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Notes from the Editors

This issue opens with an article by the 2012 Keynote Speaker at *ASIANetwork's* Annual Conference, which was co-hosted by Willamette University. Professor Wendy Larson of the University of Oregon's essay, "Chinese Culture on the Global Stage: Zhang Yimou and Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles," addresses the work of Chinese filmmaker, Zhang Yimou. Born in the 1950s, Zhang grew up when Mao Zedong's theory of "permanent revolution" was reaching its zenith. The revolutionary aesthetic of that world, of which Zhang is a prime example, created an emotionally coherent set of ideas and forms that were expressed idealistically, passionately, and with exuberance. This aesthetic tradition emphasized bright colors, sharp outlines, and striking poses. In literature, as well as in film, characters journeyed from bourgeois to revolutionary sensibilities. As one of the most famous of the 5th class of students to graduate from the Beijing Film Academy (and thus the "Fifth Generation"), Zhang both inherited and fought against these socialist film conventions. He sought to create instead a modern cinematic language that distanced itself from the thematically clear-cut socialist films, bringing in stylistic ambiguity, while also making use of their striking imagery and visual force.

This issue proceeds with two essays that grew out of the Spring 2012 "Half the World Symposium" at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, generously supported by The Henry Luce Foundation. Our continued focus on Asian environments was guest edited by Darrin Magee of HWS Colleges. The first piece, by Bahar Davary, examines environmental degradation (she uses the more forceful "ecological genocide") and human-nature relations by comparing Muslim and Christian history of science perspectives. On the one hand, this is a theoretical piece with a post-colonial critique of the nature-society rift. On the other, it is an empirical project in which Davary argues that certain traditional practices and places in Southeast Asia, namely *adat* in Western Sumatra and *keramat* in Malaysia, offer perspectives that may go far in bridging the nature-society divide that lies at the heart of the ongoing ecological crisis worldwide. The second piece, by Jack Hayes, throws water on the idea that fire is simply conflagration and disaster by examining the ways fire has been used in modern China as a tool for managing land, people, and economies. For Hayes, fire regimes vary with political ones over time and space. These inflammatory acts of the state reflect agricultural priorities just as well as they do concerns of inter-ethnic relations. We will continue to feature articles on Asian environments in the Spring 2013 issue.

An essay by Han Li continues on a theme we have been featuring as well. Reflecting on the experience of designing and teaching a course on material culture and Chinese gardens, she explores traditional philosophy, ethics, religion, painting, calligraphy, craft, literature, architecture, and horticulture to teach students to read classical Chinese gardens as microcosms of Chinese culture. This essay provides a detailed discussion not only of the organization and reading materials used in the course, but also a reflection on how students come to understand the key elements (rocks, water, plants, and architecture) in a Chinese garden. In addition, the essay considers how teachers may use Chinese gardens built in the United States to discuss the appropriation of "Chinese-ness" in different geographical, physical, and cultural environments.

Focusing on three influential contemporary Chinese political fantasy novels, Guo Wu's article, "Imagined Future in Chinese Novels at the Turn of the 21st century," contextualizes the stories in terms of contemporary Chinese political thought and interprets them in light of the rivaling tendencies among the Chinese intellectuals since the 1990s. In doing so, Wu's article exposes the complex relationship between rising nationalism and political authoritarianism, the possibilities of fascism and federalism, the role of a strong, centralized state, and the relevance of liberal democracy in China. The article emphasizes how important fiction has been in terms of expressing political thought and concerns, arguing that these novels present a pessimistic and chilling view of China's political future.

The issue concludes with two book reviews. The first, by Robert Montgomery, will be of particular interest to those seeking to integrate the territories and peoples of the former Soviet Union into the study of Asia. His review essay examines *The Ethnic History and the Traditions of Culture and Daily Life of the Peoples of the Baikal Region (2010)*. Laura Nenzi addresses a volume of interest to those teaching pre-modern Japanese history with a review of Constantine Nomikos Vaporis's *Voices of Early Modern Japan: Contemporary Accounts of Daily Life during the Age of the Shoguns (2012)*.

Erin McCarthy and Lisa Trivedi, Editors

With Darrin Magee, Guest Editor for articles on Asian Environments

Chinese Culture on the Global Stage: Zhang Yimou and *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*

Wendy Larson

Abstract: As opposed to Zhang Yimou's 张艺谋 much-criticized film *Hero* 《英雄》 (2002), which addresses the relationship between culture and political power, *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* 《千里走单骑》 (2005) asks the question of whether, under the conditions of globalization, any performance between cultures can contain truth value, be authentic, or represent something real. Although a key scene acted by Japanese star Ken Takakura effectively expresses his true despair and thus seems to indicate a positive response, Zhang Yimou persistently inserts into the film queries about the validity of performance across cultural and linguistic borders, and the complex trail of conflicting desires that motivate it. *Riding Alone* is one example of Zhang's complex filmic investigation into the relationship between culture and political power under the developing conditions of a border-crossing global world.

Keywords China; film; Zhang Yimou; nationalism

Wendy Larson is Professor of Modern Chinese Literature and Film at the University Oregon and Vice Provost of Portland Programs. She completed her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Literary Authority and the Chinese Writer: Ambivalence and Autobiography* (Duke University Press, 1991), *Women and Writing in Modern China* (Stanford University Press, 1998), and *From Ah Q to Lei Feng: Freud and Revolutionary Spirit in 20th Century China* (Stanford University Press 2009). She is currently working on a new monograph titled, *Zhang Yimou: Globalization and the Subject of Culture* (in progress). She was the Keynote Speaker at the 2012 ASIANetwork Conference in Portland, Oregon.

In his early career, Zhang Yimou's films—*Red Sorghum* 《红高粱》 (1987), *Judou* 《菊豆》 (1990), and *Raise High the Red Lantern* 《大红灯笼高高挂》 (1991) — positioned him as an influential interlocutor, launching Chinese cinema onto the global screen and capturing the attention of a world audience, especially those watching from the West. Yet it did not take long for Zhang to become suspicious about the value of identifying and displaying Chinese aesthetic, ideological, philosophical, and thematic elements in his films, and to question his previous strategy's efficacy in gaining space for Chinese culture on the global stage. Soon he moved away from his early assumptions and their colorful expressions of a troubled (and thus potentially modern) Chinese heritage, instead incorporating the question of cultural representation and its relationship to political power directly into the substance of his films.

Thus moving from adherent to skeptic, Zhang fashioned his later projects as theoretical inquiries regarding the demand—built into the nation-state political structure—that native culture in the broad sense be identified and “performed” (Penrose 1995). Zhang's later films suggest that relationships which determine who performs for whom, and the realities of who influences versus who is influenced, establish a hidden hierarchy. Despite ongoing globalization, Zhang implies, this pecking order is nationally based and ultimately allows the cultures and languages of politically stronger nations to flourish. Thus, although hope for recognition as equals among the world's great cultures sustains a tremendous investment of funds and energy in China, parity seems impossible to reach, even with modifications designed to make China's cultural products more approachable to foreigners. Also, when performed on the global stage, national, regional, or local culture is inevitably mediated and reworked, and therefore sacrifices immediacy, directness, and authenticity, losing reality for



Figure 1: Zhang Yimou

the native viewer while simultaneously failing in its task of representing something real for the world audience.

While Zhang's films are strong indictments of the cultural promise built into the nation-state political form, his work also makes other implications relevant to the global/national debate. First, he affirms the contemporary significance of national over ethnic culture in the global struggle for representation, connecting "Chineseness" with its political body. In other words, Zhang's films suggest that without an organized form of governing power through which it can work, any culture stands little chance of gaining breathing room on the global stage. Second, he implies that should the cosmopolitan peace or post-national rational world society imagined by proponents of globalization ever be realized, only the most powerful nations will have the resources to establish and manage global governance and culture. In this regard, Zhang becomes a skeptic of pro-globalization theories or, minimally, a transformationalist who recognizes that the nation-state—with its marked boundaries, identifiable culture, and relative wealth or poverty—plays a crucial role in what will survive as globalizing forces intensify (Hay & Marsh 2000; Martell 2007). Zhang argues against those who imagine that liberatory subjectivities and collective experiences based on equality and democracy will be expressed in and through media, film, and other exchanged cultural forms in a globalized world (Appadurai 1999; Bhabba 2003; Beck 2006). Zhang's films throw a wrench into this utopian dream by implying that should the nation-state undergo radical change, whatever form the new model of globalization takes, politically strong nations will be most able to ensure the continuation of their cultures and languages.

Through his filmic work, Zhang reaches two conclusions that have to do with China. First, that the only way to guarantee the survival of Chinese culture—that is, both readily identifiable forms such as language, aesthetic expression, and other traditions, as well as the more subtle habits and patterns of daily life—is to make sure that a strong political entity is actively defending it. And second, that the implicit promise of the nation-state political form—the "family of nations" model, which implies that performance of a distinct culture will gain recognition from the powerful—will do nothing to prevent the erosion of Chinese

ways of life and their gradual replacement with a universalized model based primarily on Western ideals, customs, and languages. While his work brings him to the position that in the present world, the nation-state is the only entity capable of organizing and supporting Chinese cultural representation in a comprehensive way, his perspective is not simply one of cultural nationalism or the promotion of unthinking patriotism, although he is often accused of both of these attitudes. Rather, it is the result of Zhang's extensive creative investigation that he ends up believing that without a powerful nation-state, Chinese culture will have no way to guarantee its survival; and like so many cultures, languages, and societies in the so-called global world, will slowly be eroded by more powerful entities.

Since the late Qing dynasty, the position of China vis-à-vis the militarily, economically, politically, and culturally powerful West has been a key debate. Zhang Zhidong's 张之洞 (1837-1908) formula, "Chinese learning as substance, Western learning as application," 中学为体, 西学为用 promoted in his 1898 book, *Exhortation to Study* 《劝学篇》, was an early and influential theory that imagined the crystallization of a Chinese cultural core. The Constant Learning School 学恒派 argued in favor of national essence and a later neo-Confucian movement promoted a return to Confucian social values and structures as the basis of Chinese society. Even though globalization progresses unabated, filmmakers and writers have continued to grapple with the meaning and position of Chinese culture within the global nation-state system. Zhang started his career promoting "Chineseness" to the world audience, but his recent work instead takes the position that the future belongs to nations that successfully engage in a struggle for political strength, resources, and alliances which will solidify their global position. Should a utopian global world ever emerge, those nations will be able to determine its shape, content, and cultural foundation. Contemporary nations must be prepared for the time when globalization begins to eliminate even relatively powerful languages and cultures. Although only political, economic, and military strength will push the nation forward when globalization reaches its zenith, the nation must have a strong culture that it can present as one option for the world.

The local-national-global quandary of culture is not limited to China, Asia, or the Third World. As early as the 1820s, Dmitry Venevitinov argued that Russian national culture could not be built with external forms imported from the West, and Ivan Kireesky claimed that only expression of local thought and life could attract the rest of the world to Russian literature. The dispute between Slavophiles and Westerners that structured Dostoyevsky's fiction in the mid 19th century continues into the 21st (Rabow-Edling 2006). In 2003, Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida proposed that Europe unite around a set of fundamental European values, beliefs, tendencies, and qualities that would distinguish it from other nations, in particular the United States (Kumar 2008). This manifesto was viewed by many as an attempt to erase the small nations of Europe by a powerful cohort made up of Germany and France, a forced unification and the creation of a new intellectual and cultural nation-state called "Europe." Habermas and Derrida may have imagined this strategy to be the only possibility for gaining a cultural influence as strong as that of America, and their methodology implicitly recognizes that so-called national culture must pick and choose among hundreds of possibilities, excluding most. Such a strong proclamation on behalf of cultural similitude for the European Union indicates that despite increasing interest in the 'de-nationalization' that popular terms such as global, cosmopolitanization/cosmopol, hybrid, border-crossing, transnational, global multicultural, and the third space indicate, the value of conceptualizing unique group-based cultural approaches and a fundamental essence with territorial boundaries has not disappeared (Larson 2008, 194).

Some Chinese filmmakers have accepted the model of national cultural competition,

promoting typical Chinese qualities, philosophies, and aesthetic ideas that they believe can stand up to the pressure on the world stage. For example, Tsui Hark 徐克, in his 6-part series *Once Upon a Time in China* 《黄飞鸿》, insistently proclaims the value and richness of Chinese culture in comparison to the West, especially its medical traditions, vibrant social life, philosophical heritage, and morality (Larson, 2012). Zhang Yimou tried this approach in his early films, but his later work testifies to his disappointment with it. Although he is often regarded as a sell-out to commercialism, a self-Orientalizer, and an admirer of totalitarianism, I argue that Zhang's work is best understood as a frank and long-term investigation into the relationship between culture and political power under the conditions of a developing global world or as a theory of culture. Below, I analyze Zhang's film, *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* 《千里走单骑》 (2005) as one example of his intense interest in the meaning of cultural performance on the global stage.

RIDING ALONE FOR THOUSANDS OF MILES

Although *Hero* (2002) and the 2008 Olympics opening and closing ceremonies left no doubt about Zhang's position on the pragmatic importance of power, *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* is also a significant contribution to his career-long investigation into the performance of culture. Starring Japanese action actor Ken Takakura, who plays an uncharacteristically introverted Japanese fisherman, the film uses contrasting images of China and Japan to contextualize China as a land of immense natural beauty, while Japan remains shrouded in gray.

At first it seems that Zhang may be suggesting that genuine human vitality has been lost



Figure 2: Chinese Lijiang landscape

in Japan, but can be found in China. The plot seems to confirm this perspective, as the fisherman, Gouichi Takata, is alienated from his son Kenichi. After Kenichi comes down with a mortal illness, his father learns that more than anything, his son enjoyed travelling to China to see local opera in Yunnan province. The audience, along with Takata, is led to believe that Kenichi had many friends in China, and was a strong admirer of this form of opera.

What unfolds, however, is hardly a straightforward description of a native cultural performance appreciated and understood by a foreigner, or of cultural vitality in foreign lands. Although he has not spoken to his son in years, Takata takes off to China to film a performance by one of Kenichi's favorite actors, Li Jiamin. According to his son's wife, Rei, this is something Kenichi regrets not being able to do himself. Thus motivated by his son's deathbed wish, Takata begins a quixotic journey. He soon learns that Li Jiamin is in prison for stabbing a man who called his son a bastard. Takata approaches the officials in charge to

Figure 3: Japanese landscape



request permission to film Li performing in prison, but he is turned down. He finally gains approval, but only through a mediated performance of his own. Takata and his translator, Lingo, have worked together to record an emotional plea, and while Lingo plays it for authorities on a television screen, he adds translation and props. When he finally makes it into the prison, however, Takata is disappointed that instead of performing opera as he agreed to do, Li begins to blubber on stage. A mirror-like situation reflects Takata's broken relationship with Kenichi back to him as he understands that Li has not seen his own son for 7 years and misses him deeply. Thus he is too sad to perform for his foreign visitor.

Takata's second journey, to find Li's son Yangyang, also brings confusing results. Not only is Yangyang so uninterested in seeing his father that he runs off into the picturesque hills to avoid it, but the villagers also protest, claiming that Li Jiamin has never shown any interest in the boy, either before or after he went to prison. Village leaders agree to go along with Takata's plan to take the child to see his father. Their change of heart is not, however, for Li Jiamin's benefit, but in order to further "international friendship." They hold a banquet for Takata with the entire village in attendance. Takata steps aside to take a call from daughter-in-law Rei, who admits that she has told Kenichi about his father's trip to China. She insists that Kenichi, who refused to see his father when Takata came to the hospital, is touched, and called the trip the nicest thing his father had ever done for him. In a voiceover, however, we learn that Takata is not sure whether to believe Rei or not. What he believes is that the villagers, total strangers, have generously held a banquet for him. While that may be

Figure 4: Villagers at banquet



true, Zhang's filming angle highlights a long table with most of the villagers far away from Takata, leading the viewer to wonder if Takata's presence is nothing more than an excuse for revelry.

Meanwhile and to his great surprise, Takata learns from Rei that Kenichi never really cared that much about the local opera, nor did he truly admire Li Jiamin. Rather, too polite to admit his lack of interest, Kenichi also was operating under the dictates of international friendship when he tried to film the opera and insisted that he admired Li Jiamin. If true, this information undercuts the logic of Takata's trip to China, which was to film a performance that his dying son wanted to see. Rei begs Takata to return to Japan, implying that Kenichi has little time left.

None of this information, however, changes Takata's plans. Although Kenichi dies before he does so, Takata succeeds in reuniting Li Jiamin and Yangyang, not with a one-on-one meeting, but via his filming of the child, which he shows to the father. And although Kenichi is now dead, Takata goes ahead and records Li Jiamin's performance in the prison. Takata's success in inspiring fatherly feelings in Li Jiamin appears to substitute for what he can no longer accomplish in Japan, turning the film into a celebration of universal human attachment, as Zhang Weiping 张伟平 describes: "The film narrates an emotional topic common to all people, it transcends national boundaries and politics" (Zhu Jie 朱洁, 151).

Yet although there are warm scenes and human successes in the film, many aspects point to the director's ongoing investigation into the meaning of performed culture in a global environment, and to his harsh judgment about the efficacy or authenticity of cultural performance. As for Kenichi's life in China, Takata learns that it was not what he imagined. Jasmine, one of his translators, informs him that as far as she understands, Kenichi had no friends and spent most of his time staring off into space. Rei, Kenichi's wife, also bursts Takata's bubble about his son's appreciation of the performance by Li Jiamin. Although Rei tells Takata that Kenichi is touched by his efforts, her mission of bringing father and son together one more time, even at the cost of the truth, drives her narration. Takata has good reason to suspect that the change of heart in Kenichi is most likely a fabrication by Rei.

The director's focus on strategic, rather than truthful, communication and performance extends throughout other areas of the film. The villagers regard Li Jiamin's outpouring of emotion as nothing more than performance. They are suspicious of his newfound interest in his son and for that reason, initially refuse to acquiesce to Takata's request. Nor does Yangyang want to see his father. The authorities in charge of deciding whether or not Takata can film in the prison quickly expose the nearly complete lack of Japanese language skills in Lingo, a sympathetic but opportunistic translator who takes over when Jasmine, realizing that the negotiations are a nightmare, takes her leave. Translation problems throughout the film highlight the space between native and outsider understanding of local culture, customs, and behavior.

By emphasizing the ambivalent nature of performance, Zhang Yimou shows that although it may be effective in producing and transmitting emotions, its authenticity or truth value is almost always suspect. One key moment in the film comes as Takata, desperate to gain the cooperation of the authorities, concocts a performance of his own, the recorded plea for help to which I earlier referred. In the official's office where he goes to make his case, Takata notices colorful banners on the wall, and learns from Lingo that they are expressions of gratitude. When he fails to interest the authorities in charge of approving a prison visit, he has his own banners made. In an expressive plea that ends in silent tears, he shows his own banners, which thank the authorities for the help he anticipates they will provide. Lingo translates and narrates as the officials watch, holding up banners to comple-

ment those that Takata shows on the screen.

The officials judge the performance to be genuine and grant Takata's request. Yet they

Figure 5: Takata's videotaped plea with Lingo in person



have no knowledge of the complexity of the situation, which has by now become apparent to the viewer through the ongoing phone conversations between Rei and Takata, as well as through Takata's voiceover musings. Ironically, the mediated performance on film has impressed the authorities more than meeting with Takata face-to-face. This suggests that in terms of expressing emotion, performance, especially if mediated through the distancing lens of film or television, may be more effective than communication in person. At the same time, however, an emotionally effective performance does not guarantee that the affected audience will understand the issues behind what is presented on the screen.

Zhang Yimou's interest in performance also is indicated in his choice of title for the film. *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* refers to a story in the *Three Kingdoms*, which describes the history of the century toward the end of and following the Han dynasty, beginning roughly in 180 AD. The story "Riding Alone" relates Guan Yu's attempt to reunite with his sworn brother and leader Liu Bei, in which Guan Yu "traveled through five valleys and killed six generals" (五关斩六将). Scholars recognize that this part of the *Three Kingdoms* is a fabrication, for there is no historical record of Guan Yu actually having traveled through five valleys (impossible considering his destination) or killing five generals (Lu 2007). Nonetheless, the story is a foundational tale of Chinese culture, exhibiting the values of emotional intensity and loyalty. The implication is that a riveting performance—this time, through a textual narrative—can inspire emotions that may drive beliefs, behavior, and ideology. But in terms of the "facts" it presents, it also may be fundamentally wrong.

Issues of performance and authenticity also came to the fore outside the film, when the actors who acted in the opera performance at the jail protested that the film misrepresented local culture.

Whereas Zhang Yimou originally had planned on using Guansuo Opera from the Chengjiang area of Yunnan (Chengjiang guansuo xi 澄江关索戏), the film's music director, Guo Wenjing 郭文景, at the last minute decided Guansuo Opera would not show well on the stage, and instead used Anshun Local Opera, (Anshun dixi 安顺地戏) from Guizhou province. However, promotional materials for the film continued to play up the opera as in the Yunnan Chengjiang Guansuo style, and posters touted the mystery and beauty of Yunnan in the opera, including its costumes and masks. The success of the film, with its Japanese star, Ken Takakura, and its renowned director, Zhang Yimou, brought fans to Yun-



Figure 6: Opera actors on stage with other prisoners

nan to see Chengjiang Guansuo Opera instead of what was actually performed, with credit going to the wealthier and more famous Yunnan province instead of its relatively impoverished neighbor, Guizhou province. To make things more complicated, the actor who plays Li Jiamin in the film is an actual Yunnan Opera performer in real life, but the masked actor performing on stage at the jail in the film is a different person: Zhan Xueyan 詹学彦, an Anshun Local Opera actor. Those acting with him in prison garb are also Anshun Local Opera actors.

When the opera actors learned that their performance was advertised as Guansuo Opera instead of Anshun Local Opera, they felt betrayed. They argued that the soul of culture is in transmission, and ethnicities survive only through culture. Demanding an apology, they claimed legal protection under the “Law to Protect the Transmission and Management of National-Level Non-Material Culture” 《国家级非物质文化遗产保护与管理暂行办法》 Line 21, which states: “The use of national level non-material cultural heritage items in order to carry out artistic creation, product development, travel activities, etc, should respect the original form and cultural content, and prevent misuse and misappropriation.” What ensued was a “cultural battle,” online and in print, in Guizhou and Yunnan, about the proper attribution of the film and the way the actors were used (Wang 2007; Zhang 2006). Although they did not succeed in their suit, this real-life debate mimics the query into cultural representation, performance, and authenticity that the film vigorously undertakes.

As his film *Qiuju Goes to Court* 《秋菊打官司》 (1992) indicates, Zhang Yimou believes that culture is not static, but a dynamic process that exists under an overlay of laws and regulations. As opposed to *Hero*, *Riding Alone* investigates not the power of culture to perform, or to accomplish what it should on the global stage, but rather whether or not any performance—especially a performance where the audience and performers are separated by different cultures and languages—can contain truth value, be authentic, or represent something real. Through persistently raising questions and doubts in the narrative and visual presentation of the film, Zhang Yimou forces us to closely examine the validity of the endeavor and the complex trail of conflicting desires that motivate it.

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Islam and Ecology: Southeast Asia, Adat, and the Essence of *Keramat*

Bahar Davary

Abstract: The gradual “ecological genocide” of our times demands not only a transnational critical investigation but an ecumenical and interreligious query as well. In this paper, I will juxtapose the views of Lynn White (Christian) and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Muslim) with respect to nature and religion. What the two share is the analysis that the rift between culture (Western ethos) and nature is the cause of the environmental crisis. By way of reference to Malay *adat*, and the example of *keramat*, this paper argues that the key component for the establishment of a harmonious ethos cannot be maintained without reenvisioning the sacred in nature. Within the context of South East Asia, the example of the Minanagkabau can serve as a model in which culture is shaped by nature. It is based on relationships that are neither anthropocentric nor androcentric, one that is not based on dominion but on fostering nature-human-divine relationships.

Keywords Ecology; Islam; Ethics; Christianity; Culture; Malay; *adat*; *keramat*; anthropocentrism; androcentrism

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades there has been a surge in literary and critical environmental works in academia. This surge has produced a variety of environmentalisms, leading to the “Greening of Humanities.” At the same time, Rob Nixon has pertinently observed that the rise of various environmentalisms in the humanities has been suffering from an “unself-conscious parochialism,”¹ in that it is heavily Euro-American. There has been little mention or recognition of those who are engaged in the struggle in the rest of the world, and who often risk their lives or livelihoods in protecting the devastation of their environment and its resources by standing up to corporations.² While the flourishing of ecocriticism in academia goes back at least two decades, exploring literature and the environment from a post-colonial perspective is a novel, yet rapidly emerging field.³ One of the main goals of post-colonial theory and this paper is opening a space for voices that have been previously silenced by dominant ideologies.⁴

Particular forms of human relationships and control of power and production continue to bear harmful ecological effects. Historically, colonial incursions have had severe environmental consequences, including appropriation of natural resources such as wildlife, forests, minerals, and land, by both companies and settlers.⁵ If, in the fifteenth-century, Madeira was set on fire for seven years to clear its densely wooded landscape for settlers, more recently the landscape of South East Asia has been blazed and drastically severed, especially since the 1970s. In the early sixteenth century the colonial powers often announced their arrival by symbolically striking trees or cutting branches, everywhere from the Americas to the jungles of Aceh,⁶ with the aim of dominating the lucrative spice, sugar, and oil trades,

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along with other resources. The most longstanding legacy of colonialism, however, is not its material but its discursive effects; it is not its overt violence, but its covert cultural, intellectual, and religious assumptions that still remain in force today.⁷ The colonial mentality which sees the colonized as inferior people with inferior cultures has resulted, among other things, in the use of the knowledge of the colonized to serve the interests of the colonizers. It is this discursive effect that has heavily amplified the suffering of nature, women, and the poor, and is the subject of criticism by liberation theologians and ecofeminists. Consistent with this theory, Sallie McFague refers to the colonizing attitude as the “arrogant gaze” of colonialism that needs to be transformed into a “loving gaze.”⁸ It is with a similar methodology that the noted Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff binds the fate of the rain forests of his native Brazil with the fate of the Indians and the poor of the land in his book, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Christian liberation theology considers violence against nature and the poor as a symptom that should warn the first world of a sickness at the heart of Western culture.⁹ What Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo refer to as “sickness” is identified and elaborated on in the works of Lynn White Jr. and Seyyed Hossein Nasr in their reflections on religion and nature and human-divine-nature relations, with the focus not on the poor but rather on the loss of the sense of the sacred.

This paper argues that the two historians of science, one from a Muslim and the other from a Christian perspective, share the analysis that the rift between culture (Western ethos) and nature and the loss of the sense of the sacred are the cause of the environmental crisis. By way of reference to Malay *adat* (ethos), and the example of *keramat* appropriation, the paper argues that the establishment of a harmonious society cannot be maintained without reenvisioning the sacred in nature¹⁰ as well as in culture. Based on the premise that environmental degradation is not a resource problem but an attitude problem,¹¹ it is important to return to the innate wisdom that informs us of our primordial harmony with the natural world. This primordial harmony is at the heart of several religious traditions.

The field of social ecology, which grew as a subfield of evolutionary psychology, has also established that we humans have an affinity with our natural environment. It affirms that human separation from nature has health (both mental and physical) as well as intellectual perils for us. Edward Wilson, who coined the term, defines biophilia¹² as “the urge to affiliate with other forms of life.”¹³ His hypothesis emphasizes the bond between humans and the natural world, and other forms of beings. It implies that we are biophilic, i.e., we are in equilibrium in natural environments because of a basic human need to be in contact with nature. It is this basic need that causes an instinctive reaction of connectedness with the landscape every time we see the sun rise, watch the sun set, or even when we feel a soft breeze. In environmental studies and architecture, biophilic design aims to reestablish the lost connection between the natural world and us as an attempt to fill the gap resulting from expanding urban lifestyle.¹⁴ Biophilic design was an ancient architectural tradition in various Muslim cultures until the early twentieth century, when the local traditional models were replaced with modern architecture in many places.¹⁵

PARADISE LOST

Rapid industrialization and development in South East Asia threatens to destroy its biodiversity within the next few decades. Environmental problems, such as the illegal sand trade for land reclamation in Singapore,¹⁶ heavy oil palm plantations (with neglect and disregard for the killing and misplacement of orangutans,¹⁷ elephants, and tigers), conversion of forested areas into massive rice fields, commercial and illegal logging,¹⁸ the failure to establish sustainable agriculture, pit mining for coal, and heavy metal mining¹⁹ across

Southeast Asia are the main causes of this threat.²⁰ Foreignaid “experts” are hard at work to turn most of these islands into a giant plantation area for oil palms, rubber, pines, and tapioca.²¹

Taking advantage of the poor environmental regulations in those parts of the world, corporations not only seize their resources but also use them as dumping grounds for toxic waste. The most recent case in Kuantan, Malaysia is the Australian corporation Lynas, which managed to set up a rare earth processing plant despite local protests. The plant will potentially impose tons of toxic waste onto the region.²² Other companies, such as Cargill and April, are rather savvy about greenwashing.²³ According to conservation biologists, the rate and scale of industrial forest clearing in Sumatra by palm oil plantations and big pulp and paper producers is as daunting as an “ecological Armageddon.”²⁴ Repeatedly, state or local governors resist the efforts to protect the rainforest and give in to the big companies, because logging provides the state great revenue.²⁵

The outsourcing of environmental crises, along with “resource imperialism,”²⁶ has given rise to a resurgent “environmentalism of the poor,” i.e. the resistance by impoverished communities against the assaults on the ecosystem by transnational corporations, the military, and civilian and corporate elites.²⁷ The struggle of the Dayak of Borneo against palm oil monoculture and the efforts of farmers of Riau and Palau Padang, Sumatra are not only a struggle over resources, but also a challenge to maintain a way of life. The situation in these places has set up a tragic tale of resistance and survival that can be witnessed in villages across Indonesia.²⁸ The environmental travesties cause anger and desperation among the villagers who lose their land to company concession.²⁹ In his award-winning novel, *This Earth of Mankind*, Pramoedya Ananta Toer depicts this anger and grief, while simultaneously reflecting on the oppression of colonialism.³⁰ Munif’s *Cities of Salt*, the story of a desert oasis disrupted by the arrival of western oil companies, presents an image not so different from the stories of the Buru Quartet, the disrupted villages in Toer’s island of Java, or Saro-Wiwa’s Niger Delta that had suffered “the equivalent of an Exxon Valdez-size oil spill every year for nearly half a century.”³¹ What the cases discussed in these books share is a reflection on and protest against the attritional environmental damage that deems nature and the people of the land disposable. According to Guha and Martinez-Alier, this has led to a “full stomach” and “empty belly” dichotomy in environmentalisms³² and it is the relation between the two that will shape the future of the biosphere and the environment.³³

THE GREATEST RADICAL IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY AFTER CHRIST

If there is truth to the Hindu doctrine of the four human cycles, we are currently in the Kali-Yuga or “dark age” period, writes Rene Guenon. This period is known as the time of inaccessibility of the supra-human wisdom.³⁴ Something has been lost everywhere,³⁵ Guenon writes, and hence the crisis of the modern world.³⁶ Science at the service of industry has brought about development of machinery seeking to dominate matter, yet it has only led to human enslavement to the machine.³⁷ Reflecting on the greed and encroachment of Western civilization on other people and their resources, what Guenon deplors most is what he calls the poisoning of their minds and their spirituality.³⁸

The need for a return to spirituality and prophetic wisdom is at the heart of Lynn White’s seminal essay. If Guenon has found the cause of the crisis in modernity, White’s search for the historical roots of our ecological crisis took him back to the Christian Middle Ages. His research on the effects of technological invention led him to believe that technological and scientific movements began not in the 18th century, but in the Middle Ages,³⁹ that they achieved world dominance in that period,⁴⁰ and that they are distinctively Occidental.⁴¹ He

came to believe that the fundamental medieval assumptions established not only “a dualism of man and nature” but that the theologians of the time, figures such as Tertullian and Saint Irenaeus, insisted that “it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper end.”⁴² It was at that time, he claims, that humanity moved from man as part of nature to man as exploiter of nature.⁴³ Animism was deemed a pagan practice, and the whole concept of the sacred grove became alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West. White rejects the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man, and that man is the rightful master over nature,⁴⁴ and instead suggests an alternative Christian interpretation. That alternative voice, according to White, is none other than “the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ: Saint Francis of Assisi.” Reminding us of the radical virtues of the prophets, White emphasizes that what humanity lacks is “humility as a species,” hinting at the idea that humility is incongruent with individualism and with the basic tenets of modern democracy. Michael Northcott points out the contradiction in the Church’s perception “that democracy is essentially Christian, even when modern democracy ... is increasingly identified with the completely unchristian idea that the chief end of people is to be free from the needs and demands of other people, and in particular free to consume.”⁴⁵ This idea leaves out the Christian notion that not only humans, but all animate and inanimate beings have been designed to glorify their transcendent creator,⁴⁶ and are co-created and thereby joined in a unity of beings.

Human ecology is deeply conditioned by our understanding of nature and our destiny, issues that are fundamental to religious discourse. Religion as a reservoir of ethical code and conduct for many has much to offer in the conversation about ecology. As such, it is essential to understand and interpret the role that religious thought plays in today’s environmental crisis. General statements found in support of environmental sustainability suggest that Islam forbids overuse of natural resources even as it encourages agriculture. Planting a tree, sowing a seed, and cultivating a wasteland are considered reward-worthy actions. Islamic sources prescribe the prevention of pollution, enforcement of cleanliness, and respect for animals, plants, and water, which it considers worthy of protection.

GREEN PROPHET

The Prophet of Islam is at times referred to as a “green Prophet,” an “environmentalist *avant la lettre*”⁴⁷ because he sought to maintain a harmonious balance between human and nature. He is quoted as saying: “When doomsday comes, if someone has a palm shoot in his hand, he should plant it.” At the same time, he advises prudence and frugality in the use of water, “even if one is standing on a flowing river.” He considered it a sin to withhold water from one who is thirsty. The concepts of *hurmah* (*harim* and *hima*) are protective measures for the earth. To protect land, forests, and wildlife, “the Prophet created inviolable zones known as *hima* and *haram*, in which resources were to be left untouched. Both are still in use today: *haram* areas are often drawn up around wells and water sources to protect the groundwater table from over pumping. *Hima* applies particularly to wildlife and forestry and usually designates an area of land where grazing and woodcutting are restricted, or where certain animal species are protected.”⁴⁸

The Faithful servants of the beneficent are those who tread upon the earth lightly (*Qur’an*, 25:63). The Islamic primary code of ethics is drawn from the Quran and the *sun-nah* (tradition of the Prophet) interwoven with *adab* or social mores taught in the works of literature, both poetry and prose. The Qur’an makes references to the sanctity of nature and of all animal species. It specifically declares that all beings, the heavens, and the earth, glorify God (*Qur’an*, 17:44). All Islamic schools of law have set out guidelines for the proper

treatment of animals and plants as well as natural resources. A simple example can be found in the edict that polluting the water is a sin according to the *shari'ah*.

Other broad concepts such as justice “*adl*” kindness “*Ihsan*”, and balance “*mizan*” are important points to be considered in the discourse on Islam and conservation, sustainable development, and resource management. The Qur’an prohibits wastefulness: “... waste not” it declares, “for Allah loveth not the wasters” (Quran: 7:31). In fact, wastefulness is synonymous with ungratefulness, and the term used for ungratefulness in most Muslim languages has been *kufri*; i.e. disbelief.

Theoretically there can be much found within the sources of Islam that respects the natural world and maintains its sanctity. Muslim scholars of the 10th and 12th century perceived individual happiness and virtue as premised upon quality of interaction with the society and on a life of association.⁴⁹ Yet, as Mawil Izzi Dien observes, the majority of Muslim countries around the world are “witnessing a cultural environmental rupture.”⁵⁰ The rapid introduction of industry into these countries without a supporting value system compatible with Islamic values is cited as the main reason for this breach. In Islam, an acceptance of what is legal and what is ethical has not involved the same processes as in cultures that base their laws on humanistic philosophies.⁵¹ Ethical conduct which involves the well-being of the created world – and its relation with the creator – has been the central theme of Islamic thought and action for centuries; however, the contemporary study of Islam has afforded little attention to the theme of ethics, and to environmental ethics.

Both Christianity and Islam emphasize the idea that the book of nature (cosmos) and the book of God are to be read side by side in order to reveal to us the inner meaning of creation.⁵² The Qur’an repeatedly invites us to look into ourselves and to the heavens and the cosmos for reflection. In fact, Muslim scholars have come to call creation *al-Qur’an al-takwini*. Islamic theology, however, has not escaped charges of anthropocentrism and utilitarianism when it comes to its relation with nature. Some trace back “the genesis of Islamic humanism to the metaphysical notion of man as God-like, which has held sway among Muslim thinkers for generations.”⁵³ Some have taken this view to be a blind spot in modern Muslim thinkers like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Seyyed Qutb, Muhammad ‘Abduh, Muhammad Iqbal, and Ali Shari’ati.⁵⁴ These Muslim revivalists’ overemphasis of socio-political and cultural issues has come at the expense of theological and ecological issues, and even contemporary *fiqh*, jurisprudence, fails to go beyond vague references.⁵⁵ Referring to the idea of *insan al-Kamil*, some argue that “from an ecological critique of Islam to a critique of Islamic humanism is but a small step” and that “it is not enough to show that pro-ecology insights can be found in Islam.”⁵⁶

There are verses in the Qur’an that at first glance seem to support an anthropocentric⁵⁷ vision of humanity:

(22:36) thus have We made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful.

(22:37) He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His Guidance to you and proclaim the good news to all who do right.

(36:72-3) ... and that We have subjected them to men’s will, so that some of them they may use for riding and some of them they may eat. And they have (other) profits from them (besides), and they get (milk) to drink. Will they not then be grateful?

(22:65) Seest thou not that Allah has made subject to you (men) all that is on the earth, and the ships that sail through the sea by His Command? He withholds the sky (rain) from falling on the earth except by His leave: for Allah is Most Kind and Most Merciful to man.

(6:165) It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you: for thy

Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

(2:21-22) O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth).

A holistic approach to the verses reveals that human centrality in the Qur'an is balanced and mediated by moral and metaphysical controls.⁵⁸ While the earth appears as subservient to humans, humans are made subservient to the Creator of all things. Humans have rights and responsibilities. The earth has rights, just as the flora and fauna that live on it. While humanity is *ashraf al-makhlouqat* (the best of creation), the "creation of heaven and earth is greater than the creation of human beings" (40:57) and "The earth, God has assigned to all living creatures" (55:10). "There is no animal on the earth, nor bird that flies with its two wings but that they are communities like yourselves" (6:38). The Quran emphasizes the moral responsibility of humans as the custodian and guardian of the rest of the creation. At the same time, the Qur'an attributes other traits to humans, such as: weak (4:28), given to hasty deeds (17:11), ungrateful (22:66; 17:67), miserly (17:100), unjust, foolish (33:72), and ignorant (14:34).

"Let there be among you," proclaims the Qur'an, "a community that calls to the good (*al-khayr*), bidding virtue (*ma'ruf*) and forbidding vice (*munkar*)" (Qur'an, 3:104). The Qur'an repeatedly states: "God enjoins justice and kindness" (Qur'an, 16:90). It is also emphatic about the fact that all animals and birds are communities like human communities (Qur'an, 6:38). More importantly the affirmation of the principle of *tawhid* and the idea of the unity of the natural world, of the cosmos, and of living species is the first and foremost Islamic teaching.⁵⁹ Furthermore, *fitra*, or the state of instinctive balance and harmony with creation, denotes that all elements are connected with each other and with the whole, and that every action of ours affects other people, other species, and other places, near or far.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AS A SPIRITUAL CRISIS

In a series of lectures at the University of Chicago in 1966, Seyyed Hossein Nasr spoke of the ecological crisis not in terms of sustainability or a resource crisis but as the spiritual crisis of modern man.⁶⁰ The crisis is reflected, according to Nasr, in the fact that humanity has lost the sense of the spiritual significance of nature, and that nature is no longer seen as the grand theophany.⁶¹ He sees the destruction of the natural environment as a failure to fulfill our humanity, and as a crime against creation that also praises the creator.⁶² "The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise God," the Qur'an declares, "and there is nothing but that hymns God's praise, but you understand not their praise..." (Qur'an, 17:44) In identifying the roots of the crisis, Nasr – like White – points to industrialization and mechanization. However, he associates the process not with Christianity of the Middle Ages, but with Western humanist thought and 19th and 20th century theologians, figures such as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, who were the forerunners of a new theology that believed: "nature can not teach man anything about God and is therefore of no theological and spiritual interest."⁶³ To be an intellectual, for these thinkers, meant to surrender to science. Philosophy became a reflection of science, rather than remaining the judge and critic of scientific methods and discoveries.⁶⁴ In order to plunder nature, it was necessary to "reduce it to a meaningless artificial background for the life of modern man."⁶⁵ The damage this kind of thinking has done to the sacred and spiritual value of nature can be remedied not by modern science alone, but by attentiveness to the metaphysical knowledge, *scientia*

sacra, pertaining to nature.⁶⁶ Within the context of Muslim South East Asia, the example of the Minangkabau can serve as a model in which culture is shaped by nature. This culture is based on relationships that are neither anthropocentric nor androcentric, that are not based on dominion but on fostering nature-human-divine relationships.

MALAY ADAT AND MATRILINEAL ETHOS

In the Malay world-view *adat* (etiquette that guides all relations) are granted sacred status. For the four million Minangkabau people of Western Sumatra, *adat* is the foundation of their matriarchal society. In *alam* Minangkabau, like much of the Malay world, *adat* and Islam are thoroughly interwoven. In other words, *Adat* are based on religion and religion is based on *adat*. "... [A]*dat* is not the whole of life but operated in conjunction with the dictates of Islam and the laws of the nation-state."⁶⁷ At the same time, there is sanctity for *ilmu gaib*, a "secret understanding of the unseen world of spirits and healing practices."⁶⁸ At the core of the *adat* philosophy is good deeds, kindheartedness, and thoughtfulness for the feelings of others. *Adat* are taught and propagated through proverbs.⁶⁹ Within Minangkabau society, the highly present animistic past is fused with the primordial emphasis on the maternal. While women and men are considered the same in their humanity, women are given more privileges. They are heir to ancestral property. "The house goes to women and women keep the key to the rice house. Young boys sleep in other houses (usually mosques) to show their sisters that they do not own the house."⁷⁰ One has to consider the feelings of everyone else in the house and how they would be affected before acting. Attention to community rather than to the individual is one of the clear indications of *adat*.

In the broader context of Muslim South East Asia, the application of environmental policies based on *adat* is to act from an advantageous position of the age-old ecological wisdom of the people. For the villagers, "the forest is their brain; the land their life and soul; and the water their blood."⁷¹ For the Oma'lung tribe in Setulang village, near the Malay-Indonesian border, who apply the Dayak code restricting access to the forest and to its resources, the death of the forest is the demise of their promise to their ancestors. Their ancient indigenous knowledge guides them to manage their natural landscapes sustainably by shifting cultivation to agro-forestry that does not harm nature, while humans can still benefit from it.⁷² That is part of their cultural heritage. The new policies of REDD, while well-intentioned, change those values by putting a price on the trees of the forest, which in turn change the tribe's ways and perceptions of them. It compromises and replaces the agreement they have with the forest and with their ancestors to an agreement with the UN based on a monetary value.⁷³

KERAMAT PROPITIATION

In South East Asia, especially in Malaysia, *keramat*⁷⁴ refers to a sacred shrine where usually a holy person has been buried. Small, modest roadside shrines, often associated with a tree or nestled in its trunk (believed to have grown at the site)⁷⁵ reflect symbolic representations from Malay Muslim, Indian, and Chinese traditions. The *datuk* of the shrine provides protection, good health, and good luck. *Keramat* is highly venerated in the hybrid culture of Malaysia by people from all walks of life and, hence, removing them would be a bad omen. In its inception, the *keramat* was associated with a rural Malay practice, especially among the fishermen and the peasants.⁷⁶ During the colonial era, the practice spread among the *orang asli* (aboriginal people), as well as some rural Chinese, with the hope of reducing calamities and uncertainties arising from hazardous economic activities such as fishing and logging.⁷⁷ Ironically, the prevalent belief in the power of the Malay-Muslim

supernatural force present in the *keramat* has not protected the sanctity of the space from the transgression of the construction activities of developers. By the process of capitalist sacralization, most developers remove the *keramat* but hold *keramat* propitiation rituals at the commencement and completion of construction activity. It is especially common in Penang that the *keramat* is removed ceremonially and carried to its new location such as a corner rooftop of the newly constructed high-rise, to both respect and appease the common people's faith and sensibilities.

CONCLUSION

Joseph Meeker's *Comedy of Survival* suggests that the environmental crisis is caused primarily by a tradition of separation between culture and nature, and the moral elevation of culture over nature. The West Sumatran Minang society derives the rules of their culture (*adat*) from observing the benign aspects of nature. For them, culture emulates nature in order to learn what supports life as well as what destroys it.⁷⁸ The Malay concept of *keramat* weds culture, religion, and nature seamlessly. Its propitiation is a misappropriation in the name of cultural sensitivity. Both *keramat* and *adat* represent models for an interreligious ecotheology that respects the collective memories and traditions that seek harmony with nature rather than dominion over it. It would be a failure for humanity to ignore or deny the traditions based on innate human nature (*fitra*), and appalling to call them irrational and worthless – in the name of modernity and rationality – as a way to seek to uproot them.

Religion was, for the primordial human, a sacred cosmology and a sacred order of nature. Comparative ecotheology, religious ecocriticism, and the study of models of authentic biophilic thought, design, and action in various religious traditions and cultures can lead the way in helping to heal the attitude problems that cause suffering for the earth and all that lies within it.

NOTES

1. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
2. In literature, the work of prominent activists, such as Ken Saro-Wiwa, who wished that his people would live to celebrate the end of Shell's ecological war did not make it to the list of important works on the environment, despite the fact that his protest against the gradual "ecological genocide" of the Ogonis was met with violence and, finally, execution. See Rob Nixon.
3. See Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (eds.), *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Bonnie Roos, Alex Hunt, and John Tallmadge (eds.) *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010); Helen Tiffin and Graham Huggan, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
4. Human threats to the environment and its resources are vast and deep. Among the most severe of these threats is the startling rate of population increase. Over forty years ago Garrett Hardin wrote an influential article entitled "Tragedy of the Commons," in which he warned about population growth. The population of the world has more than doubled since the publication of his article in the journal *Science* in 1968. It reached 7 billion on October 31, 2011. It has grown by over 50,000,000 in the eight months since that time (by the time of this writing) with the net daily population growth of 171,000. <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/> (accessed on July 2, 2012)
5. Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986): p. 76.
6. Stephen Greenbalt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): p. 56.
7. See Syed Hossein Alatas *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1977).
8. Sallie McFague, "The Loving Eye vs. the Arrogant Eye: A Christian Critique of the Western Gaze on Nature and the Third World," *Macalester International*, Vol. 6, pp. 77-97. Rosemary Radford Ruether *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1994).

9. Leonardo Buff and Virgil Elizondo, eds., *Ecology, and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry, of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), p.xi. and Leonardo Boff *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).
10. What Rudolf Otto called *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (fearful and fascinating mystery) in *The idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).
11. Adi Setia, "The Inner Dimension of Going Green: Articulating an Islamic Deep Ecology," *Islam & Science*, Vol. 5 (Winter 2007) No. 2
12. Edward Wilson, *Biophilia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).
13. Stephen Kellert and Edward Wilson (eds.), *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (Chicago, IL: Island Press, 1995): p. 416.
14. Stephen Kellert, Biophilic Design. See <http://www.biophilicdesign.net/> (accessed on July 8, 2012.)
15. Biophilic and sustainable design have been articulated in various models of architecture around the world, including in many examples of Islamic architecture from Iran to Southeast Asia. A simple example of the biophilic design is the traditional Malay home made out of timber with wooden or bamboo walls, designed to suit the tropical climate of the region. For information on Malay traditional architecture see Lim Jee Yuan "Under One Roof," at <http://www.sabrizaain.org/malaya/library/malayhouse.pdf> (Accessed on July 8, 2012.)
16. Singapore uses purchased sand in the construction industry to produce cement, in order to reclaim land within Singapore's territorial waters. Every cubic meter of concrete requires 0.8 tons of sand. See http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/09/28/singapores_sand Indonesia and Malaysia have officially banned land sand exports for environmental reasons. Despite the ban, Singapore has traded 133 million tons of sand from Malaysia. The latter has expanded its land area from 581.5 sq. km. in 1965 to 710 sq. km. in 2011, expanding its land by 20 percent in less than 50 years. See http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/04/the_sand_smugglers and <http://grbusinessonline.com/wp/?p=492>
17. <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/bleak-forecast-for-the-future-of-e-kalimantan-orangutans/499327> and <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/orangutan-exterminators-on-trial-in-indonesia/496443>
18. <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/illegal-logging-unlikely-to-end-unless-all-companies-follow-rules/498255>
19. <http://www.nodirtygold.org/pubs/DirtyMetals.pdf>
20. Willem Meijer, "Ecology of Two Indonesian Islands," in *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (June, 1989), p. 181.
21. See *The Ecology of Sumatra*, by Anthony J. Whitten; Sengli J. Damanik; Jazanul Anwar; Nazaruddin Hisyam, (Gadjah Mada University Press, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; distributed in North America by Sinauer Associates, Sunderland, Massachusetts, 1987). *The Ecology of Sulawesi*, by Anthony Whitten; Muslimin Mustafa; Gregory S. Henderson, (Gadjah Mada University Press, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; distributed in North America by Sinauer Associates, Sunderland, Massachusetts, 1987). The 1987 edition of the book on Sumatra praises the rapid consolidation of forest into monetary gain as the most rational path (p. 642). See Willem Meijer, "Ecology of Two Indonesian Islands," in *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (June, 1989), p. 182.
22. <http://stoplynas.org/abc-malaysians-protest-against-mining-site/>
23. Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL) is a leading pulp and paper manufacturer. APRIL advertises as a sustainable company with a green leaf logo. It plants almost 400,000 trees per day or 150 million trees per year, which covers an area of 10,000 hectares, which claims to surpass targets set by the Forestry Ministry's "One Man, One Tree" Program to deal with the impact of climate change. In January 2012 protests and rallies staged by the local residents stretched from Meranti island district, Riau's capital, Pekanbaru, to Jakarta, where the villagers sewed their lips in protest. See <http://earthfirstnews.wordpress.com/2011/12/29/indonesian-protesters-sew-their-mouths-shut-over-deforestationpalm-oil/> and <http://eyesontheforest.or.id/index.php?page=news&action=view&id=512> and <http://eyesontheforest.or.id/index.php?page=news&action=view&id=505>
24. W. F. Laurance, T. Kakul, R. Keenan, J. Sayer, S. Passingan, and N. Sodhi., "Better governance to save rainforests," *Nature*, 467:789.
25. Estimate of logging revenue in Malaysia is RM 30 million each year, i.e. U.S. \$10 million a year.
26. Richard H. Grove, Vinita Damodaran, and Satwal Sangwan (eds.), *Nature and the Orient: The Environmental History of South and South East Asia* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998)
27. Nixon, 22.
28. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD2B0nnyAzs&feature=player_embedded
29. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-02/sumatra---papertiger/2821752>, Sumatra- Paper/Tiger (accessed on 02/17/2012).
30. In his *Buru Quartet*, the prominent Javanese author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Feb. 1925- May 2006) tells the story of Minke, living in colonial Indonesia. The struggle for justice that Minke faces is perhaps as dramatic as Toer's own life. The story developed during his eight-year imprisonment in Buru Island, where political prisoners were kept. He told stories to encourage his prison mates, and was found effective. Minke's story is of a passionate struggle against the oppression of colonial rule, including injustices against women and the environment.
31. Rob Nixon, "Slow Violence," in *The Chronicle Review*, Section B, July 1, 2011. p. 12
32. Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (Routledge, 1997); and Juan Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflict and Valuation* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003).
33. Nixon.

34. Rene, Guenon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, translated by Arthur Osborne, Marco Pallis, and Richard C. Nickolson (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis) p. 7.
35. Ibid. 87.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid. 99.
39. Guenon exclaimed that the West was Christian in the Middle Ages, but lost Christianity in the Modern era, and became not only anti-Christian but anti-religious and anti-tradition. (Guenon, p. 87-96)
40. Lynn White Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" at <http://www.earthtalktoday.tv/earthtalk-voices/historical-roots-ecological-crisis.html>
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Michael Northcott explains part of the problem for Christians: "The point is that this false notion of freedom and the use of violence against other people and other species to achieve human ends are deeply intertwined." Michael Northcott, "The Ecological Spirit: Being Church and Being Creatures" <http://www.jri.org.uk/resource/ecologicalspirit.htm> and Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991)
46. Ibid.
47. Francesca De Chatel, "Prophet Muhammad: A Pioneer of the Environment", http://www.islamicbulletin.com/newsletters/issue_23/environment.aspx
48. http://www.islamicbulletin.com/newsletters/issue_23/environment.aspx
49. Aryn Sajoo, *Muslim Ethics: Emerging Vistas* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2009) p. 2
50. Mawil Y. Izzi Dien, "Islam and the Environment: Theory and Practice," *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 1997, vol. 18, no. 1, pages 47-58
51. Ibid.
52. See <http://www.jri.org.uk/resource/ecologicalspirit.htm> (accessed on March 15, 2012)
53. See Kaveh Afrasiabi, "Toward and Islamic Ecotheology" in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003) p. 283
54. By the same token, can one say that the absence of ecotheology in the works of Catholic theologians Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, and Yves Congar is a blind spot in their theology?
55. Afrasiabi, 289.
56. Afrasiabi, 285.
57. We humans will forever be at least to some extent anthropocentric, just as the jellyfish would be jellyfish centric, as Daniel Quinn puts it. Even in our concern over the environment we are at best minimally anthropocentric because with all the changes that we have imposed upon the biosphere, reduction of biodiversity, climate change, and the extinction of species, nature will survive, while we humans may not be able to endure.
58. Nasr.
59. Osman Bakar, *Environmental Wisdom for Planet Earth: The Islamic Heritage* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 2007): p. 26-29.
60. See also Michael Northcott <http://www.jri.org.uk/resource/ecologicalspirit.htm>, and *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
61. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (ABC International Group, Inc. 1997) the book is based on four lectures delivered at the University of Chicago in May 1966
62. Nasr, p. 10.
63. Ibid. p. 31.
64. Ibid. p. 30.
65. Ibid. p. 32.
66. Ibid. p. 14.
67. Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002): p. 16.
68. Ibid. p. 7.
69. Ibid. p. 20.
70. Peggy Reeves Sanday, p.20
71. Bapak Jamaludin Antel is from Desa Semuningjaya, District of Jagui Babang, Bengkayan, West Kalimantan. He is one of the community leaders of the Dayak Iban indigenous peoples. See <http://ecologicalequity.wordpress.com/themes/stories-of-right-stories-of-might/call-for-support-for-the-struggles-of-the-dayak-iban-indigenous-peoples/>
72. <http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/forbidden-forest-of-the-dayak/>
73. REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) leaves forest out. It is a UN program that creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, by offering monetary incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forests. The plan is that communities like the Oma'lung will essentially be paid for doing something that they would have otherwise done for no financial benefit.
74. In Islamic mysticism; *irfan*, *keramat* are gifts, miracles, unusual powers of the prophets, but also of the *awliyya*, saints, or ordinary Muslims who have reached high levels of piety.
75. See, Iain Buchanan, *Fatimah's Kampung* (Penang, Malaysia: Consumers Association of Penang, 2008). An

illustrated tale of a disappearing world of Kampung Malayu, a *keramat*, the forest, and the tiger, and their destruction along with the trees to make room for multi-level apartment complexes and mega electronic stores.

76. See Winstedt, R. "Keramat: Sacred places and persons in Malaya," Journal of the Malayan branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1924: 2(3): 264–279.
77. Beng Lan Goh, "Malay-Muslim spirits and Malaysian capitalist modernity: A study of *keramat* propitiation among property developers in Penang," Asia Pacific Viewpoint, Dec 01, 2005; Vol. 46, No. 3, p. 307-321
78. Sanday, p. 23.

“Fire and Society in Modern China: Fire Disasters and Natural Landscapes in East Asian Environmental History” (1820-1965)

Jack Patrick Hayes

Abstract: Land clearance and agriculture have long been associated with fire. Open fire, whether from natural or human ignition, has changed the face of many natural landscapes, especially in frontier regions. Much of modern China’s landscape has been shaped by fire, yet fire has usually been treated as a conflagration or disaster (*huozai*) in official literature. However, fire in Chinese agriculture also played a positive role in the development of regional economies. This essay will review the different meanings of fire disasters in recent Chinese environmental history by analyzing a few illustrative examples of late Imperial to Mao-era agricultural development, warfare, and legal institutions. By examining these elements of Chinese fire regimes, this paper considers problems and management practices in Chinese environmental history, especially ethnic, regional, and temporal trends in legal and administrative forms of fire control. These examples enable us to examine aspects of Chinese military, agricultural, social, and political history that lend themselves to cross cultural and environmental comparison.

Keywords Chinese history; fire, environment; warfare; agriculture; law

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USING FIRE TO TEACH ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Fire is an amazing natural and unnatural force—it has existed on Earth for hundreds of millions of years and it is one of the most anthropocentric forces that humans can employ in the natural environment and on one another. All that a fire requires is fuel, oxygen, and an ignition source. However, the ecology of fire in the natural world is only one facet of the ecology of fire in environmental history. Humans can and have manufactured fire almost at will for millennia, and exerted a tremendous power over the natural environment (especially forests and grasslands) ever since. In particular, humans have used fire to clear land permanently and maintain it for farming and herding, as well as for heating and cooking. With industrialization, anthropocentric fire in the form of fossil biomass (coal, oil, etc.), and not just surface biomass like trees and grasses, fueled the machinery that runs our world. These kinds of fires, from agriculture to industry, are “good fires” that help define our world and act as catalysts of economic and human development. However, there are also “bad fires,” disasters, conflagrations, and accidents — both devastating and horrifying when they serve other purposes. A history of these good and bad fires, which includes an environmental history of both the positive and negative aspects of conflagrations, can serve several teaching purposes.

This study of fire in recent Chinese history examines the ramifications of rural and urban conflagrations from approximately the mid nineteenth to mid twentieth century. It outlines how fire in China can reveal patterns of natural, social, and political causes, tied to the both the destructive effects of rebellion, warfare, and human carelessness, as well as the

constructive processes of land clearance for agriculture, politics, and legal innovation that have prompted conservation or preventative efforts to protect from fires. Through three broad themes of fire and war, fire and agriculture, and fire and politics (of which there will be a more extensive discussion in roughly chronological order), this essay begins to plot a countrywide map of environments, conditions, and the historical issues of conflagrations. Taken together, these three themes begin to define a kind of “Chinese fire regime,” or system of patterns of fire engendered by local environmental and social conditions specific to China, especially the political and administrative meanings of various kinds of conflagrations.

What the environmental history of fire demonstrates best in the Chinese context is that there are a wide variety of attitudes and interpretations of fire and disaster, with wide-ranging consequences for not only the natural environment, but also society in general. Fire has been one of the most important tools of environmental, social, and political manipulation throughout China’s history, either as a negative, destructive force, or as positive one in both utilitarian and symbolic ways in living and attempting to improve individual and collective ways of life. Much of China’s landscape has been shaped by fire, and fire has normally been considered a conflagration or disaster (*huozai*) in Chinese official and popular literature (Zhong 2004: 1). Yet, fire has also been one of the chief sources of land clearance for settlement, for economic gain, and for seasonal agriculture among China’s diverse ethnic groups. In order to address this seeming contradiction, this essay establishes that the process of limiting the effects of uncontrolled fire or its environmental and social threat has been a central, if often unsuccessful, part of Chinese legal and political administration. In addition, efforts to control fire were never a simple effort of mastery, but an uneven process of complex military, social, and political negotiation over constant, general fire use throughout rural *and* urban areas. By elucidating a Chinese fire regime in this fashion, this essay begins to explain and outline the role of conflagration and fire use in the social and environmental history of China.

FIRES, WAR, AND REBELLION IN CHINA

China offers some excellent examples of how to talk about unique aspects of the creative and destructive nature of fire in history, not just as an environmental force, but as a social and administrative force as well. The two faces of fire—good and bad, destructive or constructive, risk factor versus catalyst for change—have informed centuries of discussion about the core and periphery of Chinese civilization and people. It has also informed century-long conflicts between bandits and military forces, rural farmers and urban administrators, and ethnic minorities and state authorities. Two brief examples from the 19th century Chinese periphery begin to illustrate these forces, especially the military aspect of fire in natural and social environments.

In 1860s northern Sichuan, a series of fire disasters descended upon the Sino-Tibetan frontier prefecture of Songpan and counties of the northern Sichuan Basin. One such revolt, “The Tibetan Rebellion in the Gengshen Year [1860]” (*Songpan Gazetteer* 1924) describes a number of Han and Tibetan “rebel” military actions that led to significant urban and rural conflagrations that illustrate at least one primary aspect of Chinese conflagrations as a weapon of war *and* agent of landscape development and change. In the wake of the Opium Wars (1839-42) and beginning of the Taiping Rebellion (1860), grain tax burdens in China increased as the state sought to pay for its expanding military actions and defeats. Between 1859 and 1862, at least three major conflicts broke out between Han Chinese garrisons stationed in and around Jin’an (the district seat of Songpan Prefecture government

and military, northern Sichuan) and Tibetans, who lived in the surrounding agricultural and uplands areas. The *Songpan Gazetteer* (1924) describes how these conflicts involved the fiery destruction of urban properties and buildings, including a local Confucian school, several Han Chinese temples in Jin'an and surrounding garrison towns, government buildings, and most of the town itself at one point.¹ Han Chinese properties and overt symbols of Chinese authority and culture, in the case of this uprising, were particularly targeted by the Tibetans.

The rebels, however, were not the only ones using fire. Chinese troops were dispatched to fire the countryside in an effort to disable the rebellion. This was not a new tactic in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, but dated back to at least 1851 in this region, when Chinese troops were dispatched regularly to "...cut and burn [trees] in surrounding mountains... and strategic passes and approaches to the district seat."² Setting major fires (conflagrations) to prevent banditry and barbarian uprisings was something the Qing state approved of, not just in the borderlands, but throughout the country until its fall in 1911, in much the same manner as earlier dynasties. Chinese authorities and military in many incarnations dealt with banditry, rebellion, and potential raids on trade caravans and traveling officials by firing the countryside when it suited their purpose. Fire was employed to burn out trees, shrubs, and forests, especially near major roads and paths, but more generally as well—whether the areas in question were known to harbor bandits or not.³ These descriptions of firing the hillsides and forests can, naturally, also be read in a more constructive light, as they cleared more land for agriculture or grazing. Firing was linked to both constructive agricultural use and solving ethnic or administrative issues. For example, in the multiethnic Mao County, just to the south, soldier-lit conflagrations that burned out so-called bandits and the local Qiang ethnic minority in the 19th century were equally credited with "... opening up land for agriculture... and settlers."

Conflagrations were thus used creatively and destructively for military purposes and rebellion depending on the interpretation that official Chinese narratives might give them. The rate of fire disasters from the warlord to civil war period (1911-1949), including World War II, certainly supports this (for example, see Chart 1 on Sichuan fire disasters). This rate also skews a total analysis of fires from rural areas to predominantly urban settings during the three decades of the Warlord-WWII-Chinese Civil War. The industrialization of war and new methods of delivering fire to cities (aerial bombing in particular) highlighted this trend,⁴ as did increased human carelessness in war-time urban concentrations of population. However, in outlining a fire history for China in general, military or bandit origins usually make up the most common descriptions and sources for major conflagrations in both urban and rural areas. For Zhong Maohua (2004), any analysis of fires must assign the primary causes of conflagration in Chinese history to warfare and bandit and rebel suppression. In his analysis, one in four fires in recorded Chinese history from 220 B.C.E. to 1949 originated in a military action—whether anti-bandit, open rebellion, invasion, or subversive in nature. However, setting fires in the fields, forests and towns was more than simply a time honored military tradition of numerous imperial Chinese states through the early 20th century when fighting "bandits" or protesting peasants, who themselves often used conflagrations as a tactic in war. The prevalence of military/bandit-related fire disasters during the late Qing especially demonstrates at least a late imperial process of trying to incorporate and maintain control of borderland and bandit-prone regions through the creative and destructive use of fire and a military fire regime—if not a long-term practice of using fire as a tool of control and reprisal.

AGRICULTURE AND FIRE IN CHINESE HISTORY

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, however, major fires not only sprang out of banditry, military reprisals, and sometimes poor inter-ethnic relations, but also from agricultural pursuits. Conflagrations were not simply military fire regimes in China, but could also act as catalysts for change and development—a fire environment is just as likely to occur in a natural forest or grassland setting as it is in an agricultural field or urban setting. In western China’s Sichuan and Gansu Provinces, numerous counties’ production of tobacco, poppies, wheat, and other agricultural products was often aided by creative and widespread use of fire. However, fires could and would regularly rage out of control when peasants in rural districts set spring fires to clear land and trees, burn off the previous year’s stubble, or clear waterways for late spring and summer agriculture.⁵

Regardless of negative discussions in some official materials, fire played a nearly constant constructive role in Chinese agriculture and rangeland management. As one can see from the nature of fire disasters in Charts 1 and 2 (below), fully one quarter of all fire disasters, and over half of the “rural fire disasters” in late imperial and early 20th century Sichuan Province can be traced or related to rural field-agriculture fires (linked to both rural occurrence and human carelessness). Specific examples from early and late imperial Chinese history of fire in agriculture use, especially from Wang Zhen’s *Nongshu* (Treatise on Agriculture) and its later editions, describe fire use in the countryside as a nearly human implement of farming. According to Francesca Bray’s excellent overview of agriculture (in part based on the Wang’s treatise, among others), crop field fires, a common practice in Chinese agriculture, burned relatively small areas and were especially common in the months leading up to the late spring and summer wet season (Bray 1984: 93-8).

AGGREGATE SAMPLE FIRE DISASTERS IN SICHUAN, 1820-1960

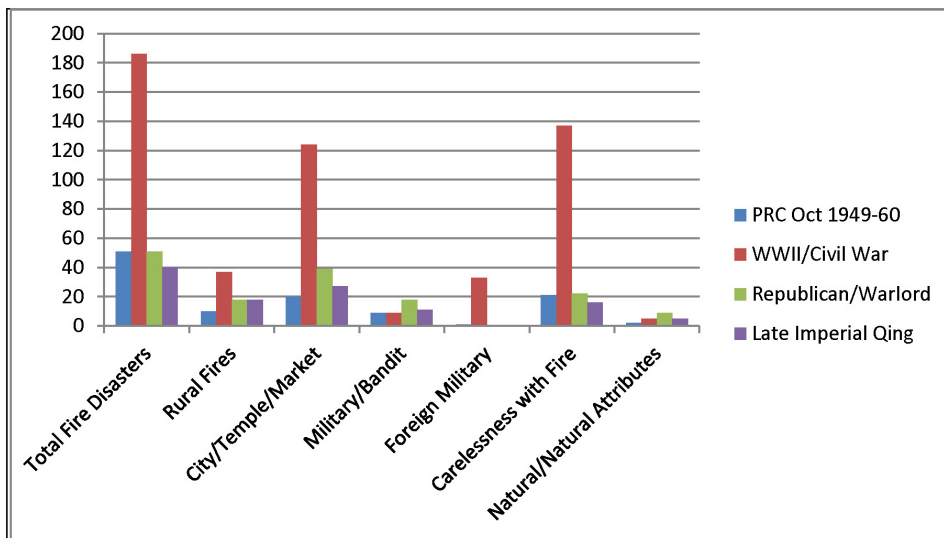


Chart 1: Sichuan Province Fire Disaster Data (52 Counties and Prefectures)

In crop field fires outside of forest plots (Menziess 1996; Bray 1984: 98-101), farmers often burned the standing vegetation in the plot they intended to cultivate. The vegetation may have been uncultivated grassland, fallow fields, or short-fallow fields covered in grass, weeds and crop stubble. After burning a plot, farmers would spade or hoe the upper layer of soil, thus burying the nutritious ashes. Throughout Chinese history and in most provinces, ashes from burned over plots, along with human and animal manure, were considered a part of the agricultural routine to prepare agricultural plots, including in swidden-agricul-

tural areas of southern China (like Akha and Han agricultural areas in Yunnan Province). In rice growing areas, piles of dry rice straw or cut grasses were burned in dry paddies destined to be flooded and used as rice nurseries to provide fertilizer input. Wheat fields and other cereal crop fields were also regularly burned to clear the previous year's chaff and provide ash for the plowing and planting season. Fire was and remains one of the most economical (in terms of time and effort) ways to rid farmers of leftover organic materials, a seasonal byproduct of harvesting not always (but sometimes) gathered for animal fodder or home/hearth fuel purposes.

Other agricultural fires were related more specifically to seasonal irrigation. First, fire in catchment basins above rice paddies could encourage the erosion of important nutrients and soil into the paddies. Farmers thus manipulated fire and erosion to concentrate nutrients or soil where they would be most productive. Second, fire in the catchment basin above rice paddies could also facilitate quicker runoff during the first rains, aiding the all-important quest to fill farmers' rice paddies or water catchment basins with water. Finally, farmers lit fires to clean irrigation canals and field edges. Just like Joe Mondragon's New Mexico father in the *Milagro Beanfield War* (Nichols 1974), farmers fired irrigation ditches to clear them of grasses and other materials that hampered the flow of water.

In terms of rangeland, pasture and range (or grassland) burning also had a clear logic—to defend rangelands from bush and tree encroachment and ensure animal survival by providing extensive supplies of rangeland fodder. Regular firing of rangeland also helped protect hills and grasslands against unpredictable and destructive wildfires. Most burning was accomplished through an opportunistic strategy of temporal and spatial rotation. That is, people would burn pastures in patches, and at different times, taking advantage of the best seasonal, ecological, and political times to do what many Chinese authorities frowned upon. People might burn upland meadowland in late spring, for example, to help control weeds in later summer pasturage, and so on. By September and early October, after harvests in the lowland and upland areas of Sichuan and Gansu, burns were clearly destined to “fill in” unburned patches. For Tibetans and Hui, burns were necessary in sunny-slope ranges and grassland areas to clear unwanted trees or summer re-growth for the following year, in addition to numerous field burns for crop clearance.

The opportunism of rangeland fire management by Tibetans Han and Hui in north and western Sichuan was often seen by Chinese officials and foreign observers as casual and careless, or even irrational and pyromaniac. “Careless” was an epithet thrown not only at Chinese farmers in rural areas, but especially at ethnic minorities in more pastoral environments—just as it has been flung at fire users around the world, such as African herdsmen, Californian sheepmen, Native American hunters and gatherers, and European peasants (Pyne 1995; 1997). Chart 1 demonstrates in a concrete sense how powerful “carelessness” could be in describing the nature of fire disasters. However, whether “careless” was a fair generalization or not, fire was a necessary, seasonal, and important part of the agricultural and pastoral year. Fire in this sense was “good.” People ignited fires in western China in winter months for heating and to initiate backfires to control potential wildfires. They also ignited fires in early spring to prepare land for pasturage and farming, and to maintain woodlands (usually without much risk of punishment as most lightning fires and natural fires seemed to take place at approximately the same time). As Stephen Pyne (1997: 90) demonstrates elsewhere, wildfires and land clearance fires had the tendency to spread quickly to untended, overgrown sites, and the solution was “good housekeeping,” including burning land in patches and burning the patches at different times.

Despite this seeming constructive and extensive use of fire in rural and wasteland areas,

however, most official Chinese sources outside of agricultural treatises had little good to say about fire as a natural or human force. In part, this was a function of political and administrative notions of authority, but it was also related to rural-urban beliefs about the nature of the human use of fire. Urban fire was seen as a detrimental, disastrous force—where the fire regime caused property loss, disruption of commerce, and a potential and real threat to many lives. The urban or urbanized elites that made up the majority of the late imperial authority structure rarely perceived the beneficial qualities of a natural or unnatural conflagration. The authorities created human systems to combat such hazards, focusing especially on the human dimension of urban and rural fire systems embedded in social systems such as regulations and punishments.

POLITICS AND FIRE: LATE IMPERIAL TO MAO ERA CHINESE FIRE

LEGISLATION

Fire is not just a hazard, potential weapon of war, or tool for agricultural development—it is also a political phenomenon. Fires, conflagrations, and their origins have played a consistent role in Chinese environmental history, especially in administrative and legal history. The nature of these laws and legal norms are also very comparable across cultures. Wherever people have cleared land with fire to permanently maintain it for farming or herding, they have also devised some sense of land ownership, whether communal or individual. Thus, despite its historical role as a tool for land clearance, fire was more often seen as a destructive force that had to be contained and constrained. An examination of the roles of legality and authority in controlling (and punishing) fire use is particularly illustrative in the Chinese case, as it highlights not only an interesting ethnic but also rural-urban divide in the politics of fire. It also demonstrates that fire regimes change as political regimes change.

Analyzing the nature of fire disasters and regulation in China is challenging, considering the scarcity of documentary records and the emphasis of Chinese and non-Chinese scholars on agricultural and especially urban settings in eastern China. However, a variety of different sources do demonstrate that *human* fire use was usually subject to strict control through statutory and customary law. For the most part, traditional statutory and customary laws of the late Qing dynasty were utilized through the end of the Republican era. Qing era Chinese statutory laws, as William Jones and Jiang Yonglin note, were derived from the *Great Ming Code* (*Da Ming Lu*), itself a derivation of earlier Chinese legal codes (Jones 1994: 12; Jiang 2005: xxxiii). In the *Ming Code* (and the later *Qing Code*), fires and fire disasters were discussed in terms of prescriptions against and punishments for arson (Article 16, Jiang 2005: 406, 407), looting during a fire disaster (Article 291), and criminal responsibility for hurting someone with or through fire (i.e. causing a fire disaster made one liable for any injuries to persons or properties even if it was not an overt act of arson; Article 326, Jiang 2005: 27, 160, 180, 219-20).

Fires and conflagrations were the responsibility of local officials, who were expected to assert state authority and combat the dangers of fire and fire use regardless of local practices. Urban Chinese were especially expected to adhere to the regulations regarding fires as their highly flammable urban domains and dense concentrations of houses only needed a wayward spark to trigger a severe conflagration. Yet, despite the hazard, laws and prescriptions related to fires and conflagrations were treated in several different areas of the code rather than a single section or cohesive fashion. These laws were also often rigorously applied to countryside. This was a real problem for China's urban and peri-urban authorities, as the general population invariably used fire in the urban *and* rural hearth and home, throughout the agricultural countryside, and in the loosely governed ethnic border

and rangelands. In the end, legal statutes on fire control from the highest authorities were articulated and applied, especially in the urban setting. Individuals and families hurt, killed, or who had lost property due to urban conflagrations could use these statutes to seek redress through the late Qing court system.⁶ Rural and borderland fire regime legislation was a bit more complex.

In addition to state and urban legal codes, there were local magistrate handbooks and other forms of local regulation during the late imperial period to deal with fire control. Good examples of these rural legal norms could be found in magistrate's guides, including one translation of late Ming Dynasty local laws in semi-rural/peri-urban eastern China. In this handbook, fires, conflagrations, and fire prevention receive their own complete subsection (Chu 1984: 501-03). The author discusses fire as a major calamity usually caused by human carelessness. He addresses the nature of urban fires, how to prevent them, and how to fight them. He also charges magistrates and the masses to fight fire with vigor or risk losing everything. In important ways, this points to a significant political aspect of an historical Chinese fire regime—that fires were discussed as primarily urban, human events, and the historiography of conflagrations focused on primarily Han Chinese, urban populations.

Of course, Tibetans, Yi, Hui, and other ethnic groups of China did have their own ways to legislate and deal with fire disasters. Like the Han Chinese, they had legal codes to quantify punishments and practices after a fire disaster. In addition to reliance on state authority and Chinese legal codes, customary law was especially important as a mechanism for communities and populations to exert control over land and resources. There is some evidence of common property systems, especially in Hui and Tibetan communities of Sichuan and Gansu, under which the members of a community had rights to use a specified resource or an area of land, sometimes referred to as “unenclosed” (*wei she weizhang*) land. When something happened to the land or property by fire, for example, local people could seek redress from whoever ignited the fire. Where some form of commons existed, restrictions were imposed on access to and utilization of land to combat overuse or destructive use, especially for grazing, but mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing these regulations were rarely mentioned (Wu, 1962; 2.4.39a/b). Most of the agricultural land, forests, range, and grasslands used by ethnic minorities were not recognized as having individual owners, but were in fact protected or managed under some monastic/temple, kinship, or community collective.

One Qing dynasty military campaign manual describes the control and maintenance of rangelands falling into three areas: individual tenure of hay and fodder fields near towns and villages, large tracts of rangelands owned and controlled by monasteries or community councils, and community agreements on how to bring stock in from far pastures through individually and communally owned land (Yan Ruyi 1934). In the case of local hayfields located most often very near to villages, individuals owned and controlled their use through earth and stone fences. Fires that crossed over the fences were the responsibility of the ignition site. Monasteries and communities dominated by kinship groups would allow individuals to use their rangelands in exchange for a percentage of the resulting food or material products, and they also helped manage discussions or arguments over responsibility for the regular wildfires or land clearance fires started by locals (Chang 1997; 230-31, 240-41). Individuals who ignored communal or monastic land management would not be allowed to use near-community pastures and rangeland the following year, and might face even more stringent punishments or fines. In addition to communal practices, more formal political norms to deal with conflagrations existed. Some foreign and 20th century Han Chinese comments to the contrary, ethnic minority villages and regional headmen had legal

systems in place to combat improper fire use. In Sichuan and Gansu Tibetan areas, Buddhist and Bon temples and local headmen usually settled rangeland and agricultural fire-related disputes (Zhang 1993: 14-5). Two Sichuan Tibetan examples of fire laws, like their Han Chinese counterparts in urban areas, stand out.

In late imperial and Republican era (post-1911) northern Sichuan, local headmen in Dege had a series of customary and statutory laws to deal with banditry and one of its related practices, careless or intentional fire use. If bandits or local Tibetans carelessly used fire and created a fire disaster on the grasslands, in forested areas, or in towns and villages, they were liable for blood money fines and property damage; they could even be sold into slavery or executed (Zhang 1993: 146-57). The Badihe Mountain village(s) *tusi* had similar laws governing grassland use and grassfires, an accepted method of grass regeneration as long as they did not get out of hand and burn too widely, damaging personal property or endangering lives (Zhang 1993: 148-49). Not only did local regulations and customary laws recognize the dangers of fire on the grasslands, they also put a series of graded fees and punishments in place for careless or widespread fire use on the grasslands and highland meadows that were integral to regional herding practices. Four out of nine regulations regarding herding and rangeland of various sorts referenced fire disasters or careless fire use; in contrast, the same local leaders had only a single fire-related customary law for towns, agricultural land, and land clearance (Zhang 1993: 151; 154-55).

In southern Gansu Province, Tibetan temples were the primary guiding force behind fire prevention and deciding disputes related to common fire disasters. Like Tibetan north Sichuan, similar practices prevailed, although there was an additional statute in the Tewa and Maqu *tusi* areas against monks or visitors causing fires in Tibetan temples—one of the “16 Laws” (*Shiliu fadian*) regarding major monastic centers, those living in them, and visitors (Zhou 1996: 412-14, 417-18). Fire was not only a necessary part of the daily monastic regime, from food preparation to daily ceremonies, it was also recognized as one of the key dangers to personal safety and the monastic center itself. Gannan Tibetans also had one of the more comprehensive discussions of fire use and regulations, which included carelessness with fire when burning off fields or grasslands. In particular, if local Tibetans were careless during the spring dry season (when they usually fired fields to prepare for late spring planting), they could be fined if their fires spread to neighboring fields, temple lands, or the local rangelands. When examining the laws and regulations regarding fire, it is also important to note that most of the foregoing legal and regulatory material relates to urban and semi-urban areas and temples, as well as territory and fires along established trade routes. While late Qing and Republican era laws could be (and according to several Chinese authors were) applied to a wider range of improper fire use in the countryside,⁷ local customary laws usually played an even greater role in fire use and fire prevention beyond the urban and semi-urban areas.

With few exceptions, statutory Republican era laws covering forest and rangeland use and fires were not effectively implemented in western China. However, pre-1949 sources for a limited number of statutory laws and a corpus of language to deal with fire disasters did exist. In Sichuan Province these laws targeted, in particular, what most Chinese considered poor ethnic minority land use management leading to fire disasters, in almost all cases without referencing land clearance policies used by Han Chinese on the Chengdu Plain or in valley bottom agricultural areas. The first such “modern” law was passed in 1910, the “Statute Protecting Forests and Grasslands,” which outlined a number of fees, jail time, and other sentences for improper use of fires in upland regions of Sichuan. Another set of statutes followed in 1937, *Senlin fa* (Forestry Regulations), which discussed forested areas

in largely minority regions of Sichuan (*Sichuan Linye zhi*, 311). These regulations were not regularly enforced, and by 1943, fire disasters in rural agricultural areas and upland forest areas were so serious that the Republican government of Chiang Kai Shek gathered over 180 administrators and ethnic minority leaders in Chongqing to discuss the issue of widespread fire damage to forests and agricultural land in the highlands and on the plain.

Starting in late 1940s, a new actor stepped into the fire legislation arena—the People’s Republic of China, run by the Chinese Communist Party’s local representatives in the form of cadres, military personnel, and/or state forestry representatives. In western China, beginning in 1951, the new state codified laws that regulated fire use. These new laws were rife with a series of assumptions about fire use, abuse, and disasters, constituting a new legal fire regime in comparison to late imperial and Republican legal norms. In Sichuan, this took the form of general regulations such as the “Baohu senlin, fazhan linye” (Protect Forest, Develop Forestry) and “Baohu caodi, fazhan muye” (Protect Grasslands, Develop Animal Husbandry) campaigns, whose regulations were intended to popularize natural resource protection (*Sichuan linye*, 311). Like many of the Nationalist era laws and discussions about fire disasters, the locus of fire problems was perceived to be local people, and very rarely, natural ignition.

In order to protect newly confiscated/expropriated natural resources in the countryside, Mao’s socialist government laid down laws that targeted local practices—particularly those of ethnic minorities—while often ignoring the creation of new legislation in the Han dominated countryside. In 1956 this took a new turn in minority-dominated areas of Sichuan by the establishment of public security bureaus to monitor local activities in natural resource rich areas with regard to fire regulations and the campaign legislation “Six Don’ts with Fire” (*Liu bu shao*). The “Six Don’ts” would be the mainstay of fire regulation not just in minority areas, but Han dominated areas of the countryside as well, until the late 1970s, but it was first developed in ethnic minority areas. Among other things, two of the “Six Don’ts” regard grass and field clearance, often destructive to natural resources owned by the state (trees, cattle/yaks, etc.) after the mid-1950s.

Sichuan Province provides some further examples of a new Chinese fire regime. There were two primary “fire areas” in western China, and after 1955 laws and regulations on fire that separated plains from mountain/up-country fires (Han versus Tibetan, Yi, etc.) were divided along ethnic and ecological lines, as were punishments and definitions of fault. Fines and other punishments for fires, carelessness, and conflagrations were raised for minorities in forested, grassland and agricultural areas. It should be noted, however, that fires, even major ones, that were “accidentally” caused by state industries and their personnel were rarely punished. Such disparate treatment existed for two reasons. First, as of 1955, the state (or its representatives in the provinces) officially took ownership of all natural resources from people on the ground,⁸ including agricultural products, grasslands and the grass on them, trees in forests, and so forth, including in minority areas of Sichuan Province. Second, starting in 1956, Tibetans and Yi, in particular, began to fight government control of their daily lives and property, particularly the confiscation of temple land, the closure of religious institutions, and the confiscation of previously undeveloped land and resources.

Part of the push to further criminalize extraneous fire use and punish fire disasters was that many Tibetans and Yi violently resisted state authorities and military personnel by torching the very resources the state attempted to claim, and otherwise resisting the new politics of land and fire management that did not take local conditions or traditions into account.⁹ Land reform, in conjunction with sweeping state regulations concerning natural

resource ownership and fire use and management, all helped feed existing cultural, political, and ethnic tensions over land management. The result was a tremendous amount of violence and widespread destruction of property, homes, trees, rangeland, and lives in the fire disasters of the mid- to late-1950s northern Sichuan. Chart 2 illustrates this trend; military action/bandit suppression was a significant cause of fire after 1949, while there were no reported cases of natural fire disasters.¹⁰

SICHUAN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS FIRE DISASTERS, 1821-1960

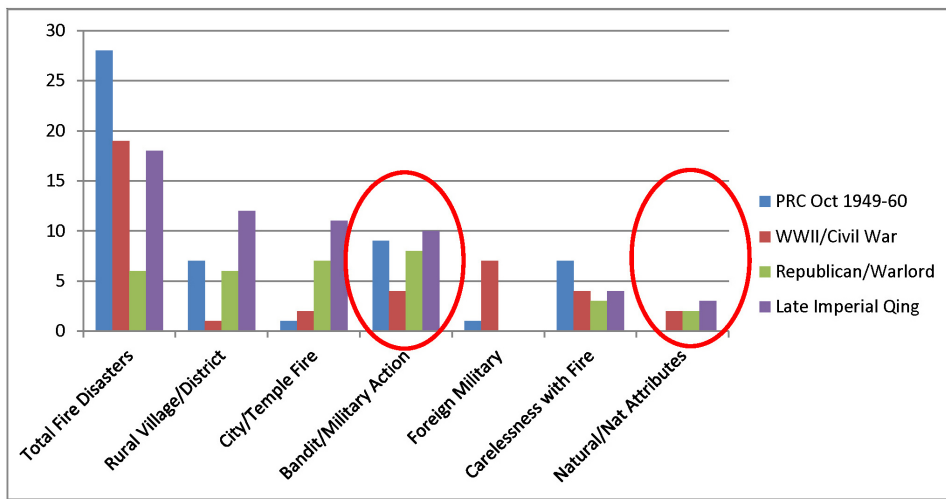


Chart 2: Sample: Lipan, Songpan, Xiaojin, Pengshui, Xiyang, Qianjiang, Xiushan, E'bian, Xundian, Wenchuan, Kangding, Jinchuan, Nanping, Aba, Heishui, Ma'erkang, Yuexi, Shihua, and Liangshan Yi Counties.

Fire, forest, and rangeland laws before the late 1970s were more a statement of policy and exhortation than they were prescriptive. Instead of formal laws to control various uses of the wastelands, laws, policies, and regulations were ambiguous and gave local, provincial, and state officials great flexibility and administrative oversight on how to implement and understand the existing legal structures. Instead of formal legislation, control and land use policies toward the wastelands were determined by a program of campaigns (*yundong*).¹¹ The initial law that treated forests and their products was based on a program of campaigns and called for the establishment of organizations to introduce fire control, afforestation programs, and wasteland reclamation. Many such “campaign documents” and regulations limiting access to forest and rangeland areas, prohibiting fuel gathering, urging fire protection, and so forth, were followed throughout the 1950s and '60s.

It is important to note that despite a few academic studies that discuss fire control and prevention through prescriptive fines and punishments, the vast majority of Mao era (post 1949) discussion about fire does not recognize rural people, much less ethnic minorities, as having the wherewithal, legal structures, or authority to prevent disasters. As part of its agenda to increase local control of people, resources, and sources of authority, the new state (and its subsequent incarnations up to the present), did not recognize alternative interpretations of fire use, fire control, and fire disasters. Key examples of how this came to pass included the fact that neither the *Sichuan Forestry Gazetteer*, nor official discussion of grass and rangeland fire disasters in the *Grassland Tibetan Investigation Materials*, recognized Tibetan customary laws (in place for generations if not hundreds of years), as legislating against or attempting to control fire use and related disasters (*Sichuan Linye* 1994: 311-12; *Caodi zangzu* 1984).

GOOD FIRE, BAD FIRE, CHINESE FIRES...

Fire disasters in Chinese environmental history are not simple black and white, social and environmental evils. Fire use was complex—conflagrations and large and small-scale fires could have both positive and negative consequences for people, authorities, and natural landscapes. However, in Chinese literature the vast majority of fires were considered disasters. In recent Chinese history, a significant portion of major fires have been most often attributed to either banditry, military activities, or to human carelessness. This emphasis on a military fire regime was certainly a legitimate explanation for the frequency of fire disasters. Given the number of wars and rebellions, and especially their effect on urban areas, it also helps explain a large number of the urban conflagrations of recent Chinese history. However, the social and political aspects of fire disasters (issues of authority, resource control, and landscape management) equally point to more constructive as well as hegemonic and authoritarian aspects of fires, fire control, and fire interpretation. In other words, this duality highlights a complex of Chinese military, agricultural, and political fire regimes.

While one should not downplay the destructive nature or devastating damage of fires, one should also recognize that both Chinese and minority “authorities” recognized the prevalence of fire in their societies and culture, and made widespread use of this tool in both urban and rural areas. They regulated it through statutes, customary laws, and practices in the hopes that it would not get out of hand and cause significant loss of life or property. However, far from always being a clear good, fire was a complex and multifaceted process and tool with significant environmental and social consequences. As politics and population centers changed, fire regimes changed too.

Another pattern in the legal and political structures to mitigate fire disasters was the nature of authority over fire—in other words, authority over the message of fire disasters. State control was evident in how fire disasters were reported. The very nature of sources and materials points to how and why various authorities have reported on, disapproved of, and legislated fire. Part of this pattern of Chinese political fire regimes was linked to evolving patterns of Chinese governance and the nature of an urban-rural divide, but in the end, it was also related to human carelessness with fire. While some of these patterns may be self-evident, they also obscure another principal pattern that this research has only begun to shape—that the nature of fire and natural sources of ignition more or less took a back seat in how people tried to explain the reasons for fire disasters. In this sense, natural forces and sources of ignition in conflagrations play far too minor a role in this fire history. At least to some degree, there is an overemphasis on the scale and breadth attributed to fire as an almost purely human action.

Chinese fire history is more than an event—it is a process. By examining just a few of the possible fire regimes of recent Chinese history, we not only begin to see contrasting and complementary urban-rural and urban-forest fire regimes, we also begin to perceive some of the unique political, military, ethnic, and temporal trends that are imminently comparable to other historical world fire regimes.

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NOTES

1. Fu Chongqu and Xu Xiang, *Songpan Xianzhi* (1924), juan 3:3.7-65b. See also, *Zhongguo huozai dadian* [Grand Collection of Chinese Fire Disasters] (1997): 1505-06. Hereafter HZDD.
2. *Songpan xianzhi* (1924): juan 3:70-71b, 8:40-41. Also HZDD: 1310, 1506, 2893-95. There are numerous other examples of troops dispatched to clear trees or deal with bandits where fires raged out of control in Tibetan, Hui and Qiang areas of northern, western and southern Sichuan, and southern Gansu. See HZDD: (Hui areas) 1590, 1625; (Tibetan areas) 1628, 1698.
3. There is a long tradition of burning out bandits in forested areas of China that goes back to popular literature, including “Romance of the Three Kingdoms” and “Outlaws of the Marsh.” More practically, military manuals like Yan Ruyi’s study of the Sichuan-Gansu-Shanxi borderlands called for regular use of fire to control banditry by firing grasslands and forests. Yan Ruyi, *Sansheng bianfang beilan* [A Complete Survey of Defense in the Border Region of the Three Provinces] (1806), MS Sichuan Archive, juan 4 (Reprinted as *Chuan Shaan E bianfang ji*, Nanchang: Guomindang Military Commission, 1934).
4. Fully one-quarter of conflagrations for Sichuan Province between 1916-1948 can be traced to aerial bombardments, especially by the Japanese between 1937-45—skewing any statistical analysis of fires not only toward urban areas, but taking China as a whole, toward urban areas dominated by Chiang Kai Shek’s government. HZDD: 3034-4689.
5. Of the numerous examples of crop fires and field burning conflagrations, Fuling County in May 1864 and again in May 1869 in surrounding tobacco fields and village districts stand out for scale and devastation. HZDD: 1634, 1693.
6. An overview of official Chinese laws and their use regarding fires is also in HZDD vl. 3, 6048-50. A complete set of the *Great Qing Code Substatutes* (*Da Qing huidian*, juan 278) follows on HZDD: 6053-54.
7. See HZDD 6044-55 which include basic law codes and criminal procedures related to fire disasters.
8. This was particularly problematic for Tibetans and Yi (as well as other minorities like Akha, Miao, Qiang, etc.) as they practiced both a form of swidden agriculture (regular land clearance with fire, then rotating on to a new area to allow cleared land to regenerate after agro-production had exhausted the soil) and regular firing of grass-rangeland areas to help regenerate grazed and overgrazed grasses.
9. Hayes Spring 2005: Interviews with local Tibetans in Maqu (Gansu), Labrang (Gansu), Songpan (Sichuan), Mao’er gai (Sichuan), Hongyuan (Sichuan), and Jiuzhaigou (Sichuan). According to Steve Harrell, fire issues were also an issue in the Liangshan Yi region in southwestern Sichuan. Hayes-Harrell personal communication, Fall 2005.
10. In official forestry studies after 1952 the Bureau of Forestry in China began to collect forest and grass fire data stemming from natural causes for the first time—this data was, however, not widely known or accessible.
11. One of the best overall treatments of various campaigns from the 1950s and ‘60s in English is Judith Shapiro’s *Mao’s War Against Nature*, Cambridge, 2000. The two campaigns mentioned above, “Baohu senlin, fazhan linye” [Protect Forest, Develop Forestry] and “Baohu caodi, fazhan muye” [Protect Grasslands, Develop Animal Husbandry], were the earliest campaigns to target fire culture and fire management/disaster issues. Other campaigns followed in 1955 and 1956: “Controlling Forest Fire Disasters in Regions” and “Controlling Forest Fire Disasters in Villages.” Both sets of regulations targeted Tibetans in particular as they were considered to “hate” trees and constantly set these new state commodities and strategic resources on fire. This naturally ignored centuries of land clearance practices for rangeland and preventative fire setting to control detritus in dry years. See *Sichuan linye zhi*, 1994: 331-32; *Sichuan Senlin*, 1992: 1254-55.

Teaching Material Culture and Chinese Gardens at American Colleges

Han Li

Abstract: The paper reflects upon the experience of designing and teaching a course on material culture and Chinese gardens. Involving traditional philosophy, ethics, religion, painting, calligraphy, craft, literature, architecture, and horticulture, a classical Chinese garden can be considered a microcosm of Chinese culture. This essay discusses the textbooks and general organization of the course, particularly focusing on how students study the key elements (rocks, water, plants, and architecture) in building a Chinese garden. Some Chinese literature with representations of gardens that can be used for this class is also introduced. In addition, this essay uses two classical Chinese gardens built in the United States (the Astor Court and the Garden of Flowing Fragrance) to discuss the appropriation of “Chinese-ness” in different geographical, physical, and cultural environments. Finally, some available online resources and technologies that have enhanced student understanding of the subject matter are introduced.

Keywords Material culture; Classical Chinese gardens; Suzhou; Yangzhou; Classroom

Involving traditional philosophy, ethics, religion, painting, calligraphy, craft, literature, architecture, and horticulture, a classical Chinese garden is a microcosm of Chinese culture. As such, teaching Chinese culture through the lens of traditional Chinese gardens can be highly productive. In addition to being admired as works of art, Chinese gardens are at the same time valuable pieces of real estate. They have economic importance and function socially as status symbols. Therefore, in addition to the aesthetic perspective, this class (“Material Culture and Chinese Gardens”) also adopts a historical approach and examines how the aesthetic meanings of gardens translate into social experience and sensibilities. If we define “environment” broadly to include a wide range of issues dealing with the interactions between humans and the natural world, this course also contributes to Environmental Studies.¹ In the first part of this essay, I discuss the textbooks and general organization of the course, particularly focusing on how students study the key elements (rocks, water, plants, and architecture) used in building a Chinese garden. Then I introduce some Chinese literature that features representations of gardens. After that, I focus on two classical Chinese gardens built in the United States (The Astor Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Garden of Flowing Fragrance at the Huntington Library in California) and discuss the appropriation of “Chinese-ness” in different geographical, physical, and cultural environments. Finally, I introduce some resources and technologies available online that have enhanced student understanding of the subject matter. The discussion here is based on my own experience of designing and teaching this course. This course could

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also be combined with a study abroad program in which students would gain firsthand experience with the gardens; in fact, such a combination would be ideal.

TEXTBOOK AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The main readings for this class include Maggie Keswick's *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture* (3rd edition), Chen Congzhou's *On Chinese Gardens*, excerpts from Hu Dongchu's *The Way of the Virtuous: The Influence of Art and Philosophy on Chinese Garden Design*, and Stewart Johnston's *Scholar Gardens of China: A Study and Analysis of the Spatial Design of the Chinese Private Garden*.² Keswick's book, targeting non-specialists, offers straightforward and informative readings that help students understand basic concepts about Chinese gardens. Chen's seminal study comprises five essays – respectively, “implicitness and appropriateness,” “garden composition,” “restoration and renovation,” “the natural and the cultivated,” and “motion and stillness.” Each essay provides a comprehensive overview of the important issues concerning Chinese gardens. Poetic in both content and language, Chen's essays are more scholarly than Keswick's book. One needs to have a solid understanding of Chinese gardens to appreciate the terms, assumptions, allusions, and associations that are integrated into but never explicitly explained in Chen's work. Therefore, his essays provide ideal materials for students to review and reflect upon what they have learned in the latter half of the course. The books by Hu and Johnston, with detailed studies on individual gardens, are especially useful for case studies of specific gardens. While Hu's book is mainly written for generalists, Johnston's systematic examination of the history and form of private gardens is more scholarly in nature and provides greater depth. Therefore, each book complements the others nicely.

The class starts with a comparison of gardens in the East and West (oversimplified but a necessary initial step for the students, especially those who enroll in the class with no background knowledge of Chinese culture), to gain a general overview of the differences between the two. After viewing the pictures of Versailles and the layout of Yuan Ming Yuan (Garden of Perfect Brightness) in Keswick's first chapter, students will immediately notice that while Western gardens are designed according to precise mathematical and geometrical rules, Chinese gardens tend not to involve strict symmetry or artificially trimmed plants and trees. Here the instructor needs to clarify the seeming absence of artificial design in the Chinese gardens – it is not that Chinese gardens are purely “natural,” but rather that the whole endeavor lies in skillfully concealing traces of artificiality.

Following this comparison, students read passages from Keswick's and Hu's books which explain the philosophical, ethical, and religious ideas involved in a Chinese garden, including the Confucian emphasis on *li* (ritual or etiquette), Confucian ethical views of mountains and water (“The wise find pleasure in water; the virtuous find pleasure in hills”),³ the Daoist idea of the unity of all existing things, the concept of *wuwei* (non-action), the relative value of size and emptiness, as well as Buddhist idea of mountain monastery. A key concept in Chinese culture and also in Chinese gardening is *yin-yang* dualism – the idea that opposing forces are interconnected and interdependent. I find using the Outlook Garden (Zhan Yuan) to elaborate on this idea quite effective. As the residence of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) founding general Xu Da (1332-1385), the Outlook Garden has a relatively simple layout – a principal hall separating the garden into northern and southern sections with each involving a major artificial stone mountain and a pond. The purpose of this case study is to have students understand the *yin-yang* concept and be able to find the ubiquitous *yin-yang* dualism in a Chinese garden. Students will identify many expressions of *yin-yang* dualism, such as rockeries vs. water (hard and soft, passivity and motion); rockeries vs. caves (solid-

ity and emptiness, revealed and concealed, closed and opened); the northern pond vs. the southern pond (big and small, north and south); the Fan Pavilion vs. the Pavilion of Annual Coldness (high and low, warm and cold, function and name); and architecture vs. natural elements (crooked and straight, simple and adorned). Above all, the goal is that students will gradually come to recognize the ultimate *yin* and *yang* – the cohabitation of traditional Confucian literati's concern for worldly success and outward expression and their Daoist pursuit of a pleasant, quiet and secluded lifestyle.

In addition to exploring the ideas from the three schools of thought – Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism – students read selected chapters from Ji Cheng's *The Craft of Gardens* (*Yuan Ye*) – one of the few primary materials students read for this class. Written between 1631 and 1634, *The Craft of Gardens* is the oldest surviving garden manual in the Chinese tradition and possibly the first general manual on landscape gardening in the world. Students need to understand the historical background of the work in order to understand the work itself. During the late Ming period, with the emergence of a wealthy merchant class longing to join the cultured upper class, there appeared a strong demand for works on self-improvement and advice on what was socially acceptable. Ji Cheng's work fits into this genre of literature. The purpose of reading Ji Cheng's theory is to have students examine some of the most important principles governing Chinese garden designing, which they will repeatedly encounter in the latter half of the course. "Artistry through suitability," for instance, is a fundamental one. Since Ji Cheng hardly provides any step-by-step instructions, as students read the selected chapters, they will find considerable contrasts relative to what modern people would expect from a gardening manual. Instead, Ji insists that a garden should be designed according to the existing nature and features of the landscape; for example, the foundation should be designed "in accordance with the rise and fall of the natural contours to accentuate their intrinsic form," or rocks should be used "to direct the flow of a spring, so that each borrows value from the other."⁴ Therefore, according to Ji Cheng, there are only general principles when designing a garden, no hard and fast rules. Everything depends upon what's already there.

KEY ELEMENTS AND CASE STUDIES

Following the theoretical introduction, we discuss design techniques and key elements involved in building a garden, namely, the use of rocks, water, plants, and architecture. I usually devote at least one week (three class sessions) to each topic. Students examine the symbolic meanings of each element, the traditional Chinese fascination with them, and various ways of using such elements in Chinese gardens. In addition, I accompany the examination of each element with a case study of the particular garden most well-known for that element.

Rock: In addition to related pages in Keswick's book, students also read Claudia Brown's "Where Immortals Dwell: Shared Symbolism in Painting and Scholars' Rocks" and David Sensabaugh's "Fragments of Mountain and Chunks of Stone: The Rock in the Chinese Garden." Claudia Brown is the curator of Asian art at the Phoenix Art Museum and David Sensabaugh is the curator of Asian art at the Yale University Art Gallery. Both articles carefully study the placement and representation of rocks and stone mountains in Chinese paintings and explore how they are associated with the idea of the land of immortals in Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian philosophy. By this time, students will be familiar with the terminology and classification of the rocks often used in Chinese gardens. As for actual appreciation of rocks, students examine the four cardinal characteristics – *shou* (slim), *zhou* (wrinkled), *lou* (leaking), and *tou* (transparent) – through which the *Taihu* (Great Lake)

stones are appreciated.⁵ While examining these four features, I use high resolution pictures that I took of the rocks and stone mountains in Chinese gardens for students to analyze.⁶ A close look at the photos of the Jade Stone Peak (Yu Linglong) in the Garden of Pleasure (Yu Yuan) in Shanghai and the Cloud-Crowned Peak (Guan Yun Feng) in the Lingering Garden (Liu Yuan) in Suzhou, for instance, perfectly illustrate these four features.

The garden used for the case study for rocks is the Lion Grove Garden (Shizi lin) in Suzhou.⁷ Nowadays, the tickets to some Suzhou gardens (mainly the World Heritage sites) are foldable maps with both Chinese and English captions. When I visited them during the preparation stage for this course, I collected a few of these special tickets from each garden

for use in classroom discussion. The sections on the Lion Grove Garden from Hu's and Johnston's books serve as good readings for this part of the course. Looking at the pictures of the lion-shaped stones, students will realize that they are not literal likenesses; instead, they lack concrete details such as claws, teeth, or manes. Even perceiving the shape of a lion's body may require the visitors' imagination. In other words, these stones are chosen for the image or spirit they evoke, not for perfect fidelity.⁸ This examination will help students understand a unique characteristic often seen in Chinese ink monochrome painting or calligraphy – “*xieyi*” (freehand brushwork). This approach emphasizes the spirit rather than the form, which echoes the discussion regarding “natural” and “artificial” in Chinese and

Western gardens at the beginning of the course.

Water: Students study the various symbolic and practical uses of water in classical gardens. Some of these uses are not mentioned in the readings but are illustrated using materials I collected during my preparation trip. For example, there is a *qi*, *qin*, *shu*, *hua* (“Chinese

Figure 1. Plan of the Surging Wave Pavilion (Johnston, 101)

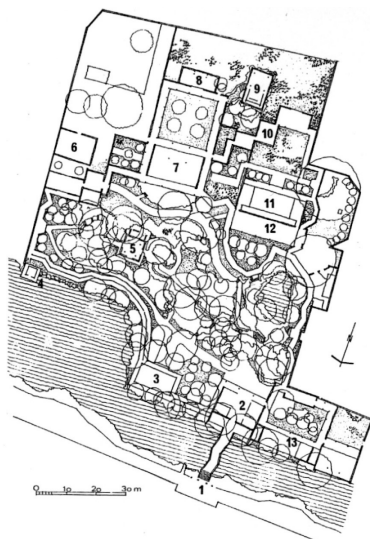


Figure 2. The moat-like pond outside of the Surging Wave Pavilion. (Photo by author.)



chess, zither, calligraphy, painting”) corner in the He Garden (He Yuan) in Yangzhou, where the sound of the running water in a well resembles the music of the zither. The case study for this topic is the Surging Waves Pavilion (Canglang Ting) in Suzhou. In addition to the basic historical background of the garden, we discuss two other key points. First, we reflect on the origin and connotation of the garden’s name (in combination with studying the couplets of poetry inscribed on the Surging Wave Pavilion in the garden). Here, instructors can seize the opportunity to introduce the importance of names in Chinese garden culture. A classical Chinese garden is never considered complete unless it is properly named. The name should reflect the garden’s character and demonstrate a poetic touch. Second, the most distinctive characteristic of this garden is its use of water. For this point I always juxtapose the plan of the Canglang Ting garden with the photos I took onsite, so students can clearly see how water is used in the outside rather than inside this garden to contribute to its sense of seclusion and serenity.

Plants: I ask two questions to facilitate students’ understanding of the roles of plants in Chinese gardens. First, considering the astonishing wealth and variety of plant life in China, why are only very limited plant species favored in a Chinese garden? Through answering this question, students will realize that certain plants are preferred not just for their beauty, but primarily because of the ethical values and literary associations they carry. Second, I often select a plant (lotus or bamboo, for example) and ask students what kind of virtues they would associate with the plant. After a discussion, students are often amazed to know that the hollow-ness of the bamboo stem suggests humility in Chinese culture, and the fact that bamboo bends but never breaks in the wind symbolizes the flexibility of a Confucian ideal gentleman. The discrepancy between the students’ answers and the symbolic meanings of bamboo in a Chinese context allows students to reexamine the familiar from another cultural perspective, while simultaneously becoming aware of the culturally-specific nature of these connotations. This is also a good time to revisit the Confucian idea of finding virtues in natural things. We then discuss the botanical symbolism of the long-standing favorites in Chinese gardens, including the lotus, orchid, banana tree, pomegranate, peony, peach blossom, plum blossom, pine, and chrysanthemum. Some of these plants are associated with famous historical figures, such as lotus with the neo-Confucian thinker Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) and chrysanthemum with the poet Tao Yuanming (365?-427). This is also a good time to have students read related passages such as Zhou’s *Ai lian shuo* (“Love of Lotus”) as well as poems about chrysanthemum from Tao Yuanming’s *Yinjiu* (“Drinking Wine”) series. (These literary aspects are further discussed below.)

The Bamboo Garden (Ge Yuan) in Yangzhou provides a useful case study. Other than studying the different kinds of bamboo and the four-season motif of this garden, we emphasize that this garden built in 1818 by Huang Zhiyun, a salt-merchant-turned-official, is a typical Yangzhou salt merchant garden. As such, it differs from the scholar-officials’ gardens in Suzhou. This prepares students to discuss the difference between Suzhou and Yangzhou gardens.

Architecture: This section focuses on the function, organization, and symbolic meanings of various architectural features, such as the pavilion, bridge, covered corridor, undulating wall, gates of various shapes (with various connotations), lattice windows of different patterns, roofs, and eaves. Here I use episodes from the *Romance of the West Chamber* (*Xixiang ji*) and the *Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin ping mei*) to show students how lovers are forever speaking, listening, and climbing over garden walls in Chinese novels and plays.

I use the Garden of Pleasure to conclude this part. With five major compartments and a series of buildings, the Garden of Pleasure entails a more complicated layout than the other

gardens we have examined. I usually have students engage in a group discussion, imagining they are the owners of this garden and designing a route to guide their guests around the property. Each group then presents its preferred route and the rationale behind their choices. The purposes of this activity are multifold. First, when designing its route, students need to put themselves in the “real life” situation as if they were really living and strolling in the garden. Therefore, they are “experiencing” the garden rather than just reading and talking about it. Second, students get to exchange ideas within the group and facilitate each other’s learning. Most importantly, students become inspired when each group presents its proposed route and realizes that, despite the limited space, there are numerous possibilities to explore in a Chinese garden.

The Garden of Pleasure has been renovated several times over the years. Some of the renovations and additions are controversial among scholars. For example, the dragon heads on the undulating walls have been criticized for being too explicit and vulgar. Consequently, this is a good time to have students read Chen Congzhou’s chapter on “Restoration and Renovation.”

THE SUZHOU AND YANGZHOU TRADITIONS

After studying the four key elements, I use the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician (Zhuozheng Yuan) and the Lingering Garden to sum up the Suzhou tradition. In addition to the readings from Hu’s and Johnston’s books, I show a DVD purchased at the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician (in English or with English subtitles, about 10 minutes long). From the video, students gain a vivid experience of the garden and review the elements they have learned up to this point. To accompany the video, I hold a session in the computer lab during which students use Google Earth to experience the gardens first-hand. I will elaborate on this point later in the “Technological Aids” section.

Students will also read selected chapters from Crag Clunas’s *Fruitful Sites* to wrap up the Suzhou tradition. As a prominent scholar on material culture of the Ming era, Clunas has written extensively on Chinese gardens, furniture, paintings, and calligraphy. In addition to studying these specific topics, his scholarship is especially illuminating on the methodology and historiography of art history. His work urges students to take a critical look at the concept of “*yuan*” and reflect on the aesthetic approaches that some of the previous readings use. Did people from 16th and 17th century China, for instance, look at the gardens the same way? Were those gardens always appreciated in terms of the criteria we have been studying? In addition to aesthetic values, what other practical or social functions did gardens perform in traditional China? Clunas’ work helps students to historicize Chinese gardens and become aware of the pitfall of treating “*yuan*” statically. In *Fruitful Sites* Clunas points out that in the mid-16th century “*yuan*” meant “orchard,” a productive place. Over time, however, gardens lost their practical role as centers of horticulture. He convincingly argues that in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, people’s perspectives on gardens shifted from the realm of production to the realm of consumption and excess. Also, Clunas urges a critical view toward the local gazetteers, the main source of our knowledge of gardens. Clunas demonstrates that these gazetteers are by no means unbiased primary sources. Instead, cunning political maneuvering lies behind the records of many of the gardens. Students consider these chapters from Clunas’ book the densest scholarly reading for this class. Therefore, breaking the reading into small questions helps students see how Clunas arrives at his arguments.

In contrast to the Suzhou tradition, I introduce the Yangzhou gardens, which witness the vicissitudes of the salt merchants’ families in this city. Students will recall the Yangzhou

garden – the Bamboo Garden – we considered earlier for its plants. In this part, students carefully examine the He Garden and the Wang Residence (Wangshi xiaoyuan, renovated and opened to the public a few years ago). Through these two sites, students not only see the difference between the Yangzhou residential garden house and the Suzhou garden, but also get a peek at the society of the *Jiangnan* area in the late 19th century.

THE LITERATURE COMPONENT

In this course, students read poems, essays, novels, plays, memoirs, and miscellaneous records regarding classical Chinese gardens. Some of the short ones can be integrated with the lecture on the same topic. Zhou Dunyi's "Love of Lotus," for example, can be discussed in the plants section. Longer readings can be discussed in their own right. I usually reserve four class periods to discuss selected chapters from the following three works: *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng*), *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting*), and *Six Records of a Floating Life* (*Fusheng liuji*).

Students are always amazed to know that so many stories from famous Chinese literary works are set in gardens. For *Dream of the Red Chamber*, instead of reading the text students watch parts of episode 8 from the Chinese TV series, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, when the Jia family builds the Grand Perspective Garden (Daguan Yuan) for the visit of the imperial consort, Yuanchun. I ask students to pay special attention to three points: 1) When Jia Zheng and his official friends talk about the design of the garden, their words nicely echo the principles from Ji Cheng's manual; 2) When the construction is almost finished, Jia Zheng explains the importance of names in a Chinese garden; 3) When Jia Zheng visits the garden with his friends and his son, Jia Baoyu, the names that Jia Baoyu contributes for the architectural features in the garden are considered "superior" to those contributed by the bookish scholars. Students often find this clip extremely interesting, particularly because they have read theories on designing and naming a Chinese garden in the earlier part of the class. This episode provides a good opportunity for students to observe the implementation and negotiation of these theories in an actual situation.

For Tang Xianzu's (1550-1616) *The Peony Pavilion*, students read the synopsis of the play and then read only the most renowned scenes – "strolling in the garden" and "the interrupted dream."⁹ I ask questions ranging from the meaning of Liu Mengmei's name to the relationship between Du Liniang's visit to the garden to the author's primary theme of *qing* (usually translated "passion"). To help students better understand the significance of this work as well as the Kun opera, the tradition to which *Peony Pavilion* belongs, I play a five-minute video of an interview in English with Kenneth Pai, producer of the Young Lover's edition of the *Peony Pavilion*.¹⁰ Through this interview, students have an opportunity to see what a performance of the Kun opera looks like, as well as to understand the importance of the costumes, especially the long sleeves and the movements of the performers.

From *Six Records of a Floating Life*, students read "The Joys of the Wedding Chamber" and "The Pleasures of Leisure." In this memoir, Shen Fu, a young painter who lived at the beginning of the 19th century, describes in touching detail his everyday life with his beloved wife, Yun. In "The Joys of the Wedding Chamber," students will see that the couple lived in the Surging Wave Pavilion for a while (translated as "Pavilion of the Waves" in the version I use).¹¹ The portrayal of their family life offers a chance for students to examine how the aesthetic and social function of the garden are integrated into their lives, as well as into gender relationships in the early 19th century. In "The Pleasures of Leisure," Shen Fu describes some of the hobbies that he and his wife share – gardening, flower arranging, interior design, and, most importantly, creating a miniature mountain in a tray. Stephen Owen, a

professor and the leading scholar of classical Chinese literature at Harvard University, draws a compelling allegory between Shen Fu's memoir writing and building a miniature mountain – in both he is eternally unsuccessful in the effort to hide the chasmal marks and create a seamless illusion.¹²

CLASSICAL CHINESE GARDENS IN THE US

In addition to exploring the many nuances of Chinese gardens, introducing students to selected classical Chinese gardens in the U.S. is crucial for this course. First, compared to traveling to China to visit these gardens in person, visiting a U.S. garden is feasible for most students. Also, by the time the two classical Chinese gardens in the U.S. are introduced, students will have finished the major part of the course. Examining these two gardens provides an opportunity for the students to reflect on what they have studied. We usually consider two gardens – the Astor Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Garden of Flowing Fragrance (Liufang Yuan) at the Huntington Library. I introduce the Astor Court along with its prototype – the Master of the Nets Garden (Wangshi Yuan) in Suzhou – and its genesis. For this topic, Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong's article "A Chinese Garden Court: The Astor Court at The Metropolitan Museum of Art" is useful. In this lengthy article, Murck and Fong review the tradition of a scholar's garden, analyze architectural details of Astor Court, and document the process of building this garden court in New York. Built during the era of normalization of US-PRC relations, the Astor Court illustrates the first cultural-political exchange between China and the US after China reopened to the US. An award-winning documentary, *Ming Garden*, made by Met commissioned filmmaker Gene Searchinger and communications specialist Thomas Newman, carefully documents the process of installation.¹³ Compared with Murck and Fong's article, the teaching set *Nature within Walls: The Chinese Garden at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* is relatively straightforward reading. This set includes a color booklet, two full-size posters of the garden court, and a CD-ROM featuring a 10-minute narrated video tour of the garden.¹⁴ By this time, students are already equipped with the necessary knowledge to appreciate the garden court. Therefore, I often have the students serve as if they were the narrator or curator to navigate the class through the poster or the video. This is an effective way for the students to reflect on how much they have learned about appreciating a Chinese garden.

Compared to the Astor Court, the Garden of Flowing Fragrance is much bigger. Therefore, there is considerably more to talk about in terms of garden design and technique. Brochures I obtained at the garden show the plan of the garden and translate all of the site names as well as the couplets adorning some of the buildings. This, again, makes wonderful study material for the students. In addition to the aesthetic approach, I historicize these two projects so students see how the "Chinese-ness" was transplanted differently in each situation. To ensure authenticity, both projects invited designers and craftsmen from China (especially Suzhou). The majority of the building materials, such as Taihu rocks, roof tiles, and the *nan* timber were shipped from China, and the construction involved a complex and unique Chinese-American cooperation. Both projects had to make compromises to adjust to the on-site situation and the local building codes. As it is located on the second floor of the Met, designers of the Astor Court had to deal with the capability of the floor to bear the weight of the traditional garden wall. The Garden of Flowing Fragrance had to meet California standards for guardrail height, handicap accessibility, and seismic standards. It is interesting to discuss how the Chinese designers negotiated such requirements and reinvented authenticity. In an essay in *ASIANetwork Exchange*, Carol Brash quotes Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims to elaborate on the constructed nature of authenticity in

the classical Chinese gardens in the US. Authenticity is not about objects *per se*, but rather about the social contract between the audience and the museum.¹⁵ While students should have no problem understanding how authenticity is negotiated through specific examples, understanding the discourse of constructing authenticity may be difficult for undergraduates, particularly those students who are non-majors and taking this course simply to satisfy general education requirements. A monograph on creating the Garden of Flowing Fragrance – *Another World Lies Beyond: Creating Liu Fang Yuan, The Huntington's Chinese Garden* edited by June Li, the curator of the Garden of Flowing Fragrance—serves as useful reading for discussion of this garden.

TECHNOLOGICAL AIDS

In addition to texts, pictures, videos, maps, plans, and pamphlets, two interactive web tools can greatly enhance students' experience of the gardens. The first, Google Earth, now offers panoramic photos of some Chinese gardens in extremely high resolution.¹⁶ The visitor is given a 360° view of a certain part of a garden where s/he feels like s/he is standing in the middle of the place and can look around on all four sides (by using the mouse to navigate). Also, the resolution is so high that details like a pebble on the ground show up clearly. I had a successful experience using Google Earth in this course. We held the class in the Language Center, where two students worked together on each PC and used Google Earth to take a virtual tour of the gardens. For example, after students located the Lion Grove Garden, they found a panoramic picture of the lion rockeries facing the True Pleasure Pavilion. Although they have seen several pictures of it in various readings, the Google Earth images make them feel as if they are actually in the garden.

The other interactive webpage concerns not a garden, but a house – the Yin Yu Hall (Yin Yu Tang). Built by a Huang merchant in Anhui province around 1800, eight generations of the family had lived in this house compound, until the mid-1990s, when the remaining members of the family sold the house to the Peabody Essex Museum of Salem, Massachusetts (PEM). The entire house was dismantled, shipped and rebuilt at the museum in 2003. PEM has an award winning website¹⁷ where visitors can take a virtual tour of the house with audio narratives, pictures, and videos. Most importantly, visitors can closely observe detailed views of all structural and decorative elements of the house. The traditional Chinese house and classical gardens share cultural principles. By using this online source students have a chance to see how the concepts that they have previously learned are actually implemented and negotiated.¹⁸

Also, the PEM provides a generation-by-generation documentation of the history of the Huang family who occupied Yin Yu Tang. Therefore, by looking into the Huang family's domestic life and their interaction with the larger social, economic, and historical circumstances, students will also see the socio-historical change of Chinese society over the past two hundred years.

In addition to these two main websites, the webpage¹⁹ for the Garden of Flowing Fragrance also has plenty useful information, especially the audio tour narrated by curator June Li. The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician has its own website,²⁰ where the introduction is available in both Chinese and English.

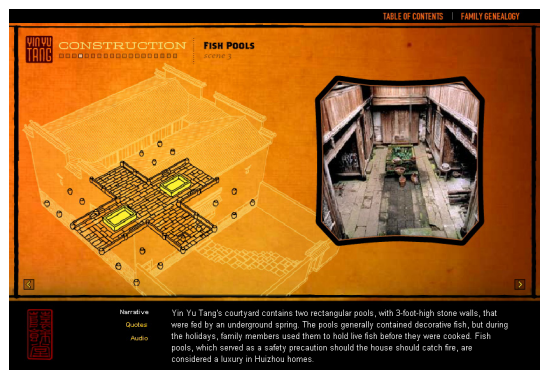


Figure 3. A snapshot from the Yin Yu Tang webpage where it introduces the inward courtyard and the two fishponds. (<http://www.pem.org/sites/yinyutang/house/base.html>)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

My experience with the “Material Culture and Chinese Gardens” class has been extremely pleasant and rewarding. The advantage of this course is that it enables students to experience many aspects of Chinese culture without going through the conventional survey. One of the main objectives of the course is for students to gain factual knowledge regarding Chinese gardens in particular and Chinese culture in general. Through this course, students learn the fundamental principles involved in designing and appreciating a Chinese garden. They examine the use of the four key elements in classical Chinese gardens as well as their respective symbolic meanings. By the end of the course, students are familiarized with the terminology and classification of Chinese gardens as well as the most well-known extant classical gardens in the lower Yangtze delta. In addition, students are expected to gain a broader understanding and appreciation of cultural activity. As college students they should be able to view the world from more than one cultural perspective and understand how historical forces have shaped human cultures. One thing I remind students throughout this course is that although their own (dis)likes about Chinese gardens are certainly valid, this course is about understanding why Chinese people like or dislike certain elements about the gardens. I have had quite a few students travel to or study abroad in China after taking this course. Each has relayed how his/her knowledge of the gardens enhanced his/her experience of the space, and vice versa. If the course is taught at an institution close to one of the Chinese gardens in the US, a field trip would be invaluable to participating students.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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- Nature Within Walls: The Chinese Garden Court at The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004.
- Sensabaugh, David Ake. “Fragments of Mountain and Chunks of Stone: The Rock in the

Chinese Garden.” *Oriental Art*, vol. 44, no. 1, (Spring 1998): 18-27.

NOTES

1. This course fulfills two foundational requirements of the Rhodes College liberal arts curriculum: F3 – Understanding How Historical Forces Shape Human Behavior and F9 – Viewing the World from More than One Cultural Perspective, and is listed as an elective course offering in the following interdisciplinary fields of study: Asian Studies, Chinese Studies, Environmental Science, and Environmental Studies.
2. Although not required reading, the course design benefitted tremendously from reviewing “A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization” prepared by Patricia Buckley Ebrey (URL: <http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/home/3garintr.htm>)
3. Translation is by James Legge. See *Confucian Analects*, Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2004, p.46.
4. Ji Cheng, *The Craft of Gardens*, trans., Alison Hardie. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, p.39.
5. This is also a good opportunity for students to revisit *yin-yang* dualism as each characteristic features an example of *yin-yang* dualism. For example, *shou* – bulk vs. slim; *lou* and *tou* – solid vs. transparent/ porous.
6. Growing up in Nanjing, I visited these *Jiangnan* (lower Yangtze delta) gardens many times. While preparing for this course, I spent a summer visiting all the gardens studied in this class again, deliberately collecting teaching materials during this trip. I took most of the photographs used in the class.
7. The Lion Grove Garden in Suzhou was the property of the Bei family before they gave it to the PRC government in 1951. The famous Asian-American architect I.M.Pei lived in this garden for a short time during his childhood. I.M.Pei was invited to design the Suzhou Museum in 2003. He made an innovative use of rocks in the museum courtyard. I always include this in lecture.
8. Hu Dongchu, *The Way of the Virtuous: The Influence of Art and Philosophy on Chinese Garden Design*. Beijing: New World Press, 1991, p. 81.
9. There is a 10-minute clip of “strolling in the garden” with English subtitles, which may be used interchangeably with reading the text of that scene.
10. Lamenting the fact that many of the Kun opera masters are aging while the younger generation is increasingly distanced from this time-honored art, Kenneth Pai invested in producing the Young Lovers’ edition of the *Peony Pavilion*. In this production he cast the young Kun opera artists and designed beautiful costumes to revive the Kun opera art and attract young audiences. This interview is available on URL:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4T6Ic84AZI>. Also, the UCLA Center for Chinese Studies has a webpage for the Young Lovers’ edition of the *Peony Pavilion* (URL: <http://www.international.ucla.edu/china/mudanting/>). It includes additional texts, pictures, and videos that can help students understand this work.
11. Translation is by Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-Hui, published by Penguin Books, London, 1983.
12. Stephen Owen, *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986, p.103.
13. As far as I know, this is only available in VHS format.
14. The video is also available on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C92bYFQDTzA>.
15. Carol Brash, “Classical Chinese Gardens in Twenty-first Century America: Cultivating the Past,” in *ASIANetwork Exchange*, 2011 (fall), Vol.19.1: 18-19.
16. To locate a garden in Google Earth, one simply puts the name of the garden in the search bar. After locating a garden, keep zooming in and you will see a number of blue squares. Each blue square can unfold like a ball and spread out into a view of a section of the garden.
17. URL:<http://www.pem.org/sites/yinyutang/index.html>
18. The main contradiction with the traditional principles in the Yin Yu Hall is that it faces north instead of south. This is related to the geographical situation of Huang village. Hills and flowing water block southern exposure making the northern orientation more desirable for Yin Yu Hall. The members of the family designed and lived in the house as if it faced the auspicious south.
19. URL: <http://www.huntington.org/huntingtonlibrary.aspx?id=490>
20. URL: <http://www.szzzy.cn/>

Imagined Futures in Chinese Novels at the Turn of the 21st century: A Study of *Yellow Peril*, *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty* and *A Flourishing Age: China, 2013*¹

Guo Wu

Abstract: Focusing on three influential contemporary Chinese political fantasy novels, this article contextualizes the stories in the complex spectrum of contemporary Chinese political thoughts and interprets them in light of the rivaling tendencies among the Chinese intellectuals since the 1990s, regarding the issues of rising nationalism and political authoritarianism, the possibilities of fascism and federalism, the role of a strong, centralized state, and the relevance of liberal democracy in China. The article calls attention to fiction as an expression of political thought and concerns, and argues that these novels present a pessimistic and chilling view of China's political future, in contrast with the optimistic tone of novels of the same genre in the early 20th century, and also challenge an earlier cult of the Western model of liberal democracy. An earlier Chinese-language version of the paper appeared in the website "Democratic China", <http://www.minzhuzhongguo.org> 12/8/2010, entitled "Zhengzhi huanxiang xiaoshuo zhong de dangdai Zhongguo sixiang: jiedu Huang Huo, Zhongnanhai zuihou de douzheng, he Shengshi, Zhongguo 2013" [Chinese Political Thought as Reflected in Political Fantasy Novels: Interpreting *Yellow Peril*, *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty*, and *A Flourishing Age: China, 2013*]

Keywords Asia; China; Literature

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Since the late 1980s, Chinese scholars and critical intellectuals have been engaged in a debate about how to assess China's cultural tradition, political reality, and future road. Based on their different agendas and intellectual resources, these intellectuals are roughly divided into the following schools: "anti-traditionalism," "neo-authoritarianism," "neo-conservatism," "new-leftism," and "liberalism."² This article argues that political fantasy novels appearing in late 20th and early 21st century China, though unlike straightforward polemical writings, also continue to express concerns about China's political future and reflect the writers' own political thoughts, albeit in an artistic and subtle way. By examining the three political fantasy novels, *Yellow Peril* (Huang huo), *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty* (Zhongnanhai zuihou de douzheng), and *A Flourishing Age: China, 2013* (Shengshi Zhongguo, 2013), we can decode the trend of thought among these Chinese intellectuals concerning the destiny of the Chinese nation and possible systems to be adopted, as well as the interaction between and roles of the state, elite intellectuals, and ordinary people in these endeavors. The three books chosen for analysis were all published in Hong Kong, where political opinions can be articulated in a candid way, as opposed to elsewhere in China.

A PESSIMISTIC VIEW

Compared with the utopian literature appearing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the three novels analyzed here all demonstrate sentiments of pessimism and uncertainty. The influential utopian novels in the late Qing dynasty, such as Liang Qichao's *The Future of New China* (Xin Zhongguo weilaiji), Lu Shi's *New China* (Xin Zhongguo), and Wu Jianren's *New Story of Stone* (Xin shitouji), all placed hope on "progress" and "future" against the background of the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution.³ These authors were all confident about the democratic political system and China's national revival. Liang Qichao envisioned the full implementation of representative politics, and Lu Shi imagined a China that had implemented constitutional democracy and economic independence by 1951. In contrast, all three fantasy novels of our time imagine a disastrous crisis that China will encounter, and the plot of each work revolves around how to resolve that crisis. *Yellow Peril*, written by Wang Lixiong and first published in 1991, imagines an extremely devastating future for China, one in which Russia and the US would attack China with nuclear weapons while China was on the brink of civil war. In the aftermath of the nuclear attack, the Chinese people must migrate to other parts of the world in search of new space in which to live.⁴ Wang Lixiong's pessimistic view is not limited to the future of China, but also extends to the future of mankind at large. Written in the third person, the narrator of the story asks at the very end of the novel: "Is human society going to extinguish, or will it regress to a thousand years ago? When will we see a new point of balance? Or will it just decline and fall to the bottom? Is this reversible at all? Or will fully new life grow out of the rotten, old body? These are questions with no answers at this moment."⁵ Whereas late Qing writers imagined a China that stood out among the family of the nation-states, Wang Lixiong goes so far as to envision the disappearance of nation-states altogether, along with the atomization of human society, i.e. in his vision mankind will be dispersed to form small-scale, self-governed groups.

"BITTER SEARCH FOR NEW AUTHORITIES"⁶

It is notable that all three novels identify themselves with neo-authoritarianism, if only in indirect ways. Each portrays independent-thinking and reform-minded high-level party leaders in a very positive way. Significant space in each novel is dedicated to the liberal-minded communist statesmen's articulation of progressive ideas for China's future. In Wang Lixiong's *Yellow Peril* the protagonist Shi Ge has multiple identities: an independent thinker and scholar, a social activist and organizer, and a high-ranking party official. He freely moves between political dissidents and the politburo meetings. As the narrator says in the book, "How many layers are there in his identity—even he himself doesn't know." Shi Ge's political position and ideology is both complicated and ambivalent, as stated by the narrator: "Right after the passing of the Cultural Revolution's fervor, his inner heart has departed from the Communist Party; however, he has never stopped working for the governance of the CCP in the past years. The shooting of June 4th convinced him that the man-slaughtering tyranny is doomed to perish, but he was still appointed by the authorities because he was considered 'politically reliable.'⁷ Shi never participates in any pro-democracy protest. He does not belong to any camp; he has no team to his own name, and he is against both of the two confrontational forces. Opposed to both tyrannies of the government and of the mob movement, Shi Ge proposes a new style of democratic system called "gradational election," in which elections will occur in small groups of 6-7 people where everyone knows each other, and the selected representative from each small group will participate in a higher level small group in which they will conduct the election again.

Chillingly, the implementation of the utopian system imagined in the novel needs the work of an authoritarian system on the top to oversee it. For Shi Ge, the best method of political reform in China is the “self-transformation of the rulers” because “if the big power and high efficiency of the autocratic system can be utilized to implement gradational election system from the top down, it will be a most cost-effective, most promising, most smooth and peaceful revolution that will inflict the least pain on the people.”⁸ Here there is evidence that the author has accepted the premise that an autocracy has two distinct advantages for China over democratic alternatives, namely, concentration of power and high efficiency. It is only within the context of these assumptions that Wang envisions China’s future. This position is made clear again in another place in the novel, when Wang Lixiong makes a straightforward remark through the narrator: “Authority is the core to maintain the rule of the Chinese society in the past centuries. The loss of authority means the loss of the ruling power...the degree that the authority was damaged through ‘opening-up and reform’ is no less than the last years of the Qing Dynasty.”

While Wang Lixiong presents a broad scenario that encompasses multiple social groups and trends of thought, Li Jie focuses on high-level political struggle within the party. For Li Jie, the fate of China almost fully depends on the struggle between the reformer Li Yifeng and the fascist military leader Zhao Yibiao, plus the intervention of the United States. Through the dialogue between the characters, Li Jie conveys a message similar to Wang Lixiong’s: “Usually people who come from the old system and carry out a set of top-down reform can realize their ideal of peaceful reform; in contrast, if one rebels from the bottom up, it’s almost inevitable for him to use violence, and it’s very possible to bring about the restoration of the old system.” Here we see a deep skepticism of the outcome of a bottom-up revolution in China.⁹

In *A Flourishing Age*, Chen Guanzhong portrays an “alternate politburo member,” “leader of the party and the state,” He Dongsheng, who is a former Fudan University professor. He Dongsheng is a high-level political advisor, also with a dual identity as both liberal thinker and government official. His opinions can influence the decision making of the highest party apparatus, but he also maintains close relationships with non-official liberal intellectuals through the activities of a reading club that meets regularly in Beijing. According to the author, He is a “rational and deeply hidden Chinese style idealist,” but he is also a cool-headed realist. He “has been disillusioned by modern Western representative democracy...instead, he is increasingly convinced that the post-totalitarian, autocratic big government is capable of domesticating the current global financial capitalism, as long as China has a correct understanding about it.” He Dongsheng is a nationalist who attaches importance to the unique characteristic of China: “China is China. History is not a piece of blank paper that can tolerate random writing, and history can’t be restarted. Everything starts right here and right now.” He Dongsheng understands China’s future role in the world as that of regional overlord: “The Chinese century means that China can finally recover its original historical status prior to the mid-Qing time. It is sufficient for China to hold its own *tianxia* (all-under-Heaven), and it does not attempt to rule the entire world. This scheme must be known by the powers in Europe and America. China does not intend to eat all, but the West should not hinder the China-guided rise and integration of East Asia.” Yet He Dongsheng is conservative with regard to domestic political change of China. He believes that the best way forward is to maintain the status quo, because “where there is change, there is chaos.” At the same time, He Dongsheng emphasizes social security, the protection of workers and China as a country of “socialism,” which makes his listeners, Xiaoxi and Laochen, keep nodding.¹⁰ Apparently, the image of He Dongsheng is its author’s idealization

of a new-style of Chinese reformer who is a nationalist, a socialist, and a strategist, and who is both open-minded intellectually and firm politically.

SCRUTINIZING THE WEAKNESSES OF THE MASSES AND PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS

Compared with the political maturity of the statesmen in each of these novels, political dissidents and ordinary people are portrayed in the three novels as lacking rationality, managerial ability, and moral integrity. Wang Lixiong's criticisms point to the irresponsibility and infighting of pro-democracy activists. In *Yellow Peril*, Wang Lixiong envisions a Communist-yet-liberalized China that allows the return of the exiled pro-democracy activists. However, an unproductive confrontation between the "People's Front," founded by domestic activists, and the "Democratic Front," composed of former political exiles, immediately emerges. The leaders of the People's Front suffer from a long-time imprisonment in China and thus despise the leaders of the Democratic Front, seeing the latter as opportunists who just come back to China to pick cherries. On the other hand, the exiles and their Democracy Front regard the People's Front as "short of theory, short-sighted, lacking an understanding of world trends and real experience of democratic systems," and thus "they are unable to accomplish the task of reforming China." With a strongly sarcastic tone, Wang writes that the People's Front publishes a magazine called "Digging Night Soil," which is devoted to exposing sex scandals the Democratic Front leaders engaged in while they were living overseas. At the same time, their opponents, the Democratic Front, publish the confessions of the People's Front leaders after their arrests by the Chinese police. What makes the two groups look identical is their common disposition of irrational radicalism. In the eyes of the CCP high-ranking leaders, these fighters for democracy are nothing more than hypocrites. Once one side or the other acquires power, they will discard their "ism" right away, and become an authoritarian regime just like any other. As the people see through these former activists' personal ambitions, infighting, and Machiavellian means, they will lose respect for these dissidents. Grassroots-level democracy in China is disappointing, according to the author, because the traditional morality of China has been totally destroyed after incessant revolutions and the thrust of foreign culture. This history, combined with the fact that a new moral system has not been established yet, forms the moral vacuum of the entire society.

According to Wang Lixiong, with the lack of morality among the grassroots pro-democracy activists, China needs to turn to the guidance of higher level leaders. The potential new authority will be forceful and coercive, which is based on assumptions that not only are the fighters for democracy selfish and petty, but the "masses" are also vulnerable and irrational. For the statesman Shi Ge, "The masses lack rationality. Once they are incited, their behaviors will be fraught with violence and bloodstain." The novel envisions a scenario in which the masses turn to and seek the protection of a strong government after they are scared by social chaos and fed up with the empty promises of the self-proclaimed democratic leaders. In *Yellow Peril*, after the news about the nuclear attack on China is released, the masses begin to flee, loot, and spread sensational rumors. "The masses are extremely callous to political action," the narrator writes: "Robbery is the only valid action." In *A Flourishing Age*, the debacle arises from the global financial crisis, the sudden and significant depreciation of the value of US dollars, and the subsequent panic-purchasing in China. In this novel, the statesman He Dongsheng knows very well that after six days of panic and rumors, the people will cry for government protection and beg for the state machineries to provide their salvation. He is convinced that the people are extremely vulnerable and they will "willingly

prostrate themselves before the not-lovable leviathan out of fear of anarchism and great chaos, because only this leviathan can protect their life and property.” Li Jié’s *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty* is equally pessimistic about the character of the Chinese nation, as Li Yifeng says: “Human hearts are both dark and chaotic. Though this country is still paying lip service to the great unity, as a matter of fact, human hearts have decentralized... this nation only has the form but the spirit is gone, like a dying person.”¹¹ The “masses” in Li’s novel are epitomized by a group of college students who hold dialogues with Li Yifeng. These young college students have been brainwashed by the education of xenophobic patriotism, and the pro-American, reform-minded national leader Li Yifeng is seen by the students as a national traitor. However, the book also portrays the students as hypocrites: “After they make this uproar, they will still go to the US embassy applying for visa.” Therefore, the long-extolled moral credibility of Chinese students as vanguards in national salvation and democratization since the May Fourth Movement is undermined in this novel, and students are seen as being self-serving as anyone else.

Not only college students, but the half-baked Chinese liberal intellectuals and their relevance to social governance are also under scrutiny. In *A Flourishing Age*, the long conversations between the statesman and strategist He Dongsheng and independent and Bohemian intellectuals Lao Chen, Fang Caodi, and Xiao Xi to a large extent become a metaphor for the dilemma of critical liberal intellectuals in contemporary China, caught between mature and resourceful statesmen and irrational masses. The author, Chen Guanzhong, seems to be sympathetic and even identified with the liberal intellectuals, but he also knows their weakness, which is the lack of any concrete plan to solve economic and political problems, despite their spirit of idealism, skepticism, and criticism. At the same time, He Dongsheng is given ample room to expound upon his ideas, ranging from state intervention of economy to the care of workers’ benefits, from Asia’s Monroe Doctrine to China’s position in the world. Though He Dongsheng is pessimistic and cynical about China’s prospect of democratization, he has answers for all current issues, except political reform. In contrast, liberal intellectuals know nothing except their dream of political reform, and are “tonguetied” when He brags about state intervention of economy because they know nothing about economics. Here Chen implicitly poses a pointed question: since what China needs is continued self-strengthening to accomplish its rise, which increasingly places emphasis on knowledge of the international political economy and awareness of state security, how can “public intellectuals,” who mainly rely on the internet to express their critical opinions, prove they are still relevant and useful?

The three political fantasy novels pose an old question that has troubled the Chinese since the late nineteenth century: the relationship between political change and people’s “quality” (suzhi); and *Yellow Peril*, at least, suggests through the monologue of a main character, Xing Tuoyu, that “The quality of the masses predetermines the quality of democracy.”¹² Without a doubt, the three novels all rule out the sentiment of democratic populism as an option to solve China’s problems, and all instead return to a model that reinforces rather than checks elite leadership. By doing so, the authors eschew Liang Qichao’s call for refreshing the people, as well as Mao Zedong’s call for relying on the masses as a strategy of communist revolution. Despite the innovative fantasy form of these novels, each returns to a well-known Chinese pattern in which the enlightened political elites inside the current government are the only agents of change.

A NATIONALISTIC PERCEPTION OF THE WEST

Most Chinese political fantasy novels since the late Qing Dynasty have invariably

touched upon the theme of Chinese perception of Western civilization. As with the late Qing works, the above-mentioned three novels have an ambivalent attitude towards the United States as both a moral and political support for Chinese democratization and reorganization, as well as a target for Chinese scrutiny and transcendence. In these imaginations, the United States no longer serves as a paragon for the Chinese to emulate. In *Yellow Peril*, Shi Ge, the thinker-statesman in the central government, dismisses Western-style representative democracy as an “illusory aura,” and he says, “The fundamental flaw of the Western political system lies in its too large constituency. The limits of each individual voter will be enlarged to become overall limits.” Shi elaborates on the problem further: “The American society allows its people to elect a president who people actually have little knowledge of but will not allow them to pick the leader who rules them directly.”¹³ As a result, Shi Ge advocates a gradational election system in which a well-informed elite leadership acts on behalf of the larger population. Similarly, *A Flourishing Age* presents the reader with a claim that China is superior to the US in coping with the global financial crisis through the articulation of He Dongsheng, and that China is entitled to a Monroe Doctrine-style position in East Asia, a resumption of the tributary system of ancient China, and a pan-Asianist Sino-Japanese alliance to drive the US force out of the West Pacific region. In Shi Ge, *Yellow Peril* demonstrates a critical attitude towards the West as the model of China’s democratization, and asserts that the Chinese might find a better alternative to overcome the shortcomings of Western democracy, while *A Flourishing Age* enhances the feeling that the most urgent task for China is not to imitate the American political system, but to struggle for its own power and status as a main rival of the US.

The ultra-nationalist theme in two of the novels is embodied by military generals and officers. At the individual level, both *Yellow Peril* and the *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty* portray ambitious military generals who harbor deep personal animosity to the US. In *Yellow Peril*, the main anti-American character is a nuclear submarine captain named Ding Dahai, a steadfast follower of the dictator Wang Feng. Ding was sent to pursue advanced study in a US military academy, but during this experience feels that he is a misfit in American society. This feeling is exacerbated by his American classmate’s contempt of him, and his frustration after a sexual encounter with an American female classmate. In *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty*, though the US seems to play a positive role in China’s democratization by backing up the hero Li Yifeng, the author also allows the villain, the fascist military leader Zhao Yibiao, to express anti-American sentiments. As with Ding Dahai, Zhao Yibiao also has the experience of studying in the US, but this did not make Zhao a friend of America, either. Instead, “[Zhao] deeply feels, as a yellow-skinned Chinese, all kinds of humiliations when socializing with Americans. Though he does not hear a single word of insult being uttered, from their eyes, expressions, or even a subtle gesture and a touch of smile he was repeatedly told a fact: he belongs to a different world from theirs.”¹⁴ Again, Zhao’s sense of alienation is added to by insult when he discovers that his American girlfriend has not been faithful. At the end of the book, Zhao vows that he will let Americans know, sooner or later, how big a mistake they have made, and how high a price they will have to pay for treating him so poorly. In these two cases, individual desires of revenge are mixed with nationalism and become the strongest motivation of Anti-Americanism.

In the *New Story of Stone*, Wu Jianren imagines that China could draw upon its old morality to confront Western culture.¹⁵ In later political fantasy novels, such as those discussed here, the authors have all implicitly acknowledged the futility and irrelevance of Confucianism in the age of globalization, while emphasizing the break of tradition and loss

of morality. None of the authors discussed here suggests the revival of Confucianism as a cultural resource for China's reconstruction. For them, the Chinese could regain a sense of superiority against the Americans in three aspects: institutional renovation that transcends the American system, as done by Shi Ge; the power of the current strong government, as advocated by He Dongsheng; and Anti-American sentiments and a desperate desire for revenge, as shown in Ding Dahai and Zhao Yibiao.

THREE PROSPECTS: FASCISM, FEDERALISM, OR UTOPIA?

Both Wang Lixiong and Li Jie suggest the possibility of the rise of Chinese fascism or military dictatorship through their novels. There are two circumstances that will allow for or tolerate such approaches to China's future. The first is a crisis moment when people are too weak to protect themselves. In *Yellow Peril*, even the reformer Shi Ge admits that in crisis "the rise to power of fascism has its rationale. At the moment of life and death, only power can reconstruct a mechanism for redistribution, which will give a portion of food to each person to survive, rather than allow some to eat to his full and some to starve."¹⁶ For the military dictator Wang Feng in *Yellow Peril*, the rationale for fascism is the re-establishment of authority. "The biggest danger of China is the loss of authority," Wang argues, "...authority can only build upon iron and blood. Without a natural core, then force must be used; without the prestige to subdue the people, then power must be utilized to force a submission."¹⁷ When some southern Chinese provinces, under the leadership of Huang Shike, rebel against the central government and pursue independence, Wang suppresses the movement. The narrator's comments show an ambivalent attitude towards fascism in China because the "No. 16 Institute," under the supervision of Shi Ge, has concluded: "It seems that fascist rule has become the only way out to save China...but...once China has a fascist government in power, it will be the beginning of social breakdown. In other words, the general collapse will definitely be preceded by the rise of a fascist government."¹⁸ Here the author, Wang Lixiong, makes explicit his claim that military intervention into domestic politics and fascist takeover in China is likely but not desirable, and in the long run will be self-defeating.

Both *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty* and *Yellow Peril* discuss the possibility of China's federalization as a means of imagining an alternative future for China. In *The End of Red Chinese Dynasty*, one character argues that "the historical development of China will naturally move towards a federal state," and "only when this grand old empire gets loose will the prosperity of economy and culture become possible."¹⁹ Huang Shike, the separatist provincial governor in *Yellow Peril* cries out, "Why China fails to find a direction? Why does it always go back and forth? Where does the problem lie? It lies in the centralized Great Unity!" Huang calls for the establishment of a unified, peaceful, and reciprocal China based on local self-determination. Here the authors seem to have returned to the political ideals and experimentation of the federalist movement in 1920s China, and they see federalism and local self-government as a viable plan to bring vigor to each individual province which attempts to break away from the tight control of a centralized government.²⁰ At the same time, the tension between the central government and the separatist tendency as manifest in the novels reveals a major dilemma of China's modernity: to become a strong nation-state of the world, there needs to be a strong and centralized state government as the agent of modernization; but democracy and autonomy, as the other side of modernity, would require more respect for the vast geographical and cultural diversity of China, and the dynamics of local self-governance.

Of the three novels, Wang Lixiong's *Yellow Peril* definitely presents the most complicated

picture of the future of China, as well as the future of mankind. His novel does not end with a democratic or federalist China, but instead goes so far as to envision an anarchist utopia. The small community presented by Wang Lixiong looks like the New Village ideal prevalent in China during the May Fourth period. On the one hand, Wang Lixiong emphasizes the necessity of reestablishing political authority to address national crises; on the other hand, his ultimate dream seems to be communal utopianism for the world. The two faces of Wang's political imagination, authoritarianism and anarchism, are dialectical as well as chronological. They co-exist, but will only manifest themselves one after the other since authoritarianism is to be adopted as expediency based on cultural and political realism, but utopianism is Wang's ideal in the long run.

CONCLUSION

The three political fantasy novels discussed here each present possibilities for China's political future based on the author's specific analysis of China's past and present. Above all, the authors share an attitude of pessimism and uncertainty towards China's future. Politically, the authors' conservative faith in an elite leadership leads them to reject the discourse of radical mass-based revolution, and instead to return to a moderate, top-down approach. The authors not only critically reflect upon the effects of radical left-wing party politics that run through the entire 20th century of Chinese history, but also criticize the radical students of the Tiananmen Square protest in 1989 for having rejected collaboration with reform-minded officials in order to chart a new course for China's future. Interestingly, collaboration between reform-minded officials and students, which is implicitly advocated for in the three novels, was openly advocated by Adam Michnik, the former Polish dissident who visited China in July 2010, and echoed by a few leading Chinese dissident intellectuals.²¹ The three novels all mention the existence of ultra-nationalistic, anti-American political forces in China, the potential of militarization of politics, and the weakness or irrelevance of the US as a model for China's future. Though politically conservative and nationalistic, none of the three novels suggest that China's own cultural tradition and Confucianism can play any significant role in nationalist reconstruction. With a skepticism of the West and nihilism towards China's own past, the authors present dim views of China's future: realization of democratization at a high social and political cost (Li Jie), a national exodus to an unknown future while rejecting both tradition and the West (Wang Lixiong), or the passive maintenance of the status quo because there is no other viable option (Chen Guanzhong). Interestingly, a passive acceptance for elite leadership in China was recently expressed by the prominent contemporary Chinese writer and former Minister of Culture Wang Meng in an interview with Jianying Zha, a famous cultural critic: "I support [the CCP] not because it's that good, but because it would be worse without it."²² If Wang Meng's remark sounds more than a little cynical, we might also think about the recent, more positive assessment of the Chinese state by Francis Fukuyama as "high-quality authoritarian government," compared with the Middle East countries that underwent Jasmine Revolutions.²³ The flexibility and adaptability of this "high-quality authoritarian government" of China, to be sure, awaits further observations and analysis.

NOTES

1. *A Flourishing Age: China, 2013* is my translation of the book's title. The English translation of the book has been published. See Koonchung Chan, *The Fat Years* (Doubleday, 2011). The translations in this article are mine. I want to thank the editors and anonymous readers of *Asianetwork Exchange* for their meticulous reading and insightful comments during the process of revising this paper.

2. See Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese Intellectuals' Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s," *The China Quarterly*, No. 152. (Dec. 1997), pp. 725-745. Also see Kaplana Misra, "Neo-left and Neo-right in Post-Tiananmen China," *Asian Survey*, vol. 43, no. 5 (2003), 714-744. For a detailed analysis of the intellectual debate among Chinese scholars, also see Xu Youyu's article "Jinru ershiyi shiji de zuyou zhuyi he xin zuopai" [Liberalism and Neo-leftism enter the 21st century] *Dangdai zhongguo jianjiu*, no. 2, 2007.
3. For an analysis of these novels, see Geng Chuanming, "Old State and New Mission: A Survey of Utopian Literature during the Late Qing Dynasty and the Early Period of China," Wang Hui Trans. In *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 2010, 4 (3): 403-424. David Der-wei Wang discusses Liang Qichao's *The Future of New China* as "science fantasy" in his *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 301-312.
4. Wang's pessimistic tone is also pinpointed by Henry Y.H. Zhao in "A Fearful Symmetry: The Novel of the Future in Twentieth China," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol.66, No. 3 (2003), pp. 456-471.
5. Wang Lixiong, *Huang Huo* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1991), 603.
6. This phrase is taken out from Lucien W. Pye's *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977). Pye points out that "The Expectation that pure authority has the capacity to change everything has made the Chinese peculiarly prone to throw in their lot with any emerging authority that has seemed in any way efficient." See Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics*, 107, 123. For alternate means of political authority in Communist China, see Chalmers Johnson, "Chinese Communist Leadership and Mass Responses," in Ping-ti Ho and Tang Tsou eds., *China in Crisis, Vol.1 China's Heritage and the Communist Political System* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 397-437.
7. Wang Lixiong, *Huang Huo* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1991), 95.
8. *Ibid*, 104.
9. In early 2012, this skeptical attitude towards revolution was echoed by the influential and highly controversial essay "On Revolution," written by the young writer and social critic Han Han. Han argues that the final winner of a revolution will always be a selfish, vicious while seditious person. For Han's article and comments, see the Chinese website of *Financial Times*: <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001042410>
10. Chen Guanzhong, Shengshi Zhongguo, 2013 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2009), 228-233.
11. Li Jie, *Zhongnanhai zuihou de douzheng* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1999), 193.
12. Wang Lixiong, *Huang Huo* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1991), 287.
13. *Ibid*, 261. Here Wang might refer to a smaller institution such as a company, a college, or a government office, rather than the local government which is elected in the US.
14. Li Jie, *Zhongnanhai zuihou de douzheng* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1999), 127-128.
15. Geng, "Old State and New Mission," 415.
16. Wang Lixiong, *Huang Huo* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1991), 147-148.
17. *Ibid*, 193-194.
18. *Ibid*, 255.
19. Li Jie, *Zhongnanhai zuihou de douzheng* (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 1999), 188-189.
20. For the federalist movement, See Jean Chesneaux, "The Federalist Movement in China, 1920-1923," in Jack Gray. (ed.), *Modern China's Search for a Political Form* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 97-137, and Leslie Chen, *Chen Jiongming and the Federalist Movement: Regional Leadership and Nation Building in Early Republican China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for China Studies, 2000).
21. See He Qinglian, "Taren de jingyan yu women de xianshi—yoguan Miqinike Zhongguo duihua de jidian-sikao" [The Experience of the Others and the Reality of Ours---A few Thoughts on the Conversation held by Michnick in China], in *Zhongguo renquan shuangzhoukan*, 7/15/2010, no. 29. This viewpoint and its applicability was challenged by He Qinglian and Wu Guoguang. Also see "Wu Guoguang Jiaoshou Fangtan—Zhongguo zhengzhi gaige" [An Interview with Professor Wu Guoguang—Chinese Political Reform] <http://my.cnd.org/modules/wfsection/article.php?articleid=27660>
22. Jianying Zha, "Servant of the State," *The New Yorker* (Nov. 8, 2010).
23. Francis Fukuyama, *The Origin of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 313.

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Review essay: Recent Scholarship from the Buryat Mongols of Siberia

Etnicheskaia istoriia i kul'turno-bytovye traditsii narodov baikal'skogo regiona. [The Ethnic History and the Traditions of Culture and Daily Life of the Peoples of the Baikal Region] Ed. M. N. Baldano, O. V. Buraeva and D. D. Nimaev. Ulan-Ude: Institut mongolovedeniia, buddologii i tibetologii Sibirskogo otdeleniia Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk, 2010. 243 pp. ISBN 978-5-93219-245-0.

Keywords Siberia; Buryats; Mongols

Siberia's vast realms have often fallen outside the view of Asian Studies specialists, due perhaps to their centuries-long domination by Russia – a European power – and their lack of elaborately settled civilizations like those elsewhere in the Asian landmass. Yet Siberia has played a crucial role in Asian history. For instance, the Xiongnu, Turkic, and Mongol tribes who frequently warred with China held extensive Southern Siberian territories, and Japanese interventionists targeted Eastern Siberia during the Russian Civil War (1918-1921). Moreover, far from being a purely ethnic-Russian realm, Siberia possesses dozens of indigenous Asian peoples, some of whom are clearly linked to other, more familiar Asian nations: for instance, the Buryats of Southeastern Siberia's Lake Baikal region share particularly close historic, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural ties with the Mongols. The Buryats, who fell under Russian rule over the seventeenth century, number over 400,000 and are the largest native Siberian group. Most dwell in the Buryat Republic, or Buryatia, which borders Mongolia to the south and whose capital is Ulan-Ude (called "Verkheneudinsk" during the Tsarist period); others inhabit Siberia's neighboring Irkutsk Oblast and Zabaikal'skii Krai (formerly Chita Oblast), and tens of thousands more live in Mongolia and China. The Buryat language belongs to the Mongol branch of the Altaic family. Most literate Buryats used the vertical-script Literary, or Classical, Mongolian language until the 1930s, when it was replaced by vernacular Buryat written first in Latin, and then in Cyrillic letters. Like their Mongol brethren across the border, most Buryats practice Tibetan-style Buddhism or Shamanism, both of which have survived Communist anti-religious campaigns that – just as in Mongolia – decimated shamans and lamas and laid waste to the numerous *datsans* (Buddhist monasteries) that previously existed in the region. The Buryats' traditional economy – like that of the Mongols – revolved around horse, cattle, sheep, goat, camel, and yak herding, often nomadic; hunting and agriculture played secondary roles. Just as the Mongols of Chinese-ruled Inner Mongolia confront Sinicization and massive Chinese immigration, the Buryats' cultural survival is threatened by centuries of Russification policies, and they are greatly outnumbered by Russians in their homeland.

The history, archaeology, language and literature, folklore, religion, and sociology of the Buryats and other ethnic groups of the Baikal region from antiquity to the present are treated in *Etnicheskaia istoriia i kul'turno-bytovye traditsii narodov baikal'skogo regiona* [The Ethnic History and the Traditions of Culture and Daily Life of the Peoples of the Baikal Region], edited by Marina Namzhilovna Baldano, Oľga Vladimirovna Buraeva and Daba

Dambaevich Nimaev. Most of the twenty-seven chapters' contributors are researchers at Ulan-Ude's Institute of Mongolian Studies, Tibetology, and Buddhism of the Siberian Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences; others are affiliated with the same city's Buryat State University, East Siberian State Academy of Culture and the Arts, Ethnographic Museum of the Peoples of Transbaikalia, and Buryat branches of the Siberian State University of Telecommunications and Information Sciences and the Russian State University of the Humanities.

Nikolai Vladimirovich Imenokhoev and Evgenii Vladimirovich Pavlov investigate the pre-conquest Buryats' archaeology and ethnohistory. Examining the Buryats' various methods of corpse disposal – cliff burial, ground burial, cremation, and exposure – Imenokhoev connects cliff burial to the prehistoric groups that occupied Southern and Eastern Siberia during the second and first millennia B.C.; ground burial, to the influence of the Xiongnu and early Mongols; cremation, to the Turkic Kurykans and Yenisei Kyrgyz of the ancient Baikal region; and exposure to the entry of Buddhism from Mongolia by the seventeenth century. Pavlov ponders the origins of the Khamnagadai clan, a subset of the Western Buryats' Ekhirit tribe. Folklore and linguistic evidence suggests that at some point in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, the Ekhirits defeated a local Evenk (Tungus) clan in the upper Lena River basin; they initially enslaved the Evenks, but later incorporated them into the tribe as equals after the Evenks' archers helped the Ekhirit defeat an enemy proto-Yakut group: these Evenks subsequently became the Khamnagadai clan.

Saian Iur'evich Darzhaev, Irina Batoevna Batueva, Elena Aleksandrovna Bardunaeva, and Ol'ga Vladimirovna Buraeva address aspects of Buryat life under Tsarist rule. Darzhaev shows how the Russian autocracy's search for political and cultural unity and fear of minority nationalism resulted in the following assimilationist policies towards the Buryats at the turn of the twentieth century: the abolition of traditional self-government, Russian colonization of Buryat lands, aggressive proselytization by the Russian Orthodox Church, and conscription of Buryat males. Instead of inculcating a "Russian" self-identity and loyalty to the Russian state, however, these measures increased Buryat alienation from the regime. Batueva and Bardunaeva describe examples of prerevolutionary Western Buryat architecture preserved by the Ethnographic Museum of the Peoples of Transbaikalia. The climate and soil west of Baikal favored settled herding and agriculture, so Buryats there constructed permanent homes, unlike nomadic Eastern Buryats. Alongside the portable felt yurts common to all Mongol peoples, they built six-, eight-, ten-, and twelve-sided wooden "yurts" that mimicked the form of an actual yurt (including the smoke hole in the center of the roof), as well as wooden storage buildings, fenced enclosures, and heated barns. Buraeva examines changes in the Buryat diet wrought by contact with Russians between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. Pre-conquest Buryat cuisine had consisted primarily of boiled meats and dairy products – the fruits of herding – but Russian contact brought new foods (e.g., grain products) to the Buryat table. Occasionally, the state's alcohol policies had deleterious results: when the distilling of *tarasun* – the traditional mare's-milk liquor – was outlawed to protect alcohol tax revenues, some Buryats turned to commercially-produced vodka, increasing alcoholism and poverty.

Sesegma Gendenovna Zhambalova, Bair Bal'zhinimaevich Dashibalov, and Bair Sonomovich Dugarov investigate the life and works of the renowned prerevolutionary Buryat ethnographer and educator Matvei Nikolaevich Khangalov (1858-1918). Zhambalova employs unpublished reminiscences by Khangalov's fellow teacher, the Russian V. A. Zarechenskov, to shed light on his pedagogical activities at the Bil'chir primary school for Buryats near Irkutsk between 1902 and 1918. Dashibalov seeks the origins of the

“Khori Mongols” and “Khorduts”: powerful, occasionally malevolent spirits featured in folklore materials gathered by Khangalov and other Siberian ethnographers. He concludes that superstitions about such spirits reflects an ancient folk memory of Mongol-speaking groups – separate from the Buryats themselves – who formerly inhabited the western Baikal region, perhaps as early as the thirteenth century. Dugarov discusses Khangalov and Nikolai Nikolaevich Agapitov’s (1840-1900) groundbreaking research on the Buryat Shamanist pantheon, which provided the first systematic enumeration, description, and hierarchical arrangement of the *tengris*: the ninety-nine deities and other supernatural figures that play crucial roles in Buryat religion, myth, and epic.

Svetlana Vladimirovna Vasileva and Liliia Vladimirovna Kal'mina investigate non-Buryat migrants to prerevolutionary Buryatia: the Old Believers (ethnic Russians who left the official Church after an unpopular seventeenth-century liturgical reform and arrived in Buryatia fleeing persecution), and Polish, Jewish, and Tatar migrants who arrived in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Vasileva surveys materials on the Old Believers held in the State Archive of the Republic of Buryatia and the Institute of Mongolian Studies, Tibetology, and Buddhology: these include prerevolutionary police, judicial, and local-government documents; photographs of traditional clothing and architecture; correspondence between Old Believers in Buryatia and Harbin, China; audio recordings of Old Believer tales; and unpublished folklore studies by local scholars such as Lazar' Efmovich Eliasov (1914-1976). Kal'mina examines the economic and social life of Polish, Jewish, and Tatar diaspora groups in the Baikal region. Some Polish migrants, particularly well-educated political exiles, took up medical and clerical work, while others helped build the Trans-Siberian Railroad as engineers or laborers; Jews and Tatars tended to enter urban commerce, although some Tatars took up farming. Poles and Jews frequently intermarried with Russians, but the Muslim Tatars refused to do so on religious grounds, which hindered their acculturation.

Turning to the Communist era, Svetlana Viktorovna Baldano, Larisa Galsanovna Rakshaeva, Viktor Mizhitovich Mitypov, and Khishikto Vasilevich Kishiktuev address the impact of Soviet policies upon Buryat intellectual life, religion, and language. Baldano examines Buryat nationalist intellectuals' attempts to come to terms with the new Soviet order, whose ideology subordinated national issues to class ones and denounced nationalism as reactionary. In the 1920s, the ethnographer Tsyben Zhamtsarano (1880-1940) and the left-wing activist Elbek-Dorzhi Rinchino (ca.1885-1937) espoused a “National Communism” (p. 101) that allowed them to defend native culture while embracing Communist egalitarianism and modernization; the Buddhist reform leader Agvan Dorzhiev (1853-1938) argued the compatibility of Buddhism and Communism. But the Stalinist regime's intolerance and implicit Russocentrism made such ideological maneuvering impossible, and the Purges subsequently decimated the native intelligentsia. Rakshaeva follows the Buryat scholars' campaign to preserve the site of the Gusinoozërsk *Datsan*, which once had housed up to one thousand lamas and had served as Buryat Buddhism's official headquarters. It was forcibly closed during the Party's 1932-1933 anti-religious drive, and its surviving buildings – unique examples of Buryat Buddhist art and architecture – fell into disrepair. After 1940, administrators of Ulan-Ude's Antireligious Museum periodically petitioned Party and state officials to restore the *datsan* for educational purposes. However, documentary evidence of their campaign abruptly and inexplicably ends in 1961, signaling its failure. Mitypov examines relations between the Buryat Buddhist clergy and Communist authorities between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. Although the Soviet Union's leaders signed numerous international agreements supporting religious freedom, in fact the regime severely perse-

cuted Buryat Buddhism. The most infamous example of repression was the 1972 trial and imprisonment of the *lama* Bidiia Dandaron (1914-1974) and his followers on fantastic charges of attempted murder, debauchery, and ties to foreign powers. Less sensational forms of persecution included officialdom's interference in the day-to-day operations of the few remaining *datsans*, and its close surveillance over their visitors: informers reported worshippers' donations and their overheard prayers to Party and KGB officials. Kishiktuev traces the shrinking role of the Buryat language in primary and secondary education between the 1930s and 1980s. A steady stream of assimilationist measures undertaken by Soviet officialdom, coupled with some Buryat parents' concern that bilingual education would deny their children the Russian fluency required for professional success, led to the steady reduction in the teaching of Buryat. By the early 1980s, Buryat no longer served as the medium of instruction and was rarely taught even as an academic subject, resulting in a sharp decline in knowledge of the native tongue.

Problems of public services and urban growth in Ulan-Ude (Verkhneudinsk) over the pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods are addressed by Darima Sergeevna Danilova, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Imenokhiov, Marina Namzhilovna Baldano, and Baiarma Babasanovna Tsyretarova. Danilova examines firefighting in pre-revolutionary Verkhneudinsk, a crucial matter since – just as in traditional Japan – most buildings were made of wood. City authorities expended much effort and material on equipping fire stations and extinguishing and investigating fires, but not enough on preventing them; firefighters often lacked specialized training and were burdened by unrelated duties such as watering the city garden and removing snow, trash, and the corpses of murder and freezing victims, so fires continually plagued the city. Imenokhiov investigates the challenges faced by Ulan-Ude's health-care officials during the first two decades of Soviet rule. The collapse of public sanitation during the Russian Civil War and the influx of industrial workers and refugees from collectivization in the early 1930s helped the spread of typhus, cholera, and tuberculosis, and the harsh conditions of Stalinist industry fostered workplace illnesses and injuries. Shortages of funds, personnel, medicines, equipment, and bed space hampered attempts to provide medical care and control the spread of disease. Baldano examines the effect of Stalinist industrialization upon Ulan-Ude's development. As Buryatia's processing, extractive, and manufacturing workforce grew exponentially, so too did its cities and towns, especially Ulan-Ude. However, urbanization was shaped by the state's economic needs, not the population's wishes, and local officials paid scant attention to infrastructure and the quality of life, resulting in haphazard and poorly-planned growth, the effects of which linger to this day. Tsyretarova addresses Ulan-Ude's housing problems during the Second World War, when refugees and war-industry workers overwhelmed the city's inadequate housing stock. State and Party authorities responded by relocating nonessential workers to the countryside by turning warehouses, stores, and cultural institutions into barracks; by foiling unauthorized immigration through stricter document checks; and by building temporary housing. Nevertheless, monetary, material, and personnel restraints limited these efforts' efficacy.

Daba Dambaevich Nimaev, Vsevolod Iurevich Bashkuev, Elena Vasil'evna Banzarakt-saeva, Bair Zorigtoevich Nanzatov, and Maria Mikhailovna Sodnompilova take up developments in post-Soviet Buryatia. Nimaev considers the plight of the Aga Buryats of far eastern Transbaikalia. Although their territory had been included in the Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic formed in 1923, Stalin abruptly transferred it to neighboring Chita Oblast in 1937; however, he granted them an "Aga Buryat Autonomous Okrug" there, and they successfully used its limited autonomy to protect and develop the native culture and economy. Beginning in 2000, the Putin administration began to press

for the Okrug's dissolution, a move that the Aga Buryats initially opposed. Yet in March 2007, they voted overwhelmingly to merge with Chita Oblast into a new administrative unit called the Zabaikal'skii (Transbaikal) Krai. Nimaev traces this change of heart to the federal government's guarantees of administrative, economic, and cultural autonomy, but the abolition of local institutions soon after the merger leads him to doubt that these promises will be kept. Bashkuev considers the prospects for Buryatia's economic development and modernization in light of a partnership envisioned by Russian and Chinese leaders in which Russia will export raw materials from Irkutsk and Amur Oblasts, Buryatia, and Zabaikal'skii Krai for processing in Northeastern China. Bashkuev concludes that Buryatia is ill-suited to benefit from such an arrangement: it lacks Irkutsk Oblast's large urban population and well-developed industrial base; it does not border directly on China like Amur Oblast and Zabaikal'skii Krai; and it possesses a backward infrastructure and few raw materials of interest to China except lumber and nephrite. Additional drawbacks are local elites' corruption and incompetence and – perhaps – Kremlin concerns that Buryatia's successful development might fuel separatism or pan-Mongolism. Banzaraktseva examines post-Soviet cultural revival efforts among the Soyots, a small indigenous Turkic herding and hunting people of Southwestern Buryatia's mountainous Oka Raion who suffered decades of Russification under Stalin and his successors. The decay of traditional skills has hampered the Soyots' return to reindeer breeding, but favorable climate and geography have fostered the growth of yak herding, and a few local schools have introduced Soyot language classes. Nanzatov and Sodnompilova examine the impact of traditional Shamanist attitudes towards nature upon post-Soviet rural Buryat economic choices. For instance, an ancient superstition warns that wantonly cutting live trees will shorten one's lifespan, so some native owners of timber concerns assign logging work to Russians or Chinese migrants, who are not bound by the taboo. Often, however, the demands of survival in the market economy outweigh a mystical regard for nature: field researchers note an increasing tendency to over-hunt game and to gather pine-nuts (a Siberian delicacy) unsustainably.

Liudmila Sanzhiboevna Dampilova and Ekaterina Vladimirovna Sundueva investigate topics in Buryat literature and linguistics. Dampilova examines the language and imagery employed by the Buryat lyric poet Galina Radnaeva (1949-present) in her 1992 collection *Khete, sakhiuur* (Steel and Flint). Radnaeva's lengthy, imaginative descriptions of landscapes and nature display extensive use of allegories and allusions drawn from Buryat mythology: for example, the sky appears as a father or grandfather, and the earth as a mother or grandmother, while the stars are described as the campfires of countless heavenly warriors. Sundueva investigates the etymology of the *yookhor* (a.k.a. *ëkhor*), a traditional Buryat round dance. She discusses variant forms of the dance's name in different Buryat dialects and provides a comparative discussion of the names of similar Slavic, Turkic, and Caucasian dances. After considering several possible etymologies and analyzing the texts of songs that accompany the *yookhor*, Sundueva traces its most likely origins to the verb *yookhoikho* "to bow, to incline oneself," in light of the bowing motions within the dance's moves.

Of particular interest to Asian specialists outside Siberian studies are the contributions of Bazar Dogsonovich Tsybenov, Vladimir Andreevich Khamutaev, and Larisa Batoevna Badmaeva on two Mongol-speaking groups of China's Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region with ties to Siberia: the Dagurs and the Shenekhen Buryats. Tsybenov ponders the origins of the Dagurs. Linguistic, anthropological, religious (Shamanist), and folkloric evidence, along with accounts by Chinese and Russian travelers and historians, convince Tsybenov that the Dagurs are descendants of the proto-Mongol Khitans (Qidans) of the Liao Dynasty (947-1125). Following their defeat by the Jurchens in the twelfth century,

some Khitans journeyed north to the Amur River basin and eastern Transbaikalia: there, they absorbed smaller Tungusic-speaking indigenous groups, along with elements of their cultures and languages, before Russian invaders drove them to their present territory in the seventeenth century. Khamutaev and Badmaeva turn to the recent history of the Buryats of the Shenekhen area, whose ancestors arrived in several waves between the 1900s and 1930s fleeing Tsarist Russification, the First World War's military draft, the Russian Civil War, and Stalinist collectivization and terror. Once in China, they experienced Japanese wartime occupation, postwar repression for alleged collaboration with the Japanese, Maoist collectivization, and persecution as potential Soviet agents during the Cultural Revolution. Despite this tragic past, their isolation has helped them preserve their language, crafts, folklore, music, dance, and lifestyle to a very high degree. As Khamutaev informs us, patriotic nostalgia has brought hundreds of Shenekhen Buryats "back" to Buryatia since the late 1980s: in their own simple but poignant words, "Shuhan tatana" ([My] blood calls me [back]) (p. 110). But poverty, lack of Russian-language skills, bureaucratic obstructions, and difficulty in finding work and housing have forced some Shenekhen Buryats to return to China. Badmaeva discusses loan words in the vocabulary of the Shenekhen historian Bodongut Abida's (1917-2006) *Short History of the Buryat Mongols* [Buriyat mongyol-un tobči teüke], published by the Inner Mongolian Publishing House in 1983. The *Short History* is written in Classical Mongolian, in which the Shenekhen exiles continued to write long after its proscription in Buryatia itself. Beyond its intrinsic historical value, Bodongut's work provides examples of Russian, Chinese, and Manchu loan words that are no longer used by modern Siberian Buryats but are crucial for understanding administrative, political, and technological matters of daily life in the Buryat past.

Etnicheskaia istoriia i kul'turno-bytovye traditsii narodov baikal'skogo regiona is a sterling example of the progress that Buryat scholarship has made so far in the post-Soviet era. The authors' topics and methodologies display great originality and thoughtfulness, and their use of sources, editing, and citation practices show a vast improvement over most Soviet-era works (although the book would have benefitted from the removal of occasional typographic errors, inconsistencies in Buryat orthography, and ambiguities in the citation of archival materials). Researchers of Siberian and Mongolian issues will find this volume particularly useful, but Asia scholars of all specialties can discover between its covers valuable comparative material on a wide range of issues ranging from minority policies to urbanization to linguistics.

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Review of Vaporis, *Voices of Early Modern Japan*

Constantine N. Vaporis, *Voices of Early Modern Japan: Contemporary Accounts of Daily Life during the Age of the Shoguns* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2012) ISBN 978-0-313-39200-9.

Voices of Early Modern Japan is a well-designed and useful source collection that will, in more ways than one, aid instructors in preparing and conducting meaningful lectures and discussions on Japan's Tokugawa or Edo period (1600-1868).

The text's first strength lies in its breadth. The anthology is organized in seven thematic units (The Domestic Sphere, Material Life, The Political Sphere, Foreign Relations, Social and Economic Life, Recreational Life, and Religion and Morality), whose documents cover virtually the entire time span of the Tokugawa period, with the earliest example dating back to 1610 (the testament of merchant Shimai Sōshitsu, Section 26) and the latest composed in 1866 (a letter of apology from a violent farmer, Section 27). Technically, the anthology includes an even earlier example, Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 1588 "Sword Hunt" edict (Section 14), which set the stage for some of the most meaningful social policies of the Tokugawa; and a much later one, Yamakawa Kikue's recollections, published in 1943 but relaying memories of life in nineteenth-century Mito (Section 8).

Chronological breadth is not the only area in which this anthology excels; coverage of social spectrum is also comprehensive. The voices of early modern Japan that come to us through this collection are those of both the rulers and the ruled, of men and women, of samurai and commoners, of the inhabitants of the Japanese islands, and of foreign visitors. They speak to us by way of law codes and fiction, personal memoirs and letters, songs and population registers. Such an assortment successfully brings to light the discrepancies between theory and practice as well as between discourse and reality, enabling us to see, as Vaporis intends, "what kind of society Tokugawa Japan's rulers idealized and what the reality of it actually was" (p. xi). Take Section 4, for example: on the one hand we find the pedantic exhortations to female quietness and restraint of *The Greater Learning for Women*, an eighteenth-century manual written by a man, and on the other, the candid musings of Tadano Makuzu (1763-1825), a woman who professed to having jotted her *Solitary Thoughts* "without any sense of modesty or concern about being unduly outspoken" (p. 20). Just as enlightening is a comparison of the samurai ideals as expounded in Sections 35 (Hinatsu Shirōzaemon Shigetaka's treatise on archery and the martial arts, 1714) or 25 (two samurai brothers' bid to avenge the death of their father, 1828) versus the reality of a life defined more by debt and misery than by lofty military achievements (samurai Tani Tannai's 1751 request for a loan, Section 23).

Second, instructors can assign documents from this collection to dispel some of the most enduring misconceptions about Tokugawa Japan: that it was a "closed country," that the entire population was organized into four rigid social classes (samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants), and that the samurai at the top of the ideal social pyramid were the paragons of virtue, honor, and loyalty. While Vaporis does use the contentious term *sakoku* (closed country) in the timeline (p. xlv), in the preface (p. xii), and in Section 17, he also

warns that *sakoku* is in fact a retroactively attached label, arguing that closing the borders was probably not the intention of the Tokugawa, and that trade with China and Korea actually picked up after the expulsion of the Portuguese (p. 98). Appropriately, the anthology provides ample evidence for the existence of lively contacts with the outside world *after* the issuing of the maritime restrictions in 1639 and *before* the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853 – see for example Sections 10 (a Swedish doctor’s description of the Japanese home, 1791), 18 (the diary of a Korean official visiting Japan in 1719), and 20 (the report of an audience with the shogun by a German doctor at the service of the Dutch, 1692).

As far as the four classes are concerned, Vaporis tackles the issue head-on in the introduction (pp. xxiii-xxiv), warning that such “idealized conception” hardly squared with “social realities” (p. xxiii). Some of the sources included in *Voices of Early Modern Japan* support the notion that an *idealized* division of society in four neat groups did exist (for example Yamaga Sokō’s lamentations on the decline of samurai spirit and on the transgressions of “the three classes of the common people” in Section 22), but many more speak of “commoners” and “townspeople” (*chōnin*) rather than “artisans” and “merchants,” effectively debunking such artificial taxonomy (see document 2 in Section 14, document 2 in Section 5, document 1 in Section 16). One (Section 30) even sheds light on an otherwise unmentioned category of individuals, the outcastes. To be clear, questioning the validity of the all-too-convenient “four class” model is not the same as denying the Tokugawa’s obsession with the boundaries of status. A useful way to bring this obsession to light would be to focus on the many documents that tie one’s place in society with one’s appearance (acceptable garments, fabrics, colors). Sections 13 (Regulations for the Imperial Palace and the Court Nobility, 1615), 15 (village laws, 1640), 16 (regulations for townspeople, 1642 and 1711), and document 2 in Section 5 (prohibitions concerning clothing for Edo townsmen, 1719), for example, offer abundant food for thought in this respect and would make for a lively in-class discussion: who was allowed to wear what, and why? What does the need to issue such regulations suggest?

In my Pre-modern Japan course I spend a lot of time adjusting misconceptions about the samurai’s unassailable loyalty and their preternaturally immaculate character, and there is no shortage of documents from earlier periods that can be used to do so. *Voices of Early Modern Japan* offers similar opportunities for the Tokugawa era. Section 11, for example, details the fall of Osaka Castle in 1615, which can lead to a discussion of Tokugawa Ieyasu’s betrayal of the Toyotomi clan. Selections from the *Laws for the Military Houses* (1615 and 1635, Section 12) in the league of “avoid drinking parties and gaming amusements,” “practice frugality,” or “expel any of [the] retainers guilty of rebellion or murder” (p. 68) beg the question: why were such exhortations necessary? And why did they have to be re-issued periodically?

The notion that Tokugawa-era samurai were concerned with honor and loyalty is not incorrect per se, but needs to be contextualized: they were especially sensitive to such ideals because theirs was a day and age in which they no longer got to practice meaningful acts of violence. The prolonged peace turned a day job (warfare) into a forbidden fruit, a collective obsession, something that would be talked about and written about, but could not actually be acted upon. I suggest using documents like the samurai brothers’ request to avenge their father (Section 25) less as examples of “timeless” samurai values and more as examples of a time-specific trend on the part of the rulers toward the micromanagement of violence, social order, and public peace. As mentioned earlier, I would also read idealized projections of samurai life like the treatise on archery and the martial arts (1714, Section 35) or Yamaga Sokō’s *The Way of the Samurai* (mid- to late-seventeenth century, Section 22) against the

reality of debt and misery that is perfectly captured in Tani Tannai's 1751 loan request (Section 23). Incidentally, I wholeheartedly second Vaporis' suggestion to integrate his selections on samurai life with Katsu Kokichi's iconoclastic *Musui's Story: The Autobiography of a Tokugawa Samurai* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988) and/or with the poignant film *Twilight Samurai* (*Tasogare Seibei*; directed by Yamada Yōji, 2002) for a more comprehensive depiction of the daily life of low-rank samurai in the nineteenth century.

Vaporis' suggestions for further readings and recommendations for appropriate films bring me to the third and final way in which *Voices of Early Modern Japan* makes for an excellent reference collection: its practical approach and attention to pedagogical principles. The introduction (pp. xvii–xxix) treats the reader to a brief account of the Tokugawa era and to a concise summary of its historiographical ups and downs, from its characterization as a dark and feudal age in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the “Edo boom” of the 1980s (pp. xvii–xx). The next section, *Evaluating and Interpreting Primary Documents* (pp. xxxi–xli), not only advises students on how to approach and read primary sources, but also describes in fascinating detail and with the powerful support of visual reproductions what Tokugawa-period documents looked like (scrolls, bound books, one-page broadsheets), how they were created (either with brush and ink or with woodblocks), how they were read (top to bottom, right to left), and even what kind of paper was used and what measures were taken to fend off the attacks of the voracious paper worms (the documents were treated with persimmon juice). Chronologies of the main events in the early modern era, of the fifteen Tokugawa shoguns, and of the emperors who reigned at the time are also included, as well as a glossary and a series of short biographies of the main historical figures featured in the collection.

More importantly, each entry is presented in its historical context, with a brief introduction and a follow-up on the fate of the author(s) after the document was written or made public. A set of points for the students to keep in mind as they read, a series of questions and topics to consider after having read the document, suggestions for further readings, titles of relevant films, and even links to appropriate websites complete the picture, offering full guidance to the novices and great ideas even to the experts. Some of the recommendations extend beyond the field of Japanese history and provide general suggestions for comparative discussions that would be of great use even in a World History survey. To cite two examples among many, the 1815 document on marriage and dowry (Section 1) includes links to the Code of Hammurabi and to India's 1961 Dowry Prohibition Act; the 1615 and 1645 grooming standards for samurai (Section 6) are presented as the possible starting point for a discussion on the relation between politics and hairstyles that would also look at the hippies in 1960s US.

These are, in my opinion, the strengths of *Voices of Early Modern Japan*. At the same time, there are a few caveats. Because the anthology is organized topically and not chronologically, some caution must be exercised in assigning the selections of readings, particularly in light of the fact that students often tend to overlook the dates. For example, under Foreign Relations (Sections 17 through 21) we find documents from as early as 1635 to as late as 1825 – and the different historical contingencies behind each document ought to be kept in mind. In the aforementioned Section 4, the comparison between *The Greater Learning for Women* (1716) and Tadano Makuzu's reflections (1818), while enlightening, needs also to take into account the opportunities for women that had materialized in the one hundred years between the publication of the former and the penning of the latter.

A second caveat for those considering the adoption of this anthology has to do with a less abstract, more practical matter: its cost. At \$100, *Voices of Early Modern Japan* may

be well beyond the reach of many students and, I suspect, of a few instructors as well. Its beauty and elegance, inevitably, come at a price.

Last but not least, I would like to make two suggestions for possible amelioration. Should the publisher consider a paperback reprint and/or a revised edition, I would ask that they add a map of early modern Japan with its provinces and major cities. Given the book's general attention to detail (chronological tables, glossaries, biographies), the absence of a map is a bit puzzling; its addition would greatly enrich the volume from a pedagogical standpoint. Second, and this may require a bit more work, I would strongly recommend the inclusion of visual sources. Save for the calendar in Section 7, the documents featured in *Voices of Early Modern Japan* are exclusively text-based, which is unfortunate given the usefulness, charm, and availability of woodblock prints from this period (especially the nineteenth century). Their exclusion is a missed opportunity to educate the students on the challenges and joys of visual literacy, not to mention to grab their attention with the early modern antecedents of manga. For now, instructors wishing to consult exemplary historical analyses of late-Tokugawa woodblocks should look at the following: Smits, Gregory J., "Shaking Up Japan: Edo Society and the 1855 Catfish Picture Prints," *Journal of Social History* 39.4 (2006): 1045-77; and Steele, M. William, "Goemon's New World View" in *Alternative Narratives in Modern Japanese History* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003): 4-18.

For its few minor flaws, *Voices of Early Modern Japan* has a great many strengths. It is comprehensive, informative, innovative, and elegant. The collection's subtitle promises to open a door into "daily life during the age of the shoguns," and the parade of characters to which Vaporis gives a voice certainly delivers on this promise: not only do they open the door, they also entice the reader to walk right in and enjoy the show.

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