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Martin Lavička, ed.

Voiced and Voiceless in Asia

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Content

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Foreword

The work on this volume began with the *14th Annual Conference on Asian Studies* (ACAS) which took place on November 20–21, 2020 online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The ACAS conference series is organized annually by the Department of Asian Studies at Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic. Over the years, a system of each conference edition dedicated to a particular theme has developed. The title of this publication is, consequently, the same as was the general theme of the conference that year. The Call for Chapters that we issued following the conference with the support of the *Sinophone Borderlands – Interaction at the Edges* project was, however, open not only to those who participated in the conference, but to anyone working on an issue that could be subsumed under the general theme. The very high number of proposals that we received in response to the Call proves the importance as well as complexity of questions that in one way or another pertain to the overarching issue of "voice" situated into the Asian context.

This volume is the first in the Department of Asian Studies' newly established Olomouc Asian Studies (OLAS) publication series. While we were eventually able to accept only a handful of the submitted proposals, the volume still boasts 19 chapters that develop the general theme from a wide range of angles as well as scholarly disciplines and perspectives. In doing so, we hope that this volume will set the standard for the volumes to come in that they will involve a variety of approaches and connect scholars working across different fields and focusing on different geographical areas in Asia.

To conclude, we would like to express our gratitude to those who have played a role in making the publication of this volume a reality. We would like to thank the authors whose chapters make up this volume for their contributions, active cooperation, and kind understanding of the fact that the production process took us longer than what we initially expected. We would also like to express our gratitude to the reviewers of individual chapters, including those that were not selected for publication, who – as the anonymous peer-review process requires – cannot be named here.

The editors

Introduction: In Voice is Power

Halina Zawiszová and Martin Lavička

To have a voice is to have power. People strive to have a voice, to be heard and be seen, to have their interests taken into account and have the capacity to have them fulfilled, to have representation and be represented in a way that is favorable to them and reflects their identity, to be in the position that allows them to feel safe, valued, and free. Voice is instrumental for achieving one's goals. The interests of one may, however, be in conflict or even in direct opposition to those of another. Therefore, those higher up in any kind of a power hierarchy may – and indeed often do – use their voice to construct complex ideological as well as actual systems that promote and legitimize their values, beliefs, behaviors, and social positions, while marginalizing, excluding, silencing, and even demonizing those that they view as their Other.

The voiced set normative standards and define what is important, meaningful, desirable, and justifiable, what should be supported, nurtured, and fostered, and what should be eliminated, hidden, and suppressed. The unequal distribution of power in our cultures and societies consequently establishes voice as something valuable which is scalar, dynamic, and emergent, hence as something that social actors – individuals, communities, institutions, or states – in particular contexts and moments in time possess or not, are given or denied, are trying to preserve, looking for, finding, gaining, discovering, losing, acknowledging, depriving others of, fighting for, and so on.

Viewed in this way, the question of voice is as central to individuals' daily lives, their well-being, and personal relationships, as it is to the very workings of societies and the development of cultures, their policies, economies, systems of justice and education, art, sciences, technologies, media, housing, public health, etc. It is fundamental to the construction of social and political hierarchies and the attendant power dynamics, such as the establishment of dominant social groups as opposed to minorities, mainstream cultures as opposed to subcultures, and standard or official languages as opposed to regional and social varieties. It is key to the construction and perpetuation of hegemonic ideologies and realization of

all systems of government, but also to the attempts to dismantle, reject, and subvert them, that is, to the attempts to change the *status quo*.

Voice – albeit referred to by various terms – has long been acknowledged as an important topic across the humanities and social sciences (e.g., Louis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, Norman Fairclough, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Steven Lukes, among many). The present volume contributes to this tradition, narrating the multifaceted relationship between voice and power – although seldom mentioning the term itself – through the lens of scholarly fields, such as political science, history, international relations, cultural studies, media studies, literary studies, art history, or anthropology.

The volume consists of 19 chapters, broadly divided into two parts, which emerged organically in the process of preparing this publication based on the approaches and central foci that the authors of the texts adopt. The first part, entitled "Politics and Society," includes nine chapters, while the second part consists of ten chapters and is called "Arts and Literature," although the studies that it contains also deal with social themes. The publication brings together authors associated with universities in Europe and Asia as well as independent researchers, from senior academics to early career scholars.

Probing into a wide range of topics and adopting various methods and perspectives, collectively, the chapters discuss 'voice' in Asia – or more specifically, East Asia (China, Japan, Taiwan, and Tibet) and South Asia (India) – as closely intertwined with other social, political, and cultural issues. Those that resonate most prominently include human rights, equality, institutionalized inequality, ideology, justice, (systemic) oppression, discrimination, suppression, violence, resistance, activism, empowerment, liberation, freedom, non-conformity, identity, representation, access to rights and resources, social media, propaganda, censorship, gender and sexuality, the power of art and literature, construction of narratives or discourses, social, cultural, political, and economic domination and control.

We have sketched out below some of the concerns and findings that the individual chapters included in this volume provide.

In the first chapter of the first part of this volume, Madhu discusses contemporary attempts at online activism of the Dalit community or the so-called untouchable caste in modern India. Although the Indian government banned the caste system in the last century, the socio-economic disadvantages and discrimination against the Dalits remain even today. Madhu analyzes how social media help this disadvantaged group voice their grievances and gain support for their plea for human rights, justice, democracy, and equality, within as well as outside of India,

allowing Dalits to forge connections with other economically marginalized, socially stigmatized, and oppressed communities, such as the *burakumin* in Japan or the Roma in Central Europe. Importantly, the chapter shows that through social media, Dalits themselves can construct their identity as empowered people, all the while challenging the mainstream narratives and misconceptions.

In the following chapter, written by Bhavana Kumari, we remain on the Indian peninsula. Kumari discusses the migrant labor crisis that occurred because of the imposition of lockdown policies during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic. In her case study, Kumari focuses on the central eastern state Bihar. The author illustrates how the long overlooked and ignored situation of domestic migrant daily wage laborers began to pose serious problems during the lockdown, but failed to result in any substantial change. Extremely vulnerable even in normal times, they were left voiceless without money and without adequate help from their contractors, recruiters, states, as well as civil societies, and the Indian government, which did not provide sufficient relief measures to mitigate their dire situation. The socially and economically disadvantaged are revealed as lacking voice as well as a means for gaining it.

André Pinto Teixeira's chapter is of a more theoretical nature. It concerns *burakumin* in contemporary Japanese society, that is, marginalized people traditionally defined as people of (perceived) outcast ancestry, born or residing at particular locations, and/or engaged in particular occupations considered 'polluted' or 'unclean.' The author addresses questions related to identity, discrimination, and empowerment, stressing that the discriminatory practices are rooted in discourses, traditional historiographies, and imposed labeling, rather than genealogies, actual physical spaces, or occupations. He argues that the people discriminated against as *burakumin* can gain their voice only through reflexive and conscientious self-identification and presentation.

The chapter by Silvia Picchiarelli looks closely at China's countryside in the 1950s, when the so-called "unified purchase and sale" system was introduced. Based on her examination of archival sources in Shanxi province, Picchiarelli paints a compelling picture which shows that Chinese peasants were not completely submissive and, as it were, voiceless in their resistance against Mao Zedong's plan of the socialist transformation of agriculture, which they saw as highly problematic and endangering their existence. The author describes the 'soft methods' they employed in order to protest and express their opposition to the state without provoking the authorities.

Rural China is also the concern of the study by Pia Eskelinen. Eskelinen focuses on the contemporary issue of gender inequality regarding land tenure rights related to the *hukou* household registration system. Based on her field research and interviews with members of the All China Women's Federation in Central

and Eastern China, the author argues that the efforts of the Federation were not in vain and actually led to important legislative changes to the system. Women are still more likely, however, to become landless and slip into poverty after changing their *hukou*. This is, the author insists, due to the gendered decision-making processes, Chinese rural women's historically disadvantaged socio-economic position compared to rural men, as well as women's general acceptance of their less privileged position. More substantial reforms, which would deal with the core problem of gender equality, are therefore needed.

With the next chapter, we remain in mainland China but move to its westernmost part, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). In the first of two studies that focus on this region, Martin Lavička illuminates how normative documents are transmitted and adjusted into various channels to reach their target audience in the XUAR. Specifically, Lavička analyzes one of the propaganda channels, the officially published Uyghur-written booklet *Din esebiyliki ademni nabut qilidu* (*Religious extremism kills/destroys people*), which is about the fight against religious extremism and terrorism in the XUAR. He compares the booklet's content with provisions in the Regulations of the XUAR on Religious Affairs and the Regulations on De-radicalization of the XUAR. Lavička identifies the most common propaganda strategies utilized by the Chinese government to enforce the restrictive policies and laws on the Uyghur population, whose voice has been not just unheard, but actively suppressed by China's political leadership.

The second of the chapters dealing with Chinese propaganda in the XUAR is written by Rune Steenberg and Tenha Seher. The authors analyze vlogs made by popular young minority vloggers from the XUAR at a time when the region has been under massive pressure by the government and security apparatus. In the videos, they study the explicitly political content and close alignment with the Chinese Communist Party's narratives and suggest that there is direct involvement of the government apparatus in the design of the vlogs. The authors argue that the videos provide invaluable insights into the workings of the propaganda practices in the People's Republic of China as well as into the daily life in the XUAR when approached critically and with adequate epistemological care.

Nikolaos Mavropoulos's chapter takes us back to the time when imperial China lost in the First Sino-Japanese War and Taiwan became a Japanese colony. Mavropoulos zooms in on two Japanese men who went against the military establishment, the First Chief Justice of the High Court of Taiwan Takano Takenori and the first Chief of the Education Bureau Osawa Shūji, in order to contribute to the debates on Japanese colonization of Taiwan by showing the struggle between the civil or political and the military voices in administering the colony. The author describes how both men's voices were silenced by the military establishment and – using their cases to explain the Japanese colonial strategies – argues that

as a Japanese colony, Taiwan was destined to become a place of military rule that offered no place for civil rights and dissident voices.

The last study in the first part of the volume is by Fumi Inoue and takes us to Okinawa after the Japanese war endeavors ended in failure and the U.S. began to occupy the Ryūkyū Islands. The author reflects on the Okinawans' 1955 uprising following the murder of a local girl by a U.S. military service member and describes it as a critical milestone in the development of popular human rights activism in Okinawa, as it involved the Okinawans collectively raising their voices to seek legal justice under the U.S. military occupation. Significantly, Inoue points out the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for the empowerment of the Okinawans in their daily fight against injustice and other issues that were caused by the U.S. military presence.

The second part of the volume begins with Freya Terryn's study, in which she explores the satirical depictions of the Boshin War between the pro-imperial and pro-shogunal forces in Japan in the woodblock prints of Utagawa Hiroshige III produced in the second half of the 19th century in the face of the censorship laws that banned depiction of the ruling classes and current events. The author exposes how the artist – aided by the publisher, the engraver, and the printer – made use of images and explanatory inscriptions in the prints in order to offer a commentary on the shifting political power and the dynamics between those who govern and those who are governed against the backdrop of the governmental censorship trying to suppress any dissenting voices.

In the following chapter, Jessica Uldry provides insight into a prominent Swiss diplomat Aimé Humbert's critical views on the life of female sex workers in the 19th century Japan by analyzing the engravings and textual commentary related to various forms of female prostitution in Japan included in his monograph *Le Japon Illustré* (1870). The author shows how Humbert used altered images, text, and composition to criticize Japanese society of that time for allowing the trade of women's bodies as a form of slavery that caused social damage and had to be eradicated. Humbert is thereby shown to be exposing the less alluring and rarely talked about aspects of the lives of Japanese female sex workers and as taking onto himself the role of a speaker for those that may be otherwise left voiceless.

Noriko Hiraishi focuses on Japanese female writers' search for autonomy in love at the beginning of the 20th century. Hiraishi specifically considers depictions of unfaithful wives and places them in the context of Japanese infatuation with European literary representations of 'romantic love,' such as the adulterous love between Paolo and Francesca in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which was idealized at the time as a representation of 'true love.' The author describes the paradoxical situation of the female writers' adaptation of the European literary and philosophical trends in allowing their expression of longing for independence in love,

marriage, and sexuality which went against the laws as well as the traditional values and customs upheld by contemporary Japanese society.

In the ensuing chapter, Robert Ono discusses the emergence of literary voices by leprosy patients in 1920s and 1930s Japan, that is, at the times of thriving eugenics. The author first introduces a collection of 'confessions' of leprosy patients, confined to public leprosariums, which was compiled by the government, but casts serious doubt on the authenticity of the represented voices. Ono subsequently portrays the aspiration and efforts of Hōjō Tamio to become the first leprosy patient who would have their literary works published as part of mainstream literature as well as the response of the contemporary literary world to his works. While still censured and manipulated, Hōjō's writings gave voice to leprosy patients otherwise deprived of humanity. His works, however, contrary to his hopes, were largely considered in light of his condition rather than purely for their literary merit.

With the chapter by Martina Renata Prosperi, we turn our attention to the voices of the sick and the deviant in Chinese literature. Prosperi specifically concerns herself with the role played by the figure of a beggar in Chinese modern and contemporary literature. She discusses how the powerless characters of beggars act as impossible witnesses to their times and to human nature. Prosperi argues that it is only through the process of active readership that their dissenting perspectives and destabilizing testimonies can effectively serve as an alternative and a counterpoint to the dominant narratives.

Robert Tsaturyan's chapter contemplates broader questions, such as the relationship between witnessing and literature, and the idea of a poet's role as a witness, as he analyzes the representation of personal as well as collective trauma in the works of the Chinese poet Wang Jiaxin, who represents one of the most prominent voices in contemporary Chinese poetry and translation. The author considers Wang's poetry as well as his translation-dialogues with other poets, exploring thus the voice of one poet dealing with human life experiences in the face of the absurdities of history.

Kamila Hladíková focuses on a representative of an often-overlooked literary voice coming from within Tibet. More specifically, Hladíková explores Sinophone writings produced by an ethnic Tibetan writer Tsering Norbu and discusses them as an example of a distinct voice of literary self-representation coming from contemporary Tibet as opposed to the authoritative majority Han Chinese discourse. She demonstrates that his short stories give voice to ordinary people of Tibet and employ various narrative strategies that allow the writer to deal with censorship and resist the hegemonic state ideology as well as commercialization.

Letizia Guarini then takes us back to Japan with her chapter on gender discrimination and gender-based violence both in the real world of contemporary

Japan and as addressed by the contemporary Japanese female writers Himeno Kaoruko and Matsuda Aoko. The author presents feminist voices in literature against the backdrop of recent cases of gender-based violence and feminist activism in Japan, proposing to approach literature as a feminist act of resistance and solidarity that influences our understanding of the world and is able to subvert hegemonic gender norms by breaking the culture of silence and voicing dissent against misogyny, gender-based discrimination, and violence against women.

The following chapter, penned by Rafael Vinícius Martins, also concerns Japanese contemporary literature and gendered experiences. Situating the discussion into the context of Japanese popular media culture and its consumption, Martins considers gendered experiences of objectification, oppression, repression, and violence, as addressed by Sakuraba Kazuki in her light novel *Red x Pink*. The author demonstrates how Sakuraba appropriates the conventions of the male-oriented genre to express the voices of young women and gender-nonconforming people through her three protagonists grappling with issues related to gender, power, and identity.

The volume concludes with Annegret Bergmann's chapter, in which she elucidates the ways in which performing art productions in Japan have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the attendant restrictions. Bergmann argues that the pandemic has underscored the Japanese government's general lack of interest in supporting the performing arts and – using an opera production and a kabuki production as her case studies – describes how performing art productions dealt with insufficient financial assistance from the government at the time of crisis. The title of the chapter reveals the author's conclusion: "performing artists' voices remain unheard."

To conclude this introduction, we would like to emphasize one more time that the purpose of this publication is to illustrate the great variety of issues that can be addressed from the perspective of voice and power in Asia. The resulting diversity in topics, approaches, and disciplines is not a disadvantage. It, on the contrary, allows us to highlight many important links and connections that would have remained hidden should we have opted for a different publication type. We hope that readers will take full advantage of this format and that a reader, for example, predominantly interested in Chinese propaganda will also be drawn into reading about the Dalits' ongoing struggle for human rights in India or contemporary feminist activism in Japan.

PART I

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

DALIT ACTIVISM, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Madhu

This paper argues that social media engagement and strategy offers Dalits to not only construct their own identity as an empowered Dalit but also offers them opportunities to unite and forge transnational ties with other marginalized communities across the globe to fight against caste-based discrimination. This paper highlights the assertion of Dalits using social media pages like Roundtable India, Velivada, and YouTube channels like Dalit Camera, and Dalit organizations such as National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), Equality Labs, etc., in India and abroad for voicing their opinions, mobilizing, and fighting a pitched battle in the contested public sphere. The paper explores the question of how subalterns are using new media technologies by analyzing reports of various Dalit organizations, pamphlets, and social media posts.

Keywords: Dalits, social media, transnational advocacy, discrimination, identity

1. Introduction

Dalit[1] political assertion in different parts of India rarely becomes a nationwide movement. Today, the imagination of the Dalit community has begun to expand beyond the confines of city and state seeking to further the cause of democracy

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[1] Etymologically the word Dalit derived from "crushed, ground, destroyed" which leads to the meaning of "depressed" (Narayan 2008, 171). Dalit as a category is a modern construct and has been in use since early 20th century from the beginning of the Dalit social movement. It was Dalit Panthers who expanded the meaning of it by including Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and all "oppressed" groups (Webster 1999, 68). In legal and constitutional terms, Dalits are known in India as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. India's erstwhile untouchables became an official category of "Schedule Castes" and "Scheduled Tribes" in 1936 when a list or Schedule of castes was drawn throughout the British administered provinces. There are currently some 16.6% SC and 8.6% ST respectively, of India's population according to 2011 Census data (Express 2013).

and equality (Thirumal and Tartakov 2011, 34). The government's affirmative action policies in post-independence India have not made much of a difference as Dalits remain a socially stigmatized and economically marginalized group that is severely underrepresented in politics and media. This paper discusses the trend of emerging online Dalit activism. It focuses on the attempts of Dalit Internet users to explore and exploit various social media platforms to battle Dalit deprivation, discrimination, inequality, and injustice.

G. S. Ghurye, a sociologist, identified at least six different features of the Hindu caste system which included caste membership to be ascribed by birth, hierarchy a scheme of social precedence amongst castes, restrictions on inter-dining, civil and religious disabilities, and privileges of different sections, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, endogamy, and no inter-marriages between castes (Ghurye 1969). Several village ethnographies account for mainly two rigid pillars in which caste system were reproduced – food and marriage (Marriot 1968, 133–134; Mayer 1960, 35–40; Parry 1979, 41). French sociologist Louis Dumont in his well-known book, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*, argued that caste was above all an ideology, "a system of ideas, beliefs and values." He called hierarchy as an essence of caste and purity-pollution as an important aspect of caste, using mainly Indological sources (Dumont 1980, 49–51). Since colonial times caste was redefined, as many scholars believe it to be a colonial construct, because under the British rule that the practice of manual scavenging expanded phenomenally. The British both legitimized and systematized caste, while setting up army cantonments and municipalities. The official posts of manual scavengers were created because the colonial army, railways, courts, industries, and quarters of the officials were equipped with dry toilets instead of water born sewerage. The British did not invent caste, they institutionalized it (Dirks 2001, 9). The colonial officials and the municipal authorities of that time drew on the edifice of caste to recruit sanitation workers and brought in Dalit workers, many of whom were agricultural laborers in the countryside, to the cities. Wherever there was a shortage of sweepers and scavengers in urban areas, municipal authorities looked to Dalit migrants from rural areas to meet the shortfall. This cemented caste occupation into a waged "occupation." Nicholas Dirks in *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* has shown how Christian missionaries, colonial ethnographers, Brahmins, and civil servants made caste into an essential element of Indian society since they were more concerned with the strategic questions of land ownership and sovereignty, as well as cultural and political questions of social relationships and caste (Cohn 1996; Dirks 2001; Rao 2009). Louis Dumont approached caste through the conceptualization of purity and pollution considering them to be an essential element of Indian society. No attempts have been made by the upper caste Hindus to annihilate caste, whereas several attempts have

been made by them to reform caste, through religious, political, legal issues, and practices of normalization.

Caste can also be seen through the tensions between the nationalist and anti-caste movement (Rao 2009). While on the one hand, the Gandhian nationalists searched for India's history and identity for the young nation and the "lost past," Dalits on the other engaged in the construction of India's modernity by challenging its "pre-modern" past as "oppressive." In the present times, NGOs, advocacy platforms and human rights activists tend to use a narrative of caste which was the construct of colonial knowledge and are including caste perspective in their work. Caste-based atrocities continue to be inflicted on the Dalits in more ways than one even today. While Dalit identity remains deeply historicized and primordialized and rooted in Indian modernity formations, at the same time it is re-conceptualized on the transnational level against the backdrop of human rights, development, governmental policies, reservations, etc. The activists of transnational organizations, the International Dalit Solidarity network (IDSN), the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), Equality Labs have been raising the voice of the subalterns by lobbying to include caste-based discrimination as a protected category as grounds for discrimination in the United Nations (UN), and the European Union (EU) in order to put pressure on the Indian state to address the issue of inequalities arising out of the caste based social structure.

Studies in digital cultures in India have not given due recognition to the presence of subalterns in the cyberspace. This can be attributed to online Dalit self-representation which contradicts the right-wing Hindutva[2] self-representations (Nayar 2011, 69). Issues concerning Dalit communities are discussed freely and openly on the social media platforms, which the mainstream media has been ignoring for a long time. Dalit activists feel that websites, online forums, blogs, Facebook pages, and Twitter handles contribute immensely, enabling access and participation by the members of Dalit community. Thus, the Internet is acting as a focal point for re-igniting the triad of caste and discrimination, religion, and class (Krishna 2018).

Since the year 1999, when the first Dalit website Dalitstan.org was launched, the visibility of the Dalits on the Internet has increased many folds. Today, Dalits are using social media as a counter public sphere[3] to raise their voices. For example,

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[2] Hindutva is the name by which the ideology of the Hindu right, represented by the political party, the Bhartiya Janata Party is known. The Hindutva movement has been described as a variant of "right-wing extremism," and as "almost fascist in the classical sense," adhering to a concept of homogenized majority and cultural hegemony.

[3] The Habermasian public sphere was the one that ignored the existence of other public spheres and reflected and protected the specific interest of the bourgeoisie. Bonfiglio (1997, 179) has asserted that Kant says that people who were propertyless were locked into com-

the suicide of Rohit Vemula, who was a Ph.D. student at Hyderabad University, and killed himself on January 17, 2016 after he was expelled from the university's housing facility along with four more students on false charges of indiscipline. He was a member of the Ambedkar Students' Association and fought for the rights of Dalit students. He blamed the system for his death. His suicide note went viral on social media fueling widespread nationwide protests. Dalits are exposed to online discourse from different parts of the country and they imagine themselves as part of a larger collective and community cutting across language and cultural divides. Following the Una incident, in which seven members of a Dalit family were assaulted by the members of cow vigilante group in Una, Gujarat, video of the incident went viral on social media platforms sparking protests by the Dalits. Jignesh Mevani, a Dalit activist, led the protest march and blocked highways, forcing the state to take note and act towards the redressal of the complaint made by the Dalit victims of violence involving the incident. In both these incidents, a pattern was seen where people protest instead of remaining confined to their states of origin, and gained prominence and widespread following the release of as images and videos on the online platforms by several Dalits who were not necessarily playing a leadership role (Ahuja 2018).

The upper caste or *savarna* Hindus have used historic traditions for legitimizing the lowly status of the Dalits and it has been very important for the Dalit publics to construct and provide a counter-historiographical tradition. Central to the Dalit websites is the contribution of a different or alternative history of India. Dalits are challenging the mainstream narrative of the Hindu nationalist caste history by presenting counter narratives. The battle of Bhima-Koregoan, fought in 1818, which had resulted in the defeat of the Peshwa by the British army comprising a large number of Dalit soldiers is loaded with a powerful narrative of the Dalits battling caste oppression that runs parallel to the uncomfortable fact of its being a victory for colonialism.

The online Dalit discourse has helped youth from different parts of the world to imagine themselves as part of a larger community beyond borders and divides of language, culture, countries, and continents. The news of a former employee of the tech major Hindustan Computers Limited (HCL) for unlawful termination and discrimination at job, based on his caste identity by his superiors, has been doing rounds on social media platforms. A lawsuit against Cisco, a multinational technology company that allegedly failed to prevent discrimination against a Dalit engineer in San Jose, U.S.A. has once again highlighted the issue of caste and discrimination associated with it among the Indian diaspora (Moorthy 2020).

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petitive social relations that prevented them from being able to deliberate upon universal, moral, and political concerns.

India's erstwhile untouchables, now called Dalits, are using digital mediums to communicate, agitate and organize with their fellow Dalits worldwide. Over the last six decades, Dalit activists have built connections with groups across the world, including, for example, with the Roma in central Europe, the Burakumin in Japan, African Americans in the United States, and landless workers in Brazil (Thorat 2009, 149). Groups such as the Dalit Panthers, the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW), and the Navsarjan Trust express a clear internationalist vision for the empowerment and liberation of all oppressed communities. The transnational dimensions of this activism illuminate the ways in which they reach beyond and transect the Indian state (Keenan 2004, 435–49). The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN),[4] Equality Labs,[5] and Voice of Dalit International (VODI)[6] are some of the groups active on social media which highlight and internationalize the appalling plight of Dalits of South Asia and the diaspora.

Dalit activists consistently use social media to share things as they happen in society. The agency of social media provides the Dalits, who have been historically deprived of agency to tell their own story, in constructing and expressing identity. The importance of internet and opportunities it offers for networking with fellow human beings cannot be overemphasized. Today, Dalit activists are spending much time in sharing posts, life stories, writing blogs, Dalit histories, opinions challenging the basis of the caste system in Hinduism in more interactive and logical ways. While the digital divide remains unbridged, as only a fraction of Dalit users is able to afford better connectivity and devices, many are trying hard to make their presence felt in the cyberspace. Digital bonds that are forged online are also limited in their durability unless backed by on ground mobilization and activism, as social media activism may not always translate in offline activism.

2. History of Dalit activism and quest for an identity

Hindu society is organized on caste lines, which is a hierarchy of ritual pollution. The Hindu masses practiced untouchability as part of their caste obligations. In general, the practice revolved around avoiding physical contact with particular

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[4] IDSN is an international human rights group which works on a global level for the elimination of caste discrimination and human rights abuses against Dalits and similar communities that suffer discrimination on the basis of work and descent.

[5] Equality Labs is an Ambedkarite South Asian power-building organization dedicated to ending caste apartheid, gender-based violence, white supremacy, Islamophobia, and religious intolerance. Thenmozhi Soundararajan is its Executive Director.

[6] VODI is a UK based group that champions the rights of all individuals to equality and freedom through integrated development programs.

groups to save oneself from being "polluted." The varna system is a four-fold categorical hierarchy of the Hindu religion with Brahmins (priests/teachers) on top, followed, in order, by Kshatriyas (rulers/warriors), Vaishyas (farmers/traders/ merchants), and Shudras (laborers). In addition, there is a fifth group of Outcastes, that is, people who do unclean work and are outside the four-fold system (Massey 1995 39–40). Dalits are not formally included in this scheme, but as evident by designations such as *avarna* ("without varna") or *Panchamma* ("fifth varna") they can be considered included in the system by virtue of their explicit exclusion.[7] The Portuguese were the first to use the term "caste" to denote the hierarchical divisions in the Indian society (Samarendra 2011, 51–52).[8]

The group of Outcastes is known by various names such as Untouchables, Scheduled Castes, Harijans, and Dalits. First coined by Jyotirao Phule, an activist of Non-Brahmin Movement in the 19th century, the term "Dalit" has served as a central organizing identity for the anti-caste movements of post-independence India. The term comes from the Sanskrit root *dal*, meaning "to break" or "to crack," and is often glossed in English as "the oppressed," "the downtrodden," or "the crushed." B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalits, popularly known as "Babasaheb," was an Indian jurist, economist, politician, and a social reformer under whose leadership the Dalits became organized and joined struggle for their rights, first used the term in 1928 to describe people who had experienced degradation and deprivation, but the term "Dalit" did not gain popularity as an identity marker until the 1960s (Rao 2009, 15).

Before Ambedkar's prolific writings, Dalit writings existed mainly in the form of poetry and songs of the Dalit Bhakti[9] poets. Madara Chennaiah,[10] a cobbler

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[7] Ambedkar (1948, 11315) argues that the reason why Dalits are not included in this framework is because untouchability was established as a social institution around 400 CE, after the creation of the varna system.

[8] Samarendra notes that "caste is a foreign word" and argues that the concept of caste "as conceived in contemporary academic writing or within the policies of the state" has "never characterized the Indian society."

[9] Bhakti means "devotion" in Sanskrit. The Bhakti movement was an important historical religious movement in 12th century India that sought to bring religious reforms to all strata of society by adopting the method of devotion to achieve salvation. The rigid caste system, the complicated ritualism that constituted the practice of worship and the inherent need to move to a more fulfilling method of worship and salvation perhaps spurred this movement. Their method of expression was to sing devotional compositions in the temples, Gurudwaras, and at shrines of the Sufi saints.

[10] Madara Chennaiah belonged to the *Madiga* Caste (largely involved in Manual Scavenging work, however, Madara worked as a cobbler) and was a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva. He was one among the galaxy of enlightened men and women which included mystics and seekers of truth and were part of *Anubhava Mantapa*, a body established by Basaveshvara (known as the founder of the Lingayat religious sect in India). Madara composed several vachanas in

saint from the 12th century Karnataka, who is among the earliest known Dalit writers. He is often referred as "the father of Vachana poetry," a form of writing with rhymes in Kannada. Many others like Chokhamela[11] (14th century), Guru Ravidas[12] (15–16th century), and several Tamil Siddhas (6–13th century), wrote poetry questioning inequalities of the caste system (Duhan 2018). It was primarily in the 19th century that literature became an instrument of resistance. Strong egalitarian thinkers such as Sri Narayan Guru,[13] who wrote several pieces in Malayalam, Tamil and even Sanskrit, Jyotirao Phule,[14] who wrote in Marathi, highlighted the core problems of caste oppression. Dalit pamphlet literature highlighting caste histories became popular in the 1920s. U.B.S. Raghuvanshi wrote *Shri Chanvar Puran*, around 1910, and Sunderlal Sagar wrote *Jatav Jiwan* in 1929, challenging their *jati's* (caste) history's low caste position in the dominant upper caste literary representation (Hunt 2014, 32). Around the same time Ambedkar too started his own movement for Dalit people to be allowed inside Hindu temples which did not bear any fruits (Kharat 2014, 46–47). It was after the Poona Pact[15] in 1932, that Ambedkar grew more critical of the Gandhian program for the removal of

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Kannada where he spoke about the futility of flaunting one's caste as superior, as all are born of the same process and are made of same flesh and bones. According to him a person's pedigree depended upon righteous conduct alone and not on caste.

[11] The 14th century Bhakti saint Chokhamela belonged to Mahar (untouchable) caste and spent most of his life doing the peculiarly menial work *Mahars* were mandated to do. He was devoted to *Vitthal* (God) but did not transgress lines drawn by society and its privileged elders. During his entire lifetime he was told where he really belonged: the door. Even today his memorial stands outside the *Vitthal* temple in *Pandharpur*.

[12] Born in Varanasi, Ravidas wrote many devotional songs during the Bhakti movement. He became a spiritual figure and was bestowed with the title Guru and Sant in regions of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. He worked towards reforming people from social evils including caste system.

[13] Sri Narayan Guru belonged to *Ezhava* caste, from Kerala. He learned Vedas, Upanishads, literature, logical rhetoric of Sanskrit, Hatha Yoga and other philosophies. He founded Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) in 1903. He gave the slogan "One Caste, One Religion, One God for All."

[14] Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was an Indian social activist, thinker and anti-caste social reformer from Pune, Maharashtra. His critique of the caste system began with an attack on the Vedas, the fundamental texts of Hindus. In his book *Gulamgiri*, he thanked British colonists for making the exploited castes realize that they are worthy of all human rights. He also founded *Satyashodhak Samaj*, through which he opposed idolatry and denounced caste system.

[15] Poona Pact was an agreement between the upper caste Hindus and B.R. Ambedkar signed in the Yeravda Central Jail, Poona on September 24, 1932 on behalf of the Depressed Classes for the reservation of electoral seats in the legislature of British India. It was signed by Ambedkar on behalf of the Depressed Classes (the untouchables), and by Congress leader Madan Mohan Malaviya on behalf of Hindus and Gandhi as a means to end the fast-which Gandhi was undertaking in jail as a protest against the decision made by the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to give separate electorates to the Depressed Classes for the election of members

untouchability. Since literacy was very low among the Dalits, usually songs were sung in the villages, poems and other writings were read out by the literate Dalits to the entire community. It is the educated Dalits and intellectuals who not only began to talk about the problems of the poor, exploitation, and humiliation from the upper castes but also integrated and used technology effectively to reach out and forge ties in a transnational manner (Aruna 2018). The majority of the Dalit representation emerged first in the Marathi[16] Dalit literature. Namdeo Laxman Dhasal along with J. V. Pawar, and Arun Kamble founded the Dalit Panthers[17] in 1972. The establishment of this organization is considered one of the major game changers in the Dalit revolution in the 20th century (Breiner 2020). In addition, Dalit feminist writings gained prominence in the 1990s with writer-activists like Bama, whose autobiography *Karukku* (1992) explored joys and sorrows in the lives of Dalit Christian women of her state or Om Prakash Valmiki whose autobiography *Joothan* (1997) is another strong literary work that movingly talks about caste-based discrimination.

Ambedkar belonged to the untouchable Mahar community from Maharashtra and fought for the rights of the Dalits since the colonial days (Zelliot 2005, 53). His period of struggle marks a transformation in the Dalit history (Zelliot 2005, 59). In post-independence India, Ambedkar while drafting the Indian Constitution, was aware of the disjunction between political status and social reality of the Dalits in post-independence India where caste fault lines were visible. Ambedkar pointed out in a speech in 1949 this contradiction and argued that "Political democracy" could only thrive if joined with "social democracy," which was not possible unless Hindu society gives up the practice of caste.

On January 26, 1950, a time of contradictions begins. In politics, there is equality, and in social and economic life there are inequalities. In politics there is recognition of the principles of "one man, one vote" and "one vote, one value." In the social and economic life, there is, by reason of the social and economic structure,

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of provincial legislative assemblies in British India. Ambedkar had represented the Depressed Classes at the Second Roundtable Conference in 1932 after which the award was announced.

[16] The Dalit writers began their focused and stipulated work in 1950s, much of which was written in Marathi. Anna Bhau Sathe, Baburao Bagul, Arun Kamble, Raja Dhale, Laxman Mane, Sharan Kumar Limbale, Namdeo Dhasal, all wrote in their literary works in Marathi between the 1950s–1970s.

[17] Inspired by the Black Panthers movement for civil rights and against racism, Namdeo Dhasal and J. V. Pawar decided to form the Dalit Panthers in 1972. Pawar also named his daughter Angela after Angela Davis and began to network with civil rights groups worldwide. Dalit Panthers focused on economic issues and social justice as it was largely comprised of working-class people. The organization got dissolved in 1988 when their leader Ramdas Athawale was made a minister by Sharad Pawar of Congress party.

continued to denial of the principle of "one man, one vote." "How long shall we continue to live this life of contradiction?" (Scroll.in 2016).

For Ambedkar, caste was a systemic problem and without achieving Fraternity and Equality, political freedom could be quite meaningless. Ambedkar was instrumental in building a Dalit identity which was at the opposite spectrum of what Gandhi was trying to build. Ambedkar disapproved of the Gandhian nomenclature of Harijan[18] for the Dalits and also made sure they are not known by their derogatory caste names. Rather, he chose the word "Dalit" which underlined the identity of oppression. Ambedkar followed in the footsteps of Jyotirao Phule who founded Satyashodhak Samaj, in 1873. Its mission was to provide education and increased social rights and political access for underprivileged groups, the Shudras, the Dalits, and the women. Savitribai Phule, Jyotirao's wife, taught at the school established by the couple in the face of stiff opposition from the upper castes. Jyotirao used Deenbandhu[19] as an outlet for the voice of Satyashodhak Samaj. It was started in 1877 by Krishnarao Pandurang Bhalekar, a low caste, in Marathi language. Ambedkar, too, realized the importance of media but since most of it was owned by upper castes, he started newspapers[20] such as the *Mooknayak*, *Bahishkrut Bharat*, *Janata*, and *Prabuddha Bharat* to raise the voices of the Dalits. He used his journalistic writings to create awareness and mobilize people in the anti-caste movement. He communicated not only with Dalits but with society at large and tried to shape public opinion with respect to the caste system and various other social issues and events (Pol 2018).

Ambedkar slowly began to realize that structural reform was the only means to make way for social change in India and firmly began to believe that social revolution was necessary, which could come only from actively critiquing the cultural structure of Hinduism, as opposed to attempting to change it from within (Rodrigues 2002, 27). Ambedkar's identity evolved throughout his life with a strong sense of commitment to pursue justice not only as an activist but also as a prolific writer. (Narke 1979, 61–65). At a later stage, Ambedkar also started to look at religion as a valuable means to realize change through socio-cultural critique. While Hindu religion proved to be a vehicle for the structural violence of the caste system,

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[18] Gandhi used the term "Harijan," meaning "children of God" for the untouchables. The term was coined by Narsinh Mehta, a Gujarati poet-saint of the Bhakti tradition, to refer to all devotees of lord Krishna irrespective of caste, class, or sex.

[19] Deenbandhu, was a weekly Marathi-language newspaper in British India to cater explicitly to the laboring classes. The weekly articulated the grievances of the peasants and the workers.

[20] Pol (2018) observes that the newspapers Ambedkar was associated with have largely contributed in disseminating radical political ideas and motivated a churn within the society. These newspapers also help to contextualize and trace the history of the Dalit political discourse, issues of caste violence, representation, and religious fundamentalism.

Ambedkar challenged its orthodox beliefs of Indian culture head on with fierce debate and rhetoric. He studied various religions of the world in order to find the one, which would best fit the untouchable communities and finally chose Buddhism. Gandhi criticized the idea of a "choice" of a religion and has remarked that "religion is not like a horse or a cloak, which can be changed at will. It is a more integral part of one's self than one's own body" (Queen 2013, 525). On October 14, 1956, on the 2500 anniversary of the Buddha's Nirvana, Ambedkar led a mass conversion of "untouchable" Hindus to Buddhism.[21] For Ambedkar, changing his religion was an act of social protest which re-positioned the Dalit identity as collective and as well as personal. He used both secular (gaining rights through legislation), and religious narrative (converting to Buddhism), as a means of not only securing rights for the Dalits but also attempting to fill a void of cultural identity, which over two thousand years of caste discrimination had created. Ambedkar was a pragmatist who studied under John Dewey at Columbia University in the United States. He had a modern understanding of religion, which emphasized that belief was not only about ends, but also a means of social interpretation. He attempted to approach social conflict strategically in a way which neither privileges religious nor secular explanations (Taylor, Bougie, and Caouette 2003, 213). His main mantra for the Dalits to improve their condition remained: "educate, organize, agitate."

The revival of Buddhism and the changed social identity of India's Dalits is seen as an important marker of building a separate identity in a Hindu-dominated India. The Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha, Sahayak Gana (TBMSG),[22] founded in 1967 by an English Buddhist monk, Sangharakshika, is the largest indigenous Buddhist organization on the Indian sub-continent. It provides a stark contrast to secular focused Indian social activists who find the narrative structure of religion-based movements focuses on overcoming victimization through the reclamation of one's identity within each individual (Senauke 2015). The Dr. Ambedkar Non-Resident Indian Association (DANRIA),[23] is a group of non-resident Dalits

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[21] Queen (2013, 526) writes that approximately 380,000 "untouchables" took part in the outdoor ceremony. However, scholars disagree about the actual numbers of the converts, but most agree that it was probably the largest mass religious conversion in human history. Some scholars have estimated that as many as 800,000 "untouchables" converted to Buddhism on that day.

[22] The basic guiding principle of TBMSG has been to form a civic-life, and community outreach around the idea of a renewed Buddhist Sangha ("community"), as well as, concepts of Kalyana Mitra ("spiritual friendship") and Dharma as social practice. The Bahujan Hitaya meaning "for the welfare of the many," is the social work wing of the movement.

[23] DANRIA is a small collaborative group of non-resident Dalits living in the United States who have incorporated an NGO in Baltimore, Maryland founded in 2006. Their goal is to provide educational assistance and social uplifts to Dalits living in India, particularly the manual scavengers of Uttar Pradesh.

living in the United States, have repeatedly made their stand clear that their work is to support secular Dalit education and empowerment. Their strict adherence to secular identity is seen as to have evolved from community-based religious ideologies and in turn, is considered a more effective vehicle for social change. It is the secular narrative structure of securing rights for the Dalits that has allowed activists to conflate Dalit rights with human rights. The opposite and secular narratives, by contrast focus on the re-humanization of past victims, posits that there is a need to push the collective mentality to a tipping-point in which a rights regime can be adequately enforced. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism along with many of his Dalit followers remains an act of defiance, to show that they existed and now have a distinctly new identity that could not be simply disregarded and de-legitimized. Followers of Ambedkar's religious rhetoric can be exclusionary and appear pre-modern for those following secular narrative, while the followers of religious narrative find that the Dalits following the secular narrative structure having too much reliance on western notions of liberty, democracy, fraternity. However, most of the transnational organizations are hesitant to support religious commitment and are willing to sideline it in favor of an underlying, and more basic, commitment to humanism.

3. The mainstream media and the Dalits

The domination of the upper castes in the mainstream media has been described by Kumar and Subramani (2014, 125) as "elite oriented" and "monopolized" and is criticized by Dalit reformers as Manuwadi or casteist. Ambedkar (1945, 200) pointed out about the absence of Dalits in the newsroom:

> The Untouchables have no press and the Congress Press is closed to them. The staff of the Associated Press of India, is entirely drawn from Madras Brahmins—indeed the whole of the press in India is in their hands who for well-known reasons, are entirely pro-Congress and will not allow any news hostile to the Congress to get publicity.

Even while reporting on the carnage of Partition,[24] the Indian and the British media were relatively silent on the problems of the Dalits. The main reason for this silence as argued by Ambedkar was the main news distributing agency, the

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[24] Partition was the inevitable outcome of India's Independence in 1947. Incidents of mass violence spread all over Northern and Eastern India, with mass migration of people from these areas sometimes caused violence and sometimes resulted in violence. Partition set people against people of Hindu and Muslim faith. Systemic and organized violence against women was perpetrated as they were kidnapped, raped, killed and their bodies mutilated.

Associated Press[25] which was dominated by the English-educated "Madras Brahmins" (Pandian 2007, 3).[26]

The alternative (predominantly print) Dalit media outlets were established already in the 1920s but had limited success due to financial constraints (Matta 2019). The Oxfam (2019) report reaffirmed that marginalized groups are absent in news media, particularly in leadership positions which determine who gets the space (Mondal 2017). The report revealed that the percentage of people from the upper caste holding leadership positions is 100% in Hindi television news; 89.3% in English television news; 91.7% in English newspapers; 87.5% in Hindi newspapers; 84.2% in digital media; and 72.7% in news magazines (Matta 2019). The survey reports the complete absence of Dalits in the decisive positions in India's news media. Even anchors, panelists, and writers are predominantly from the upper castes. Except for the Hindi newspaper *Amar Ujala*, the percentage of anchors and writers from upper castes reporting on caste issues in India is more than 50% in all mainstream media (Matta 2019).

The Constitutional provisions and protective legislation all aim towards abolishing "untouchability" practices and promoting Dalits socio-economic development. The affirmative action policy, wherein seats are constitutionally "reserved" for the Dalits to ensure their proportional representation in federal government jobs, state and local legislative bodies, the lower house of parliament, and educational institutions, has not proved to be fruitful in achieving the inclusion of the oppressed and the underprivileged in several domains. It is also worrisome because, this leaves out a large share of oppressed people who need a platform to represent themselves. There is no democracy without diversity. For democracy to thrive, journalism must thrive and for journalism to thrive, diversity must be robust. This must be done consciously because the numbers on caste diversity in newsrooms are dismal. This is a dreadful commentary on the quality of Indian democracy.

It appears that things have changed little since Kenneth J. Cooper, an African-American and the then New Delhi bureau chief of *The Washington Post*, had noted in the mid 1990s that "India's majority lower castes are minor voices in newspapers" (Cooper 1996), which was followed by B. N. Uniyal, a Delhi based journalist who wrote that in his career as a journalist spanning over 30 years he has never met a fellow journalist who was a Dalit (Uniyal 1996). Professor Vivek Kumar

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[25] India's Associated Press was re-christened as the Press Trust of India in 1947.

[26] Madras Brahmins had intolerant attitude towards the Dalits and it can be seen in their comments towards the controversial "Non-Brahmin Manifesto" of 1916 issued by the Nationalists of Madras. They did not open their discussion correspondence column on this subject citing that this may lead to acrimonious controversy.

(2017), who teaches Sociology at the Center for Study of Social Systems,[27] argued in a lecture that he gave at Center for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Milia Islamia University, that Dalit marginalization in media takes place at two levels. At one level the mainstream media suffers from a cognitive blackout and exclude the marginalized groups from the structures and processes. At another level, the Dalit icons and leaders are reduced to stigmatization, as their caste identity is always highlighted. He cited the example of Mayawati, the leader of Bahujan Samaj Party and the ex-Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh who is never credited for her brilliant mind but is only projected as a Dalit leader. Even Ambedkar's contribution towards the Constitution, labor reforms, and rights are not highlighted by the mainstream media and he is rather reduced to a Dalit leader, who fought only for the rights of the Dalits. The issue of reservation (Affirmative action) finds more space in discussions in the media than the universal idea of equality, fraternity, and justice for the Dalits. The entire Dalit movement is reduced to a fight for reservations, issues concerning caste atrocities of the Dalits are not brought into the discourse by the mainstream media (Kumar 2017).

4. Dalits and new/alternative media

Systemic exclusion and underrepresentation led the Dalits to a strong desire and need for an alternative media. By the year 2000, Dalitistan.org (now defunct) and International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) were already on the horizon. Around 2008, the Internet began to be effectively used as a medium to achieve what the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions[28] were able to achieve in the Western world (Best et al. 2011, 231). The Khairlanji incident in which a Dalit family were abducted, raped, and killed in the village of Bhandara district of the state of Maharashtra, was a turning point in the use of the cyberspace by the Dalits. The mainstream media did not report the news for weeks on end. With no witnesses ready to testify, a Dalit government officer used the Internet to publicly upload the report of the Fact Finding Commission that documented the findings about the crime (PUDR 2007). The post was quickly taken down from the website, but by then it had been widely shared and reported in the mainstream media. The Internet was effectively used to at least give voice to otherwise voiceless victims.

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[27] Professor Vivek Kumar's major works revolve around the issue of caste and he specializes in Dalit Studies and Sociology of South Asia.

[28] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an official body tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoing by a government. The Commissions are occasionally set up by states emerging from periods of internal unrest, civil war, or dictatorship marked by human rights abuses. The India Residential Schools Settlement Agreement is the largest class-action settlement in Canadian History. The Truth Commissions also formed part of peace settlements in El Salvador, Congo, Kenya, and others.

The Sessions Court, the highest criminal court in a district, held eight people guilty of murder, six accused were given death, and two life imprisonment. The court acquitted three of the accused (The Hindu 2016). The Bombay High Court commuted death sentence of six convicts to life imprisonment for a period of 25 years, drawing sharp reaction from the Dalit people including the lone survivor Bhaiyalal Bhotmange of the victim's family. He observed that not a single person has had a confirmed death sentence which was unfortunate (Hattangadi 2010).

The atrocities on the Dalits, such as those at Khairlanji, not only suggest media bias but questions state policy and principles (Sebastian 2009). It also focuses on the impact of Internet on the public sphere as it enabled the emergence of an alternative or counter public sphere, where political currents oppositional to the dominant mainstream can find support and expression (Dahlgren 2005, 152). In the book *Dalits and Alternative Media*, C. Suresh Kumar and R. Subramani (2017, 25) suggest that civic discussions and deliberations in the public sphere can prove an important catalyst of change. Since the first Dalit website Dalitistan.org came into being in the year 2000, many Dalit organizations have made their web presence felt in the cyberspace (Thirumal and Tartakov 2011, 26–27). They mention numerous websites run by Dalit collectives which question the normative structure of Indian modernity, most asking for political recognition or redistributive justice. Dalit Camera, a popular YouTube channel operating since 2007, has more than 76,000 subscribers and has over 3,000 videos uploaded with some fetching up to six million views. It also has films featuring Ambedkar's speeches, clips of his funeral procession, a television series on the making of the Indian Constitution, as well as of riots in early 2018 at Bhima Koregaon, filmed and shared by the members of the public.

The construction of an alternative identity through various online platforms is not just about presenting dissenting lower caste characters, glorified as Dalit heroes who fought against upper caste oppression and injustice, but also about educating the Dalits of their constitutional rights and highlighting their contribution in Indian history. Dalits are now claiming the authority to write independent historical narratives from their own point of view and discredit the grand narratives showing Dalits in poor light by the upper castes (Narayan 2008, 170–72). The legend of Nangeli,[29] a Dalit woman who cut off her breasts in protest against a horrific "breast tax" which is not found in the pages of history of Kerala, nor of Travancore, the erstwhile princely state, has made strides in the 21st century mainly with the help of Dalit social media platforms. An Instagram page #nangeli

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[29] In the early 19th century, Dalit woman were not allowed to cover their upper body in front of the high caste people and if they did so, they had to pay a hefty tax. Nangeli cut off her breasts in protest and presented the bleeding organs on a plantain leaf to the king's official who had come to collect tax for covering her breasts.

has photos, videos, and other information about her highlighting a lone Dalit woman's resistance against caste diktats (Instagram). Similarly, Dalits worldwide celebrate the birth anniversary of Savitribai Phule[30] the wife of anti-caste activist Jyotirao Phule, known for her contribution in the field of women's education in the 19th century. She is regarded as the first female teacher of India (Jamal 2019). Dalits has started to celebrate her birthday on January 3 as Teachers' Day instead of on September 5 which is the birthday of Dr. Sarvaplalli Radhakrishnan,[31] scholar and statesman who also served as the President of India between 1962 and 1967 (Navayan 2016). Social media activism of Dalit advocates and reinforces Dalit masses to think about their identities. Most believe that there is a deep conspiracy by the Hindu caste to maintained rigid religious norms and ignorance about Dalit identity and their historical contribution. Significant links backed by available literature on social media are exposing the hypocrisy of the Hindu caste in plotting a certain perception and understanding of the Dalit lives.

Beyond physical violence, ideological violence is a real threat to the Dalit movement. Building of ideological thought on the philosophy of Phule and Ambedkar is also one of the objectives which the digital platforms serve. It is the hypertextual nature of the digital medium that enables one to explore links to news reports, videos, and other documents. Digitized versions of the *Collected Works of Dr. Ambedkar*, compiled and published by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and Phule's writings, such as *Ghulamgiri*, provide food for thought, while Human Rights Watch shares glimpses of anti-Dalit violence providing exposure to injustices against the Dalits. Dalits have also resisted efforts, from the "left" and the "right" of the Indian political spectrum in appropriating Ambedkar. Arundhati Roy, Booker Prize winning Indian author, wrote an extensive introduction of Dr. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* in 2014. Many Dalit activists felt her introduction did not convey the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar (Sarvan 2019). Some Dalit scholars and thinkers also wrote their repartees around the theme and published their writings in a book titled *Hatred in the Belly* (Harad 2016). The website roundtableindia.co.in regularly features views and discussion of the book through the website and their Facebook page.

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[30] Savitribai Phule was subjected to immense harassment every day as she walked to the school. Stones, cow dung and mud were thrown at her by the upper caste Hindus who opposed the idea of women's education. Savitribai faced everything courageously and her poems and efforts were noticed by the British Indian Government.

[31] In India, Teachers' Day is celebrated annually on September 5 to mark the birthday of the country's former President, scholar, philosopher and recipient of Bharat Ratna (highest civilian award). Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a strong supporter of the varna system, is alleged by The Roundtable India, a Dalit website, that he stole from his student's (Jadunath Sinha's) thesis.

5. Dalit activism and transnational advocacy

Digitization has increased communication manifolds and has allowed the Dalits to seek support and forge bonds with groups and institutions beyond the nation-state. This has internationalized the issue of caste-based discrimination as it has disrupted the isolation of Dalit voices in India and has helped them garner international pressure on the Indian state to act in the interest of the Dalits, who suffer from various kinds of socio-economic disabilities on account of caste. Transnational Dalit activism uses the language of human rights to articulate its protests and demands. This allows them to seek support from other groups like the Blacks from United States and gain from their social movement like Black-LivesMatter, highlighting similarities in the kind of discrimination Dalits face to garner support. Dalits from around the world can now meet on digital platforms and discuss issues and concerns that affects them on digital platforms. Social media thus plays a crucial role in shaping political identities in the movement.

In an example of transnational solidarity, six stone carvers of Pathar Gadhal Mazdoor Suraksha Sangh (PGMSS), a labor union of more than 3,000 stone carvers, mostly belonging to Dalit communities from the state of Rajasthan India, have filed a law suit against the egregious abuses they have faced while constructing Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in New Jersey (Backweb 2021). The temple was being built by the Hindu organization Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), which has built several extravagant temples around the world (UK, New Zealand, Australia, Kenya, India), with intricate marble carvings. The Dalit workers who were recruited by the agents of BAPS were taken to the United States and alleged that their passports were confiscated on arrival and they were not paid the minimum hourly wage, and moreover were made to work for over 87 hours per week. The workers protested after one of the workers died and the leader of the protest was forcibly returned to India by the BAPS agents (Reddy 2021). The International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC), which represents 75,000 skilled masonry-trowel trade craftworkers providing essential construction services across the United States and Canada and Global Labor Justice-International Labor Rights Forum (GL-ILRF) has shown solidarity towards PGMSS and has demanded a fair probe in the matter (GLJ 2021).

In an attempt to forge bonds with allies, Dalit activism lays emphasis on similarities in identity with other groups such as Blacks who face racial discrimination especially in the first world countries like United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. These groups are in a comparable social position facing discrimination and injustice just as the Dalits in India, but critically are outside of the Indian state. Dalits share an analogical history of oppression and marginalized structural position in society: a shared difference. The politics of a political identity of a "minority group" is relevant within a nation state however, for sharing solidarity with global

groups, analogies are drawn suggesting that Dalits are just like African Americans under Jim Crow laws or the Black South Africans under Apartheid. The success of the hashtags #Blacklivesmatter and #Dalitlivesmatter shows that these analogies and comparisons have been mobilized for many ends. Transnational activism thus communicates Dalit identity and human rights claims through the "citation" of these other communities (Burton 2012, 13). Making Dalit issues international/global issues, the activists have forged solidarities with other marginalized groups and have tried to recast "caste" as a global phenomenon, as a form of social stratification and inherent inequality that is found in societies across the world in different countries, such as Japan, Nigeria, or Senegal. The conceptualization of caste, while drawing similarities between other forms of inequality and discrimination on one hand allows solidarities across borders, and on the other hand raises questions about its unique nature specific to Hinduism.

Small inroads have been made by Dalit activists for international recognition of their issues. In 2001, the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) helped organize over 200 Dalit activists to travel to Durban, South Africa to protest against caste-based discrimination and violence at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR). The Dalit activists were successful in pointing to the global nature of caste arguing that "caste-affected" societies existed across the world, therefore caste discrimination should be considered as a human rights violation just like racism (Visvanathan 2001, 3125–3126). The attempts made by the Dalit activists to have caste discrimination included in their reports and declarations proved unsuccessful as these, were consistently opposed and blocked by the Government of India, which argued that racism and caste-based discrimination were distinct phenomena and outside the purview of the WCAR (Bob 2007, 84).

Earlier in the 1990s, attempts were made to include caste atrocities and discrimination as violation of human rights by the Dalit Indian delegation to the United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights but were rejected in favor of the arguments made by representatives of the Government of India who argued that cast was a social institution relating to matters of "birth" and "social origin" specific to India (Bob 2007, 166–170). In 1996, India's report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) presented the dominant nationalist narrative of Indian history which embedded a politically conservative understanding of caste (CERD 1996, 5). The 1996 report also cited a benevolent origin of the caste system and stated that caste has its origins in the functional division of Indian society during ancient times (CERD 1996, 6). The report argued that unlike racial discrimination, which is a product of global historical processes, caste discrimination was specific to India, and had local roots, and thus was outside the purview of UN covenants on discrimination (CERD 1996, 22). The Dalit

activists failed to obtain the international legal protections available to victims of racial discrimination at WCAR. However, the Dalit activists and sympathizers succeeded in galvanizing considerable support and increasing visibility of caste-based discrimination and the plight of the Dalits in India (Divakar 2004, 319).

Through the 1990s and early 2000s, a robust domestic and transnational Dalit advocacy network was developed which saw NCDHR, an umbrella group of Dalit organizations from 14 Indian states, changing the scope and reach of domestic Dalit activism. The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) was established in the year 2000 in Copenhagen, particularly for networking transnationally between the organizations that work for the eradication of caste discrimination. It is led by non-Dalits but seeks support for Dalit issues from the UN, EU institutions, and private sector actors (Tarrow 2006, 32). It regularly organizes international conferences on Dalit rights. The NCDHR connects the grassroot organizations from different parts of India, gathers data, monitors the media and allocation of Government funds, publishes reports, and plays a networking role as well as advocates Dalit rights in relation to their legal rights (Bob 2007, 170–182).[32]

Reaching out for foreign support to put pressure on the local government is described by Sikkink and Keck (1998, 93) as a "boomerang" pattern.[33] Sikkink and Keck (1999, 95) argue that such patterns are used mostly for human rights cause and largely emerge in authoritative states where the activists' access to their own governments is blocked and is used mostly for human rights causes. Although India is a democratic country and the Indian Constitution outlaws untouchability (the Constitution of India, Art. 17), Dalit transnational activists find usefulness in the boomerang pattern strategy by bringing the local issues into the transnational scene. Globalization and the spread of universal human rights norms thus offer new opportunities for Dalit movement. It brings caste into the international human rights discourse and locates caste into civil society and developmental discourse.

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[32] The focus of Bob's work "Dalit Rights Are Human Rights," is on the efforts of Dalit activists to include caste discrimination as a human rights issue within the international community. According to Bob, lack of coordination and poor organization among Dalit groups along with lack of human rights terminology have been some of the bottlenecks which denied Dalits making the human rights claim till the end of 1990s. However, he draws attention towards changes within Dalit community including the establishment of national and international network that built a rhetoric of fixing state culpability for caste-based discrimination. He draws parallels between Dalits and other minority groups such as Burakumin of Japan, Wolof, Pehul, Mandinka, from Senegal, and Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo of Nigeria, indicating the need for recognition of human rights theories and international politics.

[33] The externalization strategy by reaching out for foreign support and putting pressure on the local government is called a "boomerang" pattern which was introduced as a concept by Keck and Sikkink (1998).

The 19th century anti-slavery movements tell us that transnational activism is not a new phenomenon (Keck and Sikkink 1999). Globalization and changing structure of international politics have strongly facilitated the new patterns of transnational activism of the age (Tarrow 2006, 5). Tarrow (2006, 25–27) emphasizes the actions of international institutions as important factors in the creation of opportunities for causing the contention of transnational activists. However, it is noted that the rise of Dalit transnational activism may not be a direct or indirect outcome caused by contention from international institutions, like the IMF, the World Bank, etc., because Dalit activists target international institutions mainly with a purpose of gaining support from them. It is the strategies such as networking, using the boomerang pattern, the spread of universal human rights norms in a globalized world, that offers new opportunities for the Dalit movement. It locates caste into civil society and a discourse on development.

The transnational Dalit activism uses a political logic and form of argumentation that departs from Ambedkar's movement for Dalit rights which saw caste as "parochial" having specificities peculiar to India regarding its origin. The main focus of transnational Dalit activists remains on finding similar grounds for caste-based discrimination and racism along with conceptualization of caste as a form of inherited inequality. The Cisco Systems Inc. case brought out the ghost of caste-based discrimination faced by the Dalit diaspora globally.[34] Equality Labs, a Dalit civil rights organization dedicated to ending caste apartheid across the world, conducted a survey in 2018, which revealed that two-thirds of American Dalits reported being treated unfairly at their workplace because of their caste. The report was cited in the lawsuit against Cisco (Mukherji 2020). Run by Thenmozhi Soundararajan, Equality Labs specializes in digital security for activist groups. Thenmozhi states that the lawsuit against Cisco is a landmark case because it is first civil rights case in the United States where a governmental entity sued an American company for failing to protect caste oppressed employees and creating a hostile workplace (Mantri 2020). The Indian Dalit organizations like The Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students Association BAPSA along with Ambedkar students' Association and several others showed solidarity by tweeting about the Cisco case.

The internationalization of caste discrimination as in the case of the Cisco and HCL employee reworks previous conceptualization of Dalit identity and caste and has paved the way for the recognition of caste as a category for discrimination.

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[34] The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) filed a petition against Cisco Systems Inc. on behalf of a complaint given by a Dalit employee who alleged that his Indian supervisors practiced discrimination against him owning to his status of being a Dalit. The complaint also read that peers junior to him were given a promotion and granted the ability to supervise him, despite the fact that he was both competent and deserving of a promotion and salary raise.

Harvard University[35] has become the first Ivy League university to recognize caste as a protected category as a ground for discrimination (Kapur 2021). Most Dalits who have received higher education in India or abroad are hesitant to disclose their caste, fearing stigmatization and discrimination. After the advent of social media, many Dalit youngsters have often said that Twitter gave them a sense of community and for the first time they were not ashamed of disclosing their identity in public. Facebook pages like Ambedkar Caravan, Dalit History Month and Twitter handles like Ambedkar's Community Live, Dalit Voice, Dalit Diva, Savarna Fat Cat, and Everyday Casteism are used by the Dalits to create discourse, ideate, and connect with each other, and with the world. These platforms have allowed the Dalits to reshape caste imagination as people can overcome the ghetto mentality, which was ingrained by caste-based socialization. For a large number of Dalits who otherwise would not disclose their caste identity, social media has brought safety as they are part of a large Dalit community who can share their views with remote chances of receiving any physical violence from upper caste Hindus (Singh 2019).

For most Dalits, the Internet and social media are not a part of their ordinary life and within their reach. Even in the 21st century only a few thousand – mostly city-based, male Dalits – have access and competence (in terms of English language and technological skills) to be able to use social media effectively (Kumar and Subramani 2014, 127). However, for those few educated Dalits, the cyber space has provided access to the production and consumption of the digital world which they are keen to appropriate and use it for their individual, social, and political purposes. Such a situation is not without its pitfalls where a miniscule Dalit middle class what becomes the interlocutor between the State and the rest of the Dalits who are illiterate and technology challenged. This may lead to monopolizing the issues, material and symbolic resources available to all Dalits. The difficulties in combating misinformation and fake news have plagued the social media. Sometimes unverified or fake news is used to create Faultline and animosity. For example, *Newslaundry* ran the piece headline "The media's blind eye to President Kovind's humiliation" with the narrative, that mainstream media has not found the Dalit President's insult by Brahmin priests inside a temple a newsworthy story.[36]

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[35] Harvard now joins a handful of American Institutions such as the University of California, Davis, Colby College, and Brandeis University in formally accepting the prevalence of caste-based harassment on campuses.

[36] President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind and his wife Savita visited the Shri Jagannath temple at Puri, Odisha on March 18, 2018. Some news reports suggested that there was possibly breach of President's security cordon and some servitors allegedly milled around Savita Kovind, while she was offering prayers inside the temple's sanctum sanctorum, leading to occasional jostling. The news was reported by some journalists with a caste angle to it stating that "*Brahmin*" priest allegedly misbehaved with President Kovind because he is a Dalit. Even

Later, the Press Secretary declared the article based on a fictional incident, stating that the event never happened in the first place. The story was suspended and taken down from the portal (*Newslaundry* 2018). Fake news and disinformation over time may lead to decline in public trust in media which in turn might prove dangerous for democracies as governments would then use surveillance and control over the content posted on social media.

6. Conclusion

There is no doubt that today social media platforms are helping the Dalits raise their voices in the public discourse, reconstructing their identity and finding global support in fighting against caste-based discrimination and social injustice. Dalits are using all forms of social media to challenge the distorted notions that deliberately malign their identity and also piece together parts of their missing historical identity by challenging mainstream historical narratives and stereotypes about them. Social media is also shifting the existing caste paradigms from the religious arena to rationality helping Dalits to feel proud of their legacy, beliefs, and practices. Dalit's perception and conception of their caste identity are finding new grounds on the social media. It is a hard truth that Indian mainstream media does not address Dalit issues and the voice of the Dalits is largely absent from the newsroom even today (Cooper 1996; Jeffery 2012, 34). Identity formation and recreation are largely influenced by blogs, social networking, and online social exchanges in the digital era (Buckingham and Willet 2006, 24). The dominance of caste Hindus has been challenged at every point (Gupta 2004, 12). The several instances and stories reported online of discrimination of Dalits, their torture, abuse, and violation of their human rights by the upper castes indicate that online mobilization and agitations are being resorted to, but the widespread online publicity may or may not always translate into offline actions. The real and the virtual world are not exclusive as they may seem. The protests which are offline may sometime go unnoticed/without action, however, the hashtags and tweets posted by the social media users sometimes force the government, judiciary, print media, and political leaders to take notice and act upon it. Virtual media is not so virtual after all (Katariya 2018).

The digitally empowered Dalits making use of social media are more likely to be educated, city dwellers with higher socio-economic disposable income. It does leads to the danger of the Dalit middle class becoming interlocutors between the state and the rest of the disenfranchised Dalit community. This

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eminent Journalist Shekhar Gupta tweeted that it was no surprise that Kovind and his wife were "treated so boorishly" by "casteist priests" at Puri.

could also lead to a cultural hegemony of the digitally advantaged Dalits over the disadvantaged ones. This also raises questions about available strategies for non-Ambedkarite Dalits especially in Eastern India, where an Ambedkarite approach has found only limited footing. It is human behavior that unless people interact offline and forge personal bonds while working together, they are unlikely to be able to sustain collective action with regularity. It is because of the barrier of language and technology which the majority of Dalits do not have access to, thus puts the focus back on the mainstream media which still has a much wider reach. What is required therefore is diversity in the newsroom, as it is of great importance not only from the point of view of the representation of the oppressed, but also because their presence contributes to ongoing social movements and subsequently drives social change.

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AN ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S UNCALLED MIGRANT LABOR CRISIS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CASE STUDY OF BIHAR

Bhavana Kumari

> *Necessitous men are not free men.*
> *(Franklin Delano Roosevelt)*

The chapter discusses the migrant labor crisis in India that surfaced because of the lockdown imposed during the first wave of the SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) in 2020. Despite several relief measures, there have been lapses that resulted in unwelcome consequences to the fate of migrant laborers. This chapter attempts to find the reasons behind the unfortunate consequences and offers an in-depth analysis of India's COVID-19 lockdown and its effects on the socio-economic challenges of domestic migrant laborers. Neoclassical Migration and Dual Labor Market theories are applied to understand the nuanced situations of migrant laborers in India. This research makes an inductive and qualitative analysis. The chapter uses official empirical data available for study, and takes Bihar, a central eastern state of India, as a case study for a better understanding of the issue.

Keywords: India, COVID-19, lockdown, migrant laborers, Bihar

1. Introduction

India registered the first case of the SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) on January 30, 2020, in Kerala, a southwestern coastal state of the country (Andrews et al. 2020, 490). A student returning home for winter vacation from Wuhan University, in Wuhan, People's Republic of China (PRC), tested positive for the deadly virus. The student did recover from the infection later (Andrews et al. 2020, 490). However, the COVID-19 cases kept on increasing slowly but steadily in India. On March 24, 2020, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the world's most stringent

lockdown on only four hours' notice to fight against the pandemic. The decision was praised as it initially helped to keep the number of infections low. However, at the time of writing this chapter, with more than 33 million cases,[1] India has become the world's second worst-affected country by the COVID-19. The sudden and stringent lockdown, which lasted for more than two months, brought India's economy to its knees. The country recorded a 23.9% contraction in its GDP in the first quarter, that is April-June month, of 2020 (GoI 2021, 2). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated India's economy to grow at 11.5 % in 2021, after the country comes out from the lockdown (Mitra et al. 2021).

However, the second wave of COVID-19 hammered India more severely than the first one. India recorded an average of about 0.35 million COVID-19 cases daily from April 20 to May 8, 2021.[2] Unlike the 2020 lockdown, which was announced by the Central Government of India, during the second wave of COVID-19 infections, it was the state governments which took initiatives to curb the surge of infections. The initiatives included measures like a complete lockdown and weekend curfew. Such measures are further expected to hinder the country's economic growth. This slowdown of the national economy results in high unemployment rates. It eventually affects the lives of the poor and voiceless class of Indian society, particularly migrant laborers. In 2001, India had 315 million registered migrant laborers out of a total workforce of 406 million (GoI 2001). The number included both intra-state and inter-state migrant laborers. A decade later, the total number of migrant laborers saw a significant increase and went up to 452 million (GoI 2011). The share of migrant laborers in the national workforce, which was 463 million then, went to 97%. They also contributed 10% to the national GDP.

Table 1: India's labor force and migrant laborers

Year	Total labor force (in millions)	Migrant laborers (in millions)
2001	406	315
2011	463	452
2020	471	Not available

Source: Census Data (2001, 2011) and World Bank Data (2020)

The exact figures of internal migration are always disputed because of mismanagement and problems in maintaining empirical data. India has postponed its population Census 2021 enumeration due to the pandemic. The data of 2021 should present a better picture about the number of migrant laborers in the coun-

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[1]   Data updated on September 28, 2021, on worldometers.info.

[2]   Data updated on May 9, 2021, on covid19india.org.

try. This chapter presents an analysis based on the 2011 Census Data and other latest economic survey reports. Migrant laborers usually come to urban areas and big cities to earn their livelihood. According to several news reports and economic surveys, the number of inter-state migrant laborers is estimated to be around 150–200 million. India has a population of 1.3 billion. This means that, on average, every seventh person in the country is an inter-state migrant.

In India, there are four major types of migrant laborers: permanent, semi-permanent, seasonal, and circular migrant laborers. Semi-permanent, seasonal, and circular migrants are more vulnerable to exploitation due to the irregular market wages and job-availability, when compared to the permanent migrants. Seasonal and semi-permanent migrant laborers are approximately 14–15 million in number. It is also estimated that India has around 30–70 million circular migrants (Krishna and Rains 2020). The plight that has been reported in the media was mainly of the latter three categories of migrant laborers. So, talking in conservative numbers, approximately 50–80 million migrant laborers were heading back to their native homes during the first phase of lockdown in 2020.

This chapter conducts a study about the plight of migrant laborers, which happened during the COVID-19 induced lockdown in India in 2020. It finds the reasons for the hardships of migrant laborers by understanding their socio-economic background and their place in India's dual/segmented labor market. The chapter also analyses the measures taken by the central and state governments to address the migrant labor crisis in the country. The crucial section on Bihar, a state which saw a large-scale reverse migration during the lockdown, helps to meet the above stated objectives.

This chapter argues that India was facing a migrant labor crisis for the past few decades, but the pandemic made the crisis publicly visible and further worsened it. The economic imbalances between states and social conservatism pushed laborers from poor states to migrate towards other rich states. The chapter also asserts that migrant laborers' needs were long ignored by the governments, industrialists, and their recruiters. The reasons for such ignorance could be the lack of any significant political, social, and economic power of migrant laborers in India.

2. Theoretical framework

To understand the scenes that unfolded during the lockdown, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of India's labor market and where a migrant laborer fits in the system. India's labor market is one of the most complex labor markets in the world because of its vast size and no unified system. It includes both the organized/formal and unorganized/informal sectors. So far, no theory has clearly explained the migration issue in the Indian labor market. However, in this chapter,

the author has used the "neoclassical" migration and "dual/segmented labor market" theories to draw some understanding.

The neoclassical theory makes three important arguments about the labor migration. Firstly, it argues that internal migration happens during the process of economic development because of the "geographical differences in the supply of and demand of labor" (Massey et al. 1993, 433). People from a low-wage market with a higher endowment of labor migrate to areas that provide higher wages but have a lower endowment of labor power. India is one of the fastest developing economies in South Asia. However, internally, not every Indian state shows a similar rate of economic development. The North-South regional division is depicted in ample survey results. The southern states have outperformed the northern and eastern states of India on many socio-economic parameters like Human Development Index, per capita income, and GDP growth (Paul and Sridhar 2015, 1). In intra-northern regions, the Delhi-NCR area has outperformed the other states of India. As labor migration occurs in the process of economic development (Todaro 1980, 361; Massey et al. 1993, 431), India's better performing regions see a major influx of migrant laborers from less developed states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and others.

Secondly, the neoclassical theory also argues that migrating people consider better wages as a long-term benefit of relocation and mitigates the monetary risk taken during the initial period. In India, semi-permanent, seasonal, and circular migrant laborers coming from poor states take the risk of traveling for days before reaching their preferable workplaces. Most of the time, they remain jobless for weeks and even for months, before getting a job with pay that justifies their skills. However, they evaluate such risks to be fruitful for them in the long run. Thirdly, according to the neoclassical theory, individuals are the rational actors and decisions regarding when, where, why, and how to migrate are purely taken by the individuals. Indian society is mostly patriarchal. It is rare to see women making decisions to migrate due to work, either alone or with the family. Though male migrant laborers are themselves not well educated, their female partners are even less educated. This often results in the decisions of a female partner being insignificant in family affairs and the final decision is mostly made by the male head in the family.

The understanding, that the decision making mostly rests on the male head of the family, helps us to rule out the "New Economics" theory of migration for this study. This theory argues that the social dimensions, usually household/family, play a decisive role for migration of an individual (Massey et al. 1993, 436). The theory seems to be unsuitable for a typical Indian family. Therefore, the New Economics theory was not applied for this study and neoclassical theory is considered essential in explaining the migration of laborers in India.

Once migrant laborers reach the target workplace, they enter in the dual/segmented Indian labor market. The dual labor market theory emerged in the United States and was developed in the 1960s and 1970s. The theory divides the labor market into two sectors: primary and secondary. The primary sector labor market is more formalized, while the secondary sector has informal employment. The labor markets in the primary sectors offer high wages, stable employment, job security, and good working conditions. On the contrary, the labor markets in the secondary sectors offer no job security, no grievance mechanism, no promotion guarantee, and no labor union. Wages are low and largely unregulated in the secondary sectors. In India, there is a concept of organized sectors (equal to the primary sectors) and unorganized sectors (equal to the secondary sectors). Organized sectors are part of the formal economy and unorganized sectors constitute the informal economy. Since the last decade, even in the formal and organized sectors, the percentage of contract labor employment has been increasing (Anant et al. 2006, 205). The unorganized and informal sectors are labor intensive, employ less-skilled laborers, and pay low wages with no or minuscule job security and other benefits. Ninety percent of the working population in India are part of the informal economy and just two states (Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) share more than 80% of the labor force in informal economy (Patel 2020). Moreover, 90% of migrant laborers work in the unorganized sectors that lack formal employment mechanisms. Segmentation based on class, caste, religion, region, and gender is another primary feature of the Indian labor market (Srivastava 2019, 49).

3. Socio-economic background of migrant laborers

When a person is listed in the Census at a different place from his/her place of birth, he/she is called a migrant (GoI 2001). As per the Census Data of 2001 and 2011, the annual growth rate of migration has doubled from 2.4% to 4.5%. Migrant laborers usually belong to socio-economically backward sections of society. They are poor, less educated, and politically overlooked. They hesitate to use their surname, to hide their identity and escape from being exploited based on caste, class, or culture. If we try to divide the migrants based on their social caste category, Other Backward Castes (OBCs) comprise 36.94% of rural-urban seasonal migrants, Dalits comprise 30.57%, Adivasis comprise 12.63%, and Muslims comprise 11.03% (Tyagi 2020). The General Category castes share only 5.5% and Brahmins only 2.8% (Tyagi 2020).

Males contribute 68.4% of the national workforce and women 31% (GoI 2011). However, the percentage of migration for women is, somewhat surprisingly, more than that of men. Marriage is the primary reason for women to migrate, whereas males migrate mainly in search of jobs and a better lifestyle (Rajan, Sivakumar, and

Srinivasan 2020, 1023). Women are part of the "invisible economies of care" (Shah and Lerche 2020, 720). They are the primary caretakers in most Indian families. They bear immense physical and psychological pressure while nurturing their children (Bhattacharya 2013). They do unpaid domestic work at home which further facilitates their male relatives to travel for work. The patriarchal mindset of the Indian society also supports such rules for women. The reproductive activities of female partners should be considered as a supportive factor for the productive activities of males at the workplace (Shah and Lerche 2020, 721). Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) highlights such relation between production and reproduction. The concept builds on the factors of domestic labor and women's economic role in the capitalist society (Bezanson and Luxton 2006, 3). Having said that, some female partners do take up jobs after migrating. Still, their primary reason for migration is listed as marriage in official records. The female partners who join the workforce are often paid lower wages than their male counterparts for the same job. As mentioned earlier, gender discrimination is a part of the segmented labor market, and female migrant labors are not unaffected. Women migrant laborers are also the first ones to bear the brunt of unemployment.

From an economic perspective, India's per capita income was USD 156 for the year 2019–2020. With an average monthly income of USD 437, India has been ranked at 72nd position among 106 countries in the global list of countries with average monthly income (PTI 2018). According to survey data of the Centre for the Study Developing Societies (CSDS), 22% of Indian households monthly earn less than USD 26, 32% have monthly income of 26–66 USD, and 25% manage to earn 66–133 USD as monthly household income. Only 13% of households' monthly income is between 133–266 USD and 8% earn more than or equal to USD 266. A migrant worker in India earns approximately USD 137 monthly, which is even lower than the national average (PTI 2020a). The money is insufficient to live a healthy and decent lifestyle. Given the fact that the cities they help to build become far too expensive to accommodate its poor builders, migrant laborers prefer to live in the outskirts of the city where they can get rooms at cheaper rates. However, even those rented houses are not easy to find, because laborers are new to the city, to its native culture, and its code. They also feel alienated in the destination states. As a result, migrant laborers often choose to live at their worksites in poor and unhygienic conditions. Article 42 in the Constitution of India (CoI) guarantees good working conditions and maternity leave for women. The poor and unhealthy working conditions at worksites show the real face of implementation of rules. Moreover, in the lack of data, how many female migrant laborers have been granted maternity leave are unknown.

In occupational terms, nearly 42% of rural-urban seasonal migrant laborers' primary source of income are non-agricultural works, 22.5% take up cultivation

jobs, and 18.9% are engaged in allied agricultural activities (Tyagi 2020). In the case of rural-rural seasonal migration, 31.9% of laborers work in non-agricultural sectors, 21.9% are cultivators, and 29.5% are engaged in allied agricultural activities (Tyagi 2020). Densely populated Indian states like Bihar (17.88%) and Uttar Pradesh (16.88%) comprise the highest proportion of rural-urban seasonal migrants (refer to Table 2). Other states like Jharkhand in the east, Madhya Pradesh in the center, Uttarakhand in the north, and Rajasthan in the west are some of the major sources of migrant laborers.

Table 2: Major sources and destinations of rural-urban seasonal migration

Major sources of migration	Top destinations
Uttar Pradesh	Delhi
Bihar	Maharashtra
Rajasthan	Gujarat
Madhya Pradesh	Haryana
Jharkhand	Punjab
Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka
Tamil Nadu	Kerala
Uttarakhand	

Source: Census Data (2011)

Lastly, the number of child migrant laborers is also increasing in significant numbers in India. Though there is no separate data of child migrant laborers, India is estimated to have about 10.1 million child laborers in total.[3] Articles 23 and 24 of the CoI prohibit any kind of forced labor and child labor. However, in a liberal and democratic system, where social mobility is encouraged by the institutions in place, millions of children particularly from the lower and voiceless sections of societies are replicating the professions of their parents (Clark, Baldwin, and Carter 2012, 2011). They join their parents at labor worksites. However, they get paid low wages.

4. Challenges of migrant laborers

The chapter looked at the inter-state migration and migrant laborers issue, as it is these who were stuck in *pardesh* ("foreign land"). In many Indian languages, particularly of the northern belt, *pardesh* refers to a land of different cultures, languages, and customs. So, whenever a person leaves his/her home and travels

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[3] Data collected from the official website of UNICEF India. https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/child-labor-exploitation. Accessed on May 26, 2021.

to other Indian states, a land of a different language and culture, it is said that the person is going to a foreign land.

Migrants always face challenges when moving from home to *pardesh.* Firstly, they need to overcome the language and culture differences between their home and the destination states. This is often the biggest problem for them, and often results in migrants being looked down upon in the destination states. They are seen as "aliens" for the native society of the destination state. They find difficulties in communicating with their employers. Therefore, sometimes, they compromise with low wages and inhospitable living conditions. They work in Dickensian conditions and reside in slum areas. They do not settle at their workplace because of the expensive urban environment. They prefer to keep families at their native places and travel between workplace and home multiple times a year. Secondly, if they belong to the vulnerable sections of society, their challenges multiply manifold. One of the major challenges that migrant laborers from vulnerable sections have been facing, even before the pandemic, is discrimination based on class and caste. Those who belong to the upper class and castes are better educated. They are placed in comparatively better jobs compared to migrants who are from socially weaker classes. Poor and socially suppressed migrant laborers lack land ownership and usually migrate to escape from the feudalistic approach of the dominant class in their region. They are less educated and have low skills, which gives them low bargaining power. They migrate from their native places, but the hardships continue at the destination workplace. "Dirty, dangerous and demeaning work being invariably carried out by migrant laborers from low status caste," writes Ravi Srivastava (2019, 56). Lower status migrant laborers get little chance to develop or improve their living standard.

Thirdly, migrant laborers are also treated as a threat to domestic laborers. Low-wage domestic migrants within countries are there to fill the gaps left by low-wage international migrants (Kofman and Raghuram 2015, 23). Many rich Indian states like Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra are major sources of labor force for Gulf countries. The gap left by these labor forces back in their native states is filled by the cheap and easily accessible migrant laborers coming from other poorer states. However, as states have data servers for their non-resident Indians, they don't have a similar mechanism for internal migrants, much less for the labor class. Up to date data on internal migrant laborers help in keeping records of their whereabouts and in case of any emergency they would be easily traced and helped. Moreover, those labor forces who choose not to migrate abroad but would not work at low-wage jobs in their home state see migrant laborers as threats and as someone who would pollute and corrupt their society (Mishra 2021). They regard migrant laborers as "work snatchers" (Mishra 2021).

Lastly, migrant laborers from poor states face discrimination because of the sense of "nativism" among the people of richer states in India. Many states' social security systems have domicile requirements. These schemes favor the native population and leave migrant laborers from accessing government-sponsored benefits like healthcare (Rawat et al. 2020). Seasonal, circular, and temporary migrants are not eligible for domicile rights in their destination states. Several social welfare schemes like Public Distribution Schemes (PDS), which distributes food and other essentials at subsidized prices, are not available to them. They cannot access rice, lentils, and kerosene provided to the poor at subsidized rates under the state's PDS, which increases their spending and reduces their overall saving. Migrant laborers also need to send remittances back home.

It can be concluded that migrant laborers' challenges do not end after migrating to high-income states. One can understand why the migrants were rushing towards their homes after the sudden and abrupt announcement of the nationwide lockdown. They were forced to travel on foot and, unfortunately, some of them even died on their way back home.

5. Why migrant laborers wanted to leave cities during the lockdown?

India announced a nationwide lockdown on only four hours' notice. It pushed millions of migrant daily wage laborers out of their jobs overnight with little to no savings left to survive. The situation brought the country's invisible apathy towards its internal migrant laborers into visibility. Figure 1 shows the direction of reverse migration that happened during the first country-wide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The map indicates only the inter-state reverse migration and not the intra-state migration. Nonetheless, one cannot deny the fact that intra-state reverse migration also happened during the same time. However, they did not catch the attention of the media or the government.

A study of CSDS and Azim Premji university in 2019 estimates that 29% of the population in India's big cities is of daily wage laborers. The abrupt and complete cessation of economic activities overnight led to a large scale of unemployment for daily wagers, street-vendors, and contractual seasonal and circular migrant laborers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in an address to the nation on March 24, 2020, said that the fight against the pandemic will take three weeks (Pandey 2020). However, the restrictions were extended further for months, with a few exemptions for essential services. Millions of migrants found it hard to cope with the harsh realities of cessation of economic activities. They suffered from lack of food and money. As mentioned in the previous section, migrant laborers are deprived of domicile rights in other destination states. Due to the lack of documents,

migrant laborers were turned away from the destination state's PDS shops and free ration distribution was not made available to them initially. It was only after the government relaxed norms for availing ration benefits, some of them could collect rice, lentils, and oils from the PDS shops (Tripati 2020). Soon, the PDS shops ran out of stock for relief foods, as the number of claimants exceeded the estimates.
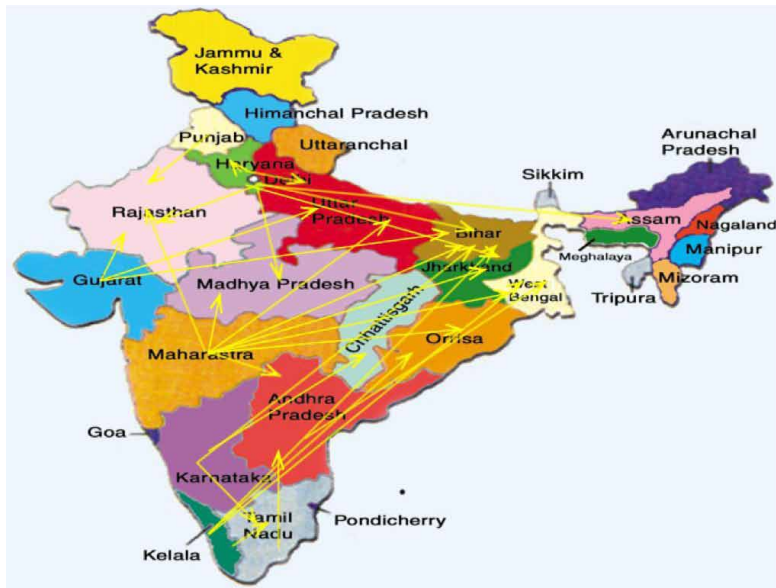
Figure 1: Reverse migration during the first lockdown in March 2020

(Source: Compiled by the author)

Migrant laborers also felt abandoned by their employers (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020). The contractors and recruiters of migrant laborers failed to provide any help. It is estimated that nearly 4 out of 5 workers were left unpaid by their employers (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020). Swain, a 45-year-old migrant laborer, said in a telephonic interview, "Nobody was understanding our problems there. My employer did not lift the phone when I contacted him to ask for my 10 days' wages pending with him. They are big people. What can we do?" (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020).

The relief camps, set up to provide housing to the migrant workers, along with meditation and yoga classes to ease distress and anxieties, were overcrowded as the number of shelter and food seekers was far more than the government's estimated figures. The camps also lacked basic sanitary facilities, making lives of women and children more troublesome (Pandey 2020). Migrants were unsure about the reopening of workplaces any time soon. Therefore, with no hope for

reopening of workplaces, no place to live, and no savings left, migrant laborers preferred to move back to their native home (Pandey 2020).

The other most crucial factor that led to a mass exodus of migrant laborers is the lack of communication about the situation, which eventually created a sense of panic (Sengupta and Jha 2020). They were aware that a new virus was spreading in urban areas, which was also highly contagious, but the precautions required to be taken were not well communicated to them. Later, when the government ministries and local administrative officers tried to convey precautionary measures with them, they found it impossible to follow (Sengupta and Jha 2020). Practicing physical distancing is not possible for everyone. In a country like India, it is a privilege. Migrants also feared that, though the mortality rate from the virus is low, if they got infected, they might face harassment from local community (Kumar et al. 2020). Therefore, they believed it would be better to leave the urban and metropolitan cities and live in their villages.

However, their journey back to home also had several hurdles. As per the records of the Railway Protection Force (RPF), 80 migrants died in trains, run by the governments, while traveling back to their respective home states (Dutta 2020). They allegedly died due to lack of food and extreme heat. Article 38 clause (1) of the CoI says that the state should aim to be a welfare state. Clause (2) of the same article says that the state should try to eliminate inequalities in society. Keeping these clauses in mind, one must compare the repatriation flights operated under the Vande Bharat Mission to bring back stranded Indian nationals from abroad to the scenario where the migrant laborers were left in their precarious conditions in locked cities at nobody's mercy until they started walking to their home state under scorching heat in the months of April–May in 2020. Privation undergone by migrant laborers due to the lack of jobs, food, and shelter clearly shows that the central and state governments were not anticipating such harsh results of the lockdown. The lack of political voice of the migrant laborers could be one of the reasons behind such steps taken by governments. The case study of Bihar further discusses this point in detail.

6. State's play

In March 2020, the Government of India invoked Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 (EDA) combined with National Disaster Management Act, 2005 (NDMA), and designed the complete plan of how and until when the nation will be under a complete lockdown. State governments had little to no power to make any changes in the given format of executing the lockdown order. The Central Government granted 14.8 billion USD to the Indian states and Union Territories under the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) (Ministry of Home Affairs 2020). The

grants were used to provide temporary shelter, food, and medical care to home-less people, including the migrant laborers. The PDS shops were allowed to open throughout the lockdown period. Around 80 million migrant laborers received 5 kg of rice per person per month and 1 kg of chickpeas per family per month, even if they could not present a valid ration card[4] (Tripati 2020). The supply was for two months (June and July 2020). This was done outside the ambit of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 (Agarwal and Srivas 2020). The government also aimed to launch the One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme[5] by March 2021. According to the latest reports 34 states/Union Territories out of 36 could implement the ONORC scheme by August 2021 (Express News Service 2021). Others are in the process of integration to the scheme. According to reports, 17 states also borrowed an additional 5.1 billion USD in 2020–2021 to implement the plan (Sharma 2021).

Several state governments promised an immediate monetary help of 7–14 USD per month to each migrant laborer in their respective states (Telegraph News 2020). There was no mention of the termination date of this monetary help. How-ever, it was widely anticipated that the help would be extended for at least two to three months.

For those who wanted to head back to their home, trains named "Shramik Trains" were started in collaboration with the state and central governments (Dutta 2020). "Shramik" is a Hindi language word for "labor". Indian Railways is among the world's largest rail networks and its route length network. It is spread over an area of 23,236 square kilometers with 13,523 passenger trains, 9,146 freight trains, 23 million travelers, and 3 million tons of freight transported daily from 7,349 sta-tions (Shah 2021). Despite this enormous capacity, around 40 out of 3,000 trains lost their way and did not reach their destination on scheduled time (HW News 2020). Many got delayed and diverted. Railway Board Chairman Vinod Kumar Yadav clarified that since most of the trains were reaching only two states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, "[t]here has been a surge in crowding of people. This is the reason why the railways had to change routes of some trains" (HW News 2020). Therefore, a journey which was supposed to be covered in a day took 60 hours to complete, thereby causing great distress and sufferings to passengers who starved due to lack of food and water, which as mentioned earlier also led to death of some of the migrant laborers (The Wire Staff 2020). Apart from trains, some buses were also arranged later, mainly by the states that were suppliers of migrant laborers (Express News Service 2020). However, before the traveling mechanisms became

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[4] Ration cards are the documents that governments issue to persons who are eligible to buy food grains and other essentials at subsidized rates from PDS shops under NFSA.

[5] ONORC is aimed at providing universal access to PDS food grains for migrant workers.

smooth, the distressed migrants were caught in inter-state political disputes as well. States like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu initially refused to send the migrant laborers back, due to the fear of not getting them back after reopening of the economy (Wielenga 2020).

The Central Government also launched a 7 billion USD Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan to provide work for over three months to returnee migrant laborers in six states (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Odisha) (PTI 2020b). The Central Government allotted 13.8 billion USD for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005[6] (MGNREGA), which protects the "Right to work" in rural India, to boost employment in villages (Agarwal and Srivas 2020). The government raised average daily wages of MGNREGA laborers from 2.44 USD to 2.70 USD (Shukla et al. 2021) and also increased the minimum number of working days from 100 to 150 days (Special Correspondent 2021). The demand for jobs under MGNREGA saw a sharp rise as around 20 million people requested for work in April 2020 (Sharma 2021). The number is the highest since the launch of the scheme in 2006. One major limitation of MGNREGA scheme is that it leaves out the poor population in towns and urban areas, so for them the government tend to provide another package. An economic package of 0.6 billion USD to provide a Special Credit Facility for Street Vendors (SCFSV) was also announced by the Central Government. The SCFSV scheme for street vendors is estimated to cover around 5 million street vendors (Agarwal and Srinivas 2020) which is a number based on 2011 Census data. By 2020, the numbers must have been significantly more.

For long-term benefits, the Central Government announced an affordable rental housing scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana for migrant laborers and urban poor. The mentioned relief measures had been announced and carried out after a few days of lockdown and some were taken on the recommendation of the Supreme Court of India. However, after their announcement, planning and proper execution have been a major hurdle in front of states. There was no or minuscule central registry of migrant laborers, despite having Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Acts 1979 in place, which further derailed the PDS and cash transfer schemes of the governments (Venkataramanan 2020). The lack of literacy among laborers usually makes them unaware of their rights and the state's efforts to make them aware have not been enough; the labor inspectors who are assigned to monitor the implemen-

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[6] The program aims to provide livelihood security in rural India by providing at least hundred days of employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Official Website for MGNREGA. Government of India. https://nrega.nic.in/Nregahome/MGNREGA_new/Nrega_home.aspx Accessed January 3, 2021.

tation of these laws rarely operate (Shah and Lerche 2020, 728). Thus, making the laws is the least beneficial for the labor class. The execution is always the toughest part of any law and if this is not done with strict monitoring, legislation could be of no use.

Further, in May 2020 as the lockdown restriction were relaxed, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government announced a 271 billion USD economic package under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan[7] to bring back the country's slumped economy out of the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, state governments also carried several reforms to send relief to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and bring back their confidence in the Indian economy. However, in this process states took steps to abolish a few labor rights, which was again criticized by the labor groups, particularly the migrant laborers. The next section discusses the reforms and suspension of those labor rights.

7. Reforms and suspension of labor rights

In 1991, India moved from being a planned economy to a capitalist and free market economy. But the reforms made then were largely in the product and service sectors, not in the factory market. After 2014, under the leadership of Narendra Modi (2014–2019), India has brought reforms into its labor laws. To make laws simpler and easily executable, 44 Union laws have been condensed into four laws:

1. The Code on Wages, 2019
2. The Industrial Relations Code, 2019
3. The Occupation Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019
4. Code on Social Security, 2019

The above-mentioned four new laws intend to bring revolution in the factory and labor market. The new laws include provisions like paid leave with medical care which will apply to all laborers, irrespective of working as full-timers, part-timers, casual, contractual, domestic, or home-based employees (Vanamali 2021). The reforms in laws attempt to bring the unorganized sectors and the informal economy in line with the organized sectors. They also attempt to eliminate the segmentation of the labor market and bring uniformity in wages and other benefits for working groups including migrant laborers. Firstly, to catch the interest of industrialists, the laws provide powers to employers where they do not need the government's permission for shutting down companies and firing less than 300 employees (Vanamali 2021). Earlier, the cap used to be at a hundred employees. It

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[7] Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan means Self-reliant India Campaign. The campaign aimed to make India and its citizen independent and self-reliant. The campaign is focused on India's economy, infrastructure, system, vibrant democracy, and demand.

can be inferred that the move might send relief to SMEs which are facing a crisis and are on the verge of closing. However, from an employees' point of view, the provision will bring unfair outcomes for them.

Under The Code on Wages, 2019, seasonal laborers will be given a gratuity of pay equal to their seven days of work (Ministry of Law and Justice 2020). The point here is, as the government stresses that the new laws would safeguard both employers and employees, it forgets that 90% of India's workforce including migrant laborers work in informal sectors (Sharma 2020) where implementation of these laws has become a herculean task. The implementation of The Code on Wages, 2019, has been postponed from April 1, 2021, till further notice as states were not prepared with their Plan of Action (PoA). India's labor law reforms come under the concurrent list, so finally, states will decide how to implement them according to their ground situations.

At the provincial level, states have extended working hours in industries from 8 to 12, though some states like Punjab have also doubled pay for extra hour work (Krar 2020). Some states suspended labor rights amid the pandemic. The rationale behind the suspension is that labor rights are inflexible and demotivating for investors. In May 2020, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan suspended labor laws with few exemptions for three years, while the state of Gujarat suspended them for 120 days (Ghose 2020).[8] States like Assam introduced fixed-term employment (all became contractual laborers). According to the law, labor rights can only be suspended during the case of external aggression or a war-like situation, and not during a pandemic (Gowda 2020). However, due to its weak enforcement, the law seems to do little to stop the states from suspending labor rights. SMEs indeed need the support of the governments to pay their laborers well and survive during hard times. However, further investigation is needed to know whether Indian investors have invested their money back in the country's economy after receiving relaxation from the government or invested abroad.

India is a developing country with the largest young and working age population in the world. Every year, around 12 million youths are added to the country's workforce (Sarkar 2021). Private sectors play a vital role in providing opportunities to fresh young talents and subsuming them in the nation's economy. India has some huge private sectors enterprises that contribute around two-thirds of the country's GDP (Banerjee 2019). Narendra Modi's government aims to strengthen the private sector because they believe that "asset monetization and privatization will empower Indian citizens, enhance India's infrastructure, and increase economic efficiency" (Pathania 2021). However, at the same time,

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[8]   Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1976, Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment 7 and Condition of Service) Act, 1996, and workers security provision are exempted.

the government should also take care of those who are invisible but omnipresent in every sector that contributes to the country's economy. An affirmative reform means relaxation for industrialists and investors, at the same time providing more wages and better working conditions for the employees. Governments must play the role of mediator between industrialists and employees. It needs to maintain a balance between capital and labor. So far, the migrant laborers have not received many benefits from the policy change. Instead, it looks like they will be exploited more in the name of crisis management and the need to revive the economy at the earliest. The extension of daily working time from 8 hours to 12 hours would severely impact the health of factory laborers. Experts note that the government's steps are largely focused on boosting the supply side (Krar 2020). However, there is an urgent need to increase the demand side as well, for which India's poorest need to have cash in their hands. Without an increase in demand and people's purchasing capacity, an economy like India could never recover after the crisis. Moreover, with less pay and harsh working and living conditions, India's poor will be hapless.

8. Bihar: A case study

Bihar is one of the states which saw the largest reverse migration during the pandemic-induced national lockdown in 2020. An estimate shows that 14.3% of the more than 10.5 million returned migrants were Bihari migrant laborers (Parth 2020). The state, located in the Indo-Gangetic belt, has vast fertile lands and is rich in mineral resources. Still, more than 50% of households in Bihar are exposed to migration (Mishra 2020). People from Bihar struggle to find jobs with decent pay in their home state. Bihar, a state once known for its learning culture and as the center of power in ancient India, is currently one of the poorest states and ranks lowest on HDI (0.576). In terms of population (refer to Table 3), Bihar ranks the third most populated state of India and has the second-highest population density. The state's 33.73% population lives below the poverty line, which is again higher than the national average of 21.92%. Under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India is aiming to eradicate poverty in the country by 2030. But, if the states like Bihar are not developed, the country will remain a poor developing country. Recent reports flesh out that 58% of the population of Bihar is under the age of 25, and 11.3% population lives in urban areas, which is the second lowest in India (Varma 2015). The state's literacy rate in the state is 63.82%, ranking third last in India, and 13.8% lower than the national average of 77.7%.

Table 3: Bihar data chart

Total area	94,163 km^2
Total population (2011)	104,099,452
Population density (2011)	1,102 / km^2
GDP (2019–2020)	USD 86 billion
Per capita income (2020–2021)	USD 661
Human development index (2018)	0.576
Literacy (2011)	63.82%
Sex ratio (2011)	918 ♀ / 1,000 ♂
Population below poverty line	33.73%
Industrial area (2021)	68
State certified startups (2021)	76

Source: Census Data (2011), Department of Industries, Government of Bihar (2021)

There are a set of issues, the "4Ps" – Population, Politics, Policies, and Partition – which the author believes led to the large-scale migration from Bihar. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Bihar is the third most populous state in India and its population density is the second highest in the country. Due to the lack of jobs and ample supply of laborers, the people in Bihar could not get good wages. Natural calamities like floods in the northern region and drought in the southern districts of the state, further affects employment generation. Secondly, the feudalistic approach of the dominated class complicates the social and economic equilibrium in the state. Bihar's politics is also highly divisive and the voters favor candidates from their own caste and class. The high rate of corruption is another serious issue in Bihar (Bhalero 2019). Such incidences dilute the vision of achieving economic development and leaves Bihar behind on several economic parameters.

Thirdly, policies like Freight Equalization Policy (1950–1993), which said that one can set up factories anywhere in the country and the raw materials would be provided by the government at a subsidized rate or almost at the same price where the raw materials are coming from, proved to be unfair for mineral-rich states like Bihar (Krishna 2017). The policy laid big blow to industries like the sugar industry, Morton chocolate industry, and the textile industries in Bihar. Gradually, some of them were closed and some shifted to the coastal states. Lastly, on November 15, 2000, a state of Jharkhand was formed from a relatively underdeveloped southern part of Bihar. However, Jharkhand has rich natural resources and today is one of the leading suppliers of minerals in India. The state was the hub of mining industries in pre-partitioned Bihar that employed a lot of Bihari laborers. Therefore, one can see how the "4Ps" led to the lack of economic opportunities, education, and a better lifestyle in Bihar. Consequently, people from Bihar started migrating

to other economically well-performing states. The migration is also cost the state its economic growth.

8.1 Theoretical analysis

Bihar's migration fits well in the example of neoclassical migration and dual/segmented labor market theory. As elaborated is the theoretical section, the neoclassical migration theory stresses that the internal migration occurs in the process of economic development, due to the "geographical differences in the supply of and demand of labor" (Massey et al. 1993, 433). The theory also says that migrants are the sole rational decision-makers and they consider long-term monetary benefits over the short-term cost of relocation. Bihar is India's poorest state (Shillong Times Reporter 2021), with an unemployment rate of 7.2%, which is higher than the national level of 6.1% (Surya 2020, 1). Bihar has huge economic disparity in comparison to other rich Indian states. The state's economy is still largely dependent on agriculture and traditional sectors, like handloom, art and craft industries, etc. Both agriculture and traditional sectors employ massive manpower, however, not at a satisfactory rate. Moreover, the agriculture sector is gradually becoming non-productive with low yields (Haq 2020). Increasing landlessness and lack of the state's financial support are other reasons for Bihari laborers to leave agriculture (Kumar and Kumar 2020). The traditional sectors do not generate a desirable profit either. Therefore, with the higher unemployment rate and weak economic conditions at home state, Bihari laborers choose to work in rich Indian states, which need cheap laborers to run their big factories and industries, for economic benefits. Apart from economic disparity, Bihar has a highly patriarchal society, and given the low literacy rate among women, male laborers are the sole rational actors behind making decision of migrating to other states for work. Lastly, they believe that their short-term hardship would yield benefits in the long run. Therefore, it can be said that all three silent features of neoclassical migration theory explain the migration in Bihar.

Looking from the dual/segmented labor market theory, Bihar has the largest number of laborers employed in informal sectors (GoI 2020), reported by Periodic Labor Force Surveys of 2017–2018 and 2018–2019. They are put into unskilled or semi-skilled jobs that are usually low-paid, have no job security, and are left by the local labor force (Ghosh, Chaudhary, and Noronha 2021). From a gender perspective, the percentage of Bihari women laborer participation in the total workforce is also lower than the other states (Mitra and Rajput 2020). In addition, they are also paid less and preferred only in a few job sectors. They usually find employment in garment industries as tailors, take up jobs as maids, house helpers, cooks, etc. The other important fact is that Bihari migrant laborers are also looked down upon due to their state of origin.

The following subsections explore the problems that surfaced in Bihar from the high-scale reverse migration during the COVID-19 crisis. The subsections also evaluate the Bihar state government response to the challenges of reverse migration and why Bihari laborers were again compelled to move to the cities which they once left in anger. I also explore whether the migrant laborers were able to make their anguish acknowledged by the ruling government by making their votes count in the state election that was held soon after the first wave.

8.2 Government's relief measures and reverse migration

The Bihar government had been announcing a number of relief measures since the reverse migration of its workforce started in April 2020. On the direction of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Bihar State Health Society (BSHS)[9] initiated a mental health program for migrant laborers (Sopam 2020). The program was conducted at the isolation and quarantine centers where the migrant laborers were kept upon their return. They were provided counseling, psychiatrist support, and basic medical treatment for mental health problems. Around 14,000 migrant workers had used the facility by July 18, 2020 (Sopam 2020).

Under Corona Sahayata (Corona Help) drive, the Bihar government has provided a one-time assistance of USD 13 to all migrant laborers who came from other states, provided the applicant proves his/her eligibility (Government of Bihar 2020). The money is not enough to sustain the monthly expenses, however, a family of three to four members could buy ration for two to three weeks with the amount. The amount was directed to be credited to migrant laborers' Jan Dhan Accounts.[10] According to government reports, 1,857,991 beneficiaries registered out of which 1,578,853 applications were accepted by the bank for this assistance program and 271,602 were rejected for various reasons (GoB 2020). The program has two major shortcomings that restricted many poor and uneducated migrant laborers from availing the benefits. Firstly, the applicant can apply for the Corona Sahayata fund only through online portals, and secondly, laborers younger than 18 years can not apply individually (GoB 2020). They can only use of the benefits if their bank accounts are registered in their parents' names, and they are included as minors. Thousands of laborers who are lacking smartphones/access to the Internet cannot avail the state's monetary relief.

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[9] BSHS has been established as an institution which is in direct link with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MHRW), Government of India. It manages the funds receive from MHRW and organizes programs, training, meeting, conferences, policy review studies/surveys, workshops, and inter-state exchange visits. For more information, see: http://statehealthsocietybihar.org/aboutus.html.

[10] Jan Dhan Account is a special savings account with no minimum balance requirements. It is a benefit provided by Indian government to its citizens with low income.

The lockdown in India, which was announced on March 24, 2020 was initially expected to last three weeks. However, the crippling lockdown lasted until the May 31, 2020. As the lockdown duration increased, the amount of 13 USD proved to be insufficient. People were in desperate need of long-term support and solutions to their problems. People wanted jobs that could guarantee them food and money. Though Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, "It's the government's resolve, all returned migrant laborers will be provided employment in Bihar" (Kumar 2020), the administration could not meet the expectations of the returned laborers. Around 1.4 million Bihari laborers returned to their home state during the national lockdown in 2020 (Parta and Umesh 2020). The Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reports that the unemployment rate rose to 46.6% in April 2020 (Mehrotra and Roy 2020). Darbhanga, Madhubani, East Champaran, West Champaran, Motihari, Gaya are some of the districts in Bihar which received the maximum number of returning migrants. Migrants were returning to their traditional agriculture activities in the rural districts. However, the less availability of agricultural land and the low productivity did not keep the returned migrants for long. The state government started employing migrant laborers on May 27, 2020 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. Those who completed their mandatory 14 days quarantine were eligible to take up the work. Unfortunately, not everyone who registered for work managed to get a job. According to People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) reports, 1.1 million MGNREGA job cards were issued in Bihar from April 1, 2020, to August 31, 2020 (Parta and Umesh 2020). However, only a few thousand (2,136) could get a hundred days of work as promised under the MGNERGA program (Zumbish 2020). This number is one of the lowest in the entire country. One of the reasons for low employment under MGNERGA program could be the floods in the northern districts of Bihar. The northern districts of Bihar like Darbhanga, Katihar, Saharsa, Samastipur are often flooded due to heavy monsoon rains during the months of May to August. As majority of the migrant workers returned during these months, it became difficult in employing them in agricultural jobs or in other construction jobs. In addition to above measures, Bihar government also conducted a skill analysis survey of 0.14 million Bihari laborers who came home because of reverse migration till May 17, 2020 (Thakur 2020). The survey has been conducted under the JEEViKA project initiative.[11] However, no data could be found regarding the number of migrants workers that could get employment under this program.

Facing poverty, unemployment, and flooding of their homes, the migrant workers had to borrow money, sometimes even from illegal private money lenders

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[11] The initiative has been administered by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS), an autonomous body under the Department of Rural Development, Bihar. Official Website for JEEViKA, Government of Bihar: http://brlp.in/overview. Accessed May 17, 2021.

at higher interest rates to survive. Although the Bihar Money Lending Act of 1974 prohibits illegal private money lending and requires registration for all private money lenders, the illegal borrowing of money increased in rural Bihar during the lockdown due to lack of law enforcement (Taskin and Yadav 2020). Finally, with no new investments in the state, private loans on high-interest, the shutdown, and slowdown of jobs in the already existing industry, migrant laborers were left with nothing but to march back to cities in the fall of 2020.

8.3 Bihari migrant laborers moving back to cities

Migrant laborers have been pledging to their families that they will never ever take the roads to *pardesh* again (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020). However, every pledge does not meet the destiny. Because of the high-interest loans from local moneylenders and acquaintances, along with running out of savings, migrants were left with no other choice but to return to their workplaces in other states. The situation in their home state became even worse compared to the pre-pandemic period due to the economic slowdown. Although they did become an agenda for opposition political parties during the election times, nothing changed in reality. Migrants received no equal or better opportunities in their home states.

As mentioned earlier, India's high-income states are also the source of the labor force for Gulf countries, due to the pandemic those states have themselves seen a huge influx of domestic laborers returning from abroad (Parkin and Singh 2020). The states will obviously be prioritizing their own laborers returned from abroad, which could make the situation for low-skilled laborers from other states grim. In this highly competitive labor market, many migrant laborers decided to return to their previous jobs as soon as possible, even if they are paid less. According to a survey, only a few could manage to get reinstated on the pre-pandemic pay scale (Azim Premji Foundation 2021, 15). Adding more to this, employers in high-income states need the cheap workforce to re-start their industries and business, and for better or not, they did ask migrant laborers to come back and join the work. The contractors and employers were even willing to pay for the transportation of migrant laborers (Nahata 2020). According to research conducted by Azim Premji University in Bengaluru, the capital city of Karnataka state, 50% or more migrants (including migrants from Karnataka) left the city in the first few months of lockdown (Azim Premji Foundation 2021, 5). Around 18% of them returned after the opening of workplaces. Some of those who did not come back in the initial months of opening of the economy were planning to return by January 2021 (Azim Premji Foundation 2021, 5). Female migrant laborers suffer the most and are the last ones to join back the workforce due to the uncertainty of how and when the job will be made available to them, and on what severity scale the next wave of virus hits them.

8.4 Could Bihari migrant laborers speak?

Migrant laborers swing between their home state and target state to make ends meet. Gradually, their identity becomes less acknowledgeable at the former and unidentifiable at latter place. The state, politicians, and even the well-off middle-class population of India did not pay much heed to their existence despite knowing that without migrant labor, the whole system of urban places would have collapsed. To some extent, it did collapse when migrant laborers started moving back to their homes. As migrant laborers circulate from one state to another throughout the year, it becomes difficult for them to make a union or organize meetings against any unfair treatment they experience. So, is there any way for them to raise their voice? Probably through their votes.

In a democracy, everyone meeting the eligible age criterion, has power to vote. Usually, migrants are not able to cast their vote in state or national election because their voter IDs belongs to their state of domicile, i.e., their home state. Due to high transport costs and the fear of losing jobs, migrant laborers forgo their right to vote and thus lose their political voice (Rajasekaran 2019). However, during lockdown, as they were living in their home states, they choose to use their vote power.

Bihar conducted its state legislative assembly election in three phases from October 28, 2020 to November 7, 2020 (Election Commission of India 2020). The migrant labor crisis became a hot election campaign agenda. Compared to the 2015 poll, 29 districts out of 38 in Bihar saw more turnout of voters and all 29 districts had seen major reverse migration (Vishnoi 2020). In Bihar as well, migrant laborers used their vote power to show their anger against the ruling government. The election results shocked most people, as Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's party saw a sharp decline in its vote share and stood in the third position. However, Narendra Modi's party which is also in alliance with the Nitish Kumar's party, emerged as the second-largest party in Bihar (PTI 2020c). Surprisingly, the prominent opposition party (Rastra Janta Dal) that the people of Bihar had rejected for fifteen years because of the corruption of its leaders, emerged as the single largest party. The results showed that although migrant laborers might need to keep a low profile in other states, they raised their voices and made everyone, including the ruling regime, in their home state feel their presence and realize their pain.

9. Conclusion

According to its constitution, India is a democratic and socialist country. However, somewhere the question arises on the system that lacks sympathy towards its socially and economically disadvantaged population. The internal migration of laborers drives not only the economy of the big cities and rich states, but it also dares India to aim at becoming a global power. Migrant laborers who are

jobless or underpaid in their home states leap at the opportunities provided by the rich states. However, the expensive maintenance and irregular income compel circular and seasonal migrant laborers to keep their families at home, and travel between their origin state and workplace multiple times a year. Their hardships and laborious lifestyle have been invisible to the media and the general public till now, but, whether for good or bad, it became visible due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown from March 24 to May 31, 2020. The rising unemployment rate, especially for migrant laborers, shows that their conditions have deteriorated in the pandemic even after reopening of the economy. The chapter explains that when migrant laborers' employment avenues dwindled, they were left on their own. The relief measures provided by the government and civil societies were insufficient to help them. The case study of Bihar, a state with the second-highest rate of migration, shows that the economic disparities between the Indian states have widened. Despite having rich resources, Bihar could not capture and create sectors that could generate mass employment and help in reducing its rate of labor migration. Unequal migration of labor results in lack of skill in the origin state and burden on the destination states. The Bihar government needs to anticipate factors that push its people to migrate to other states and work in precarious conditions. The migrant labor receiving states need to anticipate that though the migrant laborers do not have a political voice in their system, but they also contribute to the states' economic development. Thus, destination states should consider the needs of migrant laborers and work for their development. They have the right to live a dignified life in their own country and should not become victims of nativism.

India is an emerging economy and a country full of opportunities. It will see more internal migration in the future as more rapid urbanization takes place and big cities are developed. The complexity of India's internal migration cobwebs cannot be solved in a single tenure of any government. The system must function well for decades. It must work with sincerity and vigor for the betterment of the labor class, and not just for rich and powerful people. In a federal set-up like India, the onus lies on both the central and state governments to establish a national network that reaches to the most vulnerable people of society, particularly the migrant laborers. India needs a separate and robust annual data collection system for migrant laborers. The years' old data is insufficient in handling relief package distributions. India needs to introspect, anticipate, make rules, and execute them properly. After all, if a democracy is to function, then its foundation should always be on the principle of "for the people, of the people, and by the people" in true letter and spirit. The chapter concludes that without any prior COVID-19 mitigation measures and proper communication with citizens, the draconian style lockdown of a nation with a 1.3 billion population wreaked havoc on its vulnerable citizens, particularly migrant laborers. Though, some reforms in labor

laws were made in the pandemic years, the state has to carefully monitor their implementation and try to take constant feedback from all stakeholders, because India need to learn from its mistakes and do a better job in future if faced with a similar situation again.

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BURAKU DISCRIMINATION IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN: THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN DISCURSIVE PRACTICES AND IDENTITY

André Pinto Teixeira

The *buraku* discrimination issue in Japan has been discussed in different ways, both at an academic and activist level. Despite divergences in discourse through-out the 20th and 21st centuries, the traditional interpretation of the problem is postulated by Inoue (1969) under the "trinity of *buraku*" model, which is, hitherto, the most widely used framework. However, it is not clear whether this conceptual framework is applicable to *buraku* discrimination or *buraku* empowerment in con-temporary Japanese society. With that in mind, this paper will begin by reviewing and discussing Inoue's (1969) "trinity of *buraku*," comparing its three core roots of discrimination with contemporary accounts retrieved from secondary sources. Subsequently, we will move on to the question of identity building and presen-tation within the burakumin communities, referring back to the seminal works of Worchel and Giddens to garner conceptual support. Lastly, this paper will assert the rights of *buraku* discrimination victims' through a multivocal approach that does not replicate discriminatory discourses.

Keywords: Japan, *burakumin*, discrimination, discourse, identity

1. Introduction

Since the Meiji period (1868–1912), the words *buraku* (部落) and *burakumin* (部落民) became synonymous with groups of people in Japan who shared experiences of discrimination based on perceived outcast ancestry, occupation, and/or place of residence. Some scholars involved with the *Buraku* Liberation movement,[1] such as Yoshikazu (1998, 315), described discriminatory practices against *burakumin* as

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[1] Activist groups striving for the end of discrimination, such as the *Buraku* Liberation League.

a residue of the feudal status system under the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867), which condoned and allowed for the systemic oppression of outcasts (穢多 *eta* and 非人 *hinin*) according to their base nature and pollution taboos. These perceptions created a separation between normal folk and unclean peoples, called *senmin* (賤民).

Inoue (1969, 231–236) attempted to explain the roots of *buraku* discrimination by categorizing it into three archetypal typologies: lineage, place of birth or residence, and occupation. However, not only is there no strong evidence for a direct genealogical linkage between feudal outcasts and *burakumin* (McCormack 2013, 74–75), but the notion of *burakumin* as a group, and not merely as a discursive practice, is, in itself, highly problematic.

This study will revisit Inoue's "trinity of *buraku*," mentioned above, which serves as the theoretical and historical basis for an overview and discussion of the relationship between categorization and discrimination in the context of *buraku* discrimination in contemporary Japan. Lastly, it will present the findings of the current research, proposing a more nuanced approach to *buraku* discrimination issue as an academic discipline.

2. *Buraku* discrimination as discourse

2.1 The "trinity of *buraku*"

In 1969, the historian Kiyoshi Inoue (1913–2001) published his emblematic work *The History of Buraku and Liberation Theory* (部落の歴史と解放理論 *Buraku no rekishi to kaihō riron*). In this book, Inoue introduces the groundbreaking "trinity of *buraku*" (部落の三位一体 *buraku no sanmi ittai*) model, a framework that has impacted many thinkers and researchers of the *buraku* issue up to this date.

In the first chapters of the book, Inoue introduces the history of Japanese outcasts from the Jōmon period (c. 14,000–300 BCE) up to the Edo period (1603–1867). As Inoue demonstrates, ever since the imperial system was established, there have been outcasts ostracized by society at large and who were in direct submission to the ruling class.[2] Those outcasts included the *hajibe* (土師部, "earthenware artisans"), the *yugebe* (弓削部, "bow makers"), and other artisans of the Nara period (710–1185).

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[2] Inoue (1969, 22) uses the term *bumin* (部民) to refer to outcasts in general. While the author himself does not include the *raku* (落) character in his analysis, most works who quote him do, hence the uniformization in this work.

As the Heian period (794–1185) began and the *ritsuryō* (律令) system[3] declined, the Japanese court moved from Nara to Kyōto. In that period, the distinction between "good people" (良民 *ryōmin*) and "base people" (賤民 *senmin*) became more pronounced. The social pariahs included not only artisans, but also people who took up any occupations that dealt with death, such as butchers and gravediggers. Is it precisely in the Heian period that intermarriage (exogamy) between so-called "good people" and "base people" became legally forbidden by the imperial state. Nevertheless, it is documented that, despite the legal restrictions, marriage between good and base people was not so uncommon, resulting, however, in the social demotion of their children into the base stratum. In those cases, social mobility was exclusively unilateral and warranted nothing but disadvantages and hardship to the people involved. Thus, there is no evidence suggesting that exogamy (hypergamy in particular) was a relevant agent of upward social mobility in the Heian period, due to the inevitable consequences that followed (Inoue 1969, 29).

From the late Heian period to the Muromachi period (1338–1573), outcasts grew into different groups according to their occupation and the way they were referred to. Besides the people known as *kawaramono* (河原者, "people of the riverbed"), outcast groups such as the *shōmoji* (声聞師, "itinerant artists"), the *chasen* (茶筅, "bamboo craftsmen") and the *eta* (穢多, "full of impurity")[4] were also excluded from society at large, despite their invaluable economic contributions. These outcasts had professions that were essential to secure the normal functions of society. Nevertheless, their social status was extremely low, and they were often strongly discriminated against by society at large and institutions directly connected to the state and other local power structures. One such group known as the *kawata* (皮田) was documented as early as the 16th century, often in connection to the West riverbank of Surugafuchūmachi, where they took up leather craftwork as their main occupation. According to historical records, these outcasts gathered near the riverbank, where they formed a *buraku* (部落, "hamlet") (Inoue 1969, 39–40). The term *buraku* would become synonym with discriminated outcasts from the late nineteenth century onward.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the idea that the ancient outcasts were the ancestors of modern *buraku* people was still mainstream. Moreover, for a long time, there have existed many baseless theories and conjectures postulating that the ancient outcasts were foreign technicians from such places as China and the Korean pen-

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[3] A Japanese law system based on Confucianism and Chinese Legalism, first implemented through the proclamation of the Taika reforms of 645 AD.

[4] These may also be graphed as *etta*, in katakana or Chinese characters, according to regional pronunciations and spelling disparities. In contemporary Japanese, the term is considered discriminatory and generally banned from usage in the media except in cases where a discrimination incident is being reported and quoted directly.

insula, who had allegedly been deliberately made captive, thus forced to emigrate to Yamato. There, they were supposedly discriminated based on their "polluted" occupations. This line of thought is also present in Inoue's aforementioned work on the trinity of *buraku* (Inoue 1969, 23–24).

But what are, exactly, the three components of the trinity of *buraku*? Let us review them: they are lineage, land, and occupation.

Lineage: The 1976 amendment to the Family Registry Law strived to end unauthorized access and background checks. However, contemporary accounts of crimes concerning illegal access to Family Registries by private detectives and private citizens suggest that the law has failed to thoroughly eradicate such practices associated with *buraku* discrimination, even if they have experienced a drop (Saitō 2017, 8–9). In light of that, one may conclude that lineage is still a relevant factor despite its lack of historical proof. Lineage as a weapon of exclusion is based on perceived heritage and discursive practices that are enormously flexible, adaptive, and indifferent to factual information.

Land: Thanks to investment in infrastructure development promoted by the *Dōwa* Countermeasures Special Law (同和対策事業特別措置法 *Dōwa taisaku jigyō tokubetsu sōchihō*), many historically discriminated *buraku* areas and designated *dōwa* areas (official terminology for *buraku* areas) have become indistinguishable from other neighborhoods. However, it has been speculated that there were many areas where similar infrastructure investment and human rights awareness policies could not be implemented because some areas were not designated by the government as official *dōwa* areas during the period between 1969–2002.

Occupation: One may consider that the disparity between the white-collar and blue-collar classes is becoming wider. However, the traditional labor market is modernizing, propelling a severe rural exodus and a growing acceptance of foreign workers. A number of workers engaged in occupations that have been designated as *buraku* industries have become more diverse, including ethnic Koreans, immigrants, and people of other backgrounds. Therefore, it has become more difficult to discriminate by categorizing people as *burakumin* based on their profession. Nevertheless, the discriminator's standards are essentially arbitrary, hence able of producing new rationales to justify and reproduce discrimination despite changes in context.

2.2 Criticisms of the trinity model

Almost as a direct response to Inoue and his successors, Timothy D. Amos makes a sound rebuttal of these claims, arguing that the ancient outcasts are in no way related to the *buraku* discrimination registered from the late 19th century onward (Amos 2007, 14–15). Even if modern outcasts have been discriminated against due to their occupations, it is impossible to empirically prove that they share a lineage

with the ancient outcasts. In most cases, the act of discriminating by resorting to history as a pretext is not an act based on any historical proof, but a rationalization process based on prevailing prejudices and discriminatory perceptions.

Now that more than 50 years have passed since Inoue first presented his trinity model, one must pose the following question: Does the trinity of *buraku* still apply to contemporary *buraku* discrimination? In light of recent data, the safest answer is probably that it does, to some degree, but not entirely. In 1969, the Japanese government implemented the *dōwa* Countermeasures Special Law. This law was in effect for 33 years, up to 2002. This piece of legislation allowed for the government to officially designate *dōwa* districts and provide them with financial support for infrastructure, education, and other public projects. While acknowledging the significance of the trinity model, Noguchi (2000, 27–28) points out that contemporary victims of *buraku* discrimination are not necessarily bounded by a particular status (lineage), occupation, or place. The *buraku* have become more and more heterogeneous, thus furthering the ambiguity of its physical and conceptual borders.

According to traditional historiographies and discourses on *buraku* issues, victims of discrimination have been subjected to discrimination by certain criteria that distinguish them from the majority of Japanese. As discussed above, the trinity of *buraku* proposed by Inoue (1969, 231–236) has been widely employed to explain the causes of *buraku* discrimination. It may seem that these three categories perfectly explain why historically discriminated people, such as *eta* and *hinin*, have been ostracized and forced to resort to endogamy (De Vos and Wagatsuma 1972, 118–120). However, is this interpretation applicable to *buraku* discrimination in the latter half of the 20th century and the 21st century?

As Noguchi (2000, 26–28) argues, after the period of accelerated growth that the Japanese economy experienced up to the 1990s when the bubble crisis put an abrupt end to decades of prosperity, and through the *Dōwa* Countermeasures Project of 1969–2002, the number of trinity-like populations is believed to have decreased sharply, leading to growing diversity within *buraku* areas. The boundaries between non-*burakumin* and *burakumin* have also become blurrier. Such a transformation of the *buraku* may be linked to a confluence of trends seen in the 20th century, such as an increase in migrations (both inward and outward) and an increase in the intermarriage/exogamy rate.

The trinity theory also fails to explain the persistence of discrimination after the *Dōwa* Countermeasures Law (1968–2002). Through the implementation of *dōwa* measures by the central government and local governments, the crumbling infrastructure of the *buraku* was repaired, the housing situation was improved, and the enrolment rate of *buraku* youth to high schools and colleges increased sharply. In that sense, it can be said that the affirmative action measures propelled by the

dōwa projects at a nationwide level have raised the living standard of the *buraku* people who belonged to officially designated *dōwa* districts (Kadooka 2013, 97).

However, even if we admit that the former *dōwa* districts now have higher living standards compared to the early 20th century, one cannot ignore that discrimination itself is still occurring, as suggested by manifold activist groups and court cases. Saitō (2017) provides various examples of marriage discrimination in the 2010s. These cases vary from parents opposing matrimony to more extreme and rarer incidents involving violence, kidnappings, and forced abortions, perpetrated by opposing family members, partners, and neighbors.

A particularly famous case that perfectly demonstrates how *buraku* discrimination has adapted to the 21st century is the incident known as the Tottori Loop/Shingensha case. Tottori Loop/Shingensha, a small publisher headquartered in Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture, hinted online that it would publish a reprint of the *National Buraku Survey*, that is, a report that lists all the names of places suspected of being *buraku* areas. This survey is based on the *Buraku Name Directory* (部落地名総鑑 *Buraku chimei sōkan*), an illegal publication that was widely used by large companies in the 20th century as a tool to discriminate job applicants. When Tottori Loop/Shingensha announced that it would publish a reprint, the *Buraku* Liberation League quickly and severely condemned its actions, filing a lawsuit against the publication due to the illegality of the publication itself (*Buraku* Liberation League, 2018/11/12−2882).

Among the discrimination cases that occurred in the 21st century, the Tachibanamachi discriminatory postcard case stands out in particular. From 2003 to 2008, discriminatory postcards were sent one after another to members of the Fukuoka Prefectural Branch of the *Buraku* Liberation League, in Tachibanamachi. The victims were members in charge of human rights awareness and *dōwa* education. In the postcards, the perpetrator wrote that the *Buraku* Liberation League members who engage in educational activities were responsible for transmitting (that is, "polluting") children with their *burakuness* and filthiness. This case reproduces a quintessential type of impurity (穢れ *kegare*) perception, as displayed by the text contained in one of the postcards:

> 部落のあなたが子どもを指導してくれますと子どもたちに部落が伝ります。子ども
> を体験塾に参加させたいのですが参加させられません。社会教育課を辞めてくだ
> さい。役場を辞めて下さい。

> If you keep tutoring children, your *burakuness* will be transmitted unto them. I would like to let my children take part in your association's tutoring activities, but that is not possible with you there. So, please resign from the Educational Affairs department. Leave your position.

However, if the trinity of *buraku* does not apply to the 21st century, what kind of motivations underlay the prevailing discrimination against the *buraku*? Based on the typology proposed by Inoue in the 1960s, it would be assumed that genealogy, land, and occupation would still be the true motives underlying discrimination. Nonetheless, as pointed out by Noguchi (2000) and other authors, in the 21st century, the trinity model has already become anachronistic in most cases. Therefore, it must be judged insufficient to interpret *buraku* discrimination in contemporary Japan.

In light of this acute contradiction, one question persists: why does prejudice against *buraku* and discriminatory practices prevail if the traditionally held categories no longer seem to apply? The answer might be in Amos's *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan* (2011). Amos (2011, 24–26) defines the term *burakumin* in the following manner:

> A discourse of difference used to define and bind together socially marginalized persons on the Japanese archipelago [...], an imagined community that is believed to have emerged as a result of the common experiences of social marginalization originating in inherited circumstances.

This definition proposed by Amos (2011) appears to be the most suitable to explain *buraku* discrimination in the 21st century, revealing a deep historical consciousness and an enormous level of nuance that Inoue's pioneer model fails to provide.

Having discussed Inoue's trinity of *buraku* and its relevance to the *buraku* issue in contemporary Japan, the following section will address the processes of categorization and identity formation within the context of *buraku* discrimination.

2.3 Evolution and appropriation of the terms *buraku* and *burakumin*

Derogatory terms such as *eta* and *hinin*, as well as other words designating feudal outcasts, are, in most aspects, semantically different from the contemporary label *burakumin* (which is now a sensitive term considered taboo by contemporary Japanese media, despite its wide usage by the *Buraku* Liberation movement). *Eta* and *hinin* were labels based on value judgments, referring to the quality as human beings of the people who were found to be polluted due to their occupations or perceived lineage. If one was to be described as *eta* or *hinin*, their innate value as a human being would be suspect, which, in practical terms, meant that any rights applicable to the general population, including the right to protection, would not technically apply.

Up until the 1871, there were clear legal grounds for segregation based on status (身分 *mibun*). Nevertheless, the term *buraku* originally refers to a location, the settlement or the hamlet, and the people who came from or resided in those

areas, thus the derivation "people of the hamlet" (Amos 2011, 11–14). Unlike the historical names given to outcast communities, the words *buraku* and *burakumin* do not exist within the framework of social strata or *mibun*.

As society at large changed, so did discriminatory practices and discourses. Hatanaka (1993, 143) points out that discriminated peoples were not and are not static entities, but the products of social and political structures within a given time. In that sense, Inoue's and other researchers' usage of the term *burakumin* to refer to outcasts from the Edo period, such as the aforementioned *eta* and *hinin*, may be anachronistic and not in line with the semantic and pragmatic nature of the terms as they have been and are still used by the actors themselves. In contemporary Japan, there are also similarities between accounts of prejudice against the *buraku* and other discriminated groups, such as victims of Minamata's disease, Hansen's disease, and Zainichi Koreans.

To fully understand the *buraku* discrimination issue, one must comprehend how discriminated communities have been perceived, and how the practice surrounding discrimination has been rationalized and justified. Kurokawa (1999, 112) indicated that, in the early 20th century, when ideas based on eugenics became mainstream in the intellectual scene, discriminatory perceptions, and discourses based on the assumption that the *burakumin* belonged to a "different race" or that they were "the descendants of foreigners" gained acceptance in manifold echelons of Japanese society. Social Darwinism gave discriminators a scientifically based justification for exclusion.

> *Buraku* people who were discriminated against were virtually perceived as being "from a different race" [...]. It could be said that it was a recognition that had almost the same meaning as the racism that had disseminated after the Russo-Japanese War, although it did not specify biological differences. (Kurokawa 1999, 112)

What is striking is that even Inoue, who makes occasional references to the possible foreign origin of the *bumin*, calls the origin stories (and histories) of *buraku* communities "legends" or "myths" (Inoue 1969, 41). These origin theories, while lacking in empirical groundings, have been widely used to rationalize discrimination of anyone perceived to be *burakumin*. Nevertheless, this kind of discourse became prominent and even the orthodoxy within the *Buraku* Liberation movement, assuming the role of a unifying myth and fundamental axis of the liberation discourse and its narratives. This fact is noticeable in the Suiheisha (水平社, Leveler's Association) Declaration of 1922, where the liberation activists refer to themselves as eta. This allowed them to appropriate the derogatory term that was used against them, going as far as calling upon their "discriminated ancestors." This was a dramatic calling that could only be possible by referring to an imagined common history. In this manner, the Leveler's Association attempted to construct

its own narrative and, thus, subvert the asymmetrical relation between society at large and outcast groups at the time.

It was precisely because the discriminated *buraku* peoples of the 20th century perceived themselves as descendants of feudal outcasts that a distinct culture of the *buraku* was "invented." Kobayakawa (2018, 232–235), a fierce critic of discourses that emphasized the otherness of the *buraku*, calls this phenomenon the "trap of identity." According to Kobayakawa, since the communities that became the discriminated *buraku* areas are extremely diverse in their geography, economic activities, and history, narratives calling upon the unity of the *burakumin* end up perpetuating a homogenous and limiting image of the *buraku* which is ultimately harmful to the actors themselves. By limiting the experiences of discriminated *burakumin* to a particular culture, profession, and/or identity, regardless of their own identity, one might inadvertently disseminate the same stereotypes that are at the root of individual and structural discrimination. As examples of particular cultural practices that have been reinterpreted by the *Buraku* Liberation movement as unique to the *buraku*, Kobayakawa (2018, 238–239, 244–245) lists the *harigoma* (春駒) dance of Sado Island and the performance art of *kadozuke* (門付)[5] in Shibata city (both in Niigata prefecture) as prototypical cases of this invention process. According to Kobayakawa's reading of ethnographic and historical documents, there is little evidence suggesting that *harigoma* and *kadozuke* in these regions had historically been linked to segregated communities. This reframing happened only in the 20th century as a conscientious effort by the *Buraku* Liberation movement to create a historiography of *burakuness* based on an invented cultural uniqueness.

By actively identifying, promoting, and passing on the culture of the discriminated *buraku*, the activists and members of liberation movements "invented" particular traditions or connotations of pre-existing traditions that had not existed hitherto. As Hobsbawm (1983, 4, 7) argued, inventing a tradition based on the past (history, genealogy, etc.) is mainly a process of formalization and ritualization. The historical continuation itself must be created by each society and community at any given time. Similarly, traditions (such as folklore and customary forms of art) that were invented or became associated with the distinctive culture of the *buraku* people embodied the boundaries of discriminated *buraku* peoples who were scattered all over the country. This strengthened the sense of community within each community. People who shared the same experience of discrimination were, henceforth, called "brothers" and "comrades." These were inclusive terms that stressed their shared experiences and feelings of brotherhood. Inter-

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[5] A type of traditional performing art consisting in visiting people's houses and standing in front of their entrance asking for metal items.

estingly, the term "comrade" stopped being used in the liberation movement as soon as the *Buraku* Liberation League cut its ties to the Communist Party in the 1970s (Aoki 2018). As a result, the invention of a distinct culture and traditions produced an unnatural heterogeneity in the discriminated *buraku*, thus emphasizing its difference from the so-called "non-*buraku*" Japanese (a category that only makes sense in the context of a non-negotiable dichotomy). This unwanted accentuation of distinctive features has been criticized by some who believe that it may, inadvertently, hinder *buraku* communities from being accepted in society at large (Kobayakawa 2018, 250).

Activists who advocate for the rights of the *buraku* often refuse to use words such as *dōwa* (同和), which means harmonious, and is preferred by government agencies when dealing with the *buraku* issue. They reject silence as a pathway to equality. These *buraku* activists defend that it is necessary to promote the empowerment and social equality of the people who are discriminated against based on their location or occupation, which includes their right to proclaim their distinct identities without fear of repercussions. The eradication of discrimination can only be considered thorough if it includes the possibility of self-affirmation (or coming out).

Moreover, Kobayakawa's (2018) argument against *buraku* culture seems to fall short when considering the pertinent legislation. Even if people from discriminated *buraku* communities had chosen to embrace a unique culture that is different from the mainstream culture of their place of residence, Article 14 of the Constitution of Japan enshrines the right of all citizens to be treated equally, regardless of their identities or backgrounds. Therefore, the ostracism of discriminated *buraku* based on the argument of "otherness" can only be seen as a crass violation of Japanese law and social norms regarding equity of treatment. In that light, Kobayakawa's criticisms, even if well-intentioned, may be interpreted as a form of victim-blaming that is often at the root of discriminatory practices in Japanese society.

As previously mentioned, the trinity of *buraku* model advanced by Inoue (1969) stipulates three elements that are indivisible from the *buraku* areas: land (one or one's family's place of origin and/or residential area), status (historical or imagined), and occupation (so-called "*buraku* industries" or other occupations deemed to be impure). In 1913, the ethnologist Kunio Yanagita considered the possibility that the discriminated *burakumin* had their origins in a land other than Japan. He defined a *buraku* community simply as an area ravaged by poverty, high unemployment, and subpar living conditions (Yanagita 1913, 108, 111).

Buraku discrimination is, in fact, closely related to poverty and limited social mobility. Nevertheless, according to Inoue, the reason why *buraku* discrimination did not disappear in the 20th century is because the *buraku* issue might not only

be a matter of class disparity (socio-economic standing). "No matter how much money they have or how good their neighborhood looks like: as soon as they are called 'the people from that area,' they will be discriminated against" (Inoue 1969, 231). That is, although the *buraku* people who have been subjected to discrimination have historically experienced economic difficulties based on their exclusion from society, their economic situation is not the root of the discrimination and social exclusion that they face. Rather, they have been discriminated against because they are from or reside in an area that is itself avoided and ostracized because they took up occupations such as tanning, meat processing, or garbage collection, that were deemed as impure, or because they are perceived to be the heirs of feudal outcasts, which results in being sentenced to the bottom strata of society. Nevertheless, it is sensible to suppose that people who are subject to *buraku* discrimination may also be excluded from society based on their class and other factors, but, in that case, it is hard to determine whether it should fall under the category of *buraku* discrimination or if it is simply an expression of classism and/or the general disparities that reside in Japanese society at large.[6]

3. Categorization and identity formation in the context of *buraku* empowerment

3.1 Deschamps and Devos, and Giddens

In this brief section, I will start by defining the concept of categorization as used in this article, which relies mostly on the previous conceptual work by Jean-Claude Deschamps and Thierry Devos (1998) and Anthony Giddens (1991). The clarification of these concepts will be followed by an analysis of identity formation within the context of *buraku* discrimination and the challenges that it poses.

Deschamps and Devos (1998, 4) define categorization as a process through which individuals divide "the environment into groups of subjects which are or seem to be similar according to certain criteria." As the author points out, one of the major consequences of this simplification process is the exaggeration of contrastive features as a resource to enhance the identity of one's group (Deschamps and Devos 1998, 4). Sakurai (2005, 36–37) distinguishes between innocuous processes of categorization, needed for individuals to navigate the world around

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[6] One must also consider meta-discrimination within the discriminated communities. This may include discrimination based on class, gender, and nationality. Moreover, people from discriminated *buraku* areas may experience multiple forms of discrimination, such as discrimination for being both from a *buraku* area and for being a woman, a member of a sexual minority, a migrant worker, or the victim of a contagious or stigmatized disease, such as Minamata's or Hansen's disease, etc.

them, and discriminatory categorization. Through this process, the dominant culture unilaterally imposes a particular form of life onto a group of people, whose self-awareness often ends up being entirely ignored.

At this stage, it is equally important to clarify the meaning of self-identity as used in this paper. Self-identity presupposes reflexive awareness and has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (Giddens 1991, 52). While self-categorization theory recognizes that negative outcomes, such as a shared experience of oppression can lead to strengthened group cohesion, such as in the case of Jewish communities in the US, for a given group to effectively exist it must first define *itself* as such (Robinson 1996, 35). In his pioneer work on group identity, Henri Tajfel connects social identity to belonging to a certain social group to which the individual attributes emotional and evaluative significance (Tajfel 1972, 272–275).

By comparing Deschamps and Devos's and Tajfel's understanding of categorization and group identity with common strategies of bracketing and passing among targets of *buraku* discrimination (Bondy 2015, 10–12), one may conclude that, for a vast number of hypothetical members of the *burakumin*, their aspired group identity is that of a so-called ordinary Japanese citizen, defined by their personal history and experiences, just like any other individual around them, and not simply a product of past or future instances of discrimination that they may encounter during their lifetime. Bracketing is essentially a strategy aiming at covering up stigma (Goffman 1959) and avoiding social exclusion. In that sense, one must admit that bracketing or fully concealing one's linkage to *buraku* markers of difference (hometown or place of residence, occupation, etc.) is not necessarily an act of self-identification with the *burakumin* category.

3.2 Becoming *burakumin*

As aforementioned, *burakumin* as a fixed category is, in itself, highly problematic. Firstly, because individuals who are categorized in such a manner might not necessarily identify with the label. It is vital to keep in mind that *burakumin* or discriminated *buraku* (被差別部落 *hisabetsu buraku*) are terms that do not refer to real and specific communities, but rather to diverse peoples and communities that might not share much other than the common experience of discrimination or being targeted due to perceived otherness. In this sense, the *buraku* as a conceptual space may be defined as a sort of Foucauldian heterotopia, "a collection whose members have few or no intelligible connections with one another," as defined by Mead (1995–1996, 13–31).

Secondly, a unilateral categorization of *buraku* discrimination victims deprives individuals of their identity, often mistreating them as mere receptacles of external discrimination acts. As a result, this type of identity imposition through discourse

excludes the voices of the very people who have been discriminated against or have lived in fear of segregation.

A common opinion on how to end discrimination against *burakumin* is the theory of natural extinction, popularly known as the "do not wake up a sleeping child" (寝た子を起こすな *neta ko o okosu na*) approach. According to its proponents, silence and absolute ignorance about the issue of discrimination will naturally lead to the end of such practices. In practical terms, that means that the *buraku* issue should be absent from school curricula and the media and that the end of discrimination should be sought through general human rights promotion and public policies that improve the standard of living of a given community. This approach, however, raises a few questions about its efficiency and feasibility. Recent accounts of marriage discrimination and discriminatory remarks online (Saitō 2017, 2–9) suggest that certain forms of discrimination persist to this day despite the public and civic efforts to eradicate them.

In the 21st century, more than a century after the legal abolition of outcast status in 1871, the only available means to trace a person's real outcast lineage is through the family registry (戸籍 *koseki*). After the reformation law of 1976, it became illegal to access other people's family registers without prior consent. Nevertheless, some studies suggest that even in recent years private detectives and detective agencies have unlawfully accessed and leaked transcripts of many household registers upon request by employers, parents, or spouses who wished to conduct background checks (身元調査 *mimoto chōsa*) to determine whether a future employee or spouse was from a *buraku* area (Saitō 2017, 8–9). Hence, even if one assumes that the incidence of discrimination has become comparatively lower than in the past, it is far too optimistic to expect that silence and ignorance will suffice to completely solve the long-lasting issue of *buraku* discrimination.

Therefore, it is not particularly surprising that many *buraku* rights activists and researchers, alike, choose the opposite approach, by prioritizing frankness, open dialogue, and education as the keys to correct discriminatory mindsets and behaviors. Even so, both researchers of this issue and *buraku* rights advocates must recognize that an open approach to discrimination is, in its core, inalienable from social categorization. That is, one can only choose openness if one is ready to accept *burakumin* as an isolated category. In some cases, doing research on the *buraku* issue may unconsciously bring about the unwanted result of reproducing discrimination by solidifying the *burakumin* category (Miura 2009, 11–13). While recognizing that dealing with the *buraku* issue may lead to undesired consequences, Miura (2009) defends the role of the researcher as that of a clarifier, who sheds light on the mechanisms which give birth to *burakumin* as a representation only visible to certain people. Moreover, the author considers it necessary to take into account the conditions which allow for the persistence of *buraku* discrimi-

nation in modern society, characterized by a plurality of representations of *buraku* and *burakumin* which diverge on their positive or negative value judgments about these imagined categories (Miura 2009, 12).

Despite the imposed nature of the category and the difficulty of identifying its supposed members, many reports and studies accept the a priori existence of *burakumin* as a tangible, clearly defined group. Some accounts go as far as presenting *burakumin* as "Japan's biggest minority,"[7] a straightforward description that gives the illusion of homogeneity in a country that is, in fact, far from cohesive (Gottlieb 2006, 50).

Confronted with the problematic recognition of *burakumin* as a tangible group, one must be bold enough to ask the following difficult question: who is, then, part of the *burakumin*? Is anyone a *burakumin* to begin with? A straightforward definition would be that anyone who shares the experience or fear of discrimination based on their place of birth or residence, occupation or perceived lineage might become a *burakumin*, at least at a social and interpersonal level. That is the classical understanding based on Inoue's trinity, as previously discussed. While this broad definition encompasses many central issues of the *buraku* discrimination problem, it fails to accommodate the most important aspect of identity: the right of individuals to construe their own identity and present it or conceal it as they desire. Advocates of *buraku* rights, such as the National Leveler's Association, from 1922 to 1943, and the *Buraku* Liberation League (部落解放同盟 Buraku kaihō dōmei), founded in 1946 (and renamed in 1955), openly embraced *burakumin* as a banner of their identity, as seen in the Suiheisha declaration of 1922, which has been mentioned before in this article: "People of the special hamlets [*tokushu burakumin*] from all over the country, assemble" (Suiheisha Declaration 1922).

Nevertheless, one must also consider the clear difference between the term *burakumin* as used by the Suiheisha and other advocates, and how the term has been employed by outside actors (government, journalists, aggressors, etc.). The latter may, in many cases, impose unto unwilling actors an identity with which they do not identify. As James et al. (1997, 4) point out, when we think about identity, we must value multivocality. That is, to listen closely to the actors themselves, paying close attention to the way they choose to express and present themselves. In that sense, even activists and researchers who strive to end discrimination against the *buraku* areas must privilege how the actors themselves choose to form

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[7] In Western media, in particular, the discriminated *buraku* communities are often referred to as the untouchables of Japan, or Japan's largest minority. This type of nomenclature has also penetrated the discourses of some South Asian human rights advocates, who refer to *burakumin* as Japan's equivalents of India's Dalits or Harijans. This nomenclature might have its roots in Orientalism and colonialism, which appropriated "caste" and other conceptual frameworks from South Asian societies and unilaterally imposed them into different cultural contexts.

and express their own identities when conveying their particular challenges to a broader audience.

Multivocality is and must be one of the main pillars of any discussion that deals with direct accounts of discrimination by its victims. On the other hand, one must also discuss the mutability of identity. Migrations, increasing rates of intermarriage, urbanization, and the absence of strong communal interactions in urban areas have made it increasingly harder to cite strong correlations between places of residence or origin and traceable *buraku* backgrounds. According to Sakurai (2005, 36–37), the transformations that have shaped *buraku* areas in the past decades, such as the allotment of public funds for *dōwa* education and the establishment of social welfare centers, have not only changed living conditions but have also increased the ambiguity of the borders of the *burakumin* category as defined by the dominant culture.

Victims of discriminatory discourses and practices in marriage and employment do not necessarily self-identify as the categories assigned to them by their discriminators (whether individuals or institutions) or by the *Buraku* Liberation League members and allies. Furthermore, concealing a connection with the *buraku* by outsiders does not necessarily constitute a statement of identity. In some cases, this behavior should rather be understood purely as a self-defense mechanism, given the social stigma that they may face otherwise.

On a purely ideal level, it is reasonable to affirm that it would only be reasonable to ascribe a given group identity to the *burakumin* if the hypothetical members of the imagined group self-identified and presented themselves as such. However, without reflexive awareness of one's membership, *burakumin* as a group becomes an imposed category that relegates its coerced members to a condition of utter powerlessness and silence.

Then, let us compare the case of *buraku* discrimination with discrimination based on sexual orientation. In many countries throughout the world, sexual minorities have historically hidden their true identities due to fear of persecution and social stigmata (Brekhus 2003, 78–79). However, as laws, cultures, and dominant values shift towards acceptance of different types of sexual orientations and lifestyles, LGBTQ individuals are more likely to proudly embrace and exhibit their identities not only as individuals but also as members of a larger group of people with shared values and experiences.

Yet, in the case of *burakumin* that does not seem to be the case. Even in the 21st century, when instances of discrimination have become less visible compared to the prior century, the treatment of *buraku* issues as taboo makes it difficult to determine how most victims of discrimination see themselves and choose to present themselves publicly. In her study of education on assimilation issues (*dōwa kyōiku* 同和教育), Gordon (2015, 125–126) describes how teachers who attempted to relate

to their students of *buraku* or Korean *zainichi* backgrounds ended up "imposing onto young people identities that the students *clearly* did not wish to embrace." The teachers in this account would have certainly benefited from hearing the students' voices, thus contributing to a smoother formation of their self-identities. The problem lies not in each individual, but in the public policies that shape the curricula and guidelines on the teaching of *dōwa kyōiku*. Changing policies might, therefore, be a necessary step toward achieving the goal of eradicating *buraku* discrimination.

For identity not to be imposed, it must be formed voluntarily by the actors themselves (individuals or communities). In a candid account of his experiences as someone who grew up in a discriminated area, author Nobuhiko Kadooka, who proudly identifies himself as *burakumin*, expresses his belief that the continuity of *buraku* and *burakumin* as relevant categories will only be possible if an associated *buraku* culture follows suit (Kadooka 2013, 214). In other words, if the discriminated *burakumin* do not possess a unique culture and only share their hometown and/or the culture of their place of residence, it may not be meaningful to identify with a *burakumin* category, which is, in many cases, imposed exogenously. His view seems to echo that of Kobayakawa, previously discussed in this article. Although the implications of culture as used by Kadooka are not clear, people in the *buraku* people who are discriminated against can openly embrace their identities or, as an alternative, choose identities that are not related to discrimination in any fashion. If one takes into account every individual's right to live freely, according to their own terms, it is clear that Kadooka's ideas about identity may rely too heavily on discourses that are mainstream in the Liberation Movement and may not reflect the plurality of opinions on what it means to be *burakumin*, both as an individual and as a community.

Considering the difficulties of definition and the imposed nature of this category, *burakumin* should, henceforth, be presented not as a cohesive social group but, as Amos (2011, 24–26) brilliantly advocates, as a "an imagined community that is believed to have emerged as a result of the common experiences of social marginalization."

Unlike members of sexual minorities, who are defined by their sexual orientation, lifestyle, and reflexive discourse, people referred to as *burakumin* are, in many cases, unwillingly ascribed to this fluid category, which changes boundaries and definitions according to evolving circumstances and social context. In other words, one may observe that the implications of the term *burakumin* as used by activists and the parties involved and their discriminators (directly or indirectly) are quite different.

In the hypothetical community of *burakumin*, the alleged characteristics of the group (that is, other than the common experience of discrimination) are created

by the discriminators' arbitrary criteria or by the mythical narratives of activist groups. How, then, do the victims of discrimination become members of this so-called group?

It can be said that the circumstances inherited by the victims of discrimination, that is, the series of situations in which they are subjected to social exclusion, are "thrown at them" without any consideration of the victim's awareness and will. Although some people may identify as *burakumin* and be proud of that identity, those who have become *burakumin* because they were discriminated against or were at risk of being discriminated against experience a sudden paradigm shift. That is, the process of becoming a member of an imaginary community that is inconsistent in most aspects, besides the common experience of discrimination, presenting vague boundaries and commonalities, from being considered normal through the lens of social norms and expectations. In other words, there is no liminal state between being a non-*burakumin* and a *burakumin* because of the experience and risk of being discriminated against. The first acts of discrimination and the revelation of one's origins (whether historically proven or as a product of discourse) subject the victimized individual to a new reality. With this new paradigm, discriminated individuals will have to choose between bracketing and passing, or openly accepting their new imposed identities. Individuals who are subjected to *buraku* discrimination have no choice but to act according to this new paradigm since that in which these individuals were not subjected to *buraku* discrimination by external volition and actions does no longer exist.

The self-inquiring nature of the victims of *buraku* discrimination raises many questions about self-identity. To answer this particular question, it may be valuable to refer back to Giddens's *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991). Self-identity is "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography" and presupposes recursive consciousness, "which must always be constructed and sustained by the individual's recursive activity" (Giddens 1991, 52–53). Individuals who are from *buraku* or who may be subjected to *buraku* discrimination must discover their history and traditions in order to decide whether to accept or reject their *burakumin* identity.

This self-discovery process sheds light on an important dimension of self-identity: time. According to Latour (2005, 200), all interactions are diachronic in nature, not synchronic. It is not the case that an individual becomes an exclusive *burakumin* at the moment when he becomes aware of the attributes of the *burakumin* category, through his own inquiry and external categorization. Becoming and being a member of the discriminated *burakumin*, as a category, is a culmination of the cumulative knowledge, experiences, and discourses that the term *burakumin* encompasses, including various conceptual and practical implications. These parameters make up the *burakumin* category through a sense of values, percep-

tions, and zeitgeist that may change rapidly at each point in time. According to psychological research, the formation of self-identity and the recognition of time are closely related. Kimura (1982, 36–37) states that "a sound self-identity requires an expansive awareness of betweenness in time." In other words, an individual should have a strong awareness of the different time intervals (past and past, past and present, present and future). Therefore, the victims of *buraku* discrimination can engage in self-reflection on their identity and social status by having a sound perception of time. Giddens insists on the spatial and temporal facets of self-identity. These aspects are premised on having "a continuity across time and space […] as interpreted reflexively by the agent" (Giddens 1991, 53).

In short, members of the imagined *burakumin* category are not just passive containers of discrimination, but active and recursive people. Despite being "thrown" into this reality, the *buraku* subjects may live by pursuing history, while having a strong sense of time and examining themselves. As a result, the targets/victims of *buraku* discrimination are able to decide whether to accept or reject the identity that has been externally attributed to them. Of course, it is also possible for the people who are discriminated against to unite and write their own narratives as individuals and communities and change the meaning of the category of *burakumin*. However, to change the meaning of *burakumin* it is necessary to take into account not only the will of the parties but also the reliable support of their allies, as well as a public policy of zero tolerance that must follow suit.

4. Conclusion

This article discussed Inoue's trinity of *buraku* and how it fits into contemporary cases of *buraku* discrimination. The persistence of discriminatory practices well beyond the affirmative action campaigns that sought to improve living conditions in discriminated areas suggests that the problem lies not so much in physical spaces or genealogies but discourse.

After having established that the *buraku* is not a static entity but a mere product of discourse, corresponding to imagined communities of immense diversity (heterotopia), the present study goes on to champion the importance of reflexive and conscientious processes of self-identity making in the construction of *buraku* narratives that do not fall in the pitfalls of traditional historiographies and imposed labels. While the victims of *buraku* discrimination have mostly been defined by either their aggressors (in the form of individuals, groups, or the media) or the liberation movement, independent accounts from *burakumin* that do not fall into the traditional categories are still extremely rare. This scarcity can also be linked to the absence of representation in the Japanese media, who have adopted the

"do not wake up a sleeping child" approach to avoid reproach from activists and stir up controversy.

Despite the lack of evidence that supports the usage of these terms in the 21st century, the terms "untouchable" and "outcast" still seem to be mainstream, at least in Western and, in some instances, South Asian reporting on the *buraku* issue.

In conclusion, as discussed throughout the article, this treatment of the *buraku* as a static category poses many issues relating to identity. Ideally, the term *burakumin* as an attribute marker would only be applied when referring to people who reflexively accept and present *burakumin* as their own identity, as is often the case among Liberation League activists, rather than being forced unilaterally by an external agent. The act of referring as *burakumin* to someone who does not identify in such a manner is, in itself, an instance of discrimination. Well-meaning activists and researchers, in particular, must tread carefully while addressing this issue, so as not to impose categories unto other individuals, while allowing for the actors themselves to choose their own identities and how they prefer to construe and present them. As James et al. (1997, 12–13) point out, expression is also a political practice. Social scientists, such as anthropologists, take into account the dialogues and asymmetrical power relationships that underlie expression practices, even when trying to convey the worldview and perspective in the representation of the helpless and voiceless. Therefore, this chapter asserts the responsibility of researchers who deal with discrimination issues and the importance of multivocality in social science research. Similarly, efforts such as the Settlement social work projects (隣保事業 *rinpo jigyō*) and *dōwa* education aimed at empowering *buraku* people who have been discriminated against should also take into account the position of victims and their own identities without imposing them a fossilized and stereotypical image of a *buraku*. The question of how to close the divide between discourses and self-identity has yet to be answered.

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"SOFT" RESISTANCE IN RURAL CHINA: THE SILENT VOICE OF THE POWERLESS

Silvia Picchiarelli

In 1953, the Chinese government introduced a monopoly on trade in grain, known as the "unified system of purchase and sale." Although often underestimated by the academic world, the effects of this policy on the countryside were nothing less than devastating. Challenging conventional wisdom which deems the Chinese peasants completely powerless and subservient, this paper seeks to show that in fact they unswervingly resisted it. However, as my comparative analysis of primary sources dating from 1953 to 1955 and relating to villages in Shanxi province (northern China) has shown, the peasants rarely resorted to violent, large-scale rebellions to express their discontent. They were more inclined to employ invisible and unorganized resistance strategies, which were very similar to those identified by the American scholar James Scott in his study of a Malaysian village and defined as "everyday forms of peasant resistance."

Keywords: Chinese peasants, resistance, Maoist era, unified system of purchase and sale

1. Introduction

In the summer of 1953, a radical shift occurred in Chinese politics as Mao Zedong decided to promote the process of socialist transformation of agriculture (Liu and Wang 2006, 724–725). Such a decision led a few months later to the establishment of a state monopoly on the purchase and sale of grain, known as the "unified system of purchase and sale" (*tonggou tongxiao zhidu*).[1] This was a policy whereby local governments were supposed to purchase the surplus grain from peasants in

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[1]   This measure remained in force for about forty years. It was gradually abolished during the phase of "reform and opening up" (*gaige kaifang*) introduced by Deng Xiaoping (Luo 2008, 28–30).

amounts, varieties, and at prices set by the State, and to resell it to households in need. Furthermore, this measure would have also guaranteed the supply of food to the urban residents (Li 2006, 145; Luo 2008, 28–34).

Defined as "one of the greatest enigmas" in Chinese contemporary history (Gao 2016, 1), the unified system constitutes a topic that has so far been treated only marginally in both Chinese and Western historiography. The socio-economic effects of this measure on the countryside have often been neglected by historians and consequently the extent of the peasant reaction to it has also been erroneously minimized (Tian 2006, 4–10; Huang 2013, 13). Scholars who deal with China's agrarian policies in the early 1950s have generally assumed that the unified system received a positive response from the rural masses and that the resistance, if any, involved mainly "class enemies" (*jieji diren*) in the countryside, namely rich peasants (*funong*), former landlords (*dizhu*), and other so-called "counter-revolutionaries"[2] (*fangeming fenzi*) (Bernstein 1967, 38–40; Perry 1985, 416; Lin 1990, 1228; Li 2009, 76–77). As Chinese scholar Yu Liu asserts, the ordinary villagers, including poor (*pinnong*) and middle peasants (*zhongnong*), would have never opposed a directive issued by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For them, the Party was a "savior," who had redistributed a larger share of land to them, and even more importantly, had empowered them politically (Yu 2006, 734–735). In addition to this, Professor Vivienne Shue confirms that the unified system brought many benefits to the rural populace, thus gaining its immediate support (Shue 1980, 218–222).

The purpose of this paper is instead to show that the unified system encountered a wide and unswerving opposition, which involved the entire rural society, and even included the CCP's most reliable allies, the poor (*pinnong*) and middle peasants (*zhongnong*).[3] The supposed voiceless in the Chinese countryside, indeed, were not as vulnerable and submissive as conventionally held. Even under the authoritarian socialist regime, they proved capable of devising their own ways to react.

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[2] In addition to rich peasant and former landlords, bandit chiefs, professional brigands, Guomindang secret agents, local tyrants and sectarian leaders were also labelled as "counter-revolutionaries" (Yang 2008, 106).

[3] As is already known, Mao Zedong was among the first Chinese Communists to perceive the revolutionary potential of poor peasants and his preoccupation with safeguarding the interests of middle peasants, who held considerable economic power, is a continuous theme in his leadership and writings from the early 1930s until 1955. He considered this strategy as the key both to securing broad-based support and ensuring the vitality of the rural economy. Theoretically, even the measures of socialist development were designed to elicit broad support from such social groups. As Mao declared in *On the present situation and our tasks* (*Muqian xingshi he women de renwu*): "Our policy is to rely on the poor peasants and unite solidly with the middle peasants to abolish the feudal and semifeudal system of exploitation" (Selden 1982, 42–43; Selden and Lippit 1982, 6–7).

To prove this thesis, I carried out a comparative analysis of local archive documents, statistics, newspaper articles, and inner-Party investigative reports (*Neibu cankao*)[4] dating from 1953 to 1955 relating to the northern province of Shanxi.[5] Although the unified system was implemented nationally, I chose this area as the object of study for the uniqueness of its historical background. Shanxi, indeed, played a fundamental strategic role in the process that led to the establishment of New China and later to the building of a socialist society. This province was on the front-line of conflict with Japan during the 1937–1945 War of Resistance[6] and in 1951 it hosted the first ten experimental agricultural cooperatives in the entire country.[7] The discovery that the peasants opposed a measure introduced by the Communist leadership even in a province with such a glorious revolutionary past is significant in order to understand how serious its consequences had been on their lives.

This paper is organized as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 illustrate the reasons behind the peasants' discontent. In particular, Chapter 2 shows how the flaws in the mechanism of grain procurement, which were conspicuous during the purchase campaign of 1954, caused many peasants to suffer starvation. Chapter 3 focuses

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[4] The archival documents analyzed are almost two hundred and mostly include reports from local Party committees to higher Party bodies. They are kept in the archives of some Shanxi townships and villages, where I conducted research between the summer of 2005 and the spring of 2016. The newspapers of the time consulted are mainly local, such as the *Shanxi Daily* (*Shanxi Ribao*), the *Shanxi Peasants' Daily* (*Shanxi Nongmin Bao*) and the *Pingshun* Gazette (*Pingshun Xiaobao*). They were all run by provincial and local Party organs. The so-called *Neibu cankao* consist of a series of confidential, inner-Party investigative reports written by Xinhua News Agency's journalists and submitted to the various levels of the Party leadership.

[5] Shanxi province is located between North latitude 34°36'–40°44' and East latitude 110°15'– 114°32' and it extends over an area of 156,000 square kilometers, occupying approximately 1.64% of the Chinese territory. Indicated also with the abbreviation of *Jin*, from the name of the state founded in that area during the Spring and Autumn period (771 B.C.–476 B.C.), it borders Hebei to the East, Henan to the South, Shaanxi to the West and Inner Mongolia to the North. Currently its territory includes eleven prefectures: Taiyuan, where the homonymous capital is located, Changzhi, Datong, Jincheng, Jinzhong, Linfen, Lüliang, Shuozhou, Xinzhou, Yangquan, Yuncheng (Shanxi sheng Difangzhi 1994, 2).

[6] During the War of Resistance against Japan the Communists established in Shanxi province some of the revolutionary base areas (*geming genjudi*) which proved to be decisive in the fight against the invaders. One of the most important was the Taihang base area, from which the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu (Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan-Jiangsu-Anhui) border region grew (Goodman 2000, IX).

[7] The ten experimental agricultural cooperatives were established in Changzhi prefecture, in southeast Shanxi, on the initiative of the local authorities. However, this decision triggered a heated debate, which even involved the highest ranks of the Party and the government. In fact, many leaders were convinced that anticipating the stages of the process of transition to socialism would have been harmful for the development of the rural economy (Gao 1999, 35–61; Ma 2012, 10–12).

on the restrictions the unified system imposed on trade and other activities which were vital to the economy of the countryside and the peasants' livelihood. The various strategies used by the villagers to resist this policy are examined in Chapter 4.

2. The grain purchase campaign of 1954 and the causes of peasants' starvation

The unified system of purchase and sale of grain was officially established in Shanxi province in autumn 1953, soon after the approval by the central authorities of the *Resolutions on implementing planned purchases and planned supply of grain* (*Guanyu shixing liangshi de jihua shougou yu jihua gongying de jueyi*) and the *Orders on implementing planned purchases and planned supply of grain* (*Guanyu shixing liangshi de jihua shougou he jihua gongying de mingling*) (Shanxi sheng Difangzhi 1996, 110–111). The regime propaganda presented it as an indispensable measure for the following reasons. First and foremost, it would have guaranteed the availability of grain needed for both consumption and national construction, and secondly it would have stabilized the price of grain across the country and also eliminated speculation in grain. But, more importantly, this radical new policy was aimed at leading the peasantry on the road to socialism, the only path that would guarantee them prosperity and well-being.[8]

Despite these promises, right from the start Shanxi peasants showed a certain reluctance to hand over their grain quotas to the State. Back then, grain constituted their main source of nourishment (Walker 1984, 1–2) and, consequently, they feared that once it sold they would not have enough stocks to satisfy their needs, especially in the event of unforeseen incidents such as natural disasters (WX1 1953; Chen 1953; Shanxi Ribao 1953).

These fears materialized between the end of 1954 and the spring of 1955, when a grain crisis (*liangshi weiji*) erupted throughout the country (Tian 2006, 27). In 1954, the "unprecedented" floods of the Yangzi and Huai rivers ruined the harvests of about sixty million peasants (Trevor and Luard 1962, 196; Luo 2008, 187). In order to meet the demands of State supply, while at the same time not cutting down resources for the industrialization program, the State decided "to buy a little more" grain surplus from areas that had not been affected by calamities, or that had suffered only minimally (Bernstein 1969, 374). Since Shanxi province had been classified as a "minor disaster area" (*qing zaiqu*), it was forced to give its contribution, providing a large quantity of grain to the State (CZ10 1954). According

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[8] These statements were contained in the *Outline of propaganda work on the unified purchase of grain* (*Guanyu tonggou liangshi de xuanchuan yaodian*), issued on October 31, 1953 by the Central Committee of the CCP (Shue, 1980, 217; Luo 2008, 89–90).

to a survey of twenty Shanxi townships,[9] despite the fact that in 1954 the grain production dropped by 12.26% compared to the previous year, the State purchased 35.18% more of their grain surplus, namely 3,183,177 *jin*,[10] equal to 21.1% of production (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13).

Such outstanding results were obtained above all at the expense of the ordinary villagers, 92.73%[11] of whom were grain-surplus holders (*yulianghu*). The rich peasants and the landlords, having lost a great part of their privileges during land reform, owned on average a quantity of land which was lower or slightly higher than that of the poor and middle peasants.[12] In addition, the survey shows that only 6.98%[13] of them held grain surplus. Therefore, the burden of grain procurement they shouldered could not be more than that of the ordinary villagers.

From the documents examined, it is possible to deduce that during the purchase campaign of 1954, the latter were even forced to sell a quantity of grain which was far beyond their surplus (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13). The excesses in grain procurement (*guotou liang*) as a result deprived them of a conspicuous amount of provisions for personal consumption (*kouliang*). According to the above-mentioned survey results, in the twenty Shanxi townships the quantity of *kouliang* left in the peasants' hands corresponded on average to only 300 *jin* per person,[14] namely 115 *jin* less than in 1952, when the unified system had not yet been established. Considering that in Northern China the minimum quota

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[9] The twenty townships were selected by the Rural Work Department of the Shanxi Provincial Party Committee to represent the various geographical areas that characterized Shanxi province, including flat areas, semi-mountainous and mountainous areas. They were: Beiganquan, Yanggao, Guandongshui (Pingshun county); Wangjiazhuang, Caijiaya, Fengle (Xing county); Wangcun, Zhongwa, Xiaozhangwu (Jieyu county); Futang, Chenkan, Yanwucun (Yuci county); Xiashengjin, Xingjiabu, Youzai (Yanggao county); Lujiazhuang (Lu'an county); Pengmen (Xi county); Shangnaihe (Hepinglu, Shuozhou counties); Wangjiata (Lishan county); Weimozhuang (Wutai county) (Zhonggong Shanxi shengwei 1956, vol. 2, 1).

[10] Unit of weight equal to 500 grams.

[11] This is the percentage of grain kept by poor and middle peasants' households in the 20 townships, after the State's taxation of 1954 (Zhonggong Shanxi shengwei 1956, vol. 1, 19).

[12] According to the survey of twenty townships, in 1954 the poor peasants had 7.05 *mu* of land per person, the old middle peasants owned 6.85 *mu* per person, the new middle peasants had 6.21 *mu* per person, the rich peasants had 7.08 *mu* per person and the landlords 5.55 *mu* per person (Zhonggong Shanxi shengwei 1956, vol. 1, 28–29).

[13] This is the percentage of grain kept by rich peasants' and landlords' households in the 20 townships, after the State's taxation of 1954 (Zhonggong Shanxi shengwei 1956, vol. 1, 19).

[14] This average was calculated by adding the maximum quantity of *kouliang* (379 *jin*) recorded in Wangcun township (Jieyu county, Yuncheng prefecture) to the minimum quantity (202 *jin*) recorded in Fengle township (Xing county, Lüliang prefecture) (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13).

excluded from sale, though judged small,[15] was normally 360 *jin* (Gao 2016, 186), this data is quite alarming.[16]

The reasons behind the *guotou liang* phenomenon are various and attributable above all to the ambiguity of the rules governing the unified purchase policy. Indeed, neither the *Resolutions* nor the *Orders* reported concrete criteria to determine the quantity of grain each peasant household would have to sell to the State. The procurement quotas were generally defined on the basis of the general principle for which "if the surplus is a lot, a lot will be purchased; if it is little, a little will be purchased; if there isn't any surplus, it won't be bought" (CZ10 1954). Following this vague criterion, the local authorities were required to extract a percentage of grain corresponding to 75%–90% of the household's grain surplus.[17] Such a percentage was determined through the method known as "self-declaration and public discussion" (*zibao gongyi*). Once the peasants had calculated their grain surplus, subtracting from the estimated production the amount of grain each household would need for family consumption, for fodder, for seed, and for the payment of the agricultural tax, they communicated it to work teams. Subsequently, the work teams carried out checks and discussed the results with the villagers during public meetings. If the quantity of surplus declared by the peasants was less than that estimated by the work teams, the peasants were invited to repeat the count, until a match was reached (Luo 2008, 102).

As can easily be inferred, this method unleashed arbitrariness on the part of the work teams, who often failed to understand the grain situation of the villagers, thereby making mistakes in determining the procurement quotas. Contravening the principle of "leaving [the peasants] some [surplus]" (*liu yidian*) (CZ10 1954), they often deprived the peasant households of their entire surplus and, in the most serious cases, left them only the *kouliang* or a part of it. Therefore, the peasants worried that the State had set no limits in grain procurement. Interpreting their mood, the Chinese historian Gao Wangling asserts that the unified purchase seemed to have abolished the norm for which "the more you work, the more you get" (*duo lao, duo de*) (Gao 2016, 186). Even if grain output had increased, the peasants would not have reaped any benefit. With the exception of the quotas

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[15] According to some peasants in Wangzhuang village (Pingshun county) at least 600–700 *jin* would have been needed to feed themselves enough (Guo 1954).

[16] There were, however, even more dramatic situations, such as that of Xinzhuang (Changzhi county, Changzhi prefecture), where some peasant households were left an amount of kouliang corresponding to only 100–140 *jin* per person (CZ3 1954).

[17] Specifically, in Shanxi province if the households' grain surplus was less than 100 *jin*, 75% was extracted; if the grain surplus was between 100 and 300 *jin*, 75–80% was extracted; if it was between 300 and 600 *jin*, 80–85% was extracted; if it was between 600 and 1.000 *jin*, 85–90% was extracted; if it was more than 1.000 *jin*, 90% was extracted (Shanxi sheng Difangzhi 1996, 111; CZ10 1954).

for personal consumption, for fodder, and for the other needs, the entire amount of their provisions would have been purchased by the State. For this reason, Du Runsheng, a former secretary of the Rural Work Department, compares this system to that of the rationing for soldiers (Gao 2016, 186). Other authors, including Yang Jisheng, even state that it was the origin of the Great Famine (*Dajihuang*) which afflicted the country in the late 1950s (Yang 2012, 320–325).

Furthermore, the grassroots cadres were sometimes forced to overestimate or even falsely report crop yields, because they were put under pressure by higher authorities, and they did not want to fail to meet their expectations. According to an investigation into Qin county,[18] for example, during the purchasing campaign of 1954, the local Party Committee decided that the estimated production – on average 195 *jin* per *mu*[19] of land – was low and increased it by 17 *jin*. As a result, in some villages, the grassroots cadres had no choice but to revise and lower the criteria for calculating the grain rations for personal consumption, forcing peasants to sell part of it (NC3 1954).

To achieve the objectives set, the cadres did not hesitate to resort to coercion (*qiangpo mingling*). As a result, the peasants who did not want to sell their grain were subjected to "abominable" tortures (WX2 1955), such as being tied up, hung up, beaten, forced to fast, or kept outdoors in the cold for a whole night (WX2 1955). Such coercive methods led many peasants to commit suicide. According to the statistics of the Grain Department, 566 cases of suicide and 74 cases of attempted suicide occurred throughout China during the purchase campaign of 1954 (Yang 2008, 51).

The villagers were thus quite concerned about the unified purchase policy. According to a report dated November 24, 1954, a peasant resident in Huo village[20] admitted: "The transition period is really terrible, once the grain is sold, there are not even the shells left" (CZ9 1954). While another from Machang township[21] declared: "Once the grain is levied, people starve [...]. The Communist Party doesn't like the peasants [...]. Only 12 *liang*[22] of grain per person are left, the rest is all purchased by the State" (PS2 1954). The same rancor emerges from the words of Wu Qiqun, resident in Changjing village,[23] who declared: "In Shanxi province the planned purchasing task is heavy; this is the damage we receive

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[18] Qin county belongs to Changzhi prefecture.

[19] Unit of area equal to one fifteenth of a hectare.

[20] Huo village is located in Xiangyuan county, Changzhi prefecure.

[21] Machang township was located in Lu'an county, Changzhi prefecture.

[22] Unit of weight equal to 50 grams.

[23] Changjing village was located in Lu'an county, Changzhi prefecture.

for having followed Li Shunda[24] [...] the grain has all been taken to the Soviet Union" (CZ5 1954).

Not even the guarantees offered by the unified sale program to the grain-short households (*queliang hu*) helped to reassure the mood of the rural masses. Indeed, many mistakes were also made during the redistribution of the State grain supplies in the countryside. According to a survey, in 1954 in eight Shanxi townships, 305 households who were not really in need of grain were excessively supplied; 156 should not have been supplied, but were nevertheless; 212 should have been given a supply of grain, but were not supplied at all (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13). Furthermore, the price of the grain resold by the State was not only sometimes higher than the one established in the unified purchase, but it could also be affected by other factors such as transport, thus further aggravating the purchasing conditions of the peasants who lived in the mountainous areas, which were difficult to reach. Further inconveniences were due to the malfunctioning of transport systems, which sometimes caused delays in grain supply, thereby adding to the peasants' concerns (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13).

Another factor that aroused peasant discontent concerns the purchase price of grain. Chen Yun, the president of the Finance and Economics Committee, declared that the purchase price would have been fair, reasonable, and above all stable (Pang 2003, 291–292). Despite such reassurances, there is little doubt that the peasants would have obtained a greater profit by selling their products on the free market rather than to the government organs. Furthermore, before the system was introduced, the villagers could take advantage of seasonal fluctuations of prices or wait to sell their products in the spring when their value would have increased. Later on, all these possible sources of profit were eliminated (Bernstein 1969, 366).

However, the excessive grain extraction in 1954 and the other problems which emerged during the implementation of the unified system in Shanxi villages were not the only reasons for the discontent of poor and middle peasants. As illustrated below, there were other factors which negatively affected their lives.

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[24] Li Shunda (1115–1983) was born in Dongshandi village (Henan province) from a poor peasant household and later moved to Xigou village (Pingshun county, Changzhi prefecture). In July 1938 he secretly joined the CCP and on February 6, 1943 he founded, together with five other peasant families, a mutual aid team: it was the first organization of its kind created in China during the War of Resistance against Japan. For this reason, he was later awarded with various honors, including that of "hero of work." In subsequent years Li held various institutional positions at the local level, until April 1983, when he was elected vice-president of the Standing Committee of the Shanxi provincial People's Congress (Zhonggong Pingshun xianwei 2015, 5–8).

3. From individual entrepreneurs to "agricultural workers:" How the unified system changed peasants' lives

The unified system of purchase and sale inaugurated the process of the socialist transformation of agriculture, allowing the State to strengthen its control over many aspects of the peasants' economic life. This process entailed, first and foremost, the loss of a series of fundamental freedoms for the villagers, starting with the freedom to trade (*maoyi ziyou*) their own products. This and other freedoms, such as buying and renting land (*tudi maimai he zudian ziyou*), hiring labor (*gugong ziyou*), borrowing or lending money (*jiedai ziyou*), had been legally allowed by the central government since the founding of the PRC in 1949 to facilitate economic recovery after a century of political disintegration, protracted foreign invasion, and civil war (Zhao 1992, 57; Gao 1992).

With the introduction of a state monopoly on trade in grain, however, this activity was subjected to many restrictions. As a result, the peasants were no longer allowed to operate as individual entrepreneurs, seeking the most economically advantageous opportunity to sell their products; they were now dependent upon a new and complex state mechanism (Bernstein 1967, 365). This radical change naturally caused great resentment among the rural masses. Chen Yun himself was aware of this and acknowledged it in one of his speeches: "The peasants are individual small producers and for thousands of years they have cultivated the habit of only paying rent and taxes and of at least formally disposing of their surplus grain freely," consequently "[they] are not accustomed yet to the monopoly on the purchase and sale of grain" (Zhang 2006, 96).

The state monopoly on the purchase and sale of grain had an adverse effect also on sideline rural occupations,[25] which had always been a sort of "safety valve" in case of bad harvests and an indispensable source of income. They were therefore fundamental for both the livelihood of peasants and the development of rural economy (Gao 1992). According to some estimates, in the early 1950s, subsidiary occupations accounted for almost a third of the total value of national rural production and about a fifth of the families relied on them for a primary means of making a living (Gao 1992).

After the planned purchase was established, however, the exercise of subsidiary activities was severely limited. In order to guarantee the production of grain and the purchase program, the central authorities found it necessary to impose control over the peasant workforce and the cultivated area (Du 2005, 42). For the same purpose, they assigned the grain a value which was much higher than that of any

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[25]   Some of the most popular sideline activities were raising livestock, poultry, bees, silkworms, planting fruit trees, fishing, weaving, working leather and wood, transporting goods, cultivating soy, cane sugar, peanuts, tobacco (Perkins 1966, 69).

other commodity and, sometimes, well above its official price (Perkins 1966, 52). Discouraged by these measures, Chinese peasants were thus forced to close their family-run workshops and to interrupt the production of many sideline goods, such as tofu, noodles, alcoholic beverages, soybeans, and other traditional food-stuffs. According to a survey on six townships of Shanxi located in semi-mountainous areas,[26] in 1954 the poor peasants' and middle peasants' sideline rural production respectively fell by 18.42% and 9.91% compared to the previous year (Zhonggong Shanxi shengwei 1956, vol. 2, 19–20).

The sideline rural occupation that suffered serious repercussions more than any other due to these restrictions was livestock farming. Raising livestock was not only a profitable activity, but it was also an essential source of fertilizer and workforce for the peasants. Hence, the popular saying "rich people do not part with books, poor people do not part with pigs," which was widespread in Chinese villages (Du 2005, 41).

However, since autumn 1954, livestock production decreased significantly. The main reason for this phenomenon was the lack of fodder due to the high compulsory quotas procured that year (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13). As we have already established, the grain provisions kept by peasants after the purchasing campaign of 1954 were sometimes so scarce that they had no choice but to eat the animals' forage. For this reason, in Lujiazhuang township,[27] for example, the donkeys and the oxen were respectively left 360 *jin* and 240 *jin* of fodder, when they would have needed at least 500 *jin* and 300 *jin* to provide enough food (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13).

The malnutrition of draft animals also had negative repercussions on agricultural production. In the Xinghuo cooperative, located in central-eastern Shanxi,[28] the amount of land that an animal was able to plow had dropped from 5 *mu* to 3.8 *mu*. Furthermore, some of the available animals had even become too weak to be employed in the fields (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13).

Given the fact that the peasants had to raise livestock in increasingly difficult conditions, they preferred to give them away or to slaughter them. The villagers were convinced that they would have drawn a much greater profit from their carcass. Some of them, indeed, admitted: "When [the livestock] are alive we cannot sell them; once dead we can at least sell their skin and their meat, it is much more profitable" (HG1 1955). Thus, according to a survey, in eighty-five townships located

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[26] The six townships were Beiganquan, Yanggao (Pingshun county); Futang (Yuci county); Weimozhuang (Wutai county); Wangjiata (Lishan county); Pengmen (Xi county) (Zhonggong Shanxi shengwei 1956, vol. 2, 1).

[27] Lujiazhuang township was located in Lu'an county, Changzhi prefecture.

[28] The Xinghuo cooperative was located in Fudang village, Yuci county, Jinzhong prefecture.

in Huguan county, Southeast Shanxi,[29] 53% of cattle, pigs, and goats died only in the last four months of 1954 (HG1 1955). While in Xiashengjin township, Northern Shanxi,[30] the number of pigs had decreased from 140 to 20 heads (Zhonggong zhongyang 1954, 13).

The decrease of livestock production, however, did not concern only Shanxi province, but the whole country and it finally became serious enough to require an intervention by the central authorities. In order to safeguard livestock, on January 15, 1955, the Central Committee of the CCP issued the *Urgent directive to vigorously protect the working animals* (*Guanyu dali baohu gengchu de jinji zhishi*), establishing that farm animals could be slaughtered only after receiving the authorization of the local government (Gao 1999, 161). Although in some Shanxi counties urgent measures aimed at the protection of farm animals had already been taken in the winter of 1954, by the end of the following year little progress had been made in "safeguarding small livestock" (HG1 1955).

As Gao Wangling asserts, the limits imposed on trade and sideline activities transformed peasants from independent laborers into "agricultural workers" (*nongye gongren*), devoted almost exclusively to agriculture or, better, to the production of grain (Gao 1992). This change also interrupted their hopes of enriching themselves and improving their living conditions, taking advantage of the benefits obtained from land reform (Zhang 2013, 155). As an inner-Party document dated April 20, 1955 reports: "In the mountainous area of Pingshun county, Shanxi, the activities which were relied upon in the past, such as transporting cereals, [raising] cattle, [cooking] food and [running] inns, etc. [...] have already been abolished, [...] peasants' life now is very tough" (Gao 2016, 155).

Starting with the introduction of the unified system, however, the government did not only impose its own control over the economic life of the countryside, but also on the social. In order to ensure the efficacy of the grain rationing process in the urban areas, the State established the household registration system (*hukou*), which allowed it to exercise its own control over the population's geographical mobility.[31] Since then, the peasants, being in possession of a rural residence per-

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[29] Huguan county belongs to Changzhi prefecture.

[30] Xiashengjin township is located in Yanggao county, Datong prefecture.

[31] Although it was not until January 1958 that the *Regulations on household registration in the People's Republic of China* (*Zhonghua renmin Gongheguo hukou dengji tiaoli*) passed as a law, its establishment and execution was much earlier. In 1951, the Ministry of Public Security issued *Provisional regulations on urban hukou management* (*Chengshi hukou guanli zanxing tiaolie*). From then on, Chinese residents were required to have official permission to migrate. After the introduction of the unified system and the agricultural cooperative movement, expecting a possible large-scale exodus of rural residents, control of spatial mobility was deliberately strengthened. In March 1954 a *Joint directive to control blind influx of peasants into cities* (*Quanzhi nongmin mangmu liuru chengshi de zhishi*) was promulgated and in June

mit (*nongmin hukou* or *nongye hukou*), were prohibited from leaving their native village and migrating to the urban areas in search of work and better living conditions. Peasants who illegally entered the cities would have even risked starvation, as they were not provided with the coupons needed to obtain the food. The coupons, indeed, were distributed only to the urban residents, based on criteria such as age and profession (Cheng and Selden 1994, 657–658; Lei 2000, 121).

The *hukou* and the coupon system (*piaozheng zhidu*), therefore, bound the peasants to their land and facilitated the formation of a dualistic, city-countryside structure (*chengxiang eryuan tizhi*), which further increased the disparity between urban and rural residents. While the urban residents' livelihood was guaranteed by the State, the rural residents were responsible not only for feeding themselves, but also for providing enough grain surplus to meet the State needs (Cheng and Selden 1994, 650–651; Wang 2008, 12).

The process of centralization and control undertaken in the countryside by the central government intensified with the establishment of the agricultural production cooperatives (*nongye shengchan hezuoshe*) in late 1953.[32] Some historians, including Lin Yunhui and Xu Yong, have underlined the profound relationship between them and the unified system. The latter promoted the process of transition to socialism in the countryside, leading the peasants on the road to agricultural collectivization, whereas the agricultural cooperative greatly simplified and quickened the task of collecting grain performed by the cadres, who therefore no longer had to singularly deal with the numerous peasant households (Xu 2008, 54). This kind of organization, however, was never particularly attractive to most of the rural masses. Surprisingly, even in Shanxi province, where forms of mutual aid in agriculture had a long tradition, most of the peasants, taking advantage of the benefits obtained from the economic recovery, wanted to deal freely with production by working individually (*dangan*) (Zhao 2014, 101–102). As Professors Xin Yi and Gao Jie state, the peasants' lack of enthusiasm for the agricultural cooperatives proves such organizations did not arise as a response to villagers' desire, but by the exclusive will of the Party, contrary to what is generally claimed. In short, cooperatives, not unlike the unified system, represented a typical example of "top-down socialism" (*zi shang er xia de shehuizhuyi*) (Xin and Gao 2010, 84–85).

1955 the State Council passed a *Directive concerning establishment of a permanent system of household registration* (*Guanyu jianli jingchang de hukou dengji zhidu de zhishi*). These decisions were endorsed despite the fact that Article 90 of the 1954 Constitution, in force until 1975, guaranteed people "freedom of residence and freedom to change their residence" (Cheng and Selden 1994, 646; Yu 2006, 737–738).

[32] The agricultural cooperatives spread nationwide from December 1953 onwards, after the promulgation of the *Resolution on the development of agricultural production cooperatives* (*Guanyu fazhan nongye shengchan hezuoshe de jueyi*) (Gao 1999, 137).

4. The "soft" strategies of peasants' resistance in Shanxi villages

As previously discussed, the unified system of purchase and sale of grain brought many disadvantages to the Chinese peasants. Not only did it put their livelihood at risk, but it also radically changed their way of life and their long-established habits. Paradoxically, moreover, it transpired that these consequences were more deleterious for those who were considered the Party's allies, the poor and middle peasants, than for the dispossessed "class enemies."

Contrary to any expectations, however, the peasants were not helpless vis-à-vis such adversity. Instead of hindering their attempts at resistance, their condition of subordination and the ideological pressure exerted by the Party led them to devise alternative and more adequate methods to express their discontent. Surprisingly, indeed, the historical sources analyzed reveal that the villagers rarely resorted to violent or large-scale rebellions to oppose the unified system. They were rather more inclined to turn to individual, unorganized, and hidden protest strategies, described in the documents as "soft methods" (*ruan banfa*) (CZ2 1954; CZ8 1954; Picchiarelli 2021, 164–165). Such specific manifestations of rural discontent are very similar to those identified in the 1980s by the American political scientist James Scott in his study of a Malaysian village and defined as "everyday forms of peasant resistance" (Scott 1985, XV–XVI). Given the low level of tolerance of the Chinese Communist regime, the villagers preferred to opt for these kinds of actions, as they would allow them to keep a low profile and to avoid uselessly provoking the authorities (Scott 1989, 44).

The documents examined reveal, for example, that Shanxi peasants, reluctant to sell their harvest to the State, found all sorts of pretexts to evade or reduce their duties in grain procurement. They pretended to be ignorant, deaf, or sick regarding the requests of the grassroots cadres. Sometimes, they even bribed, cursed, threatened, or begged them by bursting into tears and swearing that they did not have enough grain to sell (CZ8 1954).

Some peasants thought it was better to self-consume the harvest rather than hand it over to the State (CZ8 1954), while others resorted to strategies such as the one known as "four for sale, four not for sale" (*si mai, si bu mai*), through which they "sold [only the grain of] bad quality and not [that one of] good quality; [they] sold [only] the unhusked grain and not the processed one; [they] sold [it] late and not soon; [they] sold [only] small amounts and not big amounts" (CZ2 1954). Following this logic, a middle peasant named Jia Cunxiao, who lived in the Chengcun township,[33] decided to sell only 300 of the 1,000 *jin* of grain he was supposed to hand over to the State. Disappointed with compulsory sales policy, he declared:

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[33]   Chengcun township is located in Huguan county, Changzhi prefecture.

"The State needs to purchase the grain surplus, but we [the peasants] don't need to sell it" (CZ7 1954).

An article from November 10, 1954, published in the *Gazette of Pingshun* (*Pingshun Xiaobao*), instead reveals that in the Nanjiao cooperative[34] the peasants used "the old type of scales (*lao cheng*) to [weigh the quantity of] grain to be distributed [among the peasants] and the new type of scales (*xin cheng*) to weigh [the quantity to be reported to the authorities]."[35] Using the *lao cheng*, the peasants could make a coarser measurement of their grain and thus keep a bigger portion thereof for their own needs (Pei and Han 1954). The same source also exposes the use of another popular method, which consisted in "sharing a lot [of grain], and reporting little [to the authorities]" (*duo fen shao bao*), through which the peasants of a cooperative in Huangya township[36] succeeded in subtracting from the unified purchase 1,956 *jin* of millet and over 16,360 *jin* of potatoes (Pei and Han 1954). A similar practice consisted in using a concave container (*jian dou*), slightly larger, to measure the grain to be distributed among the peasants and a flat-bottomed container (*ping dou*) to measure the quantities that the local cadres should have registered (NC1 1954).

In addition, always aiming to keep more grain, villagers used to exaggerate the damage caused by natural disasters to the harvest or to falsify the real quantity of the grain production. In some cases, they did not declare part of the crop coming from private fields, small plots, as well as that of the lands along the rivers or on the slopes of the hills (NC1 1954; CZ4 1954). Some villagers from Yuci, Yanbei, and Xinxian prefectures[37] had even intentionally left a large part of the land uncultivated, according to the motto: "Grow a little less, cultivate a little better, leave a little more, sell a little less."[38]

Not completely trusting the unified sale program and the reassurances of the government, many peasants claimed that they had no grain, even though in reality they had enough provisions. In Renjiazhuang village,[39] for example, out of 186 families, as many as 120 (64.5%) had lied about the quantity of grain at their dis-

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[34] Nanjiao cooperative was located in Pingshun county, Changzhi prefecture.

[35] With "old type of scales" the report could refer both to the one employed starting from 1928 with the Nanjing government (1928–1937), and the one which persisted from the Qing era (1644–1911). The "new type of scales" was instead introduced on June 25, 1959, after the approval of the *State Council ordinance on the unification of China's system of measurement* (*Guowuyuan guanyu tongyi woguo jiliang zhidu de mingling*) (Sun 2006, 46–48).

[36] Huangya township is located in Pingshun county, Changzhi prefecture.

[37] The territories of Yuci, Yanbei and Xinxian no longer have the status of prefecture (Shanxi sheng Difangzhi 1994, 47–51).

[38] The news is taken from an inner-Party investigative report dated April 20, 1955 (Gao 2016, 194).

[39] Renjiazhuang village is located in Pingshun county, Changzhi prefecture.

posal. Therefore, at the time of implementing the procurement policy, it turned out that more than double of the expected quantity of grain was missing (PS1 1954). A similar situation also occurred in other Shanxi villages, as the numerous articles published in the *Shanxi Daily* (*Shanxi Ribao*) report (Shanxi Ribao 1955).

Besides the above-mentioned methods, the peasants also resorted to other and more explicit forms of daily resistance. Defined in the archival documents as "hard methods" (*ying banfa*) (CZ2 1954; CZ8 1954), they consisted, for example, in avoiding public meetings or refusing to collect the certificate with the quantity of grain to be handed over to the State. It also happened that the head of the household sent their wives and children to face the local cadres, then pretend not to know or understand the information provided by them (CZ2 1954). Others barricaded themselves at home to avoid the local authorities or they left their house with the excuse of visiting relatives (CZ8 1954).

The archival documents also report acts of vandalism, such as thefts of grain and fires to the detriment of the harvest. Particularly serious, moreover, were the episodes that occurred in Lu'an county in the winter of 1954. There was a case of poisoning, which occurred in Guzhang, and an attempted attack by means of grenades organized in the village of Hetou. The details of these incidents are not revealed. The historical sources only report that they seriously affected the implementation of the unified system (CZ6 1954).

Finally, as a last resort, some Shanxi peasants did not hesitate to abandon their native villages to go in search of better job opportunities in the cities, despite the fact that the government had tried to limit this phenomenon through the establishment of the *hukou* system. According to an inner-Party report, more than four hundred people, most of whom came from Yanggao, Tianzhen, and Huanyuan counties,[40] migrated to Inner Mongolia between March 27 and April 20, 1954 to seek their fortune (NC2 1954). Although not properly defined in these terms in the documents from that period, the migration can be interpreted as a further example of resistance, and specifically of daily resistance. To paraphrase the German economist Albert Hirschman, subordinates preferred abandoning their own village rather than manifesting dissatisfaction with higher authorities (Hirschman 1982, 13, 31; Lichback 1994, 394; Eckstein 2013, 83).

Regardless of whether they were explicitly undertaken or not, these forms of daily resistance sometimes were not enough to express the peasants' resentment towards the unified system. When the frustration reached its peak, the peasants did not hesitate to act violently. Although no evidence has been found of rebellions against the unified system occurring in the Shanxi countryside, it is certain that

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[40] Yanggao, Tianzhen and Huanyuan counties belong to Datong prefecture.

riots (*liangshi saoluan shijian*) and mass incidents (*qunzhong nao shi* or *jiti nao shi*) broke out in other areas.[41]

Having described the various strategies of daily resistance used by Shanxi peasants to boycott the unified system, it is worth wondering if such illegal acts, despite being hidden and extemporaneous, were really effective in achieving their purpose. Scholars who have dealt with this issue have conflicting opinions regarding these events. Professor Zhang Xiaoling, for example, argues that any act of protest would have been, in fact, ineffective. Typically, being too vulnerable, the Chinese peasants could not win the fight for their rights, nor influence the choices of the central government in any way, so they had no choice but to submit to its will (Zhang 2013, 153–154). Similarly, Lucien Bianco states with a clever wordplay that, with few exceptions, the "weapons of the weak" – as the strategies of daily resistance are often defined – turn out to be "weak weapons." From the point of view of the French sinologist, such actions did not bring any long-term results; on the contrary, they were sometimes even counterproductive (Bianco 2001, 263).

According to Li Huaiyin, instead, it would be wrong to consider the peasants powerless and subservient under the socialist State and the latter as an entity capable of imposing itself by any means. Li believes that the protests which occurred in rural China in the early 1950s played a key role in shaping the State's agrarian policies. It was under the pressure of the villagers' persistent and widespread resistance that the State finally adjusted its unrealistic plans in order to make them workable in the rural areas (Li 2009, 334).

Regardless of what the results of the daily resistance had been, it is certain that resorting to more open and violent strategies of dissent would have constituted, in any case, the least desirable alternative.

5. Conclusion

This paper has tried to re-evaluate the phenomenon of the peasant resistance to the unified system of purchase and sale of grain, showing that it was more serious and widespread than generally believed.

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[41] In Guangodong, for example, starting from December 18, 1954 the so-called "*Xijie* events" (*Xijie shijian*) took place. The riots involved about 40,000 people and lasted for more than two weeks. During that time, the headquarters of thirteen local governments and six grain purchasing stations were besieged; more than 100,000 *jin* of rice was looted. The cadres sent to the village to collect the grain were kidnapped and beaten, while the militia were robbed of their weapons. A similar episode occurred in Fujian province, where on April 23, 1955 a violent riot broke out involving more than 10,000 people, including about thirty local cadres, thirteen of whom were arrested and eight accused of stealing 860 *jin* of millet and 437 *jin* of rice (Jiang and Liu 2012, 89).

To demonstrate this thesis, I decided to carry out a case study of Shanxi, a province where the Communists had settled in the countryside since the 1930s. The discovery that even in this area the peasants opposed the unified system highlights two aspects hitherto underestimated by Chinese and Western historiography. Firstly, the effects of this policy on villages were more damaging than many historians demonstrated. As stated before, the unified system radically changed peasants' habits and negatively influenced the economic development of the countryside. Secondly, the existence of forms of resistance, albeit "soft," indicates that the peasants were not as submissive and well-disposed under the socialist State, as is generally believed. When their livelihoods were compromised, they did not hesitate to express their dissent, even if this meant questioning the decisions of the Party.

However, to interpret peasant behavior in light of their relationship with the CCP could be misleading. As opposed to what was initially hypothesized, it is likely that the bond they had created since the anti-Japanese war had not consolidated over time (Bernstein 1967, 389). Some scholars even doubt that the Party leadership ever managed to establish a connection with the rural population. David Goodman, for example, demonstrates that the Communist penetration into the Shanxi countryside was sometimes received with coldness and hostility by residents. Where the presence of landowners was greater, such as in Licheng county,[42] the local CCP organizations even encountered stubborn opposition, which effectively thwarted their reform plans (Goodman 2000, 144–145, 258).

Moreover, it seems that even the ordinary peasants, at least in an initial phase, were not very sensitive to the revolutionary ideals propagated by the communist leaders. According to Lucien Bianco, their manifestations of discontent were generally due to factors related to the defense of their immediate and personal interests[43] and the maintenance of the status quo, rather than the development of a mature class consciousness and the consequent awareness of their condition of misery and exploitation. Similarly, in a volume destined to raise a lot of controversy (Johnson 1962), Chalmers Johnson argues that, despite having carried out economic and social reform programs in Soviet areas, the Communist leaders had failed in trying to gain popular support. In his opinion, the peasant participation in the Anti-Japanese war was less due to the call for mobilization launched by

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[42] Licheng, located in Changzhi prefecture, was included within the Taihang base area (Goodman 2000, 2).

[43] Peasants generally rebelled when events occurred that compromised their already precarious living conditions, such as abuses by the authorities, tax increase, military raids, to name but a few (Bianco 2001, 40–41).

the Communists, than to the emergence of a strong nationalist sentiment and the desire to protect the homeland from the invaders.[44]

Based on these assumptions, resistance in the Shanxi countryside should be considered anything but an unexpected occurrence. The connection between the CCP and the rural masses, indeed, was not strong enough to constitute a deterrent to action for the latter. Further investigations into the nature of the CCP-peasants relationship would therefore be useful to delineate this phenomenon more clearly.

Towards this end, it would also be interesting to extend this kind of analysis to other areas of the country. Shanxi, indeed, represents only a small reality compared to the enormous plurality of contexts that characterized, and still characterize today, the Chinese territory. Considering the influence exercised by this policy on peasants' lives, it is almost certain that such phenomenon did not concern only this province, but also throughout the mainland.

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[44] Johnson claims that the war presented the peasants with a challenge to their security of such immediacy that they could not ignore it. Prewar pressures on them–such as economic exploitation, warlord wars, and natural disasters–had never been sufficiently widespread or intense to give rise to a peasant-based mass movement (Johnson 1962, 2).

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[45] Documents beginning with CZ and HG are respectively from Changzhi county archives (*Changzhi xian dang'an guan*) and Huguan county archives (*Huguan xian dang'an guan*). Documents beginning with PS and WX are from Pingshun county archives (*Pingshun xian dang'an guan*) and Wuxiang county archives (*Wuxiang xian dang'an guan*). The inner-Party investigative reports (*Neibu cankao*) are indicated with letters NC.

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HUKOU, LAND TENURE RIGHTS, AND CHINESE RURAL WOMEN

Pia Eskelinen

Land is a powerful asset, and it has a social function as its economic and social aspects are central in advancing gender equality. Legal control of land as well as the legal and social recognition of women's uses of and rights to land, can provide catalytic effects of empowerment, increasing women's influence and status in their homes and communities. The main aim of this article is to investigate and analyze the difficulties rural women face in land tenure rights when changing their *hukou,* which is the household registration system. During past decades, changes in the practices of the Chinese *hukou* legislation and land tenure rights have brought important incentives for rural developments, including farmer income and living standards. Even though both men and women face difficulties in rural areas due to the *hukou* system and its clashes with land rights, women are more vulnerable and more at risk of facing poverty and abuse. Women remain more likely to become landless after changing their *hukou*. The lack of recognition for women's land-use rights deprives them of their chances of surviving in rural China. They become legal ghosts.

Keywords: land rights, rural women, China, *hukou*, household registration system, women's rights

1. Introduction

Land is a powerful asset, but it also has a social function because its economic and social aspects are central in advancing or suppressing gender equality (Agarwal 1994). More specifically, the legal control of land as well as the social recognition of women's use of and rights to land can have catalytic effects of empowerment, increasing women's influence and status in their homes and communities (Araujo 2017; UN 1995). As land is the only lifeline that forms the basis of social security and economy for rural Chinese people, and especially women, land tenure rights

ought to be protected and respected. However, in China, this is not always the case. One major influence is the *hukou*, which is the household registration system.[1]

Both the *hukou* and the more ambiguous land tenure rights that regulate the allocation of rural land are supposedly gender-neutral, bestowing women with the same opportunities as men. However, the law on the books differs from the law in action. The ambiguity of land-use legislation and the dogmatic implementation of *hukou* legislation deprives women of their chances at survival in rural China and these women may become legal ghosts who are ignored and forgotten.

Chinese *hukou*, derived from the Soviet *propiska*, and internal passport in the 1950s, controls the population in an efficient way. The control and regulation of the internal movement of Chinese citizens is far more elaborate than in almost any other country in the world (Chan 2009, 199). The *Hukou* is supervised by the Ministry and Agency of Public Security (NPC 1958, § 3). The fact that those responsible for public security are responsible for *hukou* matters reveals how important the *hukou* system is to China. *Hukou* legislation is also the only national legislation on migration and residence approved by the National People's Congress.

Although Chinese rural farmers' land tenure rights have been strengthened since the introduction of the *hukou* system, some key issues remain. For example, as peasants are turned into a "mobile population,"[2] their land could be taken away[3] to feed industrialization's insatiable demand for land, urban construction, and local state revenue (Chan 2019, 17). Or, as revealed by previous literature, interviews, and arbitration cases, when a woman permanently moves her *hukou* location to another village, she is denied her legal right to a piece of land even though the original village had already taken away her land tenure rights (Li and Xi 2006, 628–630; Huang et al. 2017, 213–222).

> A woman had four *mu* of land in her original village. She married and moved into her husband's village as is the custom. The original village took away her land and the new village refused to give her land. After arbitration, she was allowed to keep her land in the old village and the old village was ordered to pay compensation. (from the author's interview with members of the All China Women's Federation)

However, this kind of policy allows China's economic machinery to run smoothly, and so is tolerated by the authorities (Song 2014, 200–212).

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[1] The other being the rural land tenure system itself and its ambiguities. This is being researched in another article that is part of a Ph.D. project studying the position of rural women in Chinese society.

[2] A "mobile" or "floating" population refers to work-related migration (Luo et al. 2018, 219–228).

[3] Since they are no longer actively tending their piece of land, it can be expropriated from them.

This chapter seeks to ascertain how the Chinese *hukou* system affects rural women's land rights tenure practices. To assess the impact of *hukou* on land tenure practices, it is necessary to understand *hukou*'s significance to Chinese society, which in turn is based on how the development of *hukou* is intertwined with Chinese history. The *hukou* system has made both positive and negative contributions to contemporary Chinese society; it has helped foster rapid economic growth and political stability, but has also reinforced social stratification, the rural/urban divide, regional inequalities, as well as discrimination and injustice (Wang 2005).

As mentioned, the *hukou* system and all related practices are administered by public security bodies at all levels, and the system is shrouded in a dense and secretive network. However, I managed to collect sufficient data, including interviews for this chapter. In addition, interviews, scientific articles, and publications have shed light on the true nature of the *hukou* and land tenure rights. Since (rural women's) land rights are considered to be a "sensitive issue," data gathering has been challenging, to say the least.

As this chapter focuses on women in rural areas, a feminist standpoint (Hartsock 1983, 283–310) provides a thought-provoking framework, complemented with an intersectional analysis. Women's land rights and *hukou* are connected to their location, particularly on the rural/semi-urban/urban axis. In addition, age, and marital status are defining aspects of their *hukou*-status and effects of *hukou* on their situation.

Of course, it is important to remember that land rights and *hukou* issues are not the only challenges women face in China.[4] Women encounter systemic gender discrimination in education (Ross 2015, 25–54) and employment (Dasgupta, Matsumoto, and Xia 2015; ILO working paper), as well as all kinds of harassment (Srivastava and Gu 2009; ILO working paper). Additionally, news articles expose a certain hostility from authorities which has extended to women's rights activists over the last few years.[5]

This paper is organized as follows. Chapter 2 begins by laying out the theoretical and methodological dimensions of the research. It presents the interviews carried out in Chinse semi-urban areas forming the original data for this chapter. After that, Chapter 3 addresses the history and development of *hukou* and its effects on Chinese society. Next, Chapter 4 introduces the rural land tenure system. Chapter 5 addresses the interplay of *hukou* legislation and the regulation and

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[4] When lecturing at Fudan University, I was told of a professor (not Fudan-based) who categorically refuses to take female students as master/postgraduate students because women "get pregnant and stay at home."

[5] In January 2016, Guo Jianmei, founder of the Beijing Zhongze Women's Legal Counseling and Service Center closed the organization. It has been argued that the authorities ordered the closure (Zeng 2014a, 136–150).

practice of land tenure rights and their effects on rural women. Finally, the last chapter provides a summary and discussion.

2. Theory, data, and method

China is, at least in theory, still a socialist country. However, since 1978, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has slowly introduced a capitalist economy to Chinese society (Ai 2009, 689–701). Marxism no longer has a strong foothold. In Daniel Bell's words (2010, 8):

> Hardly anybody really believes that Marxism should provide guidelines for thinking about China's political future. The ideology has been so discredited by its misuses that it has lost almost all legitimacy in society.

Although the power of the CCP is still strong, the norms that govern society at the grassroots level are anchored deeper than in the structures of state and administrative power. Even though the CCP has a significant hierarchical power structure, power does not entirely lie in the hands of one person, or even the CCP. The CCP and structures such as village committees, other authorities, and courts are aware of and operate within known power structures (Wang 2010, 181–210). Everyone (e.g., those who exercise power and the objects of the exercise of power) is stuck within different kinds of structures. However, they know how to operate within these structures. In other words, it is not enough to analyze the hierarchical concept of power but also the exercise of power at the grassroots level (Foucault 1977, 17–49).

A feminist standpoint (Hartsock 1983, 283–310; Harding 1987, 193) explains the Foucauldian (Foucault 1977, 17–49) power structure in a way that places women in the center. Hartsock is aware that power is an essentially contested concept and that different epistemologies are based on different theories of power (Hartsock 2013). Hartsock also claims that women's unique standpoint in society provides the justification for the truth claims of feminism while also providing a method to analyze reality (Hartsock 1983, 283–310; Harding 1987, 193). Accordingly, it is easy for those at the top of social hierarchies to lose sight of real human relations and the true nature of social reality. Yingru Li and Dennis Wei (2010, 303–316) have noticed that in China, the social realities of different groups, authorities, and rural women are so far apart that there is no real connection or understanding between them.

In addition, it is vital to understand that women are not a coherent group of people. Previously women's and gender studies considered women as a standardized group with common interests, desires, and problems regardless of class or ethnic connection (Mohanty 1988, 61–88; Nicholson and Seidman 1995, 39–102). Yet, women's lives in any given society are shaped not by a single axis of

social division – e.g., gender – but by many intersecting axes that work together and influence each other (Hill Collins and Bilge 2020, 3–30). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that rural women form a group of their own with their own distinct and intersecting social justice issues. In this chapter, age, marital status, location, and gender play an important role in the situation surrounding women's equality. These intersecting social justice problems are subclasses to topics such as gender inequality, gendered societies, or gendered decision-making structures.

Several researchers[6] have utilized government documents and other official documents to analyze Chinese policies. Likewise, this chapter utilizes Chinese policy documents in addition to observations and interactions with Chinese scholars and students during my research visits, guest lectures, and seminars in China. Since the research interest focuses on grass-roots interaction, the specific and original data comprise interviews with the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) personnel and one expert. As this is a qualitative study, the idea was to produce contextual real-world knowledge about social structures and the political atmosphere in which the ACWF is currently operating by using semi-structured interviews. Even though these interviews usually produce results that cannot be generalized beyond the sample group, they provide a more in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions, motivations, and emotions.

The main topic of the interviews was rural women's land rights situation in rural areas of China. The interviews also addressed the *hukou* system since it affects daily lives of Chinese citizens in many domains and shapes China's socio-political structure and socioeconomic development. The questions about the *hukou* system were such that after answers it was possible to add a follow-up question according to what was included in the answer. Example questions included:

> "What do you think is currently the most problematic issue in the *hukou* system?"

> "The *hukou* system is facing some reforms, what do you think of them?"

> "Do you think rural people are frustrated because changing *hukou* is so difficult?"

Also, the informants mentioned the insurance system connected to the *hukou* and its problems.

As this chapter tries to establish how the *hukou* and land tenure legislation affect rural women's lives, the answers to these questions were revealing. The answers painted a picture of various policies, practices, and power relations that have a great impact on women's economic and overall independence. Also, dur-

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[6]   See for example Gregory Veeck (2011), Benxiang Zeng (2014b), Jude Howell (2006), and Guo and Yang (2016).

ing interviews, it was important to pay attention to what was not mentioned, the small silences. Nevertheless, the interviewees were very responsive and willing to answer the questions. At some point, the interviewees negotiated among themselves about what kind of concrete examples they were able to provide. After their discussion, they gave a few examples of cases they had arbitrated. One case in particular was quite important for this chapter. That case revealed how compulsory legislation and its ambiguous nature can cause problems in land tenure after moving one's *hukou* location.

The interviews were conducted in city A in Central China in April 2017 and in city B in Eastern China in April 2018. There were three and four participants, respectively, from the ACWF but the reference is to the group. Additionally, an interview with a professor of human rights law provides insight into women's legal status, and equality. The ACWF was chosen because it is basically the only national women's organization in China. The interviews were not recorded, but transcripts were taken.

Arranging formal interviews was relatively easy after I found and got in touch with the right person. ACWF's Shanghai and Beijing offices were very helpful in finding the right person, contacting them, and explaining my intentions. However, both offices were a little concerned, as women's land rights are considered a sensitive issue in China. While this issue can be discussed in China, it must be done in a certain tone that is not too critical of the government or the Communist Party. One of the conditions of the interviews was that the interviewees spoke with one voice. The second condition was that the interviews should not be recorded.

The beginning of the first interview in City A was quite awkward and confusing. The interviewees were very nervous and constantly said they were not sure if they had anything new to tell me or if they would even be allowed to talk to me even though the Beijing headquarters had accepted the interview. At that point, my research assistant, a 19-year-old young man, and I began to be as anxious as the interviewees. To alleviate the situation, I began to explain that my research assistant had just enrolled as a student and that he was going to perform his compulsory military service in the Armoured Brigade. The atmosphere changed immediately. The interviewees started a lively discussion with the assistant about Finnish youth culture, how he feels about the army and what he wants to do after his military service. Their small discussion session lasted about half an hour and after that I was able to start the interview and the atmosphere remained relatively free and friendly.

The second interview in City B was easy because the interviewees had heard of my assistant. My assistants and interviewees again discussed Finnish youth, school, and military service. The theme of this interview was quite sensitive (the position of women and women's organizations in China), and I was very surprised that the

interviewees were very open in their opinions about the current situation. ACWF interviews revealed how concerned they are about the current situation and wanted someone to listen to their concerns in order to make their fears heard and visible.

Both an inductive approach and a deductive approach were used. Primarily the inductive approach allowed the determination of the main themes. Of course, there were some preconceived themes that were expected to be found based on existing knowledge. The themes that emerged from the interviews were gender inequality, the ostensible neutrality of legislation, and gendered decision-making structures at the local level. These themes seem primarily to affect the work of the ACWF. Secondly, the themes and their consequences also have effects on women as the ACWF is not able to provide adequate support and/or guidance concerning land tenure rights.

3. What is the *hukou*?

3.1 A short history

All through the 1950s, China implemented a code of laws, regulations, and programs, the effect of which was to formally differentiate residential groups to control population movement and mobility and to shape state developmental priorities. The *hukou* system, which emerged over the course of a decade, was integral to the collective transformation of the countryside for a demographic strategy that restricted urbanization, and to redefine city-countryside and state-society relations (Cheng and Selden 1994, 644–668).

During the 1950s, three important measures tightened administrative control over population flow within and between urban and rural areas: "Regulations for Public Security Substations," "Organic Regulations of Urban Street Offices," and "The Directive Concerning Establishment of a Permanent System of Household Registration." These three measures paved the way for the promulgation of Regulations on Household Registration in the People's Republic of China, which happened on the eve of the Great Leap Forward in 1958.

Originally intended only as a tool for controlling internal migration, the *hukou* system soon transformed into a social institution that divided Chinese society into regional hierarchies. The Chinese *hukou* system differs significantly from household registration systems used by other countries, such as Taiwan and Japan, which do not restrict the right of citizens to choose their own place of residence (Chan and Buckingham 2008, 582–606). Soon after the promulgation, the *hukou* system began to divide citizens into two categories, or statuses: agriculture and non-agriculture. In addition, a person's location was registered. Martin King Whyte's (2010, 125–146) and Xiaogang Wu's research team (Wu and Treiman 2004,

363–384) discovered that the purposes of the dichotomy caused by the *hukou* are diverse and the Chinese administration sees the division as necessary for the functioning of the state, as the system is able to effectively control citizens. According to them, the *hukou* system is a very efficient (political) tool, that allows the authorities to not just monitor but exclude people outside of society. In addition, Fei-Ling Wang (2005, 86–112) argues that the division and control of people into different categories adversely affects the realization of the fundamental rights, livelihoods, and ordinary lives of hundreds of millions of people. As the interviews revealed, the *hukou* system is quite dogmatic and inflexible.

Despite sweeping dramatic social and economic changes over the last four decades, the *hukou* system remains an enduring institution. With its service beyond controlling migration, the *hukou* system was a mechanism for reorganizing land. Immobilizing the peasantry enabled the state to arrange extractions and land expropriation from the agriculturalists to support the first and foremost goal of industrialization and economic growth for the greater good of the country (Chan 2019, 59–79). Its continued importance tells us how far, and indeed how little, China has departed from its "socialist" path.

3.2 *Hukou* system in operation

When arriving in a hotel in China, a traveler encounters the *hukou* system at check-in. A hotel porter scans the passport and sends it to a local office of the Internal Security Agency. The visitor is now registered, and their location is stored in the state systems. Registration provides a comprehensive picture of a visitor's movements throughout China, and they can be monitored, especially if they visit a controversial area.[7]

Elisabeth Perry and Mark Selden (2010, 80–100) have found out that the *hukou* registration not only provides the principal basis for establishing identity, citizenship, and proof of official status, but it is essential for every aspect of daily life. Without registration, one cannot establish eligibility for food, clothing, or shelter, obtain employment, go to school, marry or enlist in the army. Moreover, as Judith Banister (1987, 328) noted of the dichotomic social order produced by the registration system:

> Urban areas are essentially owned and administered by the state, and their residents are the state's direct responsibility. The state budget must supply urban areas with employment, housing, food, water, sewage disposal, transportation, medical facilities, police protection, schools, and other essentials and amenities of life.

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[7]   In most countries, hotel guests' personal information is gathered for cases of emergency, not for internal security reasons or for monitoring peoples' movements.

The state assumes direct responsibility for none of these services for the countryside. Nor does it provide rural people with any of the other vital services and welfare benefits that it routinely provides to urban residents, particularly to state sector employees, including free or subsidized health care, retirement benefits, and subsidized food and housing. To the extent that any of these services have been available in the countryside, they have relied on the highly differentiated resources allocated by self-reliant rural communities (villages) or their collective sub-units, i.e., production teams (Afridi, Li, and Ren 2015, 17–29).

The interviews confirmed all this. When asked what the biggest problem is now for rural women, the ACWF answered the current insurance situation, and its unequal arrangement existing between rural and urban women. The ACWF points out that the biggest problem that prevents equal insurance system is purely economic:

> The change needs money, there is not enough money. Urban people don't want to lose their benefits and there is not enough money to support rural people as well. (interview with the ACWF)

Furthermore, the *hukou* system has a significant impact on China's internal development. Different requirements for *hukou* registration by region[8] affect the national distribution of labor resources. The availability of public services related to one's *hukou* status, or rather the lack of availability, also increases social inequality. Urban *hukou* registration rules can indirectly affect the development of rural areas, including agricultural production, land use, and rural governance (Zhang, Wang, and Lu 2019, 210–221).

Jason Young (2013, 47–53) points out that China's *hukou* system of population registration has long been, and remains today, the central institutional mechanism defining the city-countryside relationship and shaping important elements of state-society relations in the People's Republic. But even though the central government in Beijing has eased the *hukou* system, there still are restricting elements:

> It is not so much about controlling people as it used to be. But it is a very good way to restrict people from moving to new areas. Not everyone can live in cities. (interview with the Professor of human rights)

4. Land rights

Land tenure rights constitute the most significant form of income, economic safety, and social security for the rural population (Li et al. 2015, 635–641; Liang and Burns 2017, 75–88). In other words, a farmer's land not only generates income,

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[8] *Hukou* regulations are regional and differ from area to area.

but also acts as a means of life security. It is easy to agree with Chengri Ding (2007, 2) who argues that despite the benefits of the public land leasing system for local government financing, flaws and ambiguities within the legislation and implementation of land leasing policies have had negative impacts in various sectors of society.

Previously, when socioeconomic development plans called for land development, Chinese municipal governments increased their land supply through land acquisition, a conversion of landownership from the collective to the state. In these land acquisition cases, municipal governments compensated farmers for their land. Since there were no land markets, peasants were instead compensated with a package that included job offers to work for the enterprises established on the acquired land, housing compensation referred to as "resettlement fees," compensation for the loss of crops and belongings connected to the land, and an urban *hukou*. It was common for large projects such as highways, railroads, and water projects to leave farmers with no land to farm (Ding 2004).

The reallocation of land and relocation negatively affected tenure security, farmland investment, and agricultural productivity. In 1984, the state stipulated that land use rights should be leased to villagers for a minimum of 15 years, and this was extended to 30 years in 1993 (NPC 2004, § 14). However, when lands are reallocated land use rights can be taken back from villagers before the end of their lease contract. Technically, the inclusion of "reallocation is prohibited before expiry date" as a clause in land rights certificates should be unnecessary since it restates what the law says. Thus, a land rights certificate should protect the leaseholder during the entirety of the lease term. However, in China, anything not specifically banned may be considered acceptable. If the "reallocation is prohibited before expiry date" clause is not included in land rights certificates, the understanding is that reallocation may be permissible (Feng, Bao, and Jiang 2014, 255). It captures the importance of the formality of land rights certificates and measures the impact of the functionality of these certificates.

There are grey areas where basic land rights certificates do not offer *enough* land-use rights protection. Pieces of land can be taken back if certain conditions are met; for example, reallocation is allowed if approved by more than two-thirds of the members of the collectives. However, the "reallocation is prohibited before expiry date" clause provides an extra layer of protection if included in land rights certificates. In other words, the issuing of land rights certificates offers basic land tenure protection if the above-mentioned clause is present.

Perhaps the reforms that were most important to land development were the Constitutional Amendment and the development of Land Administration Law (LAL) in 1988. First passed in 1986 and amended in 1998, the LAL guides compensation for compulsory land acquisition (NPC 2004, § 47). In 1986, the LAL followed

the old model of land acquisition compensation, containing four main compo-
nents: land compensation, resettlement subsidies, compensation for young crops
and attachments on the land, and labor resettlement. Despite the positive impacts
of land acquisition and public land leasing on local government financing, an
examination of land acquisition reveals institutional flaws that lead to socioeco-
nomic and administrative problems.

The Land Contract Law for Rural Areas (Law of the People's Republic of China
on Land Contract in Rural Areas, RLCL) increased tenure security for rural people.
The law demands in § 21 (NPC 2002) that there should be a contract between the
parties to land tenure.[9] Two documents should record farmers' land rights and
provide farmers with some measure of protection: a contract and a land rights
certificate. Still, many households and individuals do not possess the required
documents. According to the Summary of 17-Province Survey Findings in 2011,
only 36.7% had both documents (contract and land rights certificate) as required
by law and policy. However, only 20.9% of the issued contracts and 40.3% of issued
certificates contain all the legally required information. Women's names are not
generally listed on land documents (Zimmermann 2012, 1).

During the past decades, changes in Chinese land tenure rights and practices
have given incentives for rural developments, including farmers' incomes, and liv-
ing standards (Ding 2003, 109–120; Zhu and Prosterman 2007; ACWF 2014; 2017).
As Shenggen Fan, Linxiu Zhang, and Xiaobo Zhang (2004, 400) state, the well-be-
ing of many rural landowners has improved by various indicators and factors
such as human capital. Furthermore, those improvements have promoted the
entire Chinese economy (Li 2014, 936–937). However, this positive progress does
not necessarily apply to women. As Carol Woodhams, Ben Lupton, and Huiping
Xian (2009, 2084–2109) point out, the status of women in China is far from equal
to men.[10] Ellen Rudd (2007, 689–710), Yueping Song, and Xiao-Yuan Dong (2017,
1471–1485) concur with Woodhams et al. and argue that the situation for women
is even more complicated in rural or peri-urban areas.

The ACWF feels that in the past ten years, China's continuous acceleration
of urban construction has led into a massive wave of expropriations. The ACWF
also emphasizes the fact that rural women are more vulnerable in expropriation
situations:

> Especially for rural women, it has been difficult, and the system discrim-
> inates women. (interview with the ACWF)

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[9]   The party giving the contract may be, for example, a village collective.

[10]   See also Nancy Riley (1997), Teemu Ruskola (1994), Alicia Leung (2003), and Ellen Rudd (2007).

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5. *Hukou*, land tenure and rural women

The issue of women losing rights to land and property during marriage, divorce, and widowhood has long been regarded as a major obstacle to achieving gender equality in rural China (Liaw 2008, 237). In all of the interviews, this issue was raised on numerous occasions. It seemed that the ACWF is quite concerned about the situation. Likewise, the cases provided the same information; when women were most (economically and socially) vulnerable the system failed them, and rural women were left with no income from the land.[11] The biggest problem with *hukou* location change is related to land management and the transfer of control. According to Jun Xiang (2015, 231–253), this problem particularly affects rural women, who usually move to a new village after marriage. In addition to this, widows are at risk of becoming landless, as a result of which they sink into poverty.

When the first version of the RLCL debuted in 2002, one thing was clear; the message of the ACWF had not fallen on deaf ears. Articles 6, 30, and 54 in the law vowed to uphold women's rights to use and to manage land under contract. Also, the law banned rural collective economic organizations – which were the legally designated owners of farmland, comprising villages and village groups – from revoking their female members' access to land upon marriage, divorce, or widowhood. In other words, so long as their families hold valid land contracts with rural collectives, women's land rights should not be compromised by changes in marital status. What the 2002 RLCL omitted to mention, though, were the criteria necessary to determine the membership of rural collectives. In the absence of criteria defined by state laws, rural collectives remained free to decide who could or could not enjoy membership, a question at the heart of the distribution of income and benefits based on land use. The law's silence on this matter soon proved to be highly problematic, leaving millions of women with little certainty about their standing as members of a particular community (Li 2020, 33–65).

Changing the location of *hukou* involves both bureaucracy and discrimination. In a case provided by the interviewees, the amount of bureaucracy was overwhelming and the outcome uncertain.

> First, an announcement of moving out of the area is made to the authorities of the original area. After the authorities provide a certificate and approve the announcement, the certificate is delivered to the *hukou* officials who cancel the *hukou* of that area. After that, a *hukou* application to the *hukou* authorities of the new area can be made. It is not uncommon that the *hukou* is rejected. (interview with the ACWF)

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[11]   For rural women, land is their only asset and economic provider.

Liu Yansui, Fang Fang, and Li Yuheng (2014, 6–12) found in their research that when a man moves to a new area, he is allocated his own small plot of land fairly soon after the move because he no longer has land in his old place of residence. For women, the situation is different, as the case provided by the ACWF showed. Based on that, it became clear that, according to the interpretation of the village committees, women do not have to change their location because they have land in the old location and therefore do not have to be granted any compensation, let al.one land. Ray H. Liaw (2008, 237) states that the problem is that the original village interprets the matter as meaning that the woman is no longer entitled to use and benefit from her land because she has moved out of the area. However, the RLCL clearly states in § 30 that: "During the term of contract, a woman gets married and undertakes no contract for land in the place of her new residence, the party giving out the contract may not take back her originally contracted land."

The non-transfer of new land to women is also often justified by the authorities with the fact that the land has been allocated under section 14 of the LAL for 30 years, although the same section allows for the division of land if a two-thirds majority supports it. In reality, the two-thirds of the decision-makers are men, making the decision-making process very gendered.

> Village committees are decision makers. And there are mostly men in the committees. Women are not represented in the committees. (interview with the ACWF)

> Men in the village committees ignore women, there are not enough women to look after their rights in village politics. (interview with the ACWF)

The interviews revealed that decision making processes are gendered not only at the village level but though out Chinese society.

As a consequence, no new land divisions are carried out. It seems that the impact of society and public opinion on the functioning of village committees is greater than that of official legislation, as Lawrence Rosen (2017, 231) suggests. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, Louise Lamphere, and Joan Bamberger (1974, 352) say that village committees implement the model that society expects of them. This is the case in today's China; the village committees are constantly aware of the expectations set for them (Xu and Fuller 2018, 38–55). However, these gendered practices seem to be the mode in which Chinese society operates as a whole. This frustrates the ACWF since they are not part of the decision-making bodies but only provide outside help to women.

> Actually, men rule in China, but we are used to it, it's okay to us. We try to change it, but it is a slow change. (interview with the ACWF)

Even though both men and women face difficulties in rural areas due to the *hukou* system and its clashes with land rights, women are more vulnerable and so more at risk of facing poverty and abuse.

Since laws and regulations are considered equal and neutral, it is considered that they eliminate any potential threats of inequality. Thus, village committees and other authorities defend their own decisions with neutrality (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, 201). These are not just men, but all those in power who truly believe they are acting neutrally:

> A law is neutral, but it is thought that neutrality means men. If women are not mentioned specifically, then, women are not taken into account. Simple as that. (interview with the Professor of human rights)

This dilemma is also familiar in Nordic feminism, where attention has been drawn to the fact that formally gender-neutral legislation can mask and even prop up gender-segregated practices and ways of thinking (Lykke 2010, 242). Such gender-neutrality may be called gender-blindness. It does not only mean that gender is not recognized but it usually means that ignoring gender serves the interests of decision-makers and those in power positions.

In addition, the local-level Chinese officials are left with little guidance or no guidance at all. That creates a challenge; officials at the lower levels, including village councils, avoid interference or simply forbid everything in fear of doing something wrong.

> There is no interpretation guidance. [...] [O]fficials don't know how to interpret the law... they forbid everything so that they don't do anything wrong. (interview with the Professor of human rights)

However, problems in implementing decisions or legislation are part of the overall system of Chinese policy-making (Shi, Markoczy, and Stan 2014, 57–75). Furthermore, officials making decisions at the national level do not understand life in rural areas. It can also be argued that since legislators at the national level do not understand life in rural areas, the areas do not receive the support they need.

> Most of the national legislators live in big cities. They don't know what is going on in rural areas. (interview with the Professor of human rights)

6. Discussion and conclusions

Since the *hukou* system is a key institution in defining an individual's socioeconomic status and opportunities in China, it not only impacts women's bargaining power but also their social security, economic well-being, and independence.

It is quite clear that land tenure policies play a part in affecting the household registration system.

Between 1980 and the mid-1990s, gender bias was explicit in the implementation of land tenure policies and population control, especially in rural China. Since that time, explicit gender bias has been reduced, reflecting China's modernization goals. However, the policies are still not gender-neutral in their implementation. Women remain more likely to become "landless" after changing their status in accordance with the *hukou*. The lack of women's land use rights recognition deprives them of their chances of receiving equal treatment in rural China.

The role of social institutions, such as the *hukou* system, in discrimination continues to be the subject of scientific debate. Kuang and Liu (2012, 46–93) indicate that rural *hukou* holders are in many ways in a poorer situation than urban *hukou* holders. But, then again, as Litao Zhao (2017, 165) argues, rural people are reluctant to give up their *hukou* because keeping the rural *hukou* would guarantee their rights to land and thus secure their income. Chen Chuanbo and Cindy Fan (2016, 10, 26) noticed that the access and benefits tied to the rural *hukou*, such as farming and housing land, compensation for land requisition, and, nowadays, abdicated birth control, are considered increasingly valuable. Therefore, many migrants opt to straddle and circulate between the city and countryside rather than giving up their rural *hukou*. However, according to Farsana Afridi, Sherry Li, and Yufei Ren (2015), the living standards and income of rural migrants living in urban areas with the rural *hukou* are far lower than those with urban *hukou*, proving that income from the land is not sufficient (Perry and Selden 2010, 324). In addition, Yang Song (2014, 200–212) states that workers with different *hukou* face different costs of living in cities and have different access to government-provided public services and welfare programs in the urban areas. Migrants with rural and non-local *hukou* working in big Chinese cities have little or no access to welfare programs provided by local city governments.

It is difficult to know why migrants keep their rural *hukou* when they are working in the cities. It is generally difficult to obtain an urban *hukou,* but this is not necessarily the only reason. It is possible that female migrants feel that they must keep the rural *hukou* to support their family in rural area, possibly for reasons related to childcare, which is often the responsibility of grandparents. This is obviously an area where more research is needed.

Even though both men and women face difficulties in rural areas due to the *hukou* system and its clashes with land tenure rights, women are more vulnerable and so more at risk of facing poverty and abuse. Legislation concerning the *hukou* and land rights is gender-neutral, which causes genuine problems. The implementation of the legislation is not neutral, but gender-blind implementation

causes and indeed justifies unequal treatment. In addition, policies and legislation reinforce and strengthen the traditional gender bias that is present in China.

Furthermore, the unequal insurance and social benefit system causes harm to rural women. Their livelihood and economic well-being are bound to the piece of land in their possession. If that piece of land is taken away and/or denied, there is no proper safety net and rural women face an uncertain economic and social future. China has joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which includes a specific article (§ 14) dedicated on the situation and rights of rural women and their right to access, use, and control land (UN GA 1979). Cultural and social factors and a lack of knowledge prevent rural women from obtaining secure rights to land. It is crucial to ensure that legislation and land reform policies are gender-responsive and consider rural women's historically disadvantaged socio-economic position compared to rural men. Furthermore, there is reason to create and maintain an environment that encourages rural women's increased participation in (political) decision-making, such as in village committees.

Social discrimination and exclusion brought by the *hukou* system has become a major obstacle for China in its aims to become a modern nation and global leader. The imbalanced approach to economic growth by sacrificing the interests of the peasantry undermines the stability of economic relationships and economic growth. Recent peasant and migrant labor protests are symptoms of insecurity and may threaten China's political stability and economic sustainability in the long run (Chan 2019, 59–79). China should accelerate *hukou* reforms and dismantle this discriminatory system within a reasonable period. As Charlotte Goodburn (2014, 6) proposes:

> Real *hukou* reform would require fundamental changes to the provision of public services, and the funding to support them, as well as an overhaul of China's land rights.

However, the *hukou* system and its reforms are incredibly complex, largely due to its connection to Chinese governance and the linking of one's *hukou* status to social services and local finances. It is important that the *hukou* system and its problems are researched and written about, for it is a comprehensive system that affects all aspects of life in China.

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RELIGIOUS AND DE-EXTREMIZATION REGULATIONS AND THEIR DISSEMINATION IN THE XUAR

Martin Lavička

A system creating propaganda is to be despised;
everybody hopes for it to end. The times in which
propaganda flourishes are considered unhappy times,
times that everybody hopes will pass very quickly.
(Mittler 2008, 466)

The current situation of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is considered by many as one of the most pressing human rights violations of the last few decades. The Uyghurs, being an ethnic minority in China, are voiceless under the current political leadership, which suppresses anything deviating from the official course set up by the Party leaders in Beijing. The legal guarantees, stipulated by Chinese law, are nothing more than a pretend world in which the Uyghurs are only second-class citizens. This chapter looks at one of the Chinese government channels employed to raise public awareness among Uyghurs about the new laws and regulations. It discusses the content of an officially published Uyghur-written booklet *Din esebiyliki ademni nabut qilidu* (*Religious extremism kills/destroys people*) and analyses in what way legal regulations are explained to the "common" Uyghurs. This chapter also identifies various propaganda strategies within the official narrative of the Chinese government.

Keywords: Xinjiang, Uyghurs, propaganda, religious policy, ethnic policy

1. Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the most populous country in the world and has one of the biggest economies. However, in many ways, it is still a mystery

for generations of sinologists and political scientists. Projections of Western ideas and values about society and governance fail to predict China's near future and political trajectory successfully. Under Xi Jinping, what China wants and what role it intends to play in the global world is unclear. Relevant data that could help us understand it are either classified or scattered in myriads of formal and informal information channels. It is more and more difficult for foreign scholars to access Chinese archival sources and conduct field research, two valuable resources to learn more about China's past and present (Cunningham 2014). To extract the data from the available sources is tricky and not without danger because these sources are not verifiable in most instances due to non-existing independent and credible "second" sources of information.

This chapter focuses predominantly on the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) that has been in the spotlight for more than a decade as the most turbulent and restive region in the PRC (Dillon 2004, xi). The PRC government has called the region "the hotbed of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism" (Liu 2014) and labelled the 2009 *Qiwu* Incident[1] and other violent insurgencies that followed as terrorist acts conducted by Uyghur separatists and terrorists. To avert any further revolts, Beijing introduced more restrictive policies under the new Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism (*Yanli daji baoli kongbu huodong zhuanxiang xingdong*)[2] and the People's War on Terror. The change in Chinese policy to perceive the situation of Xinjiang is no longer an internal separatists' problem but is a part of the international war on terrorism and took place in 2001. It was supported by US Executive Order 13224 from September 23, 2001, under which the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) was classified as a terrorist organization in the following year on September 3.[3] On September 11, 2002, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) added the ETIM to the UNSC Consolidated List,[4] established under UNSC Resolution 1267 from 1999, which allows sanctioning individuals and organizations associated with Al-Qaida and the Taliban. These links between global terrorism and Islamic extremism empowered the Chinese government to justify its policies and crackdowns on "illegal religious activities" in the region of Xinjiang as counter-terrorism measures (Roberts 2018, 8).

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[1]   Uyghur protests, which turned into violent riots, began on July 5, 2009 in the region's capital Ürümchi. According to the Chinese narrative, these riots were organized from abroad by the World Uyghur Congress and its then-leader Rebiya Kadeer. Following the incident, hundreds of Uyghurs were arrested and many sentenced to death.

[2]   The campaign launched in 2014 in Xinjiang.

[3]   See the Executive Order 13224 at: https://www.state.gov/executive-order-13224.

[4]   See the updated version at: https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/un-sc-consolidated-list.

The Strike Hard Campaign significantly intensified after the new XUAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo[5] assumed his leadership in 2016 (Hurd 2018). Previously, Chen Quanguo served as a party secretary in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and was praised for the region's economic development and securitization of the area (Lavička 2021a, 62). The PRC implemented modern surveillance methods and state of the art technologies including iris scans, DNA sampling, and facial recognition cameras to curb any expression of discontent or disobedience and monitor every person's whereabouts (Shih 2017).

This chapter looks at how the new restrictive regulations and policies are communicated and explained to people living in the westernmost part of the PRC, what themes are the most common, and whether there are any stereotypical portrayals of the Xinjiang region and the Uyghurs. In this chapter, I am discussing some of the techniques Chinese propagandists use to influence the targeted audience. However, in the case of Xinjiang, this emotional manipulation might prove to be more counterproductive than initially desired by the administration. The officially issued documents tend to include a large amount of propaganda ballast. However, by scrutinizing the textual strategies, wording, repetition of specific themes and omission of others, we can still distil some hints about the actual policies and Chinese governmental priorities towards particular topics. This text will try to show what Franz Schurmann said in his book *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* about working with Chinese sources, that "[c]ommunist documents cannot be read as if they were written in conventional language" (Schurmann 1977, 62).

This chapter examines one of the channels used for such propaganda dissemination. It looks at a cartoon-like booklet written in Uyghur titled *Din esebiyliki ademni nabut qilidu* (*Religious extremism kills/destroys people*).[6] It compares its content with two normative texts, the Regulations of XUAR on Religious Affairs (RXR) and the Regulations on De-radicalization of the XUAR (RDR). The analyzed documents differ in their nature; the two regulations use condensed legal language, but the booklet "humanizes" the language and supplements the legal imperatives with emotional manipulation in both a textual and visual way by including "real stories" and illustrations. These documents, however, do not differ in the actual content, and their analysis and comparison can provide us with some insights about Chinese governmental thought work. This chapter selects only parts of the material and pinpoints some of the most common narratives about Xinjiang and Uyghurs found in the booklet.

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[5]   *1955, Communist Party Secretary of the XUAR from August 29, 2016 to December 25, 2021.

[6]   The booklet was translated into Uyghur from Chinese original *Zongjiao jiduan haisiren*, with the similar meaning.

2. Propaganda and thought work

Before looking at the selected documents, I should clarify some of the terminologies this chapter contains. One of them is propaganda with the related term 'thought work.' Propaganda can be seen as "the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols" (Lasswell 1927, 627). Randal Marlin thinks of propaganda as an effort to mobilize a large audience through communication to influence beliefs, actions, and attitudes in a way that circumvents or suppresses the individual's ability to make a rational, reflective, and adequately informed decision (Marlin, 2013, 12). According to Terence Qualter (1962, 27), it is a

> deliberate attempt by some individual or group to form, control, or alter the attitudes of other groups by the use of the instruments of communication, with the intention that in any given situation the reaction of those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist.

Jacques Ellul, in *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, adds that propaganda seeks to "bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulation and incorporated in an organization" (Ellul 1965, 61).

In China, propaganda plays a crucial role both in government and governance mechanisms since the establishment of the PRC (Rawnsley 2013, 147). The Chinese term for 'propaganda' (*xuanchuan*) means both publicity and propaganda, illustrates the principal differences of the concept in the West and China. Nowadays the term propaganda has a negative connotation in the "Euro-American context," while the Chinese translation of propaganda is not just neutral, it is widely used in many names of official governmental bodies. That is the main reason for the dichotomy between the English translation done by Chinese who prefer to translate the *xuanchuan* as "publicity," and the outside world translating the same term as "propaganda."[7] The current meaning of the word comes from Latin. It derives from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide) installed by the Catholic church in the 17th century to "promote" missionary work and the catholicization of foreign lands, including China (Menegon 2017, 27–28). However, by the 18th century, the term's usage was no longer limited to religious activities. It was adapted for secular and political purposes, already with negative connotations, leading to the current pejorative understanding of it as a tool to "spread biased information or falsehoods to promote a cause or serve an agenda" (Diggs-Brown 2011, 48–49).

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[7] In the 1990s, the official English translations of Chinese institutions started to use "publicity" or "information" instead of "propaganda," however keeping the Chinese name intact (Brady 2009, 440).

In China, propaganda and the mass persuasion not only transmit thoughts and attitudes desired by the Chinese Communist Party of China (CCP) among the citizens. The CCP system of persuasive and coercive communication is also designed

> to provide the Party with a continuous flow of information concerning the sentiments of people […] [so] that what ought to be known by the people *is* known and that what should be felt by the people *is* felt. (Yu 1964, 4)

Propaganda has been an integral part of the CCP agenda since its founding in 1921, when it was modelled after the Soviet example. However, propaganda methods were also inspired by other totalitarian states, including Nazi Germany (Shambaugh 2007, 26). The target group of official propaganda has transformed, and techniques were modified and modernized throughout the turbulent decades after the founding of the PRC. Nevertheless, the motivation behind it remains the same – to ensure the mass support of central government policies and its priorities in the regions, control public opinion, strengthen and justify the leading role of the CCP, and legitimize the regime. Gary Rawnsley argues that propaganda is possibly even more crucial nowadays for the government than before because China developed into a post-ideological society that requires a significant amount of thought work to "explain and justify the continuation of the CPC rule" (Rawnsley 2013, 148). The Chinese government keeps up with the times and applies modern technologies to make it more modern and market-friendly (Brady 2009, 434).

The most important institution responsible for the propaganda work, reaching with its sub-branches to all levels of governance, is the Publicity/Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu*, CCPPD), which is charged with ideology work (Brady 2010, 13). Its prominence within the structure is quite apparent; the current head of the department, Huang Kunming (*1956), is also a member of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, elected by the 19th National Congress in 2017. Although the most important, it is not the only institution dealing with propaganda/publicity (Shambaugh 2007, 30).

2.1 Detecting propaganda

The crucial question asked in this chapter is how to detect propaganda in the Chinese context and decipher the most common strategies utilized by the propagandists? In November 1937, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) in New York published an article entitled "How to Detect Propaganda?" which suggested that the propagandists use seven common techniques to influence the thinking of the audience in whatever directions they want (Fleming 1995, 3). The first mentioned tool is "name-calling." Its strategy appeals to the reader's fear and hate

by using bad names to discredit the opponent. Hence, the reader forms a judgement without examining the actual evidence (IPA 1937, 5). "Glittering generalities" is the second tool in opposition to the "name-calling." The propagandist uses "virtue words" to praise and defend his (governmental) policies, therefore evoking reader's feelings of love, pride, and brotherhood, but without providing the relevant evidence (IPA 1937, 6). The first two types of devices introduce the positive and negative models "towards which the people are to orient themselves" (Schurmann 1977, 67).

The third tool is the "transfer," by which the propagandist shields himself with an authority that is prestigious and highly respected by the general public. Such authority can be a church, nation, or some international organization, e.g., the United Nations. "Testimonial" is another device by which the propagandist offers a "credible" testimony or counter-testimony to influence public opinion so the audience does not look for any other information resources. "Plain folks" strategy is quite common and often used in audio-visual propaganda materials. Leaders and politicians are portrayed as common people, engaging in everyday activities, such as cooking, gardening, fishing, playing sports, or enjoying cozy time with their families, something common people can relate to. Using underemphasis and overemphasis to "dodge issues and evade facts" (IPA 1937, 7) is the "card stacking" tool. Its main goal is to masquerade half-truths, omit unfavorable facts, and resort to lies and false testimonies to stack the cards against the truth to support the propagandist endeavors. The last device suggested by the IPA is the "band wagon" strategy to make the individual follow the crowd. The propagandist

> hires a hall, fills a great stadium, marches a million men in parade [...] employs symbols, colors, music [...] appeals to the desire to 'follow the crowd' [...] directs his appeal to groups held together by common ties of nationality, religion, race, environment, sex, [and] vocation. (IPA 1937, 7)

In the following part of the chapter, I will show how these strategies, identified in the first half of the last century are still widely used by the Chinese government in the 21st century.

2.2 Art as a tool of propaganda

The analyzed booklet consists of a text accompanied by black and white drawings in an *Orbis Pictus*[8] style. Therefore, we should briefly discuss how art is used as a propaganda tool in China in addition to the strategies mentioned in previous

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8   A revolutionary textbook from the second half of the 17th century, written by John Amos Comenius. It was the first widely used textbook for children, which combined pictures with text.

paragraphs. Mao himself stated at the Yan'an Forum (*Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui*)[9] that art has a specific purpose and cannot be detached from politics. Instead, it is an irreplaceable part of the proletarian revolution (Mao 1967). I consider the booklets a form of art but with a clear political purpose similar to its more famous "older brother," the propaganda poster. Their primary functions are similar, but the images in the booklets, as I will show later, can sometimes be ambiguous, and so they are further accompanied by explanatory texts. Moreover, propaganda posters often served as colorful decoration, and their aesthetic value overshadowed their political meaning. As Stefan Landsberger, the prominent collector and expert on Chinese propaganda posters noted, these posters were cheap and widely available. They could bring some color to otherwise drab places where most people lived (Landsberger 2013, 397). The booklet analyzed in this chapter, however, does not entirely fulfil all these characteristics. It is less elaborate in style and is black and white. All the illustrations are accompanied by a textual narration, not just by simple phrases as commonly seen in propaganda poster. The visual aspect of propaganda was a successful strategy to convey the desired message among the illiterate rural population and played an "immediate and didactic role" since the founding of the PRC in 1949 (Barnes 2020, 125).

Positioning the current Uyghur population in Xinjiang the same as the illiterate Chinese population in the 1950s would be highly controversial. It brings us back to what Mao called the Han chauvinism,[10] which he promised to eradicate. Nowadays, 'illiteracy' does not often mean actual illiteracy. Instead, it implies the struggles some minorities might have with the standard Chinese *Putonghua*. The Whitepaper on Development and Progress Xinjiang published in 2009 by the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (SCIO) stated that up to 70 % of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang have problems with standard Chinese and that such incompetence could pose a threat to the development of the region (SCIO 2009, Ch. 3). According to the former Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan (*1944) statement from August 2, 2002, minority languages cannot contain the vocabulary necessary for modern science and technology. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of life of the Uyghur youth when they grow up, all instructions have to be in *Putonghua* (cited in Becquelin 2004, 376).

The primary functions of the booklet are identical to propaganda posters as it informs the readers about new policies and laws, in Antonio Terrone's words, about "political imperatives and policy priorities" (Terrone 2016, 40). Both the pro-

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[9]   The Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art was held in May 1942 in the Chinese Communist revolutionary centre in Yan'an in the Shaanxi province. It was decided that art should be about and for the Chinese working class and serve the political goals to achieve socialism.

[10] Mao used this term in the Inner-party directive, drafted for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on March 16, 1953 (Mao 1977).

paganda posters and the booklets can be instructing – stating what to do or how to do it. They can mobilize the masses (something often connected with various campaigns in the past). They can praise the government's actions, specific role models, military, police, etc. They can serve as a deterrent, warning people about punishments if they do something wrong. Moreover, they can also denounce and defame certain people, even the former role models. Of course, these materials can combine more functions on one page.

3. Analyzed documents

The two normative documents analyzed in this chapter are part of the so-called local regulations (*difangxing fagui*) issued by the provincial-level people's congress. The RXR was adopted by the 9th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 8th National People's Congress of the XUAR on July 16, 1994 and came into effect on October 1, 1994. The amendment came into effect on January 1, 2015. It consists of eight chapters and 66 articles in total. These Regulations apply only to the XUAR, demonstrating how vital religious affairs in Xinjiang are to the Central Government. The RXR was amended shortly after Xi Jinping assumed power and can be understood as an answer to the various violent attacks in and outside of Xinjiang in 2013 and 2014.[11] According to the Chinese government, these attacks were conducted by the Uyghur separatists and terrorists (Wu 2014).

The RDR was adopted on March 29, 2017, at the 28th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 12th People's Congress of the XUAR. It consists of six chapters and 50 articles. Similar to the RXR, the RDR applies only to Xinjiang, suggesting that extremism is a severe problem in the region. It defines extremism as "expressions and behaviors influenced by extremism, rendering radical religious ideas, and rejecting and intervening in normal production and life … inciting hatred, discrimination or advocating violence" (RDR 2017, Art. 3). These regulations became widely discussed after the prompt amendment on October 9, 2018. In this revised version, Article 33 was rewritten to acknowledge and legitimize the existence of re-education camps, calling them vocational education and training centers (Lavička 2021b, 108).

However, for this short analysis, the second chapter on primary manifestations of the "extremification" (*jiduanhua*) is of particular interest. It lists the behaviors which are considered extremist by the authorities. In the following paragraphs, I describe how these "signs of extremism" materialize in the booklet and are

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[11] E.g., the 2013 Tiananmen square car attack, killing five and injuring more than 30 people, and the 2014 Kunming railway station attack, with a death toll of 35 and over 100 injuries.

presented both textually and visually to the audience. I also include some of the pages of the brochure to provide a clearer image.

Article 9 of the RDR states that it is prohibited to propagate and disseminate extremist thoughts (§ 1), to interfere: with others' freedom of religion, e.g., by forcing others to participate in religious activities (§ 2), with activities such as weddings, funerals or inheritance (§ 3), with others from having exchanges, mixing with, or living together, with persons of other ethnicities or other faiths (§ 4), with cultural and recreational activities, and rejecting or refusing public goods and services such as radio and television (§ 5). It is also forbidden to generalize the concept of halal, and expand it into other areas beyond food, and then using the idea of something being non-halal to reject or interfere with others' secular lives (§ 6). It is forbidden to wear, or to compel others to wear, burqas and face coverings, or symbols of "extremification" (§ 7) and spread religious fanaticism through irregular beards or name selection (§ 8). Another sign of extremism is failing to perform the legal formalities in marrying or divorcing by religious methods (§ 9), or not allowing children to receive public education, or obstructing the national education system (§ 10). Intimidating or inducing others to boycott national policies and destroy state documents, such as resident identity cards, household registration, or even the Chinese currency, is prohibited (§ 11). It is further forbidden to intentionally damage or destroy public or private property (§ 12). Paragraph 13 prohibits publishing, printing, distributing, selling, producing, downloading, storing, reproducing, accessing, copying, or even possessing articles, publications, audio, or video with extremist content. The fourteenth sign of extremist behavior is to deliberately interfere with and undermine the implementation of family planning policies (§ 14). The last paragraph forbids any other extremist speeches and actions (RDR 2017, Art. 9). Such a vague formulation allows the local authorities to interpret the regulations as they wish.

The first edition of the *Din esebiyliki ademni nabut qilidu* was published in 2014 by Xinjiang People's Publishing House (*Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe*)[12] and reprinted in 2015, with a price tag of 8 RMB. It is a thin booklet consisting of 60 pages with black and white illustrations and the accompanying explanatory text in Uyghur. However, the Uyghur text was translated from the Chinese original,[13] which is a common strategy even for the newspapers published in Uyghur. The imprint of the booklet states that the publication is part of the patriotic education (*aiguozhui jiaoyu*). I chose this booklet from other available sources because it deals more with current policy implementation and law enforcement than the

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[12] The publishing house was founded in 1951 and is under the control of the Bureau of Publishing of the Central Propaganda Department (Brady 2010, 20–21).

[13] The author of the Chinese text is Zhang Yubo and the Uyghur translator is named Dilmurat.

other booklets, primarily focusing on official Chinese narratives about the history of Xinjiang. The general idea for the analysis is to see how the official narrative from official normative documents is transformed into this kind of material and what propagandist strategies are used.

The following pages include examples directly taken from the booklet. I am trying to illustrate some of the narratives that are repeatedly present in the booklet and therefore they are perceived by the Chinese authorities as crucial.

Figure 1

(Source: Zhang 2014, 35–36)

The picture on the left in Figure 1 reflects § 7 of the RDR Article 9, which bans the veiling and wearing of extremist symbols. It shows a "modern" Uyghur woman pointing at four other women wearing black burqas and explaining in the text that this Arabic dress is not original to Uyghurs. The text further reads that by wearing such a dress, women lose their freedoms and become brainwashed. As veiling became a widespread phenomenon in Xinjiang in the early 2010s, the government stepped in and initiated the Project Beauty (*liangli gongcheng*) campaign in 2011. The main goal of this campaign was to discourage women from veiling and covering their entire body, as in some other Muslim countries. Men were discouraged from growing extensive beards. The "symbols of extremism"

are usually associated with a star and a crescent. They are considered extremist because they were used on flags of the short-lived East Turkestan Republics in the 1930s and 1940s.[14] However, they are still an important symbolic representation of the independent Xinjiang and the Pan-Turkic movement, something the Chinese government does not tolerate (Jiménez Tovar and Lavička 2020, 253). Failing to comply with the regulation would automatically make that person suspected of being infiltrated by dangerous extremist thoughts (VOA 2013). Nowadays, the only arbiter of acceptable attire, behavior, or even the ethnic culture, is the Chinese state (Leibold and Grose 2016, 102).

The picture on the right in Figure 1 further recounts § 3 of the RDR Article 9, which bans interfering with weddings, funerals, and other activities. It further explains that religious extremists are compelling people to believe that real Muslims should not sing and dance or watch TV. The story recalled below the picture talks about some "simple" people in southern Xinjiang who believed the extremists and stopped dancing at weddings and crying at funerals. It follows with a story of a woman who was working in Ürümchi. She went to Hoten[15] for a wedding and was shocked to see all her former friends wearing burqas. The wedding ceremony was very quiet, quite different from the traditionally festive and enthusiastic Uyghur celebrations. The portrayal of a happy dancing Uyghur girl in traditional dress, with braided hair and a *doppa* hat, illustrates the stereotypical image of the Uyghurs and the reduction of their culture into exotic singing and dancing (Anonymous 2021, 134). This text bears characteristics of the testimonial strategy of propaganda by implying that it tells the real story of a specific person. The name-calling strategy of propaganda complements the testimonial by sneaking in the idea of the underdeveloped and backward southern Xinjiang, which is a common narrative. We can only deduce that this can go even further by stating that the South is poor and obsolete because most people are the Uyghurs, not Han Chinese. However, it is necessary to add that in terms of the GNP, the southern part of Xinjiang is considerably more impoverished than the northern part.[16]

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[14] The First East Turkestan Republic (1933–1934) and the Second East Turkestan Republic (1944–1949).

[15] Hoten is an important urban center in southern Xinjiang, located on the south-western edge of the Taklimakan Desert. It is inhabited predominantly by the Uyghurs.

[16] In 2019, the per capita disposable income of urban residents of Ürümchi was 40,101 RMB, while in Kashgar it was only 25,631 RMB (XSB 2020, 10–12).

Figure 2

(Source: Zhang 2014, 37, 41)

In Figure 2, the picture on the left reflects § 5 and § 6 of RDR Article 9. The fifth paragraph states that people must not intervene in cultural and recreational activities or reject public goods and services such as radio and television. Quite interestingly the televisions depicted in the picture resemble obsolete models from the last century. Moreover, the Uyghurs are portrayed wearing very old-fashioned clothes, and the Uyghur men have twisted moustaches. The sixth paragraph of the RDR Article 9 forbids generalizing the concept of "halal." The text under the picture states that extremists tell the people that food, such as vegetables grown by the Han Chinese (eggplant, white radish), and other products, including televisions, or even houses given to Uyghurs, are not halal because they all come from the Han. In the 2010s, Xinjiang authorities launched the anti-halal movement because they feared that the Islamic tradition began penetrating secular China (Kuo, 2018). Various local governments decided to close many shops and services to "fight against the pan-halal tendency and safeguard ethnic unity" (Li 2018). Some cities ordered the shop owners to remove Islamic symbols and Arabic from their storefront signs (Wyatt 2019).

The text under the picture on the right explains that the "Three evil forces" (*sangu shili*)[17] tell people that the Chinese government encourages Uyghurs to learn Mandarin to side-line the Uyghur language to make it eventually disappear. According to them, it is a part of a bigger plan to erase the whole Uyghur culture. Therefore, people should not send their children to public schools. Because of the "three evils'" influence, some students start to run away from schools or refuse to continue their studies. They destroy their books and refuse to learn Mandarin. The text concludes that these people reduce their opportunity to become competitive in society and have a good life.

Figure 3

(Source: Zhang 2014, 11, 16)

Figure 3 refers to the RXR Article 40 and 41. Article 40 says that the content of religious publications and audio-visual materials must not: 1) undermine national unity, social stability, economic development, or scientific and technological progress; 2) incite national hatred or racial discrimination, or undermine ethnic unity; 3) promote separatism, religious extremism and terrorism; 4) affect religious harmony, causing disputes between and within religions; 5) endanger social morality

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[17] The proper translation would be "Three forces," meaning terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism.

or great, Chinese cultural traditions; or 6) violate other laws and regulations. Article 41 forbids the "use [of] satellite ground receiving facilities to listen to, watch, or disseminate domestic and foreign religious radio and TV programs." According to the accompanying texts, the "evil forces" use modern technology to spread religious extremism. Several people in southern Xinjiang, especially young people and teenagers, watch and store videos about terrorism on their mobile phones. The "three evil forces" encourage young people undertake Jihad to go to heaven. The picture on the right reiterates the content of Article 40, stating that extremism is like cancer to a human body. Therefore, viewing, downloading, owning, sharing, or selling such content is strictly forbidden and punishable by law. Like Figure 2, the computers and even the mobile phone showed in the picture are all very obsolete, the picture also depicts a video and audio tapes that are hardly used anymore.

Figure 4

(Source: Zhang 2014, 14–15)

The left picture in Figure 4 talks about a group of terrorists from Seriqbuya[18] who began to gather to watch films about jihad in September 2012. They built their organization, trained physically and on April 23, 2013, they conducted a terrorist attack killing 15 people, including Uyghur, Han, and Hui people. The police took

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[18]   A town located in Kashgar prefecture, approximately 180 kilometers to the east of Kashgar.

quick action and shot dead seven of the terrorists and caught another 18 of them. The picture on the right depicts a car attack involving a suspected suicide bombing on October 28, 2013 at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. According to the accompanying text, the investigation found that the driver, his mother, and his wife watched movies about jihad and decided to conduct a terrorist attack, even taking their baby with them. The Chinese government blamed the attack on the ETIM (Kaiman 2013). Both texts use the "testimonial" and the "name-calling" strategies. They show how people in Xinjiang are easily influenced by extremism and engage in reprehensible terrorist acts. To make the description more believable to the readers, exact numbers of offenders, real place names, and dates are included in the text. The Chinese police, in contrast, are portrayed as a swiftly acting force that does not hesitate to kill the terrorists to protect the rest of society.

Figure 5

(Source: Zhang 2014, 8, 10)

Figure 5 shows the denunciation of some religious leaders and even of some family members, such as parents. It also refers to Articles 12–14 of the RXR. These Articles ban religious home-schooling, including theology classes or scripture reading. The text on the left recalls a police case from June 2016, when the police department in Hoten arrested a Mullah who secretly offered religious classes to local people. He had a wife, but two more women lived in the same house and

shared the bed with him, living in polygamy. As the religious leaders often carry more authority than the local administrators or the CPC cadres, it is a governmental strategy to disgrace such personalities publicly and point out their moral weaknesses. The scene in the picture's background resembles orientalist image of the harem where women were sexually subjugated and exploited.

The picture on the right shows two happy Uyghur children studying in the public school and a sad Uyghur boy being sent to the religious school by his father. The accompanying text explains that nowadays, all Uyghur children have the opportunity to receive a good public education. Even the children from rural areas can study in the public schools for free, get a free lunch there, and receive financial support to stay at the dormitories if they are from far away. However, some parents sent their children to religious schools instead, so now, as grownups, they cannot participate well in society and are not financially independent, compared with those who studied in public schools.

Figure 6

(Source: Zhang 2014, 42, 47)

Figure 6 shows two pictures praising the government's efforts for helping the Uyghurs, talking about the affirmative actions towards them. The picture on the left tells the reader to learn how to use technology to be modern and that the Party and the government support minority education. The image on the right

stresses that compulsory education is free in Xinjiang and that minority students get extra points at the university entrance exams. Moreover, after graduation, the government offers them jobs. For those who cannot find jobs, the government pays for their re-education, after which they can find new jobs quickly. Chinese government is portrayed in a paternalistic fashion and emphasizes its core role in "civilizing" and modernizing Xinjiang since the establishment of the PRC (Zhang, Brown, and O'Brien 2018, 799–800). The Uyghur children are stereotypically portrayed wearing *doppa* hats in all the pictures, which does not, however, correspond with the everyday reality in Xinjiang.

4. Common themes

Several main themes reappear throughout the whole booklet. There is the narrative of "three evil forces" trying to split up and frustrate China by spreading various rumors. These "rumors" are, for example, that the Han Chinese steal the natural resources of Xinjiang (Zhang 2014, 43), that the Chinese government bans Muslims to go to Mecca (Zhang 2014, 27), and forces people to learn *Putonghua* instead of Uyghur. Another common theme is the lack of education among the rural Uyghur population in the southern part of Xinjiang. According to the official narrative, this disadvantage makes people prone to accept extremist ideas, illegally leave the country, or sabotage official policies.

Throughout the brochure, it is also stressed that Uyghur culture is unique and should be protected from "foreign" influences. Correspondingly, Islam in China is specific, Sinicized, and peaceful compared to other Muslim countries. Only the extremists are changing the meaning of the Koran (Zhang 2014, 9) to force people to go on jihad and kill innocent people (Zhang 2014, 19). The booklet states that it is necessary to prevent the penetration of radical Islam from other countries such as Afghanistan or Pakistan and fight illegal migration to these countries. Afghanistan and Pakistan are portrayed as developing countries with starving, unhappy people influenced by extremism (Zhang 2014, 20–24). Quite surprisingly, Saudi Arabia is described as a role model. The booklet states that although the country is the source of Islam, it is highly developed and modern, and women there can work as television anchors, be professional athletes, and walk freely in the cities. Particularly surreal is that the same picture also shows bottles of alcohol and cigarettes (Zhang 2014, 25), which is even more surprising because smoking regulations are strict and alcohol is completely banned in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, breaking the law is punished by hundreds of lashes. In several instances, the booklet describes Pakistan as a failed state and the hotbed of the "three evils." It depicts Pakistani population suffering a great deal of hardship and oppression due to religious extremism. Such portrayal suggests that China-Pakistan relations

must be disrupted. In reality, however, Pakistan is one of the Muslim countries which are mostly silent about the treatment of Muslims in China (Kelemen and Turcsányi 2020, 232), and even praising Beijing's treatment of Muslims in China and the detention of Uyghurs as a counterterrorist and deradicalization measure (OIO 2019a; OIO 2019b).

"Glittering generalities" and "card stacking" are common strategies used in the booklet to praise the role of the Chinese government in modernizing the region. The government is portrayed as an eager supporter of Uyghurs' struggle to modernity represented by various forms of affirmative actions in education, employment, housing, etc. (Zhang 2014, 48–49). At the same time, the booklet stresses the uncompromising stance towards any activities considered illegal by the administration and it reiterates the "strike-hard" attitude of the security forces in the region (Zhang 2014, 53). As the CCP wants to retain the only real authority in the region, the booklet tries to discredit any possible competitors, such as the local religious personnel and even the family elders, who are portrayed as two-faced, or brainwashed and hindering the improvement of living conditions in the region.

5. Conclusion

This chapter tried to outline one of the propaganda channels that the Chinese government uses to inform the Uyghurs about new laws, regulations, and restrictions especially. It studied one specific Uyghur booklet about religious extremism in the region and compared its content with provisions in two normative texts: the Regulations of XUAR on Religious Affairs (RXR) and the Regulations on De-radicalization of the XUAR (RDR). It also identified various propaganda strategies still used in the 21st century in official Chinese narratives, which are in line with the seven typical propaganda techniques put together in 1937 by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in New York. The most commonly used strategies were "glittering generalities" and "card-stacking" to highlight the positive role of the party-state in the region. At the other end of the scale was "name-calling," denouncing the backward and uneducated people and even some religious leaders for their supposed two-faced behavior. Another frequently employed method was the "testimonial," telling "real stories" to make the whole text more believable. Quite interestingly, some content of the booklet goes ad absurdum, such as the portrayal of the Saudi Arabia as a liberal country and accompanying such depiction with pictures of alcohol and cigarettes.

It is evident that in 21st century China, the spread of information through this kind of visual propaganda still plays an essential role in certain parts of China, and definitely in Xinjiang. One reason can be the inherited distrust towards non-Han groups living in the PRC, especially on the peripheries. The booklet reiterated

on many occasions that radicalization is often related to uneducated and rural Uyghurs. Therefore, the Chinese government puts significant efforts to educate the people and integrate them into a homogenized, modern Chinese society even against their will. This argument follows Stevan Harrell's statement that "the ethnic minority people are seen as inferior and peripheral, but also civilizable" (Harrell 1995, 13). Visual or even cartoon-like propaganda is often associated with the illiteracy of the target group. Therefore, instead of promoting interethnic harmony, the propaganda does the opposite by highlighting the differences among the ethnic groups. It offends their cultural values and subsequently leads to discontent among the target population and their resentment toward the governing agencies (Terrone 2016, 40).

This chapter is a small addition to Chinese propaganda studies. It is envisioned as a part of the future larger project that will seek to understand how normative documents are transmitted and adjusted into various channels to reach the target audience in Xinjiang.

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PERSONALIZED PROPAGANDA: THE POLITICS AND ECONOMY OF YOUNG, PRO-GOVERNMENT MINORITY VLOGGERS FROM THE XUAR

Rune Steenberg and Tenha Seher

This paper introduces a new genre of Chinese online propaganda about the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) that we call personalized propaganda. It takes the shape of personal vlogs and short videos by young minority people showing their lives and debating political topics in line with the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The paper describes and contextualizes this phenomenon and argues that, unlike what the videos seek to portray, these political influencers are supported and coordinated by the government while also deriving much incentive from the private market of media platforms that help turn such videos into business opportunities. We see the phenomenon of personalized propaganda as a synthesis of state propaganda, social media, the gig economy, and the commercialization of personal space. The videos analyzed for this paper are similar to those of other young vloggers and influencers using social media platforms to earn money in China and elsewhere. What is special about them is their explicit political content and close alignment with CCP narratives and that they are produced by young minority people in Xinjiang at a time when the region is under massive pressure from the government and security apparatus. Based on an analysis of seven ethnic minority vlogger accounts with a total of over 2,000 videos, their videos and the personal interconnectedness of the vloggers in question, we argue that these schemes of personalized propaganda are likely to have been started by state-sponsored programs that subsequently help facilitate commercial success on social media platforms. We also hope to make a contribution to the establishment of an epistemological frame and an analytical set of tools for the online ethnography of places with limited access, high surveillance and securitization.

Keywords: XUAR, Uyghurs, state propaganda, personalized propaganda, social media

1. Introduction

"Hello everybody, welcome! You are watching Anniguli's channel, and so on, hahaha." A young Uyghur woman addresses the camera placed on a table in front of her in what looks like a hotel room. She is in her early twenties, impeccably, fashionably, and quite expensively dressed. She smiles and laughs while speaking into the camera in an animated fashion in Mandarin. Her adding of "and so on" to the initial greeting betrays her routine and provides a hint of refreshing self-irony. This is her 746th video on YouTube, a platform blocked and forbidden in China, having posted there first from her native Ürümchi, but more lately from Shanghai where she has gone to study at a private university for media and the arts. The video is short, a mere 3:33 minutes. She speaks about dating during college and about how she was approached and courted by a high-school student four years her junior. She laughs and assures the viewer that she is more interested in learning and in earning money than dating.

The Anniguli account initially looks like that of a regular fashion vlogger based in China talking about regular topics of interest for people in their early 20s, but the video carries a number of sub-texts. These only become fully understandable when read within the larger context of minority, mainly female, vloggers from Xinjiang uploading videos with political content onto both YouTube and Chinese media platforms like Weibo (新浪微博), Haokan Shiping (好看视频) and Xigua Shiping (西瓜视频). This young Uyghur woman is not promoting fashion, nor any other products, life-hacks or techniques; she is promoting the narratives and policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in her native region, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Anniguli is the most prominent of a number of young minority profiles uploading videos of their daily lives and issues of concern to them. The narratives they present as their personal views align suspiciously well with those of the CCP. Such 'personalized propaganda,' as we choose to call this phenomenon, is but one element in a broad 'united front'-type media offensive by the Chinese authorities, which started in 2018 (see Alpermann 2020; Byler 2019; Moghazy 2021) to shape the representation of Xinjiang in China and the world in reaction to negative publicity and attention resulting from excessive violence by the Chinese state, including the mass incarceration and torture of minority people in the region since 2017.

While Anniguli's camera is placed in a seemingly careless way on the table in front of her, on closer inspection, the picture looks thoughtfully designed. A clean white plate with Western cutlery between her and the camera defines her lifestyle as decidedly modern while a continuously visible bottle of red wine and a wine glass in the background underscores the high-end flair indicated by her clothing. A shopping bag at the far left of the picture nods to luxury consumption as a status symbol and to the CCP narrative that it is helping minority people become wealthy.

Figure 1: Screenshot from one of Anniguli's videos

(Source: Anniguli 2021b)

In the very front of the picture, to the left side, just before the shopping bag, we see the characteristic red color and contour of a Coca-Cola can and part of a similarly red cardboard take-away carton. On the carton, right in the foreground of the image, linger the five Olympic rings and the symbol for the Winter Olympics 2022, due to take place in Beijing eight months later.

This is hardly a coincidence. Grave concerns about China's human rights record in Xinjiang and elsewhere, including accusations of possible genocide against the Uyghurs, had prompted international calls for a boycott of the Winter Olympics (Kidd 2021). Her subtle promotion of these Olympics is merely one of a long series of political messages in what are by now thousands of personalized propaganda videos across the net. They address the situation of minorities in the XUAR, reiterating government narratives of ethnic harmony and prosperity thanks to the party. They refrain from any religious references and promote inter-ethnic dating and marriage, food, and the beauty of landscapes and minority women in ways that carry self-exoticizing and eroticizing elements. More recently they have also begun to comment more directly on political issues such as whether cotton from Xinjiang is being produced ethically, ethnic tensions and prejudices, the economic development of the XUAR, and accusations of human rights abuses. Even the seemingly apolitical story of Anniguli's dismissal of her young admirer carries subtle support for government narratives on inter-ethnic dating and mar-

riage: she does not explicitly mention the ethnicity of the youngster, but as she is now living in Shanghai, she mentions that he is from a wealthy family, and from the way she recounts their conversation, it is tacitly implied that he is Han. Yet she dismisses him on the grounds of his youth and her lack of interest in dating, not – as many Uyghurs would have – on the grounds of his ethnicity. The underlying assumption is that she would not think twice about dating a Han Chinese, something she expresses explicitly in other videos.

In this article we introduce the phenomenon of Chinese-language personalized propaganda about the XUAR at the intersection of government propaganda and commercial social media and suggest that they present unintended insights into the systems of propaganda production and commercial vlogging in China. The first two chapters outline the context of Chinese state violence in Xinjiang and the war of information and representation that has evolved over it. The fourth chapter presents the characteristics of personalized propaganda and our rationale for using this term, zooming in on Anniguli's account. The fifth chapter elaborates on other channels or accounts, common themes, and the connections between them, while the sixth and final section addresses the commercial incentives for engaging in this type of propaganda.

2. Securitization, surveillance, and mass incarceration in Xinjiang

It was the declared hope of the Chinese government that the XUAR would develop into conditions of prosperity and peacefulness as a result of state-induced economic growth in the 2000s following turbulent periods of social struggle and resistance by the local minority populations throughout the 1990s. This hope was heavily dented in 2009 when protests and demonstrations in the provincial capital Ürümchi erupted into violence. The years 2010–2013 saw an intensified attempt to ensure economic growth and thereby stabilize the region (Klimeš 2018, 417), but, as in the 2000s, the benefits of these policies were not evenly distributed, with corruption and ethnonationalism becoming rampant including in the highest echelons of the party. Many minority people experienced discrimination, loss of land, underemployment, disenfranchisement, alienation, and dissatisfaction. As in many other colonial contexts, local Uyghur reactions to these experiences included identity building, network construction, piety movements and various forms of symbolic and physical (mainly non-violent, but also some violent) resistance (Rodriguez 2013, 136). The government did not find any adequate means to deal with these reactions but instead initiated a radical and violent shift in policy (Klimeš 2018, 418). In 2014, the government introduced a "People's War on Terror" (Byler and Zolin 2017; Roberts 2020, 161) clamping down on religious and political practices of minority populations.

Starting in 2014, thousands of minority people suspected of facilitating, aiding, or covering for subversive views, of radical Islamic activities or of spreading its ideologies were rounded up, in many cases during nightly house raids. Restrictions were introduced on religious practice, marriage customs, and the mobility of minority people in southern Xinjiang. An assumption of guilt by association led to extensive arrests of family members and those in their social networks. This seemed to develop into a form of paranoia for some government officials, and some personal accounts report it being used as a tool by some to rid themselves of personal rivals or to further their careers.[1] Ilham Toxti, Professor of Economics at the Minorities University in Beijing, became the first prominent minority intellectual to be targeted for his political views. His moderate criticism of the CCP's economic policies in Xinjiang earned him a life sentence for separatism (Wong 2014). In 2016, under newly appointed first Party Secretary of XUAR, Chen Quanguo, the clamp-down on minority populations expanded immensely. Between 2016 and 2019, hundreds of thousands, possibly even millions, of minority people were detained within a large network of camps and prisons of different types, mostly without trial. Survivors from these camps have reported abhorrent conditions as well as widespread violence, torture and abuse.[2] Internment could be based on such banal activities as praying at home, having contacts or sending money abroad, or using a VPN to circumvent Chinese internet censorship. As a result, many Uyghurs across the world lost touch with their relatives in the XUAR and some have remained without contact till today. After a year or more of not being able to speak with their parents or siblings, many Uyghurs not previously politically engaged entered into the field of activism. This created a new generation of young, well-educated, and well-informed Uyghur activists active on social media and with close ties to Western researchers and journalists. They were instrumental in directing the world's attention to the Uyghur situation and to the issue of human rights abuses in the XUAR (UHRP 2021). This, in turn, prompted a massive media and public relations response by the Chinese state.

3. The propaganda battle

The Chinese government initially denied the existence of detention centers and re-education camps in Xinjiang. Then they insisted that they were voluntary and benevolent vocational training centers built as a part of necessary anti-radicalization and poverty-alleviation measures. As early as summer 2018, the Xinjiang

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[1]   Interviews conducted by the authors in Turkey and Europe, 2018–2022.

[2]   Interviews with camp survivors conducted by the authors between 2018–2021 (see Amnesty International 2021 and Human Rights Watch 2021a).

government invited foreign journalists and diplomats to selected camps for curated visits. Subsequently, several well-produced documentaries have been aired presenting the CCP's narrative of radicalism and terror rampant in Xinjiang, but brought to a halt by the authorities (CCTV 2021). In the years that followed, the Chinese state broadened its propaganda offensive concerning Xinjiang and developed a strong presence in social media both domestically and abroad. It aimed to dispute negative reports about the camps, securitization, and surveillance. Instead, it argued that the Party had led the region to peace, harmony, prosperity, and happiness (Alpermann 2020). In summer 2019, then governor of the XUAR, Shöhret Zakir,[3] proclaimed that all "students" of what he called the vocational training centers and voluntary de-radicalization programs had successfully graduated. A year later, in September 2020, the Chinese government issued an official White Paper, "Employment and Labor Rights in Xinjiang" (SCIO 2020), in which it announced its victory against extremism and security threats in Xinjiang. This did not reduce the propaganda efforts of the Chinese government.

The English-language arm of China's public television channel, CGTN, has devoted many hours of its programming to discussing economic development, ethnic harmony, and poverty alleviation in Xinjiang. It has also produced several documentaries drawing up, dramatizing and exaggerating the threat of terrorism in the region (Alpermann 2020), together with more personal content. This included so called "proof-of-life" videos and assurances that minorities are living a happy life in Xinjiang. These are often in the style of forced confessions and aim to dispute Western media reports of abuse and misconduct. The first and most prominent example of this involved the Uyghur folk musician, Abdurehim Heyit. In spring 2019 rumors circulated that he had died in a camp, sparking outrage not least in Turkey, where his music is extremely popular (Ghoja 2019). To calm these sentiments, the Chinese authorities released a video in which Abdurehim Heyit assures the viewers that he is alive and has not been mistreated. This led to a campaign, started by the Uyghur activist Halmurat Uyghur, calling for proof of life for disappeared Uyghurs with whom their relatives abroad had lost contact. While such proof was never provided by the authorities, they did produce a number of videos featuring the relatives of Uyghur activists and camp survivors. Many of these videos included smears and personal attacks meant to discredit critical

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[3]   Shöhret Zakir is the son and grandson of high-ranking Party officials who had, exceptionally, been ordered back to Ürümchi in 2016 after having been moved to Beijing in what was seen as a common step towards retirement. Then in 2017, in a similarly untypical move for the CCP, he replaced Nur Bekri, who, although six years younger, had fallen from grace within the Party as governor of the region (Eset Sulayman 2020). Nur Bekri was later to be tried and sentenced to life in prison for being "two-faced" along with scores of other Uyghur officials, intellectuals, and businesspeople. They have been given very long sentences on various nebulous charges.

voices (UHRP 2021). Meanwhile, in 2020, for the first time since 2016, several Uyghur-language TV series and shows were launched on Xinjiang TV and quickly shared on international social media platforms that provided a veneer of normalcy aimed at Uyghurs and observers both inside and outside China. On April 13, 2021, a government report was published entitled "Xinjiang migrant workers debunk 'forced labor' claims with personal experiences" (SCIO 2021), which aimed to show the people of Xinjiang living happily in the region. Vlogs by Han-Chinese travelers to Xinjiang have similarly described their easy and joyful travels in the region.

In addition, a number of Westerners living in China, together with some political commentators outside China, often coming from leftist, anti-imperialist stands, have criticized what they have seen as Western propaganda about Xinjiang. These critical contributions present relevant arguments about instances of biased or selective media reporting and about Western double-standards in regards to human rights, but have been mostly ill-informed about the actual situation in Xinjiang. They have thus become in effect channels for CCP objectives,[4] with some directly utilized by propaganda outlets such as CGTN.[5]

4. Personalized propaganda

A particularly interesting genre in this cacophony of different propaganda output are the personalized vlogs of young minority women (and a few men) based in Xinjiang and publishing content supportive of Chinese government narratives. Starting in 2018, a growing number of accounts began to upload considerable volumes of well-produced content about their own personal lives and about selected places in Xinjiang. They first appeared on the Chinese web, but were soon

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[4]   The Western counter-critique has mainly come from a left, anti-imperial perspective critical of the US hegemony and of the weaponization of Western media to vilify those countries that do not follow its lead or dictation (see, e.g., those of The Greyzone and The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research). Much of it has to our best knowledge and estimate not been initiated by the Chinese government but expresses genuine distaste for political bias in Western reporting on Xinjiang. These accounts have been particularly critical of what they have described as unsubstantiated accusations of genocide, often paired with a more or less explicit lauding of the US and its allies as the protectors of freedom and human rights (Flathery 2021). They point out that necessary fact-checking and careful research have been increasingly neglected in Western reporting on Xinjiang and that the Western media have given disproportionate attention to a limited group of researchers and institutions financed by or closely associated with the US government, conservative circles known for opposition to China, or linked to the military-industrial complex. Media reporting on Xinjiang on all sides has largely replaced study of actual developments on the ground with political and ideological narratives – none more so than the reporting sponsored by the Chinese state.

[5]   Examples of this include Raz Galor, Daniel Dumbrill, Cyrus Jansen, Ajit Singh, The Grey Zone, and others on YouTube, Twitter, and other platforms. For many of those living in the PRC, the connection to the Chinese government is not clear.

also uploaded to Western social media platforms like YouTube. During 2020, we discovered dozens of such political influencers posting content on the Chinese social media sites, Weibo, Haokan Shiping, and Xigua Shiping. At first sight the videos seemed very similar to those of vloggers, YouTubers, etc. across the globe, sharing their lives and commenting on topics that move or interest them. Early videos countered Han stereotyping of minority people, addressing their cleanliness and "level of civilization." Others discussed inter-ethnic dating. These are both topics of high relevance to young minority people in Xinjiang. Yet, on closer examination, these videos had both titles and dialogue that aligned neatly with Party recommendations and with the narratives promoted by the Chinese government and carried suspiciously similar content and wording.

It is possible that some such videos could be self-motivated initiatives to publicly display full loyalty to the Party in the hope of gaining protection for the producer and their family, or to profit from it politically or economically. Yet, several of the most popular ones have their own YouTube accounts. As YouTube is blocked in China and its use is forbidden – minority people in Xinjiang have even been detained and imprisoned for using blocked Western apps and media there – this strongly suggests government involvement.[6] Further, the vloggers were traveling across the region on a scale that did not match the level of income of their families as portrayed in the videos at a time when minority people's mobility was severely restricted. In addition, they were filming places of production such as cotton fields during harvesting that would usually require special government permission. These videos are partly recorded unprofessionally, but they have professional subtitles in Chinese, have apparently been edited professionally, and carry titles often in the same format. In early videos some of the influencers are accompanied by camera teams, while in the later ones they hold their cameras themselves, pointing to a possible sophistication of the strategy.

Some videos address very political topics, such as accusations of forced labor or accusations by the then US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of genocide against the minorities in Xinjiang. It is hardly imaginable that a young minority person would address such topics without having assurances from government officials that she would not get into trouble over it. In addition, as we will discuss further below, many of these influencers seem to know each other and have figured in each other's videos, and at least one channel changed presenter while retaining its

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[6]   Among the multiple cases of people in Xinjiang reportedly detained for having installed WhatsApp on their devices, two examples can be found in the Xinjiang Victims Database at https://shahit.biz/eng/viewentry.php?entryno=8 and https://shahit.biz/eng/viewentry.php?entryno=59. Further examples can be found on the "Tools/filters" page of the database (https://www.shahit.biz/eng/#filter) by selecting "contact with outside world" under the option "detention reason."

name. Paired with the high quantity and quality of output, this strongly indicates government involvement and most likely even government coordination. The personal motivation of the vloggers themselves may involve any mix of coercion, fear, economic opportunity, and even genuine conviction, but the execution certainly seems centrally organized and approved by the Party.

The presenters of the videos call themselves "personal media influencers" (自媒体人 *zi meiti ren*), while we prefer to call them "political influencers" and term their videos "personalized propaganda."[7] We have collected and analyzed the videos of seven screen names (they are not all single individuals, though they are presented as such) that have official accounts both on Weibo, Xigua Shiping, or Haokan Shiping and on YouTube. By June 2021 we had found a total of 2,672 videos on these platforms including duplicates that have been uploaded onto more than one platform. Of these we scanned the general content of around 500 videos and did in-depth analysis of about 30. Most videos are between two and ten minutes long.

4.1 Anniguli (安妮古丽)

One of the earliest and most active characters producing personalized propaganda about Xinjiang calls herself Anniguli. The account shows a young Uyghur girl in Ürümchi filming herself as she takes the viewer on tours to the countryside and to tourist sites as well as around the bazaar, to her mother's clothing store, and to her grandparents' house. She speaks Mandarin directly addressing the camera as well as with her siblings and even with her mother, who clearly does not speak it very well. In a few videos she says some Uyghur sentences when she talks to her grandfather or other old people, probably out of respect and because of their lack of Mandarin skills.

Anniguli's first videos were uploaded onto Weibo in July 2018. From July 13, 2018, she uploaded videos to Xigua Shiping, but stopped on December 24, 2020. She has been uploading her Haokan Shiping videos to YouTube since late 2018. On YouTube, her account is called "Anniguli", while on Haokan Shiping, it is called "Guli walks in Xinjiang" (古丽走新疆). After three years of activity, a total of 777 videos had been uploaded onto YouTube and garnered 23 million views.

The name Anniguli sounds like the Chinese rendering of a Uyghur name. The suffix *-guli* is the Mandarin transliteration of the Uyghur *-gül*, which is a part of

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7 The epithet "personalized" is often used to refer to targeted advertising which utilizes personal user profiles for the consumers, but we use it here to refer to producers rather than the target audience. This dichotomy, in our view, is false when looking at social media, since social media often personalizes both the output and the targeting. Indeed, personalized targeting is often achieved through the personalization of the output; the two thus go hand in hand. Personalized propaganda is thus personalized both in the sense of being made to look like individually motivated content, and by targeting specific demographics and viewers' personal preferences through the personages of the influencers.

many Uyghur female names, and the two syllables *an* and *ni* are typical in Uyghur. However, no existing Uyghur name seems to really match. This would not be an issue for Chinese audiences (not to speak of international ones), but to someone familiar with Uyghur names it sounds odd. When looking at the earliest videos on this account, we realized its origin. The account had initially been used by two girls that called themselves Anni and Guli. Anni was a Kazak girl who only appeared in a few early videos. Guli stayed with the account and continued to upload videos. Yet not even her initial screen name, Guli, tells us much about her actual Uyghur name. *Gül* in Uyghur means rose or flower, but while it is a common suffix, it does not exist as a name in its own right. Instead, its ubiquity has, to Han Chinese, made it a stereotypical designation in Chinese for any young Uyghur woman. This name thus presents her as *the* generic Modern Uyghur Girl, which indeed seems to be what she is intended to represent on screen: The Modern Uyghur Girl as the authorities want her to be seen. Guli thus speaks fluent Mandarin and wears fashionable clothes and make-up. She drinks alcohol in public and speaks openly and positively about marriage between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. She is beautiful and accommodating, smiling, and fond of music, dance, and food. She thus fulfills most Han-Chinese stereotypes about minority women.

The videos are of a high-definition quality. They are well edited and subtitled and, early uploads had background music. Her first videos were filmed by her early collaborator Anni or by a Han-Chinese man whom she calls Elder Brother Wang (王大哥, Wang *dage*). The steadiness and quality of his shots suggest professional equipment and knowledge. Later she makes her own recordings with a small, high-quality camera attached to a selfie-stick, which does not seem like the kind of equipment a young Uyghur woman like Anniguli would own. The apartment she lives in with her parents and siblings does not display wealth, but rather shows simple conditions with little equipment or luxury goods; before 2021 we do not get the impression that she is from a particularly wealthy environment. The number of videos, their quality, her equipment, the regularity with which they are uploaded, the platforms that she is using, her mobility, access, anonymity, and pitch-perfect representation of a generic model minority girl as seen from the perspective of the Party-State, as well as the fact that she used to share the account with someone else, all suggest that this is not entirely the self-motivated labor of love of a twenty-year-old woman.

4.2 Inter-ethnic dating and marriage

In one of Anniguli's videos, she talks to her two girlfriends about interethnic dating and marriage between Uyghurs and Han Chinese (Anniguli 2020a). They all express very liberal views on this and are generally in favor. These have long been sensitive topics among Uyghurs. The experience of discrimination and a fear of

being assimilated and "bred out" has contributed to fairly strict ethnically en-dogamous practices and a low acceptance of marriage with Han, especially for women in Uyghur communities. During the 1990s and 2000s, ethnic endogamy became a kind of resistance and technique of cultural preservation. Even in the cases where actual love marriages took place inter-ethnically, it was not advertised widely but rather happened quietly, almost secretly, and stayed mainly confined to the larger cities in the north. These inward-looking strategies are more than political or identitarian. They are based in Uyghur kinship and social structure more generally, as marriage is the central way of defining close relatives for mutual economic dependency and labor cooperation. The family has a say in marriages and is impacted by marriage choice. Marriages are preferably undertaken within circles in which one feels close, whom one can trust and on whom one can de-pend. The strong ethnic discrimination experienced by most Uyghurs and the fairly strong segregation of the social and economic lives of the two groups make Han unlikely candidates for this category, including from a household strategy perspective, unless a stronger economic or political motivation is provided. Ac-cording to official statistics, in 2010 only 0.2 percent of Uyghur marriages were with Han (Xiao 2019).

Inter-ethnic marriage is an area that the Chinese government has long seen as a potential path to closer integration and ethnic harmony. In 2014, some counties in Hotan advertised an award of 10,000 RMB (US$1,450) per year for Han-Uyghur interethnic families during the first five years of their marriage. In case of a di-vorce within those first five years, the money would have to be returned (Xiao 2019). Since the beginning of the recent campaign of the mass incarceration of minority people in the region, rumors have circulated of coerced interethnic mar-riages. Several videos appeared on Chinese social media in 2017 allegedly showing Uyghur women forced to marry Han Chinese men in order to protect themselves and their family members from political persecution. In May 2017, one such video on Douyin quickly spread to several Western social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, attracting much attention in the Uyghur diaspora. In the video, the guest of a wedding party appears to ask the Chinese groom what his job is and how long he has known the bride, and he replies, "I am a soldier and we have known each other for two months," while his Uyghur wife has a very unhappy look on her face (see Figure 2).

Anniguli depicts inter-ethnic marriage as being purely about freedom of love. This is the government's narrative. It ignores the political and economic realities that surround this sensitive issue and places her not only on the side of the gov-ernment in these questions, but also in violation of local sensitivities and risks community outrage and condemnation. She has also made several videos on "how to win a Uyghur girl's heart," most likely for the considerable part of her target

audience that are Han-Chinese men. In her discussion of inter-ethnic marriage, while she does refer to difficulties arising from cultural and linguistic differences, she does not mention religion at all, in spite of Islam being often mentioned as one of the main obstacles for Uyghurs to marrying Han.

Figure 2: Screenshot from a video circulated on Uyghur social media accounts in May 2017 showing a newly married Han-Uyghur couple

(Source: Muslim 2018)

4.3 Drinking in public

Ayituna is another young female Uyghur influencer. Her account was the second one we came across. Unlike Anniguli, Ayituna seemingly uses her real name, Ayituna Abulikemu (Uyghur: Aytune Ablikim), and shows her family members and her parents' restaurant in her videos. She started to upload videos in July 2019. In the beginning, she was working for a company in the regional capital Ürümchi, but in June 2020, she moved back to her hometown of Hotan and continued to record videos there. In her videos, she also uses the name "Guli of Southern Xinjiang" (南疆古丽). She stresses her ties to Southern Xinjiang, but her dressing style, her make-up and her accent align her more closely with Ürümchi. When on rare occasions she speaks Uyghur to her parents, she does not use the Hotan dialect and mostly addresses them as well as the camera and all others in Mandarin,

even though her parents clearly struggle. From the videos we learn that she has studied chemistry and has no other job in Hotan but recording videos. She is from Qaraqash county, which is one of the most conservative and religious regions in Xinjiang, with a population of 99 percent Uyghurs.

In one of her videos, she visits a liquor factory in Hotan. The video is provocatively entitled "Can Xinjiang people drink [alcohol]?" (Ayituna 2020). She tastes the factory's liquor, finds it too strong and mentions several times during the video that she does not drink very often. The Han-Chinese bystanders laugh at her sensitivity to alcohol. Even in the more liberal areas of Xinjiang, it is untypical for Uyghur women to drink alcohol in public. For a young, unmarried woman from Qaraqash, openly drinking alcohol and broadcasting it on social media for all to see is in complete breach with local Uyghur etiquette. It relates to highly emotive discourses prevalent in the area for at least two decades. In Hotan, local Uyghur opinion has swung against alcohol consumption since the 2000s, while the government has promoted it and portrayed such sensibilities as indicating an extremist or fundamentalist mindset. In 2013, the Xinjiang government classified 75 types of behavior, including refusing to drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes for religious reasons, as expressions of religious extremism.[8] Being branded an extremist has landed many Uyghurs in camp and prison since 2014 and most especially since 2017. It is not unlikely that a young Uyghur woman, raised in a traditional, southern Uyghur family would drink alcohol. Many do, especially in educated, urban circles, and doing it at government events or publicly showing acceptance of it can be ways for Uyghurs to protect themselves politically. What seems unlikely is for her to deliberately choose it as a topic of her vlog, to drink in public, film herself doing it, and then upload the video of it for thousands to watch, including her parents, relatives, and teachers. This must have been damaging for her personal reputation and hurtful to her relatives. It therefore seems more than likely that the topic and content of this video had been suggested to her or even decided for her. Interestingly, Ayituna has been receiving thousands of views and likes from the very outset of her accounts being established, starting with her very first videos. This also suggests that she did not have to start from scratch to build up her own following over months and years, but that her accounts were from the outset promoted by powerful entities such as government organs.

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[8] One of the 75 points mentioned as an indicator of religious extremism is to "deliberately expand the category of "*halal*"; use religion to promote smoking and alcohol prohibitions; use the notion of "non-*halal*" or "*haram*" as an excuse to resist the circulation of normal commodities" (故意扩大 "清真" 范畴，以宗教为由，宣扬禁烟禁酒；以 "非清真" 为由，抵制正常商品的流通). Alcohol falls under the category of normal commodities here. See Ifeng.com (2014).

Figure 3: Screenshot from Anniguli's account, featuring four minority influencers on a beach in Qinhuangdao (from left to right: Duoduo Qimuge, a Han-Chinese friend, Ayituna, and Anniguli)[9]

(Source: Anniguli 2021a)

4.4 A network of accounts

Besides Anniguli and Ayituna a number of other popular accounts produce personalized propaganda on Xinjiang. Kaidiyaya (凯迪娅娅) and Nihao Dina (你好, 迪娜) are two such accounts based in the Kashgar region. Just like Anni and Guli, the two started out on a common account known as Kaidiyaya. They began uploading videos onto the Chinese web platforms Weibo, Xigua Shiping, and Haokan Shiping in July 2020. From November 2020 only Kaidiyaya remained on this account, while Dina started her own. By April 2021, Kaidiyaya's account had 172 uploaded videos. In them she is very open about her biography. From the videos we learn that her real name is Qedirye. She graduated from a medical university in inner China and returned to her hometown after graduation, when she got married. In spite of her medical education, she does not seem to have other work than producing videos. Most of her videos concern her daily life as a married woman in Kashgar, praising the Chinese government's good policies in the city, including improvements in the educational system of rural Kashgar and the increased happiness of its population. Kaidiyaya speaks fluent Mandarin in her videos. Sometimes she speaks Uyghur (with a strong Kashgar accent) with some of her friends or family members. Dina,

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9   The subtitle reads: "If you like the four of us, you've got really good taste."

who works at an unspecified company besides making videos, started to upload her own videos onto Weibo, YouTube, and Xigua Shiping from November 19, 2020. She addresses many of the same topics and narratives as Kaidiyaya.

Several accounts are associated with other ethnic minorities. Hanikesiya (哈尼克斯呀) is an account managed by a young Tajik woman from Ghulja (Hanikesiya 2021) and the account Duoduo Qimuge (多多其木格) features a young Mongolian woman from Inner Mongolia (Duoduo Qimuge 2019). Both make much of their minority identity, but speak almost exclusively Mandarin in their videos. Vloggers of Hui and Mongol ethnicity produce similar content. There are far fewer male representatives in the world of ethnic-minority personalized propaganda, but an account named Fa-te Yi Jiaqin (法特一家亲, Fa-te's United Family) is among the most productive. It is managed by Arafat (Fa-te), a young Uyghur man living in Chöchek, Xinjiang. Fa-te does not address political topics but mainly displays his cooking skills and his happy life. A younger Han Chinese man often appears in his clips whom he addresses as his younger brother (弟弟 *didi*). He and his parents are also close with a number of Han Chinese in their town whom they talk of as godparents (干爸干妈 *gan ba gan ma*) or godchildren (干女儿 *gan nü'er*). His videos thus perfectly illustrate the Chinese government's vision of the "harmonious society of ethnic unity" in Xinjiang. Another popular account is run by a Uyghur man in Kashgar called Mewlan. He uploads his videos onto Weibo under the name of Kashi nongmei ge (喀什浓眉哥, Bushy-eyebrowed brother in Kashgar). He focusses on food, business, and tourism in the region.

Anniguli, Ayituna, and several of the others move around in the region a great deal, visiting different tourist sights, villages, and even agricultural production facilities. Such mobility is not easy for ordinary Uyghurs, and especially not for young Uyghur women, whether in the sense of passing checkpoints or meeting cultural and economic norms. In one of her videos, the Mongolian influencer travels to Xinjiang to meet Anniguli. They also mention Ayituna in the video. Anniguli and Ayituna appear together in several videos and in one clip from 2021 meet with two other minority influencers on a beach in Qinhuangdao on China's east coast not far from Beijing (see Figure 3), where they also meet Duoduo Qimuge. These connections likewise point to the videos being coordinated and maybe initiated by the same organization, most likely one that is government related.

5. Modes of representation

The accounts frequently discuss the stereotypical minority topics promoted by the government, such as food, dance, and music, but fail to mention religion, minority history, identity, or traditions. Important Uyghur holidays like Nowruz, the Feast of Sacrifice (*Qurban héyit*), or the End of Ramadan (*Roza héyit*), are not

marked or celebrated in these videos, while typically Han-Chinese holidays like the Chinese Lunar New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival are noted. Also, we did not find a single woman with headscarf in the videos. According to reports from the region by refugees and foreign observers, this partly reflects reality on the ground, as between 2017 and 2020 religious symbols were largely removed from the public sphere and minority traditions were coercively replaced by Han-Chinese ones. This seems to have been somewhat loosened or reversed since, but probably was never carried out to the degree shown in the videos. They do not merely depict reality but also consciously represent society in the image of Party ideology.

Up until late 2020, the videos mainly addressed government policy indirectly and never commented on international issues. They were generally fairly subtle in toeing the Party line and addressed mainly politically safe "cultural" topics. These fit the government-supported depiction of Xinjiang as "folklore-land," a term used about Kashgar in a government-sponsored booklet from 2014. Ayituna summarized this notion in one of her videos by listing what she sees as the "four charms" of Xinjiang: beautiful women, delicious food, dance, and music (Ayituna 2021b; see Figure 4). Two of the most-used terms in the videos are: "Uyghur girls" and "Xinjiang girls," essentially constituting a self-exoticizing and self-erotization process as these young women adapt and reiterate the Han male colonial gaze on ethnic minorities (Gladney 2004; Bovingdon 2010; Cliff 2016).

In one of her videos, Kadiyaya praises the beauty of a village outside Kashgar that she visits. Here the government has built standardized "Safe Living Houses" (安居房 *anjü fang*) for the Uyghur inhabitants (Kaidiyaya 2021b), as an element in the larger government policy of modernizing rural areas through centralization of settlement and infrastructure, called "Building a New Socialist Countryside" (社会主义新农村建设 *shehui zhuyi xin nongcun jianshe*) (Luo et al. 2007; Kreutzmann 2012). This policy has been heavily criticized for effectively depriving local populations of pasture and agricultural land and thereby destroying their established livelihoods. It makes them dependent on a money economy in which their only viable way to make a living was often reduced to Han-Chinese tourism or labor migration to industrial urban centers. But Kaidiyaya only mentions the settlement's modern flair. She talks to school children in the village and is impressed by a young girl reciting classical Chinese poetry and the children's general level of Mandarin. She thereby underscores the government's emphasis on Mandarin while suppressing Uyghur and other minority languages. The need for better Mandarin skills has also been one of the narratives that the government uses to defend its re-education camps in Xinjiang.

Figure 4: Xinjiang's "four charms" listed by Ayituna[10]

(Source: Ayituna 2021b)

Starting in late 2020, the personalized propaganda videos have increasingly ad-dressed government talking points and international political topics of importance for China's diplomacy. In March 2021, pressured by protests in the West over the alleged use of minority forced labor in the cotton industry, companies like H&M and Nike declared that they would stop using Xinjiang cotton. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, refuted claims of forced labor and was echoed by intellectuals in Xinjiang (Al'erti and Chen 2021). Chinese social media and consumers reacted with a strong backlash against these companies and calls to support Xinjiang cotton. From March to April, this topic became the top trending topic on Weibo with more than 1.8 billion views (Brant 2021). In one of the trending videos, two Kazak girls from Xinjiang danced in front of an H&M shop in Sichuan, Chengdu, to show-case their "happy life" in Xinjiang (Beijing Toutiao 2021).

In March 2021, Anniguli posted a video in which she directly discusses the Xinjiang cotton industry and the allegations of human rights abuses and forced labor (Anniguli 2021c). In her video, she denies any abuses and refers to one of her earliest videos from October 2018 (uploaded to YouTube in March 2019) where she visited a Xinjiang cotton plantation.[11] She revisited the same place in 2019

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[10]   The subtitle reads: "In Xinjiang we have four great things: beautiful women, delicious food, dance, and music."

[11]   The exact location of the plantation is not disclosed, but given that those picking cotton are

(Anniguli, 2019). Her comments mark a shift toward more explicitly political topics. This aligns her more closely with other types of government propaganda. In May 2021, she relaunched her upbeat 2018 video from the Xinjiang cotton fields on YouTube with English subtitles and the English heading: "All you want to know about Xinjiang cotton over here" (Anniguli 2021d). Other vloggers similarly seem to have recently ventured into more explicitly political content and connected more closely to other Chinese propaganda outlets.

On April 9, 2021, a video produced by CGTN appeared on Ayituna's account, bearing the title: "The southern Xinjiang girl standing against Western media fake news, our homeland's happiness cannot be ruined" (Ayituna 2021a). In it, Ayituna is introduced as an internet influencer (网红 *wanghong*) who laments how Western media outlets are spreading lies about the current situation in Xinjiang. Hanikesiya also has a video about Xinjiang cotton, where she expresses shock and anger over what she calls H&M and Nike's "slanders against people in Xinjiang." In a wording similar to that of a government spokesperson, she contrasts the happiness and prosperity of the Xinjiang cotton farmers with that of black slaves on historical US cotton plantations. After only a few days, she deleted this video and posted a new one entitled "I protect Xinjiang cotton" (Hanikesiya 2021). In the new video, she visits a local cotton trader (Uyghur: *paxtichi*) and speaks to him about prices and quality. Kaidiyaya posted a video with the same content and very similar sentences (Kaidiyaya 2021b). It seems likely that both were following the same script.

On March 23, 2021, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported that several web accounts such as that of Ayituna were using YouTube to spread China's propaganda (Qiao Long 2021). In a subsequent video addressing this directly, Ayituna expressed shock and indignation about these accusations and insisted that she and her videos aim to show the region's happy and harmonious life and distribute knowledge about the XUAR "in the right way." Once more, it is more than unlikely that a young Uyghur woman in Xinjiang will have, much less publicly address, knowledge from RFA, which is funded by the US Congress and is highly critical of China, without the support and approval of Chinese officials. Indeed, it is almost certain that she would only dare to mention this if she had been directly instructed to do so by the government.

6. The political economy of personalized propaganda

Most probably the government has also provided funds for the recording. Estimated expenses for travel and equipment to produce these videos are substantial

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Han Chinese and that Anniguli lives in Ürümchi, it is likely to be around Shihezi, a mere hour's drive from the regional capital.

when measured against the backgrounds and lives these influencers seem to come from. Much speaks for these influencers being to some extent on a state payroll, though it is unlikely to be a very significant amount. Besides money, this type of work can also provide political protection for the influencer and their family as they publicly display loyalty to the party. In some cases, there may even be an element of coercion involved – a type of forced political labor. Yet, the videos also provide good business opportunities. The media platforms onto which they upload their videos, Weibo, Xigua Shiping, YouTube, and Haokan Shiping, all pay a fixed amount per view and provide bonuses for landmark numbers of views or subscriptions. Anniguli has earned several awards on the different platforms. On October 16, 2018, she uploaded a video of herself attending a festival organized by the Shigua Shiping platform company to reward their top influencers of the year. On April 29, 2020, she received an award from YouTube for having more than 10,000 followers. In September 2021, the number of her YouTube subscribers reached 157,000.

In April 2021, a Han-Chinese YouTube vlogger, Wang Xiaolong (王小龙) up-loaded an estimated analysis of Anniguli's earnings.[12] According to him, her ac-count on Xigua Shiping then had 1.05 million followers and each of her videos had 19,000 views on average. The Xigua Shiping platform pays 800 yuan for each video with this amount of views. Anniguli is uploading at least 15 videos per month, which according to Wang's calculations equals about 12,000 yuan per month after tax from Xigua Shiping alone. She also has accounts on other platforms, including Weibo, YouTube, and Haokan Shiping. This means that her monthly income is likely well above 12,000 yuan, possibly more than twice that. In other words, she seems to have created a profitable business model in which she uses government incentives to produce propaganda content and government support to become established, to get followers and to be able to reach international plat-forms otherwise inaccessible. It is also likely that the government promotion of her account propels views and followers which in turn are monetarily awarded by the platforms. The commercial success of the personalized propaganda influ-encers follows established influencer models, yet government support increases the chances of earning a considerable profit.

Anniguli describes how her father did not support her work in the beginning, but was convinced when she started earning good money from it (Anniguli 2020). Anniguli's mother and siblings appeared regularly in her videos until she moved to Shanghai to study at a university for film and arts in October 2020. In Shanghai she continued to upload videos. In one of her recent clips, she says that she spends

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[12] Wang Xiaolong (2021) himself had 668 subscribers on YouTube and his video on Anniguli's earnings had been viewed 29 times as of May 31, 2021.

20,000 yuan (2,554 Euro) every month for her university life, not including tuition. Also her style of dressing has become much more fashionable and expensive than before. The living standard of her family in Ürümchi as shown in previous videos did not match such spending.

Anniguli seems to be among the most commercially successful minority influencers, but she is not the only one who has turned it into a viable business model. The Uyghur vlogger Mewlan has seemingly opened a restaurant in Kashgar named after his screen name, Bushy-eyebrowed brother (浓眉哥), that caters to Han-Chinese tourists who have been watching his videos. It is possible that influencers like Mewlan, who remain very low-key in their political stance and focus mainly on food and dance, have not received direct government incentives, but only ride the wave of this new genre to profit from it economically. Still, his range of topics is determined by the Party, reflecting the way in which political and commercial spheres and motivations reinforce each other.

7. Conclusion

In order to understand the phenomenon of personalized propaganda on Xinjiang and the situation in Xinjiang more generally, it is important to avoid thinking in dichotomies such as market versus state, private versus public, and forced versus voluntary. The vloggers discussed here all seem to be coordinated to a degree by the Chinese government. This is supported by a number of factors: they use government terminology and narratives; many of the videos seem to follow a standardized script; their equipment is also standardized and professional, as is the editing; in some cases they use professional camera personnel; some of them started in pairs only to later split up into individual accounts; they refer to each other, stay in touch and visit each other; they are much more mobile than expected of young Uyghur women from such backgrounds as those depicted in the videos; they display a surprising disregard of local minority sensitivities; they choose topics and reiterate narratives that strictly follow the Party line and government propaganda views; they increasingly react directly and supportively to Chinese Foreign Ministry talking points and state policies; they have access to platforms like YouTube that are blocked in China and highly sanctioned in Xinjiang; they gather large followings on the Chinese platforms suspiciously quickly; some of them cooperate closely with CGTN and other government propaganda outlets.

Yet the videos are not purely a state initiative. Instead, the influencers seem to be using the access and support provided by government promotion to develop their individual businesses on the commercial social media platforms and thereby make decent – in some cases substantial – earnings. Social media platform payment schemes for influencers have been used successfully by commercial brands

for years. They are a highly efficient way of promoting products directly and target groups personally in emotionally charged ways, while obscuring sponsorship and money flows. In the cases presented here, they are being used to promote the policies of the CCP. The commercial social media platforms pay for online activity. Therefore, a company, government, or political organization can "pay" influencers indirectly by promoting their content and thereby boosting their views, likes, and subscriptions. Thus, media influencers spreading Chinese (or American or other) government propaganda can truthfully claim that they do not receive any direct payment from the government and thereby retain a veneer of independence and credibility.

Such earnings provide a powerful motivation to produce personalized propaganda for minority youths whose economic opportunities have shrunk over the past decade due to increased discrimination and the suffocation of Xinjiang's local economy by securitization and mass incarceration. Additionally, participating in this type of scheme provides a degree of political security to the influencers and their families. While many of these influencers seem to be uploading their videos voluntarily and some even look to have fun while doing it, the context within which they operate must be recognized. Over the past five years, hundreds of thousands of members of minorities have been detained and tens of thousands sentenced for minor political or religious issues. This has put an immense pressure on minority members to show their loyalty to the party. The exact intertwining of propaganda, business, opportunity, marginality, pressure, and fear are not yet fully understood. What is clear, though, is that we here witness the development of a sophisticated political and commercial practice that challenges many of our established categories.

Given the youthfulness and lack of experience of the vloggers, the informational worlds within which they live, and the pressures around them, their conduct is hard to judge. It is even difficult to gauge how conscious they are of their role or how they understand their own position. In a New Year video from December 31, 2019, Anniguli gives a rare insight into some of these pressures. In an emotional monologue following a family dinner and dance in the living room with her siblings, she admits to 2019 having been a really hard year with much suffering, but says that her mother has now returned (possibly from a re-education camp) and that she hopes and expects the new year to be different, better, and brighter (Anniguli 2020c). This provides us with some understanding of the circumstances behind the production of these videos. At the same time, it is an example of how these videos can be used to gain precious knowledge about Xinjiang at this time when access is limited and research ethically questionable because of the danger in which fieldwork may put local interlocutors. As demonstrated above, the videos provide ample insights into the workings of the PRC propaganda practices, but

also into other parts of daily life in Xinjiang when read critically and with suf-ficient epistemological care. This includes insights into cotton harvesting, the local bazaars, fluctuations of housing prices, dressing practice, code switching, language in signs, presence of religious and ethnic symbols, and many other local matters. More research is needed to develop this into a systematic methodological approach, but we hope to have here provided some of its groundwork. Given the current geo-political rivalry between China and the US and the role Xinjiang has been given as an element in their current propaganda warfare, and given the still rising importance of social media in the global battle for hearts and minds, the phenomenon of personalized propaganda is unlikely to cease anytime soon. On the contrary, it is bound to expand and develop in sophistication and importance.

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JAPANESE MILITARISM IN EARLY COLONIAL TAIWAN: TWO DISSIDENTS MUTED – THE TAKANO AND ISAWA CASES[1]

Nikolaos Mavropoulos

Through the examination of Taiwan's early colonial administration and the Isawa and Takano study cases, we will clarify the nature and purposes of the colony's acquisition. In addition, we will be able to disperse the outdated economy-centered and demographic theories that many historians espoused to explain Japan's drive for colonies. This study, through an examination of secondary and primary sources, makes a contribution to colonial studies. Thus, the aim of this paper is to fill the gap and enrich the content, context, and the general understanding of the dynamics and events of the Age of New Imperialism and beyond.

Keywords: Meiji Japan, colonial Taiwan, militarism, Japanese colonialism

1. Aim and scope

A distinctive trait of Japan's expansionism in its earliest stage is the fact that it ran contrary to what Lenin defined as the highest stage of capitalism; Japanese history expert Jon Holliday defined Japan's expansion as "imperialism without capital" (Ching 2001, 10). Given Japan's undeveloped capitalism in the late 19th century, it appears that the imperialistic expansion was fueled more on ideology, psychology, or strategic considerations than on capital. Hobson suggests that the existence of excess capital leads to seeking profits overseas. However, during this period Japan had no excess capital, ran a significant trade deficit, and, following the annexation of Taiwan, even had to borrow large amounts from Britain and the United States to finance its industrial expansion. In a sense, Japan exported its

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underdevelopment in its colonies. Lenin's theory of imperialism advocates that the capitalists wanted to employ surplus capital abroad to achieve higher profits than in the domestic market. This does not appear to apply to Imperial Japan, which throughout this period had been tormented by a lack of sufficient arable land and raw material alike (Penfield 1905, 667–669).

Japanese imperialism is often characterized as "self-defensive" or "petty" imperialism. This theory of petty imperialism was first expressed by the economic analyst Takahashi Kamekichi in 1927 to prove the qualitative difference between the advanced capitalist states like Britain or Germany and Japan (Hoston 1984, 10–18). Japanese imperialistic aggression in the 19th century was generated under immature capitalistic economic conditions. At the time, the Japanese economy was mainly based on agricultural production while the production systems were semi-feudal (Lee 1994, 99). Kamekichi argues that Japan's expansion was in response to external circumstances and cannot be explained simply by the needs or demands of the capitalistic class.

The Marxist scholar Inomata Tsunao describes 19th century Japan as a developing country, which had not yet reached the stage of finance capital but had adopted imperialist policies as a reaction to western penetration in Asia (Duus 1995, 434). O. Tanin and E. Yohan, authors of the work *Militarism and Fascism in Japan* (1934) state that until the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese imperialism was not a product of finance capital since the solid foundation of large-scale industry was absent and Japan's domestic market was underdeveloped (Townsend 2000, 78–79). Illustrious historians such as Mark Peattie and Hilary Conroy agree that economic factors were not decisive in the shaping of Japan's early expansion. Failure to reach the stage of monopoly capitalism meant that Japan in the late 19th century was in "an earlier stage of imperialism," and Japan's imperialism was "a non-imperialist nation's practice of imperialism" (Ching 2001, 23–24).

Putting the widespread (and probably most prominent) economic "justification" of imperialism aside, we should look for the answer in another direction. Historians had argued that both Meiji Japan and Imperial Germany pursued a reactionary, authoritarian modernization that led eventually to totalitarianism. Even though this statement holds some validity for the 20th century, we are yet to fully comprehend and reach a consensus upon the nature of Japan's expansionism in the last quarter of the 19th century. It could be argued that the latecomers' imperial expansion was both preemptive and reactionary to the powers' colonialism. Numerous scholars of German expansion identified in 19th century colonial endeavors an effort by the metropole to resolve their demographic-migration and internal stability problems (Smith 1974, 641–643). But how can early Japanese colonial rule be defined: Commercial, Demographic, Militaristic, Strategic, Assimilationist, or perhaps a combination of these? Japan's geographic and cultural

affinity with its subject peoples makes the phenomenon atypical but which theories (dependency, mimicry, underdevelopment, reaction to external factors, etc.) better sums up its imperial expansion? Through the analysis of two characteristic study cases and early colonial Taiwan's administration this study contributes to the field of colonial/postcolonial studies; the critical re-examination of the nature and origins of early Japanese colonialism can hopefully lead us to an innovative evaluation of Asian politics and the human condition.

The cases of Takano Takenori (1854–1919) and Isawa Shūji (1851–1917) are the more illustrative of Japan's (early) rule in its first *gaichi* (外地, "outer colony"). Both hailing from the civil administration sector in *naichi* (内地, "mainland Japan"), they experienced the ruthlessness and irrationality of the colonial regime's methods first-hand. Their testimonials and views hold relatively more value than the usual biased eulogies as recorded by the supporters and members of Japan's military establishment. They can also provide an objective and unprecedented glimpse on Taiwan's actual conditions. The eternal struggle between the political and the military element in the colony and the prevalence of the latter over the former would prove the fundamental weaknesses of Japan's colonial system. The establishment tried and succeeded in silencing their voices. The examination of judge Takano's and pedagogue Isawa's cases may appear as local histories, but they touch upon broader debates on colonial capitalism, settler colonialism, exploitation, and oppression.

2. Introduction

Japan after the Restoration of 1868 was a poor, backward, semi–feudal, and fragile country. The Boshin civil war of 1868–1869 and the signing of the unequal treaties rendered the nation even more vulnerable amidst the frenetic international competition for concessions and economic privileges. Western domination was not an unfounded fear in a country dubbed by historians as "semi-colonized." The country's economy would be controlled by foreign financiers for decades to come, and the government's decisions were often susceptible to western pressures (Bradshaw 1992, 115). For these reasons, but probably even prior to 1868, a reactionary siege mentality developed among the Meiji leaders and commoners alike. Tōkyō, in the midst of its modernization and westernization program, as a measure to counter the external threat and safeguard the nation's survival, always had its gaze fixed on the mainland. The late-19th century Japanese perceived themselves as the underprivileged latecomers who had to catch up with other contenders in the imperialistic arena. Suffering from limited resources the newborn state could not afford the luxury of distant and thus costly colonies in the European paradigm (Asano 2004, 54). Just five years after the Meiji Restoration the government was

split over the debate about Korea's possible invasion (征韓論 *seikanron*), the nation's closest neighbor. Remarkably, the following year an overseas colonial expedition was actually undertaken to capture Taiwan; it only failed because of western and Chinese reactions (Mayo 1972, 801–809).

Before expanding abroad, however, the new leadership had to solidify its rule and authority in the Japanese archipelago. Initially the main Japanese islands were brought under submission (the Boshin War) and were ruled almost despotically by the Chōshū and Satsuma (i.e., Satchō) leaders that came to dominate the Meiji government after their victory over the old regime. Clans were relocated or exterminated, people were taught the standard national language and made into loyal subjects and the entire nation suddenly acquired a common identity (internal colonialism) after centuries of division (Ikegami 1995, 196). The pre-modern colonies of Hokkaidō (1869) and Ryūkyū (1879) were incorporated next and secured in the face of foreign penetration. Strategic considerations about the safety of the nation spurred Tōkyō towards controlling, absorbing or reforming Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1910) (Conroy 1955, 821). For historians Wu Rwei-Ren and Donald Calman, this is a typical example of the core/periphery model (dependency theory) and the "transfer of oppression" doctrine. In this light, one can argue that eastern Japan and Hokkaidō were subjugated, economically exploited, and assimilated by the new Meiji government which was composed mainly by men from Chōshū and Satsuma in South-Western Japan. The Japanese people were the first targets of the government's colonizing-civilizing mission even before they began colonizing foreign peoples. First the rest of Japan, then the peripheral territories of Hokkaidō and the Ryūkyū to check the Russian and Chinese aspirations, and later on, other territories as beachheads for further expansion. This hierarchical relation of ruler and subordinate can be traced back to Japan's traditional social structure (Rwei-Ren 2003, 72–73). Calman goes a step further in asserting that Satchō systematically wiped out the opposition and promoted solely the political and commercial interests of their clan members and protégés in parts of Japan and Asia. According to Calman, this clique carried out ruthlessly a meticulously outlined plan of colonial domination, firstly by subjugating their fellow countrymen, then by exploiting Japan's periphery and lastly by advocating a plan of world conquest that led to the Second World War (Calman 1992, 244).

As a result of its victory over China, Japan occupied Taiwan from 1895 to 1945. The lack of preparation on how to rule Taiwan demonstrates that the seizure of the island was more occasional and opportunistic than deliberate. The annexation was a result of the sweeping victory over China and the jingoistic response of the public, which encouraged territorial expansion. Both the Meiji leaders and the ecstatic public agreed that Japan should be rewarded for its sacrifices with territorial compensation at China's expense, as the other Powers had done. Liaodong's

retrocession meant that at the very least Taiwan had to be held at any cost. Interests, calculations and aspirations by individuals and pressure groups alike, albeit conflicting at times, brought about Japan's first colony. While now it is easy to disprove the demographic or economic justification of Japan's early expansion, we should not neglect that similar ideas were held and popularized by members of the ruling classes in the late 19th century. The complexity of the phenomenon in question is highlighted by the plethora and disparity of different views on the purpose and administration of Taiwan, expressed by cabinet members, foreign experts, and the omnipresent military. Navy officers were perhaps the only ones to deem the island as essential for the nation's future security (Beasley 1987, 56–58).

In the hands of another power, Taiwan would endanger Japan's position in the Far East and shatter its ambition to expand commercially and politically in the South (Roy 2013, 32). In this sense, early Japanese colonialism was reactionary, a mere precautionary measure to counter the forthcoming western encroachment. Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) was convinced and pressed to annex Taiwan in the Shimonoseki peace talks. On May 10, 1895, he appointed Admiral Kabayama Sukenori (1837–1922) as the first Governor-General in Japan's colonial history. This study will argue that it was predominantly the search for strategic safety, militarism/authoritarianism, and the struggle for equality rather than economic or demographic concerns that led to the decision to annex the island regardless of the subsequent reasoning that was in line with New Imperialism's oratory (Peattie 1984, 82).

3. The initial confusion in ruling Taiwan

Despite the inhabitants' unexpectedly hostile disposition, the Japanese finally had placed Taiwan under their control. The Taiwan Affairs Bureau (台湾事務局 Taiwan Jimukyoku) set up by Prime Minister Itō on June 13, 1895 (Law No. 74) in Tōkyō to supervise Taiwan was abolished the following year. Itō Miyoji (Chief Cabinet Clerk), Kawakami Sorōku (Vice Chief of Staff), Kodama Gentarō (Vice Army Minister), Yamamoto Gonnohyōe (Vice Navy Minister), Hara Kei Takeshi (Vice Foreign Minister), Suematsu Kenchō (Chief of Legislation Bureau), Tajiri Inajirō (Vice Finance Minister), Den Kenjirō (Chief of Communications Bureau of the Ministry of Communications and Transportation), and the Prime Minister constituted the Bureau. These Ministers and agents lacking colonial experience could not agree on the status of Taiwan; was it to be ruled as a foreign territory or as a special province like Okinawa and Hokkaidō where assimilation (同化 *dōka*) was the state's main policy? William Montague Kirkwood (1850–1926) proposed the British model of "association" whereas the French jurist Michel Revon (1867–1947) stood for assimilation, illustrating the conflicting colonial methods of their re-

spective nations. The British and Dutch models were based on indirect rule and the principle of racial apartheid. The French model's assimilation was costlier but the coveted Japanization of the inhabitants would ensure Taiwan's possession in the long run (Matsuzaki 2011, 53–54).

Kirkwood in his "Opinion paper on the issue of the Taiwan system" submitted on April 30, 1895 to the Ministry of Justice proposed the treatment of Taiwan as a crown colony, as a distinct legal entity institutionally distinct from mainland Japan (Asano 2004, 37–38). The only common ground with Japan proper would be the subordination to imperial rule rather than to the constitution. In July 1895, he further declared:

> The institutions of Taiwan should be decided by the prerogatives of the emperor without the legislative review of the Imperial Diet. It is a legitimate constitutional action. The review of the Imperial Diet is required only when the budget of Taiwan is to be appropriated from the imperial treasury. (Chang 2003, 172–173)

Revon, influenced by France's colonial rationale, believed that Taiwan could be gradually integrated and assimilated to the conqueror's political and cultural sphere. On April 22, 1895, he stated that Japan "should assimilate [Formosa and the Pescadores] as fully as possible, and therefore, [Japan] must plan on making the islands a prefecture of the empire in the future, if not now." Large waves of Japanese immigrants and the imposition of the mainland's legal codes were steps towards assimilation. In order to prevent confusion and unrest in these first crucial steps Japanese civil law should be implemented gradually for the time being. In the future and when Taiwan was completely pacified its judicial integration to Japan's system could be more safely attempted (Asano 2004, 37). In the same manner, initial administration should enjoy some liberty of action but in the long run the island had to be transformed into a "true prefecture" under the government's direct jurisdiction. The pattern of gradual assimilation had precedents in French Africa; it also took place in Hokkaidō (1869) and Okinawa (1879) after their annexation. They were both considered backward territories populated by savages as was the case of Taiwan.

The liberal politician Hara Takeshi (1856–1921) as member of the Taiwan Affairs Bureau evaluated the suggestions of the two foreign advisors. On February 2, 1896, he decided that "Taiwan may have a system slightly different from the mainland, but will not be considered to belong to the colonial type." His ideas included a gradual implementation of the mainland's laws, legal and political incorporation into the Japanese structure, assimilation (内地延長主義 *naichi enchō shugi*, "doctrine of homeland extension") and administration directly accountable to Tōkyō instead to a colonial structure in Taiwan (Taiwan's tax affairs, military, and communications would be regulated by the respective ministries in Japan).

The last recommendation divided the members of the Taiwan Affairs Bureau. Many found it impractical and costly. Being a native of Japan's northeastern area (Tōhoku), the region that supported the shogunate and had been defeated, Hara had little chance of winning over the Satsuma, Chōshū, Tosa, and Hizen clique that dominated the Meiji government and military after the Restoration. Clan nepotism was partially responsible for the rejection of Hara's proposals (Oguma 2017, 98). Hara retorted that to treat Taiwan as a colony would bring about inconsistency in the metropole's legislation and could provoke diplomatic problems with the foreign countries (Nomura 2010, 69). As for his assimilation strategy he justified it by calling attention to the geographic proximity and racial affiliation between Japan and Taiwan.

The fear of Western intervention partially prompted Hara and many of the Japanese elite to support the position of assimilation. Direct implementation of the mainland's laws in Taiwan would prove Japan's sovereignty over the island. The American legal advisor to the Foreign Ministry Henry Willard Denison (1846–1914) believed that Japan should not incorporate conquered peoples into the nation or grant them citizenship rights (Caprio 2009, 72). Denison came up with a discriminatory legal system based on the individuals' ethnicity as a solution. Westerners and Japanese in Taiwan were to be subjected to modern civil, commercial, and criminal codes, while the locals would be permitted to follow their own customs for the time being (Asano 2008, 106). The application of Ordinance No. 8 of June 23, 1898, which wholly embraced Denison's recommendation, reveals a lot about the nature of Japan's early colonial rule (Matsuzaki 2011, 60–62).

4. The colony's early administration

The Organic Regulations of the Government of the Governor-General of Formosa (台湾総督府 Taiwan Sōtokufu), of November or December 1895, set up the colony's administration. The Governor-General, as in the French, German, and British cases, was responsible to the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, established by imperial Ordinance 87 in 1896 after the abolition of the Taiwan Affairs Bureau. 16 months later the Ministry was also abolished, and its functions were transferred to the new Taiwan Affairs Bureau under the Prime Minister (Law No. 295). The Bureau was transformed into an office of the Home Affairs Ministry in February 1898 (Law No. 24). In October, it was again abolished, and Taiwan was placed under the direct supervision of the Home Affairs Ministry (Law No. 259) (Asami 1924, 13–14). The government consisted of the Governor-General's Secretariat, the department of Civil Affairs or Civil Administration Department (民生部 Minseibu), the Army Department and the Naval staff all under the Governor-General's authority. The Governor of Civil Affairs supervised the administration and finances

in Taiwan (PCE–FMC 1909, 24–26). Through several minor departments he controlled the colony's finance, education, communication, commerce and industry, public works, railways, monopolies, customs, surveys, and general affairs. The last branch was subdivided into four offices: domestic affairs, foreign affairs, legislation, and education (Hishida 1907, 269). The Army Department was made up by the General Staff, the Administrative Staff, the Judicial Section, the Commissariat Corps, the Medical Corps, and the Veterinary Corps. The Naval Staff was subdivided to the Chief Staff Officer, Administrative Staff Officer, and the Naval Interpreters (PCE-FMC 1909, 11).

The Governor-General was given the rank of *shinmin* (臣民) the highest of the four bureaucratic grades in Japanese officialdom. In this way, they enjoyed the same privileges of protocol as the Prime and Cabinet Ministers and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Tōkyō. They came from the military; the ranks of general, admiral, lieutenant general, and vice–admiral were eligible for the post. Hara Takashi pushed in vain for civilian administrators under the direct supervision of the central government instead. A military oriented colonial administration meant that army leaders would have a bigger say in Taiwan than the Diet in Tōkyō. The uprisings and the continued local guerrilla warfare in the island, however, seemed to justify the successive appointments of Government-General from the ranks of the military from 1895 to 1919 when the system was abolished. Historian Atsushi Yamada argues that in fact the army had dominated the colony until 1919 (Yamada 2009, 43) This study will examine the activities of the first four Governor-Generals: Admiral Kabayama Sukenori (May 10, 1895–June 2, 1896), Lieutenant General Katsura Tarō (June 2, 1896–October 14, 1896), Lieutenant General Nogi Maresuke (October 14, 1896–February 26, 1898), and Lieutenant General Kodama Gentarō (February 26, 1898–April 11, 1906) (Chen 1970, 127–128). If we exclude Kodama, the average length of tenure was two years and one month, too short to gain a deep knowledge of the island's conditions (Grajdanzev 1942, 161).

The Governor-Generals were given almost unlimited powers in ruling the colony in order to pacify it. For some members of the Diet this semi-independent dictatorship was an emergency and a temporary measure (Komagome and Mangan 1997, 311). In this sense Japan's rule in Taiwan can be described as bureaucratic and militaristic. The Governor-Generals had the command of the colonial garrison. Furthermore, they had the authority to "control general political affairs;" to "control officials under [them];" to "command the military and naval forces;" and the right to issue executive ordinances carrying the same effect as the laws of Japan. As *shinmin* they answered directly to the Emperor for their colonial and administration policies (Yamada 2008, 43). The Imperial Ordinances No. 86 and No. 9, of 1896 and 1897, respectively, somewhat limited their authority. Taiwan's Governor-General held the power to cancel any decision of the provincial gov-

ernors and dismiss or appoint officials of the lowest rank. If he was able to obtain imperial approval, he could even impose penalties upon the higher-level bureaucrats according to Article 4 Paragraph 1 of the 1897 Law (Chen 1970, 134).

The broad legislative powers, mainly in the form of the *ritsurei* (律令, "decrees as laws") ordinances, entrusted to the Governor-General to maintain social order after Taiwan's occupation were challenged by the Diet. The Diet was the only law-making institution in accordance with the Japanese constitution of 1889. The Meiji Constitution did not contain any provisions regarding colonial annexations in the empire. The inland's political condition, the population's hostility, and the notion that Taiwan's traditions and customs were completely different from those prevailing in Japan brought about the Governor-General's investment with extraordinary powers (Barclay 2018, 91–92). In March 1896, Law No. 63 was approved by the Diet with the provision that its enactment would be a temporary measure; its duration was set for three years (Komagome 1996, 33). Therefore, the Diet's legislative powers were bypassed, and the constitution was only partially applied (Oguma 2017, 108); some Japanese laws would be selected and imposed. Law 63 was put in effect again in 1899, 1902, and 1905 despite the liberals' objections on the constitutionality of the proposed legislation. The liberal parliamentarian Takata Sanae (1860–1938) was among those deputies who objected. Mizuno Jun (1851–1900), Taiwan's first Governor of Civil Affairs from 1895 to 1897, replied in the Lower House:

> The entire Constitution cannot be applied in Formosa. On the contrary, the Government proposes to exercise sovereignty as far as possible on the basis of the Imperial prerogative. (Asano 2004, 39)

The government was unwilling to discuss further the law's constitutionality and in later years pointed out that the law has already passed and was now a legal precedent (Asano 2004, 39). In 1897, the scholar Ume Kenjirō (1860–1910) proposed that the rights of the Japanese citizens should be extended to the Taiwanese as well, because imperial rule was based on impartiality and justice (Komagome and Mangan 1997, 312). Law professors and constitutionalists such as Hozumi Yatsuka (1860–1912) argued that the constitution should be enforced in its fullest in Taiwan whereas others like Mitsue Ichimura (1875–1928) were against its application. Finally, the scholar Tatsukichi Minobe (1873–1948) proposed the constitution's partial implementation (Asami 1924, 32). The controversial Law 63 was eventually superseded by Law 31 in 1906.

5. Military over civilian rule

Due to the prolonged resistance, the Governor-General and his staff were granted in 1896 considerable authority. Thus, they proceed unhindered in imposing

a military and not a civilian rule in the colony. Every Governor-General who was by definition closely associated with the ranks of the army did not feel that he had to conform to Tōkyō's directives. Concurrent implementation of assimilationist and "differentiation" policies resulted in a complicated and contradictory legal framework for the island's inhabitants (Yamamoto 1942, 3). Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi's plan on May 21, 1895 intended to place the Governor-General's authority under the planned Taiwan Affairs Bureau. Furthermore, Hara's pleads for a civilian Governor-General's were vetoed by the Vice Chief of Staff, Kawakami Sōroku on the grounds that the army needed freedom of action to suppress the rebels. The Army and the Navy Ministers had the power to bring down the government if one of them decided to resign; according to the law these posts had to be filled by active officers. The promulgation of Law 63 was a field of power struggle and a victory of the military at the expense of the civil administration and the Diet. In Japan, where the military had a preponderant political status and an overbearing influence upon society, the Governor-General and his associates hailing from the army were immune to possible criticism and pressures by the liberal deputies in the Diet (Haruyama 1980, 39). Ranking army and navy officers in the colony saw the Governor-Generals as patrons and colleagues. These close relations meant that the military held many of the offices of the colonial government and exerted great influence over domestic matters.

Every Governor-General vigorously guarded his autonomy in Taiwan. From 1896 to 1915 the post was occupied strictly by Chōshū men. The General Staff saw Taiwan as its private outpost, as a great opportunity to act without civilian restrictions and implement its belligerent and expansionist aims. For the Navy and other government members the island's pacification and transformation into a military foothold was the first step towards the subjugation of South China and the South Seas (南進論 *Nanshinron*) (Matsuzaki, 72–73). Other members of the armed forces favored the northern advance (北進論 *Hokushinron*) but had to content themselves with Taiwan for the time being; it would take another decade for Japan to acquire a second colony to potentially transform into a military stronghold for further advance. In 1895, any expansion was welcome but unplanned; since Taiwan happened to come under Japanese rule first, the government delved into a policy of expansion towards the South.

Despite the declaration of civil rule on the island in March 1896, its administration remained preponderantly military oriented for years to come (Kublin 1973, 319). The colony was practically under constant martial law. Until 1898, when competent colonial magistrates took over, no sound administrative base or long-term civil policies were formed and even then, the military's role was prevalent. Despite the implementation of more reasonable approaches to governing Taiwan, Japan's rule remained militaristic and tyrannical. The first infrastructural works

on the island, during Kodama's tenure, were not meant and did not improve the inhabitants' daily life; if anything, they tightened the rulers' grip (Ts'ai Hui-yu 2009, 124–126). Tōkyō was still faced with the stubborn rebels (the last pacification campaign took place in the 1910s), financial limitations, and the unsettling watchful eye of the westerners, and struggled to retain control after 1895 as well. After years of continuous insurrection, scandals, and rapid turnover of incompetent Governor-Generals, Japan's immature colonial experiment in Taiwan seemed destined to fail (McLaren 1965, 243–249).

6. Military law is the only law: the Takano case

The Governor-General also had the power to establish or abolish courts in the colony and to appoint or dismiss public persecutors and judges. He also had the authority to suspend a judge or reduce his salary considerably. Thus, the judiciary was silenced and subordinated to the executive. The actual administration of the law was in the Governor of Civil Affairs' hands. In May 1896, a Supreme Court (高等法院 *kōto hōin*) and a court of appeals were set up in the capital Taihoku, the seat of the colonial government. This measure was followed by the establishment of local courts in 15 districts, each one equipped with public persecutors. No channels of appeal to the Supreme Court in Tōkyō were made available. The court system employed in Taiwan had nothing to do with the one in metropolitan Japan. In line with the *ritsurei* 16 issued on July 19, 1898, three district courts (地方法院 *chihō hōin*) and a court of appeals (覆審法院 *fukushin hōin*) were inaugurated in Taiwan. The latter had a civil and criminal division each presided by three judges. The district courts were also divided to civil and criminal branches and had the competence to examine preliminarily criminal cases. In the first 20 years of the Japanese occupation the colonial government, facing budgetary limitations, did not appoint many legal professionals and did not spend funds to bolster Taiwan's judiciary (Hishida 1907, 270).

The case of the First Chief Justice of the High Court of Taiwan, Takenori Takano, is enlightening. Takano conducted a prosecution involving high officials in the colonial administration under suspicion of corruption. He also criticized the military police's cruel methods. Governor-General Nogi, willing to silence any scandalous rumors and considering Takano's actions as civilian meddling in his rule, attempted to oust him. Takano was recalled to Tōkyō where some cabinet Ministers tried to convince him to desist from his investigation. When he declined, they ordered him to retire in October 1897. Takano claimed that he was free from executive interference under Article 58 of the constitution which states that judges were immune to dismissal or involuntary transfer (Asano 2004, 42). But, his removal was explained on the grounds that Taiwanese courts were

not ordinary courts and in any case, they were outside of the constitution's area of jurisdiction. Takano rejected their bidding as illegal and returned to his post in the colony (Chen 1970, 140). The day before the corruption case was to be tried, 16 police officers and constables arrested him in the courthouse. The majority of the judges in Taiwan supported him but could not overrule Tōkyō's and the colonial government's decision. The application of the constitution to Taiwan became again a heated debate in Prime Minister Matsukata Masayoshi's (1835–1924) cabinet. In July 1897, the colony's Supreme Court was temporarily abolished. The opposition and some cabinet members supported Takano's case and harshly attacked the government in December. Matsukata resigned in January 1898. Takano asked the next Prime Ministers Ōkuma and Itō for his moral exoneration and he further appealed to various courts, but in vain (Kim 2012, 163).

The first colonial laws were nothing more than punishments copied from the military code of justice for the rebels. Military tribunals with extraordinary authorities were hastily established (Asano 2004, 41); the first was set up in November 1895 in line with the Regulation regarding the Organization of the Taiwan Governor-General Courts. According to the Dispositions for Taiwanese Military Criminals the penalty was always death. Few "insurgents" were actually put to trial; most of them were hurriedly executed. Only 41 out of 345 criminal cases in the tribunal involved the offense of rebellious activities between November 1895 and March 31, 1896. The Penalty Order for Inhabitants of Taiwan (Ordinance No. 4) made the provisions of the army and navy criminal law during wartime applicable to cases of homicide, rape, and robbery without the right of appeal. It was succeeded by the 1898 Bandit Punishment Law, a particularly harsh law whose aim was to terrorize the "bandits" into submission. Takano demonstrated sympathy for the guerrilla fighters; many of them were not prosecuted during his tenure in 1896–1897. In 1897, district courts imposed death on only 54 out of 526 rebel cases. The police were so corrupted that its members exhorted money from the Taiwanese in order to not charge them with made up crimes. The official report entitled "Actual conditions in Taiwan" presented some time in 1896 to Prime Minister Matsukata admitted that the Japanese military:

> violently abused the native inhabitants, struck them without reason, forced them to sell their goods at a low price; or, in the name of requisition, seized their goods, occupied their houses and ancestral halls; or arbitrarily suspecting them (of some crime), arrested natives and slaughtered them. (Oguma 2017, 44)

Destruction of temples and schools, excavation of tombs, disdain of local customs was not a part of an assimilation policy but random violence (Oguma 2017, 44). Early in 1897, Chief Justice Takano accused the Japanese police of arresting

and torturing inhabitants arbitrarily. No civil law was applied until July 1898 (*ritsurei* no. 8 of 1898 enforced the Civil, Commercial, and Criminal Law) (Wang 2000, 106).

Due to the absence of a Chinese central administration, the Taiwanese were accustomed to solving their differences by themselves. In 1899, trials in Taiwan were aligned to the Japanese penal codes that in turn were adopted from the Western-style legal systems. In this sense, the modernization of the Japanese society in Western terms was duplicated on another "backward" Asian society that until then had been influenced by Chinese practices. Of course, not every aspect of enlightened legislation was put in practice; for example, suffrage only existed in the metropole and not in the colony. Conscription was not implemented as it would bring the untrustworthy Taiwanese into the ranks of the military (Oguma 2017, 63). The Meiji legislators believed that an outright application of Japan's Westernized legal system in Taiwan was not possible due to the island's particular conditions (Wang 2000, 146–149).

7. The Isawa case

The main tool to achieve assimilation was education (Gotō 1921, 114–116). Many Taiwanese that experienced the Japanese educational system wished to become imperial subjects and tried to behave as Japanese.[2] Tōkyō, however, despite the proclamations for equality, never considered them to be Japanese or to possess the rights of Japanese (King 2013, 13). Isawa Shūji was the first Chief of the Education Bureau (PCE–FMC 1916, 15–16) of the colony with the task of modernizing Taiwan's educational system between 1895 and 1898. Isawa reached the island on June 16, 1895, accompanying the first Governor-General; he submitted his first plan four days later (Howe, Lai, and Liou 2014, 101). Securing interpreters and translators was the first order of business (Komagome 1996, 43); the new colonial administrators and military authorities were unable to understand the local dialects and the island's inhabitants did not speak Japanese (Zagarola 1991, 267). Isawa founded the Japanese Language School in Taihoku in May 1896 and 14 elementary schools for the Taiwanese were built throughout the island during his first two years in office. In the next years, 19 more were built with the local districts covering the expenses which were paid by the local villages through taxes. In 1898, these schools were transformed into "public schools" (PCE-FMC 1916, 12). Isawa had the long-term goal of free universal elementary education in the colony (Tsurumi 1977, 42). Taiwanese children of all social classes were welcomed in his system. In October 1895, he declared:

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[2]   Many however resisted and sought to preserve their identity (Dawley 2019, 161–204).

> To make the people of Taiwan into Japanese we should not resort to military force. We are educators, and educators must instead expend immense energy and have the utmost dedication to their cause. (Heaton 2014, 52)

By 1898, Isawa had overseen the building of 76 common schools (Heaton 2014, 56–76). Among them, there were 16 Japanese language schools and 36 branch institutes. The curriculum's aim was to assimilate the ruled into Japanese culture; Japanese language was the main subject, replacing the study of Chinese and Confucian text. Isawa eventually accepted the teaching of Confucian texts to make the schools more appealing to the Taiwanese (Kleeman 2003, 131). Military oppression and the lack of Chinese classical education made the Taiwanese parents unwilling to trust their children's education to the new regime (Komagome and Mangan 1997, 314). Japanese textbooks promoted advancement and individual capabilities, but the ones taught to Taiwanese children promoted mostly loyalty, cooperation, and morality. They were also taught Japanese history as part of their own history. In an 1897 speech, Isawa claimed that Taiwan was Japanese territory in ancient times but it had been "taken by the Qing Dynasty." Geographically speaking, "Taiwan really constitutes one chain with our country and is almost naturally attached to our country" (Oguma 2017, 72). Further schooling was not encouraged and was limited to those students that had the potential to be teachers and doctors. Later, Gotō Shinpei, head of civilian affairs in Kodama's administration, instructed the teachers to not over-educate the Taiwanese; further instruction could be expensive but more importantly detrimental to Japan's long-term grip on the island (Tsurumi 1977, 23). Taiwanese students could study engineering, science, technology, and medicine, but the subjects of law, politics, and social sciences were forbidden for their allegedly disruptive potential (Hechter, Matesan, and Hale 2009, 49). Carefully selected Taiwanese students were permitted to continue their studies in Japan. The first arrived in Japan in November 1895 (Lamley 1964, 323).

In 1898, Isawa proposed to the Government-General the creation of more Japanese language schools, of elementary schools for Japanese children, and of more public schools for the Taiwanese. In that year, however, the Diet decreased the funds available for Taiwan by four million yen, or almost 30%. The civil administrator of Taiwan, Mizuno Jun, had decided in 1897 to spend the following fiscal year's budget on military and police build-up. Isawa found these investments counterproductive; for him education was a more efficient instrument than the army (Kleeman 2003, 131). In any case, Isawa's education-related projects were scarcely funded. He also learned that for the next fiscal year, the colonial government was inclined to increase investments on the colony's schools by only 100,000 yen. Isawa appealed to Governor-General Nogi to gain support for his plans that had been already approved by Tōkyō. When Nogi rejected his appeal

Isawa resigned on July 29, 1898, and his plan for universal education faded away (Heaton 2014, 76).

The proclamations about civilizing the Taiwanese through education were shattered under the pressure and the preponderance of the military in the colony. Economy, legislation, and the relations between the colonizers and the subjugated in these first years of Japanese rule were not regulated in line with the patterns of modern civil administration. Every aspect of economic and social life in a military orientated colony was rather dominated by the needs and aspirations of the army. Every endeavor that was contrary to the military's goals and every dissident voice in the colony were ruthlessly muted and brushed aside. The authoritarian and bellicose character of early Japanese colonialism is easily perceivable through Taihoku's interaction with the island's inhabitants, both Chinese and aborigines. It was in that occasion that the façade of the enlightened, benevolent, and sympathetic ruler resonantly collapsed. For the army, administering the colony was a task too important to be entrusted to the Diet and the politicians. According to the "Chronicle of the Police Affairs of the Taiwan Governor-General's Office," the office at a certain point suggested the expulsion of the Taiwanese from the strategically important island so that loyal subjects from the Japanese Home Islands could populate the colony making it safer (Nomura 2010, 75–76).

8. Conclusion

Besides the "economic" interpretation of Japan's drive for colonies, many scholars argue that the phenomenon had a "demographic justification." The available statistics make evident that Taiwan was not able to accommodate Japan's surplus population as many imperial advocates had claimed before 1895. In 1905 the Japanese were only 57,309, less than 2% of the total population. 40% of them were self-employed or colonial officials, while 1,4% were employed in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. In 1898, the Japanese permanently settled in Taiwan, besides the military forces, were 13,214 with 3,078 leaving that year. In 1899, the arrivals amounted to 20,743 while 7,903 returned to Japan. In 1900, 20,995 arrived and 8,842 left. The respective number for the next four years are: 17,841 and 14,054 for 1901; 13,821 and 11,478 for 1902; 15,892 and 13,149 for 1903; 11,564 and 12,155 for 1904 (Semple 1913, 273). The Japanese newspaper *The Kobe Chronicle* set the number of the Japanese houses in Taiwan in 1899 to 2,247. The total Japanese population in 1900 was 7,402 according to the editor (*The Kobe Chronicle*, vol. VI, no. 143, Wednesday March 28, 1900). Additionally, malaria and brigandage forced the majority of the aspiring colonists to return to Japan. Japanese immigrants, despite Tōkyō's promises and facilitations in Taiwan, kept flocking to Hawaii and North America (60,000 Japanese were living in Hawaii by 1900, whereas 27,500

left Japan for the US between 1890 and 1900) (Kawaguchi 1991, 344–345). In the early 1900s, hundreds of thousands of Japanese would work and reside overseas. In contrast, by 1911 only 231 Japanese agricultural families had settled in Taiwan (Davidson 1903, 594). From 1896, when the first civilians were permitted to enter the colony, and until 1942, the Japanese population of the island never exceeded 6% of the total population (Xiong 2014, 12–13).

Early Japanese rule's focus on assimilation collapses as a theory as well. The supposed goal of the assimilationist faction was to transform the peripheral peoples into Japanese (to make the colonized as similar as possible to the colonizers), before granting them the status of Japanese citizen just like it happened in Hokkaidō and the Ryūkyū islands (Komagome 1996, 58–59). It was deemed risky to grant citizenship rights lightly to peoples whose loyalty was problematic or else the metropole itself would be in danger of disintegration.[3] Japan was not a superpower. Its limited resources meant that realistic priorities and a gradualist approach had to define its incorporation of foreign territories. Thus, Japanese assimilation was based on the ethnocentric, militaristic, racist, and nationalistic conviction of the superiority of the Japanese spirit. For the colonial expert Yanaihara Tadao (1893–1961), assimilation was not the early administration's main policy. It was only a scheme to differentiate Japanese colonialism from its western counterparts and silence those in Taiwan and Japan that were calling for the colony's political autonomy. For the Japanese, the goal was the integration of the Taiwanese as (lesser) members in the Yamato family. In theory the whole population of the colonies, and not a few native elites, would be given equal rights at some point. Education, of the Japanese language that is, was the means by which assimilation would be accomplished (Furukawa 2007, 24). Ironically, the regime failed to support Isawa's educational plans, demonstrating its inconsistency and fixation with military rule.

How early Japanese colonialism compares with the more modern postcolonial interpretations of imperialism? The "underconsumption thesis" does not apply in our case since 19th century Japanese economy was in shortage not in excess of capital to be invested abroad. Dependency theory explains Japan's peripheral po-

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[3] Political and administrative autonomy could prove fatal for Tōkyō's long-term grip over Taiwan. The Taiwanese, as the Ryūkyūans and the Ainu before them, had to be politically, spiritually, and culturally assimilated for the metropole's national security and well-being. On January 2, 1899, Hara wrote in favor of the assimilation doctrine and warned that "appeasement buys peace in the short term" but can be dangerous in the future. Isawa Shūji, Taiwan's Education Bureau Chief from 1895 until 1897, could not agree more: "In order to maintain order in a new territory, in addition to conquering it externally through force, it is necessary to conquer its spirit, dispel its old national dreams, and realize a new national spirit. In other words, it is necessary to pursue Japanization." Japanization would be achieved mainly through education as in the other two peripheral territories (Matsuzaki 2011, 63).

sition and forceful introduction to the global capitalist network in the 19th century. However, Japan as the unique non-western nation to become an imperial power, swiftly transformed itself from periphery to core, from vulnerable subordinate to ambitious colonizer. For Paul A. Baran Japan flourished exactly because it had escaped Western domination, although this growth probably refers to the 20th century and does not apply in the context of the 19th century. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher's scheme explains the phenomenon better despite having placed Britain and Europe at the center of their attention; it was international politics and strategic fears rather than financial calculations that carved up the African continent. Each western power had to be territorially compensated in the event of other colonial annexations in a diplomacy game which resembles the domino effect. Similarly, Yanaihara Tadao and Kamekichi Takahashi claimed that Japanese imperialism had more to do with Euro-American imperialist competition and less with the export of financial capital, the formation of monopolies, and overproduction. For them Japan's expansion was a product of and a reaction to external factors. Early Japanese colonialism can be partially explained by the Robinson-Gallagher thesis since the Meiji elites' drive for colonies was in part fueled by strategic considerations. Nevertheless, we have to remember that until the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 the Powers did not show interest or willingness to collaborate or negotiate with a backward nation;[4] if Japan aspired to expand in Asia, this had to take place in the battlefield, without international support and against all odds (Wolfe 1997, 388–406).

Despite the proclamation regarding the establishment of a civil administration in Taiwan the muted voices of Takano and Isawa show the true nature of Japan's colonialism. It can be safely inferred that these two examples offer a rare glimpse on colonial Taiwan's painful reality. The militaristic nature of Japan's early (mis) management of Taiwan is clearly documented by Isawa's case. Takano's attests to the rapacious and atavistic side of his country's overseas rule as well but there is more; it is a proof that abuse, despotism, and injustice rose to new heights in colonial Taiwan and disperses any banal claim on Japanese benevolence and clemency. If a high-ranking Japanese official could be bullied into submission by the military establishment one can only sympathize with the harsh reality the average imperial Taiwanese subjects had to face.

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[4] The imposition of the unequal treaties (especially the exterritoriality clause) stemmed from West's perception of Japan as barbarian in the 19th century. The Western world's disdain was an insult to Japanese honor which compelled the Meiji government to modernize itself following the Powers' example and to embrace their civilization. In their first colony, the Japanese did everything they could to project their cultural superiority and modernity in contrast to the Taiwanese backwardness (Auslin 2004, 25).

On a broader level Taiwan served as Japan's base of operations in the impe-
rialistic field. The colony would act as a conduit through which Japan's military
power and capital were to augment Tōkyō's interests and enable territorial ex-
pansion in south China and beyond (Chang and Myers 1963, 434). In the summer
of 1896, while writing to Itō, Katsura added: "We must make Southern China, the
Fukien zone, ours, and establish a close connection with Amoy" (Lone 2000, 41).
He continues: "in political and trade terms, Amoy will be our most important point,
serving as a new channel for our ways and goods. With this, we can nurse our
possibilities in the Fujian region and be ready when opportunity appears" and "[w]e
should hold matters in the north and push south, reaching out from the Japan
Sea to the China Sea and all parts of the coast" (Lone 2000, 47). Kodama was of
the same opinion. In his "Fourteen-point Memorandum on the Past and Future
Administration of Taiwan of 1899," he stated: "In order to accomplish *nanshin* [南
進, "southern expansion doctrine"] […] we should make it our policy to gain a pre-
dominant commercial influence in South China and the South Seas" (Schencking
1999, 779).

In order to rapidly achieve their goal, project their possessions as pacified,
profitable, and developed for reasons of prestige, the early colonial authorities
marginalized any kind of civil administration since the 1898 proclamation of civil
administration was more theoretical and real. Immediate results could be achieved
by utilizing strict military rule and terror even during Kodama's and Gotō's tenure.[5]
The Japanese urgency to appear as equal and successful colonizer explains their
eagerness to silence any opposition at home and in their first colony. In both study
cases we detect the prevalence of the military authority over civilian rule. Isawa's
grievances and Takano's protests fell on deaf ears. Having to put up against the
pro-military ruling classes and authorities at home and in the colony, they never
had any chance of contributing in a meaningful way in Taiwan's administration
no matter how noble their initial intentions might have been. Marginally improv-
ing the life of the Taiwanese, even in a colonial context, through education or the
exercise of justice was a futile effort all along due to Tōkyō's priorities and goals.

 Taiwan after its acquisition was destined to become military base where civil
rights and dissident voices had no place. In fact, the colony was in constant state
of war (against the aborigines and insurgents), under martial law, administered
always by generals and admirals and serving the military's purposes and interests.
The Governors pledged their loyalty to the military, almost ignoring the national
parliaments. For the military officers serving in the colony the politicians from

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[5] The courts during the Kodama's administration were harsher than their predecessors during
the tenure of Takano. According to the new law almost all bandits were sentenced to death.
As a result, in 1899 death sentences regarding cases of banditry increased to 60% and to
74,3% in 1902 (Zagarola 1991, 308).

their comfortable seats of their assemblies in Tōkyō, utterly ignorant about the warlike conditions of this distant place, were not suitable to enact laws for Taiwan or administer it. Lacking the funds to set up an efficient judicial system, Taiwan's courts were initially entrusted to army officials. Special "temporary" courts were immediately organized (1895) not to provide a fair trial to any Taiwanese insurgent but to punish them as criminals. To Takano's frustration, Taihoku unsupervised and in haste, put to death and deported thousands of native troublemakers.[6]

Taiwan's administration was authoritarian and the governors ruled it despotically and virtually unrestrained as their personal fief. Japanese legislation (1895–1897) gave to Taiwan's Governor-General's considerable authority.[7] The never-ending state of war in the first colony provided the governors and thus the military with "urgent" and enlarged powers for years. During these periods, lawlessness, oppressive and abusive police action, coupled with human rights violations, scandals, mismanagement, confusion, and even mass murders systematically took place but were covered up to avoid international condemnation. According to author Paul Barclay, even the most lenient Japanese officials "believed that the indigenes were savages squatting on the emperor's land" (Barkley 2018, 46). That was the prominent rationale that Takano and Isawa had to put up with the moment they reached the colony.

In Taiwan, any interference by civilians in the colony's military establishment, such as the one made by judge Takenori Takano, was bluntly silenced (1897). Takano's criticism about the army using excessive force, extorting money, and intimidating civilians was suppressed by the colonial authorities. Similarly, Isawa Shūji condemned the Japanese soldiers' horrendous behavior in Taiwan's Confucian temples (Nomura 1999, 6). Spending the limited available funds on the colony's police and armed forces instead of on the education of the colonial sub-

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[6] Not only the local Taiwanese but even the Japanese soldiers stationed on the island revolted against their superiors at times proving that the island was a constant warzone. On November 30, 1900, privates of the fifth battalion of the third brigade mutinied and opened fire against their commanders at Shinyeisho. The Governor-General government tried to cover up the incident but it was evident that anarchy ruled over the colony. See "Soldiers' mutiny in Formosa," *The Kobe Chronicle*, vol. VIII, no. 183, Wednesday January 2, 1901, p. 15.

[7] Two Japanese residents (Hagiwara and Kobayashi) travelled in 1902 to Tōkyō in order to reveal the island's real conditions. They lamented the perpetuation of the military law in Taiwan and the "despotic authority" of the colonial officials. The Governor-General was disregarding the needs of the Japanese inhabitants, deported dissidents, and promoted the interests of his clique. The Japanese, the Japanized Taiwanese, and the ordinary Taiwanese in the island did not enjoy any rights. Hagiwara and Kobayashi requested full rights and the right of representation at least for the first two categories; the colonial state's arbitrariness and abuse suffocated the colonizers and subordinated voices alike. See "The condition of Formosa, rights of residents, an interview with a deputation," *The Japan Chronicle*, no. 236, Wednesday January 8, 1902, p. 8.

jects prompted the first Chief of the Education Bureau, Isawa Shūji to resign in protest (1898). The island became a miniature police state as the result of the intensification of the *hokō* system (1898), brimming with prisons; the army and the police enjoyed great authority and manned the colonial administration *en masse*. One of the most heinous acts was the mass murder of 275 surrendered ex brigands on May 22, 1902 organized by the higher echelons of the colonial administration in their effort to "pacify" the locals. The same tactic was repeated six more times in different locations. Gotō's and Kodama's mafia like methods did not provoke a scandal, bring dishonor, or effect their resignation. The military approved these tactics while the Diet had not any say in the colony. Moreover, entire villages were set on fire and many Taiwanese, innocent or not, were murdered instantly by the occupation forces or sentenced to death as "brigands" after hasty and inept military tribunals.[8] In practice, awe and fear was employed in contrast to the rhetoric of the benevolent civilizing mission. On one occasion, more than 4,000 houses were burned to the ground in Yunlin (1896). The islands' aboriginal inhabitants also got to know Tōkyō's colonial brutality first by being under siege by a restrictive and armed guard line and in the 20th century by being the direct targets of the Japanese army's purges (Ōe 2001, 72–74).

The lack of funds as a result of the country's immature capitalism was evident at home and in its first colony as well. During the first years of colonial rule, investments were scant, private interest limited, and the authorities, having more urgent priorities, neglected the local populations. While the dominant state put forward a plan of industrialization and economic development at home, Taiwan was to remain underdeveloped. Nevertheless, the colony was a burden for state finances. During the first years at least, colonial administration was draining the national treasuries while the colony's trade deficit was a constant source of anxiety for the colonial policy makers (Hoston 1984, 18).

What is certain is that soon after the colonization of Taiwan, Japan sought to further expand. The nation did not simply annex this colony but engaged in bloody warfare to consolidate its presence. The Japanese had to fight almost immediately after establishing their presence in their first colony: initially against the Republic of Taiwan, later against the insurgents, and until 1915 against the island's indigenous population. It was from the new colony that the Japanese sought to expand commercially and politically in Southern China. The city of Amoy (modern day Xiamen), opposite to Taiwan, was targeted first and was captured briefly

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[8] Following the Yunlin massacres Takano criticized the Japanese military and called for equal treatment for the Taiwanese: "The governance of Taiwan is a difficult enterprise beyond ordinary imagination [...]. We need to stop viewing the Taiwanese as people of a defeated country or slaves, but as the imperial subjects of the emperor. In other words, they should be treated the same as the people of Japan proper" (Chang 2003, 179).

(August 1900) before the withdrawal of the Japanese troops in the face of foreign protests. The plan was orchestrated by the military (Katsura and Kodama) and the Japanese troops hailed from Taiwan amidst the raging Boxer Rebellion in China (Jensen 1951, 243–245). This bellicose, opportunistic, and failed attempt encapsulates perfectly the nature of early Japan's expansion.

The historian and journalist Tokutomi Sohō perceived Taiwan as a natural "footing for the expansion of Greater Japan" in the South even before the acquisition of the island:

> Taiwan is a strategic point, like Japan's south gate. If Japan intends to expand its territorial map of the Greater Japan Empire toward the south, there is no room for discussion about whether Japan has to go through this gate [...]. It is natural [...] to expand to the Strait of Malacca, the Indochinese and Malay Peninsulas and to the South Seas islands through this gate [...]. If we do not acquire it today, some other power will take it in the future. Taiwan is an easy prey in Asia. (Gotō 2014, 16–17)

Katsura claimed that "the areas in South China ought to become like the Korean Peninsula" and concluded that "it is not difficult to expand political and commercial strength to the South Seas in the future from the base of Taiwan" (Gotō 2014, 17). In this sense the financial loss for the mother country was deemed as secondary in comparison to the colony's future strategic value.

Although the veterans of the 1874 campaign never abandoned the dream of Japan's return to Taiwan, the island's occupation was more of an adventurist byproduct of the Sino-Japanese war and less the fruit of a long-term official strategy. Japan's focus on Taiwan was not constant. It was Korea rather than Taiwan that had dominated Meiji foreign policy for decades. This fact is verified by Japan's initial confusion in governing the island. Taiwanese resistance shook the invaders' confidence in their civilizing mission and transformed the project of a peaceful administration into a military campaign for years to come. Gotō admitted Tōkyō's unpreparedness: "The Japanese occupation of Taiwan was the unexpected result of the Sino-Japanese war. We were not yet prepared for any civilized colonial policy" (Chang 2003, 112–119). In 1900, at a conference of island administrators, Kodama presented his long-term goals:

> In order for us to acquire the power to oppose them [Western powers] so that we can continue to dominate in the Far East and pre–serve the peace, there is no other recourse open to us but to acquire more knowledge and increase our wealth. (Chang and Myers 1963, 436)

In late 1900 Japan had already undertaken a massive armament expansion for its future clash with Russia and its participation in the global colonial race; an unprofitable and unruly colony could not be tolerated (Barclay 2018, 96). Militarism,

industrialization, and colonialism were symbols of modernity; in the 19th century modernity was the ticket to higher status. Tōkyō decided to emulate these Western practices and policies. By occupying a colony, any colony, the Meiji elites tried to gain respect, recognition, and stature as a modern and civilized nation in order to be admitted as equals in the exclusive club of the Great Powers. The adoption of Western civilization went hand in hand with adoption of Western imperialistic practices. In other words, colonialism was not the result but a prerequisite in the path to modernization (Eskildsen 2002, 391–392).

The message was clear; Japan had to acquire more territories, exploit their resources, and challenge the strategic predominance of the other empires. Taiwan had to be developed agriculturally in order to supply food and raw materials to the mother country in this conflict; industrial development was reserved for the met-ropole alone. In the empire building process justice both in court and as a principal is rather a nuisance and a burden; this is how Takano was perceived by the regime. Similarly, Tōkyō was unwilling to give heed to a skilled pedagogue's grandiose and expensive plans for universal schooling. The Taiwanese were destined to be-come hard-working farmers and obedient subjects for Japan's sake. Furthermore, Takano's and Isawa's isolation or even removal unveiled the military establish-ment's conviction to proceed as planned. It was a symbolic gesture certifying that any civilian interference with the army's plans and methods would not be tolerated.

Acquiring Taiwan, and later Korea, seemed to complete the strategy of China's encirclement. Most of the funds from foreign debt following the acquisition of Taiwan went for military expenditure, and only 3% of the funds went for the de-velopment of Japan's colonies. Schumpeter's thesis appears to have validity in this case. According to him, imperialism represented the survival of older social structures, such as the warrior class, within a capitalist economy (Furuya 2002, 128). This theory, in connection with strategic considerations and the quest for modernity and recognition seems to explain the attitude of early Japan's lead-ers towards imperialistic expansion more thoroughly than the rest (Chang 2003, 259). In brief the reason was psychological and mental rather than based on defi-nite factors and assessed considerations. Undeniably the function of Japan's first colony was connected to future strategic considerations (to serve as a bridgehead for further expansion against China) and to project a modern and potent Japan to the world. Initially though, it was colonized for the sake of colonization, emulating the Western powers. It was latent atavism, as Schumpeter put it; conquest, aggres-sion, and effortless and predatory grabbing of foreign resources and lands. The widely and conventionally accepted theories on the demographic and economic factors as catalysts of overseas rule in the Age of Imperialism do not hold truth when it comes to early Japanese Taiwan.

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RETHINKING THE POWER OF THE VOICELESS: THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE BIRTH OF POPULAR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN OCCUPIED OKINAWA

Fumi Inoue

This paper rethinks the power of the voiceless by interrogating Okinawans' resistance to extraterritorial American military justice in the mid-1950s. Despite the long history of, and continuing public attention to, the issue of American military legal immunity from local jurisdiction, historians have not yet traced the genealogy of protest movements against it in U.S.-occupied and post-reversion Okinawa. This paper sheds new light on the islanders' 1955 protest against the murder of a local girl by a U.S. military service member by defining it as a pivotal moment for the rise of popular human rights activism in contemporary Okinawa. This case study attests that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) empowered the locals, whose legal status was reduced to being treated as the "voiceless" under the San Francisco System, by allowing them to demand the occupied people's equal status as the peoples of sovereign nations and the protection of their human rights.

Keywords: contemporary Okinawa-Japan-U.S. relations, Cold War history, extraterritoriality, human rights, social activism

1. Introduction

This chapter interrogates the power of the voiceless by visiting mid-1950s occupied Okinawa (1945–1972). Here the rape and murder of a local five-year-old girl by a U.S. service member crystallized a dramatic transformation in the islanders' articulation of rights and resistance to the U.S. occupation. At the heart of the empirical analysis is the formation of a local popular uprising against U.S. military injustices that unfolded against the backdrop of the emergence of the Third World as an international force. Whereas the First Afro-Asian Conference (Bandung Confer-

ence) of April 1955 advocated self-determination, sovereign equality, and colored populations' cooperation in the face of a transwar imperial order dictated by new hegemonies, occupied Okinawans seized on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to seek legal justice and compensation even under military rule. In Okinawa, I assert, the UDHR served as the rationale for demanding the "free world" hegemony's respect for egalitarianism, that is, occupied Okinawans' equal status as peoples of sovereign nations.

This historical study builds on the existing literature on occupied Okinawa and recent interdisciplinary scholarship on the history of international human rights. Scholars have recognized Okinawans' outrage about the 1955 rape incident, the so-called Yumiko-chan Incident, as a critical event leading up to an island-wide uprising against the systemic land seizure by the military in 1956.[1] Nevertheless, no single historical study has traced, empirically, the large story of the American military's criminal jurisdiction policy in Okinawa, which had to contend with serious local resistance from the 1950s all the way to today. My work on what I call the politics of extraterritoriality in post-occupation Japan and U.S.-occupied Okinawa (1952–1972) shows that Okinawans' protest movement against postwar U.S. "extraterritoriality" was distinct from the Japanese counterpart in that human rights, not national sovereignty, served as its collective appeal (Inoue 2021).[2]

Witnessing occupied Okinawans' cry for "human rights," that is, the right to life and safety and equality before the law, in the mid-1950s, challenges extant scholarship of the history of human rights. According to Samuel Moyn, what we know as human rights – a concept understood as the *international* protection of individual rights – did not exert any substantial influence on international civil society until the late 1970s because much of human rights advocacy before then had been couched in struggles for national self-determination. This was despite the United Nations' landmark adoption of the UDHR and anti-colonial movements' use of human rights language at the 1955 Bandung Conference and thereafter (Moyn 2010). In the Japanese context, sociologist Kiyoteru Tsutsui dates the surge

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[1] For major works on contemporary Okinawa referring to the Yumiko-chan Incident, see Arasaki (1976), Arasaki and Nakano (2005), Sakurazawa (2015), and Tanji (2006). Except for my research project, journalist Sasaki Ryūzō's book chapter, published in 1976, has offered the most detailed account of local responses to the incident based on newspapers and his interview with the victim's mother. See Sasaki (1976, 189–211). For a feminist inquiry into the Yumiko-chan Incident, see Takauchi (2015). There is also a brief mention on the incident's impact on U.S. military families in Alvah (2007, 177–178). For a journalistic inquiry into the racial politics of military justice that arose from the Yumiko-chan Incident with a focus on the aftermath, see Serrano (2019).

[2] My dissertation offers a comparative analysis of the trajectories of local responses to postwar U.S. military criminal jurisdiction policy in post-occupation Japan and U.S.-occupied Okinawa. For the chapters on Okinawa, see Inoue (2021, 172–242, 300–353).

of human rights advocacy among minority groups in Japan from the 1970s, when the Japanese government ratified major human rights treaties (Tsutsui 2018).[3] But this trajectory can only be upheld by excluding occupied Okinawa. A closer examination of the triangular relationship between post-occupation Japan, occupied Okinawa, and the U.S. military regime of extraterritoriality changes that picture.

This chapter demonstrates how the Okinawan human rights advocacy took shape as a product of Okinawa's geopolitical position and the conjuncture of local and global contexts specific to that time. It offers a three-fold analysis by, first, laying out occupied Okinawa's legal and political architecture, second, clarifying the connection between Okinawans' struggles against the occupation/military justice and their early human rights advocacy, and third, illuminating the formation of the protest movement against the Yumiko-chan Incident on the basis of declassified U.S. papers, newspapers, a court-martial record, and legislative records. Of primary importance here is the tension between Okinawans' articulations of universal rights and the occupiers' exceptionalist positioning toward civilization.

Because the islanders lacked both legal and political subjecthood in the mid-1950s to launch an island-wide movement for reversion or autonomous rule, they employed the UDHR as a collective means to expand their rights.

2. The "legal" architecture of occupied Okinawa

The ambiguity of Okinawa's legal status resulted from the San Francisco System that blurred Okinawa's national belonging. For decades, scholars have tried to capture this situation by terms, such as "the vacuum of the rule of law" (Ushiomi and Ōno 1959), "legal monster" (*Ryūkyū Shimpō*, April 27, 1961), "liminality in law" (Onishi 2012), and "alegal" (Shimabuku 2019), to describe the American military occupation authorized by Article 3 of the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty. To be sure, Okinawa's intricate legal architecture was a product of U.S. policy elites' careful creation of political power that relied upon the premise of international law. With a parliamentary approval of the Peace Treaty, Japan authorized the United States' "right to exercise all and any powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction" over a chain of islands, known as the Ryukyus, the largest of which is the Island of Okinawa, until the U.S. proposes to place them under the UN trusteeship system. U.S. policy elites knew that a trusteeship would be neither feasible nor desirable due to the exacerbating rivalry with Soviet Russia. The Treaty was therefore written in such a way as to avoid pronouncing contradictions with the Allied powers' non-expansionist principles declared in documents such as the

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[3]   Tsutsui Kiyoteru provided sociological case studies of Burakumin (a former outcaste), Zainichi (Koreans who remained in Japan after the end of World War II), and the Ainu (an indigenous people in northernmost Japan). See Tsutsui (2018).

Atlantic Charter and Cairo Declaration. Regarding Okinawa's sovereign status, the U.S. recognized Japan's "residual sovereignty" over the Ryukyu Islands (Onishi 2012, 753–756; Koseki and Toyoshita 2018, 42–66).[4] The U.S. occupation policy on Okinawa, called the "blue-skies" position originating from the architect of the Peace Treaty, John Foster Dulles's 1953 speech, declared Washington's intention to maintain the American military presence as long as "conditions of threat and tension" remained in Asia (Kōno 1994, 93–94; Swenson-Wright 2005, 118; Koseki and Toyoshita 2018, 98–100).

Under the San Francisco System, the occupation regime introduced a dual-administrative system dividing functions between the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) and the Government of the Ryukyu Islands (GRI). Even though the USCAR allowed the GRI to maintain three branches of power, its autonomous rule was prohibited: the former secured the right to appoint a chief executive of the latter (until 1968) and veto any legislation. The military's proclamations, ordinances, and directives functioned as fundamental law (Hagino 1973, 43–44; Rabson 1989, 14–16; Iwagaki 2018, 1–23). Further, USCAR Ordinance No. 68 Provisions of the GRI (February 29, 1952) virtually denied individual rights as natural rights as it read:

> All of the people shall be respected as individuals and hold equal under the law. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare, be supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs.

The newly adopted Japanese constitution (1947) also contained provisions concerning "public welfare." But it recognized respect for fundamental human rights, popular sovereignty, and pacifism as three pillars of constitutional values. In short, Okinawa was susceptible to the U.S. national security state's definition of "public welfare" much more than Japan, whose constitution reflected New Dealers' democratic values.[5]

The judicial structure of occupied Okinawa, which would eventually provoke the 1955 uprising, was built on a mixed-court system, thereby dividing jurisdiction between the military, USCAR, and GRI. Although GRI ran its own courts, the rigid hierarchy between the occupier and the occupied perpetuated their unequal relationship, as with the legislative and executive branches. Proclamation No. 12 Ryukyuan Court Systems (1952), Ordinance No. 144 Code of Penal Law and Procedure (1955), and Presidential Executive Order 10713 (1957) denied Okinawans'

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[4] For recent in-deepth analyses of the legal and political structure of Article 3 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, see Onishi (2012, 753–756), and Koseki (2018, 42–66).

[5] For a classic study on the origins of the postwar U.S. national security state, see Hogan (1998). For a recent study on U.S. Cold War policy on Japan, see Miller (2019).

jurisdiction over cases involving persons of allied powers. Moreover, USCAR held the right to transfer any cases involving Okinawans and Americans from GRI courts to either USCAR or military courts as the occupation authorities deemed it necessary for postwar America's national security. The GRI Police was authorized to arrest military personnel only at the scene of a crime and in the absence of the military police (MP) (see "Courts in the Ryukyu Islands: Jurisdiction of Courts in the Ryukyu Islands," undated; Hagino 1973, 105–111; Aketagawa 2017, 162–164).[6] Unlike in the case of sovereign nations hosting the permanent American military presence, "extraterritorial" practices were *de jure* permitted in Okinawa.[7]

Although still nascent in the early postwar period, the global human rights regime stood in stark contrast to the undemocratic U.S. military rule in Okinawa. In the aftermath of intense international discussions over the definition of "universal" human rights, with varied emphases on political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights, the UN General Assembly adopted the 1948 UDHR, declaring the inherent equality of all peoples: "the right to life, liberty and security" (Article 3) and "the right to equal protection of the law" (Article 7). The text incorporated civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights into the preamble and 30 articles. The text and the question of legal enforcement were contested among U.S. elites, best illustrated by the tension between Franklin D. Roosevelt's widow Eleanor Roosevelt, who served as Chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights and represented New Dealers' social democratic values, and John Foster Dulles, who resisted calls for racial equality, economic redistribution, as well as the legal enforcement of the UDHR (Glendon 2001, 21–34, 205; Moyn 2010, 76, 125; Barsalou 2015, 362–380; Simpson 2014, 261–263).

Although the UDHR was not legally binding, it became a useful tool for occupied Okinawans to combat their marginalized legal status under the San Francisco Peace System. The U.S.' involvement in the making of the UDHR and its ambivalence toward "universal" human rights, including political liberties, is key to understanding this history.

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[6]   The records are available at the National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as NARA), College Park, Maryland, U.S.A.

[7]   Since the 1950s, the U.S. Defense Department has institutionalized the policy of maximizing U.S. jurisdiction over all–both on-duty and off-duty–criminal cases committed against locals by its service members stationed abroad–not only in the non-western world but also in Europe. Yet, due to local protests, the Defense Department has often relied on the State Department's assistance in securing the host nations' arrangements via informal means. See Inoue (2021, 56–80).

3. Background of the 1955 uprising

The birth of popular human rights activism in occupied Okinawa requires a brief overview of its pre-1955 trajectory. By "popular," I mean the mobilization of masses with the support of all major political parties, executive/municipal institutions, and a wide range of grassroots organizations, either partisan or suprapartisan. Indeed, Okinawans' 1955 popular protest was never a natural occurrence, given their political divisions shaped before and after the U.S. arrival. In 1945, American military elites recognized the strategic value of identifying locals as a people liberated from Japanese imperialism for the long-term garrisoning of the islands. They, therefore, began implementing inclusionary and humanitarian policymaking amidst the Battle of Okinawa (Short 2020, 31–44).

Seizing on this unique momentum, some Okinawans advocated the Ryukyu Islands' independence from Japan, which had incorporated them into its prefectural system through annexation in the late 19th century. However, the military's ad-hoc orders, its impunity from criminal cases committed against locals, and punitive measures against dissents generated widespread discontent by the late 1940s. From 1947 onward, Okinawans created new political parties under the influence of returnees from Japan familiar with the U.S.-led democratization. The leftist-inspired Okinawan People's Party (OPP) became the most vocal opponent of the occupation. Those who advocated independence from Japan and Okinawa's direct alliance with the capitalist bloc, even under the temporal condition of trusteeship, formed the Ryukyu Democratic Party (RDP). The centrist Okinawa Socialist Mass Party (OSMP) collaborated with the OPP on numerous fronts but cautiously maintained its distance to avoid being labeled communist by the occupiers. The state of the Ryukyus-U.S. relationship on the eve of Japan's independence was such that over eighty percent of the locals signed petitions demanding immediate reversion to Japan. But the Japanese Diet neglected Okinawans' plea in favor of institutionalizing the San Francisco System. USCAR appointed the first GRI chief executive from the RDP in 1952 (Sakurazawa 2012, 39–64; Sakurazawa 2015, 12, 48–49).

In this highly charged political climate, the high rate of criminal cases committed by military personnel and the lack of official compensation became a pressing agenda for the GRI. Official records (OPA: Chief Executive of Governor 1952) show that a total of 473 criminal cases committed by U.S. military personnel against locals were reported during the period between 1946 and 1952: 24 murders, 5 assaults resulting in death, 102 rapes, 1 burglary and rape case, 18 arsons, 9 burglary and assaults, 313 assaults and batteries, and 1 accidental homicide. Indeed, the real number was much higher. As a *Time Magazine* article put it in November 1949, "Okinawa has become a dumping ground for Army misfits and rejects from more comfortable posts."

In April 1952, Charles N. Spinks, a high-ranking U.S. civilian official in Tokyo, received a letter from "a close personal friend" residing in Okinawa. Spinks forwarded the letter to Kenneth Young, his civilian colleague in Washington. Withholding the author's name, Spinks wrote: "you will be interested in the very frank observations expressed therein [...]" (NARA: Letter to Counselor of Mission 1952). This anonymous letter recounted a grotesquely racialized crime against locals and the state of military injustices in Okinawa:

> I have been told directly of an instance in which a number of GI's decided to "go out and shoot 'em a few gooks" five years after the end of the war [in 1950]. So they took carbines [rifle] and went up on a ridge [...]. They got seven Okinawans working in the fields below. These included a child of four, an old man, and others. Two died. One – a woman – was shot through the back of the head and paralyzed for the rest of her life. What happened? A desultory investigation, then pressure to drop it. When the civilian in charge of Public Safety (my host and informant) went to the top general and threatened to blow the whole thing wide open, the case was revived and the GIs brought to court-martial. One was tried for the death of one "gook." He was acquitted – and so were the rest. The court-martial was unable to find any means of determining who had shot which bullet which killed which person [...]. My informant has been torn between blowing the case publicly or silence. (NARA: Letter to Counselor of Mission 1952)

The letter questioned the qualification of judges working for the military government, many of whom had come from the police. Further, even when a case ended with a conviction, the sentence was often suspended (Nakano 2011, 80). The author also warned that the disclosure of such information could cause far-reaching policy consequences by empowering "reds" especially after Japan's recovery of independence:

> It is my belief [...] that the Peace Treaty will be a signal for the Japanese to throw all this at us at some appropriate time. Records of the severe prosecutions and punishments being meted out to Okinawans over six years, presented with the record of acquittals of American Army personnel who have committed every form of arson, rape, and violence upon Okinawans, are on the books. If the Army doesn't arrange for a convenient fire to destroy all Okinawan records at the governor's office or the Police Department, they may turn up in Japan someday, and from there go into the UN or other international body.

The letter proposed a demilitarization and democratization policy on Okinawa, because the occupation, "unrestrained by any public opinion at home and by no very visible authority in the civil government at Washington," was "an enormously

complex American disaster" (NARA: Letter to Counselor of Mission 1952). Despite the urgent warning from the "forgotten" island, the State Department would not initiate the proactive assistance and reformation of the Army-run U.S. policy on Okinawa until 1955.

Under the military legal regime of exception, the islanders resorted to various means to receive compensation – individual pleas, executive and legislative representatives' petitions, and communal rallies, in vain. In December 1952, Higa Shūhei, the first GRI Chief Executive appointed for his early career as an English teacher, petitioned Civil Administrator Vonna F. Burger to install an official compensation program as follows:

> It is understood that there have been many cases including the offenses [...] committed by U.S. military personnel and its civilian employees against the Ryukyuan inhabitants since the end of the War, which cases have brought heavy casualties toward the lives and properties of the inhabitants. Among the cases, some of the persons concerned lost their sole children, bring them desperateness in their future lives, and others were robbed of their sole supporters, bring them miserable livelihood therefrom.

According to Higa's letter, written in English, although Okinawan authorities "tirelessly worked [...] pleading to the U.S. Authority for the compensation," the military officials repeatedly responded that they "cannot practice the compensation due to the fact that there [wa]s no such regulation concerning compensation" and there was "no available budget." Having received such dire responses, Higa asked the Civil Administrator to recall an earlier statement that "a 'Compensation Committee' might be established" upon the adoption of the Peace Treaty. No announcement had been made on that matter, nevertheless, even after Japan's independence (OPA: Chief Executive of Governor 1952).

Nascent human rights advocacy emerged in occupied Okinawa in this climate. The newly established GRI Legislature unanimously adopted a brief appeal entitled "On the Protection of Ryukyuans' Fundamental Human Rights" in November 1952. The statement, proposed by the OPP, squarely criticized rampant military-related cases and the absence of official compensation: "From the standpoint of protecting life, liberties, and safety of the Ryukyuans grounded in the spirit of the UDHR, we demand the eradication of misconducts and proper compensation for victims" (*Ryūkyū Shimpō*, November 16, 1952). The move stemmed from legislators' growing attention to the spirit of the UDHR to cope with this urgent issue, securing a suprapartisan front three years before the uprising. Yet the actual utility of "fundamental" human rights – an ill-defined concept in occupied Okinawa – was questioned at that time, as a local newspaper's editorial cynically contrasted the

islands with Japan with constitutional definitions (*Ryūkyū Shimpō*, November 7, 1952).

In the following years, the U.S. military's sweeping, uncompensated confiscation of native land galvanized popular resistance, consolidating the GRI branches and municipal/grassroots organizations. In 1954, the GRI Legislature declared the famous "Four Principles for the Protection of Land" for its suprapartisan resistance. Then, approximately 800 Okinawan prisoners launched a revolt at the Okinawa Central Prison to protest the poor prison conditions and violent treatment by guards. At that time, not only regular convicts but also a growing number of political activists were imprisoned, including Senaga Kamejirō, who proposed the 1952 GRI Legislature statement on Okinawans' human rights. Enlisting Senaga's advice, the prisoners declared their collective demand as the protection of prisoners' "fundamental human rights." USCAR blamed Senega for having instigated the revolt without concrete evidence. But prison conditions did improve, proving that human rights advocacy could work (*Ryūkyū Shimpō*, November 13, 1954).

The critical push needed to get Okinawa's resistance into higher gear came from Japan. On January 13, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported on the Japan Civil Liberties Union's (JCLU) publication entitled "Human Rights Problems in Okinawa." Based on a ten-months investigation conducted by JCLU-affiliated legal professionals, the report problematized the legal structure of the occupation, the racialized unequal wage difference between Okinawan base workers and others with Japanese or Filipino nationality, the land seizure, the undemocratic handling of courts-martial involving locals, and the high rate of military-related incidents. It argued that the Japanese public must acknowledge the violation of fundamental human rights in Okinawa as their problem with attention to Articles 73 and 74, Chapter XI of the UN Charter (Declaration regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories). The *Asahi Shimbun* followed up with a month-long special coverage of Okinawa, which invoked not only parliamentary debates and Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichirō's pledge to protest the U.S. government upon ascertaining evidence (*Okinawa Times*, January 26, 1955) but also public awakening to the plight of people living under military rule.[8] The Far East Command responded to the outcry by dismissing it as a communist conspiracy (NARA: Department of the Army Staff Communications Office 1955).

Behind the scene, nascent transnational grassroots networks played a vital role in this cascade of events. In January 1954, Baptist Reverend Otis W. Bell residing in Okinawa condemned a forced land seizure he had witnessed through his article "Play Fair with Okinawans!" published in *The Christian Century* (Bell 1954). The article vividly recounted the violent crackdown and refuted the USCAR's labeling

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[8]   For a detailed analysis of the subject, see Inoue (2021, 172–242; 2022).

of the local resistance as a "communist" conspiracy. Then, Roger Nash Baldwin, a co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), having come across Bell's article, wrote to the President of the JCLU Unno Shinkichi inquiring about the issue:

> Protests by Okinawans are said to be answered by American military authorities with charges of communism. We have no correspondent in Okinawa, but I suppose you do. Can you get the facts which perhaps the Japanese has published, and let us have your judgment? (SGMML: Chairman Baldwin 1954).

About a year later, Baldwin would be surprised to learn about the JCLU report during his stay in Egypt. Further, Tokyo University Assistant Professor Ushitomi Toshitaka, who compiled the report, presented it at the Conference of Asian Lawyers amidst the controversy created in Japan. This international conference held in India on January 25–31 adopted a resolution calling for an international investigation on Okinawa (Ushitomi 1955, 59).

Okinawan newspapers seized upon this unprecedented opportunity to exercise freedom of speech. In a stream of articles referring to the Japanese and international press coverage of Okinawa, they closely monitored the development of international solidarity activism. And yet, the locals were highly cautious of being labeled as "anti-American" and "communist" much more so than mainland Japanese. The Mayor of Naha Tōma Jūgō found it "utterly regrettable" that the JCLU report appeared to be "anti-American" (*Ryūkyū Shimpō*, evening edition, January 14, 1955). Chief Executive Higa called the JCLU allegations "one-sided" (*Ryūkyū Shimpō*, January 16, 1955), and insisted after meeting with Deputy Governor Ogden that "confrontation with the military must be avoided to demonstrate Okinawans' ability for an autonomous rule" (*Ryūkyū Shimpō*, January 19, 1955). Opposition parties, however, welcomed Japanese residents' criticism of the authoritarian military rule. The OSMP legislator Ōyama Chōjyō told the press that he was "overjoyed" by Japanese civil society's increasing familiarity with Okinawans' "persistent efforts to solve the land problem." He believed it would lead to the Japanese government taking this issue seriously (*Okinawa Times*, January 15, 1955).

The JCLU report triggered further discussions on human rights in Okinawa, soliciting decolonization advocates' solidary messages simultaneously. In January, the *Okinawa Times* published an excerpt of a Japanese magazine article titled "The Promise of the UDHR—Also Declared in the Provisions of the GRI" authored by Japanese legal scholar Iriye Keishirō. He argued that despite the legal constraints posed by the Peace Treaty, the UDHR declared that peoples residing in territories of the UN member states were entitled to be protected by it. The UDHR's promises were often ensured by "civilized nations' constitutions," Iriye asserted (*Okinawa Times*, January 27, 1955). In April, Kamiyama Seiryō, a leading Okinawan intellec-

tual based in Japan, attended the Conference of Asian Countries in New Delhi and met with Indian Premier Jawarharlal Nehru's daughter. Kamiyama was surprised at her knowledge of Okinawa and conveyed her father's message that Okinawans "must not lose courage" (*Okinawa Times*, April 19, 1955).

Okinawans' uprising emerged in a transnational context, linking Okinawan desire for the international recognition of their equality with those with an unambiguous national status, Japanese antagonism toward subordinate independence, and an emergent Third World resistance to U.S. and Soviet hegemony in Asia. But the Okinawan struggle was also a product of local outrages against the occupation: nothing would galvanize the local resistance as decisively as the rape and murder of a five-year-old girl.

4. The Yumiko-chan incident

On September 4, 1955 Nagayama Yumiko went missing. The residents of her hometown Ishikawa were enjoying a summer festival. The streets were busier than usual, filled with young people performing *eisā*, a famous folk dance inviting back the spirit of their ancestors each summer. With sugar *tempuras* in her hands, Yumiko was watching *eisā* dancers passing by her parents' Nagayama Photo Studio (Sasaki 1976, 191–193). From there, the dancers were headed to a local school where a movie was to be screened open-air. Little Yumiko went missing at around 8 P.M., but local construction workers found her body on the eastern shore of Kadena Village, roughly 12 miles away from Ishikawa City, the next morning. When the local police arrived, U.S. Criminal Investigation Command officers were already present. They shouted at the Okinawans, "No touch!" Yumiko's corpse lay on U.S. military property (*Okinawa Times*, September 5, 1955). An investigation found evidence of rape before her murder. Even though the local press reported her age as six, a court-martial record of U.S. Army Sergeant Isaac J. Hurt, who would be found guilty of this crime later in the year, states that she was five years old:

> At about 0730 hours 4 September 1955, in Okinawa, the dead body of five-year old Yumiko Nagayama was discovered […]. Deducing from the state of rigor mortis, death had occurred about 22.00 hours on the night of 3 September 1955 with a possible variation of two hours either way. The cause of death was suffocation and could have been caused by the fingers of an adult on the neck obstructing the windpipe. Bruises about the chest indicated an attempt to revive the victim with artificial respiration […]. (United States v. Isaac J. Hurt 1956)

In the next two months, this gruesome sexual violence committed against the local girl would mobilize a popular movement against the American military legal regime of exception. It began with local legal enforcement authorities publicly ex-

pressing indignation at the crime, extraterritorial realities, and their determination to find a suspect who appeared to be a military service member. Chief of the GRI Department of Prosecutors Hirata told the press: "This is a heinous crime unprecedented in the history of [...] the Ryukyus. To dispel parents' fears, we will arrest [the suspect] at any cost." Chief of the GRI Police Nakamura commented: "I myself as a parent cannot help but feel infuriated. The problem with this case is that we do not have the right to investigation [...]. We, therefore, beg for the military's cooperation" (*Okinawa Times*, evening edition, September 5, 1955). Given such responses, the MP authorized the GRI Police to collaborate in finding the suspect (*Okinawa Times*, September 6, 1955). One hundred Okinawan police officers were mobilized to conduct round-the-clock investigations (*Okinawa Times*, September 14, 1955). The MP arrested Hurt within three days (*Okinawa Times*, September 7, 1955). Further, as part of their unprecedented joint efforts, a local doctor conducted an autopsy at an army hospital under the supervision of U.S. physicians (*Okinawa Times*, September 12, 1955).

The local media also contributed to the quick arrest by providing extensive coverage of Yumiko's death. On September 5, the press reported on "curled brown hairs" found in Yumiko's private parts and a nine-year-old local boy's testimony of Yumiko's abduction by an American with "red hair." Following the details of investigations, the *Okinawa Times* ran sensational headlines: "How can we protect children from such crimes exposing the ugly aspects of human nature?;" "The unhesitating girl: 'Why on earth did she end up like this?' Parents broke down crying" (*Okinawa Times*, September 5, 1955). The more conservative *Ryūkyū Shimpō* also provided day-to-day updates on the repercussions of the incident.

Among grassroots actors, educators were the first to translate their despair into concrete political actions. The Okinawa Teachers Association (OTA) was one of the two main drivers of social movements in 1950s-Okinawa with the highest ratio of female teachers in primary school (Sakurazawa 2012, 65–109). They immediately organized a protest movement on the grassroots level. A local primary school principal commented:

> I was very shocked at the newspapers' reports. Because these crimes arise from military bases, we must expand the Okinawa Association for the Protection of Children's (OAPC) activities. Our school will consult with the OTA and the PTA to implement preventive measures. (*Okinawa Times*, evening edition, September 5, 1955)

The OAPC scheduled a board meeting to collaborate with other grassroots organizations, including the Okinawa Youth Confederation (OYC), Okinawa Women's Association (OWA), and the PTA. It announced to conduct thorough investigations, demand an open trial, and request the disclosure of judicial proceedings of the accused (*Okinawa Times*, evening edition, September 5, 1955).

But women, as well as men, were far from united on who or what was principally to blame for this tragedy. An Ishikawa Women Organization representative pointed a finger at parents' neglecting to supervise their children properly (*Okinawa Times*, September 9, 1955). Outraged, the OTA board contended that incriminating parents implicitly exonerated the criminals themselves, namely military service members. Instead, they demanded the harshest sentence and the disclosure of court proceedings if a court-martial was held (*Okinawa Times*, September 8, 1955). Another rape incident scarcely a week after Yumiko's death brought public anger to a boiling point. The nine-year-old victim's father told the local press that he was unable to prevent his young daughter's violent rape by a GI intruder at night (*Okinawa Times*, September 11, 1955). Soon, the case came to be referred to as the "S-ko-chan Incident."

The OTA protested the military's racialized "extraterritoriality" and demanded the protection of Okinawans' human rights. At its general assembly, the teachers agreed that "[n]othing will change whether we adopt a statement or we feel infuriated about it [...]. This time, really, we have to tell the United States without fail that we Okinawans are also humans." The assembly voted unanimously to organize a rally against GI crimes and adopted the following statement under the spirit of "human equality and human rights" (*Okinawa Times*, September 12, 1955):

> [The Yumiko-chan Incident] terrorized 800,000 Okinawan residents [...]. We, as 5,000 teachers and parents responsible for the education and lives of 180,000 small children, cannot repress our grief and indignation. Before this horrifying reality, we [...] have united with the OAPC to protect children's lives from sins and prevent such calamities from happening again [...]. We [...] demand the U.S. military to reflect on these cases seriously and the GRI to rise up. Punish the criminal regardless of race and nationality [...]. Authorize Okinawan legal authorities to attend courts-martial as judges. The root cause of these endless crimes lies in the extraterritorial realities and [the U.S. policy of] withholding information on such cases. Further, it must be recognized that it is an indication of American military service members' colonialist, discriminatory sentiment. (*Okinawa Times*, September 14, 1955)

Notably, the statement challenged the military's positioning as a supposedly democratic force: "Regrettably, the crime was committed by a member of U.S. forces proud to have the tradition of justice, humanity, liberty, and democracy."

After the S-ko-chan Incident, more diverse individuals and grassroots organizations joined this public outcry. Chairman of the OWA Takano asserted, "They [the military] are insulting Okinawan people. We want to organize the locals' rallies and appeal to people in mainland Japan and the United States." A college student studying education commented, "[Recognizing that] all these unprecedent-

ed heinous crimes recently committed resulted from Okinawa's status as a base society [...] makes me filled with sorrows [...]." The chairman of the OYA called for solidarity activism, stating,

> We want to address this base-related problem from the standpoint of protecting Okinawans' human rights [...] from now on, the military must investigate such cases [involving GIs and Okinawans] thoroughly, hold fair trials, and give criminals sentences that everyone can accept [...]. We demand a letter of apology from a supreme leader of the military. (*Okinawa Times*, September 12, 1955)

In this political climate, Okinawan legal professionals called attention to the link between rampant GI violence and the structural barriers against legal justice that perpetuated it. The Naha Police argued, "The reason why crimes are endlessly committed by foreigners is that the Okinawan police cannot arrest them unless we witness the scene of the crime. We can only ask the military [to prevent crimes] but cannot do anything to prevent them" (*Okinawa Times*, evening edition, September 8, 1955). Lawyer Nakaima contended:

> the military must show the evidence that they are protecting human rights and humanity in every process while trials are being held and the results are implemented. Given all the previous classified cases, I would like to see the most rigorous legal enforcement [on this case]. (*Okinawa Times*, September 12, 1955)

GRI judge Matsushima demanded a death sentence for Hurt, considering the military's petition for an Okinawan boy's death sentence for his murder of a U.S. service member. A GRI prosecutor refused to be satisfied with the disclosure of courts-martial: "We would have no way to find out if the sentences were implemented. When the criminal returns to the United States, it will be over" (*Okinawa Times*, September 12, 1955).

Before the rapid rise of the massive protest against GI crimes, the GRI Legislature unanimously adopted the "Statement of Petition for An Open Trial of the Murder, Violence, and Abduction Committed Against a Young Girl and the Disclosure of the Results of Previous Court-Martial Cases." It stated that "a crime worse than that of demons" had been committed by a military service member of the U.S. as a "civilized nation" administering the islands. The legislators asserted that the military's systemic refusal to disclose court-martial records to the victims "[...] made Okinawans' lives treated as if being killed for nothing, being kicked for nothing, being raped for nothing." The utter disregard of Okinawan lives, further demonstrated by the secretive proceedings of GI cases, violated "Okinawans' human rights and contradicted the spirit of the UDHR" (September 13, 1955).

This unusually strong language of protest put the USCAR authorities on the defensive side. In their effort to implement counter-measures, John M. Steeves, a U.S. State Department official serving as Foreign Relations Consultant to USCAR since May, played an integral role in assisting the inexperienced military elites' operation of civilian affairs. His assignment reflected the State Department's policy change facilitated by the Japanese awakening to the "Okinawa problem" earlier in the year. Upon his arrival in Okinawa, Steeves advised against the additional deployment of the Marines, given the gravity of the land problem (OPA: Telegram from Steeves 1955). Yet he observed that

> [m]y first impression is that the sentiment for reversion is much stronger in Japan than it is here. The attention of those Ryukyuans that I have met is so completely absorbed in the local land problem that they have little time to think about the broader aspects of reversion. (OPA: John M. Steeves, American Consul General 1955)

In the wake of the Yumiko-chan Incident, Steeves warned the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo that the military command wanted to "place entire island[s] off limits (1) to facilitate control forces personnel and (2) to punish populace for anti-American outburst and wholesale criticism of forces personnel by depriving them of economic benefits resulting from forces personnel patronage." These high-handed measures resulted from the military's frustration with "heavy adverse press comment; resolutions by number[s] [of] private organizations and somewhat provocative letter from Chief Executive [to] USCAR urging immediate actions." Foreseeing adverse political consequences, Steeves "urged command to calm and moderate and not to respond to intemperance on peoples' part by being rash ourselves" (OPA: Telegram 19 1955).

The military's proposal of making the "entire island off-limit" to U.S. service members and dependents had been on the table since the early 1950s as a means to quash Okinawans' protests against the occupation; it was a ban on their entry into those areas where Okinawans made a living by providing reactionary services (*Okinawa Times* 1983a, 614).

At the USCAR's meeting, Steeves asserted that "off limits order would accentuate cleavage, would intensify mistrust and animosity and that no good could result from blanket punitive measures involving innocent as well as guilty." Besides, he added that "it would give ammunition to extremists by admitting American [and] Okinawan populations cannot associate together normally on island which would be inimical [to] our long range interests." To prevent Okinawans' popular uprising, Steeves stressed the importance of conciliatory measures by "urg[ing] rather to ride out storm and continue emphasiz[ing the] fact that American sense of justice requires criminals be tried in due process of law and if guilty punished, but refuse to be panicked by public clamor." Other measures Steeves proposed

included "carry[ing] out intensive instructions service personnel on conduct and [...] hold[ing] General Moore's press conference in the afternoon" (OPA: Telegram 19 1955).

Steeves's advice convinced the military authorities. In the afternoon, a "Special Meeting" of the Ryukyuan-American Community Relations Advisory Council was held at the Ryukyus Command Headquarters, where prominent leaders of both sides attended.[9] In the opening, Deputy Governor Moore explained that the Council was

> set up to provide a friendly medium of liaison, discussion and consultation for the purpose of [...] [e]xchanging information of mutual interest [...] [and] [f]urthering understanding and implementation of appropriate laws, decisions, directives and regulations.

In addition, as Steeves recommended, Moore stated that the U.S. Code of Military Justice treated rape cases more harshly than the Japanese Penal Code. He claimed,

> To my knowledge, there never has been an attempt at whitewashing or covering up of any case. They are all tried impartially and the findings and sentence [sic] are based on the evidence in each instance. The rights of the accused to a fair trial are fully provided [...].

Added to the above reasons as to why the military held exclusive jurisdiction over GI cases was Okinawa's international legal status:

> Now, although we have by Treaty granted to some friendly sovereign powers the right to try military personnel for violations of local laws, it would hardly be proper to grant this right in the Ryukyu Islands, since the United States exercises the power of sovereignty here.

Instead, Moore encouraged the Okinawan representatives to leave the protest movement:

> I do want to point out to you thinking people that a situation of this kind provides a fertile field for agitators who are up to no good purpose and it is a situation made to order for Communist activities [...]. I can foresee irresponsible persons, Ryukyuans and Americans, taking matters into

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9   The USCAR representatives include Major General James E. Moore (Deputy Governor of the Ryukyu Islands), Brigadier General Vonna F. Burger (Civil Administrator of the Ryukyu Islands), and nine other military officers. Okinawan representatives include Chief Executive Higa, Speaker of the Legislature Ohama, Chief Justice of the Ryukyu Islands Nakamatsu, President of University of the Ryukyus Asato, President of Bank of the Ryukyu Tomihara, President of Okinawa Women's Association Takeno, President of the *Okinawa Times* Takamine, Managing Editor of the *Ryukyu Shinbun* Tamaki, and Managing Editor of the *Ryūkyū Shimpo* Takehara. U.S. newspaper *Morning Star* correspondent Robert Prosser was also present. The main organizers of the protest movement such as the OTA were not invited.

their own hands, acts of violence occurring, and a feeling of resent-
ment developing between the two races which will not be good for the
community.

Moore emphasized the harmony between "the two races" (NARA: Headquarters
Ryukyus Command 1955).

Sitting before the USCAR representatives, most Okinawan representatives
toned down their earlier criticisms spoken outside the room. Chief Executive
Higa stated that

the objective of this meeting [...] should not lie in taking advantage of
these instances to accomplish something else but in the re-examination
of these matters to devise a means of preventing recurrence of incidents
of this nature [...]. To tell the truth, I was rather shocked to hear that the
Deputy Governor had proposed placing the entire island off limits. It [...]
will bring destruction the economic life of the Okinawans [...].

GRI legislator Ōhama commented:

The statement that these trials will be open trials and that the sentences
will be made public has pacified my feelings and no doubt a similar re-
action can be expected from many other people. As for the Legislature,
it will place trust in the spirit of democracy and America. The Americans
who committed these incidents were probably ignorant or mentally ill.

Chief Justice Nakamatsu also backed away, stating, "I wholeheartedly concur
with General Moore's statement that trials should be held in courts and not in the
newspapers." He criticized the OTA's protest statement, which made "a request
pertaining to permission to have Okinawa legal experts sit on the bench as ob-
servers. Would it be possible for Okinawan judges to be in the military trials? [...]
I do not think it is possible [...]" (NARA: Headquarters Ryukyus Command 1955).

Nevertheless, symbolic of the tenacity of the 1955 protest movement were
a few local representatives' attempts to express their protest even before the
highest-ranking occupation authorities. As the only female participant, the Pres-
ident of the OWA Takeno resisted the tide of the discussion. She revealed the
visceral impact the recent rape-murder had on her: "The Yumiko-chan incident
was the most brutal I have ever heard of throughout the world [...] whenever I see
children of that age I cannot help thinking of that incident." Then, highlighting her
feminine identity and Okinawa's shared Confucianist roots with Japan, Takeno
countered the occupiers' definition of civility: "There are many stories in Japa-
nese books and in dramas [that] place [...] virtue beyond life if women are sexually
attacked even though it was through no fault of their own, they commit suicide.
Women of Okinawa feel exactly the same way." Takeno's statement was nonethe-
less sexist and classist when she stated: "You might say that there are thousands of

women selling their bodies but these women are doing so because of their ignorance. Besides, they are not true Okinawans." Still, with her rhetorical employment of sexism and Confucianism, Takeno refused to give an unconditional pledge to the occupation. In concluding the meeting, Moore responded,

> We all deplore these incidents. As a matter of fact, had we known that we had men wishing to enter the service who were capable of committing such acts, we never would have enlisted them in the first place. I can understand Mrs. Takeno's feeling with respect to the virtue of womanhood and I can assure her that Mrs. Moore and other women feel the same way. (NARA: Headquarters Ryukyus Command 1955)

Moore projected the image of delinquent GIs as the Other and homogenized women to depoliticize the incident.

While the State Department was urged to discuss, internally, how to intervene in the military's authoritarian handling of civilian affairs, local organizations held meeting after meeting. And more rallies were organized. In mid-September, more than a thousand residents of Ishikawa City held a rally for Yumiko. According to the local press, the participants, more than eighty percent of whom were mothers, shouted, "No more tragedies like this," and "Record and air the trial!" Their demands included the death sentence for the perpetrator, the abolition of extraterritoriality, and the military's rigorous implementation of disciplinary measures (*Okinawa Times*, September 17, 1955). Other districts adjacent to military bases also held communal rallies under the leadership of the OAPC (*Okinawa Times* 1983b, 784). Following the demonstration in Ishikawa, the OTA held its gathering. The *Okinawa Times* reported that at the OTA's rally "crowded participants exploded with indignation and listened to [speeches about] the rapes of the young children with tears." Two thousand and two hundred participants silently prayed for Yumiko and adopted a statement calling for the establishment of an association for the protection of human rights as well as the island-wide rally against GI crimes (*Okinawa Times*, September 18, 1955). The newspaper welcomed the OTA's entreaty to found a human rights association and regretted that its absence had made it "difficult for Okinawans to unify public opinions" (*Okinawa Times*, September 19, 1955).

The following month, Okinawans organized a historic one-of-a-kind rally. On October 22, "All Okinawan Residents' Rally for the Protection of Human Rights" was held in Naha, packed with approximately five thousand residents, including nineteen grassroots organizations. Giant banners were displayed behind the speakers' stage. Takeno stated: "The animals' world is ruled by the law of the jungle. The same phenomenon is happening to us because we are powerless and poor. We must never forget that we are a superb people." A teacher representative stated:

> It is extremely regretful that we have to see American soldiers as demons and devils. I want to ask Americans if they think Ryukyuans are worthless humans. If their answer is no, and if they do not see [Okinawa] as their colony, I ask them to behave gently. I demand complete autonomy.

Other representatives asked the audiences to reflect on other human rights violations, such as poor working conditions, unregulated layoffs, the land problem, and the shooting of Okinawan fishermen by unidentified soldiers on the ocean. Japanese grassroots organizations and local organizations in remote areas sent solidarity messages endorsing the rally. However, some conservatives retreated from the protest movement as symbolized by the Chief Executive's absence; although Higa was expected to attend the rally, he did not appear (*Okinawa Times*, October 23, 1955).

This historic rally still demonstrated the islanders' collective acquisition of the power of human rights advocacy. A prominent politician from the RDP, Nagamine Akio conveyed an official solidarity message as Vice Chairman of the GRI Legislature, albeit without his attendance:

> We cannot call it a civilized society when the majority of people have not heard of the language 'human rights' [...]. I will make every effort to protect human rights in Okinawa, thereby enhancing moral principles and defending the conscience and virtue of the Okinawan race.

Nagamine's protest signified a historical moment when Okinawans as a collective began countering not only the military legal regime of exception but the occupation itself with their appeal for universal human rights and articulation of "civilization" on their terms. The adopted declaration, albeit lengthy, is worth providing here to narrate the birth of popular human rights activism in occupied Okinawa:

> A decade has passed since the end of the war, and four years have passed since the conclusion of the Peace Treaty. Although the world is turning brighter and moving towards peace, Okinawa is still placed in an abnormal position, and our lives are exposed to poor conditions both materially and spiritually. The fear stemming from frequent rapes makes people – albeit limited to particular areas – unable to sleep in peace at night and stay alone even during daytime. The seizure of land that gives life to people has reached the Ie island, Isahama [...] and the great threat posed by the grand-scale, new confiscation plan is befalling all across Okinawa [...]. Labor unions cannot perform expected functions, forcing workers to struggle with low wages, layoffs, and fear of unemployment and making their lives filled with hardships. Further, the agony brought by such conditions discourages us to speak freely [...]. Most victims endure the pain without compensation. Yet now we see people in the mother country, Japan, and other parts of the world showing us empathy

and hope for the protection of Okinawans' human rights. Just as any member of human society, we have inalienable rights to the inherent dignity and equality, which underpin liberty, justice, and equality. We declare that we will overcome this crisis incurring on the Okinawan race. Toward this end, we demand the livelihood and rights that allow us to live as humans and tighten our solidarity for the protection of peace and liberty regardless of the difference in our ways of thinking and status. (*Okinawa Times*, October 23, 1955)

At this gathering, Okinawans presented their collective demand in the realm of the struggle against military injustices as the disclosure of courts-martial. In response, the USCAR authorized the locals to attend courts-martial that held the two rapists accountable. The locals also saw the first application of the Foreign Claims Act, a U.S. federal law stipulating official compensation for cases committed by U.S. military personnel against foreigners. On December 6, 1955, Isaac J. Hurt received a death sentence at the court-martial held in Okinawa, allowing Yumiko's parents to receive 2,000 dollars for compensation (*Okinawa Times*, October 20, 1956; Sasaki 1976, 210).

5. Conclusion

An overly celebratory evaluation of the 1955 uprising no doubt blurs the tenacity of extraterritorial manifestations of U.S. military justice in Okinawa. In 1960, President Eisenhower reduced Hurt's sentence to forty-five years of hard labor in prison without parole (Sasaki 1976, 210; Serrano 2019, 98) after having confronted Okinawans' massive protest during his visit to the island (Arasaki and Nakano 2005, 119–120). In 1977, President Ford removed the prohibition against parole, which authorized Hurt to apply for parole and turn the decision over to the Parole Commission (The Lawton Constitution 1977). The U.S. presidential clemencies effectively ended Okinawans' fight for legal justice and equality before the law.

However, another retrospective reflection on the 1955 uprising reminds us of the power of the "voiceless," that is, how Okinawans accumulated transformative power through their collective use of the UDHR ever since. Human rights advocacy has underpinned Okinawans' ability to unite in popular struggles against various issues arising from the American military presence. The islanders' reliance on Japanese nationalism (i.e., affinity with the Japanese state), not just *interna-*

tionalist human rights activism, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, requires further research.[10] So far, what is clear is the shared suprapartisan organizational platform between the 1955 uprising and the 1956 "island-wide struggle" (*shimagurumi tōsō*) against the U.S. confiscation of native land. This 1956 uprising, much greater in scale and more persistent than the 1955 protest, even prompted Chief Executive Higa to declare to join the masses shortly before his sudden death amidst the height of the struggle. Three years later, Roger Nash Baldwin's visit to Okinawa inspired the locals to found the Okinawa Human Rights Association (*Okinawa jinken kyōkai*) in 1961. Within four years since the Yumiko-chan Incident, the Okinawa Prefecture Council for Reversion to the Home Country, established in 1960, placed the protection of human rights and the adoption of the Japanese constitution in Okinawa at the heart of the organization's pleas while declaring its pledge to sustain a suprapartisan front (Sakurazawa 2012, 119–140; Sakurazawa 2015, 90–92). These organizations played a vital role in facilitating popular movements for reversion, which eventually materialized in 1972.

Over the past five decades, post-reversion Okinawa has faced the problem of how to resist the U.S. military's permanent use of Okinawa as a borderland and base society, aided and abetted by the Japanese government. In Japan, the nationalist protest against postwar U.S. extraterritoriality in the 1950s failed to establish local jurisdiction over criminal cases committed by off-duty U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan. Instead, U.S. policy elites succeeded in appeasing the population via public relations campaigns to respect Japanese sovereignty over such crimes (Inoue 2021, 81–171). The Japanese outcry did not fundamentally reject the exceptionalist, racialized, and imperial rationale for extraterritoriality. In contrast, occupied Okinawans won substantial rights rather than nominal change by linking human rights with what they understood as "civilization." The islanders' continued employment of human rights activism in the twenty-first century in their recent "all-Okinawa" mobilization emerged in this historical context.

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[10] The author is currently working on a book manuscript that responds to the stated research question, i.e., how the fusion of and interactions between human rights activism and nationalist reversion movements shaped the political landscape of pre-reversion Okinawa. For in-depth and extensive discussions on Okinawans' engagement with nationalism during the occupation period and beyond see: Oguma (2014) and Komatsu (2015).

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PART II

ARTS AND LITERATURE

PLAYFUL PICTURES AS SATIRE: UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE III CAPITALIZING ON THE SHIFT IN POLITICAL POWER DURING THE BOSHIN WAR

Freya Terryn

This paper is concerned with the satirical depiction of the Boshin War (戊辰戦争 *Boshin sensō*, 1868–1869) in the woodblock prints of the artist Utagawa Hiroshige III (三代歌川広重, 1842–1894). It employs his prints to examine the relationship between those that govern and those that are governed, in particular how the print medium capitalized on a shifting position in political power in the late 1860s. It aims to provide a broader perspective from which to consider the relationship between politics and art, the rulers and the ruled, and censorship and satire during a time when the visual expression of contemporary events and ruling classes was banned. By taking Hiroshige III's prints as a case study, this paper reveals how Hiroshige III used humor and satire as mechanisms to provoke shared laughter over the pro-imperial and pro-shogunal forces fighting over power.

Keywords: ukiyo-e, Boshin War, Utagawa Hiroshige III, satire

1. Introduction[1]

The origin of comical illustrations in Japan can be traced back to the *Scrolls of Frolicking Animals and Human Figures* (鳥獣人物戯画 *Chōjū jinbutsu giga*, 12th–13th

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[1] In this paper, Japanese names are written in the traditional and autonomous usage, with family name preceding the given name. The paper deals with historical and visual documents that were published before the adoption of the Western Gregorian Calendar on January 1, 1873. Before this date Japan employed the lunar calendar and it should be stressed that the lunar month/year designations do not correspond with months of the Western calendar. As such, 1866/V indicates that the print was published in the fifth month of 1866. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this paper are by the author.

century). Pictures that ridicule or satirize a person, society, contemporary events, or the ruling classes are known in Japanese as *giga* (戯画, literally "frolicking pictures") or *fūshiga* (風刺画, literally "pictures of stabbing wind"). There is one Japanese art form that was prolific in its output of satirical and humorous images: Japanese woodblock prints or ukiyo-e (浮世絵, literally "pictures of the floating world"). The popularity of these printed images was owed to their technology, as Japanese woodblock prints were a popular art that produced printed images in very large quantities at low cost. In addition, the widespread distribution of these prints to a mass audience stems from the print medium relying on the vibrant publishing industry, which had Tokyo as its epicenter.

The Japanese woodblock print medium, however, did not exist in a vacuum, but was instead influenced by political developments and government regulations. During the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), the shogunate – the feudal military government with the shogun ruling Japan in the name of the emperor – exercised considerable control over the production and distribution of these printed images through censorship laws. These edicts were issued at specific times and are known as the Kyōhō Reforms (享保の改革 *Kyōhō no kaikaku*, 1720s–1730s), Kansei Reforms (寛政の改革 *Kansei no kaikaku*, 1790s), and Tenpō Reforms (天保の改革 *Tenpō no kaikaku*, 1841–1843). As the producer of potentially powerful instruments of mass communication, the printing industry – both prints and printed books – was subject to strict controls (Thompson 1991, 29). In general, four specific subjects of visual expression were continuously banned: sexually explicit pictures, Christianity, the Tokugawa family, and current events. Especially images depicting the ruling elite and current events directly threatened the shogunate's view of itself and posed a threat of them being portrayed in an unfavorable light. As a result, such prints were most ardently controlled.

Japanese woodblock prints that ran afoul of government regulations are often excluded from the discussion on graphic art.[2] Yet, among the internationally celebrated artists of ukiyo-e were also artists who created a prolific number of comical and satirical images. Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北斎, 1760–1849), for example, who is worldwide renowned for his prints of Mt. Fuji and his drawing manuals known as *Hokusai Manga* (北斎漫画 *Hokusai manga*, 15 vols, 1814–1878), drew many possibly subversive, humorous pictures. In addition, Utagawa Kuniyoshi

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[2] This is especially noticeable in exhibitions catered to the general public. See, for example, the catalogues of the last major exhibitions on Japanese woodblock prints organized in Japan and Europe: Kokusai Ukiyo-e Gakkai et al. (2014) and Forrer (2018). A notable exception is *shunga* (春画, literally "spring pictures") or sexually explicit prints. Although *shunga* is a generic term – including the vast body of explicitly erotic and pornographic paintings, handscrolls, illustrated books, and prints – *shunga* prints have received more attention in the last years, as exemplified by the publication that accompanied the 2013–2014 landmark exhibition at the British Museum (see Clark et al. 2013).

(歌川国芳, 1797–1861), who is a celebrated artist of warrior prints (武者絵 *musha-e*), created an abundant number of comical and satirical prints that take the form of anthropomorphic images of animals and inanimate objects coming to life.[3]

The abovementioned reforms often prompted a rise in satirical images and there was one particular event that captured the attention of print artists and publishers, as well as the print-buying public, namely the Boshin War (戊辰戦争 *Boshin sensō*, 1868–1869). This war, which lasted approximately one year and five months, originated in the last shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu (徳川慶喜, 1837–1913, reign 1866–1867) launching a military campaign against the imperial forces, despite having agreed on November 9, 1867 to restore the sovereign power to the emperor (大政奉還 *taisei hōkan*). Previous studies on woodblock prints documenting the Boshin War have identified 144 prints that were published between the second and the tenth month of 1868 – or from the end of February to December 1868 (Nagura 2007, 25). This body of satirical prints is crucial to paint a picture of how the war was perceived at the time, as no effort was taken to photograph the developments of the war. Although photography had been introduced in Japan as early as 1848, the core business of commercial studios around the time of the Boshin War centered on portrait photography and on "Yokohama photographs." The focus was thus on stereotypical and romantic representations of Japan, its customs, and its scenic views, which were above all mainly developed for the overseas market.[4] As a result, the prints are the only available source of visual representation of the war, and, above all, the only imagery through which subsequent generations can comprehend it.

Regardless of their important value and their popularity at the time – prompting Shimizu (2005, 15) to declare the Boshin War the "golden period of satirical prints" – studies on these prints are scarce both within and outside of Japan.[5] There are two factors that contribute to this research gap. To begin with, the majority of these prints reveal no signature of their artist or publisher, as well as omit a date seal which would disclose in which month and year they were published. The omittance of such information, which was in fact required by law to be included on each print, decreased the artist and publisher's chances of receiving

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[3] For examples of satirical and humorous prints by both Hokusai and Kuniyoshi, see, for example, Ōsaka Shiritsu Bijutsukan and Mainichi Shinbunsha (2018).

[4] For an in-depth discussion of the arrival of photography in Japan, see, for example, Kinoshita (2003, 14–99).

[5] In 1995, an exhibition was organized on these satirical prints, entitled *Caricatures of the* Bakumatsu *Period: Focus on the Boshin War* (幕末の風刺画: 戊辰戦争を中心に *Bakumatsu no fūshiga: Boshin sensō o chūshin ni*), at the Machida City Museum (町田市立博物館 Machida Shiritsu Hakubutsukan) (Machida 1995). Other studies on these prints are by Minami (1995, 1998, 1999), Tomizawa (2005), Shimizu (2005), and Nagura (2007).

a heavy fine, being manacled, or imprisoned for openly defying government censorship. In addition, the prints that have been identified as satirical prints of the Boshin War are in general accompanied by explanatory descriptions which are difficult to decipher as they are not written in the standard script, but in a semi-cursive or cursive style with classical Japanese grammar and older form of Chinese characters.[6] As a result, not only is there little information on the makers of these prints but the transcription and translation of the explanatory inscriptions has been avoided. Yet, as stressed by Nagura (2007, 25), these explanatory descriptions hold the key to decipher the other embedded "codes" in the prints and are crucial to eventually understanding what and who is being satirized.

From the body of prints that identify their maker, it is very clear that one woodblock print artist in particular was the most prolific as well as the first artist to satirize the Boshin War: Utagawa Hiroshige III (三代歌川広重, 1842–1894).[7] Yet, little is known about his satirical prints as previous literature has mainly evaluated his life and work through his *kaika-e* (開化絵) of the 1870s and 1880s, or in other words, his prints that introduce and document specific symbols of Westernization, the modern civilization of the Meiji period (1868–1912), and the influence of Western manners and customs on Japanese society.[8] As a result, important questions regarding Hiroshige III's role in the output of satirical prints on the Boshin War remain unanswered as he has mainly been introduced as an artist of little artistic importance and whose work is only valued as cultural documents of the Meiji period (Higuchi 1955, 70; Yamaguchi et al. 1968, 38–39; Takahashi 1972; Yoshida 1987, 19, 104–105; Inagaki 1990, 130; Newland 2005, 504; Kokusai Ukiyo-e Gakkai et al. 2014, 68, 323).

In this study, Japanese woodblock prints depicting the Boshin War are used as a framework to examine the relationship between those that govern and those that are governed, and in particular how the popular Japanese print medium capitalized on a shifting position in political power in the late 1860s. It aims to provide a broader perspective from which to consider the relationship between politics and art, the rulers and the ruled, and censorship and satire. By focusing on Hiroshige III, this study also seeks to shed light on the origins of his career as a starting print artist, the collaborations that were crucial to the publication of his satirical prints, and whether he was visually and verbally criticizing those that had recently started governing – the new Meiji government alongside the emperor – or those that had governed for the past 265 years – the Tokugawa

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[6] Classical Japanese grammar and non-simplified Chinese characters were in use until 1945.

[7] Other artists who signed their prints were Utagawa Yoshifuji (歌川芳藤, 1828–1887) and Utagawa Yoshiiku (歌川芳幾, 1833–1904).

[8] For a discussion of the historic evaluation of Hiroshige III, see Terryn (2021, 446–452).

shogunate – or perhaps both. This study identified 24 prints on the Boshin War in Hiroshige III's oeuvre and conducted a close visual analysis of three prints. The three prints under close analysis were chosen to address how both the artist and his publishers responded to the war and how humor and satire was used as mechanisms to provoke shared laughter and to illustrate the two forces fighting over political and governing power. These prints were published at different but crucial times during the war: one at the very beginning; a second during a decisive breaking point when the war was brought to Edo (modern-day Tokyo); and a third when only small resistant forces continued to fight in the north of Japan after Yoshinobu had surrendered. Hence, these prints offer a perspective of how the opinions of print publishers, Hiroshige III, and the public evolved during the war. As the prints display a close connection between text and image, particular attention is also paid to the codependency of these two visual systems, to which end the written explanatory inscriptions were translated. Before Hiroshige III's prints are analyzed, this paper first reviews the context that generated government censorship and how it affected the characteristics of the Japanese woodblock print medium. Then, it discusses the key aspects of prints on the Boshin War in general and of Hiroshige III's prints in particular, in order to move on to a close analysis of the three prints.

2. Japanese woodblock prints and censorship

The Tokugawa period was defined by its strict social hierarchy which was founded in Neo-Confucianism that divided society into four distinct classes: samurai (武士 *bushi*), peasants (平民 *heimin*), artisans (職人 *shokunin*), and merchants (商人 *shōnin*). Despite the merchants' low ranking, they possessed the time, money, and environment conductive to the creation of the world of pleasure and entertainment – brothels, theatres, restaurants, teahouses, and fads and fashions – usually called the "floating world" (浮世 *ukiyo*). Japanese woodblock prints, or ukiyo-e, were mirrors of this world and preferred the subject matter of the kabuki theatre, teahouses, and brothels. In order to protect the ruling elite and to control the growing economic and cultural influence of the merchants and denizens of the "floating world," the government retaliated with frequent sumptuary laws and other edicts, which intended to prevent affluent classes from maintaining a lifestyle more luxurious than deemed appropriate for their low Neo-Confucian social rank (Desai 1991, 3; Harootunian 1991, 11).

Woodblock prints were as a result also subjected to censorship and especially visual depictions of the ruling Tokugawa family and current events were prohibited, which was extended to cover high-ranking warriors who had lived from the late 16th century onwards. Moreover, woodblock prints were required to include

the signature of the artist, the seal of the publisher, as well as an official censor seal of the year and month of its inspection. Among the three reforms that censored Japanese woodblock prints, the Tenpō Reforms had a considerable influence on the woodblock print medium and on the different actors involved in its production. Japanese woodblock prints were in fact a product of a collaboration between at least five actors: the publisher, the artist, the engraver, the printer, and the consumer. This collaboration was the most vital part of the woodblock print production in which the publisher held a key position as he pre-financed everything: from the labor fees for the design, block carving and printing, to the material costs for the woodblocks, the ink, and the paper. Meanwhile he also had to be able to withstand the financial loss and conserve enough capital to be able to continue with his business (Marks 2011, 11; Davis 2016, 12).[9]

Following the promulgation of the edicts of the Tenpō Reforms, the print medium was censored on several levels as the publishers' association was abolished, minor government officials were appointed as censors, and depictions of kabuki actors and prostitutes were banned, while the number of sheets per design, the number of color blocks, and the price of each sheet was limited. In a further attempt to exercise control over the urban population, publishers were urged to issue works extolling the benefits of filial piety and chastity. Hence, the reforms gave rise to the publication of prints inspired by Confucian lore and literary classics to comply with the new publishing regulations. According to Minami (1999, 2), the reforms also prompted a rise in satirical prints, as publishers saw their chances at earning large profits dwindle and in attempt to express discontent with government censorship. Perhaps the most notorious case of alleged satire at this time is the woodblock print *The Earth Spider Generates Monsters at the Mansion of Lord Minamoto Yorimitsu* (源頼光公館土蜘作妖怪図 *Minamoto Yorimitsu [Raikō] kō no yakata ni tsuchigumo yōkai o nasu zu*, 1843/VIII). It is believed to be filled with hidden references as rumors spread that the sleeping Yorimitsu represented the shogun Tokugawa Ieyoshi (徳川家慶, 1793–1853, reign 1837–1853), the retainer nearest him was the man who had instituted the reforms, Mizuno Tadakuni (水野忠邦, 1794–1851), and the "demons" were actually various citizens angered by the Tenpō Reforms because they had lost their jobs or had been punished in some way (Thompson 1991, 82). Although authorities investigated the print and suppressed its publication, Kuniyoshi and his publisher escaped punishment, suggesting that the print had not been issued with the intent to satirize (Thompson 1991, 82).

Transposing settings to a distant past or to popular legends and myths was a favored method to sneak by censors, as was altering the names of the per-

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9   For a detailed discussion of printing practices and economics of the Japanese woodblock print industry, such as production costs and fees, see Marks's (2011, 22–26) compendium of print publishers.

sons appearing on the prints. This method of disguising current news events was also employed when print artists satirized the Boshin War. Yet, the clash between pro-shogunal and pro-imperial forces took the form of children or adults playing games, quarrelling, re-enacting kabuki plays, or engaging in other activities.

3. Visual representations of the Boshin War

When the last shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu agreed on November 9, 1867 to restore sovereign power to the emperor, he not only abolished the Tokugawa shogunate – putting an end to its 265-year rule – but also relinquished his power and surrendered his lands to the emperor. Emperor Meiji (明治天皇 Meiji tennō, 1852–1912, reign 1867–1912) subsequently proclaimed the Restoration of the Imperial Rule of Old (王政復古の大号令 Ōsei fukko no daigōrei) on January 3, 1868 with no place for the Tokugawa house in the new government. This shift of power from the Tokugawa shogunate to the imperial court further enraged Yoshinobu and his loyal retainers, prompting his refusal to comply with the proclamation of restoration in January 1868 and his contest of the issue by force.[10] The first battle between the pro-shogunal forces and those professing loyalty to imperial rule was the Battle of Toba–Fushimi (鳥羽・伏見の戦い Toba-Fushimi no tatakai), which lasted from January 27 to 30, 1868 at the approaches to Kyoto. Although the shogunate army outnumbered the 5,000 men of the pro-imperial forces three times over, the clash immediately sealed the fate of the shogunate as its forces, poorly led and unprepared, fled the field and Yoshinobu retreated to Edo (Keene 2002, 125–127; Jaundrill 2020, 271–272). The defeat of hardline Tokugawa loyalists who had managed to escape was prolonged until the summer of 1869 when the last shogunal naval units surrendered in Hokkaidō.

The fight over political power was rapidly picked up by the popular print medium. A little over 140 woodblock prints were published from the end of February to December 1868, humorously depicting and satirizing the confrontations between the pro-shogunal and pro-imperial forces. More than half of the identified prints omit the signature of the artist, the seal of the publisher, and/or the date seal of inspection, confirming their intent to escape government censorship. Previous literature has divided these satirical prints into two categories based on their depictions: "playful prints of children" (子供遊絵 kodomo asobi-e) and "playful prints of adults" (大人遊絵 otona asobi-e) (Shimizu 2005; Tomizawa 2005; Nagura 2007). True to their appellation, these prints were "playful" and, as Salter (2006, 133) points out, the disguise of play was an invaluable way to poke fun at the author-

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[10] For an in-depth discussion of the unfolding of events leading up to the Boshin War, see, for example, Keene (2002, 118–127).

ities without spending days in chains or paying a fine as punishment. It should be remembered, however, that these prints were more than merely the attempts of print publishers and artists to go against government censorship, because the prints simultaneously reacted to a certain demand in the market. Hence, these Boshin War prints reveal attitudes toward the two forces fighting over political power when the Tokugawa shogunate had fallen and the new Meiji government had just been established.

Although the number of identified prints today might appear limited, there is one contemporary account that confirms that the satirical prints were very popular and readily available at the time. Sudō Yoshizō (須藤由蔵, 1793–?), also known as Fujiokaya Yoshizō (岡屋由蔵), who bought the first print of Hiroshige III under analysis in this paper on April 20, 1868, wrote in his diary that print publishers were producing an abundance of prints on the eviction of the shogunate forces out of Edo and that they were selling like hotcakes, stressing that by the end of April 1868 over 300,000 prints were on sale (Suzuki and Koike 1995, 505).[11] Sudō's diary thus confirms that the audience in Edo was eager for visual imagery that depicted and satirized the clash between the pro-shogunal and pro-imperial forces.

Publishing caricatures or satirical prints on a contemporary event, however, was not revolutionary. In 1855, for example, woodblock prints were distributed on the 1855 Edo earthquake (安政江戸地震 *Ansei Edo jishin*) that held a giant catfish (鯰 *namazu*) responsible for the disaster, for according to popular belief a giant catfish was living beneath the earth that caused earthquakes when it moved.[12] What was revolutionary, was the continuous publication of prints that satirized a contemporary event relating to the government and the ruling classes. This was unprecedented in Japan. According to Thompson (1991, 34), the suppression of the depiction of current news events originated in the ancient notion, imported from China, that a truly virtuous regime would be so completely uneventful that even natural disasters would not occur – eliminating any possibility for implied criticism of the government. Thus, the Boshin War prints, as well as the 1855 catfish prints (鯰絵 *namazu-e*), vouch for the failing authority of the Tokugawa shogunate and the eventual fall of government censorship. At the time, however, the ability to conceal political discontent within innocent-seeming prints acted as a safety

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[11] Sudō's large number nevertheless also suggests that the majority of the produced prints did not survive. The playful nature as well as the satirical intent of the prints is most likely one of the main reasons behind the low number of prints that remain today. Another reason is the fact that ukiyo-e were essentially ephemeral objects that were mass-produced and consumed by a mass audience, or in other words, the general public. In contrast to high art, such as paintings, ukiyo-e were not intended for a select audience or display. A final reason is also to be found in the general attitude of collectors, curators, and print scholars toward these playful prints as they have often been found not worthy of attention, collection, or examination.

[12] For a discussion of such prints, see, for example, Smits (2006).

valve for the frustration felt through a lack of legitimate outlets for expression (Salter 2006, 148).

As these prints concealed their satirical intent, they required their audience to be able to "read" past the disguise and to decipher the embedded "codes" in order to arrive at something new – as otherwise the prints would miss the point they were trying to make. In other words, they depended on the visual literacy of their audience. For this, the explanatory descriptions accompanying the satirical prints not only demonstrate the close interconnection between the two visual devices of text and image but also act as another "weapon" in the playful arsenal of the artist (Salter 2006, 134). When it comes to the Boshin War prints, the children and adults depicted can be identified as the feudal domains supporting either the pro-shogunal or pro-imperial forces by means of the patterns in their clothing as well as the dialogues or monologues accompanying the figures. These patterns or symbols were often connected to famous products of each domain and were common knowledge to the buyers of the prints at the time. Recurring motives to which the Boshin War prints were transplanted were, among others, kabuki plays, such as *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (忠臣蔵 *Chūshingura*), compositions of famous prints, historical battles, as well as prints in which the heads of figures were replaced by famous products from the feudal domains.[13] Dominant motives in prints depicting the pro-shogunal and pro-imperial forces as children were of children doing the following activities: playing a game, re-enacting a kabuki play, having a snowball or a mud fight, or just simply quarrelling – all motives which Hiroshige III, the primary focus of this study, employed.

4. Hiroshige III and satire

Previous literature has defined Hiroshige III as an artist who devoted himself to chronicling the Westernization and modernization of Japan during the Meiji period (Higuchi 1955; Yamaguchi et al. 1968; Takahashi 1972; Yoshida 1987; Inagaki 1990; Newland 2005; Kokusai Ukiyo-e Gakkai et al. 2014). Although this is an important aspect of Hiroshige III's career, as he did design an abundance of prints documenting the changing cityscape of the capital and the country, no study has looked specifically at his satirical prints of the Boshin War. Yet, these prints mark an important new stage in his career because of the signature he employed, namely "Hiroshige" (広重). It should be stressed that Hiroshige III was not born

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[13] For an overview of the different "codes" used by artists in over 40 prints to disguise the domains and figures associated with both the imperial and shogunal forces, see Nagura (2007, 41, 57). Emperor Meiji, for example, is often recognizable by the Chinese character for gold (金 *kin*), a paulownia crest, a chrysanthemum crest, red shoes, a chrysanthemum jewel/ball, and so on.

with the name Hiroshige but instead was given the name Gotō Torakichi (後藤 寅吉) at birth.[14] It was customary for woodblock print artists to receive their pen-name by their master after they have gone through several years of training. It is in general believed that Hiroshige III started studying with Utagawa Hiroshige (歌 川広重, 1797–1858) in 1858 prior to his death on October 12. As such, his training under Hiroshige was cut short but picked up by Utagawa Hiroshige II (二代歌川 広重, 1826–1869), who married Hiroshige's adopted daughter Otatsu (お辰, 1846– 1879) around December 1858 and thus took over Hiroshige's studio. Hiroshige III's first signature, Shigemasa (重政), appeared for the first time in 1864 alongside illustrations in an illustrated book, suggesting that in 1864 he made his artistic debut. To the author's knowledge, the following year Hiroshige III produced his first woodblock print, entitled *The Great Commercial Goods Tree* (商易諸物の大 樹 *Shōeki shobutsu no taiju*, 1865/III), which was simultaneously his first satirical print. He employed the signature "Shigemasa giga" (重政戯画) to clearly enunciate his intention to ridicule and satirize people's attachment to material goods by de-picting figures trying to get a hold of rice, sake, textiles, and other goods hanging from a giant tree.

A change in Hiroshige III's signature followed in early 1867 when he married Otatsu, after Hiroshige II had divorced her sometime between October 19, 1865 and June 26, 1866.[15] The marriage allowed Hiroshige III to take charge of Hiroshige's studio and to use his master's signatures. His output of woodblock prints at this time, however, remained low until the first prints on the Boshin War appeared. By December 1868, when the publication of prints on the war dwindled drastically, Hiroshige III managed to book his first serialized print series dedicated to scenic spots of Tokyo – the studio's specialization – entitled *Pictorial Record of Scenic Spots in Tokyo* (東京名勝図会 *Tōkyō meishō zue*), which covered 50 prints that were produced over a time period of almost two years. Therefore, Hiroshige III's output of satirical prints on the Boshin War between April and December 1868 provide convincing evidence to suggest that they were his artistic breakthrough.

Although it is uncertain whether Hiroshige III intentionally produced prints without signing them, the 25 prints that do reveal his signature, of which an over-view can be found in Appendix A, clearly state their satirical intent as they are: "Hiroshige giga" (広重戯画), "Utashige ga" (歌重画), "Utashige giga" (歌重戯画), and "Hiroshige zarefude" (広重戯筆). By employing *giga* ("frolicking pictures") and *zare-*

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[14] For an in-depth discussion of Hiroshige III's art names throughout his career, see Terryn (2022).

[15] These dates are the result of an examination of the signatures employed by Hiroshige II and Hiroshige III from 1865 to 1867. As a result of the divorce between Hiroshige II and Otatsu, Hiroshige II renounced his right to use any of the signatures or seals associated with the art name Hiroshige and the studio.

fude ("frolicking brush"), Hiroshige III stressed that he was satirizing something or someone, whereas the signature Utashige was his master's signature for satirical prints. Thus, Hiroshige III consistently proclaimed that he was satirizing someone or some event repeatedly in 1868 and it was for the buyer to find out who or what that was.

5. Hidden motives and codes

Previous studies on Boshin War prints conclude that the majority of the prints depict the pro-imperial and pro-shogunal forces to be equal in power but that many prints also express hidden motives of wanting the pro-shogunal forces to win (Minami 1999, 6; Shimizu 2005, 16; Nagura 2007, 242). The stance of Hiroshige III on the matter, however, remains unclear. Therefore, in the pages that follow, three prints by Hiroshige III are analyzed in-depth to examine how the artist illustrated the pro-imperial and pro-shogunal forces fighting over power in a chronological order. These prints were selected because of their publication at three crucial moments of the war: the second month of 1868 when the Toba-Fushimi Battle came to an end; the fourth month of 1868 when Edo Castle was bloodlessly surrendered to the imperial forces; and the eleventh month of 1868 when the young emperor visited the capital, now already named Tokyo, and the new government no longer considered the rebelling forces a threat.

Before their analysis, however, two general remarks must still be made about Hiroshige III's satirical prints on the Boshin War. To begin with, his prints were aimed at the general public with fairly low levels of literacy of Chinese characters or kanji (漢字). This is evident in the explanatory descriptions on the prints favoring the usage of *kana* (仮名), which are syllabaries used to represent morae or units of sounds, over kanji and the restriction of Chinese characters to the prints' title, which were often accompanied with *kana* to indicate their pronunciation. In addition, Hiroshige III employed a set of "codes" when it came to the garments of his figures to represent the different domains fighting for both the pro-imperial and pro-shogunal cause, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Codes used by Hiroshige III

Allegiance	Domain or person	Matching code(s)
Pro-imperial	Satsuma domain	*Kasuri* weave pattern
	Chōshū domain	Bush clover
	Tosa domain	Tortoise shell
	Tsu domain	Ivy
	Okayama domain	Pincers (nail hammer)
	Hikone domain	Family crest of Tachibana clan
	Emperor Meiji (明治天皇 Meiji tennō, 1852–1912, reign 1867–1912)	Red sash on green garments, introduced with character for money (金 *kin*), chrysanthemum
Pro-shogunal	Aizu domain	Emblem of the domain
	Kuwana domain	Grilled clams
	Shōnai domain	Double cross pattern
	Himeji domain	*Shimenawa* (しめ縄) or rope used to cordon off consecrated areas or as a talisman (*hime* became *shime* in Edo dialect)
	Tokugawa Yoshinobu (徳川慶喜, 1837–1913, reign 1866–1867)	Pattern of one vertical line alternated by a horizontal one, similar to a brick pattern
	Princess Kazu (和宮 Kazu-no-miya, 1846–1877)	Introduced as the "daughter," hollyhock
	Tenshō-in (天璋院, 1836–1883)	Introduced as the "mother," or abbreviated as "Ten"

Sources: Minami (1995, 6); Minami (1999, 127); Tomizawa (2005, 159); Nagura (2007, 41, 57); Tanabe and Yuasa (2008, 126–127)

These codes were not unique to Hiroshige III's prints, but were in fact actively employed by other print artists, establishing a certain uniformity for print buyers in order to decipher the hidden satire.

6. Grab a child, grab a child

Among one of the first prints that Hiroshige III illustrated on the Boshin War is the print of the title *Little Children Playing "Grab a Child, Grab a Child"* (幼童遊び 子をとろ／＼, *Osana asobi ko o toro ko o toro*, 1868/II, *ōban* diptych; see Figure 1), which is simultaneously believed to be one of the earliest prints satirizing the war (Minami 1995, 6; Minami 1998, 290; Minami 1999, 127; Nagura 2007, 30). The print was published by Maruya Heijirō (丸屋平次郎, dates unknown), the same publisher who issued the abovementioned first print of Hiroshige III. In other words, Maruya commissioned Hiroshige III with the particular goal of illustrating a satirical print

on the war and would publish two more of his satirical prints in the fourth month of 1868, or sometime between April 23 and May 25, 1868 (see Appendix A).

Figure 1: Utagawa Hiroshige III, *Little Children Playing "Grab a Child, Grab a Child,"* 1868/II, full-color woodblock print

(Source: Photograph © National Diet Library Digital Collections)

At first sight the print seems to be an innocent illustration of children playing a game called "grab a child, grab a child" (子をとろ子をとろ, *ko o toro ko o toro*) in which one person plays the devil, another the parent, and the rest the children. In the game, the devil attempts to capture the children while the parent is in charge of protecting them. This diptych, in contrast, employs the game as a device to juxtapose the pro-imperial forces, on the right, with the pro-shogunal forces, on the left. The pro-shogunal domain Aizu (会津) has taken up the role of the devil, as he is the child with his hands reaching out ready to catch one of the children in front of him and is identifiable because of the emblem of the domain's infantry featured on the back of his haori. Standing next to him are the other domains supporting the Tokugawa shogunate: the domains of Kuwana (桑名) and Shōnai (庄内) pointing and laughing at the pro-imperialists. The Aizu domain is cheered on by Tokugawa Yoshinobu, here with his hands on his head, saying, "Hey, mate, pull yourself together! Don't worry cause I'm right behind you!"[16]

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[16]　をいあいぼうちゃんしつかりやんなへうしろにはおれがついているから大丈夫 (*Oi aibō-chan*

On opposite side of the domains supporting Yoshinobu are the pro-imperialists who form a line while grasping each other's shoulders. Here, the Satsuma (薩摩) domain has taken up the role of the parent and is "protecting" the other pro-imperial domains who are standing behind him, which are the domains of Owari (尾張), Tosa (土佐), Fukuoka (福岡), Tsu (津), Okayama (岡山), Hikone (彦根), and Chōshū (長州). Watching from the sideline – thus taking a neutral stance – is Princess Kazu (和宮 Kazu-no-miya, 1846–1877) carrying her adopted son Kamenosuke (亀之助), better known as Tokugawa Iesato (徳川家達, 1863–1940). Together they refrain from participating in the game while Princess Kazu reassures Kamenosuke that everything will be alright because they have the support of the Chōshū domain.

On the back of the Chōshū domain sits another child: Emperor Meiji, who is identifiable by the combination of the red sash and the green garments. This color-combination confirms that Hiroshige III and Maruya were aware of the banner that the imperial army was using at the time (Nagura 2007, 31–32). Moreover, it suggests that the print was published rather fast, roughly one month after pro-imperial forces had risen victorious in the Battle of Toba-Fushimi. Yet, Emperor Meiji was at the time 17 years old and not an infant as suggested by Hiroshige III.[17] So why would Hiroshige III disguise the emperor as an infant? Naturally, the motive of a child's game worked as a safety valve to escape censorship. However, if the composition of the print is taken into account, it becomes clear that the emperor was under the direct protection of both the Satsuma and Chōshū domains, which were respectively protecting the pro-imperial domains and carrying the emperor. As Keene (2001, 142) explains, the emperor was incapable at that age of making any significant contribution: neither towards the movement that restored power to the emperor, nor to the Boshin War, nor to the momentous changes that immediately ensued, but was solely the guiding spirit. Hiroshige III and Maruyama were clearly aware of this fact and used a seemingly innocent children's game to satirize the parties quarrelling over political and governing power, while suggesting that the pro-imperial forces were winning the game – and thus the war – as they appear more organized and outnumber the domains supporting Yoshinobu.

7. The world seen through a physiognomist's glass

After the defeat of the shogunal forces at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, Yoshinobu retreated to Edo. In April, however, negotiations were under way between Katsu Kaishū

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shikkari yannae ushiro ni wa ore ga tsuiteiru kara daijōbu).

[17] Although one can reasonably argue that the emperor was 16 at the time, considering that he was born in 1852, the "East Asian age of reckoning" (数え年 *kazoedoshi*, literally "counted years") was not abolished until 1902. Thus, the emperor was one year old when he was born and 17 when the Boshin War commenced.

(勝海舟, 1823–1899), Yoshinobu's military commander, and Saigō Takamori (西郷隆盛, 1828–1877), the principal field commander for the imperial forces, for the bloodless surrender of Edo Castle. During these negotiations, the opinions of Sir Harry Smith Parkes (1828–1885), Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary and Consul General of the United Kingdom to the Empire of Japan from 1865 to 1883, were also sought (Keene 2002, 142–143; Ishii 2008, 134–144). As a result, Edo Castle, which had been the shogunal administrative center, was turned over without a fight to the emperor's army on May 3, 1868. In the context of bloodless surrender, Hiroshige III designed another satirical print which was published by Kakumotoya Kinjirō (角本屋金次郎, dates unknown) in the fourth month of 1868, or, taking the date of surrender into account, between May 3 and May 21, 1868 (see Figure 2). Considering Marks's (2011, 26) research into the minimum production time of woodblock prints, Hiroshige III's print was published faster than the average 22 days which would have been necessary to produce a batch of 1,000 triptychs (that is, prints consisting of three sheets) if we can assume that Hiroshige III only needed one day to complete his design. As this print is a diptych and there were several ways to speed up the production process, such as starting the printing when blocks were still being carved, this diptych confirms that time and speed were of the essence for the publication and promotion of Japanese woodblock prints. Indeed, the first publisher who was on the market with an appealing design had notably the best chances to receive the majority of the customers and thus had a higher chance of making a profit (Marks 2011, 26).

With this print, entitled *The World Seen through a Physiognomist's Glass* (世の中天眼鏡 *Yo no naka tengankyō*, 1868/IV, *ōban* diptych; see Figure 2), Hiroshige III visualized a group of people consulting a physiognomist or a fortune teller who tells somebody's fortune from his facial features. The fortune teller is Emperor Meiji himself, as is indicated by the chrysanthemums embroidered on his garment, and he is surrounded by nine people, representing both the pro-imperial and pro-shogunal forces. From right to left we see Princess Kazu, the Sendai (仙台) domain, the Owari domain (the *yukata* with the octopus), Tenshō-in (天璋院, 1836–1883), the Chōshū domain (blue overcoat), Tokugawa Yoshinobu (scratching his head), the Aizu domain (sitting in front of the physiognomist), the Satsuma domain (behind the Aizu domain), the Tosa domain (holding the open fan), and Emperor Meiji (holding the mirror). This print introduces the only two women who ever appear in satirical prints on the Boshin War, namely Princess Kazu, who was the wife of the 14th shogun Tokugawa Iemochi (徳川家茂, 1846–1866), and Tenshō-in, who was the wife of the 13th shogun Tokugawa Iesada (徳川家定, 1824–1858). Princess Kazu is seemingly ashamed by the consultation, as she says: "It is a little embarrassing to consult [a fortune-teller]."[18] Tenshō-in, on the other hand, who refers to herself

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[18]   なんだかみてもらうのがはづかしいねへ (*Nandaka mitemorau no ga hazukashii nee*).

as "mother," reassures the princess that "As if there is something to be embarrassed about! Let's have a thorough consultation cause mother is really worried."[19]

Figure 2: Utagawa Hiroshige III, *The World Seen through a Physiognomist's Glass, 1868/IV, full-color woodblock print*

(Source: Photograph © 2023, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston;
William Sturgis Bigelow Collection [11.34998.14a-b])

But what could they have been worried about? Neither Princess Kazu, who played a passive role in Figure 1, nor Tenshō-in were worried about their own future, as Saigō and Katsu's negotiations guaranteed that they would not be taken hostage. Instead, they were worried about the future of the Tokugawa house. As Yoshinobu had been branded an enemy of the emperor (朝敵 *chōteki*), the entire Tokugawa family ran the risk of being ruined and destroyed. Moreover, since the succession to the Tokugawa family fell on Princess Kazu's son Kamenosuke, Princess Kazu had sent a letter between the Battle of Toba-Fushimi and the bloodless surrender of Edo Castle to avoid the entire Tokugawa family being branded as an enemy of the court and to secure her son's succession to the Tokugawa family (Keene 2002, 129).[20] Regarding their worries, the physiognomist foretells:

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[19]   はづかしい事があるものかねよくみておもらいよおつかあさんは誠にしんぱいだよ (*Hazukashii koto ga aru mono kane yoku mite-omorai yo okkāsan wa makoto ni shinpai dayo*).

[20]   According to Keene (2002, 129), Princess Kazu sent a letter to Hashimoto Saneya (橋本実梁,

Now, you maidservants in the back, I can see that you seem to have a great deal of worries about the residence of your family, but everything I say is a promise. If you truly care about your family, then do listen to me carefully. However, you probably won't like what I have to say.

さてうしろに御座るお女中おまへは家住居の事につきだいぶくろうがみへるがこれと申もみなやくそくごとじやた゛／＼家を大事におもふならわしがいふ事をよくきゝたまひしかしわしが申ことはとかく御気にはいるまい

Sate ushiro ni gozaru ojochū omae wa ie jūkyo no koto ni tsuki daibu kurō ga mieru ga kore to mōshimo mina yakusoku goto ja tada tada ie o daiji ni omou nara washi ga iu koto o yoku kikitamai shikashi washi ga mōsu koto ha tokaku oki ni wa iru mai.

With these lines, Hiroshige III was urging his print-buying public to sit tight and wait, similar to how Emperor Meiji was ordering Princess Kazu and Tenshō-in to wait for further instructions. Through the powerful combination of the above lines, which fail to reveal anything about the future, and the visualization of the two women waiting in line behind pro-shogunal domains, which suggests that their fate was not the emperor's top priority, Hiroshige III succeeded in mocking the reality that the once-powerful Tokugawa family was now at the mercy of the emperor – and not the other way around.

Other people visiting the physiognomist had similar concerns. The Sendai domain, for example, wearing the yellow overcoat and sitting behind Princess Kazu and Tenshō-in, murmurs, "I am concerned about my friends, is there something that I can do?"[21] Similarly, the Owari domain, who is wearing the yukata with the octopus pattern, says, "I have a lot of concerns about my brothers, what will become of them?"[22] The Sendai domain is here referring to the "four Takasu brothers" or the feudal lord of Aizu Matsudaira Katamori (松平容保, 1836–1893), the feudal lord of Owari Tokugawa Yoshikatsu (徳川義勝, 1824–1883), the feudal lord of Kuwana Matsudaira Sada'aki (松平定敬, 1847–1908), and the head of the Hitotsubashi branch of the Tokugawa house Tokugawa Mochinaga (徳川茂徳, 1831–1884). The response of the emperor to each and everyone's concerns was vague at best, but he warned his visitors:

Now, as I look around at each and every one of you, you appear with your own [facial] features but also with your connections. As long as you

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1834–1885), the commander of the eastern sea circuit, who forwarded it to Madenokōji Hiro-fusa (万里小路博房, 1824–1884), a political advisor (参与 *san'yo*) to the imperial court in Kyoto.

[21] みどもはほうゆうのことにつきましてしんぱいいたしおるがいかゞいたしたものて御座るな (*Midomo wa hōyū no koto ni tsukimashite shinpai itashi-oru ga ikaga itashita mono te gozaru na*).

[22] わたくしは兄弟のことにつきましていろ／＼しんぱいおいたしおりますがいかがなりませう (*Watakushi wa kyōdai no koto ni tsukimashite iroiro shinpai o-itashi-orimasu ga ikaga narimashō*).

make use of what I have to say, then your hearts will be at ease. However, as there are different characters present here, I can see that among the [facial] features that I see, there will be persons who think, "It is a lie!"

さておの／＼かようにみわたした所が何れも私よくがあらわれた相ごうでみな手前がつてがあるわたしがいふ事さへもちいればみな／＼のこゝろがあんどいたすが此内にもいろ／＼な気ふうがあつてわしがみる相はうそじやと思ふ人がみへるて

Sate ono'ono ka yō ni miwatashita tokoro ga doremo watashi yoku ga arawareta sōgō de mina temae ga tsute ga aru watashi ga iu koto sae mochiireba mina mina no kokoro ga ando itasu ga kono uchi ni mo iroiro na kifū ga atte watashi ga miru sō wa uso ja to omou hito ga mieru te.

Hiroshige III's overall vagueness in the explanatory inscriptions suggests that the general public was kept in the dark about the fate of the Tokugawa family and the pro-shogunal domains. This is also supported by the fact that the only facial expression that we cannot see is the one of the emperor. Thus, the emperor's fortune was the sole fortune that was undecided, as he was in control of his own fate and that of everyone else. It is also in the representation of the emperor that a change presents itself. In contrast to Figure 1, Emperor Meiji was no longer in need of being saved by pro-imperial domains and exchanged his passive role for an active one, primarily because of Yoshinobu's surrender with the fall of Edo Castle. Similarly, Princess Kazu transformed from taking a neutral stance in Figure 1 to actively seeking out the emperor to discuss the future of Kamenosuke – something which she did in reality with her letter. Thus, the emperor, previously introduced as a child incapable of achieving anything on his own, now controlled the narrative of the woodblock print as a fortune teller and, thus, the fate of the defeated shogunal forces and the remaining members of the Tokugawa family.

8. A bonanza of sake

With the bloodless surrender of Edo Castle, the remaining rebelling domains were no longer considered a threat and the war was as good as won by the pro-imperial forces. This realization also affected the woodblock print production as Hiroshige III's output of Boshin War prints drastically dwindled following the aftermath of this surrender. In April 1868, when negotiations were being conducted and the shogunal administrative center was eventually turned over, Hiroshige III produced nine prints followed by six more in May. In the coming months, however, his average output decreased to either one or two a month until December 1868 (see Appendix A). At that time, other events resulting from the ongoing Boshin War were attracting more attention in capital. The emperor's journey to Tokyo, for example, was announced on September 19 and the inhabitants of Tokyo were eager for an imperial visit as the city had lost its political importance since the dismantling of

the shogunate (Keene 2002, 160). The emperor left Kyoto accompanied by a procession of more than 3,300 people and arrived in Tokyo on November 26. Not soon after the imperial visit had been announced, woodblock prints were issued upon the (expected) arrival of the emperor's procession in Tokyo. Hiroshige III himself designed five such prints, with his earliest print published sometime between October 16 and November 13, thus approximately one month after the emperor's visit had been announced and prior to his arrival (see Appendix B).

On December 17 the emperor offered the people of Tokyo a vast amount of sake in commemoration of his visit. In total 2,990 barrels of sake were distributed, as well as 550 pewter sake containers and 1,700 bundles of dried cuttlefish, which the people of Tokyo consumed in a two-day binge (Keene 2002, 163). On this celebration and distribution of imperial sake Hiroshige III designed five triptychs which were published between November 14 and December 13, 1868 (see Appendix C). These prints depict people queuing in front of government offices to collect the barrels as well as "processions" of people who had just received their sake barrels, holding large and colorful banners that read *tenshu chōdai* (天酒頂戴), *omiki chōdai* (御神酒頂戴), and *tenpai chōdai* (天盃頂戴), all meaning "Give us the heavenly sake!" Around the same time, Hiroshige III also designed his last satirical print on the Boshin War, which took as subject the distribution of the "heavenly sake" (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Utagawa Hiroshige III, *The Whole Nation Celebrating the Given Sake to Wish for the Emperor's Reign to Last for Eternity*, 1868/XI, full-color woodblock print

(Source: Photograph © Cool Art Tokyo / DNPartcom; Asai Collection)

Entitled *The Whole Nation Celebrating the Given Sake to Wish for the Emperor's Reign to Last for Eternity* (ありがたき御代万代を寿て御酒下されを祝ふ万民 *Arigataki godai yorozuyo o kotobukite osake kudasare to iwafu banmin*, 1868/XI, *ōban* diptych), the diptych illustrates people celebrating and drinking sake. Everyone is seated in a half circle facing the hanging scroll painting of the young and radiating emperor, which has been made visible by the uplifted curtains carrying the Imperial Seal of Japan or the Chrysanthemum Seal. Emperor Meiji is worshipped as a god as suggested by the altar placed before him, the barrels' label that reads "sake of the gods" (御神酒 *omiki*), and the sun-disc floating behind his head as the Japanese emperor is believed to be a direct descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu (天照大神 *Amaterasu Ōmikami*). The explanatory inscriptions accompanying the print all contain praise for the emperor and the sake he provided. Attendees express their wish to consume more sake while they push each other to drink more, despite someone complaining he cannot. The government official standing next to the barrels on the left sheet proclaims: "We'll never have such an opportunity again. Here, do not hold back and have another [drink]."[23] One of the kneeling ladies bows her head in agreement and says, "I do not know if there is anything more grateful in this world than this."[24]

Lacking in this print, however, are the embedded codes that dominated Hiroshige III's other prints. This confirms that imperial forces had emerged victorious in the Boshin War and that for print artists and print publishers it was no longer necessary to disguise any political discontent with either the shogunal or imperial forces as the people of Tokyo had been appeased with sake. This poses the question who Hiroshige III intended to satirize as neither the defeated shogunal forces or the victorious imperial forces are explicitly depicted. It can be inferred that he satirized the people of Tokyo no longer being interested in the outcome of the war and that pro-shogunal sympathizers had been won over to support the emperor with the distribution of the "heavenly" sake. Similar to Figures 1 and 2, the depiction of Emperor Meiji changed once more. From a passive bystander to the fortune teller dominating the conversation on the future of the shogunal forces, the emperor had now ascended to power as the descendant of the sun goddess and was revered by the general public of Tokyo.

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[23] またとないことぢやえんりようなくてうだいさつしやれ (*Mata to nai koto ja enryō naku chōdai sasshare*).

[24] こんなありがたいことはこの世にあろか (*Konna arigatai koto wa kono yo ni aroka*).

9. Conclusion

This paper examined how Utagawa Hiroshige III responded to the Boshin War and how he employed humor and satire as mechanisms to provoke shared laughter and to illustrate the pro-imperial and pro-shogunal forces fighting over political and governing power. The satirical prints on the Boshin war were very popular at the time, as can be concluded by their availability in large numbers and their short production time. This suggests that the woodblock print-buying public in Edo/Tokyo was very eager for visual imagery that depicted and satirized the clash between pro-imperial and pro-shogunal forces. Moreover, the co-dependency of text and image in the prints confirms their informative function as well as strengthens their satirical intent. Hiroshige III employed various codes to convey the true identity of the people involved in the Boshin War and transposed them to innocent-looking settings such as a children's game and a consultation with a physiognomist. Although censorship was wavering, this method of disguising current news events confirms that Hiroshige III and his publishers still felt the need for a safety valve in case of government inspection. That being said, Hiroshige III nevertheless clearly announced his intent to satirize, by means of his signatures, and established himself as a print artist capable of swiftly and elegantly disguising contemporary and political events in seemingly innocent, yet intriguing, scenes. The usage of the term "*ōju*" (応需, literally "responding to a demand") in several of his prints also provides evidence for the above claim as it implies that he designed the prints on special commission (see Appendices A, B, and C).

With a print-buying public hungry for visual imagery on the developments of the Boshin War, Hiroshige III and his publishers provided novel and disguised interpretations of the war that kept the print-buying public up-to-date on its latest developments. From the analysis of the prints, it can be concluded that Hiroshige III did not express hidden motives of wanting the pro-shogunal forces to win. This is clear as Hiroshige III visualized a remarkable and powerful trans-formation of the emperor from a helpless infant to a physiognomist consulted by all important politicians to a revered and celebrated god. This finding goes against the general claim made by previous research (Minami 1999, 6; Shimizu 2005, 16; Nagura 2007, 242). Therefore, further studies on the depiction of Emperor Meiji in Hiroshige III's remaining prints and in the work of other print artists could provide detailed information on how the Japanese popular print medium perceived, and capitalized on, the shift in political power during the Boshin War – or how the ruled introduced their new ruler.

In the end, these satirical prints were published at a time when government censorship was wavering, of which print artists and publishers eagerly took ad-vantage. The satirical prints on the Boshin War eventually made way for the con-tinuous depiction of contemporary events, the identification of historical figures

and the ruling classes in prints, and satire aimed at the government, which would become common practice from the 1870s onward.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

Because the prints under analysis in this paper were published before the adoption of the Western Gregorian Calendar on January 1, 1873, the three following appendices employ Roman numerals to refer to the lunar month in which the prints were published. The format of the prints is the standard format for woodblock prints, namely ōban (大判), which measures approximately 39 by 26.5 centimeters.

Appendix A: An overview of satirical prints on the Boshin War by Hiroshige III

Date	Title	Publisher	Signature	Format
1868/II	Little Children Playing "Grab a Child, Grab a Child" (*Yōdō asobi ko o toro ko o toro* 幼童遊び子をとろ／＼)	Maruya Heijirō 丸屋平次郎	Ōju Hiroshige zarefude 応需広重戯筆	*Ōban* diptych
1868/II	Battle of Marketprices of Silver Coins (*Zeni taihei kin sōba gassen* 銭太平金相場合戦)	Ōsada 大貞	Utashige giga 歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	The Pride of the Pleasure Quarters (*Kuruwa no ikiji* くるわのいきぢ)	Maruya Heijirō 丸屋平次郎	Hiroshige giga 広重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	The World Seen through a Physiognomist's Glass (*Yo no naka tengankyō* 世の中天眼鏡)	Kakumotoya Kinjirō 角本屋金次郎	Utashige ga 歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	Amateur Comedians Rehearsing (*Shirōto chaban shita geiko* 素人茶番下げいこ)	Iseya Kanekichi 伊勢屋兼吉	Hiroshige zarefude 広重戯筆	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	Zhong Kui from the Famous Painting (*Meiga no Shōki* 名画の鍾馗)	Iseya Han'emon 伊勢屋半右衛門	Hiroshige ga 広重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	Got Them! Rats in the Bag (*Shimeta shimeta fukuro no nezumi* しめたしめた袋の鼠)	Yorozuya Jūbei 万屋重兵衛	Ōju Utashige giga 応需歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	Popular Giant Dolls (*Ryūkō ōningyō* 流行大人形)	Iseya Kisaburō 伊勢屋喜三郎	Utashige ga 歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	Oimatsu [name of a piece of noh music] (*Oimatsu* 老まつ)	Maruya Heijirō 丸屋平次郎	Hiroshige ga 広重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IV	Matabei of the Floating World Praying a Million Times for his Deceased Master (*Ukiyo Matabei shishō no tsuizen ni hyakumanben o suru zu* 浮世又平師匠の追善に百万べんをする図)	Shimuzuya Naojirō 清水屋直次郎	Ōju Hiroshige giga 応需広重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/V	The Arts Performed by Children (*Kodomo gei zukushi* 子供芸づくし)	Zen 善	Utashige giga 歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/V	The Arts Performed by Children (*Kodomo gei zukushi* 子供芸づくし)	Wakasen 若仙	Utashige giga 歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/V	The Persuasive Speech of Negotiators in the Floating World (*Ukiyo keian-guchi* 浮世けいあんぐち)	Yoki ヨキ	Ōju Utashige giga 応需歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/V	The Seven Gods of Good Fortune Playing with Chinese Children (*Shichifukujin karako asobi* 七福神から子あそび)	Maruya Jinpachi 丸屋甚八 and Zen 善	Utashige giga 歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych

1868/V	Flourishing Business for Merchants in the Summertime (*Natsu akindo han'ei no zu* 夏商人繁栄の図)	Kiya Sakutarō 木屋作太郎	Ōju Utashige ga 応需歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/V	Eight Suitors for One Daughter (*Hitori musume ni muko hachinin* 一人娘にむこ八人)	Zen 善	Ōju Utashige ga 応需歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/VII	Children at Play: A Mud Fight (*Kodomo asobi doro gassen* 子供遊どろ合戦)	Zen 善	Ōju Utashige giga 応需歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/VIII	Popular Floating World Proverbs (*Ryūkō ukiyo no tatoe* 流行浮世のたとへ)	Yoki ヨキ	Utashige ga 歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/VIII	Guests Staying for a Long Time (*Tōsei nagatchiri na kyakushin* 当世長ッ尻な客しん)	Kiya Sakutarō 木屋作太郎	Utashige ga 歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IX	Proverbs in the Floating World (*Hitogokoro ukiyo no tatoe* ひとこゝろ浮世のたとへ)	Nishikisen 錦仙	Ōju Utashige ga 応需歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/IX	Children Playing: Comparison of Kite Flying (*Kodomo asabi tako no agekkura* 子供遊凧のあけっくら)	Kiya Sakutarō 木屋作太郎	Utashige giga 歌重戯画	*Ōban* diptych
1868/X	Belligerent Drunks (*Hara tachi jōgo* はらたち上戸)	Kiya Sakutarō 木屋作太郎	Utashige ga 歌重画	*Ōban* diptych
1866/X	'Six-petal Flower' from Children Playing (*Mutsu no hana kodomo no asobi* むつの花子供の戯)	Unknown	Ōju Utashige giga 応需歌重戯画	*Ōban* triptych
1868/XI	The Whole Nation Celebrating the Given Sake to Wish for the Emperor's Reign to Last for Eternity (*Arigataki godai yorozuyo o kotobukite osake kudasare o iwafu banmin* ありがたき御代万代を寿て御酒下されを祝ふ万民)	Iseya Kanekichi 伊勢屋兼吉	Hiroshige zarefude 広しげ戯筆	*Ōban* diptych

Appendix B: An overview of processional prints by Hiroshige III

Date	Title	Publisher	Signature	Format
1868/IX	Scenic View of Nihonbashi in Tokyo (*Tōkyō Nihonbashi shōkei* 東京日本橋勝景)	Maruya Tetsujirō 丸屋鉄次郎	Ōju Hiroshige hitsu 応需広重筆	*Ōban* triptych
1868/X	The Official Notice Board at Nihonbashi Bridge in Tokyo (*Tōkyō Nihonbashi gokōsatsuba no zu* 東京日本橋御高札場之図)	Hiranoya Shinzō 平野屋新蔵	Ōju Hiroshige hitsu 応需広重筆	*Ōban* triptych
1868/X	Scenic Spots of Tokyo: Shiba Daijingū (*Tōkyō meishō Shiba Shinmeigū no zu* 東京名勝芝神明宮之図)	Sanoya Kihei 佐野屋喜兵衛	Hiroshige hitsu 広重筆	*Ōban* triptych
1868/X	Scenic Spot of Takanawa in Tokyo (*Tōkyō Takanawa no shōkei* 東京高輪之勝景)	Iseya Kanekichi 伊勢屋兼吉	Ōju Hiroshige zu 応需広重図	*Ōban* triptych

1868/XI	Scenic Spots of Tokyo: Shibadaimon (*Tōkyō meishō Shibadaimon no zu* 東京名勝芝大門之図)	Maruya Heijirō 丸屋平次郎	Hiroshige hitsu 広重筆	*Ōban* triptych

Appendix C: An overview of prints on the distribution of imperial sake

Date	Title	Publisher	Signature	Format
1868/XI	Shinbashi from Shiodome in Tokyo (*Tōkyō Shiodome yori Shinbashi no zu* 東京汐留ヨリ新橋之図)	Tsunokuniya Isaburō 津国屋伊三郎	Ōju Hiroshige hitsu 応需広重筆	*Ōban* triptych
1868/XI	Gratitude for Receiving the Imperial Sake, Various People Revering and Enjoying Themselves – Scenery of Yotsuya in Tokyo (*Tenshu chōdai tame orei shomin tsushimi tanoshimi Tōkyō-fu Yotsuya no fūkei* 天盃頂載為御礼諸民欽楽東京府四谷之風景)	Nōshūya Yasubei 濃州屋安兵衛	Ōju Hiroshige hitsu 応需広重筆	*Ōban* triptych
1868/XI	Give us the Imperial Sake! (*Tenshu chōdai* 天酒頂戴/御酒頂戴)	Ebiya Rinnosuke 海老屋林之	Hiroshige hitsu 広重筆	*Ōban* triptych
1868/XI	At the Gates of Sawai Bridge in Tokyo (*Tōkyō Sawaibashi gomon uchi no zu* 東京幸橋御門内の図)	Arai Sannosuke 新井三之助	Ōju Hiroshige hitsu 応需広重筆	*Ōban* triptych
1868/XI	Sawai Bridge in Tokyo (*Tōkyō Sawaibashi no zu* 東京幸橋之図)	Unknown	Ōju Hiroshige hitsu 応需広重筆	*Ōban* triptych

ECHOES OF SLAVERY:
AN ANALYSIS OF AIMÉ HUMBERT'S DEPICTION OF COURTESANS IN *LE JAPON ILLUSTRÉ* (1870) AND HIS ARTISTIC APPROACH

Jessica Uldry

Folks today seem more exposed than ever.
They are, in reality, under-exposed because of
censorship or over-exposed in the artificial light of their
spectacularisation. The result is equivalent invisibility.
In short, they are, as too often, exposed to disappear.
(Didi-Huberman 2012, 15)

Aimé Humbert was a prominent political figure in Switzerland whose account of his trip to Japan awakened renewed academic interest following the 2005 reissue of his monograph *Le Japon illustré*. Tales of his travels, along with illustrations of Japan, were published in 1870, providing one of the very few Swiss testimonies of the remarkable wave of illustrated works produced in the 19th century. This paper centers on an analysis of a select group of engravings related to sex work in Japanese society. Following the chronology of the narrative, this paper aims to deconstruct Humbert's rhetoric, highlighting his creativity on a visual and textual basis. With a methodology derived from both art history and literary analysis, this analytical essay reveals the subtlety of Humbert's critique on prostitution in Japan, where he expresses singular concerns regarding Westerners' behavior as well as his more general position on Human Rights.

Keywords: Aimé Humbert, Edo period, illustration, prostitution, travel book

1. Introduction

On February 6, 1875, a conference was held in the city of Neuchâtel, Switzerland with Josephine Butler (1828–1906) as the guest of honor, in order to introduce her campaign against the establishment of a regulatory system of prostitution known as the Contagious Diseases Acts.[1] The organizer behind this conference was Aimé Humbert (1819–1900), a professor and leading political figure in the canton of Neuchâtel.[2] Humbert had received a letter from Butler in 1874, corresponded with her, and in less than a year they had planned her trip to Neuchâtel (Stead 1888, 52–53, 63). Humbert (1875, 8) was very receptive to Butler's call and welcomed her fight as "providential." Indeed, it might have been his destiny to find himself once again confronted with the issue of prostitution. A decade prior to the conference, during a stay in Japan, Humbert was able to observe what he considered to be the social damage resulting from a legal system that allowed and regulated women's sex work. In 1870, the tale of his travels and his impressions of Japan were published in an illustrated monograph titled *Le Japon illustré* (*The Illustrated Japan*).[3] The two thick volumes were enhanced by 476 illustrations, in which the reader can appreciate Humbert's verve through the many opportunities he seized to subtly reveal his critique of prostitution in Japanese society.

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[1] For the content of the conference, see Humbert (1875). For Josephine Butler's campaign, see, for instance, Summers (2006, 2008).

[2] Born in Bulles (Prussia, now Switzerland) to a modest family of watchmakers, Aimé Humbert became a literature teacher. He actively supported the revolutionary movement when the Neuchâtel canton was under Prussian domination and participated in the Neuchâtel's revolution on March 1, 1848. Humbert received the position of secretary in the provisional government of Alexis-Marie Piaget (1802–1870). He helped to write the first draft of the Constitution of the Neuchâtel Republic and was subsequently elected to various key positions in the Grand Council and the cantonal chancellery. In 1859, he ceased his political activity to devote himself to one of the main industries of his canton – watchmaking – as President of the Watch Union (Union Horlogère). He undertook a journey to Japan to open a new economic outlet for watchmakers. On his return, he accepted a position as director of the new academy of Neuchâtel, worked for the Neuchâtel City Council, and became Grand Master of the Masonic Grand Lodge Alpina of Switzerland. He died of illness in the city of Neuchâtel in 1900. For more information about Aimé Humbert's life, see Quartier-la-tente (1900); Henry (2001); Barrelet (2005).

[3] The 2005 publication is a facsimile of the original version published in 1870 (Humbert [1870] 2005). Since this 2005 reissue, Humbert's life and testimony have sparked renewed of academic interest and studies focusing on the preparation of his diplomatic mission to Japan (Alimann 2009), the identification of the visual material he collected there (Gonseth et al. 2015), the history of his collection (Dallas 2005), and the impact of this collection on the perception of Japan in Switzerland (Dallais 2006; Tissot 2006) have flourished. An 1874 English translation features almost 200 illustrations and includes additional chapters on the Revolution of 1868 and its aftermath (Humbert [1874] 2015). Adaptations in Russian and in Spanish were also published in 1870 and 1875 (respectively: Humbert 1870; Mayor and Akiyoshi 2018, 9).

In 1862, the author of *Le Japon illustré* was sent to Japan by the Helvetic Confederation with the title of Minister Plenipotentiary to sign a commercial treaty with the local Japanese authority. The goal of his mission was, through direct negotiations, to bind Switzerland to Japan through legal trade and secure a flat import-export rate like that obtained by a few of other nations in previous years.[4] Although Humbert arrived to Japan on April 6, 1863, the authorities refused to start negotiations, and the Minister found himself with no other choice but to wait for an advantageous moment to perform his task. Only after ten months of delay did his operation come to fruition – with the help of the Netherlands[5] – and the first Treaty of Commerce and Friendship between Switzerland and Japan was signed on February 6, 1864.[6]

Before embarking on his journey to the Far East, the Swiss Minister seems to have reached an agreement with the French publishing firm Hachette to publish an article upon his return in the magazine *Le Tour du Monde* (*Around the World*) about his travel in Japan.[7] The delay in the Treaty's negotiations from April 1863 to January 1864 turned out to be favorable for Humbert's article project, giving him time to discover the archipelago and its inhabitants, as well as to collect an impressive number of native visual materials.[8] Prints and other artwork, which represented all of Japanese society "in a language accessible to everyone" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 1, i), were a veritable treasure trove of information. Humbert collected at least 3,668 pieces, of which 2,634 are currently kept at the

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[4] In 1864, Switzerland joined the United States of America, the Netherlands, France, Great Britain, and Prussia, which had already obtained similar commercial treaties with Japan. For further information about the Swiss diplomatic mission to Japan, see Barrelet (1986, 2005); Tissot (2006, 150); Alimann (2009); Hoya (2015).

[5] In January 1864, when the Japanese made known their intention to send a mission to Europe, the Dutch – and Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek (1833–1916; General Consul of the Netherlands and government representative in Japan) in particular – took the opportunity to blackmail the Japanese authorities: they refused to help them in their preparations or to officially welcome the Japanese emissaries to the Netherlands as long as Switzerland did not benefit from trade relations with Japan. It is due to the support of the Dutch that on February 6, 1864, a treaty was signed with three Japanese emissaries in the Choji temple in the city of Edo (Barrelet 2005, xx).

[6] The original treaty in French can be found in the Swiss Federal Archives (Traité d'Amitié et de Commerce, Swiss Federal Archives).

[7] See, for instance, Aimé Humbert from Japan to his wife Marie, April 18, 1863, folder 12, *Aimé Humbert Papers*, Archives of the State of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel.

[8] The material is mostly Japanese, but it also contains drawings and watercolors by Charles Wirgman (1832–1891) and Alfred-Victor Roussin (1839–1919), both of whom lived in Yokohama and created them *in situ*, as well as photographs by Felice Beato (1832–1909), who accompanied Humbert on some excursions (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 1, ii; Tissot 2012, 15).

Museum of Ethnography Neuchâtel (MEN).[9] His prolonged stay in Japan, as well as his vast collection, became a rich source for his articles – published in *Le Tour du Monde* between 1866 and 1869[10] – and an even more ambitious luxurious illustrated monograph with the same publishing firm.

Issued in 1870, *Le Japon illustré* is promoted as a nonfictional travelogue attesting to the troubled period that preceded the fall of the Tokugawa clan (Gordon 2002; Souyri 2010). This clan had ruled for more than two and a half centuries (1603–1867), bringing a period of stabilization and pacification to the country. When Humbert was in Japan, the Tokugawa regime was in crisis, rapidly losing its hegemony, and Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 2, 141–146, 369–375) recounts some personal events that attest to this predicament.

In general, the author chose to organize his book by geographic region, successively presenting Benten,[11] Kyoto, Kamakura, Edo, and finally Yokohama. The spatial grid he established shows his determination to achieve as complete as possible a global archiving of a still largely unknown society. More generally, *Le Japon illustré* is a remarkable example of the wave of illustrated works produced in the second half of the 19th century.[12] Unlike other travelers of his time, Humbert not only relates a succession of events backed by illustrations, but paints a compelling portrait of his surroundings using both engravings and text.[13] His role in the print production has been highlighted in a major exhibition, *Imagine Japan*, which was held at the MEN in 2015.[14] This exhibition, along with its catalogue (Gonseth et al. 2015), traces the main sources of many of the illustrations in the book. Together, they demonstrate how Humbert used his visual collection from Japan as a kind

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[9]   For the history of the Aimé Humbert's collection, see Dallais (2005, 38; 2006, 73–78), Doyen, Lorrain, and Mayor (2015, 204), Gonseth (2015, 8). For the content of the collection, see Fujiwara (2015, 156–172); Mayor and Akiyoshi (2018).

[10] Humbert (1866, 1–66, 305–337; 1867a, 289–336; 1867b, 369–416; 1868a, 65–112; 1869a, 353–416; 1869b, 193–224).

[11] Benten (弁天) is a district in central Yokohama where Benten Dōri (弁天通り, Benten Street) and a temple dedicated to the Goddess Benten are located.

[12] The second half of the 19th century saw the influence of wood engraving in Europe. The technique is a relief form of printmaking that offers the possibility of extremely fine details. This process made such an impact on the society of the time that Rémi Blanchon (2001) named it the "pictural engraving."

[13] Hachette publishing house, which issued *Le Japon illustré*, had already printed travel stories to Japan by Marquis Alfred de Moges (1860, 161–176), Rodolphe Lindau (1864), and Alfred Roussin (1866). These books and articles about Japan did not feature such diverse, detailed, and numerous illustrations as Humbert's monograph did.

[14] In particular, the exhibition *Imagine Japan*, under the direction of Marc-Oliver Gonseth, was open to the public from June 20, 2014, to April 19, 2015, in the temporary rooms of the MEN, in Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

of portfolio to capture scenes and poses.[15] By adding, removing, or switching figures, as well as including shadow or Western perspectives,[16] Humbert modified the source Japanese images to create new scenes for his book. Various pieces conserved in the MEN include annotations attesting to traces of a classification system and a manuscript of *Le Japon illustré* (Humbert 1868) conserved in the city of La Chaux-de-Fond, which contains instructions in the margin intended for print workshop technicians who were in charge of applying Humbert's instruction to the engraving process. Hence, the exhibition and catalogue teams at the MEN have made significant strides in their effort to confirm the role played by Humbert in the selection of the source materials and in his oversight of the creation of the illustrations, as well as of their layout within the book. However, this information has not been used for an in-depth study of *Le Japon illustré* as an intertwined discourse produced by the author based on images and texts. On the contrary, and prior to the exhibition, some pejorative comments have been raised against Humbert's interventionist approach to the images he collected.

In 2005, the Swiss historian Jean-Marc Barrelet was invited to write the preface of a facsimile reissue of *Le Japon illustré* (Humbert [1870] 2005). In this context, the alteration of the source images undertaken by Humbert for the illustrations and the resulting printed monograph did not escape his attention. The historian openly condemns Humbert's practice and the "lack of respect for the original iconography," which he seriously qualifies as "faking" (Barrelet 2005, xxii). Then, a decade later, in the exhibition catalogue of *Imagine Japan*, Audrey Doyen, Samia Lorrain, and Grégoire Mayor (2015, 206) noted a renewal of "the initial intention of the images." The curatorial team made no pejorative statement regarding his practice, and it seems that their project aimed to present Humbert's editing practice as a remarkable act, although they may have failed to identify it as an artistic act.

As an alternative view, I propose to reassess Humbert's role as a creative intermediary in the creation of the prints in order to analyze the *Le Japon illustré* monograph in its entirety, without privileging one form of expression over the other. Using a methodology that draws on approaches utilized in art history and

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[15] The exhibition catalogue is filled with examples that show how the illustrations of *Le Japon illustré* were created from various images identified in the MEN's collection. The source images were from Humbert's mission in Japan. For example, the print *Mountebanks and sword-swallowers* (*Saltimbanques et avaleurs de sabres*) (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 167) created by the workshop in Paris has taken elements from at least eleven visual works of Humbert's collection (Gonseth 2015, 148–155).

[16] Shadow effect made by light and dark areas and Western perspective were techniques borrowed from imported European prints that were disseminated originally by Japanese scholars studying *rangaku* (蘭学, "Dutch learning"). Japanese artists would get familiar with those techniques during the late Tokugawa period (late 18th century–19th century) and implemented them in autochthone production.

in literary analysis, this paper aims to explore the subtlety of Humbert's critique of Japanese society. I will examine a specific theme: the position of the author on the female condition in Japan, more specifically, with respect to sex work. This paper considers the following questions: How does the author materialize the various forms of prostitution that he stands against in *Le Japon illustré*? What strategies does he use to convey his message and convince his readers?

For my purposes, I propose to start a descriptive approach to underline the importance of Humbert's image selection process. Thus, I will endeavor to identify Humbert as a creative man who acted as an image hunter, assembler, and manager of the general aesthetics of *Le Japon illustré*. Then, using the illustrated mono-graph, I aim to investigate the construction of a pointed critique of the trade of women's bodies, following the narrative chronology of the book. This assessment will serve to specify the similarities and divergences of content in the selection of images and outline the major steps in the maturation of Humbert's global thought on "involuntary servitude."[17] A particular focus will be placed on the written text, in order to examine the main lines of Humbert's rhetoric. Nonetheless, this close analysis of the text will not lead me to adopt a comparative approach by cross-referencing Humbert's information about prostitution with other historical documents on the sex trade in 19th century Japan and the surrounding society. The purpose of this study is to define the contours of one man's graphic and textual discourse on the female sex trade in Japan through an empirical method. The close link he perceives between religion, institutions, and prostitution will be discerned as the discourse unfolds. In the process, the development of a global and more general thought on Human Rights can be found, grounded in Humbert's book, and I will briefly mention how these issues were proactively addressed in his later life.

2. From Edo to Paris, Humbert's transversal and creative role

Whether in Japan or Paris, several favorable stages can be determined to affect the development of Humbert's visual discourse as displayed in *Le Japon illustré*.

Upon his arrival in Japan, the Swiss diplomat immediately launched his image prospection. In a letter addressed to his wife, he commented that on the third day of his stay in Japan, he went to Nagasaki and stopped by the print shops.[18] He

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[17] Humbert textually mentions "voluntary servitude" (*servitude volontaire*), but the content of the sentence and the previous paragraphs clearly indicate that he means the opposite and that, according to him, the courtesans are under "involuntary servitude" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 287).

[18] Aimé Humbert from Japan to his wife Marie, April 11, 1863, folder 12, *Aimé Humbert Papers*, Archives of the State of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel. On Humbert's tenth day in Japan, he returned to the city of Nagasaki during the afternoon. He did not lose sight of his objective and wrote to Marie: "I did not find anything special in the print shops. They are provincial images that

finally stayed for 347 days in Japan, which allowed him to become familiar with Japanese print production and trade and acquire a very wide range of artwork.

At the end of the Edo period, images were very accessible both in terms of price and distribution. The expansion of book culture arising from the democratization of illustration in the 17th century allowed a large number of images to circulate and be distributed and sold (Kornicki 1998; Marquet 2006; Moretti 2020). In Japanese art, and in engraving in particular, Humbert discovered a fertile ground for illustrating his articles and for his subsequent monograph project. The vast collection of at least 3,668 pieces he brought back in his luggage corresponds to a sample of the richness of Japanese print culture.[19]

Humbert then benefited from a similar context in Paris, which boasted an illustrated press of great vitality (Grandjean 1997; Blanchon 2001; Bacot 2006). The introduction of the British wood engraving technique a few decades earlier had given a new dynamism to the French publishing industry. Workshops were applying an end-grain boxwood cut process concomitantly with the use of fine tools normally favored by metal engravers, achieving delicate results produced in record time, which could also withstand a large-run press. The technique systematized the relationship of text and image at a low cost. The cohabitation of the two modes of discourse (literary and graphic) offered new perspectives of combined expression. The circumstances were therefore favorable to publish an illustrated monograph in this city. *Le Japon illustré* is a great example of the golden age of wood engraving, with such illustrations comprising about a third of the total monograph. Its author proposed a work where the written and pictorial signifiers had equal importance because they operated dialogically and aimed at a common goal.

At the crossroads of two geographical temporalities, *Le Japon illustré* was born from the fusion of the materials offered by two major image societies in both Japan and France. Its author knew how to seize the available opportunities to realize his project. Neither editor nor engraver, Humbert became the mastermind of a design that allowed him to edit the images collected in Japan and managed the print production in Paris by sending instructions remotely from his homeland in Neuchâtel. It was essential for him to carry out an adaptation, a reframing of the source images. Indeed, the illustrations of *Le Japon illustré* do not simply offer

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we could compare with the ones from Épinal and Montbéliard, although they are better than those. I have only bought two sketchbooks of aquarium drawings, which will enable me to give new motifs to our engravers" (Aimé Humbert from Japan to his wife Marie, April 18, 1863, folder 12, *Aimé Humbert Papers*, Archives of the State of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel).

[19]   The exact number of visual works Humbert collected during his trip is unknown, but it is certain that 3,668 pieces were acquired from Humbert by François Turrettini (1845–1908) in 1871 (Doyen, Lorrain, and Mayor 2015, 204).

facsimile reproductions of the material collected in Japan. On many occasions the optical grid involves modifications under the aegis of perspective or light and shadow added to the depicted scene. According to the author, it was necessary to renew the perceptual paradigm (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 1, ii); however, he did not consider the modifications he oversaw contradicted the testimonial value of his monograph. In *Art and Illusion*, Ernst H. Gombrich ([1960] 1987, 96) admirably demonstrates that the standards of veracity for illustration and documentation vary according to eras. Humbert's point of view was symptomatic of the dominant discourse in Europe during his time. The perspective device, used in a Western context, had the power of representation and conformed to an established canon.[20]

Beyond the perceptual paradigm at play, the Swiss Minister was selecting, cutting,[21] juxtaposing, interweaving, organizing,[22] and assembling images in order to manage the production of the illustrations (Doyen, Lorrain, and Mayor 2015). As was clearly established by the *Imagine Japan* exhibition (Gonseth et al. 2015), Humbert hand-picked several images and sent them with instructions to the Parisian craftsmen in charge of creating the engravings. Humbert's guidelines demonstrate that he was numbering images and giving them titles, associating them with a specific page number where they should appear, selecting reference elements or sources that should be included in the engraving, and providing a more precise description when he deemed it necessary.[23] What is not mentioned by him, in one docu-

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[20] The position claimed by the author is indicative of a thought system based on a hegemonic organization of the visual that seeks to obtain a realistic effect, which becomes an increasingly powerful model in the visual world in the 19th century (Crary [1990] 1994, 24–25).

[21] Regarding the cutting of images, Humbert admits that: "I have begun to work bit by bit, my eyes wide open and a pair of scissors in my hand. If I discovered a good sketch, I would cut it out and put it aside. For the albums, I unstitched the binding, organised the engravings in subject order, and put the rest aside" (Aimé Humbert from Japan to his wife Marie, September 24, 1863, folder 11, letter no. 38, *Aimé Humbert Papers*, Archives of the State of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel).

[22] Regarding the classification of images, the Swiss Minister explains that: "After a few days of very patient, assiduous work, but which always keenly captured my curiosity, I have materially arrived at the following results in terms of classification: First choice pieces, handmade, [pieces] half that of school paper, miscellaneous subjects: [e.g.,] religious painting, genre scenes, animals, trees and flowers [...]. And regarding printed albums, I arranged them in groups, which fell into the following categories: 1. Bamboo studies. 2. Studies of other trees and various flowers. 3. Horses. 4. Storks. 5. Small birds and flowers. 6. Costumes, games, trades. 7. Screen paintings. 8. Chinese style paintings, and finally 9. a large bundle of religious subjects [...]" (Aimé Humbert from Japan to his wife Marie, September 24, 1863, folder 11, letter no. 38, *Aimé Humbert Papers*, Archives of the State of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel).

[23] The manuscript in La Chaux-de-Fonds contains instructions in the margin intended for the Parisian print workshop technicians. For instance: "N° 70) The norimon of the Mikado, (from the Japanese album by M. Roussin and the Japanese sheets indicating Table page 60. Notice

ment or another, should be potentially interpreted as the initiative of the Parisian workshop technicians, who had great freedom of execution (Gonseth et al. 2015, 176). The guidelines also uncover the author's vigilance with respect to the general sequence of the prints,[24] suggesting that they have partial autonomy from the text. The illustrations have their own coherent system; the act of turning pages implies a particular temporal perception of the contemplation of images and contributes to widening the field of vision. Even though adjustments might have been made by the publisher – constrained by editorial considerations – it seems that the Swiss diplomat had a significant degree of autonomy. The number of steps and people involved in this project do not affect Humbert's fundamental contribution. His investment in the creative process went beyond the simple selection of visual material; he transformed the iconographic corpus into a creative principle. The handwritten annotations directly penned on the corpus provide less information on the representations themselves than on their subsequent transformations into prints. The indications in red ink on the manuscript and the annotations left directly on the artwork bear witness to a form of montage. According to Daniel Bladet (1978, 125), "the montage is an act (and not a look), an act of interpreting reality." In his own way, Humbert made an act of interpreting the Japanese world he visited by assembling pieces from his own visual art collection. Humbert's contribution is fundamental because associating images is already creating a thought. Through this method, and with the help of the print workshop in Paris, he made an act of deliberate interpretation of the world he had witnessed.

In the section on the making of the images, I have sought to briefly reconstruct Humbert's artistic journey in order to highlight his creative contribution. The engravings of *Le Japon illustré* are analyzed in order below, according to the chapters and their appearance in the book.

3. Chapter 43 – "The *Matsuris*": Public girls, sacred girls

Humbert positions the city of Edo (renamed "Tokyo" in 1868) as the starting point for addressing the first form of prostitution, that of high-ranking courtesans. The whole sequence of prints in the chapter "The *Matsuris*" (*Les Matsouris*) (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 177–189) is dedicated to illustrating the diversity of the *matsuri*

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the women next to the doors. Custom indicated in the Roll of Fashion N° 4" (Humbert 1868b, vol. 1, 164). For another example: "N° 82) Hostel girls. Watercolors. N° 25 of shipping N° 9, Roussin collection, b. 61 – good hairstyle and n° 26 [space] ig [space] ig f.191" (Humbert 1868b, vol. 1, 178).

24 For instance: "Obs.) It does not really matter if the illustrations related to the funeral ceremonies are placed on the pages [I indicated], but rather that they follow each other in the indicated order, which is the order of these ceremonies" (Humbert 1868b, vol. 2, 297).

(祭り, "annual religious festivals") celebrations. The procession of Sannō is the object of a long text description by Humbert ([1870] 2005, 186–189). Indeed, this festival allowed the opportunity to see the seven most beautiful courtesans of the capital parading on the streets of the district. Their parade is introduced in a print titled *Sannoō Matsuri: lobster, courtesans, buffalo, rice* (*Matsouri de Sannoō: la langouste, les courtisanes, le buffle, le riz*; see Figure 1). The title is straightforward and clearly informs the reader about what is depicted. The engraving represents a panoramic view of the procession of these ladies whose presence can be seen at the center of the composition under their respective parasols.

Figure 1: Louis Crépon (?–?) and anonymous, *Sannoō Matsuri: lobster, courtesans, buffalo, rice*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 187)

The tailpiece *Procession of courtesans at the feast of the Sannoō temple (Cortège des courtisanes à la fête du temple Sannoō*; see Figure 2) closes the *matsuri* chapter. The tight angle on two of the seven women makes it possible to discover a faithful mirror play between the description of the text and the illustration. The lady with the war fan on the right, followed by the lady with a goldfish, are carefully portrayed by Humbert in the text, with special attention given to the extravagant clothes they wear.

The *matsuri* is an opportunity for Humbert to describe the procession in all its pomp and absurdity. Thus, it is a moment when the author explicitly shows his first disappointment with the local religion.

Due to their profession, courtesans were in the lowest rank of the socio-professional pyramid, under the name *hinin* (非人, "non-human"). In Japan, as in any societal group, a magico-religious cleavage separates soiled beings (穢れ *kegare*) from those that are not (Douglas ([1966] 1981). A relative or total exclusion is organized to avoid contact with the impure. The notion of impurity as it is developed in the context of prostitution was not homogeneous in Japanese society.[25] Since feudal times, the female sex trade has sometimes been linked

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[25] As the British anthropologist Mary Douglas ([1966] 1981) pointed out in her famous essay *Purity and Danger*, anything that contravenes the established order of a social group could become a form of impurity.

Figure 2: Louis Crépon (?–?) and Henry T. Hildibrand (1824–1897),
Procession of courtesans at the feast of the Sannoō temple, facsimile of a xylograph
(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 189)

with religious practice; therefore, those who sell their body convey a symbolic ambiguity, with a status oscillating between the sacred and the profane, or even between legality and illegality.[26] Indeed, during the Edo period, the sex trade was authorized under a regulatory system that varied over time and geographic area. In the second half of the Tokugawa reign (1730s–1868), it was a legal activity that prevailed inside the walls of the licensed pleasure quarters (遊客 *yūkaku*) and ex-tended to licensed teahouses outside of it, under certain requirements (Sone 1999). Even though the profession theoretically appears to have been practiced under strict conditions, a lax enforcement seems to have prevailed (Stanley 2012). Illegal activity was nonetheless recorded by the Japanese authorities under the qualifier *kakushi baita* (隠し売女) or "secret prostitution" and could be sanctioned (Sone 1999, 175). This name reflects the clandestine nature of what Sone Hiromi (1999) called "private prostitution," in contrast to the authorized "public prostitution" of licensed girls. Finally, the presence of courtesans at the Sannō *matsuri* illustrates a form of public prostitution and the complex and changeable nature of their symbolic position within society.

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[26] For further information about the connections between prostitution and religion, see Pons (1999, 30–106).

4. Chapter 48 – "The Teahouses of Asaksa": The leading figures of the floating world

After this first glimpse into one aspect of the life the most beautiful, high-ranking courtesans of Japan, Humbert comes back to this subject in the chapter "The Teahouses of Asaksa" (*Les maisons de thé d'Asaksa*) (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 243–252). In the description of Asaksa, a district of the city of Edo, the author refers to the different forms of entertainment that could be found there, especially with regard to the pleasure industry of the famous Shin-Yoshiwara quarters. This universe, spatially distant from the city center, was still not isolated from the cultural dynamism of the capital. The *yūkaku* subculture had won the enthusiasm of the crowds, and the depiction of the *yūjo* (遊女, "licensed courtesan") was a popular subject of ukiyo-e (浮世絵, "images of the floating world"), in which she was mainly glorified in idealized existence. Beautiful, graceful, and fashionable, she had become the heroine of this carefree, idle world at the edge of society. In "The Teahouses of Asaksa," Humbert begins by identifying the transversality of the pleasure industry through the figure of the customer. He explains that the more privileged customers could go to aristocratic teahouses whose ceremonial service immediately set them apart from other establishments. Humbert hastens to describe the luxury of these institutions reserved for the nobility.

Figure 3: Louis Crépon (?–?) and F. Pannemaker (?–?), *Aristocratic Teahouse*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 245)

The illustration *Aristocratic Teahouse* (*Maison de thé aristocratique*; see Figure 3) showcases the care dedicated to receiving clients. In the foreground, the action focuses on female figures arranged around a samurai in the narrow passage of a gallery. A *shinzo* (新造, "young female apprentice to a courtesan") in a black furisode (振袖, "long-sleeved kimono") is greeting the man by prostrating herself in front of him, while another woman is kneeling behind him, carrying his sword with gloved hands. The text painstakingly describes the ceremonial codes for receiving a high-status individual. The illustration is, once again, a faithful mirror of the story up to this point. What follows in the description of the image, however, does not appear in the written passage. The engraving represents the moment when a high-ranking courtesan makes her entrance to welcome her client, while the story does not mention it. A hanging scroll is unrolled on the left half of the background and divides the scene in two: on one side is the customer, on the other the *yūjo*. The object seems to establish a cleavage between the socially accepted universe of the samurai who is about to enter the "counter-world" (Pons 1999, 10) of the girl. The French journalist Philippe Pons (1999, 59) underlines the bonds created by courtesans between commoners and the court. Even if discriminated against, prostitutes did not necessarily have homogeneous positions in society, and some of them actively participated in the flow of cultural exchanges between social classes.

Figure 4: Louis Crépon (?–?) and anonymous, *On the Sidewalk of the Northern Road*, facsimile of a xylograph
(*Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 248*)

Figure 5: Louis Crépon (?–?) and Antoine V. Bernard (1824–?), *In the Vicinity of Theatres*, facsimile of a xylograph
(*Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 249*)

For the first time in his monograph, Humbert discusses in detail where and what kind of pleasures were indulged in by the gallant and libertine society of Japan. His discourse, however, does not linger long on their entertainment and slowly deviates to the status of lower-ranked sex workers with *On the Sidewalk of the Northern Road* (*Sur le trottoir de la route du nord*; see Figure 4), *In the Vicinity of Theatres* (*Dans le voisinage des théâtres*; see Figure 5), *In the Alleys* (*Dans les ruelles*; see Figure 6), *Nearby Bridges* (*Aux abords des ponts*; see Figure 7), and *Hostel Maids* (*Servantes d'auberge*; see Figure 8). The series introduces the established hierarchy of the working women the author kindly named "night walkers" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 251), in contrast to abovementioned high-raking courtesans who had no need to find their clients outside. All five engravings were illustrated by the same designer, Louis Crépon (?–?), who seems to have deliberately sought to

Figure 6: Louis Crépon (?–?) and Antoine V. Bernard (1824–?), *In the Alleys*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 250)

unify the style of those portraits to give a feeling of communitarian harmony.[27] He was most probably inspired by the ukiyo-e albums. For instance, *In the Vicinity of Theatres* presents a girl with a typical serpentine posture.[28] The twist of her body is reminiscent of those found in an ukiyo-e subcategory named *bijinga* (美人画, "images of beautiful people"), whose primary purpose is to highlight the knot of the *obi* (帯, "belt"), as much as the face of the individual represented.

Each image of the group illustrates the theme of prostitution by focusing on a "night walker." The group of scenes features full-length portraits in an out-

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[27] I am missing information to corroborate who would have had the initiative to harmonize (or to cause to be harmonized) the style of the group of illustrations: Crépon, Humbert, or someone else.

[28] It is difficult to verify which ukiyo-e Humbert would have asked Louis Crépon to draw from, as at least some of the missing objects of the original collection conserved in the MEN correspond to the source images of chapters 48 to 53 of *Le Japon illustré*. These are some of the key chapters in which Humbert develops his argument about prostitution in Japan, and we have no information about their content (Doyen, Lorrain, and Mayor 2015, 205–206).

Figure 7: Louis Crépon (?–?) and C. Laplante (?–?), *Nearby Bridges*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 251)

Figure 8: Louis Crépon (?–?) and Antoine V. Bernard (1824–?), *Hostel Maids*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 252)

door environment at night. The framing is inevitably focused on the body, each time dramatizing the subject in close-up because it is her body that is constantly brought into play. This body is contextualized in the universe to which it belongs, far from the idealization exalted by most ukiyo-e woodblock prints. These bodies are "over-exposed" (*sur-exposé*), as per the expression of the French philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman (2012).[29] When a series of portraits is unified by a common approach, the whole takes on a community and civic dimension (Didi-Huberman 2012). The plebs are exposed as themselves. Each woman presents a separate subject. Their portraits give an indication of individual sovereignty, an individuality that was intentionally granted to them. Moreover, this series of illustrations does not follow the hierarchical order established by Humbert in the narration. The ranking is not

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[29] George Didi-Huberman intentionally uses a dash in "over-exposed" to separate "over" (*sur*) from "exposed" (*exposé*) in order to stress the type of exposure, brilliantly opening a space for questioning the disparity between over- and under-exposure. As Didi-Huberman (2012) argues, they should be two opposite words in meaning, but in fact they are not so far from each other.

maintained because the essence of his discourse is probably not to be found in the variations of their status. To illustrate his argument, Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 2, 252) uses an interrogative rhetorical form that involves the reader:

> But where shall we find the last vestige of abject misery? Is it to be seen in the impoverished girl, who, on account of her landlady, wanders by the bridges, all the while shivering and barely decently covered in a garment woven from thin cotton? Or should we seek it out in the depths of Sin-Yosiwara's abyss?

It seems that Humbert does not really attempt to define the worst form of prostitution. He observes that while there is a hierarchy of prostitution, in which some sex workers are elevated to a higher status, the miserable conditions of the prostitutes are shared by all within this hierarchy equally. In this aspect, the series of images is essential to the speech. As a genre, the series represents a perpetual tension between its singularity and its fusion into the group, and it constantly plays on both sides of this dynamic. The individual portraits therefore each represent a singular misfortune, but their serialization shows that there is no distinction or hierarchy possible in a situation that Humbert considers tantamount to slavery.[30] The portraits bring together members of the same corporation, the same discrimination, the same human "misery" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 252). In this chapter, Humbert does not use pathos in the narration; he wants the reader to freely reach his same conclusions through the force of his rhetoric.

5. Chapter 51 – "Sin-Yosiwara": Exhibiting prostitution

From this chapter on, under the depiction of the Swiss Minister Plenipotentiary, Shin-Yoshiwara,[31] flagship of the *ukiyo* (浮世, "the floating world") culture, renowned quarter of social entertainment, essential meeting place for *iro-otoko* (色男, "dandies"), was losing its charm. It is through the description of this famous place that Humbert sets up the scene in order to answer the questions he posed at the end of the chapter "The Teahouses of Asaksa." His rhetorical questions were, in fact, a springboard to continue the description of this universe in a chapter fully dedicated to this notorious district (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 275–287).

To aspire to the highest ranks, a courtesan had to have a good sense of repartee and practice various arts with talent, in addition to possessing beauty and grace.

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30 Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 2, 252). The author continues to be vague about women's condition of slavery when explaining their work environment, partly because he will provide further explanations in Chapter 51, "Sin-Yosiwara" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 275–287).

31 In *Le Japon Illustré*, Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 1–2) refers to "Shin-Yoshiwara" (吉原) as "Sin-Yosiwara." This is also the title of this chapter (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 275–287).

Dancing and singing had to be mastered because she would be called upon to perform and entertain clients during her career. The engraving *The Butterfly Ballet at the Gankiro Theatre* (*Le ballet des papillons au théâtre du Gankiro*; see Figure 11) represents a children's theatre where young dancers from seven to thirteen years old are training on stage (Humbert [1870] 2005, 280). Humbert explains that they are under the teaching of emeritus courtesans, but the illustration depicts a rather distracted audience of several courtesans. The main subject (the one mentioned in the title) is relegated to the background in order to highlight the female audience in the foreground. The five women symbolize the different stages of a high-ranking courtesan's lifetime, from a little *kamuro* (禿, "young woman in apprenticeship") to a *yarite* (遣手, "middle-aged woman who served as a matron, teacher, or female chaperone of courtesans"). It is a microcosm that is presented in the foreground, an autonomous system, closed in on itself. At the same time, the butterfly costumes of the dancers are a reminder that beauty – and the resulting status of those who possess it – are fleeting.

Day and night, the spectacle of the floating world takes its course. *Sin Yosiwara Private Walk* (*La promenade réservée de Sin-Yosiwara*; see Figure 10) shows the quietness of the streets of Shin-Yoshiwara during the daytime. The building seems to extend to infinity due to the use of a markedly cavalier perspective, evocative of certain types of *vedute*. Courtesans dawdle there while a few men walk on the street, but at this time of day, they are the minority. It is quite different at night – as evidenced by *The Restaurant of Gankiro* (*Le restaurant du Gankiro*; see Figure 12) – when the streets are taken over by a throng of individuals from different social classes. The impression of a tumultuous crowd is accentuated by the absence of a focal point and the close framing on a building; people dance, dine, feast, parade, converse, seduce, and negotiate under the lantern lights. The image is saturated by a great variety of events happening simultaneously. Like an onlooker, the viewer does not know where to look, alienated by the spectacle of the floating world.

"Every now and then, in the midst of night-time revelry, a grim rumor of a bloody catastrophe suddenly reveals the abyss that has been veiled with decorations and flowers in these cursed places" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 283). The (at first glance) pleasant appearance of these sites hides a sordid reality that Humbert wishes the reader to pay attention to. This chapter presents a darkness that the preceding ones do not. Using metaphors and hyperboles, Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 2, 284) testifies to the alarming state of health of these places: "Dante's hell, in contrast to certain existences, fades away before the horror of this reality." The idealized images of *Sin-Yosiwara Private Walk*, *The Butterfly Ballet at the Gankiro Theatre*, and *The Restaurant of Gankiro* described above are not intended to deceive the reader. They attest to the seduction of this extraordinary universe; Humbert agrees that one can be deceived by the welcoming aspect of

Figure 9: Louis Crépon (?–?) and C. Laplante (?–?), *Exhibition Room*,
facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 275)

Figure 10: Emile Thérond (1821–?) and Henry T. Hildibrand (1824–1897), *Sin-Yosiwara
Private Walk*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 277)

the neighborhood. The illusion is absolute when "all these rooms are illumin-
ated, decorated with flowers, animated by gatherings, songs, and board games,
it seems that family celebrations follow one another from door to door until the
two ends of the street" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 283). The visual appearance
of prestige clashes with the tone of the chapter, which creates a disparity with the
images, but also with two engravings, one that opens and the other that closes
the sequence of illustrations of this chapter. The frontispiece above the title and
the tailpiece appear in a darker register, ultimately closer in substance to the tale
developed in the text.

Placed on the front page of the chapter, the image titled *Exhibition Room* (*Salle
d'exhibition*; see Figure 9) links to the questions left unanswered at the end of the

Figure 11: Emile Thérond (1821–?) and Félix J. Gauchard (1825–1872),
The Butterfly Ballet at the Gankiro Theatre, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 281)

chapter "The Teahouses of Asaksa." The viewpoint of the scene is at the level of the roadway, at a distance that allows a complete view of the ground floor of the building and of the pedestrian path that borders it. A row of openings (腰 *kōshi*) runs along the facade to allow viewing the girls in the room, which was a typical design of exhibition rooms. These rooms served as parlors where prostitutes were showcased and waited to be chosen by clients.[32] To Westerner eyes, vertical openings have a similar shape to prison bars, which gives a sense of a lack of freedom.[33] In the background of the image, a halo of light emerges from the openings, accentuating the contrast between the interior and the exterior of the building. The *chiaroscuro* gives a surge effect and creates a visual barrier, which prevents the gaze from clearly seeing what is happening inside. The scene is relayed by

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[32] According to a study by Cecilia Segawa Seigle (1993, 233), exhibition rooms seem to have been the standard ground floor of teahouses since the late 18th century. An establishment's rank was identifiable by its *magaki* (籬), the partition between the entrance and the trellised parlor. Even high-ranking courtesans were subject to this practice of exposure, although they did not make appointments or negotiate directly with clients, as others did.

[33] In *Un voyage autour du Japon*, published six years before *Le Japon illustré*, Rodolphe Lindau (1864, 57–58) tells how he observed, on his way to a *matsuri* festival in Edo, young prostitutes exposed in "windows." He qualifies them as "curious animals" and "trained animals." Lindau uses two animal metaphors to accentuate the inhumanity of their treatment. The Prussian writer's description is undoubtedly exacerbated by the architecture of the place, which reinforces this impression of imprisonment.

passers-by who see what we, as onlookers, cannot see. A mise en abyme of the gaze is achieved in the composition, which returns us to our condition of simple observers of this universe.

Below the engraving, the text is constructed in rhetorical pathos. The author evokes the fate of a resourceless mother who finds herself in the obligation to sell her child, because "to send a young girl to Gankiro, it is to save her from destitution and to delay, for a few years perhaps, the mother's own ruin" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 279). This anecdote operates as a testimony to the miserable origins of prostitution. Hence, Humbert demonstrates that sex work does not result *de facto* from voluntary servitude. On the contrary, according to him, it is a state undergone by a fellow human being sold, raised

Figure 12: Louis Crépon (?–?) and Henry T. Hildibrand (1824–1897), *The Restaurant of Gankiro*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 285)

in an unsuitable environment, and exploited until the end of her contract. This chapter addresses an essential question about the origin of prostitution. The discourse slides from glory to misery or, by means of two terms developed by Didi-Huberman (2012), it moves from "over-exposed" (*sur-exposé*) to "under-exposed" (*sous-exposé*) people. In light of the theory developed by the French philosopher in his essay *Peuples figurés, peuples figurants*, extreme overexposure makes it impossible to see because "too much light blinds" (Didi-Huberman 2012, 15). At the other extreme, people stay in the shadow of exposure, negated and censored.[34] Such over- and under-exposure outline two sides of a same coin

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[34] Didi-Huberman (2012, 15) is highlighting an existing threat to people's "representation—

Figure 13: Louis Crépon (?–?)
and Paul A. Fournier (1847–?),
*Gigokoō, the Lady of the
Underworld*, facsimile of
a xylograph

*(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005,
vol. 2, 287)*

that represents voiceless people. Humbert wants to lift the veil on the unspoken, on what is hidden beneath the decorations of the pleasure districts. The backdrop allows him to detail a fundamental notion to his discourse on female slavery for the first time.

The chapter ends with a full-length portrait of Gigokoō, a *yūjo* known for her beauty, but also for her cruelty. Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 2, 283) tells us that she unscrupulously brags about her love for money and luxury, and about the number of men who have committed suicide on her behalf. Titled *Gigokoō, the Lady of the Underworld* (*Gigokoô, la dame des enfers*; see Figure 13), the engraving painstakingly follows up on the elements depicted in the narration. The symbols of her power are manifold: among others, the armchair, which, by its size, is analogous to a throne, the embroideries of her garment, which depict scenes from the underworld to which she belongs, and the fly swatter that she holds, which looks like a carved scepter. All these elements deliberately add to the demonic power Humbert describes. They might even resonate with Christian iconography for the Western reader for whom the image is intended. The illustration probably invites reflection on the nature of this type of trysts, at the same time announcing the disastrous outcome for those who would be tempted by them.

In this chapter, the sequence of images plays on its potential, an alternately revealing but also fallacious and misleading artifice. However, it is Humbert's text which is most indicative of his view of slavery and prostitution. The text takes a moral and authoritative tone, positioning Humbert as an advocate and crusader for the predicament of women in the slave trade. In this text his voice is one of moral and social concern.

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political, aesthetic—and even, as too often happens, to their very existence." He adds that: "Under-exposure deprives us of the means to see, quite simply, what it could be about" (Didi-Huberman 2012, 15).

In this chapter, the development of the narrative shifts from over-exposed prostitution to the hidden, under-exposed aspect, which is now revealed to the reader. The dramatic intensity of the discourse about the sold child leads to a new step in the discussion of servitude and its involuntary aspect, which is a subject infrequently mentioned by travelers writing about Japan.

6. Chapter 59 – "A Transitory Colony": The *mousmé*

The chapter "A Transitory Colony" (*Une colonie transitoire*) (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 369–378) begins with the 1863 conflict between Japan and England following the Namamugi incident. Humbert engages with the issue relating to the restriction that confined foreigners to specific zones around designated ports in Japan, better known as treaty ports.

The illustrations in this chapter, however, are in discrepancy with the storytelling because the majority represent independent portraits of *mousmés*. In the 1860s, the term *mousmé* was certainly not commonly used outside the Japanese colony of Yokohama and was a novelty when published in Humbert's monograph. Indeed, it is generally accepted that the word could be found in the French language since the 1887 publication of *Madame Chrysanthème* by Pierre Loti (Ortolang 2021). Its etymological origin is linked to the Japanese word *musume* (娘) which means "a young girl" in a filial sense. Its use in French is based on a similar semantic field, the parental aspect being, however, absent from the definition. The French term is even tinted with a gallantry that the Japanese one lacks. Although Loti's novel was an immense success that contributed to the circulation of the word in France, the common belief that he introduced the world to the French language should be reassessed, considering that it was introduced as early as 1870 with the publication of *Le Japon illustré*.

Figure 14: Gustave Staal (1817–1882) and Antoine V. Bernard (1824–?), *Mousmé of Yokohama*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 370)

In the context of the novelty of this word in the 1870s, it could be argued that the first two prints of *mousmés* might have aroused readers' curiosity. Their interest was potentially increased by their lack of knowledge about the definition of the term "*mousmé*" that titles the depictions. Indeed, *Mousmé of Yokohama* (*Mousmé de Yokohama*; see Figure 14) and *Mousmés Sleeping* (*Mousmés dormant*; see Figure 15) interfere with the storytelling, creating a gap between the text and the image. The titles represent lexical enigmas that contribute to the general intrigue and dynamism of the chapter. It is only after the second illustration of a *mousmé* that her identity is revealed.

The author introduces the subject of private prostitution by stating that during his stay in Yokohama, the colony was mostly made up of unmarried young men. These foreign residents hired maidens, or *mousmés*, as housekeepers. The distinguishing characteristic of these employees, however, resided in that: "whatever position they [the maidens] occupy, they [the masters] surround them with the same respect as married women" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 376). The definition given by Humbert introduces an ambiguity to the profession exercised by the *mousmés*. They are young female workers that might accept intercourse with their master, but the way Humbert structures his sentence is interesting to analyze further. It seems clear that the use of "they" in the second part of the sentence implies that the action comes from the men and the situation is not the responsibility of the object pronoun "them," which passively undergoes the action. The sentence construction discharges the *mousmés* of any ploys. This information is essential; the maid's behavior is dictated by her master's, as is customary in relations of domination. Humbert emphasizes the fact that this form of private prostitution is the responsibility of the Western men and not of the female domestic workers.

Figure 15: Gustave Staal (1817–1882) and Antoine V. Bernard (1824–?), *Mousmé of Yokohama*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 370)

According to the author, the *mousmés* were not completely innocent either. Humbert warns that they could take advantage of the emotional situation that bound them to their employer to attain a new financial position for themselves and their family. The author cautions that this situation could promptly become harmful to the Western men.

The woodcut *Mousmé with her Child* (*Mousmé avec son enfant*; see Figure 16) features a Japanese woman carrying her little boy on her back, according to the local custom. The passage of the book the print illustrates is set slightly back, so that the reader might first be surprised by this unconventional depiction of the child. Indeed, the latter is not shaved, as was common, which highlights his fair hair. With this indicative detail, the viewer might realize – and the story will confirm it – that the little boy is the fruit of an illegitimate union between a foreigner and his *mousmé*. The author then emphasizes the fatal consequences the birth of such a child could entail.

Throughout the monograph, the figure of a woman carrying her child on her back has appeared many times, constituting a system of signs that becomes a symbolic system. Since the first appearance of a mother carrying her child in the print *Japanese Women Going for a Visit*

Figure 16: Adrien Marie (1848–1891) and Johann J. Ettling (?–?), *Mousmé with her child*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 377)

(Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 1, 74), the child on the back becomes a strong attribute of Japanese motherhood. This symbol is bypassed in *Mousmé with her Child*. Even though the maiden is a mother (the title endorses it), her offspring is deemed socially unacceptable and society will reject him. The graphically prevailing maternal praise is made impossible by the tenor of the text.

The final print, *Mousmé of Yokohama* (*Mousmé de Yokohama*; see Figure 17), presents a standing woman leaning on the back of a Western seat with a seemingly vacant stare. As the tailpiece, the image could illustrate the situation following the funeral rites performed after the death of an illegitimate child, described in the text. Her haggard attitude, in contrast to the gaze of the *mousmé* in the first print of this chapter (see Figure 14), could result from the loss of her baby. A moralizing interpretation could also be possible: a housekeeper must remain in her place, literally standing behind and symbolically at the service of her master. If everyone fulfils his or her role, no tragic issue should arise. Between the lines, Humbert seems to make male readers aware of their responsibility and encourages the "disciplinarization of bodies," as defined by Michel Foucault (1975, 159–200). The Swiss

Figure 17: Gustave Staal (1817–1882) and Jean-Marie J. J. Huyot (1841–1921), *Mousmé of Yokohama*, facsimile of a xylograph

(Source: Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 378)

diplomat maintains a discourse that does not incriminate anyone in particular and condemns the system as a whole: those who generate it, those who manage it, and those who profit from it.

The chapter "A Transitory Colony" addresses the problems linked to the prostitution of domestic workers. The figure of the *mousmé* is a way for Humbert to approach the delicate issue of private prostitution with decency and with the seemliness of his time. The author formulates an impartial critique by placing all individuals on equal footing regarding their responsibilities. Over the entire monograph, Humbert's method spares neither over- nor under-exposed forms of prostitution from his criticism. With the double material support of text and image, *Le Japon illustré* seeks to shape a perspective and conquer readers by arousing their own revulsion when faced with the misery generated by institutionalized – as well as secret – prostitution in Japan. Each graphic unit adds to the global discourse that has been built throughout the book.

The next two sections examine how speech modalities contribute to the overall strategy established by Humbert. Through the written word, he laid the foundations for a sharp critique of a system that allowed prostitution.

7. A book in service of a cause

This paper has hitherto shown how the selection of wood prints serves to unfold in their materiality, their aestheticism, and their dialogical relationship with the text, but the autonomous evolution of the written tale has been neglected. This investigation aims to identify a few key words that reflect the structural model of the author's thoughts on the trade of women's bodies.

The theme of prostitution is gradually introduced in *Le Japon illustré*. The timing of the story allows Humbert to develop a global understanding of this phenomenon. The strategy of a gradual narrative is suitable for transcribing a nat-

ural feeling of a progressive discovery. Both surprising and menacing, his first impressions of Japan progressively give way to a greater familiarization with the Japanese society. In a way, the timing of the narration tries to respect the timing of the progressive discovery of the archipelago, and the specific theme of prostitution follows the same strategy.

Before the *matsuri* parades, the Swiss legation went to the south of Yokohama Bay to visit the Kamakura temple. An incident disturbed their visit, when a monk tapped on a member's shoulder and offered him a young girl groveling at his feet (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 1, 239). Humbert does not use this episode to broach the subject of sex work. The narrator retains his role of simple observer, without further comment on what happened. For the first time in his account, an obvious example brings together the world of prostitution and religion.

On various occasions, the Swiss Minister emphasizes the diversity of honest teahouses established in the capital, to better distinguish them from the brothels (also named "teahouses" or *maisons de thé*) (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 1, 71, 215–216, 324; vol. 2, 45) he plans to present in the chapter "The Teahouses of Asaksa." Indeed, Humbert gets to the heart of the subject with the description of an aristocratic teahouse. The division of tasks within the establishment is the starting point for explaining the hierarchy of the courtesan classes that could be found in the Asaksa district. Humbert thus reveals what he deems to be the terrible living conditions of the women working there. He explains that prostitutes were subject to the double supervision of the pimp and the government, from which they could hardly be freed. Their situation under patronage was a form of oppression that he qualifies as "slavery." The author also condemns the corruption of the local administration, which he considers driven, above all, by the lure of profit from the taxes levied on this economy. In addition, he regrets that the shogunal power was not concerned about the repercussions of prostitution on public health (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 252).

Humbert continues the deployment of his discourse with the most emblematic of the *yūkaku*: Shin-Yoshiwara. In this chapter, all the key words of the author's indictment converge. First, there is the word "slavery," which appears again. The condition of courtesans is compared to that of "Black" people:

> Thus it is with this kind of slavery, as can be witnessed with the enslavement of Black people or as can be seen with all abuse that stems from brutality. These misdeeds are avenged by their own consequences to the point where an excess of evil brings about the downfall of the institution that has created it. (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 283)

The downfall referred to by the author was undoubtedly inspired by the recent history of the United States of America. The question of the abolition of the slave trade led to the Civil War (1861–1865) and the defeat of the slavers. Humbert impli-

citly announces the fall of the Japanese powers that authorized what he considers female slavery. Then, the "excess of evil" Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 2, 283) mentions refers to the abuse of power he judges some people to exert for their own benefits and to the detriment of the freedom of others. The end of this passage on prostitution leads the reader to reflect on the relations of domination between human beings beyond the notions of race or gender. Talking about the condition of "Blacks" places the discourse on a more global scale and, in that sense, his viewpoint reflects a position that coincides with the abolitionist movement of his time.

Humbert does not forget to mention that the process of domination could shift when a courtesan took advantage of a man and imposed her authority on him. In particular, he describes the *yūjo* Gigokoō, who is the only explicitly greedy and cruel courtesan identifiable in a print of *Le Japon illustré*. Its author tacitly suggests that her behavior is the product of her environment. For instance, he uses the word "contagious" and complains about how the "vice city" of Shin-Yoshiwara could "ravage younger generations" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 283). For him, Gigokoō was the result of system that promoted economic gain to the detriment of social morality. His judgement of Japanese society accepting the opening of these vice cities is nuanced; he explains that cruel women were not free from trial by the mob, confirming that those behaviors were not commonly accepted (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 284).

The second key word is "female servitude" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 284). The concept is used to describe the subjugation of sex workers in order to invite the reader to question, once again, the legitimacy of any authority over individuals. Third, the term "prostitution" is used in relation to religion:

> Thus it is, that Buddhism, if fed by speculative genius, will tolerate [...] prostitution, in all its organized forms to any degree, to its being accessible without judgement or limit to all classes of people—including that of the traffic of young children, or indeed, of children of any age. The notion of coming-of-age as a right is a mere illusion, should it clash with the will of parents. (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 276)

The single use of "prostitution" over the entire monograph accentuates its use value. Under the weight of this word, the discourse is transformed and the disapproval of the author becomes fiercer. The Buddhist religion is clearly the essence of the problem for Humbert. Judgements against Buddhism appear gradually, with the same strategy employed as for prostitution. The two concepts are doomed to be linked together as of the incident with the monk in Kamakura, followed by the passage about the *matsuri* that happens to affirm the tenuous connection existing between religion and prostitution. The image of the courtesans' parade functions as a visual tell-tale sign.

Between "The Teahouses of Asaksa" and "Sin-Yosiwara," the chapter of "Asaksa-téra" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 253–261) recalls the link between the sex trade and the religious universe. Apart from the parades, Japanese temples annually promoted prostitution by exhibiting portraits of the seven most beautiful courtesans of Edo on their walls, alongside statues of the Buddhist pantheon (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 258).

Then, in the chapter "Asaksa's Fair," Humbert ([1870] 2005, vol. 2, 268) begins blaming the local religion, qualifying it as a "bastard religion." He goes on to designate religious literature "as a narcotic that makes man a sort of perpetual sleepwalker" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 268). This meaningful metaphor evokes Karl Marx's ([1843] 1998) theory of the alienation of people by religion. Humbert seems to share with the German philosopher a feeling of religious misery when he observes Buddhist practices. The Japanese religion is weighed down by a plethora of derogatory terms, whereas the denunciation of prostitution in "Asaksa-téra" works with a reverse system, mentioning a few relatively decent words, such as "courtesan" or "privileged" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 258). Nevertheless, the force of the indictment is increased tenfold with the use, unique and powerful, of the word "prostitution."

Ultimately, "Sin-Yosiwara" is the chapter where all the most elementary and fundamental notions of a critical discourse about prostitution converge. Everything comes together in Shin-Yoshiwara because this *yūkaku* had become an icon of the floating world and, as such, a symbol to be destroyed. By portraying what is hidden behind the curtains, Humbert uncovers the abject misery which some women lived in. For him, the teahouse makes possible a breakthrough into the pleasure slums. Language, like depiction, materializes the position taken by the author. The two modes of expression underlie a common strategy of denunciation that each develops in parallel, while simultaneously apprehending a dialogic form between them.

8. When the carnal body meets the social body

To persuade the readers of the horrors of female slavery, the strategy identified in *Le Japon illustré* is that of slowly introducing depictions of daily life and the struggles of the female sex workers described. The districts where the girls were kept, the system for selling children, their daily life, their servitude, the collaboration of Buddhist priests, and the government's incitement to debauchery – none of these escape Humbert's vehement critique. Nevertheless, the author did not choose to end his argument at the climax he reached in the chapter "Sin-Yosiwara." A shift from the capital to the treaty port area takes place where, against all expectations, the author decides to end his critique.

The chapter "A Transitory Colony" holds a decisive place, as it is the endmost sequence of the print series related to sex work. Having examined a variety of categories of public girls who exercised their work in teahouses, streets, or exhibition rooms, "A Transitory Colony" stands out by speaking about secret prostitution. Humbert describes the living conditions of under-exposed women, forced to sell their bodies in the shadow of another profession. In this sense, private prostitution is a radical thematic novelty materialized by the figure of the *mousmé*. Half-servant, half-married woman, as Humbert describes her, she had an ambivalent function. The ambiguity of her role, however, is matched only by that of her master, and it is very precisely the man's conduct that Humbert wishes to address. As of the end of the "Sin-Yosiwara" chapter (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 287), a reversal of the criticism is clearly announced in the last four paragraphs:

> Veils of mystery cover public morality in ways which shield and condemn simultaneously. The observation of conventional behavior has a greater impact on us than any interest we might invest in justice and humanity.

> Female slavery, even in those countries where it appears that such slavery may be carried out on a voluntary basis, is the most insidious form of oppression possible.

> Any legislation which does not outlaw such a practice is unworthy of being recognized as a proponent of the principled behavior on which our century prides itself.

> If the actions of the Japanese *gankiros*[35] were truly put into practice and the consequences thereof justly analyzed, no flattering comparisons for Western Civilization could be drawn. Indeed, the West would urge us to shun any such terms of comparison.

When reading this passage, the idea (dear to Humbert) of consistency between principles and actions is essential; everybody must firmly condemn prostitution to become true guarantors of the fundamental values of the 19th century. Humbert first proceeds to an inventory of public mores that are incomprehensible to him. In the same impetus, he presents himself as a member of a social group – Westerners – to better move away from it and address a critique to his fellow members. The effectiveness of the text lies in that it encompasses all individuals who do not walk the talk. In the first place, the author blames his fellow writers,

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[35] Gankiro (岩亀楼) was a famous teahouse in the Miyozaki District of Yokohama. Humbert mentioned it with a capital letter, but he also repeatedly mentioned any generic courtesan's teahouse as "*gankiro*," as is the case here. The use of the word as a common name can be interpreted either as a term used in the Japanese colony of Yokohama to refer to a certain type of teahouse or as a personal choice (consciously or mistakenly) by Humbert.

whose travelogues about Japan abound in comments about modesty and who take umbrage at the gender diversity reigning in *sentō* (銭湯, "public bath establishments") but apparently collectively fail to describe the situation undergone by prostitutes. Even though this situation should have been detrimental to the values that Humbert and his colleagues supposedly share as representatives of "modern" society, the latter do not mention it. Then, in the second place, the author attacks the legislative and judicial authorities before extending his criticism to the whole of Western civilization, which does not prohibit sex work as a form of slavery. The singular audacity of this passage initiates a shift in Humbert's upcoming critiques of Western behavior.

In the final sequence, "A Transitory Colony," Humbert's accusations are still valid, but they are softened, almost insidious. It should be kept in mind that the practices of his time did not allow people to write freely about prostitution, and even less so when they condemned the behavior of their potential readers.[36] To compensate for this constraint, he relies on the power of representation to transmit his critical message. The arrangement of the portraits of the *mousmés* accentuates the individuality of those that Walter Benjamin ([1870] 1991, 356) calls "the nameless."[37] The general content of the story of this chapter, which tends towards universalism, also becomes more anecdotal, sublimated by the omnipresence of the *mousmés*. In the text, Humbert tries to identify the conduct of a Western man and a Japanese woman by focusing impartially on the wrongs of each. Ultimately, Humbert nevertheless seeks to demonstrate that men's actions have implications in the prostitution of housekeepers. Their disgrace culminates with the woodprint *Mousmé with her Child*. At this remarkably simple level of visual reading, the child represents factual, irrefutable proof of misconduct with a *mousmé*. In the end, treaty ports, where most Europeans lived, failed to shield them from some form of sex trade or another. Humbert requests the reader's attention to focus on the licentiousness of certain foreigners and the disastrous consequences their irresponsibility could entail.

When the Swiss Minister looked at Japanese courtesans, he did not fall into the trap of seeing "the birth of humanity" (Boyer 2011, 19) in indigenous practices that seduced many ethnographers, amateur and professional. It could be argued that his discourse embraces a colonial approach, and he clearly advocated for Japan's necessary transition to a "modern" system. Even if he saw the world through

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[36] As highlighted previously, Humbert only mentions the word "prostitution" once in the entire book *Le Japon illustré* (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 276).

[37] As Walter Benjamin ([1870] 1991, 356) claims: "It is harder to honor the memory of the nameless (*das Gedächtnis der Namenlosen*) than that of the famous [passage crossed out: celebrated people, poets, and thinkers are not the exception]. Historical construction is dedicated to the memory of the nameless."

the lens of Western imperialist superiority, Humbert went beyond this *topos* and opened his eyes to the condition of prostitutes both in the Far Est and the West. In other words, his stay in Japan functioned as a primer that sensitized him to the universal injustice of the trafficking of women. Art historian Eleanor M. Hight (2011) accurately describes Humbert as a man who stands out for his countercurrent views on women. The written work he left to posterity, and which cannot be reduced to *Le Japon illustré*, proves that he was concerned about women's living conditions as few men were at the end of the 19th century.

Humbert left various records of the fight he led on his return from Japan. In particular, he tried to create awareness about sexually transmissible diseases (1877). Public health was not his only preoccupation. He also wrote about the White Slave Trade (*Traite des Blanches*), which encompassed all forms of slavery suffered by "White" female individuals. For instance, the article "Traite des Blanches. Les émules en Autriche-Hongrie" ("White Slave Trade. Emulators in Austria-Hungary") (Humbert 1883) focuses on the fate of household children placed in Switzerland to work and who found themselves confined against their will, as well as mistreated, by their foster families. For Humbert, these incidents make evident that slavery in any form and for any duration is intolerable and must be legally condemned. Hence, as of his return from his diplomatic mission to Japan, the politician was involved in the defense of fundamental rights through his written work.

Humbert did not content himself with making his voice heard by publishing articles, but he also acted as a spokesman. In 1875, his introductory speech during the *Conference on Public Morality*, held in Neuchâtel's Bellevue hotel in the presence of Josephine Butler, was the starting point for the fight of the Swiss man against the White Slave Trade in Europe. On the evening of the 1875 conference, an action committee was formed to look after the interests of public morality. This conference was followed by several others organized by Humbert. In 1877, Geneva became the seat of Butler's movement, which changed its name from British Continental and General Federation for the Abolition of the State Regulation of Vice to become the International Abolitionist Federation (IAF), which aimed to abolish state regulation of prostitution with different programs between members. Humbert was given the position of continental commissioner and later secretary general of the federation.[38] Along with his dedication to the IAF, Humbert and his wife founded Les Amies des Jeunes Filles ("The Friends of Young Girls"), an organization similar to Butler's that offered assistance to girls travelling alone in search of work and helped with the social reintegration of sex workers by training them for other professions.

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[38] Humbert's official biographer, Quartier-la-tent (1900, 40), confirms that he "displayed considerable activity […] in this work."

The IAF's fight is one of the oldest feminist movements known to date. One point must be noted, however, about the disparity that reigned within the federation. Butler's own position "on the state regulation of prostitution was rigorously and consistently liberal" (Summers 2006, 217), a view that was not shared by all members. Consequently, IAF programs varied significantly between and within the federations. For instance, the Social Purity group in Switzerland found it more interesting to focus its discourse on the degradation of public morality and private life. Humbert followed the Social Purity movement, whose philosophy is blatantly apparent in *Le Japon illustré* and his later writings.

9. Conclusion

At the end of this study on *Le Japon illustré*, intended to be an analytical essay on the material employed by Aimé Humbert to denounce Japanese prostitution, I would like to present three points of conclusion. First, Humbert's position seems to be embodied in the language, the words, and the literary composition used. Then, it appears materialized in the illustrations created with his crucial role as an assembler. Ultimately, it is the total monographic work that allows the reader to grasp the relationships that arise from the perception of an aesthetic and a narrative. The two intertwined forms of discourse show that they were alternately in movement, in tension, mirroring each other, but never purely independent. In that sense, *Le Japon illustré* is an accomplished illustrated book where the reader can appreciate how the author made the most of the contemporary wood print production available both in Japan and in France.

Initially, the Swiss diplomat and the legation he headed reached Japan with the main mission of defending the economic interests of their country; however, the ratification of a treaty was compromised by local conflicts, freezing negotiations with Switzerland. The postponement of talks was profitable for Humbert's publishing project; his long stay in the archipelago, as well as the remarkable diversity of visual materials he collected, would serve as a monographic project that quickly took over the article.

The reconstruction of Humbert's artistic journey, from the sources he collected to the final printed object, shows the substantial work he carried out. He was already flirting with the artistic with his triple role as a traveler, writer, and collector. However, the most noteworthy of his creative phases is the montage, through which he shows that associating images is already creating a thought. From image hunter to editor to layout manager, Humbert undoubtedly played a transversal role in the production of illustrations that crystalized his viewpoint on Japanese society at the end of the Tokugawa regime.

Guided by his own values, the Swiss traveler begins his monograph by reflecting on the concept of slavery through the figure of the courtesan. He describes his progressive discovery of the relationships between religion, institutions, and prostitution. He tries to make the reader attentive to the social scourge that contravened "the interests of justice and humanity" (Humbert [1870] 2005, vol. 2, 287). To accompany his textual argument, the depictions become plural. Through this process, Humbert seeks to acquire various perspectives to report on the polysemy of the female sex trade. The hierarchical presentation of courtesans begins from its top, with the description of the high-ranking *yūjo* of the Sannō *matsuri*, then, with aristocratic teahouse workers, and so on until the order brings the depiction to its breaking point. The last ranks of women's abject misery are not exposed to the gaze because their exhibition would not help to highlight the core of the matter. The ladder of sex workers ultimately matters little to the author. Prostitution seems to have no valid hierarchy for him; this was a profession exercised only by women and ostensibly differentiated them from free individuals, and, as such, should be eradicated.

The information on Japanese prostitution presented here is intended to provide a reference for the thought system of a man who thoroughly exploited the possibilities offered by a medium – the illustrated book – to convey his message. The author's position on prostitution as a nadir for women, as well as his broader cultural assumptions considering the promotion of some social patterns over others, could be questioned from a modern perspective. His discourse on the stigmatization of sex work needs to be addressed, but this was not the aim of this paper and I invite further research on this matter.

Some observations, however, can be tentatively proposed. While Humbert's arguments can be qualified as being rooted in patriarchal and colonial beliefs, he provided a way to bring awareness to the social condition surroundig sex work during this period. Through his critique, Humbert not only unveiled the suffering of some courtesans, but also gave a voice to the illegal, unspoken, and under-exposed face of prostitution. His prosecution went beyond the Far East and opened to a broader scale, including the part of the world that he came from. After the publication of his monograph about Japan, his meeting with Josephine Butler worked to highlight the necessity of continuing this fight. He became involved in Butler's movement in 1875, participating actively in opening a debate on the sex trade and the slavery of women in Europe through different activities. Humbert's question on prostitution seems to have been inherited from those surrounding the abolition of the slave trade, anticipating later debates on universal individual freedoms and the blossoming of feminist movements of the 20th century.

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FEMALE WRITERS AND AUTONOMY IN LOVE: "ROMANTIC ADULTERY" IN JAPANESE LITERATURE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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This study explores the voices of women in modern Japanese literature, focusing on female writers' desire for autonomy in love during the beginning of the 20th century. Interestingly, female writers of this period often depict unfaithful wives. To explain this phenomenon, we examine the Japanese enthusiastic pursuit of European literary trends, such as the romantic reception of Paolo and Francesca in Dante's *Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*), which glorifies adultery in the name of "true love." In the Japanese literary world, empathy with the romantic concept of love idealized a longing for true love and overcame negative feeling towards adultery. Under these circumstances, female writers raised their voices for independence in love and marriage. Exemplifying the writers who adapted European literary and philosophical trends into their works to confront the laws and customs of Meiji Japan, this study clarifies that the trends paradoxically endorsed and created an explosive freedom for women to explore the concept of love.

Keywords: Japanese female writers, adultery, Paolo and Francesca, true love, autonomy

1. Introduction

Literature is a vehicle for "voices," a platform where subjectivity, autonomy, or resistance can be presented. This study examines fluctuations in the modern Japanese notion of adultery during the early 20th century, focusing on the "voices" of unfaithful wives as written by female writers. Although the Japanese modern penal code of 1880 (*Meiji 13nen Dajōkan Fukoku Dai 36gō*) considered criminal

conversation punishable by imprisonment, the literary world at that time transgressed the bounds of decency and glorified adultery in the name of "true love." This study clarifies that this trend was encouraging, especially for emerging female writers who voiced their autonomy in love.

Among the various moral codes set by society, adultery has always been a topic of discussion in literature around the world, and Japan was no exception. In his work *Kōshoku Gonin Onna* (*Five Women Who Loved Love*, 1686), Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693) portrayed the tragic death of unfaithful wives during the Edo period (1603–1868), where illicit intercourse with a married woman was considered a grave crime punishable by death. The process of modernization in Japan did not change this attitude towards infidelity, where the penalty for a married woman who commits adultery is imprisonment, while adultery by a married man is not criminalized under the abovementioned Criminal Code.

In this context, it is significant that some female writers dealt with the subject of adultery in their works. *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*), the first Japanese literary magazine established by women in 1911, was an important social/literary contribution for the emergence of feminism in the country. The members of the Bluestocking Company and the magazine caught the curious, mocking eyes of society at the time, often causing scandals and leading to the magazine being banned several times. It is notable that the magazine was first banned in 1912 for a short story in the April issue, which was judged to be a work that affirmed adultery. "Tegami" ("Letter"), written by Araki Iku (1888–1943), is a five-page epistolary story that describes a married woman's love for her young lover. In the text, "I" earnestly expresses her feelings for her lover, Hideo, although they had broken up six months earlier. The letter ends with "I" inviting Hideo to meet her in "that room," since "my husband will be away from the beginning of next month" (Araki 1912, 105):

> I remember everything about our first night together. The stars at dawn were a guide to love [...]. You always said the sweetest things. We held each other as we looked at the stars and talked for a long, long time about things we would be ashamed for others to hear. Even the waves of the sea seemed to be enjoying themselves, singing sweet songs and kissing the shore unceasingly. Even happier than that, the two of us created an unforgettable memory. (Araki 1912, 106)

To fully grasp the context of this work and its significance to society in that period, we should examine the Japanese literary world's transgression of the bounds of decency, possibly due to the influence of the Western literary canon. Western literature and its translation played a momentous role in Japanese modernization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Wakabayashi and Sato-Rossberg

(2012, 1) state: "Japan has often been portrayed as a 'translation superpower' and Japanese history as a history of translation."[1]

This study initially examines the reception of Paolo and Francesca's episode in Dante Alighieri's *La Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*, c. 1308–1321) and its romantic revival during the 19th century, followed by an analysis of female writing on this issue during that time to clarify the alterations to the literary notion of "adultery" during the initial decades of 20th century. Furthermore, the circumstances also encouraged female writers, who were searching for autonomy regarding love and marriage, to speak out. Ōtsuka Kusuoko (1875–1910) created female characters who uninhibitedly voiced their own desires in *Tsuyu* (*Dew*, 1908) and *Soradaki* (*Incense Burner*, 1908). In the first issue of *Bluestocking* (September 1911), Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971) carried a declaration of women's rights, where she emotionally refers to Auguste Rodin's sculpture *Le Baiser* (*The Kiss*, 1882), which is an image of Paolo and Francesca. In the same first issue, Araki Iku published *Yōshin no tawamure* (*A Flirtation of the Sun God*). Through an analysis of these works, this study examines how they re-interpreted the modern masterpiece and the ideology of romantic love, and how female writers sought autonomy in love while challenging the taboos such as adultery.

2. *The Divine Comedy* in modern Japan

The first translation of Italian literature into Japanese appeared in 1884, where it was a partial translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1348–1353). This was eventually followed by translations of Dante Alighieri during the early 20th century. *The Divine Comedy*, the epic poem written by Dante between 1308 and his death in 1321, is widely considered as a preeminent work of Italian literature and one of the greatest works of world literature. Divided into three parts – the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso – the poem's imaginative and allegorical vision of the afterlife is particularly attractive for both Christian readers and Japanese readers.

It was Ueda Bin (1874–1916) and the literary group that produced the magazine *Bungakukai* (*Literary World*), who contributed to the reception of *The Divine Comedy* in Japan (Kenmochi 1976, 320). Ueda was a student of Lafcadio Hearn and the German-Russian philosopher Raphael von Koeber at Tokyo Imperial University. Although he could neither speak nor read Italian, with his knowledge of English, French, and German, he became a significant figure in introducing and translating Western literature.

The first article by Ueda about Dante was a brief introduction to Dante's life with a portrait by Giotto, published in *Literary World* in October 1895. Moreover,

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[1] For the arguments that take up this issue in East Asia, see Wong (2017).

in the special issue of the magazine published in May 1896, Hirata Tokuboku (1873–1943) wrote an article "Jigoku no maki no issetsu" ("Passage of the Inferno"), which centers on the episode of Paolo and Francesca.

The episode of Paolo and Francesca, featured in Canto 5 of the Inferno, was based on a true story from 13th century Ravenna. The Lord of Ravenna, Paolo Guido da Polenta, made his 14-year-old daughter Francesca marry the eldest son of Malatesta, the lord of Rimini, to end the long war. While Francesca was married to the Malatesta's eldest son, Giovanni, also called Gianciotto, she fell in love with her husband's younger brother named Paolo. When Giovanni discovered their affair in 1285, he killed both the lovers.

In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante depicts the poet putting the following question to Francesca. This is from Longfellow's translation, which was the version read by the Japanese literati during the Meiji era (1868–1912):

> 116 And I began: Thine agonies, Francesca,
> 117 Sad and compassionate to weeping make me.
> 118 But tell me, at the time of those sweet sighs,
> 119 By what and in what manner Love conceded,
> 120   That you should know your dubious desires?

<div align="right">(Dante 1866, 47)</div>

Francesca recalls how the act of reading the book on Lancelot of the Lake and Guinevere was the earliest root of love between them:

> 121 And she to me: There is no greater sorrow
> 122 Than to be mindful of the happy time
> 123 In misery, and that thy Teacher knows.
> 124 But, if to recognise the earliest root
> 125 Of love in us thou hast so great desire,
> 126 I will do even as he who weeps and speaks.
> 127 One day we reading were for our delight
> 128 Of Launcelot, how Love did him enthral.
> 129 Alone we were and without any fear.
> 130   Full many a time our eyes together drew
> 131 That reading, and drove the colour from our faces;
> 132 But one point only was it that o'ercame us.
> 133 When as we read of the much-longed-for smile
> 134 Being by such a noble lover kissed,
> 135 This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided,
> 136 Kissed me upon the mouth all palpitating.
> 137 Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it.
> 138 That day no farther did we read therein.

<div align="right">(Dante 1866, 47)</div>

In his article, Hirata (1896, 1–6) reinterpreted and described this episode of Paolo and Francesca as follows:

> Among the poisonous flame and miasma, there is a clump of reeds by a stream, with beautiful fragrant flowers. It is the renowned episode of Francesca, a sorrowful passage at the end of the Canto five in the Inferno. [...] The poet, who fainted hearing the tragic passage, has made the people faint, in Italy and in the world. [...] Francesca's love was a sin. A pure sin cursed on the ground and permitted in the sky.

Here, Hirata based his theory of "pure sin" on Boccaccio. Disregarding his own words "an illicit love affair is awfully corrupted," he admits it as "pure," sympathizing with Francesca. Ueda Bin also followed this view of Francesca. He introduced Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the January issue of *Literary World*, carrying Rossetti's painting *Paolo and Francesca* (1855) and his translation of Francesca's confession. In his book *Shisei Dante* (*Dante the Great Poet*), published in 1901, Ueda stated that the tragic love of Francesca as two masterpieces of the Inferno, and praised the former as "the most influential story that moved later poets and evoked numerous imitations, expatiations, translations and critiques" (Ueda 1979, 103). He also delivered a lecture titled "Gekishi Furanchesuka" ("Francesca: A Dramatic Poem") in July 1904.

3. The romantic reception of the episode and its development toward the fin-de-siècle

To understand Ueda's particular attention to this episode, we should observe the discourse on *The Divine Comedy* in Europe, as the Japanese reception of the text reflects the European literary trends of the day.

The Divine Comedy was rediscovered in the age of Romanticism. The romantic reappraisal of Dante invited greater attention to the episode of Paolo and Francesca, a tendency which spread to the European art scene during the 19th century, making the two lovers a romantic subject for painting, music, and theatre. Guglielmo Locella observed this enthusiasm in *Dantes Francesca da Rimini in der Literatur, Bildenden Kunst und Musik* (*Dante's Francesca da Rimini in Literature, Art, and Music*), which was published in Germany in 1913.

In the 19th century, "Paolo and Francesca" was introduced as a theme for painting by Marie-Philippe Coupin de la Couperie in his *Les amours funestes de Francesca de Rimini* (*The Tragic Love of Francesca da Rimini*, 1812). Inspired by Coupin de la Couperie, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, a neoclassical painter who was against the rise of Romanticism, created his version in 1819. Both paintings and an earlier work by J. A. Koch (1805–1810) depict Paolo and Francesca about to kiss, while reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, with Francesca's

husband Giovanni preparing to kill them in the background. Interestingly enough, Romanticism transformed the composition of the paintings. In his work in 1854, Ary Scheffer focuses on the two lovers embracing in the winds of hell, placing Dante and Virgil as observers. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, divides his painting *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini* (1855) into three parts, with the following scenes on each screen: the kiss of Paolo and Francesca on one side, the lovers embracing in the winds of hell on the other, Dante and Virgil on the center panel. Eventually, artists became more focused only on the lovers. This suggests a shift in audience reception, where the episode was no longer about adultery, but about the romantic love that invalidates a marriage without love. A work that represents such reception is George Frederic Watts's *Paolo and Francesca*, painted between 1872 and 1875. Having read John Aitken Carlyle's translation of the Inferno, Watts seems to have been attracted by the theme of Paolo and Francesca for a long time. The Watts Gallery in Surrey has Watts's sketch of this episode from 1849. His work has been regarded as one of the most important among the Paolo and Francesca paintings from the turn of the century. In 1899, Stephen Phillips (1864–1915) published a dramatic poem, *Paolo and Francesca*, with this work as a frontispiece. When the book became a bestseller, Watts's visual depiction also gained popularity.

The tragic love of Paolo and Francesca has been widely referred to in literature at least since Louise Labé's remark during the 16th century, followed by Blake, Coleridge, Byron, Tennyson, and others. In Victorian England, Francesca was even considered to have "not committed the sin of adultery" (Milbank 1998, 151). This artistic trend extended into the literary world during the end of the century. As mentioned, Stephen Phillips's dramatic poem, published in 1899, became a great success, making the author highly acclaimed by critics (Monroe 1916, 260; Buckley 1966, 238).

The important point in this dramatic poem is that it modified character representations, portraying Francesca as an innocent (and pure) maiden and Paolo as a young man torn between his love for Francesca and a sense of guilt. In 1902, it was adapted into a play, which had a long run at the St. James's Theatre. In Italy, Gabriele D'Annunzio wrote the play *Francesca da Rimini* in 1901, starring Eleonora Duse, one of the most acclaimed actresses in Europe during that time. D'Annunzio is also compassionate toward Francesca, having Giovanni deceive Francesca into marrying him by sending Paolo as proxy for the marriage proposal. Furthermore, Arthur Symons (1865–1945), a critic and poet who translated *Francesca da Rimini* into English in 1902, mentions in its introduction:

> Towards her husband her attitude is quite without modern subtlety; he
> has won her unfairly, she is unconscious of treachery towards him in

loving another; she has no scruples, only apprehensions of some un-
lucky ending to love. (Symons 1902, vi)

It is worth noting that in Japan, the romantic aspect of *The Divine Comedy* was emphasized from the beginning. This view of Paolo and Francesca owes much to the interpretation of *The Divine Comedy* in this context, as pointed out by Hirakawa (2000, 15). The reception trends of Paolo and Francesca in Europe led to the initiation of the Japanese reception of *The Divine Comedy*. Some Japanese intellectuals who were in London at that time witnessed the enthusiastic reception of Francesca's episode. One of these intellectuals, Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871–1918), watched Phillips's play in June 1903 and bought a copy of the poem. Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), who stayed in London from 1900 till 1903, also had Phillips's book. He refers to the play in his article "Eikoku genkon no gekikyō" ("The Present Situation of English Plays"), which came out in the 1904 summer issue of the theatre magazine *Kabuki*. The experiences and interests of Japanese literary figures prompted the Japanese performance of *Francesca no hiren* (*The Tragic Love of Francesca*) at the Hongōza Theater in September 1904. Written by Matsui Shoyō (1870–1933), this work was based on the episode in Ueda's *Dante the Great Poet*, and it was reported in the December issue of *Kabuki* wherein Ueda had introduced the outline of D'Annunzio's play as an inspiration to Matsui for this play (Ueda 1980, 76).

The works of the Japanese literati generally adopt the same stance as Phillips and D'Annunzio, endorsing the romantic reception of the episode, which in turn glorifies adultery in the name of true love. This trend pervades even modern literary works as seen in *America Motogatari* (*American Stories*, 1909) by Nagai Kafū (1879–1959), where the author bewails the fate that pushed him to leave his girlfriend and compares his own love to that of Romeo and Juliet, and Paolo and Francesca. It seems that adultery is of no concern to him, as he states that both tragic couples died for true love:

> I truly believe that our love was never less than that of Romeo or Paulo and Juliet or Francesca. We knew well that once we parted we might never see each other again—a beautiful dream of one instant brings lifelong sorrow; still from the following day on, we would go to the deserted woods at the edge of the village every afternoon and share deep kisses, in order to show we would live on and sing of love, forever lost... (Nagai 2000, 224–225)

4. Ōtsuka Kusuoko's re-reading of a modern masterpiece

Rather intriguingly, the Japanese male literati did not hesitate to diffuse the romantic reception of adultery to a female audience; the main audience of Ueda Bin's lectures were the women who studied traditional Japanese poetry. The theater was also a new social phenomenon for middle- to upper-class women. In these circumstances, it is also noteworthy that the reception of the episode specifically encouraged emerging female writers who sought autonomy in love. The first case in point is that of Ōtsuka Kusuoko (1875–1910).

Ōtsuka Kusuoko is known for creating middle- to upper-class female characters who uninhibitedly voice their own desires. Born as the eldest daughter of a judge, Kusuoko graduated from Tokyo Women's Normal School in 1893 with top honors. In 1895, she married Oya Yasuji, a graduate student of aesthetics who would open the first aesthetics department at Tokyo Imperial University after studying in Europe for four years the following year. Ōtsuka studied traditional poetry since her childhood – alongside Sasaki Hirotsuna (Nagisono, 1828–1891) and Sasaki Nobutsuna (1872–1963) – and from 1895, she began to publish novels and other works in literary magazines such as *Bungei Kurabu* (*Literary Club*). She succeeded in attracting attention within the literary world, and eventually published two books: *Harekosode* (*Short Sleeved Kimono for Special Occasions*), a collection of short stories and translation, in 1906, and the novel *Tsuyu* (*Dew*) in 1908.

The novel *Dew* was serialized in the newspaper *Yorozuchōhō*, from July 9 to September 13, 1907. The protagonists of this story are Tazumi Suzune and Hinomori Shizuko, who just graduated from a girls' high school and entered a research course. Suzune is the only daughter of a dry foods wholesaler in Nihonbashi, and although she has been brought up without any difficulties, she cannot bear the thought of taking over the family business or marrying her father's distant relative, Keisaku, who has helped the family business since graduating from primary school and now runs the wholesaler. Suzune dislikes Keisaku and falls in love with Dr. Kamisaka, who has returned from Europe, but when she hears that Kamisaka has run back to Japan from England leaving his mistress, she becomes disillusioned and reassesses Keisaku's seriousness. Meanwhile, Shizuko's health begins to fail after her financial support from her brother-in-law is cut off upon her graduation. After refusing a marriage proposal forced upon her by her brother-in-law, and then being declined a job as a tutor for a noble family, Shizuko commits suicide by throwing herself under a train. The story ends with Suzune and Keisaku's wedding scene.

Shiota Ryōhei (1983, 275) describes this work as "mediocre" and points out that Ōtsuka's works are "strongly imitative." Although we have to admit that *Dew* is not a novel of high quality, this is not to say that there is nothing worth noticing

in this work. Ōtsuka's works are interesting because they sometimes reinterpret previous literary works from her point of view.

The most significant scene is that of Suzune and Shizuko becoming disillusioned with Kamisaka. The girls meet Shizuko's cousin by chance in Ikaho, and are told that Kamisaka ran back to Japan, leaving his four-year-old daughter behind in England, with no words to his mistress. Upon hearing this, they lose their admiration for him. We should note that the image of Kamisaka depicted here is one possible future for Toyotarō, the protagonist of Mori Ōgai's (1862–1922) *Maihime* (*The Dancing Girl*, 1890), which was already highly acclaimed as one of Mori's masterpieces during that time. Needless to say, the plot of an elite man who goes to study in Europe and finds a lover there was not only used by Mori. A female writer, Kitada Usurai (1876–1900), also deals with this theme in her work *Uba* (*Nanny*) from 1896. However, Kitada's work focuses on the tragedy of the heroine who finds her fiancé return to Japan with "a beautiful Western lady of 22 or 23." In *Dew*, the girls are disillusioned by the fact that Kamisaka did not marry his lover in England, which is similar to criticism of Toyotarō, whose abandonment of his pregnant girlfriend drove her to madness. In this way, Ōtsuka re-reads *The Dancing Girl* from a woman's point of view. For her, *The Dancing Girl* is not a masterpiece of beautiful tragic love, but a story that shows how an elite young man, who is responsible for "modernizing and civilizing" the nation by overthrowing Japan's old-fashioned values, can act selfishly towards women.

5. Deconstruction and reconstruction of romantic love ideology

In this context, Ōtsuka's novella, *Soradaki* (*Incense Burner*) – the first part of which was serialized in *Tokyo Asahi Newspaper* from April 27 to May 31, 1908, and the sequel from May 18 to June 26 the following year – is quite a deliberate work. Although *Incense Burner* has been regarded as a work influenced by Natsume Sōseki's *Gubijinsō* (*The Poppy*, 1907) (Shiota 1983), essays pointing out the significance of this work from a feminist perspective began to appear during the late 1990s, spearheaded by Saeki Junko's essay (1998). In this section, first, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the heroine of this work dismantles the romantic love ideology of the time, which favored platonic love.

The heroine of *Incense Burner* is Hinae, a beautiful woman who "loves the fashions of a country 4,000 miles away" and who is "known to be the most talented woman of her time." Since the death of her fiancé at the age of 17, she has "tried to remain single for as long as possible" until she reaches the age of 26, working as a secretary of a women's association, a reporter for a women's magazine, and even becoming a governess and socializing with the aristocracy. To satisfy her "sense of honor," she marries a member of the House of Representatives, a man

over 50, as an attempt to raise her social status. What Hinae suggests is that "marriage" and "work" are not necessarily opposites for women, and that marriage is not the goal of a woman's life.

Hinae's appearance in the newspapers might have been a shock to the female readers of the time, who were more accustomed to the *ryōsai kenbo* ("good wives and wise mothers") figures in fiction. Marriage, which has nothing to do with *love*, brings social status to the heroine. Rather, Hinae actively displays her sexuality after marriage. She plans to keep her husband under her "charming control." In this sense, her sexuality is an important strategy:

> The man was forced to sniff a strong rose scent, which started out pleasantly intoxicating, but eventually became painful. And even if he thought it was painful, he could not get rid of it; it was forced upon him, and he was forced to sniff it even when his body and mind were exhausted. (Ōtsuka 1966, 336)

In this way, Hinae comes close to the image of the fin-de-siècle *femme fatale*. Hinae's sexual attractiveness is described as a "strong scent," a description that echoes the declaration of victory of the heroine in Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Trionfo della morte* (*The Triumph of Death*, 1894), which was translated by Ueda Bin in 1901 and has had a great influence on modern Japanese literature (Hirayama 2011; Hiraishi 2012).

> I am always the unconquered. You have known with me all the enjoyments for which your endless desire was thirsty, and I will clothe myself in lies that will endlessly provoke your desire. [...] I am stronger than your thought. I know the secret of my transfigurations in your soul. I know the gestures and the words that have the virtue of metamorphosing me in your eyes. The odor of my skin has the power to dissolve a world in you. (D'Annunzio 1896, 309)

For Hinae, even rape is not so much of a problem. After being humiliated by her husband's friend, Count Kiyomura, Hinae achieves her goal of greater social prosperity with Kiyomura's help.

In this way, Hinae, who is half-intentionally described as a "coquette," is no longer a woman with the same values as Suzune in *Dew*. Hinae presents the image of a new woman who is not defeated by society. She does not connect "love" with "marriage," but actively demonstrates her sexuality in a way that embraces the male desires expressed in Western literature, which had a great influence on Japanese male intellectuals.

However, what is strange about this novel is that Hinae, who is supposed to play the role of dismantling the ideology of romantic love, can also be read as party to romantic love. Hinae is fascinated by her stepson, Kiichi, who bears a striking

resemblance to her dead fiancé. In the last episode of the first part, Hinae visits Kiichi's room when her husband is away. It is notable that Hinae refers to *Paolo and Francesca* by George Frederic Watts to describe her affection. She takes out a copy of the painting and asks him to explain the story:

> Francesca leaned back against Paolo's chest, a strong, sturdy man with a strong frame, whose nose was straight in the Italian way, whose lips were tight, whose eyes were hidden by the robe he wore, but whose eyes shone like stars, clouded by the sorrow of love. Taking one of the man's hands firmly in hers, Francesca's beautiful eyelids were partly closed, and she seemed to be sobbing with joy at her inextricable bond, even as she agonized over her eternal sin. Their clinging bodies are slanting in the air, blown about by the eternal winds of hell.

> When one looks at the painting carefully, Dante's poem comes alive in Watts's brushwork, and one feels the sadness of love cutting into his/her heart. (Ōtsuka 1966, 326)

Hinae tries to confess her feelings to Kiichi through this painting, saying "A woman loves someone, like Francesca, forgetting her husband... But she's pitiful, if it is heartrending true love... Love does not obey the dictates of reason."

What is described here is Hinae's desire for "true love" and her readiness to commit adultery for it (at this point of the story, the relationship between Hinae and Kiyomura has not occurred). As Hinae's feelings are unrequited, she tears Kiichi and his girlfriend apart. Later, Hinae repeats her feelings regarding Francesca after her husband's death, telling Kiichi that,

> I think that those who blame Francesca are more pitiful than ashes, because the mysterious power of love is not at the disposal of man. It's not like the weathervane, which changes direction with the wind. (Ōtsuka 1966, 374)

The technique employed by the author here, to use (often Western) pictorial arts to enliven the emotions of the characters was innovative. It seems that the technique of Ōtsuka also influenced her mentor, Natsume Sōseki.[2] Hinae justifies her extramarital desire by referring to Dante. Watts's painting lends the protagonist some persuasiveness as it was also well-known among the Japanese literati owing to its presence in Phillips's book.

After Watts passed away in July 1904, the literary journal *Jidai Shichō* (*Spirit of the Times*) dedicated an article to him in the September issue, which also carried *Paolo and Francesca*. Although Watts had other renowned masterpieces, such

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[2] The serialization of Sōseki's *Sanshirō*, in which a picture of mermaid by Waterhouse appears, does not begin until September 1, three months after this description.

as *Hope* (1855), the Japanese literati nonetheless selected *Paolo and Francesca* as this choice clearly shows the impact of Phillips's work on Japanese literary world. Saitō Nonohito (1878–1909), a member of the editorial board of *Spirit of the Times*, also wrote an article in *Teikoku Bungaku* (*Imperial Literature*) entitled "Alas, Francesca" in October 1904, where he describes Paolo and Francesca in Watts's painting as follows:

> Alas, poor Paolo and Francesca, they are now abandoned in the depths of hell. Holding each other like the warp and weft of a brocade, without tears, without smiles, and without a nest to follow, they drift and wander in this sad black cloud. Look, they are like a vision, thin and shadowy, pale faces, eyes sunken and closed, no red on the cheeks, no trace of a smile on the lips. The tears have now dried up, and the sorrow has become a panting. In silence, in anxiety, all their passions have vanished, and only the bloodless, voiceless anguish and agony remain. Oh, what a pity that their shadows are fading! This is the wage of the sin of their eternal love. (Saitō 1904, 84–85)

Concerning Watts's picture, Arthur Symons once again plays an important role. There is a chapter for Watts in Symons's *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906), where he describes *Paolo and Francesca* at length:

> In *Paolo and Francesca* passion is seen eternalized at the moment of weary ecstasy when desire has become a memory, and memory has extinguished the world. These bodies are like the hollow shell left by flames which have burnt themselves out, and they float in the fiery air, weightless and listless, as dry leaves are carried along a wave of wind. All life has gone out of them except the energy of that one memory, which lives in the pallor of their flesh, and in the red hollows of the woman's half-closed eyes, and in the ashen hollows of the man's cheeks. (Symons 1924, 66–67)

Widely read in Japan, Symons's argument in *Studies in Seven Arts* found leverage within the Japanese literary scene. Saitō Nonohito continued to write in praise of *Paolo and Francesca*. In the article, "The Romanticism in Japanese Literature," published in November 1907, Saitō expresses admiration for *Paolo and Francesca* as one of Watts's masterpieces, emphasizing the romantic spirit of the episode: "Among love stories, the story of Paolo and Francesca is the most romantic and pathetic one" (Saitō 1970, 165).

Being sensitive to this literary trend,[3] Ōtsuka cleverly states Hinae's opinion: "But, for Francesca, she would find some satisfaction in her sorrow, even being

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[3] We should also note that Ōtsuka Yasuji, the husband of Kusuoko, who became a professor of aesthetics at Tokyo Imperial University after he studied in Germany from 1896 to 1900, apublished a record of a lecture entitled "A Discussion of Romanticism and the Current State

cast into Hell" (Ōtsuka 1966, 327). "Loveless marriage has no power before *true love*" is indeed the basic principle of romantic love ideology (Ōsawa 1996, 90). Since Watts's picture was used in the novella, Paolo and Francesca's episode, interpreted as a tragic story of *true love*, lent persuasive power to the argument made by Hinae, and gave the readers of *Incense Burner* an alternate interpretation of the protagonist as a poor coquette who was actually seeking *true love*, not unlike Marguerite Gautier.[4] This is why the story ends without condemning her. In the literary world, empathy with the romantic love ideology idealized the longing for *true love* and overcame negative feelings towards adultery. It also encouraged female writers to speak out, seeking to express their own subjectivities when it came to love and marriage.

6. Female writers in *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*)

Now, I would like to focus on the female writers who gathered around the magazine *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*). In her essay published in 1939, Miyamoto Yuriko (1899–1951) describes the women's magazines of the time, emphasizing how *Bluestocking* was different:

> The first issue of *Bluestocking* was published in 1904, and it had a certain freshness as a literary magazine for women. At the time, *Joshi Bundan* (*Women's Literature*) and *Murasaki* (*Purple*) were considered as magazines for young women with literary ambitions. Although they were decorated with illustrations of Watanabe Yohei and Takehisa Yumeji, who had the taste of the neo-romantic era, their covers were always the pictures such as "Kimuko, the wife of Representative Hyūga, in Western dress," or "The son of Representative Inukai Tsuyoshi and his wife." The portraits of women writers and poets, who were starting to work in the same period, were never included. The title of "the wife of a representative of the Diet" is all that is left of her, and her name as a unique woman has been eliminated as if it were no mystery at all. Their titles are written out, but even their names are completely missing. This is a concrete example of how old social sentiments were embedded in

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of Japanese Literature and Art" in 1902, wherein he identified leading figures of the "new wave of Romanticism" of the late 19th century as "Rossetti, Morris, Stevenson, Swinburne, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Bourget, Pierre Loti, Rod, Huysmans, Zola, Hauptmann, Sudermann, Ibsen, Dostojewsky, Tolstoi, D'Annunzio, Maeterlinck," and included Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Watts to "those who belong to the New School in painting" (Ōtsuka 1902, 14).

[4] *La Dame aux Camélias*, written by Alexandre Dumas fils, was one of the earliest translated works of fiction to appear in Japan. The earliest example, *Pari jōwa: Tsubaki no omokage* (*A Parisian Romance: The Vision of the Camellia*), was published in 1884. It can be said that Marguerite Gautier was known to some extent to the Japanese intellectuals at the time.

> a society where young women were allowed to aspire to literature. In
> such an atmosphere, *Bluestocking* was novel, intellectual and dynamic.
> (Miyamoto 1986, 290–291)

Women's sexuality had been an issue tackled by *Bluestocking* from the very
beginning, an issue which had never been taken up in *Women's Literature*. It
was not until the Taishō era (1912–1926) that women's sexuality came to be dis-
cussed in modern Japan (see Suzuki 2010). In 1914, Ikuta Hanayo (1888–1970)
wrote an essay titled "Taberu koto to teisō to" ("About Survival and Chastity") in
the magazine *Hankyo* (*Repercussion*), which developed into the "Teisō ronsō"
("Chastity Debates") among the women were who gathered at *Bluestocking*. How-
ever, as Kawamura (1996, 121) pointed out, this debate avoided confronting the
issue of women's sexuality. The issue converged on virginity, and the debate never
deepened to include the presence or absence of women's sexual desire.

   The sexology of the Meiji period, developed through the transfer of Western
sexology, suppressed the sexuality of women who were not engaged in the sex
industry. The "chastity debates" mentioned above were not free from this idea.
However, if we look at Japanese literature in the first decades of the 20th century
(from the end of the Meiji era to the Taishō era), it is precisely at this time that
women who affirmed their sexual desires and sometimes tried to demonstrate
their own sexuality were portrayed, even by women themselves.

   Women's sexuality has been circumscribed by men and discussed in men's logic
and language. Women in the sex industry have been granted "active sexuality," while
"the girls of good families" were considered asexual (see Saitō 2006). However, fic-
tion appeared to be a means of escape. The Japanese literary world at the time was
earnestly following the Western literary trends and absorbed a wide range of female
figures from European literature. This included, for example, Ibsen's heroines who
try to break out of the male ideal of womanhood. Decadent fin-de-siècle literature
was also full of depictions of women as "sexual beings." The desires of these charac-
ters had much to do with their attempts to be subjective, both sexually and humanly;
within the fin-de-siècle aesthetics, the concept of *femme fatale* was exemplary in
taking an inordinate pleasure in making men their own.

   It is worth noting that, by the end of the Meiji period, the young Japanese
literati's sense of self and others was being eroded by fiction. From the 1890s
onwards, the members of the Ibsen-kai (Ibsen Society) seriously discussed the
possibility of "women like Hedda coming out of women's colleges" (Ibsen Society
1907, 172–179). Apparently, the Japanese intellectuals of this era wanted to project
Western fiction onto the real society of Japan. The "Shiobara Incident," a strange
double-suicide attempt in 1908 between Morita Sōhei (1881–1949) and Hiratsuka
Haruko (later to become Raichō) would be remembered as a typical example of the

mixture of reality and fiction.[5] In fact, the women who were gathered at the *Blue-stocking* party were called Japanese "new women," and it is noteworthy that the image of "new women" in Japan was partially constructed by the dominantly male literary imagination under European influence. With Hiratsuka Haruko/Raichō as the chief editor, *Bluestocking* could be considered, in this sense, as the result of the women's participation in the male literary imagination. Indeed, *Bluestocking* attracted many girls because they recognized the heroine of *Baien* (*Sooty Smoke*) in relation to the magazine (Sasaki 1994, 111).

It is important to note that Morita's *Sooty Smoke*, which encouraged young readers to idolize Hiratsuka as a "new woman" to such an extent, was a work heavily influenced by the decadent literature of the *fin-de-siècle* Europe. Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Triumph of Death*, the text with the greatest influence on the Shiobara affair, features a tormented man who cannot resist his "invincible" lover and finally commits suicide with her. The heroine, Ippolita, is depicted as a *femme fatale*. Manabe Tomoko, the heroine of *Sooty Smoke*, was developed under the influence of this novel and resembled exactly the kind of woman that the members of the Ibsen Society had hoped for. As a *femme fatale*, Tomoko fully expresses her sexuality. Although the description of Tomoko is indeed a result of men's sexual fantasies, her queenly appearance makes her seem, at least in the first glance, to be a woman who affirms herself as a being who has acquired sexual agency. For the readers, Hinae in *Incense Burner* was reborn as Tomoko of *Sooty Smoke*, and this Tomoko lives, speaks, and publishes a magazine *Bluestocking*. Seeking other models for the "new woman," the magazine also looked to the women in Ibsen's plays, featuring Hedda Gabler from the very beginning, and Nora, and Magda. Other than Nora, the heroines of Ibsen's works did not necessarily attract the sympathy of Japanese female readers, yet the characters who had and expressed a strong will provided Japanese women with a guideline for their own actions.

Concerning the Paolo and Francesca episode, Hiratsuka Raichō published "Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta" ("In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun"), as the words of the magazine's launch in the first issue of *Bluestocking* in September 1911. In this manifesto, Hiratsuka refers to Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss* (1882–1889) with emotion:

> I think of [Rodin's famous sculpture] "The Kiss," a kiss that melts everything
> in the crucible of passion, my kiss. A kiss that is actually one. Spirit! Flesh!

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[5]   In 1908, Morita Sōhei, a pupil of Natsume Sōseki, ran away with Hiratsuka Haruko, a graduate of Japan Women's university, to Shiobara to commit double suicide but were taken into custody. This incident became a scandal as they were intellectuals who attempted suicide under the influence of D'Annunzio's fiction, *The Triumph of Death*. Later, Sōhei published a novel *Baien* (*Sooty Smoke*, 1909) based on the incident. See Amano (2013) for a summary of the incident and Morita's work in English.

> Rapture of tranquility at the extremities of ecstasy. Repose! The beauty of rest! Tears of deep emotion surely sparkle with golden light. (Barsley 2007, 99)

In a passage that follows, Hiratsuka confesses that she "received many hints and suggestions" from the Rodin issue of a literary magazine *Shirakaba* (*White Birch*) published in November 1910. Rodin was an object of admiration for the Shirakaba Coterie during that time, and this special issue shocked and impressed the young Japanese intellectuals. As this particular work of Rodin's is an image of Paolo and Francesca, Hiratsuka's glorification of *The Kiss* might have been meant to affirm the passionate love, while also implying a denial of the contemporaneous marriage system. In Japan, marriage was still considered as a family affair, and most marriage partners were decided for their daughters by fathers. The kiss in Rodin's sculpture could be interpreted as a symbol of the women's liberation from customary marriage.

Now, let us go back to Araki Iku. She became a member of the Bluestocking Company and published a play *Yōshin no tawamure* (*A Flirtation of the Sun God*) in the first issue of *Bluestocking*. Although the first article of the general rules of the Bluestocking Company was to "promote the development of women's literature," the literary works published in the magazine were markedly underdeveloped and have not attracted much critical attention. It is only in recent years that the texts published in *Bluestocking* have come to be studied in earnest. However, if the early issues of *Bluestocking* "had a meaning similar to that of the consciousness-raising movement of radical feminism" (Ōkoshi 1996, 109), the fiction published in the magazine also has the capacity to voice a variety of concerns and aim to raise awareness.

A Flirtation of the Sun God has four characters: Yoshiko, a married woman who runs away with a student, her husband Moriya who follows her, a 22-year-old student Haruo, and the student's girlfriend, Urako. Yoshiko, after running away to a mountain with Haruo, wants to go back to the city, while Haruo is satisfied with "the power of love." Meanwhile, Urako and Moriya meet at the home of the mountain's ruler, Yurihime (Princess Lily). Urako teaches Moriya about "sincerity" and reminds Yoshiko that "pretending to be something you're not is the scariest thing you can do" (Araki 1911, 81). Through the power of Princess Lily, Urako's words reach Yoshiko, who realizes that she has been lying to herself and thus leaves the mountain. The story ends with Urako proclaiming the victory of "sincerity."

The play can be understood as a tribute to the virtue of Urako. In contrast, Yoshiko is described as "tall and beautiful," but "lacking warmth in her eyes;" her appearance is reminiscent of Hinae from *Incense Burner*. Similarly, Yoshiko does not deny her sexuality, admitting that she "played" with Haruo. However, after leaving Haruo and returning to the city, Yoshiko declares that she will live for her-

self from then on. This conclusion is also similar to that of Hinae, where Yoshiko, an adulterous married woman, is not punished for her display of sexuality. Furthermore, when Urako meets Moriya, she says to him:

> If you continue as you are now, you will lose your position when women awake. Even if you do find your wife, you will have to live a life of misery. (Araki 1911, 77)

Urako's argument reveals that Yoshiko's running away is due to her husband's lack of "sincerity," and that Yoshiko's actions could be linked to her "awakening." The awakening of women – in other words, the acquisition of subjectivity – remains an important theme in *Bluestocking*. In this way, Araki addresses the issue of female sexuality from the author's own perspective.

Araki's *Letter* can be read in this same context. "I," the unfaithful wife who narrates the story, writes in the style of a woman who is newly educated during the Meiji period. She must know the romantic love ideology through literary magazines and translations of Western literature, similarly, identifying "sincerity" and "true love" as her own issues. She does not suffer from her husband's unfaithfulness or violence: "He is always smiling, giving me hair ornaments, rings, sweet things, and long kisses in the morning when I wake up." They seem to be a couple without any problems. However, "I" sees the couple's relationship as something "strange," in that it is "treating love like a very useful machine." The problem, she states, is that her husband has "never given me his heart." She feels that her husband does not want to touch her heart and "only needs to see me smile and pretend to be sweet." She extols that such a sweet and gentle image of a wife is also "created by men's imagination." She cannot be satisfied with the fact that her husband is satisfied with the image of his ideal wife within his own fantasy and does not seek any further heart-to-heart communication. Recalling Urako's warning to Moriya in *A Flirtation of the Sun God*, "I" is a woman "awakening." Additionally, this wife, "one of the chaste ones," declares: "I don't want to receive such words. I'd rather be embraced by a serious love like a human being." She yearns for "a life of heart-to-heart contact, rather than a day of pretense, even if it is an act ruled by the name of a terrible sin," to which she then invites her old lover.

Just as Hinae uses Paolo and Francesca to defend her notion of "true love," here, women are able to exercise their full agency and are even willing to disobey the law for the sake of "serious love." Moreover, this text also reveals that "true love," which justifies any deviation from the norm, is based solely on the value judgment of "I," the subject. The most important aspect was for women to acquire a sense of agency, something that only men possessed and women were deprived of.

7. Conclusion

The image of a woman who expresses her will and tries to live freely without being bound by traditional values and social conventions appearing in Japanese literature at the beginning of the 20th century was originally the product of the male literary imagination influenced by Western literature. This study has revealed that these new images of women also encouraged women writers. Araki Iku and Ōtsuka Kusuoko used the imagination of male authors to create an "awakening" in female characters, who asserted their spiritual and physical subjectivity. What becomes clear when the ideology of romantic love is re-read from a woman's point of view is that the fidelity of a wife means nothing in the face of "true love." Their works, which have never been accorded much literary value, are important as they represent the voice of the women of their time.

Nevertheless, the "true love" of a woman, unbound by the institution of marriage and which female writers sought to pursue in their works, was hardly acceptable in real society. On July 5, 1912, Kitahara Hakushū (1885–1942), a modern poet with a promising future, was accused by his neighbor, Matsushita Chōhei, of adulterous relationship with his wife. The next day, Kitahara and Matsushita's wife, Toshiko, were arrested and detained. On July 6, the *Yomiuri Newspaper* reported this incident and called Kitahara a disgrace to literature and art. It has been pointed out that this incident caused a great deal of damage to Kitahara's mind and body (see Kanazawa 1998), and his anguish is also expressed in his traditional poetry collection *Kiri no hana* (*Paulownia Flower*, 1913). As a matter of fact, Matsushita Chōhei had a mistress and had already filed to divorce Toshiko even before the adultery lawsuit. He withdrew the charges with a settlement of 300 yen, paid by Kitahara's younger brother, leaving only the scandal. Toshiko later married and divorced Kitahara; after their divorce, she worked at a bar in a hotel for foreigners in Yokohama under the name Lily. Kitahara depicted her in *Paulownia Flower*:

> I want to see her again… I opened my eyes in a flash, and found a cockscomb shone as if it was mocking me. She was really like a cockscomb, who had the charm and beauty of a tomboy, a liar, clever, foolish, vain, crazy and terrible devil… Everything about her was mysterious enough to tempt and deceive my artistic desires, and to drag me around. (Kitahara 1985, 145)

From this passage, it is obvious that Kitahara framed Toshiko as his *femme fatale*. Although this case demonstrates how strict the real world is about adultery, it should also be pointed out that this description of Toshiko overlaps with the image of women seeking freedom as portrayed in *Bluestocking* fiction.

As we have seen, women began to speak out in order to liberate and empower their desires in the name of true love, at least in fiction. Their voices on love, marriage, and sexuality were sometimes quiet, inadequate, and inconsistent in the

eyes of those in the present. However, what these voices convey is a willingness to re-appropriate an image of women which men had constructed through their own engagement with Western literature and to establish a new image of women in Japanese literature, one that women wanted – one that allowed them to choose their own love, marriage, and sexuality according to their own free will.

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ILLNESS IN THE ECHO CHAMBER: THE RISE OF LEPROSY LITERATURE IN JAPAN

Robert Ono

This chapter will assess the quick rise of "leprosy literature" in Japan during the latter half of the 1930s using much of the primary sources available, including diaries and letters privately penned by Hōjō Tamio, a young writer who was at its epicenter. I will begin by taking a look at the collection of "confessions" compiled by the government in 1921 to see how the authorities manipulated the voices of patients before the boom. Then I will focus on Hōjō, who was uniquely ambitious to join the mainstream literary establishment, while many residents of the leprosarium were reluctant to have their voices heard knowing that public scrutiny would only make them vulnerable in a society brimming with eugenic ideals. Finally, some discussion from a wider historical and cultural context should facilitate a clearer understanding on different forms of power that sought to control and sometimes aggravated the situations surrounding Hōjō and other patients.

Keywords: leprosy literature, Hōjō Tamio, Kawabata Yasunari, censorship, eugenics

1. Introduction

An "echo chamber" is where "like-minded people" gather and form an environment in which somebody encounters only opinions and beliefs similar to their own, "a breeding ground for information to spread," hence relieving the need of considering alternatives (Roese 2018, 327). While the term is increasingly associated with social media, it is not hard to imagine a similar environment in real society, especially when society at large seems to be merciless against anything that could cause hindrance to its progress. In Japan in the 1920s, for example, the popularity of eugenics was thriving. With war against the Western powers imminent, the nation no longer desired to accommodate the sick and weak who would be useless on battlefields and the home front.

Eugenics, of course, implies a broader sense of racial selectivity. Race was already a crucial component of Japanese ideology during the process of the Meiji Restoration (1868–1889), as it is engraved in the symbolic slogan *sonnō jōi* (尊王攘夷, "revere the Emperor and expel the barbarians"), which was a reflection of Neo-Confucian and nativist ideals that sought to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate and restore the power of the Emperor of Japan. But "foreigners" were not always repelled. Several Japanese people who traveled abroad during the 1870s and 1880s became believers of *jinshu kairyō* (人種改良, "racial eugenics"), proclaiming that the Japanese race could be improved by mixing it with the Western race through marriage (Takahashi 1884, 115). However, as Japan further militarized, eugenics turned into more of an intra-racial, intra-national issue. Radical beliefs harbored by people like Ikeda Shigenori (池田林儀, 1892–1966), the founder and editor of the magazine *Yūsei undō* (優生運動, *Eugenics Movement*), can be baffling from a current perspective. They not only incorporated ideas such as "shared heredity" or "shared ancestry," but also the belief in good and bad blood-types, which pertains to fortunetelling rather than medicine (Robertson 2002, 191). They did, however, appeal to many patriotic readers.

Of course, medical practitioners by far played the most important role in the movement. It was their duty to modernize the nation by keeping its people from diseases that would stunt healthy advancement. Since the Restoration, Japan implemented several health policies to contain persisting epidemics, such as tuberculosis, smallpox, cholera, and leprosy.

Mitsuda Kensuke (光田健輔, 1876–1964), dubbed "father figure and savior of lepers," quickly came into the limelight as a champion of headstrong policies. In 1909, he was appointed the first director of Zensei Hospital (全生病院) located on the outskirts of Tokyo, which was to become the largest public leprosarium in Japan. Its basic function was to quarantine patients, possibly for the rest of their lives, in accordance with the Leprosy Prevention Law (癩予防ニ関スル件), first enacted in 1907. Whether this was a precaution to protect the lives of the diseased is at least partially questionable. Mitsuda, who firmly believed leprosy to be highly contagious despite the lack of evidence, did not hesitate to enforce vasectomies, or surgical sterilization, to inhibit reproduction among the patients. Perhaps he could not agree more with the following passage in Plato's *Republic*:

> The best men must cohabit with the best women in as many cases as possible and the worst with the worst in the fewest, and that the offspring of the one must be reared and that of the other not, if the flock is to be as perfect as possible. (Perseus Digital Library, n.d.)

The actions of Mitsuda and his colleagues could serve as a textbook example of the phenomenon Michel Foucault discusses in his 1975 work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. To control the spread of the disease (in this case, the plague), "panopticism" is reinforced to govern and keep the patients under strict

surveillance, while attempts to disobey or escape are punishable by imprisonment, or even death. And it is scientific knowledge, not physical force, that provided the enforcers almost god-like power (Foucault 1995, 18). Here, the French philosopher could very well be describing leprosariums established throughout Japan; the five public colonies that opened their gates in 1909 accepted 980 patients in total during the first year and continued to accommodate between 300 and 800 new patients each year (Mori and Ishii 2017, 76). The Leprosy Prevention Law urged directors to police the patients; they had legal rights to lock up rebellious residents in solitary confinement for up to two months, and take away a half portion of food for up to seven days (Miyasaka 2006, 123).

The battle against leprosy entered the next level in 1931 when the Leprosy Prevention Law was renewed. It was now permissible to arrest patients who are reluctant to hospitalize themselves and send them to colonies for compulsory quarantine. This inspired a nation-wide campaign called the *muraiken undō* (無癩県運動, "movement for leprosy-free prefectures"), which spurred each prefecture to locate and accommodate all patients to realize a leprosy-free community. Within the year, by the end of 1931, a total of 3,546 patients were residing in eight public leprosariums, a great leap from the 2,339 patients in the year before (Mori and Ishii 2017, 76).

In addition, the Association for Leprosy Prevention (癩予防協会) was set up in 1931 to support the nation's mission to rid of the disease by enlightening the public as well as monitoring the well-being of patients both physically and mentally. Here, too, Mitsuda served as one of the masterminds. It is also noteworthy that Sadako, the Empress Dowager Teimei, bestowed her personal fortune for the cause (Nichibenren Hōmu Kenkyū Zaidan 2015). The donation had a great symbolic value, since legend has it that in the 8th century, the Empress Kōmyō used her lips to suck out the puss of a wandering leper who then revealed himself to be Akshobhya, a form of Buddha.

In short, during the 1920s and into the 1930s, an echo chamber was constructed around leprosy. It was rare to hear the voice of the actual patients; it seems that medical practitioners, lawmakers, and the public had a larger say on the illness. However, this does not mean that the patients were completely muzzled, especially inside the colonies. There, different parties with different interests gathered in a small arena of illness to create echolalia that is resounding, converging, and often contradicting. This paper aims to examine the threads of voices, especially those surrounding the movement of "leprosy literature." Namely, I will begin by taking a look into the collection of authentic voices of patients gathered by the government, and then juxtapose it with written words of Hōjō Tamio, the pioneering author of this particular genre, to see how different parties coped with the situation through varying self-representation.

2. The confessions of patients

In 1921, amidst the heightening effort of the nation to contain leprosy, the Home Ministry's Department of Hygiene (内務省衛生局), a branch of the government in charge of managing public leprosariums, asked the directors of each facility to gather "confessions" from patients that pertain to their "thoughts upon the diagnosis," "hardships on concealing or treating the disease," "hatred towards other patients and relatives," "experience of vagrancy and possibly spreading the disease," "mental situations upon acceptance to the facility," and "hopes for the future" (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 172). The objective of such an attempt was quite clear-cut; the department will use these confessions to "improve preventive facilities" and to "diffuse better understanding of leprosy while arousing public sympathy to the disease" (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 172). The collection was compiled as *Rai kanja no kokuhaku* (癩患者の告白, *The Confessions of Leprosy Patients*) in 1923, and was published by the said department.

The names of the authors of the confessions are concealed, while their gender and age are mostly visible. Out of 106 contributors, at least 75% are men and 15% are women; the mean age of the patients is 33 years old (Gotō 2016, 47). Each confession, on average, is approximately 2,700 characters long (Gotō 2016, 47).

It is impossible to share the details of all the confessions, but here are four summaries of confessions made by patients of different age group and gender, to demonstrate their basic nature.

Summary A (female, 28 years old)

One of the longest entries at 306 lines, her confession is the first to be featured in the volume. Her prose, which displays a high level of education and taste in literature, is a brief autobiography. She begins by recounting her life story from the age of four and recalls her happy childhood. She quotes her letter to her brother, stating that her childhood seems to "belong to somebody else, a dream, events that took place in a fairyland," and that presently her mind is in "such lonely and desolate state" (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 173). She was diagnosed with leprosy three years after she got married at 20 years old. Ever since, she has been spending a quiet life at a leprosarium. In the latter half of the entry, she recounts the shocking memory of her brother, who, out of despair, advised her to take her own life. The brother, however, took back his words and encouraged her to "study literature" in the quiet environment (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 175). He further suggested that it is her "destiny" to suffer from such a disease, and that "there are other ways to live […]. Spiritual life is much higher and valuable than material life" (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 176). She also shares her poetry, some in freestyle and some in the form of *tanka*, a traditional 31-syllable verse.

Summary B (male, 66 years old)

He was 18 years old when he realized there were some blisters on his body and spots on his face. Anxious of his conditions, he visited a Buddhist temple to pray and even fasted to no avail. Suspecting leprosy, he spent two years at a hospital, after which his condition seemed to have improved. Believing himself almost cured, he went on to get married, and had two children. However, he decided to leave the family when he discovered that his wife was having an affair. Instead of finding a new home, he wandered through the country as an outsider, taking odd jobs here and there. After coincidentally meeting his son in Tokyo, who was now 17 years old, he turned himself over to the police to confess his illness, and was taken into custody. He is now blind.

Summary C (female, 48 years old)

With her younger sister, she helped her parents to farm the family field. When she was 21 years old, her parents passed away in rapid succession. Although the sisters were able to survive thanks to the support from their relatives, she was diagnosed with leprosy at the age of 23. Her relatives started to abuse her. Her sister remained supportive but eventually left the household. When she was finally hospitalized, she was "pleasantly shocked" because the "treatment was just perfect. Attentive doctors and abundant supply of clothing and food" helped her put her feet back on the ground (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 208). While she misses her sister terribly, she is thankful "for the grace bestowed upon me by the nation," and is ready to spend the rest of her life in happiness (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 208).

Summary D (male, 11 years old)

The last section of the volume is titled "The struggles of children with leprosy" and consists of 16 entries by children between ages 11 and 19. The youngest boy's father, a carpenter, died when he was seven years old. His grandfather, who is also a carpenter, worked hard to feed him. The boy, however, ran away from his home at the age of 10, due to his worsening relationship with his abusive step-grand-mother. From Osaka, he sneaked onto a train bound for Tokyo. During the trip, two gentlemen discovered him and took pity on his circumstances. They accompanied the boy to an orphanage in Tokyo. Soon afterward, he was diagnosed with leprosy and was taken to the hospital. He has lost contact with his family, but "feels no pain" about it (Naimushō Eiseikyoku 2002, 280).

While these entries recount life stories of the patients with utmost reality, we must take into consideration the unreliable nature of these "confessions." First of all, it is unclear in what fashion the testimonies were collected. While it is plausible that some entries were actually written by the patients, as in Summary A, most of

the articles were likely edited after an oral interview was conducted. The logical explanation for this is that most entries are written in formal *bungo* (文語) style, a style of writing requiring a certain level of education that was not available for most patients, let alone children. Moreover, many of the older authors were blind at the time of the interview as their symptoms progressed and could not write at all.

Another point that stands out is that while several patients do complain that they are sometimes treated cold-heartedly, the majority describe themselves as being in a happier state than they were before. Most of the entries pay great attention to the hardships and misfortunes they endured *outside* leprosariums. In other words, the colonies are depicted as some sort of haven they have finally discovered after years of suffering. Even if it was true that life at leprosarium was comfortable for many patients, it is hard to believe that only a handful of patients had complaints, given the often strict and harsh environment they were forced to live in. In reality, it was not uncommon for patients to desert the facility, and many such patients were caught and punished, often by incarceration into a small and dark cellblock, where it was common for the "prisoners" to die from malnutrition and various illnesses (Miyasaka 2006, 146).

Finally, we should not overlook the complete lack of comments or analysis by the authorities on any of these entries. Except for the brief introduction at the beginning, no text is added by the editors. After the final entry authored by a 16-year-old girl, the volume concludes itself rather abruptly. This makes the collection even less reliable since it seems to neglect the aforementioned purpose of the volume to disseminate better understanding of leprosy and to improve the lives of the patients, but rather focuses on the paternalistic affection demonstrated by the government that protects the poor souls.

All in all, there is vast room for argument as to whether the "confessions" qualify as such. Confessions innately come from within; a "forced confession" would be an oxymoron. It seems, therefore, that we must wait for the arrival of more outward literary efforts by patients to be truly able to listen to their voices.

3. Hōjō Tamio: The troublesome writer

About a decade later, in May 1934, a 19-year-old who would be remembered as Hōjō Tamio (北條民雄, 1914–1937),[1] decided to hospitalize himself at Zensei hospital.

Born in Keijō (present-day Seoul) under Japanese occupation, Hōjō grew up in Tokushima and moved to Tokyo as a teenager to pursue education, while earning

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[1]   Hōjō's real name, Shichijō Teruji (七條晃司), was only disclosed in June 2014, 77 years after his death.

his living as a pharmacy clerk. Soon, he became an avid reader of Kobayashi Takiji (小林多喜二, 1903–1933) and Hayama Yoshiki (葉山嘉樹, 1894–1945), both known for their radical leftism. We must bear in mind, however, that he was no black sheep; he merely followed the zeitgeist. Similarly, his obsession with the idea of becoming a writer is no oddity. In fact, aspiring to become a writer was one of the most mundane things one could do. There were, according to distinguished author Ibuse Masuji (井伏鱒二, 1898–1993), approximately 20 thousand literary enthusiasts, or *bungaku seinen* (文学青年), in Tokyo at the time (Ibuse 1987, 50).

His diagnosis with leprosy in 1932, however, separated Hōjō from most of the crowd. His trips to the doctor's did not improve his symptoms. He was a newlywed but – doomed with an incurable disease – had no choice but to divorce his wife. In short, Hōjō quickly became a nuisance to his family, and perhaps more so to himself. After contemplating suicide, he decided to be hospitalized and visited Zensei Hospital accompanied by his father.

It is from this moment on that we know about his life in more detail because he started keeping a diary.[2] Of course, with some luck he could live a full life under proper care, but there was also a possibility that his life would be curtailed. Understandably devastated by his fate, he wasted no time to realize his vocation as a writer. In one of the earlier entries in the diary, dated July 21, 1934, he states his determination:

> これだけの苦しみを受け、これだけの人間的な悲しみを味わされながら、このまま一生を無意味に過されるものか！

> With all this suffering and human sorrow, how could I live my life in vain! (Hōjō 1980, 147)

It was perhaps to his pleasant surprise that many of his fellow patients were also fond of literature. Each colony published an intramural magazine of its own. *Yamazakura* (山櫻) of Zensei Hospital was launched in April 1919. In response, many patients expressed themselves eagerly, especially in the traditional poetic forms of 17-syllable *haiku* and 31-syllable *tanka*, which demanded readers to "connect with the health issues and struggles" they have experienced (Ono 2017, 70).

Such tradition of rather meek and pessimistic self-expression went hand in hand with the view of the authorities. For example, Ishibashi Ihachi (石橋伊八), the superintendent of Zensei Hospital, contributed an article to the August 1934 issue of *Yamazakura*, in which he states:

> そうして我等はかりそめにも常軌を逸するが如きことなく、常に品性を陶冶し真心から出た、偽りのなき思想を紹介し、そうして自分を動かし、人を動かすだけの努

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[2] A very rare heritage in itself, since virtually no diary of patients before the end of the Second World War survives to this day (Yamashita and Arai 2004, 1).

力をしたい、其処に文学の興味津々たるものがあり、又趣味を持つ人の生活として価値があると言へやう。

Literature lets us stay within certain norms, and it allows us to introduce to the reader elegant and wholehearted thoughts, which would move their hearts along with ours. That is why literature is so intriguing, and that is why having a hobby is valuable. (Ishibashi 1934, 5–6)

In other words, Ishibashi merely treats creative writing as a character-building exercise or something that would help the patients vent. To say the least, he does not believe that patients are capable of producing works of art with intrinsic value.

There is little doubt that Hōjō, who had already contributed a short story on the July 1934 issue, read this article. And there is even less doubt that Hōjō did not like Ishibashi's tone at all. On August 27, 1934, Hōjō writes this in his diary:

この雰囲気の内部では文学など糞喰えだ。だからこそ、こうこの院内の文学が断れ断れなんだろう。そして本気でやっているものは詩か歌の世界に遁れて、創作（小説の）世界に戦おうとする熱意は消失してしまっている。

In this kind of atmosphere, literature should be fed to dogs! That is why literature at the hospital is so detached. And decent enthusiasts take refuge in the world of verse; they have lost the passion for struggling in the world of fiction (the novel). (Hōjō 1980, 154)

For a young literary enthusiast like Hōjō, fixed verses must have seemed out-of-date and insufficient as a means to express the true struggle of one's spirit in the age of prose. It is his contemporaries who would lead fruitful decades of memorable novel and short story writing, a period Donald Keene, a prominent Japanologist, would retrospectively call the "golden age" of Japanese literature (Keene 2015).

But as long as Hōjō created inside the walls, it was obvious he could not bring about much change. While it was the patients who played a major role in the editing of the magazine, the process was thoroughly overseen by staff members. Like Ishibashi, many of them also contributed articles about their views toward leprosy. Some doctors, who were casual poets, served as judges; many of the poems published in these magazines were, in fact, hand-picked by the doctors (Tanaka 2013, 205).

It was, therefore, only natural for Hōjō to aim for success in the mainstream literary establishment, where he could break away from the scrutiny and peer pressure, and meet tens of thousands of potential readers. As a first step, he wrote to the future Nobel laureate in literature Kawabata Yasunari (川端康成, 1899–1972) on August 13, 1934, begging him to take a look at his story. Kawabata was already in his prime years. Besides writing his own works, he managed and edited several literary magazines. He was also an influential critic who was enthusiastic

about discovering new talents to quench the public thirst for more things to read (Kawakatsu 2015, 252). In short, well-connected and resourceful, Kawabata was an ideal person to contact.

It seems that his expectations were reciprocated. In the eyes of Kawabata, Hōjō was a promising young writer *in the sense that* he suffered from leprosy. Indeed, Hōjō himself proclaimed in his letter that he writes "about what is going on in the hospital" where nobody is "taking a serious look at leprosy" (Hōjō 1980, 316). Such an author is unprecedented and would call for public attention with or without a masterpiece. On October 12, 1934, Kawabata urges him to finish the work and send it over.

With a greenlight from his new mentor, Hōjō continued to work on his stories and made his nation-wide debut in October 1935 with the story "Maki rōjin" (間木老人, "Old Maki"). It was published in the magazine *Bungakukai* (文學界), managed by Kawabata and several other writers. While this meant his career as a professional writer had set sail, and he had now become a public figure, we can see that he was not exactly happy if we take a look at the entry written in his diary on December 20 of that year:

> 「間木老人」が発表された喜びも、その他先生から戴いたお手紙の数々の中に記されてあった喜びも、束の間の喜びに過ぎぬ。時間が経って平常な気持に還れば、またしても病気の重苦しさがどっと我が身を包んでしまう。(中略) 文壇なんて、なんという幸福な連中ばかりなんだろう。何しろあの人達の体は腐って行かないのだからなあ。今の俺にとって、それは確かに一つの驚異だ。俺の体が少しずつ腐って行くのに、あの人達はちっとも腐らないのだ。

> The joy of publishing "Maki rōjin," and the joys I found in the many let-ters from Sensei [Kawabata], are all ephemeral. Once I am my usual self again, I am crushed by the heaviness of my gruesome illness. [...] These people of the literary establishment are such a happy bunch. I mean, they are not going to rot. This is really amazing to me. While I rot away, these people do not. (Hōjō 1980, 223)

Here we see that Hōjō has cut himself off from the establishment, to which he no doubt longed to belong, and it is his physical condition that thwarts Hōjō from sympathizing with his fellow writers. This is obviously because he feels that what one writes is inseparable from the world one lives in; since he lives in the world of illness, he assumes that there is no way that he can associate himself with healthy writers. A feeling of contempt in his entry must also be noted. Hōjō, at least to some extent, ranked himself above other writers *because* he was ill.

This sort of anger was not nurtured overnight. At least, he was fully aware of the distance between himself and the "society" as early as July 4, 1935, according to his diary:

先ず第一に僕達の生活に社会性がないということ。従ってそこから生れ出る作品に社会性がない。社会は僕達の作品を必要とするだろうか？　よし必要とするにしても、どういう意味に於てであろうか。僕は考える。先ず、第一に「癩」ということの特異さが彼らの興味を惹くだろう。

Most importantly, our lives here have no sociality. Therefore, our works, written in such an environment, also lack sociality. Does society even need our works? Even if it did, on what terms? This is what I think: people will be interested because of the peculiarity of "leprosy," before anything else. (Hōjō 1980, 206)

Now that he suffered from an incurable disease, the only way for him to stay connected with the world outside the hospital was to become a successful writer. To do so, however, he had to make full use of his unique experience. The problem was, the more he demonstrated his version of reality, the more he drifts away from the "ordinary" people. And what is more, he could even become isolated in his own "society."

"Maki rōjin," for example, made Kawabata worry that it might raise a red flag in the small community of the colony. The sad and ominous story revolves around the titular character and concludes with his suicide. A reader would never know which parts of it are inspired by true events, but it is very easy to assume that everything is real. A letter from Kawabata dated May 14, 1935, shows that perhaps he, too, felt that way: "Are you sure your position in the village [colony] would still be secure after publishing this kind of story? Please confirm. Is it alright we moved forward?" (Hōjō 1980, 321).

Moreover, Hōjō's arrogance and hatred seen in the entry above may have been triggered by his completion of "Inochi no shoya" (いのちの初夜, "The First Night of Life"), which would become his best-known work. The story is in many ways similar to "Maki rōjin," but is much more personal since it centers around a young man named Oda, who hospitalizes himself to a leprosarium on the outskirts of Tokyo. There, Oda is shocked by the desperate state of helpless patients and indifference on the part of the hospital staff. In a fitful manner, he attempts suicide on the first night to no avail. However, after spending a sleepless night with his roommate Saeki, who tells him that life does go on even in such circumstances, he decides to give life another chance.

The story was published in the January 1936 issue of *Bungakukai*, and in the next month, Hōjō was awarded the Bungakukai Prize (文學界賞).[3] With permission from the hospital, he visited the publisher to receive the award and also made a stop at Kamakura to meet Kawabata in person. After such a momentous event,

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[3] The magazine is the same as the one published today but was owned by a different publisher. The prize, too, remains today, but now it is an annual prize with somewhat greater influence.

we might expect him to spare a few pages of his diary on the matter; but there is no word about meeting his mentor.

As a matter of fact, he writes less and less in his diary, and when he does, he is almost exclusively angry. The following entry from April 3, 1937, would be a typical example:

> 創元社からも川端さんからも返事なし。果して向うに着いているのかどうか疑わしい。そう考えると腹が立って来て仕事をやめてしまう。事務所を呪ひたくなる。この原稿だって武藤、永井、林の輩に見せなくちゃならんのだ。俺が全身をぶち込んだ作を、彼等はまるで卑俗な品物のように取扱うのだ。そして勝手に赤線など引いて返すのだ。しかもあの頭脳低劣なる、文学のブの字も判らぬ連中なのだ。ああ屈辱の日々よ。

> Nothing so far from Sōgensha [the publisher] and Mr. Kawabata. Did they really get my manuscript? Such a thought maddens me, and I stop working. This manuscript too should be shared with people such as Mutō, Nagai, and Hayashi. To them, my work, the fruit of my painstaking effort, is nothing more than a vulgar object. They would draw red lines all over it. And these people are mere imbeciles, who have no idea whatsoever what literature is all about. Ah, my days of disgrace. (Hōjō 1980, 277)[4]

Up until the end of the Second World War, especially from the 1930s, a decade of increasing political unrest with coups and assassinations becoming almost pervasive, censorship was wholly enforced both inside and outside the colonies (Arai 2011, 103). Any negative sentiment against the government, especially ideas even remotely related to communism or socialism, were to be eradicated from the text. While much of the troubles with government-led censorship could be avoided with simple editing and prior arrangements with the officials (Maki 2014, chap. 2), that was not the case inside the colony.

Even though Hōjō was quickly becoming a notable young talent in the eye of the public, it did not boost his status inside the walls. Quite on the contrary, Hōjō could have been considered dangerous since he had become the first patient to express himself through mainstream media. Stressing that all patients are legally bound by the Leprosy Prevention Law, the colony staff urged Hōjō to turn his manuscripts over to the censorship office, and, as a result, a number of his works were declined. For example, stories "Seishun no tenkeibyōshatachi" (青春の天刑病者達, "The Young Patients of Karma") and "Rai o yamu seinentachi" (癩を病む青年達, "The Young Lepers") were banned from publication. The former contained depictions of a penitentiary "maximum security cell," and the latter discussed how abortion was enforced on female patients.

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[4]   Some proper nouns have been expunged from the entries reprinted in Hōjō (1980); they could be restored by consulting Yamashita and Arai (2004).

It is also noteworthy that Hōjō was not entirely popular among fellow patients, especially outside the circle of his literary friends. In terms of symptoms, his condition was far from serious, and, in the eyes of veteran patients, it was ridiculous that a young man like Hōjō would treat himself as a model patient (Matsumoto 1979, 129).

It is tragic, then, that Hōjō did not live long enough to become a veteran. On December 5, 1937, Hōjō died from tuberculosis in the intestines and lungs. Perhaps his deterioration was accelerated by the nervous breakdown he was going through in his final months. Although Hōjō's life was a short one of 23 years, at least he became what he wished to be. But what sort of impact did he have outside the walls of the hospital? Was Hōjō able to acquire an unmuzzled voice? Did anyone follow in his footsteps, immersed in the echoes of his voice?

4. The birth of leprosy literature

The February 1936 issue of *Bungakukai* was, to some extent, dedicated to Hōjō. Besides publishing "Inochi no shoya," Kawabata allocated several pages of his "Zoku shishōsetsuteki bungei hihyō" (続私小説的文芸批評, "Literary Criticism in the Style of an I-novel, Continued"), a serialized critique, exclusively for Hōjō. There he clarifies that the author of "Inochi no shoya" is no other than the author of "Maki rōjin,"[5] and declares: "I must be disqualified as an editor of a literary magazine if I should hesitate to publish this kind of work" (Kawabata 1936a, 117). He further points to the fact that Hōjō lives in an "unworldly place" that is so different from "where we live" (Kawabata 1936a, 117). We can safely say that Kawabata was not entirely impartial. Proud of his serendipity, Kawabata boasted about his new protégé. He did not forget, of course, to stress the scandalous nature of his physical condition.

Then, on the following March issue, it was announced that the participants of *Bungakukai* have agreed to award Hōjō the monthly Bungakukai Prize. Here again, Kawabata focuses on the author's character rather than the work:

> 世間と隔絶した療養所にいる、二十四五歳の北條君を、今回の受賞がいかに慰め、力づけるかは、私達の想像以上であらうが、また入院費一箇月十円に足りぬ生活では、百円の賞金が実際に役立つことも非常なものであらう。(中略)共同生活であり、狂病者の附添夫になつたりして、つまり作家といふ特別な生活は許されてゐないので、書くことは困難である一方、貴重であるらしい。

> It is beyond my imagination how this prize would comfort and encourage Mr. Hōjō, who is in his mid-twenties, and lives in a secluded colony. Also, the prize money of 100 yen should come in very handy, given he

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[5]　Hōjō used another nom de plume, Chichibu Gōichi, for "Maki rōjin."

> pays 10 yen or so for the hospital every month. [...] He lives in a small community, where he sometimes has to take care of the insane. The privileged life of a writer is not at his disposal; because of this, writing is difficult, but also very precious for him. (Kawabata 1936b, 252)

It is noteworthy that two of the esteemed literary prizes, the Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize, were just established in 1935. The idea was to set up respectable awards comparable to Prix Goncourt of France, or even the Nobel Prize (Umeda 1977, 124). The establishment was now venturing on a new business model where prizes were manipulated as publicity tools to boost the career of writers, usually younger talents, in order to stimulate the entire market. In short, it was Hōjō's turn to enjoy his fifteen minutes of fame.

The members of *Bungakukai* reacted in several ways. Yokomitsu Riichi (横光利一, 1898–1947), an old friend of Kawabata, was quite discreet. Putting aside the physical condition of the author, he urges the young writer to be more calculating:

> 最悪の境遇にゐる場合の作者の心理といふものは、畳み包んでおくことのために作者の以後書く全作の根抵に蔓延する。作者の最悪の場合の心理は誰にでもあるものだが、それもそのまま飛びついて書くといふことは、科学にならず感傷になる。

> The psychological state of the author, who is at the rock bottom of his life, may provide the roots for all of his future works if he could preserve it. Of course, we all experience the rock bottom; but if you just pounce on it and write about it, that would be a work of sentimentalism, not of science. (Yokomitsu 1936, 124)

Yokomitsu, obviously, is too demanding, since leprosy is not a phase that one could break through. If the patient waited long enough, it is highly likely that he may never write again. On the other hand, though, Yokomitsu is being much fairer than Kawabata in the sense that he focuses on the work instead of the author.

Another member of *Bungakukai*, the critic Kobayashi Hideo (小林秀雄, 1902–1983), approaches the issue more abstractly. He claims that the story, which is "oddly simple," reminds the reader of "fairy tales of sorts" (Kobayashi 1936a, 151). He then compares the story with "Rai" (癩, "Leprosy"), a work by Shimaki Kensaku (島木健作, 1903–1945), which was published on *Bungaku hyōron* (文学評論, *Literary Critique*) in April 1934, just before Hōjō was hospitalized. "Rai," as the title blatantly suggests, is a story about a political prisoner who meets an indomitable comrade who does not let leprosy hinder his beliefs.

Hōjō, too, was aware of this piece, as he comments on it in his diary entry of June 7, 1935. There he claims that the story suffers from the "lack of reality," an understandable sentiment coming from an aspiring writer who, unlike Shimaki, actually fights the disease (Hōjō 1980, 191). But again, if we are to focus on the work rather than the author, Kobayashi is in the right to make a comparison between

two works that revolve around the same leitmotif. By doing so, at least, Kobayashi gives Hōjō a little spot in the timeline of Japanese literature.

The magazine also featured a slight expression of doubt. Takami Jun (高見順, 1907–1965), a prolific writer often categorized as belonging to *buraiha* (無頼派, "the decadent school"), starts off by approving the power of Hōjō's writing by saying, "my hangover just evaporated" (Takami 1936, 198). This does not mean, however, that Takami agrees with Kawabata from start to finish: "That being said, I am not sure if this work of literature is as wonderful as Mr. Kawabata claims it to be. It is a great documentary, no doubt, but is it a great tale, a *great literature*?" (Takami 1936, 198). In other words, Takami suggests that it lacks prowess, and there is still room for improvement.

No matter how the opinions contradict each other, it is almost surprising that a good portion of the issue is dedicated to discussing the work of a novice writer. The exchange also reverberated outside the magazine. For example, on January 24, 1936, Kobayashi had already shared his view in *Yomiuri Shinbun*:

> 雑誌に以前同じ作家の作品（間木老人）が発表された時、その号の編集後記に、作者は癩病患者であるといふ文句があるのを見咎めて、ある人が、実に失敬だなぞと憤慨してゐたが、さういふ人も、この第二作を読めば、僕等は、お互に、実に失敬だなぞと憤慨する結構な社会に生きてゐる事を納得するだらう。

> When a story (Maki rōjin) by the same author was published in the magazine, someone I know was upset because the editor declared that the author was in fact a leprosy patient. But this person, and not to mention me, too, shall realize after reading the second story, how lucky we are to be able to be irked by mere rudeness. (Kobayashi 1936b)

It seems as if Kobayashi is trying to overcome the aporia of Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1977) here. Apparently, unlike most stories, those written by Hōjō constantly reminded readers of the author's physical condition. Educated readers know, on the one hand, that who the author is should not have an overbearing effect on the interpretation of the text. But they also know by experience, on the other hand, that readers do read in the shadow of the author. A single text may yield a myriad of evaluations depending on *who* has written it. Putting aside the heritage of the Naturalism movement and the tradition of I-novels,[6] works of Hōjō would not have attracted a similar scale of attention if the author boasted flawless health.

In short, as soon as Hōjō escaped the echo chamber of the colony, he was now trapped in another. In the colony, he was merely ill, but in the literary establishment, he *ought* to be ill.

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[6] I-novels are often considered to be the fruit of the Japanese writers' effort to adapt the French Naturalism movement in the first two decades of the 20th century (Suzuki 1996).

5. Discussion

Writers have, in the past, discussed their illness in many ways. The act itself is a far cry from uncommon; for example, modern Japanese literature is known for its proneness of recounting tuberculosis (Johnston 1995, 124–159). But leprosy opens up a whole new sphere. No author with leprosy had documented his illness through a work of fiction and distributed it through channels of mainstream media. Let us remember that a diagnosis with leprosy in 1930s Japan (or elsewhere) was practically a death sentence, and thanks to the Leprosy Prevention Law, *de facto* illegal. Each period has its disease to signify demise and decay (Sontag 1990), and as for the 1930s, leprosy was in the limelight. It is easy to imagine this, of course, because we know for a fact that 2020s will be remembered as the age of coronavirus.

That being said, it must be pointed out that studies on Japanese, or the entirety of leprosy literature for that matter, are scarce. The paper by Susan Burns is one of the few treatises written in English that thoroughly provides the background to the development of this "distinct genre" (Burns 2004, 192). But the very idea of "genre" is what Hōjō despised and repeatedly denied towards the end of his life:

> 癩文学というものがあるかないか私は知らぬが、しかしよしんば癩文学というものがあるものとしても、私はそのようなものは書きたいとは思わない。私にとって文学はただ一つしかないものである。癩文学、肺文学、プロ文学、ブル文学、或は行動主義、浪漫主義など、文学の名目は色々と多いようであるが、しかし文学そのものが一つ以上あるとはどうしても思われぬ。文学が手段化した時に文学はもう堕落の一歩を踏み出しているのだ。

> I don't know if there is such a thing as leprosy literature, but if there is, I do not wish to write something like that. For me, there is only a single kind of literature. There seems to be an awful lot of labels on literature: leprosy literature, lung literature, proletariat literature, bourgeois literature, or activism, and romanticism. I find it hard to believe, however, that there is more than one kind. When literature is mobilized for a certain objective, it is already beginning to fall from grace. (Hōjō 1980, 114)

In this manuscript of an uncompleted essay, Hōjō provides a keen insight into how readers of the time treated his works. No matter how lethal his condition is, essentially it makes no difference to the reader. After all, the reader ravishes the end product and not its production process.

It seems Hōjō could not stress this point enough. In another essay "Keijitsu zakki" (頃日雑記, "Notes of Recent Days"), published posthumously in the March 1938 issue of the magazine *Kagaku pen* (科学ペン, *Science Pen*), he says that he wishes "only to write about human beings," no matter how people describe "what *we* write" (Hōjō 1980, 122; my emphasis). It is important to notice that Hōjō chose a plural pronoun.

While refusing to be consumed as a "leper writer," he segregates himself and his fellow patients from the rest of the authors, just like he did in the diary entry of December 20, 1935. He also claims, in another unpublished essay, that people should regard magazines published inside the colonies as "just *plain literary magazine*, without putting nouns like colony and leprosy in front" (Hōjō 1980, 136).

But apparently, nobody took him seriously. On the contrary, people who were supposed to be his mentors and protectors were the ones who constantly reminded him that leprosy was his greatest asset.

The exchange between Hōjō and Kawabata concerning the Akutagawa prize is a blatant example. Not surprisingly, it was announced in August 1936 that "Inochi no shoya" was shortlisted for the third Akutagawa prize. Very soon afterwards, however, Kawabata warned Hōjō in his letter dated August 7, 1936, that "it would be difficult for you to receive the prize" (Hōjō 1980, 371). It can be easily surmised that Kawabata, a member of the Akutagawa Prize committee, already had a very good idea about who the recipients will be: Tsuruta Tomoya (鶴田知也, 1902–1988) and Oda Takeo (小田嶽夫, 1900–1979).

Like most awards and prizes, Akutagawa Prize, too, is far from transparent. It is ultimately impossible to know why a certain author or work was chosen over others. In the case of Hōjō, however, Kawabata is quite clear on why he was *not* chosen. Here is his comment published on the November 1936 issue of *Bungei shunjū*, where the winners were announced:

> 発表当時既に或る程度酬いられ、また特異な作家として印象も強いゆえ、入賞せずとも注目されると思う。

> I am sure people will follow him even without the prize. His work was already rewarded to some extent when it was first published. Moreover, he is known to be quite peculiar as an author. (Kawabata 1936c, 349)

Here Kawabata honestly acknowledges the fact that Akutagawa Prize may be manipulated to boost the sales of certain works. And, from a business point of view, he is in the right; Hōjō's first collection of stories, also titled *Inochi no shoya*, sold well when it was published in December 1936. More than 6,000 copies were sold during the first two weeks (Hōjō 1980, 402), and this is a very good number when contemporary works of fiction typically garnered sales of about 1,000 copies (Itō 2006, 102).

But at the same time, Kawabata was determined that Hōjō's "peculiarity" was on the verge of expiring. Simply put, his leprosy no longer shocked the readers. If Hōjō were to survive and prosper in the establishment, he ought to come up with a new theme or style. "Why don't you consider writing about something else than leprosy?" Kawabata demanded straightforwardly in his letter of November 30, 1936, as *Inochi no shoya* was being printed (Hōjō 1980, 395). Kawabata, an able

producer and fixer, wasted no time. One thing he did forget, perhaps, was that Hōjō was only 22 and was gravely ill.

We already know that Hōjō was not fond of his status as "the leprosy writer" and was eager to expand his horizons. But in reality, he merely had a single year of experience as a professional and was not at all confident with his skill set. His reply to Kawabata's suggestion above, dated December 3, 1936, is almost self-mocking:

> 癩以外のことはいずれ書こうと念願しておりますけれど、まだその用意が出来ておりません。これは癩を書くよりもずっと難しいことですし、それに誰も書いておりますので（後略）。

> I have been wanting to write about something other than leprosy, but I am not ready. This is something much more difficult, and what's more, everyone is doing it [...]. (Hōjō1980, 396)

And he never ventured to do so, for he passed away a year later. His death sealed his reputation as it is. Since he was never going to produce new works, nothing stopped the establishment from using Hōjō as a monument of leprosy literature.

Let us take a look at a few obituaries published in newspapers. Critic Kawakami Tetsutarō (河上徹太郎, 1902–1980) praised the improvement Hōjō demonstrated in such a short career, stating that his later works teach "us healthy writers" a lesson or two (Kawakami 1937, 7). Another reviewer with the sobriquet Ryū Tōtarō (龍燈太郎), writes that the essence of Hōjō's works is "to immortalize oneself through literature while physically locked up in the prison cell of illness" (Ryū 1937, 4). And finally, a few months later, philosopher Tanikawa Tetsuzō (谷川徹三, 1895–1989) pointed out that while "it is no wonder the works written by a man secluded from the society because of his karmic disease are mesmerizing," this does not explain "the depth of heart and maturity" of his literature (Tanikawa 1938, 7).

Compared to the exchange between members of *Bungakukai*, the posthumous evaluation on Hōjō seems to be less diverse. We can confirm this on an advertisement of *Hōjō Tamio zenshū* (北條民雄全集, *Complete works of Hōjō Tamio*), which circulated in major papers. Here is an example from *Yomiuri Shinbun* on May 18, 1938:

> 世界に類のない『癩文学』の傑作を数々遺して、廿四歳で、奇蹟的な生涯を閉ぢた此の天才の文學ぐらゐ、切実で単純で、いのちそのものの真の姿を見せた不滅文学はない。蓋し、小説と云はず、随筆、感想、日記等の片々たる小篇の中にも、過去二千年の悲惨な歴史を持ち、今日の医学では治癒の道なく、社会の片隅に放棄され、侮蔑と排斥を浴びつつある癩患者の生活が、素朴な筆致と、老熟した手法をもつて、遺憾なく活写されてゐるからである。

> No literature is a better manifesto of life itself; a literature that is serious, simple, and immortal, produced by a genius who lived his miraculous life of 24 years, studded with unprecedented masterpieces of "leprosy

literature." All of his unaffected, mature works of varying scale includ-
ing stories, essays, notes, and diary, are vivid reflections of the life of
a leper, who, amidst contempt and segregation, lives with his incurable
disease in a dead-end of the society, reminiscing on two thousand years
of hardship.

In the end, Hōjō himself won over his works. Almost every comment on him is
either based on his medical peculiarity, or on the belief that his physical condition
should not affect the evaluation of his works. The outcome is surprisingly similar
in both cases. Most, if not all, contemporary comments are made about Hōjō
himself rather than his works; and this, to a large extent, still holds true today.

Although Hōjō was an overt "leader" of the movement concerning leprosy lit-
erature, it is important to recognize that he was not alone in it. Two artists, Akashi
Kaijin (明石海人, 1901–1939) and Ogawa Masako (小川正子, 1902–1943), quickly
come to mind.

Akashi Kaijin rose to fame in 1937, when 11 of his leprosy-themed, autobio-
graphical *tanka* were chosen to be included in *Shin Manyōshū* (新万葉集, *New
Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*), a "modern" version of the classical poetry
collection *Manyōshū* (万葉集, *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*), commissioned
by the publisher Kaizōsha. A couple of years later, his own collection *Shironeko*
(白猫, *White cat*) caused an even larger sensation with the sale of an astonishing
250,000 copies – possibly an erroneous figure announced by the publisher, may
it be unintentional or deliberate (Murai 2012, 266).

It was not only the patients who carried the fad forward. In 1938, Ogawa
Masako published her memoir *Kojima no haru* (小島の春, *Springtime in the Isle*),
which recounts the mission of a young female doctor to enlighten and protect
the patients of leprosy residing in small villages in and around Kōchi prefecture.
The book was a best-seller and was made into a propaganda-laden film in 1940,
which in turn was highly praised (Arai 1996, 92).

The three artists have much in common. Kaizōsha, the publisher that worked
with Hōjō on several occasions, was very much aware of the market value of
"leprosy literature." It is tempting, therefore, to surmise that the poems by Kaijin
had an extra charm for the editors of *Shin Manyōshu* due to the poet's medical
condition. Kaijin's mentor was Uchida Mamoru (内田守, 1900–1982), a doctor in
residence at the colony Nagashima Aiseien, who further advised Kaijin to publish
Shironeko. And it was also Uchida who convinced Ogawa, his colleague, to publish
her memoir. It is telling that one of the scenes in the film features Kaijin's verse
(Murai 2012, 267).

Demonstrating how "leprosy literature" was received by an average reader
could be a difficult task; but Takamine Hideko (高峰秀子, 1924–2010), one of the
great actors of the Showa period (1926–1989), remembers the shock she experi-

enced from reading Hōjō's story for the first time (Takamine 1998, 131). She also states that it was the performance of Sugimura Haruko (杉浦春子, 1906–1997), who starred in the film version of *Kojima no haru*, that fueled her passion for act-ing (Murai 2012, 267). It is noteworthy, too, that Takamine mentions these works alongside Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and the verses of Ishikawa Takuboku (石川啄木, 1886–1912), a poet who died in poverty after suffering from tuberculosis. Perhaps for a typical young reader of the time, "leprosy literature" was accepted as a documentation of courageous challenges against the hardships of the world.

6. Conclusion

"Leprosy literature" did not merely offer a stimulating experience for readers who are intrinsically drawn upon secrets and taboo, but new opportunities to relevant parties. For Kawabata, the discovery of Hōjō constituted a merit in his career. Not only was he able to introduce a new genre, but his connection with a patient with a lethal disease could also easily be manipulated into proof of his philanthropic nature. He quickly became one of the protectors of "leprosy literature," and ap-parently, he now agrees with Hōjō's view that a writer should not be judged by his medical condition:

> 癩院を描く作家はまだ北條君一人しか世に現れていなかったためにこれが癩者の真相であるという面ばかりが強く受け取られ、これは北條民雄なる一作家の文学であるという一面が、広い読者には忘れられ勝ちでなかったかと疑われる。

> Since Mr. Hōjō was the only writer who writes about the leprosarium, it seems that readers, in general, disregarded the fact that his works are the result of an effort by an author named Hōjō Tamio, and that they were not exclusively written to recount the truth about leprosy. (Kawabata 1980, 421)

And again, when the volume *Bōkyōka* (望郷歌, *Songs of Nostalgia*), a collection of stories and essays written by patients of leprosy, combined with contributions by writers, scholars, and medical practitioners, was published in 1939, Kawabata concurred with Hōjō in his essay that there is no such thing as "leprosy literature." Obviously, this is something Hōjō would have appreciated to hear during his life-time. Kawabata's logic, however, seems a little shaky:

> ここに癩文学の本が特に出されるといふのも、北條君の出現が与って力あることだらうが、彼の遺稿にも見える通り、彼は「癩文学者」と言はれるのを嫌ってゐた。当然である。しかし人々が言ふのも、癩者が書いた文学とか、癩を書いた文学とか、ただそれだけの軽い意味であらう。「癩文学」といふ特殊なものがあるわけはない。

> A volume on leprosy literature such as this would not have been pub-
> lished without the emergence of Mr. Hōjō. We know from his posthu-
> mous manuscripts, though, that he never liked being called a "leprosy
> writer." Of course he didn't. But when people talk about it, they simply
> mean that the work was written by a leper, or that the work is about lep-
> rosy; nothing more. There is no distinct genre called "leprosy literature."
> (Kawabata 1939, 315)

There is little doubt that Kawabata is trying to advocate the view Hōjō manifested in his unpublished manuscripts that have been quoted earlier. But it is doubtful whether Kawabata truly understood them. People's simple talk about works "written by a leper" and "about leprosy" is exactly what made Hōjō insecure. He rather wanted people to forget about leprosy and look beyond.

Instead, it seems that Kawabata built a monument of Hōjō and engraved "leprosy literature" on it. Kawabata's short story, "Kanpū" (寒風, "Cold Wind"), a slice-of--life piece about himself visiting a leprosarium for the funeral of a young patient, was serialized in the magazine *Nihon hyōron* (日本評論, *Japan Critique*) between 1941–1942. There, he reminisces of a troublesome youngster who "must have acted in a shockingly arrogant manner after being awarded the prize at a young age of 22 or 23. He was obviously a 'bat in a bird-less village,' and could not help it" (Kawabata 2015, 199).[7] But now that he is gone, the protagonist is purely awe-stricken by patients striving to create amidst their suffering.

How did the protagonist, or Kawabata, relate to them? At least this is what he believes:

> 私達はなんの話をしたのか、今は全く覚えていない。故人の遺稿は日記や手紙な
> ども整理して送ってほしいと、事務的に依頼したことだけが纏まった話であったよう
> だ。ただ私は、若い癩作家を世に出した男、また一人の作家、つまり文学というも
> のの一つの形として、この青年達の前に坐っていたわけになるだろう。私は無言の
> うちになにかが通じ合っているように思えて、謙虚であった。

> I have no recollection of the conversation I had with them. One thing is
> for sure. In a businesslike manner, I asked them to make sure they'll file
> the manuscripts, diaries, and letters of the deceased, and send them over
> to me. I think I was sitting in front of those young men as the one who
> produced a young leprosy writer. Or, in a way, I sat there as an example
> of a writer; a form of literature if you would. Sensing that something
> connected us without even uttering a word, I felt modest. (Kawabata
> 2015, 211)

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[7] The proverb "bat in a bird-less village" suggests someone with moderate qualities who gets to pretend to be superior in a place full of incompetent people.

"Kanpū" is a work of fiction, and it does not aim to reconstruct Kawabata's experience with Hōjō.[8] But there is little doubt that Kawabata sums this up in his work and paints himself as the advocate of sickly artists. He did try to live up to his standards, too. In 1958, when he was invited to Okinawa via the local Pen Club, he made a detour to visit the Airakuen colony to meet patients of leprosy (Nishimura 2016, 3). A couple of days before his visit on June 8, he telephoned the staff and asked them to send over essays written by children of the colony for their school assignments (Koyano and Fukasawa 2016, 487). He then used them as a source of inspiration for his speech, with an expectation that essays written by children should reflect their emotions and feelings in an untinged manner.

We must bear in mind that soon after Hōjō's death, from 1939, Kawabata became deeply involved in the so-called *seikatsu tsuzurikata undō* (生活綴方運動, "the movement of daily life writing"). Originally, *tsuzurikata* was simply a writing class on the timetable at a typical school, urging students to write freely of their experiences and thoughts. However, the sense of "freedom" is malleable. With an overall inclination towards militarism, school assignments were quickly manipulated into an educational program that would raise children in ways that would profit the government; school teachers were able to instruct children on "correct" ways to feel and think by marking and commenting on their essays. Kawabata, who too believed in the quality of "self-salvation" through writing, outspokenly advocated education administered by the Japanese government, especially in foreign territories such as Manchuria, because he believed that children could be liberated and be equipped for the future by learning how to write in Japanese (Wei 2014, 107). Perhaps it was his conversations with Hōjō that inspired Kawabata how mentoring aspiring writers, who are often meek because of their humble social background, could help him gain merit and authority.

Kawabata, of course, was not alone in such a venture. People with power who participated in the swell of leprosy literature, namely writers and medical practitioners, often enjoyed such imbalance. One example would be Shikiba Ryūzaburō (式場隆三郎, 1898–1965). A psychiatrist and a critic, he most likely took an interest in Hōjō and leprosy literature through his brother Shikiba Toshizō (式場俊三), who was among the editorial staff of *Bungakukai*. By January 1936, Shikiba was already taking part in *Yamazakura* magazine as one of the "outside authorities" of colony literature and made comments on the works of patients. In a closing remark of an essay, he claims:

> 癩者の文学ばかりでなく、病者の文学は、その材料の特異さと経験の深さによつて、職業的文人の及ばない傑作が生れるものである。(中略)私は文芸のみならず、もつと多方面な知的作物が癩者の中々からも続々生れるやうに希望する。

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8   Igarashi (1996) points out numerous "factual errors" if the story were to convey true events.

> Not only works of leprosy patients, but also those of people with health issues in general, tend to become masterpieces that surpass the works of professional writers, because of their peculiar material and rich experience. [...] I truly hope to see many more intellectual achievements, even those outside the realm of creative writing, among leprosy patients. (Shikiba 1937, 67)

Although his statement can be viewed as empowering for the writers deprived of freedom and connection with the outside world, we must note well his bias against the patients. It is very much possible to interpret his words as a suppressing voice of authority. That is to say, he sees value in the writings of the patients only because they *are* ill. In other words, Shikiba might not have found their works intriguing if they were written in such a manner that no reader could associate them with leprosy.

This view could be substantiated by the fact that Shikiba soon turned his attention to visual artists with mental challenges. The most renowned of his protégé is by far Yamashita Kiyoshi (山下清, 1922–1971), the artist known for his brilliant collage of colored paper. During the early 1940s and again in the 1950s the media often covered him as a model savant; Yamashita was among the early examples of Japanese "outsider artists." In a way, then, leprosy literature could be deemed as a starting point of outsider art in Japan (Ono 2020).

Generally speaking, it was only after the end of the Second World War that leprosy could be critically represented through literature. With new drugs such as Promin, leprosy was now curable, or at least fully suppressible. Although most patients stayed in colonies rather than to start their lives anew, they could now hope for a long and full life. It was also after the War that patients began to stand up for their rights; they deemed the Leprosy Prevention Law to be unwholesome and discriminatory, and demanded the government to abolish it. This battle would end only in 2001, with the total annulment of the law in 1996 and the subsequent lawsuit that resulted in the victory of the patients. But the Leprosy Prevention Law is only one of the many laws that allowed the government to carry out inhumane "treatments," especially sterilization, on the voiceless patients who "failed" in the eyes of eugenics.

Was Hōjō a hero who, ahead of his time, rebutted the policies of the government that deprived the patients of their freedom and basic human rights? One could easily argue so. Paradoxically, however, his works were also often manipulated to prove the nation's perseverance, not to mention the diversity of the literary establishment. Leprosy literature is not unique to Japan, nor was it the first of its kind. Mrs. Piilani Koolau, a resident of Hawaii, shared her account as early as 1906 (Frazier 2001). Manuel Ortiz Guerrero, a popular poet from Paraguay, died in 1933 from the disease. A North Carolina native John Early quarantined himself for 28 years and published a narrative on it in 1935 (Kalisch 1972). In Japan, however, it evolved into a move-

ment exceeding personal accounts, where numerous patients were able to share their voice in multiple media channels. Whether they enjoyed full freedom of speech is a different question. The movement was, through its rise and fall, controlled by participants who were healthy and powerful. Perhaps it is not overly pessimistic to state that the voice given to writers with leprosy was always an echo; it only proves that the voice was once there, but is never heard directly.

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VOICELESS WITNESSES:
THE ROLE OF THE BEGGAR IN FOUR WORKS
OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY CHINESE
LITERATURE

Martina Renata Prosperi

Thinking of China in the early 20th century and China today, one tends to high-light the great transformations dividing past and present. However, Chinese lit-erature offers evidence of interesting thematic continuities, too. The figure of the beggar, an extremely significant yet voiceless outcast of society, is just one remarkable example. Represented by modern characters such as the protagonists of Lu Xun's "Kong Yiji" (1919) and of Ba Jin's "Dog" (1931), the beggar continues to appear in contemporary narratives, including A Yi's short story "An Accidental Murder" (2010) and his novel *Wake Me Up at 9:00 in the Morning* (2014). Which continuities are traceable among these works? If literature has the power to voice the voiceless, what do the outcasts portrayed by these authors reveal to their read-ers? Drawing on Agamben's reflections on the concept of testimony and on psy-choanalytic categories, this chapter offers a comparative analysis of four case studies.

1. A thematic connection between early 20th century literature and today's literature: The topic of deviance, the image of the beggar

Reading through both early 20th century Chinese literature and contemporary novels, it is quite easy to detect a common topic – deviance – which recurs in different forms, e.g., characters deviating from a traditional familiar system, from a socially accepted idea of "health," as well as from a pre-established concept of so-cial order, or the boundaries of legality. In fact, "the metaphorization of disease as socio-cultural symptom and symbol of traumatic modernity emerged in modern

Chinese literature [already] from the late Qing to May Fourth periods," and even if "the writing of disease as a counter-discourse to the dominant Mao discourse had disappeared in the People's Republic of China," it has recently re-emerged "as a marginal voice against the mainstream of marketization" (Choy 2016, 4), thus returning as an object of undoubted interest for literary criticism.

Drawing inspiration from this reflection, this chapter analyzes the thematic continuity between early 20th century literature and today's literature by electing a slightly broader criterion, namely the topic of "deviance." This topic, undeniably close to that of "disease," shares a similar etymology with the word, as disease literally means "a lack of ease," or a disconnection from wellness. Meanwhile, deviance is the result of "deviating," or drifting away from the "way" (in Latin, *via*). Both terms bear a reversative or privative prefix (*dis-* and *de-*). So, why are these destabilized and destabilizing perspectives – those offered by sick or deviant characters – such a relevant issue both in the early 20th century and in contemporary literature? And what is the universal interest of inquiring about this literary *topos*?

First and foremost, narrating deviance – like narrating disease – means providing alternative narratives vis-à-vis a dominant discourse of harmony (和谐 *hexie*) and health (健康 *jiankang*), which not only neglects those sick, diseased, and dissenting voices, but also precludes any chance of treasuring their perspectives. Second, narrating deviance means naming problems, thus providing a language to discuss them. Thence, if narrating deviance means voicing the symptoms of a critical condition, it also means affirming the possibility of facing that criticality, or even healing it. Therefore, by filling the shoes of a deviant character (e.g., a beggar), the reader is enabled to experience a constraint-free, rule-free, super-structure-free perspective: a place of abstraction, and hence, of understanding.

In order to explore that place of understanding, this chapter offers a multidisciplinary analysis of four fictional beggars: firstly, Lu Xun's (鲁迅) Kong Yiji (孔乙己) (孔乙己 "Kong Yiji," 1919); secondly, the protagonist of Ba Jin's (巴金) "Dog" (狗 "Gou," 1931); thirdly, He Shuiqing (何水清), a young poet who risks becoming a city beggar in A Yi's (阿乙) story "An Accidental Murder" (意外杀人事件 "Yiwai sharen shijian," 2010); and finally, Fuzhong (福忠), a mute beggar from A Yi's novel *Wake Me Up at 9:00 in the Morning* (早上九点叫醒我 *Zaoshang jiu dian jiaoxing wo*, 2014).

The figure of the beggar or the homeless person is not uncommon in contemporary Sinophone literature. Examples of this figure are found not only in the production of post-1970s authors such as Sheng Keyi (盛可以, 1973–), A Yi (1976–), and Xu Zechen (徐则臣, 1978–), but also in several works by older authors, such as Jia Pingwa (贾平娃, 1952–) and Yu Hua (余华, 1960–), just to mention a few well-known names among many others. It should also be said that this figure, dear to both the Taoist and Buddhist traditions, is already present in the premodern

landscape, with specific characteristics and functions that would certainly re-
quire a separate discussion. Therefore, this research does not intend to trace an
exhaustive overview of this literary figure, but, starting from and limiting itself to
the selected case studies, it intends to provide a few interesting insights about its
recurrence and significance, that is, about its being indicative of certain social
situations, and witness to a possibility of existence outside any concept of "nor-
mality." In fact, it is namely in literature that this figure, often banned from the
streets or denied by government-orchestrated narratives, does actually survive,
together with its destabilizing testimony.

As for the contemporary panorama, the choice of limiting the case studies to
two characters by A Yi, which undeniably precluded many other possibilities, was
determined both by the clarity with which these characters offer a counterpoint to
contemporary society and its dominant narratives, and by some significant analo-
gies with Lu Xun's and Ba Jin's characters. In fact, He Shuiqing can be considered
a failed scholar like Kong Yiji; while Fuzhong, like the protagonist of "Dog," is the
example of the beggar considered to be almost inhuman, as he even lacks that
verbal language that would neatly distinguish man from beast.[1]

When I began researching the figure of the beggar, I came across a paper
mentioning a series of New Year's pictures issued in Shanghai during the 1920s
and "entitled '360 walks of life' (360 *hang*) [...], meaning 'every walk of life' or 'all
professions,'" in which "a beggar was one of the subjects" (Lu 1999, 7). This means
that, in the realm of those 1920s New Year's pictures, the beggar was considered
a profession or a walk of life. In other words, it could be seen as a possibility of
existence. This fact should not be surprising, being it a consequence of the Taoist
and Buddhist traditions, and of a social order in which this figure was not only
a concrete presence but a recognized and respected one from the earliest times.
As Aude Lucas interestingly observes, it was seen already in classical literature – in
Pu Songling's (蒲松龄) stories, for example, but soon before even in the *Zhuangzi*
(庄子) – that the figure of the beggar might happen to represent, if not a real pro-
fession (such as a healer), a marginal yet mysteriously resilient "walk of life."

> *Liaozhai* [聊斋] beggars are quite expectedly repellent characters, [...] how-
> ever, they are more often than not endowed with supranatural abilities
> that actually make them powerful protagonists. [...] [They] are not rep-
> resented by [Pu Songling] at the bottom of the society, but as characters

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[1]   The man-beast connection, and, in particular, that between man and dog, is also a frequent
thematic knot in contemporary Sinophone literature. Consider, for example, the uncanny
bestiary staged by Can Xue (1953–), or the literature of Mo Yan (1955–), whose masterpiece
Red Sorghum (1986) includes a long chapter having dogs as protagonists and telling their
story just as if they were human characters.

whose marginalization goes along with a *superior understanding of life*.
(Lucas 2021, n.p., emphasis added)

The figure of the beggar as an absolutely negative and unproductive element is
instead a product of modern times, of the Cultural Revolution, of the following race
for economic development (last decades of the 20th century), and of rules, such
as the 1982 vagrancy law (officially called "Custody and Repatriation of Homeless
Beggars Law"), which empowered the police to jail anyone without an identity
card, work permit, or temporary residence certificate. Although this law was abol-
ished in 2003, it was then replaced by bans on begging in numerous areas of the
city centers, deliberately reiterating the very same intolerant mentality towards
beggars, along with the will to erase their inelegant presence. Therefore, com-
pared to the times of Pu Songling, there is no doubt that, at least at a sociological
and anthropological level, the life of Chinese beggars has significantly changed.
Their presence on the sidewalk of glamorous streets is now vanishing, and they're
becoming less and less disturbing. Their status is not a profession anymore, and
their humanity is neglected. They barely receive any reaction from the passers-by,
and nobody producing a New Year's picture series in today's China would ever
consider including a beggar in it.

Yet, contemporary literature still does. That is to say, within the fictional world
of stories and novels, the character of the beggar, differently from its real counter-
part, can still play a significant role, offering an external and critical eye towards
the dominant concepts and practices, if not even that "superior understanding of
life" typical of his Taoist and Buddhist ancestors.

2. The beggar as a witness, the reader as a witness of the witness

To investigate the role of the beggar in the following case studies, the textual
analysis hereby proposed will make use of a multidisciplinary approach and take
advantage of Peter Brooks's (narratological), Massimo Recalcati's (psychoanalyt-
ical), and Giorgio Agamben's (philosophical) reflections.

As Peter Brooks states in his work *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention
in Narrative* (1986), "the study of narrative needs to move beyond the various for-
malist criticisms that have predominated in our time," and his proposal is that of
looking to "a convergence of psychoanalysis and literary criticism" (Brooks 1992,
35–36). He suggests employing the dynamic model of the psychic processes for
analyzing the dynamics of texts, and he defines the plot as a dynamic mechanism
both started and fostered by the engine of "desire;" the desire of the protagonist to
achieve a goal, which, according to Brooks, does actually elicit and coincide with
the reader's desire to follow the plot and establish a senseful connection between
its incipit and its conclusion. Brooks's examples are mostly drawn from European

novels of the 19th century, in which "ambition" and "Eros" were the most common drivers underlying the dynamics of the text. Whereas going through the four stories hereby analyzed, the reader's "desire for the plot" is not a curiosity about the outcome of any brave deeds. The protagonists of these narratives are not heroes, so the reader is not made curious by their actions, but instead about *them*, as human beings. Namely, about who they are and what they represent. When approaching "Kong Yiji," for example, the main interrogative triggering the reader's desire is: Who is Kong Yiji? Why should the internal narrator still remember him? Similarly, when reading "Dog," one's main curiosity will be about the protagonist's identity: Who is this character? Is it a man or a dog? And this is also the very same question the protagonist himself is trying to answer.

Recalcati's book *Il soggetto vuoto* (*The Empty Subject*, 2011) raises further questions about the purpose of their begging. What do these characters beg for? Are they begging to remedy a *lack*? Do they represent an alternative vis-à-vis another trend – dominant among the other characters, as well as in reality – in which we see a compulsive search for *jouissance* (mainly represented by a greed for money) as the only – though deceptive – way to remedy a sense of *emptiness*? In fact, the concept of "lack" and the concept of "emptiness" are very different from each other. The concept of lack is related to that of "desire," because people desire what they lack. Thus, reversibly, this lack generates their desire. As Lacan explains, this (real) desire is never addressed toward consumable objects (e.g., money), but is always a desire of reaching (the) *Other*, or, an ever-missing and never attainable object. In other words, it is a desire that triggers a productive dynamism. On the contrary, the experience of "emptiness" is produced by a disconnection between lack and desire; emptiness is not a desire-triggering lack, but rather the downfall of any desire. It does not elicit any creativity, but repeatedly searches for a deceptive solution through the device of *jouissance*. All of those gadgets and addictive behaviors (e.g., money, alcohol, drugs, violence, food and sexual disorders, compulsive shopping, etc.) providing human beings with ephemeral solutions to that emptiness can be considered *jouissance* devices (Recalcati 2011, 21–24). Hence, are these beggars able to awaken others from this deadly trend? Can they re-propose a model of life that is not afraid of looking for the Other instead of looking for money? Or of chasing an unattainable – but vivifying – "Real," a fully human existence, rather than settling for a mere consumer's one?

Actually, it may be exactly through his Sisyphean existence and his experience of failure and *shame* (since "Real" is always unattainable) that the beggar eventually reveals himself to be an authentic witness, both of his human nature and of his time. As Giorgio Agamben states in his book *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, "the subject of testimony is the one who bears witness to a desubjectification" (Agamben 2002 [1998], 121); the one who has experienced – and has

simultaneously seen himself – being inhuman. In this sense, if the *Muselmann* is the human-who-has-witnessed-himself-being-inhuman, or "the downed," the "remnant," and hence, the "complete witness" of Auschwitz (Agamben 2002, 133–134), these fictional beggars can also be considered the legitimate witnesses of their respective times. All the more so, these characters are *voiceless* – thus, "impossible" – witnesses: Kong Yiji speaks a barely understandable Chinese; the dog-man never speaks, it/he just listens to the others and occasionally barks; He Shuiqing is a failed poet, while Fuzhong is a mute. Indeed, these four characters being wordless is the exact proof of their paradoxically bearing witness, by "bearing witness to the impossibility of witnessing" (Agamben 2002 [1998], 34).

Accordingly, it becomes self-evident that the recipient of these beggars' stories is not just a simple listener being entertained by a work of fiction, but quite the opposite. The reader of these stories is required to be the addressee of an impossible testimony, and thus is, through the very act of his or her reading, the possibility of accomplishing that testimony. This reader is not a passive receiver of the plot, but, as Brooks keenly suggests, he or she is to play a rather active role. By collecting the clues provided within the narration, and tracing connections between its beginning and its end, the reader finally *realizes* (understands and implements) the sense of its plot, as well as the meaning of its beggar character: the (inhuman) remnant, that ultimately is the human. Otherwise said, stepping into the shoes of these fictional beggars allows the reader to understand how losers are often more mindful of their own humanity than winners. In fact, winners automatically become part of their society's mainstream narrative, joining its legitimate members. Whereas losers become not only the living testimony of a possible existence *outside* the abovesaid narrative, but also witnesses to the many critical issues about this narrative that insiders fail to notice.

The following textual analysis will therefore shed light on these significant characters, by investigating their main characteristic and functions, and by contextualizing them in their respective time periods. As the following case studies will demonstrate, although times and plots have inevitably changed, the role of these characters has almost kept unchanged: they are there to provide an alternative narrative, and to be the voiceless voice of the society's human conscience.

3. "Kong Yiji" (1919)[2]

"Kong Yiji" is the title of the story, as well as the name of its protagonist. However, this character is not introduced to the reader until the end of the third paragraph. Instead, the very first phrase of the text is: "The layout of Luzhen's taverns

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[2]   All the quotations reported in this section refer to Lu (2000 [1919]).

is unique" (鲁镇的酒店的格局，是和别处不同的), and the narrative actually begins by describing the environment of Luzhen's taverns, where hot water is always kept ready for warming rice wine and where customers are sorted on the basis of their wealth and education, which is deducible from their clothes: most of them are "the short-coated class" (短衣主顾), whereas the richer and educated ones are referred to as "those in long gowns" (长衫主顾).

In the second paragraph the internal narrator reveals his own identity; at the time of the narrative, he was little more than a child and worked as a potboy in Prosperity Tavern. According to his boss, he was "too much of a fool" (太傻) to serve long-gowned customers, but he was also unable to dilute wine for the short-coated ones. Therefore, his only task was to warm wine and he was easily bored.

> 只有孔乙己到店，才可以笑几声，所以至今还记得。

> The only times when there was any laughter were when Kong Yiji came to the tavern. That is why I remember him.

The first piece of information provided about Kong Yiji is that he brought laughter in the tavern, this also being the reason why the former potboy remembered him. The topic of *ridicule* is strictly related to the topic of *shame*. Ridiculing Kong Yiji is a way for the potboy to detach himself from that miserable customer, to feel safely and happily distant from the fearful uncanny demeanor that he embodies. Subsequently, the narrator comes to describe Kong Yiji, whose exterior aspect and behavior are rich in paradoxes. He wears a long gown, *but* his gown is dirty, his beard is unkempt and, differently from any other long-gowned customer, he drinks his wine standing. He speaks using archaisms, as if pretending to be an erudite, but his words are hardly understandable, and everybody mocks him for his vicious habit of stealing books. The narrator explains this situation as follows:

> 孔乙己原来也读过书，但终于没有进学 4，又不会营生；于是愈过愈穷，弄到将要讨饭了。幸而写得一笔好字，便替人家钞钞书，换一碗饭吃。可惜他又有一样坏脾气，便是好吃懒做。

> Kong Yiji had studied the classics but never passed the official examinations and, not knowing any way to make a living, he had grown steadily poorer until he was almost reduced to beggary. Luckily, he was a good calligrapher [...], but unfortunately he had his failings too: laziness and a love of tippling.

A few lines later, the narrator points out another paradox; Kong Yiji is a lazy worker, *but*, in Prosperity Tavern, he is a "model customer who never failed to pay up" (品行却比别人都好，就是从不拖欠). In regard to the other customers, they never speak with Kong Yiji, but rather they mock his literacy, which they constantly doubt. The former potboy himself remembers that Kong Yiji had once tried to test him

by asking whether he was able to write the character for "aniseed." The boy's irritation and indifference, however, had left the failed scholar invariably frustrated and alone in his own wordless wordy world. "That was how Kong Yiji contributed to our enjoyment" (孔乙己是这样的使人快活), states the narrator, and then another: "but we got along all right without him too" (可是没有他，别人也便这么过). That is to say, Kong Yiji is not necessary; his language – along with the cultural system it represents – is obsolete, unusable, and incomprehensible; his presence is just something to distance oneself from, an uncanny remnant of the past which cannot be dealt with but by the means of ridicule. In other words, other characters are dealing with him by making him the representative, and ultimately the scapegoat, of a shared sense of inadequacy. In this light, it is no coincidence that, at the time of the narrative, the potboy himself felt largely inadequate to do his job.

One day the boss of the tavern is making out his accounts, and, by realizing that Kong Yiji's name is still written on the tally-board, he deduces that the failed scholar "hasn't shown up for a long time" (长久没有来了) and "still owes nineteen coppers!" (还欠十九个钱呢！). One of the customers explains that Kong Yiji has been caught while stealing books and beaten until his legs were broken.

> "后来呢？" "后来打折了腿了。" "打折了怎样呢？" "怎样？……谁晓得？许是死了。"

> "And then?" [asks the boss to the customer.] "Well, his legs were broken." "Yes, but after?" "After? ... Who knows? He may be dead."

The boss needs to ask twice ("And then?", "but after?"), because the fact that Kong Yiji "may be dead" is irrelevant to the customer who is giving the account of his disappearance. Kong Yiji's absence, like his presence, is something irrelevant and almost *unreal*, detached, separate, and far away from the supposedly authentic *reality* of the human world in Prosperity Tavern. No wonder he has no *real* name, his surname being the *kong* (孔) of Confucius (孔子), and his nickname, *yiji* (乙己), being the first two characters of the old-fashioned children's copy book, that is a senseless word and a mockery in itself.

After some time, Kong Yiji comes back to the tavern, *but*, differently from his old habit, he cannot drink his wine standing, and now he is squatting cross-legged on a mat. His voice is "low *but* familiar" (虽然极低，却很耳熟), and he looks like a wreck *but* invariably asks for his usual bowl of wine: "Warm a bowl of wine" (温一碗酒), he says entering the tavern; "Warm a bowl of wine," he repeats after a while. Just as in the past, he is teased by the boss and by the other customers because of his vice of stealing books, *but* this time he does not admit the truth, nor does he insist on his old adage that taking books could not be counted as stealing. He does not even pay his debts. Rather, he just pretends to have broken his legs in a fall, pays the price for this bowl of wine, and eventually leaves the tavern. As hereby

emphasized, this last appearance of Kong Yiji at the Prosperity Tavern is marked by a contradictory tension. On one hand, it bears familiar features like Kong Yiji's voice, his asking for a bowl of wine, and his being teased by other customers. On the other hand, it betrays something unusual, unfamiliar, and uncanny, such as his squatting on the mat, the low volume of his voice, his denying the truth about his legs, and his failing to pay his debts, which the insistent repetition of the usual, familiar, and comfortable phrase "warm a bowl of wine" does nothing but attempt to control, and thus, to conceal.

After a long period, the boss of the tavern realizes that Kong Yiji's name is still on the tally-board. This time, however, Kong Yiji does not reappear, "nor have I ever seen him since" (我到现在终于没有见), affirms the former potboy, by ending his account: "No doubt Kong Yiji *really* is dead" (大约孔乙己的确死了; emphasis added).

What could this ending mean? The phrase is clearly structured as a deduction: *since* the narrator has not seen Kong Yiji since (his very last appearance at the tavern), *he deduces that* "no doubt Kong Yiji really is dead." This deduction, how-ever, is founded on two assumptions. The first assumption is that Kong Yiji *really* is a "model customer." The second assumption is that his existence or non-exis-tence can be simply deduced from his frequent visits to the Prosperity Tavern. In other words, this ending should rather be stated more similarly to "no doubt *our beggar-like customer* Kong Yiji really is dead." However, this begs the question: What about the *man* Kong Yiji?[3] His nickname – though as bizarre as it sounds – is still written on the tally-board. The memory of him is still fresh in the narrator's mind and his contradictory, uncanny existence, which the former potboy was once able to ridicule and exorcise, is now coming back to his mind. Although he does not admit it, indeed it constitutes a problematic memory, a *present doubt*, which eventually results in his need to narrate it. If there was really "*no doubt*" about Kong Yiji's death, there would be *no need* to call back his story, to set it – and thus, to control it – within the frame of a plot. In other words, to transform it into a sense-desiring, sense-searching structure.

So, what was so scarily uncanny about Kong Yiji? What was the most fearful – and thus, the most ridiculed – part of him? Given the period in which this story takes place, the most shameful feature of Kong Yiji is not his material poverty, nor the supposed laziness which eventually catalyzed his bankruptcy. Most likely, Kong Yiji's uncanny character consists in his failure as a literate, of which his exterior aspect and his material poverty are merely symptoms: the witnesses. Kong Yiji is

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[3] In regard to the neglected humanity of Kong Yiji, Foley (2012, 380) affirms: "Neither the owner nor the narrator allow themselves any sort of emotional investment in Kong Yiji as a person […]. Accordingly, his absence is marked only by his debts, rather than by any memory or feeling of his human presence in the establishment."

nostalgic for language. Namely, he is nostalgic for a language system that, at the time of the narrative, has already disappeared. Yet, he invariably struggles to keep it alive by mumbling unintelligible archaisms and by stealing books (an allegory of this language), until this spiritual lack turns him into a beggar, eventually causing his physical death.

What is the language that Kong Yiji begs for by witnessing the unbearability of its loss? Is it the grammar of cultural and ethical values, which several intellectuals among Lu Xun's contemporaries had long started to perceive as insufficient, obsolete, shameful, and hence, *ridiculous*? The abolition of the Chinese imperial examinations (1905) was just 14 years older than this short story. One might well assume that while Lu Xun was writing "Kong Yiji," China taverns were still *really* crowded with several sorts of neglected, unappreciated Kong Yijis. If the abolition of any examination system can be fixed through an established set of bureaucratic operations, the abolition of a language, the dismissal of generations of literates who have been trained with the exact purpose of speaking *that* language and entering *that* system is not so easily done automatically. Rather, it involves a cluster of people speaking the words of the *past*, but suddenly finding themselves on the threshold of the *future*. They lack the *present* in between. They lack *time*, and indeed, they beg for it. That language, and that socio-cultural grammar that once was their dignity, their privilege, their legitimation, and their social status, is now of no use and no value. With their surrounding society embracing a modern devotion to scientific knowledge and technical progress, their identity is left empty, their existence meaningless, and their presence voiceless.

4. "Dog" (1931)[4]

> "我不知道自己的姓名[...]。我不知道谁是我的父亲，谁是我的母亲。"

> "I don't know how old I am or what my name is. [...] I have no idea who my parents are."

This is the opening of a five-chapter short story. The narrative is delivered by the voice of a first-person narrator who is also the protagonist. His poor conditions are evident from the very beginning, as he is unaware of his name, age, and roots. Most of all, he is completely alone. These are the features that mark the insurmountable difference between him and other people. All he knows about himself is his exterior appearance, which he describes by listing a series of characteristics, that is, "skinny [literally, short] body, yellow skin, black hair, black eyes, and a flat

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[4]   All the quotations in this section from the original Chinese text refer to Ba Jin (1991 [1931]). Their English translations are from Ba Jin (2007).

nose" (黄的皮肤，黑的头发，黑的眼珠，矮的鼻子，短小的身材). This unmistakably recalls the image of a stray dog. "Every person has a childhood," he explains, "but mine was different [...]. All I've known is cold and hunger" (每个人都有他的童年。[...] 我的童年却跟别人的童年不同。[...] 我知道的只是寒冷和饥饿). Nevertheless, the first thing he recalls about this childhood is something "human:" an old man suggesting he go look for a school in order to receive a good education. However, when the abandoned child tries to enter the imposing buildings of the schools, he only received fierce refusals, and eventually started doubting his own human nature: "A voice in my head kept asking, 'Are you really human?'" (在我的耳边似乎时常有一个声音在问：'你究竟算不算是一个人？').

To answer this question, he eventually decides to enter an "abandoned temple" and begs the temple god – whose statue is significantly damaged to the point that "the gold had peeled off his body, and one of his hands was missing" (身上的金已经脱落了，甚至一只手也断了) – to give him a sign. The decaying god (probably, an allegory of an obsolete tradition system), gives him no sign, but the boy eventually solves the problem by himself. He decides that, judging by his way of living, he cannot possibly be a person: "I begged for scraps like a dog, because I wasn't human" (我乞讨残汤剩饭，犹如狗之向人讨骨头。我并不是一个人). Because he feels like an object, he sticks a sign on his back and tries to sell himself, ready to serve anyone as faithfully as a dog. However, the attempt of selling himself as an object or a pet results once more in failure, proving him to be "totally useless" (完全不需要的东西). Finally, after recovering from his desperate mourning, he goes back to the temple and begs the god statue to become his surrogate father: "Though the Holy One didn't reply, he didn't refuse my request" (神的口永远闭着，他并没有说一句反对的话).

There are two points worth noticing. The first point is the lack of language both in the dog-man and in his statue-father, which obviously *never* replies. The second point is the (illusory) response that the dog-man eventually creates in order to remedy his sense of lack. That is, by providing himself with a surrogate father because his real Father (an allegory of China, its culture, or its social system?) is unknown (disappeared or failed?), and thus unable to provide his son with any legitimacy to exist, nor, consequently, with any right to speak (Recalcati 2016, 199–200).

The second chapter's opening is marked by the important change of the dog-man adopting the god statue as his surrogate father:

> 我虽然跟平常一样每天出去向人们讨一点骨头，但是只要有了一点东西塞住我的饥饿以后，我便回来了，因为我也跟别的人一样，家里有一个父亲。

> I went out to beg for bones as usual, but returned to the temple as soon as I had a little something to fill my stomach, because now I had a father at home, *just like other people*. (emphasis added)

This new sense of belonging provides the guy's existence with a renovated self-confidence in his own human nature (after the first chapter's long list of animal similes – "like a dog," "as he would kick a dog," "like a wounded dog," etc. – the reader is hereby delivered a human simile: "just like other people"). However, this step toward humanization is *not* produced by any concrete transformation, nor by any practical action. The statue-father is not able to speak any comforting words to his son, not to mention providing him with any tangible help. On the contrary, the humanizing function of this surrogate father is rather to be found in his *symbolic* presence. In other words, it is found in his representing the inhibition and in his symbolizing the Law which defines the limit of *jouissance* by providing his son's life with an Order: "I went out to beg for bones as usual," says the protagonist, *but* "returned to the temple as soon as I had a little something to fill my stomach" – and here is the change elicited by the symbolic father, that is, the inhibition of the (otherwise deadly) *jouissance*. He does not beg for more food than the little he really needs because he does not have any *empty* time to fill by trying to satisfy any *illusory* desire. Instead, he knows exactly what his *real* object of desire is: a womb-like warm sense of belonging and of being legitimate and useful. In other words, he has a longing desire of *being* human, *living* as a human, and completely fulfilling his human nature (Recalcati 2011, 18).

Yet, this tension toward humanization, which the protagonist manages to trigger through the device of the surrogate father and which is made all the more evident by his starting to nurture human desires ("I hungered to live like other people, to eat good food, live in a grand house, wear beautiful clothes," 我渴望跟别的人一样：有好的饮食，大的房屋，漂亮的衣服和温暖的被窝) is punctually contradicted by an opposite tension toward animalization. The latter tension is particularly evident in other people's derisive laughter that the protagonist happens to raise while trying to approach a pair of woman's legs walking along the sidewalk, as well as in the frustrated barks he later gives out from inside his temple-home, eventually begging his surrogate father to turn him into a dog. In other words, this second chapter is crossed by two paradoxical trends: a tension toward humanization and a tension toward animalization. These two processes, though apparently opposite, are strictly linked to each other. The second one – that is, the animalizing process which culminates with the protagonist praying to be turned into a dog – is simply the result of the first one, which is the humanizing process that, through the topic of derision and the desubjectifying experience of shame, makes the protagonist all the more aware of his (human) condition. To put it simply, the human protagonist eventually begs to be transformed into an animal (namely, a dog) in order to escape the (expressly human) experience of shame. Because human beings can detach from themselves – to see themselves from the outside – they therefore

are able to experience shame.[5] However, a dog is poor without having the *word for*, thus, the *awareness of* "being poor." Thence, the protagonist's tension toward humanization, indeed *leads him* to his tension toward animalization, and finally pushes him to beg for an animal life.

The third chapter can be divided into two parts. The first part describes how the protagonist considers other people and starts classifying them in different categories. The most honorable of these is composed of those wearing "white caps" (白色帽子) and "white uniforms with blue trim" (蓝边的白色衣裤) and speaking a language that the protagonist cannot understand. These "more honorable people" (更伟大的人) are likely foreigners, but the dog-beggar does not envy them. On the contrary, he secretly worships them:

> [我]祝福他们。我因为世界上有这样的伟大人物而庆幸，我甚至于因此忘记了自己的痛苦。

> I wished them well. I felt blessed that this kind of honorable persons existed in the world. Because of them, I forgot my own misery.

Thence, the second part of the chapter narrates how his dystopian wish (of turning into a dog) eventually comes (almost) to fruition. One evening, he is sitting against a wall by the roadside when an "honorable person" happens to stumble upon him and consequently cries out, "Dog!" (狗!). Despite being kicked and bruised by the collision, the dog-beggar is overjoyed; he takes the incident as a baptism and runs back home (to the abandoned temple) to thank his surrogate father.

The fourth and the fifth chapters are the shortest ones. In the fourth chapter, the protagonist, who now considers himself a dog, happens to encounter those same pair of beautiful legs that he had once tried (and *ridiculously* failed) to approach. This time, he manages to control himself and waits for the legs to walk over to him. The legs, however, are accompanied and guarded by a white puppy, which suddenly attacks the beggar, starting a scuffle between *dogs*: "Hands were pulling at me, hitting me, but I held on to the little white dog with all my might" (许多只手在拖我，打我。可是我紧紧抱住那条白毛小狗死也不放). After this phrase that marked the end of the chapter, there is a narrative blackout. The reader does not state how the scuffle eventually ends, as the fifth and final chapter of the story begins with a completely new scene:

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[5]   "'The phenomenon of *aidos* (the Greek term for "shame") [...] unites respectively active vision and passive vision, the man who sees and is seen, the seen world and the seeing world' [...]. In this reciprocity of active and passive vision, *aidos* resembles the experience of being present at one's own being seen, being taken as a witness by what one sees. [...] Whoever experiences shame is overcome by his own being subject to vision; he must respond to what deprives him of speech" (Agamben 2002 [1998], 107).

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等到我回复知觉的时候，我是在一个黑暗的洞里。[...] 身子给绳子缚住，连动也不能够动一下。我又想，在那个破庙里，断了一只手的大公无私的神，作为我父亲的神 [...] 在等我。我要回去，[...] 不管我全身痛得怎样厉害，我毕竟是一条狗，我要叫，我要咬！我要咬断绳子跑回我的破庙里去！

> I found myself in a dark cave when I regained my senses. [...] I was tied up with a rope so I couldn't move. My thoughts returned to the dilapidated temple where my surrogate father [...] was *waiting* for me. I had to go back. [...] No matter how much I ached, I was still a dog. I wanted to bark and bite, to bite through the rope and run back to my abandoned temple.

The dog-beggar has been imprisoned. Nonetheless, he is not scared, nor depressed. On the contrary, he holds tight to his identity. "I was still a dog," he says, and he can affirm that, because he knows his surrogate father is waiting for him, he holds a legitimacy to exist. He exists in light of the waiting, as one extreme of a bipolar system. He belongs to this symbolic order. He *is*, thus, no matter how he suffers, he *still is*. And if he calls himself a "dog," it is just, as previously explained, to avoid the burden of shame. Defining himself as a "dog," he declares himself out of a social order to which, being orphan and poor, he would not be allowed to belong anyway. Claiming to be a dog is claiming to belong to another kind of order, thus, admitting that another kind of existence is still possible outside and regardless of the dictates of the dominant society.

The dominant society is represented here by the legs of passersby, that constantly come and go, almost without noticing the beggar. They are the legs of busy people; sometimes they are feminine and charming legs, other times they are the legs of people speaking incomprehensible languages, supposedly of wealthy foreigners. They are the legs that walked on the sidewalks of Chinese cities at the beginning of the 20th century: those of a new bourgeoisie and of its growing interest in the West; legs of new ideas and new ways of living, which irremediably left behind a certain type of individuals and of concepts, rejecting them or simply forgetting them, in the dazzling light of the modern beacon of progress.

The dog-man character of Ba Jin constitutes a physical and symbolic counterpoint with respect to this kind of legs and society. First, his gaze on the world is a gaze from below, as it is physically anchored to the ground; moreover, it is not in motion like the pedestrians, but has a fixed and constant position from which the beggar watches the comings and goings of other people. Also, he often stays in closed and dark places, while other people are portrayed as they move freely in the open air. The substantial stasis of this beggar-character could be interpreted as the symbol of that traditional society, deemed as backward and miserable, mired in the superstitions and beliefs of the past, from which the Chinese intellectuals of the early 20th century intended to emancipate themselves, in order to catch up with the other world powers. On the other hand, however, this stasis does indeed

preserve a positive element: humanity, that is, the awareness of every human being's desire for the Other, or of the intrinsic need and capacity to love of any human being. In this way, this outcast character manages to surprise the reader with the effectiveness of his paradox. On the one hand, his semi-canine identity is for the Sinophone reader an immediate reminder of an idea of derangement and insults. For example, in the word for "crazy", *fengkuang* (疯狂), the character 狂 (*kuang*), meaning "mad," "violent," "wild," or "insane," significantly contains the radical for "dog," 犭 (*quan*). Whereas phrases such as *gouzaizi* (狗崽子), *gou dongxi* (狗东西), *gou niang yangde* (狗娘养的), etc., which can be translated with the expression "son of a bitch," refer to a degradation which is precisely associated with the image of a dog, or *gou* (狗). On the other hand, however, this dog-man's will to exist as a member of a relationship, that is, his will and ability to love, which he even places ahead of shame and fear, effectively contrasts with the emotional ineptitude of passers-by, who are clearly unable to feel any human empathy.

Although the world changes, and runs towards progress, and speaks different languages, the beggar, still and silent, simply remains a human being, in need of relationships and eager to love, that is, a living testimony of what being human means. One might therefore conclude that this beggar's determination to keep on existing as a dog, his resolute will "to bark" and "bite through the rope" for going back to his surrogate father, is his paradoxical way of preserving the man within the dog, the continuous need for love within the ephemeral race for progress, or the humane within the inhumane.

5. "An Accidental Murder" (2010)[6]

This medium-length narrative is part of A Yi's story collection *The Bird Saw Me* (2010) and is a multi-perspective account, delivered by an internal narrator, who – as revealed only towards the end of the story – works as a policeman in the township of Hongwu. Instead of introducing himself, the narrator starts his account by describing the rat-infested train station of Hongwu, because the railroad section near Hongwu is the place where, on October 10, 2010, "around evening, a bit later than 7 pm, [...] a [passing] train window spat out a demon, as it was a jujube seed" (傍晚7点多 [...] 车窗里吐出一只妖怪来，随意得像吐一只枣核). The reader is not told who this monster is, but the narrator reports that, concomitantly with that evil creature being spat out of the train and landing somewhere near Hongwu, a strong wind rises, the sky gets suddenly dark, and six local people of Hongwu, coming from six different lanes of the town center, eventually end up – each for

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6 The quotations reported here are from the original Chinese text (A 2010) and are accompanied by my own translation.

a different reason – in the same main road. This road is where the demon himself is soon going to pass through and bump into each of them. To be as precise as possible, the narrator provides the reader with a graphical representation of those six streets' disposition vis-à-vis the main road:

求知巷	青龙巷	朱雀巷	Qiuzhi Lane	Qinglong Lane	Zhuque Lane
———————————————————			———————————————————		
（西）建设中路（东）			(West) Jianshe Middle Road (East)		
———————————————————			———————————————————		
明理巷	白虎巷	玄武巷	Mingli Lane	Baihu Lane	Xuanwu Lane

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Six Lanes

This use of visual elements is eloquent of a need for order, or for systematization. It is a graphical attempt to master the uncanny chaos of reality, or the unpredictable inhuman within the human. Time and duration of the mishap are also provided very precisely: "That odd accident was over within twelve minutes, it started at 10 pm and ended at 10.12 pm" (这诡异的事只发生了12分钟，10点开始，10点12分结束).

After this introductory part, the narrative is divided into seven chapters, each of them being named after a character: Zhao Facai (赵法才), Jin Qinhua (金琴花), Langgou (狼狗), Ai Guozhu (艾国柱, A Yi's namesake), Yu Xueyi (于学毅), Xiao Qu (小瞿), and Li Jixi (李继锡). The first six people are the locals who happen to walk down the main street of Hongwu on the night of the "odd accident," while the last one is the stranger: the demon "spat out of the train." Every chapter reports the same day – that October 10, 2010 (10.10.10, *shi shi shi*, which in Chinese is almost homophone of 死死死 *si si si*, "death death death") – but narrating the perspective and the background story of its respective protagonist. This means that the reader is taken back in time seven times and repeatedly reconstructs that night from seven different angles.

All these characters are problematic, tormented, unsuccessful, unsatisfied, and somehow even dangerous people. Zhao Facai is a heavy drinker. He has long given up having sex with his wife and, after being forced to leave his secret lover, has become depressed. Jin Qinhua is a decayed prostitute, and her days are all alike. But on this unlucky night, she happens to be caught in the act and brought to the police station. When the "demon" arrives in town, she has just been released and she is still hanging around, feeling sad. Langgou is a failed mob boss and a hypochondriac. Ai Guozhu is a young colleague of the narrator, and a disenchanted policeman who likes writing poetry and is determined to leave his dull job in Hongwu to move to the city. The night of the mishap, he is sitting at a night market stand together with another guy, He Shuiqing, who failed to have a career in the city and eventually returned to his rural hometown to escape a life of beggary. Yu Xueyi is mentally ill; he went crazy after his first heartbreak and never recovered. As the former house of his beloved one is set to be torn down, he spends most of

his time – including this unlucky night – sitting in front of the house to guard against its destruction. Xiao Qu is the village idiot who became famous after saving a few people from drowning. He consequently has based the sense of his life on the outcomes of that heroic episode. He spends his days meeting journalists and rescuees, giving interviews and speeches. On this night, an old friend of his, a vicious man who once raped a young girl in the countryside near Hongwu, happened to come visit him. However, after Xiao Qu's wife leaves the two friends alone, the man (named Lei Mengde 雷孟德) seems to lose any interest in staying with Xiao Qu and eventually leaves his house. Therefore, as the "demon" is passing through Hongwu's main street, Xiao Qu is looking for his friend Lei Mengde. While going through these chapters, the reader, who knows that an "accidental murder" is about to take place but has no clue *who* is going to be the murderer, is kept in a constant state of alertness, gradually suspicious of every character.

Li Jixi, the protagonist of the last chapter, is a paranoiac. On October 10, 2010, he turns out to be the monster spat out of the train near the station of Hongwu. The reason he's on the passing train is because he recently obtained 3,000 yuan and was travelling to a medical clinic to pay for an infertility treatment. Feeling suspicious of a young couple – a boy and a girl – sitting next to him, he decides to entrust his money to the train conductor. Due to his severe persecution complex, however, he soon starts nurturing the fear that the boy might intend to kill him. Thus, he first locks himself in the toilet, then desperately decides to jump off the train.

At this point, the seven threads of these seven-perspective backstories eventually merge into a unified narrative. While Li Jixi is walking toward the town center, the narrator updates the reader about the situation in Hongwu (respectively, who is simultaneously doing what). Any character's gesture, emotion, doubt, or tension, as well as all the narrative suspense, is pressed down into a flat, precarious simultaneity.

The next scene takes place at the police station, where the identity of the narrator is finally revealed to the reader. The narrator is none other than the policeman doing the night shift exactly at the time when the mishap occurred, and several people started calling the station to report a murder. It is soon clear that they are not reporting the *same* murder. Indeed, they are reporting six different murders; the killer being the "demon" spat out of the train, the paranoiac stranger who tried to overcome his desperation, and remedy his powerlessness and incapability of facing reality by stealing a fruit knife and stabbing those six people passing by to death. The reader is told this last part of the story by the means of a flashback, as the policeman-narrator reconstructs the chain of the events, as well as the motives underlying the absurd massacre. In the end, after Li Jixi is easily found and arrested, the policeman goes to the township hospital, where he discovers that his

young colleague Ai Guozhu is among the six victims. As if suddenly aware of the precariousness and unpredictability of life, he immediately feels the need to call his lover and reassure her that he will always be there to protect her.

> 这只是当夜无数个许诺之一。当夜，红乌镇的人 [...] 彻夜不眠，他们紧紧抱着女人和孩子，就像后者正发着致命的高烧。

> That was just one of the innumerable promises of that night. The inhabitants of Hongwu [...] were sleepless all night long; everybody was holding his own wife and children in a strong embrace, just as if they had a fatal fever.

This ending can be considered a gateway to interpret the whole story. There is no real focus on the killer as a legal person, nor is his gesture judged from any ethical point of view. On the contrary, Li Jixi is almost described as a victim (e.g., he is affected by infertility; he is convinced that the boy on the train wants to kill him; he is poor and lost in a place, Hongwu, where nobody helps him). His fatal act is rather automatic, predestined, and *ineluctable*; when he stabs his first victim, Zhao Facai, it is precisely as if he had no real command of his own action:

> 就好像不是刺，而是沼泽似的肉将刀子吸进去，又慢慢吐出来。

> It was not like he was *stabbing* him, but rather as if the marshy flesh [of Zhao Facai's body] was itself sucking the knife in, and then slowly throwing it out.[7]

The murderous act is deprived of any sense of responsibility. Accordingly, the reader is offered no chance of ethical blame. That uncanny plague which Li Jixi is representing is actually nothing unfamiliar or *foreign* – thus, limited to the only *foreigner* of the story – but rather, as Freud puts it, "something familiar [...], which ought to have been kept concealed, but which has nevertheless come to light" (Freud 2004, 429). In other words, the uncanny character Li Jixi is no surprise to the reader, who has just gone through the daily lives of a depressed drinker, a decayed prostitute, a failed criminal boss, an unsatisfied policeman, a desperate psychopath, and a friendless idiot. The uncanny element – that "fatal fever" – is

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7   As regards this excerpt, two issues are worth noticing. First, the combination of the topic of violence with the semantic field of "eating" (which the verbal expressions "sucking in" and "throwing up" do clearly belong to); a combination which might remind us, for example, of Lu Xun's *Madman's Diary*. Second, the same passage, the same sense of ineluctability, the same impossibility of judging a killer, given his concurrently being a victim – both of himself and of his (cannibalistic?) society –, is clearly traceable in another work by A Yi, namely, in the short novel *A Perfect Crime* (下面我该干些什么 *Xiamian, wo gai gan xie shenme*), where he writes almost the same line: "It was not like he was stabbing her, but rather as if the mire-like flesh [of the girl's body] was itself swallowing the knife" (就好像不是刀子在刺，而是泥潭似的肉将刀子吞吸进去) (A 2012).

indeed "something *familiar*" in each of these people's lives. Therefore, this absurd "monster" spat out of the passing train is nothing but the waste, the remnant, the witness, and the (re)emerging evidence of all of the uncanny incongruities characterizing and shaping these lives. In the end, though usually "kept concealed," this uncanny sense of dullness, inadequacy, dissatisfaction, and lack of sense is actually ubiquitous and never-ending, to the point that – and all the more so, given that A Yi himself admits his debt to Albert Camus (Hong 2012, 41) – one cannot help comparing this story ending with *The Plague*'s:

> As he listened to the cries of joy rising from the town, Rieux remembered that such joy is always imperiled. He knew [...] that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years [...] and that perhaps the day would come when [...] it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city. (Camus 1972, book ending)

Given this summary, one can now focus on the character He Shuiqing, the ambitious writer who ends up as a beggar while trying to make a living in the city. Although he is a minor character, He Shuiqing is all the same a significant part of this story's mood and highly representative of its uncanny-concealing system. More precisely, one might say that this failed man does nothing but embody the uncanny element of Ai Guozhu's life. The two of them share the same sense of dullness and unsatisfaction, which results in their desire to leave Hongwu and move to the city. They both like writing and have a critical perspective on reality. The only difference between them is that He Shuiqing has already made his attempt and failed. After becoming a city beggar, he finally decided to come back to Hongwu. He was perfectly aware that by coming back, he would be the object of the locals' mockeries (again, note the topics of ridicule and shame), but those mockeries, as well as the dullness of a whole life in Hongwu and the frustration of wasting his own talent down there, were seemingly more bearable than the hunger, the cold, and the humiliation he had suffered in the underground passageways of the city. His speaking of those city pedestrians' "shoes," and not of their whole body, might remind us of Ba Jin's dog-beggar, who rather mentions the people's "legs." Moreover, both Ba Jin's beggar and He Shuiqing experience the desperate circumstance of eating a dirty bun that had fallen to the ground (first story) or been thrown into a trashcan (second story), and both of them eventually internalize this episode as the evidence of concretely being beggars, and thus less-than-human or inhuman.

Moreover, with He Shuiqing being a failed intellectual, we cannot help but to bring back Kong Yiji's failure as a literate and, thus, as the bearer of a language that is no longer appreciated, nor even understood, by his surrounding reality. It might be no coincidence that He Shuiqing is an intellectual, and more precisely,

a humanist. In the past, he published his poetry works on the *Renmin Wenxue* (人民文学). He speaks the language of poetry, and the language of humanistic cultivation; a language which, given his bankruptcy, might prove to be as obsolete as Kong Yiji's archaisms. Humanistic discourse is no priority for He Shuiqing and Ai Guozhu's contemporaries. It is not appreciated within the confined rural context of Hongwu, nor is it required in that glamorous city society, where He Shuiqing has suffered the worst disappointment and humiliation. Therefore, he has come back. He has given up his battle between nurturing his soul and feeding his body, and he has chosen the latter. In He Shuiqing's eyes, this conclusion is ineluctable; as ineluctable as that marshy flesh swallowing the knife; as ineluctable as the "fatal fever" which imaginarily affects the whole township of Hongwu. Ai Guozhu, however, does not accept this ineluctability, and after listening to He Shuiqing's story, he reflects to himself as follows:

> 你失败不代表我失败；即使所有人失败，也不代表我失败；即使我已失败过两次，也不代表会失败第三次 [...] 我不能在临死前追悔莫及。

> Even if you [He Shuiqing] have failed, this doesn't mean that *I* am to fail; and even if everybody fails, this also doesn't mean that *I* am to fail; and if I've failed twice, this doesn't mean that I'll fail the third time [...]. When I will be on my deathbed, it will be too late for regrets.

Ironically enough, that night was *really* the time for Ai Guozhu to lie on his deathbed. Nonetheless, and despite this all of the more patent sense of ineluctability, Ai Guozhu does undoubtedly play a fundamental and somehow cathartic role within this story. It is no coincidence that the view of his corpse, together with the policeman's phone call, constitutes the ending scene of the narrative: the last image that one bears in mind. Ai Guozhu is the witness of the possibility to choose. Despite any (almost) ineluctable failure, he stands out as a Sisyphus, as an *homme révolté* (again referring to Camus). He also stands for the possibility for anybody to try one's own luck. He Shuiqing's testimony is nothing but the catalyst for Ai Guozhu to carry out his critical reflection, strengthen his will, and deliver *his* own witness. It is the witness of a person who chooses to choose, and who chooses to (dare to) *desire*, within a society (represented in this story by the township of Hongwu) where the other characters have all given up nurturing any real *desire*. In other words, one might conclude that He Shuiqing's witness is functional to Ai Guozhu's witness. His role as a beggar-character is not to raise any moral judgment, but rather to put any passerby (who could be Ai Guozhu, or even the reader) in front of one's own innermost conundrum: the ineluctability of failing, yet the possibility to choose.

6. *Wake Me Up at 9:00 in The Morning* (2014)[8]

Wake Me Up at 9:00 in The Morning is A Yi's first long-length work of fiction, and it is hereby impossible, nor pertinent, to provide a comprehensive summary of the whole novel. Instead, after briefly giving account of its structure, we'll focus on its interesting beggar-character, Fuzhong the mute.

This novel is not only a multi-perspective narrative, but also a multi-narrator one. When not employing a third-person omniscient narrator, the storytelling often relies on the voice of a character named Hongliang (宏梁), who is the youngest and most educated among the brothers of the story's (dead) protagonist, Hongyang (宏阳). During the preparations for Hongyang's funeral, Hongliang has a long conversation with his nephew Xu Yousheng (许佑生). Therefore, while the preparations for Hongyang's funeral constitute the framework and the main narrative (delivered by an external narrator), it is instead through Hongliang's account to his nephew that the reader is informed of the funeral's backstories. Among the minor characters that recurrently appear in the novel, the beggar Fuzhong is the most peculiar. His singularity, however, is not much due to his being mute and mentally retarded, but rather to his way of feeling and behaving both during Hongyang's funeral rites and in his everyday life. This stands as a counterweight to the rather phony, greedy, selfish, opportunistic, and *homo-homini-lupus* discourse represented by most of the other characters.

Who is this mute beggar named Fuzhong? Even before his introduction, he appears on the scene of Hongyang's burial chamber by bringing a page-long list of sacrificial offers, which is a name parade of both Chinese and imported brands, including any sort of soft drink and snack. This is undoubtedly an estranged narrative device. As he is desperately crying, the sound of his mourning is compared to a wolf cub's call (the inhumane within the humane), but it is also said to sound sincerer than any sweet human voice (the humane within the inhumane). It is no wonder that, when Hongbin and Hongliang (Hongyang's brothers) approach this desperate man, who has just brought in an entire supermarket of offerings and is now crying as sincerely as can be, they themselves cannot help feeling their eyes getting watery and admitting:

> 还好有这个妥子，正是这妥子让我们想起自己所面对的并不是一具待处理的尸体而是一个值得追忆的有血有肉的人。

> It's a luck that this idiot has come; he has reminded us that here, in front of our eyes, is not a corpse to be disposed of, but a flesh-and-blood person who deserves being remembered.

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8   The quotations reported here are from the original Chinese text (A 2018) and are accompanied by my own translation.

A few lines later, the external narrator eventually informs the reader about this good-hearted mute: "The man, whose name was Fuzhong, was of unknown age and unidentified origins" (这个叫福忠的人没有年龄和故乡). Like in Ba Jin's "Dog," the description starts from the unknown origins of the character and the mystery of his chronological age; his existence being as ageless as that of a mythological creature. Afterwards, the narration shifts to a flashback reconstruction of this person's life in Fanzhen (范镇), the village where the story takes place. It is a life that, despite the poor character's blurred provenience, is actually pragmatic and satisfying.

Before Hongyang's arrival in Fanzhen, Fuzhong the mute was just a beggar. The other villagers initially help him to survive by providing him with food scraps. After some time, however, they conclude that their help would just prolong the beggar's suffering, and that "[p]erhaps, the only way to show him [their] humanity was to let him die" (也许只有死对他才是人道). But, Fuzhong does not die. He manages to survive until the day of Hongyang's arrival, when – to everybody's envy – he receives a 100-yuan handout, which is just the first of a long series of handouts. By regularly receiving money from Hongyang and observing the other people exchanging cash for purchasable products, Fuzhong the mute gradually becomes aware of the meaning of cash, and finally, "[he] realized that the sense of human life lies in possessing as many of those pieces of paper [read: banknotes] as possible" ([他]明白人活着的意义其实就是尽量占有这些纸). When Hongyang comes to give him the 51st banknote, the beggar eventually refuses it, since now, as he tries to gesticulate to his donor, *he has understood*. Now he knows that "[a] man's value lies in selling his force and skills, as well as those things [read: products] in which these force and skills can be transformed" (人的用处就在于他可以卖自己的力气、技术以及由它们变出来的东西).

A man named Zhu teaches him the language of trade (e.g., the meaning of words like "buy," "sell," "barter," "value," "price," etc.), and Fuzhong's mastering the language of trade results in his mastering the language of reality. Despite his being mute and rather unintelligent, he finally becomes a shoemaker. He saves up a small fortune and eventually gets married to a mentally retarded but good-hearted woman. They move into a comfortable house, and soon have a healthy and intelligent baby. In short, if Fuzhong understands that the goal of human life is to make money, he also instinctively perceives that this goal is just a (trade) language, or a *medium*, and a means to achieving *another* goal. Specifically, he wanted to reach a relevant life goal: the possibility of *belonging* somewhere and creating a product as an act of participation in a collective dialogue, or the possibility of being a craftsman as an act of affirming his own useful – thus legitimate – presence within his own society. In other words, Fuzhong manages to join his society system by mastering its most conventional and simplistic legitimating

language: the language of trade. However, his personal development goes beyond this, as in the end, the sense of *his* existence lies not in earning money, but in *creating*. He creates products through his "force and skills," which are the exact substitutes of his words. Also, and most importantly, he creates another life – his son – and authentic relationships with others.

In conclusion, if the other characters' sense of life lies in making money and attending Hongyang's funeral is nothing more than an empty formality, Fuzhong's sense of life lies in creating and belonging to human relationships. Therefore, his participation in the funeral rites can only be desperate, intense, and sincere. This contrast – between the authenticity of Fuzhong's feelings and the emptiness characterizing most of the other characters – is highlighted through the means of eloquent details. For example, when the Taoist priest arrives and urges the funeral participants (including Fuzhong) to leave the burial chamber, the good-hearted mute cannot stop crying. While being dragged out of the room, he continues to reach for Hongyang's daughter-in-law, who, in contrast, is frivolously laughing at the situation. Xu Yousheng adds to this scene, thinking: "[h]e [Fuzhong] still had the loyalty of a dog" (他有着狗一样的忠心). Although the character is compared to an (inhuman) dog, his (human) loyalty is precisely guaranteed by his affinity to the beast. In other words, the *humanity* of Fanzhen society is preserved, defended, and represented by the former beggar himself, and not even by his "civilized" side, but by his "animal" one, as the dog-like Fuzhong is clearly far more human than all of Fanzhen and Hongyang's other relatives.

Afterwards, when the time comes to nail down the coffin lid, nobody seems willing to own the action other than Fuzhong. He not only takes control of the task, but he carries it out in a very meticulous way, which is distinctly representative of the authenticity of his feelings. Here is a brief but significant excerpt of its description:

> 灯光照耀，阴影盖住半边房，他的行动看起来像史诗有种不可褫夺的庄严感。

> In that half-dark, half-illuminated room, his gestures seemed to have an epic-like undeniable sense of solemnity.

Fuzhong's gestures are *epic*; they are *solemn*, but not *ridiculously* solemn, nor *deceptively* solemn; they are *authentically* and *meaningfully* solemn. To put it in another light, Fuzhong is not only participating in the rites; he symbolically *is* the rites.

Later in the novel, when the men are digging an unrefined grave, it will again be Fuzhong who solves the problem by shaping it properly. And finally, at the end of the funeral, when most of the participants have already scattered, Fuzhong is still there crying on the grave, unable to sever a *real* bond and unable to face a *real* loss. To him, the funeral rites are not an empty ceremony, nor a past tradition, and

not even an obsolete language. In fact, they are a present and useful language, the undying language of a human suffering for a human's loss. It's a language of prayers, acts, repetitions, mourning and tears, which only allows a human being to narrate a loss, to comprehend it, to decompose it and reabsorb it within life's continuity. Once again, the former beggar is hereby the *human*, the one able to feel *reality*, and to nurture authentic relationships and meaningful desires. "Look at him!," says Xu Shuang to Xu Yousheng, "Indeed, he lives an enthusiastic life!" (瞧他活得那么起劲).

One might not say whether in that very moment, while crying for his bene-factor's loss, Fuzhong was aware of living an "enthusiastic life." But this line by Xu Shuang does certainly make a point. With his mute but attentive participation to reality, Fuzhong stands out as a counterpoint to a cluster of rowdy and care-less characters, and as a witness, a living reminder – both to Hongliang and Xu Yousheng and to the reader as well – of what it really means to be human.

7. An immortal beggar for passers-by to see

The conclusions of these analyses lead back to their premises, and namely to the substantial difference between the concept of "lack" and the concept of "empti-ness." As previously mentioned, in psychoanalytic terms, the concept of lack is related to that of "desire" because people desire what they lack; and reversibly, this lack generates their desire. Meanwhile, "emptiness" is produced when lack and desire are disconnected. Thus, emptiness is not a desire-triggering lack, but rather the collapse of any desire. Considering these definitions, the wish of Ba Jin's dog-beggar to be *recognized* as a human, or at least as a dog – that is, his will to *belong* somewhere – is an example of real *desire*, whereas the compul-sive thirst for money of Hongyang's relatives and of Fanzhen's inhabitants might be representative of a *jouissance* device. Lacking a Father symbol, thus, lacking one's own right to speak (like in the case of Ba Jin's "Dog"), *indeed* is experiencing a *lack*. Whereas those people (like Hongyang's relatives) collecting "pieces of pa-per" (money) are not addressing their real lack. Instead, they are distracted by an illusory *emptiness* which comes with the promise of a quickly and easily attainable legitimization, but which, they surely will never manage to fill up.

Thus, to conclude, what is the role of the beggar in these four literary pieces? What is his meaning? In light of the above-given analyses, one can certainly affirm that, similarly to what Lucas sustained about the figure of the beggar in classical literature, this kind of character remains an ambivalent one in modern and con-temporary literature as well. If, on one hand, he is the outcast of society (the ill-treated or the scrap), on the other hand, he is also the immortal, the poet, and the keeper of a knowledge that others do not have or do have forgotten.

Kong Yiji is a failed and derided scholar, but his figure reminds us how the traditional knowledge and education system prior to the abolition of the imperial exams were not simply a matter of bureaucracy and institutions. They were the reason for living and the social legitimacy of many intellectuals like him. Kong Yiji is the human side of what was merely regarded and treated as a retrograde legacy from the past. His long gown is eventually replaced by his beggar-like appearance, but this does not prevent the narrator from remembering Kong Yiji, because his paradoxical posture, his silent desperation, is the expression of a very human discomfort; it represents that feeling of exclusion and inadequacy of those who have suddenly found themselves deprived of their role, and therefore of their place in society. Kong Yiji is immortal because he remains in the narrator's memory, and because the news of his death is not a certainty but a deduction. Therefore, he remains a suspended character, both in the sense that he is suspended above the changes of his time, and in the sense that his life story is suspended from a narrative point of view; neither the narrator, nor the reader can be sure of his death. In this way, Kong Yiji remains a forever silent witness to the fact that reforming society is not a mere operation of transforming institutions. On the contrary, it requires providing people with a new place in society, or a new way of existing in – and belonging to – the environment in which they live.

The protagonist of Ba Jin's story is different from Kong Yiji because he's so poor and miserable, that no school accepts him among its students, thus, he does not receive any education. His misery precludes him from any kind of social legitimacy, or excludes him from society. Society not only does not accept this man, it does not even see him. In fact, it is not passers-by who notice him; not even the man who, tripping over his body, furiously swears by calling him a "dog." It is the reader who notices him and listens to his testimony, finding in his sincere affection for his surrogate father much more humanity than that shown by all the passers-by appearing in the story. This character by Ba Jin is therefore a witness to a humanity that is mistreated, or forgotten, by a society that is too busy and dazzled by the alluring myth of the West; of a humanity made up of affections and even rituals, made of a faith that is no superstition, but an authentic desire of being seen by the Other.

And the same faith in life and human relationships is that shown by Fuzhong the mute in the abovementioned novel by A Yi. Fuzhong testifies to this kind of humanity: a humanity capable of loving in an authentic way, and of using work and money as tools rather than as ends in and of themselves. His testimony – like that of the failed poet, or the idealist, He Shuiqing – acts as a counterpoint to a panoply of indifferent, if not mischievous characters, blinded and corrupted by a spasmodic search for success, appearance, and money, which well represent the contemporary society, and not just the Chinese one. In the midst of a com-

plex narrative, full of backstory and of any kind of degeneration, Fuzhong in all its simplicity testifies to the possibility of a happy life with authentic emotions. He testifies that, despite all their crimes and their ugliness, men still know how to love, and that their emotional vulnerability is ultimately the force that vivifies them, making them creatures in need of the Other, and therefore desiring the Other, and therefore reaching out towards the Other, and therefore alive. It is not the desire for any kind of success, but the desire for what is truly unattainable – poetry for He Shuiqing, his dead friend Hongyang for Fuzhong – that makes human beings really human. The beggar, who has nothing, and for whom *everything* is unattainable, is in this sense the best connoisseur and the best representative of human desire, or of the human beings' capacity and power to desire.

In conclusion, the beggar's recurrence in literature can be interpreted not only as an eloquent symptom of specific historical periods and social settings, but even as representative of human condition itself, which implies – and is defined through – a perpetual desire-producing tension to (the) Other. The beggar is precisely the one who asks for remedying his *lack*, or the one who *desires*. He is the "impossible witness," yet the very custodian of our human essence, because he testifies to the possibility of surviving a lack, not by neglecting it and moving one's attention to an ever-refillable (but never-fillable) emptiness, but by embracing its uncanniness and making it visible for passersby to see.

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"POETRY OF ANGUISH, POETRY OF PRAISE": A STUDY OF WANG JIAXIN'S POETRY AND TRANSLATION

Robert Tsaturyan

The representation of trauma in contemporary Chinese poetry is a complex and multilayered phenomenon that resists purely aesthetic, historical, and especially political readings. It conflates all of them. Among the poets that have exemplified remarkable perseverance in their exploration of personal and collective traumas over the past four decades, Wang Jiaxin (王家新, 1957–) is an important voice. This article studies the characteristics of Wang's earlier and later works and the subtilities of his translation-dialogues with primarily Soviet Russian and Eastern European poets. What is the relationship between poetry and translation in working through suffering and coming to terms with the suppressed memories of the past? How does translation render the mourning voice of a poet that is cosmopolitan yet has historical particularities? Situating the poet in the sociohistorical conditions of his time, this paper explores the vicissitudes of one voice against these larger issues.

Keywords: Wang Jiaxin, contemporary Chinese poetry, translation, anguish

1. Introduction

> On the drawbridge
> On the day that has now become a holiday,
> My youth ended.
>
> > (Anna Akhmatova, end of the 1910s,
> > trans. Judith Hemschemeyer)

That year
A teenager became a poet.

那一年
一個少年成為一個詩人。

<div align="right">(Wang Jiaxin, "That Year")[1]</div>

Wang Jiaxin (王家新) was born in 1957 in Danjiangkou, Hubei province, and was sent to do hard labor in the countryside immediately after graduating from high school. He was among the first batch of students to take the *gaokao* (高考) in 1977, after the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) was over, and was accepted to the Department of Chinese at Wuhan University. He started writing poetry in his student years at the end of the 1970s and has become one of the most important voices in contemporary Chinese poetry and translation. In this paper, I will try to read Wang's poems not in relation to the 1980s onward poetic movements in China, which have been alternatively called by some critics as *xianfeng shi* (先鋒詩, "avant-garde poetry") or *shiyan shi* (實驗詩, "experimental poetry"),[2] and have been extensively studied (van Crevel 2007), but within their personal and historical matrix.[3]

The juxtaposition of Wang's poetry and translation makes it possible to encompass the two in the descriptive umbrella term: "poetry of anguish, poetry of praise" (創痛之詩，讚美之詩), a line taken from one of his recent poems.[4] I aim to explore Wang's "poetics of anguish" – burgeoning in his childhood, transformed and intensified after 1989, and eventually turned perspicuously bitter in recent years. I start the study with the "late style" of a young poet situating it in a historical context and go on to explore his "poetry of anguish" with a few examples of "poetry of praise" – taking the mediation between the two as a quest in maintaining the freedom and integrity of his voice – one poet's voice standing in as the expression of the collective will of

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[1]   Most translations in this study are based on Diana Shi and George O'Connell's versions; the translations are mine whenever left unindicated.

[2]   See, e.g., an important early anthology edited by Tang Xiaodu (唐曉渡) and Wang titled *An Anthology of Contemporary Experimental Chinese Poetry* (中國當代實驗詩選 *Zhongguo dangdai shiyan shixuan*), published in 1987.

[3]   Zhang Zao (張棗, 1962–1910), a poet of the same generation, writes in the preface to his PhD dissertation, originally written in German: "The terms *menglong shi* (朦朧詩 Obscure Poetry) and *houmenglong shi* (後朦朧詩 Post-Obscure Poetry) lost all meaning in the interpretation of Chinese poetry after 1989" (Zhang 2004, 2020). Note that the Chinese translation of Zhang's dissertation has recently been published in mainland China. It has minor alterations; most relevant for our study is the replacement of the year 1989 with "the end of the 1980s" to avoid censors. This is a common practice in mainland China, and it usually does not affect the argument, as informed readers are well aware of this practice.

[4]   The poem is titled "The Seaside Mountain" (海邊的山 "Haibian de shan," 2017); however, the context of the poem differs from the theme of this paper, the latter is solely my own description of Wang's poetics.

a generation. The role of translation in mourning history is thoroughly explored, with particular attention to Wang's translation-conversations with Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966), and Paul Celan (1920–1970), to a lesser extent. Trilingual comparisons are made between versions in Chinese, English, and Russian, where necessary.

The research is primarily based on the following theoretical principle: textual sensitivity, biographical sensitivity, and historical sensitivity (Yim 2009).[5] By studying the relationship of Wang's poetry to history, broader questions are explored concerning literature and witnessing, writing and silence, aesthetics and atrocity.

2. Poetry, history, and transformation

Wang started writing poetry in his student years at the end of the 1970s. Early poems such as "Chinese Painting" (中國畫 "Zhongguo hua," 1984), "Awakening" (醒悟 "Xingwu," 1985), "Scorpion" (蠍子 "Xiezi," 1987), are meditative in tone, seizing minute instants of life experiences, absorbing the cultural and philosophical riches of *chandao* (禪道, "Zen/Chan Buddhism"). It was a period of the "cultural fever" in the People's Republic of China (PRC), which for Wang did not last long, and only left a transient mark on his poetry (Hong and Liu 2005, 255). His poems from this period are densely ornamented with symbols, some of the recurring ones are the sun, the sea, stone, autumn, and snow; in some cases, more than one of these images appear in a single poem.[6]

His early meditative voice is distinctive in the following lines:[7]

> Turned every stone on the mountain,
> not one scorpion: this was childhood?
>
> 翻遍滿山的石頭
> 不見一隻蠍子：這是小時候
> 哪一年、哪一天的事？
>
> (Wang 2001, 44; Shi and O'Connell 2016, 21)

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[5]   I am indebted to Prof. Yim Chi Hung Lawrence for inspiring us during the tumultuous autumn semester of 2019 to persevere with this academic posture. Although not developed into a theoretical framework, Yim applies this principle in his studies of Ming-Qing poetry, with slightly different articulation; he calls them "the three contextualizations:" literary contextualization, biographical contextualization, and historical contextualization.

[6]   Some early poems where the image of "stone" (石頭 *shitou*) is central are: "Notes from a Harvest Festival" (收穫節札記 "Shouhuojie zhaji," 1983), "Starting from a Stone" (從石頭開始 "Cong shitou kaishi," 1983), "Landscape" (風景 "Fengjing," 1985), "Empty Gorge" (空谷 "Konggu," 1985), "Gary Snyder" (加里·斯奈德 "Jiali Sinaide," 1986), "Scarborough" (斯卡堡 "Sikabao," 1992), "Motherland" (祖國 "Zuguo," London, 1992). In the last poem, "motherland" is compared to "stone exposed to the sun." Note that month and city/country annotations are omitted from the poems unless they assist in reading.

[7]   This is Wang's first full-length volume in English translation.

This is the opening scene of "Scorpion," a representative poem from his lyrical and meditative 1980s. Here, "stone" can be read as the image of an unshattered past, that is, the long cultural history of China, but, as we will see in the later works, the spirit of endurance is more important than culture per se.[8] The decade of the 1980s is also known, up until 1989, as a time of extraordinary openness and interest in non-Chinese, mainly Western, literature and theory (Yang 2009, 42–85).[9]

The image of "snow" was already widespread in Wang's early meditative poetry, but it gradually transformed to become a metaphor for a static, unalterable wound, a metaphysical imagination of existence.[10] His poems from the first half of the 1980s can be characterized by borrowing the title of his 1989 essay collection as "man's encounter with the world" (see Wang 1989). Unlike the poetry of anguish discussed in this study, his most famous poem among the general public is probably the early poem "Beyond the Mountain" (在山的那邊 "Zai shan de nabian," 1979), as it has been included in the Compulsory Education Curriculum of some experimental textbooks in the PRC, since as early as 2001.[11] The long poem "Answer" (回答 "Huida," 1998) is widely considered by critics as his most important work, for its succinct narrative quality yet apparent simplicity in language, enabling the integration of an honest portrayal of private life's failure with that of a defeated era (Zhang 2017).[12]

In 1989, in the wake of the Tiananmen incident, Wang went through a stylistic, existential, and, indeed, historical transformation. He started to write predominantly in the past tense, that is, he abandoned hope. But merely a year before the

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8   In recent years, especially, Wang has been contemplating "endurance/perseverance" in his poetry. See, for example, a recent poem "Football Field" (足球場 "Zuqiuchang," 2019). In this poem, the poet expresses his admiration for the teenager who is the last to leave the field.

9   Although read through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which has its shortcomings, this lengthy article gives some robust analysis and is an interesting viewpoint on the nature of the relationship between Western and Chinese poetry from that period.

10   Some early poems where the image of snow (雪 *xue*) is central are: "Hexi Corridor" (河西走廊 "Hexi Zoulang," 1985), "A Visit" (訪 "Fang," 1986), "What Place" (什麼地方 "Shenme defang," 1988), "Northern Notes" (北方札記 "Beifang zhaji," 1988–1989); fragment poems: "Continuous Arrival" (持續的到達 "Chixu de daoda," 1990–1991), "Reversal" (反向 "Fanxiang," Beijing, 1991), "Poetry" (詩 "Shi," 1992), "Diary" (日記 "Riji," 1992), "Solitary House Overlooking the Sea" (臨海孤獨的房子 "Linhai gudu de fangzi," winter 1992). Note that the various manifestations of the snow metaphor are abundant throughout Wang's whole writing career.

11   2001 is also the year when a selection of his poems was published by the prestigious *Lanxing shiku* (藍星詩庫 *Blue Star Poetry Series*) of *Renmin wenxue chuubanshe*.

12   Although the poem is also a manifestation of trauma, the main difference is that the event that "triggered" the poem is a divorce, a strictly personal matter, in contrast to the primarily historical reading of this paper. For this reason, it is a question for a separate study, and I refrain from analyzing it here.

tragic events he had written the following concluding lines to "Étude" (練習曲 "Lianxiqu," 1988), imagining his other self, perhaps the poet-prophet:

> Without him, the rain's sound could not ascend,
> not my two hands touch this paper.
> Nor could I write this bitter line.

> 沒有他，雨聲不會響起
> 而雙手不會伸向稿紙
> 我不會寫下這痛苦的詩句。

<div align="right">(Shi and O'Connell 2016, 20; Wang 2001, 46–47)</div>

The last stanza of another poem called "Praise" (讚美 "Zanmei," 1988) from the same year, full of dread, reads:

> Autumn has arrived
> between a gust of wind and another, it has arrived.
> And I know what is ahead of me,
> sitting amidst the mountains and hills, all my blood drains.

> 秋天來了
> 在一陣風與另一陣風之間，來了
> 而我知道是什麼在等著我
> 坐於群山之中，我全部的血流盡。

<div align="right">(Wang 2001, 48–49)</div>

In praise, there is a bitter voice.

This "bitter line," becomes more historically striking after 1989, in his poem "Transformation" (轉變 "Zhuanbian," 1990), which defined both his era and the turn in his literary world. As the "snowstorm" suggests in the poem, the image of wind (風 *feng*) is a symbol of the intruder, the force in history that often disturbs the calmness of things. He states the poets' role in a destitute time, which, in the last two lines of "Transformation," is 1990 (Wang 2001, 66–67; Shi and O'Connell 2016, 32): "It is time to stand in the wind / or surrender" (是到了在風中堅持 / 或徹底 放棄的時候了). The appropriation of history in poetry came to shape the "late style" of Wang's poetic career. Yet, at the same time, history is explicitly present – in the form of a date or a historical place/event – only in a small number of poems. It is worthy to note that his "late style" appeared at a time when he was only a little over 30 years of age.

In what follows, I present an analysis of the relationship between Wang's po-etics and his often explicit manifestation of indebtedness to primarily Russian and Eastern European poets. This intertextuality is an interpretative and creative act, done through writing and translation, in which the particularities of the two overlap in the process. Recognition (辨認 *bianren*), as Wang insists, is possible

only through translation – recognition of the other, and thus of your own cultural, linguistic, and also existential condition (Wang 2017). Translation itself has a twofold meaning for him: translating from a foreign language into Chinese and conversations with the poets that he interprets through his own poetry – the two meanings are often interwoven.

3. The writing of anguish: "What is it that is agonizing us?"

In almost all the poems that Wang is recollecting childhood memories, which tragically coincided with the tumultuous ten years of the Cultural Revolution, the poet is reminiscing traumatic memories, as in the long poem: "Early Youth" (少年 "Shaonian," 2003), as well as the short poems: "Simple Autobiography" (簡單的自傳 "Jiandan de zizhuan," 2004) and "Tangerines" (橘子 "Juzi," 2006).[13] In his poetry from the first decade of the 21st century, memories of the past are often the subjects of contemplation. However, memories of the past are not about individual events, and what makes his pain all more visible is the unspoken between the lines, which shows that the poetry of anguish has its origins in the traumatic memories of childhood.[14]

In a poem composed in 1990 called "The Last Camp" (最後的營地 "Zuihou de yingdi"), the image of "stone," in a violent burst, is "gathered by a storm" (聚集起石頭的風暴). The political-historical context is crystal clear here; however, a mere political reading of Wang's poetry, or indeed any poetry, will be misleading. The events of 1989 had a lasting effect on Wang's writings; however, it is already his mature poetics of anguish, his well-crafted images, and his slightly pessimistic tone that intensified during and after the crackdown of the Tiananmen Square protests. It is not that Tiananmen caused friction in his poetry, but with the grim hand of history, it created the necessary conditions for an already tragic voice to further aggravate. Nevertheless, rather than having major signifying ruptures in the metaphorical chain mentioned above, the images evolved into similar but somewhat more stern representations. I argue that Wang's pessimistic tone is a response to traumatic history; it is a form of ethics but also an aesthetic choice.

The image of "snow" in "Pastoral" (田園詩 "Tianyuanshi," 2004) reaches its utmost as a metaphor for death:

> On the country roads outside Beijing
> you're sure to spot sheep

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[13] Not to be confused with "Pomelo" (柚子 "Youzi," 2005), written one year earlier.

[14] Wang comes from a family of *dizhu* (地主, "landlord"), which was an unfavorable title during Mao's purges when even children were often bullied by their classmates; Wang, as a child, was no exception. See "Early Youth" for hints on his experience as a nine-year-old when the Cultural Revolution started.

scattered over fields, like unmelted snow
or swollen blooms burst open.
They cross the road in clumps,
the herdsman barking them down
a weedy ditch, tripping and tumbling
through the dust.
I never paid much attention
until one afternoon
in flurries of snow
I nosed close behind a sheep truck,
the dark eyes gazing down
gentle and quiet, not knowing
where they were headed.
They turned toward me then,
curious as children.
I let the car drift back
through the thickening curtain of snow
and watched them disappear.

如果你在京郊的鄉村路上漫遊
你會經常遇見羊群
它們在田野中散開，像不化的雪
像膨脹的綻開的花朵
或是縮成一團穿過公路，被吆喝著
滾下塵土飛揚的溝渠
我從來沒有注意過它們
直到有一次我開車開到一輛卡車的後面
在一個飄雪的下午
這一次我看清了它們的眼睛
（而它們也在上面看著我）
那樣溫良，那樣安靜
像是全然不知它們將被帶到什麼地方
對於我的到來甚至懷有
幾分孩子似的好奇
我放慢了車速
我看著它們
消失在愈來愈大的雪花中。

(Shi and O'Connell 2016, 86; Wang 2021, 77)

It is known that the Nazis used to transport Jews and other prisoners in sheep-trucks or cattle-trucks. We can read this poem as an allegory of Jews being transported to Auschwitz. About the latter, Zygmunt Bauman (1989, 23) writes,

> The gas chambers, temptingly dubbed "bathrooms," presented a wel-
> come sight after days spent in overcrowded, filthy cattle trucks. Those
> who already knew the truth and entertained no illusions still had a choice
> between a "quick and painless" death, and one preceded by extra suffer-
> ings reserved for the insubordinate.

Those in the "sheep-trucks," unsuspecting – "not knowing / where they were
headed" – are the Jews, or in Wang's poetry the symbolism of Jews, that is, the vic-
tims of a catastrophe. Wang's metaphorical associations with the Holocaust may
cause uneasiness to readers; thus, it is one of the objectives of this paper to answer
the following question: why does Wang, and some other poets of his generation,
feel a kinship with the Holocaust witnesses and post-Holocaust writers?

As I already mentioned, in the wake of the Tiananmen incident, the poet went
through a stylistic and spiritual transformation; the movement left an indelible
mark on the whole generation of writers, and even more so on Wang. He was
working as an editor of a major poetry magazine based in Beijing, *Shikan* (詩刊,
Poetry Monthly), at the time; and when the movement was crushed by the gov-
ernment, as a liberal-minded editor, he was an unwanted person. Thus started
his self-imposed exile in Europe, and it was in London, from 1992 to 1994, where
he would eventually settle for two years. Whether it was a forced exile or a con-
scious choice is still a matter of debate, but what is crucial is that the tragedy he
witnessed, followed by years of political repressions, transformed Wang's poetry, at
least partially, into "poetry of anguish."[15] It was in the early 1990s that he composed
the poems that are considered, even today, his representative works: "Varykino
Ballad" (瓦雷金諾敘事曲 "Waleijinnuo xushuqu," winter 1989), "Pasternak" (帕斯捷爾
納克 "Pasijieernake," December 1990), "A Man Splitting Wood for Winter" (一個劈木
柴過冬的人 "Yi ge pi muchai guodong de ren," October 1989), his fragment-poem
series "Words" (詞語 "Ciyu," England–Belgium, 1992–1993),[16] and others.

"Pasternak," an often-anthologized poem, is representative for several rea-
sons. It is, first of all, a classic example of his stylistic transformation, which in
the 1990s signified more than merely a literary transformation. It is at the same
time a moving elegy to Boris Pasternak (1890–1960), the great Russian poet, and
metamorphosis of his own voice under the new social and political climate.

I quote the celebrated two lines of the second stanza, as well as a stanza from
the middle part:

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[15] For the question of "exile" in Chinese poetry circles after 1989 and the various debates sur-
rounding it, see van Crevel (2008, 137–186).

[16] Not to be confused with Wang's 1990 poem with the same title, which is not fragment-poem
series, but a single short poem.

I can finally write to my heart's content,
but cannot live true to my inner heart.

終於能按照自己的內心寫作了
卻不能按一個人的內心生活

[...]

Crying out those noble names
Those exiles, sacrifices and witnesses, those
Souls meeting in the tremor of Mass
Those shining in death, and my
Own land!

呼喊那些高貴的名字
那些放逐，犧牲，見證，那些
在彌撒曲的震顫中相逢的靈魂
那些死亡中的閃耀，和我的
自己的土地！ [17]

(Yang 2009, 55; Shi and O'Connell's translation is consulted)

Poetry critic Zhang Taozhou (張桃洲) refers to the two Pasternak odes as "companion poems," about which he maintains that apart from "Transformation," two poems from the same period – "Varykino Ballad" and "Pasternak" – have composed the spiritual pain of the era most profoundly (Zhang 2018, 130). This indirect mourning encompasses the pain of two nations, it at the same time, shares the predicaments of artistic and literary representations. About these two poems, Yang (2009, 56) writes, "Wang Jiaxin's Pasternak poems are representative of the imaginary transference and symbolic transference that Chinese poets were generally engaged in the late 1980s and early 1990s." The psychoanalytic reading of the poems as the manifestation of transference, Chinese poets' tendency to write about Western masters they admire as a kind of symbolic resistance, is only partially correct. The obvious question is, however: Why is this relationship not mutual but only one-way? To answer this question, we perhaps need to explore the socio-political contexts of the time in their respective countries. Hereafter, I will briefly explore the interaction of poetics and politics, and poetics and life experience.

What all these works from the beginning of the 1990s have in common, apart from being a poet's answer to the great political and social transformations of his time, is the striking intertextuality with early and mid-20th century Russian and Eastern European writers, especially those who lived through the worst times of

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[17]   I partially follow Yang's citation of this couplet.

their respective histories. As the snowstorm rages just beyond the door, Wang chooses to dedicate the poem to Pasternak, perhaps to gird his endurance – "turning pain to music" (把苦難轉變為音樂) (Wang 2001, 59–62). In "Varykino Ballad," even such a reoccurring image as "snow," is transformed into a snowstorm (暴風雪 *baofengxue*).

In Hong Zicheng's (洪子誠) 1999 *A History of Contemporary Chinese Literature* (中國當代文學史 *Zhongguo dangdai wenxueshi*), there is a short introduction to Wang. It is in this breath that Hong interprets Wang's poetry of the transformation period and its aftermath as "expressing the 'shouldering' of experience," and defines the poet's ongoing development as "orienting his literary aspirations on the basis of reflecting and critiquing the era" (Hong 1999, 312). This is precisely how Wang interprets the works of his literary heroes: those "Soviet-Russian exiles,"[18] poets who lived through the terrible years of Stalinist terror, and yet gave the world literature such everlasting works as *Doctor Zhivago*, the poetry of Osip Mandelstam (1891–1938), Anna Akhmatova, and Marina Tsvetaeva (1892–1941). The historical contexts are distinctly different, and what Wang does with his ode writing, reading, and translating is to decontextualize and apply – what he perceives as great works of literature – to his own times.

If we were to take one keyword, one which recurs in Wang's poetry, that would certainly be "anguish" (痛苦 *tongku*), a word which is not merely a rhetorical technique, as I will try to show in the following examples. Due to his traumatic experiences during the Cultural Revolution, lamenting over childhood can be traced even in his early meditative, largely ahistorical, and apolitical poetry.[19] In those post-1989 poems, which are mostly homages to poets who have gone through enormous pain and suffering, Wang is allegorically shouldering the suffering of a hard laborer (苦役犯 *kuyi fan*), and often chooses to translate Mandelstam and other poets in the same spirit. Thus, the term surpasses autobiographical dimensions, touching upon the atrocities of the 20th century befallen almost equally on the Western and non-Western worlds, with all its non-poetic connotations.[20]

One example is a poem from the "Marginalia" series, which I will discuss in the last section of this chapter. The poem is a praise and a critique of Johann Sebastian

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[18] "Soviet-Russian exile poets" (蘇俄流亡詩人 *Su'e liuwang shiren*) comes from a recent poem titled: "Heaney in 1969, or in 1972" (希尼在1969，或在1972 "Xini zai 1969, huo zai 1972," 2019).

[19] Suffering (苦痛 *kutong*) or anguish (痛苦 *tongku*) can be traced in the following pre-Tiananmen poems: "Autumn Leaves Have Turned Red" (秋葉紅了 "Qiuye hong le," 1982), and "Poetry" (詩歌 "Shige," March 1989), dedicated to the memory of fellow poet Haizi (海子, 1964–1989).

[20] In addition to the poems examined, the phrase also appears in a late poem: "Reading Nadezhda Mandelstam's Memoir" (讀娜傑日達·曼德爾施塔姆回憶錄 "Du Najierida Mandeershitamu huiyilu," 2016).

Bach's fugue composition, not as a piece of music, of course, but as an emblem of modern European culture:

> We hardly know how
> such transcendence can arise
> from this world of pain,
> but at the edge of the city,
> where I drive past mountains of trash,
> past empty-eyed kids, staring,
> Bach enters my ears, and I cross
> into my own country, vast and impoverished.
>
> 在這令人痛苦的世界上，
> 我們指責不該有這樣超脫的藝術；
> 可我仍忍不住去聽，
> 當我幾乎是含著淚，緩緩駛過
> 垃圾成山、孩子們癡呆相望的城鄉結合部，
> 進入我貧寒而廣闊的國度。

<div align="right">(Shi and O'Connell 2019a, 93; Wang 2019, 43)</div>

The connection between music and atrocity, exemplified in poetry in its all intensity, is Celan's "Death Fugue" ("Todesfuge"), which Wang has translated. Thus, this poem quoted above, Wang's "Bach's 'Art Of The Fugue'" (巴赫《賦格的藝術》 "Bahe: 'Fuge de yishu'"), echoes Celan's poem, which in its turn, echoes Bach's fugue style compositions. Here, neither the analogy between music and literature is at stake, nor the fusion of the two in the technical sense, but the reference to music as a form of high art in literature. Wang's reconstruction of music in poetry is seen through the lenses of an intellectual; in "Words," he writes about the "pain of Rachmaninoff's exile" and "Tchaikovsky's elegy." Both composers are from Soviet Russia, and both of them are depicted in Wang's poetry in their tragic faith and bitter experiences. Here, not their music, but their fate as musicians is the key motif.

An extraordinary encounter of intercultural and extratemporal wartime pain, both for Celan and Wang, post-atrocities literature is the almost-sacred act of preserving memory, with the danger of reenactment of trauma all the more palpable. What we see here is not an imitation of poetic language, but an ethical response to history – one that belongs to humanity as a whole and not to individual nations. And even though committed to preserving autonomous history, Wang's poetry is tightly connected to the lineage of poets that he considers his literary forefathers. For this reason, he has often been called a poet with "uniquely cosmopolitan existential style" (Crespi 2011, 78–82). In other words, though his medium is the Chinese language, with its syntax, punctuation (especially Chinese dashes), form, and grammar – the last two heavily influenced by Western poetry – he is not writing national literature.

Time and again we can see in Wang's poetry that the tragedies of the other are intermingled and overlap with the tragedies which have befallen him and his compatriots. Even more often, the analogies of the foreign and Chinese catastrophes are so interwoven that unknotting them would mean creating incongruities in the world of a poet where there is no clear distinction between the pain of the other and his own. To Adorno's celebrated maxim, "there can be no poetry after Auschwitz," Wang would have replied in the bold spirit of the English poet Tony Harrison, that "there is only poetry after Auschwitz" (Adorno 1967, 17–35; Rowland 2009, 101). The tense juxtaposition of atrocities and aesthetics is ameliorated by the humane day-to-day language of his poetry. The moral and political challenges of writing poetry in Chinese after 1989, and the predicament that many writers faced, whether in physical or spiritual exile, are what Zhang (2020, 7) called "the exile of the word" (詞的流亡 *ci de liuwang*). In a 1991 fragment-poem called "Reversal" (反向 "Fanxiang"), Wang asks the following question and provides an answer:

> Where is your home?
> You hold your tears, you go into exile in your own language.
>
> 你的家園在哪裡？
> 你忍住眼淚，在自己的語言中流亡。
>
> (Wang 2001, 90)

In his earlier works such as "Scorpion," he alludes to classical Chinese philosophy, and his later works become more and more de-rooted.[21] His short fragment-poems are often rich with allusions, with philosophical undertones, exploring silence, time, history, Auschwitz, suffering, and survival.

The salient aspect of Wang's later works – the poetry of anguish – is the poetic diction which internalizes and thus gives voice to the inarticulable, not only in the sense of exposing the truth when it is silenced while evading censorship, but also in giving voice to anguish itself, a sensation that can be felt but not adequately expressed. Personal anguish intersects with the wider trauma of the poet's *dangxia* (當下, "the present times") – a term which, in his writings, has not only temporal but also a metaphysical dimension. A poem that mourns his mother's death, titled "Dawn, Five AM" (黎明五點鐘 "Liming wu dianzhong," 2018), also laments again and again the "hard laborer" or "jail worker," as in the following lines:

> Five AM, only city jail workers stepping out
> beneath pale blue seeped from the horizon.

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21   One recent poem in which he revisits his cultural roots is "Listening to *Qinqiang* Opera in Tianshui" (在天水聽秦腔 "Zai Tianshui ting qinqiang," 2018).

在黎明五點鐘，祇有勞改犯出門看到
天際透出的一抹蒼白的藍。

<div align="right">(Shi and O'Connell 2019b, 75; Wang 2019, 64)</div>

Wang uses the same term in his translations to refer to the actual experiences of Russian poets such as Mandelstam, in Soviet labor-camps of the Gulag. Let us have a look at another recent poem, which can be read as an attempt in coming to terms with history.

There is a quietistic voice in the poem "This Street" (這條街 "Zhe tiao jie," 2016) – melancholic but not mournful. The poet is gazing at the street behind the window from his study. The street manifests all that is worldly, but also transient: "a girl in a mini-skirt walking /[...]/ we have been living on this little green street for five years" (現在，一個穿短裙的少女走過 /[...]/ 一條我們已居住了五年的綠蔭小街).[22] The fading time travels the street back and forth, and the poet stands authoritatively at the threshold of the present life and the past. The poem opens with an epigraph by Mandelstam: "I shall not return my borrowed dust / To the earth."[23] "This Street" was written in the same year when Wang published a rich collection of Mandelstam's poetry in Chinese translation (see Wang 2016), which once again shows the variations of the Chinese poet's dialogues with Russian poets and the constantly overlapping nature of his writing and translation. Mandelstam's tragic life ended in a Siberian hard-labor camp in 1937; Wang's poetic dialogue with Mandelstam incorporates the very essence of the poet's fate – hard laborer, perhaps as recognition of Mandelstam's pain.

4. Writing on a slant: "Glacial marginalia"

Wang came up with a formal breakthrough in 2016–2017, with a series of 34 marginal-style short poems called *Pang zhu zhi shi* (旁註之詩), which is translated into English as *Marginalia* by Shi and O'Connell. They are, structurally, a more sophisticated form of his fragment-poem series. The inspiration comes from the following line by Mandelstam, from his only piece of prose fiction *The Egyptian Stamp* (1928): "Destroy your manuscripts, but save whatever you have inscribed in the margin out of boredom, out of helplessness, and, as it were, in a dream" (Brown 1965, 187). The epigraph for *Marginalia* misses the phrase "as it were, in a dream;" by omitting it, the emphasis is on destroying manuscripts and saving the inscriptions in the margins. These short poems are mostly dedicated to the poets, and occasionally to individual books, that have shaped Wang's literary spirit and

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[22] Note: these two lines do not follow each other in the poem.

[23] The English translation is by Clarence Brown and W. S. Merwin.

style. In his lectures, he describes a kind of poetic family whose genealogy transcends national, temporal, and linguistic borders (Tsaturyan 2018, 158–159). Many of these poets are those whose works Wang has been translating since the 1980s: Akhmatova, Pasternak, Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva – from the Silver Age of Russian poetry. There are also poems dedicated to classic figures of world literature: Dante, Shelley, Camus, Rilke, T. S. Eliot; others are dedicated to philosophers: Benjamin, Heidegger, Levinas, and others. These are not odes, but poem-dialogues, at times critiques. They are fragmented "flash photographs" of the vulnerabilities of those giants, in the poet's eyes, and he writes on the borders of silence.

A poem on Heidegger with the same title:

> Confirmed in your black notebook:
> in the end one must be true
> not to philosophy scribbled at a mountain resort
> but to one's own blood.

> 你的黑色筆記本最終證實了：
> 一個人忠實的，不是他在
> 高山療養地寫下的哲學，
> 而是，他自己的血。

<div align="center">(Shi and O'Connell 2019a, 90; Wang 2019, 38–39)</div>

In a way, this is an angry pronouncement, as it is known that Heidegger was a Nazi member and had joined the National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) Party in 1933. Celan, a survivor of the Holocaust and whose parents had perished in the camps, continued reading Heidegger and writing in German until his death, including after their "historic encounter" in 1967 (Lyon 2006, preface). The poet committed suicide by drowning himself in the river of the Seine in Paris in 1970. Celan is one of the first poets that Wang translated. The affinity that Wang feels with Celan, the spirit or disposition manifested in his own works, is what American poet Robert Hass explores in an article, which is also an introduction to Wang's English volume of poetry. He writes, "They [these poems] seem to belong to a vision of the world stripped bare, to the voice that emerges from winter clarities" (Hass 2015, 22–24). In another poem written less than a year later, called "Flying Over the Alps" (飛越阿爾卑斯 "Feiyue A'erbeisi," 2017), Wang makes a reference to *Marginalia* in the following lines:

> The mountains turn ink-green
> with glacial marginalia,
> then red and yellow, mixed forest,
> beneath the clouds, fairytale houses.

> 然後是綿延的墨綠色山嶺
> 冰川的旁註之詩

是變紅變黃的雜樹層林
是雲彩下童話般的房子。

(Shi and O'Connell 2019b, 68–75; Wang 2019, 58–59)

The poet compares "glacial marginalia" to the Alps – while flying over the mountain range. As in Wang's poetry, the image of "snow" is one of Celan's most forceful images, evoking winter and death (Joris 2003, 461–462).

Wang is also a professor of literature at Renmin University of China, and he has often been referred to as an "intellectual poet" (van Crevel 2008, 169). As an intellectual, he often keeps a keen eye on contemporary events, injustices, big and small tragedies befallen on ordinary people. One incident happened on November 18, 2017, to which Wang responded immediately. A major fire broke out at Daxing suburban district of Beijing, located at Xinjian village, part of Xihongmen town. Nineteen people were killed, and eight were injured. The Beijing government believed that the accident had crossed the bottom line of security in the capital; as a result, initiating a massive project to expel the *diduan-renkou* (低端人口, "low-income residents"). The "expulsion of low-end populace" became the headline of all major media outlets of the month.[24] Contemporary traumatic events recur, and Wang as a poet-intellectual became increasingly vocal in his writings, lamenting the pain of his fellow citizens, this time from the lowest strata of the society in the capital Beijing. He composed a poem during the peak days of the mass expulsion campaign. The title of the poem is "Tonight" (今晚 "Jinwan," 2017), and the striking details are in the 11th line, of a 14-line poem:

Tonight, I really wish there was a concentration camp
that would make me feel the mercy of death.

今晚，我倒真希望有一座集中營
讓我感到死亡的仁慈。

(Wang 2019, 60–61)

Similar to the gigantic events of the 20th century, at times abstractions of traumatic incidents, poetic engagement with small and specific incidents like the above partly arises from his desire – unlike in his earlier poems – to be in the present. This is a turn in his late style: from the past tense to the present. This tendency is even more amplified with the advance of social media and the fusion of daily news with social media; however, this does not mean that technological advancement plays a decisive role in Wang's engagement with the present. His is, rather, an attempt to bear witness to the true and real dimensions of suffering

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[24] For details of the Daxing fire, the short introduction of a documentary by Chen Jiaping (陳家坪) is primarily consulted. The documentary is titled *Daxing Is on Fire* (大興失火 *Daxing shihuo*, 2019).

and write poetry as testimony, an attempt to grasp the essence of pain. On the relationship of testimony to poetry, Giorgio Agamben (1999, 161) explains:

> Hölderlin's statement that "what remains is what the poets found" (*Was bleibt, stiften die Dichter*) is not to be understood in the trivial sense that poets' works are things that last and remain throughout time. Rather, it means that the poetic word is the one that is always situated in the position of the remnant and that can, therefore, bear witness. Poets – witnesses – found language as what remains, as what actually survives the possibility, or impossibility, of speaking.

Witnessing is not only about remembering the past but also a nuanced response to the impending catastrophes. Wang's poetics is the endurance of his voice.

5. "An infidel fidelity": Wang Jiaxin's translation of anguish

As a poet-translator, Wang regards encounters as deeply intrinsic and solemn events, like the one that occurred with Celan's poetry in 1991. "These kinds of encounters," he says in an interview, "are seemingly accidental, but they are not at all. Just look back at the 'historical conditions' of those two–three years. I think, precisely of all that we experienced amidst the tumultuous history what drew me to Celan. Otherwise, he wouldn't even come to me" (Wang 2012, 299–300).

The following is an attempt to investigate Wang's translation choices and strategies. In the case of translating Akhmatova, I try to answer the following question: Why did he especially select and translate those some 170 poems and the two celebrated long poems: "Poem Without a Hero" (1940–1962) and "Requiem" (1935–1940), out of more than 800 poems in *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova* (1997) that he consulted?[25] I aim at establishing the link between his writing and translation, not in regard to style, but as the pursuits of a poet mourning in translation, both the past and the present. Theoretically, I follow Wang's discussions of "trauma" as a key to exploring Celan's poetry; I rely heavily on his explorations of the relationship between trauma and literature to read his poetry and translation strategies.[26]

His translations of Celan, Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva, and others are, what one young critic Chen Qing (陳慶) defined in a short but insightful article, referring to Wang's translations as *bu zhongshi de zhongshi* (不忠實的忠實, "infidel fidelity"). Chen is emphasizing the importance of *yinzhi* (音質, "tone quality") in

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[25] In several translations cited in this study, it is evident that Wang has also relied on Nancy K. Anderson's versions, as in the example below.

[26] Wang has dedicated six essays on Celan's life and work in one of his essay collections, which mainly deal with the question of "trauma" (see Wang 2012, 147–248).

translating from a second language. He writes: "The 'tone' that Ezra Pound referred to, at the same time includes the tone quality and intonation of a poem, or to put it more thoroughly, it includes: tone quality, intonation, flavor, as well as rhythm and syntax" (Chen 2017, 110–114). In the following, I will explore specific cases of Wang's indirect translations, as examples of "infidel fidelity" where the lack of rhyme and literalness is ameliorated by the strangeness of "tone quality" and its mood in Chinese. In the case of the Russian texts, although Wang's medium in reading and translating is English, as he does not master Russian, I often consult the original texts for comparison.

Wang first came to know Akhmatova's works at the beginning of the 1980s through the memoirs of Ilya Ehrenburg (1891–1967), collected in a work called *People, Years, Life*, published serially in the Soviet Union from 1961 to 1965. The Chinese translation of which, together with the translations of Akhmatova's poetry by Gao Mang (高莽, 1926–2017) and others, introduced Russian poetry from the Silver Age to Wang's generation of writers. As in other cases, Wang is attracted to Akhmatova's later poetry; thus, his 2014 translation-anthology titled *With the Book From Tarusa: Collected Poetry Translations of Wang Jiaxin* (帶著來自塔魯薩的書：王家新譯詩集 *Daizhe laizi Talusa de shu: Wang Jiaxin yishi ji*) includes over 30 later poems by Akhmatova, as well as an appendix of several letters and articles. His decades-long reading and translating culminated in his translation of Akhmatova's collected poetry, borrowing the book's title from the poet's famous long poem. The collection is titled *Poem Without a Hero: Akhmatova's Selected Poems* (沒有英雄的敘事詩：阿赫瑪托娃詩選 *Meiyou yingxiong de xushishi: Ahematuowa shixuan*), published in 2018. In a lengthy introduction to the book, which is also a tribute-essay to the poet, Wang draws our attention to Akhmatova's tragic life after the 1930s, her tremendous courage to bear the burden and responsibility of writing about the personal and historical disasters befallen on her compatriots in the beloved city Saint Petersburg, and the whole of Russia. Contemplating on the poets' role as witnesses, he quotes the following section in his translation from "Poem Without a Hero," perhaps as a classic example of a poem that "denounces history" (Wang 2018, 13).[27] This poem was not included in the text of "Poem Without a Hero," upon its publication and is only a later addition (Hemschemeyer 1997, 582). Interestingly, in its Chinese afterlife, it gets full recognition as an integral part of the enigmatic long poem:

> 去問問任何一位我同時代的女人，
> 任何一位因徒，流放者，苦役犯——

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[27] The title of Wang's introduction is borrowed from an epigraph that Akhmatova uses for one of her 1962 poems, herself quoting the line from Joseph Brodsky (1940–1996): "You will write about us on a slant." Wang's intentional mistranslation as "you will write about us in italics" is reading what he calls "the secret joining signal between Brodsky and Akhmatova," a symbolism of "unofficial" literature in an unfree country.

她都會盡力讓你明白——
是怎樣的恐懼讓我們變得癡呆，
我們又是怎樣為集中營，為監獄，
為斷頭台而扶養孩子。

(Wang 2018, 13)

In Nancy K. Anderson's English translation:

> Ask any women of my age—
> Any of those arrested, exiled, caged—
> And she'll try to make you understand
> How terror left us half-demented,
> How we raised children to be sentenced
> To firing squads or concentration camps.

(Anderson 2004, 171–172)

In the Russian original:

> Ты спроси моих современниц,
> Каторжанок, «стопятниц», пленниц,
> И тебе порасскажем мы,
> Как в беспамятном жили страхе,
> Как растили детей для плахи,
> Для застенка и для тюрьмы.

(Kralin 1990, 338)

As mentioned above, Wang cannot read Russian, so his translations of the Russian poetry are done through an intermediate language – English, a fact that scholars and particularly graduate dissertations often fail to emphasize.[28] Translating from a translation inevitably raises the questions of fidelity to the original. Assuming that indirect translation is entirely justified and is not in violation to the commonly agreed upon standards of a high-quality translation, both purposeful and accidental choices in the English versions need to be consulted for a more comprehensive analysis.[29] The polemic of translation choices has its occasional

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[28] The practice is so widespread in mainland China that providing a reference will be arbitrary to no avail; the crucial point is, however, that the fact is so commonly known among scholars and students of Chinese poetry that it is a usual practice not to mention it unless the paper is concerned with the debate. In most cases, the debate is among poets and not scholars.

[29] Wang always emphasizes the importance of consulting several versions of the same poem when translating from a translation; however, the definitive edition of Akhmatova's poetry in English translation, and I believe the principal version he translates from, is the following: Hemschemeyer (1997). Note that all the English-language quotations of Akhmatova are from this version unless otherwise stated. Other translators of Akhmatova into English that Wang has mentioned include Walter Arndt, D. M. Thomas, and Nancy K. Anderson.

outbursts in literary circles in mainland China; it is particularly so in the case of translating the modern classics (Krenz 2019, 287–308). However, the question that interests me more is why so many Chinese poets choose to translate Russian and Eastern European poets – Akhmatova, in this case, a poet of strict meters. What is this particular poet's intention and the significance of his translation in relation to the era? For this purpose, I will closely look at the characteristics of his translation and "mistranslation" choices.

One question to ask on the translation of this poem – apart from the specific word choices, line breaks, pauses, and other stylistic subtleties, is the following: Is there anything in the Chinese version that acts, in a meaningful way, independent of the poem in the other two languages? In other words, is there an element of Chineseness – linguistic or historical – in Wang's translated version? The repetitions of the question "how" is strikingly haunting in both the original and the English version, and in Chinese, the second question becomes "how, once again" (又是怎樣 *you shi zenyang*). The intensification of the question does create the "tone quality" mentioned above; that is, one minor and other not easily identifiable details that make a poem more palpable when read aloud. Line breaks and the punctuation mark *pozhihao* (破折號, "dash") work in the same way. It is interesting to note that the dash is absent in the original, the English version provided above does add dashes, and Wang probably adopts the dashes of the English version. In comparing these three language versions, there are other differences that we can analyze. However, what is more important is that the translator aimed to enter the very depths of Akhmatova's spiritual, and not the linguistic world.

The prophetic quality that Wang recognizes in Akhmatova's poetry is in a way the influence or even guidance of another Russian poet, Brodsky, especially his classic essay on Akhmatova titled "The Keening Muse," written in English in 1982 as the introduction to *Anna Akhmatova: Poems*, selected and translated by Lyn Coffin.[30] The idea of "poet as a prophet" appears time and again in this essay, which Wang often refers to in his introduction. The origin of the concept itself comes from Akhmatova's dictum, written in 1958: "But in the world there is no power more threatening and terrible / Than the prophetic voice of the poet."[31] Akhmatova took this role at the age of 17, adopting the pen-name Akhmatova, a patronymic coming from the Tatar name Akhmat, instead of using her aristocratic surname Gorenko, as her father had been opposed her becoming a poet, which would thus bring shame to the family. But it was also the prophecy of sensing what was coming in history (Brodsky 1985, 34–52). Not once did Wang declare these Rus-

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[30] Interestingly, Tsvetaeva had given Akhmatova a similar name: "Muse of Weeping."

[31] It was quoted by Roberta Reeder as an epigraph to her biography of the poet (see Reeder 1994).

sian poets as his exemplary models, and it is in the context of reading Brodsky that Wang dedicates one of his *Marginalia* series poem called "Reading *The Gulag Archipelago*" (讀《古拉格群島》 "Du *Gulage qundao*"). The poem most importantly expresses what Brodsky says about the relation of poetry to history:

> At certain periods of history it is only poetry that is capable of dealing with reality by condensing it into something graspable, something that otherwise couldn't be retained by the mind. (Brodsky 1985, 52)

Here is Wang's poem, in which he "mourns the mourners," in Brodsky's words:

> Before it was written,
> no one would believe it.
> Now talking as we walk,
> what keeps us apart is no longer a fence
> but barbed wire.
>
> 有些東西沒有寫出來之前，
> 誰也不會相信。
> 現在，我與你談話，我們邊走邊談，
> 中間隔著的也不會再是籬笆
> 而是一道鐵蒺藜。

(Shi and O'Connell 2019a, 87; Wang 2019, 34)

One striking example where Wang practices "infidel fidelity" and is faithful to his poetic spirit, is in translating Akhamtova's another long poem or a cycle of poems, the epic "Requiem." Poem #3 from the series is short, with only four lines and the single word "Night" standing alone on the fifth. Reeder (1994, 218) cites Gumilyov[32] scholar Michael Basker for drawing our attention to how

> Akhmatova's use of structure influences the meaning and impact of a poem [...]. The fourth line tails off with suspension points, and all development is halted by the single disruptive monosyllable of the fifth: *Noch* [Night]. The poem breaks off into another premature silence, the formal counterpart of unutterable darkness.

Wang generally follows the structure of the English versions but occasionally adds or removes certain words. He translates the first two lines of the poem: "No, it is not I, it is somebody else who is suffering. / I would not have been able to bear what happened" as "不，這不是我，這是另一些人在受苦。/ 我從來承受不了如此的苦難" (Hemschemeyer 1997, 387; Wang 2018, 92). The first line is plain, and both the English and Chinese versions are faithful to the original. At the end of the second

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[32] Nikolay Gumilyov (1886–1921) is a Russian poet, one of the founders of the Acmeist movement in early 20th century Russia; he is also Akhmatova's first husband.

line, Wang adds the word *kunan* (苦難, "suffering/misery") instead of the simple *chto sluchilos'* (что случилось, "what happened") in Russian, as well as in the two English versions. As a result, the Chinese version connotes suffering in two different words. Once again, the poet-translator has chosen a word that shares one [Chinese] character with *tongku*, pain or agony, echoing his poetics of anguish.

It is remarkable that already before the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), Akhmatova was writing, or prophesizing, what would so tragically befall on her years later: "Take my child and my lover, [...] / after so many tormented days" (Hemschemeyer 1997, 203). In another poem from the same year, the second poem in the two-poem series called "May Snow," from 1920s-onward, the two Akhmatovian themes merge: prophecy and anguish, unlike her earlier poems that were predominantly on the theme of sensual love. The first two lines of the second stanza read in English translation: "Don't torment me anymore, don't touch me! / Leave me to my prophetic woes..." (Hemschemeyer 1997, 198). Wang translates: "别再折磨我，别再碰我！/ 讓我守著我先知的苦惱……" (Wang 2018, 39). "Prophecy" or "prophetic" in Wang's translation is *xianzhi* (先知, literally, "someone who knows things before others"), which appears in the same line with "woes," which he has translated as *kunao* (苦惱, "distress"); with the light hand of a poet that writes of a disaster, the character of *ku* (苦, "bitter"), is omnipresent – out of which the angst vocabulary is often derived in Chinese: anguish, distress, pain, agony, suffering, misery, and even the hard laborer.

6. Un-silencing through translation

Mandelstam's tragic fate in exile and that of Akhmatova's – whose husband, the poet Gumilyov was executed in 1921, and their son was arrested – did not resemble Wang's personal tragedies. Still, it appears that he internalizes the ubiquitous suffering of those poets. Using the past to talk about the politically dangerous is a standard technique in Russian literature (Hemschemeyer 1997, 5). Wang, and other poets of his generation, have moved the technique a step further: to talk about the politically dangerous through foreign literature. If Mandelstam is the "hard laborer" in exile, then Celan is the survivor of a concentration camp; historical contexts differ, but all these motifs are mingled as an entirety of artists' suffering amidst the tragedies of humanity. Just as Akhmatova, Wang is a poet dedicated to writing the truth, as a testimony.

The spirit of translating, writing, and rewriting, which is the poetics that Wang firmly believes in, can also be found in his critical reading of Akhmatova, in the example of one poem as an archetype. This poem, the first line of which is usually

read as its title, written in 1933/1934,[33] can be defined as a praise to freedom, and condemnation of bloodshed by the Bolsheviks of the time. The opening line is praise: "Wild honey smells like freedom, / Dust—like a ray of sun." And the last line of the first stanza: "But we learned once and for all / That blood only smells like blood…" (Hemschemeyer 1997, 382). Wang's translation of the first two lines of the first stanza: "野蜂蜜聞起來像自由，/ 灰塵——如太陽的光線;" and the last two lines: "但是我們聞一次也就永遠知道了 / 血，聞起來衹能像血腥味" (Wang 2018, 67). Both the Russian original and the English translation use the phrase "blood only smells like blood," whereas Wang uses *xuexingwei* (血腥味, "smell of blood"), which sounds more detestable. But otherwise, a word-by-word translation would have sounded awkward. Hence, the crucial point in this case is not how Wang translates this poem, but how he reads it, and I argue that this is also, in a way, an expression of his poetics. About this poem, he writes:

> Its every word is thought-provoking, emotional; but they also have an aphoristic quality. The first line is a great, yet valorous praise; it is link-ing 'wild honey' with freedom that the poet wants to sing. The last two lines have a certain kind of merciless power of reaching to the point of historical reality. (Wang 2018, 24–25)

This reading is in the same breath with the above-mentioned "denouncing his-tory," and it is to his own history, through the voice of Akhmatova, that Wang is filing a complaint.

In the title of a short memoir-style article, which is also a tribute to Imre Kertész (1929–2016), Wang is asking the following question: "What is it that is agonizing us?" He goes on with the self-interrogation:

> In the summer of 1998, in front of an old castle in Stuttgart where I was residing as a writer-in-residence, an open-air concert was held, sponsored by the Audi company. It was a grand scene: middle-class audience of thousands in their evening dresses; the final part of the concert was Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* by the Stuttgart Symphony Orchestra, and the conductor was Jewish, specially invited from Israel! When the music reached its climax, magnificent fireworks flew to the night sky from both sides of the stage; the crowd boiled with excitement and the champagne bottles popped. But for some reason, it was my most painful night. I thought to myself: I am a Chinese and have never ex-perienced "Auschwitz," what is it that is agonizing me? (Wang 2008, 63)

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[33] Both Reeder's biography and Hemschemeyer's *The Complete Poems*, and subsequently Wang's translation date the poem as 1933; however, the 1990 Russian language publication dates the poem as 1934. Similar inconsistencies occur elsewhere; however, they do not affect the translation or the argument in this paper. It is also important to note that there are many debates among scholars concerning the exact dates of Akhmatova's certain poems.

Through translating Celan and other Eastern European tragic poets, Chinese po-
ets sometimes address questions that cannot be explicitly addressed for fear of
censorship or political persecution. But again, it is important to emphasize that
a mere political reading of their poetry and translations – in Wang's case even
more so – would be gravely misleading. More than this, there are ethical limi-
tations in comparing historical incidents and catastrophes of different eras and
contexts, and the matter is not merely about (ab)using one historical catastrophe to
address another. The phenomenon is rather the recognition of pain and suffering
as a shared human existence. As Cathy Caruth (1996, 18) puts it in her reading of
Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*,

> we could say that the traumatic nature of history means that events are
> only historical to the extent that they implicate others. And it is thus that
> Jewish history has also been the suffering of others' traumas.

This can explain Wang's repeated insistence that Celan's suffering still causes
anguish to him. Thus, it is not surprising that Tsvetaeva, another poet that Wang
has spent decades translating, writes in her 1924 poem written in Prague – "The
Poem of the End," the following words: "In this most Christian of worlds / all
poets are Jews" (Feinstein 1993, 67–89). Although she herself was not a Jew.
Celan, writing decades after Tsvetaeva's poem, uses her line as an epigraph
to his poem titled "And with the Book from Tarussa" ("Und mit dem Buch aus
Tarussa") (Joris 2015, 2020). Several more decades passed and Wang titled his
translation-anthology as *With the Book From Tarusa* (2014). Celan is a Holocaust
survivor and a witness, and he has created an oeuvre which is in a constant
dialogue with silent survivors. After all, careful readers are as much shaken by
the fact that Tsvetaeva did not write a single poem on hunger while starving, as
they are shaken by the silence in Celan's language: in his poetry, he never used
the word "Auschwitz."

    Many Chinese poets of Wang's generation feel the need to translate, I believe,
as a search of poetic language amidst silence, a constant search of recognition,
and a way of bearing the suffering of humanity.

7. Conclusion

Defining Wang's poetry as the "poetry of anguish, poetry of praise," at the same
time encompasses his translation as an inseparable part of his whole oeuvre.
As exemplified in this paper, some of his poems evoke praise and gratitude.
At the same time, a larger part is philosophical contemplations and mournful
testaments on the enigmas of the 20th century and beyond: the unachievable
ideals, the hard-laborers' pain, Auschwitz, the artists' burden. Bitter memories of
childhood during the dramatic years become increasingly painful when memo-

ries become recent; the present is explained through the past, hope is explained through anguish.

The "Aesopic language," which Reeder has attributed to Akhmatova, is equally true for Wang, expressing grief and devastation on specific historical events that cannot be discussed openly (Hemschemeyer 1997, 24). "Anguish" and "praise" may at first glance seem to be inherently opposite sentiments, but we should not view them in a dichotomous way. In Wang's poetry, there are instances when they reconcile, as in the following line from his fragment-poem series "Words:" "When the poems of praise ring, another generation felt that the poverty of their lives was left unaccomplished," "當讚美詩響起的時候，又一代人感到了他們這一生的貧困不可能完成" (Wang 2001, 117) – placing the celebratory and the accusatory all in one complex web of a generation's historical predicament.

Through reading Wang's *Marginalia* poems, the haunting repetitions of Celan's resentful "Death Fugue" reverberate, his translation of Akhmatova's most magical poema "Poem Without a Hero," as Isaiah Berlin called it (Hemschemeyer 1997, 40), the all-pervasive anguish in writing and translating, and many more, we see the vicissitudes of a poet of the beastly 20th century. In his poetry, Wang is often trying to step out of history and embrace everlasting values, or a "universal culture" – at times he succeeds, at times the trauma of particular historical events overweighs the eternal.

His irrepressible confidence in the power of poetry in un-silencing the harrowing details of human life experiences amidst the absurdities of history – in memory or as dark prophecy – continues into the 21st century.

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VOICELESS TIBET?
PAST AND PRESENT IN TIBETAN SINOPHONE
WRITING BY TSERING NORBU

Kamila Hladíková

As a culturally and linguistically hybrid product emerging from specific historical and political conditions, Sinophone Tibetan literature has been often overlooked in Western academic and literary circles. Still, as argued in this article, it is a plausible voice coming from within Tibet, shedding more light on the present lived reality of the region and its inhabitants and forming a multilayered minor discourse of self-representation vis-á-vis the major Han Chinese discourse regarding not only Tibetan history and culture, but, more generally, literary creation. By analyzing the various representations of present-day Tibet in short stories by Tsering Norbu, this paper provides insights into the formation of collective historical memory and transformation of Tibetan society following the economic development of the region after the year 2000. While responding to the official call for a realistic representation of the lives of ordinary people, the author has come up with effective counterhegemonic narrative strategies of resistance to the dominant forces of ideology and brutal commercialization by including elements of religion, suppressed historical memory, and social problems in contemporary Tibetan society.

Keywords: Chinese literature, Tibetan literature, *Xizang wenxue*, minority literature, Tsering Norbu (Ciren Luobu), postcoloniality

1. Introduction

Various representations of Tibet have been subjected to both commercial and political interests, providing mutually conflicting perspectives. As a piece of land "far and high above" for most people both in the West and in China, Tibet has been represented through a range of stereotypes based on Western orientalism and Chinese colonial perspective inherited from imperial times, informed by Marxism,

and shaped by the state ideology. The most common clichés about Tibet are its perceived remoteness, mysteriousness, and deeply rooted spirituality, that bear rather positive connotations in the West, but in China relate to cultural, social, and economic backwardness. This paper examines representations of Tibet within the frames of contemporary literary discourse in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and looks at various narrative strategies used by Tibetan writers to negotiate the boundaries of the official discourse on various levels on the example of a prominent Tibetan Sinophone writer Tsering Norbu (Tib. ཚེ་རིང་ནོར་བུ tshe ring nor bu, Ch. 次仁罗布 Ciren Luobu, b. 1965).

Sinophone Tibetan literature can be analyzed within the theoretical framework of postcolonial, or more specifically Sinophone studies, introduced as "study of colonial language cultures" (Shih 2013, 1) specifically related to the Chinese cultural sphere. As a part of Chinese "minority literature" (少数民族文学 shaoshu minzu wenxue) created by ethnic minority writers within the PRC and in Chinese language, it may be as well considered as a "minor discourse" in the sense of "minor literature" discussed on the example of the German-writing Prague Jew Franz Kafka by Deleuze and Guattari (1986). For ethnic Tibetan writers addressing their readers in the major language – i.e., Chinese – the "impossibility of not writing" from a minority perspective is insurmountable. Using a clearly *deterritorialized* language, they cannot avoid always being read as representing certain collective values that inevitably bear a *political element* (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16). Moreover, they do it in the form of a "small talk" (小说 xiaoshuo, the Chinese term for fiction) that originally evolved as "fragments, little sayings, and collected stories" (DeWoskin 1986, 423) seen as a marginalized complement to canonical texts and History.

At the same time, in the light of several-decades-long commercialization of literature in the PRC after introduction of "reforms and opening up" policy following Mao Zedong's death, such literature can be even interpreted as a kind of counterhegemonic discourse, subverting the *hegemony*, exercised by "dominant groups in society, through a process of 'intellectual and moral leadership'" (Gramsci 2009, 75). This *counterhegemony* can be seen not only unwinding against the backdrop of the dominant culture in ethnic, ideological, or political sense, but also, as it will be argued, as a form of negotiation of one's own cultural identity vis-á-vis widespread commercialization, monetization, and related exoticization and "othering" of "minority cultures" in state-regulated pop-cultural production, mass tourism, etc.

2. Writing Tibetanness in Chinese

Despite initial discussions whether Sinophone works should be considered "Tibetan literature" at all (Shakya 2004), Chinese-medium works have played a significant role in giving voice to Tibetans in the PRC. The new literature emerging around the mid-1980s was closely interconnected with contemporary literary developments in inland China. Writers like Tashi Dawa (Tib. བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཟླ་བ་ *bkra shis zla ba*, Ch. 扎西达娃 Zhaxi Dawa, b. 1959), inspired by prominent Han Chinese members of the Lhasa art circle, such as Ma Yuan (马原, b. 1953), started to experiment with modernist and avant-garde narrative techniques popular in Chinese literature in that time. Tashi Dawa introduced a Tibetan version of "magical realism" (see Grünfelder 1999; Schiaffini 2002), slightly later adopted by writers of Tibetan-medium fiction as well, for example Jangbu (Tib. ལྗང་བུ་ *ljang bu*, Ch. 蒋布 Jiangbu, b. 1963) (Stoddard 2010) or Pema Tseden (Tib. པད་མ་ཚེ་བརྟན་ *pad ma tshe brtan*, Ch. 万玛才旦 Wanma Caidan, b. 1969) in his early writing (Erhard 2007).

Magical realism, which emerged in postcolonial Latin America, proved both an attractive and effective literary means to deal with the rapid modernization and transformation of Tibetan society in the reform period. It enabled the depiction of the sometimes-absurd clashes between traditional society and elements of modernity, on one hand disrupting the Shangrila-like image of Tibet while on the other hand contesting the notion of Tibet's "backwardness" (落后 *luohou*) that is driving the Chinese "civilizing mission." As explained by Heather Stoddard (2010, xxii):

> While due largely to the political and social climate, this tendency can be partly seen as a reaction against the many magical or mystical references in certain genres of classical Tibetan literature, and to the overriding necessity of coming to terms with and describing contemporary realities over which Tibetans have little control.

However, more recently, Sinophone Tibetan literature has turned into a new direction. Writers who only started to publish in the early 2000s, like Tsering Norbu, have abandoned the "magical" style, claiming that such works depicted Tibet from an outsider's perspective, as exotic and mysterious. Such representation was not something Tibetan readers could identify with. Pema Tseden has addressed this in several interviews:

> I don't think there is a need to redefine magic realism (for the Tibetan context). What we term magical realist literature must bear the marks of a certain region's historical culture or folk customs, so there are naturally distinctions between the Latin American magical realism literature and the Tibetan context. The historical culture or folk customs of these regions themselves contain things that may be full of magic in the eyes of outsiders, but to the indigenous they might not be magical at all. (Shakya 2021)

Contemporary writers, like Pema Tseden or Tsering Norbu, who are writing (also) in Chinese need to consider different types of audience than writers using exclusively the Tibetan language. Their readership includes Chinese-educated Tibetan readers, general Chinese readers, and possibly even readers in the West or elsewhere in Asia, like Japan or Korea. Therefore, they are striving to find a language that would represent the life in contemporary Tibet in a more realistic, yet subjective way. Tsering Norbu based his fictional writings in the everyday life of ordinary Tibetans, from modern city dwellers to nomads inhabiting the remote grasslands and high-altitude deserts of Changtang. The connecting topic in his short stories, collected into an anthology called *Fang sheng yang* (放生羊, *Liberated Sheep*, 2015),[1] is the notion of compassion (Ch. 悲悯 *beimin*, Tib. སྙིང་རྗེ་ *snying rje*), one of the key values in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, in the sense of empathy with the vulnerable and suffering.

The Chinese-medium "literature from Tibet" (西藏文学 *Xizang wenxue*) is a product of cultural and linguistic hybridity rooted in the geopolitical condition of Tibet in the second half of the 20th century. Writers who officially claim their "Tibetan" (藏族 *Zangzu*) identity,[2] used various narrative strategies to express the "Tibetanness" in their literary texts. For example, early poems of the senior writer Yidam Tsering (Tib. ཡི་དམ་ཚེ་རིང་ *yi dam tshe ring*, Ch. 伊丹才让 Yidan Cairang, b. 1933), as examined by Lara Maconi (2002), were characterized by extensive use of Tibetan words, which, transcribed in Chinese characters, complicate the reading experience for readers not familiar with Tibetan language, geography, and culture. Maconi (2002, 180) describes Yidam Tsering's poetry as "deeply nourished by Tibetan oral tradition" and "using symbols rich in cultural connotations that differentiate his world from the official discourse." His "tibetanization of Chinese language" (Maconi 2002, 185) proves the poet's "effort to negotiate a gap between the two 'worlds'" and his "resistance against the use of the 'imported' language, a refusal of its categories and connotations" (Maconi 2002, 186).

The generation of Sinophone Tibetan writers born already in the PRC, including Tashi Dawa and Alai (阿來, Tib. ཨ་ལེགས་ *a legs*, b. 1959), started to implement various narrative strategies to express a specifically Tibetan subjectivity or identity. Tashi Dawa's magical realism can be read as an early attempt to translate Tibetan subjective reality based in Tibetan history and culture into a "modern language" of rationality introduced by the Chinese colonial endeavor. Alai, who is a member of the Gyalrong community inhabiting the mountainous landscape around Barkham

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[1]   Here is the concept of "liberation" in Buddhist sense, the Chinese term *fang sheng* (放生, "liberation of life" or "life-release") refers to the Tibetan *tshe thar* (ཚེ་ཐར་) ritual. It should not be confused with the Chinese "Liberation" (解放 *jiefang*), which is the official Party jargon for the Communist subjugation of Tibet.

[2]   Some of these writers – for example, Tashi Dawa, Alai, or Sebo – have in fact mixed origin.

in northwestern Sichuan, both linguistically and culturally distinct from Central Tibet, has made notable effort to "undo the hellish stigma that the Chinese government and the Han majority have attached to 'Old Tibet'" (Baranovich 2010, 172).

Literary styles and narrative techniques used by Sinophone Tibetan writers since the 1980s should be evaluated to a certain extent as consciously or subconsciously applied strategies how to deal with censorship, as the representation of Tibet is in the PRC heavily monitored and regulated (Hladíková 2021a) and writers, even those who hold high positions in the official literary system as Tashi Dawa and Alai do, need to always keep this in mind. In the language of the postcolonial discourse, these writers appropriate the dominant/official perspective and representations of Tibet while using specific linguistic and narrative devices (like "magical realism," unreliable narrators, Tibetanisms, etc.) to reclaim their Tibetanness by narrating about significant historical events and sometimes violent clashes between tradition and modernity through a lens of Tibetan subjectivity. Compared to Tibetan-medium literature, Sinophone works more often tend to use various "modernist" (现代派 *xiandai pai*)[3] techniques to address the exoticism and "otherness" of Tibet as perceived from the Han Chinese point of view. Such narrative devices can be considered native writers' answers to the Chinese representations of themselves, and at the same time they serve as hooks to appeal to educated readers and to meet their expectations based on commonly accepted stereotypes about Tibet.

Even though such works in some way reflect the absurdity of contemporary reality in Tibet, which is increasingly becoming an open-air ethnological museum for mainland tourists, where Tibetans strive in their quest for modernization and development, the last two decades have seen more serious effort of Sinophone Tibetan writers to portray Tibet without the "magical" and "mysterious" elements now seen as "orientalist." This effort is clearly identifiable in the work of Pema Tseden, not only in his short stories, but in movies as well. The first and most successful Tibetan director whose films have been long recognized on international art scene and film festivals has recently drawn considerable attention on the PRC market with public screenings, readings, and debates with his last two movies, *Jinpa* (Tib. ལག་དམར་ *lag dmar*, Ch. 撞死了一只羊 *Zhuang si le yi zhi yang*, 2018)[4] and *Balloon* (Tib. དབུགས་ལྒང་ *dbugs lgang*, Ch. 气球 *Qiqiu*, 2020). His "demythization" of

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[3]   On Chinese "modernism" see, for example, Zhang (1997).

[4]   The English title simply refers to the two protagonists who both happen to have the same name, Jinpa, which is also the name of the actor playing the main role. The Chinese title is the name of Pema Tseden's short story, one of the two original works adapted for the movie. Finally, the Tibetan title meaning "butcher" or "murderer," same as the name of the second source work, Tsering Norbu's short story "The Killer," refers to the taboo of killing any living creatures, which is based in the Buddhist notion of compassion.

Tibet may have initially disappointed the audience craving for the stereotypically exotic, orientalized Tibet, but gradually have found its viewers and, consequently, readers. It is not a coincidence that one of Pema Tseden's latest movies, *Jinpa*, was partially based on the short story "Shashou" (杀手, "The killer," 2006)[5] by his colleague from Lhasa, Tsering Norbu, with whom the Amdo-based director and writer seems to share a similar approach to the representation of contemporary Tibet.

3. Tsering Norbu

Tsering Norbu was born in 1965 in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and lives in Lhasa, where he graduated in 1986 from Tibetan language and literature department of Tibet University. According to his public profile on Baidu, he later taught Tibetan language at high schools in Chamdo and Lhasa and soon started to work as editor for the official newspaper *Xizang ribao* (西藏日报, *Tibet Daily*) and the official magazine published by Tibet Writer's Association, *Xizang wenxue* (西藏文学, *Tibetan Literature*). Simultaneously, he established a career in the state apparatus, first as Party secretary and later deputy head of the Department of Quality Supervision of the TAR. He started to publish short stories in the early 1990s and in 2004 was picked to join the "national minority study group" at the Lu Xun Academy of Literature in Beijing.

In 2006 his short story "Shashou" was selected for the first time to appear in a national anthology, received the Tibetan Jomolungma literary award and finally was picked for official publication in *21 shiji Zhongguo dangdai wenxue* (21世纪中国当代文学, *Contemporary Chinese Literature of the 21st Century*) and translated into English and Korean. Since 2009, several of his short stories were published in literary journals outside of Tibet (for example 芳草 *Fang cao*, 民族文学 *Minzu wenxue*, 小说月报 *Xiaoshuo yuebao*, etc.) and his short story "Fang sheng yang" (放生羊, "Liberated Sheep") gained the 5th Lu Xun Literary Award. Tsering Norbu presently serves as the executive director of Tibet Writers' Association, editor-in-chief of *Xizang wenxue*, and since 2016 is a member of the National Committee of the Chinese Writers' Association. In 2015 he published his first full-length novel *Jiyu fengzhong* (祭语风中, *Prayers in the Wind*).

Tsering Norbu has formulated his understanding of the function of literature using an often-quoted phrase inspired by the title of a novel by the prominent writer of Hui origin Zhang Chengzhi (张承志, b. 1948) *Xinling shi* (心灵史, *History of the Soul*, 1991): "Literature is the history of the soul of a nation[ality]" (Li 2017). In accordance with the objective expressed through this mantra[6] of all Chinese

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5   The story has been recently translated into English by Riga Shakya.

6   In the official Chinese literary discourse, the "history of the soul of a nation" is connected to the struggle of the broad masses of people against (presumably feudal, but possibly also

minority writers, his literature in general sticks to "realism," responding to the of-ficial literary circles' call for "realistic depiction of everyday reality of the masses,"[7] while his literary style employs narrative techniques that were initially connected to "modernism" in Chinese literature. Notably, almost all his stories somehow relate to the notion of compassion with – in the broader circle of Chinese or Sinophone literatures – an unusually high ratio of short stories related to illness, disability, old age, and dying. Compassion and kindheartedness have been pointed out by the author himself as the "influence of traditional Tibetan culture" (Ciren 2010).

Han Chinese literary critics tend to emphasize Tsering Norbu's use of "tradi-tional culture" like "the stories of the Tibetan mystic Milarepa, stories of the Gesar Epic, folk Buddhist tradition, Corpse Stories, Tibetan folk stories, or mysterious Tibetan custom of sky burial" (Li 2017). But the writer himself has rather expressed his intent to go deeper under the surface and reflect the proclaimed "history of the soul," a mixture of culturally based identity and (heavily suppressed) collective memory. From the Tibetan point of view even the most "mysterious" elements have their reason and logic. That is why Tsering Norbu repeatedly addressed the employment of "magical and mysterious" elements in representation of Tibet and Tibetan culture, stating his intention to depict Tibet in a more "realistic" way. In an interview he said:

> After the opening of Tibet, many outsiders started to write about it, provided a very superficial representation of Tibetan history, culture, and present situation. As a result, they depicted Tibet as magical and mysterious. I want to return back to the original Tibetan realm of mind, to the real Tibet. (Ciren 2019)

Short stories from the collection *Fang sheng yang* can be divided into four general thematical categories: religious topics, life in contemporary society, historical topics, and what I shall call "folk tales" (Ch. 民间故事 *minjian gushi*). Except for the last category, all of them might be surprising in the context of the communist "new Tibet," where religious and historical topics are strictly monitored and affected by

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ethnic) oppression. For example, Hui scholar Yang Jiguo has explained in these terms the repeated violent uprisings of the Muslim Hui during the Qing dynasty that are described in Zhang Chengzhi's novel: "In that specific time, 'religion was a sigh of an oppressed soul, emotional expression of the merciless world', 'suffering of religion was a [symbolic] expres-sion of present suffering and at the same time a kind of resistance to that real suffering.' And because Islam is the religion of Hui people, he used this ideological cover [i.e., religion] to explain numerous uprisings of the Hui. Therefore, in Zhang Chengzhi's writing, the history of religion was in fact the history of the soul of the Hui people and his religious sentiment was in fact an expression of his empathy with the suffering of his own people" (Yang 2004). Unless specified otherwise, translations from Chinese are my own.

[7] This was stressed as the main objective of literature in the PRC by the present leadership (see Xi 2014).

censorship. On the contrary, life and society in contemporary Tibet, namely urban, with all the conflicts, dilemmas, and newly arising social problems, is something that was hardly touched upon in Sinophone Tibetan literature before the year 2000. The last category, based on "folk tales" or folklore elements that are often celebrated in Chinese literary criticism of Sinophone Tibetan works, transcends the category of religious topics with which it shares interest in supernatural and magic elements. The surrealistic elements in this category are not as much connected to Buddhism (a *religion* officially recognized by the authorities) as to the folk oral tradition and to what would be classified as "superstition." It includes folk elements that can be attributed to *bön*, shamanistic, or various local cults and traditions, but it also includes popular stories from traditional literature and oral histories circulating among people. Folk tales sometimes allow the author to deal with "sensitive" topics related to identity or historical traumas that would otherwise be excluded as literary material publishable in the PRC. As Franz Xaver Erhard (2018, 134) has noted: "Folk culture and oral lore provide a ground—however limited—for the negotiation of Tibetan identity in the highly restrictive public space allowed by the Chinese state."

Erhard connected the use of folk elements in Tibetan literature to what Erich Rotermund called *concealed writing* and characterized Tibetan writing within the official system of the PRC as "inner emigration," a state, where "even though dissenting, a person decides to consent in public but secretly keeps to his or her nonconformist opinions in private" (Erhard 2018, 134). Erhard argued that the folk elements not only "cater to the folkloristic taste of the socialist state and function as a major means to achieve promoted national characteristics," but at the same time they serve "as a rare opportunity to present and sometimes celebrate Tibetan culture, language, and customs" (Erhard 2018, 143). As already argued elsewhere, such elements can be in the context of Chinese literature read in accordance with the original Chinese understanding of fiction (*xiaoshuo*) as a "minor discourse" regarding official history, collecting "fragments and little sayings" that do not fit into the orthodox ideology-based narratives (Hladíková 2021b, 3). The fantastic elements stress the fictional character of such works even more (e.g., Chinese 传奇 *chuanqi* tradition), making them ostentatiously irrelevant and thus not threatening the official discourse.

4. The solace of religion

Under the category of "religious topics" I include short stories broadly related to the above-mentioned notion of compassion. Perhaps the most representative one is the title novella "Fang sheng yang," first published in 2009. Narrated in a strongly subjective mode by a first-person narrator, a dying old man, it includes

fantastic visions which can be rationalized as dreams or hallucinations caused by the narrator's degrading cognitive functions and dying signs. The protagonist is a widower whose wife died 12 years ago, and who had been recently disturbed by visions of her suffering in hell, from which she is unable to escape to be reborn again due to unspecified karmic causes:

> Tears filled your black hole-like eyes and you replied with trembling voice: "I am in hell, suffering endlessly." You took off the sleeves of your *chupa* and slightly lifted the rim of your blouse. Oh, Lord Buddha! Who cut off your two breasts and left the open bloody wounds swarm with worms? Fresh blood was still dripping down, and sharp stench attacked my nostrils. My heart sank and I was so devastated that I started crying. (Ciren 2015, 63)

The narrator himself is later confirmed to be in a terminal stage of cancer but feels the urge to devote his remaining time to prayers for his late wife's re-birth. To improve her *karma*, the old man decides to "liberate" a sheep in a ritual known as *tshe thar* ("liberation of life" or "life-release"), where Tibetan Buddhists buy animals, typically fish, but sometimes also sheep, to save them from being slaughtered and consumed. The events are narrated in the first person, but the narrative voice often shifts to second person narration, as large part of the story is formed by inner monologues of the narrator talking to his late wife or to the liberated sheep. Gradually, through the first-person plural and second-person narrative discourse, they merge into one precious life, symbolically compared to a lotus flower, which is also a symbol of Buddha and Dharma. The endless and repetitive religious activities – circumambulations, prostrations, incantations, and prayers – are highlighted, not only as the means of personal life fulfillment and solace for the lonely old man, but also as distinctive connecting points of pan-Tibetan identity:

> The next day we again started prostrating from the point where we had stopped yesterday. I realized that there were several dozens of people prostrating around me, from their clothing it was apparent that they were pilgrims from the far-away eastern Tibet. As the day broke, we kept moving forward amidst the monotonous rustle of crawling bodies. The sun went up and its rays shone upon us, suffusing the road ahead with gold. In their light, your white body appeared even purer and smoother, like a lotus flower without a speck of dust. (Ciren 2015, 77)

Several short stories in the collection include a motif of physical disability. One example is "Lü Dumu" (绿度母, "Green Tara," 2011), a story of a disabled girl who has not known anything else but being laughed at and discriminated against by everyone around her, including her own family. She is tragically disappointed in love when abandoned by a stranger whom she met at Barkor and who seduced

her for a few short moments of physical pleasure. After that she takes refuge from worldly life and enters a monastery, where she finally finds reconciliation and, having finished her circle in *samsara*, dies at a young age, getting rid of her imperfect, inauspicious body. As in the previous short story, the theme is obviously inspired by Buddhist philosophy: life brings suffering stemming from bad karmic conditions (physical disability, illness) and unsatisfiable desires (mistaken for love) and the only cure is compassion, sympathy with other sentients beings, and reconciliation with one's fate.

One of the most notable pieces in the collection is the award-winning novella "Jie" (界, "Boundary/Realm," 2007). It can be categorized within the Chinese genre known as "new historical fiction" (新历史小说 *xin lishi xiaoshuo*) or as an "alternative history" (Lin 2005) contesting the official historical narratives by shifting the focalization from the perspective of class-determined "heroes" to the perspective of "class enemies," aristocracy and clergy. The novella presents atrocities of the "old Tibet" from the point of view of several members and servants of a feudal aristocratic family. As expected in the works depicting the life in old feudal regime, both in inland China and Tibetan areas, the novella showcases the decadence and immorality of the upper class. The plot turns around extramarital affairs, the sexual enslavement of serf girls, and the fates of illegitimate children in the family. The events from the "pre-Liberation times" are narrated through several interchanging narrators who hold different positions on the social hierarchy within the feudal estate. The first narrator is a housekeeper, a man of low origin who managed to climb higher on the social ladder thanks to his sly and cruel personality. Initially, he shows little sympathy for the suffering of those below him and inclines to power abuse as a natural means of survival. The second narrator is an illegitimate daughter of one of the feudal lords who had an illicit love affair with another aristocrat and gave birth to a son. This affair inevitably ruined her life, as the family sent her away with her little son who was later forced to enter a monastery and become a monk.

This monk becomes the last narrator who concludes the story. His mother, having no one else to rely on, is excessively mentally dependent on her son and refuses to leave him even when he has been recognized as *tulku* or "living Buddha" (Ch. 活佛 *huofo*). To keep him by her side, she decides to poison him, so that he can never leave her. With his exceptional mental abilities, the *tulku* has realized what his mother plans to do but sees no other way out of the situation caused by bad *karma* accumulated for generations and by unrestrained desires, greed, jealousy, and other negative emotions, than to let her kill him. With his sacrifice, he can make his mother realize the true nature of her emotions and actions and can lead her to understanding and regret. Watching her beloved son dying, she finally finds the true compassion deep in her heart and vows to spend the rest of

her life in prayers, carving *mani* stones beside her late son's monastery to repay for her wrong deeds.[8]

The novella, partly narrated in the first person by a narrator who has died in the course of the story, includes supernatural elements connected to concepts like reincarnation, rebirth, or *karma* and *karmic* reward:

> The soul had already left the main temple hall and flew towards the Yamanataka shrine, causing the offering lamps to die out at once. In the dark of the night, the monk who took care for the butter lamps could clearly see the soul flying out of the shrine, and when he followed it outside to the foot of the mountain, he could see an old woman lying there not far from Duopei's collapsed body. The news spread quickly and pilgrims from all directions started to flock to Zhari Monastery and decided to build a *chörten* for Duopei next to the pile of *mani* stones. (Ciren 2015, 136)

However, these elements certainly go beyond the function of a somehow playful narrative embellishment that the "magical" elements usually assumed in "magical realism." They are rather used to express distinctively Tibetan subjectivity such as internalized compassion, which naturally stems from understanding the laws of *samsara* and *karma*. It is what the *tulku*-son has taught his mother Tashi (Zhaxi) by the sacrifice of his body:

> When the *chörten* was finished, the housekeeper Sangye wanted to take Tashi away. But she said: "Housekeeper, I have committed many sins in this life, if you want to pity me, give me a hammer and steel knife and I am going to carve one thousand six-syllable mantras onto *mani* stones." (Ciren 2015, 136)

5. Conflicting modernity

Religious themes in the collection may be read in a certain juxtaposition to themes connected to modernity. Life in contemporary society is often characterized by an absence of religion, the kind of values, life certainty, and solace brought by faith in Buddhism or, more precisely, finding inner peace in living up to the basic notion of compassion as described above. For example, the piece called "Fen" (焚, "Burning," 2000) tells a story of an independent and educated young woman named Woeser (Weise) who decided to divorce her abusive husband and cut herself off from his family. In her quest for personal freedom, she had to give up her little son and leave him with his father. However, her "free life" soon starts to feel somewhat

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[8] According to the author, this novella was inspired by a "folk tale" which was narrated to him by a monk in Sangpo Monastery near Lhasa (Xiao 2017).

dull – she has a love affair with a colleague, but it turns out that her lover is not interested in a stable relationship and is just seeking fun. Woeser gradually finds herself struggling without the pillars of traditional society, religion, and family. Her life appears as rootless, unstable, and, in the end, meaningless, very different from the life of the older generation whose members, despite living through the turbulent times of the 1950s to 1970s, still felt the connection to traditional morality and values, even when they could not be openly acknowledged as originating in Buddhist philosophy and faith during certain historical periods.

This is made clear, for example, in "Qianfang you ren dengzhe ta" (前方有人等着她, "Someone is Waiting for Her Ahead," 2004), a short story which, again, brings up the theme of old age – and generational conflict. An old upright woman spent a nice life with her late husband. They loved and respected each other despite their poverty and political turmoil, staying humble even when their material condition and social position improved. Nevertheless, their children did not live up to their parents' expectations: their daughter divorced, and their son got addicted to gambling and ended up in prison for not paying his debts. The old woman sees no more meaning in life and willingly follows her dead husband to the afterlife, happily bidding farewell to this world.

A similar topic had appeared already in Tsering Norbu's very first short story, "Luozi de chuanfu" (罗孜的船夫, "The Boatman of Luozi," 1992). Narrated as "story within a story" told in a circle of travelers, it introduces an old boatman who had lost his daughter many years ago when she escaped with a Khampa trader. The girl allured by worldly desires of love and comfortable urban life, however, did not meet a happy fate. She was left by the Khampa as soon as she got pregnant with his child and miscarried the baby later. Her father, unaware of her fate, took a trip to Lhasa to find her, but quickly ran away in terror. The city was like hell for him, without any signs of love and compassion, a bleak and cruel place. Even when his daughter finally came to bring him back to Lhasa with her, he refused and decided to live alone near the river, forgotten by the world, but free, like a hermit.

The abrupt intrusion of modernity into the idealized pastoralist life is the main theme of a longer novella called "Shen shou" (神授, "Divine Initiation," 2011). The main hero, Yargye (Ya'erjie), is an illiterate nomad who was endowed by deities with the exceptional and magical art of reciting the Gesar Epic as little boy shortly after the end of the Cultural Revolution. For comparison, Riika Virtanen has recently brought to attention a Tibetan-medium short story with the same topic by Dhondup Gyal, who has been celebrated as the "founder of modern Tibetan literature." His work "Sgrung pa" (སྒྲུང་པ་, "The Storyteller," 1981) describes the fate of a Gesar Epic bard during the Cultural Revolution (Virtanen 2020, 88). Interestingly, as an early work of the post-Mao era, the short story avoids descriptions of the

divine initiation and fails to explain how the bard attained his art. In sharp contrast, Tsering Norbu gives a detailed description of the magical scene on several pages:

> The divine army general, riding a white steed, descended from clouds, waving his banner, vast and mighty, as he was ready to turn the Sejian Grassland upside down. It happened in 1979. However, none of the people inhabiting the Sejian Grassland saw this magnificent scene and did not hear the storm-like sound of horses' hooves. This was what only a thirteen-year-old herding boy experienced. (Ciren 2015, 217)

Tsering Norbu's description is almost identical with a "real person's" experience described in "The Biography of Grags pa" in Fitzherbert's translation as quoted by Virtanen:

> It is also revealed that an event of a mystical nature was connected to his becoming a Gesar bard: namely, he disappeared for some time when he was still a child, slept for an unusually long time, and saw a dream in which his stomach was filled with stories of King Gesar. (Fitzherbert 2010, 228–229, quoted in Virtanen 2020, 94)

After his divine initiation, the bard Yargye in "Shen shou" spent several years traveling across the grasslands of Changtang, singing the epic for nomadic herdsmen. Later he was contacted by researchers coming from an ethnological institute in Lhasa who asked him to come to the city to make recordings of the whole epic for archival and research purposes. After that, he spent the next ten years reciting the epic not to live people, but to a cassette recorder, gradually losing his divine talent. When he is, after a long time, able to return to the grassland, he learns in shock about the modernization which caused a drastic change of people's interests and values, so that no one is interested in the Gesar Epic anymore.

This quick transformation is symbolically expressed in the scene, where the protector deity of the bard, a wolf whom he had met during his original initiation, clearly the symbol of the old nomadic life, roams abandoned in the grassland. The final part of the novella turns back to the surreal mode of the opening scene of the divine initiation. The protector wolf appears once again to take Yargye away, but the divine army general does not descend to the steppe anymore and the transmission of the Gesar Epic seems to be disrupted as the bard's successor fails to be sanctioned by the deities as he is watching Yargye disappearing into nowhere. Nevertheless, the ending remains open:

> The sound of the Gesar Epic drifted in the air above the Sejian Grassland, but I couldn't move. The dark shadow over the *mani* stones pile lightly descended to the steppe and you and the dark shadow [Yargye and the wolf] walked into distance. You both disappeared from my sight. Yargye! I was not able to shout, but my heart filled with worries. The dark night

enveloped my eyes, and I could only lie there, waiting, waiting. (Ciren 2015, 262)

This ending differs notably from Dhondup Gyal's story, wherein the conveyed message was that even in the hardest times, in the 1950s and during the Cultural Revolution, the tradition managed to survive thanks to the unbreakable will and devotion of people.

6. Disturbingly "mysterious" history

In general, historical themes related to Tibet are in the PRC considered "sensitive" and are subjected to censorship and self-censorship. A few notable works have been written in Tibetan and published unofficially with personal consequences for their authors, as it is the case with the full-length novel *Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur* (ཀློང་དམར་འུར་འུར་, *Red Wind Howling*, 2009) by Tsering Dhondup (ཚེ་རིང་དོན་གྲུབ་ *tshe ring don grub*, b. 1961).[9] As for Sinophone works, all attempts to represent history re-strain themselves on depiction of what the official narrative denotes as "old Tibet" or retell the process of the so called "Peaceful Liberation" (和平解放 *heping jiefang*) and "democratic reforms" (民主改革 *minzhu gaige*) from a Tibetan perspective, but still reflecting the official narratives based on the ideological interpretation of "backwardness" versus "civilization."[10]

Among them, Alai's "new historical fiction" *Chen'ai luoding* has drawn considerable attention outside of China thanks to its English translation under the title *Red Poppies* (2002). The existing studies (e.g., Choy 2008; Baranovich 2010) focus on the representation of specific "Tibetan subjectivity" in the novel, which re-tells the history of the "Liberation" of the Gyalrong area in what is now Barkham County in Sichuan Province from the point of view of the offspring of the local chieftains (Ch. 土司 *tusi*, known as རྒྱལ་པོ་ *rgyal po*, "king," in Tib.). It is narrated in the first person by a narrator who is clearly unreliable, an "idiot" with limited mental capacity or ability to fully understand the unfolding events leading to the fall of his chiefdom and surrender to the Chinese army. The novel described the local Gyalrong chieftain family as – from the point of view of implied Han Chinese reader – clearly barbarian, but also as degenerated and already hybridized by mix-ing their blood with Han Chinese, because the narrator's mother was a Chinese prostitute. In contrast, the Red Army soldiers, seen from the native perspective as

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9 The novel has been translated to French by Françoise Robin and excerpts in English appeared in Barnett, Weiner, and Robin (2020). For a detailed analysis, see Jabb (2015).

10 For example, Yangdon's (央珍) *Wu xingbie de shen* (无性别的神, *A God without Gender*, 1994), Tashi Dawa's *Soadong de Xiangbala* (骚动的香巴拉, *Turbulent Shangbala*, 1993), or Alai's *Chen'ai luoding* (尘埃落定, *Dust Settles*, 1998).

the intruding Other, represent the civilizing ("Liberating") force bringing modernity based on scientific world outlook.

Nimrod Baranovich has argued that Alai is deconstructing the "demonic image of the 'Old Tibet'" (Baranovich 2010, 174) by "his insistence on depicting pre-'[L]iberation' Tibet as a place full of humanness," where "brutality is only part of a much richer reality in which one can also find love, regret, friendship, and compassion, and in which these human expressions often cross the rigid boundaries of social class and status" to prove that "'Old Tibet' was not 'hell on earth' and that Tibetans were not demons" (Baranovich 2010, 176). He shows how Alai has addressed some of the common Han Chinese stereotypes and clichés about Tibet, but does not point out the obvious sarcasm with which the author portrays the "fierce Tibetans" in a more "human light," like for example in this quoted passage:

> [If you] still don't believe me, you should come to our home and eat
> a meal with us right after an order has been given to the executioner.
> Then you'll see that we drink more water and eat less than usual. The
> meat, in particular, will hardly be touched. Everyone will eat just a slice
> or two as a symbolic gesture. (quoted in Baranovich 2010, 180)

Moreover, his conclusions are based in a vision of a homogenous "Tibet" and strictly inclusive "Tibetanness," omitting the fact that Alai (himself being of mixed origin) comes from and writes about the Gyalrong community, which could hardly ever be considered as a "Tibetan" territory under the Ganden phodang government. Thus, the claim that Alai conforms to the official Chinese communist narrative "that the Tibetans were part of China long before the 1950s" (Baranovich 2010, 189) fails to acknowledge the complexity of linguistic, cultural, and historical context of Alai's homeland, as well as his fictional world. Rather than reading the work as "a rare voice to Tibetan resistance" (Baranovich 2010, 195), where "politically correct narratives are used in *Red Poppies* to hide subversive ones [...] to maintain good relations with the cultural authorities" (Baranovich 2010, 197), I suggest to interpret the novel in accordance with the author's position as an official, himself representing the cultural authorities: i.e., as a highly hybridized work blurring the sharp division between "us" and "them," the Self and the Other, and author and censor. In other words, the novel is an excellent example of the employment of specific narrative strategies, like the unreliable narrator, or sarcasm stemming from the almost grotesquely showcased mixture of excessive brutality, violence, and sex, used to deal with political taboos and censorship when addressing a "sensitive" historical topic.

A very different perspective from the Chinese "Liberation" of Tibetan areas is provided in the above mentioned novel *Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur* by writer who is officially of "Mongol nationality" (蒙古族 *Menggu zu*), Tsering Dhondup. Despite this official "nationality" label, coming from a nomadic family from Sokpo, Tsering

Dhondup is linguistically and culturally Tibetan and is one of the boldest authors writing and publishing in Tibetan. Many of his works faced problems with official publication in the PRC (Erhard 2019, 186) and the novel *Rlung dmar 'ur 'ur* had to be published unofficially through a now illegal process via Hong Kong.

Lama Jabb (2015) who also comes from a nomadic community in Sokpo has provided a detailed account of the work in his dissertation. In general, he interprets Tibetan (Tibetan-medium) literature as a means of dealing with the "cultural trauma" Tibetans have faced since the "peaceful Liberation" and suppression of the uprising(s). He writes:

> The violent takeover of Tibet in the 1950s and subsequent Communist Chinese rule have been traumatic experiences that have left indelible marks on the Tibetan psyche. The Chinese state continues to control and shape the narrative of modern Tibetan experience, but in recent times Tibetan writers have been breaking (at great personal cost) a long-held silence through poetry, prose, and visual art. (Jabb 2015, 91)

He talks about generations of Tibetans, who, just like himself "grew up listening to stories of the harrowing experiences of their parents" that mostly remain in the "private, oral sphere of the family hearth" (Jabb 2015, 91). And even when they are transformed into the written form of fictional work, it "requires at least a certain degree of cultural sensibility and Tibetan historical consciousness to decipher their hidden messages" (Jabb 2015, 95). These "hidden messages" are seen as "literary identity markers of the Tibetan people" and highlights the mutual "unintelligibility" (Jabb 2015, 110) between Tibetan and Chinese terms, concepts, and worldviews. In case of Tsering Dhondup's censored novel, it is again its "experimental mode of narrative which is deliberately disjointed, fragmentary, and confusing" (Jabb 2015, 115), "resembling oral narrative (fragments, episodes, and repetitions)" (Jabb 2015, 116) that "reflects the prohibited nature of the story, and the unspeakable horrors associated with it" (Jabb 2015, 117). In the conclusion of the chapter, Lama Jabb writes:

> In the written word contemporary Tibetan writers continue a long-running act of remembrance that starts in orality. The indelibility of cultural trauma is generated by the radical, fundamental, and shocking impact on social change. (Jabb 2015, 128)

In accordance with this statement, Tsering Norbu's representations of Tibetan history are always inspired by oral narratives and often transformed into "folk tales" including magical elements, hinting the unspeakability of certain topics. For example, the short story "Chuanshuo" (传说, "Myth," 2009) is based on popular tales about magic amulets that can protect people from weapons (Ch. 刀枪不入 *dao qiang bu ru*, literally, "neither knife nor spears can penetrate"). Several related

legends about important figures from Tibetan history, namely Sakyapandita and Reting Rinpoche, are passed on to the first-person narrator in a pub along with liters of alcohol. After hearing the stories, the narrator-protagonist, who is later identified as a "peasant," walks out of the pub determined to try the protective power of the allegedly magic *dorje* only to be killed soon after he gets involved in a fight. The very fact of the narrator's death makes him unreliable, casting a mysterious shadow over the narrated legends, while his apparent drunkenness serves as a rationalizing element.

One of the remarkable details of this short story is the reference about a controversial figure in modern Tibetan history, regent Reting Rinpoche who was allegedly poisoned by members of the Tibetan government in 1947 and later was celebrated as a "patriotic figure" by Chinese propaganda (Ji 2012). According to one of the legends, the magical *dorje* was stolen from the Reting Monastery when it was looted by soldiers sent by the Kashag. These events are described in "Deduo" (德剁, "Dabdob," from Tib. སློབ་སློབ་ *ldob ldob*), a short story inspired by popular legends related to infamous Tibetan "violent monks" who defended the Reting Monastery against Tibetan army. The story plays with what is often seen as a paradox, the connection between Buddhist monks and violence. It is thematized in the plot through the interaction between an injured, dying monk defender and a government soldier who is reluctant to kill the enemy wearing monk's robe. In a gesture of compassion, the government soldier gives the seriously hurt monk water to drink, but the *dabdob* takes an advantage of the moment when the soldier relieves his alert and attempts to kill him. Now the soldier cannot avoid killing the monk despite his fear of karmic retribution for his sin.

While these two stories focus on topics that might seem to be in accordance with the stereotype of "mysterious" Tibet appealing to Han Chinese readers familiar with Ma Yuan's early "avant-garde" stories and to tourists who can hear such folklore from tour guides on their trip to Lhasa, they in fact, just as the above-mentioned historical novella "Jie," break the notorious stereotypes about the "old Tibet." What in the beginning appears as conventional depictions of the old feudal-monastic system or depraved Tibetan upper-class society gradually shifts towards questions of desire, guilt, suffering, repentance, and forgiveness, thus subverting the stereotypical perceptions stemming from mere incomprehension.

Several of Tsering Norbu's short stories even mention details or what can be described as "micro-stories" that are clearly related to the Cultural Revolution. A story called "Bakuo jie" (八廓街, "Barkor") after the main circumambulation circuit around the Jokhang Tempe in Lhasa consist of three such "micro-stories" based on the author-narrator's childhood memories. They are memories of life in old part of Lhasa in one of the traditional old Tibetan manors, which was after

1959 changed into a *siheyuan* (四合院), a courtyard providing cheap housing for low-class families. All "micro-stories" include fantastic or even horror motifs. The main hero of the first one is a young "hooligan" (流氓 *liumang*), a boy, presumably with bad class background, who often got involved in street fights and committed small crimes – a possible allusion to the rebel faction of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. His untimely death is later interpreted by the author-narrator as karmic retribution for his "sins."

The protagonist of the second "micro-story" is a young female lunatic who often appears naked in the window of an old manor on the Barkor. The author-narrator with other young boys were naturally attracted by her beautiful and mysterious figure but were repeatedly driven away by a man who appears to be her husband. Later, news spread around Barkor that the sick woman died, and her husband committed suicide by hanging himself in the manor. Surprisingly, after several years the author-narrator runs into the supposedly dead couple on the Barkor again and after telling his mother, she goes crazy and starts to undress in public too, as the young woman used to do. As the first micro-story, this one also allows a kind of hidden allegorical interpretation, linking the insanity to the period of the Cultural Revolution, which corresponds with the author's earliest childhood memories.

The connection to the Cultural Revolution is most obvious in the last micro-story, where the main protagonist is again a beautiful woman. This local beauty secretly loved by all men living in the neighborhood, is married to former monk who had been forced to disrobe after the 1959 uprising. All the kids in the courtyard look down upon the monk. However, the beautiful woman dies after giving birth to their second child, and as the neighbors in the courtyard watch him struggling to bring up the kids alone, they slowly find some sympathy for him. The climax of the monk's destiny comes, when he is persecuted and imprisoned because his little son found his old prayer-beads and took them out to play in the courtyard.[11]

One story in the collection directly links "oral narration" (言述 *yanshu*) with history and historical narratives. "Yanshu zhi huo" (言述之惑, "Perplexities of Storytelling") retells a local story from the time of the Tibetan uprising. Two journalists travel to a remote grassland area to find details about a propagandist story published in press back in 1960. It was a story about a "people's hero" named Gyalpo (Jiabu) who helped the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops eliminate a group of rebels (叛匪 *panfei*). 60 years after the uprising, the two men arrive to the grassland to retell the story in a more realistic way. However, they find very different, even conflicting accounts from local witnesses. In the memory of local

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[11] This motif was later incorporated into the Tsering Norbu's novel *Ji yu fengzhong*.

nomads, the "hero" was a macho man who had affairs with almost every woman in the area and was an opportunist who had just taken the advantage of the situation when he was injured by the rebels by a mere coincidence. Later he made a fortune as the hero celebrated by the authorities and even as a disabled old man he lived comfortably in the big city and without the worries of the ordinary people who stayed in the grassland. After hearing these stories, the two journalists sighed over the "difficulty of [objective] expression" (Ciren 2015, 299).

The obvious sarcasm of the story is based on the juxtaposition of the eulogizing official accounts (represented by the old newspaper article and by the voice of the "hero's" Party official daughter) and of the "folk tales" – the voice of the "people." It is highlighted by contrast between the lofty vocabulary of the official propaganda and the eloquent vocabulary of the local nomads. The Han Chinese journalist at the end of the 1950s and Gyalpo's daughter in the narrative present describe him as the "hero" (英雄 yingxiong) and "patriot" (爱国主义者 aiguozhuyizhe), celebrate the heroic "Golden Army" (金珠玛米 jinzhu mami)[12] as "Bodhisattva soldiers" (菩萨兵 Pusa bing), and emphasize the "the landlord's oppression and exploitation [of the masses]" (牧场主的压迫和剥削 muchangzhu de yapo he boxue), using the standardized Party vocabulary. However, an old herder describes Gylapo as "pitiful" (可怜 kelian), the same characteristic that he later uses for the presumably evil landlord (可怜的老爷 kelian de laoye) when he mentions his suicide after the "democratic reforms" were implemented in the area. Finally, his description of the arrival of the "Golden Army" to the high-altitude plateau is beyond realistic:

> When the Liberation Army soldiers came here chasing [after the rebels] gasping heavily, Gyalpo showed them the direction where the rebels went. But the soldiers were so tired that they could hardly move, and their lips turned all purple. (Ciren 2015, 295)

7. Playful "folk tales"

In general, the employment of "folk tale" elements in a narrative provides space for playful or even ironic probes into the Tibetan way of life and thinking. One example is the short story "Shashou" (杀手, "The Killer," 2006). Stories of blood feuds and revenge are part of Tibetan local histories as well as the folklore around them.[13] This work gained considerable attention when it was selected for publication in

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[12]   The term is phonetic transcription of the Tibetan term for the People's Liberation Army, bcings 'grol dmag mi (བཅིངས་འགྲོལ་དམག་མི།).

[13]   They were introduced to Chinese/Sinophone Tibetan literature for the first time probably by Tashi Dawa, for example, in his short story "Feng ma zhi yao" (风马之耀, "Glory of the Wind Horse," 1991).

official edited anthologies, and ten years later it was adapted – along with the director Pema Tseden's own short story – into a movie, which was internationally distributed under the title *Jinpa* and turned into the first commercial success for the director on domestic Chinese market. The film is set closer to the director's native region in north-eastern Tibet and with actors speaking Amdo Tibetan, but the original short story takes place around Saga, a high-altitude township on the road from Ü-tsang to western Tibet in the TAR. Beside the rather conventional vengeance story, the short story has a specific aesthetic value which highlights the landscape of the Tibetan high plateau, its desolation and bleakness:

> The sand picked up around my windswept trouser legs. I could picture him taking step after step out there beyond the glass of my window. The wind crashed *kacha kacha* against the truck window, and the tarpaulin covering the goods was almost swept away. The sandstorms around there are really frightful. I honked a few times into the dark, the sound carried away by the wind. (Ciren 2015, 210, trans. Riga Shakya)

However, unlike the conventional descriptions of Tibetan landscape by Han Chinese writers, this landscape, no matter how tough it looks, is described neither as a threat endangering humans who have to struggle for survival, nor are readers presented with a "typical" Tibetan landscape with green grass, blue lakes, and snow-covered peaks. Tsering Norbu's landscape possesses a completely different aesthetical value, similar to the one from Pema Tseden's films. It is described using words like "vast," "wasteland," "horizon," "boundless," "desolate," etc. Such a description induces a kind of vertigo effect resembling the one caused by the extremely high altitude that, along with amounts of alcohol, explains the blank spots in the narration and the dreamy, or even hallucinatory open ending, which was successfully rendered into the film as well.

A particularly notable novella inspired by "folk tales" is *Quguo shan shang de xue* (曲郭山上的雪, *Snow on the Quguo Mountain*). This piece was written in reaction to the Hollywood movie *2012* (directed by Roland Emmerich, 2009) and is an ironic response to both the Western orientalization of Tibet and the Chinese-constructed utopia of Communism. After watching the film *2012*, a peasant – influenced by the Tibetans' own mythology about various *beyuls* (སྦས་ཡུལ་ *sbas yul*, so-called "hidden land" considered to be terrestrial Buddhist Pure land or Paradise) and by what the uneducated villagers were taught by the Chinese propaganda – takes it literally. Upon returning to his native village, he becomes a "harbinger" for the others and motivates them to get ready for the "end of the world." With this expectation, many villagers decide to give up on all worldly things. They "liberate" (*fangsheng*) their livestock (i.e., either just let the animals go or give them away to a monastery), refuse to grow the crops and leave their fields or, again, give them away to monks. Some of them even sell their houses and all valuables below price

for charity so that they can earn merit before the "judgement day." Having done the preparations, they just spend days celebrating, drinking, dancing, and singing.

The irony in this story stems from its narrative features – it is narrated by a senior Communist cadre to his superior. The narrator/protagonist is the village head, who is himself illiterate and never went further than to the county seat for a Party meeting. He knows he is in big trouble as his people refuse to work, so he brings the case to the county head and pleads for help. At one point, the first-person narrator himself brings up the comparison to the utopic communist society, with no ownership, where people do not have to work hard as they share everything and do not ask for more. At the same time, it can be related to the traditional Tibetan Buddhist utopias about *beyuls*, hidden valleys, where people live in idyllic state, free from the chain of cause and effect, desire, and suffering, as well as to the more recent mythology of such popular movements during some of the difficult moments of the 1950s and 1960s (Wen 2005).

> I was still wondering, isn't this the Communism that we have talked about so often? Wherever you went, they welcomed you warmly as their close relative. And they showed compassion and love not only to people, but to every living creature. When Langdün demolished his house, the villagers put all spiders, ants, and little mice into basins and took them to a safe place. They even spilled some *tsampa* around for them to eat. They were really crazy. (Ciren 2015, 205)

The village head's opinions are revealed in the form of a first-person narrative discourse, wherein the events are focalized from his perspective as he described them to the county Party chief. The narrative discourse is interlaced with marked direct speech recording what was said by the two protagonists, the village head and the Party chief, during their talk. The long narrative passages in the first person are interrupted by shorter parts of the third person account of the actual events, chronologically as they unfolded in the village, which are marked with italics. This kind of narration highlights the limited perspective of the village head and his unfulfilled effort to keep his people in order and at the same time to meet the expectations of his Party boss. In this way, the novella ironically relates to the "unintelligibility" (Jabb 2015, 110) of Chinese ideological concepts to the "Tibetan masses," who use their own logic to interpret them.

8. Conclusion

The present study has focused on Chinese-medium literature written by an ethnic Tibetan writer and thus aims to contribute to the research of Sinophone literatures or, more broadly, Sinophone studies, as well as modern Tibetan literature studies. With a lack of first-hand information from Tibet for Western researchers who have

had only very limited access to the region during the past decades, literature and more recently film can be seen as sources that help to improve our understanding of contemporary Tibetan society and social transformation. Fictional works, no matter whether they position themselves as "realistic" or otherwise, tend to reflect certain aspects of both past and present "realities," and in case of Tibet, this can provide valuable insights into contemporary intellectual discourse in the region on the background of dominant official narratives. Even the works of authors who are actively participating in the official literary/cultural establishment, as Tsering Norbu does, need to be seen more in light of counterhegemonic strategies allowing self-expression under very specific and limited conditions rather than simply conforming to the authorities.

As shown through the analysis of themes and narrative modes of Tsering Norbu's short stories, the author is carefully negotiating towards what Gramsci (2009, 76) called "a compromise equilibrium" with the "dominant ways of making the world meaningful" (Storey 2015, 92), i.e., with the "hegemonic discourses" of those in power in both political and economic terms. Intellectuals in the PRC, and those of Tibetan origin even more so, are entangled in a complex net of power relations influenced not only by ideology/politics and their ethnicity, but also by economic/market factors within the state-controlled system. The commercialization of Tibetan culture, which started around the mid-1980s, has reached new heights since the early 2000s as Tibet has become a popular destination for Han Chinese tourism. This might be the reason why contemporary Tibetan writers (and filmmakers) strive so much to represent an "authentic" Tibet, while, in the act of "figuration" through various fictional forms, they indirectly undermine *myths* (in Barthesian sense; see, e.g., Storey 2015, 80) imposed on Tibet by both Western and Chinese orientalism symbolically expressing the uneven power relations.

Tsering Norbu is using specific narrative elements (that could be called "modernist" in the Chinese literary context) to convey hidden meanings that make his representation of Tibet "authentic" in the sense of expression of shared subjectivity, culture, and historical experience. These modernist devices, like dreams and hallucinations, subjective narration with changing focalization or narrators, stream of consciousness, unreliable narrators, etc., and the use of "magical" "folk" elements symbolically confirm the fictional (*xiaoshuo*) character of narrated events, transforming them into a "minor discourse," which does not directly subvert the official narratives. The underlying "counter discourse" of such "minor/minority" literature is not expressed by the direct questioning of the dominant discourses or addressing controversial themes, but rather by the emphasis on a positive affirmation of "authentic" (and harmless) Tibetan values and frames of reference for understanding the world, in particular the notion of "compassion" as pointed out already by Françoise Robin (2008, 37).

Compassion as the key notion of Tibetan culture based in Buddhism is acknowledged in Tsering Norbu's short stories by highlighting the topics related to aging, illness, disability, and death. In contrast to representations of suffering and death in some Han Chinese works about Tibet, like for example Ma Jian's and Ma Yuan's short stories from the 1980s, these themes are turned into a positive and highly human tales that realistically reflect the natural course of human life as something universal, without deliberate exaggerations and exoticization of Tibet. Then, the supernatural elements can be organically engaged in the otherwise realistic narratives, be it in the form of subjective perceptions of the narrator's/protagonist's consciousness or in the form of "folklore."

In conclusion, it is possible to say that Tibetan subjectivity/identity is incorporated into the text in the form of various "hidden messages" in an attempt not only to "translate [the Tibetan] world," as it has been formulated already by Lara Maconi (2002, 186), but also as "literary identity markers of the Tibetan people" (Jabb 2015, 110) sharing the same traumatic history. Such "hidden messages" are not restricted to the use of Tibetanisms in Sinophone Tibetan fictional texts, from personal and place names to the realia of Tibetan history and everyday life. In Tsering Norbu's short stories, just like in Tibetan-medium fiction, even more important are the subaltern voices of "ordinary people" (老百姓 *laobaixing*), the "people" (人民 *renmin*) or the "masses" (大众 *dazhong*) who should have gotten their voice a long time ago through the official Marxist Chinese literary discourse, however, have remained largely voiceless in both the intellectual discourse and the literature produced by it, as well as in commercialized production informed and dominated by state ideology.

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VOICES AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF TWO NOVELS BY KAORUKO HIMENO AND AOKO MATSUDA

Letizia Guarini

While the #MeToo movement has not gained much popularity in Japan, in recent years, several individuals and organizations have spoken out against gender discrimination and gender-based violence. At the same time, literature is also a place where women address these issues. The aim of this paper is to explore feminist voices in Japanese contemporary literature vis-à-vis recent feminist movements. The first part of this paper examines recent examples of gender-based violence in Japan and the actions initiated by women in response to them. The second part focuses on two novels: *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* (*It's Because She's Stupid*, 2018) by Kaoruko Himeno, and *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō* (*The Sustainable Use of Our Souls*, 2020) by Aoko Matsuda. Through an interdisciplinary approach, this study aims to explore the connection between activism and literary studies, looking at literature as a feminist act of resistance.

Keywords: Japanese literature, gender-based violence, feminist movements, Kaoruko Himeno, Aoko Matsuda

1. Introduction

Hewett and Holland (2021, 3) argue that the power of storytelling is a fundamental element of the #MeToo movement. They note that "the voicing of individual traumatic experience, shared with others who listen and support the victim" is a powerful tool in the fight to dismantle the culture of silence surrounding sexual and gender-based violence. Literature has often proved to be a powerful tool to expose and resist misogyny and has likewise become a vehicle for the emergence of #MeToo. Writing literature – both fiction and nonfiction narratives – as well as

writing about literature, share with activist work the potential to make real change in the world (Hewett and Holland 2021, 8–9).

The aim of this study is to consider how questions of feminism can be used to analyze literature, and to examine the use of literature as a feminist act of resistance and solidarity. In order to explore the possible connections between literature and activism in contemporary Japan, this paper will address the issue of gender-based violence through an interdisciplinary approach, by applying data-based research to the analysis of literary texts. The first part of this paper focuses on recent examples of gender-based violence in Japan and the actions initiated by women in response to them. The social science perspective applied in the first half of the paper is essential to understand literature and literary studies as agents of change. By exploring feminist voices in Japanese contemporary literature vis-à-vis feminist movements, this paper aims to show how literary texts – which shape our perception of the real world – can be read not only to enrich our knowledge but, most importantly, to understand and subvert hegemonic gender norms.

Since the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report was first released in 2006, Japan has often been reported as lagging behind other advanced countries when it comes to gender equality, and the numbers continue to illustrate the country's poor performance in narrowing the gender gap. Japan ranked 79th out of 115 countries in the inaugural index, but it was still 94th out of 134 countries in 2010, and 101st out of 145 countries in 2015. In 2020, it ranked 121st out of 153 countries, with a decline of 41 places compared to the 2006 report. In 2021, it ranked 120th among 156 countries, inching up one place from 121st among 153 countries in 2019, the lowest position Japan has occupied. Kano (2020, 31) has consequently noted that Japan presents a paradox, in that it is both a highly developed nation and one that continues to rank dead last among G7 countries in terms of gender equality. News outlets reported that in the 2021 gender gap report, Japan stood far behind Italy, which, at 63rd, was the next worst-ranked member of the Group of Seven industrialized countries (Kyodo News 2021). Furthermore, the media stressed that Japan's position was one rank below Angola, a country with a long history of dictatorships wherein citizens' rights are significantly restricted (Shiota 2021).

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index quantifies gender equality based on four categories: politics, the economy, education, and health. Thus, Japan's low ranking highlights the nation's lack of progress in closing the gender gap in the political and economic spheres. However, discrimination against women and gender inequality are not limited to those spheres but are, in fact, pervasive in contemporary Japanese society; sexual harassment in the workplace, the exclusion of women from medical schools, the ranking of colleges by easy sex in tabloids, and the compulsory use of makeup and high heels

in the workplace are only some examples of how misogynistic cultural norms are preserved in Japan. Furthermore, the role of the media in reproducing systemic gender inequality cannot be underestimated. McLaren (2020) explores how the structure of misogyny perpetuates mainstream media culture as well as the male-dominated media industry in Japan. She argues that the negative representation of women reinforces the exclusion of women from power in Japanese society, thereby maintaining gendered hierarchies and preserving patriarchal norms. She also stresses that "the beneficiaries of misogynistic practices are patriarchal elites, who might currently be intent on resisting any challenge to their authority but are also anxious about the destabilization of gender norms" (McLaren 2020, 347). Recent examples of such misogynistic practices can be found in two high-profile incidents, involving former president of the Tokyo Olympics Organizing Committee Yoshiro Mori and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) secretary general Toshihiro Nikai.

As reported by both local and international media, during the Japanese Olympic Committee meeting held on February 3, 2021, committee members were discussing the issue why women are not equally represented on the boards of sports associations and committees. Speaking to members of the Japanese Olympic Committee with reporters present, Mori said that a board meeting where many women attend takes time because "when you increase the number of female executive members, if their speaking time isn't restricted to a certain extent, they have difficulty finishing, which is annoying" (Bonesteel 2021). He then continued by stressing that the women in the Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games "all know their place" (Iki, Mishima, and Ito 2021).

Mori's sexist remarks generated a wave of protests against the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee chief, as well as against misogyny in society at large. Momoko Nojo, the head of a youth group called No Youth No Japan, an organization that encourages young people's involvement in politics, started a petition calling for action against him that collected 100,000 signatures in two days (Oi 2021). At the same time, the hashtags *#WakimaenaiOnnatachi* (#わきまえない女たち, "women who refuse to know their place") and *#DontBeSilent* spread over social media, and on February 6, 2021, an online forum entitled "Don't be silent #WomenWhoRefuseToKnowTheirPlace" was held by the online news media group Choose Life Project (Iki, Mishima, and Ito 2021).

Although on February 5, 2021, Mori announced his resignation as president of the Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Game, experts hesitate to consider such a move as a victory for women's rights in Japan. En-Ting has noted that "this is a problem of systemic sexism; Mori and others are enabled by an environment that tolerates blatant sexism" (quoted in Gunia 2021). It is thus unsurprising that on February 16, 2021, Toshihiro Nikai, the LDP

secretary general, announced the governing party's decision to allow five women to attend their meetings as non-speaking observers. As reported by local and international news outlets, Nikai explained that "he was aware of criticism of the male domination of the party's elected board, and it was important that female members of the party 'look' at the decision-making process" (BBC 2021). Thus, women were again accepted at meetings on the premise that they would "know their place" and stay silent.

The petition started by Momoko Nojo, as well as the hashtags *#Wakimaenai-Onnatachi* and *#DontBeSilent*, are part of a larger trend that sees women raising their voices. In 2017, the activism of Shiori Itō and the blogger Ha-Chu against sexual violence and sexual harassment marked the beginning of the #MeToo movement in Japan. In 2018, the group Voice Up Japan (VUJ) started a petition to take down an article published by the weekly magazine *Spa!*, ranking colleges based on how sexually "easy" their female students were after drinking. In 2019, the #KuToo movement started fighting against the high heel policy in workplaces. In the same year, Flower Demo, a movement to protest sex crimes and sexual violence, was initiated by feminist activists Minori Kitahara, Eiko Tabusa, and Akiko Matsuo, with monthly gatherings where participants are given the stage to speak up about their experiences of sexual assault.

At the same time, literature has also been a place for women to raise their voices against misogyny, discrimination, and violence. This paper begins with an analysis of the above-mentioned feminist movements to frame it as a continuum with the fictional world. In order to explore the relationship between feminist activism and resistance to misogyny and a culture of gender-based violence in literature, the second half of the paper focuses on the literary analysis of two novels: *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* (彼女は頭が悪いから, *It's Because She's Stupid*, 2018) by Kaoruko Himeno (姫野カオルコ, b. 1958) and *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō* (持続可能な魂の利用, *The Sustainable Use of Our Souls*, 2020) by Aoko Matsuda (松田青子, b. 1979). *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* is based on an incident that happened in 2016 at the University of Tokyo, Japan's highest-ranking university, in which a male student conspired with four other men from the same university to intoxicate a female student in order to sexually assault her. In *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō*, Matsuda depicts two worlds. On the one hand, her characters struggle to survive in a misogynistic society where women are either sexual objects used to satisfy men's desires, or victims of male violence. On the other hand, she creates a world where all "middle-aged men" (*ojisan*) have disappeared, and women are finally free from their misogynistic attacks. Through an analysis of Himeno's and Matsuda's novels, I will connect these works with recent feminist movements, thereby showing how Japanese fiction both serves as a platform to voice traumatic experiences and has the potential to make real changes in society.

2. From Shiori Itō to Flower Demo: A recent history of women's voices against gender-based violence in Japan

The journalist Shiori Itō is often identified as the face of the #MeToo movement in Japan. However, her fight against sexual violence started before the phrase #MeToo made its first appearance on Twitter in October 2017. On April 30, 2015, Itō filed a criminal complaint accusing Noriyuki Yamaguchi, then the Washington Bureau chief of the Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS), of drugging and sexually assaulting her on April 3, 2015. Although an arrest warrant for Yamaguchi was issued, it was later cancelled and on July 22, 2016, prosecutors dropped the charges against him. In light of this, Itō decided to file a petition to re-open a case against Yamaguchi and to go public with her case. On May 29, 2017, she held a public press conference at Tokyo District Court and in September 2017 she filed a lawsuit against Yamaguchi. In October 2017 she published *Burakku bokkusu* (*Black Box*), a sexual assault memoir where she reported both the incident and the experiences that followed. In 2018, her BBC documentary *Japan's Secret Shame,* directed by Erika Jenkin, was released. Both the book, which was awarded the best journalism award by the Free Press Association of Japan in 2018, and the documentary depict her "fight to be taken seriously despite systematic obstruction, threats and a nasty online backlash" (McLaren 2020, 346). Itō's fight was not only against her assaulter, but foremost against the silence – the "black box" – forced upon victims of sexual violence in Japan. She spoke up to testify that Japan's bureaucratic approach to the prosecution of sex-related crimes highlights how rape is still considered a taboo topic. She further argued that the system itself, with century-old rape laws, a lack of rape crisis centers, and the re-enactment of alleged rapes with life-size dolls,[1] discourages victims from reporting rape and assault (Coates, Fraser, and Pendleton 2020, 2).

Furthermore, Itō's story proves that the silence forced upon victims of sexual assault is the product not only of Japan's patriarchal system and its legislation, but also of the mainstream media. O'Dwyer (2020) noted that although foreign media organizations extensively covered Itō's story, mainstream Japanese media were slow to take up her case. Moreover, Yamaguchi's connections within the conservative political establishment[2] might also have polarized the response to Itō's allegations. Itō was attacked for coming forward as a victim of sexual violence

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[1] The use of life-size dolls is a common practice in police investigations of sexual violence in Japan, where the alleged victims are required to lie on a mattress as a life-size doll is pushed down on them, re-enacting the attack for the police.

[2] Although Yamaguchi, friend and biographer of former Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, has always denied knowledge of any moves by his political allies to protect him, suspicions remain that the decision to cancel Yamaguchi's arrest warrant despite the strong evidence the police had gathered was determined by some governmental influence.

and became a victim of backlash and a second rape. LDP politician Mio Sugita[3] and conservative manga artist Toshiko Hasumi[4] accused Itō of being responsible for what happened by getting drunk and suggested that she was trying to sleep her way into a job. In other words, as Hasunuma and Shin (2019, 104) argue:

> in addition to the legal barriers that make it so hard for women to pursue cases of sexual harassment and rape, the media attention perpetuated the narrative of sexual harassment and rape as being the victim's fault or responsibility rather than the perpetrator's.

Although Itō has become the face of Japan's #MeToo movement, #WeToo, formed by a group of Itō's friends and other allies to "promote solidarity and offer a collective voice to help victims speak up" (Hasunuma and Shin 2019, 105) gained more popularity in Japan than #MeToo, which is still considered too difficult and high-risk by many Japanese women. Nevertheless, Japan was among the top ten users of the hashtags #MeToo and the Japanese equivalent #WatashiMo (#私も, "me too") in the first weeks after actress Alyssa Milano used the phrase echoing activist Tarana Burke in October 2017. It rose to third place worldwide among nations using the hashtag after the blogger Ha-Chu accused Yuki Kishi, a prominent creative director at Japan's leading advertising agency Dentsu, of sexual harassment on December 16, 2017 (Coates, Fraser, and Pendleton 2020, 1–2). Other high-profile cases of sexual harassment include, for example, allegations of sexual harassment against the Administrative Vice Finance Minister Junichi Fukuda in 2018. On April 12, 2018, the magazine *Shukan Shinchō* published an interview with a female reporter for the broadcast network TV Asahi, in which she accuses Fukuda of sexual harassment. While Fukuda eventually resigned and had his retirement payments reduced, it should also be noted that Finance Minister Tarō Asō initially dismissed the allegations against him, hinting that Fukuda had been the victim of a "honey trap." Furthermore, Asō emphasized that sexual harassment was not, in any case, illegal in Japan, arguing that the way to stop harassment of women reporters is to replace them with men (The Japan Times 2018). As Hasunuma and Shin (2019, 103) have eloquently put it:

> Despite laws to assure the rights of women in the workplace, such as the Equal Employment and Opportunity Law of 1985, the Ministry of Labor's

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[3]   Itō has filed a damage suit after Sugita's Twitter account liked a number of posts that suggested that Itō was lying about being raped. It is worth noting that Sugita admitted saying that "women can lie as much as they want" about sexual violence during a closed meeting of LDP lawmakers in September 2020 (The Asahi Shimbun 2020).

[4]   In November 2021, the Tokyo District Court ordered Hasumi and two other men to pay damages to Itō, recognizing that they defamed her in tweets and retweets that portrayed Itō as lying about being subjected to sexual assault (Shiota and Udagawa 2021).

> official recognition and definition of sexual harassment as a violation in the workplace (Efron 1999) and the government's recent "womenomics" agenda to promote women's greater inclusion in the workforce, Japan has not done enough to address its procedural, legal, and governmental responsibilities in protecting women or any victims of rape or harassment. [...] Furthermore, because sexual harassment is not considered a crime in Japan, it remains a private matter, and crime statistics do not capture the full extent of sexual harassment and abuse, especially of minors (Ogasawara 2011).

As previously stated, the legal vacuum, the mainstream media's attitude toward reported cases, and the backlash both online and in print journalism cooperate in forcing victims to stay silent. It is against such a culture of misogyny that various movements have made their appearance in recent years. Voice Up Japan, #KuToo, and Flower Demo, among others, have gathered media attention for their activism both online and in the streets.

Voice Up Japan (VUJ) began in early 2019 when Kazuna Yamamoto, a student at International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo, started a petition on Change.org, speaking up against the weekly magazine *Spa!*, which in its December 25, 2018 issue published an interview with Keiji Isogimi, manager of the dating site Lion Project, who ranked five universities where girls are "easy to access" for sex and described how to judge whether a woman is sexually available based on her appearance (Sugiyama 2019). The petition garnered over 40,000 signatures in four days. As a result, the magazine issued an apology and later released an article on sexual consent. Yamamoto, along with a number of fellow ICU students including Ryo Tsujioka and Asaki Takahashi, decided to create VUJ, which is now a structured organization whose mission is "to create a more gender equal society where people feel safe to voice up" (Voice Up Japan, n.d.). As Yamamoto states in her message as the founder of VUJ:

> Growing up in Japan, I struggled because I always felt like I didn't fit any "standards." I didn't fit the ideal beauty standard, my ambitions didn't fit the "female standard," and how I wanted to dress was different from what fashion magazines told me was right. My ambition was laughed at because "I'm a girl" and I don't know how many times I was told by neighbors, peers, and relatives that education shouldn't be a priority because of my gender. I used to speak what was on my mind, and was clear about what I wanted, but society taught me that raising my voice won't do any good. (Voice Up Japan, n.d.)

In other words, the *Spa!* article only triggered Yamamoto's protest, which in fact arose not from this isolated episode alone, but rather in response to the misogyny deeply rooted in Japanese culture, which teaches girls and women "to be

obedient and patient, and [...] to not question our leaders" (Voice Up Japan, n.d.). The group, which now has chapters at more than ten universities, including ICU, Aoyama Gakuin, Meiji, Keio, and Waseda, is currently working on two projects, the Anti-Discrimination Law Project and the Sexual Consent Project, while also collaborating with experts to organize different events. VUJ ICU has, for example, recently partnered with Minna no Seiri (Menstruation for Everyone), an organization that aims to reduce taxes on menstrual products (Zujeva 2021). Every Monday they publish articles related to gender issues on the "Our Voices" section of their website, and in spring 2022 they were set to release their very first magazine with articles by writers from different departments of VUJ, as well as special guest writer Yumi Ishikawa, founder of the #KuToo movement (Voice Up Japan, n.d.).

The #KuToo movement begun in January 2019 with a tweet by Yumi Ishikawa, former gravure idol and part-time worker at a funeral parlor. Having noticed that her male colleagues wore light, flat shoes, she tweeted about her frustration with the dress code, which stipulates that women have to wear high heels. The original tweet received over 67,000 likes and nearly 30,000 retweets (The Japan Times 2019a). She later created the hashtag #KuToo, a pun on the Japanese words for shoes (靴 *kutsu*) and pain (苦痛 *kutsū*) amalgamated with #MeToo. She then launched a campaign on the petition platform Change.org that collected 18,856 signatures and was presented to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, calling for a ban on dress codes that force women to wear high heels at work. While All Nippon Airways Co. and Japan Airlines Co. revised their regulations to allow their female employees to wear shoes with no heels (The Japan Times 2020), most companies where in-person customer service plays a major role still maintain dress codes which require women to wear high-heeled shoes, according to a survey by Kyodo News (Kyodo News 2019a). The importance of such a dress code was also supported by Health, Labor, and Welfare Minister Takumi Nemoto, who in response to the petition submitted by Ishikawa and the #KuToo movement replied that he would not support a drive to ban dress codes that force women to wear high heels at work, since "it's generally accepted by society that (wearing high heels) is necessary and reasonable in workplaces" (Kyodo News 2019b).

The history of the #KuToo movement shares some characteristics with Shiori Itō's fight and other feminist movements, in that it proved again how a legal vacuum, the mainstream media's attitude, and backlash, especially online, combine in forcing women into silence. In this regard, Ishikawa's activism is particularly significant, in that she addressed the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, arguing that they fill the legislative vacuum that allows misogynistic practices in terms of dress code, and later spoke up about her experiences of sexual harassment, stressing the absence of a law that recognizes it as a crime. Ishikawa has also continued to raise her voice to address and fight back against backlash both through her

Twitter account and her activity as a writer and editor. Her book *#KuToo. Kutsu kara kangaeru honki no feminizumu* (*#KuToo. Reflections on a True Feminism Starting from the Shoes*, 2019), in particular the chapter "#KuToo *bakkurasshu jitsuroku 140ji no tatakai*" ("A True Record of the #KuToo Backlash: A Fight in 140 Characters"), is a record of her long-standing fight on Twitter against the so-called *kusoripu* (クソリプ, literally "shit reply").[5] Furthermore, Ishikawa edited the volume *Josei undō to bakkurasshu* (*Feminist Movements and the Backlash*, 2020) of the magazine *Etosetora* (*Etcetera*), where, together with Akiko Matsuo and the editorial board of etc.books, she again addressed the role of the backlash against feminist movements as a way to take away women's confidence and force them into silence, as well as the right of women to be angry and to voice that anger (Ishikawa 2020, 5).

Akiko Matsuo is another prominent figure in recent feminist movements in Japan. She is the founder of etc.books, a bookshop and publisher specializing in feminist books. Together with Minori Kitahara, writer and owner of Love Piece Club, Japan's first sex toy shop owned by a woman and catering exclusively to women, and Eiko Tabusa, a prolific author of manga, she founded Flower Demo, a movement to protest sex crimes and sexual violence. The movement started in March 2019, when several cases of sexual assault were given the verdict of "not guilty." On March 12, 2019, Yasuhiko Shiiya, a company executive accused of having sexually assaulted a 22-year-old woman who was too drunk to resist during a drinking party in 2017, was found not guilty by the Kurume branch of the Fukuoka District Court[6] which concluded that "the circumstances could have misled him into believing the victim had given her consent, as she had sometimes opened her eyes and made sounds, making her look conscious" (The Mainichi 2020). Not-guilty verdicts in other sexual assault cases followed at the Hamamatsu branch of the Shizuoka District Court, the Okazaki branch of the Nagoya District Court,[7] and the Shizuoka District Court[8] that same month. On April 11, 2019, over 500 women gathered in front of Tokyo Station to protest against unjust acquittals

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[5] *Kusoripu* is a term used mainly on Twitter and Instagram to refer to unwarranted replies often based on false premises and containing defamatory content.

[6] On February 5, 2020, the Fukuoka High Court overturned the not-guilty ruling and handed a four-year sentence to Shiiya (The Mainichi 2020).

[7] On March 13, 2020, the Nagoya High Court overturned the not-guilty ruling and sentenced a 50-year-old man to 10 years in prison for raping his 19-year-old daughter in 2017 (The Japan Times 2020b).

[8] On December 22, 2020, the Tokyo High Court overturned the not-guilty ruling and handed a seven-year prison term to a father who raped his biological daughter from the age of 12 (Netsu 2020).

of sexual crimes, show support for the victims,[9] and seek changes to the law.[10] From April 2019 until March 2020, demonstrations took place in over 40 cities around Japan. The movement, which was supposed to be held until March 2020, when the members of an investigative commission to deliberate penal code revisions pertaining to sexual crimes established by the Ministry of Justice would have been announced, has in fact continued its activities, partially moving online amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women's voices have been a fundamental element of the Flower Demo movement from its inception. As stated by Minori Kitahara, one of the founders of the movement:

> Why do we feel like we have to be so cautious, be ready to defend ourselves, make sure we don't make any mistakes, be sensitive to other people's mood, and lower our voice when we are just voicing the pain we feel? I couldn't take it anymore. We don't need to stay silent anymore, we can say something is wrong when it's wrong, we want to change that atmosphere that lets people question our tone of voice and make fun of our angry voice. I talked about this with Akiko Matsuo from etc.books, and on April 4, we created a Twitter account to spread our views through social media. (Kitahara 2020, 10)

The silence forced upon women and the desire and need for them to speak out were the driving forces behind the Flower Demo movement, and certainly many women in Japan shared the same frustration and anger. The act of raising one's voice against gender-based violence was thus an essential element of the demonstrations from the outset. Since the first demonstration held in Tokyo, many participants have not only been listening to speeches by the organizers of the demonstrations, but they have actually taken the microphone and begun speaking about their own experiences of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence.[11] A section of the movement's official website is dedicated to collecting the voices of those people who could not join the demonstrations in person but who want

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[9] Flower Demo's organizers asked the participants to join their demonstration by bringing a flower as a symbol of #WithYou, that is to say, a symbol of solidarity with the victims (Kitahara 2020, 11).

[10] The current sexual assault law, promulgated in 1907 and amended for the first time in 2017, states that "the victim must not have consented and that there be proof of the inability to resist due to physical violence or threat." Activists have demanded that the Justice Ministry introduce far heavier sentences against sex crimes. Furthermore, they asked that the current age of sexual consent be raised from 13 to 16 (Tamura 2020).

[11] According to the World Health Organization, the term "sexual and other forms of gender-based violence" comprises not only rape, but also sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, forced early marriage, domestic violence, marital rape, trafficking, and female genital mutilation (World Health Organization, n.d.).

to share their opinions on the judicial system regarding sexual violence. Some of those "voices" have been included in the volume *Furawā demo o kiroku suru* (*A Record of Flower Demo*, 2020). The importance of victim's voices within the Flower Demo movement has been often emphasized. As reported on the movement's official website:

> It became clear that it wasn't the case of victims cannot speak out [*sic*], it was the case of society not letting the victims speak. In fact, the victims have always spoken out about their struggles. However, the society who [*sic*] puts the victim and the perpetrator side by side, to judge who is lying or not, shut the victim's voice. This society did not have the ability to hear the voices of the victims. (Flower Demo, n.d.)

Flower Demo is thus not only a movement that aims to dismantle misogyny by raising the age of sexual consent, changing the current sexual assault law, and abolishing the legal clause that demands proof of the victim's inability to resist due to physical violence or threat in order to recognize the act as non-consensual (Kitahara 2020, 15). Neither is it simply a movement made of "brave victims who started to raise their voice;" it is also and foremost a "space where we are challenged to listen to the voices of victims of sexual violence" (Kitahara 2020, 16).

In this section, I introduced some recent trends in grassroots feminist movements in Japan. While tackling the issue of gender-based discrimination from different perspectives, all of the above-mentioned movements have addressed the effects that the legal vacuum regarding gender-based violence has on the lives of Japanese women, who are often forced further into silence by the male-dominated arenas of politics and the mainstream media. With this context in mind, in the following sections I will analyze the novels *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* by Kaoruko Himeno and *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō* by Aoko Matsuda. I will show how these fictional works embody the need to provide victims of gender-based violence with a space where their voices can be raised and heard. Furthermore, I will argue that these literary texts can be viewed as tools for building solidarity among readers and strengthening the relationship between writers and activists.

3. Fiction as a space for victims' voices: *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara*

Kaoruko Himeno made her fiction debut in 1990 with her comedic novel *Hito yonde Mitsuko* (*People Call Her Mitsuko*). In 1997, she published *Junan* (*The Passion*) which was shortlisted for the Naoki Prize, one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Japan. Himeno was later nominated for the same prize four more times. In 2003 with the novel *Tsu, i, ra, ku* (*F-a-l-l*), in 2005 with *Haruka eiti* (*Haruka at 80*), in 2010 with *Riaru Shinderera* (*Real Cinderella*), and in 2014 with *Shōwa no*

inu (*Showa Dog*) for which she was awarded the 150th Naoki Prize. Some of her works address the issue of gender and sexuality. *Junan* is the story of a Christian woman who loses her virginity with the help of a talking face that appears near her genitals. *Tsu, i, ra, ku* describes the lives of some young girls through first loves and sexual experiences. Nevertheless, it is in *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* that Himeno tackles issues related to gender-based violence for the first time. The novel is based on a real story of violence perpetrated by five male students from the University of Tokyo on a female student from a different school. Before exploring the depiction of gender-based violence in this novel, it is thus necessary to situate Himeno's novel in the context of this incident.

In April 2015, Kensuke Matsumi, Taichi Komoto, Koki Matsumoto, Ikushima Kazuki, and Fujita Tomoyuki, all students at the University of Tokyo, formed "The University of Tokyo Birthday Research Group," a social club whose goal was to intoxicate young girls with alcohol and molest them. The incident narrated in *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* happened on May 11, 2016, when the five men got their victim (A) intoxicated and assaulted her. They forced her to strip naked, groped her upper body, and forcibly kissed her while she lay on her back. They were also accused of slapping her on the back, using a hair dryer to blow hot air on her genitals, prodding her anus with disposable chopsticks, and pouring a cup of hot ramen noodles on her breasts (Murai 2016).

The victim refused Matsumi's offer of a settlement, and on September 20, 2016, the Tokyo District Court sentenced him to two years in prison. Presiding Judge Hajime Shimada ruled that Matsumi's actions were "despicable and caused unbearable suffering," but also recognized that there was room for rehabilitation considering that Matsumi had expressed remorse for his actions, apologized, and vowed to refrain from ever drinking alcohol again (Adelstein 2016). Taichi Komoto, who did not participate in the drinking party, but offered his room to his friends for the after-party and touched A's buttocks, was sentenced to one year and six months in prison. During the trial, he admitted, "I began to think that the female students at other universities were dumber (*atama ga warui*) than we were. I wanted to get them drunk so they would lower their rational hurdles and do something indecent" (The Asahi Shimbun 2016). Koki Matsumoto, the man who invited the victim to the drinking party and slapped her back with his palms, was sentenced to one year and six months in prison. While the court acknowledged that Matsumoto "took advantage of the victim's fondness for him to lure her out, and played an important role in forcing her to drink alcohol, stirring up his accomplices, and removing the victim's pants and underwear," it also recognized that there was room for rehabilitation (The Sankei News 2016). Ikushima Kazuki and Fujita Tomoyuki accepted the settlement terms from the

victim – to withdraw from the graduate school of the University of Tokyo – and were thus not prosecuted.[12]

While the incident was widely reported in the media, it also inspired a massive backlash against the victim, who was accused of being responsible for what happened to her. As reported in an interview with Himeno, it is both because of the cruel nature of the incident and the backlash that followed it that she felt the urge to write this novel.

> When this incident was reported, I found it terribly strange. There were two women at the scene. The victim who was stripped naked was A, and the other was B. B said to the men, "Don't do this. This is a crime." Then she asked A, "Do you want to go home?" But since A didn't move, B left first. Since A didn't leave despite having been asked "Do you want to leave?" there were many opinions on the Internet like "A stayed behind by herself" and "This woman [A] is also responsible." That question, "Why did she stay?" stuck with me. I couldn't believe that there would be a woman who, after having been teased and stripped naked by some men in front of another woman, asked by that same woman "Do you want to leave?" would quickly move her body and reply "Yes, I'm leaving! Wait!"

> There was another reason why A was being criticized. One of the perpetrators was a man who had had sex with her, and some people said, "Then what, she had already had sex with him." I thought that A went along with the students from the University of Tokyo because there was a man with whom she had such a relationship, and that A had special feelings for him. I was curious about how she came to have a sexual relationship with him. I felt that this incident, which was unfortunate for A and shameful for the student from the University of Tokyo, had a universal background or reason, trivial and complex at the same time. I decided to write a novel about these aspects of the story. (Tōdai Shinbun Online 2019b)

Through writing her novel, Himeno tries to understand the relationship between the victim and the perpetrators, as well as the role of bystanders when sexual and gender-based violence occurs. Moreover, she addresses the problem of second rape and emphasizes how society contributes to the perpetration of violence through victim blaming. As discussed in the previous section, the backlash against the voices of victims of sexual assault who speak up is a recurrent element in recent feminist movements. We can thus assume that *Kanojo wa atama ga warui*

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[12]   After the trial, Matsumi, Komoto, and Matsumoto were expelled from the University of Tokyo. One of them went abroad and two have been working as engineers and consultants in Tokyo. At least one of the indicted students who dropped out of graduate school changed his name (Takahashi 2019).

kara is a story about the silence forced upon women, and as such it challenges readers to listen to the voices of victims of sexual violence.

The story in *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* starts in 2008, eight years before the incident took place, and it follows the female protagonist, Misaki Kandatsu, from her junior high school years through the events that will turn her into the victim of five students from the University of Tokyo: Tsubasa Takeuchi, Jōji Miura, Satoru Wakuda, Kōji Kunieda, and Teruyuki Ishii. Depicted as a young girl from a middle-class family who attends a low-ranked school in the suburbs of Yoko-hama, Misaki is described as a "normal girl" (Himeno 2018, 134) with normal in-securities. Aware of her low position in an academic background-oriented society, she is self-conscious, passive, in love with the idea of love but at the same time lacking in initiative. In October 2015, while a student at Mizutani Women's Uni-versity,[13] Misaki meets Tsubasa, who grew up as the son of a bureaucrat in the high-class residential area of Hiroo, Tokyo, and went on to study at the University of Tokyo. The two meet one night at an Oktoberfest party in Yokohama and fall in love with each other. However, their relationship is gradually affected by Tsubasa's egotism. Tsubasa starts dating Maya Izumi, whom he considers more suitable for him in terms of education and socioeconomic status, while treating Misaki as a casual sexual partner. Misaki, who is aware of Tsubasa's feelings, is conflicted in that she wants to end the relationship with him but cannot help responding to his wishes. On a night in May 2016, Tsubasa invites Misaki to join him and his friends at a drinking party. Misaki is not aware that they are the founders of the "Con-stellation Study Group," an intercollegiate club whose purpose is to rank female students, intoxicate them with alcohol, make money by taking sexy pictures and videos and selling them secretly, and have physical relations with them. During the party, Tsubasa and his friends start sending messages to each other and mocking Misaki for her looks and her educational background. After Tsubasa sent them a naked picture of her, they start a drinking game forcing Misaki to answer difficult questions and take off her clothes as a penalty if she cannot answer. Afterwards, Misaki tries to go home, but Tsubasa persuades her to go to the apartment of one of his friends, where she will be later assaulted.

While the description of the incident is extremely realistic and it depicts the sexual assault in detail, the story narrated in *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* does not focus only on that violent episode, but also explores the trivial and yet com-plicated lives of Misaki and the men who assaulted her. The use of multiple internal focalization allows the reader to experience the story from different points of view. In this way, Himeno manages to explore the background of each character in terms of education, family, socioeconomic status, and, needless to say, gender.

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[13] Mizutani Women's University (Mizutani Joshi Daigaku) is a fictitious, low-ranked university.

This is particularly important in that the use of multiple internal focalization allows the violence in this story (as well as the violence perpetrated against A in 2016) to be understood as a result of the intersection of class and gender. By continuously shifting the internal focalization from one character to another, Himeno reveals how boys and girls internalize models of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity through the education they receive both at school and within their home environment. In other words, by focusing not only on the violent incident, but also on the lives of both the victim and the perpetrators leading up to it, Himeno explores how boys and girls are taught to behave according to the expectations of their respective roles, and how insecurities and inferiority complexes in boys can lead to violent expressions of toxic masculinity. Furthermore, by stressing the sense of superiority felt by the five students from the University of Tokyo, the most prestigious university in Japan, toward female students of lower-ranking schools, Himeno reveals how discrimination and violence cannot be fully understood if we dissociate class from gender. In this sense, it is worth recalling that both in reality and in Himeno's story, the settlement terms from the victim are that the five men voluntarily withdraw from the University of Tokyo. We can assume that she wanted them to acknowledge that the violence they perpetrated was the result not only of their misogynistic behavior, but also of discrimination based on their victims' socioeconomic status.

As stated above, after the incident was reported in the media, A became the target of a massive backlash. Himeno, aghast at the number of people who blamed A on the Internet, decided to write *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara*. In the last part of the novel, Misaki is insulted over the phone and on the Internet by people who believe she ought to be held responsible for the incident and that she destroyed the lives of five promising young men. She progressively loses her voice, while the reader is forced to bear witness to other voices: the voices of the backlash. Across more than six pages, the reader is overwhelmed by the violence of the comments on the Internet:

> "Do they release your real name just for fooling around at a bar? I feel so sorry for the guys from the University of Tokyo."

> "That woman followed them while wagging her tail. It's like giving the green light. Why did they get arrested?"

> "I don't think a woman who says she had a drink and went along with them and yet didn't expect them to do something like that has the right to sue them. She should be sorry…"

> "A slut goes to the room of some guys she's never met before, complains to the police, and causes trouble for the students from the University of Tokyo. This woman should be tied naked to a telephone pole and publicly

lynched. Maybe if men on the street will start pissing on her, this woman who thinks she's God's gift on earth will feel sorry."

"I feel sorry for the students from the University of Tokyo, but they're too stupid even though they studied at that college. Are they all virgins? They have such a bad taste in women. They should have stuck this woman's face in the toilet from the beginning and stuffed shit in her mouth. They should have torn her spirit to shreds. Then she would have lost her words and wouldn't have been able to sue them." (Himeno 2018, 403–405)

After the incident, Misaki's voice almost disappears, covered by the noise of the violent backlash, as well as the voices of the five perpetrators and their families. Misaki is continuously referred as a "stupid woman" (*baka onna*) who believes that she is God's gift on earth (*kanchigai onna*). Kōji Kunieda's mother goes so far as to foresee that Misaki will write a book to report the sexual assault and she recommends that her son write a book entitled *Honey Trap* as a response. In other words, while the victim is punished for having spoken out and is forced into silence, her attackers are encouraged to raise their voices against the woman who ruined their bright future as alumni of the University of Tokyo.

A never wrote a book to report the abuse she endured at hands of Kensuke Matsumi, Taichi Komoto, Koki Matsumoto, Ikushima Kazuki, and Fujita Tomoyuki, nor did she become the face of the #MeToo movement in Japan. Nevertheless, her story is worth telling, and her voice is worth listening to. In light of this, *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara* demonstrates that literature, along with recent feminist movements, can provide victims of gender-based violence with a platform where their voices can be raised and heard, and contribute to raising the awareness necessary to fight against the misogyny that forces women into silence.

4. Strategies of resistance against silence: *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō*

Aoko Matsuda made her literary debut in 2013 with *Sutakkingu kanō* (*Stackable*), which was nominated for the Yukio Mishima Prize and the Noma Literary New Face Prize. Her collection of stories *Obachantachi ga iru tokoro* (*Where the Wild Ladies Are*, 2016) has been translated into English and included on *TIME's* list of the 100 must-read books of 2020. This collection of stories draws inspiration from traditional Japanese ghost tales and can be read as a feminist rewriting of "old stories" that, as Matsuda stated, "reflected and encouraged people to internalize misogynic views towards women" (Matsuda and Barton 2020). In her works, filled with irony and humor, she often focuses on the misogynistic elements of Japanese society. The short stories "*Misoginī kaitai shō*" ("Dissecting Misogyny: A Live Demo") and "*Onna ga shinu*" ("The Woman Dies") both included

in the collection *Wairudo furawā no mienai ichinen* (*The Year of No Wild Flowers*, 2016), probe this matter.[14]

Matsuda is also a translator. Her translations include the feminist books *The Trouble with Women* (2016) by Jacky Fleming and *Her Body and Other Parties* (2017) by Carmen Maria Machado, among others. Furthermore, she has selected the name of the feminist publisher and bookshop etc.books previously mentioned in this paper. It is thus easy to draw a line connecting her works with the most recent feminist movements in Japan. In regard to this matter, Barton (2020) argues that:

> [Matsuda's] calling, as she characterizes it, is to give a home on the page to people who have experienced marginalization, and to make them feel less alone. The most obvious form that this takes is with respect to the treatment of women: in Japan, the word "feminism" is still either wrapped in the shroud of academicism and seen as something that has no point of contact with everyday folk, or else seen as the preserve of highly strung women with a victim complex. An important part of what Matsuda does is to spell out in an accessible way the way that living in a patriarchal society impacts their lives. Even the humor and the almost cake-like enjoyability of her stories has an articulable rationale: to ensure that people actually enjoy what it is that she is doing. [...]
>
> Her prose may be deceptively delightful, but Matsuda is angry, and the solutions that her fiction envisages are not in the realm of characters who accustom themselves to difficult situations through psychological growth or suitable choices.
>
> Matsuda wants systemic change, and the feats of the imagination she conjures up should not be read purely as escapist fantasy but also a kind of training in grasping towards a better world.

Matsuda's anger at the embedded nature of sexism and misogyny in Japanese society and her desire for systemic change are also fundamental in her first full-length novel, *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō*. In this section, I will focus on the depiction of women's voices and the strategies deployed in the story to fight back against sexual harassment and to dismantle misogyny.

Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō begins as a work of speculative fiction, describing a future Japanese society where the *ojisan* (literally, "middle-aged man") have disappeared. However, in Matsuda's novel the term *ojisan* is used to refer to

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[14] Both stories have been translated into English by Polly Barton and published, respectively, online at *Granta* (2018) and in *Monkey. New Writing from Japan*, vol. 1 (2020). *Wairudo furawā no mienai ichinen* has recently been reprinted in paperback with the title *Onna ga shinu* (*The Woman Dies*).

any person with a misogynistic mindset and behavior, regardless of sex, gender, or age. Girls and young women used to be victims of incessant, encompassing, unwanted attention from *ojisan*. They were sexually harassed in the workplace, molested by gropers (*chikan*) on the train, or more generally subjected to the male gaze that sexualizes and objectifies women's bodies, especially when they are wrapped in school uniforms. However, young girls suddenly became invisible to *ojisan*. The girls took advantage of the situation and started making fun of *ojisan* and taking revenge on them. The situation quickly escalates and after the death of an *ojisan*, the Japanese government decided to separate the young girls' and *ojisan's* respective living spheres. The young protagonists of the parts of the story set in such a utopic future thus live in a "new" world where *ojisan* do not exist and the "old" male-dominated world has become a subject taught at school. This narrative set in the future is contrasted with the reality lived by the protagonist Keiko and other characters around her, which closely resembles Japanese society in the early 2010s.

While a large part of the story is narrated from Keiko's perspective, *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō* is a polyphonic novel that allows the reader to listen to many voices. Ayumu is a woman who works in the same company as Keiko and who is tired of the unequal treatment she receives at work. Ayumu's colleague Mana experienced the objectification and oversexualization of women's bodies as a member of an idol group. Kobayashi, also Ayumu's colleague and her friend, is a young man who refuses the model of culturally privileged hegemonic masculinity embodied by the "salaryman."[15] Minor characters include young mothers dissatisfied with Japanese government policies for blaming women for the low birth rate without providing adequate, publicly-funded social care. Matsuda continuously shifts the internal focalization from one character to another. At the same time, she includes elements that closely resemble contemporary Japan. In this way, she allows readers to have a broad perspective on how gender-based discrimination and violence affect the lives of men and women within Japanese contemporary society.[16]

Through Keiko's story, Matsuda tackles the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. In *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō*, sexual harassment is depicted in a subtle way. Matsuda herself explained that she did not want to include any explicit depictions of sexual violence against women, which she considers an overused story trope[17] (Takii 2020). Keiko was harassed by a male colleague who

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[15] On salaryman masculinity, see, e.g., Dasgupta (2012).

[16] Ozawa (2020) has pointed out that Matsuda's novel resonates with most female readers as it carefully describes the difficulties women feel in their daily lives in Japan.

[17] The short story "Onna ga shinu" ("The Woman Dies") mentioned above is in fact a parody of

intentionally showed his romantic/sexual intentions toward her in an extremely vague way, so as to give their colleagues the impression that Keiko was actually in a relationship with him. Despite Keiko's efforts to hold him accountable for his behavior, after she reported the case to their company, he was left unpunished, and she quit her job. Unemployed and wishing to distance herself from a society where she feels discriminated against as a woman, Keiko goes to visit her sister in Canada and upon her return, she is shocked by the attitude of girls in Japan. For the first time, Keiko realizes that with their "small and adorable voices that could never hurt anyone" (Matsuda 2020, 21) Japanese girls are the "weakest creatures" in the world (Matsuda 2020, 22).

While struggling to find her place in society, Keiko becomes captivated by an idol group to which the female idol "XX" belongs. This idol group fascinates Keiko through their powerful performances and songs. In their military-like uniforms, they are different from other idol groups which usually behave cutely, weakly, and submissively toward men. Nevertheless, the idol group to which "XX" belongs is produced by the same *ojisan* who created Japanese idol culture. Even though Matsuda never mentions names, a reader familiar with the Japanese context of idol culture easily recognizes that the model for "XX" is Yurina Hirate, a former member of the idol group Keyakizaka46 produced by Yasushi Akimoto, creator of top Japanese idol groups, such as Onyanko Club and AKB48. While Keiko is aware of the inherent contradiction of being a fan of an idol group that reproduces the idea of young girls as sexual objects to be consumed by male fans,[18] it is because of her "obsession" that she finds new strength within herself to endure her "weak" position within society.

After joining a live performance of the idol group created around "XX," Keiko realizes that, despite the presence of female fans, during the show she could only hear male fans singing along and calling the idols' names. She thus reaches the following conclusion: women's small voices might be a "defense wall" against the male gaze (Matsuda 2020, 111). In other words, Japanese women might have used their small voices in a strategic way in order not to be noticed (and harassed) by men. By quoting Keiko's friend Ayumu, "silence was her safety area," and she chose it after reaching the conclusion that "the chance to live safely would be higher" if she avoided expressing her thoughts out loud (Matsuda 2020, 190). Although Ayumu is aware that raising her voice can also become a strategy to keep away *ojisan*-like men, who "for some reason abhor women who are chatty, loud, and try to talk to men as an equal" (Matsuda 2020, 126), she also admits that in the end she is powerless. Keiko and Ayumu's analysis of women's voices show that while

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such a story trope.

18   On the consumption of female idols by male fans, see Rosie Dent-Spargo (2017).

women in Japan are expected to know their place and silently accept the status quo, speaking up might in fact put them in danger.

However, "XX"'s performance inspires Keiko to break this silence and speak out against a society built by and for *ojisan*. "XX" and the other members of the idol group are depicted as powerful and cool, in contrast with the powerless, cute image usually attached to female idols. While they have been created and produced within a sexist system that uses young girls as disposable goods to be consumed by their male fans and that emphasizes rivalries between members of the same group, the strong bond between "XX" and her fellow members, who help each other "as though they were in a girls-only school" (Matsuda 2020, 108–109), inspires Keiko to raise her voice and join the protests in the streets of Tokyo.[19] Furthermore, "XX" and the other members of the idol group sing songs about a revolution, and while in the beginning they were just repeating some words written by the *ojisan* who produced them, they gradually come to embody the revolution itself. Their voices are not used to respond to the male fans' desire anymore, but rather to change the lives of the female fans who stayed silent for too long. As the young girls from the future explain, "We can hear their voices saying, 'We sang about revolution, we sang the revolution,' so we must have a revolution" (Matsuda 2020, 187).

Encouraged by the idol group's song, Keiko's fight transforms. While initially she was conducting an "everyday resistance" (Matsuda 2020, 102), she decides to join an overt rebellion against male-dominated society. The expression "everyday resistance" is clearly referring to James C. Scott's influential book *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (1985). According to Scott (1985, 137), by focusing on visible, historic "events," such as organized rebellions, we end up missing more subtle but yet powerful forms of "everyday resistance," that is, forms of cultural resistance and non-cooperation by individuals and collectives in a subordinated position who, through those practices, seek to deny the claims made by elites and the effects of domination. It is through such practices, which in Scott's (1985, 137) analyses include rumor, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, and anonymity, that Keiko and her former colleagues manage to silently resist the misogynistic society they live in. Nevertheless, they reach the conclusion that a revolution is necessary in order to fundamentally dismantle the male-dominated culture on which modern Japan has been constructed. That a revolution is necessary in order to change the status quo is clearly stated from the very first page of this novel. It is not a coincidence that it opens with a quote from *Shōjo kakumei Utena* (*Revolutionary Girl Utena*,

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[19] Even though it is not clearly explained, based on several elements, such as the location of the protest, we can assume that Keiko joined the antinuclear demonstrations that took place outside the residence of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Tokyo in 2012.

1996), a famous manga and anime that tackled issues such as feminism, queerness, and the ideologies reproduced by the fairytale genre.[20]

Keiko's lonely fight against her harasser thus transforms into a revolution that will lay the foundations for an *ojisan*-free society where misogynistic behavior and sexual misconduct are no longer tolerated. In the early 2010s, when Keiko's story is set, a leak reveals Japanese politicians' plan to "shrink" the country. Since the Meiji era (1868–1912), they had been trying to shrink the population by creating a misogynistic society where women are forced to change their surname upon marriage and are confined to the private sphere of the home while financial support for pregnancy and child-rearing is insufficient. Amid protests held in the streets of Tokyo and in an effort to avoid taking responsibility for the end of Japan as a country, the Japanese government decides to make the female idol "XX" and her fellow group members the new leaders of the country and blame them for its decline. However, the newly created government is supported by the "normal office workers" (Matsuda 2020, 222) who organized the protests against the former leaders and has a plan to make Japan an *ojisan*-free country, that is to say, a society that holds accountable men and women with a misogynistic mind-set and attitude, regardless of their age. Invested with power, the idol group creates rules that make sexual violence a severely punishable crime and thus transforms Japan into a country where *ojisan* are accountable for their actions in terms of sexual harassment and gender-based violence. Forced to comply with the newly-created rules, the number of *ojisan*-like people diminishes, and they eventually disappear, making Japan a "new" country where women's bodies are no longer the targets of sexually objectifying behaviors.

Constantly wary of attacks from *ojisan*-like people, Japanese women – both in Matsuda's fiction and in reality – see their souls progressively eroding. As the title of this novel implies, women need to discover a "sustainable use" for their souls, that is to say, a way to avoid the depletion of their spirit in order to maintain balance amid the male-dominated society that they live in. Through Keiko's words, Matsuda suggests that finding an *oshi* (short for *oshimen*, a member of an idol group whom one wants to support) might be a way to "sustain one's soul," that is to say, to recharge oneself and receive the energy necessary to continue resisting misogyny, gender-based discrimination, and violence. Matsuda and her literature might in fact do the same for readers. As Iwakawa (2021, 98) notes:

> Keiko bets on the possibility that the performance of "XX" and the other [members of the idol group] will change the world. I have had such experiences too with characters in animations, artists, writers, critics,

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[20] On feminism and queerness in *Shōjo Kakumei Utena*, see Ikuhara and Kotani (2000).

> thinkers, translators, and many others. These are the moments when
> I am empowered by their resistance, and I decide to change the world.

Following Iwakawa, we can conclude that reading Matsuda's literature and listening to her characters' voices can also fuel her readers' souls and give them the energy necessary to change the world. In this sense, feminist literature and feminist activism are interrelated parts of a joint approach to fight sexual and gender-based violence, in which writers and activists can inspire and support each other.

In summary, Matsuda's novel provides the reader with several perspectives on the problems posed by the endemic misogyny of Japanese society. By switching the internal focalization from one character to another, the author tackles several issues, such as sexual harassment at work, gender-based violence toward women and young girls in particular, the objectification of female bodies through idol culture, and the lack of proper family-friendly policies. At the same time, by blending these extremely realistic elements with speculative fiction, she also suggests solutions. On the one hand, publicly-declared resistance in the form of revolution; on the other hand, "everyday resistance," that is, a reflection on "how people act in their everyday lives in ways that might undermine power" (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, 2). While a revolution led by an idol group might sound unrealistic, "everyday resistance" offers effective ways to fight back against misogyny. Keiko and Ayumu manage to "defeat" their enemy, the man who harassed Keiko and forced her to quit her job, not through an organized revolution, but by spreading gossip about his recurrent practices of sexual harassment around the company.

We can thus read Matsuda's novel as an example of feminist activism emerging out of literature. By voicing traumatic experiences and depicting solidarity and support toward the victims, Matsuda raises awareness against misogyny and probes the effectiveness of speaking out against gender-based violence as well as the importance of creating a community where victims and bystanders can work together to achieve real change.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I discussed recent movements and platforms where women can make themselves heard against misogyny, discrimination, and violence. While the #MeToo movement and Shiori Itō are well known both inside and outside of Japan, the fight against gender-based violence has continued with new faces, new names, and new voices.

Voice Up Japan, which started from a small university in Tokyo with a petition on Change.org against the oversexualization and objectification of women, has grown into an organization that actively fights against gender-based dis-

crimination and works to educate people on sexual consent. Their voices have entered into International Christian University and other schools and companies that seek to cooperate in creating a society where people feel safe to speak out. In 2019, Yumi Ishikawa, the founder of #KuToo, was chosen as one of the BBC's 100 most influential women, along with Hiyori Kon, a member of the sumo club at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, who was the subject of the British documentary *Little Miss Sumo* (2018). Upon being included in this list, Ishikawa stated, "lots of people don't even realize there's gender discrimination in Japan" (The Japan Times 2019b). It is thus of absolute importance that we keep creating venues, both online and offline, were the victims of sexual violence and gender discrimination can raise their voices and force bystanders to listen to their stories. As Hewett and Holland (2021, 3) note, this is an essential element for the creation of a community that "collectively bear[s] witness to the larger problem of violence and in so doing dismantle[s] silence, shame, and stigma." Flower Demo, which has continued organizing its monthly gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, is an example of such a community and shows what we can do to avoid forgetting these stories of violence and the victims left drowning in solitude and indifference.

The potential to make substantial changes can be explored in literature too. The two novels analyzed in this chapter exemplify how literature can work on several levels in order to voice dissent against misogyny and gender-based violence. In *Kanojo wa atama ga warui kara*, Kaoruko Himeno does not simply report the incident that involved five students from the University of Tokyo assaulting A. By following the lives of the victim and her perpetrators over eight years, the author explores their backgrounds and reveals how gender, socioeconomic status, and education intersected in causing the violent attack. Furthermore, by describing the victim's life before the incident, Himeno gives her back her dignity as a person who cannot and should not be reduced to "the Tōdai students' sexual assault victim."[21]

In *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō*, Aoko Matsuda challenges her readers to think about the condition of young girls and women, as well as that of men who refute the hegemonic models of masculinity, within Japanese society. By looking at her fiction in the context of the recent feminist movements analyzed in this chapter, we can understand that Matsuda's novel is an act of protest against a society where young girls and women often choose to stay silent in order to stay safe

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[21]   It is worth noting that during an event held at the University of Tokyo in December 2018, Himeno's novel was criticized for its lack of realism in depicting the male students and their frustration. At the same time, it was praised for giving male readers studying at the University of Tokyo a chance to think about how they can change the image attached to their university. The event also became an opportunity to discuss sexual consent and gender-based violence on campus (see Tōdai Shinbun Online 2019a).

while facing gender discrimination and various forms of gender-based violence on a daily basis. Constantly scrutinized by the male gaze and categorized as either sexual objects or disposable goods (being female idols or employees working on a poorly paid, temporary basis), the young girls and women depicted in *Jizoku kanō na tamashii no riyō* are constantly reminded that they do not have equal rights and opportunities, and are not able to live free of violence and discrimination. Against such a male-dominated society, Matsuda imagines a revolution and invites her readers to speak up or even sing against misogyny, and in so doing helps them sustain their souls. Furthermore, she creates a utopic world where, like in Equiterra, the world imagined by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, all people, regardless of gender, have equal rights and opportunities, and women and girls feel safe. Both Equiterra and the *ojisan*-free future imagined by Matsuda exist only in our imagination, and yet they offer hope that, through everyday resistance and by raising our voices, we will be able to build them.

In this paper, I addressed the issue of gender-based violence through an interdisciplinary approach by applying data-based research to the analysis of literary texts. Such a methodological approach which connects social science, specifically research data on feminist movements, to literary studies not only allows us to understand the cultural backgrounds within which fictional works are situated, but it also opens the possibility of creating a community of readers where both victims and bystanders can share their experiences. Furthermore, it makes it possible to strengthen the relationship between writers and activists and close the gap between activists and academics. Feminist activism can benefit from such bridges, which enhance our chances of winning the ongoing fight for the elimination of gender-based violence.

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GENDER AND VIOLENCE
IN SAKURABA KAZUKI'S *RED X PINK*:
HEARING FEMALE AND TRANSGENDER VOICES
IN BOYS-ORIENTED LIGHT NOVELS

Rafael Vinícius Martins

Sakuraba Kazuki is a former light novel writer whose literature shows awareness of issues of gender, with narratives about violence, power, and identity. This chapter provides an analysis of her light novel, *Red x Pink*, a story narrated by three protagonists who participate in a girls' clandestine wrestling show, each of them performing a different type of character: the youthful Mayu, the dominatrix Miko, and the boyish Satsuki, whose narrative arc unveils a process of self-discovery and coming out as a transgendered man. The analysis of this work, informed by Azuma Hiroki's concepts of database consumption and manga/anime-like realism, will clarify how Sakuraba expresses the gendered experiences of violence and exposes the consequences of oppression, appropriating the popular form of male-oriented media to narrate stories of oppressed young women and sexual minorities.

Keywords: gender studies, light novel, Japanese contemporary literature, database consumption theory, *otaku* subculture

1. Introduction

Japanese popular media, such as anime, manga, and video games, have been popularized all over the world since the 1980s, and are currently an important part of the entertainment industry. Japanese manga is famous for its wide variety of stories for audiences of all ages and genders.[1] In Japan, manga publishing is deeply shaped by age and gender demographics that not only affect how these works

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[1]   It should not be dismissed that the market (and the culture it is part of) is still predominantly conservative in terms of gender binarism.

are marketed but are also embedded in their aesthetics and narrative. *Shōnen* (少年, for boys), *shōjo* (少女, for girls), *seinen* (青年, for young adult male readers), and *ladies/josei* (レディースコミックス・女性, for young adult female readers) are some of the main categories that define the format of publication, as well as the possibilities and intentions of expression and representation of the works. The same can be said about light novels, a genre of Japanese young adult literature prominent from the 1990s that has its roots in the pop culture of anime, manga, and games. In a broad sense, light novels are books published under specific imprints that follow the same demographic categories of manga (like *shōnen, shōjo*, etc.), and that have covers and inner illustrations in a manga style. A more in-depth description can also identify several formal and narrative characteristics, such as a larger amount of dialogues, manga-like character building, and manga/anime-like and game-like realism.[2]

Sakuraba Kazuki (桜庭一樹) might not be the first name that comes to mind when talking about light novels, yet her name is constantly mentioned in many studies about this medium, especially as an author that crossed the borders of genre and established a career as a *mainstream*[3] novelist. Like several other female authors, Sakuraba started writing using a pseudonym that masked her gender to publish for young male audiences. Many female authors of Japanese pop media for male audiences (especially in *shōnen* manga and light novels) use male or gender-neutral pseudonyms to preserve their identities, and possibly to prevent gender discrimination from potential new readers. In the early 2000s, Arakawa Hiromu (荒川弘) used the same strategy when she published her worldwide acclaimed *shōnen* manga series *Fullmetal Alchemist* (鋼の錬金術師 *Hagane no* renkinjutsushi, 2001–2010).[4] More recently, Gotouge Koyoharu (吾峠呼世晴), author of the bestselling manga series *Demon Slayer* (鬼滅の刃 *Kimetsu no yaiba*, 2016–2020), has been having their gender identity speculated. Despite their attempts to keep their identity secret and their preference for the use of gender-neutral language, rumors that the author is a woman sparked online.

This issue is not unique to Japanese society. An emblematic example in recent western literature is J. K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, who has also opted for an acronym that hides her gender for similar reasons. However, when analyzing this issue in Sakuraba's works we must take into consideration the

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[2] This definition of light novel summarizes the discussions in Shinjō (2006) and Azuma (2007). The concepts of manga/anime-like and game-like realism will be explained below.

[3] In this chapter *mainstream* (in italics) refers to *ippanshōsetsu* (一般小説), a term used to label the literary works marketed for general audiences, as opposed to children and light literature.

[4] The titles of the works are cited in this chapter in English when an official translation is provided. In the cases of works with no official English title, a romanization of the original title is used.

specificities of Japanese media and its gender demographics. Meanwhile, in her earlier works, Sakuraba was introduced as "gender: unknown," but by the time of publication of *Red × Pink* (赤×ピンク *Aka × Pinku*), her female identity had already been disclosed in her bio on the interior flap of the book. Notice that her gender was only disclosed inside the book, which can be checked in most bookstores in Japan, but still is not as obvious as having a female name clearly stated on the cover of a novel targeted at a young male audience.

In this chapter, I will analyze the *shōnen* light novel *Red × Pink*, one of Sakuraba's most peculiar early works, to observe how she appropriates the tools of male-oriented media to narrate gender-informed stories of characters dealing with oppression, domestic violence, objectification, repression, and gender dysphoria. Informed by Azuma Hiroki's (東浩紀) concepts of "database consumption" and manga/anime-like "realism" that explain the forms of creation and consumption of the *otaku* subculture, this close reading will unveil how Sakuraba lures the reader with familiar narrative forms and structures on one layer, but ultimately questions those structures, and expresses the voices of oppressed females and sexual minorities.

2. "Beautiful Fighting Girls" and LGBT in Japanese popular media

Sakuraba's narratives of females and gender non-conforming characters are remarkable for the way she appropriates the discourse of male-oriented media to highlight issues of these minorities, however, rather than being incidental, Sakuraba's work builds on previous forms of representations of these identities in Japanese popular media. Regarding the representation of strong female characters, in *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, Saitō (2011, 83–132) recollects the genealogy of female warriors in Japanese popular media since the rise of television animation in the 1960s, in the works of Ishinomori Shōtarō (石ノ森章太郎), Tezuka Osamu (手塚治), and their contemporaries. His analysis continues through the 1980s and 1990s, highlighting the heroines in Miyazaki Hayao's (宮崎駿) movies and the success of *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon* (美少女戦士セーラームーン *Bishōjo senshi sērā mūn*, 1991–1997) and the female pilots in the Neon Genesis *Evangelion* series (新世紀エヴァンゲリオン, *Shinseiki evangerion*, 1995–1996). In his introduction, Saitō (2011, 7) identifies a crisis of representation in those female characters:

> Japan's beautiful fighting girls were originally icons with which their intended audience of young teenage girls could identify. Now, however, a group of consumers has emerged that far exceeds that one in scale – the otaku. The majority of male otaku, at least, see these girls as objects of sexuality.

Saitō's psychoanalytical approach focuses on the *otaku* (オタク), a niche of avid consumers of Japanese popular culture, who do not stand for the majority, but around whom the media and the industry have been molded. Ultimately, those heroines can be at the same time ideological role models for female audiences and the object of desire for male consumers. Nevertheless, it is necessary to question the representativity of these ideological role models for the life experiences of real women. By using the form of *shōnen* light novels, Sakuraba's work builds on the formulaic models of female characters from the *otaku* subculture to narrate the social struggles of girls and women.

In terms of representation of queer identities, the introduction to *Queer Voices from Japan* (McLelland, Suganuma, and Welker 2007, 1–29) provides an overview of the accounts of homosexuality and other forms of non-conformity in modern Japan. First, it alludes to traditional forms of same-sex intimacy mainly between males and indicates that they were reevaluated in the Meiji period (1868–1912) with the introduction of the sexual discourse from the West that established norms of sexual conduct and perversion. Next, it comments on the repressed-yet-blooming male and female homosexuality during the sex segregation of the war period, and the growth of the discourse of experimentation of sex as a form of pleasure in the popular culture of the post-war. Then, it gives an account of the rise of gay bars during the 1950s, while female homosexuals were poorly represented and rather objectified in the "perverse press" (magazines that dealt with matters of sexual desire and exploration). Last, it discloses the gradual reduction of male homosexual content in those magazines until the emergence of the so-called "homo magazines"[5] in the 1970s, and the political engagements of LGBT activism in the same decade. The summary highlights the importance of popular media, such as magazines, in the development of queer identities and the recognition of non-conforming sexual practices and gender identities.

Moreover, same-sex intimacy both male and female has a long history in the Japanese popular culture of manga, anime, and young adult literature. According to Kotani (quoted in Saitō 2007, 222–224), stories about male homosexual intimacy flourished among the female manga artists of the early 1970s, known as the Year 24 Group (24年組 *Nijūyonen Gumi*), with works such as Hagio Moto's (萩尾望都) *Tōma no shinzō* (トーマの心臓, 1974–1975), Takemiya Keiko's (竹宮恵子) *Kaze to ki no uta* (風と木の詩, 1976–1984), and Kurimoto Kaoru's (栗本薫) *Mayonaka no tenshi* (真夜中の天使, 1979). Over the next few years, with the publication of magazines dedicated to this kind of story and its popularity in fanfiction, it developed into

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5   The term "homo magazines" is a direct citation of McLelland, Suganuma, and Walker's (2007) text.

a genre, currently known as "Boys' Love," or "BL"[6] (Saitō 2007, 222). Besides male homosexuality, intimacy between girls has also been portrayed in works of young popular culture in modern Japan. According to Kume (2013, 178–179), to avoid depicting romantic relationships between a boy/man and a girl/woman directly, novels published in shōjo magazines from the end of the Meiji period presented stories of friendship between girls, known as *yuai monogatari* (友愛物語) or "stories of sorority." These kinds of stories have also permeated the popular culture of manga and anime, and with the emergence of the light novel in the 1990s, *shōjo* novels were incorporated by the light novel market. While such stories of sorority might include or suggest a romantic relationship between girls, lesbian relationships have also appeared in *shōjo* novels from the Meiji and Taisho (1912–1926) periods. In some of them, the same-sex relationship was only a substitute for heterosexual love, while others asserted homosexual affection, though it was mainly portrayed either as something temporary or as unrealistic (Kume 2013, 230–255). In Japanese young adult popular media of the later decades, lesbian relationships have been depicted for both female and male audiences, either as romantic or as erotic.

Besides the development of subgenres focused on homosexual intimacy, queer and gender non-conforming identities have also been portrayed in Japanese media, including popular works, such as the manga and anime series *Yu Yu Hakusho* (幽遊白書, 1990–1994), *One Piece* (ワンピース, 1997–present), and *Naruto* (ナルト, 1999–2014) for boys, and *Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon, Card Captor Sakura* (カードキャプターさくら, 1996–2000), and *Paradise Kiss* (パラダイス・キス, 1999–2003) for girls. Still, the potentiality and appropriateness of some of these characters as representations of queer identities may be questionable. The merit of Sakuraba's works is that they not only include an LGBT character or a strong female arbitrarily, but their narratives are deeply shaped by their gendered life experiences. To better understand how Sakuraba expresses gender in her works, this analysis will employ Azuma Hiroki's theory on light novels and mainly his database consumption theory, which is an attempt to define the characteristics of Japanese postmodernism in the *otaku* subculture.

3. Azuma Hiroki's theory on light novels

In *Otaku: Japan's Database Animal* (2009, originally published in Japanese in 2001), Azuma builds upon Otsuka Eiji's concepts of narrative consumption (物語消費論 *monogatari shōhiron*) and manga/anime-like realism to theorize about

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[6] Through the years, the genre was also referred to as *Shōnen-ai, Tanbi, June*, and *Yaoi*. Kotani's text refers to it mainly as *Yaoi*, however, in this article the term "BL" was preferred because it is the most commonly used in Japan currently.

the mode of production and consumption of the *otaku* subculture of the 1990s through a system of intertextual elements, which he calls "Database Consumption." In his later work *Gēmuteki riarizumu no tanjō* (ゲーム的リアリズムの誕生, *The Birth of Game-like Realism*, 2007), Azuma complements the theory with the concept of game-like realism, to explain the writing style of light novels. Azuma's theory is based on the dichotomy between light novels and *pure literature* (純文学 *junbungaku*), in which the latter is created and interpreted through the lens of *naturalistic*[7] realism, and the former through manga/anime-like and game-like realism. Azuma does not deny the possibility of a "*naturalistic* interpretation of light novels," as being a literary form with the potential to express a "New Reality" as it is perceived by young people who are already deeply influenced by manga and anime (Azuma 2007, 81). However, he proposes a different mode of interpretation of light novels for their roots in the *otaku* subculture, which exposes the crisis of mimesis in it. For Azuma (2007, 95–96), light novels are a part of a highly intertextual media subculture that is not intended to represent the real world from a *naturalistic* perspective (which he calls "transparent"), neither is entirely submerged in a romantic form of fantasy (which he calls "opaque"). They are somewhere in-between, intertwining expressions of reality and non-reality through a metanarrative system of shared signs (which he calls "translucid"). Put simply, Azuma's theory highlights that the *otaku* subculture is informed by an intertextual system of signs from other manga, anime, games, and novels, rather than by the observation of reality. It also points out that those signs not only provide necessary context when interpreting those works, but they are often the main point for which they are consumed.

Azuma (2007, 82) mentions Sakuraba as a writer whose early works were more related to manga/anime-like realism, but whose later works started becoming closer to *pure literature* as they express a reflection about contemporary society, thus his theory would not be applicable for the interpretation of these works. In his commentary, Azuma does not specify which of Sakuraba's works fall on each side. Nevertheless, as this chapter will demonstrate, *Red × Pink* has a double-layered structure that can be interpreted almost like a commentary on these two kinds of literary potentials of the light novels. On one layer, we have characters that reflect contemporary social issues of gender oppression. On the other, we have the *personas* performed by those characters, which are created following the database model. The possibility of engaging with each of these layers independently is what makes Sakuraba's work transcend the borders of its genre. But

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[7]   The term *naturalistic* will be written in italics when referring to the concept described in Azuma Hiroki's theory.

it is in the observation of the interrelation between both layers that Sakuraba's greatest literary potential resides.

A *naturalistic* interpretation not informed by manga/anime-like realism would focus only on the issues of abuse, domestic violence, gender dysphoria, sex work, or the objectification of the female bodies in the text. On the other hand, reading it purely through manga/anime-like realism theory would unveil the signs embodied by each character, and enable a semiotic analysis contrasting the characters and their personas. However, a reading informed by both interpretations can discuss how the perspective of manga/anime-like realism itself is related to the social issues that the story represents.

4. An overview of Sakuraba's oeuvre

Sakuraba started her career writing novel adaptations and scripts for videogames under the pen name of Yamada Sakuramaru (山田桜丸), in the late 1990s. She debuted under the new pen name of Sakuraba Kazuki in 1999, when she received an honorable mention in the First Famitsu Entertainment Literature Prize for her manuscript *Yozora ni, manten no hoshi* (夜空に、満点の星), later published by Famitsū Bunko (ファミ通文庫) under the title of *AD2015 Kakuri Toshi – Loneliness Guardian* (AD2015隔離都市 ロンリネス・ガーディアン). Sakuraba had her works published by different *shōnen* light novel imprints, such as Ex Novels (EXノベルズ), Kadokawa Sneaker Bunko (角川スニーカー文庫), Famitsū Bunko, and Fujimi Mystery Bunko (富士見ミステリー文庫). She reached a high popularity status with her light novel *Gosick*, published in December 2003, which became a long series of 17 volumes and various adaptations to different media. From 2005 to 2006, she went through a period of transition from light novels to *mainstream* novels, when she published under so-called *borders* (ボーダーズ) imprints.[8] After that, Sakuraba's works were mainly published under *mainstream* imprints, with few exceptions.[9] *Red × Pink*, the work analyzed in this chapter, was originally published by Famitsū Bunko as a light novel.

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[8]   Genre literature imprints that are on the boundaries of the light novel and the *mainstream* novel markets. This includes Tokyo Sogensha's *Mystery Frontier* imprint and Hayakawa's *Bunko JA*, where some of her works were published. With the consolidation of the light novel industry, in the late 1990s and 2000s, in the 2010s there was an establishment of a "light literature" (ライト文芸 *raito bungei*), as a category in-between light novels and *mainstream* novels. The light literature is similar to light novel in its form and transmedia strategies, but it aims at an older and wider demographic.

[9]   The volumes of the *Gosick* series that had already been published as *shōnen light novels* were re-published by a *shōjo* imprint in 2011, with the broadcast of the anime adaptation on TV. *Gosick* was also republished by a *mainstream* imprint from 2009, and had new volumes published exclusively by the same imprint in 2011.

Since her early works, Sakuraba's writing has paid attention to gendered experiences of violence. A recurring theme in her literature is domestic violence, with stories of girls who are forcefully confined (*Gosick* series, 2003–2016); are victims of physical and psychological abuse (推定少女 *Suitei Shōjo*, 2004; 砂糖菓子の弾丸は撃ち抜けない: *A Lollipop or a Bullet, Satōgashi no dangan wa uchinukenai: A Lollypop or a Bullet*, 2004; 少女には向かない職業, *An Unsuitable Job for a Girl*, 2005); or experience sexual abuse from their fathers or other male relatives (私の男, *My Man*, 2007). Her stories often present characters negotiating their identities and conflicts within the gender politics of the portrayed era, such as Kujo's conflict with his father's military masculinity (*Gosick*, 2003); the constricted life of Namida as a homosexual boy (赤朽葉家の伝説, *The Legend of the Akakuchibas*, 2006); Satsuki's narrative of coming out as a transgendered man (*Red × Pink*, 2003); and Nibiiro's tragedy as a closeted transgender woman having to take the role of the male head of the clan (伏 贋作・里見八犬伝 *Fuse: Gansaku Satomi Hakkenden*, 2010).

This consciousness about gendered experiences in Sakuraba's literature enabled her *shōnen* light novels to transcend the boundaries of demography and attract a wide variety of readers. This may have also been pivotal for her transition to the *mainstream* novel industry. Not only were her new works serialized and published aiming at an older audience, but also her light novels were republished under Kadokawa's *mainstream* imprint. However, this does not mean that Sakuraba's works were incorrectly marketed. Her light novels present characteristics of *shōnen* novels. But their peculiarity is that instead of reaffirming values of androcentric heteronormativity, they bring light to disruptions of gender norms using the discourse of light novels.

5. *Red x Pink*: *Kyara x character*

Red × Pink was originally published as a *shōnen* light novel by Famitsū Bunko in 2003 with illustrations by Takahashi Shin (高橋伸),[10] and later republished as a *mainstream* novel with no illustrations by Kadokawa Bunko (角川文庫) in 2008. The story was also adapted into a live-action film directed by Sakamoto Kōichi (坂本浩一)[11] in 2014, also known by its English title *Girl's Blood*. The novel is divided into three parts, each of them focused on one of the protagonists. Mayu, Miko, and Satsuki respectively succeed each other in narrating their stories that take place at the Girl's Blood, a girls' underground wrestling show situated in an abandoned

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[10] Takahashi Shin's manga *Saikano* is often cited in studies about Japanese pop culture from the early 2000s.

[11] Sakamoto Kōichi is famous for his work in *tokusatsu* and *super sentai* franchises, such as the American production *Mighty Morphin Power Ranger*, and Japanese TV shows and movies of *Kamen Rider* (仮面ライダー) and *Ultraman* (ウルトラマン).

school in Roppongi. Each one of the protagonists performs as a different character at the wrestling show which contrasts with their real identities. The novel alternates between showing the fight performances that happen in the octagon and narrating the personal dramas of the protagonists backstage.

We are first introduced to the world of the Girl's Blood by Mayu, a 21-years-old woman who performs as a 14-years-old girl at the octagon. Mayu starts the story with a young adult perspective, with some erotic and sensual descriptions of female bodies, but slowly moves the focus of her narration to the fighters' personal lives. In her narrative, she reveals her trauma caused by domestic abuse in her childhood which resulted in her childish desire for attention. The second part narrated by Miko focuses on the duality between her role as a dominatrix at Girl's Blood and in the sadomasochist club where she works, and her lack of desire in her personal life. Finally, the last chapter focuses on the development of a relationship between Satsuki and Chinatsu, and the resolution of Satsuki's identity conflict, with their[12] coming out as a transgendered man. The three stories are consecutive and interrelated, though each chapter is centered on the narrative arc of one of the characters.

If read out of context in the 2020s, *Red × Pink* might not seem particularly disruptive, it may even be regarded as objectifying and conservative in the way it handles gender identity and sexuality issues. However, considering that it is a story originally published in February 2003, targeted to a young male audience, it is possible to find here the seeds of what became Sakuraba's disruptive writing in the upcoming years. Superficially it seems like an orthodox *shōnen* light novel in conformity with Azuma's (2007) development of the concept of manga/anime-like realism, with female characters who are created following the database model, described on a sensual level to stimulate the imagination of the male readers, as suggested by Saitō (2011). Nevertheless, this chapter proposes to interpret the novel on a metanarrative level, comparing the performances of the protagonists as *personas* on the octagon for the voyeuristic audience of the Girl's Blood, with their performances as characters of the light novel for the voyeuristic reader. In other words, the male gaze, which is a common feature of this genre, can be recognized here within a subtle ironic subtext. Furthermore, this chapter emphasizes that in all the three narrative arcs there is a common theme of self-discovery, in which

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[12] In the novel, Satsuki is mainly referred to as feminine, though due to characteristics of Japanese language, such as the omission of pronouns, gender-neutral language is also frequently applied. In this paper, the gender-neutral pronoun "they" is used when referring to Satsuki in order not to overlook the gender dysphoria issue which is essential for the present analysis. However, feminine pronouns were used in direct citations to respect the original text in which the narrators refer to Satsuki as a woman.

the protagonists change from the position of serving and satisfying the others' desires into taking agency over their own.

In the first chapter, "File. 1 The Corpse of Mayu 14-years-old," the protagonist is introduced on the chapter's cover page as

> まゆ十四歳。
> 泣き虫。孤独好き。好物はチョコバナナパフェ。
> 指名料3000円。
>
> Mayu 14-years-old.
> Cry baby. Loner. Likes Chocolate Banana Parfait.
> Nomination Fee 3000 yen.

(Sakuraba 2003, 3)[13]

This, however, is not the description of the novel's character Mayu, but her wrestler persona. These two identities are marked in Japanese, using different writing systems. The wrestler persona is referred to throughout the whole chapter using *hiragana* (i.e., まゆ), instead of her real name written in Chinese characters (i.e., 真由). The name written in Chinese characters appears in determining moments of the story, such as when she receives a call from her father, and in the climax scene when she recovers her identity and introduces herself to her love interest. In other words, it is used to express her real identity, which she suppressed under the performance of the wrestler persona.

In contrast with this first description of Mayu's persona, on the next page, there is an epigraph with Mayu's self-image, which says,

> わたしは生命力が弱い。
> 生きることそのものに偏差値をつけたら
> 42ぐらいなんじゃないかと思うんだ。
>
> My vitality is weak.
> If we set a deviation score for living
> I think that mine would be around 42.

(Sakuraba 2003, 4)

Followed by these words, the chapter begins in the middle of a fight in which Mayu is being beaten up and becoming desperate. Covered in mud, she holds her scream in while she is defeated by "another her" and hears the cheering audience screaming her name. This first scene looks like a typical hero/heroine introduction, in which the heroine is shown as weak to get the sympathy of the readers who will want to watch her growth and cheer for her with the audience. The novel, on the

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[13] All the quotes from the book are direct translations of the original text made by the author of this chapter.

other hand, defies the expectations that it sets, as Mayu's narrative is not one of becoming a victorious fighter, but of finding her identity and escaping this place of violence. In addition, it is remarkable that in Mayu's view, her opponent looks like "another her." This expression of identification not only reflects the feeling of sorority between the fighters, but also foreshadows that the heroine's conflict is not with "the other," but with herself.

As the fight ends, we are introduced to the system of nomination of the Girl's Blood, in which the fighters are chosen by clients who pay a determined nomination fee to have them handcuffed near their seats for some time. This service has implications on the violence of the gendered power dynamics portrayed, but this analysis will focus on the metafictional nature of the Girl's Blood, rather than on its sociological aspect.

When she is introducing the world of Girl's Blood, Mayu already exposes the fictionality of the wrestling show, as follows:

> これは物語。
> ここで行われているのは一つのイベント。
> 『ガールズブラッド』と銘打って毎晩開催される、地下キャットファイトクラブ
> の悪趣味な物語だ。

> This is a story.
> What is happening here is an event.
> It is a distasteful story of a clandestine catfight club called 'Girl's Blood'
> that takes place every night.

> <div align="right">(Sakuraba 2003, 11)</div>

This passage can refer to the novel itself, but it also implicates the fictional nature of the show. Later, Mayu makes it even more clear:

> 今夜もまた、ショーが始まる。
> わたしたち女の子の日常を切り裂く、フィクションの時間が始まろうとしてる。

> Tonight again, it's showtime.
> We will cut off from our daily lives as girls and start the fiction time.

> <div align="right">(Sakuraba 2003, 61)</div>

The same kind of expression appears in Miko's narration in chapter two: "Tonight too, it's showtime" (今夜も、ショーが始まる) (Sakuraba 2003, 99). The novel is developed as a double-layered fiction in which characters perform as other characters in an embedded narrative, and the narration makes a clear distinction between the two levels of performance. For example, though Mayu has "14-years-old" as part of her persona's title, it is revealed in the first few pages of the chapter that she is 21. Similarly, all the characters who take part in the Girl's Blood are also assigned a persona. Miko is "The Queen," Satsuki is "The Karate Girl." The

contradiction of Miko's persona is ironically exposed in the title of her chapter "Miko, Everyone's Toy." Her narrative reveals that despite her performances as an erotic sadistic queen, in her personal life Miko has no agency over her desires and is dominated by the patriarchal social system. Satsuki's contradiction is only disclosed in the climax of the last chapter when Satsuki's gender dysphoria is pointed out by Chinatsu, a new member of Girl's Blood with whom they develop a romantic relationship. In other words, Mayu is not 14 years old, Miko is not a dominant woman, and Satsuki is not a girl. They are all playing such roles within a fictional framework.

The way that those personas are created and established in the narrative can be interpreted as a comment on the database consumption model theorized by Azuma (2001). There is a short scene in Chapter 2, where the process of creation of these personas is shown. In that scene, after Mayu left the Girl's Blood (and disappeared from the narrative itself) and Chinatsu was introduced as a new member, the executive head of the Girl's Blood creates the persona that she will have to perform at the show:

「衣装はチャイナがいいな。君、黒髪がきれいだし」

「……へっ?」

「あと、キャラはね、しゃべるとき『なんとかアルよ』って言ってね。上海娘だから。名前どうしよ、リリーちゃんとかどうかな。適当すぎる?ま、いっか。適当に生きてないと早死にするもんな─。よし決定。」

"Your outfit should be a Chinese dress [cheongam]. After all, you have beautiful black hair."

"Uh...?"

"About your kyara [persona], you should say, 'Something aruyo'[14] when you speak. Because she is a Shanghai girl. Her name would be... Lilly-chan. Is it too careless? Nah, it's enough. If we don't live carelessly, we might die early. Well, that's it."

(Sakuraba 2003, 157–158)

Chinatsu is assigned a stereotype that defines how she should act, dress, and talk, which is not related to her real identity, ethnicity, or personality, but rather is attached to her based on bodily signs such as her hair. In this scene, the persona is referred to as *kyara*, a shortened version of the loanword *kyarakutā* (キャラクター, "character"). Kuresawa (2010, 21) defines *kyara* as a step before *kyarakutā*. While

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[14] Kinsui and Yamakido (2015, 32) mention *aruyo* as a type of restricted role language used in fiction, which is associated with Chinese characters though it does not (necessarily) correspond with the way real Chinese people speak Japanese.

the latter is a fully realized character with a sense of personality, the other is a set of characteristics that projects certain feelings or expectations. Similarly, Shinjō (2006, 136) explains *kyara* as a combination of visual characteristics that indicate a determined mode of action. These concepts of *kyara* resonate with Azuma's (2001) database consumption theory, which asserts that characters within the *otaku* subculture are simulacra created from an intertextual database of characteristics and are consumed for the data, rather than the narratives.

This scene in the novel exemplifies the mode of creation of a *kyara* and potentializes the metanarrative interpretation of the novel. By bringing to light the superficiality of the process of creation of those fictional female characters, Sakuraba highlights the problems of representation in them. In other words, just as the personas in the story are female characters created according to the spectators' desires, the female *kyara* in the otaku subculture represents ideal girls and women from the perspective of male consumers, not real girls and women. Therefore, Sakuraba's text appropriates the form of *kyara*, to emphasize the crisis of representation in it.

In *Red × Pink*, it is possible to interpret the performance of a persona both as a form of escapism from the protagonists' troubled experiences and as a tool of repression that domesticates their identity issues. As the story discloses, all the main characters who take part in the Girl's Blood have some personal issues related to their gendered experiences, that they repress by performing their personas on stage. For Mayu, the issue she is repressing is her childhood trauma caused by the abusive treatment she received from her mother. Near the climax of her chapter, Mayu comments on some TV news about mothers who committed violent crimes to their children:

> だけどわたしはべつにビックリしない。そういう人を一人、知っているから。
>
> わたしは、物心ついてからも、ずいぶん長い間、赤ちゃん用の木のフェンスみたいなの、あれに入れられていた。よくわからないけど、一種の虐待だと思う。幼稚園に行くようになっても、小学校に上がっても、ずっと、家に帰った途端、それに放り込まれた。体は大きくなってくるから、それはとても狭くて、怖かった。
>
> 知恵もつくし、力もつくから、自分で出ようと思えば出られたはずだと思う。だけど、わたしは出られなかった。その中にいると、手にも足にも力が入らなくて、ただぼんやりとうずくまっていた。
>
> 中学校に入学する頃、弟が生まれた。その途端に、そのよくわからない虐待は終わった。フェンスはかわいらしい弟のために正しい使用目的で使われるようになり、二度とわたしを閉じこめはしなかった。
>
> I am not surprised at all, because I know a person like that.
>
> From as far back as I can remember, for a very long time I have been kept in one of those wooden fences for babies. I don't really understand

it, but I think it is a kind of abuse. Even when I started going to kinder-
garten and after I went to elementary school, as soon as I got back home,
I would be shut inside that. As my body was growing, it started becoming
tighter and scarier.

Since I was smart and strong enough, I think I probably would have
been able to leave it if I tried to. But I couldn't. When I was inside it my
hands and legs were powerless, and I could only crouch on the floor
indifferently.

When I was in middle school my younger brother was born. And sud-
denly, this incomprehensible abuse ended. The fence started being used
properly for my cute little brother, and I've never been confined since.

(Sakuraba 2003, 66–67)

From this point on, Mayu's narrative becomes very self-aware of these traumas.
During a fight, she draws a parallel between the fences of the octagon, a *cage*
in which she is being submitted to violence in front of a crowd of men that will
not come to help her, and the *cage* in which she was put in her childhood, from
which she just wished to be saved by her father. As soon as she realizes that she
has been always waiting for this paternal figure to free her from her *cage*, Mayu
looks at the audience for help. At this moment, she is rescued by Yasuda, a man
she had met earlier, who had playfully proposed to her backstage. She decided to
run away with him, freeing herself from the *cage* and the audience's male gaze.

By the end of her chapter, Mayu abandons the Girl's Blood and disappears from
the narrative. She appears again in the second chapter, where some of the events
are retold from Miko's perspective, but overall her life after leaving the Girl's Blood
remains unknown. This reinforces the metanarrative reading of the text, which
associates the spectators of the Girl's Blood with the readers of the novel. When
Mayu decides to abandon her persona and escapes from the male gaze of the audi-
ence of the wrestling show, the character also evades from the sight of the readers.

While a stricter feminist analysis of this text could criticize the male interven-
tion in the process of emancipation of the female protagonist, it is also undeniable
that this moment represents Mayu's retrieval of her agency, as her deepest desire
is fulfilled by Yasuda. In this scene, Mayu is not the object of Yasuda's narrative and
desire, but the subject of her own. This understating can be confirmed by Miko's
narration of the scene, in which she laments: "My Mayu has left this cage by her
own will" (わたしのまゆが、この檻から、自分の意志で出ていった) (Sakuraba 2003, 114).

6. Agency, identity, and a scream of freedom

In "File. 2 Miko, Everyone's Toy," the narrative shifts to Miko. In the first chapter, Miko was described by Mayu as a powerful woman who is always in control and uses it to provide the best entertainment to the audience. In Miko's narrative, this is disclosed as her identity conflict. Despite performing the persona of a dominant woman, Miko does not act on her own desires. In fact, she does not even know what she desires. She is always performing to satisfy the male clients and fans. Therefore, it can be said that during Chapter 2, Miko's identity and her performative persona occupy contradictory positions in power dynamics. While her persona is the queen and therefore in possession of absolute power, the real Miko is "everyone's toy," in other words, submissive to others' desires.

Miko is introduced as follows:

> ミーコ女王様。
> 19歳。天性のサド娘。趣味、彫金。
> 指名料2000円。

> Queen Miko.
> 19-years-old. A natural-born sadistic girl. Hobby: toreutics.
> Nomination Fee 2000 yen.

<div align="right">(Sakuraba 2003, 79)</div>

Different from Mayu's epigraph, Miko's epigraph is not a clear self-description. At first glance, it looks like a poem:

> わたしは山茶花の赤ピンクの花に埋もれた
> 月明かりが白かった。雪が降ってた

> I was buried under the reddish-pink Sasanqua Camellia
> The moonlight was white. Snow was falling

<div align="right">(Sakuraba 2003, 80)</div>

There is a clear contrast between the image of power and sexuality of Miko's persona defined on the chapter's cover page, and her self-image, which is poetic and static. It does not go unnoticed that though the poem is a contemplative description of this beautiful scenery, the lyrical subject is "buried," which indicates Miko's condition of oppression that is covered by a (performative) delightful appearance. Later in the chapter, it is revealed that the epigraph refers to the episode in which Miko was caught having intercourse with her stepfather and was thrown from the second floor's window by her mother. After the fall she remained there on the floor, covered by Sasanqua Camellia flowers on a snowy day, watching her mother's furious face on the window. This episode resulted in her expulsion from home and in her involvement with sex work, which will be explained later in this analysis.

Through the chapter, the conflict between Miko's persona and her identity is further developed by the contrast between the treatment that she receives from her clients, and her self-image. The following dialogue between Miko and one of her clients is one of the several examples of the superior status of Miko's persona:

> 「客なんだ、って言ったって、わたしの裸なんて見たことなかったでしょ」
>
> 「当たり前だ。奴隷が女王様の裸見たがってどうする。それじゃ普通だ」
>
> "Although you said you are my client, you'd never seen me naked, had you?"
>
> "Obviously not. What would happen if a slave wanted to see the queen naked? It's just normal [that I haven't]"

<div align="right">(Sakuraba 2003, 122)</div>

This dialogue is symbolic of Miko's identity paradox. Although she is serving the man's fantasy, in their roleplay he is the slave, and she is the queen. This contradiction is even further reinforced by her self-description:

> わたしは、真性のM男くんにはそれなりにハードな夢を、興味本位で覗きにくる人には、望んだ通りの適度に色っぽくて適度に刺激的な解説を、与えるようになった。
>
> わたしはなんにでもなれる。
>
> でも……。
>
> きっと…………。
>
> こんなふうに生きていると、わたしの人生はわたしのてからすり抜けていく。
>
> いつか自分の名前も、歳も、なにを欲しているのかまるでわからなくなって、廃人みたいになって、ドブにでも捨てられてしまいそうな気がする。
>
> 消費されて、捨てられる。
>
> おもちゃの宿命。
>
> I became able to realize the intense dreams of a genuine masochist man and to provide an interpretation that is erotic and stimulating enough for those who come to take a look just out of curiosity.
>
> I can become anything.
>
> But...
>
> Surely...
>
> If I continue to live like this, my life will slip through my hands.
>
> I feel that one day I will not know my name, my age, or what I want. I'll become like a cripple and I'll be thrown away in the gutter.

I'll be consumed and thrown away.

That's the fate of a toy.

(Sakuraba 2003, 109)

This passage is the conclusion of Miko's narrative about how she ended up working in a sadomasochist club and it reveals her fear of losing her identity. Her story started when she was rejected by her first love in elementary school, who said that she did not *need* him because she could live well on her own. From this rejection, Miko became self-conscious about society's expectations of her. To be loved she became a model student in junior high, but she was restrained by a teacher from occupying the top position just because she was a girl. A few years later, she moved to a new school after her parents got divorced and completely changed her behavior. She stopped worrying about society's expectations and started pursuing her desires. During this period, she started being seen as a problematic student and ran away with her young female teacher. Soon, they were found, but at this point, Miko understood that she had already fulfilled the needs of her teacher, who could now go back to her life with her fiancé. When she returned home, Miko also got involved with her stepfather's fantasies, which resulted in her being cast away from home and engaging in sex work.

Miko's background story takes about four pages in the middle of her ninety-page-long chapter, but it voices the main conflicts that Miko has been through during her early life because of her gender. She was rejected because she was perceived as a self-sufficient girl, ostracised by her teacher, pressured to conform to society's expectations, and finally decided to seek approval by fulfilling others' fantasies, regardless of her own desires. However, even though this passage denounces gender inequality and Miko's imposed lack of agency, Sakuraba doesn't relegate Miko to the position of the helpless victim of the situation. She voices her struggles which reflect the experiences of many young girls, but she also empowers her to overcome them through her narrative of self-realization.

Another layer of the conscious performativity of Miko's character is noticeable in her description of her job at the sadomasochist club:

ミーコを見るだけでも価値がある、と、得意先の接待でこの店を使う常連さんも最近は多い。もちろんそういうお客さんは雰囲気を楽しむだけで、本当に痛いこと、熱いこと、きつい言葉なんてものは求めていないから、わたしはうまく、それっぽい雰囲気だけ楽しんでもらって、満足して帰ってもらう。

鞭を片手にブンブン振り回すけれど、かたわらの椅子や壁を叩いて派手な音を出すだけで、お客さんは叩かない。ポーズを変えて目を楽しませるけれど、怖がっているようなら触らない。インテリのお客さんが、後で飲み屋でウンチクを垂れやすいように、わかりやすいSM講義をしてあげて、最後には覚えが早いですねって誉めてあげる。

Recently many regular customers come to this place only to be entertained. Customers who think that there is value just in watching Miko.[15] Of course, those clients only enjoy that atmosphere, and they don't really seek pain, warmth, or harsh words. That's why I just give them the kind of atmosphere that they want to enjoy and get them to go home satisfied.

I flick the whip with one hand, but I just hit a chair or the wall nearby making a loud noise, I don't hit the customers. I change my pose so that they can enjoy watching me, but if they look scared, I don't touch them. For the intellectual customers to be able to spill their knowledge later in the bar, I give an easy lecture about SM, and in the end, I praise their quick learning.

(Sakuraba 2003, 83–84)

As shown in the explanation above, not only does Miko enact the role of dominatrix, but this very performance is not the conventional sexual practice of dominance and infliction of pain. It is just an image of it. Miko's narration reiterates that what her clients look for is not the real experience, but the feeling of it. This too can be interpreted as a metanarrative commentary about the *otaku* subculture and the manga/anime-like realism, whose characters (*kyara*) are produced and consumed as signs, projections of the audiences' expectations and desires, rather than a product of *naturalistic* observation of the real world.

This description is followed by Miko's reflection about her part in Girl's Blood. She says that recently she has become more interested in the practice of martial arts and that it made her more aware of her own body. This reflection foreshadows the climax of Miko's narrative arc, in which she finds her real passion for fighting. At the end of her chapter, Miko's attitude changes from playing a role for entertaining her clients, to enjoying the bodily experience of wrestling. This process of acquisition of her agency is only possible because she observes the paradox between her persona and her identity.

One of the turning points in Miko's narrative is the scene in which she is inquired by Satsuki about her desires. Satsuki, the last of the three protagonists/narrators of the novel, is struggling with issues of sexuality and gender identity, and when confronted by Satsuki's questioning Miko realizes her own issues. The following dialogue is a part of Satsuki's inquiry:

「ミーコは、誰が好きなの」

「好きって?」

---

[15] Notice that Miko refers to herself in the third person here. Although this use of the third person is not uncommon in Japanese language, it can indicate that Miko is distinguishing her performative persona from her identity.

「誰を自分のものにしたいんだよ。そのへんな客か？まゆか？お前の大音量の一代記、聞いたあとも、思ったんだよ。耳鳴りに苦しみながら。その女の先生か？義理の父親か？お前の話聞いても、誰がミーコを求めたか、しかわかんねーよ。ミーコは誰が好きで、そいつとどうなりたかったのか。いまは……その客とどうなりたいんだ？まゆとは？おまえ、まゆを取り戻したいのか？」

「……わかんない」

皐月がガバッと起きあがった。わたしの顔に手を伸ばしてきてその細い指には似合わないほど強い力で、わたしの両頬を押さえ込み、顔と髪を前後にガタガタと揺らした。

「だいたいさ、ミーコは、異性愛者なのか？同性愛者なのか？両刀か？SMなのか？ノーマルなのか？」

"Miko, who do you like?"

"Who do I like...?"

"Who do you want to make your own? Is it that weird customer? Is it Mayu? Even after hearing your excruciating blabbering about your life I have been wondering. Is it that female teacher of yours? Or your step-father? Hearing your story, I could only know who was longing for you. But who do you like? What do you want with that person? At this moment, what do you want with that customer of yours? What about Mayu? Do you want to take Mayu back?"

"I don't know."

Satsuki got up suddenly. She extended her hand towards my face, with a strength that didn't suit those long fingers she pressed my cheeks, shaking my face and hair strongly.

"Generally speaking, Miko, are you heterosexual? Homosexual? Bisexual? Are you sadomasochist? Or are you normal?"[16]

(Sakuraba 2003, 135)

This dialogue takes place when Miko visits Satsuki looking for emotional support after Mayu abandoned the Girl's Blood. Satsuki reflects that *they*[17] fight as a form of escapism from their troubles, and by projecting their own issues they start questioning Miko about her desires. When Miko says that she does not know the answer, Satsuki points out that she does not know her desires because she has only been satisfying other people's desires. Next, Satsuki inquires about Miko's

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[16] In Japanese, the loanword "normal" (*nōmaru*) is used to indicate someone with orthodox sexual practices. In this context it is contrasting with the fetishist practices, such as sadomasochism.

[17] "They" here refers only to Satsuki.

wrestling style. When Miko responds to it with a lot of interest, Satsuki identifies Miko's passion for wrestling. From that conversation, Miko realizes what she longs for. She decides to abandon the performative job in the sadomasochist club and assume her own identity as a wrestler.

Like in Mayu's narrative, Miko's retrieval of her identity is marked linguistically using her full name in Chinese characters (山ノ辺美子 Yamanobe Miko) in contrast to her persona's name written in *katakana* (ミーコ Mīko), to which she is referred to through the whole book. On the other hand, unlike Mayu, when Miko takes over her agency, she does not leave the Girl's Blood. Instead, she changes her performance, from satisfying the audience's desires, into looking for self-satisfaction. For Miko, Girl's Blood is not a space of oppression anymore, but rather one of self-expression and self-realization.

At last, Miko faces Chinatsu in battle, in which she is encouraged by Satsuki to be herself. At that moment, Miko, who had already given up on her job at the sadomasochist club, goes through another moment of reflection in which she reconsiders her past behaviors and decisions. Finally, she frees herself from the audience's expectations and fights spontaneously. This intense fight ends with Chinatsu being rescued from the octagon and Miko screaming in delight.

> やがてその胸の奥からなにかがせりあがってきて、ふいにはじけた。爆発した。わたしは大声で吠えた。うおぉぉぉぉ──!獣のようなその咆哮は夜空に、するどく、そしてなぜか哀しげに響いた。

> Finally, something gradually rose from inside of my chest, and suddenly burst open. It exploded. I howled out loud. WOoooo! This beast-like roar echoed sharply and somehow sadly in the night sky.

> (Sakuraba 2003, 167)

Miko's scream is described as a "howl" and a "beast-like roar." These expressions are often used in Sakuraba's literature as a form of animalization and dehumanization of the characters. In *Gosick* (2003–2016), for example, the same expressions are used to describe the protagonist Victorique's cry, who is shown with a supernatural and even inhuman aura. In her later work, *Fuse* (2010), Sakuraba plays more concretely with the dichotomy between human and animal, with a story focused on creatures called *fuse*, which is a species of wolves in human disguise. In all her works, the bestial howling is used as an expression of the innermost voice that reveals an innate queerness, which can be read as a metaphor for gender non-conforming identities (not necessarily sexual minorities, but also including them). In Miko's case, it represents her freedom after a long time of repression. It is the voice of a young woman who breaks with social conventions and expectations, to be herself and pursue her desires.

7. Coming out queer

The last chapter, "File. 3 Welcome home, Satsuki," is focused on Satsuki's issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity. In the chapter's cover page, the character is presented as

> 空手少女、皐月
> 19歳。インターハイベスト4のスポーツ少女。
> 趣味、バイクと古着屋巡り。
> 指名料2500円

> Satsuki, the karate girl.
> 19-years-old. Top 4 among the girls in the Inter-High School Sports Competition.
> Hobbies: motorcycles and browsing thrift stores.
> Nomination Fee 2500 yen.

> (Sakuraba 2003, 169)

The epigraph consists of two spoken lines directed to the main character which says: "Sa-*chan*,[18] are you doing ok? What kind of face are you showing right now?" (さっちゃん、元気にしていますか / いまあなたは、どんな顔をしていますか) (Sakuraba 2003, 170). The meaning of this epigraph is immediately clarified as the chapter starts with a letter from Satsuki's mother addressing them in the same way. From this letter, it is clear that Satsuki has been keeping their distance from their parents who miss them and are trying to make contact.

Satsuki has been present since the beginning of the novel, but their role increases in Chapter 2 until they take the lead role in Chapter 3. In the first chapter, Mayu introduces Satsuki as below:

> 皐月は十九歳のフリーター。さっき言った、空手でインターハイでモハメド・アリっていうのは、この子のことだ。背はミーコと張るぐらい高いけれど、線が細くて、きゅっと無駄なく筋肉の引き締まった体をしている。腰骨に引っかけるようにはいたユーズドのジーンズに年季の入ったレザージャケット姿とかで、冬でも750CCの馬鹿でかいバイクを操ってやってくる髪は短くて、アッシュ・ブロンドに染めてリーゼント風に固めている。透き通るように肌が白く、青い血管が透けて見えそうなほどだ。ファイトのときはあまり肌を見せず、サラシを巻いた上から、長い白ランをはおり、両腕を背中に回して、背筋を伸ばしてすっくと立つ。

> ボーイッシュでかっこいいってわたしは思うのだけれど、なぜか男性のお客さんにはあまり気がない。女の子にキャーキャー言われるタイプらしくて、皐月見たさに恐々とやってくる女の子のお客さんが少しずつ増えている。でも、本人は女嫌いだ。指

---

[18] "Sa-chan" is an affectionate way of referring to Satsuki, using the abbreviation "Sa" followed by the honorific suffix "chan," which is used mainly to refer to girls and children.

名されて、手錠を引っ張られてベンチに繋がれても、苦虫を嚙み潰したような顔で
黙って煙草をふかしている。

Satsuki is a 19-years-old part-time worker. This girl is the one I men-
tioned before as the Mohamed Ali of the inter-high school sports com-
petitions. She is as tall as Miko, but her body is slenderer and more
compact with firm muscles. She wears used jeans that hang from her
hips and a good old leather jacket and rides her ridiculously large 750cc
motorbike even in winter. Her short hair is dyed ash blonde and kept
fixed in regent style. Her white skin is almost transparent enough for her
blue veins to be visible. During fights, she does not show much skin. She
puts on a long white school uniform on the top of her breast binding and
stands there stretching her back with her hands.

I think that her boyish style is cool, but for some reason, she is not very
popular among male customers. She seems like the kind of person that
girls would be screaming for, and indeed the number of female custom-
ers who come timidly out of curiosity for Satsuki has been increasing.
But she hates women. Even if she gets nominated and handcuffed to
their bench, she will just smoke her cigarette quietly with a sour face.

(Sakuraba 2003, 24)

This introduction depicts Satsuki's persona according to the database model. The
body type, hairstyle and clothes, background in martial arts, and the popularity
among girls, signal a masculine woman character to audiences informed by the
database of the *otaku* subculture. This is the persona that Satsuki presents on
stage, and also in life. However, similarly to the narrative arcs of the previous two
protagonists, Satsuki's arc also brings light to the conflict between persona and
identity. In the description above it is mentioned that Satsuki hates women, and
in the subsequent paragraphs, Mayu explains that they never share the shower
or locker room with the girls, refusing to see the girls' bodies or be seen by others.
While this initially can be perceived as part of this tomboy *kyara* who rejects any
element of femininity, it is reinterpreted in the last chapter, when Satsuki gets
romantically involved with Chinatsu, and finally, have their gender dysphoria
revealed.

At first, Satsuki and Chinatsu's relationship is presented as homosexual. When
Chinatsu gets closer to Satsuki, she reveals that she has run away from home and
that her abusive husband is stalking her. Satsuki escorts her to the nearest station
and becomes affectionate towards her. Before parting ways, Chinatsu explains
that her husband has threatened her life because he cannot accept her career
as a wrestling show fighter. She also confesses that her life goals differ from the
expectations of her husband and her father. She says that they envision for her
a beautiful place like Korakuen Hall or Ariake Coliseum, two of the biggest sports

venues in Japan used for pro-wrestling matches. However, what she wants is a "place full of corruption. A dark and frightening place that looks like the end of the world" (汚濁にまみれた場所で。この世の果てみたいな、暗くて恐ろしい場所で) (Sakuraba 2003, 231). Satsuki recognizes that the place she longs for is the Girl's Blood and relates to that desire. This dialogue ends with Chinatsu asking Satsuki to die with her, to which Satsuki responds with a joke. Chinatsu is not one of the narrators, but her story also represents issues of gender bias, such as the pressure of her father's and husband's expectations for her (which resonates with Miko's narrative) and the domestic violence that she suffers from her husband (which resonates with Mayu's). Chinatsu also expresses a form of disruption of the gender norms, by desiring an ugly and corrupted place instead of a beautiful and clean one, as it is socially expected of her.

The next day, Satsuki and Chinatsu face each other in a battle at Girl's Blood. Satsuki's narration oscillates between descriptions of the violence that they are performing and reflections about their feelings for each other. During that fight, Chinatsu again asks Satsuki to die with her, to which Satsuki responds positively this time. This scene too emphasizes the performativity of the Girl's Blood, by bringing simultaneously two contradicting ideas: the physical violence (the performance of a fight) and the emotional bond between the two characters. After the fight, Chinatsu tries to use the shower with Satsuki who refuses to do so. In that scene, Chinatsu indicates for the first time that she knows about Satsuki's gender dysphoria:

> いっしょに死ぬって言ったでしょ。だったら、いっしょに生きてもいけるでしょ。それと
> もそれはまったく別のことなの?わたし、男の人ってわからないから。
>
> You said you would die with me, right? But you could also live with me, couldn't you? Or is that a completely different thing? I don't understand men.
>
> (Sakuraba 2003, 256)

Angry, Satsuki demands Chinatsu to leave immediately, but later escorts her to the station holding hands. On their way to the station, Satsuki inquires Chinatsu if she will not go back home, to which she responds that neither her husband's nor her family's house are her home and that she wants to create a home with a loved person to whom she will want to return. From that conversation, Satsuki contemplates returning to their own family house but immediately remembers that it is impossible. Later it is revealed that Satsuki avoids their family because of the fear of rejection of their gender identity.

Satsuki and Chinatsu are a peculiar couple in Sakuraba's oeuvre. A short review of Sakuraba's novels published in the magazine *Bessatsu Otona Anime Otona Ranobe* (別冊 オトナアニメ オトナラノベ, *Anime for Adults – Extra Issue: Light Novel*

for Adults) (Inoue 2011) calls attention to the fact that many of Sakuraba's books are centered on a pair of main characters, some of whom are of the same sex (mainly two girls), such as *A Lollipop or a Bullet* and *Suitei Shōjo*, while others, like *Gosick*, have a heterosexual main couple. Inoue (2011, 48) suggests that having a male character in the role of the *knight* is what made it possible for *Gosick* to show a shed of hope, as opposed to the other mentioned works, that have tragic ends. While this observation is convincing, it is also necessary to point out that even the heterosexual pairings in Sakuraba's literature show some level of questioning or disturbance of the gender norms. Satsuki and Chinatsu, for example, form a heterosexual couple (once Satsuki comes out as a transgender man), still, there is an element of queering as Satsuki is mostly perceived and described as a woman throughout the novel. In this sense, Satsuki is part of the list of male protagonists with queer gender identity in Sakuraba's literature.

The revelation of Satsuki's gender identity is the climax of the last chapter, and thus the climax of the novel. It is Chinatsu who first verbalizes that Satsuki suffers from gender dysphoria:

> 「最初にあったとき、わかったわ。目があったとき。ねぇ……いったいどうして誰も気づかないの?」
>
> 「……知らない」
>
> 「皐月は男の子。だから、気づいてない子の裸とか見ないように、気を遣って、更衣室に入らないようにとかしてたんでしょ。本当は、女子更衣室入り放題、シャワー入り放題なんて、楽しいのに」
>
> 「……べつに気を遣ってるとかじゃないよ。そんなんじゃない」
>
> "I knew it from the first time we met. The first time our eyes met. Hey... why hasn't anyone noticed it?"
>
> "I don't know..."
>
> "Satsuki, you are a man. That's why you do things like not looking at the naked bodies of the girls who didn't notice it and you are careful when you enter the locker room. Even though it would be a lot of fun for you to enter freely in the girls' locker room and showers."
>
> "It is not like I am being particularly careful. It is not like that."
>
> (Sakuraba 2003, 268)

Faced by Chinatsu's statement, Satsuki finally reveals that they have identified themselves as a man since a young age:

> 「物心ついたときから、男だと思ってた。段々、おかしいなって思いだした。学校の制服とか、苦痛だった。スカートをはくのも、女子の列に並ぶもの。男の目で世

界を見てたし、男の目で女を見てた。女として扱われるのが辛かった。思春期とか
とくに。なにかが絶対にまちがってると思ってて、だけどどうしていいかわからなく
て、ずっと……」

"I have thought of myself as a man since I can remember. I gradually started thinking that it was weird. The school uniform was painful to wear. Putting a skirt on, cueing up with the girls. I saw the world with men's eyes, and I saw the girls with men's eyes. Being treated like a girl was hard. Especially during puberty. I knew that something was definitely wrong, but I had no idea what to do, for all this time..."

(Sakuraba 2003, 269)

Satsuki's coming out is followed by a dive into their childhood traumas:

体がどんどん女性らしく変化していくことに、静かなパニックを感じていた。欲望の
対象は女の人だけど、女が女を好きっていうのとは、どこかしらちがった。わたしは
ずっと、自分を、男のはずだと思っていた。この体はおかしいって。

As my body was getting more and more feminine, I started panicking in silence. I desired women, but I felt that somehow it was different from being a woman who loves another woman. I always thought that I might be a man. That my body was wrong.

(Sakuraba 2003, 270–271)

This narration seems like a *naturalistic* representation of transgender experiences, which is remarkable for a *shōnen* light novel created within the manga/anime-like realism model. Satsuki's words, though very simple, express very clearly the experiences of a person suffering from gender dysphoria. In both accounts, Satsuki mentions how their dysphoria was potentialized by the sexual desire for women. However, taking the whole statement into account, it is impossible to ignore the elements of aversion towards the signs of femininity in their own body, and towards wearing female clothes. Lastly, it is by succeeding in love with a woman (Chinatsu) that Satsuki can finally accept their own gender identity and overcome the fear of returning home. The novel ends with a hopeful note that Satsuki will come out to their parents now that they are unafraid of the world's judgment.

Finally, Sakuraba not only decided to have the narrative of coming out as the climax of her story, but she also alluded to a celebrity who came out as transgender around the time that she wrote the novel. The name of the character "Andō Chinatsu" is a reference to Andō Hiromasa's (安藤大将) deadname, a transgender man who was a renowned boat racer before his transition. Curiously, Sakuraba used Andō's deadname for one character, and the narrative of gender dysphoria for another. Sakuraba also directly mentioned Andō's deadname in the postface of the original publication expressing that it is "a novel dedicated to a woman that

no longer exists, Andō Chinatsu" (いまはもういない安藤千夏さんっていう一人の女の子に捧げる小説) (Sakuraba 2003, 281). Although deadnaming is controversial as it is considered a form of microaggression for dismissing one's gender identity, other publications in the same period, such as Andō's autobiography, and Sakai Tōko and Shono Rui's manga *Arigato, Chinatsu* (2003), also mentioned it apparently with his consent (considering that he gave interviews for the authors of the manga). Therefore, though deadnaming can be criticized as a practice, there is no evidence to support that Sakuraba's use was considered offensive at that time. On the contrary, Sakuraba's novel dramatizes sexual minorities' narratives, in a simplified form for young male audiences, which can help growing attention to their dilemmas and promote social acceptance and understanding from a young age.

8. Conclusion

Sakuraba Kazuki succeeded as a light novel writer for young male audiences by initially masking her gender and trying to adjust to the genre's conventions. However, she became renowned for transcending the boundaries of genre and demographics by narrating stories of characters who represent the experiences of young girls and gender-nonconforming people dealing with the oppressions of a patriarchal heteronormative society. In *Red × Pink*, Sakuraba sheds light upon various family issues that are rooted in gender inequalities that can traumatize young people and lead them to the loss of their agency and identity. Mayu suffers from a need for affection and attention because of the abuse she suffered from her mother at a young age. Miko lacks agency and lives her life to satisfy others as a consequence of the rejection, the ostracism, and the need to conform with the expectations of society for her. Satsuki leads a life of repression due to the gender dysphoria that they could not accept or share with their loved ones. Chinatsu is a victim of domestic violence and also suffers pressure for not fulfilling her father's and husband's expectations for her. The novel, thusly, represents those issues, but also develops narratives of overcoming them, through self-discovery, acceptance, empowerment, and most importantly, the retrieval of the agency.

As this close reading demonstrates, Sakuraba employed the conventions of manga/anime-like realism, such as the portrayal of attractive female characters that are created based on the *otaku* subculture database, as a form of engaging male readers with her story. However, not only does her narrative succeed in representing the gendered experiences of young women and sexual minorities to this male audience, but also her metafictional approach evinces the problems of representation in the *kyara* model. Ultimately, the protagonists in *Red × Pink* abandon their oppressive *kyara*-like personas to become fully-realized characters.

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PERFORMING ARTISTS' VOICES REMAIN UNHEARD:
THEATER PRODUCTIONS AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN JAPAN

Annegret Bergmann

This article elucidates the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions on performing art productions and the insufficiency of financial assistance programs from the government during the first months of the pandemic 2020 in Japan. By taking an opera production and kabuki productions as examples, the reactions of the management of Biwako Hall and the commercial theater production company Shōchiku to the pandemic crisis are described; how they implemented innovative and new production measures and incorporated digital tools to compensate for financial losses, as well as to retain their old audience and attract new audience. It becomes clear how insignificant the Japanese government perceives the performing arts and how little public financial support they receive. Furthermore, the indispensable role that corporate support and commercial production companies play in theater productions in Japan is illuminated.

Keywords: Japanese theater production, opera, kabuki, COVID-19 pandemic, Japanese culture policy

1. Introduction

In October 2019, the kabuki actor Ichikawa Ebizō (市川海老蔵) IX performed in the play *Oedipus* at Theater Cocoon in Shibuya, Tokyo. In the play, the city of Thebes is afflicted by a mysterious plague. To counter this plague, the city is protected by a thick shelter to reduce the impact of the contaminated air. Everyone who steps out of town wears heavy protective clothing and masks. Rather than addressing the people directly, the politicians in the play smile at the camera and address them remotely on a large television screen. At the time, nobody could have imagined

that protective masks and remote communication would be part of daily life in Japan from February 2020.

The Japanese theater landscape is characterized by extensive diversity. This landscape includes 8th century theater genres as well as the latest offerings of the avant-garde companies, along with all the genres in-between. Musical theater is staged in all its variations, from classic operas to experimental sessions, in addition to traditional dance forms to cutting edge performances. All these genres are equally affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its countermeasures.

This article deals with the impact of these measures on the performing arts in Japan after theater closures in February 2020. The impact of the COVID-19 restrictions and the financial assistance programs by the government are elucidated by means of two performing arts genres: an opera production, representative of a Western theater genre and of production at a publicly run venue, and a kabuki production, representative of a traditional theater genre that is commercially produced by a private production company. These cases also represent the current process of production of theater and musical theater in Japan.

To provide the background against which performing arts are produced in Japan, the history and aims of Japanese cultural policy and the governmental as well as private organizations that provide financial support for art and culture are described. This is followed by a description of the financial assistance program for cultural infrastructure and activities initiated by the government to assist the actors and artists of the arts and entertainment industries. The next part deals with the reactions of the management teams of both example productions to the COVID-19 crisis that highlight the inadequate support provided by the public administration to Japanese theater as well as the importance of private companies in the performing arts in Japan. These examples demonstrate that while there has been a vociferous demand to grant recognition to the importance of the performing arts in society and to provide the performing arts industry with financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, these demands have remained unheard.

2. Japan's cultural policy

The procedure of institutionalizing cultural policy and consequently ensuring governmental support for the arts is based on the nature of cultural patronage and the traditional role exercised by the state in the artistic field. The organization of cultural policy follows the political and administrative structures of a country. Therefore, the political culture determines the cultural policy of a country, whereby, according to the political scientist Klaus von Beyme (1998, 412), the policy's deficiencies are primarily due to the respective civil society traditions and its attitude toward art and culture. This is applicable to Japan.

Historically, the Japanese government has strictly demarcated education and culture. The former falls within the jurisdiction of the government, while the latter is primarily envisaged as the responsibility of the private sector. Since the establishment of the modern nation-state in 1868, Japan's cultural policy first and foremost aimed to preserve important buildings and important objects of fine art and crafts. The first extensive inventory and the first registration of national treasures by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of the Imperial Household took place in 1888. In 1897, the Law for the Preservation of Ancient Temples and Shrines was proclaimed. In this law, national treasures were defined as significant ancient artworks or seminal artifacts in the decorative arts or architecture with exemplary character. In 1929, the Law for the Preservation of National Treasures was proclaimed. This law remained in effect until 1949. Apart from the lifting of restrictions on the construction of theaters[1] or the renewal of control and censorship on performing hours and contents of plays,[2] the performing arts in Japan were not subject to any political measures until well after World War II.

In the new constitution, adopted in 1947, Japan declared itself as a cultural nation. A division dedicated to the arts and culture was established within the Social Education Department of the Ministry of Education. Apart from this, no other step was implemented by the government, and it prioritized reconstruction, the development of social infrastructure, and the promotion of industry over the promotion of arts and culture. The adoption of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Policies in 1950 determined the concept and definition of tangible and intangible cultural properties and their protection, that remained the main focus of the cultural administration until the founding of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA) in 1968 as a result of the merger of the Cultural Bureau of the Ministry of Education and the Cultural Properties Protection Commission. The ACA is positioned as an extra-ministerial bureau of the Ministry of Education and has no separate minister (Neki et al. 1996, 27). The establishment of the ACA as a part of the Ministry of Education two years after the construction of the first National Theater exclusively dedicated to traditional performing arts elucidates the insignificance attached by the political agenda of the Japanese government to other types

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[1] With the lifting of restrictions on the construction of theaters in 1868, the inheritance of theater licenses had also been abolished. The kabuki theaters, banned since 1841 from the city center, moved back to Tokyo's center from outside of the city, and small theaters at shrines and temples which previously had only temporary licenses, also entered the market. New theaters were founded, intensifying competition in this highly volatile business (Kurata 1999, 111).

[2] The Regulation for the Control of Theaters passed in 1883, placing theater performances under the control of the police headquarters (Ōzasa 1990, 32), a regulation that lasted until the end of World War II.

of performing arts, especially modern drama (新劇 *shingeki*). This shows that the Japanese government did not aim at comprehensive and balanced public support for all genres of the performing arts in the conception of the first National Theater and that the preservation and promotion of traditional performing arts, such as kabuki, puppet theater (文楽 *bunraku*), and folk performing arts (民俗芸能 *minzoku geinō*), such as puppet theater from Tokushima (淡路人形芝居 *Awaji ningyō shibai*) or shrine dances from the Izumo Shrine in Shimane Prefecture (出雲神楽 *Izumo no kagura*), were considered of paramount importance.[3] As the cultural policy scholar Kawashima Nobuko points out: "The area of cultural policy has been little developed at [the] central level in any case, and support for the arts and culture is not mandatory for local authorities" (Kawashima 2012, 301).

Until the 1980s, the government's main concern revolved around economic matters, and the promotion of culture remained secondary (Neki 2007, 47). Voices demanding reliable governmental support for the performing arts remained unheard. The "Era of Culture" (文化の時代 *bunka no jidai*) advocated by the then Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi (大平正芳) resulted only in the construction of countless public cultural institutions during the 1980s and 1990s. However, these multipurpose cultural halls (文化会館 *bunka kaikan* or 文化ホール *bunka hōru*) were constructed by local public administrations against the backdrop of the bubble economy. They were not initiated by or in accordance with the cultural agents, let alone on the initiative of performing artists (Neki 2007, 99). Rather, they were purely economically oriented projects, implemented to stimulate the local economy.

The 1990s heralded the beginning of a more active financing of arts and culture by the government. However, the ACA promoted preservation and access to rather than innovation of art and culture because its funding programs prioritized support for established and successful cultural organizations and associations of artists. Thus, by funding such associations, the administration could avoid critically assessing the need of financing individual projects (Havens 1987, 342).

With the establishment of the Japan Arts Fund (芸術文化資金 Geijutsu Bunka Shikin) in 1990, there was a sharp increase in the promotion of the performing arts. The organization's endowment capital comprised 50 billion yen of government funds and 10 billion yen provided by private companies (Kobayashi 2004, 13). With the establishment of this organization, the government and private industries jointly financed cultural activities for the first time. This joint effort disintegrated the dual structure that had prevailed in Japan in which education

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[3] In 1946, the politicians renewed their interest in the idea of a national theater; however, it was only pursued at the end of the 1950s after the country had recovered economically. For the history and the implementation of the Japanese National Theaters, see Bergmann (2018).

was the responsibility of the state, and culture, especially theater, was considered the responsibility of private entities. The establishment of the Japan Arts Fund was paralleled with the amendment of the National Theater Law of 1966 adding to its duties the assistance to cultural and artistic activities. The National Theater was redesignated as a special public corporation under the name of the Japan Arts Council (日本文化振興会 Nihon Bunka Shinkōkai). This model also led to the conceptualization of the New National Theater for opera, musical, ballet, and modern drama that opened in 1997 (Neki et al. 1996, 27–28). In 2003, the Japan Arts Council was redesignated as an independent administrative institution in charge of the National Theater, National Noh Theater, National Bunraku Theater, and the New National Theater and oversaw the opening of the National Theater Okinawa in 2004 (Japan Arts Council 2020). Its budget comprises of the Japan Arts Fund budget, the National Theater Budget, and the New National Theater Budget. The Japan Arts Fund supports general artistic and cultural activities unrelated to the national theaters. Since its establishment, the support and promotion of culture has been realized through a partnership of cultural creative groups, the state and regional administrations, and private industry. Nevertheless, the cultural policy of the public sector still lacks efficient support for contemporary artistic and cultural creative activities. Japan's current cultural policy can be characterized as "a patchwork of projects conventionally supported and sporadic programs undertaken without strategic frameworks and visions to embrace these" (Kawashima 2012, 302).

In the 1990s, the private industry's share of cultural funding increased. In 1990, the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts (企業メセナ協議会 Kigyō Mesena Kyōgikai) was founded. In addition to its main task of enabling mutually fertile partnerships between art and business, the association provides its members with information and statistics on art and commerce; organizes conferences, symposia, and exhibitions; conducts research, and publishes and awards prizes for outstanding sponsorship projects (Neki et al. 1996, 169). This specific model for cultural support financed by private initiatives and companies plays a significant role in supporting the performing arts in Japan.

Only three of the approximately 1,800 public theaters and cultural halls that are in Japan today have a resident company.[4] As it became increasingly difficult for local authorities to manage and operate the numerous facilities directly due to the administrative staff's lack of expertise, a designated management system (指定管理制度 shitei kanri seido) was introduced under the government of Prime

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[4]   The first resident company was established in 1990 at Art Tower Mito in the city of Mito and was named Acting Company Mito, followed by the establishment of Piccolo Company of Hyōgo Performing Arts Center in Nishinomiya in 1994, and the establishment of Company of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center in Shizuoka in 1997.

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Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō (小泉純一郎) in 2003. This management system allows local authorities to outsource the management of their facilities to private organizations. This system was introduced to allow a wider range of management, including designated managers and non-profit organizations, that were not allowed to get involved in productions at public cultural facilities under the old administrative system. Since the introduction of the designated management system, the preconditions for operation have also been reduced, as the designated managing organizations are able to treat the entrance fees as their own income (Nishimatsu 2014, 3–4). The designated managing system assumes responsibility for the efficient provision of services, while the public sector ensures that public welfare stipulations are observed. This partnership with the private sector means a relief for the strained public budgets in the public sector, since the private entrepreneurs provide all or part of the financing themselves, therefore taking full responsibility to ensure that the project is profitable. Thus, this business model represents partial privatization of the performing arts in public venues. In the first place, the introduction of this public-private partnership aimed at saving personal costs and outsourcing personnel in cultural facilities (Kobayashi 2013, 12). This clearly shows that these cultural policy measures focus on economic aspects of productions and neglect performing artists' needs. The concept of public theaters in the sense of subsidized theaters and their productions by the public sector does not exist and has never been intended by the ACA.

Japan's cultural policy could be characterized as patronage of arms-length governmental support (Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989, 54–55). Only 1% of the annual fiscal budget is allocated for culture, of which more than 73% is spent on cultural heritage preservation measures, as shown in the pie chart representing the budget of the ACA in 2018 in Figure 1 below. This shows that only about a quarter of this budget is available to support cultural activities produced outside of national institutions. In this context, it is important to note that while Japanese people do not disregard the importance of arts and culture, and are interested in them, the state has never given a high priority to these activities, a stance unmistakably reflected in the cultural fiscal budget. Engagement in arts and culture, either in creation or consumption, is considered to be the personal hobbies of those involved and to be of little significance to society at large (Kawashima 2020, sec. 2, para. 1).

In his *The Arts as the Basis of a Nation* (芸術立国論 *Geijutsu Rikkoku Ron*), a book published in 2001, Hirata Oriza (平田オリザ), playwright and director, advocated the view that a modern, economically well-off country like Japan needs to subsidize performing artists for the sake of a pluralistic society, and that performing arts should be officially supported in local communities where the local culture is mutating to the preservation of cultural properties alone to attract
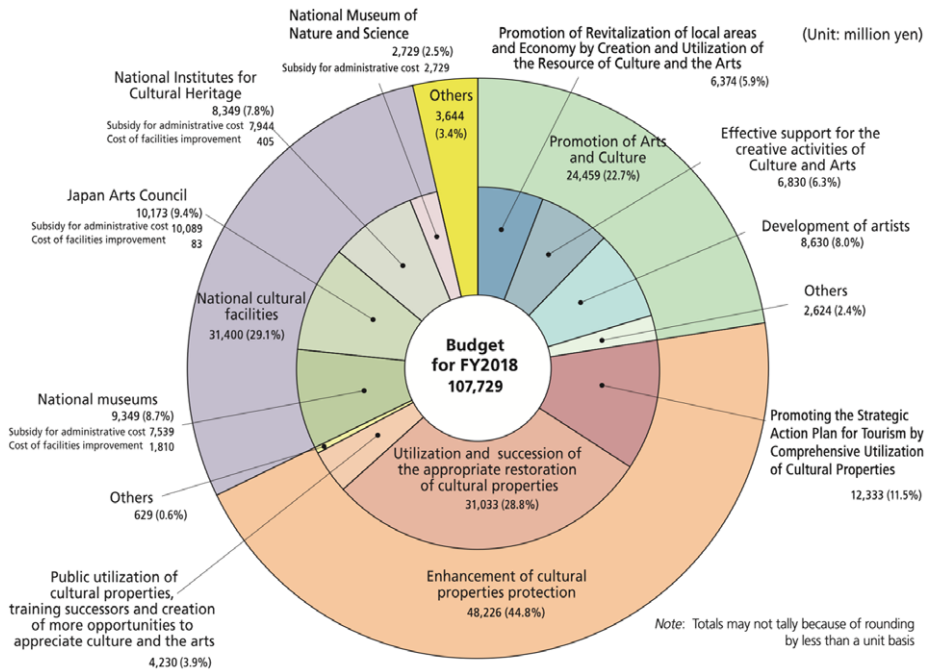
Figure 1: Budget for the ACA for the fiscal year (FY) 2018 by areas

(Source: Commissioner's Secretariat Agency for Cultural Affairs 2018, 11)

tourists, ultimately failing to be of use to the community (Hirata 2001, 39–43). Policy deficiencies are primarily due to respective civil society traditions and their attitudes toward art and culture. Civil society is considered a participatory model of society, that serves as an indicator of the degree of democratization of a society. An active, powerful civil society has the potential to influence national politics and political processes and is thus considered a normative part of a democracy. In this context, Japan's civil society can be regarded as a late-comer,[5] although citizens' initiatives and non-governmental organizations have demonstrated a new trend toward citizens' participation since the 1990s, a trend made possible due to improved legal frameworks. However, political influence tends to be marginal because of the unequal power relations between business associations and citizens. Japan remains an interventionist state that shapes civil

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[5]   Sprotte (2012) and Berry (1998) state the existence of civic engagement in Japan as early as the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) and the first half of the 20th century, respectively. In their studies, they disregard the democratizing potential of civil society as a normative order and thus recognize a "prototypical variation" (Sprotte 2012, 9) of civic engagement in subsectors of pre-1945 Japanese society.

society in close contact with business organizations (Weiß and Goebel 2002, 127; Foljanty-Jost and Haufe 2006, 253). This might be one reason why there are no strong voices in the public to demand more public support for arts and culture and thus also the performing arts.

3. Support programs by the Japanese government for the arts and culture during the COVID-19 pandemic

Against this historical and cultural policy background, it is not surprising that the Japanese culture sector heavily depends on corporate engagement, a constellation that is unique to Japan (Kawashima 2012, 306). The three biggest production companies in Japan, Tōhō Co. Ltd.,[6] Shōchiku Co. Ltd, and the Shiki Theater Company,[7] along with numerous other privately run smaller theaters and companies, manage productions and activities of a wide-ranging scale and diverse genres. To benefit from the Japan Arts Fund support, budget theaters and performing arts troupes have to apply for subsidies for every production. The cultural policy's focus on cost-reducing structures of productions in publicly run theaters and its disregard for the privately run theater scene is also reflected in the measures employed by the government in the COVID-19 crisis. The following section shows that support measures for artists and theaters in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic were framed in economic support measures and grants or in limited subsidies to promote Japanese arts online.

The following data outlines the share of the performing arts and music market in the Japanese gross domestic product (GDP). In 2016, for example, the performing arts and music market accounted for 508.9 billion yen, or 5.1% of the total contribution of cultural and creative industries to the GDP[8] that is approximately 0.095% of the Japanese GDP (ACA 2018, 9). Every autumn, PIA Research Institute publishes an annual report of the music and stage entertainment market in Japan. It has stated a steady yearly increase in this commercially produced market since the start of its survey in 2000. In 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the stage and music entertainment market size was 629.5 billion yen: 205.8 billion

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[6] The Tōhō Co. Ltd. was founded in 1932. It consists of a film, theater, and corporate real estate department. It manages two theaters directly. Theaters like the Tokyo Takarazuka Theater in Tokyo and the Takarazuka Theater in Takarazuka belong to the company conglomerate (Tōhō Co. Ltd. n.d.).

[7] Shiki Theater Company was founded in 1954 and operates nine theaters exclusively all over Japan. It employs over 1,300 people including actors and technical and management staff. It stages over 3,500 performances a year (Shiki Theater Company n.d.).

[8] This cultural GDP includes museums, the performing arts and music, art and photography, and the revenue from copyrights, media, design, and creative services.

yen for the music market and 423.7 billion yen for the stage entertainment market. Compared to 2018, this showed an increase of 7.4% (PIA Research Institute 2021). It should be noted that this commercial entertainment business was stable until COVID-19 countermeasures were implemented. Due to the pandemic, from January 2020 to December 2020, the Institute observed an 80% decrease in the size of the stage and music entertainment market in comparison to that in 2019, down to 110.6 billion yen (PIA Research Institute 2021).

On February 26, 2020, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (安倍晋三, in office 2006–2007 and 2012–2020) requested all theaters refrain from running performances on the basis of self-restriction (自粛 jishuku). This measure was intended to last for two weeks. However, on April 7, a state of emergency was proclaimed in Tokyo and six other prefectures, and on April 16, the restrictions were implemented in the whole country. This state of emergency was not lifted until the end of May 2020. Meanwhile, big theater events, such as the name-taking ceremony[9] of the kabuki actor Ichikawa Ebizō IX adopting the name of Ichikawa Danjūrō (市川団十郎) XIII, had to be cancelled. Likewise, all performing arts events planned for the Olympic and Paralympic Games had to be called off with the cancellation of the games due to the pandemic. Since June 1, 2020, holding live performances was possible again; however, infection clusters of COVID-19 occurred in a small theater in Tokyo[10] and the Tokyo Takarazuka Company explained that the performing arts not only had to cope with the big financial losses during the three-month-long closures of theaters, but they also needed to find new ways of how to deal with threats of the pandemic in order to survive (Hagiwara 2020, 35–36).

In April and June 2020, two supplementary budgets, comprising 108 trillion yen, were launched as emergency economic measures against the COVID-19 pandemic, along with government spending of 25 trillion yen, 4.6% of the GDP. In the first supplementary budget, 6.1 billion yen were earmarked for the ACA, mainly in support of cultural institutions, but not for supporting freelance artists. This first supplementary budget for the ACA included 2.1 billion yen for measures to prepare for the reopening of cultural facilities. Museums, theaters, and music halls were entitled to apply for a support of up to 4 million yen to cover expenses such as the installation of infrared cameras, air conditioning equipment, air purifiers, and alcohol disinfectants in order to implement anti-virus hygiene regulations. A budget of 1.4 billion yen was provided for the implementation of digital content

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[9]   Name-taking ceremonies in kabuki (襲名 shūmei) are among the most important events, not only during an actor's career, who climbs to a new career level with the new name, but also generating enormous revenues for the production company through the months of name-taking performances and events.

[10] In early July 2020, a cluster of COVID-19 infections was traced to a performance at Theater Moliere in Shinjuku, Tokyo and in August 2020, at Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka.

infrastructures to enable the streaming of high-resolution theatrical art contents and museum exhibitions. Additionally, 1.3 billion yen were allocated to so-called "Art Caravan" (アートキャラバン *Āto kyaraban*) programs to revive the arts by joining the forces of fine art organizations, artists, and local public organizations to organize art events throughout Japan. Another 3 billion yen was destined to promote opportunities for children's arts and culture experiences at schools and other local facilities. The government also adopted a fiscal measure in which the tickets of cancelled cultural, arts, and sports events due to the anti-COVID-19 measures were recognized as tax deductible donations by the individual customer in the case when no refund was claimed (ACA 2020–2021).

The second supplementary budget comprised 56 billion yen for sports and culture, in which the emphasis was laid on the support for the acquisition of software. Through this program, artists could increase their efforts by boosting their Internet presence. Furthermore, self-employed people and freelancers were entitled to apply for a subsidy of up to 200,000 yen. Actors and musicians benefited from this support program, as they mainly work as self-employed freelancers. Overall, substantial means of subsistence for individual artists were not provided, and the option for applying for financial help in case of cancelled programs and performances only became available in April 2020 (ACA 2020–2022).

As a support measure, the ACA launched a program called "J-LODlive" in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, that provides subsidies to promote the creation of global demand for Japanese entertainment content. It was financed by the first supplementary budget of the fiscal year 2020. This program entitled organizers who had postponed or cancelled their performances due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus to apply for subsidies for live performances and their recordings for international distribution. The recording production and distribution costs of the videos were also subject to these subsidies. All performing arts were entitled to apply for these subsidies for one production. The subsidies themselves encompass up to 50 million yen per application (J-LODlive 2020).[11]

4. Theater productions and the COVID-19 pandemic crisis

The focus of the first two support programs for art and culture by the Japanese government in the COVID-19 pandemic were to benefit the venues, that is, the theaters and concert halls, and support the implementation of hygiene measures but neglected assistance for freelance artists, such as actors and performers. This

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[11] On February 16, 2021, only 79% of the money earmarked for this program had been spent (J-LODlive 2020), a fact that might hint at bureaucratic hurdles or that the program was not sufficiently tailored to the need of the cultural industry.

part deals with the reactions of the management teams of two example productions to the COVID-19 crisis that highlight the inadequate support provided by the public administration to Japanese theater on the one side and in consequence the importance of private companies to the performing arts in Japan on the other.

4.1 The opera production at Biwako Hall in March 2020

The Japanese government's call to refrain from performing came only a few days before the premiere of Richard Wagner's opera *Twilight of the Gods* at Biwako Hall in Ōtsu city. This was the last part of the cycle of four epic music dramas, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, that had been performed at this theater since 2017.

Before looking closer at this "miracle of operatic proportions," as described by the critic Robert Markow (2020), some remarks on the production at this venue can shed light on Japan's opera production culture at large. An opera production in Japan can be compared to a puzzle that consists of several parts or agents. These agents include: the privately run opera companies[12] that provide the singers, orchestras that provide the musicians, and theaters or halls that provide the venues. Directors, conductors, and soloists for the star parts in a production are often hired independently. While this may seem operationally complex, this system is well established; the opera productions at the New National Theater are also run this way. The Association of Opera Companies in Japan has proven this to be an efficient means to produce opera performances (Kobata 2018, 63) as none of the opera theaters in Japan maintain residing opera singers or an orchestra; thus, this established complex production system is judged in a positive light by the artists of the association.

Biwako Hall, or formally, Biwako Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Shiga, is one of the most beautiful and technologically advanced opera venues in Japan. It is located in Ōtsu, a city with 350,000 inhabitants next to Lake Biwa in Western Japan. It includes the Main Theater, with 1,845 seats for the performance of operas, ballet, and classical concerts, a Middle Theater seating 800 for drama, ballet, or concerts, and the Ensemble Hall for chamber music with a seating capacity of 323 (Biwako Hall n.d.). As seen in Figure 2, the budget of Biwako Hall allocates 170 million yen for production projects, money that is sufficient to cover the costs

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[12] One of the biggest of these opera companies in Japan is the Nikikai (二期会) Opera Foundation founded in 1952. Its members consist of 2,500 singers who belong to five sister organizations: the Kansai Nikikai founded in 1964, the Hokkaidō Nikikai founded in 1964, the Nagoya Nikikai founded in 1970, and the Chūgoku Nikikai and Shikoku Nikikai founded in 1973. In 2005, the foundation was renamed as Tokyo Nikikai Opera Foundation (Tokyo Nikikai Opera Foundation 2007). The foundation cooperates closely with the New National Theater in Tokyo and is a part of most important opera productions in Japan.

Number of performances in 2015:	282
Visitors (per annum):	115,000
Project budget:	ca. ¥ 1.7 billion
Major income:	
Usage fees (including parking fees):	¥ 220 million
Operating revenue (admission fees + performance fees):	¥ 170 million
Prefectural grants (designated management fees):	**¥ 906 million**
Government subsidies:	¥ 170 million
Private grants, etc.:	¥ 100 million
Major expenditures:	
Remuneration and salaries:	¥ 300 million
Performance fees, etc.:	¥ 350 million
Commission fees:	¥ 540 million
Self-earnings ratio: Usage fees + Business revenue / Total expenses = 23	

Figure 2: Biwako Hall Stage Arts Fund 2015

(Source: Courtesy of Fujino Kazuo, Member of the Executive Board of Biwako Hall)

of one new opera production, for example as the *Twilight of the Gods* production presented below. It is important to note that 906 million yen per annum are provided by the prefectural government as fees for designated management costs that are not fixed to specific projects but can be allocated to productions by the management of Biwako Hall.

Numajiri Ryūsuke (沼尻竜典), the artistic director of Biwako Hall, embarked on performing the Ring Cycle together with veteran German director Michael Hampe, stage designer Henning van Gierke, and Scottish visual artist Jamie Goodenough, in 2017. This team made extensive use of state-of-the-art stage technology in the first three performances and the last performance *Twilight of the Gods* was scheduled for March 7 and March 8, 2020 (Markow 2020). The closing of all theaters and the cancelation of the performance would have meant that the Ring opera cycle at Biwako Hall would forever remain unfinished as rescheduling was impossible due to the complex production structure that makes it difficult to guarantee the participation of its members on a different date. This opera production included the Kyoto Symphony Orchestra conducted by Numajiri, two casts consisting of Japanese singers, two German singers, and one American singer, all supported by the Biwako Hall Choir and the New National Theater Chorus. Even though the Shiga prefectural government preferred to cancel the performance, the director of Biwako Hall, Yamanaka Takashi (山中隆) opted for a solution that would value the artistic work and finish it adequately while keeping the risk of infection for the performing artists as low as possible. Yamanaka decided that both performances

Figure 3: Performance of the opera Twilight of the Gods without an audience,
Biwako Hall Main Theater, March 7, 2020

(Source: © Biwako Hall)

were to be staged without an audience and be livestreamed on YouTube free of charge on March 7 and March 8, 2020. With the consent and strong support of the artists and staff, the live performances took place without an audience and were streamed online free of charge (see Figure 3). At the same time, the video recording of the performances served as material for its commercial release on DVD. Approximately 10,000 people watched each online performance completely and roughly 370,000 people either watched the whole or part of the performance (Tsutsui 2020, 23). Hence, this virtual performance reached a much bigger audience than it would have had as a live performance. Furthermore, this production was unique in its suddenness and paved the way for further solutions for the world of musical theater to cope with the COVID-19 crisis. One reason for pushing through the performance might have been the subsidies of roughly 50 million yen by the government that would only be paid in case of an accomplished performance (Fujino 2020a). Aside from the staging of an opera production, despite strict restrictions due to the pandemic, this production will be remembered as the first worldwide livestreaming of a Japanese opera production. This became possible only because Yamanaka holds position of the managing director as well as head

of the board of directors and had the command of the money for the designated management fund. Therefore, he was able to finance the extra cost of streaming and video production out of this fund without any delay. This was important as at the beginning of March 2020, governmental emergency help to the performing arts was not yet sanctioned.

The exceptional reaction to the livestreaming of the performing and coping with the imminent cancellation of the production by all artists and staff involved was honored with the 68th Kikuchi Kan Award (菊池寛賞 *Kikuchi Kan Shō*)[13] in 2020 for an innovative measure in the field of performing arts during the COVID-19 crisis. In an interview, Yamanaka Takashi expressed his hope that this example might be one way of coping with the crisis and at the same time a means to reach broader audiences (TR Times 2020). The livestreaming of the performance not only prevented the spread of the virus, but also reached a wider audience online that also appealed to people that had never seen an opera before (Akita 2020, 29). While streaming of live performances is a common phenomenon currently, in March 2020, this felt like a miracle in the world of Japanese opera. Without doubt, the digitalization of stage performances was a viable solution.

4.2 Kabuki production under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions

The following example deals with the impact of the closing of the theaters from the end of February until the end of May 2020 in a genre that heavily depends on a lively interaction with its audience: kabuki.

In Japan, the art form of kabuki includes over 400 years of performance, preservation, and transmission of sophisticated speaking, singing, dance, and acting techniques that are unparalleled in their stylization and yet individually characterized by the actors. It was designated as cultural world heritage in 2005. The Kabukiza Theater, located in Tokyo's busy Ginza shopping area, is the main theater for exhibiting kabuki performances in Japan today. Kabuki performances are exclusively produced by the private production company Shōchiku Co. Ltd., founded in 1902. With the gradual takeover of all important theaters and, thus, of all kabuki actors by the founders of the company, the twin brothers Ōtani Takejirō (大谷竹次郎, 1877–1969) and Shirai Matsujirō (白井松次郎, 1877–1951), the multicorporate enterprise has dominated kabuki productions since the 1930s.[14] The

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[13] The prize is presented annually by the monthly literary magazine *Bungei Shunjū* (文藝春秋, *Literature and Arts Spring and Autumn*) and the Society for the Promotion of Japanese Literature (日本文学振興会 Nihon Bungaku Shinkōkai). Originally initiated in 1938 by the dramatist Kikuchi Kan (菊池寛, 1888–1948) to reward authors for their lifework, it was revived in 1952 and the category of recipients was enlarged to honor achievements in cinema, broadcasting, performing arts, and other fields in contemporary literary culture.

[14] As the number of kabuki productions decreased during the 1920s to half the number of the

achievements of the kabuki stars and the skillful, rigorous management of this company preserved kabuki without public subsidies until the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, at the National Theater in Tokyo, which hosted ten kabuki productions per year before the pandemic, only Shōchiku kabuki actors perform on stage. The state-funded training of kabuki actors at the National Theater plays an important role in the training of actors who primarily perform supporting roles, leading to being deployed by Shōchiku after finishing the training program (Matsui 1996, 72). Nevertheless, the future of this art form depends on the success of the programs at the Kabukiza Theater and the other theaters run by Shōchiku. The production company's theaters are limited corporations run under direct management of Shōchiku Co. Ltd. These are the Kabukiza Theater, the Shinbashi Enbujō Theater in Tokyo, the Ōsaka Shōchikuza Theater in Osaka, and the Minamiza Theater in Kyoto (Shōchiku Co. Ltd. 2019).

Until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new program was offered at the Shōchiku theaters every month. As a rule, a program was played for 25 days, with a morning matinee and a late afternoon program, lasting three to four hours each. When the voluntary shutdown of all theaters was called out by the government on February 26, 296 kabuki actors, numerous musicians, stage workers, technicians, stage assistants, and other staff who are either self-employed or work for subcompanies were without a job. Evenly affected by this voluntary shut down were all the restaurants, souvenir shops, and vending stalls in the theaters, which play a part in the successful running of a theater due to the services they provide during a performance.[15]

Shōchiku decided to record the March and April programs at the Kabukiza and to stream solely the April program online for free for a limited period in April. This was a complete novelty in the history of kabuki. The closing of the theaters meant financial losses for the production company. However, even without any income from ticket sales in March and April 2020, Shōchiku paid its actors the same fees as during regular productions. There were no kabuki productions during May

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productions in the 1910s, the phenomenon of actors performing exclusively for Shōchiku was closely related to the uncertain living conditions of the actors at that period, as these actors lived on short-term contracts with little guarantee of a regular income. There existed a fierce rivalry among the actors as they competed for the usually only five to six productions at a kabuki production theater per year. The rationalization of kabuki productions and the centralized management of numerous theaters by Shōchiku by distributing actors out of a pool of actors led to the success of the company, and in the end, to its first monopoly of kabuki productions in the 1930s (Bergmann 2018, 164–176).

[15] The services that had been established as a kind of business cooperation between the theater and the service providing companies or stalls since the establishment of the first permanent theater houses in the seventeenth century and are an integrated part of a kabuki theaters run by Shōchiku.

Figure 4: Disinfection at the Kabukiza Theater, Tokyo, August 2020

(Source: © SHOCHIKU)

and July 2020. During this period, the star actors were paid no honorarium, the second-ranking actors (名題 *nadai*) were paid 50% of their honorarium, and the other actors (名題下 *nadaishita*) 70%.[16]

As mentioned above, on May 25, 2020, the state of emergency was lifted in Tokyo prefecture, allowing kabuki productions to resume. However, Shōchiku did not schedule performances at the Kabukiza Theater until August 1, 2020, in order to find the best solution to restart its kabuki productions. It sought advice from experts to establish a hygiene concept tailored to the theater. The standard program of two performances per day before the pandemic was discontin-

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[16] Two groups of actors have been distinguished since the Edo period. The *nadai*, whose names were recorded on the theater bills and posters (番付 *banzuke*) during the Edo period, and the much larger group of the lower ranks, *nadaishita*. Only *nadai* actors played leading roles, and were entitled to a higher salary, their own dressing rooms, and servants. They were also allowed to install curtains or lanterns in the theater with their names or crests (Gunji 1985, 37). In 1923, the first Actors' Association was founded. It introduced a uniform examination for the award of the rank *nadai*, which is still held once a year. As a prerequisite for the exam, an actor must have been at least a disciple of a *nadai* actor for ten years. Furthermore, he must be nominated for the examination by his master and teacher as well as by the chairman actor of the Japan Actors' Association (日本俳優協会 Nihon Haiyū Kyōkai), the successor organization of the first Actors' Association since 1957 (Nihon Haiyū Kyōkai n.d.).

ued and replaced by four independent programs, each consisting of one play presented without an interval. Actors, musicians as well as all staff members changed for each of the three programs to prevent possible infections on stage and in the dressing rooms. Singers, musicians, reciters, and stage assistants wore masks on stage. Only 50% of the 1,808 seats were offered for one performance. The audience members were seated with one empty seat between each person to the right, left, front, and rear, and were asked to wear a mask and refrain from talking to each other. Between each of the programs, the venue was disinfected (see Figure 4). Additionally, cheering shouts from the back seats of the theater (掛け声 *kakegoe*), a traditional sign of appreciation for an actor's performance in a special moment of the play, were prohibited. All visitors were prohibited from giving gifts or letters or paying visits to the cast members in the dressing rooms, which, under normal circumstances, was a highly valued and long-established custom in the kabuki world in order to help the actors maintain contact with sponsors and fans. Restaurants and vending stalls remained closed, and eating was prohibited throughout the venue (Yoshikawa 2020; Kabukibito 2021). All these restrictions meant a performance environment almost surreal for the lively kabuki performances generally characterized by the actors' close ties to the audience members, and the audience members' active response to the acting on stage.

Regarding the costs of the August program of kabuki performances, Asahara Tsuneo (浅原恒雄), the general secretary of the Japan Actors' Association, estimated the fees for actors and musicians to be approximately 40 million yen, the costs for scenery, props, costumes, and wigs, etc., at approximately 50 million yen. The cost for the theater venue was approximately 40 million yen and additional costs for operating expenses and other purposes were approximately 30 million yen. Altogether, this meant an estimated sum of 160 million yen in direct costs (Asahara T., personal communication, August 13, 2020). The admission fee ranged from 8,000 yen to 3,000 yen for each of the four daily programs. With only 50% of the seats sold, the production hardly made any profit. To deal with this problem, the Shōchiku management applied for and received 50 million yen out of the abovementioned "J-LODlive" support program. Even with the subsidy, the August production at the Kabukiza Theater generated a loss of 70 million yen.

For the August program at the Kabukiza Theater, the plays were selected considering the needs of as few actors as possible to lower the risk of infection. This meant that many actors were unable to perform and thus were not entitled to any remuneration, as kabuki actors work as self-employed workers. In August, all actors who performed on stage received 50%–80% of their monthly honorarium. Of those kabuki actors who had no opportunity to perform, the top star actors among the *nadai*-ranking actors were paid 50% of their monthly honorarium,

the other *nadai*-rank actors were paid 70% of their monthly honorarium, and the remaining actors, that is, all *nadaishita*-rank actors, received 80% of their monthly honorarium (Asahara T., personal communication, October 27, 2020).

This compensation for actors with no engagement (見舞金 *mimaikin*) must also be seen against the background that the company has been engaged in the preservation of kabuki since its foundation at the turn of the 20th century. Despite its strict profit-orientated commercial management, it maintains a patron-like relationship with its actors, who are at the same time dependent on the company to make ends meet. This kind of special relationship, based on mutual dependence and trust, as Abiko Tadashi (我孫子正), the president of Kabukiza Co. Ltd., characterized it (Abiko 2021), helped to preserve kabuki until the pandemic crisis. In order to be able to cope with the crisis, in spring 2020 the company set up a two-year emergency budget, financed by bank credit and assets from other companies belonging to Shōchiku Co. Ltd., to cover the huge losses due to the pandemic and to enable the company to preserve kabuki (Abiko 2021). The outcome of these measures is not easy to predict, especially as the company still restricts the number of audience members in all its kabuki theaters to minimize the risk of infection and the pandemic is still not over at the time of writing this article.

With the administrative support of the Japan Actors' Association, by October 2020 approximately 70% of the kabuki actors had applied and benefited from a one-time subsidy of one million yen, that the government had set up for small and middle-sized enterprises as well as for self-employed actors and freelancers. This program was criticized for being not enough to meet the financial needs of most freelance artists and for being excessively bureaucratic; thus, 45 billion yen allocated to this program had not yet been retrieved as of October 2020 (Fujino 2020b).

Besides the streaming of the April Kabukiza program, Shōchiku embarked on several new activities to connect to fans and to sell their kabuki-related products. Since August 2020, Shōchiku started offering kabuki videos on demand for a fee on its official site providing information about everything concerning the company's kabuki productions, *Kabukibito* (歌舞伎美人), literally translated the title means "Kabuki beauty" (Shōchiku n.d.). This service is also a historical novelty considering the company's restrictive policy regarding images and recordings of kabuki performances. However, kabuki depends especially on its fans. Since its foundation, fans not only help to fill the theaters, but also finance productions and the livelihoods of the actors. Therefore, contact with theater fans is very important for the actors.

The Japan Actors' Association adopted extraordinary measures to do so. In the past, actors granted insight into their personal stage and private life only to members of their personal fan clubs and sponsors; however, the actors now allow

the public an insight into their personal lives. The video platform *Kabukimashō* (歌舞伎ましょう), best translated as "Let us concern ourselves with kabuki," went online on YouTube in March 2020 (Nihon Haiyū Kyōkai n.d.). In short video clips, often recorded by mobile phones by the actors themselves, the actors directly address their audience, calling for perseverance and asking for their support and patience until the kabuki theaters reopened. Furthermore, they presented their private hobbies, samples of their acting in private surroundings or introduce their family life. After the relaxation of the anti-COVID-19 regulations in May 2020, young actors recorded up to 20 minutes long clips about their hometowns and local kabuki-related topics they also shared on the Kabukimashō platform on YouTube that shows more than 46,000 subscribers (Nihon Haiyū Kyōkai n.d.). The threshold to encounter one's beloved actor in private and off stage, even if only virtually, had never been so low and can be considered as a little revolution in the world of kabuki, which had so far been a very closed world to the non-kabuki-fans, due to the hierarchical structures among the actors, who traditionally kept personal close contact to their fans only in the frame of individual fan clubs, and Shōchiku supported this kind of star cult by restricting public access to the star actors. In this respect, in my opinion, the production of these *Kabukimashō* videos by the Japan Actors' Association is a step to open the kabuki world to the general public.

5. In lieu of a conclusion

The first livestreaming of an opera, as in the example of the production of *Twilight of the Gods* at Biwako Hall, proved the importance of the incorporation of digital tools into common art practices to compensate financial losses and to retain old and attract new audiences. The same can be stated for the format of kabuki performances on demand on the web. The COVID-19 pandemic corroborated the inevitability of combining digital and analogue tools.

The above-mentioned opera production shed light on the complex manner of setting up opera productions in Japan, demonstrating that a risk-taking manager made a difference by pursuing unconventional means for saving the performance of the *Twilight of the Gods*. The dedication of the production company Shōchiku Co. Ltd. to keeping its kabuki productions running during the COVID-19 pandemic and its action to support its actors serve as an example of the important role private enterprises play in Japanese theater productions.

The focus of support programs for arts and culture by the Japanese government in the COVID-19 pandemic has been on the venues, that is, the theaters and concert halls. However, most performing artists do not belong to a company or an ensemble at a venue. They are organized in many different performing artists' groups and organizations that have not formed a union and do not speak with

one voice. As mentioned above, actors and musicians are generally self-employed and often the border between amateurs and professionals is blurred, as artists often have to work part time beside their artistic engagements. The COVID-19 pandemic unveiled the fact that it is also the basis of Japanese cultural policy that arts and culture are considered a private luxury, but not essential to society. The government's support programs have not been tailored to artists' needs. Freelance artists are not entitled to file for unemployment benefits. The support program did not cover financial income losses due to the cancelling of performances nor had the amounts been enough to cover the living costs during the ongoing pandemic. This is also due to the lack of basic data on artists and their activities, such as cultural statistics, that would have allowed for the creation of an optimal support system. Since recent, precise statistics about the situation of performing artists in Japan do not exist, this article also lacks such a basis. Reliable and long-term support as had been required by the think tank NLI Research Institute in order to support actors and artists in the crisis (Yoshimoto 2020, 3) is not forthcoming as a paradigm shift in the long-term cultural policy towards more substantial public subsidies in the performing arts. Self-help and corporate initiatives continue to take the lead in supporting artists in Japan.

As mentioned above, the PIA Research Institute observed an 80% decrease in the live entertainment market size in comparison to 2019, from January 2020 to December 2020 (PIA Research Institute 2021), due to the pandemic crisis. The future will tell whether, despite the ignorance of the artists' voices and their needs by the government, the survival of theaters and theater troupes in Japan who are not part of a commercial production company like the kabuki actors or part of a public performing arts venue like the Biwako Hall is viable.

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Voiced and Voiceless in Asia

Edited by Halina Zawiszová and Martin Lavička

This volume consists of 19 chapters that reflect the titular theme – *Voiced and Voiceless in Asia* – from a variety of angles, making use of diverse scholarly approaches and disciplines, while focusing specifically on China, India, Japan, and Taiwan. The chapters are broadly divided into two parts: (1) Politics and Society, and (2) Arts and Literature, although the texts included in the second part also deal with social themes. In addition to historical topics, such as Japanese colonialism or Chinese agricultural reforms in the 1950s, the volume also addresses current issues, including restrictive Chinese policies in Xinjiang, Japanese activist movements against gender-based violence and discrimination, or the problems of migrant laborers in India and performing arts in Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, it provides insight into satirical woodblock prints from the Boshin War period or works of literature produced in Japanese leprosariums in the first half of the 20th century, as well as into selected topics in contemporary Chinese, Japanese, and Sinophone Tibetan literature. Collectively, the chapters comprised in this volume narrate the multifaceted relationship between 'voice' and 'power,' thus highlighting the fact that the question of 'voice' is closely intertwined with a variety of social, political, and cultural issues.