# ASIANetwork Exchange

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# ASIANetwork Exchange:

## *A Journal for Asian Studies in the Liberal Arts*



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# Notes from the Editors

The annual ASIANetwork conference, held this year in Bloomingdale, Illinois, was as stimulating as it was affirming of our shared goals as educators in liberal arts institutions. The conference opened with a provocative Keynote Address by Peter Hershock (East-West Center) titled "Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Reflections on Equity and Education," which will be featured in our Fall 2014 issue. Not only did Hershock's address elicit lively discussion afterwards, it provided food for thought over the course of the entire conference. The next morning attendees were treated by Robert Buswell, a past president of the AAS and UCLA Professor of Buddhist Studies, to a Plenary Address, "Transplanting Buddhism to the Korean Peninsula: Cultural Interchanges across Asia." After a day of wide-ranging panels, the conference's formal evening featured a musical performance by Gao Hong and the Carleton College Choral Ensemble, and a reception sponsored by the University of Macau and the United Board. The membership recognized the extraordinary service of two of ASIANetwork's most dedicated members: Teddy Amoloza, who steps down this year after serving as executive director for three terms, and Van Symons, a founder, Executive Director and, most recently, the point person for our Student-Faculty Fellows program. There were moving tributes to both of our esteemed colleagues, and we returned from the conference not only invigorated by the level of critical engagement, but also renewed by the extraordinary sense of community and common purpose we share.

This is the final issue of our first three-year term as Editors. Having the opportunity to work together at transitioning this publication through great change—from print to electronic form—has been exceptionally rewarding for both of us. Having the support and counsel of past Editors Tom Lutze and Irv Epstein, as well as Teddy Amoloza, enabled us to successfully meet our goals for the publication thus far. The Board of ASIANetwork, particularly its Publicity Committee, has also sustained our efforts to transition the journal to support a blind peer-review process that has transformed the quality and quantity of the work that we feature.

We are grateful to the Board and incoming Executive Director Gary DeCoker for their support as we continue our work for a second term as Editors. Now that the online system is established and running, we have another set of goals for the journal that we would like to share. First, we hope to focus on building a larger pool of outstanding reviewers. Providing constructive criticism to our peers is a key professional responsibility. By agreeing to review submissions for the journal, reviewers directly impact the quality of the pieces that are selected for publication. If you are reading this and you have not registered as a reader and as a reviewer in our system, please do so. With every submission that we receive, we look for readers who have the skills and perspective to improve the work of our colleagues and ready it for publication. Second, we hope to develop a broader active readership among faculty within the ASIANetwork and beyond. Third, we are delighted to have seen such a dramatic and steady increase in our submissions over the last two years. Our colleagues in the China field in particular have embraced the new opportunities that the journal now offers as a blind peer-reviewed publication. We want to call upon colleagues in other fields to join them in this collective project, whether by submitting a research paper, a pedagogi-

cal essay, a book/or media review, or by becoming a Guest Editor of a special section. It is critical that ASIANetwork Exchange remain a journal for faculty engaged in research and teaching in all fields of Asian Studies.

With the publication of this issue, we are also launching two new features of the journal for our readers. First, a "Books for Review" section will be accessible online through the journal website. Here, readers will be able to browse the books we have available for review. If you wish to review a book, please send the editors an email (editors@asianetworkexchange.org) accompanied by a two-page CV.

The second new feature is that members are now able to order bound, full color, print copies of the journal. While it is already possible to print out high quality PDFs of individual articles as well as the full issue directly from the website at no charge, many members expressed a desire for a bound copy of the journal. As we announced at the Business Meeting, we have found a print-on-demand service where members can order individual bound copies. ASIANetwork is offering this service at cost, and so far (depending on the length of the journal and the number of images) the price of each issue is averaging around $20 (plus shipping). To order a copy, simply go to http://www.magcloud.com/browse/magazine/751856 and follow the instructions.

This issue begins with the 2014 Marianna McJimsey Award winning essay, "Countless Ramayanas: Language and Cosmopolitan Belonging in a South Asian Epic" by Rafadi Hakim. A 2013 graduate of Carleton College's Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Hakim closely explores the Kiski Kahani project located in Pune, India. Kiski Kahani compiles fragmentary stories of the Ramayana, perhaps Hinduism's most popular epic, often told in Hindi or Marathi. Challenging Hindu-nationalist versions of the epic, Kiski Kahani privileges improvised, local retellings, and publishes them in English so that they are available to India's large English-speaking population. Jinli He's ""Continuity and Evolution: The Idea of 'Co-creativity' in Chinese Art" explores the principle of "Co-creativity" in both traditional and contemporary art. Drawing upon the recent work of feminist artists in China, He's article demonstrates this enduring characteristic of Chinese art. In "Re-examining Extreme Violence: Historical Reconstruction and Ethnic Consciousness in Warriors of the Rainbows: *Seediq Bale,*" Chia-rong Wu considers the cultural and political context of beheading in Seediq culture and how filmmaker Wei Te-sheng depicts this in film. In doing so, Wu explores how violence in the film *Seediq Bale* expresses both contemporary colonial domination of Aboriginal peoples and the conflicts that exist within these communities themselves.

The issue continues with a special section on Teaching Modern Asian History, guest edited by Brian Caton, Luther College. Developed from a pedagogical panel at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, this section features articles by four historians whose expertise spans Chinese and Japanese history to Eurasia and from South Asia to Southeast Asia. Each author carefully considers how to select appropriate primary sources and develop exercises for students in introductory liberal arts college courses. Tracy Barrett (North Dakota State University) recommends that scholar-teachers utilize a range of sources on Southeast Asia, including films, memoirs, and fiction, so that students gain exposure to Asian voices. Brian Caton suggests the use of longer extracts from primary sources to aid in the understanding of material, social, and cultural life in South Asia that often lay beyond the reach of colonial authority. Amy Kardos (University of Texas, San Antonio) shows us how new scholarship on the silk road allows us to rethink the role, influence, and initiative of Eurasian brokers in trade. And, finally, Danke Li (Fairfield University) attempts to shake up conceptions of Chinese and Japanese women with primary

sources that are both textual and cinematic so that students hear the strong feminist voices of women who have led many movements for social justice. Together, this special section offers all Asianists important tools for approaching the broad content of Asia survey courses that are the foundation of our Asian Studies programs. We are delighted to have had the opportunity to work closely with Caton and his authors on this section.

The issue concludes with Jason M. Wirth's review of Puqun Li's *A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics* (with Arthur K. Ling), which provides a detailed overview of the many possibilities this important volume has to offer to courses on Asian Philosophy.

*Erin McCarthy and Lisa Trivedi, Editors*

# The Marianna McJimsey Award Winning Paper: Countless Ramayanas: Language and Cosmopolitan Belonging in a South Asian Epic

Rafadi Hakim

The Marianna McJimsey Award recognizes the best undergraduate student paper dealing with Asia. The prize honors the outstanding service of Marianna McJimsey, the first Executive Director of ASIANetwork and the first editor of the ASIANetwork Exchange. For more information see http://asianetwork.org/programs/the-marianna-mcjimsey-award/

**Abstract:** The Kiski Kahani project in Pune, India, is a not-for-profit program that compiles stories of the Ramayana, a South Asian epic, and publishes them in English. Kiski Kahani's ideology rejects the Hindu nationalist master narrative of the Ramayana, and privileges an emerging genre that consists of fragmentary, improvised stories of the epics. As a socially-grounded language practice, Kiski Kahani's retellings are rooted in pan-Indian, cosmopolitan modalities that index a sense of belonging to a pluricultural nation: the use of English rather than Hindi or Marathi, and a curation of stories from diverse Indian regions and languages.

**Keywords** India; Maharashtra; Ramayana; language; cosmopolitanism; genre and intertextuality

**Rafadi Hakim** graduated from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton College, Minnesota, in 2013.

## Introduction: Whose Ramayana?

The stories of the Ramayana are still alive in India. Although modern textual scholars agree that the epic was first composed between 400 B.C.E. and 4th century C.E. (Brockington 1998, 26-27), the Ramayana finds its way to countless channels of transmission even in contemporary urban India: TV series, comic books, plays, novels, popular cinema, people's names, and figures of speech. Among their innumerable retellings, Ramayana stories are alternately expressed as a battle between Rama, a god incarnated as a king on Earth, and Ravana, the demon king; as a story of love and devotion between Rama and Sita, his wife; and as a story of friendship between two brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, and Hanuman, a simian god. Because Ramayana stories are told so variously and through so many channels, people who grew up with these narratives modify, extend, interrupt, question, criticize, forget, and remember them in countless different ways.

Since the rise of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s, questioning and retelling the Ramayana has become politically charged. Right wing, Hindu nationalist movements in India evoke the Ramayana as an exclusively Hindu text and as a sacred, historical narrative in religious and political debates. In 1992, Hindu nationalist activists demolished the Babri Mosque, which was built over the supposed ruins of Lord Rama's birthplace in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, and triggered communal riots that killed thousands of Muslims and Hindus across India. In 2011, an academic committee at Delhi University removed an essay written by A.K. Ramanujan, a renowned Indian-American folklorist, poet, and intellectual,

from the university's undergraduate history syllabus. The Akhil Bharatiya Vishwa Parishad (ABVP), a Hindu nationalist student organization, deemed Ramanujan's "Three Hundred Ramayanas" (1991), which discusses the diversity of Ramayana stories in South and Southeast Asia, offensive towards the divine characters of the epic.[1] In the essay, Ramanujan describes Hanuman, a deity worshipped throughout the subcontinent, as a "ladies' man" in the Thai story (44), while Sita, often the Hindu paragon of fidelity, is depicted among the indigenous Santals of central India as Rama's unfaithful wife (44).

Hindu nationalists allow only a single version of the Ramayana stories to be discussed in the public sphere: one that elevates the sacredness of Hindu divinities, especially Rama, beyond questioning. However, with all the debates surrounding the idea of a "proper" and "true" Ramayana, *which* Ramayana is being talked about, and *how* is the Ramayana debated in modern India? While I acknowledge that the Ramayana has been used to muster sectarian violence and to construct a vision of Hindu superiority by right wing, Hindu nationalist interest groups, I emphasize that retellings of the epic can resist such hegemonic narratives. Kiski Kahani, a Hindi phrase which means "Whose story?," is a not-for-profit public program in Pune, Maharashtra, that gathered little-known and emerging retellings of the Ramayana and circulated them through printed pamphlets and website posts throughout 2012 and the first half of 2013. This study, written after two months of ethnographic fieldwork, explains how Kiski Kahani's retellings of the Ramayana illustrate ways of belonging to a cosmopolitan, pluricultural Indian nation.

## Language, Intertextuality, and Performance

Understanding the cultural significance of Ramayana stories requires understanding how a story's meaning comes from a history of interrelated narratives, or, in Becker's (1996) words, "prior texts." A retelling of the Ramayana, in other words, is not a genealogical ancestor to subsequent retellings; rather, because of the fluidity of the epic genre, retellings represent historically situated crystallizations of stories from a common pool of narratives (Doniger 1988, Doniger O'Flaherty 1991, Narayan 1989, Ramanujan 1991, Richman 1991). The creation of relationships between texts, or intertextuality, explains how any particular text is created from existing language practices and socially positioned (Bauman and Briggs 1992, Bauman 2004). Simply "counting" texts as discrete units does not allow us to see how diversity across Ramayana stories illuminates their social contexts. One must pay attention to the narratives in context.

In this paper, I use concepts of "speech events" and "ethnography of speaking" from the field of linguistic anthropology that emphasize socially grounded understandings of speech and language (Bauman and Briggs 1992, Hymes 1964). The practice of using language and language styles invites commentaries on the practice itself, or metapragmatic commentaries. I draw upon the concept of metapragmatic awareness, which is the "ability that speakers have to talk about the pragmatics of their language use" (Silverstein 1981, as cited in Duranti 2009, 16). In such "talk about talk," we find socially situated understandings about the use of language and language styles. Attention to collective beliefs about language has given rise to contemporary scholarship on language ideology, which focuses on the importance of bridging everyday speech-events with their macrosociological consequences (Irvine and Gal 2009, Kroskrity 2000, Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). In this study, I draw upon common sense ideas about Marathi, Hindi, and English as languages that my interlocutors use in their daily speech and writing. The choice of language, language variety, or language register is an element of communication that indexes social meaning.

Indexical relationships between language use and communities of practice, however, do

not form a linear correspondence. Against Anderson's (1983) notion of organized linguistic unity as the basis of imagined nationhood, scholarship on language ideology disputes a one-to-one relationship between language and identity. Instead, language ideology scholarship emphasizes the empirically multilingual and heteroglossic character of speech communities (Irvine and Gal 2009). In South Asia, and in southern India in particular, the choice of language and language registers plays a major role in forming ethnic identities and indexing different audiences (Bate 2009, Mitchell 2009). Within a communicative practice, such as the retelling of Ramayana stories, ethnolinguistic associations depend on relationships between textual units, the performer of the text, the audience, and the "nonliterary" interpretive frames of performance surrounding the text (Bauman 1984, Bauman and Briggs 1992, Bauman 2004, Goffman 1974). However, because "texts" of the Ramayana stories are interrelated, retellers and performers are not confined to producing new texts; rather, they constitute the audience of retellings, or "consumers" of the stories, as well.

In this study, critical attitudes towards the hegemonic, Hindu nationalist interpretations of the Ramayana that govern the literary and performative elements of a retelling are key in understanding the epic's different audiences. Turner's (1986) concept of performative reflexivity illustrates that performances of these narratives are not mere reflections of authority, but are often commentaries on dominant sociopolitical ideologies. Performers of a story do not merely reflect a text, but they "turn, bend, or reflect back upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles…and other sociocultural components" (Turner 1986, 24). Therefore, to recognize the agency of retellers of the Ramayana stories as performers and critics, I emphasize the life histories and ideological configurations of my interlocutors that socially situate their textual productions.

## BELONGING AND COSMOPOLITANISM IN MAHARASHTRA

In the Indian state of Maharashtra, where most of Kiski Kahani's activities are conducted, Ramayana stories are situated at an intersection between ethnoregional and national imaginings. Hindu nationalist and Maharashtrian, Marathi-speaking regionalist movements, produce narratives of mytho-historical heroic figures, such as those of Rama and Shivaji, which serve as a symbol of ethnolinguistic, caste, and religious allegiances (Laine 2003; Hansen 2001, 20-22). Thus, the presence of caste, language, ethnic, and religious diversities demands attention in the case of the heterogeneous audience who are listeners of Kiski Kahani's Ramayana stories. In mediating these tensions between the particular against the universal, and the plural against the exclusivist, concepts of vernacular cosmopolitanism accommodate culturally committed loyalties combined with translocal, deterritorialized senses of belonging (Bhabha 1996; Pollock et al. 2000; Werbner 2008, 14). My argument contextualizes cosmopolitanism not as a "destination" for a cultural trajectory, but as a way of becoming, doing, rehearsing, and performing culture from a situated historical conjuncture.

## PLACING LANGUAGES IN PUNE

In October 2011, the Center for Open Society (COS), the public outreach section of a nonprofit organization, received a grant from a European development agency for the Kiski Kahani project to be conducted throughout 2012.[2] COS operates out of a converted apartment in the Erandwane neighborhood in the western half of Pune, which is predominantly upper-middle class and Marathi-speaking. The apartment complex is typical of the so-called "housing societies" in major Indian cities, where two or three apartment buildings housing about twelve nuclear families each are located in a walled compound. At COS's compound,

a guard, or "watchman," is present throughout the day, paying attention to passersby and cricket-playing children while reading a copy of *Sakal*, Pune's most popular Marathi daily. Upstairs, in a small, two-room library, COS's subscription to six English-language newspapers nourishes thirsty young minds from nearby universities, and watching jeans-clad youth immersed in reading a Hindi or Marathi book is an exception rather than the norm.

About 300 meters away towards the main road, a "thali" or full-service restaurant describes its cuisine as authentically Maharashtrian and provides only menus printed in Marathi, yet, just across the road, a stall that serves noodles and sandwiches for students is run by a couple who always speaks in Hindi to their multiethnic customers. An article in the *Pune Mirror*, an English-language daily newspaper, describes the rapid change in Senapati Bapat Road, an adjacent neighborhood, from a residential district to a commercial area in terms of a language shift: "Now, you hardly hear people speak Marathi around here" (July 12, 2012). The city's geography evokes ethnolinguistic associations, especially with the other, eastern half of Pune housing an established population of Urdu-speaking Muslims, Konkani-speaking Goan Catholics, and Gujarati-speaking Parsis in the neighborhoods surrounding the former British military cantonment area (Hansen 2005).

Pune is home to approximately five million people, and is considered the cultural heart of Maharashtrian, Marathi-speaking culture (Laine 2003). However, the geographical boundaries of Maharashtra were defined only in 1960 after the state of Bombay was divided along linguistic lines. Maharashtra, which contains a majority of Marathi speakers, was separated from Gujarat, a state with a Gujarati-speaking majority, although linguistic allegiances are fluid and diverse even within the present-day state boundaries (Laine 2003, 10). Pune asserts itself as a city that speaks Marathi, a Maharashtrian language. Street signs, local newspapers, and government documents are first published in Marathi instead of in Hindi or English. Nonetheless, Pune is home to a sizable Muslim, Christian, and Zoroastrian population, whose identification with different languages puts them in contrast to the Marathi-speaking, Hindu majority (Hansen 2005). Because regionalist political movements have built upon Marathi as an identity marker for local Maharashtrians, and because Hindi is associated with the ethnic groups of northern India, English is seen as a more "politically neutral" medium, although not without the connotations of British colonial legacy (Ramaswamy 1999, 354) and of privileging the modes of education primarily accessible to the urban upper and middle classes (Azam et al. 2013).

In mediating this ethnolinguistic diversity, COS primarily uses English, and occasionally Hindi, in its programs and publications despite its location in a predominantly Marathi-speaking city. In Pune, those who are not Marathi speakers experience a sense of alienation from belonging to the area, and lose the capability to become completely "local," as Aditi Kulkarni, a frequent visitor of COS's library who grew up in Mumbai, explains:

> I don't know Marathi because there [in Mumbai] you don't feel the need for Marathi. Even the local people will talk to you in Hindi…. You can converse with them. Here [in Pune] you feel the necessity, because [when] you know Marathi… they listen to you, otherwise they hardly entertain you....

For Kulkarni, the rootedness of an individual in Pune is expressed in terms of Marathi as a medium of speech, without which even an Indian person could experience a sense of being an outsider, whom nobody "listens to" and "entertains." While Mumbai and Pune both house a slight majority of Marathi speakers and a vast array of other ethnolinguistic groups bound together by the common use of Hindi, Pune's local identity, unlike that of Mumbai, uses Marathi as a language of vernacular belonging.

While being "a Maharashtrian local" and being a "cosmopolitan Pune urbanite" entail different arrays of loyalties that are more than just linguistic and geographic, using a language performs a sense of belonging to either of these loosely compartmentalized cultural modes. Yet, at the same time, these ways of speaking are not purely utilitarian; they are not used simply as strategic self-presentation in front of potential evaluators (Bauman 1984, Goffman 1959), but are also common sense ideas about how peoples, spaces, ideas, and actions are tied to these "local" or "cosmopolitan" modes.

Why, therefore, does COS choose to communicate in English more extensively than in Hindi? Although Hindi might seem to be a more "Indian" language, the adoption of English in different mediums of communication throughout India indicates that English has been rooted in nationwide language practices. Anjali Pradhan, who writes for Kiski Kahani's upcoming anthology of Ramayana stories from throughout India in English, disagrees with the notion of the language as foreign to India:

> I speak Hindi and Marathi, but…the language in my heart is English. I've grown up with English, I think in English, I dream in English, I speak English.... That's my most...native language easily…. [Those who say that] you're an English-speaker [so] you can't know the pulse of the country…I really think [that] is a lot of rubbish.... My husband speaks Konkani.... His Hindi is appalling, but he communicates with everybody…and almost all of his writing was with people who did not speak English. If you have empathy with the people you're talking to…you'll always find a way to communicate…. I've found a lot of people who are…fluent reading, writing, speaking Hindi, and they know nothing about this country, and they just don't manage to connect with people on the street.

As Pradhan explains, "empathy" is more important than fluency; both language and affective attachments are key modalities in negotiating India's ethnolinguistic and class diversity. For her, however, Hindi and English are not interchangeable, because they perform different roles. English is an inward-looking medium of "thinking," "dreaming," and "speaking, " while Hindi is a way of "knowing the country." While Pradhan attaches affective ties to English as her "most native" language, she does not disregard Indian languages as foreign or unfamiliar, because no languages are exclusively "native" or exclusively "foreign" to her.

Pradhan explains Hindi as one way of establishing relations among people of different subnational origins ("knowing the pulse of the country") and different social classes ("people on the street"). I argue that it is not the simply the choice of a language that constitutes her social relationships, but a consciousness of the common sense ideas and understandings about language used in social interactions. Above all, Hindi and English carry intersecting associations with the collective imagination of a multilingual Indian nation. Although it is tempting to see English-speaking urban dwellers, such as Pradhan, as deterritorialized, "floating" people with no allegiances to a locality and as less "authentically Indian," her comment on English as her "most native" language describes how simple divisions of languages as local, rooted mother tongues and foreign languages are inaccurate in describing COS's and India's polyglot identity.

A Kiski Kahani pamphlet in English describes how the project is preoccupied with imagining the Ramayana as a way of imagining India, the nation, as a place where a sense of belonging is projected:

> The Ramayana was composed in Sanskrit some time between 200 BCE and 200 CE.… Over the centuries, the story has been re-told in almost all Indian languages.… In fact, the Ramayana provides the metaphors through which Indians understand themselves. Here are some of the many Ramayanas we know: Valmiki's Ramayana in Sanskrit, Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas in Awadhi Hindi, Kamban's Iramavataram in Tamil, the Adhyatma Ramayana in Malayalam, the Pothi Ramayana in Urdu, the Krittibasi Ramayana in Bengali, Dastan-e-Ram-o-Sita in Persian and Eknath's Ramayana in Marathi called Bhavartha Ramayana.

The writers, Haroon Sattar and Neha Madgulkar, conceptualize the pamphlet, "The Ramayana Project: 300 Ramayanas & Counting," as a nationwide project, and position their writing as accommodating all of India's plurality in interpreting and translating the Ramayana stories. However, although this introduction highlights the Ramayana's diversity in terms of languages, the pamphlet is written entirely in English without any translation into the Indian regional vernaculars of the individual stories. Here, the Ramayana becomes a translocal way of communication. Through these images of multiplicity, the publications do not identify particular retellings as belonging to any specific social group. Instead, Kiski Kahani advocates for transcending what appear to be ethnolinguistic and religious boundaries in the subcontinent.

In conjunction with these common sense ideas about language, the life histories of the two individuals who retell Ramayana stories at COS, Haroon Sattar and Neha Madgulkar, are incorporated in how the stories are curated and produced. The Ramayana stories and, more specifically, the Kiski Kahani retellings, are intricately tied to the personal journeys and ideological articulations of its listeners and patrons. Eliciting life histories can illustrate how individuals are agents that interact with and transform social structures, and allow subjects to speak for themselves without completely surrendering narrative control to the anthropologist (Fisher 1997, Marcus and Fischer 1986). Even commentaries on the small sections and subplots of the Ramayana's massive corpus are entangled in sociopolitical debates about India-wide issues, such as the banning of Ramanujan's essay. Drawing a boundary between text and context, and, consequently, separating processes of contextualization and entextualization, underestimates the reflexivity between the two processes (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 72-73). Therefore, in this study, I build upon the entanglements of sociopolitical ideologies, life histories, and entextualization strategies.

### HAROON SATTAR: COMMUNICATING COSMOPOLITANISMS

Haroon Sattar, Kiski Kahani's project director, rewrites stories from different books and anthologies published by Indian academic publishers. For Kiski Kahani programs, Haroon gathers artists, writers, and theater directors to conduct workshops for the public. Among fellow staff members at COS, Haroon is remarkable for maintaining his interest in the "Hindu" epic in spite of his Muslim heritage, which is noticeable by the mere mentioning of his name. Ashwini Parikh, a theatre specialist whom COS invites on a regular basis to conduct workshops, once reminded me about how Kiski Kahani deals with imagining plural religiosities: "After all, what is a Haroon Sattar doing with the Ramayana?" Haroon, who grew up in Mumbai, Saudi Arabia, and Pune, classifies his own nuclear family's linguistic identity as English-speakers at home, and as Urdu- and Hindi-speakers outside.

Haroon, with his tightly-fitted jeans, checkered shirts, and bright red Hyundai hatchback that he drives to the COS office, challenges those who classify the Ramayana as ancient, fossilized, and trapped in the timeless realm of priests and academics. The Ramayana, accord-

ing to Haroon's account, is part of growing up in India, of being exposed to a nationwide literary culture, and of being able to appreciate a certain verbal artistry with language and stories:

> All Indian kids grew up with Amar Chitra Katha [comic books]… It's part of… your… rite of passage….[3] There was the Doordarshan Ramayana, which we all knew about….[4] And when this controversy happened, the [banning of the] A.K. Ramanujan essay, [those who banned the essay] were clearly saying that this text does not belong to you anymore…. One of the big fears, for me, for any kind of oral narrative is that it will get lost…. I'm really keen on…people talking and thinking about…the diversity within the text. If you keep a text alive by reading and narrating constantly, people will keep in touch with it….

For Haroon, the Ramayana is a set of texts that "all Indian kids" of his generation who are within the reach of mass media encounter. Even into adulthood, the Ramayana stories are narratives that Indians still "think" about and "keep in touch" with. What is politically contentious, however, is identifying the "people" who belong to this tradition of Ramayana stories and are legitimized to express ownership. As previously described in the opening of the "300 Ramayanas" pamphlet, Haroon criticizes right wing interpretations, which advocate for a singular, authoritative Ramayana based on a conflation of Indian-nationalist and Hindu allegiances. Nonetheless, Haroon argues for "keeping the text alive" by rethinking, rewriting and retelling the Ramayana stories. For him, the Ramayana is an ever-growing corpus of stories bound together by an embedded reflection of a cosmopolitan Indian identity, and, concomitantly, a cosmopolitan way of communicating stories.

How, therefore, do cosmopolitan aspirations become cosmopolitan modes of performing culture without displacements, and without necessarily having the self-contained cultural units that represent all the enumerated parts of the Indian nation? When Haroon describes Ramayana stories as "mythology," "metaphors," and "language," he works with an audience aware of how the Ramayana is aesthetically evaluated through both literary and nonliterary framing devices. Both the holder of a master's degree in English literature and a former interior designer, Haroon not only archives and rewrites stories. He also spends many hours on the colors and designs of COS publications, and strives to keep Kiski Kahani's website visually attractive. The Kiski Kahani pamphlet, on which he has worked intensively, shows how graphic design and literary curation, which are key parts of Haroon's own life history, reframe Ramayana stories.

A multitude of pictures are present on the cover: a classical, "calendar art" painting of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman in the middle; a Ramayana panel from the English-language Amar Chitra Katha comic strip; a still from Ramanand Sagar's (2001) Hindi-language televised series; and another still picture from Nina Paley's (2008) animated retelling of the Ramayana through Sita's story.[5,6] This eclectic assemblage of images, which spans the most "local" to the most "global" of Ramayana stories, mirrors the chaos of urban India where the stereotypically old meets the stereotypically modern, and where stories are decontextualized and recontextualized at a blinding pace as new forms of mass media are invented. Through this mosaic-like construction, Haroon argues against a monolithic sense of cultural ownership, and allows retellers to express their way of belonging to a cosmopolitan, pluricultural India. In line with his words, it is "reading" and "narrating"—the performative, audience-oriented aspects of the Ramayana—that characterize the making of a Ramayana genre at COS's Kiski Kahani.

### NEHA MADGULKAR: COMMUNICATING COSMOPOLITANISMS

Neha Madgulkar, an undergraduate mass communications student and an intern for Kiski Kahani, comes from a Hindu Maharashtrian family who moved around India constantly because of her father's assignment as an air force officer. Having lived all over India, Neha discovered different retellings of the Ramayana during her internship that she sees as deviating from the Valmiki's written, Sanskrit version, which is the authoritative text used to retell the Ramayana in both Ramanand Sagar's televised series (Lutgendorf 1995, 217) and the Amar Chitra Katha comics (McLain 2009, 133-134). Neha frames the Ramayana as a genre that accumulates new sets of stories throughout her life:

> When we were younger, we used to hear stories, because, we have…friends from all over the country, and people from Tamil Nadu and they would say… 'in my home village they worship Ravana and I've seen this temple where they worship Ravana….' It's typical of the epic, there are lots of stories running parallel to each other….

By knowing what "deviates" from Valmiki's text, Neha familiarizes herself with the ethnic diversity of the Indian nation, as she explains that Tamil villages supposedly "worship Ravana," who is the archetypical, demonic character in many Ramayana stories. Neha's understanding of the epic through Kiski Kahani, with its capacity to accumulate stories, often ones that are contradictory and conflicting on the surface, unites diverse ethnic and religious strands under the umbrella of a common storytelling practice. Kiski Kahani, therefore, allows these retellings, which diverge from the hegemonic, Hindu nationalist narratives that center on devotion to Rama, to crystallize into a coherent, performable corpus. The Kiski Kahani stories, while fragmentary and evocative rather than continuous and descriptive, represent a regime of cosmopolitanist ownership, where discourses of partial senses of belonging override discourses of authenticity and cultural purity.

### THE MAKING OF A NEW GENRE: RAMAYANA STORIES WITHOUT AUTHORS

Kiski Kahani's curation of Ramayana stories, which builds upon difference from Hindu nationalist texts, is an attempt at widening intertextual gaps. The performances and the publications are not projects to create a master narrative of the entire epic; rather, they play upon the side stories and the characters of the Ramayana to entextualize cosmopolitan aspirations. As Ramanujan (1991) suggests, the structure of the Ramayana is such that stories can always be inserted and crystallized within the epic, thereby interrupting authoritative episodes with improvised episodes.

In the following story, taken from the "300 Ramayanas" pamphlet, the notion of independent, singular authorship of any retelling of the Ramayana is challenged:

> After the epic battle between Rama and Ravana, Hanuman retreated to the mountains where he spent his time meditating and writing Rama's illustrious deeds on a rock, using his nails.[7]

> In another part of the forest…Valmiki had just completed his own version of Rama's journey. Valmiki had been told that the mighty Hanuman would be the best critic of his story, so he set out to climb the mountain…. As he reached the top of the mountain, Valmiki saw, painstakingly etched on a rockface, a story so wondrous that it made him weep. And weep, and weep and weep some more, partly because the story was so beautiful but mostly because his own story was but a shadow of this

> one. Seeing the "rishi" [sage] reading his story with tears coursing down his cheeks, Hanuman selflessly picked up the rock and with all his divine strength, and flung it into the ocean.
>
> Taken aback, Valmiki swore to be reborn so that he may sing Hanuman's praises which he had understated…. Tulsidas, the great poet who wrote [the Ramcharitmanas], is said to be an incarnation of Valmiki.

Here, the god Hanuman, the sage Valmiki, and the poet-saint Tulsidas, are not divine figures or "primordial" authors who wield authority over the "true" Ramayana. In fact, Valmiki and Tulsidas are listeners who, despite being incapable of preserving the "entirety" of the epic, become retellers whose names are embedded in iconic retellings of Ramayana stories. Even when there is a *certain* Ramayana attributed to Valmiki or Tulsidas, neither of them are authoritative creators of the text. This passage illustrates that such stories are still imperfect renditions of a mythical, inconceivable whole that nobody in particular owns.

By incorporating the "authors" themselves into a retelling and citing other retellings, this episode demonstrates how intertextual relationships and genre formations are not simply formal categories that are imposed by scholarly interpretations. Writers at Kiski Kahani internalize previous retellings of the Ramayana and create a new array of interrelated stories to comment on the sense of ownership of a text. This particular episode, as well as many other stories that Kiski Kahani generates through Neha's and Haroon's literary curation, question the notion of a text to which all other retellings are compared. Ramayana performances, therefore, do not start at the reteller and end at the listener. Listeners are, in fact, prolific retellers as well. There is no single author who owns the text.

## conclusion

My study poses two main questions: How do retellings of the Ramayana stories reflect a way of belonging to a cosmopolitan, pluricultural Indian nation? How do performance modalities contextualize the text as a socially contested space? I found that interpreting how a curation of Ramayana stories is discussed and debated does not continuously explain the epic's social position; rather, it suggests how the Ramayana's retellers configure their sense of belonging and identity through listening to and performing these stories. Admittedly, the Ramayana might not be easily reclaimed from its history of appropriation by Hindu nationalists during the Ayodhya incident in 1992 and its violent aftermath. Even today, retelling the Ramayana stories is still a politically vexed project. Nonetheless, understanding how the epic is retold in emerging and improvised forms allows us to see how the Ramayana stories have not been surrendered to sectarian divisions.

Ideological contestation within the formal, textual structure of the epic, however, is not the core of my analysis. Instead, I am interested in how the Ramayana stories index a sense of belonging to an India-wide literary practice. My study builds upon the ethnography of speaking approach, where the socially patterned use of language depends on the "nonliterary" context of the performance, such as the life histories of the retellers. The concept of performance illuminates broader social processes as well. My approach to cosmopolitan belonging argues against enumerating Indian nationhood in terms of discrete cultural units. The formation of a Ramayana genre from fragmentary, incomplete narratives illustrates that culture, like stories, is lived through debates and differences. Unfinished retellings and authorless stories, which Kiski Kahani compiles and frames as representations of the nation, are simultaneously a reflection and a critique of macrosocial discourses of culture. Retell-

ers of the Ramayana, therefore, are not only Indian citizens, but also innovators of a way of composing, rehearsing, and performing culture in everyday life.

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## NOTES

1. See *Tehelka* (October 24, 2011).
2. The names of this organization and of individuals in this paper have been changed to protect privacy.
3. The Amar Chitra Katha (ACK) comic books are almost as popular today in urban India as they were in the 1980s. ACK, which is a colored, illustrated comic series, presents stories from the Ramayana in English. Although it has been criticized for using only "Hindu" texts, the ACK is a common way of experiencing mythological texts among upper-middle class, urban Indians (McLain 2009).
4. Ramanand Sagar's (2001 [1987]) Hindi-language television series of the Ramayana was broadcasted through *Doordarshan*, the Indian central government's official channel.
5. "Calendar art" or "god poster" is a popular genre of illustrations on mythological themes based on deities, saints, and sacred sites that are commercially produced, especially in major Indian urban centers. See Smith (1995).
6. Paley, an American cartoonist, released "Sita Sings the Blues" in 2008. The feature-length animation combines selections from the Ramayana stories with her life history as an artist.
7. Hanuman, a simian god whose virility and courage is indispensable to Rama during the numerous battles with Ravana, is said to be an ascetic that secluded himself in the mountains of the Himalaya after the battles of the Ramayana (Lutgendorf 2007,173-174).

# Continuity and Evolution: The Idea of "Co-creativity" in Chinese Art

Jinli He

**Abstract:** This paper seeks to explore an important characteristic of both traditional and contemporary Chinese art, that is, co-creativity. The author believes that co-creativity is a particular Chinese cultural sensibility that establishes the continuity of Chinese art and allows it to endure despite historical, societal, and political changes throughout the centuries. This paper starts with an introduction of the idea of co-creativity in Chinese culture. One of its embodiments is the relationship between *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* both engender and fulfill each other, which is a co-relational and co-creative process. The paper then analyzes how the idea of co-creativity is demonstrated in traditional landscape painting through the expression of the oneness with nature and invitation to join a journey with the artist. Lastly, it demonstrates this continious co-creative cultural sensibility through analyzing two contemporary artists' works. The author reads the submissive openness and vulnerability in Chinese female artist Chen Lingyang's works as a continuity of the co-creative spirit of *yin* and *yang*, of nature and human. Chen's work, rooted in her cultural sensibility, expresses a totally different statement of women's desires and conditions than does that of American feminist artists Judy Chicago and Carolee Schneemann. Likewise, performance artist Ma Liuming's Fen-Ma Liuming in… series seems inspired by nature's image of co-creating the world. Different as these works may be in their formal aspects—from painting to poetry, from photography to performance— "co-creativity" is at the heart of Chinese cultural expression.

**Keywords** co-creativity; cultural sensibility; landscape painting; Chen Lingyang; Ma Liuming

## Introduction

Why co-creativity? My choice of this term and concept to describe a Chinese cultural sensibility that plays a role in the creation of art was inspired by a conversation I had with Professor Roger Ames several years ago. In their book *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (2001), Roger Ames and David Hall use "creativity" and "co-creativity" to translate the central concept *cheng* (誠) in the *Zhongyong*. As we know, *cheng* has been conventionally translated as sincerity or integrity. I raised the question of this discrepancy with Professor Ames while conducting an interview with him for a journal edited by a friend of mine in Shanghai. Ames's answer began with a discussion of the cosmological meaning of the concept *cheng* (Ames and Hall 2005, 438):

> Cosmology is the projection of the human world onto the cosmos—the shaping of experience of the world with the lens of human feelings. This is certainly what we see in early Greek philosophy where "love" and "strife" are the creative forces which shape cosmic order. *Cheng* (誠) should be understood in a cosmological sense—that is in a philosophical sense. For this reason, *cheng* is not used in the conven-

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> tional way, but with a philosophical import—the cosmos as a projection of human feelings. I take this to be a distinctive characteristic of the *Zhongyong*. What the *Zhongyong* does is to "cosmologize" human affect. The human being is co-creator with the cosmos—this is the main theme of the *Zhongyong*. It is just as we can see in the language of "on a par with *tian*" (*peitian*, 配天) and "the three powers"(*sancai*, 三才). The human being is the heartmind of the cosmos—its collaborator. With this kind of understanding you become aware of the fact that feeling is the foundation of creativity. Hence, translating *cheng* as "creativity" or "co-creativity" is not abandoning its meaning of "sincerity" because we in fact create each other—we literally "make" our friends. It is on this basis that we use this vocabulary. When you are in the process of creating yourself together with others, you should have integrity in the sense of "becoming one together." You are not exclusively "yourself," you are your relationships, and it is in these relationships that you become one together. So "integrity" too is the foundation of "creativity" and "co-creativity." Hence, "creativity" or "co-creativity" does not abandon the conventional meaning of *cheng* as "sincerity" or "integrity," but just appeals to a different way in which they are expressed.[1]

Cultural translation is a charming and mysterious process of meaning aggrandizement. According to Ames, the reason for their use of "co-creativity" to translate the Chinese philosophical concept *cheng* is that the word "co-creativity" bears the same Chinese cultural sensibility that *cheng* implies ("cosomologizing human affect," the continuity of *tian* and human, the sensibility of "becoming one together," and so forth). Those qualities are essential for Chinese artists as their goal of creativity is an ongoing process of self-cultivation, being one together with the cosmos, nature, society, family, friends, and their surroundings. As Ames and Hall describe in their distinction of the notions of "power" and "creativity":

> Power relationships reduce creativity to modes of external causation…the world is sharply divided into creators and created—that is, makers and made…
>
> Creativity is always reflexive and…with respect to "self"…is transactional and multi-dimensional. Thus creativity is both self-creativity and co-creativity…. All relations are transactional in the sense that they are reciprocal and mutually determinative. (Ames and Hall 2001,12-13)

One of the conventional embodiments of co-creativity is the relationship between *yin* and *yang*—they both engender each other and consummate each other, which is a co-relational and co-creative process. The concept of *yin* and *yang*, and by extension co-creativity, is an enduring theme of Chinese art. It is demonstrated in all aspects of artistic creativity: First, as I mentioned earlier, for a Chinese artist, the significance of artistic creativity is that consummating a work is a means by which to self-consummate. Secondly, co-creative sensibility is one of openness that is embodied in the Chinese artist's attitudes toward nature, history, the viewer, and so forth. Handscroll painting is a fine example because its unique format often allows people other than the artist to become literally involved in the creation of art. In one case, a 15 x 41 inch framed landscape masterpiece from the Song dynasty was extended to twenty times its original length through the ages. Paintings, poetry, comments, and styled seals were added by friends, collectors, or viewers, and collectors from later generations continuously participated in this creative process. The moment the viewer unrolls the handscroll painting, he is also participating in this historical co-creative process. The masterpiece itself becomes an ongoing open "system" which creates art history and an

enduring self-creating process. The co-creative sensibility is the key to this distinctive Chinese tradition of art appreciation and creation.

Another example of this co-creative and open artistic relationship is the traditional art gathering, where artists enjoy creating a work together. The famous example is a work co-created by the Yuan masters Gu An (ca. 1289-1365), Yang Weizhen (1296-1370), Zhang Shen (dates uncertain), and Ni Zan (1301-1374) called *Old Tree, Bamboo and Rock* (1370-1373). The former three artists co-created the original work in 1370; the old tree was painted by Zhang Shen and the bamboo by Gu An. The middle left inscription was written by Zhang Shen and the upper left by Yang Weizhen. Three years later, after Gu An and Yang Weizhen had passed away, Ni Zan saw the painting and added the rock as well as a poem (upper right) to memorialize the late masters. The spirit of artistic co-creativity is well expressed in this single painting.

Finally, one of the unique characteristics of traditional Chinese art theory is that literature, painting, and other art forms share the same critical standards and aesthetic terms. For example, the famous poet and painter Wang Wei, who lived in the eighth century, was viewed favorably by later artists and poets because of the convertibility of his arts: "painting in poetry, poetry in painting" (Su Dongpo, 1981, 37). As the legend goes, the famous calligrapher Zhang Xu (eighth century), considered to be the sage of cursive style (*caoshu*), was inspired by the martial arts dancer Gongsun Daniang's sword dance. The aesthetic terms such as *yun* (韻, rhythm), *shen* (神, spirituality), and *wen* (味, taste) are applied to all kinds of art styles, from calligraphy to painting, poetry, dance, sculpture and music.

Fig. 1. Yang Weizhen, Nizan, Gu An, Zhang Shen, *Old Tree, Bamboo and Rock*.

Yuan Dynasty (1370-1373), Taipei, Palace Museum. *Digitalarchivers*. Web. 4 December, 2011.

http://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/03/fa/e7.htmlalarchive

Now I will turn to landscape painting to demonstrate how this cultural sensibility plays a role in the creation of that type of art.

## co-creativity and landscape painting

Landscape painting was a major art form in traditional Chinese art and achieved its full development during the Song Dynasty (tenth-eleventh centuries). Jing Hao (tenth century), one of the leading artists of the "monumental style," theorized that successful landscape painting was based on six essentials: *qi* (氣, spirit, energy, life breath), *yun* (韻, resonance and elegance), *si* (思, ideas), *jing* (景, scenery, i.e. "nature"), *bi* (筆, brush work), and *mo* (墨, ink wash) (Jing Hao 1963, 3). Jing's goal was to make the internal nature (breath, resonance, ideas) harmonize with the external nature (scenery, and brush and ink—the tools for artistic creation). The process went something like this: through the artist's contemplation of the natural world, the self-cultivated *qi* will find a way to resonate with the *qi* of the universe; then the artist rationalizes the process and expresses the harmony with *bi* (brush work) and *mo* (ink wash). This is not a one-way movement: to achieve and appreciate the resonance of *qi* requires mutual openness, reciprocity and co-creativity between the artist and the natural world.

Jing Hao's idea of essentials was greatly influenced by the Neo-Confucian understanding of the relationship between the self and the outside world. Neo-Confucian thinking, which can be traced back to the eighth century but primarily developed during the Song Dynasty, was a new, synthesized ideology combining basic ideas of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, but claiming to be loyal to the Confucian tradition of the Great Way (the way of life, the cosmos) developed by Confucius (551-479 BCE), Zisi (481-402 BCE), and Mencius (372-289 BCE). Its followers aspired to achieve the great way through "self-cultivation."

This self-cultivation starts with *qi* (spirit, energy, life, breath). *Qi* has always been the first and most important concept in traditional Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. The Confucian philosopher Mencius, whom Neo-Confucian scholars often quote, claimed that he was

good at cultivating his "flood-like *qi* " (浩然之氣), describing it as "most vast" (至大) and "most firm" (至剛) (Meng Tzu 1941), but he did not explain how to cultivate or achieve it. The Song dynasty Neo-Confucians explained that the utmost truth is cultivating your own flood-like *qi* to be one with the flood-like *qi* of the cosmos. Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the famous Song Neo-Confucian philosopher, later theorized and clarified: "Heaven and Earth (the cosmos) has the heart and mind of creativity, and this same heart and mind is attained in the creation of human and things" (Zhu Xi 1973, 4186; 天地以生物為心，而人物之生，又各得夫天地之心以為心者). For Zhu Xi, in other words, the heart and mind of the cosmos is united with the heart and mind of humankind. This is the ultimate truth of universe that the Neo-Confucians called *li* (理, principle, truth).

Applying this ideology to art, the great Chinese master tries to unify his mind with the mind of heaven and earth in his artistic creativity. The master studies nature until he or she reaches the point where he is able to capture nature's heart and mind in his own heart and mind. Then he/she concentrates this cultivated life breath (*qi*) in the brush, in order to convey the *qi* of nature he achieved in his heart and mind.

In Chinese art theory, there is no such concept as "perspective," instead there is *yuan* (遠, distance). The great Song landscape painter and theorist, Guo Xi (c.1020-c.1090), described three distances in landscape painting: *high distance* (高遠) (viewing from the bottom of a mountain to its peak); *level distance* (平遠) (viewing from a near mountain to a far mountain); and *deep distance* (深遠) (viewing from the front of a mountain to its back) (Guo Xi 1993, 500).

Fig. 2. Guo Xi, *Early Spring*, 1072, ink and color on silk, Palace Museum, Taipei. Courtesy of ARTstor : ARTSTOR_103_41822003468954

http://library.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3osf1N9dSc%3D

"Scientific perspective involves a view from a determined position and includes only what can be seen from that single point" (Sullivan 2008, 176). Chinese "distances," on the other hand, are inclined to view "the part from the angle of totality" (Sullivan 2008, 176). Therefore, sometimes artists apply more than one "distance" in a piece of work, which requires shifting perspectives. Guo Xi's work *Early Spring* (1072) has been viewed as a great example for applying "three distances": first you see a tiny human figure at the bottom of the majestic mountain—this is called *high* distance. Then, changing your distance, your mind travels up, and you now use your *level* distance—you are among the mountains, and you see the beauty around you. As you travel deeper and higher, you "climb" the mountain and "see" more and more mountains behind the first one. This is the *deep* distance. The totalizing angle of Chinese landscape painting suggests that the viewer is going on a tour with the artist to participate in the journey of appreciation. This is a process of interaction. The harmonized *qi*, received by the Chinese master from his ongoing encounter with nature, is carried to the brush, and the brush becomes part of his body and of the harmonized *qi*. In his work there is always the resonance of his enjoyment of the harmony of *qi*, so that the work is made up of two natures coming together in utmost harmony—that of the artist and that of the cosmos. The artist uses his imagination to paint the harmony of a beautiful journey rather than a particular, static scene (such as a photograph would encapsulate) and he also invites the viewer to join him, thus extending the creativity outward, in an ongoing movement.

## co-creativity in contemporary chinese art

This cultural sensibility of co-creativity even survives in some more radical contemporary art forms. Here I have chosen a young female artist who uses photography to make her artwork and a second who is a performance artist to demonstrate what I mean.

We shall first examine the work of Chen Lingyang.[2] Chen Lingyang was born in Zheji-

ang Province (south part of China) in 1975, and she graduated from Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing in 1999. She lives in Beijing and mainly works with installation and photography. Her works usually explore the beauty of female bodies and their intrinsic meanings. *Twelve Flower Months* is her most famous work.

Chinese women's art has received increasing international attention since the 1990s. More and more exhibitions have been held both in China and abroad—solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, and international exhibitions.[3] There are numerous articles employing Western feminist movements as the standard to analyze Chinese women's art, reading it as a gesture of liberation of women. For example, in her article "Female Body: True and Beautiful - Chen Lingyang's *Twelve Flower Months* and Women's Self-Consciousness," the Chinese art critic Liao Wen relates Chen's work to American artists Judy Chicago and Carolee Schneemann, reading them as one and the same "female body," united in confronting "the truth of the female body." She describes how the works destroy the exoticization of the "female scent" (the "scent of a woman"), whose beauty is the object of male gaze and consumption, using the most "true" things—genitalia and menstrual blood—which had been taboo in traditional art, to show the real form of a woman's body. From this perspective, Wen concludes that "Chen uses the superficial traditional art form to form tradition, and the actual 'female scent' to destroy the '(traditional) female scent'.… Those 'new new' generation girls who were born in 1970s…growing up in a relatively open-minded social environment, and a gradually internationalizing age of information…inspire us with the self-consciousness and earnestness of their 'feminist' expression!" (Liao 2001)[4]

Unlike in Western art, the naked body never appears in traditional Chinese art history. As the body is the symbol of privacy, it makes perfect sense to see contemporary Chinese artists using it to express that historical repression. Indeed, I do not exclude a "feminist" interpretation of *Twelve Flower Months*. Such an analysis does have its insights, but it cannot exhaust the rich meaning of this work. My understanding of this work is that the cultural sensibility plays an even more important role than does a feminist one.

Although all three artists use the female "personal, everyday functions" to create their art, the visual expression of Chen's work is quite different from Chicago and Schneemann. One of Judy Chicago's (b. 1939) famous works is *Red Flag* (1971). Chicago interpreted viewers' failing to recognize the gesture in the photo as "removing a tampon" (some people thought it was a bloody penis, according to her) as showing how unwilling many men (and women!) are to look at women's personal, but everyday functions. Carolee Schneemann's (b.1939) *Interior Scroll* was performed in East Hampton, NY and at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado in 1975. Schneemann ritualistically stood naked on a table, and later slowly extracted a paper scroll from her vagina and read a eulogy of a vagina from it: "…I saw the vagina as a translucent chamber of which the serpent was an outward model.... This source of interior knowledge would be symbolized as the primary index unifying spirit and flesh in Goddess worship" (Shneemann 1975). Both Chicago and Scheneemann's works convey strong feminist messages. One criticizes the ignorance of a society full of both men and women who are unwilling to face the historically established inferiority of women; the other eulogizes the female sex. Those powerful gestures claim a war for the justice of women. I do not think the cultural sensibility behind Chen Lingyang's work *Twelve Flower Months* supports the same kind of interpretation.

Fig. 3. Judy Chicago, *Red Flag 65/94*, 1971, photo lithgraph, Collection of Constance Gee. Courtesy of ARTstor: AJCHICAGOIG_10313027095

http://library.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8DpJfzQsKDI7KiAiFTx5RnsqXXwsdFE%3D

Fig. 4. Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll*, performance, 1975, ©2007 Carolee Schneemann/ARS, New York. Courtesy of ARTstor : ARTSTOR_103_41822000275568

http://library.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3kpeF98eig%3D

I will start with a brief introduction of the background of Chen's work. After graduating from art school, Chen Lingyang lived in isolation. She did not work, seldom contacted friends, and lost or cut connections with public life for several months. She writes: "In that situation, the physical aspects of my identity became prominent: hunger, cold, and espe-

Fig. 5. Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months*. photograph. Nov.1999-Dec.2000. *Xindong Cheng Space For Contemporary Art Website*, 28 June. 2011.

http://www.chengxindong.com/index.php?option=com_rsgallery2&gal_id=131&page=showImages&id=1080&NewsID=319&Itemid=5&lang=en

cially menstruation, and menstrual pain, emotional turbulence, and so on. I became aware of the cycles of day and night, the slow growth of plants and the changing patterns of the weather…" (Chen 2003). This emotional experience inspired Chen to create *Twelve Flower Months* (Nov.1999-Dec. 2000), a "real work" about menstruation. The work took twelve months and consists of handmade enlarged color photos. Each picture uses the perennial blossom of that month, as well as a mirror of a different classical shape reflecting the genitalia and menstrual blood of Chen's own body; the borders of the photographs imitate the shapes of the windows and doors of traditional Chinese gardens; the flowers shown in each photograph are the blossoms of each month of the traditional Chinese calendar. Drawn from her year of self-imposed exile, *Twelve Flower Months* is extraordinarily private and self-reflective, while at the same time expressive of Chen's effort to emerge from isolation and establish an intimate connection with the world. Because of its attempt to connect to the viewer through culturally-recognized symbols, this work can be viewed as being created in a co-creative spirit with nature and culture despite the fact that its visual language and artistic expression differ from the traditional landscape painting I discussed above.

The menstrual blood in this work reflects woman's nature, echoing the nature of the cosmos, and the blossoms of the monthly flowers. The mirrors and self-portraits draw the viewer into the image. The classical shapes of the mirror and the light, the shapes of the borders of the photographs, and even the placement of the flowers have cultural resonance. The open blossom and the opened body in the reflected mirror and the gaze of the camera all emphasize the idea of openness. But this openness is not a strong, open statement as is clearly expressed in Chicago and Schneemann's works, rather it implies a continuity of nature and culture.

It is worth quoting the artist's own interpretation of her work here. Chen Lingyang composed a "self-interview" between "Chen Lingyang No. 2" (C2) and herself (C1):

> C2: Your work (Twelve Flower Months) seems to have a very strong emotional expression…
>
> C1: Yeah. But I don't want to explain this. I want to leave the space of interpretation to the viewers. Of course, I'm happy to hear the opinions and discussions from the others' own perspectives.
>
> C2: Some people say that your work expresses privacy. When a private work is exhibited in a public space, it is hard to anticipate, or in other words, to control the consequences…
>
> C1. In some sense, it is aimed to have an impact upon the public space.
>
> Let me start from the background of this work. We are all familiar with the idea of "*Tian* ren he yi" (the oneness of *tian* [nature] and the human) in traditional Chinese culture. It is said that the utmost self-cultivated person achieves the feeling of oneness with the cosmos and the ten thousand things; she totally loses herself in the mysterious aesthetic world, loses all human feelings, such as joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, right, wrong, good or evil. *Tian* is the rhythm of the cosmos (come back and go, round, round again); women can feel this cosmic rhythm from her monthly physical (consequently, psychological) changes.

> When people view this work in a public space, they may have various opinions. However, the work itself also offers the possibility to deconstruct those interpretations. The traditional allusions make this deconstruction possible. Engendering and deconstructing, like the cycles of *Tian*.
>
> It is this relation of constructing and deconstructing that gives birth to new possibilities.
>
> C2. I notice that the duration of Twelve Flower Months is one year and it includes twelve photographs. You seem to give prominence to this.
>
> C1. Yes. The twelve photographs appear together as a completed work. Just as I mentioned above, this work is related to the pattern and rhythm of the circulation of things. A year is a completely basic palingenesis of time. Where is the beginning and where is the ending actually doesn't matter, it just goes round and round, but each moment is unrepeatable…In a word, apparently, it is a year, but actually it is an infinite time conception." (Chen 2001)[5]

I would like to introduce another of Chen's works, *The 25th hour* (2002), to deepen the contrast between Chen Lingyang's work and that of Chicago and Schneemann.

Fig. 6. Chen Lingyang, *25:00 No.1*, C- Print, 2002. *Chinesische Gegenwartskunst*. Web. 29, June.2011.

http://www.chinesische-gegenwartskunst.de/pages/galerie.php?catid=07-01-29&id=15

While the concepts of privacy and openness, the oneness of nature and culture informed *Twelve Flower Months*, *The 25th hour* can be read as women's dialogue and communication with the real world. Yet there is continuity between the two works, especially concerning Chinese women's sensibilities, including the established cultural co-creative spirit and openness. *The 25th hour* was created in 2002 and is a digital photograph. A giant woman kneels down, her face hidden, on a top of a dark warehouse; around her is the night sky and many industrialized city buildings. In the introduction to this work, Chen says,

> This 'giantess' is not really very brave, and so she will only freely change her size and make these kinds of gestures when the clock strikes 25:00.
>
> Very often, the real world and the male world get mixed up in my mind. They both come from outside me; they both exist very forcefully, with initiative, power and aggression. Facing these two worlds, I often feel that I am weak and helpless, and don't know what to do. But just being alive means that I cannot avoid them, not even for one day. I wish that every day there could be a certain time like 25:00, when I could become as large as I like, and do whatever I want. (Chen 2002)

Reading this work from a feminist perspective, we will see how different are the visual messages Chen and Chicago and Schneemann convey in their expressions of women's desire and transcendence. The giant, kneeling Chinese woman is so different from her Western sister who stands up with her powerful body right in the center of the stage to show how her strength and height—everything a patriarchal society takes to be symbolic of power. But that stage is for monologues—it is not intended to arouse dialogue. Chen's giant Chinese woman, on the other hand, kneels down under the twilight sky, amid the steel and concrete forest which is much more powerful, more "giant" than she is. There is no central stage; the stage for her is unstable and dangerous. As she kneels down and bends her naked body, she takes the risk of being exposed, of being taken advantage of. She waits there, her head and eyes covered, and seems to totally relinquish her rights to the viewer. This silent,

submissive gesture is a kind of openness, like the openness of nature. This gesture invites communication, as nature invites the participation of humans. It might be too ideal, too dangerous, and too hopeless. It certainly requires a most sensitive heart from the viewer to appreciate this gesture, lift her head and remind herself that she is actually as "giant" as anyone. I read the submissive openness and vulnerability in this work as a continuity of the co-creative spirit of *yin* and *yang*, nature and human. Chen's work, rooted in her cultural sensibility, expresses a totally different statement of women's desires and conditions than do Chicago and Schneemann.

This sensibility is also reflected in performance artist Ma Liuming's work. Ma Liuming was born in 1969 in Huangshi, Hubei Province, China. He graduated from the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts in 1991 with a focus on oil painting. After graduation, Ma Liuming moved to Beijing and began making nude performance pieces. He wears his hair long and has feminine features, and his androgynous look is an important part of his art. Makeup helps to transform his face into his female alter ego, Fen (*Fen*, 芬is a very common female name in China). The coexistent sex egos in this single artist remind us of the co-creative relationship between *yin* and *yang*.

Fig. 7. Ma Liuming, *Fen-Ma Liuming in Lyon*, 2001. *ARTLINKART Data*. Web. 29 June, 2011.

http://www.artlinkart.com/cn/artist/wrk_sr/ab2bsz/b5aa

Fig. 8. Ma Liuming, *Fen-Ma Liuming in Munich*, Germany, 1999. *ARTLINKART Data*. Web. 29 June, 2011.

http://www.artlinkart.com/cn/artist/wrk_sr/ab2bsz/b5aa

Ma Liuming's *Fen-Ma Liuming* in… series displays the idea of openness and invitation. For this particular project, Ma Liuming took sleeping pills and placed a camera in front of him to record the whole scene of his co-creativity. We can see from the photographs how the audience reacted. Some people made the same gesture as him. A lady took off one of her stockings and rolled it on to one of his legs. A young boy kissed him with a reverential attitude. Two guys made some funny postures with him. The willingness of the artist to surrender to his audience reminds us of the silence of nature. Nature is always there, inviting us to enjoy the harmony of the universe. She gives the choice to you: you can choose to offer respect, friendship, appreciation, or violence. I view Ma Liuming's performance as a gesture of nature's openness and invitation. The work reminds us to ask ourselves: do we cultivate ourselves as the self—the so-called master of the universe? Or can we be sensitive enough to nature's openness and invitation to participate in the great harmony—that is, to co-create the world?

"Co-creativity" is an enduring theme in Chinese art. It can be traced to the artist's goal of harmonizing one's "flood-like" *qi* with the *qi* of the cosmos. The artist is not just a creator, but is also created, and in this spirit, he or she invites the viewer to be part of the creative process. In landscape painting, it is the oneness with nature and invitation to "enter the scene," as well as a journey with the artist. In contemporary art, it is the expression of the artist's openness and vulnerability. Different as these works may be in their formal aspects—from painting to poetry, from photography to performance—each one demonstrates that "co-creativity" is the heart of Chinese cultural expression.

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## NOTES

1. Ames and Jinli He (interview), "The Meaning of Cultural Dialogue," June 2004. This interview was included in the Chinese translation of Ames and Hall's *Thinking through Confucius* (1987. Albany: State University of New York Press. Chinese version: 2005. Beijing: Peking University Press). The paragraph quoted here was revised by professor Roger Ames.
2. I have used the case of Chen Lingyang in another article, "Second Sex and Contemporary Chinese Women's Art: A Case Study on Chen Lingyang's Work" (in *Subversive Strategies in Contemporary Chinese Art*, edited by Mary Bittner Wiseman and Liu Yuedi, 2011. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 147-169), to discuss the difference between the characters of contemporary Chinese women's art and Western women's art. I have revised section of that work for the purpose of this paper.
3. To name just a few exhibitions inside of China: *Female Artists' world* (I,1990, II,1995, III,2000, Beijing); *Century, Women* (1998, Beijing); *Women Declaration: Contemporary Women Artists' Exhibition* (2004, Shanghai) *SHE: Ten Female Artists' Works*, (2004, Beijing), *Dream, Dilemma, Modern Feminine Nature* (2004, Beijing), *Between Liberation and Bondage* (2005, Beijing); *Combination: Female Artists' Exhibition* (2006, Beijing) [titles are all my translations].
4. My translation.
5. My translation.

# Re-Examining Extreme Violence: Historical Reconstruction and Ethnic Consciousness in *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale*

Chia-rong Wu

**Abstract:** This article focuses on the ideological representation of extreme violence in Wei Te-sheng's *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* with an aim to explore the cultural and political dimensions of the Wushe Incident and to restore the voice of the oppressed and colonized. The first part of the article accounts for the historical setting of the film and the trope of beheading in traditional Seediq culture. The second part discusses how Wei's film sheds a new light on localized spectacles of decapitation and further addresses various forms of violence caused by inner and outer conflicts within the Seediq tribes in the face of aboriginal traditions and colonial hegemony. The final section brings into focus the issue of how the extremism of the film engages the global trend of violence in cinema and facilitates aboriginal glory and consciousness in defiance of continued symbolic oppression in twenty-first-century Taiwan.

**Keywords** Seediq Bale; Wei Te-sheng; extreme violence; decapitation; ethnic consciousness; anti-colonialism

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Written and directed by Wei Te-sheng魏德聖 [Wei Desheng], *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* 賽德克巴萊 [Saideke balai] (2011) has become the No.1 blockbuster in the film history of Taiwan. This film is a compelling action epic that has drawn both praise and controversy. The historical drama centers on the Wushe Incident霧社事件, which is one of the most famous anti-Japanese revolts. It was also the bloodiest, characterized by excessive violence and decapitation. Led by tribal hero Mouna Rudo[1] 莫那魯道 [Mona Rudao], three hundred Seediq[2] warriors took part in the rebellion against the oppressive colonial rule on October 27th, 1930, and brutally killed more than 130 Japanese settlers, including women and children, at a sports event. The film begins with the early lives of the Seediq people in the late nineteenth century, then shifts to the subjugation of Taiwanese aborigines in the colonial period, and finally highlights the violent clash between primitive aboriginal warriors and modern Japanese soldiers. In the film, these headhunters stage an appalling bloodbath with direct visual impacts and profound ethnic complexities.

This article focuses on the ideological representation of extreme violence in Wei's *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* with an aim to explore the cultural and political dimensions of the Wushe Incident and to restore the voice of the oppressed and colonized. The first part of the article accounts for the historical setting of the film and the trope of beheading in traditional Seediq culture. The second part discusses how Wei's film sheds a new light on localized spectacles of decapitation and further addresses various forms of violence caused by inner and outer conflicts within the Seediq tribes in the face of aboriginal traditions and colonial hegemony. The final section brings into focus the issue of how the extremism of the film engages the global trend of violence in cinema and facilitates aborigi-

nal glory and consciousness in defiance of the continued symbolic oppression in twenty-first-century Taiwan.

Director Wei Te-sheng has become one of the most significant cultural icons in Taiwan since his hit movie *Cape No.7* 海角七號 [Haijiao qihao] was released in 2008. Three years later, Wei's *Seediq Bale* further leads audiences to look closely at the violent anti-Japanese uprisings in colonial Taiwan. Despite their differences in tone and scale, both films are connected with the intercultural relationship between Taiwan and Japan. Actually, Wei had the idea of filming *Seediq Bale* even before he produced *Cape No.7*. On several occasions, he has made clear to the public media that he was first inspired by *The Wushe Incident*, a comic book written by Chiu Row-Ling 邱若龍 [Qiu Ruolong] in the late 1990s. However, Wei did not have enough funding to make such a big-budget movie until the domestic success of *Cape No. 7*. Wei and Chiu later became close friends and shared the vision of producing a film about the Wushe Incident. Chiu even served as one of the costume designers of *Seediq Bale*. Before the popularity of *Seediq Bale*, representations of the history of aborigines in Taiwan had usually been shown on TV alone, and had relatively limited impacts on the Taiwanese psyche and market. It is *Seediq Bale* that helps to reunite Taiwanese aborigines as a whole by formulating a collective, national Taiwanese identity for both the Han and the indigenous peoples.

As the most expensive historical epic film ever produced in Taiwan, *Seediq Bale* runs for four and a half hours in the full, two-part version (Part 1: The Flag of Sun 太陽旗 [Taiyang qi] and Part 2: The Bridge of Rainbow 彩虹橋 [Caihong qiao]) and two and a half in its international cut. Given that its international cut leaves out some details regarding the lives of the Seediq people, the focus of this paper is on the full version. With a cast made up of indigenous, Hans, and Japanese actors, the film clearly shows Wei's ambition to display an authentic picture of Seediq lives in terms of language, costumes, and weaponry. The film starts with an action-packed sequence during a boar hunt and quickly shifts to more violent man- and headhunting between two aboriginal tribes, Seediqs and Bununs. Young Mouna Rudo (游大慶 Da-ching), son of the tribal chief Rudo Ruhei (曾秋勝 Pawan Nawi), is figured as a tall and muscular Seediq hero. In the opening scene, young Mouna Rudo beheads two Bunun hunters and escapes successfully with their heads as trophies, a victory for which he receives a facial tattoo as a spiritual mark. In the Seediq tradition, a young male can never become a true man "commemorated by a facial tattoo" unless he presents "a human head to the tribe" (Berry 2008, 100). The process of transformation from boy to man is also echoed by the film title *Seediq Bale*, which means "true man."

*Seediq Bale* then recounts the outcome of the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895. The defeated Qing court signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki 馬關條約 [Maguan tiaoyue] and ceded Taiwan and Pescadores to Japan. Under colonial rule, the islanders, including the indigenous people, and the Hans, Chinese immigrants mainly from Fujian Province, experienced "assimilation […] from 1895-1919" and "integration from 1919 to 1930" (Liao 2006, 2). During the "assimilation" period, the Japanese government's attempt to make Taiwan a colony was not as smooth and successful as expected due to constant riots organized by the Hans. The "assimilation" process actually sped up in the "integration" period through educational reform. After 1919, Japanese education was systematically implemented by the colonial government, and it radically changed the lives of both the Hans and the aborigines. In the name of modernization, the Japanese colonial education involved "formal schooling" and "[Japanese] language standardization" (Heylen 2004, 5). The devastating consequence is the decline of indigenous culture, as shown in *Seediq Bale*. Some critics have argued that Japan actually introduced modernity to Taiwan by developing its economy, education, and

transportation. Nevertheless, it is also important to take into account the negative aspects of colonialism, including high-handed control, violence, and exploitation.

Throughout the colonial period, Japanese settlers were eager to exploit the island's resources, such as lumber and mines. The so-called "assimilation" and "integration" process was simply a colonial means to complete the colonizers' exploitative mission. Although the Hans were generally subjugated and ill-treated as subhumans, they were still involved in society, albeit with class divisions. Aborigines, on the other hand, were directly linked to savagery and granted limited access to modernity. One major reason for this divide is that bridging the cultural gap between Japanese and Hans is much easier than doing the same thing between Japanese and aborigines. Back in 1895, the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan started banning hunting and ritual headhunting by the aborigines. In order to fully assimilate indigenous people into the Japanese colony, colonial officials even organized seven "tours to Japan proper" between 1897 and 1925. During these trips, selected aboriginal leaders, including Mouna Rudo, "were directed to and shown various industrial and military facilities, the imperial palace, and Shinto shrines [in Japan]" (Ching 2000, 795). The colonizers later asked these "savages" to reveal to their tribesmen a grand modern picture of the Japanese empire. Despite this and other colonial teachings on industrialization, indigenous people still practiced hunting and headhunting in some regions until the late 1920s, when the Japanese colonizers were finally determined to tighten up control over the indigenous people. The enforced banning of traditional indigenous practices had a huge impact on aborigines. Without their hunting rights and ground, aborigines gradually became lumberjacks, miners, and maids.

It is worth noting that *Seediq Bale* valorizes primitive violence in response to colonial atrocity by sharply delineating the contrast between courageous aborigines in the mountains and weak Chinese immigrants in the plains. While the unorganized Han rebels are easily conquered by the well-equipped Japanese army in the film, resilient aboriginal warriors set up a series of successful ambushes against their foreign enemies. Actually, the Hans' military rebellion against the Japanese did not end until 1915. This part of the history, of course, would not fit properly in this indigenous-centered film. In *Seediq Bale*, there are only two noticeable Han figures, the nameless owner of the trade center (馬如龍 Ju-Lung Ma) and Mr. Jin-Dun Wu (鄭志偉 Chi-Wei Cheng), a grocery store owner in the Wushe district. Unlike robust aboriginal hunters, both Han Chinese men merely engage in trading with aborigines. The passive tone expressed through these harmless Han characters is a stark contrast to both indigenous extremism and imperial enormity.

As a matter of fact, the violent scenes of *Seediq Bale* make it comparable to Mel Gibson's aboriginal epic—*Apocalypto* (2006). Some critics may argue that *Apocalypto* is produced to represent Mayan culture in an authentic and unvarnished way—that is, a strategy also used by Wei in filming *Seediq Bale*. However, *Apocalypto* and *Seediq Bale* differ in their perspectives and receptions in domestic communities. The former film aims to represent the cultural other, and it is perceived as such. The latter re-claims the right to represent the self, and it greatly raises Taiwan's indigenous consciousness to the level of national spirit. Moreover, the bloody massacres represented in *Seediq Bale* further correspond with the New Extremism in European cinema in which "brutal and visceral images [are] designed deliberately to shock or provoke the spectator" (Horeck and Kendall 2011, 1). Director Wei Te-sheng's handling of extreme violence has received a lot of negative feedback. For instance, Stephen Holden claims that this film is a "bloodbath that fetishizes the machete as the ultimate human slicing machine" (2012). Focusing on mechanical killing acts only, Holden misses the cultural essence of the Seediq people that the director wants to retrieve

through the repeated spectacles of violence.

To renarrate the bloody event from an aboriginal angle, the director carefully presents the heroic image of Mouna Rudo, along with other Seediq warriors, and instills spirituality into endless headhunting. By aestheticizing headhunting, the director successfully revives Asian Extreme cinema outside of the framework of brutal martial arts and horror. Since the 1960s, kung fu has emerged as one of the most popular genres in Chinese film production.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Shaw Brothers director Chang Cheh 張徹 [Zhang Che] produced dozens of kung fu flicks that exploit violence primarily for profit. Still, some of Chang's films have a close engagement with the historical and cultural background of China. The legendary cultural icon Bruce Lee 李小龍 [Li Xiaolong] further reversed the weak, feminized Asian male image in the west through kung fu classics like *Fist of Fury* 精武門 [Jing wu men] (1972) and *Enter the Dragon* 龍爭虎鬥 [Longzheng hudou] (1973). Bruce Lee's success was later repeated by Jackie Chan 成龍 [Cheng Long] and Jet Li 李連杰 [Li Lianjie] in the 1980s and 1990s.

In addition to these types of films, Chi-Yun Shih provides an intriguing analysis of the Asian Extreme films by Tartan Films, such as Japan's *Battle Royale* (2000) and South Korea's *Oldboy* (2003) in the essay "Art of Branding: Tartan 'Asian Extreme' Films." While Tartan Films employs "the visceral and hyper violent nature" of their films as a marketing strategy (Shih 2008), there is much less cultural and historical context covered in Tartan's Asian Extreme series. We need to keep in mind that *Seediq Bale* is different from Tartan's Asian Extremism in that the extreme violence in the film does not exist for its own sake, but rather as a means of regaining ethnic identity and cultural autonomy for Seediq people. In this light, we might consider the film to be closer to the kung fu genre, which celebrates extreme physicality, individual heroism, and sometimes national consciousness. By watching *Seediq Bale*, viewers are given close-ups and slow-motion shots of beheading acts, but what really matters lies behind severed and headless cadavers and beyond shocking effects and uncanny feelings. Here, the cinematic representation of decapitation is realigned with its original honor in tandem with the Seediqs' ancestral spirits and cultural roots.

Through the spectacles of violence, director Wei Te-sheng masterfully retells the epic story and explores a disintegrating ethnic culture of Taiwan. The exceptional vividness of combat engagement in *Seediq Bale* has garnered a lot of attention from the public. We can even say that the director celebrates primitive violence not just as a visual shock, but as a significant way for aboriginal men to complete their lives and souls. The aboriginal extremism in the film is justified in several aspects. Each aboriginal tribe has its own hunting ground, which represents natural resources, cultural basis, and spiritual home. According to Omi Wilang, "Land is the medium through which culture is passed from one generation to the next. When people's land rights are lost, their autonomy is also lost" (2011). In one scene, middle-aged Mouna Rudo (林慶台 Lin Ching-tai), now the tribal chief, is confronted by the son of a Japanese officer. The Japanese boy emphasizes that all the hunting grounds in Taiwan belong to imperial Japan. Without the rights to claim their hunting ground, the Seediq men lose their glory as hunters and are mistreated as lumbermen, while some Seediq women serve as maids in Japanese households and bar girls to entertain Japanese men. In order to fully understand the Wushe Incident, we need to go back to the historical fact that the Japanese government in the late 1920s coercively banned headhunting acts widely conducted by the indigenous people in Taiwan. As Michael Berry cleverly argues,

> The Japanese prohibition against headhunting, which resulted in an entire genera-

> tion of [Seediq] males who were relegated to a state of perpetual adolescence and psychological inferiority can be seen as an important factor that, combined with exploitation, mistreatment, and other abuses, contributed to the explosion of violence [in *the Wushe Incident*]. (2008, 100)

A critical concern or question here is as follows: if we take a closer look at the extreme violence of *Seediq Bale* vis-à-vis the ethnic rite of passage from adolescence to manhood, can such primitive extremism be perceived and embraced despite its challenge to the rules of civility in the (post)colonial period?

To the above question, director Wei Te-sheng's answer is yes. Despite some critiques on its extreme violence and poor CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) effects, *Seediq Bale* has been wellreceived in indigenous communities as an epic film bound up with ethnic consciousness. For general Taiwanese viewers, other than aborigines, the film can even be treated as a national calling and a collective endeavor for resistance against the traumatic colonial past. Some critics may question how the film creates a collective vision against Japanese colonizers and formulates a shared national identity while focusing on aborigines and marginalizing the Han Chinese, the dominant ethnic group in Taiwan. At this point, it is essential to take into account the enormous influence of aboriginal cultural icons, even in modern Taiwan. In the field of sports, spectacular examples are Olympic medalists Chuan-kuang Yang 楊傳廣 [Yang Chuanguang] and Chi Cheng 紀政 [Ji Zheng]. While Yang is wholly aboriginal by birth, Chi is partially so. As for show business, it is impossible to ignore the success of the queen of Chinese pop music A-Mei 張惠妹 [Zhang Huimei], and pop idol Show Luo 羅志祥 [Luo Zhixiang]. Not to mention that the local professional league of baseball, the national sport of Taiwan, is dominated by indigenous players. Given his brilliant record against Japan in international baseball games, the most-loved local hero Chin-Feng Chen 陳金鋒 [Chen Jinfeng] is a perfect case in point. Whenever an international baseball tournament comes up, the majority of Taiwanese people, baseball fans or not, are obsessed with the performance of Taiwan's team. Thus, Taiwanese people's passion for baseball in international competition is lifted to the level of national consciousness, which is shared by all residents in Taiwan. Following the successful model of aboriginal heroism described above, *Seediq Bale* showcases a revolutionary narrative of extreme violence on a national level.

In presenting the primitive violence of the Seediqs, Wei Te-sheng implicitly criticizes the ideological suppression and physical torture from which the Seediqs suffer. Therefore, the film idealizes aboriginal uprising and celebrates the aesthetic of primitive violence. The director uses "words" and "lyrical voiceovers set to battle scenes" to "enhance" the primitive "violence "and "justify" aborigines' "brutality" (Nordine 2012). It is Wei's belief that the violent custom of headhunting has to be reenacted and represented from the Seediq perspective: "Ultimately, I decided to keep those [violent] scenes because they reflected the truth and I felt it was important to face such things head on, but rather encourage the audience to consider how such brutality should be dealt with" (Wei 2011). In the film, Mouna Rudo witnesses the declining morale and norms of the Seediq people. Once their hunting grounds are taken away, their identity and culture gradually erode. After the law against headhunting was put into practice, the life of the Seediq people "changed dramatically" and many of them "quickly adapted to Japanese ways" (Balcom 2005, XVII). In this sense, the Wushe Incident emerges as Seediq warriors' last revolt against the cruelty and corruption of Japanese colonists. In defiance of Japanese desecration of the Seediq society, such violent performances are required and highlighted.

To a great extent, the director follows the conventional revolutionary narrative between the colonizers and the colonized. Still, some twists exist and are worthy of discussion. Besides antagonism against Japanese intruders, aborigines encounter domestic conflicts and high tensions that result from headhunting among various tribes. The Seediq tribe of Mehebo 馬赫坡 [Mahebo] led by Mouna Rudo, the Seediq tribe of Toda 道澤 [Daoze], and the Bununs are cases in point. In the film, Mouna Rudo's major opponents are the Japanese Major General Yahiko Kamada (Sabu Kawahara) and the tribal leader of Toda, Temu Walis (馬志翔 Umin Boya). If the 300 Seediqs' uprising against the Japanese is a wrenching experience of resistance for film audiences, the internecine violence among the Seediq communities is no less unnerving. After the Japanese settlers in the Wushe area are slain and decapitated by the Seediqs, the colonists soon strike back with force and gas bombs. The colonists even incite the tribe of Toda to hunt the 300 Seediq warriors' heads. In this case, Mouna Rudo, Temu Walis, and Yahiko Kamada are cast as the ethnic hero, the tribal traitor, and foreign villain, respectively.

More importantly, *Seediq Bale* stages varied forms of extreme violence in the colonial context. In addition to the visual and visceral shock of decapitation, the film portrays some upsetting scenes about excessive violence performed by the Seediq adolescents and imposed on innocent women and children. In order not to become tribal warriors' burdens, a number of the starving Seediq women decide to commit suicide by hanging themselves in the forest after the rebellion begins. They die in peace, knowing that they will be waiting on the other end of the rainbow bridge—that is, the final destination and spiritual haven of the Seediqs. However, this tragic scene is overshadowed by the "simplified" relationship between the passive aboriginal women and their aggressive counterparts, as if aboriginal women can act only as obedient daughters, faithful wives, and dutiful mothers in Wei Te-sheng's male-dominated narrative, or kill themselves. As Ian Inkster points out,

> [I]t should at least be noted that there is much evidence of independence and the high status of women in Atayal—whom the [Seediq] had previously been classified as —and related Aboriginal cultures, and early evidence of women engaged in fighting to the death, and at times using firearms. (2012)

The Seediq women, including Mouna Rudo's daughter Mahung Rudo (溫嵐 Landy Wen), who survive the incident, cannot but suffer psychological traumas. Undoubtedly, the director's "simplified" version of the male-female relationship successfully projects a riveting performance of aboriginal masculinity. However, the gender dynamic poses a serious question to this allegedly authentic historical drama. Unlike the passive Seediq women, the Seediq boys stand as merciless warriors and are thus given opportunities of reaching manhood through headhunting. That said, viewers witness how the Seediq adolescents led by Pawan Nawi (林源傑 Umin Walis) participate in fierce battles and kill their Japanese enemies, including unarmed women and children. The bloody violence conducted by Pawan Nawi and his friends stirs up viewers' feelings of distress in that the brutality of/on children has gone beyond the limit of common audiences' comprehension and sympathy. Through these cases of Seediq women and children, the director creates some gray space within the framework of the male-centered, anti-colonial narrative.

Furthermore, *Seediq Bale* also reexamines two ambiguous figures: Hanaoka Ichiro (徐詣帆 Hsu Yi-Fan [Xu Yifan]) and Hanaoka Jiro (蘇達 Soda Voyu), whose original Seediq names are Dakkis Nobin and Dakkis Nawi. Both Ichiro and Jiro receive Japanese education and later serve as policemen in the Wushe district. In the film, they straddle the line between Seediq traditions and Japanese teachings. Though unwillingly, in the film they help

their tribal fellows gain firearms from the Japanese. However, they never join the physical combats against the Japanese during the incident. Instead, they commit suicide along with their families. It is worth considering that both Ichiro and Jiro choose to wear traditional Japanese costumes before committing suicide. Ichiro takes the Japanese way and commits seppuku, or stomachcutting, whereas Jiro adheres to the tribal custom and hangs himself from a tree. In the film, Ichiro even slits the throat of his wife and suffocates his newborn son before committing suicide. In real life, their deaths have drawn much attention in historical research and literary studies. As Michael Berry claims,

> [Hanaoka Ichiro and Hanaoka Jiro's] chosen methods of ending their lives—*seppuku* and hanging—seem to hint at a cultural schizophrenia: even in death they were haunted by the tensions between loyalty to their [Seediq] tribe and loyalty to the colonial empire that reared them. (2008, 56)

While the 300 Seediq warriors' anticolonialism mission is clear and straightforward, the two Hanaoka cases are ambiguous due to their cross-cultural identity.

As mentioned earlier, this indigenous revolt is embraced by Taiwanese audiences as a nationalist epic. Therefore, the 300 Seediqs' "drive to kill" can further be expanded into "the entitlement called narcissism in an individual but nationalism in a country" (Dutton 2007, x). Such double-edged symbolic violence proves too overwhelming for Ichiro and Jiro to handle. Thus, suicide serves as the only relief from their symptoms of "cultural schizophrenia" and identity crisis. In this sense, Ichiro and Jiro's inner problem of intercultural positioning complicates the heroic act and singular wish of guarding the hunting grounds shared by Mouna Rudo and his followers. While Ichiro and Jiro die in anguish and bewilderment, the 300 Seediq warriors fight until the end. Most of them are either slain/beheaded or hang themselves from the tree as many of their tribespeople did before them. Mouna Rudo disappears, and his dead body is found in the deep forest four years later. As for the few Seediq survivors, their destiny is summarized in the following lines from the film: "After the incident, Kojima Genji instigated the Seediqs from Toda to revenge the death of their chief Temu Walis by killing all the remaining defenseless tribesmen staying in the shelter during the night" (Wei 2012). The film concludes with the 300 Seediq hunters crossing the rainbow bridge. Because they have guarded their land, these true Seediqs finally reach heaven and join their ancestors there.

Through its multiple standpoints and perspectives, *Seediq Bale* challenges the conventional paradigm between good and evil, and between colonizers and colonized. Without any doubt, the Japanese rule shatters the peace of aboriginal villages, and there are indeed many high-handed and unsympathetic Japanese characters in the film. Still, viewers get to examine the relatively friendly police officer Kojima Genji, who befriends Temu Walis and successfully persuades the tribesmen of Toda to be Japanese colonists' loyal allies. *Seediq Bale* is also loaded with tribe-to-tribe conflicts as well as Hanaoka Ichiro and Hanaoka Jiro's dilemma. These multiple facets make the film more complicated than other contemporary Chinese anti-Japanese epics, such as *City of Life and Death* 南京！南京！ [Nanjing Nanjing] (2009) and *The Flowers of War* 金陵十三釵 [Jinling shisan chai] (2011).

To viewers not on Taiwanese soil, *Seediq Bale* may seem merely sensational with its exotic settings and violent spectacles. If we take a closer look, however, we see that the appeal of the film actually springs from the dynamic mix of valor, fear, love, and hatred in response to cultural contacts and conflicts within human civilization on a universal level. While the colonial history and postcolonial experience have become significant topics in the global network, *Seediq Bale* not only engages the assertion of local identity, but echoes

collective remarks against oppressive colonial rule. Unfortunately, the film did not achieve great success outside Taiwan, given that the mixture of minority discourse and extreme violence is difficult for global audiences to grasp. The lack of a starry cast and poor CGI also make it harder to hit foreign markets. Moreover, the truncated version of the film screened in foreign countries leaves out a lot of historical and cultural context that make it understandable. It is indeed a pity that *Seediq Bale*, as the highest grossing film in Taiwanese history, could not spread its influence across the sea to neighboring countries like South Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia. Still, the film has reached a milestone of the local film industry in the form of national cinema.

Since the 1980s, Taiwan has gone through various aboriginal movements towards localization, including a series of political claims to preserve the land and promote the tribal languages of indigenous people. Yet, the declining indigenous cultures often end up as "nothing more than an exotic cultural commodity to be sold to the tourists" (Balcom 2005, XXI). That said, it is extremely challenging for local ethnic minorities to resist the impacts of the Han-Chinese culture in the process of urbanization and modernization. There is still a long way to go for aborigines to raise their self-awareness and to be understood and respected by other ethnic groups. In a public meeting with indigenous people in 2007, President Ma Ying-jeou 馬英九 [Ma Yingjiu] made an indiscreet and much criticized remark: "I see you [aborigines] as people and educate you properly." No matter how hard Ma tried to justify himself afterwards, his statement clearly shows the strong sense of superiority the Han Chinese feel over the aborigines. In terms of the revival of indigenous awareness, *Seediq Bale* can be taken as a successful cultural product, if not commodity, targeting the local audience. Through the film, the fading history and customs of the Seediqs are once again renarrated and projected in celebration of the collective spirit and pride of ethnic minorities.

To conclude, the graphic bloody scenes of *Seediq Bale* deliver messages of ethnic consciousness and exercise the insights of the director into historical trauma. The film has been officially recognized by the Taiwan Intellectual Property Office (IPO) as "an important agent for ethnic identification and a call for historical awareness" (*Taipei Times* 2010). As the director expresses his attempt "to promote Taiwan in the international community" and "bring peace and harmony to all the ethnic groups in the country" (*Taipei Times* 2011), the beautifully crafted film provides the audience with a new angle to look into the complex Wushe Incident through varied forms of extreme violence. This film indeed achieves a sense of sincerity and vividness in covering the glorious past of aboriginal culture. Although the extremity of the film sweeps Taiwanese viewers up in its excessive exposure to violent spectacles, watching this film is like going through a profoundly cathartic and healing process. The film achieves this affect by reconstructing the collective memories of historical trauma and producing a localized vision of ethnic consciousness in the postcolonial context of Taiwan.

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**NOTES**

1. This article uses Chinese pinyin, but follows the translations of specific names provided in the English subtitles of the movie DVD released by CMC Movie Corporation in April, 2012.
2. Seediq is originally part of the Atayal tribe and has been officially recognized as one of the fourteen aboriginal tribes of Taiwan since 2007.

# Introduction to ANE special issue

This special section on teaching modern Asian history developed from papers originally presented as a panel at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association. Tracy Barrett (North Dakota St. U.) and Xiaojia Hou (U. Colorado-Denver) constituted the panel with an eye to drawing together research expertise from each of the "subregions" of Asia (Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia). It was their hope to identify new strategies and materials that would support rigorous teaching of Asia in liberal arts institutions. When Alison Mackenzie Shah (U. Colorado-Denver) was unable to attend the conference, she kindly recommended me to participate as the representative for South Asia. As a relative latecomer to the project, I hope to convey accurately the aims and concerns of these essays, which represent the trajectory of our discussions thus far.

Each of the contributors perceived the need to address two pressing concerns. First, for over a decade we have seen the creation of new faculty positions in one field of Asian history or another. In the United States, many of these new positions are conceived very broadly as "Asian history." Such a broad category presents a problem, as the demands of this definition are often at odds with the area studies boundaries that continue to define graduate-level training. This presents scholars in all fields of Asia Studies with both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is that scholars with training in one area may be asked to teach courses that lay well beyond the boundaries of their training. For example, an East Asia specialist may be asked to teach courses on South Asia or on Asia at large, for which they have little training. Faculty find themselves at a loss to identify appropriate readings and craft assignments for their undergraduate students because they cannot draw upon their formal preparation. How does one develop a familiarity with whole new fields of study, or keep an eye open for new trends in fields to which they are not accustomed? The opportunity lies in the potential for faculty to read and engage more widely in discussions across area studies boundaries, and to bring to bear analytical concerns and techniques from one field of scholarship upon another. This breadth can serve us as scholars and our students as young adults living in a connected, interdependent world.

Second, the area studies framework of graduate training, grounded as it is in study of particular languages, has created a problem when it comes to finding and evaluating primary sources. To be sure, the vast linguistic diversity of Asia plays a role in the structure of this problem. But it is difficult for a specialist in Southeast Asian history to know what sort of primary sources can best represent, for example, Japanese thinkers and connoisseurs of high culture in the Muromachi period, unless that person has built and maintained a network of colleagues who can make these recommendations. While such appeals have been made through H-Asia, and contributors to that network do periodically announce the publication of electronic and print resources that might suit the needs of instructors attempting to cross the various area studies boundaries, H-Asia alone is not enough. A cursory search for "Muromachi culture" carried out on 16 March 2014 yielded just seven hits, including announcements of scholarly publications and academic conferences. With new resources becoming available electronically, and older print sources becoming less easily available or disappearing entirely, annotated lists of resources need to be made available and updated

regularly. This is a particular area in which ASIANetwork can serve educators in many different kinds of institutions.

Traditional formulations of Asian history cohere in one or two regions, including East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia; alternatively, Asia is presented as a collection of disparate nation-states. One may be tempted to substitute a nation-state approach for the problematic area studies approach; after all, much scholarship and course design limit themselves to a single nation-state. The nation-state approach offers a mixed blessing: it provides massive quantities of data, yet the production of such data naturalizes the teleology of nation-state. And the populations and territories claimed by nation-states constantly change, for political and environmental reasons. Further, forces with causative power have acted and continue to act without reference to area studies or nation-state boundaries. How could a specialist in only one region of Asia easily assess and teach the effects of the 2005 tsunami or the Tablighi Jama'at with sophistication? Given the range of problems, how might we organize courses, particularly those taught at the introductory level? How can we present distinctively Asian voices from the past, without succumbing to the latent orientalism of the area studies mode of organizing knowledge? The essays in this special section of *ASIANetwork Exchange* seek to introduce students to new methods of understanding the interconnectedness of Asian history in modern times and in world history. The articles focus on the idea of avoiding the description of historical actors as objects by incorporating their subjective experiences through the use of their photographs, art, primary texts, music, and other media. Each article considers specific sources drawn from their field and provides insight into how one might incorporate them into existing syllabi or shape a new syllabus altogether.

**Tracy Barrett** focuses her essay on the common historiographical problem of who gets to write histories and the linked pedagogical problem of how to get primarily American students to think about Asian history outside of fundamentally colonial *mentalités*. Barrett argues forcefully that, in the case of Southeast Asia, the answer to both problems requires the classroom use of films, memoirs, and fiction produced by Southeast Asians. While this pedagogy may require interpretive practices that are not staples of undergraduate historical training, such primary sources are much more widely available in English translation than are collections of documents that might otherwise shed light on the economic, social, or cultural history of Southeast Asia. In addition, their narrative structures make them more compelling than analytic narratives and thus better able to evoke an empathetic understanding of the past.

In my article, I address the pedagogical problems associated with building a course covering the full range of South Asian history with the available textbooks on the subject and the absence of a primary source reader free of the political history and Indological proclivities of the mid-twentieth century. I offer some possibilities for combining textbooks with each other as well as with longer primary sources. The article makes an introductory effort at listing primary sources, mainly written, with an eye to those that shed light on the material, social, and cultural lives of South Asians. While there is no single solution to suit all needs, I argue that some materials do permit instructors to organize teaching in ways that move students beyond the narrow focus on the colonial popularized through readings of *Subaltern Studies*.

**Amy Kardos** grapples with the historiographical chestnut of how to recover histories of central Eurasian people through the often pejorative textual sources produced by their literate neighbors. She shows how using new scholarship can help specialists in South and East Asia to conceptualize the "silk road" not as a path along which material objects, people, and

therefore ideas traveled, but as a shorthand for material and intellectual exchanges, carried out by central Eurasian brokers along shifting frontiers defined by the exchanges themselves. These can be traced through, for example, variations on the spiked fiddle that extend from Persia to China, and through modes of playing them, from early times to Yo-Yo Ma's "Silk Road Project."

**Danke Li** thinks through the old, yet persistent, problem of transforming students' one-dimensional views of women in Chinese and Japanese history. Though some of the challenges posed by student assumptions detailed in her article could apply to instructors in courses pertaining to virtually any other part of Asia, Li argues that the most effective solution is to expose students to feminist scholarship produced by Chinese and Japanese scholars and to supplement it with textual and film primary sources that let Chinese and Japanese women, as much as possible, express themselves and depict their own lifestyles. The approach has the additional benefit of giving students tools with which to challenge and therefore engage intimately with gender and feminist theory, both as an academic enterprise and as a strategy for seeking social justice.

Through this collection of articles, the special section on teaching modern Asian history aims to initiate what we hope will be an ongoing discussion about the theoretical underpinnings and practical approaches to a pedagogy of modern Asian history. We pointedly invite comment, either in *ASIANetwork Exchange* or in other venues.

*Brian Caton, Luther College*

# Teaching East and Southeast Asia through Asian Eyes

Tracy C. Barrett

**Abstract:** Colonialism and indigenous responses to its varied forms dominate modern Asian historiography and imbue the history of the region with rich and multifaceted connections to world history. As a result, the histories of East and Southeast Asian nation-states since 1500 cannot be viewed outside of the context of global affairs. Imagining Asian peoples and cultures during this time is problematic for students, who typically approach colonialism from a western perspective. This article explores various means of incorporating pedagogical materials and diverse media sources into the classroom to facilitate a more grounded examination of East and Southeast Asian colonies, peoples, and nation-states. It pays special attention to teaching colonialism, anticolonialism, nationalism, and transnationalism from the perspective of Southeast Asia's indigenous peoples.

**Keywords** History; Pedagogy; Film; Literature; Memoir; East Asia; Southeast Asia

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In 1960, renowned Southeast Asian historian D. G. E. Hall published a call to arms for Asian historians, and particularly historians of Southeast Asia, writing, "The need therefore for a big effort of expansion in the serious study of Southeast Asian history in the United States has become very urgent" (Hall 1960, 281). Despite the passage of more than 50 years since the penning of that article, Hall's complaint still resonates with Asian historians today. Nowhere is the dearth of Asia-centered histories and sources felt more keenly than in the classroom. A myriad of challenges confronts teachers of Asian history in the U.S., and irrespective of the types of institutions at which Asian history is taught, these challenges more or less remain the same.

Broadly speaking, these issues are well known to historians who visit the various professional forums frequented by teachers of Asian history. Most of them concern the general lack of familiarity with Asian philosophies, culture, and languages exhibited by American students. A recent thread on the H-Asia listserv, for example, questioned the value of teaching Asian history beyond the survey level to students unfamiliar with Asian languages. The crux of this dilemma seemed to center upon two questions: can one effectively introduce Asia to non-Asian students and, if so, how? I believe that a solution to this difficulty can be found in a careful reevaluation of the types of sources used in the teaching of Asian history. Film, fiction, and memoir are essential ingredients in the successful development of cultural understanding in the classroom.

In the past, Western discussions of pedagogical approaches to diverse media having to do with Asia have tended to focus upon the failure of these media to give true insight into Asian history. Such discussions have emphasized the many colonial, neocolonial, or Orientalist perspectives displayed by Western media, and then discussed best practices for analyzing these biased sources in a way that broadens student understanding of Asian issues in a global society.[1] Insofar as these approaches help us (and our students) understand the racial and ethnocentric preconceptions that Western students often bring into the Asian history classroom, they can be useful; however, using them to the exclusion of other materials fails

to expose students to the breadth and depth of Asian memoirs, fiction, and film available for classroom use.

The late Chinese historian Harold Isaacs once commented that "every 'reality' is made up of somebody's images; every 'image' is part of someone's reality. Images, moreover, appear in the eye of the beholder. Who, then, is beholding, and who is being beheld, when, where, in what circumstances...?" (Isaacs 1975, 258) No group is more capable of expressing who "Asians" are—whether historical or contemporary—than the writers and filmmakers of Asia itself. Given that indigenous filmmakers and authors may not be historical or ethnographical experts, issues of historical authority and veracity provide additional fodder for contextualization and group discussion in class. This essay offers some suggestions for resources to use when teaching Asian history in general and Southeast Asian history in particular. It also examines ways in which these sources might be used to speak to some of the broader historical themes that are central to courses in Asian and global history.

Before entering into a more exhaustive survey of specific current Southeast Asian sources, it is important to look critically at methods of conveying "images" of Asia that transcend the bounds of classroom lectures and recitations of historical fact. In particular, the use of film as a medium for enhancing historical and ethnographic understanding remains hotly contested in pedagogical scholarship. In the field of Anthropology, a mournful discourse has emerged addressing the issues surrounding what are largely documentary films and students' less than optimal responses to them. Elizabeth Bird and Jonathan Godwin criticize what they term the "unspoken assumptions…that films 'speak for themselves' in a direct way that books may not, or that students in a media-saturated society will naturally respond better to media than to lectures or reading" (Bird and Godwin 2006, 285). They highlight the realities of the modern freshman classroom, warning readers not to show "classic" ethnographic films in their entirety: "Do not expect distracted, media-saturated freshmen to appreciate the elegiac beauty of [indigenous peoples] – they are much more likely to react to 'disgusting' habits and 'primitive' conditions" (Bird and Godwin 2006, 296). Bird and Godwin are certainly correct in cautioning teachers to contextualize their selections of media sources carefully.

Teachers of language, culture, and history, on the other hand, generally report more satisfaction with media-based pedagogy. Historian Denise Blum speaks of the power of film when she suggests that, when properly presented it, "is not just about the transfer of information as film is traditionally used in classrooms. Rather, it engages memory, emotion, and the intellect in the production of knowledge and meaning" (Blum 2006, 301). In writing about her experience screening a film about the Arab-Israeli conflict, Blum notes that "identities are a key ingredient in the film experience. Depending on which political identities are engaged and the form in which the film is produced, viewed, and facilitated, the experience can vary tremendously" (Blum 2006, 303). This idea is reinforced by the work of Janet Staiger, who highlights the multidimensionality of film reception and audience response, a heterogeneity based largely upon the experiences and identities with which viewers, or, in our case, students, approach the screen (Staiger 2000). Elissa Tognozzi, an Italian professor, concludes that film-based assignments expand "students' notions of how to interpret other cultures and how to communicate within their social contexts, emerging from the experience with a far deeper cultural awareness" (Tognozzi 2010, 81).

These inconsistencies in evaluating the medium of film revolve largely around issues of audience bias and receptivity: pedagogical success or failure seems to hinge upon appropriate contextualization of the media by the instructor. Contextualization is an essential element in the use of any medium, whether film or printed, fiction or nonfiction. Many

teachers, especially in secondary and community college education, cite "providing subject matter content" as a rationale for using expanded media, but this reasoning has serious flaws (Marcus and Stoddard 2007, 315). Levstik and Barton (2001, 9-12, 358) have already established that rote memorization is not an effective method of fostering historic understanding, but the unproblematized use of fiction, film, and other media is equally unproductive. Adam Woelders (2007, 365) argues for a distinction between ineffective teaching with film and the immensely useful process of "teaching *about* history *with* film," which "challenges students to construct their own historical knowledge based on inferences, speculations, and conclusions drawn from evidence, not solely from any authoritative source such as the teacher, the textbook, or the information" they glean from other course materials like film, fiction, and memoir. In this paradigm, in the college classroom, the act of assigning critical value to narrative sources based upon information already gleaned from more didactic pedagogical methods such as lecture instructs students in historical relativity and bias while simultaneously enabling them to hone their skills at historical interpretation.

Film as a means of increasing students' historic empathy, while potentially quite effective, can also be pedagogically suspect. After all, increased empathy is no guarantee of improved understanding or knowledge of historic events. As so many of the scholars cited in this article have agreed, the key to enhanced cultural awareness and historic understanding lies in the careful contextualization of prominent events and cultural realities of the past. With proper groundwork, however, fiction, memoir, and film become invaluable resources for enabling students to understand what otherwise might seem, as Bird and Godwin put it, "primitive and disgusting" cultures and events. To this end, the remainder of this article shall address a variety of literary and film sources that offer particular insight into various time periods and themes of Asian history.

One of the more difficult tasks when teaching Asian survey courses is to sufficiently explain numerous and complex Asian philosophies in order to contextualize the histories I am trying to illuminate. In my classroom, I have begun experimenting with assignments that combine primary source examples of historical events with the philosophical texts themselves. For example, when discussing the Confucian value of filial piety in an East Asian survey course, we read and discuss brief excerpts from the *Confucian Analects*, Mencius, and the *Classic of Filial Piety* (Xiao Jing) (de Bary, Bloom and Adler 2000), but we also read Lady Hyegyong's 1805 memoir (Hyegyong 1996, 241-337). This classic and chilling tale of the path of madness and murder taken by Lady Hyegyong's husband, Korean Crown Prince Sado (1735-1762), eventually ends with Sado's public execution at the hands of his father, King Yongjo. This tragedy, given perspective and emotion by Lady Hyegyong herself as she grapples with her own Confucian responsibilities, creates the perfect backdrop for a writing assignment dealing with the multidirectional obligations inherent in the Confucian family structure. The pathos and horror of Lady Hyegyong's tale bring 18th century Korea to vivid life—even for students raised on *Law & Order* and *CSI*.

Carefully selected combinations of primary texts also lend themselves to writing exercises that employ methods of historical, cultural, or political role playing. Historian Noel Miner has argued convincingly in favor of the employment of historical role-playing techniques, including having students write and perform their own three-act plays distilled from selected historical events and sources in class. Miner argues that while

> simulation and role-playing techniques cannot be considered panaceas to replace the lecture and textbook in every history class, … the potential emotional impact of simulated events and the opportunity to manipulate events which will become history justifies use of these pedagogical methods. Students involved in these classes

> have stated that the exercise had been both intellectually stimulating and enjoyable.... Especially among non-history majors there was genuine enthusiasm for a subject which too often succumbed to the listing of arcane facts and forgettable names. For a brief moment, history had come to life in the classroom. (Miner 1977, 227-8)

While Miner's complex multi-act play assignment might be too time consuming for use in a survey class, role playing in other forms can still involve students more personally in the philosophies of a given place and time.

Students have responded very positively, for instance, to a writing assignment that has become a staple of my pre-modern East Asian history class: a letter written to an imaginary king of the Warring States period urging him to eschew the ideas of certain prominent philosophers of the time while encouraging the wholesale adoption of the ideas of another. Each student is required to develop his or her own rationale for supporting the chosen philosophy. Given all of the philosophers from this broadly-conceived period—Confucius, Mencius, Han Fei Zi, Mo Zi, Lao Zi, and Zhuang Zi—this assignment encourages students to delve into and engage with a selection of philosophical readings in a way that mere description or recitation of facts would not.[2] Similar writing assignments addressing early confrontations between Asia and the West have also piqued student interest and received favorable reviews in end-of-semester course evaluations.

In upper-division classes, longer papers and a heavier reading load allow for more complex assignments. In a recent senior-level course on Japan, my students looked at a variety of sources dealing with three prominent periods in Japanese history in order to envision these eras more clearly and personally. For the Heian period, Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* (1990) provided a fictional account of Heian society that was brilliantly reinforced by an iconic Heian diary, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon* (Shonagon 1991). Video clips of modern kabuki performances and PowerPoint presentations emphasizing Heian art and architecture breathed life into a period whose aesthetics might otherwise appear fussy and effete in a modern classroom. Finally, with regard to Japan in the aftermath of war, Kenzaburo Oe's short stories (for example, those found in the 1994 collection *Teach us to Outgrow our Madness*) nicely complemented John Dower's exemplary traditional history *Embracing Defeat* (Dower 2000). In this modern era, films such as Ichikawa Kon's 1956 gem *The Burmese Harp*, Honda Ishiro's 1954 film *Gojira*, or even the more recent 1988 anime film directed by Takahata Isao, *Grave of the Fireflies* (based on Nosaka Akiyuki's semi-autobiographical account of his childhood in wartime Kobe, Japan) could all be used as further platforms for discussion of the impact of war upon Japanese society.

The strength of all of these memoirs, novels, stories, and films rests in the vividness with which they portray the culture, people, or zeitgeist of a different place and time. When Sei Shonagon writes lists of things she finds annoying, modern college students find that they can relate because they find some of the listed things annoying too. When students weep over the fate of Seita and Setsuko in *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), they have transcended cultural barriers to empathize personally with the film's protagonists. When their hearts break for *The Burmese Harp*'s (1956) main protagonist, Mizushima, as he wanders around Burma to bury the untended piles of Japanese dead, the stereotype of the fearsome and single-minded Japanese soldier is severely damaged. In the Western classroom, relating to Asian characters on these levels transcends mere human empathy; in fact, it represents the replacement of myth, stereotype, and fantastical imaginings with "images" of greater authenticity. While The *Tale of Genji* may not be representative of the Heian-era Japanese lifestyle in general, it still depicts with some significant fidelity the mores and aesthetics of a

real time and place. Can the same be said of *The Karate Kid*'s (1984) Mr. Miyagi?

The examples I've discussed so far have all involved the study of East Asian history, which, while certainly exotic in the minds of most American students, is bolstered by a substantial body of translated primary sources of all varieties and in all major media. Historians of Southeast Asia, on the other hand, are not yet blessed with such a bounty of primary source material in translation. But despite the paucity of major Southeast Asian works in translation, many of the sources that do exist are ideal for "reimaging" Southeast Asia in the eyes of American students. The remainder of this essay shall focus upon introducing some of these Southeast Asian sources while, in the interest of brevity, limiting this discussion to the central and overlapping themes of colonialism and war.

By far the most iconic of Southeast Asia's anticolonial novels, Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (2006), is stunning in its sweeping challenge to Spanish Colonialism. First published in 1887, this novel and its sequel, *El Filibusterismo* (2007), were originally written in Spanish by Rizal, perhaps the most prominent of the Filipino nationalists. This story exposes the corruption, ignorance, and venality of the Spanish colonial authorities and Spanish friars in the Philippines. By ridiculing and caricaturing the hypocrisies abounding in the colonial Philippines, *Noli Me Tangere* provides a peerless platform for evaluating Spanish colonialism and evolving nationalist sentiments from the inside out.

The injustice of the racial hierarchy of Dutch colonialism is the focus of the first volume in Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Buru Quartet.[3] *This Earth of Mankind* (Toer 1996) was narrated to Pramoedya's fellow political prisoners on Buru Island beginning in the early 1970s. This novel, too, provides a scathing critique of colonialism, in this case as it operated under Dutch rule in the Netherlands East Indies. In this tale, the main character, Minke, a Javanese youth of uncommon intellect and promise, is scorned by his classmates and limited in achieving his ambitions as a result of his race, while others of lesser ability find greater opportunity for happiness and success because of their European blood. When read alongside other, earlier primary sources, such as Raden Ayu Kartini's turn-of-the-nineteenth-century writings about Javanese society and the social plight of Javanese women, student understanding of the difficulties faced by the denizens of the Netherlands East Indies resonates with an even deeper poignancy (Kartini 1992).

Equally critical of French colonialism in Vietnam but far more satirical in their approaches to it are Vu Trong Phung's 1936 novel *Dumb Luck* (2002) and his 1934 reportage, *The Industry of Marrying Europeans* (2005). *Dumb Luck*, the story of the absurd ascent of a mendicant named Red-Haired Xuan through the social strata of colonial Hanoi, sheds light on the problems resulting from the abandonment of all things "traditional" in pursuit of western-style modernization. By offering a powerful critique, less of colonialism than of the people who fall prey to its influences, *Dumb Luck* preaches a subtle and nuanced message about the cultural and social threats made to Vietnamese society by French involvement in the region. *The Industry of Marrying Europeans*, using a combination of fiction and non-fiction, examines a similar phenomenon: the lives of Indochinese women who seek to improve their lots by marrying, even if temporarily, European men. The less farcical approach taken by *The Industry of Marrying Europeans* is particularly appropriate for students in survey classes, as its critique leaves a bit less to the imagination. These stories provide a fascinating and personal narrative backdrop to more political sources, such as those assembled in Truong Buu Lam's exceptional collection, *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism*, 1900-1931 (2000).

In the category of cinema, when discussing the colonial era in Indochina, the main pitfall is the proliferation of assorted French films of varying virtue and veracity that depict

French recollections of the colonial. The most prominent of these is doubtless the 1992 film *Indochine*, which tells the story of a plantation-owning mother and her adopted Vietnamese daughter as they maneuver through a society being altered by rising anti-French sentiment and a growing tide of Vietnamese nationalism. As a representation of French fascination with the Indochinese exotic, this film can be quite useful in a classroom setting; it is a perfect example of Orientalism in film form. This bias makes *Indochine* a helpful springboard for upper-level discussions of the repeatedly-demonstrated French reluctance to relinquish their Asian colonies. However, there is also a stellar Vietnamese film that depicts the lives of Vietnamese peasants in the twilight of the colonial era, the 2004 production *Buffalo Boy*. This film, set in the late 1940s, tells the story of a teenage boy named Kim and his struggle to save the water buffalo, which are instrumental to the family's survival as subsistence farmers. This coming-of-age story is set against a backdrop of water and reflects the relentless impact of monsoonal floods upon a family terrorized by natural disaster and an oppressive French colonial government.

For greater insight into the changing lives in colonial and postcolonial Thailand, Kukrit Pramoj's novel *Four Reigns* (1999) paints a sweeping portrait of the life of an upper-class Siamese woman. Even though Siam itself was never colonized by a European power, this novel, beginning in the 1890s and continuing through World War II, still depicts the dramatic transitions of a single lifetime as the main character, Phloi, moves from her home to the king's palace, where she befriends the palace servants and courtiers, eventually marries and begins a family of her own, and watches her children embark upon their own lives. This "story of a life" takes dramatic twists and turns due to the impacts of events happening both in Asia and across the globe. Although the main character is a woman, and despite the sensitive treatment of women's powerlessness by the author, this novel is better used as a fictionalized social history of *fin de siècle* and wartime Siam/Thailand than as a representation of female voice.

Using a satirical approach more similar to *Dumb Luck* than to the more serious *Four Reigns*, Y. B. Mangunwijaya's novel *Durga Umayi* (2004) also tells the story of a Southeast Asian woman through several decades of dramatic postcolonial change. This story begins in the Netherlands East Indies in the 1930s and ends in Indonesia during the presidency of Suharto. Set against the backdrop of the radical transformations wrought by Indonesian nationalism, *Durga Umayi* faithfully, if surrealistically, depicts the chaos and capriciousness of life in the new Indonesia while remaining faithful to the magical world of Indonesian tradition. As an example of the postcolonial condition, this entertaining tale is well suited to upper division Asian and World History classes, especially if students are encouraged to persevere through the first chapter or two until they get a feel for the flow of the novel.

Another interesting twentieth-century Southeast Asian source comes from Ba Maw, the political leader and advocate for Burmese self-rule during the British colonial period. His memoir, *Breakthrough in Burma*, depicts the chaos, violence, and betrayal that characterized Burma during the late colonial era and the early years of World War II (Maw 1968). Although not explicitly an Asian voice, in his 1934 classic *Burmese Days* (2010), George Orwell offers a blistering insider's critique of British colonial rule that adroitly describes not just the nature of British colonial society, but also the price of speaking out against it. When assigned consecutively, even if in excerpts, *Breakthrough in Burma* and *Burmese Days* together provide an excellent framework for discussing the destabilizing influence of colonialism upon a colonized society.

In any discussion of the overlapping colonialisms of Western nations and Imperial Japan, Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer makes an excellent starting point. His

first major novel, *The Fugitive* (2000), tells the story of Hardo, a young soldier who has been involved in a failed revolt against the occupying Japanese. This story of betrayal and suffering under a second round of foreign occupation is brilliantly complemented by two sections of Pramoedya's memoir, *The Mute's Soliloquy* (1999). These chapters, entitled "Death in a Time of Change" and "Working for the Japanese," recall Pramoedya's own experiences as a young man living and working in an East Indies under Japanese occupation (Toer 1999, 153-91). Lee Kuan Yew, the first and longest-serving Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, tells a similar story in his autobiography, *The Singapore Story*, reflecting upon the arrival of the Japanese into the city-state and the impact that their presence had upon his life as a young boy (Yew 1999).

When addressing Southeast Asian history in America, it is impossible to discuss Southeast Asian sources without talking about the wars in Indochina. When teaching upper-level courses on Vietnam, I have had great success when presenting students with a combination of war memoirs. Seemingly innumerable sources address the Indochina wars from all aspects of the conflicts, but my favorite pairing is Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War* (1996) and Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (2009). In circles frequented by historians of Vietnam, Bao Ninh often meets with mixed reviews, in large part because of the rambling and disorganized nature of his story's plot. That being said, both narratives, by eschewing efforts to replicate faithfully the authors' wartime experiences, manage to convey the essence of that experience in a way that is far more powerful and affecting than a more dispassionate account could hope to achieve. There are also more traditional accounts of the Vietnamese experience during the wars of the 20th century. In particular, Nguyen Thi Dinh's *No Other Road to Take* (1976) is effective at helping American students understand why some Vietnamese civilians wanted to fight the French and the Americans. It is also quite useful as a springboard for a discussion about biases in sources, in large part because Nguyen Thi Dinh is so open and overt in her support for the communist cause in Vietnam. This memoir has the added benefit of female authorship, providing an account of women's wartime experience actually written by a woman. As a result, among Southeast Asian sources available to date, this memoir represents a unique voice.

Finally, for history teachers, the Vietnam War was the catalyst for another human catastrophe that is central to any discussion of modern global history. The Cambodian genocide has been illuminated by a multitude of primary source accounts of its human toll and tragedy. In particular, memoirs by survivors Chanrithy Him and Luong Ung tell equally chilling stories of the horror of life under the Khmer Rouge. Both accounts, Him's *When Broken Glass Floats* (2001) and Ung's *First They Killed My Father* (2006), provide an excellent counterpoint to class discussions about the political philosophies of the Khmer Rouge and, in putting faces to the Cambodian tragedy, color the statistics of the tragedy in almost unbearable ways.

The widely acclaimed 1984 film *The Killing Fields* graphically depicts the experiences of *New York Times* reporter Sidney Schanberg and his Cambodian translator Dith Pran during and after the Khmer Rouge conquest of Phnom Penh, but what fewer people realize is that the actor who played Dith Pran in the movie, a Cambodian doctor named Haing Ngor, was himself a survivor of Cambodia's Killing Fields. His memoir, *Survival in the Killing Fields* (2003), is more than 500 pages long, but excerpts of it brilliantly complement the movie for which its author won an Academy Award, due in part, no doubt, to his true understanding of Cambodia's tragedy.

Two further films on Cambodia deserve special attention. The first, *Rice People* (1994), is set in the crushing poverty of the rural countryside in post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, where

rice farmers must deal with natural disasters, deadly snakes, and relentless disease in order to eke out a meager living in the rice paddies. The other film is a documentary in which two of the seven known survivors of Tuol Sleng, the most notorious of the Khmer Rouge detention facilities in which as many as 17,000 people were tortured and killed, return to the prison with their captors to revisit the experiences of their imprisonment. Entitled *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003), the film is difficult to watch and even more difficult to explain to undergraduates without significant historic preparation and contextualization.

As discussed at the beginning of this essay, nowhere is the dearth of Asia-centered histories and sources felt more keenly than in the classroom. As a result of this paucity, western pedagogy over the past few decades has tended to fall back upon western accounts of Asia as the lens through which to imagine Asian history and culture. Fortunately, even though the list of accessible primary sources in translation has expanded at a glacial rate, the number of Asian primary sources in translation that are accessible to history teachers grows larger with every passing year and currently includes a wide variety of films, memoirs, and works of fiction addressing virtually any significant period of the Asian past. This relatively recent expansion in available sources represents a shifting of the historiographical tide, an evolution of which all globally-inclined historians should take notice. If one of the most difficult aspects of teaching Asian history to western students is students' lack of familiarity with the topics central to the course, then western students are best served by exposure to Asian sources that help them "reimage" Asia: by putting a face to distant places, different times, and foreign cultures; by replacing western stereotypes and political biases with Asian voices; and by empathizing with the personal experiences of those who lived through the events we study. This, I believe, is the future of successful Asian history pedagogy.

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## NOTES

1. This issue is certainly not new to pedagogical forums. For a dated, but particularly exhaustive, examination of issues of Western perceptions of Asia and pedagogical approaches to Asian history, see Yang (1980).
2. Translations of assorted ancient Chinese philosophical writings can be found in De Bary, Bloom, and Adler (2000).
3. The Buru Quartet consists of four books written by Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer: *This Earth of Mankind*, *Child of All Nations, Footsteps*, and *House of Glass*.

# Teaching South Asia beyond Colonial Boundaries

Brian Caton

**Abstract:** Because of the methodological innovations of *Subaltern Studies* in the 1980s and 1990s, most historians' familiarity with South Asian history is limited to the colonial or modern period. While the subalternist view is undoubtedly useful, it does not provide much help in thinking about what came before or after the colonial period. This limited context may prove to be a problem for a nonspecialist constructing a full course in South Asian history or adding South Asia content to a course that seeks to break down area studies or nation-state boundaries. This article provides a starting point for such an enterprise. It reviews the South Asian history textbooks available in the market and identifies some of the scholarship that would suit courses or units organized by theme or by a larger Asian geography. It also reviews some of the collections of primary sources that could be used in such coursework.

**Keywords** Textbook; Primary sources; South Asia; History

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Historians of nearly every part of the world have acquainted themselves with histories of colonial South Asia, primarily through the work of the *Subaltern Studies* group and the various discussions that have arisen from it (Ludden 2002b). For all the good that this reading and discussion has done, few historians outside of those specializing in South Asia have given much thought to locating the history of colonial South Asia within either a longer chronological trajectory or a broader geographical context (beyond core-periphery dynamics). In this article, I do not intend to radically change this predicament, but this pattern of limited reading does pose a problem when an East Asia specialist, for example, is asked to teach a course in South Asian history or desires to add South Asia content to a thematically-oriented course. There is no single solution to this sort of problem, but one or two good textbooks and a carefully selected set of primary sources can do much to help situate colonial South Asian history in a broader context of time and space.

## TEXTBOOKS

While the market appears to offer several options for textbooks on the history of South Asia, the offerings are limited in a variety of ways. Although many options are available for East Asian history (e.g. Ebrey, Walthall, and Palais 2009), no major publisher of academic textbooks has produced a narrative-plus-sources, magazine-stock textbook for South Asian history. Most textbooks of South Asian history are single volumes, with a small number of maps and plates, and average 300 pages in length (with a range of roughly 200 to 450), excluding back matter. Most textbooks attempt a panoptic chronological scope, but the great majority of those books do not allot equal time to the various periods of South Asian history. For example, about half of Burton Stein's posthumous *History of India*, recently edited by David Arnold, deals with the period after the dissolution of the East India Company in 1858, as does Peter Robb's *A History of India* (Stein 2010, Robb 2002). Barbara Met-

calf and Thomas Metcalf's *A Concise History of India* spends a bit more than half its length on this period (Metcalf and Metcalf 2002). Although it does not follow this same chronological marker, David Ludden's *India and South Asia: A Short History* spends about half its length on the "modern" era (Ludden 2002a). Thomas Trautmann's *India: Brief History of a Civilization* achieves the reverse; about a quarter of its length deals with the colonial and postcolonial periods combined (Trautmann 2010). Trautmann's compression of modern history might be a fair corrective to the general trend in textbook periodization, but the emphasis on a "classical India" that produced "mentalities" prior to Islam risks providing fuel to the flames of Hindu chauvinist historiography. In any case, a course that intends to give equal time to South Asia's historical periods will need to use multiple textbooks, or a combination of a single textbook with other scholarly literature.

Some instructors may not want a textbook attempting a full chronology, especially if the South Asia content is to fit into a geographically broad or thematically-organized course. Crispin Bates' *Subalterns and Raj: South Asia since 1600* is probably the best book for its stated time period, but it is too lengthy and detailed to be used with other texts in a one-semester survey of South Asian history (Bates 2007). Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose's *Modern South Asia*, now in a third edition, could be combined with other texts covering periods before 1500 (Bose and Jalal 2011). One such text could be Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot's *India before Europe*, perhaps the only excellent book for the period between 1000 and 1750 (Asher and Talbot 2006). Another text could be Burjor Avari's *India: the Ancient Past*, which covers the Neolithic era through the construction of Chola and Turkish states up to the twelfth century (Avari 2007). Although it is not technically a textbook, because its chronological scope is limited to the time period a few hundred years before and after 100CE, Richard Davis' recent *Global India* makes important challenges to the standard periodization of South Asian history and demonstrates South Asia's linkages to the rest of Eurasia. It is also short enough to be combined with a textbook covering the same time frame (Davis 2009).

Even if they do not cover all periods of South Asian history, most textbooks share a remarkably durable periodization, although other possibilities are beginning to appear. Periodization has to some degree been standardized since the publication of James Mill's *History of India*, and affirmed in an important way by Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* (Mill 1817, Nehru 1946). In defense of empire, Mill proposed that India had an "ancient" period of cultural production and political stability, followed by a "medieval" period in which Muslim forces plunged India into a period of political and cultural penury. This was followed by a period of British tutelage, in which just administration and English knowledge would rebuild India from the wreckage of the medieval period. Nehru amended this periodization by valuing the British period negatively and adding a "modern" or "nationalist" period, in which independent India would rebuild itself through political, economic, and cultural self-sufficiency. The two-volume *A History of India* published by Penguin in 1965 was long the work that defined this periodization for a nationalist history of India (Thapar 1965, Spear 1965). Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund's *A History of India*, now in a venerable fifth edition, does probably the best job of balancing attention among the many periods of South Asian history, but it is most closely the inheritor of a nationalist historiography (Kulke and Rothermund 2010). Although they do not follow this periodization strictly, their treatment of "the Freedom Movement" (note the singular) and "the Republic" betrays an adherence to Nehruvian, if not Congressite, visions of India, best captured in Rothermund's close-up photograph of current Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (Kulke and Rothermund 2010, 258). Pakistan appears only periodically, as an

irrational provocateur in India's political history; the comparison of Jinnah to Shylock in the narrative of Partition provides a tellingly uncharitable starting point (Kulke and Rothermund 2010, 231-2). The most recent edition of Stanley Wolpert's *A New History of India* also cleaves closely to the Indian nationalist formula, and enjoys a long list of other faults, including spending only one twenty-two-page chapter (of a nearly 500-page book) on "The Impact of Islam (ca. 711-1556)"; a failure to recognize environmental change, particularly in the well-documented period after 1860; and the stunningly Orientalist claim that "the enervating effect of heat on Indian productivity is a factor that can hardly be underestimated" (Wolpert 2009, 4). For all of the complaints of historians about the Mill or Nehru periodization of South Asian history, few textbook authors have done anything to generate a new model. Ludden has done so in *India and South Asia*: two key innovations are, first, the creation of a period defined by the formation of a political idiom that he calls "sultan" but applies to regional powers from the post-Gupta successor states through the Mughals, and, second, the imagination of a way to think about Partition as an event couched in political, economic, social, cultural, and intellectual trends that neither ended nor began in 1947—in other words, a historical event rather than a historiographical watershed.

Textbooks tend to waver between using "India" and "South Asia," although in many cases the history of states other than the Republic of India tends to be pushed to the margin or ignored altogether. In part, this is a marketing decision: only Bates (2007) and Bose and Jalal (2011) use "South Asia" rather than "India" in the title. Ludden's (2002a) use of both "India" and "South Asia" allows him to make a point about the intellectual tension between the two terms. Constructions of "India" that use mountain ranges (Himalaya and Sulayman) and the Indian Ocean as impregnable boundaries may be convenient but are constantly problematized by the historical and continuing movement of people, material objects, and ideas. We know a great deal about South Asian history from records left by Chinese, Arab, and other intellectuals and travelers (Gordon 2008, Davis 2009), and many groups of people, primarily from the Middle East and Central Asia, established expatriate communities that became fully integrated into South Asian social and cultural relations. The smaller number of records of South Asians migrating or circulating to other places in precolonial periods has given rise to past claims that South Asians did not or could not make such long-distance migrations. However, Stephen Dale's work on Multani traders and David Rudner's on Chettiar merchants, for example, suggest that migrations from the geographically central parts of South Asia to distant destinations were not only common but also relatively well documented (Dale 1994, Rudner 1994). Such narratives rarely if ever make more than a fleeting appearance in panoptic textbooks.

A more helpful approach to the problem of "India" and "South Asia" might be to think in terms of mobility or circulation. Ludden (1994), in challenging the notion of "Indian civilization" in South Asian historiography, set out an argument for the centrality of human mobility to South Asian history. Markovits, Pouchepadass, and Subrahmanyam have presented the concept of circulation as the movement of more than just people and material objects but also "information, knowledge, ideas, techniques, skills, cultural productions (texts, songs), religious practices, even gods" (Markovits, Pouchepadass, and Subrahmanyam 2003, 2). Although no author has written a textbook with circulation as its organizing principle for thinking about "India" or "South Asia," circulation could provide a useful pedagogical framework for discussing textbook reading assignments. Additionally, one could use Stewart Gordon's *When Asia Was the World* for getting students to think about the connectedness of people, ideas, and material objects across Asia, even into its European and African margins. Its narrative style is very accessible to introductory-level students,

but its focus on travelogues puts a significant burden on the instructor to provide the South Asian context (Gordon 2008).

In the absence of or in conjunction with textbooks, other scholarly works may support pedagogies based on theme. While one cannot adequately survey the state of scholarship within the field of South Asian history in a short article, one can suggest that much of the new scholarship tends to be focused on subjects or issues relating to certain themes or topics: Dalits, previously called Untouchables; gender; Maoists and Naxalites; science, technology, and medicine (STM); environment; and regions, typically within postcolonial India. Interest in religions or religious groups, including religious nationalisms, has declined somewhat since the fall of the BJP government in the 2004 election, which also marked the arrival of Dalit and lower-caste political parties on the national electoral scene. A unit on caste, for example, in a thematically-organized introductory course could use Susan Bayly's contribution to the *New Cambridge History of India*, Nicholas Dirks' *Castes of Mind*, or Christophe Jaffrelot's *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India* (Bayly 1999, Dirks 2001, Jaffrelot 2011), though Dirks and Jaffrelot may require some interpretation for novice readers. However, the aforementioned shift in Indian politics—and the increasing prominence of Maoist groups—has resulted in an increase of explicit attention paid in *Subaltern Studies* to Dalits and by historians in general to Dalit questions (e.g. Mayaram, Pandian, and Skaria 2005, and Rawat 2011). For a unit on gender, Geraldine Forbes' *NCHI* volume or Radha Kumar's *History of Doing* are good starting points for thinking about women's history but are perhaps less useful to get students to think critically about gender categories and the historical processes of their construction over the very *longue durée* of South Asian history (Forbes 1996, Kumar 1993). They also don't account well for the religious inflections of gender, for example in the cases of female soldiers of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, women's organizations of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or mothers of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba recruits in Pakistan (de Mel 2007, Sarkar 2005, Haq 2007).

Perhaps the other aforementioned themes deserve a more detailed presentation, but some themes that tend to be less popular recently may better serve the purpose of breaking down the boundaries of South Asian history. While most readers of this journal are probably familiar with the work on inter-Asian trade under the rubric of "Silk Road" or "Silk Route," some late twentieth century work on Indian Ocean trade can fill out the picture (Chaudhuri 1985 and 1990, Das Gupta 2001). More recently, interest in this theme (over land or seas) seems to be dwindling (despite some exceptions, e.g. Levi 2002, Hanifi 2011). Scholarly analysis of economic development and agriculture is available these days chiefly through the periodical *Economic and Political Weekly*, environmental history work (e.g. Agrawal 2005, Saikia 2011), and the slightly problematic political science and economics genre of "how to do business in India" (e.g. Kumar and Sethi 2005).

## primary sources

As in most fields of history, one may obtain primary sources for pedagogical use through published collections, published single items (such as autobiographies), web-based resources, and materials drawn from one's own research. By "published collections," I mean what are often called "document readers"—multiple sources written by a wide range of authors, selected and annotated by one or more editors, linked to a long chronological period—rather than the collected works of a single author, such as *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Gandhi 2000-01).[1] Because of the limitations of published collections, and because nonspecialists are unlikely to have research materials relevant to South Asia courses or units, published single items and particularly web-based resources are the most

promising avenues for finding good primary sources for classroom use.

Published collections make certain kinds of primary sources available, but their modes of selection and organization make them pedagogically problematic. The most well-established of this genre are the now two volumes of *Sources of Indian Tradition*. The subtitle of the first volume, "From the beginning to 1800," is a bit deceptive, since it is really organized by religious tradition: Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Muslim, and Sikh (Embree 1988). Many interesting documents are available here, but they must be handled carefully in order to avoid leading students to organize the South Asian past as the editor of this volume chose to do. Volume Two, subtitled "Modern India and Pakistan," is equally misleading, since it consists of the writings of major Westernizing, reformist, and nationalist thinkers according to canons defined by the nationalist histories of India and Pakistan (Hay 1988). Although the second edition made some changes to the selection of documents (de Bary 1958), it includes no sources that provide the intellectual argument for Bangladeshi nationalism, for example; there are no thinkers from the other, smaller nation-states of the region, either.[2] B. N. Pandey edited *A Book of India*, first published in 1965 and available in reprints (Pandey [1965] 1977). His selections are all decidedly short and therefore suitable for introductory level courses, some short enough to permit students to read and analyze them in class. However, the scheme for selecting and organizing the extracts is arbitrary, and it would require a fairly substantial investment of time to read through all of the entries to see what would be most useful. Sadly, this seems to be the complete list of published primary source readers. This was to have changed in 2013, when Routledge had scheduled to release a reader edited by Bose and Jalal, as a companion to the third edition of *Modern South Asia*.[3] However, there do not appear to be on the publishing horizon any collections that include sources produced before 1600.

Although published single items appear to be in the gradual process of being replaced by digitized sources, they remain relatively easily accessible and provide an indispensable experience as objects of analysis both inside and outside the classroom. Single items come in two broad categories: sources that are stand-alone publications (usually available as new editions or reprints) and those included in other kinds of publications. The first category includes autobiographies. While many are likely to be familiar with Gandhi's autobiography (Gandhi 1927-29), Stephen Dale reminds us that the Mughal emperor Babur's was one of the earliest "modern" autobiographies anywhere (Dale 1990).[4] It also provides ample detail for thinking about the material life and exchange between Central and South Asia, the cultural and intellectual habits of Central Asian Muslims, military strategies and administrative rewards—in short, the *mentalités* of the Central Asian ruling classes. The *Baburnama*'s length requires instructors to use excerpts, which also applies to many other single sources available in print, such as the Kautilya *Arthasastra* and al-Biruni's *India* (Kautilya 1992, Sachau 2000). Works of literature also permit an exploration of interpretive angles or themes that run through the course. For example, Kalidasa's *Recognition of Sakuntala* can sustain discussion of gender and *varna* norms in ancient India, but it also allows for discussion of drama as a literary genre and stage performance as a social event (Kalidasa 2001). In another example, one could assign any of several poems, short stories, or novels written in the immediate aftermath of Partition in order to gauge the effects of those events, at least on the literati. I have used Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), but a much superior novel is Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950).[5]

Finding primary sources published in other works requires a substantial investment of time, including the arrangement of copyright clearances, but the pedagogical rewards can be great. For example, I want students to get a sense of the physicality of writing,

even though few palm leaf or paper objects survive from the period before about 1000 CE. Edicts carved in stone in the Mauryan era (4th-3rd century BCE) are certainly available in translation, but most surviving writing samples exist as etched into copper plates. I use a facsimile, Sanskrit transcription, and translation of a pair of copper-plate inscriptions from medieval Gujarat (late 6th century CE; Mirashi 1955, 38-44, 57-66). Obviously, I don't expect students to be able to read Sanskrit, but I want them to see how language and script change over time. I also want students to think about the political relationships between people and how objects like land and temples are used to mediate or express those relationships. In later parts of the course, students read translations of paper documents relating to the properties belonging to a religious institution in northern Punjab, for the same thematic purpose (Goswamy and Grewal 1969, 83-99, 109-16, 125-47, 376-8, 381-2, 385-90). In another theme in my course, I want students to think about the why and how of governmental information gathering by reading the documentary fruits of that process. I use a selection from the *A'in-i-Akbari* which shows production and price data (over time) for one administrative unit of the Mughal Empire (Jarrett 1949, 68-93, 315-38). Later in the course I ask students to search for specific pieces of information in the District Gazetteers for Punjab, originally published between 1884 and about 1935. This gives students a sense of the panoptical ambition of the colonial government as well as the gazetteer's pragmatic focus.[6] These few examples can hardly begin to scratch the surface of the sources available for teaching the material, political, and social history of South Asia; a flood of other options are available for other themes one may wish to pursue. It may require talking with a South Asia specialist to find the best source, and if a specialist is not at hand, a quite large group is available through the H-Asia list.

Current websites vary in quality, but in total they offer a broader range of sources than available in any single print collection. For discussions of the Indus Valley Civilization, the Harappa.com site is indispensable (Khan). As one can tell from a few clicks, the site is full of information, research reports, and other materials. The 3-D rendering of IVC sites allows students to imagine more clearly what a town might have looked like during this period in this region (Belcher). The site also has very short film clips from the early twentieth century, which include professional newsreels and hobbyists' works. The Fordham Internet History Sourcebook has some useful items, mainly for very old or very recent periods (Halsall). South Asia Resource Access on the Internet (SARAI) has some useful items, mainly for the most recent periods (Columbia University Libraries). The Digital South Asia Library (DSAL), hosted by the University of Chicago, includes sources breathtaking in their completeness—for example, the Imperial Gazetteer of India, which is fully searchable and includes atlases with their own zoomable interface (University of Chicago). But the breadth of sources seems oddly limited, as though an ambitious project suddenly ran out of institutional support. By far the most useful gateway site for primary sources is maintained by Frances Pritchett at Columbia (Pritchett). Some of her items link to DSAL sources, but most link to sites that are otherwise difficult to find. They cover all of the periods of South Asian history, although more attention is devoted to precolonial periods and the territory included in modern India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Some parts are organized alphabetically rather than topically, so nonspecialists will get more out of this site after having become familiar with the characters and plot of the history they want students to learn. Most of the above-mentioned sites include some maps, but the Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas has a particularly well-organized selection of maps, which can also be used to help students think about shifting political boundaries and the ways different mapmakers imagined the world included in "South Asia" (Univer-

sity of Texas Libraries). Those interested in the lively visual culture of South Asia will find a series of galleries accompanied by critical essays in the Tasveer Ghar site (Tasveer Ghar). Although one could ask students to analyze an image or two without reading the linked essays, the authors of these pieces do a very good job of teaching readers how to look at both single and sets of images. As libraries and archives obtain greater levels of funding for digitizing their resources, web-based collections of primary sources are likely to increase in number, scope, and depth.

## CONCLUSION

No single primary source, and no single textbook, is sufficient to push the history of South Asia beyond the geographical/political boundaries of colonial India (or the postcolonial Republic of India) or to situate the history of colonial India within a broader causative framework that deemphasizes, if not effaces, the old boundaries of 1757 and 1947. Whether in an entire course or in segments of a broader course, a judicious combination of textbooks and primary sources can begin moving students toward a conceptualization of South Asia that is not merely colonial—the immediate cause of the "now"—but that recognizes the limits of colonial India as a product of a series of historiographical choices.

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**NOTES**

1. I also exclude collections of primary sources, often digitized, meant for purchase by institutions, such as the Foreign Office files published by Adam Matthew Digital, "FO India, Pakistan and Afghanistan," accessed September 5, 2012, http://www.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/FO-India.aspx.
2. Frances Pritchett, on her website, suggests that a major revision of both volumes of this work is forthcoming from Columbia University Press, although no target date is noted. If the tables of contents on the website will be retained in the print publication, then the revision will not answer some of the critiques I have made above. See Pritchett (*Sources of Indian Tradition*s, Columbia University Press).
3. Routledge has not made this reader consistently searchable on its website. The release date was provided by Pamela Moukrim, Administrative Support Clerk, Taylor & Francis, LLC, in a personal communication to the author, March 20, 2012.
4. The best available edition of the original text is Thackston (1996).
5. *Pinjar* is available in English translation in Pritam (2009). Accounts of Partition given by those outside literary circles tend to be embedded in secondary scholarship; see for example Menon and Bhasin (1998).
6. Sang-e-Meel Publishers (http://www.sangemeel.com) have reprinted the Punjab District Gazetteers (and others) over the past fifteen to twenty years; digitized versions of the original gazetteers (and even the Settlement Reports on which the gazetteers are based) are available through Google Books, although I think students lose something of the materiality by reading this way.

# Teaching Central Eurasia in Undergraduate Survey Courses: Problems and Strategies

Amy Kardos

**Abstract:** Recent scholarship has challenged narratives of Central Eurasia's relationships with its neighbors in East Asia, South Asia, and Southwest Asia. This scholarship describes the "silk road" as a cross-regional interconnected network of routes that contributed to the development of diverse and dynamic civilizations, while also functioning, from a Central Eurasian perspective, as the foreign trade component of a complex internal Central Eurasian economy. Challenging long-standing narratives of "needy" or "predatory" nomads that militarily overwhelm sedentary empires, scholars of Central Eurasia have moved the region from its place as a distant frontier on the edge of civilization to one at the center of historical globalization. This article discusses the importance of incorporating such ideas into world and Asian history survey courses, which are often taught by nonspecialists who have only encountered Central Eurasia in their respective fields as a periphery, and providing opportunities for students to think critically about historical sources and move past stereotypes of "barbarian" and "civilization."

**Keywords** Definitions; Misconceptions; Assignments; Transnational themes; History

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## Central Eurasia in World History

Scholarship on Central Eurasia seeks to reframe the region as an integral and connected current in the larger flow of world history. David Christian wrote in the *Journal of World History* in an article published in 2000 that a study of the "silk road" indicates that scholars need to take seriously the underlying unity of Afro-Eurasian history. He suggests that we should regard modernity itself as an indirect product of the rich synergy created by systems of exchanges rather than one particular regional culture (Christian 2000, 25-6). Four short and accessible books published in the last three years, all by Oxford University Press, allow world history scholars easy access to specific case studies that illustrate Christian's argument and also fit neatly into the organization of undergraduate survey courses: James A. Millward, *The Silk Road: A Very Short Introduction* (2013); Valerie Hansen, *Silk Road: A New History* (2012); Peter B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (2011); and Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History* (2010). Even if these books are not assigned to undergraduates, the information they contain can be used by instructors to add depth to lectures and as a springboard for creative assignments that highlight cross-regional connections. James Millward's appropriately titled very short introduction has an organization best suited for incorporating discussions of the silk road into a thematic world history course. The book contains chapters such as the "biological silk road" and the "technological silk road" that offer examples of exchanges across Eurasia from ancient to modern times. He incorporates some of the major contributions of Valerie Hansen's 2012 research on the silk road before 1500, while also discussing the usefulness of the term in understanding Eurasian exchanges into the modern era. While most silk road histories end with its decline after the Mongol

period and the advent of direct maritime trade, Millward suggests that significant exchanges continued through the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eigtheenth centuries (Millward 2012, 111). In this case, the silk road should not be confined to the first half of a world history survey course that ends in 1500, but should be part of the historical narrative of the early modern and modern eras as well. This connection between the ancient and modern periods is also a benefit of Peter B. Golden's work, whose regional history is not dependent upon a concept such as the silk road, which literally and figuratively moves over time. I hope that this direction of scholarship continues—one that positions the silk road as a feature of the continued global significance of Central Eurasia into the modern period. For pre-1500 silk road studies, Hansen's book contributes several ideas that reframe the role of the silk road in world history. Hansen de-emphasizes the role of merchants while highlighting the long-neglected role of differing states in creating and facilitating these networks (Hansen 2012, 235). Along the way she also critically discusses the evidence available to historians writing about the silk road by explaining and including in each chapter samples of documents such as labor contracts and medical prescriptions. The benefit of these documents, she convincingly argues, is that they were meant to be thrown away as trash and were not compiled into official histories. As such, "they offer a glimpse into the past that is often refreshing, personal, factual, anecdotal, and random" (Hansen 2012, 5). Hansen uses these documents to argue against the prevailing view of the silk road as a series of trade routes, instead showing how the silk road was a superhighway of ideas and technology that was created by a diverse group of immigrants from different cultures, occupations, and classes (Hansen, 2012, 5). As the author of a well-received earlier study, *The Silk Road in World History*, Xinru Liu has also written a teaching supplement for pre-1500 survey courses, entitled *The Silk Road: A History With Documents*. Both Hansen and Liu's recent works offer excellent opportunities to discuss the silk road through a study and analysis of primary sources.

In this essay, I outline a few of the ways in which this recent scholarship can inform teaching. I discuss broad themes, specific historical examples, and possible assignments. These teaching strategies are only a small sample of this recently published rich material that can be easily mined by nonspecialists. The first section discusses geographical terminology and how historians locate and define Central Eurasia. The second outlines strategies for moving students beyond stereotypes of Central Eurasians and highlighting the cultural diversity of the region. The third section takes the investigation of Central Eurasian culture deeper into a study of its production through cultural blending. And, finally, the fourth section makes the case for using the idea of silk road and Central Eurasian exchanges in historical narratives of the twentieth century.

## Geography: Locating Central Eurasia and the "Silk Road"

In my experience, students' lack of familiarity with the geography of Central Eurasia and its political boundaries is complicated even further by the region's multiple names. In introducing students to the distinctions between "Central Asia," "Inner Asia," and "Central Eurasia," I suggest using the resources available on three websites. The website of the *Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies* at the University of Indiana, Bloomington[1] explains the origins of the term "Inner Asia" and the history of the discipline of Inner Asian studies and Central Eurasian studies. As it notes, "Central Eurasia" can be used interchangeably with "Inner Asia" to designate the homeland of the Altaic peoples and the Uralic peoples. Today these peoples can be found in the five independent Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan; the republic of Mongolia; the Xinjiang Uygur, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet Autonomous Regions of the People's Republic

of China, as well as the Manchu lands. The term "Central Asia" is often used to refer to the Islamic part of Inner Asia, meaning the Central Asian republics and Xinjiang.[2] I adopt the designation "Central Eurasia" in teaching world and Asian history survey classes and illustrate its boundaries using several maps available at the website of *The Silk Road Project* (www.silkroadproject.org). The section on "Maps of the Silk Road" is part of a set of curricula designed for middle and secondary students co-developed by the Silk Road Project and the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education. The maps and images available on the website are a helpful introductory tool for locating and defining the boundaries of Central Eurasia. The third website I use to introduce and give depth to some of the varieties of Central Eurasian societies is that of the *Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit* at the University of Cambridge (http://innerasiaresearch.org). This website has a link to albums that show a wide range of images taken by scholars on their various research trips in Inner Asia. Current albums include photos of Tuvans, the Altai Republic, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang. Taken together, these three websites provide a much-needed supplement to any world history or Asian history survey text.

When discussing Central Eurasia, instructors will also be forced to define the term "silk road." They should make explicit to students that the concept is a nineteenth century European historiographical construct. The term did not exist before 1877 when the Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen first used it on a map (Hansen 2012, 235; Millward 2013, 4-5). As Hansen notes, no individual flying over the silk road at any point in history would be able to identify its geographical boundaries. Hansen's approach is to choose eight silk road centers to organize her study, which allows her to examine and analyze the source base for the historical record on the silk road. She concludes that the silk road as a network of exchanges was not significant in terms of international commerce or the exchange of goods. Instead, its main historical contribution was as a "cultural artery" (Hansen 2012, 235). She states, "Refugees, artists, craftsmen, missionaries, robbers, and envoys all made their way along these routes. Sometimes they resorted to trade, but that was not their primary purpose for travelling" (Hansen 2012, 238). In survey courses, I use this concept of a cultural artery not just when discussing the historical process of the silk road trade networks, but also when teaching the history of Central Eurasian cultures into the modern period. How I do so is the subject of the next section.

## Cultural Diversity: Moving Past Stereotypes about Central Eurasia

Survey courses on Asian history cannot avoid discussing the region of Central Eurasia and its peoples. Yet, instead of understanding the contributions Central Eurasian societies have made in world history, they are often portrayed in history classes as an anticivilizational force due to unrecognized cultural misperceptions and biases (Beckwith 2009, xxi). I ask students to rethink their idea of Central Eurasian nomads as barbarians that disrupt the development of "civilization" instead of contributing to it. Christopher Beckwith's ambitious 2009 text on the history of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the present, while too fragmented to be useful as a textbook for undergraduate students, offers an interesting way of thinking about the history of the silk road that is missing from world history or Asian history textbooks (Beckwith 2009).

Beckwith defines the silk road as synonymous with the Central Eurasian economy. Central Eurasian peoples lived in three different ecological-cultural zones and practiced three different modes of life that were tightly interconnected in a single economy. It was this economy that created the commercial networks referred to by outsiders as the silk road.

Therefore, what is commonly referred to as the silk road was the international component of that Central Eurasian economy. In Beckwith's definition, world history textbooks that now progressively use the plural term "silk roads" to acknowledge the multiple trade networks are still missing an important element since the term only encompasses one side of the economy. According to Beckwith, the silk road was not a network of trade routes or even a system of cultural exchange but rather created an entire local system of Central Eurasia in which commerce, both internal and external, was highly valued and energetically pursued, and reflected in cultural norms and political organization (Beckwith, 2009, 328). To get at the domestic component, Beckwith uses the Central Eurasian culture complex of comitatus. In the Central Eurasia culture complex of comitatus, the primary mode of political organization was centered on a select group of elite warriors, who also acted as administrators, who pledged personal loyalty to the ruler but in turn were rewarded with goods, some of which were silk. Thriving commerce and the accumulation of foreign luxury goods were required to meet the demand of the political system. So, Central Eurasia was not a stop or a transition between different places that produced and purchased goods, such as Rome and Han China, it was its own integrated economy that had both foreign and domestic components (Beckwith 2009, 328).

In a different yet complementary critique of the term, Millward mentions that the "silk road" would be better renamed the much-less-romantic "Soghdian Network" (Millward 2007, 29). Not only did these Iranian merchants dominate east-west trade, but Soghdian became the lingua franca of the silk road in farming, artisan, commercial, and diplomatic circles. Millward also notes that the term is misleading for other reasons: 1) silk was only one of many products exchanged, 2) merchants used multiple routes instead of a single one, and 3) Western imports to China were as important as Chinese exports (Millward 2007, 29). In addition, the focus on the east-west direction of the exchanges and the states on the "ends" of the silk road obscures the importance of Indian and Persian empires (Millward 2013, 6-7).

This expanded definition of the silk road also requires a reconsideration of Central Eurasian culture. Beckwith notes that Central Eurasian societies were not composed of "needy" or "predatory" nomads, but rather people who practiced different modes of production and relied mostly on trade in order to obtain desired products. Beckwith argues that steppe people mostly fought amongst themselves and went out of their way to avoid conflict with peripheral states such as China, preferring to maintain a trade relationship. In fact, many times Central Eurasians offended the peripheral states, such as Han China, not through invasion but merely the insistence of remaining independent. Golden's recent work complements this characterization of the nomadic/sedentary relationship. He also notes that urban Central Asia had a rich and cosmopolitan culture that had a symbiotic relationship with its nomadic neighbors, and that the nomads themselves were "no more blood thirsty or covetous of gold or silks than their 'civilized' neighbors" (Golden 2011, 6).

This idea challenges stereotypes of Central Eurasians as "barbarians." Contrary to common misconceptions, Central Eurasians, such as the Huns, the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu), and the Mongols, were no more cruel or aggressive than their contemporary large conquerors, the Romans, the Persians, or the Chinese. Beckwith notes that all empires throughout history were possessed of multiple personalities. By turn, empires were destructive and constructive, brutal and paternal, exploitative and beneficent, coercive and attractive, conservative and innovative. (Beckwith 2009, 341-355). In a writing assignment meant to stimulate in-class discussion, I ask students to think about the ways in which each of those adjectives could be applied to different world empires throughout history, and more importantly, from

whose perspective would they be used. With Central Eurasians it is often the negative characteristics, such as destructiveness and brutality, that get molded onto some sort of homogenous barbaric Central Eurasian culture and viewed as static and unchanging over many different political systems over centuries (Beckwith 2009, 341-355). Millward also suggests that, contrary to being an anticivilizational force, Central Eurasian could be thought of as "proto-globalizers" who facilitated the cultural, technological, and political advancement of neighboring states (Millward 2013).

The roots of these misconceptions can be traced to problems with historical sources about Central Eurasians—English language textbooks use the term "barbarian" to refer to Chinese descriptions of Central Eurasians. Even using the term "barbarian" in quotation marks is inaccurate in the case of Chinese history, in which the language contained a variety of different designations for foreigners. The English word "barbarian" embodies a complex European cultural construct and was a generic pejorative term for a "powerful foreigner with uncouth, uncivilized, nonurban culture who was militarily skilled and somewhat heroic, but inclined to violence and cruelty, --yet not a savage or wild man. In this case, the English term 'barbarian' does not have a single Chinese equivalent" (Beckwith 2009, 356-359). After discussing this problem of translation, I ask students to think about other narratives of "civilization" and "barbarian" that they have encountered in their history classes. How "civilized" was Rome, and how "barbaric" were the Mongols? In which ways could Rome be viewed as barbaric and the Mongols as a civilizing society? I emphasize the multiple personalities of empires and also the multiple sides of cultures. To further illustrate the diversity of cultures and polities engaged in the network of exchanges throughout Central Eurasia, I organize the students into groups and assign chapters from Susan Whitfield's *Life Along the Silk Road*. Using primary sources, Whitfield reconstructs the lives of a colorful cast of historical actors, from an opening scene with an inebriated Soghdian merchant to a painter of Buddhist art working in the Dunhuang caves. I ask my students to do additional reading on different aspects of the person's life, such as providing an overview of the history of their hometown or explaining cultural and religious practices. Some of my most interesting presentations have focused on fashion, with students researching and analyzing the various functions and meanings of dress and how those changed over time. All of this additional reading is incorporated into an oral presentation given to the class that provides the backdrop to the personal narrative of a silk road traveler.

### Cross-Regional Interactions and Cultural Blending

This section discusses strategies for demystifying Central Eurasia and placing it within the larger context of world history, while also illustrating the region's remarkable ability to create cultural hybridity. The idea of Central Eurasia as a cultural crossroads in which identity is fluid and changing is widely accepted in the field of Central Eurasian history. Yet, historical sources often have highlighted the differences between the steppe peoples of Central Eurasia and surrounding sedentary societies. Students should recognize that though it is important to understand the significance of societies defining themselves in opposition to Central Eurasians, they should not take that oppositional relationship as authoritative and adopt the same framework for understanding cross-regional interactions. The historical example that I use to illustrate potential biases in historical sources is the conflict between the Han and the Xiongnu, which is already incorporated into most world history and Asian history survey texts. This example not only shows students the complicated nature of Central Eurasia's relationship with its neighbors but also requires them to think about how and why stereotypes became part of the historical record. As the early Chinese states of Yan,

Zhao, and Qing expanded northward, Chinese states began to build long walls to secure newly conquered territories and gain pastureland on which to raise horses for chariots and cavalry units. As a result, various northern tribes who lost land formed a powerful coalition in response to the Chinese threat, a process that accelerated after unification under the Qin in 221 BCE. The Xiongnu confederation that later threatened the Han empire, in particular under Emperor Wu (r. 140-87 BCE), arose out of the crisis caused by this earlier northward expansion of Chinese states (Di Cosmo 2002). After discussing this conflict, I have students read a brief selection from the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*) by Sima Qian (ca. 145-ca. 90 BCE) describing the characteristics of the Xiongnu (Ebrey 1993, 54-56). His description of the Xiongnu as pure nomads whose young boys are able to shoot mice with bows and arrows does not hold up against the archeological evidence of Xiongnu houses, fortifications, and agricultural settlements (Millward 2009, 19). I ask the students what value they can get out of Sima Qian's description and what Sima Qian's document says about the Chinese worldview. If people define themselves by what they are not, then the qualities that Sima Qian emphasizes about the Xiongnu are less historically-accurate ethnography than a glimpse into Chinese self-definition. His description of the Xiongnu mentions their lack of family names, lack of respect for the elderly, and lack of a written language, all elements that were an important part of Chinese culture. These biases about Central Eurasian peoples as pure nomads who were oppositional in culture to the Chinese were written into Chinese historiography; Sima Qian's phrasing for describing the Xiongnu gets reproduced in later descriptions of northern nomads (Millward 2009, 19). Therefore, I have students read the description of the Xiongnu not as an accurate representation of Xiongnu societies, but as a window into Chinese self-definition. Then, for understanding the Xiongnu and other Central Eurasian societies, I draw on recent scholarship of Central Eurasianists, such as that mentioned above.

As another example of cultural fluidity, I use the history of Central Eurasian music. Nathan Light, who has a book on the process of standardizing the Twelve Uyghur Muqam, wrote an article recently about the connection between premodern cultural forms and the process in which modernizing states seek to reinforce and control populations by standardizing these premodern forms and presenting them as static historical representations of a people. The Twelve Muqams is itself a cultural representation that claims premodern origins but could only have been produced in its current form by a modern state. In this sense, modern Central Eurasian cultural production is part of the larger process of modernization (Light 2008; Harris 2008). However, for undergraduate survey classes, I use more general examples to show cross-cultural exchange and interaction. For undergraduate students, music can be an effective tool in identifying and connecting with people of different cultures. Yo-Yo Ma heads such a project. Ma's Silk Road Project does not focus on Central Eurasia, but rather takes the idea of the Silk Road as a metaphor for creating cross-cultural connections through music. And he does not just reproduce these forms, playing standardized historical pieces, but seeks to reinvent and rethink them. Below, I link together several websites that show such a dynamic in Central Eurasia—the cross-cultural connections that have been made and the ways in which outside influences have been reinvented and reused in new ways to form modern identity.

#### London Uyghur Ensemble

http://uyghurensemble.co.uk/en-html/nf-research-article1.html

This website describes the origins of muqam. A muqam is the melody type used in the Uyghur system that developed over centuries from the Arabic maqam modal system. Large-

scale suites of sung, instrumental and dance music are called muqam. Music in Uyghur culture also has religious significance because of popular Islam. Sufis used music to express and promote their faith. Music also serves central roles in social gatherings. The instruments used in muqam indicate both the particular Uyghur interpretation of the music as well as its outside influences.

For example, the Chinese instrument erhu is thought to have developed from Chinese contact with Central Asia, particularly popularized at Tang court. One of the instruments used in muqam is the ghijek, which developed as a relative of the Persian spiked fiddle—an image of which can be accessed on the Silk Road Project website. According to the London Ensemble, the current form reflects the influence of the Chinese erhu. This example shows that local identity in Central Eurasia is both very specific, most notably that local materials are used to make the instruments, as well as connected to outside cultural influences, including Chinese, Turkish, and Persian. Uzbekistan also has its own versions, the shesh-maqam, videos of which can be viewed at the Smithsonian folkways website. One common instrument is the dutar, used in both Uyghur muqam and the Uzbek Shashmaqam. Music brings Central Eurasian culture alive for students and helps teach them about cultural exchange and cultural production in a memorable and engaging way. I illustrate the above relationships through recordings, images, and videos from the websites listed below.

#### STANFORD INTERACTIVE WEBSITE

http://virtuallabs.stanford.edu/silkroad/SilkRoad.html

#### AGA KHAN MUSIC INITIATIVE

http://www.akdn.org/aktc_music.asp

#### SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

http://www.folkways.si.edu

#### *THE SILK ROAD PROJECT* AND SILK ROAD ENSEMBLE HEADED BY YO-YO MA

http://www.silkroadproject.org

#### UNESCO: THE UYGHUR MUQAM OF XINJIANG

http://unesco.org/culture/intangible-heritage/10apa_uk.htm

James Millward's short history also has a section on musical exchanges in the chapter, "Arts on the Silk Road." He discusses the muqams while providing an impressively wide survey of the origins and spread of different versions of lutes from Mesopotamia, Persia, Central Asia and East Asia (Millward 2013, 91-98).

### BRINGING THE SILK ROAD INTO THE MODERN ERA

Central Eurasia has also made significant contributions to world history in the modern period. Asian modernization is one of the themes that can be used to link Central Eurasia to its neighbors. One of the defining aspects of modernization is the emergence of active states in studying, categorizing, standardizing, and then institutionalizing culture. In the late seventeeth century the Russian and Qing empires partitioned Central Eurasia between themselves (Beckwith 2009, 321). Central Eurasian culture and political systems did not become flattened and absorbed after Russian and Qing conquest, but rather reconfigured in ways that show continuity with the past while also reflecting global trends in modernizing states. One example of Central Eurasia's impact on modern Asia is the way the Soviet Union

reshaped and exported the Uzbek SSR's capital of Tashkent as a model for Asian socialism. In the late 1950s, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited Tashkent, which Soviet leaders viewed as the ideal representation of successful Asian socialism. During this time agricultural specialists from the Soviet Union also used cotton seeds imported from Uzbekistan to oversee the new construction of cotton farms and factories in China's northwest border region of Xinjiang. Within China, several newspaper articles discussed Uzbekistan as the model for Xinjiang's post-1949 economic development. Outside of the People's Republic of China, Soviet leaders sought to export the Tashkent model of Asian socialism to South Asia and Southeast Asia. They invited delegations and sent teams to South Asian and Southeast Asian countries from the 1930s on to show other Asian countries an ideal example of Asian socialism (Stronski 2010). This model of Asian modernization was meant to tie East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia together. After the 1950s, China moved away from Soviet oversight of socialist economic development in Xinjiang and began seeking to export itself as a model of successful Asian socialism to the Third World. I use this example in class in discussing twentieth-century modernization movements to illustrate how Soviet and Chinese leaders sought to reconfigure Central Eurasia by recreating a "Red Silk Road." This relationship was terminated shortly after its formation with the closing of the border and the decline of Sino-Soviet relations. Yet, Mao and Chinese Communist Party members who were disillusioned with Khrushchev's Soviet present remained fascinated by the Soviet past. They continued to study the work of Lenin and Stalin and adapt the Soviet past to the Chinese present throughout the People's Republic under Mao. While historians of the Soviet Union may stress the Soviet leadership's focus on the third world rather than China as a destination for the export of socialism after the 1950s, a Chinese perspective shows the continuing significance of Soviet institutions across the border.

Millward suggests the usefulness of the term "silk road" in characterizing the Sino-Soviet relationship as a whole. The long relationship between India and China, revolving around Buddhism, entailed China's study of another country's religious system, the translation of its textual corpus, the exchange of envoys, and imitation of technology, music and art. Evidence of the shorter-lived but similar relationship between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China in the 1950s can still be seen today (Millward 2013, 115). Marxism-Leninism fulfilled the role of "religion" and involved personnel exchanges and the popularization of Russian film, literature, and music in China. As Millward argues, "China adopted Soviet-style apartment buildings in the twentieth century under circumstances similar to those when it adopted the chair (and much else) from India in the tenth and eleventh centuries. If we look at the silk-road phenomena broadly, we can see quantitative difference but little qualitative difference between the exchange of goods and ideas across Eurasia from prehistoric to early modern times and what we now speak of as 'globalization'" (Millward 2013, 117). Though this is an excellent example of continuity, many historical issues may not be the same for premodern nomadic/sedentary relations or cross-regional networks of exchange and those that existed in the twentieth century, but a comparison of the two periods could be used to launch a discussion among students of how things have changed over time.

## conclusion

Recent scholarship by Central Eurasianists offers insights into world history that are not captured by standard texts. This essay has attempted to touch on some of the ways in which these ideas can be used to supplement lectures and assignments in world history and Asian history survey courses for both the premodern and modern periods. Nonspecialists can

discuss the history of Central Eurasia in a way that corrects misconceptions, links Central Eurasia to other parts of the world in new and engaging ways, and offers a narrative that fulfills Christian's call to view modernity as an indirect product of a long history of cross-regional exchanges along silk roads that are still traveled today.

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## NOTES

1. *Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies* at the University of Indiana, Bloomington (http://www.indiana.edu/~rifias/RIFIAS_and_Inner_Asian_Studies.htm)
2. The website also provides links to web resources, such as the *Central Eurasian Studies Society*, which publishes the *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, edits the journal *Central Asian Survey*, and holds annual conferences through the Sinor *Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies* at Indiana University (http://centraleurasia.org/).

# Teaching the History of Women in China and Japan: Challenges and Sources

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**Abstract:** Studying the history of Chinese and Japanese women provides American students with a thematic approach to Asian Studies. This paper reflects on the challenges I face in teaching women's histories in China and Japan. It also discusses the pedagogy and sources I use in teaching the course. The paper argues that teaching the history of women in China and Japan will allow us to move beyond the conventional regional or nationally focused approach to Asian Studies and enable us to reimagine old narratives and introduce students to new methods of understanding both the universality and diversity within Asian history.

**Keywords** China; Japan; Women

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Studying histories of China and Japan can provide American Students with a thematic approach to Asian Studies instead of a conventionally geographical approach. Although China, as an emerging economy, and Japan, as an existing economic powerhouse, are no strangers to most American undergraduates, many do not know much about women in China and Japan. Most textbooks on modern Chinese and Japanese histories cover very little about women. If there is coverage, it tends to be abstract and remote to many American students of the twenty-first century. As recently as last year, I asked my American students what first came to mind when thinking about Chinese and Japanese women during the first class of my "Women in China and Japan" course. The predominant answers given still cast Chinese and Japanese women as subservient victims of patriarchal society. Examples often include foot binding, one-child family policy in China, or geishas in Japan. The overall images are often ones of passive and agencyless women. While these images do reflect some truth, it is only a partial if not a misleading one. The prevalence of such one-dimensional impressions about Asian women underscores the fact that *what* and *how* to teach American students about Chinese and Japanese women still remains a challenge in the twenty-first century. These challenges are discussed and exemplary sources presented in the following.

## Challenge Number One: What to Teach—The Contents

The first challenge involved in teaching the history of women in China and Japan pertains to content—what to include in the course materials. Most of the generalized and to some degree stereotypical images of Chinese and Japanese women as viewed by American students perhaps partially arise from a relative lack of representation of Chinese and Japanese women's own voices in Western language scholarship.

There is an uneven representation of Western and non-Western scholarly voices in feminist academic work. For example, Japanese feminist scholars have noted an asymmetry in dissemination of feminist scholarship. Since the 1970s, a considerable body of scholarship and literature on women in Japan has been published by Western scholars and translated and made available to Japanese readers. However, very few Japanese scholarly works on the same subject become available in Western languages for Western audiences (Fujimura-

Fanselow and Kameda 1995, xi). The situation in China is about the same. Additionally, in most of the existing Western works published in the 1970s, 1980s, and even the early 1990s, Chinese and Japanese women are treated mainly as the subjects of study and theorizing. And since feminist theories and the very field of women's studies themselves first arose in the West, Japanese and Chinese scholars also heavily relied on these Western theories in their own work when they first began to engage in research on women and feminism during the early 1970s and throughout the 1980s. It was not until the late 1980s and the1990s that some of the Japanese and Chinese scholars' research became known in the United States, though they remained in the academic periphery.

Women's studies is a relatively new academic field in Japan and China. In Japan, the Women's Studies Association was established in 1979, and in China it was established in the mid to late 1980s. In both countries, the development of women's studies into an interdisciplinary discourse has been influenced by Western feminist and gender theories and scholarly works. However, since the 1990s, especially after the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, women's studies has not only blossomed but also continually matured in both countries. Moving beyond the initial stage of absorbing Western theories as models for women's studies in their countries, Japanese and Chinese scholars are now developing their own perspectives and theories on women in their respective countries and believe that their studies can enrich the field both in and outside of Japan and China. For example, in China, more and more scholars have explicitly begun to challenge the universality of Western-born gender and feminist theories. One of the leading Chinese scholars of women's studies even states that Chinese scholars "respect Western-based feminist theory, and yet they still believe that Chinese women's studies has its own background and circumstances unique to Chinese history and social reality. Western feminist theory is certainly valuable as a rich source of reference, but Western feminist tradition can hardly provide a standardized answer to all Chinese women's questions" (Li and Zhang 1994, 148). Chinese scholars are challenging the notion that gender representation is one size fits all.

Western scholars—for example, Christina Gilmartin, Gail Hershatter, Lisa Rofel, and Tyrene White—had advocated for the creation of "a dialogue that would challenge the dichotomy between Europeans and Americans as theory makers and Chinese women as objects of theory" (1994, 7). Many efforts, including joint conferences, publications, and foundation-sponsored projects have been developed to promote such a dialogue. However, while Western scholarship on women's studies has continued to inspire the field in Japan and China, Japanese and Chinese scholarship has still not attained the same status in the West. In general, Western scholars and Japanese and Chinese scholars predominantly work and publish in separate circles and have not had enough active intellectual cross-fertilization between them. In addition to the fact that Japan and China do not hold the same level of global political and cultural clout as the U.S. does, the countries' political, cultural, and linguistic differences make it more difficult for Japanese and Chinese scholarship in the field to gain the same prestige enjoyed by Western scholarship. Most of the scholarly works published by Japanese and Chinese scholars in their respective languages remain read mostly in Japan and China and have had little impact on the field in the U.S. and elsewhere, except among scholars who can read Chinese or Japanese. This uneven representation of scholarship was first observed by scholars in the United States. In its 2010 Call for Papers, The National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) pointed out: "Although the problem of omissions, silences, and distortions in women's studies has been analyzed for decades, too often feminist scholarship continues to theorize on the basis of hegemonic frameworks, false universals, and a narrow range of lived experiences. The legitimate terrain of feminist

theory, inquiry, and politics remains contested."[1] The voices, lived experiences, and perspectives of Chinese and Japanese women in particular, and of Asian women in general, are part of a still-underrepresented area of feminist scholarship. In China, for example, Chinese scholars of women's history have recognized the importance and have "shown a tendency to approach women's problems from women's points of view and demonstrate a strong sense of needing to reveal women's actual life experiences" (Wang 2006, 318). But most of the Japanese and Chinese scholarly works are not available in English. In light of this situation, the question of what to include and how to recognize Japanese and Chinese scholars' and women's voices into a gender and women course for American undergraduates is a significant challenge.

In my "Women in China and Japan" course, I try to strike a balance between Western feminist and gender theories, interpretations, and the voices and lived experiences of Japanese and Chinese women as well as their scholarly works. In addition to introducing existing gender and feminist theories and framework by Western scholars, I try to include materials written by Chinese and Japanese women to show that Japanese and Chinese scholarship can enrich the field both in and outside of Japan and China. Many Japanese and Chinese scholars in women's studies are not only interested in writing about women in their countries, but also in pushing for changes in women's status in government policies and society. Their insight on women's studies and women's movements in their respective countries will enhance intellectual understanding for people outside of Japan and China. It is also important for American students to see the usefulness of Japanese and Chinese scholarship as an integrated part of the field. To reach this goal, American students need to hear the voices of Japanese and Chinese women.

The textbook I use to present Chinese scholarship on women is *Holding Up Half the Sky: Chinese Women, the Past, Present, and Future* (Mow, Tao, and Zheng 2004). This book is the first collection of essays on Chinese women written by Chinese women scholars. The book covers the history of Chinese women from the Song dynasty to the early 2000s, as well as a wide range of issues and themes, from Chinese women's own efforts in promoting women's education in the nineteenth century, to women in the Peking opera, to women's education and women in politics in the twenty-first century. The textbook for Japanese women is *Transforming Japan: How Feminism and Diversity Are Making a Difference* (Fujimura-Fanselow 2011). This book is also a collection of essays on Japanese women written by Japanese women scholars. The book is an updated version of *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future* (Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995). One reviewer commented that the 1995 book "in offering Western readers Japanese research and points of view, is path-breaking and full of opportunities for breaking down Western ethnocentrism, even feminist ethnocentrism…" (Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995, back cover). The 2011 book retains five historical essays from the 1995 volume while developing new topics ranging from single mothers' struggles, lesbian partnerships, the formation and growth of the men's movement to activism for the rights of minorities and the politicization of housewives in Japan. As the editor of the book points out, the text intends to showcase a comprehensive picture of diverse Japanese women living in a multicultural society (Fujimura-Fanselow 2011, x).

To add Japanese and Chinese women's perspectives and lived experiences, I rotate the following books on Japanese women: *Office Ladies and Salaried Men* (Ogasawara 1998), on Japanese women in the workplace; *Sandakan Brothel #8: An Episode in the History of Lower-Class Japanese Women* (Yamazaki and Colligan-Taylor 1998), on Japanese women who were sold into prostitution; *Haruko's World: A Japanese Farm Woman and Her Community*

(Bernstein 1983), on Japanese farm women and their community; *The Secrets of Mariko: A Year in the Life of a Japanese Woman and Her family* (Bumiller 1995), on middle-class urban women and their lives; *In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun: the Autobiography of a Japanese Feminist* (Raicho and Carig 2010), on one of the early Japanese feminists; and the *Prison Memoirs of a Japanese Woman* (Fumiko and Inglis 1991), on a radical Japanese woman who was executed for plotting to assassinate the emperor. I rotate the following books on Chinese women: *A Daughter of Han: the Autobiography of a Chinese Working Woman* (Pruitt 1945); *A Woman Soldier's Own Story: The Autobiography of Xie Bingying* (Brissman 2001); *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China* (Li 2010), an oral history of twenty Chongqing women who experienced the Second Sino-Japanese War; *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s* (Honig and Hershatter 1988), a study of Chinese women during the early reform era; *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past* (Hershatter 2012), a book on rural women during the early People's Republic of China; *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* (Zhong, Wang, and Bai 2001), a collection of personal essays by China-born female scholars who live and teach in the United States about being female under Mao's China; and *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Women* (Yue 1985), an autobiography of a Chinese intellectual woman who lived through the Maoist era and the Cultural Revolution.

Since most students today are netizens, I include in the syllabus some credible websites that provide useful information, for example, the Bibliography of Asian Studies, Stanford University's online source center on Japanese studies, the website of the Universities Service Centre for China Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the German Heidelberg University's online information center on Chinese women.[2]

Clips of documentary and fiction films are also used in this course. For the history of Chinese women, in addition to the usual suspects, such as *Raise of the Red Lantern*, *Judou*, *The Story of Qiu Ju*, *Road to Home*, and *Small Happiness*, I also use the documentary films *China Blue*, *Not One Less*, *The Last Train Home*, *Marrying* from the *Heart of the Dragon* series, *Chinese Foot Binding*, *Women in China: Up Against the Wall*, *Nushu*, and *A World Without Fathers or Husbands* to provide an array of visual images of Chinese women to American students to show how diverse women in China are. For the history of Japanese women, I use clips from *Sandakan Brothel No 8*, *Black Rain*, *Street of Shame*, *No Regret for the Youth*, *The Woman in the Dunes*, *Twenty-four Eyes*, *Kabe: Our Mother*, and *Granny Gabai* as well as documentary films such as *Japanese Women*, *Faces of Japan*, and *Mother's Way Daughter's Choice*, to break the stereotyped presentation of the images of Japanese women. I also find that YouTube provides many useful clips on gender and women for courses on gender and feminism. For example, I use a four-minute video presentation called "Socialization and Gender Roles within the Family"[3] on YouTube to stimulate conversation on what gender is and how it is constructed in China and Japan.

In choosing the assigned readings and audiovisual materials for the course, it is important to include materials that inform American undergraduate students about Japanese and Chinese women beyond the conventional categories of family, marriage, motherhood, and sexuality, in other words, women's lives in domesticity. The course materials also encourage students to study women and war and the LGBT movement, as well as women's lives in education, work, religion, and politics. In the case of China, I include readings and visual materials about non-Han Chinese women, for example the documentary films of *Nushu*, a film about a unique women's language developed and used exclusively by women in Yongjiang, Hunan Province, and *A World Without Fathers or Husbands*, a film on the Mosuo women who still live in a matrilineal society in Yunnan Province, to show that gender and feminist

studies intersect not only with social class but also with ethnicity in China. China has fifty-six recognized nationality groups, and conventional scholarship on Chinese women covers mainly women from the Han majority, not minority groups. Readings encourage students to consider the issue of gender and ethnicity in Japan as well. For example, they are given readings on the experiences of Korean and "Other" Asian women who live in Japan (Faier 2008).

### Challenge Number Two: What to Teach—The Theoretical Perspectives

The second challenge of teaching history of women in Japan and China is to introduce and engage American undergraduate students with existing gender, feminist, and women's studies theories, and draw their attention to competing theories and ongoing debates on the question of the universality of gender, feminist, and women's studies theories. In her 2006 study of the rise of Chinese women's history as part of the development of social history in China, Shou Wang noticed that although gender, feminist, and women's studies in China were inspired and continued to be inspired by theories developed by scholars in the West, since the 1990s more and more Chinese scholars have recognized the limitations of these theories and their applicability to the Chinese situation. For instance, Wang points out "the term 'gender,' which is widely used in Western works in women's studies, does not have a fixed Chinese equivalent." Some of the Chinese scholars even worry about the danger of "theoretical colonization" of the study of Chinese women's history by Western scholars (Wang 2006, 320). Thus, developing reading materials that help American undergraduate students understand important concepts regarding gender, feminism, and women's studies while recognizing their usefulness and limitations for studying women in non-Western societies is a challenge.

To help students understand the importance of gender and feminist theories and studies, I find several books particularly useful. The first is *Women: Images and Realities* (Kelly, Parameswaran, and Schniedewind 2011). This book not only introduces the concepts of women's studies, gender, gender studies, and the question of the LGBT, but also showcases how gender intersects with class, race, and ethnicity by providing examples of lived experiences of multicultural Americans. It also includes men's voices in supporting women's rights movements and masculine studies. Another book is *Gender in Modernism* (Kime 2007). This is a collection of essays grouped into twenty-one thematic sections. I find the essays on the theme of gender and global location particularly useful for the study of the history of Japanese and Chinese women. *The Evolution of American Women's Studies: Reflections on Triumphs, Controversies and Change* (Ginsberg 2008) is useful as well, especially the introduction chapter. This chapter highlights the three waves of feminist movement and related scholarly works in the United States and points out their weaknesses and challenges. The three books together can introduce American students to the basic theories and knowledge on gender, feminism, and women's studies and provide them with some frameworks to probe what the prevailing theories are and whether they are useful in studying the history of women in Japan and China.

Another aspect of the theoretical challenge in teaching the history of women in Japan and China is to make sure students understand that gender and feminist studies are not just academic fields but also opportunities for everyday activism for promoting social justice and equality in the world. I find *Grassroots* (Baumgardner and Richards 2005) inspiring and a fun and absorbing text for undergraduates. It is aimed at pointing out to young people that everyone, regardless of social and economic status and political standing, can be an

activist and make a difference in the world. In teaching the history of women in Japan and China, the above-mentioned books on gender, feminist, and women's studies theories and activism may be connected to the geolocation and realities of Japan and China presented in the introduction chapters of *Chinese Femininities and Chinese Masculinities* (Wasserstrom and Brownell 2002) and *Transforming Japan: How Feminism and Diversity Are Making A Difference* (Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 2011).

By connecting American undergraduate students to theories of gender, feminism, and women's studies in general and the Japanese and Chinese realities regarding women's history in particular, a course on the history of Japanese and Chinese women could engage the students to think critically. For example, last year in the discussion of the articles in Amy Kesselman's *Women: Images and Realities*, students in my class noticed that the authors argued that "feminism is continually developing a more multicultural and inclusive perspective, mirroring the lives of women in all races, ethnic groups, and classes. Feminists of varied races and ethnicities are generating theory and practice that address their particular experiences and consciousness, broadening and deepening the scope of feminist analysis" (Kesselman, McNair, and Schniedewind 2006, 12). Then, questions emerge: if feminism allows different races and ethnicities to practice and address their particular experiences and consciousness, do non-Western women groups, for example Chinese and Japanese women, experience gender the same ways as white middle-class Western women do? According to Ginsberg, in the 1960s and 70s there was a clear goal for scholars and activists about women's studies and feminist movements in the United States. Do Chinese and Japanese scholars and activists have a similarly clear goal about women's studies and movement in their respective countries? What is it? Is the goal of Chinese women the same as that of Japanese women? Is the goal of Chinese and Japanese women the same as the goal of women in other parts of the world? What unites and defines the category of women? Is womanhood defined universally in all countries? How do we strike a balance regarding universalism and cultural relativism in gender and women's studies? How do we create an inclusive feminism that does not have the West-non-Western divide? Many of these questions are probably relevant to all history courses, not only those on gender and women's studies, but also to Asian studies in general.

Although we never reach consensual answers to these questions, the study of Japanese and Chinese women's history helps students engage critically with the renegotiation of gender theories. It makes them see the challenge of the common usage of Western theories as a unitary standard for women's histories elsewhere in the world despite their development in the historical particulars of Western experience. In teaching the course on history of women in China and Japan I realize that we need to encourage students to consider the necessity and possibilities for intellectual cross-fertilization to create a dialogue challenging the dichotomy between Euro-Americans as theory makers and non-Western women as objects of theory and see that gender representation is not one size fits all. Students need to learn not only pertinent knowledge of gender and women in general, but also historiography of gender and women's studies in China and Japan.

Studying history of women in Japan and China provides American students with the opportunity to consider the commonly-shared concerns of all women as well as the unique issues facing women in these countries. For example, students are asked to consider whether socialist revolution and industrial modernization liberate women in China and whether industrialization and the Pacific War mobilization improved women's status in Japan. Teaching history of women in Japan and China helps students understand that gender construction is complex and that a multicultural and historical approach to women's

histories is necessary. As women's contributions and participation are included in Chinese and Japanese history, subjects of inquiry are recast and causes and impact of major events like China's revolutions and Japan's industrial modernization are also revised. By understanding women's position in gender relations, students gain a more realistic and comprehensive knowledge of the values of Chinese and Japanese cultures, the functioning of their societies, and the nature of historical continuities and changes.

### challenge number three: how to teach—pedagogy

The third challenge in teaching women in Japan and China is what pedagogy to use and how to make the course interesting. I employ a student-centered and interactive pedagogy to motivate students to become active and engaged learners and critical thinkers.

The format of the course includes lecture, discussion based on assigned readings, debate, and audiovisual material presentations. In addition, last year I also arranged an e-mail penpal exchange between Chinese college students and my American students. A former student of mine taught English at the Central China Normal University and I asked her to mobilize her Chinese students to exchange emails with my students. This e-mail penpal project enables American students in my class to actually interact with young Chinese peers to exchange views on topics in the course.

In my course, all students are expected to participate in class activities by contributing thoughts, perspectives, anecdotes, and so forth on the readings, classroom experience, and lectures. All students are required to lead one week of discussion, questioning and integrating the theories and arguments of the assigned readings and forging their own critical opinions on the subject matter. To ensure the quality of each week's discussion, a weekly assignment is given. Before coming to each week's class, students are required to finish a two-page reflective essay on the week's readings. They are asked to show that they understand the main ideas, themes, and assertions contained in each reading and are able to identify the information supporting the author's statement, as well as evaluate the weakness and strength of the author's ideas and presentation. In addition to the short essay, students write out a few conceptual questions that will lead to a meaningful discussion. In order to help students make intellectual connections to the various readings they are assigned each week, they are asked to take one or more ideas and facts for the week and think about how they can contrast, compare, clarify, call into question, or relate to knowledge and concepts they have gained in previous weeks or from other sources, like outside readings, other courses, and life experience. This course also requires students to produce a substantial final research paper on their chosen subject pertaining to women in Japan and China at the end of the semester. Both the weekly reading reflective papers and the final research paper are useful materials for assessing the learning outcomes of the course.

In teaching the course I realize that it is easy for many students to unconsciously fall into the trap of false gender universalism by using their own twenty-first century Western-gendered glasses to view women in Chinese and Japanese history. By measuring women in Japan and China with a yardstick determined by life in the United States in the twenty-first century, it is easy for students to jump into a premature and asymmetric comparison and conclusion that women in Japan and China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are much worse off than women in the twenty-first century United States.

One of the male students from my course stated the following in his weekly short essay: "In a way, I feel as if my original views on the status of Japanese women in their nation and society are gradually being worn away, bit by bit. When I first began reading about the stigmas, biases, means of discrimination, strict cultural expectations, and other such woes

that Japanese women have had to and continue to endure, I more or less had a knee-jerk reaction in which I wanted to more or less brand the whole society as a living trap of sexism from my personal point view. However, according to the week's readings, it would appear that yet again, I was extraordinarily hasty to dole out my over-generalizations borne out my strong emotional reaction. As I see, at least in the realm of politics, Japanese women continue to make strides, bit by bit, as seen through the profiles of Aokage Takako and Mitsui Mariko, or the growing influx of 'housewives' into the political sphere, as described by Yoko Sato in 'From the Home to the Political Arena.'"[4]

A female student in the same course also commented on the readings on the subject of the growth and movement of Japanese feminism, pointing out that the feminist movement in Japan is "in some ways like the American feminist movement, a grassroots movement that has undergone different waves and has had different leaders throughout; it is important to realize that while there are similarities/universalities to the feminist movement throughout the world, each country's movement has slightly different cultural issues it is dealing with and there are different timelines that events occurred for each country. The readings for this week focused on the growth of the Japanese feminist movement since the late 1890s and traced its progress throughout today; the feminist movement is not a static organization; it has changed and its goals have progressed with the time period."[5] With proper guidance and intensive intellectual discussion and debate, undergraduate American students can see that it is important to think like a historian and to strike a balance in the debate of universalism and cultural relativism.

Another common challenge encountered in my "Women in Japan and China" class is that it is easy for American students to assume that there is no difference between the experiences of Chinese and Japanese women. They often are surprised to see that although women in the two countries share some common experiences and aspirations, they face many different challenges and have different development stages pertinent to their own history, society, and cultural traditions. For example, during the Pacific War, while Japanese women's organizations were banned or forced to serve the military state, the war provided opportunities for Chinese women to develop their organizations and movement for liberating their country and themselves. Another example is from the middle of the 1960s to the late 1970s; when Chinese women dealt with the challenges of the Cultural Revolution and were cut off from the feminist movement in the West, the Japanese women were aware of the movement and started to launch a feminist movement of their own. Thus it is important for students to know that in studying women in Chinese and Japanese history, a multicultural and historical approach to women's studies is necessary. It is important to locate women's history within a society's national history as well as to describe its role in an integrated history of East Asia. When we teach about East Asia, we need to strike a balance between recognizing the region at large as an organizing unit in our teaching and drawing attention to the individual East Asian countries' unique identities and cultural traditions.

Gender theories and feminism are not just scholarly engagements; they are also aimed at promoting activism. One of the objectives of teaching a gender/women course is to help students link classroom learning with activism for diversity. Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa in their 2011 study point out that in the twenty-first century extracurricular activities are an integral part of American undergraduate student life and play an important role in shaping campus culture in many colleges (Arum and Roksa 2011, 3). Taking advantage of this reality, last year when I taught the course on women in Japan and China, I challenged students to connect our classroom learning with the real world of our everyday life. The students took the challenge and made the connection through a class project. After a

brainstorming session, they decided to stage three mock Chinese weddings on campus to promote diversity and cultural awareness of China.

In the course, marriage is introduced as an institution that is vital in understanding a society; wedding ceremonies symbolize and showcase a society's values and rituals. The mock weddings project provides a great opportunity for the students and the onlookers to learn about and understand the importance of marriage and wedding in the construction of womanhood, family, and gender relations, and in reproducing class structures in China from the late imperial times to the current economic reforms.

The students acted out three Chinese weddings: a traditional wedding, a revolutionary wedding presumably during the Maoist era, and a post-Mao wedding of the economic reform era. They staged a prewedding negotiation between the groom's and bride's families to show the audience that marriage in traditional Chinese society was not just the union of the young people who were getting married, but the union of the two families. They also paraded the wedding dowries to show off the economic and social standings of the groom's and the bride's families in the local community. During the ceremonies, a narrator told the audience the historical background of the weddings, the meaning of each act, and the change and continuities of the ceremonies from the traditional to the Maoist revolutionary and the economic reform era as a result of the change and lack of change in China's political and social structures.

During the course of preparing for the event, we not only learned a great deal about Chinese marriage and wedding culture, but also established our class as a learning community which went beyond the classroom. Since this project was included as part of the Multicultural Monday events, we worked closely with the University Activities and Student Diversity Programs Offices. The students wrote a grant proposal and got funding from a foundation for the event. Throughout the preparation process the students not only learned organizational skills and grant proposal writing, but also contributed to the promotion of diversity and cultural awareness on campus. This project made the students realize that learning about East Asia can be fun and meaningful to their everyday life. It provided them with an opportunity to connect academic learning with the promotion of activism and multiculturalism on campus and encouraged them to consider that as global citizens, they could think globally but act locally.

## conclusion

Anyone teaching the history of women in China and Japan in America faces challenges of how to select balanced course materials and introduce women-related theoretical perspectives that include the voices of Chinese and Japanese women. I believe that with carefully selected course materials, we can help American students hear Chinese and Japanese women's voices, which will not only enable students to better understand the history of these two countries, but also enrich the existing feminist and women's studies theories and practices in the U.S. A challenge of teaching Asian histories in the United States today is that it is difficult to make a connection between the subject matter and American students' everyday life. An East Asian women's history course can employ feminist activism and an active pedagogy to make such a connection. The study of Chinese and Japanese women's history may engage students critically with the renegotiation of gender theories and realities in the East Asian countries under study, in particular acknowledging the common usage of Western theories as a unitary standard for women's histories elsewhere in the world despite their development in the historical particulars of Western experience. Teaching the history of women in China and Japan will allow us to move beyond the conventional "area studies"

and the nation-state boundaries, to reimagine old narratives and introduce students to new methods of understanding themes of both universalism and diversity within East Asian history.

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## NOTES

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5. Elisabeth Muller's weekly reflective essay for HI 366, Women in China and Japan, 2010.

# Book Review: A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics

Puqun Li (with Arthur K. Ling), A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics (Broadview Publishers, Peterborough, Ontario and Buffalo, New York, 2012)
ISBN: 978-1-55481-034-5

Puqun Li has provided a helpful entryway for newcomers into Asian philosophy. He has done so not by resorting to what are always doomed to be indefensible generalities about this vast and philosophically complex group of cultures, but rather by prudently and helpfully providing cogent readings of ten Indian, Chinese, and Japanese classics.

The book begins with a consideration of the Indian heritage. Hinduism is introduced by an analysis of the Upanishads. Unfortunately, Hinduism only gets a single chapter and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, for example, does not receive substantial commentary. Indian Buddhism fares better with a consideration of both its early expression and its refashioning as the Mahayana (or Great Vehicle). Early Theravada Buddhism is discussed by taking up the Dhammapada, and Mahayana is introduced through Nagarjuna's Madyamaka or Middle Way as Li takes on the famously vexing *Mulamadyamakakarika* (*The Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*). Li examines select arguments from Garfield's edition of this text, including a helpful discussion of Nagarjuna's critique of substantial accounts of time.

Li then turns to China, which forms the majority of the book. Confucian philosophy is presented through an explication of the *Analects*, the *Mengzi*, and finally the *Xunzi*, which defends Confucian philosophy while adapting elements of rival schools. Li also discusses early philosophical Daoism by analyzing this tradition's two most famous and celebrated works, the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. Li finishes his consideration of China by turning to Chan Buddhism. Using the Dun-huang version of the manuscript made famous in the sixties by Philip Yampolsky, Li takes up the *Platform Sutra*, historically attributed to Hui Neng, but really the work of multiple authors. China receives three-fifths of the attention here, and Li's discussions of Chinese texts are the book's best chapters, his readings enhanced by clear and accessible analyses of some of the original Chinese terms and phrases.

Li concludes by turning to Dogen Zenji's Kamakura period Soto Zen masterpiece, the *Shobogenzo* (*Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*). The entirety of this complex and interlocking collection of fascicles is longer then all of the other works that Li considers in this book combined, so he wisely only concentrates on a few emblematic fascicles that he takes from Waddell and Abe's *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*. Li considers *Genjokoan* ("Manifesting Suchness") as well as the famous discussion of the nonseparation of being and time (*Uji*), *Shoji*, Dogen's consideration of the great matter of living and dying, and *Bussho*, Dogen's meditation on the problem of Buddha nature.

Li's analyses, written as accessibly as such difficult material allows, may be of interest to general readers who are trying to find their way into these traditions, but his target audience seems to be undergraduate philosophy students working at a largely introductory level. Li keeps discussions of the scholarly debates around these texts to a minimum (although he is always sure to mention the most salient issues).

Moreover, Li has inserted many features that one normally expects to find in the more

traditional textbook format. Each chapter is linked to a suggested primary source, namely the translation and passages of the work that Li will be discussing. Li then provides "learning objectives." For example, if you make it through Li's chapter on the *Platform Sutra*, you will be able to 1) "describe the general features of Chinese Chan Buddhism" as well as, among other objectives, be able to "compare and evaluate Shen Xiu's 'gradual awakening' and Hui Neng's 'sudden awakening'" (259). I am not sure what Hui Neng would have thought about the transformation of the great question of awakening into a learning outcome. I personally lament the incursion of such bureaucratic compromises into the practice of philosophy, but I also recognize that this battle may already be lost. For teachers hard pressed to produce such rhetoric, Li's objectives will be highly welcome.

Li then provides a vocabulary list ("key words") of the important critical terms for each work, as well as questions that his own analysis will try to answer. For example, one of the questions that guides Li's analysis of the *Platform Sutra* is: "How did Indian Buddhism fuse with the indigenous Chinese Confucianism and Daoism?" (260) Li also interpolates boxed areas that either include terse and often helpful microreflections or provide sample writing assignments and prompts.

Li wisely avoids speaking in wild and indefensible generalities about Asian philosophy. When he makes comparisons, they are between specific ideas and texts, and Li does so not to catalogue coincidences and differences, but rather to "prompt dialogue, engagement, and fresh learning" (xv). His textual analyses recreate the original philosophical context of the work, demonstrate their inner coherence, and judiciously bring select ideas into dialogue with select Western philosophical ideas (xiii).

Li also incorporates some very helpful appendices, including some handy tips on pinyin pronunciation, a glossary of key terms, some useful websites and journals, and even some suggestions of programs for graduate study in Chinese philosophy.

While Li's analysis helps students appreciate some of the vast philosophical range of Asian philosophy, he also draws three attractive conclusions about how these works can help us live a "human life." Although the accounts of the self vary, none of these texts argue that an "ego-centered" life will help us flourish (312). Rather, to live well, one must become present to every moment and, finally, although teachers may help, every serious negotiator of the Way must learn to stand on her or his own two feet (313).

Li leans heavily toward China, but he also gives each of the ten included texts an appreciative and lucid reading. As such, this is a helpful guide for introductory students to enter the extraordinary world of these philosophical treasures.

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