able to move the natural and the supernatural worlds. In this vision, nature, spirit, man, and language are integrated as one unified entity. This philosophical view provides a theoretical support for the preferred language of traditional calligraphy criticism: that of analogy and metaphor, connecting calligraphy with human and animal movements as well as shapes and forms of objects, both real and imagined. Recognizing the important relationship between calligraphy and the natural world, Cai Yong, the Eastern Han calligrapher, offered the following description:

The structure of calligraphy calls for resemblance to form and appearance, like sitting and moving, coming and going, sleeping and rising, sad and happy; like worms eating tree leaves, like sharp swords and long daggers, strong bows and arrows, water and fire, clouds and fog, and the sun and the moon. Only when the strokes find corresponding elements in nature could the writing be called calligraphy.¹⁷

Cai pointed out, in no uncertain terms, that the ultimate inspiration of calligraphy is nature. Later Lady Wei, in the language of human and animal anatomy, made these famous remarks: “Those who know how to apply strength to their brushes produce works that show more bone; those who lack strength produce works that show more flesh. The writings that contain more bone and less flesh are called tendon calligraphy; those that contain more flesh and less bone are called ink pigs.”¹⁸ Since then “bone,” “flesh,” and “tendon” became indispensable terminologies used to describe calligraphy. Centuries later, Su Shi (1037–1101) proposed five elements that were, in his view, essential for evaluating calligraphy: “spirit, energy, bone, flesh, and blood.”¹⁹ Analogies such as these give students and critics some tools to understand and appreciate calligraphic works. But their usefulness is limited, as judging calligraphic work is an anamorphous business, comparable to diagnosing illness by “taking the pulse” of a patient, according to Su Shi.²⁰ Another abstruse term, similar to

the meaning of “spirit” is “tone” or “flavor” (*yun*). Without “tone” or “spirit,” a work would be “vulgar” (*su*), but too much of it could be detrimental in the eyes of some. Xiang Mu, for example, was opposed to his contemporaries learning the styles of Su Shi and Mi Fu (1051–1107), because he considered them too individualistic, too idiosyncratic, “heretical” (*yi duan*), “self-indulgent and reckless” (*zong er si*), “radical and arrogant” (*jili jinkua*), “extraordinary” (*chaoyue xunchang*), and with too much focus on “feelings and spirit” (*yiqi jingshen*) and not enough attention to “rules” (*guidu*).²¹ To drive his point home, Xiang likened Su’s calligraphy to a “plump and good-looking maid recently promoted to the position of a lady, but still behaving coarsely, who, with a pair of unbound big feet, makes people laugh”; and Mi’s to “a flamboyant young man from a wealthy family, inflicted with ulcers and warts, trying his sword on a galloping horse, laughing and shouting, as if no one were watching.”²² The same person’s work could elicit a completely different response. According to the Yuan dynasty calligrapher Li Xue’an (a.k.a. Pu Guang) (1237?–1327?), Mi Fu’s characters “could pierce the best swords and halberds, sharp, strong and invincible, sending fear into the heart of the enemy.”²³ Huang Tingjian (1045–1105), Su Shi’s contemporary, highly valued Su’s work for its “naturalness” (*tianran zigong*) and “winning tonality” (*yun sheng*).²⁴

Nebulous as these terms may sound to a contemporary ear, there are others that are even more extravagant to the point of being unfathomable. The work of Shi Weize of the Tang dynasty was likened to “geese leaving prints on smooth sand and fish jumping into an abyss.”²⁵ A much more imaginative mind would be needed to understand what this calligraphy looks like. Zhang Huaiguan, a scholar in the Tang dynasty, quoted Zhong Yao’s comment on Lady Wei’s calligraphy as “shattering the ice in a jade pot, and fragmenting the moon over the jade terrace, graceful as a flowering tree and serene as a gentle breeze.”²⁶ While “a flowering tree” and “a gentle breeze” do give the reader some tangible references, “ice in a jade pot,” which indicates translucency and smoothness, and “jade terrace,” the celestial realm of immortals, tell us very little about the style of her writing. What these lavish and fantastic imageries create is an illusion of an exceedingly beautiful work; the reader is left to figure out its precise style and appearance.

Though widely accepted and practiced in traditional Chinese calligraphy criticism, this kind of language was called into question by a handful of critics. Mi Fu, considered one of the best calligraphers of the Song dynasty, challenged the usefulness of such highly illusive language. He questioned the commentaries made by Yuan Ang of the Southern Liang dynasty (502–557): “Dragon jumping over the gate of heaven and tiger crouching at the palace of the phoenix—what kind of language is that?”²⁷ Echoing Mi Fu, Zhu Changwen, a well-regarded critic in the Qing dynasty (1616–1912), wrote, “When critiquing calligraphy, especially calligraphic styles, the ancients preferred the use of analogies. Everything in the world, all phenomena between heaven and earth, can be compared with calligraphy ... The language is highly ornate, the imagination outlandish. Wrecking his brain, the reader, as if being shrouded in clouds and fog, has a hard time figuring out the exact look of the piece under discussion.”²⁸

Such a metaphorical language, although necessary as judging calligraphy is such a tricky business, is clearly insufficient. Therefore, it is not surprising that non-aesthetic considerations found their way into the process in traditional calligraphy criticism. Critiquing a person’s moral character, while assessing his or her work, was a common practice from the very beginning of calligraphy criticism but became dominant in the Song dynasty. Inherent in this approach is the Chinese belief in the notion of “unity between nature and man” (*tian ren he yi*), which, when applied to calligraphy, indicates that nature, art, and artist are interconnected. When his emperor sought his advice on calligraphy, Liu Gongquan made

the following reply: “When the mind is at the right place, so is the brush” (*xin zheng ze bi zheng*).²⁹ While Liu’s advice could be construed as a surreptitious political admonishment, Xiang Mu was clearly making a direct correlation between a man and his work when he wrote centuries later, “Only when the calligrapher is a moral person, can his work be considered proper” (*ren zheng ze shu zheng*).³⁰ It is worth noting that a person’s physical appearance, unlike his moral character, does not correspond to the quality of his calligraphic work. The work of Ouyang Xun, a man of unappealing looks, was seen as “having the right consistency, not too thin, nor too thick, strong and unbendable, with the moral fiber of a righteous official in charge of defending the law in the face of criticism from the imperial court.”³¹ Hypothetically, if Ouyang Xun’s moral character had been tarnished, critics would most likely have offered a drastically different judgment on his calligraphy, one that would have made convenient references to his physical imperfections.

Su Shi put his finger on this Confucian criterion, “When the ancients judged calligraphers, they also talked about their lives. An immoral person’s calligraphy was not valued, even if it could be good. . . . There are handsome and ugly people, but it is impossible to hide one’s true bearing, whether a gentleman or a villain. Some are good at debate; others stammer. But the air of a gentleman or a villain cannot be faked. There is good or bad calligraphy, but we do not confuse the heart of a gentleman with that of a villain.”³² No wonder Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), widely considered the greatest calligrapher and painter of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), who served the Mongols after the Song had collapsed, received disapproving reviews from later scholars who denigrated his calligraphy. Xiang Mu offered a typical critique: “Zhao Mengfu’s calligraphy is gentle and graceful, seemingly inherited from Youjun. But it is nimble and soft, lacking moral fortitude, same as in his decision to serve the Mongols despite being a descendant of the Song imperial family.”³³ Xiang recognized the obvious affinity between Zhao Mengfu’s calligraphy and that of Wang Xizhi (Youjun), whom he admired immensely. Nevertheless, he still considered Zhao’s calligraphy unworthy of being emulated, an opinion based more on Zhao’s political choice rather than his art.

In modern critical parlance, there is an absence of such extravagant metaphorical language; gone also is the assertion of a direct correlation between the artists’ moral character and the value of their art. Although modern critical language is almost exclusively focused on the work, considerations of the artist’s inner quality are still at work. Terms such as “divine” (*shen*), “heart” (*xin*), “energy” (*qi*), and “tonality” (*yun*) are still very present in modern calligraphy criticism. Take for example the following critiques on the work of Wang Dongling, an influential contemporary calligrapher: “The beating of his heart and the movement of his strokes are beautifully synchronized; a perfect harmony between the two is reached”; “Wang Dongling’s calligraphy, especially his large work, possesses a grandness and majesty, a general sense of poetic charm”; “His work is abstract and symbolic,” “fluid and naturally structured”; “What I see in Wang’s work are movements of rhythm, lines of spirituality.”³⁴ Commenting on Wang’s public performances of writing large characters, another critic calls his calligraphy “works created with his body temperature,” the products of “the artist breathing with the audience,” and he expresses admiration for the artist’s “great spirit and magic,” “great ambition and energy,” and “great wisdom and wit.”³⁵ The direct link between the art and the artist, without the moralistic judgment, apparently remains a very important element in appreciating calligraphy. In this line of thought, calligraphy is still seen as a personalized art, created spontaneously by a trained individual whose inner forces are actively engaged in the process of creation, and the viewer is able to see these spiritual elements in full display while a work is being created as well as in the final product.

When examining the development of calligraphy in the post-Mao era, we notice the

strong resilience of this quintessentially Chinese art and the impact it has on contemporary Chinese life, shown in both the number of people who practice it and the way modern critical language retains some of its most important aesthetic principles. Although calligraphy has lost its traditional environment, it has adapted to new realities. As traditional genres take root in higher learning and popular movement, unconventional styles that are influenced by postmodern trends have emerged. With its ability to self-evolve and self-recreate, Chinese calligraphy is positioned to survive the changes of modernity and to continue to occupy a niche in Chinese society. But it is unlikely that we will see works such as Wang Xizhi's "Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection" (*Lan ting ji xu*) or Yan Zhenqing's "Draft of the Elegy for My Nephew" (*Ji zhi wengao*), masterpieces spontaneously completed in a cultural milieu in which writing with the brush was an inseparable part of the Chinese artistic, intellectual, and personal life.

NOTES

1. Chiang Yee, *Chinese Calligraphy: An Introduction to Its Aesthetic and Technique*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 107.
2. The period from the Wei (220–265) and Jin (265–420) to the Tang dynasties (618–907) is considered seminal in establishing the major genres of Chinese calligraphy. For a thorough treatment of this period and beyond, see Ouyang Zhongshi and Wen C. Fong, eds., *Chinese Calligraphy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
3. In China, these terms are sometimes used interchangeably without attention paid to their historical and theoretical implications.
4. Wang Yuechuan, a professor of Beijing University, is highly critical of some Chinese avant-garde, postmodern artists for catering to Western tastes and values. He blames the "visual violence" brought by the so-called installation calligraphy or performance calligraphy for causing "a crisis in spiritual ecology" of calligraphy art. He views Xu Bing's English "calligraphy" as something made more for the artist's livelihood than for the development of Chinese calligraphy. See his book, *The Cultural Spirit of Calligraphy* (Shufa wenhua jingshen) (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2008), 215, 228–29.
5. Wang Nanming, "Why Do I Continue to Make Modern Calligraphy?" (Wo weishenme yao jianchi xiandai shufa) *Dangdaishufa*, <http://9610.com/dangdai/10/wangnanming/1.htm> (March 12, 2012); and his book, *Understanding Modern Calligraphy: Transition of Calligraphy in the Direction of Modern and Avant-garde Art* (Li jie xiandai shufa: shufa xiang xiandai he qianwei yishu zhuanxing) (Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Press, 1994).
6. See the interview with Lin Hwai-min about his work "Water Stains on the Wall" on the eve of its Ann Arbor debut. *Youtube*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HKozu3kl94 (uploaded by UMSVideos on October 21, 2011).
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8. Wei Shuo, "Illustrations of Brush Stroke Strategies" (Bi zhen tu), in Mao Wanbao and Huang Jun, eds., *Categorized Commentaries on Calligraphy in Ancient China* (Zhongguo gudai shu lun lei bian) (Hefei: Anhui Education Press, 2009), 195–96.
9. Su Shi, "Notes of Chouchi" (Chouchi biji), in Mao, *Categorized*, 196.
10. Chen You, "Record of Random Thoughts while Basking in the Sun" (Fuxuan ye lu), in Mao, *Categorized*, 197.
11. Xiang Mu, *Elegant Words about Calligraphy* (Shufa ya yan), Yang Liang, annot. (Nanjing: Jiangsu Art Press, 2008), 162.
12. Zhao Fangping, *Evening Songs* (Wan chang ji) (Hong Kong: Tianmatushu Press, 2011), 23.
13. Zhao Yi, "Against the Cursive Script" (Fei cao shu), in Pan, *Calligraphy*, 32.
14. Zhong Yao, "Method of Using the Brush" (Yong bi fa), in Pan, *Calligraphy*, 51.
15. Xu Shen, "Preface to *An Analytical Dictionary of Chinese Characters*" (Shuo wen jie zi xu), in Pan, *Calligraphy*, 10.
16. *Huainan Zi Annotated* vol. II (Huainan zi ji shi, zhong), He Ning, annot. (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 1998), 571.
17. Cai Yong, "On Brush Strokes" (Bi lun), in Pan, *Calligraphy*, 43.
18. Wei Shuo, "Illustrations of Brush Stroke Strategies" (Bi zhen tu), in Pan, *Calligraphy*, 95.
19. Su Shi, "Dongpo on Calligraphy" (Dongpo lun shu) in Shui Caitian, ed., *Calligraphy Criticism of the Song Dynasty* (Song dai shu lun) (Changsha: Hunan Art Press, 1999), 24.
20. *Ibid.*, 13.
21. Xiang Mu, *Elegant Words about Calligraphy* (Shufa ya yan), 27–28.
22. *Ibid.*, 144.
23. Li Xue'an, "Critiquing Big Characters" (Da zi ping), in Cui Erping, ed., *Critical Essays on Calligraphy throughout History II* (Li dai shufa lunwen xuan xu bian) (Shanghai: Shanghai Calligraphy and Painting Press, 1993), 188.
24. Huang Tingjian, *Huang Tingjian on Calligraphy* (Huang Tingjian shu lun), Wang Zhongyan and Du Yuyin,

- annots. (Nanjing: Jiangsu Art Press, 2009), 173, 193.
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 26. Liu Tao, *History of Chinese Calligraphy: Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties* (Zhongguo shufa shi: Wei Jin Nan Bei chao juan) (Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Press, 2002), 166.
 27. Mi Fu, "Famous Sayings from the World" (Hai yue ming yan), in Shui, *Calligraphy*, 174.
 28. Zhu, *Sequel*, 3.
 29. Quoted by Su Shi, who argued that Liu Gongquan's advice was not just political satire but a truthful statement about writing calligraphy. See "Dongpo on Calligraphy" in Shui, *Calligraphy*, 33.
 30. Xiang, *Elegant*, 28.
 31. Zhu, *Sequel*, 94.
 32. Su Shi, "Dongpo On Calligraphy" in Shui, *Calligraphy*, 25.
 33. Xiang, *Elegant*, 137.
 34. "Critics on Wang Dongling's Calligraphy Art" (Zhu jia zhi yan: pinglun Wang Dongling shufa yishu) *Alibaba-zhonghuashoucangwang*, <http://info.china.alibaba.com/news/detail/v0-d1019360191.html> (August 18, 2011).
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Love Song of the Foreign Liberator: Teaching Tibetan History to American Students in the PRC

Adam Cathcart

Abstract: This article takes as its point of departure *Love Song of Kangding* (康定情歌), a romantic film from fall 2010 which propagandizes the positive consequences of the liberation of Tibetan cultural areas by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950-51. The article describes how the film fit into a semester-long course on contemporary Tibet taught to American students in Chengdu, Sichuan, and the particular sensitivities and difficulties relating to learning about Tibetan history in China.

Keywords Tibet; movie; Kangding; propaganda; serf

Since the uprising (or, depending on the rhetorical orthodoxy being employed, the “riot”/*dongluan*) in Lhasa of March 14, 2008, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda has gone into overdrive to churn out a great deal of information seeking to reinforce CCP claims to Tibet. In addition to producing films, television programs, and websites, the printing presses in Beijing have been extremely busy. Treatments of the “serf liberation” of 1959 have been particularly prominent, emphasizing and enumerating the evils of the Tibetan aristocracy prior to 1959. For a Party searching for some sense of coherence in the aftermath of the uprising in Lhasa, the trope of “serf liberation” has now grown sufficiently self-convincing that in 2009 the CCP retroactively declared March 11 an annual commemoration of “serf liberation day” across China.¹ In addition to the standard range of social science and religious research, newly published texts on Tibet include historical treatments of the Tibetan aristocracy prior to 1951 along with healthy helpings of photos from the Tibetan archives.²

The appearance of new texts adds a slightly more subtle layer to the already massive drive to educate both foreigners and the Chinese public about Tibet; the new influx of funds for Tibet-related propaganda since 2008 evidences the CCP's desire to diffuse some new sources, if not wholly new points of view, about Tibetan history in the pre-1959 era. In other words, rather than sitting on its historical laurels and relying only on old slogans and familiar photographs, the CCP has mobilized a wave of scholarship and documentary energy in the service of documenting and demonizing the old system while at the same time emphasizing the high respect with which Chinese bureaucrats from “the center” have always regarded Tibetans and Tibetan culture.

LOVE SONG OF KANGDING

In November 2010, I aimed my teaching centrally into the headwinds of this discourse by leading a group twenty rambunctious American students to a screening of the film *Love Song of Kangding* (康定情歌) in Chengdu, Sichuan. For the purposes of teaching, the film's release and its heavy-handed emphasis on the CCP's historical efficacy in Tibet could hardly

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have been better timed. The students were enrolled in a semester-long course on contemporary Tibet and the PRC; by late October, they had finished reading Melvyn Goldstein's summary of Tibet's historical relations with China (*The Snow Lion and the Dragon*, University of California Press, 1997) and were primed for some informed discussion of the Chinese Communist Party outlook on both political and ethnographic Tibet. *Love Song of Kangding*, a romantic film that propagandizes the positive consequences of the liberation of Tibetan cultural areas by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950-51, provided an entry point for this discussion.

The release of the film in the autumn of 2010 coincided perfectly with two overarching administrative imperatives. First was the need of the CCP to commemorate the potentially sensitive sixtieth anniversary of the PLA's entry into Kangding (and Chamdo/eastern Tibet) in October 1950. The second administrative imperative was not the state's, but rather mine: leading my university's semester program in Chengdu, I was seeking ways to feed diverse student interests and keep my class motivated about Tibet a full six weeks after my group and I had taken an extended trip to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) in October. We had quite literally come down from the high of the trip and, in spite of the fact that Tibet was continually in the news (the Dalai Lama's announcement of "retirement" set off a texting frenzy), overall interest in the course was falling off even as some individual students were charging deeper into specialized research topics. The CCP and I were therefore in oddly similar straits: the elation of initial progress among the young intellectuals had faded, diverse interests were threatening to split the monolithic interpretation of our united front, and morale was wavering. Galvanizing doses of propaganda would, at the very least, focus everyone on Tibet-related issues and remind them of the center's benevolence. For me, spending a few hundred of the university's yuan on group tickets for *The Love Song of Kangding*—a film that had the added advantages of English subtitles over Mandarin and some exquisite Chengdu dialect—was an easy choice.

MOVIEGOING IN CHENGDU

As we congregated at the theater near Sichuan University's "Little North Gate," distributing tickets, it immediately became apparent that Harry Potter was a far greater draw for Chinese moviegoers than *Love Song of Kangding*, in spite of the fact that the male lead in the latter film was a famous and somewhat chiseled Hong Kong star. Having paid for the propaganda film, the American students, replicating their classroom habits, clustered in the back rows and quickly outnumbered the Chinese audience. The boisterous prefilm atmosphere, however, was quickly overtaken by the familiar enticements of an orchestral score and unfurling credits.

Chinese film directors have clearly studied carefully, and learned their lessons from, successful commemoration films like Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* and the Korean War epic *Tae Guk Ki (Brotherhood of War)*. Like both of these models, the *Love Song of Kangding* leans heavily on a narrative structure based in the contemporary world and does its historical work via use of heavy and extended flashbacks. The film is therefore essentially formulated as the memory of a patriotic old man, a stand-in for any materially satisfied grandfather figure watching his revolutionary offspring in China, but one whose memories are cinematic.

After a flash of wintery marching by PLA troops with machine guns in the 1950s, the picture begins in earnest in contemporary Hangzhou, where Li Xiaoxing is enjoying his retirement with his granddaughter. Tibetan cultural areas could not be farther away. Life is good, the apartments are large, and, as Richard Kraus would remind us, nothing says

middle-class prosperity like a piano. Li's granddaughter has been assigned a piano piece that evokes the plateau, namely, the famous 1946 "Love Song of Kangding." But the young Han Chinese girl lacks an emotional connection to this music and all that it is supposed to represent in official culture: China's vastness, the open spaces of the plateau, the eastern edges of cultural Tibet, and the freedom to love whomever one pleases in the exotic outlying edges of the Chinese frontier.³

In order to gain a better feel for the music and the breadth of the Chinese experience, the girl's mother suggests that she spend some time in far-off Kangding looking after her suddenly emotional grandfather. Not only would the proposed trip allow the granddaughter her first real contact with China's most mysterious minority groups, it would allow the grandfather to push forward in his life quest to find his long-lost Tibetan love. As the mother earnestly laid out the tasks ahead, my students chortled quietly at the naked telegraphing of the film's propaganda intent. Where was the appropriate cynicism toward the state, the acknowledgement that Tibet was under occupation of the PLA, the implicit understanding of the Han-dominated racism of the 1950s? While the Americans squirmed in their seats, the young and urban Han Chinese, as well as one high school graduate with a Tibetan mother and a Han father, seemed much more used to such openly patriotic and neat narrative devices; none of them batted an eyelid. Of course young Han Chinese should take tours to Tibetan areas! There was nothing with which to disagree. The intergenerational duo are whisked to Kangding's new airport.

In one early scene on the highway outside Kangding, the grandfather-granddaughter duo pass a convoy of Chinese army trucks. On our own Pacific Lutheran University trip, we had run across such a convoy of probably more than 150 trucks on its way to the border with India. In the movie, the sight of the Army trucks sends the old man pinwheeling back into the past; it is a neat narrative device. My students guffawed collectively: to Americans, the assumption is that the trucks are in fact there to suppress a rebellion of people who want to be free, "occupy" Tibet. For their part, the Chinese in the audience were totally mystified by the American reaction to this scene. "What is there to laugh about?" their facial expressions seemed to say, "of course the army helps the Tibetans!" In neither case did the students seem to grasp that by tacitly linking the 1950 invasion to an aid convoy, the CCP film bureau had created precisely the inversion of the reality at the time, when the PLA was actually forced to procure grain along the way.

Grandpa's story then begins to unfold in earnest: underneath the soft exterior of an ordinary retiree, he is a former PLA engineer who helped to push New China's integration and modernization by building the highway between Chengdu and Lhasa. He was also a forerunner in racial integration (or *minzu ronghe*, in the Chinese parlance) by gaining a Tibetan girlfriend along the way. "Dawa," he names her and sighs out the car window as they drive through gorgeous mountain roads.⁴ How he and Dawa met, and why they parted, is of course unfolded over the course of the film.

CULTURES OF MODERNIZATION AND CONVERSION

In the film, certain realities of the present are made clear: life is good for PLA veterans, Chinese kids studying classical music in wealthy cities still need to understand the sacrifices of the revolution, and Kangding is a great place to consider for your next family vacation. Above and beyond that, pains are taken to reveal how the Tibetans have great roads, a reasonably high living standard, and the freedom to sing and dance for adoring audiences.

There is also a conversion scene where the Tibetan heroine expresses her longing to follow the communist armies. In some fundamental ways, the whole ambience of the Chinese

salvation of Tibetans mirrors that of the western Christian missionaries who preceded the CCP. Take, as an example, the writing of one Swedish-American missionary describing refugees from the Hui rebellion:

It was also in God's province that the fire and sword of merciless Moslems should drive an entire family from the City of Destruction to the House of the Interpreter...But one day the story of the sufferings of the Son of God touched and broke hearts already seamed with the pangs and scars of suffering and sorrow, and the stolid mother of the family, a valiant should who had dauntlessly lived a life of suffering, wept tears the like of which she had now known for years. To think that the Son of God should suffer so for her! Her hearts all was the willing fig she professed to requite such love...these were the first Christians on the Kansu-Tibetan border.⁵

The filmmakers in Beijing and Chengdu today are no longer so bound by such outmoded things as tracts, however: they have statistics. By firmly establishing the excellence of the present day in this salient of the PRC, the film's directors can encounter various knotty issues with more confidence. Such issues broached in this film include the anger some Tibetan youth feel toward the Han, the negative impact of China's violent swing leftward in the late 1950s, and discrepancies between ethnic groups in areas of social welfare such as education and health care.

Ultimately, the connection that my students drew—namely that any discussion of Tibet in China is bound to larger Chinese discourses—is, for better or worse, an inescapable part of teaching about modern-day Tibet. The imperative toward unity demands that Tibetans are seen as members of a harmonious family who, although occasionally disruptive, inevitably return to the fold, often thanks to generous Chinese aid. Furthermore, some of the most critical episodes in twentieth-century Tibetan history are situated in China's larger blind spot regarding its own political ventures in the 1950s and 1960s. The failure, then, of the PRC to discuss the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution and the radicalism of the Great Leap Forward is extended to Tibet.

The one potentially self-critical point in *Love Song of Kangding*, when the Han hero becomes a victim of the 1957 anti-Rightist campaign, is a key point for student discussion. China's failures in Tibet are implicit; in spite of heavy-handed propaganda on the subject, there are few Chinese scholars who would argue that the subsequent Cultural Revolution was an unmitigated good. Thus, the Warren Smith approach—whereby the Tibetans are simply an oppressed and colonized people, a prototypical nation-state in all but legality—remains somewhat marginal for students observing Tibet and Tibetan cultural areas in China today.

The second avenue that students can take is, perhaps, less courageous, but it is also far more pragmatic: to recognize where Tibet is today—firmly in the Chinese discourse—and attempt to penetrate the “mysteries” of the plateau from Sichuan. After all, should Tibet ever through some act of God or Xi Jinping become “free,” a more complete understanding of the region's place in the maelstrom of Chinese history, and the impact of the encounter with China upon Tibet, will be critical. In the meantime, the PLA will continue its patrols in Lhasa and the Tibetan quarter of Chengdu, the students will go back to their campuses, and the film studios will grind on in search of the next Party epic.

NOTES

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2. Tsering Yangdzom, *The Aristocratic Families in Tibetan History, 1900-1951* (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2006) [originally published as 次仁央宗著, 西藏贵族世家: 1900-1951 (北京:五洲传播出版社)]. For a memoir in English by one such aristocrat that paints a similarly innocuous view of old society customs, see Dorje Yudon Yuthok, *House of the Turquoise Roof*, trans. and ed. Michael Harlin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Press, 1990).
3. On the notion of Chinese minority areas as repositories of Orientalist and sexualized fantasies of the Han majority, see Dru Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (February 1994): 92-123.
4. Dawa is a frequent name in Chinese propaganda for Tibetan "slaves" of both genders, as discussed in Woesser's takedown of the 1963 propaganda film focusing on Tibet, entitled "Serf." See Woesser, "Replaying the Film 'Serf' Won't Brainwash Anyone!" April 12, 2011, [http://blog.studentsforafreetibet.org/2011/04/replaying-the-film-\"serf\"-won't-brainwash-anyone-by-woesser/](http://blog.studentsforafreetibet.org/2011/04/replaying-the-film-\).
5. Robert B. Ekvall, *Gateway to Tibet: The Kansu-Tibetan Border*, (Harrisburg, Penn.: Christian Publications, 1938), 33.

Looking Back and Looking Up in Postwar Japan: A Review of *Always: Sanchōme no yūhi* (2005)

Hiraku Shimoda

Always: Sanchōme no Yūhi (Always: Sunset on Third Street). Directed by Yamazaki Takashi. Produced by Abe Shuji and Okuda Seiji. Tokyo: Tōhō, 2005, 133 minutes. Japanese narration and subtitles. English subtitles.

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One of the more poignant moments in *Always: Sanchōme no yūhi* (*Always: Sunset on Third Street*; 2005) comes after we learn that a side character, a physician, had lost his family in the Pacific War and, more than a decade later, still dreams about them in his drunken sleep. Upon hearing this, a sympathetic neighbor sighs, “And they say ‘the postwar is over.’” That famous 1956 government proclamation notwithstanding, the postwar was not yet over, at least not quite in 1958, when this film takes place. Still, Japan then could seemingly look forward to better days ahead. Or at least that is how we now often imagine the high-speed growth era (1955-73), and *Always* is happy to affirm this standard historical narrative of postwar optimism.

The pedagogical value of this drama lies in both its content and form. In its cozy, fictional depiction of life in a Tokyo neighborhood (Atagochō, near Tokyo Tower), *Always* effectively visualizes many staples of textbooks and lectures. One example is the proliferation of mass consumer culture, as captured by the so-called “Three Imperial Regalia” of postwar materialism (i.e., television, washer, and refrigerator). Television especially, as a vehicle of mass content, helps galvanize the community. *Always* conveys a sense of ongoing physical change, and the results of that change can be verified in the classroom by comparing the dusty and woody pre-Olympics neighborhood in the film to a Google Street View of present-day Atagochō and its now typically Tokyo steel-and-concrete cityscape. Tokyo Tower, whose construction began in 1957 and grows ever taller in the course of the film, stands as an icon of irrepressible industrial expansion and lofty aspiration here. It is in the shadow of this inspiring monument that the baby boom children in the film come of age, enthralled by science fiction and dreaming of a prosperous, technologically dazzling future that they would indeed deliver in due time.

Although *Always* is set squarely in Tokyo, it does occasionally connect to the countryside and a wider Japan. It faithfully depicts “group employment” (*shūdan shūshoku*), a mid- to late-1950s phenomenon whereby rural youths headed *en masse* to Tokyo to work. One such aspiring teenager, Mutsuko, is a girl from Aomori who arrives to work at Suzuki Auto, a family-run neighborhood repair shop (a rather typical destination for these out-of-towners, who were usually shunned by larger firms). Mutsuko is presented as a wide-eyed, apple-cheeked country girl who can’t quite drop her Tsugaru dialect. The film also points, if subtly, to the underbelly of Japanese society. One boy is revealed to be an abandoned son of a geisha concubine, and Hiromi, one of the main characters, has a murky past that eventually leads to life as a cabaret dancer.

At its core, *Always* is a fairly standard human drama, but it is one that feels properly historicized because the film situates itself convincingly within the greater span of the long postwar period. By invoking the dark wartime past as well as the promise of a brighter tomorrow, the film looks both backward and forward in time, thus capturing the mid- to late-1950s as the transitory moment that it was. This juicy temporal positioning is put to its best use through the salty owner of Suzuki Auto. Presumably a war veteran, Suzuki dreams of building a new Japan, often reminding others about precisely how much time has elapsed since the war. As a tellingly transwar figure, Suzuki has a complex relationship with the war. He is eager to overcome the war, and yet, in a fit of anger, also derides his younger, softer neighbor for “never having been to war.”

As useful as the film’s content is its form. *Always* is a good opportunity for students to consider not only “what” is being depicted, but “how.” Visually, the supersaturated colors of the computer-generated landscape heighten the longing for the “good old days” of a vibrant, rather romanticized Shōwa. Both U.S. and Japanese students have characterized the film as “warm,” “nostalgic,” “full of hope,” “optimistic,” and “humane,” among other similarly positive qualities. Especially idealized in their eyes are the human relationships within this close-knit community (although U.S. students are more likely to think so than Japanese students in my experience). Perhaps the intense, melodramatic neighborly interaction is part and parcel of a mainstream film like *Always*, but students could also consider reading Ezra Vogel’s *Japan’s New Middle Class* (1963) or Ted Bestor’s *Neighborhood Tokyo* (1989), which depicts a comparable community some quarter-century later, after it has undergone high speed growth, to see what is corroborated in scholarship and what is not.

One discussion question that often yields interesting responses is “What is the meaning behind the film’s title?” In other words, what is it that will “always” remain so? Whatever it may be—the answer seems to lie somewhere around familial and intergenerational bonds—what then is the relationship between that supposedly inalienable continuity and historical dynamism? (Likewise, students often make associations with the “sunset” imagery that may be worth pursuing further.) The film certainly tugs at the heartstrings; not a few students are likely to be drawn to tears. Such a tenderly rendered past might be fruitfully compared to a documentary like *The Pacific Century* series (1992), especially volume 6, which depicts roughly the same period but focuses on conflict and violence instead. What accounts for this disparity? Having students ponder various representational differences can make for a productive, nontextual, historiographical exercise.

Personally, I cannot help viewing this film as part of a larger, media-driven rehabilitation of the Shōwa postwar period that enjoyed cultural currency in the early 2000s (a development I discuss further in the forthcoming volume edited by Tim George and Chris Gerteis, *Japan since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble*, from Continuum). Post-bubble Japan has enjoyed harkening back to postwar Shōwa as a golden era, and *Always* adds to this wistful remembrance of a Japan that once was and, with any luck, may yet be again.

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ANE Special Section: Asian Environments

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Students of Asia come to know the region through diverse disciplinary approaches, grounded in different theoretical foundations, received knowledge, and lived experiences. Some see languages as a key point of entry for engaging with the cultural traditions, people, and histories of different places. Others are drawn by the phenomenon of place itself, the complex and dynamic physical and human geography of Asia, home to roughly two-thirds of the world's population and some of its most fascinating natural and built environments. Social scientists examine the diverse economies, political systems, and other societal structures, while their colleagues in the natural and physical sciences seek to understand the non-human world, a task made ever more challenging due to the expanding footprint of human activities, ranging from deforestation and over-fishing to carbon emissions and the nearly ubiquitous presence of synthetic chemicals from manufacturing processes.

It is precisely this human-environment dynamic that the current special section of *ASIANetwork Exchange* and others to follow seek to explore. The idea for the special section grew partly from the "Half the World: Asia and the Environment" series of symposia founded at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in 2006 and hosted biennially since then, initially through the generous support of the Freeman Foundation. The fourth symposium in March 2012, funded by The Henry Luce Foundation, resulted in the submission of over a dozen manuscripts, all of which have or will soon undergo double-blind peer review in keeping with the standards of *ASIANetwork Exchange*, and all of which showcase the diversity of scholarly approaches that members of ASIANetwork and contributors to *Exchange* regularly undertake. I have had the pleasure of organizing or co-organizing three of the Half the World symposia, and am excited that the series has become an important venue for scholars and practitioners working at the confluence of strong and long-standing traditions of Environmental Studies and Asian Studies programs in undergraduate liberal arts institutions.

A second, more fundamental motivation for a special *ASIANetwork Exchange* focus on human-environment issues in Asia is precisely the interdisciplinarity for which ASIANetwork is already known. That is, the same kind of creative, careful, and contextualized interdisciplinary study of a region as complex and diverse as Asia is what is needed to understand the myriad interconnections between humans, as individuals and societies, and the world that surrounds us. For those of us engaged in Asian Environmental Studies—be we artists, humanists, social scientists, or natural scientists—this is simply what we do; nature and society, humans and environment are co-constitutive and inextricably inter-related. A passage from Brett Walker's socio-natural history of industrial disease in Japan is worth quoting at length:

As William Cronon famously argued, we tend to think that "the place where we are is the place where nature is not." This perspective weakens significantly, however, if the "place" is between the teeth or in the intestinal tract of a large carnivore. David Quammen, who has studied such carnivores, explains that "alpha predators have kept us acutely aware of our membership within the natural world. They've done it by reminding us that to them we're just another flavor of meat." ¹

In a world increasingly filled with reductionist, oversimplified, black-and-white explanations of staggeringly complex and nuanced topics such as climate change and cultural change, work that crosses boundaries—not only geopolitical, but also disciplinary, theoretical, and epistemological—is vital for shining light on how we got to where we are today, and how we might move forward in a way that is sustaining of cultures and ecosystems, of human dignity and environmental integrity.

The three articles in this section address various aspects of human-environment interactions in different sociocultural contexts. Empirically rich and theoretically sound, they are resources for Asianists as well as for their (our) students and colleagues who may lack specific regional expertise but for whom the nature-society themes explored here resonate. The first article, by Chris Coggins and a group of intrepid undergraduate researchers cum co-authors, examines *fengshui* forests in southern China as important repositories of floral biodiversity. As products of specific socio-cultural management institutions (temples) that lie outside the state's normal forestry bureaucracy and rely on a set of cosmological priorities vastly different from those that underpin modern scientific forestry, the *fengshui* forests Coggins and his team studied serve a vital role as biological refugia and underscore the importance of understanding the diversity of local institutional approaches to resource management. Interestingly, all of the forests Coggins and his team visited were in predominantly Hakka (*Kejia*) areas, which raises interesting questions about whether these institutions survived only within that minority cultural context or within others as well.

Neal Keating, too, focuses his study on forests, this time in the context of a 10,000-hectare “spirit forest” in Cambodia that has been leased to a Chinese company for development into a rubber plantation. Keating queries the logic and direction of “development” based on such concessions, particularly as that development impacts the country's rural poor, who face forced eviction, loss of (already marginal) livelihoods, and not infrequently, violence. While the story of “disastrous development” for the rural poor, brought about by alliances between national governments and outside corporations, is not new, Keating brings anthropological fieldwork and a critical theoretical eye to how that development is playing out in Cambodia, one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of GDP, yet one of the richest in terms of cultural and historical heritage. He argues that at the heart of the land struggles in Cambodia lie fundamental differences in the “cognized environments” of the rural people (in this case, the Kuy) and what Keating calls the Khmer Riche, that is, Prime Minister Hun Sen and his close associates. For the Kuy, forests are at the center of socio-spiritual traditions that are localized, small-scale, and contribute to maintaining healthy and diverse forests; for the latter, it is not the forests that are sacred, but rather the market, through which forest resources are commoditized as a means of further lining the pockets of the Khmer Riche. Positive change, Keating concludes, requires understanding “the market” as a religious ideal at its core and altering the rituals we as individuals and collectives perform in its service.

In the third and final essay in this issue's special section, Setsuko Matsuzawa takes us back to China, zooming out to examine the work of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their role in changing the nature of debates about nature in China. Drawing on important examples ranging from the official founding of China's first registered environmental NGO, Friends of Nature, in 1994 to the case of anti-dam activism on the Nu River in Yunnan that began in earnest a decade later, Matsuzawa argues that environmental activism in China, while still constrained by external forces such as registration requirements and arbitrary state intervention, has played a central role not only in raising the environmental consciousness among Chinese citizens, but also (and more

importantly) in increasing citizens' willingness to speak out against environmental wrongs. Here, she relies on the notion of "rightful resistance,"² which is solidly grounded in the country's existing (but often haphazardly enforced) environmental laws, and more recent scholarship that teases out nuances in how NGOs in China negotiate political waters in which the "non-" of NGO is often understood as nearly synonymous with "anti-".

As I noted above, the fourth Half the World Symposium and call for papers for this issue of *ASIANetwork Exchange* resulted in more than a dozen essays. We expect to continue the special section on Asian environments in future issues for 2012 and 2013 (at least), and are excited about the breadth of perspectives and depth of expertise on human-environment interactions in Asia the authors demonstrate. Future special sections will likely include articles on women's activism in post-Fukushima Japan and reform-era China; the place of ecology is Islam in Southeast Asia; on fires, dams, and toxic algae in China; on the role of business in sustaining cultures, ecosystems, and livelihoods in Asia; on land dispossession and resistance in Indonesia; and on the nexus of snails, organic food, and global capital in Taiwan. All are written and edited with an eye to maintaining high standards for scholarship and for applicability in an undergraduate classroom.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not extend a special word of gratitude to The Henry Luce Foundation, not only for its long-standing and generous support of ASIANetwork, but also for its more recent commitment to catalyzing scholarship and teaching on Asian environments across the liberal arts community. The Foundation's pilot grant to Hobart and William Smith Colleges, the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment (LIASE) grants program, and the years of fruitful conversations between the Foundation and colleges like my own, offer us an invaluable opportunity to think big about how we—as scholars, practitioners, and students ourselves—can draw on the strong interdisciplinary traditions of Asian Studies and Environmental Studies to advance the state of knowledge about human-environment interactions in Asia. I also wish to thank the editors of *ASIANetwork Exchange*, Erin McCarthy and Lisa Trivedi, for the opportunity to serve as guest-editor on such an important theme as this, and for their forbearance as I have slowly trudged upward on the editorial learning curve. With their blessing I will continue my trudge, and I look forward to working with them and the rest of the ASIANetwork community on future issues of *ASIANetwork Exchange*.

Darrin Magee (Hobart and William Smith Colleges)

NOTES

1. B.L. Walker, *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 7-8.
2. Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics*, 49 no. 1: 31-55.

Village *Fengshui* Forests of Southern China: Culture, History, and Conservation Status

Chris Coggins, Joelle Chevrier, Maeve Dwyer, Lindsey Longway, Michael Xu, Peter Tiso, Zhen Li

Abstract: The post-reform revival of *fengshui* has revitalized village management of “*fengshui* forests” (*fengshuilin*). This study examines the cosmological principles, landscape ecology, conservation status, and floristic diversity of forest patches comprising critical biological refugia in China’s subtropical broadleaved forest region. From 1949-79, *fengshui* was prohibited by the state, but many lineage villages continued to protect *fengshuilin* through nontraditional means. Village *fengshuilin* still lack official state recognition, which impedes systematic research and conservation planning. We assess the political ecology of *fengshui* practice, *fengshuilin* management, enforcement of harvesting bans, and tree species selection in seventeen villages associated with over forty forest patches. There is little species selection on the basis of utility, thus *fengshuilin* contain diverse taxonomic assemblages resembling patches of old growth forest. Strong village management traditions and a general lack of state intervention suggest robust local institutional capacity for maintaining and enhancing forest diversity and protecting unique indigenous landscape ecologies.

Keywords cosmology; vitalism; fengshui forests; biodiversity conservation; subtropical broadleaved evergreen forests.

INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on village *fengshui* forests, known as *fēngshuǐlín* (风水林), which are common but understudied features in the rural landscapes of southern and central China’s subtropical broadleaved evergreen forest region and southern China’s tropical monsoonal rainforest region. Previous studies that recognize these forests as part of the Han Chinese rural landscape include those of E.N. Anderson and Marja Anderson, G.W. Lovelace, Wei Fan, Nicholas K. Menzies, and Youn Yeo-Chang et al.¹ More detailed field studies include those of Zhuang Xue Ying and Richard T. Corlett, Chris Coggins, Thomas C.Y. Chan, and H. Liang et al.² All of the latter studies focus mostly on Hakka³ villages, and with the exception of Coggins, all are limited to Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region of southern Guangdong. While it has long been established that Buddhist and Daoist temples in all regions of China have provided refugia for trees, understory plants, and wildlife,⁴ much less is known about forests protected by lineage villages across many generations through local institutional practices and how such practices may have been shaped by the state. This research combines natural and social scientific methods in order, first, to reconstruct the history and map the geographical extent of *fengshui* forests and second,

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to ascertain their significance for the preservation of biological diversity and as part of an emerging discourse on nature conservation in China.

Fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2011 was the first phase of a multiyear investigation of village *fengshuilin* in ten to fourteen provinces. As such, it establishes a baseline for methodology, critical questions, and preliminary hypotheses regarding the cosmological concepts, discursive formations, and local resource management strategies that have sustained *fengshuilin* preservation as part of a suite of southern Chinese ethno-ecological practices over the *longue durée*. In ethnographic terms, this requires an understanding of the durability of vitalism in Chinese vernacular expression and everyday life, particularly as it animates the cosmo-ecology of *fengshui* landscapes. In historical terms, we examine breaks, continuities, and reconfigurations in the relationship between political power and local resource management from the pre-communist period (before 1949), through the era of authoritarian Maoism (1949-79), and into the post-reform period (1979-present). In the context of the last period, our long-term objectives are three-fold. First, we are analyzing the degree to which *fengshuilin* management practices have contributed to biological diversity and habitat heterogeneity in southern and central China. Second, we are examining the roles of local, regional, and national state institutions in recognizing and protecting *fengshuilin*. Third, we are investigating the relationship between *fengshuilin* management traditions and emerging conceptions of place, nature, and environmentalism in the popular imagination.

This paper adopts a political ecology perspective, focusing on the political, economic, and social factors that relate to conceptions of the environment and processes of ecological change.⁵ Given the fact that *fengshui* has long been a matter of ultimate cosmological concern for corporate lineage villages⁶ across southern China, many of which were once largely self-governed, we argue first that village *fengshui* is a form of ecological vitalism—a system premised on the existence of supernatural forces connecting the living and non-living elements of the landscape and felt to be essential for the survival of the lineage as a viable polity; second, that *fengshui* is simultaneously a set of conceptual bases and performative modes of practical action enabling collective management of plant resources (forests and croplands) and hydrological resources (streams, overland flow, and groundwater); and third, that *fengshui* forests have long been preserved for their ecological and hydrological functions rather than conserved for the economic utility of certain harvestable species, and for this reason, these forests and small groves exhibit high levels of species diversity. A final point of our work is that despite radically different official discourses on nature and culture before 1949, during the Maoist period, and in the post-reform period of economic and social liberalization, the *fengshui* forests that have endured can be understood as *actants*.⁷ In specific terms, that means that the forests themselves have had, and will continue to have, significant influence on the humans who must reckon with their multifaceted presence as ancient biological, cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic features in the landscapes of southern China.

FENGSHUI AND THE POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF FOREST CONSERVATION

China is widely considered a “forest poor” country, with per capita forest coverage that is one-fifth the world average, and per capita standing forest stock that is one-eighth the world average.⁸ Most of China’s forest coverage was lost many centuries in the past, and by 1949 forest coverage was roughly 8.6 percent.⁹ Due to state-led reforestation efforts undertaken since then, including the Sloping Lands Conversion Project (SLCP) (2001-2010),¹⁰ China now has a total forest coverage of over 175 million hectares, or nearly 20 percent of the total

land area.¹¹ However, at least one-third of this consists of biologically impoverished conifer plantations, most of which are managed by the state, and only about 12 percent of the land area has vestiges of the original tropical and subtropical broadleaved evergreen forests of southern China, the mixed deciduous-broadleaved evergreen forests of central China, and the deciduous and coniferous forests of the north and northeast (Figure 1). In terms of the number of tree species, China's subtropical broadleaved evergreen forest and mixed deciduous-broadleaved evergreen forests are the most biologically diverse of their kind in the world.¹² These forest regions have also long been noted for their biological affinity with the forests of Eastern North America, the result of a disjunct distribution following the breakup of the Laurasian landmass at the end of Cretaceous Period.¹³

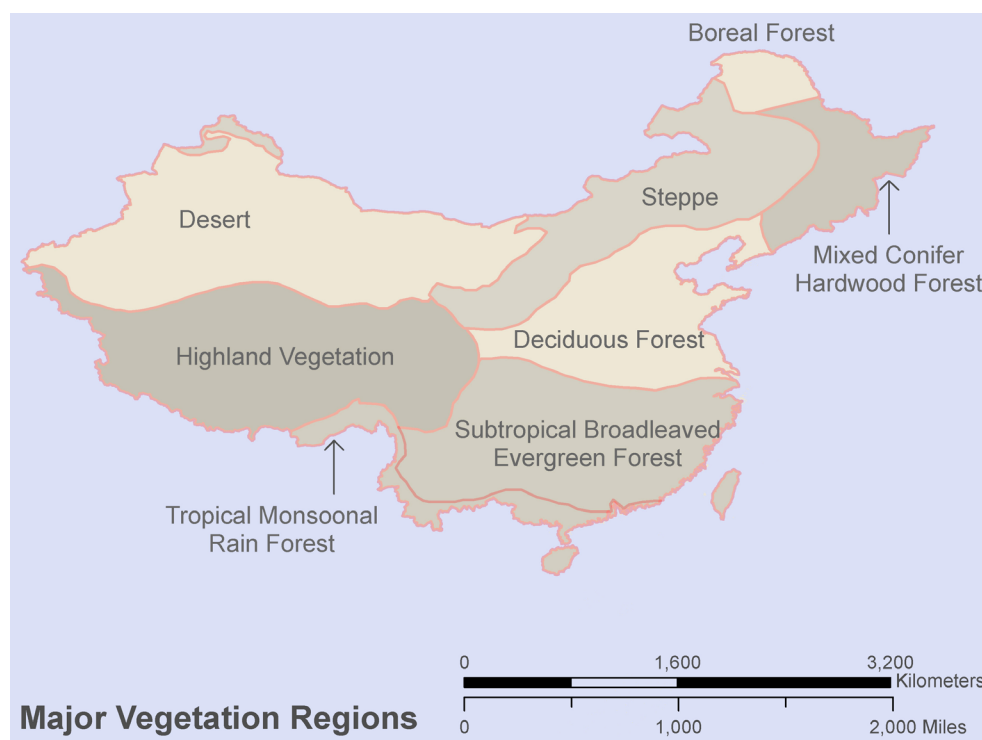


Figure 1. China's subtropical broadleaved evergreen forests and mixed deciduous broadleaved evergreen forests are the most floristically diverse of their kind in the world.

Given the relative scarcity of even successional remnants of China's primeval forests, preservation of existing mature and late-successional forest patches is critical. In this regard, we must note the complex political ecological relations between the state and local people, which are manifested in a variety of environment and development projects and associated conflicts. While the SLCP is a national program geared toward forest and watershed conservation and is a form of governmentality that nurtures the production of environmental subjects and "environmentality,"¹⁴ the local state—at the level of the county, township, and even village governments—is deeply involved in brokering commercial development schemes that appropriate village crop and forest lands, often to the benefit of officials and private corporations. The December 2011 "Wukan Revolt," in the eponymous village in southern Guangdong, is arguably exceptional only because it became a high-profile international spectacle. As a grassroots protest against allegedly illegal sales of long-term leases on farmland and forests to private developers for the construction of industrial parks and apartment complexes, the case is emblematic of an enormous wave of land tenure conflicts across China, with estimates of "mass incidents" ranging in number from an official figure of 10,000 since the mid-1990s, to a Chinese sociologist's estimate of 180,000 in 2010 alone.¹⁵ As Liu Xiaobo notes, "In more than twenty years of urban modernization and across a 'great

leap forward' in real estate values, officials wielding the power of the state and invoking government ownership of land have colluded with businessmen all over the country to carry out a kind of Chinese Enclosure Movement."¹⁶ Citing a series of "manifestos" written by Chinese farmers' organizations that demand what Liu characterizes as rural land privatization, he states that "At last farmers are speaking for themselves, loud and clear, and a silent nation is hearing a cry from deep inside its heartland."¹⁷

While it is beyond the scope of this article to examine the likely mechanisms and possible ramifications of full-scale land privatization in China's countryside, an historical political ecology of *fengshuilin* management requires an account of how *fengshui* principles and practices have long served to constitute lineage villages in cosmological terms that are inextricable from both the habitus of everyday socio-ecological practices and the political struggles and clashes that define the modern history of China's countryside. We begin with a review of key terms.

Fengshui, or "wind" (*fēng*, 風) (and) "water" (*shuǐ*, 水), is a colloquial term for the ancient Chinese way of conceptualizing and regulating the flow of vital forces or substances (known as *qi*, 氣) through the landscape. *Fengshui* theory and practice seek to optimize the locations and site conditions of houses, temples, tombs, and settlements in order to harmonize the human realm with the natural and supernatural forces and agencies associated with nature and the cosmos (*tiān*, 天). Formal terms for *fengshui* include "*dìlǐ*" (地理, earth principles)—the modern word for "geography"—and "*kānyú*" (堪輿), the canopy of heaven and the chariot of the earth, a term emphasizing the cosmic relationship between heaven and earth. The symbolic systems found in *fengshui* are based in correlative cosmology, and canonical *fengshui* theory can be traced back to the early Han dynasty (202 BCE – 89 CE), when it was already deployed in the construction of cities and palaces.¹⁸ Parallel with this "great" tradition are myriad rural folk practices that have both drawn from and informed *fengshui* doctrines passed down through texts. These have roots in both Han and non-Han cultures of southern and southwestern China, where geopieté (religious regard for terrestrial features) and animism are still common.¹⁹ The "great tradition-little tradition" dichotomy provides little in the way of an accurate history of core-periphery relations, and a scholarly consensus on the place of *fengshui* and *fengshui* forests in state-local relations during premodern times has yet to emerge. Research on this topic is scant but includes promising leads.

On the one hand, we have a view of rural isolation and village autarky,²⁰ on the other hand, in Late Imperial China there were state efforts to promote the lineage village model as a precondition for the rights of land ownership and incorporation in the administrative system.²¹ Working in Hong Kong's New Territories, Eugene and Marja Anderson were among the first cultural ecologists to undertake a study of village *fengshui*. They note that in rural regions of southern China before 1949 "state control was almost nonexistent; anarchy prevailed, order being preserved by the lineages and other associations... anarchy in peasant villages meant not chaos and strife, but a dependence on mutual-aid and kinship ties to preserve order and efficiency."²² Showing how social relations were largely mediated by the "unique science of site planning," that is *fengshui*, they add that "The perfect plan is roughly as follows: the house, village or grave must be situated on a slope or raised place. Projecting spurs should partially encircle it. Trees and plants should grow lushly, and in particular there should be a grove of large trees just behind (upslope from) the village."²³ In these and other passages, the Andersons stress the depth of interconnection between landscape management, social order, and local governance. Careful to avoid reductive functionalist assumptions about the "ecological purposes" of *fengshui*, they treat it more as a set of cogni-

tive models and performative practices in the (re)creation of a harmonious cosmos. In this view, it was critical for communities that were often politically and economically marginal to draw upon magico-religious conceptions of the environment in a system geared toward ecologically adaptive site planning and landscape management. While this view is compelling, it is important to keep in mind the possibility that the state not only promoted lineage villages and the keeping of ancestral records as preconditions for corporate membership, but also that there is evidence for imperial involvement in *fengshui* forest management as early as the Song Dynasty (960-1279).²⁴

While details of premodern state-local relationships involving *fengshuilin* management remain unclear, perhaps it is not surprising that in some of his earliest writings on revolution in the countryside, Mao Zedong targeted lineage organizations and *fengshui* as major structural (and “super-structural”) barriers to modern progress, progress that was to be based on the inculcation of class consciousness and a sense of historic and political agency among the peasantry. Early in 1927, the year that the Nationalists (*Guomindang*) largely destroyed the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai, and while Mao was still concurrently a member of the *Guomindang* and the Communist Party, he completed the now classic “Report on an Investigation of the Hunan Peasant Movement.” In this treatise, based on almost two years of experience organizing peasant associations in rural Hunan, Mao wrote that in the countryside men were subject to three repressive systems of authority: the state and formal political authority; the clan system, including central and branch ancestral temples; and the “theocratic authority” of gods and spirits. Women were subject to these and the additional system of patriarchy, embodied in the form of “the authority of the husband.”²⁵ Under such conditions, landlords and lineage temple heads had to be overthrown, idols smashed, temples demolished or converted to schools, and *fengshui* abandoned as superstition.

In the countryside I, too, agitated among the peasants for abolishing superstitions. What I said was: “One who believes in the Eight Characters (*bāguà*) hopes for good luck; one who believes in geomancy [*fengshui*] hopes for the beneficial influence of their burial grounds [*xìn fēngshuǐ wàng féngshān guàn qì*]. This year the local bullies, bad gentry, and corrupt officials all collapsed within a few months. Is it possible that till a few months ago they were all in good luck and all under the beneficial influence of their burial grounds, while in the last few months they have all of a sudden been in bad luck and their burial grounds all ceased to exert any beneficial influence on them?”²⁶

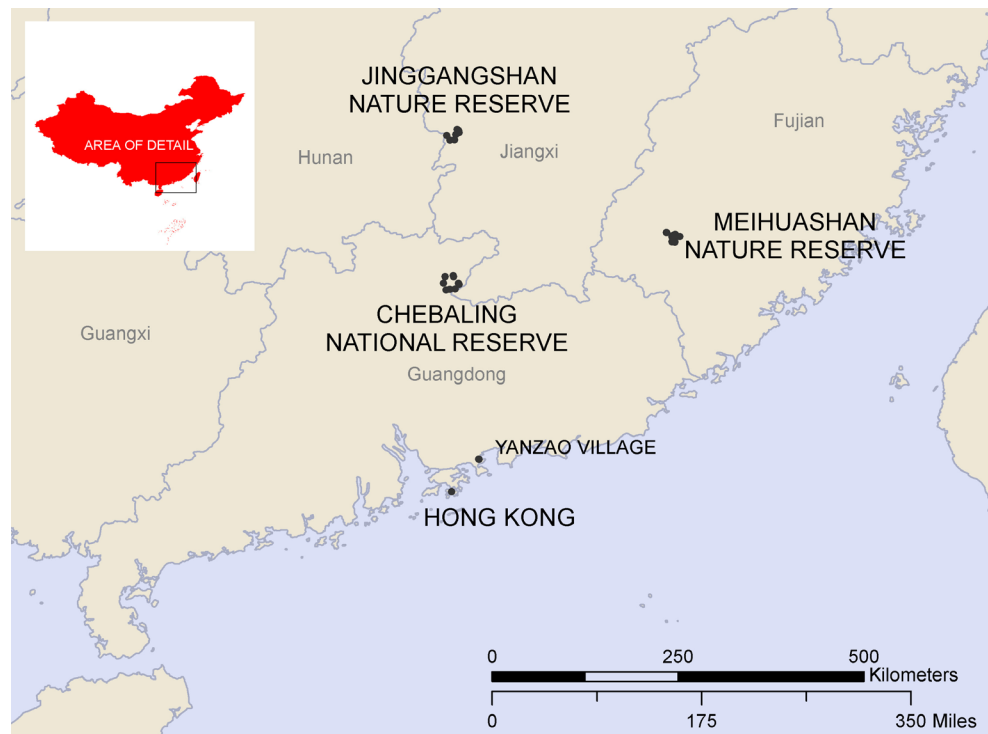
After 1949, land redistribution was carried out across China, and during the Great Leap Forward (1958-61), croplands, bamboo forests, and *fengshui* forests were usually designated as collective lands (*jítǐde tǔdì*) and only productive forests and other lands at greater distance from the village were designated as national lands (*guóyǒude tǔdì*). Thus, in spite of the prohibition of overt practices and public discourse on *fengshui*, *fengshuilin* were in many cases as effectively protected as before, and this was a socio-ecological legacy of centuries of local management institutions. As villagers in southwest Fujian explained, many *fengshuilin* were too remote to be useful for industrial purposes, even during the Backyard Iron Smelting Movement (*Dàliàn Gāngtiē*), and when *fengshuilin* were threatened by state projects, villagers often defended them on practical grounds for their role in protecting the village from wind and erosion, or in providing a shady respite from field labor.²⁷ Thus, during the numerous political campaigns that swept through the countryside between 1949 and 1979, *fengshuilin* normally fared much better than the ancestral temples (*cítáng*), earthgod shrines

(*tǔdìgōng, gōngwáng*), and small Daoist and Buddhist shrines (*ānmào*) with which the forests were (and are once more today) closely associated (see below).

PRELIMINARY FIELD RESEARCH

Our field research in the summer of 2011 focused on *fengshuilin* in Hong Kong and the provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, and Jiangxi. Most of the field surveys were conducted in the Meihuashan, Jinggangshan, and Chebaling (national-level) nature reserves (Figure 2). This study analyzes the relationship between *fengshui* cosmology, indigenous landscape ecology, and the structural and functional characteristics of *fengshuilin* as forest patches vital to a belief system that is at once social, ecological, and spiritual. We approach this subject emically, that is in terms of the logic of *fengshui* theories codified in texts and passed down in everyday practice, and etically, in terms of the ecological services and social functions that help define *fengshuilin* in natural and social scientific terms. Village-based research included indoor, semiformal structured interviews with individuals or small groups. This was followed by less formal, less structured interviews and discussions and by outdoor research in *fengshui* forests that involved discussions with villagers and forest assays. The latter included species identification and measurement of diameter at breast height (dbh) of the five largest trees in each forest patch and the identification of all trees over 20 cm dbh in 10 x 10 m quadrats in selected forest patches. All interactions were conducted in Mandarin and recorded on survey forms, digital videotape, digital audiotape, and with digital photography. GPS data were recorded and will be incorporated into a geographic information system after more field data have been collected.

Figure 2. In the summer of 2011, preliminary field work was conducted in Hong Kong; more systematic work was carried out in the Meihuashan Nature Reserve in Fujian, the Jinggangshan Nature Reserve, in Jiangxi, and in (and around) the Chebaling Nature Reserve, in Guangdong. Research was also conducted in one village, Yanzao, on the coast in Shenzhen.



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

SETTLEMENT DATA

Of the seventeen villages where full surveys were conducted, eleven (65 percent) were located within nature reserves; two additional villages had *fengshui* forests designated as protected areas by the state (at the national level in Congtuo, Fujian, and at the township level in Yanbao, Guangdong) (Table 1). Fifteen (88 percent) of the villages were inhabited by Hakka. Estimated ages of the villages ranged from 59 to 1,000 years, with an average age of 470 years. The reported number of generations *in situ* ranged from 6 to 30, with an average of 18 generations, and according to these estimates, there is an average of 26 years per generation. Primary economic activities in all of the villages consist of a combination of extra-local employment associated with high rates of labor outmigration by young and middle-aged adults (up to 70-80 percent of adult laborers in some villages), and economic land uses associated with agriculture and forestry. Meihuashan villages devoted nearly all productive mountain slopes to the propagation of mao bamboo (*Phyllostachys pubescens*) in pure stands. These villages devote nearly all agricultural lands of the valleys and lower slopes to commercial vegetable production. Jinggangshan villages continue to grow rice for local consumption and to produce some timber in Chinese fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*) plantations, and Chebaling villages had a similar land use profile.

VILLAGE SETTLEMENT DATA

Variables	Findings
Protected Area Status (17 Villages)	11 (65%) in Nature Reserves; 2 Designated as Protected Areas (1 National-level, 1 Township-level)
Ethnicity	15 Hakka Villages; 1 Yongxin Gan; 1 Yao
Average Age of Villages (Range)	470 Years (59-1,000 Years)
Average Generations <i>In Situ</i> (Range; Years/Generation)	18 (6-30; 26)
Primary Economic Activities	70-80% Labor Out-migration of Young Adults; Fujian – Bamboo & Commercial Vegetable Production; Jiangxi and Guangdong – Commercial Agriculture, Timber, Local and Extra-Local Labor

ECOLOGICAL DATA ON FOREST PATCHES—TREE SPECIES SELECTION

All of the forests surveyed were either broadleaf or mixed. Identification and measurement of the five largest trees in each forest patch resulted in a total of 56 individual broadleaved trees and 29 individual needle-leaved trees (Table 2). With only one exception, the largest individuals in mixed stands were needleleaved trees, most commonly *Cryptomeria fortunei* (Chinese cedar), followed by *Taxus chinensis* (Chinese Yew), *Tsuga longibracteata* (or *Nothotsuga longibracteata*, Chinese hemlock), and *Cunninghamia lanceolata* (Chinese fir). Informants in Meihuashan, where needleleaved trees are a much more common forest component, believe that *Cryptomeria*, *Taxus*, and *Cunninghamia* in pure and mixed stands were planted by village ancestors. Broadleaved species were the predominant element in both mixed and broadleaved forests, and are believed to have grown without human selection, propagation, or direct management. Of the largest trees measured, there were 25 species of broadleaved and four species of needleleaved trees represented. None of the broadleaved trees were described by villagers as having particular economic value, thus they were not planted or selectively protected for utilitarian purposes. From this it is clear that the broadleaved and mixed *fengshui* forests have been managed for what are now deemed “ecosystem services” rather than as sources of timber or non-timber resources. As a result

they are far more diverse and structurally complex than the monocultural tree plantations that make up the majority of reforested areas throughout China. In order to understand the species composition and *raison d'être* of the *fengshuilin*, we must consider the broader purposes of village *fengshui*.

ECOLOGICAL DATA ON FOREST PATCHES

Variables	Findings
Percentage Broadleaf/Mixed/Needleleaf	53% / 47% / 0%
Percentage Largest Trees Broadleaf/Needleleaf (n=85)	65.9% / 34.1%
Largest trees in mixed stands	Conifers (1 exception): Chinese cedar (<i>Cryptomeria fortunei</i>), Chinese yew (<i>Taxus chinensis</i>), Chinese hemlock (<i>Tsuga longibracteata</i>), Chinese fir (<i>Cunninghamia lanceolata</i>)
Total number of BL species/genera; NL species/genera (of 5 largest trees in stand)	25/15; 5/5
Average dbh of all trees measured (5 largest)	85.2 cm
BL genera represented	Castanopsis (6 species), Schima (2 species), Altingia, Liquidambar, Celtis, Sapindus, Cinnamomum, Heretiaria, Ficus, Phoebe, Uvaria, Michelia, Lithocarpus, Cyclobalanopsis, Bretschneidera

FENGSHUI — VITALIST COSMOLOGY AND RURAL LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY: THE LINEAGE VILLAGE AS WIND-WATER POLITY

Interviews with *fengshui* masters (*fēngshuǐ xiānshēng*) and other villagers revealed that *fengshuilin* are essential components of a vitalist cosmology premised upon managing village environs to optimize the spirit and vigor of landscapes and their living and deceased inhabitants. Recognizing the lack of a suitable term in English to describe forces and substances that infuse and animate both the organic life forms and the non-living components of a landscape, we use vitalism as a proxy term. Modern scientific cosmology rejects the notion of “life force” and the possibility of a vital energy or matter that animates and unites humans (both living and dead) and non-human elements of the landscape. As Latour explains, “the modern constitution” insists upon a separation of humans and “culture” from nonhumans and “nature,” which is maintained through practices of “purification.”²⁸ This discursive formation can make it difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of other ways of knowing and being in the world, although we note some recent and vigorous efforts among western social theorists and philosophers to conceive of more vital relationships between humans and non-humans.²⁹

As a vitalist cosmology, *fengshui* provides guidelines for the siting and improvement of *yángzhái* (陽宅), houses of the living, and *yīnzhái* (陰宅), tombs, or “houses” of the dead. *Qì* (氣), the primary substance or material of ultimate concern, flows through *lóngmài* (龍脈), or shallow subterranean “dragon veins”. It takes the form of *shāqì* (殺氣)—*qi* that kills or weakens the landscape and its denizens—or *wàngqì* (旺氣)—*qi* that promotes the spirit (*shén*, 神), prosperity, and health of all beings and elements within the village landscape. Of particular significance for our purposes is the fact that the flow of *qi* is mediated by wind, water, sunlight, terrain, and vegetation. For instance, dangerous *qi* is conducted within *shāfēng* (殺風, “killing wind”) and *shāshuǐ* (殺水, “killing water”), which are associated with the destruction caused by high velocity winds and high velocity overland flow of water, respectively. *Fengshuilin* ameliorate the effects of *shafeng* and *shashui* because the flow of *qi* underground is fairly shallow and is thus affected by sunlight, which adds *yang* (陽), or positive *qi*. Thus a given site’s exposure to sunlight is generally salutary as long as the area in

question is not exposed to the effects of deadly winds and waters.³⁰

For these reasons, *fengshuilin* are situated immediately behind and upslope from the village (Figures 3 and 4), on what is called the *zhǔshān* (主山), or master (also “host” or “owner”) mountain.³¹ Ideally the village is located at (or in) the “lair” (*xué*, 穴), which rests on a slope above the floodplain croplands, a site where *yin* and *yang* energies are believed to be (or need to be) in balance. Since China is in the northern hemisphere, it is considered best to “sit in the north facing south” (坐北朝南 *zuòběi cháonán*); in other words, villages and individual houses should “face” the sun, which is in the southern sky for the duration of the year. Direct sunlight promotes the growth of rice crops, which are ideally located in a broad floodplain south of the village, and the sun’s rays provide warmth for the village in winter at the same time that winds from the north are blocked by mountains “behind” the village. Figure 3 thus denotes an ideal location for a house or village, using the analogue of the human body, with the *xue* fronted by a *mingtáng* (明堂) or (“bright”) hall reflecting celestial *qi* from the sun into the *xue*. The fertile and generative *xue* is surrounded and protected by the master

mountain in the north, and spurs or ridges to the west (the white tiger, *báihǔ*, 白虎) and to the east (the azure dragon, *qīnglóng*, 青龍). Higher mountains extending farther north from the master mountain include the parent mountain, grandparent mountain, and Kunlun mountain, a series that both partially replicates the lineage structure and connects the village to the sacred originary point of gods in the Daoist pantheon.³² In fact, the Gonghe village ancestral record (*zǔpǔ*) describes the dendritic pattern of *qi* flow into the village as having its origin in the Kunlun Mountains of the far west.³³

This general crescent-shaped configuration is replicated at all scales of the built environment, from tombs, to shrines, to temples, to the villages as a whole (Figures 4-7).

Our research in Fujian yielded the most complex systems of *fengshuilin* siting within the three-province set of field sites (Figure 4). In short, there are four types of *fengshuilin* according to the local typology, and while the first was observed in all study areas, the other three were only observed in Fujian. The four types are: 1) *Houlongshan fengshuilin* (後龍山風水林), which are immediately behind and upslope from the village, protecting it from erosion caused by overland flow, helping ensure a year-round supply of ground and surface water, and protecting the watersheds of the incoming streams which comprise the primary water supply for crop irrigation and everyday use (Figures 5 and 8). All of the

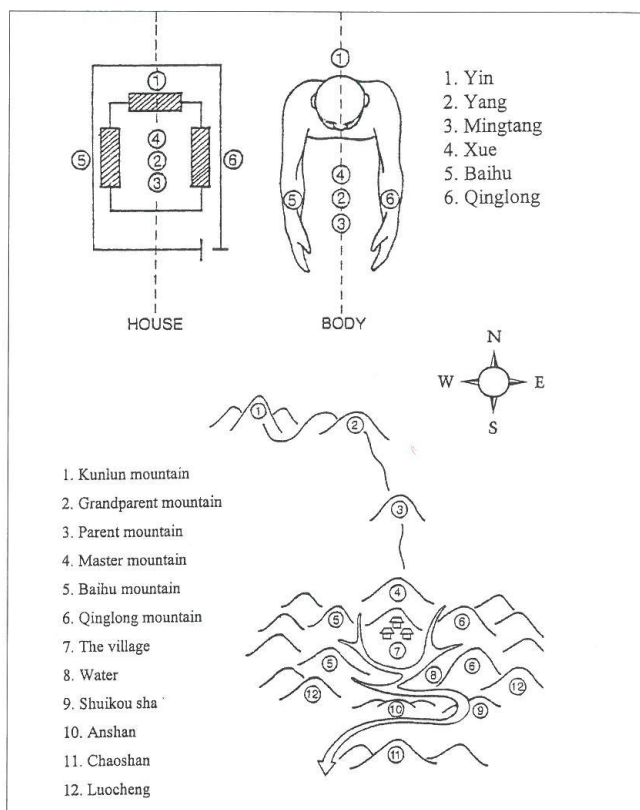


Figure 3. The structural configuration of *fengshui* sites can be likened to a human body. Shown here are ideal house sites and village sites.

Figure 4. *Fengshuilin* types are associated with specific locations relative to the settlement.



houlongshan fengshuilin observed consisted of broadleaved forests or predominantly broadleaved forests. 2) *Shan'ao fengshuilin* (山凹風水林), which block winds that enter the valley through wind gaps (*shan'ao* 山凹). In Fujian these consist almost exclusively of Chinese cedars (*liushan*, 柳杉, *Cryptomeria fortunei*) growing in saddles and along the streams that descend from them, and these trees are said to have been planted by village ancestors. 3) *Shuitou* (水頭) or *cuntou* (村頭) *fengshuilin*, which consist of Chinese cedar or broadleaved forests that serve some of the same purposes as the aforementioned forests. 4) *Cunkou/wēi* or *shuikou/wēi* (村口/尾 or 水口/尾) forests, which are typically broadleaved forests that

Figure 5. Ancestral temple (*citang*) in front of broadleaved evergreen *fengshuilin* in Gonghe Village, Meihuashan Nature Reserve, Fujian.



perform many of the same functions, but are unique in that they are supposed to “hold in” the village’s wealth and prevent it from flowing away with the water or wind that exit the village space down-valley.



Figure 6. Earthgod shrine (*tudigong*) in front of Chinese cedar (*Cryptomeria fortunei*) *fengshuilin* in Gonghe Village, Meihuashan Nature Reserve, Fujian.

Each of these forest types is also closely associated with one or more of the following kinds of temples and shrines: 1) *cítáng* (祠堂), the ancestral temples that are typically placed at or near the center of the village and directly in front of the primary (*houlongshan*) *fengshuilin* (Figure 5); 2) *tǔdigōng/gōngwáng* (土地公/公王), the earthgod shrines that in Fujian may number two to five in a single village and are located in or near virtually all *feng-*



Figure 7. Bridge temple (*qiao-miao*) in Mafang Village (Meihuashan, Fujian) with broadleaved *fengshuilin* in background. Bridge recently widened with cement slab to form new “front” of temple. Originally those who crossed the bridge had to enter through the sides that are now walled off.

shuilin (Figure 6); 3) *ānmào* (安廟), small covered shrines that house Buddhist and Daoist deities of particular local import; and 4) *qiáomiào/fēngshuǐ qiáo* (橋廟/風水橋), which are bridge-temples—covered bridges housing elaborate shrines, in the first case, and more recently built uncovered bridges that are also believed to improve village *fengshui*, in the second (Figure 7). As Guan Tuchun, a *fengshui* master in Guizhuping village (Meihuashan, Fujian) explained, these sacred sites and the *shen* (gods and spirits) that dwell within them cannot endure without good *fengshui*. So it is necessary to maintain healthy *fengshuilin* in close proximity to each temple and shrine.³⁴

Figure 8. Looking glass mangrove (*Heretiarra littoralis*) in Yanzaο Village *fengshuilin*, Shenzhen. Aerial view of seaside village of Yanzaο, with roughly crescent-shaped *houlongshan fengshuilin* behind settlement.



From an emic standpoint, the *fengshui* settlement system optimizes the flow of beneficial *qi*; mitigates destructive *qi*; draws in and retains wealth, health, and longevity; and confers blessings upon the ancestors, the living, and generations of descendants. From an etic standpoint, it provides a cognitive map for the production and conservation of wet rice agro-ecosystems through a system of forest management, soil conservation, and erosion control that ensures long-term watershed protection and hydrological stability. Maintaining forests and other vegetation on slopes surrounding the village supports an agro-ecosystem

based on closed feedback loops of matter, with fertilizer traditionally being derived from human and livestock wastes as well as from the ashes of herbaceous plants of the forest understory that were gathered and burned for this purpose.³⁵ Endowing this indigenous landscape ecology with cosmic significance constitutes the village as a coherent lineage-centric space that unifies members of the community within a watershed, which is thus a cosmic center both materially and ideationally. Corporate communities can thus be understood, at least before the ideological indoctrinations of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist modernity, as wind-water polities.

ENFORCEMENT OF HARVESTING BANS

In all of the villages surveyed, residents stated that before 1949 there were customary punitive measures to prevent tree cutting in *fengshuilin*. In some communities the belief in supernatural retribution was sufficiently strong to act as a deterrent, and there was purportedly no need for a system of surveillance and punishment. In other villages, traditional punitive measures added weight to the fear of supernatural effects. Today these traditional forms of prohibition on cutting have been enhanced or replaced by fines imposed by the state or by village managers. In villages of Chebaling, traditional human enforcement measures were believed to have been unnecessary. In Hewu village, trees in the *fengshui* forests were believed to have magical powers of regeneration (healing rapidly if not fully cut down) and tree cutting was believed to cause illness in humans. In Xiba, a Yao village, it is still believed that spirits who reside in the *fengshui* forest can cause retributive illnesses in response to tree damage. In all of the villages of Meihuashan the traditional punishment for tree cutting was a fine of one full grown pig—a draconian penalty for most families. In Jiangxi, two villages reported that customary law required that all timber illicitly harvested from the *fengshui* forest must immediately be burned (perhaps as a sacrificial offering); one village punished offenders with detainment, beating, and deprivation of food; and one village reportedly needed no specific punishment.

Whatever the traditional punishments for violation of tree cutting and plant harvesting may have been in the past, *fengshuilin* in several villages had become subject to state enforcement policies and punishments, even if reporting of illicit activities was mostly seen as the responsibility of villagers themselves. By 2011, two of the *fengshuilin* had even been converted to state protected areas. In Yanzao (Shenzhen) the *fengshuilin* has been converted to a township-level nature reserve. *Fengshui* forests in the Meihuashan reserve are overseen by villagers and reserve managers, and tree cutting is punishable by law. In Congtou (Meihuashan), where the *fengshui* forest has become a national protected area, villagers view the state as more responsible for forest protection than the village. In Jinggangshan, *fengshui* forests associated with villages in the core area received greater state protection than those in the buffer zone. Interviewees in Chebaling reported that currently their communities are the most important arbiters of *fengshuilin* management.

In regard to management decisions relating to potential resources in the *fengshui* forests, including plant propagation, gathering, and understory clearance, there is presently no state involvement. Although there was some bamboo cultivation in the *fengshuilin* of Meihuashan, it had not resulted in severe understory clearance (despite the fact that even herbaceous plants in well-managed bamboo stands are cut down to ground level at least once a year). Commercial plant cultivation was minimal in the *fengshui* forests of Chebaling and Jinggangshan and these forests typically had extremely dense shrub and herbaceous understory layers. In none of the three major study areas was understory clearance a regular part of the management regime.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Preliminary research indicates that the Chinese lineage village can be viewed, from an historical perspective, as a wind-water polity based on an indigenous landscape ecology intended to sustain life by attending to vital flows and currents. *Fengshuilin* are presently among the best long-term intentional tree refugia for biodiversity because they have been protected to serve immediate, local environmental needs without anthropogenic selective pressure based on species utility. *Fengshuilin* are also *actants* in the persistence of rural *fengshui* and village community ecology. It remains to be seen whether growing knowledge and awareness of the forests will inspire new conceptions of human-nature relations in rural southern China, and whether they will increasingly become incorporated within modern forest conservation policies and structures, including nature reserves and other protected areas.³⁶ In any case, *fengshui*, *fengshuilin*, and lineages comprise a central node in land tenure and biodiversity politics, and the implications have yet to be fully recognized.

Further research will focus on 1) the total distribution of village *fengshuilin* in ten to fourteen provinces and the development of a county-level GIS; 2) additional analysis of the political ecology of *fengshui* practice with regard to gender, age, affect, and the politics of nature under a regime of state-managed capitalism and mass urban-rural labor migration; and 3) present and potential roles of *fengshuilin* in new social constructions of nature and society, with special regard to conservation planning, land tenure conflict, and environmentalty.³⁷ These three areas of research are essentially related because while the former will provide the first accurate view of the distribution of village *fengshuilin* in China beyond the Hakka culture region, the second will enhance our understanding of how these forests figure in the lives of rural residents and, in some cases, urban visitors as well. Policies associated with the New Socialist Countryside (新社会主义农村, *xīn shèhuìzhǔyì nóngcūn*)³⁸ and national forest protection programs³⁹ are likely to affect village land use in complex ways. Ongoing multidisciplinary research on *fengshui* forests will strengthen our study of biodiversity conservation and other contemporary environmental challenges in China.

NOTES

1. See E.N. Anderson and Marja Anderson, *Mountains and Water: Essays on the Cultural Ecology of South Coastal China* (Taipei: Orient, 1973); George W. Lovelace, "Man, Land, and Mind in Early Historic Hong Kong," in *Cultural Values and Human Ecology in Southeast Asia*, ed. Karl L. Hutterer, A. Terry Rambo, and George W. Lovelace (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 341-372; Wei Fan "Village *Fengshui* Principles," in *Chinese Landscapes: the Village as Place*, ed. Ron Knapp (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 35-45; Nicholas K. Menzies, *Forest and Land Management in Imperial China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994); and Yeo-Chang Youn et al "Northeast Asia," in *Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge: Sustaining Communities, Ecosystems and Biocultural Diversity*, ed. John A. Parrotta and Ronald L. Tropper (New York: Springer, 2012), 281-314.
2. See Zhuang Xue Ying and Richard T. Corlett, "Forest and Forest Succession in Hong Kong, China," *Journal of Tropical Ecology*, 13 no. 6 (1997): 857-66; Chris Coggins, *The Tiger and the Pangolin: Nature, Culture, and Conservation in China* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2003); Thomas C.Y. Chan, ed., *Venturing Fung Shui Woods* (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, Ltd., 2004); and Hu Liang et al, "Values of Village *Fengshui* Forest Patches in Biodiversity Conservation in the Pearl River Delta, China," *Biological Conservation* 144 no. 5 (2011): 1553-59. The last of these studies shows that *fengshui* forests in the Pearl River Delta have a higher diversity of plant species than other broadleaved forest patches in the region. An additional field study, conducted by Yuan and Liu, focuses on *fengshui* forest management among the Buyi ethnic group in Guizhou Province; see Juanwen Yuan and Jinlong Liu, "Fengshui Forest Management by the Buyi Ethnic Group in China," *Forest Ecology and Management* 257: 2002-09.
3. The Hakka (*Kejia*, "Guest People") are a Han subethnic group numbering roughly 40 million in China. Having migrated to southern China later than other Han peoples, the Hakka often could not settle in prime agricultural lands and instead developed lineage villages in mountainous areas, producing wet rice, bamboo, tea, Chinese fir, and other silvicultural products. Today they are found mostly in southwest Fujian, southern Jiangxi, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Sichuan.
4. See Chi-Wu Wang, *The Forests of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961) and Nicholas K. Menzies, *Forest and Land Management in Imperial China*.
5. See Eric Wolf, "Ownership and Political Ecology," *Anthropological Quarterly* 45 no. 3 (July 1972): 201-05;

- Richard Peet and Michael J. Watts, eds., *Liberation ecologies: environment, development, social movements* (New York: Routledge, 1996); and Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: a Critical Introduction* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2012).
6. David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1. Citing Maurice Freedman, Faure states that "...the lineage was essentially a corporation, that is to say, a body that had a clear idea of membership and was able to hold property. In South China... the lineage came to be defined as the corporation in which common descent was an essential feature of membership... [which] had to be demonstrated through participation in sacrifice and the active tracing of genealogy."
 7. See Michel Callon, "Techno-Economic Networks and Irreversibility," in *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*, ed. John Law (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); and Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
 8. See Sylvie Démurger, Hou Yuanzhao, and Yang Weiyong, "Forest management policies and resource balance in China: an assessment of the current situation," *Journal of Environment and Development* 18 no. 1 (March 2009): 17-41; Jianguo Liu and Jared Diamond, "China's Environment in a Globalizing World," *Nature* 435 (June 30, 2005): 1179-86; and Alicia Robbins, "China's Forest Sector: Essays on Production Efficiency, Foreign Investment, and Trade and Illegal Logging" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, 2011).
 9. See Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: an Environmental History of China* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004); and Conghe Song and Yuxing Zhang "Forest Cover in China from 1949 to 2006," *Reforesting Landscapes: Linking Patterns and Processes*, ed. H. Nagendra and J. Southworth, (New York: Springer, 2010), 341:56.
 10. The Sloping Lands Conversion Program (*Podi Zhili Xiangmu*), or "Grain for Green Program" (*Lianggeng Huanlin Gongcheng*), was implemented in 1999 with a goal of increasing the area of forests and protecting watersheds from erosion and flooding by providing annual grain subsidies to farm families until the year 2010 in exchange for their retirement of croplands and conversion of these and barren lands to forests. The program targeted mountain and hill lands with slopes exceeding 25 degrees, and resulted in the conversion of over 20 million hectares of land into primarily tree-based plantations and is the largest land retirement program of its kind in the world, involving 25 provinces in China.
 11. Conghe Song and Yuxing Zhang, "Forest Cover in China from 1949 to 2006."
 12. Xue-Yu Hou, "Vegetation of China With Reference to Its Geographical Distribution," *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Gardens* 70 no. 3 (1983): 509-48.
 13. D.E. Boufford and S.A. Spongberg, "Eastern Asian-Eastern North American Phytogeographical Relationships—A History from the Time of Linnaeus to the Twentieth Century," *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Gardens* 70 no. 3 (1983): 423-49.
 14. Arun Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).
 15. See Andrew Jacobs, "Village Revolts Over Inequities of Chinese Life," *New York Times*, December 14, 2011 and Michael Wines, "A Village in Revolt Could Be a Harbinger for China," *New York Times*, December 15, 2011.
 16. Liu Xiaobo, "The Land Manifestos of Chinese Farmers," in *No Enemies, No Hatred*, ed. Liu Xiaobo et al (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 33.
 17. *Ibid.*, 31.
 18. See Stephan D.R. Feuchtwang, *An Anthropological Analysis of Chinese Geomancy* (Vientiane, Laos: Vithagna, 1974); Wei Fan, "Village *Fengshui* Principles"; and Ole Bruun, *An Introduction to Feng Shui* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
 19. See He Bukun, Yu Dejiang, and Ku Xiongchang, eds., *Senlin Shumu yu Shoashu Minzu [Forest Trees and Minority Nationalities]* (Kunming: Yunnan Nationalities Publishers, 2000); and Chris Coggins and Tessa Hutchison, "The Political Ecology of Geopietry: Nature Conservation in Tibetan Communities of Northwest Yunnan," *Asian Geographer* 25 nos. 1 and 2 (2006): 85-108.
 20. E.N. Anderson and Marja Anderson, *Mountains and Water: Essays on the Cultural Ecology of South Coastal China*.
 21. David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China*.
 22. E.N. Anderson and Marja Anderson, *Mountains and Water: Essays on the Cultural Ecology of South Coastal China*, 48.
 23. *Ibid.*, 40.
 24. Yeo-Chang Youn et al, "Northeast Asia."
 25. Mao Tse-tung, "Report on an Investigation of the Hunan Peasant Movement," in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Volume II, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing Tsit Chan, and Chester Tan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 210.
 26. *Ibid.*, 213.
 27. Chris Coggins, *The Tiger and the Pangolin: Nature, Culture, and Conservation in China*.
 28. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 10-12.
 29. This is summarized in Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010).
 30. Guan Tuchun, pers. comm. July 13, 2011, Guizhuping Village, Fujian. Ma Shengxue et al. pers. comm. July 13, 2011, Mawu Village, Fujian. Wei Fan, "Village *Fengshui* Principles."
 31. Wei Fan, "Village *Fengshui* Principles."

32. Ibid.
33. Chris Coggins, *The Tiger and the Pangolin: Nature, Culture, and Conservation in China*.
34. Guan Tuchun, pers. comm. July 13, 2011, Guizhuping Village, Fujian.
35. Ibid.
36. See Owain Jones and Paul J. Cloke, *Tree Cultures: The Place of Trees and Trees in Their Place*. (Oxford: Berg, 2002); and Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*.
37. Arun Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*.
38. Promulgated in March 2006 by the National People's Congress, the policy outlines the government's intention to "build a new socialist countryside" through increased funding for poor local governments in conjunction with administrative reforms and "efforts to increase...rural income through a mixture of infrastructural investment, agricultural specialization, the expansion of social welfare, and accelerated urbanization. See Anna L. Ahlers and Gunter Schubert "Building a New Socialist Countryside' – Only a Political Slogan?" *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 4 (2009): 35-62.
39. For a comprehensive review of China's major national forest programs since 2000, see Liu Dachang, "Reforestation After Deforestation," in *Good Earths: Regional and Historical Insights into China's Environment*, ed. Abe Ken-ichi and James E. Nickum (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2009).

From Spirit Forest to Rubber Plantation: The Accelerating Disaster of “Development” in Cambodia

Neal B. Keating

Abstract: Despite the rise of Cambodia’s GDP and other development indicators, continuing extreme poverty combined with very rapid conversion of traditional subsistence lands, forests, and waters into land concessions to national and transnational companies is leading to intensified land insecurity issues and other human rights problems that may destabilize the country. An elite sector of Cambodian society comprised of the heads of state, business, and the military is implicated as the central cause of ongoing poverty and land loss. This paper outlines the problematic nature of the concession processes that began in the post-conflict era and continue today, and adapts Roy Rappaport’s concepts of cognized/operational environments within a political and historical framework for analyzing the strategies of these elites, and compares their cognized environments with those of indigenous Kuy peoples whose lands are threatened by elite practice, and suggests that the high-modern discourses of development adhered to by the elites are based on ultimate sacred postulates just as much as the explicitly religious discourses of traditional Kuy peoples.

Keywords Indigenous peoples; human rights; cognized environments

THE PROBLEM

The modification of primary old-growth forest in Cambodia began about 100 years ago with French colonial-modernist ideas about scientific and market-based forestry (e.g., rubber tree plantations), but these ideas never spread too far into the uplands of Northeastern Cambodia. This was the location of the largest and incredibly biodiverse forest areas in the country, where people practiced what could be called “traditional” forestry, oriented mainly around shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing, small-scale mining, and harvesting non-timber forest products. New modernisms of forestry emerged during the Khmer Rouge years, when the Khmer Rouge began logging forests for timber for fast cash in a transnational open market. These efforts resulted in a significant amount of forest destruction and contributed to the epidemic human displacements of the time. Under the post-conflict Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), this view of forests as timber for cash has gained ascendance, bolstered by expanding market demand for timber in Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam during the first decade of the twenty-first century, and supported by new legal forms of land transfer called “concessions.” Carried out in the name of development, these concessions are effectively nontransparent business exchanges of wealth and power for natural resources, contracted between the private sector and the state. Concession area sizes usually range from 5,000 to 10,000 hectares, although some are smaller and some are much larger. The official arrangement typically is that of a long-term lease, many for 99 years. The natural resources now targeted for large-scale extraction include not only timber, but

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also the subsequent conversion of clear-cut forest lands into industrial plantations, mines, and dams. In 2006, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization surveyed the forests of Cambodia and estimated that 20 percent of the country's forests had disappeared since 1970. But rather than protect what remains, the RGC has since steadily increased the issuing of land concessions. In early 2012 it became public knowledge that the RGC has conceded over a fifth of the country's total land area to hundreds of corporations, officially including 306 economic land concessions (ELCs), 87 mining concessions (MCs), and 23 special economic zones (SEZs), many of which were issued just within the last two to three years. The recipient corporations are mainly Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Canadian, and Australian. The market is wide open.¹

Often these concessions are for lands already in use by people with little money or power, including many who self-identify as Indigenous. As companies take possession of their concession lands, the groups of people already living there are displaced, often aided by local government officials. Increasingly this has led to forced evictions, with an alarming rise in the use of state violence and guns against evictees and their supporters. Peaceful protests and organization against the concessions are legally and locally restricted, and when they happen anyway, the protestors may be threatened, photographed, beaten, arrested, imprisoned, or, in the recent case of Chut Vutty, shot dead. The legal system has in the last four years become reshaped as another potent force for silencing opposition to land concessions, with the adoption of new laws that constrain free expression and public dissent, and with a court system widely recognized as biased in favor of the rich and powerful. Poor people who are found guilty of dissent face hefty fines they cannot pay and/or doing time in extremely substandard prison conditions.²

Mu Sochea, one of the few active political leaders to speak out against the land concession problem, estimates that land concessions have displaced upwards of 1 million Cambodians over the last ten years (about 7 percent of the total population). Evidence exists that a small networked group of elites, who have effectively monopolized the state, are orchestrating a significant amount of these concessions and are benefitting greatly as a result, while the displaced people receive little or no compensation. As the concessions increase, so too do evictions, land insecurity, environmental destruction, civil protests, and state violence. It is a perfect recipe for the development of disaster. The questions, then, are why is this happening and what can be done to change the development of disaster into a different outcome?³ Cambodian peoples are the heirs to a world-class cultural and natural heritage, and have all the potential to create a very different future.

DATA

At the invitation of two Indigenous peoples organizations in Cambodia, I visited the country in 2010 and 2011, with the goal of researching indicators of Indigenous peoples' human rights. In general my approach was to adapt with modification the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) indicator framework of structure/process/outcome indicator variables using an ethnographic and historical methodology to ascertain the status of two fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples: the right of self-determination and rights over traditional lands, territories, and resources.⁴ My fieldwork was centered in the province of Preah Vihear, in several Indigenous Kuy villages that are located in the vicinity of the Boeng Peae Wildlife Sanctuary, one of nine such protected areas in Cambodia, and part of the Greater Prey Lang Forest region. The central objective of fieldwork was to elicit and document the perspectives of Kuy people on the status of these rights in their communities. We conducted 45 interviews with community mem-

bers, including adult women and men. We also observed land tenure practices, including village composition, shifting cultivation, wet rice cultivation, tree resin-tapping, artisanal gold mining, burial practices, spirit forest ceremonies, ironworking sites, the remains of an ancient pre-Angkorian temple, and community territorial demarcation. Additional research was carried out in the cities of Phnom Penh and Tbeang Meanchey, consisting of dialogues with nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives and documentary research in the National Archives; in New York City at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues where I have worked with delegations of Indigenous people from Cambodia; and via online media and NGO reports. While I continue to analyze these data with the aim of better understanding of what development means in contemporary Cambodia, the following is a preliminary response to the questions posed above.

DEVELOPMENT AS RELIGION

To address the question of why the land conflict is occurring, I focus on the cultural frames within which the leading instigators of this development may be operating. The aims are to better understand what causes elite behaviors and move analysis beyond the more usual human nature-based explanations of individual greed and corruption to a consideration of the cultural situations in which such behavior occurs. In this way, my study examines how the international system is as much a factor in the development of disaster as is the elite group that monopolizes the political economy of Cambodia. This requires taking a Durkheimian approach to the international system as a religion, with the market as its sacred, massive social fact, around which human organization has become reoriented.⁵ If the scientific discipline of anthropology has contributed anything, it is the knowledge that human behavior and what we think of as human nature and “reality” are in fact thoroughly mediated by culture: the symbols and grammars we learn, share, mobilize in our behavior, and re-enact in our structures of society and power. These mediating frames, like maps, should not be conflated with the territory itself. When we examine the cultural core of social formation, we find ritual, generating beliefs, and social structure. Cultural frames are not entirely stable or consistent and shift over time in response to changing social and physical environments, but they nonetheless demonstrate resiliency and develop structure and recursion. The case of gender, race, class, and ethnic discrimination is perhaps the most obvious example of recursive cultural construction. The individual behaviors of the Cambodian elites currently instigating the land concessions would certainly be disrupted if they were all rounded up and put in jail, but it is likely that the problem would continue with whatever group replaces them. The problem with land concessions in Cambodia is not unique, but is variably replicated in many other countries, constituting a global pattern—if not pathology—of economic development that many refer to as “land-grabbing.”⁶

Again, the position here is that this pattern is not the result of any law of nature; “market forces” are the product of human power, history, and cognition. It bears repetition because it strikes me that the mainstream theories of neoliberal economics that undergird economic practice seem to claim to have discovered the natural law of humanity: that we have always been self-interested capitalists underneath it all, and that capitalism is a spirit after all. As with most other universalizing and determinate laws of human nature, this one indicates the presence of an unverifiable verisimilitude to which science can only reply: although humans are limited by their biology, their behaviors are not entirely determined by it.⁷

It is not a change in personnel that will alter the path of the development of destruction. To turn Rostow on his head, it is a change in the cultural and global frames of development, along with the social structures that engender them, that is necessary to solve the problem

of land-grabbing. The focus of analysis in this paper will be to examine two conflicting frames within Cambodia concerning the basic relationship of people and land, one represented by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) elites who have captured the state, whom I will refer to as the Khmer Riche; and the other by Kuy Indigenous peoples whose lands are being grabbed up as corporate concessions. By examining variation in the people/land relationship, I hope to develop insights of potential benefit to solving the land-grabbing problem. To reiterate, the problem is not in this policy or that; it is in the dynamic frames that make policy making appear to be the appropriate solution in the first place, and that do not account for the evasive discrepancies between stated policy and actual practice, which are in fact fairly ubiquitous in the case of land-grabbing.⁸

To do so, I reframe the idea of cultural frame as humanly dynamic and multiple. Frames are not simply handed to people to look through; they are cognized and constructed through dynamic concatenations of social symbols and rituals in recombination with ecological, political, and historical conditions. Cognition in this holistic sense is not only empirical rationality; it also importantly involves imagination and emotion that aims to integrate different aspects of experience, however imperfectly. Nor is it purely intellectual; the ideas gain purchase from intentional stereotyped and repetitive behavior, that is, ritual. Land-grabbing has become a global ritual.

COGNIZING COGNIZED ENVIRONMENTS

The term “cognized environment” originates in the writings of Roy Rappaport as an analytical concept for modeling the human-social symbolic cognitive framing of the experienced world. It is premised on a basic insight that the discipline of anthropology has provided through many years of empirical cross-cultural research: that humans experience the world through a sensorial filter of symbolic, physiological, and social processes that we gloss as “culture.” These processes already mediate between us and the physical environment, and are what allow us to form societies and transform the physical world (or what Rappaport called the “operational environment”) in which living organisms actually operate, reproduce, live and die. The cognized environment is a diagnostic way of approaching what is commonly glossed as “worldview” or what Freire called generative themes, that is, explanatory frameworks people develop in response to the concrete historical conditions in which they live. The cognized/operational environment model suggests a paradox of the human condition—that we are conscious of our existence, but only to a limited degree. As the Mayan *Popul Vuh* puts it more poetically, when Heart of Sky and Heart of Earth finally succeeded in making beings that would be conscious of their existence, at first it was too good a creation; the beings could see everything and all of time, just as well as the gods—so they clouded the vision of the beings they made, so they could only see so much. That would be us, the humans, the beings with clouded vision. Cognized models of the world provide the underlying rationale and motivation for specific human behavior guided by the limited comprehension that humans do possess.⁹

In Rappaport's conceptualization of cognized environment, five different orders of cognition are described: ultimate sacred postulates (USPs), cosmological axioms, ritual rules of conduct, imported indications of current prevailing conditions, and mundane understandings of the everyday world. USPs are the general, nonreferential, and relatively unchanging understandings of the cosmos, for example, the existence of spirits or progress. As Rappaport put it, USPs are “the unfalsifiable... [that] yields the unquestionable, which transforms the dubious, the arbitrary, and the conventional into the correct, the necessary, and the natural.”¹⁰ Cosmological axioms are the malleable understandings of the structure

of the world that follow from USPs, connect them with the physical and social world, and suggest general modes of human behavior. While USPs may be relatively fixed, the other orders are not. What makes a given cognized model appear not as a model, but as the truth about the world, is its performance in ritual, which again may or may not be explicitly religious. By themselves, USPs and cosmological axioms are abstractions. Through their performance or enactment via human ritual action, they become palpable and emotive. Rappaport argued that ritual involves two different streams of messages, self-referential and canonical. While postulates and axioms constitute the canonical messages, the knowledge of prevailing conditions and everyday life constitute the self-referential messages. But it is ritual that combines them and gives them the feel of concrete reality. Cognized models are dynamic, because their associated rituals do not simply reflect cognitive understandings; they engender them. They are also dynamic because power and history change the prevailing conditions of everyday social life, while the postulates remain relatively stable within a shared, cognized environment, and the axioms more prone to change.

What is proposed here is that all human societies use ritual to generate cognized environments in social life. These environments are cognitive structures of the world that are enacted through stereotyped and repetitive behaviors that aim at connecting canonical and self-referential information for group members. This is what happens in religious ceremonies, but it is also what happens in the practice of global neoliberal capitalism. Cognized environments are the frames through which we map onto the world. Effectively enacted cognized environments do not appear as maps to actors, but rather as the world itself.

Rather than Manichean dualism, the relationship between the operational environment and the cognized environment is interactive, insofar as the ritual enactments of cognized environments result in specific human interactions and transformations of the operational environment that can be more or less adaptive, that is, enhancing or destroying the living systems in the operational environment. Those confident of current hegemonic development discourse use the phrase “creative destruction” to describe the interactions between dominant global-scale cognized and operational environments. Cognized environments do not exist separately from the operational environment, given that humans are part of the living systems of the planet. The operational environment is importantly changed by the power relations that are ritually enacted within cognized environments. From this perspective, there is a survival question about what is being created by capital-intensive creative destruction.

The land conflict in Cambodia pits powerful elites against peoples historically constructed as powerless. In between these two heuristic poles are many other social relationships that contradict and complicate the dichotomy, but do not eliminate it. There are stark differences between these groups not only in terms of socioeconomic status but also in terms of their cognized environments. To better understand the elite cognized model, I will first provide a brief contrastive sketch of the cognized environment of one of the relatively powerless groups, based mainly on my fieldwork. Then I will sketch the cognized environment of the elites, whom I will refer to as the Khmer Riche, using available public information. Although both sketches are admittedly reductive, they are not fictitious and are grounded in empirical data. Based on the disparity between the two, the concluding analysis offers recommendations for resolving the conflict.

SKETCH #1: KUY COGNIZED ENVIRONMENT

Kuy peoples in Cambodia constitute one of the most powerless groups in Cambodia, for not only are they poor, they are also culturally different from the majority ethnic group in

Cambodia, the Khmer. They are distinct from Khmer peoples in variable terms of religion, economics, language, kinship, politics, and various expressive arts. The Kuy peoples are one of some twenty-four different groups of people that have historically been referred to by colonial and postcolonial hegemony as ethnic minorities or worse and discriminated against on the grounds that their traditional cultures were and are inferior and primitive. Since 2001 these groups have increasingly embraced Indigeneity as a means of expressing and asserting their distinct cultures as well as collective rights, although Cambodian hegemony still has yet to fully recognize them as such. While the demographics are not definitively known, their combined population is estimated at 300,000 to 400,000, distributed across fifteen Cambodian provinces, in approximately 400 to 500 communities, many of which are located in the upland forests and mountains of the north and northeastern provinces of the country, areas rich and diverse in natural resources. Although their combined population makes up only about 2 percent of the national population of Cambodia, probably 25-50 percent of the land concessions foreclose on Indigenous traditional territories. In addition to the land concessions, Indigenous peoples are faced with significant in-migration of Khmer peoples into their territories, which further contributes to culture and land loss. These two factors constitute some of the main prevailing conditions changing contemporary Indigenous cognized environments. The Kuy peoples are one of the larger Indigenous groups in Cambodia. Kuy-speaking peoples are also present in Thailand and Laos.

Much of the data I collected in my fieldwork confirm what several NGOs have previously reported, especially within the last five years: that the land-grabbing in rural Cambodia is producing dramatic land insecurity and is destabilizing society. Approximately 95 percent of the people I interviewed made statements of concern about the loss of their lands to unknown powerful business people and corporations; many people provided accounts of violence related to the land-grabbing, including coercion, beatings, and murder by the security forces hired by the businessmen and corporations. When discussing compensation or consultative mechanisms, they reported that there were none. I collected evidence strongly suggesting government is complicit in the land-grabbing throughout the four different scales of governmental administration, from the larger national scale to provincial, district, and local commune levels.

The cognized environment of Kuy peoples in Preah Vihear is by no means monolithic or unchanging, which is at least partially understandable given the history of multiple colonizations of their operational environments over the course of the last nine centuries. Nonetheless, in the twenty-first century there are observably recurring cognized patterns that at least some Kuy share widely with other Indigenous peoples in Cambodia, including USPs involving the existence of powerful local spirits, which during fieldwork were most frequently referred to as *Ahret*. Other reported names for this class of spirits include *Neak Ta*, or *Phi*. They are typically considered as spirits of past ancestors who linger in the forests, retain a kind of personhood, and hold acquired mystical power over health and illness. Cosmological axioms that follow are that like other persons, Ahrets experience emotion and respond reciprocally to the behavior of others around them, including living people; yet they are more powerful than living people, and thus also dangerous. They are generally considered to take up residence in particular places, usually in the forest and in specific trees. Ahrets have a moral aspect; they judge and act upon the behavior of people. When the people behave well, the Ahrets contribute to their well-being. This judgement extends not only to interpersonal relations, but also to what we might call internature relations—the relations between people and the natural environment around them. The idea is that so long as the Ahrets are content, people's health and well-being will continue. Illness and death, on the

other hand, are the predictable outcomes of behaviors that upset the Ahrets. There is some evidence that these USPs formerly provided the basis of Kuy social organization, as community settlements formed and reformed around collective recognition of places where Ahrets resided. Besides cyclical ceremonies of supplication and thanksgiving, Ahrets are consulted and prayed to in the event of sickness or in the need to divine the future. People also seek out the agreement of local Ahrets prior to undertaking any sort of “development” in the operational environment, such as clearing a new field, digging for gold, or seeking out new trees from which to collect valuable resins or other non-timber forest products. As dwellers in the forests and mountains, the Ahrets are perhaps understandably sensitive about their habitat. The current prevailing conditions of land concessions are extremely stressful to both the canonical and self-referential message-streams in the Kuy cognized environment, and produce changes in their operational environment that living people experience as life-threatening. During my fieldwork my Kuy interlocutors repeatedly informed me that land equals life, that the forests and the mountains are places where Ahrets reside, and that the destruction of the forests is making the Ahrets very angry, in addition to taking away people’s source of livelihood.

The Kuy cognized environment entails a kind of embedded ecology that has until recently yielded a relatively robust maintenance of biodiversity and viable habitat. It is also a model that is locale-centric and small-scale, and that is variably replicated among many other Indigenous peoples in Cambodia, if not throughout much of upland Southeast Asia (which some have argued should be seen as a cohesive region with its own long and distinctive history), as a relatively successful alternative response and resistance to the multiple lowland state formations that have developed in Southeast Asia over the last thousand years or more. The Kuy cognized environment is not static, but has incorporated new rituals brought about by historical and political changes in the prevailing conditions, without significantly altering the USPs that provide the cosmic rationale. As contemporary evidence of this, I found that most of the Kuy traditionalists also practice Buddhist traditions, and see these as complementary to Ahret-centered ritual. One of the villages I lived in was not originally formed around an Ahret, but was formed by the Pol Pot regime as part of its arguably hyper-modern and atheist agenda of social relocation. Nevertheless, in the twenty-first century Ahrets reside near the village and are important sources of local solidarity. But the current prevailing conditions of land concessions and in-migration are more difficult to incorporate into the Kuy cognized environment because—unlike Buddhism, distant state formations, or even Khmer Rouge atrocities—the current conditions threaten the entire existence of Kuy peoples and Ahret spirits because they take away the source of their future, both cognitively and operationally. The Kuy benefit little from their integration into the market because like many other poor Cambodians who are being dispossessed by land concessions, they do not receive compensation for the loss of their territories. And because of their Indigeneity, the Kuy face the additional cost of cultural negation.¹¹

SKETCH #2: KHMER RICHE COGNIZED ENVIRONMENT

The second group is constituted very differently than the Kuy, although both are Cambodian and their languages are related. But unlike the Kuy, I was not able to live with this group and get to know them personally. Instead this sketch is based largely on media reports, NGO reports, and conversations with NGO representatives; it is also corroborated in part by my field observations in Preah Vihear. This group consists of Prime Minister Hun Sen and his wife Bun Rany, and their close relatives, friends, and business partners in the ruling CPP, which appears to constitute a patronage network that is justifiably described as

a “kleptocratic state.” Hun Sen has now been Prime Minister of Cambodia for more than 10,000 days (27+ years), and in that time he and his group—here referred to as the Khmer Riche—have accumulated a massive amount of wealth, while the vast majority of Cambodians have remained entrenched in dire poverty and fear. The Khmer Riche USPs are formed not around ancestor or forest spirits, but around a different sacred entity: the market, with the acquisition of wealth and power as one of the central axioms. These axioms are politically manifested through ritual “strongman” practices of control of government, military, and justice systems; limiting opposition parties; and suppressing public dissent and free speech. Their wealth comes from the many opaque business deals for natural resource extraction they conduct between themselves and with transnational corporations. Another important stream of their revenue comes in the form of international aid and investment, including, ironically, billions of dollars intended to develop civil society, improve healthcare and educational systems, and promote human rights. The kleptocratic and menacing nature of the Cambodian state is public knowledge, yet the international aid continues to flow in, and public criticism remains largely muted within Cambodia as well as in the international arena, which likely enhances the sense of impunity the Khmer Riche feel. The immediate issue within the country is not wealth flows per se; it is that the wealth flows do not extend outward to the rest of Cambodian society. However, wealth flows per se do constitute a structural issue no less immediate, given their increasing recursion in other parts of the world economic system.¹²

I propose the Khmer Riche cognized environment as it is today is produced through state rituals of resource appropriation and dominance expression (physical and verbal), and that these rituals generate two imbricated canonical message streams that come from different sources. The first is about the existence of the market as a powerful spirit entity (or what Durkheim would call a “social fact”), the main axiom of which is capital accumulation. Durkheim argued that religions are mirrors of society, which are produced by the social imaginaire. Their gods are reflections of what the society is. They become a source of futures in the collective imagination. The market as sacred being offers a future of progress, wealth, and security.¹³

The second canonical stream is of local Hindu and Buddhist origin, about the existence of reincarnation, and a central axiom of which is merit, which in Cambodia seems to recur along cultural lines such as the rule of disproportionate revenge. The USPs here are that souls reincarnate multiple times, acquiring and losing merit as they go through the cycles of rebirth. In a vague but axiomatic way, one’s status in this life is socially understood as a result of merit achieved in past lives. It is an axiom of predestination and a key cognitive factor in the long history of patron-client relations in Cambodia (which predates market integration). The exercise of disproportionate revenge against perceived enemies carries with it supernatural undertones.¹⁴

What Hun Sen and his group have achieved is a neoliberal fusion of these two message streams. They have fully embraced the market economy as national policy and practice, and dealt harshly with those who impolitely harm this practice by speaking out against it. In so doing the Khmer Riche generate a supernatural aura of seemingly irresistible power about themselves, a feeling of cosmic merit in action. As an Indigenous Bunong person explained it, there is a feeling in Cambodia that if you make a complaint about a small problem, the government response will be to make a bigger problem for you. Or, as Hinton explains the rule of disproportionate revenge, if in the Abramic traditions the cosmological axiom is “an eye for an eye,” in Cambodian Buddhist traditions the axiom is “a head for an eye.” This illuminates the specific Cambodian style of land-grabbing and the subsequent harsh

treatment of civilian evictees and protestors as subhuman criminals. It also provides context for understanding the tone of Hun Sen's "strongman" public rhetoric, for example when he refers to his political opponents and dissenting civil society groups as bad dogs that he will physically discipline, or responds to female dissenters by insulting their womanhood.¹⁵

Arguably, in certain respects such as bravado, cunning, and wiliness, Hun Sen bears a loose resemblance to some of the Cambodian rulers during the precolonial Angkor and post-Angkor periods, who also sought to rhetorically emphasize their greatness over that of their perceived enemies, and build their power base around strategic allies, often through extensions of kinship. And like the old rulers of Angkor Wat, Hun Sen's official title sends the message that he is not simply the Prime Minister, but suggests he is equipped with supernatural power as well. His official title today is "Samdech Akka Moha Senai Padi Techo" Hun Sen. The spellings and translations vary, but a rough translation is "his royal highness, great of the great supreme ruler, protector." In 2007, Hun Sen himself reportedly compared his title to that of Jayavarman VII (AD 1125-1200), one of the more lauded Angkor kings. The connection to Angkor Wat was also an important axiom of the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot. This connection to past kings and glories continues to be salient in twenty-first century Cambodian nationalism. How can it not be? As a UNESCO world heritage site, the sites of Angkor Wat and other temples in the surrounding region constitute one of the main revenue streams driving the Cambodia GDP, that of tourism services. Its three facing towers are the central symbol on the Cambodian flag.¹⁶

However, the cognized environment of Hun Sen and the Khmer Riche is not simply constituted by Angkorean and Buddhist postulates and axioms. Since at least the 1990s, new postulates have been imported alongside new conditions, including those of neoliberal market integration, and new access to billions of dollars in international assistance to get there. Like explicitly religious beliefs, market-based beliefs provide people with a seemingly reliable future to believe in, one of economic and social progress resulting from global market integration. While these beliefs are commonly couched as secular material beliefs, they nonetheless engender the same qualities as explicitly sacred postulates implied in ritual: general, vague, and unverifiable presumptions. These have not entirely displaced the local postulates, but they have shifted the axioms and ritual rules toward conformity with global standards of market-based capitalism. The Cambodian-style supernatural quest for elite power continues in a new operational environment in which almost everything becomes recast as a market commodity, especially natural resources. The people/land relation in this cognized environment is that land and water are sources of capital, especially Cambodian upland forests and the Mekong river system. In order for the capital to be released from these resources they have to be transformed to fit the market model of export orientation, both symbolically and physically. Symbolically this is achieved through national assurances of a progressive future based on market integration and legal mechanisms like land concessions. Physically this is achieved by transforming biodiverse forests and rivers into monocrop plantations, large-scale industrial mining sites, hydropower sites, or deforested areas.

In the neoliberal Buddhism of the Khmer Riche, the postulates of reincarnation and merit are ritually recombined with that of the market to legitimate new inequalities and practices of domination. The acquisition of merit becomes imbricated with the acquisition of capital. As a colloquial example of the way cognized environments change, the Buddhist orthodox logic of practicing compassion towards all living things as a strategy towards greater enlightenment in the next life gets inverted under the prevailing neoliberal conditions into something like this: if you are kind in this life, your next life will be better; but if you are bad in this life, in the next life you will be rich.¹⁷ This apparent mockery does not

fully dislodge the USPs of karma and reincarnation, but it speaks to the changes in the ritual rules and axioms that have modified in response to shifting conditions in the operational environment.

That Hun Sen has successfully integrated the market postulate into Cambodia is evidenced by the robust growth in the GDP indicator. The Asia Development Bank projects that Cambodia's GDP will grow 6.5 percent in 2012 and 7 percent in 2013.¹⁸ It has grown from \$3.6 billion in 2000 to almost \$13 billion in 2011, officially driven by tourism, garment manufactures, and agriculture. A visit to Phnom Penh confirms a construction boom is underway, with high-rise buildings going up in many parts of the city. Foreign direct investment in Cambodia has been steadily increasing since 1992, from \$33 million in 1992, to \$783 million in 2010.¹⁹ The population has more than doubled since the end of the 1970s. Infrastructure projects like paved roads are underway throughout the country. This year the government of Cambodia is chairing the ASEAN and has pledged to "continue to intensify efforts aimed at building a rule-based, people-oriented and fully integrated ASEAN Community by 2015."²⁰ In 2004, while laying out the national rectangular strategy of development ("growth, employment, equity and efficiency"), Hun Sen described Cambodia as having undergone a "profound transformation... from a region of uncertainty, war, internal strife, instability and backwardness into an epicenter of sustained peace, security and social order, respect for democracy, human rights and dignity, cooperation and shared development."²¹ In an advertisement for an "Investment Focus Conference" that took place in April 2012 at the new tony Sofitel Hotel in Phnom Penh, the opening address was titled "Cambodia Begins to Blossom."²² Considered from the perspective of its investment environment, Cambodia is more robust than ever. A recently released opinion poll by the International Republican Institute reports that 81 percent of Cambodians think Cambodia is going in the right direction.²³

Several observers have suggested that the international assistance regime in general has favored positive economic growth and development over concerns with human rights, democracy, and open societies, and this is why the international system remains largely blithe about the increasingly deteriorating human rights situation in Cambodia. In terms of economic development and GDP, Hun Sen has delivered the goods, and until 2011 the World Bank seemed largely pleased with his performance.²⁴ While he may be motivated in part by the postulates of ancient Cambodian history and mythology, he seems equally motivated to meet the bottom line of the international capitalist system and committed to reorienting the economy toward commercial markets. In so doing he increases his power and extends his patronage network. These two canonical message streams share a common theme of domination and foreboding for the poor and relatively powerless people, whose rural subsistence systems are inevitably doomed to be converted into new flows of capital carrying benefits elsewhere, and who are bullied into submission on another forced march of progress.²⁵

CONCLUSIONS

One does not need to use a cognized model of the environment to understand that there is a conflict in Cambodia over the appropriate use of natural resources. What cognized models do illuminate are the cultural frameworks within which this conflict has emerged in the twenty-first century. The conflict sketched out in this paper is variably reproduced in many other parts of the world today. It seems that solving this problem will be difficult if we do not understand its emergence. From a cognized environment model, transnational capitalism mobilizes ultimate sacred postulates around which human social organization

forms, like any other religion. Thus, Durkheim proclaimed a century ago that religion is the soul of society. However, it seems increasingly evident that the social forms produced by neoliberal cognized environments are no longer societies in any traditional sense, but are in fact markets. Instead of Ahrets we increasingly are organized around and by corporations. The resulting massive loss of human livelihoods and dignity, in combination with the loss of ecological biodiversity and habitat, suggests that this is a world religion that has turned pathological. In the case of Cambodia, this pathology presents itself in the current structures of kleptocracy. That modernist frames of development and progress are inherently religious is a point that many Indigenous peoples have long observed. Perhaps it is time for the rest of the world to begin to listen, especially in the elite sectors that control structural power within nation-states, and even more so at the international level.²⁶

Cambodia could begin to address this problem by reorienting the rectangular strategy of development around the growth of human cultural capacity and biodiverse habitat. This would require the RGC to reframe the national population as individual and collective stakeholders in development decisions and require their free, prior, and informed consent in decisions such as how to develop the land. If the RGC reoriented the wealth flowing into the country toward promoting the health, education, free expression, and self-determination of the rural and urban poor, an entirely different approach to development could possibly emerge from civil society that would be more sustainable than the strategy as currently practiced. Cambodia's heritage includes more than an unending string of brutal dominations. It is also rich in art, beauty, wisdom, and compassion, which offer alternative canonical message streams. It is important that Indigenous peoples in particular be given a seat at the table, as their distinctive traditions, histories, and knowledge—if nationally supported instead of nationally rejected—may offer strong, sustainable alternatives to the current models of economic development.

However, an ecological human rights-based cognized environment in Cambodia is unlikely to take hold so long as the larger global power structure of market-based capitalist development maintains its cognitive grip on the imaginations of international donors and investors as the only feasible way forward. The current structure provides the axioms for Hun Sen to continue business as usual, especially now that China has entered the picture as Cambodia's largest bilateral donor.²⁷ By analyzing this global cognized environment as based not simply on rational economic principles, but fundamentally grounded in religious imagination about the future, it may be possible to loosen this grip and open the collective imagination of otherwise reasonable donors to different ultimate postulates for human action. But USPs do not simply appear; they are brought into social existence through ritual practice. Perhaps we would do better to alter the rituals of the market and its elites in the hopes of developing new axioms that enhance human and ecological survival in the operational environment.

NOTES

1. A rather condescending discussion of Kuy forestry practice from the French Colonial period is provided in C. Cozette, "Propositions d'essais de culture chez les Kouys en vue de restreindre le ray," *Rapport de Monsieur Cozette, Charles, Garde Général des Forêts de lère classe* (Protectorat du Cambodge: Service Forestier. National Archives of Cambodia: 26431, 1915). The first Cambodian land concession laws were passed in 2001. See Open Development, <http://www.opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net/laws-regulations/> (accessed 2 June 2012). Information on the size and scale of concessions is from a LICADHO/*Cambodia Daily* analysis, by Paul Vrieze and Kuch Naren, "Carving Up Cambodia: One Concession at a Time," *The Cambodia Daily*, March 10-11, 2012, <http://www.licadho-cambodia.org/land2012/> (accessed 30 May 2012); and also from Open Development, <http://www.opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net> (accessed 30 May 2012).
2. The growing number of forced evictions and land disputes is well documented by Amnesty International and the Cambodia Human Rights Action Committee in *Rights Razed: Forced Evictions in Cambodia* (London:

- Amnesty International, February 11, 2008), <http://hrrca.org/content/kingdom-cambodia-assumes-asean-chairmanship-2012>; *Losing Ground: Forced Evictions and Intimidation in Cambodia* (Phnom Penh: Cambodia Human Rights Action Committee, 2009); and *Still Losing Ground: Forced Evictions and Intimidation in Cambodia, 2010* (Phnom Penh: Cambodia Human Rights Action Committee, 2011). See also NGO Forum *Statistical Analysis of Land Disputes in Cambodia, 2010* (Phnom Penh: NGO Forum, 2011). Chut Wutty was a well-known and outspoken Cambodian environmental activist and a member of the Prey Lang Forest Network who was shot dead on 26 April 2012 by military police while photo-documenting illegal logging activities. This was followed a week later by military police killing a 14 year-old girl in another rural area where a village was being evicted to make way for a rubber plantation. The escalating violence has begun to draw international media attention, including the *New York Times*, BBC, and Huffington Post. I worked with members of the Prey Lang Forest Network to prepare and submit a substantial human rights complaint with regard to land concessions, state violence, and restrictions on free expression to the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights on 16 May. A good analysis of the recent laws restricting free expression was produced by LICADHO, "The Delusion of Progress: Cambodia's Legislative Assault on Freedom of Expression," <http://www.licadho-cambodia.org/delusion2011/> (accessed 2 June 2012).
3. Mu Sochea is a leader in the opposition Sam Rainsy Party. She made this statement in April 2012 while visiting Australia to stop Australian companies from accepting any further land concessions in Cambodia. See Georgia Wilkins, "Call to stop firms accepting Cambodian Land," Khmerization Blog, April 16, 2012, <http://khmerization.blogspot.com/2012/04/call-to-stop-firms-accepting-cambodian.html> (accessed 2 June 2012). The Cambodian elite patronage network is most thoroughly mapped out in two extensive reports by Global Witness, *Cambodia's Family Trees: Illegal Logging and the Stripping of Public Assets by Cambodia's Elite* (2007), <http://www.globalwitness.org/library/cambodias-family-trees> and *Country For Sale: How Cambodia's Elite Have Captured the Country's Extractive Industries* (2009), <http://www.globalwitness.org/library/country-sale> (accessed 2 June 2012).
 4. I capitalize the "I" in Indigenous to indicate its emergent usage as a proper noun with regard to peoples, as a name of an emerging global identity that is broad in scale, like "Asian" or "European." Indigenous peoples may also constitute minority ethnic groups within a nation-state, but the interpellation of "Indigenous" asserts more than ethnic or minority status; it also asserts collective rights of self-determination and collective rights to lands, territories, and resources. Indigeneity as such is new in Cambodia and very much a twenty-first century process. For more on Indigenous identity in Asia, see Christian Erni, ed., *The Concept of Indigenous Peoples in Asia: A Resource Book* (Copenhagen/Chiang Mai: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2008). See also ASEAN's *Indigenous Peoples* (Chiang Mai: Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact, 2011).
 5. This idea is partially indebted to Arjun Appadurai, who recently suggested as much in an opening keynote address (and forthcoming book), "The Future is a Cultural Fact" (American Ethnological Society Spring Conference, New York, April 19, 2012; and forthcoming from Verso, 2013).
 6. The literature on land-grabbing is rapidly growing. For example, see *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39 nos. 3/4 (2012).
 7. Emile Durkheim is a key source for ideas about the social basis of religion and the religious basis of society; see Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Collier Books, 1912). On the centrality of ritual for giving substance to the canonical streams of messages, see Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Mankind*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
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27. See AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness, "Transcript of emerging Asian donors interview," March 2012, <http://www.ode.usaid.gov.au/publications/transcripts/emerging-donors.html> (accessed 15 June 2012). However flawed the Western-based aid models may be, they are accompanied by discourses and stated expectations of human rights promotion and environmental conservation. There is no indication that Chinese aid comes with any such strings attached.

Citizen Environmental Activism in China: Legitimacy, Alliances, and Rights-based Discourses

Setsuko Matsuzawa

Abstract: While China's environmental problems have been well publicized to a global audience, its citizens' environmental activism is lesser known. This paper assesses the major environmental activism that Chinese environmental non-governmental organizations and Chinese citizens have engaged in since the mid-1990s to date, focusing in particular on the unique nature of such activism in an authoritarian context. I argue that environmental activism in China has garnered legitimacy and provided citizens with opportunities to become agents of social change. Chinese citizens have become adept: at taking advantage of the state's wish to enforce environmental regulations at the local level; developing alliances with Chinese officials as well as with, in some cases, transnational actors; and using communicative technology to demonstrate and to organize their environmental discontent. Chinese environmental activism has also helped environmentally affected victims to learn of, and to exercise, their rights as citizens.

Keywords environmental activism; anti-dam activism; rights-based discourses; state-society relations; authoritarian states; China

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INTRODUCTION

China's unprecedented economic growth since the 1978 economic reforms has incurred significant current and future environmental costs to the nation. While China's environmental problems have been well publicized to a global audience, its citizen environmental activism is lesser known. The purpose of this paper is to assess the key environmental activism that Chinese environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Chinese citizens have engaged in since the mid-1990s to date, focusing in particular on the current condition of state-society relations in an authoritarian context.

The "greening" of the state¹ and the visibility of serious environmental problems have provided, since the mid-1990s, justifications for environmental groups that are more or less autonomous from the state to emerge. Despite a popular perception, the Chinese state is not monolithic. Different functional agencies of the state have different views of environmental protection and citizen environmental activism. For example, the Ministry of Environmental Protection hopes that these environmental groups can contribute to environmental protection, especially at the local level where environmental measures have largely been compromised in favor of economic development. On the other hand, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has established a regulatory framework to control and monitor citizen activism. This paper will shed light on the ways in which citizens have carved out their social space by engaging in environmental activism and address the extent to which environmental activism has provided citizens with more opportunities to exercise their rights. In China, activism has worked in neither a top-down nor bottom-up manner, but rather between the two.² Activists appeal to a vertical authority (the central government) and/or network horizontally with global actors and with kindred groups.³

In the sections below, I first discuss collective action and environmental management and policy in order to provide some context for contemporary environmental activism in China. Secondly, I introduce the concept of “negotiating the state”⁴ as a point of departure and discuss how recent scholarship departs from this to focus more on grassroots NGOs. Thirdly, I assess the major environmental activism that Chinese environmental NGOs and Chinese citizens have engaged in since the mid-1990s to date.

CONTEXTUALIZING CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN CHINA

COLLECTIVE ACTION IN CHINA

As in any authoritarian setting, China presents significant structural obstacles to activism. In the post-Tiananmen era (1989 onward), China’s party-state has implemented a tight regulatory framework to keep the nation’s social organizations fragmented and highly localized.⁵ The communist regime has been successful in co-opting or controlling most social elites⁶—the intelligentsia, professionals, and private entrepreneurs—who might otherwise present a counterforce to the regime.

Although no serious challenges have been posed to the regime, China’s social instabilities have become significant. China’s institutional mechanism for absorbing social discontent and serious grievances is the New Regulation on Letters and Visits, which replaced an older precedent in 2005. It allows citizens to express their grievances by writing a letter to, and/or visiting, the Letters and Visits Office and/or members of the People’s Congress, among others. The majority of the letters earn no response, and people increasingly resort to collective protests and riots.⁷ According to *China Environment Statistical Report*, environmental protection bureaus (EPBs) received over 600,000 letters of complaint in 2004.⁸ In addition, EPBs receive numerous complaints via hotlines.

Globalization processes have created more opportunities for domestic activists to externalize their claims and thus potentially create a Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN).⁹ By sharing values and common discourse, and by exchanging information and resources, NGO actors—international and local NGOs—as well as intergovernmental organizations and (sometimes) governments together constitute a TAN. For example, China’s hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics gave opportunities to both domestic and foreign activists to engage in an “Olympic boycott movement” to protest China’s human rights record.¹⁰

The availability of communicative technology¹¹ in China has promoted new forms of citizen activism and it is rapidly changing the activism landscape. Yang argues that the Internet has revolutionized how citizens organize and engage in activism in China.¹² Examples include two protests against chemical plants: a Xiamen walk in 2007 with ten thousand participants and Dalian protests in 2011 with twelve thousand participants, the largest of such forms of activism.¹³ Citizens joined the events after they learned of the chemical plants via text messages¹⁴ or social networking sites.¹⁵

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND POLICY IN CHINA

Fiscal decentralization, beginning with the 1978 economic reforms, has made local governments directly responsible for implementing environmental protection measures. Yet China’s administrative structure, known among scholars as “fragmented authoritarianism,”¹⁶ has made policy implementation difficult and lengthy. Under this structure, different functional bureaucracies at all levels engage in policy bargaining that is further complicated by the bureaucratic ranking system. Fragmented authoritarianism corrects a common misperception of China in which the state is presumed to implement its policies single-hand-

edly. Environmental policy implementation suffered from the low bureaucratic rank of the national environmental agency¹⁷ until it was elevated to ministerial status—and renamed the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA)¹⁸—in 1998.¹⁹ Local EPBs must negotiate with other, often higher ranking, functional agencies of the local government.²⁰ Therefore, successful environmental protection at the local level is often tied to the degree of environmental concern within local governments.

The central government has taken a series of notable steps toward the improvement of environmental protection. Between 1991 and 2003, the SEPA increased the quantity and quality of its staff.²¹ Local leaders are no longer only judged by their economic performance alone, but also by their environmental performance, based, for example, on water and air quality.²² Despite China's environmental reforms at the national level, however, some scholars have cautiously noted the weak implementation capacities of local governments.²³

“NEGOTIATING THE STATE” AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

While the state intends to use registration to control social organizations, Tony Saich has argued that registered social organizations benefit from their relationship with the state by gaining legitimacy and protection from their (state) sponsor agency. Saich calls this state-society relation “negotiating the state.” The state negotiates with social organizations because social organizations can benefit the state by stepping in to assist the state in policy implementation (e.g., welfare provision) and by offering employment for retired government officials.²⁴

Saich's insights on social organizations in China focus on state-society relations when the state first implemented the regulatory framework in the 1990s. Since then, social organizations—with exceptions, such as political or religious organizations²⁵—have been rooted in society regardless of their registration status, and have significantly affected state-society dynamics. Saich's concept still provides a useful framework for understanding China's social organizations, in particular government organized NGOs (GONGOs). Yet it does not address the different ways in which other types of social organizations engage with the state. Recent scholarship fills the gap by focusing on grassroots NGOs²⁶ or popular NGOs²⁷ and unregistered organizations.²⁸

Anthony Spires explored why illegal grassroots organizations in China survive. He argued that they can continue to operate as long as they act as social service providers and do not turn themselves into a threat by criticizing or challenging governments. Fragmented authoritarianism helps illegal grassroots organizations to develop symbiotic relationships with particular government officials. To the extent that these organizations are useful for officials in achieving good political performance, their existence is legitimized in the eyes of the officials. Spires calls this relationship “contingent symbiosis.”²⁹

Hildebrandt studied the reasons why unregistered social organizations seem to be unconcerned about legitimating their status via registration. His survey of social organizations across China, in issue areas such as environmental protection, HIV/AIDS prevention, and gay and lesbian rights, found that more than half were not registered. Registered social organizations were likely to be older, larger, or closer to Beijing, and they were over-represented in environmental protection. He also found that social organizations forego registration if local governments do not mind, or prefer them to be unregistered. From the local government perspective, unregistered organizations are easier to control because they depend more on local governments' patronage to survive. In issue areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention and gay and lesbian rights, local governments can control social organizations via the allocation of foreign funding that is typically channeled through local governments.

His study highlights that social organizations in China are controlled one way or another regardless of their registration status. Thus, legitimacy through registration and grants from foreign sources may not be of concern to an organization as long as it has access to local government funding.³⁰

Instead of the civil society framework, Keech-Marx took a social movements approach to understanding why popular grassroots women's organizations in China are able to engage in critical public debate on social issues.³¹ She employed framing theory to examine their activism on anti-domestic violence. She found that women's organizations frame their activism in ways that resonate with official discourses, legitimizing themselves and their activism, allowing themselves to negotiate with the state more effectively. The same framing analysis has been applied in other authoritarian contexts. For example, Noonan in her study on women's activism in authoritarian Chile argued that activists successfully used discourse that was parallel to state discourse, and that the framings created opportunities for protest.³²

In the field of environmental advocacy in China, the more or less autonomous Chinese environmental NGOs that have emerged since the mid-1990s have obtained legitimacy from some Chinese policy elites and western donors, steadily extending their constituencies among citizens. In recent years, environmental NGOs and citizens have been negotiating with the state to carve out more space for themselves in the policy-making process and to bring their environmental concerns into public debates. In my own study of an anti-dam activism case, environmental NGOs navigated different framings of hegemonic discourses, including universalist principles, Chinese official discourses, and international discourses (e.g., participatory politics, World Commissions on Dams guidelines).³³

CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN CHINA

Data for this paper are drawn from six one- to three-hour interviews with two environmental activists and two staff members of international NGOs. All interviewees were involved in the major environmental campaigns discussed below. I also interviewed an official from a provincial civil affairs office. The interviews were conducted in July and August 2001, August and September 2003, and November 2004. In a few cases, follow-up email exchanges were made. Data are also drawn from the organizational materials of these Chinese environmental NGOs and international NGOs. Relevant literature has also been consulted in order to supplement my data.

I argue that although citizen activism in China is subjected to more stringent constraints than is found in democratic settings, environmental activism in China has garnered legitimacy and provided citizens with opportunities to become agents of social change. Chinese citizens have become adept: at taking advantage of the state's wish to enforce environmental regulations at the local level; developing alliances with Chinese officials as well as with, in some cases, transnational actors; using communicative technology to organize their environmental discontent; and exercising their rights as citizens.

GAINING LEGITIMACY

China's major environmental NGOs enjoyed state patronage when they first emerged in the mid-1990s. Registration is one way for social organizations to legitimize their existence and their issue areas in the eyes of the state. (I use the term "legitimacy" to mean recognition or acceptance of social organizations and their activism by a state or an authoritative entity, such as the international community.) Following advice from Chinese central government officials, Liang Congjie, the founder of China's first individually organized environmental NGO, the Friends of Nature (FON), registered his organization as an NGO

in 1994. The Chinese leadership had seemingly come to realize that allowing more autonomous environmental NGOs, as opposed to only GONGOs, would help to improve China's international image.³⁴ It wanted to demonstrate to the world a sensitivity to international norms.³⁵ Global Village Beijing (GVB), which registered as a business in 1996, was able to broadcast its environmental education program with China Central TV (CCTV), the major state station. These environmental NGOs attracted international attention, and they received international awards that gave them further legitimacy domestically.

Legitimacy accrued to the state too. The emergence of environmental NGOs as poster children for the Chinese state granted the state more legitimacy within the international community. For example, leaders of both FON and GVB were enlisted to serve on the Beijing Olympics organizing committee, presumably for the state to show its commitment to the environment to the international Olympic committee.³⁶

DEVELOPING ALLIANCES

Through regulations, the party-state has effectively discouraged the formation of national-level independent NGOs in order to ensure for mass organizations a monopoly of nationwide representation.³⁷ Mass organizations, state apparatus, represent certain social groups (women, workers, youth, etc.) and their interests. They assist the state in transmitting and implementing certain policies (e.g., family planning).

I argue that, notwithstanding limitations imposed by the state, NGOs have led two major environmental campaigns—the protection of the snub-nosed monkey in 1995 and Nu River anti-dam activism in the 2000s—which demonstrate that environmental NGOs have been extending their networks, in the latter case, even beyond the national border. These networks have also been extended not only to key policy and political elites at the central government, but also to environmentally conscious citizens and marginalized populations.

The campaign for the protection of the snub-nosed monkey—one of China's most endangered species—in 1995 was China's first NGO-led environmental campaign against a local county government, Deqin county, in Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (a Tibetan minority prefecture), Yunnan province. Xi Zhinong, a photographer in Yunnan's Forestry Department, learned in 1995 that the Deqin county government had sold loggers the right to clear-cut a 200-square-kilometer swath of primeval forest. This was the habitat of at least 200 snub-nosed monkeys, or a little less than one fifth of the total remaining population. Xi lobbied in vain the vice director of Yunnan's Forestry Department to intervene with the county government's plans.³⁸

Xi consulted with Tang Xiayang, a well-respected environmental author and the founder of Green Camp, an environmental group. At Tang's suggestion, Xi contacted Liang Congjie, the founder of FON, in Beijing. Liang suggested that Xi write a letter to Song Jian, China's Minister for Science and Technology, and publicize the plight of the monkeys via the media by supplying his photos of the monkeys.³⁹ FON also joined the campaign. FON could mobilize students nationally because some members of student environmental groups are also individual members of FON. Two hundred students from the Beijing Forestry College turned out for a candlelight vigil for the monkeys in Yunnan.⁴⁰ This suggests that Chinese social organizations have been, since their early days, capable of developing national links (e.g., via student members) even though the state discourages national-level organizations.

Song Jian ordered the Ministry of Forestry in Beijing to investigate the problem and to stop the clear-cutting. As a result, a logging ban was enforced in Yunnan in 1996. Xi's initial activism catalyzed environmentalists, environmental NGOs, and the media. Xi stated that the campaign may not have succeeded without Liang's personal connections with Song at

the central government.⁴¹

I argue that this campaign expresses a vertical dynamic, i.e., activists made a claim by appealing to the vertical authority (the central government).⁴² O'Brien and Li observed that rural protesters in China often resort to the vertical authority in order to hold local governments accountable.⁴³

The Yunnan provincial government obviously did not appreciate Xi's activism. Xi's victory cost him his job with the Yunnan Forestry Department, and Green Plateau, an NGO established by Xi and his wife in Yunnan in 2000, ceased to exist in 2002.⁴⁴

The Nu River anti-dam activism emerged after the Yunnan Provincial Government and the Huadian Group, a state-owned electric enterprise, signed the dam construction agreement on the Nujiang (Nu River) hydropower dam project on March 14, 2003. Eight of the thirteen dams were to be built across the middle reaches of Nujiang in the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture (Lisu minority prefecture)⁴⁵ in Yunnan. If built, the Nu River dams could have significant impacts upon the area's ecological and cultural diversity.⁴⁶ The planned construction site encompasses one of the world's ecological hotspots, a UNESCO World Heritage natural site, "Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas,"⁴⁷ and ethnic minority populations. According to the initial 2003 plan, fifty thousand people were slated to be displaced and relocated because of the dams.⁴⁸

In August 2003, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of the central government approved the dam construction and intended to present the plan to the state council for final approval and then begin construction in September 2003.⁴⁹ Given the impetus of China's Western Development Policy since 1999, the proposed construction of the Nu River dams was expected to move ahead swiftly, or at least that was what many within the Nujiang prefecture government believed. Yet in February 2004, due to an outcry from environmental groups and scholars, Premier Wen Jiabao temporarily suspended the dam construction plan. The project is still pending. The China Daily reported in May 10, 2011 that the Huadian group intends to build the dam by 2015.

The emergence of Nu River anti-dam activism showed that some environmental NGOs are willing to advocate on politically sensitive issues, not simply more benign issues such as environmental education, recycling, animal protection, or tree planting. Dams remain one of the most sensitive environmental issues in China⁵⁰ because China is eager to increase electricity from renewable energy sources by tripling its hydropower capacity by 2020.⁵¹ This anti-dam campaign also exhibited increasing networking between journalists, NGOs, governments, international NGOs, and dam-affected people in both China and other countries. I argue that this type of networking expresses a horizontal dynamic, i.e., activists capitalized on the commonalities of their claims and agendas with global actors and with kindred groups in other localities, domestic and foreign.⁵²

The SEPA showed its clear position against the Nu River dam project. Its willingness to ally with environmental NGOs heightened after the 2003 enactment of China's Environmental Impact Assessment Law, which appointed the SEPA as the gatekeeper of major public and private development projects. The law requires the SEPA to review and (dis)approve environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports on these projects. Hence, it bestows the SEPA with the power to halt projects.

In October 2003, the SEPA organized China's first "Green Forum," a public relations event in which Green Earth Volunteers in Beijing, an environmental NGO, participated and collected signatures from participants, including Chinese celebrities, on a petition for the protection of the Nu River.⁵³

Green Earth Volunteers and Green Watershed—the key Chinese environmental NGOs

in Nu River anti-dam activism—and journalist groups jointly conducted a “study tour”⁵⁴ along the Nu River and later held a photo exhibition in Kunming as well as at the United Nations Environment Program’s Fifth Global Civil Society Forum held in Jeju, South Korea in March 2004.⁵⁵ The NGOs successfully developed alliances beyond the national border. For example, in November 2003 they traveled to Thailand to attend the Second International Meeting of Dam-Affected People and Their Allies, where they worked successfully to have the international meeting issue a joint statement opposing the Nu River dam project.⁵⁶

Green Watershed, in particular, collaborated with International Rivers, a Berkeley-based international NGO, over the Nu River campaign. The pair exchanged and disseminated information in the form of publications and translations,⁵⁷ but the most successful example of their collaboration was the Beijing Declaration on Hydropower and Sustainable Development, the product of the UN Symposium on Hydropower and Sustainable Development, held in Beijing from October 27-29, 2004. Representatives from Green Watershed, International Rivers, and Oxfam America sat at the same round table with two UN representatives, two World Bank representatives, and three Chinese government officials from the NDRC, and suggested a revision to a draft. The Green Watershed representative believed that because of their input, the final draft of the declaration addressed sustainable development in hydropower development. He pointed out that none of the opening speeches at the symposium referenced NGOs, the people, or social impact assessments, but that fully one-third of the closing speeches did.⁵⁸ The Yunnan provincial government retaliated in early January by confiscating the passports of Green Watershed’s staff, preventing the NGO from using international venues to extend its alliances.

DEVELOPING RIGHTS-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

Nu River activism not only expressed a horizontal dynamic of networking among relevant actors, but also brought rights-based discourse to dam-affected people. For prior to NGO Nu River activism, there is no indication that any of the dam-affected people either perceived injustice or made claims based on their rights. Rights-based framings resonate well with the state official rhetoric, “the creation of a legally governed nation (*fazhi guojia jianshe*).”

The dam-affected villagers were invited to participate in workshops organized by Green Watershed and funded by transnational activists. The workshop experience helped dam-affected people to acquire new knowledge of international resettlement policies and their own rights as defined in Chinese policies.⁵⁹ The new knowledge was intended to help villagers begin to perceive injustice more clearly and to demand the entitled treatment stipulated in state policies.⁶⁰ The process of feeling injustice and empowerment is what McAdam calls “cognitive liberation.”⁶¹

Cognitive liberation may have encouraged some villagers to use a rights-based discourse.⁶² For example, some dam-affected villagers who participated in the above-mentioned UN Symposium on Hydropower and Sustainable Development, along with NGOs, submitted a symposium paper entitled “Comments on the Four Rights of Immigrants Affected by Dam Construction”⁶³ and another paper entitled “The Relationship between Dam Construction and the Rights of Original Inhabitants to Participation.”⁶⁴ Both papers emphasized the rights of dam-affected people, including the “four rights” that were delineated by the Central Party Committee in China.⁶⁵

Other rights-based approaches to environmental activism were observed in the 2000s. The emergence of online-led citizen mass protests suggests a willingness on the part of Chinese citizens to exercise their perceived rights to assemble and protest. In June 2007, the

central government enacted the Recommendation about Further Strengthening Petition Work in the New Period. Local officials are now evaluated in part on how well they can reduce the number of citizen petitions that are sent to the center. This may provide local officials more incentive to respond to citizen demands at the local level, while it may give citizens more leverage to exercise their perceived rights. Alternatively, this may lead local governments to suppress citizens' attempts to express demands.

Environmental public interest litigation has also entered into China's academic and popular discourses. As witnessed in the civil rights movement in the United States, courts can be an active agent for social change. However, the lack of an independent judiciary in China makes it difficult for Chinese courts to function as such agents.

Although Chinese citizens may appeal to administrative mechanisms, such as letters and visits, to enforce environmental laws and regulations, some now want the courts to protect their rights. According to a 2008 Xinhua news article, there were 4,453 pollution compensation cases⁶⁶ in 2004. There are no official government statistics on civil environmental lawsuits.⁶⁷

Since 2001, the Beijing-based Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims (CLAPV), an environmental NGO, has been providing pollution victims free legal consultations and assisting them in bringing civil environmental lawsuits. Pollution victims tend to be rural citizens who are often unaware of their rights and do not know how to use the court system.⁶⁸ The NGO also provides lawyers and judges with a free week of training on environmental litigation in exchange for at least one pro bono environmental case in the future. However, environmental litigation is still new to the Chinese legal profession,⁶⁹ and some lawyers may be reluctant to oppose powerful polluters fearing they may become a target of intimidation and harassment.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

This paper examined key examples of contemporary environmental activism that Chinese environmental NGOs and Chinese citizens have engaged in since the mid-1990s to date in order to assess the legitimacy of environmental activism and organizations, alliance-making, and the development of rights-based environmental discourses and activism in China.

Chinese environmental activism was initially led by domestic NGOs whose leaders had political connections, an entrepreneurial mindset, and the cultural capital to negotiate with the state and donors. Such leaders include FON's Liang Conjie and GVB's Liao Xiaoyi. Their NGOs engaged in areas of activism that did not conflict with the interests of the central government.⁷¹ As their number, size, and years of experience have increased in certain issue areas, citizen environmental groups in China have gained legitimacy from Chinese policy and political elites and western donors. Evidence of this includes their over-representation among registered NGOs. Newer environmental NGOs have shifted their focus to more politically sensitive issues, such as anti-dam campaigns and advocacy for pollution victims. They have also begun forming alliances more horizontally by capitalizing on the commonalities of their claims, as observed in the case of Nu River anti-dam activism. By so doing, activists have begun reaching out to often marginalized populations in China, especially dam-affected people and pollution victims, to help them to understand and exercise their rights.

The forms of environmental activism have also become diversified. Notable examples include online-led mass protests and civil environmental litigation. As online activism easily mobilizes citizens, sometimes on a great scale, it may significantly affect state-society

relations in the future, at least within cities.

What do the recent developments in environmental activism tell us about the status of state-society relations in China? As Mertha argues, there is evidence for the emergence of political pluralism in China and the state's willingness to let citizens influence policy decision-making at the local level.⁷² This sometimes invites resistance and retaliation from local governments. One thing seems sure: environmental activism has helped citizens to make claims based on their rights and offered them a means to public participation under the authoritarian context.

NOTES

1. See Guobin Yang, "Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China," *The China Quarterly* 181 (2005): 46-66; and Peter Ho and Eduard B. Vermeer, *China's Limits to Growth: Prospects for Greening State and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).
2. Michael J. Hathaway, "Emergence of Indigeneity: Public Intellectuals and an Indigenous Space in Southwest China," *Cultural Anthropology* 25 no. 2 (May 2010): 301-33.
3. Setsuko Matsuzawa, "Horizontal Dynamics in Transnational Activism: The Case of Nu River Anti-dam Activism in China," *Mobilization: The International Quarterly Review of Social Movement Research* 16 no. 3 (2011): 369-87.
4. Tony Saich, "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China," *The China Quarterly* 161 (2000): 124-41.
5. Peter Ho, "Greening Without Conflict? Environmentalism, NGOs and Civil Society in China," *Development and Change* 32 (2001): 893-921.
6. See Mary E. Gallagher, "China: The Limits of Civil Society in a Late Leninist State," in *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 419-54; and Bruce J. Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
7. See Yongshun Cai, "Disruptive Collective Action in the Reform Era," in *Popular Protest in China*, ed. Kevin O'Brien (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 163-78; William Hurst, "Understanding Contentious Collective Action by Chinese Laid-off Workers: The Importance of Regional Political Economy," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 39 no. 2 (2004): 94-120; Jun Jing, "Environmental Protests in Rural China," in *Chinese Society, 3rd Edition: Change, Conflict, and Resistance*, ed. Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden (New York: Routledge, 2010), 197-214; Ching Kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Andrew C. Mertha, *China's Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008); Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and David Zweig, "To the Courts or to the Barricades: Can New Political Institutions Manage Rural Conflict?" in *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict, and Resistance*, ed. Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden (New York: Routledge, 2010), 123-47.
8. These *China Environmental Statistic Report* figures are cited in Arthur P. J. Mol and N.T. Carter, "China's Environmental Governance in Transition," *Environmental Politics* 15 no. 2 (2006): 149-70, 161.
9. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).
10. See Richard Baum, "Beijing Recoils Under the Global Spotlight," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (April 2008).
11. In 2003, China ranked first in the world in the number of mobile phones and second in the number of Internet users. See Eric Harwit, "Spreading Telecommunications to Developing Areas in China: Telephones, the Internet and the Digital Divide," *The China Quarterly* 180 (2004): 1010-30.
12. Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
13. Christina Larson, "The New Epicenter of China's Discontent," *Foreign Policy*, August 23, 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/08/23/the_new_epicenter_of_china_s_discontent?page=0,1 (accessed Feb. 26, 2012).
14. Pierre Haski, "The Green Revolt of Xiamen Shocks Chinese Government," Rue 89 blog, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, June 6, 2007, <http://www.rue89.com/2007/06/06/the-green-revolt-of-xiamen-shocks-chinese-government> (accessed September 17, 2009).
15. Christina Larson, "The New Epicenter of China's Discontent"
16. See Kenneth Lieberthal and David M. Lampton, eds., *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, eds., *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
17. Abigail R. Jahiel, "Policy Implementation Through Organizational Learning: The Case of Water Pollution Control in China's Reforming Socialist System" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1994).
18. In 2008 the SEPA attained a new name, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, ten years after it was elevated to ministerial status.
19. Xiaoying Ma and Leonard Ortolano, *Environmental Regulation in China: Institutions, Enforcement, and Compliance* (Boulder, Colo.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

20. See Elizabeth Economy "Environmental Enforcement in China," in *China's Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*, ed. Kristen A. Day (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 102-20; Xiaoying Ma and Leonard Ortolano, *Environmental Regulation in China*; and Eric Zusman and Jennifer L. Turner, "Beyond the Bureaucracy: Changing China's Policymaking Environment," in *China's Environment and the Challenge of Sustainable Development*, 121-49.
21. See Arthur P. J. Mol and N.T. Carter, "China's Environmental Governance in Transition." Although Mol and Carter do not specify what they mean by quality, I assume that they refer to the level of education and training.
22. See Michael T. Rock, "Integrating Environmental and Economic Policy Making in China and Taiwan," *American Behavioral Scientist* 45 no. 9 (2002): 1435-55; and Elizabeth Economy, "Environmental Governance: the Emerging Economic Dimension," *Environmental Politics* 15 no. 2 (2006): 171-89.
23. See Elizabeth Economy, "Environmental Governance: the Emerging Economic Dimension"; and Jennifer L. Turner and Linden Ellis, "China's Growing Ecological Footprint," *The China Monitor* 16 (2007): 7-11.
24. Tony Saich, "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China."
25. According to an official from the Yunnan Provincial Civil Affairs Office, political and religious organizations do not serve the public interest. Interview, September 2003.
26. Anthony J. Spires, "Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs," *American Journal of Sociology* 117 no. 1 (2011): 1-45.
27. Samantha Keech-Mark, "Airing Dirty Laundry in Public: Anti-Domestic Violence Activism in Beijing," in *Associations and the Chinese State: Contested Spaces*, ed. Jonathan Unger (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 175-99.
28. Timothy Hildebrandt, "The Political Economy of Social Organization Registration in China," *The China Quarterly* 208 (2011): 970-89.
29. Anthony J. Spires, "Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs," 36.
30. Timothy Hildebrandt, "The Political Economy of Social Organization Registration in China."
31. Samantha Keech-Mark, "Airing Dirty Laundry in Public," 176.
32. Rita K. Noonan, "Women Against the State: Political Opportunities and Collective Action Frames in Chile's Transition to Democracy," *Sociological Forum* 10 no. 1 (1995): 81-111.
33. Setsuko Matsuzawa, "Horizontal Dynamics in Transnational Activism: The Case of Nu River Anti-dam Activism in China."
34. Elizabeth Economy, "Environmental Enforcement in China," 113.
35. Alastair Iain Johnston, "China and International Environmental Institutions: A Decision Rule Analysis," in *Energizing China: Reconciling Environmental Protection and Economic Growth*, ed. Michael B. McElroy, Chris P. Nielsen, and Peter Lydon (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 555-600.
36. Yet after China made a successful bid, the state decided to use paid international consultants rather than domestic environmental NGOs. See Timothy Hildebrandt and Jennifer L. Turner, "Green Activism?: Reassessing the Role of Environmental NGOs in China," 102.
37. Tony Saich, "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China."
38. Trish Saywell, "Green Focus: A Government Photographer Comes to the Rescue of Yunnan's Endangered Snub-nosed Monkey," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 29, 1998.
39. Interview, Xi Zhinong, July 2001.
40. I must point out that ground travel from Beijing to Yunnan and then to Deqin county was not an easy matter due to bad infrastructure at that time. Therefore, this event demonstrates a significant degree of student commitment and ability.
41. Interview, Xi Zhinong, July 2001.
42. Setsuko Matsuzawa, "Horizontal Dynamics in Transnational Activism: The Case of Nu River Anti-dam Activism in China."
43. Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*.
44. Xi expressed financial insecurities in a 2001 interview. Interview, Xi Zhinong, August 2001. Today, international donors fund projects, but not "core," i.e., organizational maintenance costs (e.g., salaries, overhead). See Timothy Hildebrandt and Jennifer L. Turner, "Green Activism?: Reassessing the Role of Environmental NGOs in China," in *State and Society Responses to Social Welfare Needs in China: Serving the People*, ed. Jonathan Schwartz and Shawn Shieh (New York: Routledge, 2009), 100. This policy affects the survival of many NGOs.
45. The Lisu ethnic minority is one of China's officially recognized 55 ethnic minority groups. They live in Nu River Lisu Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan, one of China's poorest minority autonomous areas.
46. Darrin Magee, "Powershed Politics: Yunnan Hydropower under Great Western Development," *The China Quarterly* 185 (2006): 23-41.
47. For more information, see "Three Parallel rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas," World Heritage, UNESCO, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1083>.
48. Jim Yardley, "Vast Dam Proposal is a Test for China," *The New York Times*, December 23, 2005.
49. Jim Yardley, "Vast Dam Proposal is a Test for China."
50. Junhui Li, "Position of Chinese Newspapers in Framing of Environmental Issues" (master's thesis, Wageningen University, 2005).
51. Jennifer L. Turner, "China's Energy Consumption and Opportunities for U.S.-China Cooperation to Address the Effects of China's Energy Use," Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, June 14, 2007.

52. Setsuko Matsuzawa, "Horizontal Dynamics in Transnational Activism: The Case of Nu River Anti-dam Activism in China."
53. Jim Yardley, "Vast Dam Proposal is a Test for China."
54. For a detailed discussion on the study tours, see Andrew C. Mertha, *China's Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change*.
55. Guobin Yang and Craig Calhoun, "Media, Civil Society, and the Rise of a Green Public Sphere in China," *China Information* 21 no. 2 (2007): 211-36.
56. Yanfei Sun and Dingxin Zhao, "Environmental Campaign," in *Popular Protest in China*, ed. Kevin O'Brien (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 144-62.
57. Interview, international NGO staff member. November 2004.
58. Interview, Green Watershed representative. November 2004.
59. Interview, international NGO representative. August 2004.
60. Interview, Green Watershed representative. August 2004.
61. Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).
62. I am not claiming that cognitive liberation has spurred rights-based activism. As Thaxton (2008) points out, understating injustice may be a historical process and may not be automatically translated into activism in rural China. See Ralph A. Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao's Great Leap Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
63. Quanzhao Ge, "The Relationship between Dam Construction and the Rights of Original Inhabitants to Participation," paper submitted at the UN Symposium on Hydropower and Sustainable Development, Beijing, October 27-29, 2004.
64. Yinsheng Zi, Shiguo Qi, Rujun Luo, and Meijun Su, "Comments on the Four Rights of Immigrants Affected by Dam Construction," paper submitted at the U.N. Symposium on Hydropower and Sustainable Development, Beijing, October 27-29, 2004.
65. Setsuko Matsuzawa, "Horizontal Dynamics in Transnational Activism: The Case of Nu River Anti-dam Activism in China."
66. The Xinhua News article does not specify whether these cases are civil or criminal. See http://news.xinhuanet.com/misc/2008-03/08/content_7746377.htm.
67. Rachel E. Stern, "From Dispute to Decision: Suing Polluters in China," *The China Quarterly* 206 (2011): 294-312.
68. Timothy Hildebrandt and Jennifer L. Turner, "Green Activism?: Reassessing the Role of Environmental NGOs in China," 96.
69. Rachel E. Stern, "On the Frontlines: Making Decisions in Chinese Civil Environmental Lawsuits," *Law and Policy* 32 no. 1 (2010): 79-103.
70. Human Rights Watch reports such incidents. See Human Rights Watch, *Walking on Thin Ice: Control, Intimidation and Harassment of Lawyers in China* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008).
71. Robert P. Weller, *Alternate Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999).
72. Andrew C. Mertha, *China's Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change*.

