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Cover: © Papermoon Puppet Theatre, Yogyakarta / photo by Indra Wicaksono

The photo depicts a scene from the performance *Mwathirika*, which the artists have dedicated to the victims and missing family members of the 1965 genocide in Indonesia. Papermoon Puppet Theatre was founded in 2006 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and has since created more than 30 puppet performances and visual art installations and exhibitions on contemporary themes. See www.papermoonpuppet.com

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The Long 1960s in Asia

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The Long 1960s in Asia

Editorial

Claudia Derichs, Kamran Asdar Ali

A number of studies, publications, conferences and anniversary events took place in 2018 to commemorate the 50th birthday of the legendary year 1968. These were accompanied by a raft of scholarly and popular assessments of the "long 1960s", the "global sixties" and/or the "radical sixties". The predominant empirical sites for analysis and retrospective were Western Europe and the United States of America. Other world regions were discussed to a clearly lesser extent. Apart from the crucial event of the Vietnam War, the (long) 1960s in Asia did not figure very prominently in the various publications on the topic.

This issue of IQAS seeks to focus on the 1960s in Asia, covering East, Southeast and South Asia and discussing the decade from perspectives that have often escaped notice. It sheds a critical light on the notion of the "global sixties" and focuses on the local in order to grasp the spirit of the 1960s in selected Asian countries. It looks at individual nation-states but also transcends their borders, tracing transnational and transregional connectivities, mobilities and relations. It reminds us of radical junctures in countries' histories that did *not* pave the way for freedom, peace and democracy – as conventional connotations of "1968" and "the sixties" predominantly suggest. The contributions to this issue thus cover the dark as well as the light side of the 1960s and share the conviction that research on this revolutionary decade's ramifications in Asia is still a field with many blank spots.

Perhaps the most well-remembered hotspot of the 1960s in Asia is Vietnam. The Vietnam War mobilised protest movements all around the world, with European countries, the United States of America and Japan figuring prominently in the media coverage of demonstrations and activities against governments' support of anti-communist forces in Vietnam. In Japan, the movement known as *Beheiren* (*Betonamu ni heiwa o shimin undô* or the "Citizens' Movement

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for Peace in Vietnam") mobilised tens of thousands of people, who took to the streets in the second half of the 1960s. Internationally, *Beheiren* activists made headlines through their spectacular methods of helping quite a number of deserting GIs to escape to Europe via Japan and Russia. In Japan, GIs who had served in Vietnam often spent time to recover. Remarkably, it was not illegal under Japanese law to help deserters out of the country: American soldiers residing in Japan were not subject to the jurisdiction of the Japanese government; they were, like diplomats, exempted from Japanese immigration law. Hence Japanese citizens who supported US soldiers' migration out of the country were not violating any Japanese law (Takata 2017[1]). Apart from the movements and transnational networks of anti-Vietnam War activists operating within and from Japan, other Asian countries' civil society protests hardly made headlines in the Western media of the time. Especially puzzling in this context is why the anti-communist massacres of 1965 in Indonesia have received so little attention in both the West and Asia to this day. Baskara Wardaya, in his article in this volume, offers an attempt at explaining the paucity of effective and visible international solidarity. Yet a number of open questions still remain – leaving today's reader shocked and disgusted at the slaughter that took place in a country neighbouring Vietnam.

The articles in this special issue on the long 1960s in Asia intentionally address events, developments, problems and contextualisations that have thus far not been tackled, or at least not exhaustively, in the literature. They direct the spotlight at countries and trajectories that motivate the reader to put narratives into context – and to adopt a fresh perspective on events that hitherto seemed to be sufficiently interpreted for the history textbooks. Also, stories and historical phenomena that have all too easily been glossed over in the "grand narratives" of the 1960s – in international relations literature, in Cold War coverage, in retrospectives of post-World War II history – are excavated and discussed. Benjamin Kindler's contribution is just one such example. Kindler proposes to return to the 1960s and direct one's gaze at relationships of cultural solidarity within Third World socialism. He focuses on the Letters from South Vietnam that arrived in China around 1965, which are analysed as rare yet telling examples of a medium of communication which hints at the "possibilities of pan-Asian liberation struggles from a Vietnamese subject-position" in the 1960s (Kindler in this volume). The Sino-Vietnamese solidarity reflected in these letters was (only) cut off by China's Cultural Revolution, which commenced in 1966.

As the East Asian neighbour to China and Japan, Korea's (meaning South Korea's) sixties are somehow less well known, except for those who are familiar with the postwar history of the country in general and the post-Korean War

1 Kei Takata (2017): Escaping through the Networks of Trust: the US Deserter Support Network in the Japanese Global Sixties. *The Sixties* 10/2, pp. 165–181.

history in particular. Korea, as Eun-Jeung Lee describes, in fact saw a revolution in 1960. In the spring of that year, a strong student movement erupted and eventually brought down the authoritarian regime of Rhee Syngman. But what is known in Korea's history as the April 19 Revolution (and discussed intensively in our interview with Kim Kab-Nyun) turned out to have a very short lifetime. Rather than giving rise to democracy, it became the impetus for a military coup in May 1961. This coup, Lee argues, caused Korea's 1960s to bear the burden of the developmental military dictatorship that captured power. While it is debatable whether "stability" based on the rule of a dictatorial regime is advantageous for fostering economic progress, the author proposes taking relationality and conditionality into account. The article thus focuses "on the ideological structure of the transitional era in which the revolution for democracy led to the establishment of an anti-communist developmental dictatorship as a result of the combined effect of various conditions of Korean politics and the international Cold War in the 1960s" (Lee in this volume).

Similarly revealing, since not widely discussed in the literature, is Eiji Oguma's take on the long 1960s in Japan. While we have mentioned the Japanese anti-Vietnam protests and the deserter support network, these merely reflect the perspective of civil society and/or the opposition movement towards the politics and society of the time. Political regulation and economic policy in the country's post-1968 history were formative for what eventually brought a renewed turn to conservatism. Contrary to what might be assumed in light of a strong and radical student movement and a fierce rejection of the (extension of the) bilateral Japanese American Security Treaty in the wider public – which had caused then-Prime Minister Kishi to resign (1960) – Oguma shows that the Japanese ruling conservative party managed to revive and then sustain its support base. Despite the presence of comparatively strong social movements, he argues, effective social change subsided and a conservative political order re-stabilised in the 1970s. This was first and foremost possible because of a "combination of industry dispersion and reorganisation of citizenry" – resulting in a powerful conservative resurgence and one-party dominance that characterised "the long 1960s" as well as the subsequent decades in Japan (Oguma in this volume).

It might be argued that Indonesia's "long 1960s" have lasted until today. The repercussions of the massacres of the mid-1960s are by no means addressed openly and without prejudice, even though decades have passed and the post-1965 dictatorship of President Suharto was toppled in 1998, making way for a transition to democracy. Baskara Wardaya re-tells the history of 1965, which became so utterly distorted by the hegemonic – and highly fabricated – official narrative of the anti-communist purge. Certainly, Indonesia's 1960s massacres are not only "one of the gravest examples of peace-time mass violence of the post-World War II period" in Asia, but hold that dubious distinction well beyond Asia if not the world. Wardaya blames, among other factors, the lack

of pressure from the international community, which enabled the Indonesian government to refuse investigation into the events. The reason for this lack of pressure, he states, lies in the fact that at "the height of the Cold War, many foreign governments benefitted from the mass killings" (Wardaya in this volume). The trajectory of Indonesia reveals another side of Asia's "long 1960s" – a dark side, which left not much of a future to dream of.

The late 1960s are especially remembered for the numerous student and workers' movements in many Western parts of the world. Yet, some of the most important student and peasant-led radical struggles in South Asia in the 1960s were linked to the Naxalite movement in India. In the early 1970s, Kolkata (Calcutta, then) was a city under siege. This was due to the radical movement that is remembered in relation to Naxalbari, a small village in West Bengal that was the site of the 1967 peasant uprising supported by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Soon the uprising spread across the state, with major participation by indigenous groups such as the Santhals and other scheduled castes. Driven by Maoist ideological fervour and Charu Majumdar's (1918–1972) writings, the revolutionary movement was joined by a number of urban intellectuals and became popular even among students in elite Kolkata colleges. The CPI(M) itself split in 1969, forming the CPI-ML (Marxist-Leninist), which followed a more radical and insurrectionary political line. The entire province of West Bengal was engulfed in a series of violent acts and the Indian state's response was immediate and brutal. In early 1970 Presidential rule was imposed on West Bengal to combat the internal threat of a communist uprising and subsequently, through militarised state action, thousands of activists and innocents were tortured, incarcerated or killed in police encounters. Following Charu Majumdar's arrest in 1972 and his death in custody soon afterwards, the movement dissipated (to be resurrected later in various forms across India). By this time, it had already lost its force due to state suppression and also because of internal divisions within the CPI-ML leadership. To date the deaths of these young people are mourned and remembered in the city (not to mention the hundreds of peasants and "tribals" who were killed in the countryside). Contemporary Bengali literature and cinema has created avenues for rethinking and recalling the era. Within this context, Sengupata and Maitra in their paper trace the radical turn in Bengali political culture in the 1960s, ushered in by the Naxalbari Movement. The movement's vision led to iconoclastic acts of toppling statues of deified cultural figures, publicly burning canonical books and assaulting higher academic institutions as sites of the propagation of an outmoded bourgeois culture. In addition, the article provides a critique of the authoritarian leadership of the CPI-ML, the posture of non-dissent within its cadre and its anti-intellectualism, with its reading of history that was deterministic and narrowly teleological. Yet the paper simultaneously gives us a more sympathetic reading of a movement that re-

mained resplendent with multifarious possibilities and narratives, despite its many problems. In developing their argument, the authors use understudied novels, political writings, memoirs, poetry, theatre and cinema from the period as their prime archival sources. In tracing the cultural and artistic effervescence that was the product of this radical moment in the region's history, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the events of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Indian Bengal.

As in the case in Bengal, in Sri Lanka in 1970–71 there was also a major radical insurrection that had Maoist tendencies. The Sri Lankan (then Ceylon) government crushed the revolt spearheaded by the People's Liberation Front. The eruption of revolutionary violence was only a part of the longer story of the Left in Sri Lankan post-colonial history. From the time of the country's independence from Britain in 1948, the Trotskyite Left faction had become the dominant communist party in national politics and had a number of elected representatives in the parliament. The Government of S. Bandaranaike, which came to power in 1960, started to work with all left-wing groups, and in 1964 parts of the Trotskyite Left joined the government. Hence precisely at the moment when anti-communist violence intensified in places like Indonesia, interestingly in Sri Lanka there was a gesture of co-habitation with the formal Left in parliamentary politics. Yet, as mentioned above, in 1970–71 there was the near collapse of the Bandaranaike government due to the insurrectionist attack by radicals and Maoists; the Soviet Union and its allies, along with India, assisted in crushing the movement. Gunawardena and Kadirgamar, in their contribution to this volume, trace this history of the Left, but simultaneously emphasize how the Left ceded the agrarian question and the related importance of self-sufficiency in food production to the political right in Sri Lanka. The economic crisis of the mid-1970s led to the ascendancy of private capital as well as to a shift toward Sinhala nationalism that intensified existing ethnic tensions and fed the violence that engulfed Sri Lanka for almost three decades. By revisiting the history of the Left in the 1960s, the article helps us understand some additional factors in the violence that erupted in the 1980s. This perspective departs from explanations for the civil war as primarily the result of primordial identity differences (Sinhala and Tamil ethnicities) and illuminates how Leftist politics in terms of the peasant question, industrialisation, ethnic difference, distribution of resources and social welfare may have also played a part in the violence faced by the country in subsequent years.

Unlike other parts of South Asia, the Pakistani state had started to clamp down on communist activities soon after the country gained independence in 1947. In the 1950s the Pakistani state enmeshed itself in the US-led Cold War politics of the time. This close relationship culminated in the severe repression of progressive political groups and the eventual banning of the Communist

Party of Pakistan in 1954. Soon after the 1958 imposition of martial law, the military regime clamped down on all political activities, leading to the arrest and harassment of Leftist political workers and leaders. The 1960s was thus one of the most difficult times for the Leftist movement in Pakistan. By the early 1960s the various groups of the Leftist clinging to existence underground had also started to feel the impact of the Sino-Soviet split within international communism. In Pakistan, some of these international differences were played out in terms of factional rivalries, while others took the form of tangential arguments on the nature of the martial law regime. Despite the friction within and between the Leftist groups in Pakistan, it was clear that in the prevailing international atmosphere and the political realities within Pakistan, the Maoist groups with more radical anti-imperialist slogans (anti-Americanism and support for the people of Vietnam), an anti-India stance and a call for active (and armed) struggle became more popular among the youth and the students. The heavy reliance on foreign capital by the military government faced a major setback after the 1965 war with India, when World Bank funds were cut off and then resumed at much lower levels. As the country's entire financial structure had been built on a large inflow of foreign capital, economic growth began to sputter. Bad harvests in 1965 and 1966, and the demand of the East Pakistani middle classes for a more equitable share of the spoils of development, created major political turmoil in the country. The dictator Ayub Khan's much heralded "decade of development" thus came to an abrupt end when in 1968–69 students, intellectuals, the urban poor and the working classes participated in a massive civil disobedience movement. Within this larger context, Anushay Malik's article focuses on how the labour and student activists in Pakistan were part of the global moment of the 1960s with its sense of expanded possibilities. In a methodologically innovative move, Malik focuses on local stories from around Lahore to explore how this political imagination was expressed in Pakistan. Using the 1960s as one particular window to look at the aspirations of ordinary people, the essay distances itself from the narratives of political parties and transformative events. Rather it seeks to highlight voices that inform us about the future aspirations of the people themselves for meaningful change in their lives and what mattered to them. The stories Malik shares are of activist cadres who were mobilising people during the 1960s, a process that culminated in the anti-military movement of the late 1960s that toppled the dictator. This is an attempt at history from below that delves into the interstices and erasures in order to provide a more nuanced history of the Left in 1960s Pakistan.

In our attempt to provide a corrective to the silence on the history of the Left during the "long 1960s" in Asia, we have assembled a group of articles that also provide us with a history of conflict, state sponsored oppression and ideological doubt during the post-war period and in a number of newly independent

states. The articles read together are part of a mosaic that helps us see the evolving political patterns and connections through a history of social movements, peasant mobilisation, labour struggle, radical insurrection as well as state rigorism in the 1960s and early 1970s from a particularly Asian perspective. This history is surely messy, unruly and contradictory, yet it may foreground what has remained inaudible or been suppressed in history writing on the topic. Within this context, our humble attempt is to bring forward an unremembered past to add to the few academic social and cultural histories of progressive politics from 1960s Asia.

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The "Long 1960s" in South Korea: An Interview with Prof. Dr. Kab-Nyun Kim

Claudia Derichs

Prof. Dr. Kab-Nyun Kim is a professor at Korea University in Seoul, Korea. He is a linguist and an expert in German Studies. At the time of the interview in 2020, he worked on the topic of "Non-Violence Communication for Decision Making in Community Operation", a research project that he is still pursuing. His first findings have been published in the article "Review of Nonviolent Communication from a Pragmatic Point of View"(*Dokekyoujuk* 78, pp. 31–51). Currently he is conducting research on "Linguistic Analysis of Mediation" and "Linguistic Study of Communication in Community". Prof. Dr. Claudia Derichs talked with him about his reflections on the Long 1960s in Korea.

Keywords: Long 1960s, Korea, South Korea, 4.19 Revolution, democratisation, interview

In many accounts of the 1960s around the world, South Korea is a country and a case that escapes the gaze or is marginally recognised at best. This is surprising, since South Korea has witnessed quite a "rollercoaster" history in the decades following the Korean War (1950–1953). The 1960s were marked by the overthrow of the authoritarian regime of president Syngman Rhee (1960), a controversial treaty with Japan (1965) and the unfolding of president Park Chung Hee's dictatorship (1961–1979). In the following interview, Kab-Nyun Kim emphasises the strong impact of the "4.19 Revolution", the toppling of Rhee's regime in April 1960, on the South Korean nation's desire and struggle for democracy and the collective memory of a victory of the people – although this victory did not translate into democratisation in the immediate years that followed. It remains open to debate whether South Korea forms a special case or an exception in the imagination of a "global sixties".

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Claudia Derichs: *Professor Kim, you have not researched the topic of the 1960s yourself, but as a German Studies scholar, your comparative perspective is particularly acute. We are interested in your opinion. Is there something akin to "the Korean 1960s" – maybe in contrast to the 1960s in West and East Germany?*

Kab-Nyun Kim: Do you mean: Was there a Korean version of the 1960s? My answer is yes. But we had to wait for a long time until South Korea was democratised. An event that compares to the 1968 revolution in the West was the revolution of 19 April 1960 (known as the 4.19 Revolution) in South Korea. You see, in the 1960s South Korea was a country with many victims of the Korean War. Because of the inter-Korean confrontation, anti-communist ideology held centre stage on the political agenda. Within South Korean society, the anti-communist ideology constrained people's political imagination and made it difficult to come up with an agenda for social, economic and cultural progress. Today, South Korean citizens are under relentless competition for jobs and social advancement. Hence we are facing severe problems – among them an intense struggle among students to escape unemployment after graduation, the painful experience of being fired, sexual oppression of women and social inequality. Having said that, South Korean society had a wonderful, passionate start into an era of liberal democracy with the 4.19 Revolution. The revolution paved the way for the possibility of establishing a liberal democracy despite the lasting scars of the war and the fatigue and exhaustion of recovery.

Claudia Derichs: *How, then, did South Korea experience the 1960s? Are there any specificities that you would like to emphasise?*

Kab-Nyun Kim: Well, some phenomena merit mentioning. Let me continue to focus on the 4.19 Revolution as an important one. The revolution of 19 April 1960 exposed the desire of South Korean citizens for democracy and participation. Its historical relevance lies in the fact that it marked the end of the Syngman Rhee regime and served to create a new relationship between Korea, Japan and the United States of America. However, we cannot deny that 19 April was an "unfinished revolution". It did not generate a major political transformation, since the unity of its main actors, i.e., students and intellectuals, was not an organised one. Their protest did not go beyond the economic dimension of change. In retrospect, we may say that 4.19 had very limited political impact, but that it nonetheless engendered a "mental revolution", so that we can conceive of it as the forerunner of the country's modern democracy movement.

The possibility and potential of establishing a liberal democracy in South Korea via the 4.19 Revolution was pre-empted by the sudden coup d'état of 16 May 1961. In the wake of this coup, intensive industrialisation under the military regime of general Park Chung-Hee and the ensuing rapid economic growth rendered the 1960s in South Korea a highly unstable and dynamic era. Yet 4.19 is the revolution that instilled the notion of democracy in South Korea. Its sublime and noble spirit is extended in the Constitution. 4.19 is the first victory of Korean democracy and a very important date, since a dictator was toppled directly through the hands of the people. The spirit of democracy is engraved in 4.19, it continues to affect us until today and we may say that it has shaped South Korea. Currently, the anniversary of the revolution of 1960 is a legally recognised holiday. Let me therefore elaborate a bit more on the background to this event and explain why I deem it so important for South Korea's post-war political history.

Claudia Derichs: *Please do.*

Kab-Nyun Kim: The reason for the revolution was president Syngman Rhee's uninterrupted hold on power since 1948. While formally a popular vote should have determined whether Rhee would continue in office, the elections of 15 May 1960 were utterly unfair [with Rhee's "victory" relying on ballot rigging rather than a majority of votes]. Public outrage against this obvious manipulation led to his fall and to a breakdown of the regime, including the ruling Liberal Party. The protests were not meant to topple the regime or to reform the system under the auspices of a particular political ideology. The main force of the revolution, the students, did not rely on an organised plan or an organised goal, nor did they have political leadership. Yet their collective protests developed as a consequence of the youth's increasing rage at the injustices they faced. I think the 4.19 Revolution was a big historical occasion; it formed a milestone in Korea's political history – for several reasons.

First, it initiated the development of a democratic consciousness in the Korean people's mind. The people learned that an "indigenous" democracy inevitably requires hard work and struggle. Right after World War II, when South Korea gained sovereignty, citizens had believed that democracy would take root simply by transplanting the "liberating" elements of Western democracy [citizens' rights and freedom], hence by establishing particular institutions and procedures. However, in the immediate period after South Korea's founding in 1948, it became clear that democracy is a vulnerable system, the consolidation of which requires more than a transplantation of institutions. Bringing democracy to life requires the active and energetic participation of the people. The later fight for democracy between 1961 and 1987 was a result of the 4.19 Revolution; we

can consider this struggle as a national awakening, a national consciousness-raising. For this reason, 4.19 was the first successful step on the long path of Korea's fight for democracy.

Second, 4.19 symbolises the victory of a democratic civil society over the tyranny of the ruling power and provides proof of a sovereign people as a core principle of democracy. It showed that a regime that does not enjoy people's support and confidence cannot be sustained.

Third, the revolution of April 1960 can be understood as a Korean version of the "student power" that surfaced globally as a political force in the second half of the 20th century. Korean students can look back on a brilliant tradition of strong resistance and passionate patriotism, evidenced in the independence movement of 1 March 1919, in the anti-colonial mass protests in Seoul on 10 June 1926, or in the uprising against Japanese occupation in the city of Gwangju in 1929. The 4.19 Revolution should thus be understood in the context of this traditionally strong consciousness of resistance and expression of patriotism.

Fourth, the 4.19 Revolution formed a major step for society's political consciousness because the causes of the people's disappointment were clear: the incompetence of the powers that be and the vulnerability of the country's fragile economic and social infrastructure.

Claudia Derichs: *Would you speak of a "separate way" for South Korea?*

Kab-Nyun Kim: Yes, I would say Korea's path was a unique one. And it was a rocky path, since the democracy movement in South Korea was blocked several times by the state powers. After the 4.19 Revolution of 1960, the democratisation movement of 1980 and the protests of 1987, Korea continued its struggle for democracy in the form of candle-light vigils in 2017. Although the latter movement had to face military and political pressure, Korea made history. Millions of Korean citizens protested for weeks against president Park Geun-hye in 2017 – until she was taken to court, impeached, indicted and convicted. Korean democracy is thus very much alive and can be an example for the world.

At the same time, Korean democracy is vulnerable and unstable. The reason is that the history of democracy in Korea is in fact very short. It was not before the end of the 1990s that a change towards a democratic polity was possible. The comparatively long path to full democracy led to what my colleague Nuri Kim calls Korea's "democracy without democrats". In the public space, Koreans cry out for democracy, but when this is done, they return to patriarchal fathers

at home, to patriarchal bosses at the workplace, and to patriarchal teachers and professors in schools and universities. Koreans have missed out on practicing democracy in their everyday lives. This gap between the theory and the practice of democracy can be explained by the fact that a "68 revolution" like the ones in France or Germany, i.e., a movement pursuing a liberation from all forms of suppression, did not take place in Korea. Paradoxically, suppression and persecution motivated the democracy movement in Korea. Hence, it is a unique form of democratisation.

Claudia Derichs: *You have already mentioned your colleague Nuri Kim. A couple of years ago, I attended a lecture by Nuri Kim at Chung-Ang University. He pointed out seven reasons why he thinks South Korea is a "maverick" in the global story of 1968. He mentioned the Vietnam War [and how South Korea related to it]; anti-communism [as a hegemonic notion]; the power of [Western] modernization theory; delusion by the media; quixotic intellectuals; a conservative student movement; and "Americanism". What do you think of this assessment?*

Kab-Nyun Kim: Yes, I agree with Nuri Kim to large extent and approve of his opinion. Korea is indeed a "maverick" – but only from a Western perspective. Asia has a different history of civil revolutions than the West. It was not before the latter half of the 20th century that Asia experienced democracy. In view of this particular trajectory, Korea is the most democratised country in Asia. Although there is, as mentioned before, a distinct democratic consciousness in the relationship between state and society, the democratic consciousness within society is not particularly strongly developed – compared, for instance, to German society. A reason for this is in fact the lack of a 68 movement in Korea. Ecological consciousness is scarce, and so are feminism and pacifism, since militarism is still very much present in Korea.

Coming back to Nuri Kim's seven reasons for Korea's exceptional status in the narrative of 1968, as I said, I think his reasoning is correct to great extent. But we should not forget what I pointed out earlier: that Korea is the most democratised country in Asia after the "68 revolution". The degree of democratisation that Korea achieved is a repercussion of the Western 68 movement in Korea. Western democracy was very much a new concept for us in those days – as pointed out before, from 1961 to 1987, there was no democracy –, which is why we cannot compare Asia and Europe on the same level. Many of the reasons mentioned above relate to the prevalence in Korea of a feudal Confucian society. The values of 68 did not match the Korean consciousness of those days. Even the students, who strongly demanded reforms, had a very conservative mindset.

Claudia Derichs: *What kind of relationship would you then see between democracy in South Korea and the 1960s? Do you see any causal relationship at all?*

Kab-Nyun Kim: It is true that the Western 1960s exerted a certain influence on all social sectors in Korea. But unfortunately, this did not translate into change as the 68 revolution did in the West. As I mentioned before, the reason is that Korea was not yet ready to adopt change. The history of mankind is, however, similar in all parts of the world. In the 1960s, Koreans, too, longed for freedom. In this regard, the 68 revolution did in fact change Korea. In the wake of this revolution, young people were born who thought differently, felt differently, desired and acted differently from the older generation. The youth of this "68 generation" were radical in their search for a new life: they rebelled against the values of that time, experimented with new forms of living and acted them out in their daily life. Modern Western society was created in the awareness of problems of this new generation and the everyday practice of the 68 generation. It took a longer time in Korea, but eventually the same changes came about.

Claudia Derichs: *One last question. Contemporary historians of global history – not "world history" – have introduced the "global sixties" as a heuristic concept. What do you think of this?*

Kab-Nyun Kim: I acknowledge the relevance of the 68 revolution for world history. The 68 revolution achieved incredible success in terms of reducing racism, eradicating social discrimination, strengthening women's rights through the sexual revolution, as well as popularising elite culture and access to higher education. As a revolution in the conventional sense of complete social and systemic transformation, "68" was never really successful, but there were significant partial social transformations, for instance in view of gender equality and equal opportunities in higher education. This can be seen as a success.

Claudia Derichs: *Professor Kim, many thanks for sharing your thoughts with us.*

Kab-Nyun Kim: You are welcome.

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The 1960s in South Korea
Modernisation, Nationalism and the Pursuit of Democratisation

Eun-Jeung Lee

Abstract

In the 1960s, the South Korean authoritarian anti-communist system, which had been established immediately after the liberation of Korea in 1945, was transformed into an anti-communist developmental dictatorship. The student movement for democracy erupted in the spring of 1960 (April 19 Revolution) and brought down the authoritarian Rhee Syngman regime. But Park Chung Hee, a military general and former officer of the Japanese Imperial Army, seized power in a military coup on 16 May 1961. He was later elected to the presidency on an agenda of modernisation in a "nationalist democracy". In 1965, despite strong student protests, he concluded a Treaty on Basic Relations with the country's former colonial ruler, Japan, and took Korea to war in Vietnam, in the process setting the stage for a constitutional amendment that foreshadowed the transformation of the "developmental state" into the following decade's "developmental dictatorship". The focus of this paper is on the ideological structure of the transitional era in which the revolution for democracy led to the establishment of an anti-communist developmental dictatorship as a result of the combined effect of various conditions of South Korean politics and the international Cold War in the 1960s. Modernisation, anti-communism, nationalism and democracy were its essential ideological elements, and the regime changes of that decade depended on changes in the priorities and interrelations among them.

Keywords: South Korea, ROK, 1960s, regime change, Park Chung Hee, modernisation, democratisation, anti-communist developmental dictatorship

A coalition of anti-communism and modernisation

In the 1950s, Rhee Syngman, the first president of the Republic of Korea (ROK), replaced the democratic presidential system with an authoritarian system by amending the constitution to secure his power. Corruption, political terror and oppression of political opponents characterised his politics.[1] However, during his rule, South Korea[2] lacked the autonomy needed to promote economic growth. In 1960, the unemployment rate had reached 34.2%, but even those in paid em-

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ployment lived in impoverished conditions.[3] In 1960, after his third re-election on 15 March, allegations of electoral fraud led to violent mass protests, which the Rhee regime was no longer able to withstand.

Large numbers of workers and urban poor participated in the protests against the elections of 15 March 1960 alongside schoolchildren and university students (Kim 2018: 60, Kim 2017: 51). They were not merely protesting against political corruption, but also demanding an improvement in economic equality. Once Rhee Syngman had resigned on 26 April, the workers expressed their demands more forcefully. As a result, the number of trade unions increased sharply after the April 19 Revolution. Some 344 new unions were established in 1960 alone (Lee 2013: 152). The number of labour disputes also increased sharply. From April to June 1960, there were 485 street protests (KDF 2008: 247, Göthel 1988: 77). Social democrats raised their voices again, insisting that democracy should be a real, not just formal, guarantee of substantive freedom and equality (Lee 1960: 99). Others advanced the claim that the Korean Peninsula should be turned into a neutral nation to create a unified nation-state. Nationalism, which had been suppressed by the extreme anti-communism of the Rhee Syngman government, re-emerged in the social discourse (Hong 2002: 1241). This was a pan-Korean nationalism reaching across the 38th parallel. However, South Korean voters did not support these progressive groups in the parliamentary elections of July 1960.[4]

The contemporary media overlooked the role of the urban poor and workers in the April 19 Revolution. Only college students were praised as its agents. What is more, the April 19 Revolution was reduced to having been directed at achieving a mere regime change. Meanwhile, Korean intellectuals were enthusiastic about the April Revolution, welcoming it as proof of the fact that democracy was, after all, possible in Korea, and celebrated the fact that such democracy had been brought about by popular revolt. In particular, intellectuals who gathered around the magazine *Sasanggye* (literally: "*The World of Thought*"), the leading intellectual publication of the time, were thrilled by the success of the April Revolution (Kim 2007: 369). As one contemporary contribution in *Sasanggye* put it: "We have now acquired the right to discuss 'liberty' and we have created an example of the successful exercise of civil rights" (Ma 2016: 182).

But under the newly elected democratic government, the economic situation did not improve and Koreans continued taking to the streets. The majority of intellectuals, who believed in liberal democracy as the ideal form of democracy,

1 See Armstrong, 2007, Cumings 1997, Kim 1996.

2 In the following, "Korean" refers to "South Korean" and "Korea" to "South Korea", with the exception of statements referring to the time prior to Korean division. In some cases, where the distinction is relevant, "South" or "North" will be added to "Korea" and "Korean", respectively

3 Economic Planning Board 1961 and 1965.

4 In the legislative elections of 29 July 1960, the social democratic progressive forces won only five seats out of 233 in the Lower House and two seats out of 58 in the Upper House.

denounced these numerous demonstrations as mere chaos and unrest that posed a dangerous threat to public order and was attributable to the general population's low level of intelligence (Ma 2016: 184). They warned that if such "chaos" were to continue, it would lead to the creation of "a new form of dictatorship" and the loss of "the shining light of the April Revolution's struggle for civil rights" (ibid.: 185). What they feared most was that anti-national elements would allow communist infiltration. These critics were hardened anti-communists, to the point where they used the same logic against the demonstrators that they had used in their attacks against the Rhee Syngman government.

When Prime Minister Chang Myon could not find a swift response to the situation at hand, the government, too, became the target of criticism from the intellectuals. The editor-in-chief of *Sasanggye*, Chang Chun-ha, expressed the following warning in April 1961: "We hereby also declare that should the present National Assembly and government display any more indecisiveness, incompetence, and lack of planning, and should they continue to show themselves oblivious of their political responsibilities, this paper will have no choice but to engage in a relentless struggle to lead the way towards a fresh and energetic life of self-determination for the Korean people" (Ma 2016: 188).

This was the background against which a minority of Korean military officers led by General Park Chung Hee staged a coup d'état on 16 May 1961. Immediately after the coup, the new military junta proclaimed in its revolutionary pledge that it would fortify the anti-communist system and strengthen ties with the United States, fully commit to reconstructing a self-reliant national economy, focus on cultivating military strength to confront communism and then return to its original duties once these tasks were accomplished (Park 1962). The aim behind the revolutionary pledge was to establish economic self-reliance under the banner of fighting against, and achieving a victory over, communism. With this pledge, the military wanted to cut off the progressive and innovative discussions on unification that had begun to emerge after the April 19 Revolution and make clear its determination to actively participate in the United States' rigorous anti-communist containment policies in the global Cold War order. More than anything, the pledge was the product of Park Chung Hee's strategic calculation aimed at quickly gaining recognition for his military coup from the United States. On 3 July 1961, in his inaugural address as chairman of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, Park Chung Hee stated that a coup had been unavoidable in order to eradicate corruption, end poverty and fight communism, and emphasised that the coup's motive had been to safeguard the basic democratic structure of the present Constitution. It was his intention to make it appear as if the coup d'état of 16 May had inherited the spirit of the April 19 Revolution and constituted the crystallisation of the general public's demands.

The majority of Korean intellectuals at the time did, in fact, accept the coup as unavoidable. In the preface to its 1961 June edition, *Sasanggye*, which had previously been critical of dictatorial rule, took the stance that while the coup of 16 May was "unfortunate" and could be "nothing but regrettable", it was "unavoidable when seen in the light of the pressing needs of our nation's reality" (Ma 2016: 186). These intellectuals believed the military would use its considerable power and might to establish a state based on the rule of law and eradicate corruption, restore and maintain public order, end the practice of usury in fishing and farming villages, and take action in the field of regional development. The university students, who, together with the impoverished urban workers, had been the driving force of the April 19 Revolution, were equally won over by the military's modernist and reformist logic and remained silent in the face of the coup d'état (Kim 2018: 56). It was thus through the medium of anti-communism coupled with modernisation that a connecting link had formed between the military and the intellectuals.

A political arena thus characterised by solidarity – mediated by the notions of anti-communism and modernisation – between the military and the intellectual elite left no room for any political agency on the part of the workers, who demanded economic democratisation. The political space to advocate progressive ideas such as socialism equally disappeared with the military's plans for economic reconstruction founded on the notion of a "victory over communism".

To Park Chung Hee, "whether or not the coup succeeded in establishing a self-reliant economy and achieving an industrial revolution" was "all that mattered" and the sole criterion of its success or failure (Park 1997: 262). He emphasised that first and foremost the Korean people had to be remodelled into new humans so that they could provide the driving force for modernising industrial, economic, cultural and societal structures, eradicating old evils and corruption, and realising the kind of social reforms that were necessary to "remedy the decadence of public morals" (Kim 2014: 166). He appealed to Koreans to resolve to follow the example of West German economic development in the 1950s, the "Miracle on the Rhine", "take on the hardship and toil away […] endure and be patient for the next ten years", and adopt a code of conduct according to which "the economy reigns supreme […], construction comes first [… and] labour must be the top priority" (Park 1997: 270–271).

The military leaders of the coup d'état of 1961 were not the first to argue that Koreans had to remodel their "national character" or "national mentality". In the 1920s, when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, there were those who argued that in order to regain their national independence, Koreans would have to remodel their national character first (Kim 2007: 373). In the more recent past, contributions by Korean intellectuals to publications such as *Sasanggye* and *Ch'ŏngmaek* ("*The Green Stem*") similarly argued that the modernisation of Korea required a remodelling of the Koreans' national character (Kim 2014:

156–157). This hints at another commonality between the military leaders of the 1961 coup d'état and the Korean intellectuals of the time: they shared the belief that a reform of the national character of the Korean people was indispensable to the modernisation of the Korean state.

However, it cannot be said that the critical Korean intellectuals grouped around *Sasanggye* in the first half of the 1960s placed unreserved trust in Park Chung Hee and his military clique (Kim 2007: 370). In fact, there were (subtle) differences between what the military and the intellectuals meant when speaking of modernisation, differences which would later become apparent and problematic. *Sasanggye's* notions of modernisation were closer to the Western model by the early 1960s. Modernisation as advocated by Park Chung Hee bore more similarity to modernisation as propagated in Meiji Japan (1868–1912) than to modernisation according to the Western model (Lee 2011: 434). To the general, the primary tasks of modernisation were, first, to "free the people from the vestiges of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism", second, "free the people from poverty and achieve economic self-reliance", and, third, rebuild a "healthy democracy" (Park 2006: 388–390, 453). By "healthy democracy", he was referring not to a democracy founded on Western liberal notions of individuality, but to the kind of "guided democracy" required for the modernisation of a developing country (ibid.) – in other words, a democracy guided and managed by state power (Kim 2014: 156).

This was also the prevailing public mood when Park Chung Hee took off his uniform and – thus "transformed" into a civilian – ran for office in the 1963 presidential elections. By standing in the presidential elections, Park Chung Hee fell short of the promise contained in the revolutionary pledge to hand over power to a civilian government once the tasks of the "revolution" were completed. Having succeeded in the presidential elections, Park Chung Hee declared at his presidential inauguration ceremony on 17 December 1963 that "all Koreans" would have to "join forces and work hard" in order to succeed in the "modernisation of the homeland", and that they would have to foster a "sense of independent agency" (Park 1973: 4). He reduced the notion of modernisation to the issue of overcoming poverty in a strictly economic sense and declared the establishment of the economic self-reliance necessary for leaving behind the status of a developing country to be the central purpose of modernising the homeland. This marked a clear difference from the intellectuals' discourses on modernisation that postulated modernisation in all areas of life and society for Korea to emerge from its status as a developing country.[5]

In the initial stages of its rule, the military government, without first consulting with the United States, drew up an economic development plan for building an economy relying on domestic capital only and achieving balanced

5 For details on the modernisation discourse among Korean intellectuals starting in the 1950s, see Sin 2017: 58, and Kim 2007.

growth. It also introduced a number of emergency measures aimed at raising domestic capital at short notice, but these did not succeed (Kim 2004: 79–80). This failure in economic policy posed a grave threat to the legitimacy of the coup d'état. Park Chung Hee needed a plan for averting potential crises resulting from such failures of his military government's economic policies. Both the normalisation of diplomatic relations with Japan and the deployment of Korean troops to Vietnam unfolded against this background.

The end of the coalition for national (Korean) democracy

The United States had been pressing Korea to normalise its relations with Japan almost continuously from the 1950s onwards. The fiscal deficit of the United States had sharply increased in the mid-1950s, not least on account of its engagement in the Korean War, which required it to reduce both its defence and foreign aid budgets. To do so, the United States needed to reduce the number of US troops stationed abroad and the volume of its spending on foreign military aid, but Rhee Syngman had protested vehemently against corresponding plans for Korea. The United States, trying to appease him, started to deploy nuclear weapons on South Korean territory from 1958 onwards (Baek 2013: 149, 151). As Korea was one of the countries that received the most foreign aid from the United States, the latter wished for Korea to normalise its diplomatic relations with Japan, the hope being that Japan, instead, would come to provide economic aid to Korea and that the path could be cleared for a North-East Asian anti-communist system of collective security with Japan at its centre (Kim Won 2013: 125). However, as a vigorously anti-Japanese former independence activist, Rhee Syngman was fundamentally opposed to any such plans, fearing a threat to Korean independence from renewed Japanese expansionism. Following the coup of 1961, the government of US President John Kennedy, which recognised the new military government, repeated previous US demands for a normalisation of Korean diplomatic relations with Japan. Park Chung Hee, for his part, believed that a normalisation of diplomatic relations with Japan was necessary to raise the colossal sums of money needed for the fast-paced modernisation of the homeland through economic development, and he initiated secret negotiations with Japan. Having been an officer in the Japanese Imperial Army, Park was favourably inclined, rather than hostile, towards Japan (Baek 2013: 149).

When the news broke on 24 March 1964 that Park Chung Hee's comrade in the military coup and chairman of the newly formed Democratic Republican Party Kim Jong-pil had met with the Japanese Foreign Minister in Tokyo and agreed on a date for the signing of a treaty normalising diplomatic relations

with Japan, large numbers of university students took to the streets to express their opposition to a diplomacy of "self-abasement", demanding that Kim Jong-pil be recalled to Korea immediately.

The Korean public equally considered the normalisation of relations with Japan – the country that had colonised the Korean peninsula and had never so much as apologised for its colonial rule – as an act directed against the Korean people. It was difficult to accept that Korea should conclude a treaty on the normalisation of diplomatic relations in exchange for a mere 300 million dollars in aid, even more so in a situation where the damage of the colonial past had not even been investigated, acknowledged or compensated for domestically. Moreover, it was felt that concluding such a treaty would mean conceding on the issue of Rhee Syngman's maritime "Peace Line" and allowing Korea to become subsumed, as a mere sub-unit, into a system of international division of labour centred around Japan (Kim 2016: 112).

On 20 May 1964, about 3,000 students gathered in Seoul and performed a "funeral service" for "nationalist democracy" as it had been propagated by Park's regime.[6] They were joined by numerous intellectuals and citizens of Seoul. On 3 June 1964, about 50,000 people gathered in protest in Seoul alone, demanding that the Park Chung Hee government step down. That day, demonstrations unfolded all across the country. As had been the case during the April 19 Revolution, many people were injured in clashes between protesting students and police forces. At 9 o'clock in the evening, as a group of protesters approached the Blue House – the executive office and official residence of the president of the ROK – the government declared martial law for all of Seoul. By around midnight, the protest had been completely suppressed by tanks ordered into Seoul in accordance with martial law. Martial law brought with it press censorship and the closure of universities. It also meant the prohibition of all forms of assembly and the imposition of a nightly curfew. The newspapers of the following day, 4 June 1964, contained nothing on the protests other than official government announcements. No protests could be held from that time onwards, which meant the end of the movement against Korean-Japanese talks on the normalisation of diplomatic relations, which came to be known as the June 3 Resistance Movement.

In *Sasanggye*, Ham Sŏk-hŏn, one of the most influencial progressive intellectuals at that time, attacked Park Chung Hee for being another Yi Wanyong, the Prime Minister of the Korean Empire who in 1910 had signed the treaty turning the country into a Japanese colony (Kim 2016: 112). Chang Chun-ha, the Editor-in-Chief of *Sasanggye*, called on Park Chung Hee to "give up the idolatrous idea that a mere 300 million dollars in economic cooperation funds

6 Students representing Seoul National University, Dongkuk University, Sungkyunkwan University, Konkuk University, Kyunghee University and Hanyang University gathered at Seoul National University, where they carried a coffin on their shoulders with the words "nationalist democracy" written on it.

could halt a worsening of the economic crisis" and accused Park Chung Hee's government of "hastily and precipitately trying to settle relations with Japan in order to evade acute economic difficulty" and thereby engaging in a diplomacy of self-abasement towards Japan (Ma 2016: 192). Such diplomacy was the result of three years of corruption, wrongdoing and incompetence on the part of the military government, coupled with the usurpation and distortion of the democratic process. *Sasanggye* came to define the nationalist democracy advocated by Park Chung Hee as a mere "pretence" intended to cover up an essentially "pro-Japanese" act in the tradition of the "serving-the-great" mentality (ibid.). Park Chung Hee, it submitted, was "an old hand at lying and changing his mind" who had gone back on his promise of returning to the military and could no longer be trusted. The coup d'état of 16 May 1961 "[bore] no relation to the April 19 Revolution [and had] ultimately betrayed the glory of the April 19 Revolution [...] no matter what the initial intentions of the coup's protagonists might have been" (ibid.).

The movement against Korean-Japanese talks meant that nationalism had become the cause of grave socio-political tension and conflict, and that the ties linking nationalism, anti-communism and modernisation had been severed. The Park Chung Hee government continued to promote its modernist agenda. Meanwhile, many intellectuals, feeling that the autonomy and self-reliance of the Korean people were under threat, decided to join the discourse on Korean nationalism. A heated debate thereby began to unfold in Korea surrounding the question of nationalism and its relation to anti-communism, the ideology of growth and democracy (Kim 2016: 113).

The construction of a mobilisation regime: Involvement in Vietnam

In addition to its plans for a normalisation of diplomatic relations with Japan, the Park Chung Hee government actively pursued plans for the deployment of Korean troops to Vietnam. In 1961, when the United States had not even decided on the deployment of its own troops to Vietnam, Park Chung Hee informed US President Kennedy of his willingness to dispatch Korean troops to Vietnam should the United States approve of and support the operation.[7] To Park Chung Hee, who had come to power through a military coup, gaining the trust and support of the United States was central to the stability of his rule. He therefore elevated anti-communism to the status of an overarching state ideology. This was because anti-communism was the main goal of US for-

7 Document 247, Memorandum of Conversation, Kennedy–Park Chung Hee Meeting, Washington, 14 November 1961, 3:30-4:50 p.m. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia.

eign policy during the Cold War era. It was his eagerness to ingratiate himself with the United States that made Park Chung Hee approach the superpower about the possibility of deploying Korean troops to Vietnam. However, the Kennedy government did not take up his offer in 1961 for fear that doing so might negatively affect the prospect of negotiations on the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan (Baek 2013: 149, Lee 2012: 409).

Park, for his part, hoped to block any US plans for reducing expenditures on aid to Korea once a Korean-Japanese agreement – at the time still unachieved – would be concluded. He also hoped to secure the continued presence of US troops in Korea, blocking US plans for scaling down the size of troops stationed there (Bae 2015: 376).

Following a change in United States policy towards Vietnam, US President Lyndon B. Johnson, who had assumed the presidency following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, initiated the "Many Flags" campaign for Vietnam on 23 April 1964. In June 1964, it was agreed with the United States that Korea would dispatch an ambulance unit of 130 men and a group of ten Taekwondo instructors, who were sent to Vietnam on 11 September 1964 (Baek 2013: 152, Bae 2015: 373).

In a presidential address on 26 January 1965, Park expressed the conviction that "the communist attack on the Vietnam of the Free World" constituted "a grave threat to Korean security" and that supporting Vietnam was "an indirect form of protecting Korean national security" (Park 1969: 1404). This amounted to declaring the front in Vietnam to be directly linked to the Military Demarcation Line on the Korean peninsula, thereby constituting something akin to a second front against North Korea. Such statements revived the fresh memories of the Korean War that had started a mere 15 years previously and thus proved highly effective discursive devices for building a new system of mobilisation. North Korea reacted with alarm to the South Korean deployment of troops to Vietnam, declaring that the South and the United States would have to answer for all potential consequences, and the sudden increase in the number of hostilities between North and South Korean soldiers along the demilitarised zone (DMZ) created the environment in which Park Chung Hee's discursive device of the "second front in Vietnam" could operate effectively (Yun 2012: 298).

Until 1966, the United States did not consider the armed confrontations in the Korean demilitarised zone a particularly serious problem. They saw such confrontations not so much as North Korean threats towards South Korea, but as acts initiated by the North with the intention of putting an end to South Korea's deployment of troops to Vietnam.[8] Park Chung Hee himself stressed during his November 1966 talks in Seoul with US President Lyndon B. John-

8 Document 35, Special National Intelligence Estimate, Washington, 19 March 1965. Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea; Document 98, Intelligence Memorandum, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

son that, while the demilitarised zone faced "chronic problems and incidents", and while these incidents were "an irritating factor", they did not constitute "a serious danger" (ibid.). He added: "If fighting increases in Vietnam, there may be increased and more sustained pressure at the DMZ."[9]

In fact, Park's government wanted to move beyond immediate defensive measures in the demilitarised zone and engage in active acts of retaliation for violations of the armistice agreement.[10] Eventually, the South even set up and trained its own independent infiltration units and moved them into the North. In the second half of 1967, South Korean infiltration units crossed the DMZ and entered North Korea on average twice a month. In a raid in November 1967, a South Korean infiltration unit even blew up the Korean People's Army's Divisional Headquarters.[11] The US and UN commands were principally opposed to such acts on the part of the South Korean military for fear they might endanger the continued presence of UN forces on the peninsula.[12]

In the first half of 1966, the United States had promised military and economic aid to the Republic of Korea Army in exchange for more Korean troops being deployed to Vietnam.[13] However, the first priority of US aid lay with Vietnam, and until 1967 the United States had taken no active steps towards modernising the ROK forces' equipment.[14] On 21 January 1968, a North Korean guerrilla unit advanced into Seoul and attacked the Blue House, and following the North Korean capture of the US Navy intelligence ship USS Pueblo and her eighty-three crew members on 23 January that year the United States changed its policy. In the immediate aftermath of the Pueblo incident, Cyrus R. Vance, who had been dispatched to Seoul from the United States as a Special Envoy, reported as follows to President Johnson: "We often heard them comment on

9 Document 96, Memorandum of Conversation between President Johnson and President Park, Seoul, 1 November 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-68, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

10 During his meeting of 16 September 1967 with General Bonesteel, Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command in South Korea, Park Chung Hee expressed his position as follows: "[C]ounter-measures are most important to stop North Korean attacks, whenever the North Koreans violate the armistice they must be made to pay by retaliation." Document 129, Telegram From the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, 19 September 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

11 Document 181, Memorandum from Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, Washington, 20 February 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

12 "Since ROK forces are under UNC [UN Command] operational control, the Soviets could then make case in the UNGA that UN forces themselves are violating the armistice agreement which they pledged to uphold and urge withdrawal UN presence." Document 102, Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State Seoul, 29 November 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea; Document 129, Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Seoul, 19 September 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

13 Special US assistance to South Korea was promised in a letter from US Ambassador to South Korea, Winthrop G. Brown, on 4 March 1966. Document 133, Memorandum of Conversation, 13 November 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea; Document 76, Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea Washington, 27 January 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

14 Document 138, Memorandum from the Director of Defense Research and Engineering (Foster Jr., John S.) to Secretary of Defense McNamara, Washington, 7 December 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

their inability to contain North Korean infiltration teams. The South Koreans are fearful that a North Korean strike/reconnaissance team will destroy some major economic facility, e.g., a refinery or a dam".[15] In that same report, he suggests there is a need to "continue modernisation of the ROK armed forces [… and] to push ahead with the task of strengthening [the South Korean] anti-infiltration system by expediting the flow of equipment" (ibid.).

The United States subsequently initiated procurement and delivery of a "counter-infiltration package" to the ROK forces, with some priority items in that package to be delivered "on a priority equal to that of equipment going to Viet-Nam".[16] The counter-infiltration package included the costs for "[i]n-creas[ing] the effectiveness of the land barrier across the demilitarised zone in Korea and its seaward extension" (ibid.). Work on replacing the relatively loose barbed wire and wooden fences which had previously demarcated the southern boundary of the demilitarised zone with a barbed wire fence with a height of two-and-a-half to three metres began from the middle of 1967. At the time, the United States was planning to construct a barbed wire fence along the Vietnamese demilitarised zone. The United States government thought that "Korean anti-infiltration training and experience could be particularly valuable in this type of assignment"[17] and in fact, Korean soldiers deployed to Vietnam were mobilised in the construction of the Vietnamese barbed wire fence.

This was not the only time the United States would use Korea as a test site for equipment to be employed in the Vietnam War. Defoliants, too, were first tested for utility and effectiveness in the Korean demilitarised zone. According to US documents, the United States had supplied the ROK Army with defoliants and instructed them to spray them in Korea even before 1966 but did not officially notify the Korean government of its plans to use defoliants to remove vegetation until September 1967 (Lee 2011). It seems they supplied the defoliant to ROK forces without informing them of the fact that defoliants can be seriously detrimental to human health.[18] On 8 January 1968, the Korean Minister of National Defence, Kim Sŏngŭn, outlined to the Korean press the additional counter-infiltration measures of "constructing a fence across and defoliating

15 Document 181, Memorandum from Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, Washington, 20 February 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

16 Document 154, Memorandum from the US Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach, Nicholas de B.) to President Johnson, Washington, DC, 5 February 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

17 Document 107, Memorandum from the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council (Smith, Rear Admiral John V.) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow, Walt W.), Washington, DC, 19 January 1967, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

18 That defoliants were sprayed in the Korean demilitarised zone first became known when a US soldier who had served in Tongduch'ŏn in 1968 filed a lawsuit against the US government in 1999 and was awarded compensation for the after-effects of the exposure to defoliants (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 25 May 2011, p. 29). There are also many victims of exposure to defoliants in the South Korean military. They began to be awarded compensation for the damages they had suffered from as late as 2007.

the DMZ".[19] By the end of the 1960s, defoliants had been sprayed along the barbed wire of the Korean demilitarised zone, while landmines identical with those employed in Vietnam had been placed in the area of both the demilitarised zone's barbed wire fence and the fortified bunkers. One Korean newspaper estimated that the South had thereby gained a "perfect line of defence".[20]

In this manner Korea had, in fact, become a second front in the Vietnam War. The Korean government mobilised large numbers of Koreans to send off soldiers being dispatched to Vietnam and to welcome those returning from Vietnam. Soldiers about to leave for Vietnam paraded through the centre of Seoul as part of carefully orchestrated official send-off ceremonies involving students, citizens and even celebrities.[21] The "send a comfort letter to a soldier deployed to Vietnam" campaign is an excellent example of the government's strenuous mobilisation efforts. Its goal was to amass eight million "comfort letters" in the three months from 20 July to 19 October 1967. However, by the end of the war, the number of letters sent back home by soldiers deployed to Vietnam amounted to five times the number of letters they had received, in spite of the fact that even elementary school students had been mobilised to write the "comfort letters". Yun Ch'ung-ro considers this the result of a form of passive resistance against the Vietnam War by ordinary Koreans (Yun 2012: 304). However, interpreting not sending "comfort letters" to soldiers in the field as a form of resistance against the Vietnam War might be going a step to far.

Rather than with news from the battlefields, Koreans at the time associated Vietnam with the television sets, transistor radios, cameras and recorders contained in the soldiers' "homecoming boxes" and with families whose attire would suddenly improve upon returning from a trip to the bank to collect the soldiers' remittances. This was true to the point where one newspaper observed "an overwhelming climate" of finding meaning in the deployment to the Vietnam War "in personal interests related to the practicalities of life rather than in a national cause" (Yun 2012: 298). Ordinary Koreans saw Vietnam not as a smoke-filled battlefield but as a "blessed and promised land flowing with milk and honey". It was even said that one could easily make a fortune with only one year's service in Vietnam (ibid.).

According to official figures, Korean foreign currency exchange earnings related to the Vietnam War amounted to one billion thirty-six million dollars

19 Document 143, Editorial Note, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

20 Lee Yŏn'gyo 1968. To this day, the barbed wire fence along the southern boundary of the Korean demilitarised zone is preserved in the form it took in the late 1960s.

21 Parades and ceremonies included the First National Send-off Parade (August 1966, White Horse Unit), welcoming parades for the triumphant return of soldiers from Vietnam (1971–1972, Blue Dragon Unit) and 120 Send-off and Welcoming Ceremonies for Replacement Troops (1966–1972, in Pusan and Ch'unch'ŏn) (Won, Ho-chŏ 1974: 394–395).

for the period from 1965 to 1972.[22] Foreign exchange earned in or in connection with Vietnam enabled Korea to build the infrastructure required to pursue its economic development plans and laid the foundation of the Korean economy's rapid growth from the middle of the 1960s onwards.

In addition to the earnings of soldiers dispatched to Vietnam, these sums include the income of engineers dispatched to construction work in Vietnam by private companies such as Hyundai Engineering and Construction and Hanjin and by the Korean Overseas Development Corporation. Park Chung Hee's political companion Chŏng Ilgwŏn recalls in his memoirs that Park may have cited anti-communism as the grand and noble reason for pursuing a deployment of troops to Vietnam almost as soon as he had seized power but inwardly hoped to recreate for Korea the kind of economic benefits Japan had been able to reap during the times of the Korean War (Yun 2012: 290).

After 1965, the realisation of such hopes seemed to be within reach, and in a message to the Korean people of January 1966 Park declared he would complete "the modernisation of the homeland" by the second half of the 1970s. He continued to proclaim that "[i]f the path to unification leads through the modernisation of the homeland, and if the path to modernisation leads through a self-reliant economy, then self-reliance is the first step towards unification", thereby presenting a logic for his rule over Korea that linked the notions of unification, modernisation and self-reliance.[23] He had thus found his own way of connecting the notions of "modernisation" and "the nation" (ibid.).

Anti-communist developmental dictatorship

Park Chung Hee succeeded in the presidential elections of 3 May 1967 on the strength of the electorate's expectations for economic growth. In the legislative elections of 8 June in the same year, his ruling party equally secured a victory. However, this election, which won the ruling party a number of seats that would allow it to pass constitutional amendments, was widely criticised as rigged because there had been an all-out mobilisation of government resources to ensure the ruling party's victory. Again, nationwide protests ensued.

While South Koreans were largely supportive of the deployment of troops to Vietnam, intertwined as it had become with the notions of anti-communism

22 The ROK received about $238.7 million through trade and $753 million in other non-trade revenues, including military remittances, workers' remittances and compensation for casualties. According to a document released by Seoul's foreign ministry in 2005, South Korea earned a total of $5 billion in foreign currency from the dispatch of troops to Vietnam, including $1 billion in military aid, $1 billion in U.S. military expenses, $1 billion in Vietnam special aid and $2 billion in technology transfer and export promotion assistance between 1965 and 1973. (*Yonhap News*, 26 August 2005).

23 New Year's Speech by Park Chung Hee on 18 January 1966, http://pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/index.jsp?spMode=view&artid=1305648&catid=c_pa02062 (accessed 20 June 2020).

and modernisation, they protested fiercely against the rigged elections and the accompanying violation of democratic principles. However, the Park Chung Hee government in 1967 instrumentalised anti-communism to suppress the protest movements just as it had done during the June 3 Resistance Movement in 1964. Only this time, Park Chung Hee did not declare martial law, but instead chose to fabricate a spy incident (see next paragraph). He capitalised on the fact that the number of armed confrontations in the demilitarised zone was increasing to further his domestic political aims.

What is referred to in contemporary Korean historiography as the "East Berlin Incident of 1967" is a case in point. On 8 July 1967, Koreans living in West Germany and other parts of Europe were secretly abducted to South Korea and placed into confinement on the pretext that they had engaged in spying activities on behalf of the North on the basis of instructions received through the North Korean embassy in East Berlin.[24] The West German government protested against these events to the point where it stated it would have to reconsider its diplomatic relations with South Korea. The Park Chung Hee government was fully aware of the dangers of its conduct from the diplomatic point of view, but silencing the voices of the intellectuals who opposed the constitutional revision that was the first in a number of steps aimed at allowing him to stay in power indefinitely was, to Park Chung Hee, the more urgent problem. Anti-communism was the best tool available to do just that. North Korea's bold claim in 1966 that it would achieve unification of the Korean peninsula under communist rule by early 1970 greatly helped the South's anti-communist policies (Lankov 2013: 30–31).

By the second half of the 1960s, the notion of anti-communism had taken on the additional, more specific meaning of a "victory over communism" in the contest of economic systems. This is proof of the extent to which the Park Chung Hee government had become confident of its plans for economic development.[25] In parallel with opening a new front against the North in the form of a rivalry in the contest of economic systems, the Park Chung Hee government systematically pursued its mission of bringing about an internalisation of anti-communist ideology in South Korean society. This meant developing the notion of "the spy within" who poses a threat to national security and ensuring that such discourse became an integrated part of everyday life. Anti-communist education was practised in kindergartens and elementary schools to the point where children came to believe that communists were "red devils with horns". The Park Chung Hee government was aiming to thereby win control over its citizens' very way of thinking. The small- and large-scale armed confrontations that continued to occur in the demilitarised zone – coupled with incidents such

24 The South Korean Truth Commission has ascertained that this incident was a case of pure political manoeuvring (Hankyoreh 2006); for more information on the East Berlin Incident see Lee 2007: 96.

25 At that time, North Korea still enjoyed economic superiority over the South, cf. CIA 1972: 3–4.

as North Korean guerrilla forces penetrating as far as the Blue House in Seoul and the North Korean capture of the USS Pueblo – were mobilised as instruments of propaganda in this undertaking of bringing about an internalisation of anti-communist ideology in South Korean society.

In 1968, having gained confidence from the success of its economic policies, the Park Chung Hee government began opposing the US government on the issue of how to deal with North Korea. This was in stark contrast to the situation in the first half of the 1960s, when Park Chung Hee had been highly conscious of the US government's interests and eager to please them in order to secure the continuation of his rule.[26] It was, not least, an expression of the extent to which the Korean troops had gained in relevance in the Vietnam War. Regarding the North Korean raid on the Blue House on 21 January 1968 and the capture of the USS Pueblo only two days later, on 23 January, Park Chung Hee strongly objected to the fact that the United States focused its efforts on trying to bring about a release of the Pueblo's crew through bilateral discussions with the North Koreans and that the US pressed him for assurances that South Korean troops would not carry out retaliatory attacks against the North in spite of the North Korean attempt on his and his family's lives.[27] Park, who had lost faith in the United States, began planning for the creation of an "independent national defence"[28] – forming a two and a half million-strong homeland reserve force in April 1968.

At a time when students in the United States, Japan and Western Europe were filling the streets in anti-war and pro-peace demonstrations, South Korea's authoritarian ruler, with the aim of staying in power indefinitely, established a system of tight control over Korean citizens in the name of fighting against, and competing with, the North.[29] His achievements in economic development granted legitimacy to his policies because all Koreans agreed on the value of "modernisation" as a means to overcome poverty. Even the university students and intellectuals who denounced Park's constitutional amendments aimed at removing limitations to his rule as anti-democratic and took to the streets to oppose them did so demanding "the modernisation of the homeland and a truly

26 Document 182, Letter from the Ambassador to Korea (Porter, William J.) to the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Bundy, William P.), Seoul, 27 February 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

27 North Korea sent 31 commandos into Seoul to assassinate Park Chung Hee. The infiltrators made it to the first gate of the Blue House before they were stopped and eventually killed. Document 181, Memorandum from Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, Washington, 20 February 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea; see also Document 190, Telegram from the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson in Texas, Washington, 13 April 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

28 Document 183, Telegram from the Commander of United States Forces, Korea (Bonesteel, General Charles H., III) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (Sharp, Admiral Ulysses S. Grant), Seoul, 29 February 1968, Foreign Relations of the United States 1964–1968, Volume XXIX, Part 1, Korea.

29 The resident registration system introduced in November 1968 is a representative example. After the Blue House Raid incident a resident registration system was established to identify all residents of the country and to trace potential North Korean guerillas or spies.

democratic order" and with the proud assurance that none other than they themselves were the "spearhead of the movement for modernisation". The Korean media equated the protests abroad with "disorder" and spoke disparagingly of them as an amusement for the already satiated (Hwang 2018: 47). In fact, Korean elites who had previously referenced the West in their endeavours to familiarise the Korean public with their strategies for modernisation took the protests of 1968 in the West as a warning that similar events might unfold in Korea if it were to undergo a Western form of modernisation. As a consequence, they started emphasising that Korea had a cultural tradition and a morality that was different from the West. Such was the societal and political context behind the proclamation of the Charter of National Education in November 1968.[30]

The Park Chung Hee government ordered that this Charter of National Education, which begins with the words "We were born on this land with the historic mission of reviving the Korean nation" be recited in all schools and at all formal public events. This was a process of instilling in all Koreans a sense that each and every one of them bore individual responsibility for the morals and values of the nation as a whole – all in the beautiful name of national modernisation. Notably, "Koreans" in this sense were the citizens of the South only, united as they were by their shared anti-communism. A new notion of the nation revolving around the axis of anti-communism coupled with modernisation had been developed. This was fundamentally different from the concept of the Korean people as one nation uniting Koreans living in the South and the North.[31]

The Park Chung Hee government would not tolerate any expression of goodwill on the part of South Koreans towards the North. To Park, the North was nothing but an enemy waiting to attack the South and force it into unification under communism. He made this unambiguously clear in talks with newly elected US president Richard Nixon in August 1969. Park gathered from the talks with Nixon that the United States intended to end the war in Vietnam, start talks with the Soviet Union and China and, ultimately, withdraw their troops from South Korea. He said to Nixon that "Kim [the leader of North Korea] will provoke a war if he believes that [the] American policy toward the ROK is going to change or has changed", adding: "The strengthening of ROK defence would check these provocations of Kim and have him give up the idea of invading the South by force. A way to achieve this objective is to strengthen the equipment and combat capability of the ROK forces."[32] At a later stage,

30 This Charter was closely modelled on the Meiji Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 (see Elfving-Hwang 2011: 46).

31 It is here that the political conflict referred to in present-day Korean society as *namnamgaldŭng* (South-South conflict, referring to progressives vs. rightist conservatives) has its roots.

32 Document 35, Memorandum of Conversation, San Francisco, California, 21 August 1969, Foreign Relations of the United States 1969–1976, Volume XIX, Part 1, Korea, 1969–1972.

Park also started planning for the development of atomic weapons (see Snyder 2018) with a view to building an independent system of national defence, all the while continuing his work on a master plan for prolonging his rule.

On 14 September 1969, the Korean National Assembly passed a draft for a constitutional amendment that would put Park Chung Hee in a position to stand in the presidential elections for a third time. This completed the framework for the realisation of an anti-communist developmental dictatorship. Democracy was excluded from this alliance between anti-communism, modernisation, and South Korean nationalism. The decade of the Korean 1960s, which had begun with the democratic revolution of 19 April 1960 led by students and workers opposing the rigged elections of the month before, was now ending with the completion of an anti-communist developmental dictatorship that was the result of the shifting notions of modernisation, anti-communism, the nation and democracy.

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Our Friends in the South
Anti-Colonial Universalisms and Sino-Vietnamese Solidarity in the Global 1960s

Benjamin Kindler

Abstract

In 1964, the Foreign Languages Publishing House of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam released a series of letters in English, French, Chinese and other languages as part of its campaign of international solidarity against the US military presence. These letters, having initially been published in Vietnamese for domestic consumption, collected the exchanges between resistance fighters in southern Vietnam and their lovers, friends and families in the north, offering a varied and harrowing portrayal of a protracted guerrilla struggle. Whilst these publications left traces across their myriad sites of circulation, of no country was this more true than the People's Republic of China, where the letters, published as *Letters from the South* (*Nanfang Laixin*), produced a series of powerful cultural afterlives. This study tracks the reception of these publications in China and examines the works that they inspired. The first consists of noted author Ba Jin's multiple journeys to North Vietnam in the first half of the 1960s and his lyrical essays and public epistolary exchanges with leading North Vietnamese writers and poets, in which the publication *Letters from the South* features heavily. The second involves two theatrical scripts that were written and performed in China, also under the name *Letters from the South* (*Nanfang Laixin*). These sets of textual afterlives differed in their specific forms but in combination the two raise questions about translation, border-crossing and geography.

Keywords: China, Vietnam, Sino-Vietnamese solidarity, Letters from the South, 1960s, anti-imperialist resistance, literature, theatre

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> When A Yun now spoke he did so without any restraint. He spoke to me in the manner of a familiar old friend: "When you next come to us, I certainly will not be here in this school. I hope that you and I will meet again in the south!" (Du Xuan 1965: 56)

The heartfelt words with which the Vietnamese host A Yun bade farewell to the Chinese playwright Du Xuan underlines the emotive experience that was Sino-Vietnamese solidarity activism in the Asian 1960s. The promise of a renewed meeting in the south marks a horizon of expectation that encompasses the dense and complex relationships between the projects of national liberation and socialist internationalism that comprised the history of much of the twentieth century: the prospect of a meeting in the south would, on the one hand, necessitate the reunification of Vietnam, a project that reached its victory in 1975, and yet so too, in the vision of A Yun, would such a reunification provide grounds for the further extension of projects of solidarity between the two socialist states of China and Vietnam. The briefness of Du Xuan's account, which forms part of a travelogue concerning his visit to Vietnam in 1965, offers no clues as to the subsequent fate of those he met during this trip, yet history records that the expectations of Sino-Vietnamese internationalism were cruelly dashed. The two states proved unable to sustain their earlier internationalist commitments amidst the increasingly virulent struggles of the Sino-Soviet Split, and eventually their geopolitical differences descended into war in the 1970s.

To engage with this history, then, means to grapple with the difficulties and pitfalls of internationalism, mediated as it was by the persistent challenges of state borders and the polarising tendencies of the Cold War. These difficulties were further exacerbated in the case of Vietnam and China by the ideological weight of the pre-modern imperial relations between the two states, a history which today forms the basis of popular and official perceptions for each of the other. In contemporary Vietnamese discourse, China's complex historical relations with its southern partner are reduced to a dehistoricised category of colonial oppression and Vietnamese resistance. This prevalent nationalist discourse is totally inadequate to the complex permutations of that relationship, and above all to the aspirations of twentieth-century projects of solidarity, which are increasingly subject to erasure amidst post-socialist revanchist projects in both countries.

This article proposes a return to the 1960s as a moment that enables us to think otherwise, celebrating one of the most fruitful relationships of cultural solidarity between two exemplars of Third World socialism. It does so both as a recovery of a lost history, and also as a theoretical intervention amidst the ruins of postcolonial studies, oriented towards a reassertion of the necessity and possibility of a universalist emancipatory politics, rooted in the anti-colonial struggles of past and present. In doing so, it joins a range of scholars in and beyond Asian Studies whose interventions may be summarised in the terms given by Priyamvada Gopal, namely as excavations of historically-existing attempts

to envisage new "cartographies of liberation" emergent in the interstices between nation-state projects.[1] The emergence of such cartographies in the global 1960s was, in fact, no historical aberration. The shared experience of imperialist subjugation over the nineteenth century had already forced Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionaries of the fin-de-siècle to seek imaginaries of political community beyond both the pre-modern tributary system of intra-Asian relations and the emergent nation-state. The publication in 1907 of Phan Boi Chau's essay "Sorrow for Vietnam, Condolences for Yunnan", rendered in elegant classical Chinese, marked just such a vision, in which Phan attended to the border region between the southwestern province of Yunnan and northern Vietnam within the reworking of space under the aegis of colonial railroad expansion, arguing that the political geography of the region rendered it a viable site for a transnational project of insurgency.[2] The 1960s marked, to this extent, a renewal and extension of that pre-history, albeit under changed historical conditions, with cultural activism assuming a new importance in transforming the limits of spatial possibility.

During the period 1963–1966 with which this article is concerned, there were two full Chinese delegations of authors to Vietnam, the first in July 1963 and the second in 1965, both conducted under the personal aegis of veteran Chinese author Ba Jin and encompassing meetings between Chinese authors and their Vietnamese counterparts. These delegations left behind a substantial set of textual traces and accounts, of which Du Xuan's is but one example. Within the tapestry of cultural exchanges between the two countries, this article traces the history and textual afterlives of a particular set of texts whose origins lay with the Vietnamese strategy of "people's diplomacy" – namely, those published in English as *Letters from South Vietnam*.

These collections comprised a series of letters sent by fighters of the National Liberation Front in southern Vietnam to their friends, family and lovers in the north, recounting their experiences of armed struggle and their deep emotions for their loved ones in the north. In no other country did these Vietnamese-led publications shape an emergent culture of solidarity as they did in China. Translated into Chinese, they informed subsequent contacts between Chinese and Vietnamese authors, and in turn also gave rise to a series of Chinese adaptations, specifically in the form of two plays that appeared and were performed for Chinese and Vietnamese audiences. These textual exchanges are therefore of special importance in the way they were co-produced between Vietnamese and Chinese cultural workers. The resulting cartography (to borrow Gopal's term) traversed state borders and allowed the "south" to be understood as a

1 Beyond Gopal's evocative phrase, recent years have also witnessed other scholars seeking a vocabulary through which to re-state the possibility of a militant universalism. Examples include "transnational nationalism" (Prashad 2008), "new humanism" (Liu 2014) and "anticolonial worldmaking" (Getachew 2019).

2 For a further discussion of the importance of Phan Boi Chau and Vietnam in early twentieth-century Chinese anti-colonial thought, see Karl 2002 (Chapter 6).

porous space of struggle as well as the temporal horizon of expectation anticipated by Du Xuan's interlocutor, in which Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionaries might hope – one day – to meet again.

In what follows, this article begins with the arrival in China of the Vietnamese publications published in English as *Letters from South Vietnam*, with close attention to the permutations of translation that informed a capacity to produce new spatial imaginaries. It does so in particular by examining the function of these texts in interactions between Chinese and Vietnamese cultural workers, specifically the reportage of Ba Jin, which used the epistolary form to stage intimate relations of solidarity with his Vietnamese interlocutors. The article then shifts to the Chinese stage adaptations of these texts as an attempt to envisage the possibilities of pan-Asian liberation struggles from a Vietnamese subject-position. The article ends with a consideration of the process of erasure in the post-socialist period of the late 1970s, in which the spatial possibilities embodied in an expansive notion of the "south" were supplanted by a re-ethnicisation of the political subject centred around the figure of the overseas Chinese.

Letters from a familiar land

The privileging of culture as a mode of international political mobilisation under the conditions of the Cold War formed a core component of the strategy of "people's diplomacy" that was employed by both the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China to gain international support amidst widespread conditions of non-recognition on the part of other, non-socialist states. In 1964, Ho Chi Minh embraced people's diplomacy as a wide-ranging ensemble of practices that would also express and embody "the people" as an expansive political subject. He thus argued that diplomacy was "not only an area of concern for embassies and consulates-general [...] but also for such organised activities as foreign trade, culture, youth, women, and trade union agencies, all of which are equally responsible for diplomacy" (Nguyen 2003: 133).

As one particular dimension of this strategy amidst the intensification of American military intervention in Vietnam, the Vietnam Foreign Languages Publishing House (FLPH) undertook the publication in 1964 of two volumes, which appeared in English as *Letters from South Vietnam*, and in Chinese as *Letters from the South* (南方来信), the two Chinese volumes being published in January and June of that year. Issued in French and Arabic as well as English and Chinese, this set of publications embodied the cultural dimensions of "people's diplomacy" in the way they sought to engage in the international solidarity movement by drawing attention to the implications of American intervention. These translated collections were themselves collated from a prior

collection published for domestic consumption under the title *Từ tuyến đầu Tổ quốc* (*From the Borders of Our Motherland*; Hanoi: Van hoc).

Across the different versions, these collections comprise a series of letters sent by supporters and fighters of the National Liberation Front in southern Vietnam to their friends, family members and lovers in the north, recounting their experiences of armed struggle, their hopes for the future and their deep emotions for their loved ones in the north. Consistent with the international inspiration behind these collections, a lengthy introduction added to the versions published for audiences outside of Vietnam emphasised that the journeys of the letters themselves had necessitated pathways of transmission that went beyond the borders of the two Vietnamese states. The introduction recounted that the letters had passed through the countries of the presumed readers of the collections on the way to their Vietnamese recipients. The English introduction records as follows:

> From South Vietnam, letters arrive in Hanoi by hundreds, and from the four corners of the earth by thousands. To avoid the barrier of the Ben Hai river, which is "but a span", many of them had to cross frontiers, scatter in the world, pass through Asia, Europe, Africa, or America – by train, by sea, or by air; in short, they had to follow thousands of roundabout routes before reaching Hanoi, as birds flew to their nests through storm and rain. (FLPH 1963: 5)

The attention to these convoluted pathways of transmission, in combination with the letters themselves – which are often intimate and lyrical in their contents – is central to the effect of the collections, insofar as it has the function of interpolating the non-Vietnamese readers into the subject-position of the assumed recipient of the letters themselves. Yet this effect is not the same across all the versions of these publications, as there are differences throughout the English and Chinese versions of this introduction which shed light on the circulation of these publications in China as compared to other locations. In the remainder of the introduction, for example, readers are informed in the English version that "one can form a mental image of the distressing life in the occupied areas". The Chinese version maintains the same formal organisation of the introduction, whereby individual paragraphs correspond to their equivalents in other language versions, but its rendering of the anticipated effect of the letters differs in striking ways from the English. A more literal rendering of the Chinese that corresponds, in structural terms, to the English just quoted, would therefore be:

> [...] reading these letters, we can naturally place ourselves [置身于] amidst the life of terror in the areas controlled by the American-Ngo clique; and we come, without having to think about it, to stand by the side [身边] of the masses of people in the south. (FLPH 1964: 3–4)

The Chinese injunction to the reader therefore differs from the English in its vision of an almost literal spatial emplacement amongst the Vietnamese people.

In this rendering, the emotive force of the letters lies not only in the capacity to produce an "image" of life in southern Vietnam, but also in the shift in spatial location that is both willed on the part of the reader but also testament to the autonomous emotive force of the letters. The letters themselves follow the same order in the Chinese as they do in the English, and, whilst often being somewhat longer in Chinese, with the addition of asides and more literal translation of the corresponding Vietnamese texts, otherwise do not differ to the same extent as the divergences in language that emerge from the foreign-language preface.

To the nuanced differences in the language of this preface, however, must be added the title of the collections, as the Chinese rendering makes no explicit reference to Vietnam (as distinct from the English title *Letters from South Vietnam*) but rather maintains the general descriptive category of "South", such that the Chinese title can be directly rendered as *Letters from the South*. The cumulative effect of these differences in translation was decisive for the possibility of an expansion in spatial imagination beyond the limits prescribed by the English version. The "south", in other words, would come to demarcate not only the southern part of Vietnam and its division from the north, but also Vietnam itself as a "south" in relation to China, and Chinese readers as, therefore, the intended recipients of these letters sent from the south. These divergences were not without their political foundations. The strategy of "people's diplomacy" was heavily oriented towards raising support in those countries that were not allied with Vietnam. It may be surmised, then, that the intended audience of *Letters from South Vietnam* consisted of the anti-war movements in Britain and the United States, in order that those movements would put pressure on their respective governments. The People's Republic of China was an outlier in this regard, in that there was no necessity to seek the support of the Chinese government, as a socialist state which extended material support to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from the 1950s onwards.

The publication of *Letters* in China was therefore not a marginal cultural intervention but attracted enormous attention and an enthusiastic reception on the part of readers. Subsequent to the initial publications under the aegis of the Vietnam Foreign Languages Publishing House, both volumes of the letters were re-published by the Chinese Authors Publishing House in May and July for volumes one and two respectively. In 1965 there was added a "rural edition" which incorporated selected letters together with annotations and woodcut images to support readers with lower rates of literacy in the countryside (Rural 1965). Individual letters and extracts from the collections were, moreover, carried in a range of journal publications, allowing the text to gain a wider dissemination beyond the two volumes organised by Vietnamese cultural institutions.

A lengthy report published in the major periodical *Art and Literary Gazette* collected the responses of varied cultural workers to the first volume, including luminaries such as Xia Yan, Shao Quanlin and Zang Kejia. It is significant that these responses were themselves in the style of readers' letters to the journal, anticipating the use of the epistolary form as a basis for constructing solidarity. Their responses were effusive, but they also speak to the real theoretical problems at stake, namely, how to make the distinct anti-imperial histories of the Chinese and Vietnamese national liberation struggles commensurate with one another. Shao Quanlin therefore began his account by suggesting that the effect of the letters was to compel an act of memory through which the contemporary Vietnamese struggle became thinkable in terms of a Chinese historical and political precedent:

> The scenes described in this book make me think of the cruel destiny and heroic struggle of the Chinese people before liberation from the rule of the American-Jiang clique. How similar are the paths of struggle through which the peoples of our two countries have passed! (Shao 1964: 7).

The Chinese poet Zang Kejia, who during this period also wrote a poem under the title "Letters from the South" responding to the Vietnamese texts, similarly noted:

> As far as Chinese readers are concerned, this book gives us a great sense of intimacy and arouses emotional sympathy [共鸣]. This is because, beginning with the first Chinese revolutionary war, through to the liberation of our country, we underwent more than twenty years of struggle. We too were the authors and recipients of letters in this way. (Zang 1964: 9)

The problem evoked by these authors of how to locate the grounds for a concrete universality across time and space would recur in the process of adaptation of *Letters from the South* for the stage, as we shall see. Yet the immediate context of reading the letters as Vietnamese-led publications produced its own afterlives in the form of the written word, namely in the way that the epistolary form – the exchange of letters from north to south – emerged as a textual device that could be adapted to stage new relations of solidarity explicitly modelled on the practice of *Letters from the South*.

This is true above all of those individual writers who travelled to Vietnam as part of the two delegations of writers over 1963–1965. Of these participants, the leader of the delegations, Ba Jin, has a special significance, first and foremost on account of his specific use of the epistolary form as a way of staging solidarity. It cannot be ignored, however, that his role in Sino-Vietnamese solidarity in the 1960s overlapped with a much longer history stretching back to the pre-liberation period, in which Ba Jin was a leading proponent of Esperanto and closely involved in anarchist causes around the world, as well as with the

1950s, in which Ba Jin wrote a long series of reportage texts based on his journeys to North Korea.

In the 1960s, Ba Jin sought to craft two separate reportage collections based on his experiences in northern Vietnam, each of which drew together essays and reflections that had been published across different periodicals in the wake of his trips.[3] Of these, the first was published in September 1964 under the title *On the Banks of Hiền Lương Bridge*, whereas the publication of the second, planned for 1966 under the title *The Indestructible Bridge*, was interrupted by the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in that same year. In his earlier collection, *Letters from the South* emerges at the level of form, namely in the consistent choice of an epistolary mode in which Ba Jin corresponds with poets in northern Vietnam, as well as the level of content, in which Ba Jin discusses the text itself, and its significance as a material token of solidarity between himself and his interlocutors.

The short essay "A Precious Gift", then, is of special significance.[4] It takes the form of an extended letter to the Vietnamese poet Nguyễn Xuân Sanh, whose poem "Longing for the Sea" was featured in the October 1964 issue in the journal *World Literature*, this issue being a special edition comprised entirely of poetry and fiction from Vietnamese authors (Ruan 1964).[5] Ba Jin's extended letter was originally published in June of 1964, following his return from his first delegation trip to Vietnam. The point of departure for the letter is the arrival of a gift from Nguyễn, namely, the French edition of *Letters*, Ba Jin being fluent in French as a result of his earlier histories of internationalism. Ba Jin reports, in the opening lines of his letter: "Yesterday I received the copy of *Letters from the South* that you sent (the French edition). This book eternally shines forth light and is indeed a truly impressive gift" (Ba Jin 1964: 429).

The suggestion here that we might, with Ba Jin, conceive of the translated volume in the mode of a "gift" is of some significance, and one that has not gone unnoticed by other scholars attending to practices of translation (Venuti 2010). The specific contents of this gift exchanged in the interactions between Ba Jin and Nguyễn is that it does not fall into the aporia of giver and recipient, which Derrida locates as the basis of the impossibility of any genuine gift, but rather generates a transformation in political subjectivities by which Ba Jin is able both to express gratitude and also to relinquish his subject position as an

3 Across the socialist period, reportage had a special significance for projects of international solidarity. For a brief summary of international socialist reportage in China, see Laughlin 2019.

4 Of particular interest is the fact that this individual essay was also translated into Vietnamese as part of a collection entitled *Thanks to China, Our Comrade-In-Arms Of The Same Trench* (see Vietnam Centre and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive, https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/214384).

5 The journal *World Literature* had a central role across the 1960s as a site of translation through which Chinese readers were introduced to writings from across Asia, Africa and Latin America. Significantly, the focus of the journal's content on these areas marked a distinction from its earlier incarnation in the 1950s, when it had been comprised almost entirely of material from the Soviet Union and the canon of Euro-American literature. For a useful discussion of this journal, see Liu 2014.

external recipient who is outside of the context of struggle from which the gift *Letters from the South* may be said to emerge. Later in the same letter, and subsequent to a chain of anecdotes concerning his time in Vietnam, he then declares:

> These things that I saw and heard and of which I speak to you today, I have spoken about briefly, and merely in part, but only because I want you and other Vietnamese authors to know that I have carried your hearts with me back to Shanghai, and that my heart and yours have already melded together, your feelings have also become my feelings. Therefore, what an excited heart I bore as I read and re-read *Letters from the South*. That this book, written with blood, life and unwavering commitment, moved me to such an extent, you can surely imagine. (Ba Jin 1990: 435)

Ba Jin's description of his heart having melded together with those of his Vietnamese hosts marks a felt experience of total solidarity that exceeds not only the binary of recipient and giver with respect to the gift that motivates his letter, but also the limitations of mere sympathy as a political response to the Vietnamese liberation struggle. His vision of totalising commitment is therefore synonymous with that vision in the Chinese version of the international preface, in which the letters are said to generate for Chinese readers the possibility of placing themselves amongst the Vietnamese protagonists.

There is, in this context, a certain irony behind the fact of Ba Jin using a translated text as the point of departure for an epistolary mode of solidarity, which is that other forms of translation (like for example the oral translation between Ban Jin and his Vietnamese hosts) occupy only a semi-visible place in his texts. This relates in turn to the ambiguities of the epistolary form itself, which – while directed to a Vietnamese author and assuming a relationship of personal familiarity and political intimacy – was also published in a public form for Chinese readers, first in a periodical, and then as one of many essays and reportage texts making up the collection *On the Banks of Hiền Lương Bridge*. The letter provides no clues as to the necessary processes of translation which enabled it to be read by Nguyễn Xuân Sanh as its putative recipient, and the fact that Ba Jin's interactions in Vietnam naturally depended on a ready staff of translators is only occasionally rendered evident across his different texts. The impulse towards political intimacy embodied in the epistolary form therefore requires the erasure – strategic, to be sure – of those practices of translation that rendered conversation between Chinese and Vietnamese authors possible, even while a translated text provided the conditions for a mutual process of recognition. Yet the problem of oral translation, its visibility and central location in projects of political solidarity, re-emerges in more visible form in the text immediately following "A Precious Gift", which is simply entitled "Vietnamese People". Whilst not in an epistolary form, this text makes explicit that Ba Jin travelled in the company of a Vietnamese "translator comrade", never named. Ba Jin recalls:

> The translator comrade who travelled with me also worked at the Vietnamese Foreign Languages Press, and he told me that, through a process of collation and editing, people collected a series of letters into a book, and used a name that was both simple and appropriate: *Letters from the South*; he said that the translation work of the Chinese edition was already complete, and that printing was underway. (Ba Jin 1990: 451)

Listening to this comrade's account of the letters, Ba Jin turns again to the imagery of his previous text: "although I was listening carefully to his words, I nonetheless clearly felt that there was a long, long red thread that bound his heart to mine, and which coiled round these two hearts" (ibid.). It transpires that it is this very translator comrade who also sends Ba Jin the Chinese edition of *Letters From the South*, after the French edition dispatched by Nguyễn Xuân Sanh. Here, then, translation is rendered visible, but its locus remains primarily textual. It may be said, therefore, that the shifting visibility of translation is one of the points of tension within the staging of solidarity that emerges in Ba Jin's texts.

To this tension must be added the gendered content of this project of solidarity. Across his accounts, Ba Jin consistently tended towards images of heroic Vietnamese women combatants. The truth-value of these images can hardly be doubted, and yet they shed light on the extent to which the self-positioning of Chinese writers as inhabiting a porous zone of anti-colonial politics did not take place on gender-neutral grounds but rather generated the projection of the "south" as a feminised space. In a further collection of reportage essays published in 1965, then, of which Du Xuan's text was a part, the opening essay by Han Beiping, entitled "Recipients of Letters from the South" (from which comes the title of the collection as a whole) recalls, upon meeting some Vietnamese from the south, that "oh the south is a part of the whole of Vietnam, and yet today, she is divided, suffers destruction, and yet continues to fight" (Han 1965: 9).

If, with respect both to the problem of translation and the gendering of Vietnam, these texts contain their moments of tension, then neither can the emergent project of radical universalism be forced back into the familiar postcolonial critique of universalist politics that provides the alibi for the homogenisation of a particular identity or subject-position. The power of the exchange of letters marked by Ba Jin, consisting of both the exchange of the textual artefact *Letters from the South* as well as Ba Jin's epistolary exchanges with his counterparts in Vietnam, is that it provides the condition for a mode of political practice that exceeds the fixed categories of Vietnam and China, or Vietnamese and Chinese, consisting instead of the formulation of a new political subjectivity that cannot be reduced to a state logic or any narrow form of the particular. The capacity of the gift, in other words, is a generative one that replaces any notion of a fixed (that is, temporal) identity with a shared project based on a common claim to the future, and the possibility of making connec-

tions between the struggles of past and present. The universalist possibilities of Ba Jin's texts would become yet more visible when *Letters from the South* took to the dramatic stage.

Staging the people's war

The initial encounters with *Letters from the South* and the epistolary solidarities engendered by Ba Jin's reportage literature provided the conditions for a further extension of Sino-Vietnamese solidarity that would be drawn into Chinese cultural life before, in turn, gaining a new international presence. In 1964–1965, two distinct Chinese theatre companies – the People's Liberation Army Cultural Troupe Theatre Brigade and the Shanghai People's Art Theatre – each released spoken-drama plays under the title *Letters from the South*. The version produced by the Liberation Army was first released in the major theatre journal *Scripts* in September of 1964, while that of the Shanghai People's Art Theatre made its appearance the following year in the journal *Harvest*, with both plays also being released in single editions in 1965.

These plays were adapted from the materials contained in the Vietnamese-authored publications, but were, in fact, by no means the total extent of Chinese dramatic productions focused on Vietnam during this period. There was a veritable explosion of plays taking up the Vietnamese national liberation struggle. In order to summarise the extent of dramatic developments that emerged over this period, the April 1965 issue of the journal *Theatre Gazette* published a lengthy editorial under the title "Develop Theatrical Propaganda in Support of the Anti-American Patriotic Struggle of the Vietnamese People" in which they argued that theatre workers in China would:

> [...] actively use our own weapons – the theatrical arts – to expose the criminal invasion of the American imperialists, and to extol the great patriotic and internationalist revolutionary spirit of the Vietnamese people, through which they protect their homeland and protect the interests of all the peoples of the world. (Theatre Gazette 1965a: 2)

There followed a telegram sent on behalf of the Chinese Theatre Workers Association to their Vietnamese counterparts in which they pledged to continue their work in support of the Vietnamese struggle. They drew particular attention to the fact that "since August of last year, the play *Letters from the South*, which represents the struggle of the southern Vietnamese people against American imperialism, has been performed throughout our entire country" (All-China 1965: 3).[6] The choice of this particular journal issue to release such a telegram and various statements of commitment from Chinese playwrights was by no

6 Of the plays that were released under the title of *Letters from the South*, this telegram can only have been referring to the version drawn up by the Liberation Army, as the second version, that of the Shanghai People's Arts Theatre, was only released in 1965.

means a coincidence. It followed from and made explicit reference to an appeal launched at the second session of the third national congress of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the title of "A Letter of Appeal to all the Countries of the World" in which the Democratic Republic made further use of the strategy of people's diplomacy by calling for international support for an end to the conflict on the basis of the provisions set out by the Geneva Accords, which provided for an independent and united Vietnam through elections.

More impressive still than these statements of public support was the evidence of the sheer diversity of performances on the subject of Vietnamese national liberation that were performed by Chinese local and national theatre companies over this period. Some indication of this diversity is provided by a roster of plays and performances under the title "A New Theatre Roster Depicting the Anti-American Struggle of the Vietnamese People". This listing gives insight into the fact that, beyond spoken-word drama, plays based on the Vietnamese struggle also encompassed various local operatic forms, including *yueju* and *pingju*. Many of these plays were, in turn, printed in full as part of a special extra edition of *Scripts* carrying the title "Scripts Special Issue Firmly Promoting the Patriotic Anti-American Struggle of the Vietnamese People". The account of these performances emphasised that the plays concerned were varied in their sites and conditions of performance. Theatre workers and amateur dramatists were said to "extensively perform many plays supporting the struggle of Vietnam against the United States, on the stage, in squares, and on street corners" (Theatre Gazette 1965b: 9).

This aside gives some insight into the circumstances under which these plays were performed. Several of the plays performed over this period were single-act plays. Being based on local operatic forms and therefore encompassing notions of theatrical mimesis different from that of modern spoken-word drama, these single-act plays would have been accessible to audiences at street-level performances. They included, for example, a play entitled "Battle under the Coconut Trees" in which a member of a guerrilla unit is said to use clever tactics of deceit to lure enemy troops out of their positions in order that this guerrilla unit might capture their leader (ibid.).

The two plays that appeared as *Letters from the South* were not-small scale agitprop dramas, however, but full productions in the modern theatrical tradition. Of the two plays, the earlier play, created and performed by the Liberation Army, was by far the more prominent, and so comprises the basis of the analysis here. The earlier play is, moreover, distinguished by the theoretical depth of the discussions surrounding its production, which explicitly pose the problem of universalism. In a careful article entitled "Supporting the Anti-American Struggle of Our Vietnamese Brothers", two of the playwrights behind the text, Fu Duo and Ma Rong, explained the circumstances behind the creation

of the play itself. In this account, the aspiration was initially to formulate a dramatisation of the Huong Dien Massacre in 1955.[7]

Only after having encountered the publication of *Letters from the South* did the playwrights decide to take contemporary events as their site of dramatic intervention. They reportedly succeeded in crafting the play within less than a month, after which the play underwent multiple revisions in response to audience reactions. Yet more important, however, were the ways the playwrights confronted their own relationship with the Vietnamese struggle, and, more specifically, what they took to be their "insufficiency of life" (Fu / Ma 1965: 27). "Life" here signifies a theoretical category of Chinese socialist cultural production, in which entry into the social relations of production that constituted the life of the masses was understood to be a precondition for cultural production and the effectiveness of the cultural worker in portraying the cultural subject of socialism. Whilst noting that their lack of direct experience of the Vietnamese struggle posed certain problems for creation, the authors nonetheless asserted, in a passage that bears quoting at length, that:

> The Vietnamese struggle has many points of commonality with our own past struggle against the Japanese, so that it is possible to appropriate [调动] the life of the past era of struggle to make up for the insufficiencies of the present. Amongst the writers, directors and performers who participated in the creation of *Letters from the South*, there were many comrades who had also participated in the Anti-Japanese War, the War of Liberation, the War to Aid Korea and Resist America. Their past accumulation of life was therefore of great use in the creation of *Letters from the South*. For example, with respect to the life of struggle, of being oppressed and invaded, and of fighting against oppression and invasion, and the feeling of burning hatred against imperialism and its running dogs, we are in a position of commonality [共同性] with the Vietnamese. For this reason, we arrived at an image [of dramatic characters] upon reading the collection of letters, *Letters from the South*. (Fu / Ma 1965: 27)

Each of the formulations in this brief excursus are rich in theoretical significance, and demonstrate the ways in which Chinese playwrights were acutely conscious of the stakes of forging a new anti-colonial universalism through dramatic practice. Above all, their comments mark a site of productive tension. On the one hand, these remarks demonstrate the drive to formulate a dramatic text whose contents are those of the historical present, consisting of the contemporaneous events of the Vietnamese national liberation struggle. On the other hand, the dramatists show their awareness the necessity of mobilising other times and places in order that those present events might become legible and sensible to Chinese playwrights for whom the Vietnamese struggle remains adjacent to rather than synonymous or synchronous with their own political experience.

7 The Huong Dien Massacre of July 1955 witnessed the execution of unarmed peasants by forces of the South Vietnamese government in the village of Huong Dien in Quang Tri Province.

The "appropriation" or "mobilisation" of the experience of the Chinese national liberation struggle as concretised in the Anti-Japanese War thereby takes on the form of a radically presentist reading of those experiences and events. The effect is that these events and histories are dislodged from the status of a history whose temporality is simply that of the past and re-introduced into the present as the foundation of an anti-imperialist form of cultural practice. So too, in the same gesture, is the specificity of the Vietnamese struggle rendered capable of historicisation in order that it might be interpreted through the struggle of other times and places. A practice of anti-colonial comparison is therefore the basis for an assertion of "commonality" through which the Chinese and Vietnamese struggles are rendered commensurate rather than simply equivalent to one another.

The chain of comparison that unites these struggles is not the only means of marking the extent to which the Vietnamese struggle may be understood in terms of the history of struggles in China of which the actors and directors are said to have direct experience. The dialectic functions in the opposite direction as well, by instantiating the anti-colonial character of the Chinese revolutionary process. Nor was this relationship of commensurability a naively imagined one, as it also related to the concrete history of devising rural-based tactics adequate to the waging of an anti-imperialist struggle, as actualised in Mao's theory of the People's War. The posing of the People's War as a shared anti-colonial political practice provides the major motivating force for the text of the drama, to which we now turn.

As with many of the theatrical texts relating to Vietnam, as well as the content of *Letters from the South*, the suffering of southern Vietnamese peasants in the strategic hamlets provides the point of dramatic departure for the entire play. The first acts begins with a depiction of the petty abuses and demands meted out to Vietnamese peasants by American officials and their local agents in the strategic hamlets, including the imposition of strict curfews and controls on movement, as well as periodic demands for alcohol and money. Beyond this point, however, the play demonstrates a considerable range and mobility in its use of locations. There is, therefore, a formal contrast between, on the one hand, the spatial range of the play itself, and, on the other, the spatial restrictions placed on the diegetic characters.

This is true above all for the villagers who are, with the exception of those involved in the guerrilla underground, spatially restricted to the militarised confines of the strategic hamlet. The guiding thread is the character A Ha, who, as a female member of the resistance movement, displays considerable bravery throughout almost every act and emerges as a classic emblem of revolutionary fortitude. Her dramatic construction as a character poses suggestive parallels with other instances of heroic female characters in Chinese socialist

culture at this point in time, including, most famously, *Red Detachment of Women*.[8] In this context, gender is not an impediment to a universalist politics but part of its foundation, in which a vision of anti-imperialist womanhood and militancy underscores a commonality between Vietnamese and Chinese histories that is, again, irreducible to a state logic.

With the exception of the fifth act, A Ha is present in each part of the play. In spite of the seriousness of the subject matter, the play also displays borrowings from other cultural forms that allow for moments of excitement and even humour. The majority of the third act, for example, is given over to an urban setting, and more specifically a bar, which plays host to an elaborate espionage scene in which A Ha is forced to don sunglasses in order to avoid being caught by the South Vietnamese police. Yet the larger ideological subtext of the play consists of the recurrent utilisation of a figurative language of the human and non-human. The significance of these repeated gestures is that they allow the play to contest the appropriation of a discourse of humanitarianism within neo-colonial projects and in turn gesture towards a radical humanism centred on shared projects of Asian liberation. The invocation of a humanist critique emerges during the first act of the play through the figure of Fourth Older Uncle, who, like A Ha, is also a member of the guerrilla underground. Upon sneaking back into the village after having been captured and almost put to death, Fourth Older Uncle reports the cruel acts of American soldiers and local police. The police are said to have:

> [...] poured petrol on the bodies of the people and set them alight. There was a pregnant woman whose body was on fire, and the police pushed and pulled her this way and that, purposefully toying with her. Afterwards that woman fell down, and an American beast went over and gave her a kick for good measure [...] these beasts who extinguish humanity all they did was stand there and laugh! (Sha et al. 1964: 23–24)

The horrific power of this scene relies on the double audience listening to the narrative, whereby the immediate audience internal to the diegesis, consisting of the gathered villages including A Ha herself, provides the site for the positioning of the audience of the dramatic performance, in effect interpolating the audience as members of the village community to whom the story is addressed.

The articulation of a language of protest based on the denigration of the human being, or an incipient radical humanism, remains central to the remainder of the play, though not without certain ironies along the way. In the bar scene that comprises act three, for example, once A Ha has made her speedy escape, there follows a long exchange between Wen An, a dissolute intellectual who seeks to expose the crimes of the South Vietnamese government but is denied access to a free press, and Ruan Jin, who purports to be a former classmate in sympathy with Wen An. Ruan also laments that "I only wish that I could over-

8 The popularisation and dissemination of the image of the female militant in both China and Vietnam has gained close attention in scholarship, see for example Chen 2011.

throw this society that eats people!" (Sha et al. 1964: 33). The irony of this scene comes from the fact that Ruan Jin is himself eventually revealed to be a collaborator whose deeds result in the arrest of both Wen An and A Ha. Nonetheless, the deployment of the formulation of a society that eats people is significant not only as a generalised restatement of a humanist critique of a society under occupation, but also because it introduces a suggestive anachronism or a displacement of the straightforwardly mimetic qualities of the text in relation to the purportedly Vietnamese setting. This formulation, in other words, was specific to the Chinese conditions in which the text was written, having an unmistakable affinity with Lu Xun and the May Fourth tradition of humanist critique, including that of Ba Jin. If this anachronism marks a certain slippage within the text and to that extent a failure of cultural fidelity, so too does it further displace that critical humanist language from a predetermined historical position and allow for an articulation of the commonalities between these historical moments, that is, the Vietnamese moment of the 1960s that serves as the diegetic setting, and the legacy of Chinese radical humanist critique of the 1920s, from which that particular language of critique originates.

The force of humanist critique that motivates the text is, however, most visible in the final scene, which stages the impending dispatch of A Ha to a prison encampment on Con Son Island. The scene provides the basis for a prolonged exchange between herself and the American advisor, Carter, in which Carter uses a language of humanitarianism to convince A Ha of the benefits of collaboration, which deserves to be quoted in full:

> *Carter:* I am a humanitarian, and, what's more, I am a sincere Christian. My pastor told me that it is not permissible to infringe on the happiness of others in the slightest way, and so, even whilst my officers put forward the command to execute you, I am determined to allow you to live. Yet, happiness always comes with a price, and so only if you are willing to tell me the names of the leaders of this demonstration. [...]
>
> *A Ha:* Friendship! I ask you, you who have used napalm to burn our coconut groves and rice paddies into a wasteland, is this your friendship? You have sprayed chemical weapons on our banana trees, in our wells, you have caused tens of thousands to die of sickness, and you call this friendship? Your planes, your warships, your tanks, have smothered the holy skies, seas and land of our motherland, you have made our mothers lose their sons, you have made young women become widows, and you have made children who have just begun to call for their parents become orphans, and you call this friendship towards Vietnam, towards the peoples of Asia!
>
> *Carter:* Madam, how utterly barbaric of you!
>
> *A Ha:* The ones who are truly barbaric are not us, but you! Not only do you carry out butchery and plunder in Vietnam, you also carry your evil fire to Laos! You have occupied the holy territory Taiwan of the People's Republic of China! You have settled down in Japan and South Korea and refuse to leave! You seek to build your military installations everywhere, and occupy the whole world! But let me tell you: the peoples of the twentieth century have awoken, and the epoch in which you can ride roughshod

> over us is gone and shall never return! The millions of enslaved peoples of the world have taken up arms, and dawn has emerged in the East! Our motherland shall be united, and your blood debt shall be repaid, Mister Colonel, your final days draw near!
>
> (Sha et al. 1964: 44–45)

The staged confrontation between A Ha and the advisor predictably ends with a last-minute rescue and the capture of the advisor, but the interest of this closing scene is that it presents a series of claims on the political possibilities of humanism that otherwise remain only latent throughout the play. The claims of humanitarianism and Christian sympathy on the part of Carter combined with the attempted ruse by which A Ha will secure her release in exchange for endangering her comrades offers an articulation of humanism in its colonial guise, one that becomes yet clearer in the form of Carter's rebuke, posed in the form of an accusation of barbarism. The way in which A Ha displaces this accusation is by means of a reversal, in which the accusation of barbarism is thrown back at Carter himself.

This is perhaps the most important moment in the whole play, but one that can only be understood by appreciating how categories of civilisation and barbarism function within the colonial ordering of states in ways that define the human in racialised terms, whereby the removal of peoples from the category of the human provides the alibi for acts of violence. The reversal, in this context, characterises imperialist violence not only as perpetuating a state in which colonised subjects are deprived of their humanity, but rather where the colonisers are deemed barbarian or less than human, because their function as purveyors of violence removes them from the dignity proper to a human being.

In A Ha's closing rebuke, the strategic reversal gives way in turn to a geographical vision that, crucially, includes China and Vietnam but also expands to encompass the rest of Asia. The reversal within the course of the diegesis creates the conditions in turn for a certain reversal in terms of the placing of China within a vision of pan-Asian anti-colonial emancipation. In this vision, the prospective liberation of Taiwan becomes intelligible from the perspective of a Vietnamese revolutionary within the context of the play. In other words, this future political task, one that belongs to the project of Chinese national liberation at the same time as it emerges as a site of pan-Asian dreams of emancipation, is rendered as one political project amongst many, situated alongside the expulsion of American military forces from South Korea and Japan.

The position of the theatrical audience thereby becomes one of grasping the Chinese national liberation project through the eyes of the other, with whom they are engaged in shared combat: that is, the Vietnamese national liberation project. Yet in doing so, it also fractures the very boundaries between self and other in ways that compliment Ba Jin's texts. The effect is to engender an intersection of political subjectivities that render the political vision set out by A Ha in the closing scene of the play intelligible as a horizon of shared possibility.

The defining feature of this horizon is a political gesture of militant universalism in which humanism has been wrested away from its location in a colonial project and instead linked with a project whose spatial and temporal dimensions extend far beyond any delimited Chinese national space.

The universalist dimensions of this play emerge yet further from its second-order adaptations. The play underwent adaptation into a Peking opera version, also under the title of *Letters from the South*, and into a *pingju* under the title *Flames in the South* (Wu / Cheng 1965: 6–7). More suggestive still, however, was a Japanese adaptation directed by Nakamura Shun'ichi under the title *Letters from Southern Vietnam*. This play was adapted from both the Liberation Army version and that produced by the Shanghai People's Art Theatre, both of which Nakamura witnessed during his vision to China in 1965 (Xinhua 1965: 44–45).[9] The circulation and adaptation of a Chinese theatrical venture thereby came to trace precisely the vision of pan-Asian solidarity and anti-colonial humanism so eloquently articulated by A Ha herself.

Narrowing of the world

The political moment in which the culture of Sino-Vietnamese solidarity reached its height in 1965 was cut off by the advent of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. In that year, Ba Jin was preparing to release a further collection of reportage texts under the title of *The Unbroken Bridge*. The events of the summer, combined with Ba Jin's being targeted as a proponent of the "black line" in art and literature, prevented that project from ever coming to fruition. There had also, more optimistically, been plans for the shooting of a film based on the play. In spring of 1965, the August 1st Film Production Company was preparing to shoot a film based on the play developed by the Liberation Army. Fu Duo undertook a visit to Vietnam to assist in the adaptation process. Yet this project was also overtaken by the pace of political events, with all film production ceasing for several years after 1966 (Li 2018: 138). The events of that decade placed increasing limits on the possibilities for cultural solidarity. In particular, the intensification of the brutal war effort of the United States inside Vietnam, combined with the Sino-Soviet split, forced Vietnamese revolutionaries into an increasingly difficult balancing act in order that they might continue to draw aid from both China and the Soviet Union.

The reunification of Vietnam in 1975 marked the end of a protracted struggle. That this moment of reunification was followed by Mao's death and the end of

9 I have as of yet been unable to discern further details about the Japanese adaptation beyond those reported in the Chinese press. However, Japan did have its own version of the original letters published under the title 南ベトナムからの手紙 (*Letters from South Vietnam*), translated by the Japanese-Vietnamese Friendship Association.

the Cultural Revolution in 1976, however, marked a moment of crisis for the international communist movement, rendered yet more visible in 1979 with the outbreak of war between China and Vietnam. This moment, in which global projects of cultural solidarity and socialist internationalism began to come undone, witnessed one of the few references to the history of *Letters from the South* in the Chinese press since the frenzy of publication and circulation that had emerged over the period 1964–1966.

This article, published in the *People's Daily* in late 1978 under the title "Thinking of 'Letters from the South'" recalls the alleged abuse of an overseas Chinese citizen in Vietnam, Huang Jie. The author describes that "beyond our rage, we cannot help but think of a book that always shook the hearts of the Chinese people – *Letters from the South*. *Letters from the South* was a small booklet translated by our country. It collected many stories of Vietnamese revolutionaries undergoing torture in the prisons of the American imperialists and the Ngo Dinh Diem clique, and of their heroic struggles" (Li 1978). The passing reference to the book *Letters from the South* having been translated by China serves to obscure the actual circulation history of this set of texts, namely the fact that it was first translated under Vietnamese auspices as part of the international solidarity movement, and that the culture of solidarity that emerged in response to this publication was, therefore, co-authored between the two countries. More suggestive still, however, is the implication that the techniques of abuse and torture which were employed against Vietnamese revolutionaries in the past, as recounted in *Letters from the South*, were, in the late 1970s, being deployed against overseas Chinese in Vietnam. The author went on to recount, therefore, that

> [...] because they possess a shocking capacity for mimesis, they have actually gone so far as to use some of the cruel methods that were employed by the American imperialists and Ngo Dinh Diem against those overseas Chinese who faced life and death and trials and tribulations together with the Vietnamese people. Such talent, such despicable talent! (Li 1978)

The articulation here of overseas Chinese undergoing suffering in Vietnam is the key to understanding the transmutations of an internationalist vision at this historical juncture. The assumption of an assumed relationship of ethnic belonging and commonality between the authors of this article in mainland China and the figure of the overseas Chinese in Vietnam renders the overseas Chinese distinct from a larger Vietnamese community, with the overseas Chinese being a target of concern and the eventual alibi for the failed Chinese invasion of 1979.[10] The solitary reference to *Letters from the South* represented by this article is significant for the way it represents the receding of an earlier culture

10 From the late 1970s onwards, the return of the overseas Chinese became a recurrent trope, especially in Chinese filmmaking. Examples include *Romance on Lushan* (1980), *The Herdsman* (1982) and *Good Morning, Beijing* (1990). The staging of a re-ethnicisation of the political subject in these films anticipates the "Sinophone" turn in contemporary literary studies.

of internationalist solidarity from the field of historical vision, but so too does it underline the way that the retreat from anti-imperialist politics was substantially enabled by the return of the overseas Chinese in the cultural politics of the late 1970s and 1980s. An anti-imperialist front based on a commonality of struggle was supplanted by an emergent vision of racialised Chineseness, one that persists to this today as the ideological foundation of an increasingly Han-chauvinist capitalist Chinese state that demands the loyalty of "ethnic Chinese" around the world. The retreat of visions of anti-colonial universalism in the post-socialist People's Republic has, as its complement, the resurgence of an increasingly racialised trend of Sinophobia in contemporary Vietnam.

Yet memories endure. In a moment of casual conversation, when discussing this research project, my doctoral supervisor recalled that her own reading of *Letters from the South* as a young woman in the 1960s marked her first moment of encounter with the Vietnamese struggle. To recover, against our present condition, histories of cultural production that sought to re-imagine space and time and to re-orientate the world itself becomes, in this context, a pressing moral imperative. The history of Sino-Vietnamese solidarity emerging from *Letters from the South* comes to us as a letter from a time and place radically other than our own – that of the Asian 1960s – and it falls to us to decide how we read such a letter in our own time.

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The Other "Post-1968":
A Socio-Historical Analysis of the Resurgence of the Conservatives in Japan's Long 1960s

Eiji Oguma

Abstract

Economic growth in the 1960s prompted a massive internal migration from provincial to metropolitan areas in Japan. This migration and urbanisation led to the rise of social movements and a decline in the percentage of votes for the ruling conservative LDP party. In response, the government introduced an industrial dispersal policy, shifting factories from metropolitan to provincial areas. Additionally, in 1971, the government started the "Model Community Project", which strengthened local resident organisations that cooperated with local administrations and the conservative party. This reorganisation of the citizenry became the social background for the containment of social movements and the conservative resurgence of politics. This combination of industry dispersion and reorganisation of the citizenry, resulting in the conservative resurgence, characterised "the long 1960s" in Japan.

Keywords: Japan, LDP, Long 1960s, 1968, internal migration, industry dispersion, neighbourhood associations (NHA)

In the late 1960s, the conservative regime in Japan was confronted with a crisis. Economic growth in the 1960s had led to massive internal migration, rapid urbanisation, environmental issues, the rise of social movements and a decline in the percentage of votes for the ruling conservative party.

The ruling party was the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), which had been formed in 1955 by the merging of two conservative parties. As shown in Figure 1, the absolute percentage of votes (the portion of votes as a percentage of the total number of eligible voters, including abstentions) for conservative parties (centred on the LDP) in general elections declined linearly until 1969, while that of non-conservative parties (called "progressives", *kakushin*, and centred on the JSP, the Japan Socialist Party) continued to grow.

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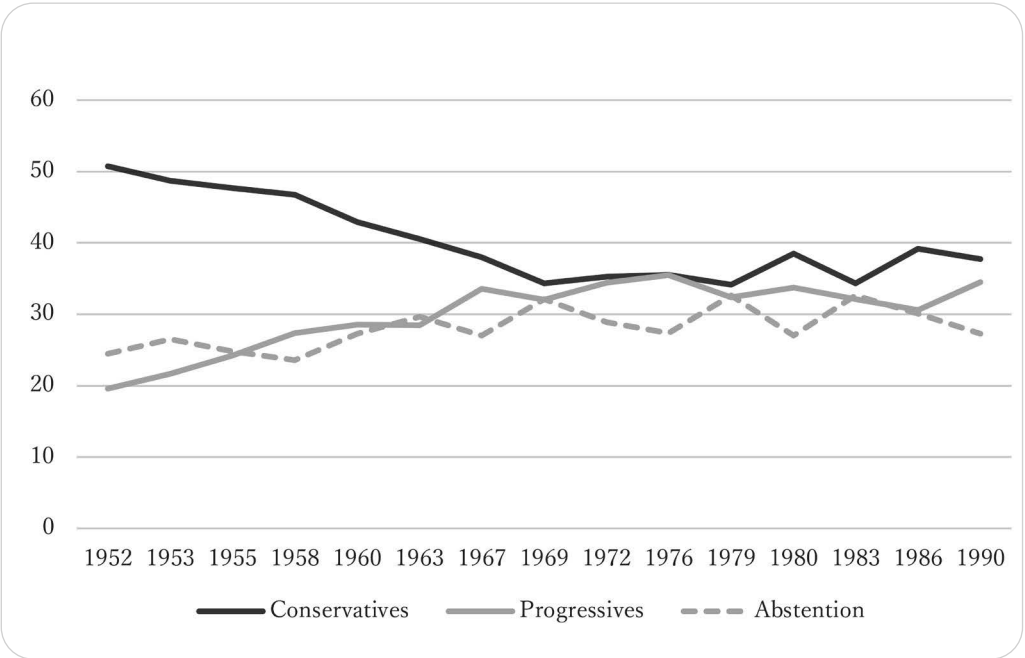
Figure 1: Absolute percentage of votes* in general elections (in per cent, 1952–1990)



The classification of parties as "Conservatives" and "Progressives" follows Ishikawa (1995).
*The concept of the absolute percentage of votes, which is distinguished from the relative percentage of votes (the portion of votes garnered by a party as a percentage of actual votes cast), has been popular in Japanese media and political science.

Source: Compiled by author, based on the data from the House of Representatives' general election results, published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

As can also be seen in Figure 1, the trend stopped in the 1970s, from which time the LDP has continued as the ruling party. Only twice, in 1993 and 2009, has the LDP lost a general election since its foundation in 1955. That said, the decline of conservatives in the 1960s was serious.

The troubles of the LDP in the late 1960s were predicted in an article written in 1963 by Hirohide Ishida, the then Minister of Labour in the LDP administration. In this article, Ishida predicted that his party would lose power in 1968. Due to the rapid economic growth and industrialisation from the late 1950s onwards, the percentage of employed workers in Japan's overall workforce had increased from 36 per cent in 1948 to 53.7 per cent in 1960, while the number of self-employed farmers and merchants had radically decreased – the reason, according to Ishida, for the LDP's continuing decline in the absolute percentage of votes. The LDP was supported by relatively lower educated farmers and merchants, whose total number had been declining since 1952. On the other hand, the rate of employed workers – about 40 per cent of them were union members supporting the JSP – had been increasing. Ishida thus predicted that

the LDP would be defeated by the JSP in 1968 if the number of young, well-educated employed workers in urban areas increased at the same pace (Ishida 1963: 92–94).

Ishida was also concerned with the massive internal migration in the 1960s and saw this as another reason for the decline in LDP votes. Between 1955 and 1965, about 4 million people moved out of the agricultural sector and into the industrial sector in large cities on the Pacific coast. In 1962, the population of Tokyo exceeded 10 million and by 1965, 45 per cent of Japan's population lived in the three major metropolitan areas of Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya. Ishida's concern became reality in the late 1960s: in the industrial areas along the Pacific coast, including the three major metropolitan areas, the relative percentage of votes for the LDP and for opposition parties shifted from 54.6 per cent (LDP) and 44.3 per cent (opposition) respectively in 1960, to 41.2 per cent (LDP) and 52.6 per cent (opposition) respectively in 1967 (Ichimura 1968: 135).

The political behaviour of the younger generation and women voters contributed considerably to this shift. For example, in the Tokyo gubernatorial election of April 1967, the LDP candidate was defeated by the candidate supported by the JSP. Kakuei Tanaka, who was the Secretary General of the LDP (and later Prime Minister in 1972), declared that the cause of this defeat was urbanisation and modernisation, causing the decline of conservative older male rule – as according to the statistics the LDP candidates received 12 per cent fewer votes than the opposition candidate among voters in their twenties, 8 per cent fewer among female voters and 6 per cent fewer among college graduates (Tanaka 1967: 285). This political defeat was followed by the rise of the student movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement. On 21 October 1967, a demonstration protesting against the Vietnam War, organised by labour unions, mobilised 60,000 people in Tokyo and even 250,000 nationwide. Two years later, Beheiren, a "New Left" activist group strongly criticising Japan's involvement in the Vietnam War, organised a demonstration of 70,000 people on 15 June 1969 in Tokyo (Havens 1987, Avenell 2010). The size of Japan's student/anti-Vietnam War movement at that time compared favourably with that in West Germany for instance, where the largest demonstration assembled 60,000 people in Bonn on 12 May 1968 (Klimke 2008).[1]

The rise of the student/Vietnam War protest movement can also be linked to the massive internal migration when looking at the statistics. According to the national census of 1965, 47 per cent of Tokyo's population was aged between 15 and 34. Since most of the migrants from the rural areas were young male labourers and students, males exceeded females in the Tokyo metropolitan

1 Some researchers are sceptical of the numbers claimed for the Japanese protests at that time because the organisers tended to inflate the numbers of the participants. As for the demonstration on 15 June 1969 in Tokyo, the organisers claimed 70,000 participants, whereas the police counted only 30,000. However, such variations in participant numbers were not specific to Japan. Martin Klimke, the co-editor of *1968 in Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) for example, wrote that 60,000 joined the demonstration at 12 May 1968 in Bonn, whereas the UK newspaper *The Times* reported 40,000 protesters (Hotham 1968).

area by 6 per cent. Another survey of 1965, by the Ministry of Labour, on the situation of workers in Tokyo reported that 36.5 per cent of the survey respondents lived in a space of less than 5 square meters per capita (Oguma 2009a: 37). Many of these young workers were thus dissatisfied with their life situation in Tokyo and often joined street protests as "unaffiliated onlookers" (*Yaji-Uma*), sometimes initiating violence, such as throwing stones at the police. Such "unaffiliated" participants often exceeded the number of students (Oguma 2009a: 537–549). On 21 October 1968, an anti-Vietnam War protest organised by New Left student groups in Shinjuku, in central Tokyo, developed into a massive riot due to the unexpected influx of thousands of young workers (Oguma 2009b: 82–93). Although only a few politicians and intellectuals believed that the student/anti-Vietnam War movement itself directly influenced the outcome of the elections at that time, the growing importance of the movement and the changing trend of election outcomes went hand in hand, reflecting the ongoing massive internal migration within Japan's society.

However, as mentioned above, the downward trend of votes for conservatives stopped in the 1970s and the LDP continued to be the ruling party thereafter. After 1968, unlike in Western countries, Japanese politics and society remained conservative even though Japan's social movements had not necessarily been weak. This article sets out to analyse why the social changes stemming from the rapid economic growth of the 1960/70s subsided and the conservative political order re-stabilised in the 1970s.

There are several earlier studies by political scientists examining why the LDP recovered in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. Many Japanese intellectuals claimed that the reason was that the LDP had promoted economic growth. After the big protest movement against the US-Japan security treaty in 1960, the LDP shifted its priority from a conservative anti-communism ideology to economic policies (Kapur 2018). Some political scientists emphasised the compensation policy and the clientelism of the LDP in the form of distributed subsidies, public works and pension increases to attract local self-employed farmers, merchants and older voters (Calder 1988). Other researchers focused on the paternalism of Japanese corporations (*kigyō shugi*), which provided long-term employment and seniority-based wages, contained militant labour movements and created a conservative cooperative culture (Watanabe 2004). There is also a perspective that the leftist movement lost its cohesion due to the end of the Vietnam War and the reversion of Okinawa (Dower: 1993).

Still, these theories do not sufficiently explain the trajectory. Even after the LDP shifted its priority to economic policies after 1960, its absolute percentage of votes continued to decline until 1969. The LDP did win in the elections of the 1960s, but this was due less to an increase in its voter base than to its strategy of limiting the number of candidates (Kōno 2001: 33–34). It is true that the

compensation policy of the LDP attracted farmers and self-employed merchants, but in the latter half of the 1970s, the support of the LDP as shown in opinion polls increased even among young labourers and clerical workers. Corporate integration though long-term employment and seniority-based wages, the containment of activity of militant labour unions and the end of the Vietnam War may explain the decline of the JSP and the leftist movement in the 1970s, but it does not directly explain the increase in support for the LDP. Moreover, no correlation has been found between the increase or decrease of income among labourers and clerical workers and their political party support in 1970s Japan (Miyake 1985: 19). Another theory states that the Japanese economic growth of the 1970s, which exceeded that of Western industrial countries, explains the increase in support for the LDP, but this theory also falters when we consider the decline in the LDP's absolute percentage of votes in the 1960s, a period in which Japan's economic growth was even higher than in the following decade.

On this issue, the journalist Masumi Ishikawa proposed his own theory: that the conservative resurgence of Japanese politics in the 1970s might be explained by the decrease in internal migration from rural to urban regions (Ishikawa 1978: 73–81; 1995: 206–210). According to Ishikawa, the LDP was actually an aggregation of local influential politicians from various regions who organised voters through their own regional networks. This being the nature of this type of conservative party, it became difficult for the LDP to keep voters on track as migration to urban areas increased. Those who migrated to the big cities would most probably either abstain from voting or join a labour union, which rendered them JSP supporters rather than voters for conservative parties.[2] But as we see in Figure 2 below, the outflow of population from provincial areas to the three major metropolitan areas decreased sharply in the 1970s, halting the further shrinkage of the LDP voter base. Through his theory, Ishikawa explained both the decline in the LDP's absolute percentage of votes and the increase in abstentions in the 1960s, as well as the subsequent stabilisation of both in the 1970s, as we saw in Figure 1. Ishikawa claimed that the LDP's decline in votes in the 1960s was too linear to attribute to individual political events, and that it could only be explained by the ongoing social structural change.

There has been criticism of Ishikawa's theory. A first objection was that the theory contradicts the fact that the rate of supporters of the LDP in opinion polls slightly increased in the late 1950s to early 1960s (Kōno 2011: 32). The second objection was that the theory did not explain the increase in the rate of supporters of the LDP among labourers and clerical workers in the late 1970s. Although Ishikawa insisted that even labourers and clerical workers had been organised in regional networks of the LDP politicians insomuch as they stayed in the provinces, he did not explain clearly how that became possible (Ishikawa

2 Ishikawa (1995) also mentioned the possibility of urban migrants joining the Sōka Gakkai, a Buddhist group that established the political party KOMEITO in 1964, and the JCP (Japan Communist Party).

1995: 210). The first objection can be explained by the fact the LDP needed a certain period after its founding to be recognised as a reliable party.[3] The second objection to Ishikawa's thoughts – the reason for the increase in the rate of supporters of the LDP among labourers and clerical workers in the late 1970s – requires more investigation.

In this article, I will corroborate Ishikawa's theory by describing the change in the social policy background of the 1970s with a focus on two important developments: the dispersion of industries from large cities to provincial areas, and the restructuring of community policy, mainly by strengthening so-called Neighbourhood Associations (NHA), by the Japanese government and the LDP administration. Both developments have been individually studied in economic analysis and local community research in Japan, but to my knowledge there is no work that comprehensively describes how the changing social conditions contributed to the resurgence of conservative politics. Political scientists who accepted Ishikawa's theory and explained the Japanese conservative resurgence in the 1970s on the basis of demographic change did not investigate the social policy context (Tomita et al. 1986). Even James W. White, who surveyed and analysed the correlation between migration and social/political stability in Tokyo during the 1970s, did not mention the industrial dispersal policy and the community policy (White 1982). This article is thus not an analysis of voting behaviour from the perspective of political science, but instead applies a sociological perspective to the history of those years.

From the cities to the countryside: Dispersing industry

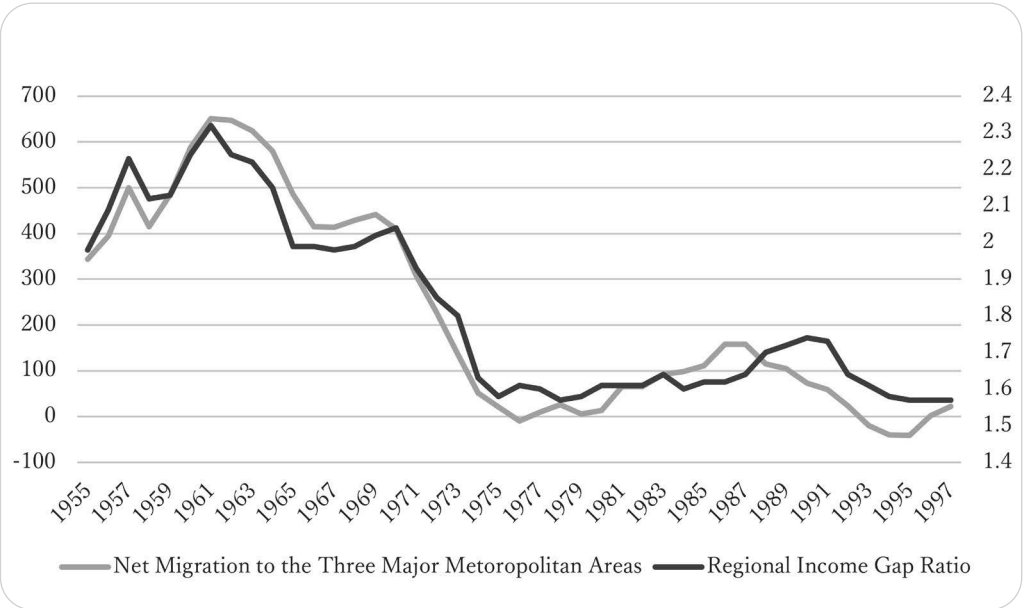
In Japan, as in other nations, the biggest factor determining internal migration was and is the regional disparity of income (Ōe 1995).[4] A report by the Agency of National Land of the Japanese government in 2000 analysed official statis-

3 Before the founding of the LDP in 1955 by the merger of conservative parties, the total rate of supporters of these conservative parties had been much higher than that of the LDP in the late 1950s to early 1960s. In opinion polls by *Asahi Shimbun*, for instance, the total rate of support of conservative parties reached 59% in June 1953, while that of the LDP was 43% in June 1956, some 7 months after its founding. The LDP, which was founded by the merger of the conservative parties, included politicians of diverse ideologies, such as liberalists, rightists and opportunists. In an opinion poll by *Asahi Shimbun* in November 1955, only 18% of respondents felt that the LDP would do well without causing splits or internal conflict. In later polls, the rate of support for the LDP increased gradually as the new party became stable, while the response "I do not answer (which party I am supporting)", chosen by 17% of respondents (24% of farmers and fishermen, 39% of those over age 60) in June 1956, decreased to 5% (9% of farmers and fishermen, 11% of those over 60) by March 1967, also in opinion polls by *Asahi Shimbun* (Asahi Shimbun 1976: 9–125). Actually, in the late 1950s to early 1960s, the LDP's absolute percentage of votes tended to exceed its rate of supporters in all of the opinion polls. These facts suggest that there was a considerable number of provincial conservative people who were reluctant to show their support for the LDP in opinion polls after its founding while remaining loyal voters for the local politicians who eventually joined the LDP.

4 Ōe (1995) analysed the governmental statistics of internal migration from 1950 to 1990 in Japan and concluded that economic factors explained 45–100% of its fluctuation. The second biggest factor was the difference in the numbers of each generation cohort.

tical data and presented a correlation between regional income gaps and net inflow to the three major metropolitan areas from provincial areas[5] (ANL 2000: 11). Figure 2 uses the same official data as the report and shows the correlation. The average annual growth rate in the gross domestic product from 1965 to 1970 of the three major metropolitan areas was 12.5 per cent, whereas that of other provincial areas was 10.4 per cent. These relative positions of these two areas were reversed in the years from 1970 to 1973, however, to 8.0 and 9.2, respectively (ANL 2000: 85).

Figure 2: Net migration to the three major metropolitan areas and regional income gap ratio in the years 1955–1997



The unit of net migration is 1,000 (left axis). Regional income gap ratio is the division of average income per capita of the best 5 prefectures by that of the worst 5 prefectures (right axis).

Source: Compiled by author, based on Statistics Bureau 2012 (for net migration) and NLBP 2006 (for regional income gap ratio)

One of the reasons for this change was the dispersion of industry, which was actually a policy of the government. In 1959, the Factory Location Investigation Law (Kōjō Ricchi Chōsa Hō, No.24/1959)[6] and the Factory and Others Restriction Law (Kōjō tō Seigen Hō, No.17/1959) were enacted to restrict the construction of large factories and the establishment of colleges and new uni-

5 The Japanese government divides the three major metropolitan areas into 11 prefectures, including Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka and their respective suburbs. The provincial areas constitute the remaining 36 prefectures.

6 Official names of Japanese laws are generally very complex and long. Abbreviations are used in the media, but the abbreviations are often inconsistent. Each Japanese law is assigned an official number for the year of enactment, and this is the most reliable way to reference them.

versity faculties in Tokyo. At that time, environmental pollution was becoming an issue, but the major purpose of legislation was national security. The government explained the purpose of these laws in the House of Representatives on 16 October 1958 in the following terms: "(these laws are meant to prevent) the capital from the possibility of confusion and dysfunction (caused by disaster and others)."

As early as the 1920s, the Army had advocated for the dispersion of government agencies and industries that were concentrated in Tokyo after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 (Imamura 1970: 131–133). The government made an industrial dispersion plan in 1936 and an Outline of National Land Plan (*Kokudo Keikaku Settei Yōkō*) in 1940, which was modelled after Nazi Germany's national land planning (Ito 1965: 61, Honma 1995: 9–10). After the defeat of Japan in WWII, further attempts were made in 1946 in the Outline of National Planning for Reconstruction (*Fukkō Kokudo Keikaku Yōkō*) and in 1950 in the Comprehensive National Land Development Act (Kokudo Sōgō Kaihatsu Hō, No.205/1950). In 1962, the government declared the need for a "balanced development of national land" in the National Comprehensive Development Plan and designated 15 cities in provincial areas as "new industrial cities" (Honma 1995: 17–47, Mikuriya 1996: 226–237).

After that the number of factories with more than 30 employees in the 23 wards (administrative districts) of the centre of Tokyo peaked. According to a survey conducted in 1963, 1,140 out of 7,290 factories in the 23 wards already had plans for relocation, and about 3,200 were considering relocation. 41 per cent indicated that the reason for relocation was restrictions by the government, while 30 per cent cited pollution and other environmental issues (Yanagisawa 2010: 119–120). By the latter half of the 1960s, public opinion criticising the depopulation of provincial areas and the deterioration of the environment in urban areas increased. In 1964, a similar restriction law to Tokyo's was enacted for the Osaka area, the second largest city in Japan. The New National Comprehensive Development Plan of 1969, which was introduced under the direction of Kakuei Tanaka, declared to allocate 130–170 trillion JPY (361–472 billion USD at that time) of government investment for the redevelopment of new industrial areas and the construction of highways and railroads in provincial areas throughout the country by 1985 (Honma 1995: 56). Furthermore, in 1972, the Factory Relocation Promotion Act (*Kōjō Saihaichi Sokushin Hō*, No.73/1972) was enacted.

The dispersion of the manufacturing industry did not proceed solely because of these policies. As mentioned above, the Factory and Others Restriction Law in 1959 prohibited the establishment not only of large factories, but also new colleges and faculties of universities in the centre of Tokyo. However, in contrast to factories, colleges and universities were relocated to the suburbs of Tokyo rather than to provincial areas. Consequently, this did not reduce the disparity

in educational opportunities between big cities and provincial areas (Shirakawa 2007). The 1962 National Comprehensive Development Plan designated 15 cities as "new industrial cities", but the majority of them failed to attract big firms; only 2 out of 15 exceeded 50 per cent of the planned industrial production indicators (Honma 1995: 100). Probably a major pull factor for the industrial dispersion to rural areas was the lure of cheap wages for female workers in provincial areas, as shown below.

Many factories that moved to provincial areas in the 1960s and 1970s were labour-intensive subcontracting companies that supplied parts to the metropolitan industrialised areas. According to a 1984 survey by the Institute for Economic Research of Chūō University (IERC) on Aoki village in Nagano prefecture, there were 29 subcontracting manufacturing companies in Aoki. The breakdown was 13 for automobile parts, 8 for electric appliances, 4 for general equipment, 2 for communications equipment and 2 others. Among the 29 companies, the largest had 70 employees, 16 had 5 to 50, 12 had fewer than 5 and many workers in those with less than 5 were family members. 69.5 per cent of the employed workers of all companies were females and most of them were women aged 35 and above from farming households (IERC 1985). The IERC also uncovered the wage gap of Hitachi and its subcontracting companies in 1975. According to the research, the wage per "unit price" of the Hitachi factory was estimated at 45 JPY or more, but the primary subcontractor received an estimated 18–20 JPY, the secondary subcontractor got 10 JPY, the third subcontractor got 7 JPY and the in-house domestic workers received 3 JPY (IERC 1976: 8–19). This huge wage gap was the defining characteristic of Japanese manufacturers, coupled with the fact that unions did not organise workers of subcontractors.

The governmental labour census reported that women accounted for 43.0 per cent of labourers in production processes in the manufacturing industry in Japan in 1989 (METI 2010: 36). The employment of female manufacturing labourers was especially significant in the north-eastern regions of Japan. According to the national census, the share of women employed in the manufacturing sector in Yamagata Prefecture (in the northeast of the main island Honshū) was 7.7 per cent in 1955, then increased to 18.7 per cent in 1970 and to 30.4 per cent in 1985, while that of male employees increased more slowly, from 10.1 to 14.9 and 19.7 per cent, respectively (Maeda 2014). On the other hand, in Tokyo, although the number of manufacturing workers had decreased, the management offices and research laboratories that required high technology remained. As a result, the average wage gap in the manufacturing industry between the north-eastern regions and the Tokyo metropolitan area became more significant in the late 1960s to early 1970s (Andō 1986: 28–29).

The dispersion of industries rendered Japanese manufacturers more efficient. In the late 1980s, US-American car maker General Motors (GM) produced about

5 million cars annually with around 800,000 employees, while Toyota produced about 4 million cars per year with around 70,000 employees. The background was that GM produced about 70 per cent of its parts in its own factories while Toyota procured about 70–80 per cent of its parts from about 270 subcontractors (Kobayashi et al. 1995: 213–214). In 1981, the percentage of Japanese manufacturing SMEs that had become subcontractors was 85 per cent in the electrical machinery sector, 88 per cent in the transportation equipment sector and 81 per cent in the precision machinery sector (Nomura 1994: 43).

The second effect of the dispersion of industries was a combination of a low unemployment rate and the flexibilisation of the economy. According to Japanese statistics, the unemployment rate never exceeded 3 per cent in the 1970s and 1980s. However, according to a survey conducted in the Ryōban area of Iwate Prefecture (in the northeast of Honshū) in 1981, 63.9 per cent of the female respondents experienced unemployment due to the oil crisis in 1978. But most of these female workers were not counted as unemployed workers by Japanese official statistics because they stayed at home as housewives after they lost their jobs, which explains the low unemployment rate of those years (Andō 1986: 107–109).

In spite of the relatively low wages, the third effect of the dispersion of industry was the increase in household income in provincial areas. Self-employed farmer households welcomed the fact that females in their households earned extra income in the vicinity rather than having to migrate to urban areas for factory work. Consequently, the rate of economic growth in the regions rose and the average rural-urban income gap decreased as unpaid female family members in farming households became factory workers, even for relatively low wages (Andō 1986: 108).

The dispersion of the manufacturing industry was accelerated by the development of public transportation networks in the 1960s and 1970s. Under the New National Comprehensive Development Plan of 1969, the government invested in the construction of highways and railroads in provincial areas throughout the country. Expenses for infrastructure in the national general account budget increased 2.2 times from 1970 to 1975, and 4.8 times in 1980. Although the policy led to corruption and clientelism among LDP politicians, it provided provincial subcontracting factories with a logistics system to connect with big corporations. This also resulted in the rise of land prices in provincial areas, the increase in construction jobs for male farmers and the decrease in the income gap between provincial areas and large cities. The economic growth in the provincial areas was accompanied by a rise in the service sector, such as retailers and realtors. Thus the National Comprehensive Development Plan subsequently resulted in the growth of the provincial economy, even though it failed in achieving the creation of "new industrial cities" (Andō 1985: 59–90).

In 1964, more than 50 per cent of a farmer's average household income was non-agricultural income, and the average farming household income (per house-

hold member) exceeded that of employee households in 1972 (Watanabe 2004: 65, 106). Self-employed farmers stopped moving to urban areas and household members would go to work in the manufacturing and construction industries in their neighbourhoods while continuing to work on the farm.

This situation not only mitigated migration from provincial areas but also reduced social disorder in big cities. In 1975, as Figure 2 shows, the regional income gap ratio reached its minimum and net migration to the three major metropolitan areas actually fell to zero. The governmental data (Statistics Bureau 2012) shows that the decrease in net migration to the three major metropolitan areas was caused not only by the decrease in migration from provincial areas (1,430,526 in 1965 to 1,285,383 in 1974), but also by the increase in migration to provincial areas (944,461 in 1965 to 1,233,597 in 1974). This suggests that the increase in jobs in provincial areas made it easy for migrants who had failed in adapting to city life to relocate to their former hometowns. Indeed, Japanese demographers have pointed out that a considerable proportion of people who moved to big cities returned to their hometowns after 6 to 7 years, and that this was mainly due to their financial circumstances (Ōe 1995, Shimizu 2010). James White, who surveyed three areas of Tokyo in 1972 and 1977, found that despite the large numbers of rural-to-urban migrants in the 1960s, those areas of the capital were socially and politically more stable than he expected. Only 11 per cent of his sample had lived less than 5 years in the surveyed areas as adults, 50 per cent had lived more than 10 years there and the mean of the sample was 12 years (White 1982: 255). These statistics suggested that the only people who stayed in the area were those who could secure their positions in Tokyo, and those who might cause social disorder, as in the 1968 Shinjuku Riot, would soon return to their hometowns.

Thus, the dispersion of industry had political effects in two respects. First, it stopped the massive migration that was causing social disorder in urban areas and a decline in LDP votes. Second, it increased manufacturing and clerical jobs in rural areas, allowing people to stay in rural areas. The latter effect would be reflected in the increase in LDP supporters among labourers and clerical workers who remained in the regional network of LDP politicians.

Community policy

Another policy introduced to stop the social disorder associated with rapid urbanisation and that eventually contributed to the resurgence of the LDP was the community policy in the 1970s. Community policy (*Komyuniti Seisaku*) is a general term for a series of policies in which many ministries and agencies were involved, centring on the Model Community (*Moderu Komyuniti*) Project started by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1971. As I describe below, it was one

of the countermeasures of the Japanese government against the crisis in the late 1960s, aiming to mitigate social disorder by reorganising society.

The annual report White Paper on Crime (*Hanzai Hakusyo*) of 1969 by the Metropolitan Police Department stated that the measures against internal migration and urbanisation were as follows: "The measures against crime and delinquency and their prevention are not effective unless the residents of the local neighbourhoods and police agencies organically unite and act with common interest. In this sense, the organisation of local society is needed" (MPD 1969). The 1973 Policing White Paper (*Keisatsu Hakusyo*) by the National Police Agency attributed the intensification of student movements and the emergence of extreme leftist groups to "the decrease in solidarity among local communities through the process of urbanisation" (NPA 1973). The government's answer to this problem was to utilise the Neighbourhood Associations (NHAs), *Jichikai* or *Chōnaikai* in Japanese.

Japanese police established NHA-based Crime Prevention Associations (*Bōhan Kyōkai*) as a security measure in the context of the rapid increase in internal migration. According to Walter Ames, who investigated the police and the local community in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture in 1974, there were 233 Crime Prevention Associations in Kurashiki City at the time, and they were organised by the Crime Prevention Federation headed by the mayor. The NHAs and the Crime Prevention Associations were made up of virtually the same members, with the members of the former providing the police with an extensive informant network. The police designated one out of every 50 households as a crime prevention checkpoint, and the designated household was meant to report information on suspicious people in the neighbourhood to the police. The system was unified nationally by the police in 1969 (Ames 1981: 41–43).

This citizenry cooperation made the police more efficient in maintaining security. From 1963 to 1975, the number of police officers in Japan increased from 137,710 to approximately 197,000. However, according to data from the Policing White Papers of 1974 and 1976, the number of police officers per capita in Japan in 1972 was only 52 per cent of the number in France, 68 per cent of that of the United States and 71 per cent of West Germany's. Still, the Japanese arrest rate was the highest. Ames asked the head of the criminal investigation division of the Okayama Prefectural Police Headquarters about the reason for this and was told that it was because the Japanese were still somewhat "feudal" (Ames 1981: 225, 228). What this meant was that the Japanese had been obedient to authority since the feudal era and were willing to cooperate with the police.

However, the NHAs were not the legacy of a feudal era, but an organisation empowered by the support of the government. Officially the NHA was a voluntary self-governing association of the local community, but in a nationwide survey of chairmen of the NHAs in 1968 by the Cabinet Office, only 53.4 per cent of

chairmen in provincial areas and 58.4 per cent in urban areas answered that the NHA was "voluntarily organised" (Cabinet Office 1968).

Although voluntary associations existed in Japanese local communities even before the modernisation of the 19th century, the origin of NHAs was the establishment of the 1889 modern municipal system, in which the government created new municipalities by merging groups of about ten old villages. The old village chiefs performed administrative assistance as honorary posts, and the territories and inhabitants of these old chiefs subsequently developed into the NHAs (Torigoe 1994, Pekkanen 2006, Hidaka 2018). In the 1920s and later, local governments in urban areas where internal migrant populations and Korean immigrants were increasing urged inhabitants to organise NHAs in areas where there had been no neighbourhood associations. In the 1930s, the city office of Tokyo set standards for NHAs to unify their rules, sizes and names. In Setagaya ward in Tokyo, where the population was rapidly increasing, the number of NHAs increased from 10 in 1922 to 31 in 1933 and 76 in 1947 (Setagaya Ward Office 2015: 70–71). The 1940 Ordinance of the central government officially legalised the NHA as a subordinate organisation of the administration and ordered the creation of NHAs to cover all Japanese people in all regions (Hidaka 2018: 193). In 1941, there were 199,700 NHAs in Japan, which were utilised for food distribution and other controls during wartime. The number of NHAs reached 210,120 in 1946 (Tsujinaka et al. 2009: 44, 2014: 19). After the defeat of Japan, in 1947, the SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) ordered the disbandment of the NHAs but local NHAs changed their names and survived as private organisations, then were officially revived at the end of the occupation (Takagi 2005, Kohama 1994: 30).

As well as in the 1920s, during the high economic growth period of the late 1950s and 1960s, the creation of NHAs became a countermeasure to maintain urban social order, which was threatened by the massive internal migration. The number of NHAs increased in line with the population growth in Tokyo. In Setagaya Ward, the number of NHAs was 76 in 1947, but had increased to 173 by 1965 (Setagaya Ward Office 2015: 70). According to the 1960 survey of NHA chairmen conducted in Meguro ward in Tokyo, most chairmen held multiple posts as chairmen of many regional organisations, not only of Crime Prevention Associations, but also fire prevention brigades, sanitary associations and social welfare councils (Hirohara 2011: 425). This kind of multiple-post holding was common nationwide (Ames 1981:41, Kurasawa 1990:19, Hidaka 2018: 139–163).

In 1968 and later, Japanese police mobilised the NHAs in an attempt to crack down on the student movement. The Metropolitan Police Department requested NHAs to form vigilante groups (Asahi Journal 1969: 7). The exaggerated image of the 1968 Shinjuku riot was utilised in this "cooperation protecting the city centre from mobs" (Oguma 2009b: 155). On 16 November 1969, when

a protest against Prime Minister Eisaku Satō's visit to the United States was held around Kamata railroad station, the nearest station to Haneda Airport, fifty NHAs organised vigilante squads. The activity of the vigilantes was reported as follows in the Tokyo Metropolitan Defence Association Bulletin issued on 25 November 1969:[7]

> There were town baseball team members who were wearing armbands of NHAs and "armed" with helmets, bats, masks and protectors. Some fencers held traditional Japanese wooden swords. "We won't let anyone who is suspicious enter our town." Some members were keeping watch from the rooftops of watchtowers and guard stations in the streets, using transceivers to contact the NHA office. […] In a restaurant area about 100 metres north of Kamata station, fishmongers with boots and wooden swords were vigilant. Then, several radical leftist students wearing white helmets ran into the town and threw Molotov cocktails. Shouting "You bastards!", youth vigilantes with wooden swords assaulted them. Students with white helmets were beaten and held their heads. Several dozen other leftist students who ran into the street were contained by the vigilantes and arrested by the riot police. The vigilantes also confined another dozen leftist students in a narrow street and called riot police to arrest them. […] Members of the vigilantes were hurling violent words at the radicals and said, "We are protecting our town and businesses!" (Anon 1969: 3)

Although such violent activity of the NHAs was exceptional, cooperation between NHAs and police was seen in Shinjuku and other downtown areas in 1969 (Oguma 2009b: 153, 162). Regional information networks of the Crime Prevention Association were also effective in the suppression of radical leftist groups. The most prominent case was the 1971 "Operation Apartment Roller" (*Apaat Rōrā Sakusen*) against the Red Army Faction (*Sekigun Ha*), which was the predecessor of the Japanese Red Army. The 1973 Police White Paper stated that:

> Operation Apartment Roller consists of investigating by visiting apartments, rented houses and other places where leftist activists are expected to be hiding. With the cooperation of local residents, it is like a steamroller that discovers their hiding places, arrests the wanted suspects and grasps the suspicious activities at their early stages. (NPA 1973: Chapter 7)

During the operation, over 250,000 rented houses, hotels and other places were investigated (Oguma 2009b: 577–578).

The LDP utilised the NHAs for election campaigns. As a political scientist who researched the LDP campaign in Katsushika ward in Tokyo in the 1996 general election said, "It's no secret that the NHAs have long been the LDP's political machine" (Pak 2000: 132). Although some NHAs came into conflict with the government due to social issues such as pollution, most of their chairmen had a conservative political orientation. According to a 1960 survey in

7 The association Tōkyō To Bōei Kyōkai was founded in 1966 as a voluntary citizen group cooperating with the Self-Defence Forces. The first chairman was Takeshi Sakurada, who was the chairman of the Nikkeiren (Japan Business Federation). The opening article of this issue of the bulletin was a contribution by Shigeru Hori, who was the Chief Cabinet Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister.

Meguro Ward in Tokyo, the chairmen were mostly landowners, town factory owners, company officers, temple monks and other men aged 60 and over who had lived in the area of their NHAs for more than 30 years, and almost all were supporters of the LDP (Hirohara 2011: 425).

In Japan, election campaigns were strictly restricted. This originated from the purpose of limiting the campaigns of proletarian parties when universal suffrage for men was introduced in 1925, and of trying to favour the candidates of conservative local leaders who already had access to local voters. In the campaign in 1967, the LDP candidates accessed voters through various local groups such as NHAs, agricultural organisations, merchant associations, school alumni associations and hobby clubs, through non-political cultural events, personal visiting and others (Curtis 1971). The method of the LDP's campaign, called a "noncampaign" by Gerald Curtis, was almost identical to that of the 1996 general election in Katsushika ward (Pak 2000: 131–133). Even researchers who value NHAs as a kind of social capital admit that "to assembly members, the NHA is not just part of their political machine but also provides the opportunity to come into contact with many voters" (Tsujinaka et al. 2009: 179, 2014: 163).

Not surprisingly, intellectuals who supported the JSP were critical of the NHAs. When the LDP won in the general election of 1960 despite the massive protests against the US-Japan Security Treaty in that year, the intellectuals who supported the protest movement, including Matsushita Keiichi, one of the leading political scientists and an advisor to the JSP, published a research report revealing that most of the conservative assembly members in Suginami ward were leaders of NHAs (Tosei Chōsakai 1960: 83–89).[8] In contrast, although the Tokyo NHA Federation (*Tōkyō-to Chōkai Rengōkai*) invited the LDP candidate (Hirohara 2011: 404) in March 1967, one month before the Tokyo gubernatorial election, the LDP candidate was defeated in the election – even though Kakuei Tanaka, the secretary general of the LDP who blamed the defeat on urbanisation, praised the contribution of the NHAs to the election (Tanaka 1967: 285–288). As Tanaka pointed out, the traditional LDP networks were becoming unable to cope with rapid migration and urbanisation.

After that, the government began to show increased interest in the NHAs. In 1968, the first nationwide survey of chairmen of the NHAs, mentioned previously, was conducted by the Cabinet Office. In 1969, the Community Issue Committee (*Komyuniti Kenkyūkai*) of the Economic Planning Agency published the report *Recovering Humanity in Community Life* (Community Issue Committee 1969). This report claimed that there was a need for a new type of resident organisation to cooperate with the local administration, taking into account the limitations of old NHAs, such as their closed nature to new migrants. How-

8 As for Matsushita, see Avenell (2010).

ever, in 1971, the year of Operation Apartment Roller, the Ministry of Home Affairs insisted that it was unrealistic to ignore the existing NHAs, and began the Model Community Project by designating 87 regions where NHAs were active as test cases (Hirohara 2011: 242–257).

The Ministry of Home Affairs (*Jichi-syō*) was a small successor to the mighty pre-war Ministry of Home Affairs (*Naimu-syō*). The pre-war Ministry of Home Affairs was divided into the National Police Agency, the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Labour and others by the SCAP in 1947. What remained was a small agency that oversaw local governments, but after it was "promoted" to the ministry in 1960, its official English translation was the Ministry of Home Affairs because the revival of the pre-war Ministry was the wish of the agency (Jin 1990). In the 1970s, the Ministry of Home Affairs was irritated with the governors and mayors who were elected with the support of the JSP, because they tried to expand their autonomy and sometimes did not follow the administrative guidance of the ministry. Many of these "Progressive Local Governments (*Kakushin Jichitai*)" were large cities such as Tokyo and thus governed 41 per cent of Japan's population in 1974 (Okada 2016). The Ministry of Home Affairs took countermeasures – which they called "Operation TOKYO (*T.O.K.Y.O. Sakusen*)" – such as leaking fiscal data to the media that emphasised the inefficiency of Progressive Local Governments. The operation began in 1974 under the Kakuei Tanaka administration, and its name was an acronym for Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Yokohama and Okinawa, which were major Progressive Local Governments (Hibino 1987: 76–96).

In the Model Community Project promoted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, local governments divided the designated areas into small districts, each led by one NHA. They built "community centres" with subsidies in each designated area and organised local residents through those centres. According to the survey of the Ministry of Home Affairs, only 619 (19 per cent) out of 3278 municipal governments implemented some sort of community policy before 1970. After the Model Community Project by the Ministry Home Affairs was launched in 1971, the number and the rate increased to 1900 (58 per cent) in December 1977, 2550 (78 per cent) in April 1983 and 2884 (88 per cent) in April 1990 (Hirohara 2011: 257).

Along with the promotion of the community policy, the number of NHAs also increased. According to a 2008 nationwide survey conducted by the research group headed by Yutaka Tsujinaka, the graph of the period of establishment of NHAs had twin peaks in 1946–1955 and 1971–1975. The former peak might have included the reorganisation after the end of the SCAP's order to disband the NHAs, but the latter shows the effect of the community policy in the 1970s. The number of NHAs was 210,120 in 1946, 274,738 in 1980, and 298,488 in 1992. From 1946 to 1996, the number of NHAs increased by 2.88 times in

Tokyo and 2.75 times in Osaka (Tsujinaka et al. 2009: 44–63; 2014: 19–38). In 1984 the Ministry of Home Affairs reported that only 7 of 3278 municipalities lacked an NHA (Kurasawa / Akimoto 1990: 2).

In the community policy of local governments, sports activities for males and cooking classes for women were promoted (Hirohara 2011: 259). There were local sports clubs that helped oppress the student movement, as in the case of the baseball team members and fencers in the Kamata station area in 1969. In some universities, such as Nihon University, clubs for martial sports such as judo and karate were utilised to oppress student movements in 1968 (Oguma 2009a: 558–559, 641–642, 661). Although such blatant manipulation of sports clubs was exceptional, sports activities were praised in conservative discourses as a measure to prevent "moral degeneracy" and "juvenile delinquency" (Nakazawa 2014: 131–134). In 1972, the Association of Corporate Executives (*Keizai Dōyūkai*) published the report *Problems of Social Tensions in the 1970s and Tentative Measures to Counter Them* (Keizai Dōyūkai 1972). The report highlighted the rise of student movements and citizens' movements as a problem and proposed the reconstruction of local communities and local sports activities as countermeasures. In 1973, the Economic Planning Agency of the government published a *Basic Plan for Economy and Society* (*Keizai Shakai Kihon Keikaku*), a report that characterised sports activities as a measure to revive the sense of solidarity that had allegedly been lost during economic growth. Later, the government promoted Comprehensive Community Sports Clubs (*Sōgōgata Chiiki Supōtsu Kurabu*), claiming to be inspired by local sports clubs in Germany (Matsuhashi 2014: 106).

According to a survey of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 67 per cent of the 3278 municipal governments responded that sports/recreation activities were the "most active community activities" in 1978; the figure increased to 77 per cent in 1983 (Hirohara 2011: 259). From 1955 to 1996, the participation rate of schoolboys in school sports clubs increased from 27.2 per cent to 73.9 per cent in junior high schools and from 23.4 per cent to 56.3 per cent in high schools (Nakazawa 2014: 96–98). In 1990, sociologist Susumu Kurasawa pointed out that all NHAs throughout Japan were conducting virtually the same activities, such as sports and crime prevention, even though the NHAs were officially voluntary associations (Kurasawa / Akimoto 1990: 4).

There are various theories about the membership rate of the NHAs. The modern NHA has been institutionalised together with zoning by municipal governments and it has become customary for all the households in a given area to voluntary/automatically join. As a result, many municipalities still claim a membership rate in NHAs of over 90 per cent.[9] However, a Japanese semi-

9 In the nationwide survey of NHAs in 2008, the average participation rate of households inside of its boundaries was 81.0 per cent (Hidaka 2018: 119).

official organisation, the Association for the Promotion of Fair Elections (APFE, *Akarui Senkyo Suishin Kyōkai*), has conducted surveys asking voters which organisation they have been affiliated with in every national election since 1972. From this survey, it is possible to interpret voters' self-recognition with the organisations they are affiliated with, and this can be regarded as a much more realistic reflection of voters' participation rates. As Figure 3 shows, the participation rate in NHAs increased in the 1970s and peaked in 1986.[10] Participation in "Society Clubs and Hobby Clubs", such as local sports clubs and cooking classes, exceeded that in primary industry organisations in 1976 and in labour unions in 1983.[11] The answer "not affiliated" declined in the 1970s and reached its lowest point in 1983. In other words, the 1970s and 1980s in Japan were the period of the reconstruction of the social order by reorganising the people/voters who had left rural organisational networks and moved to metropolitan areas in the 1960s.

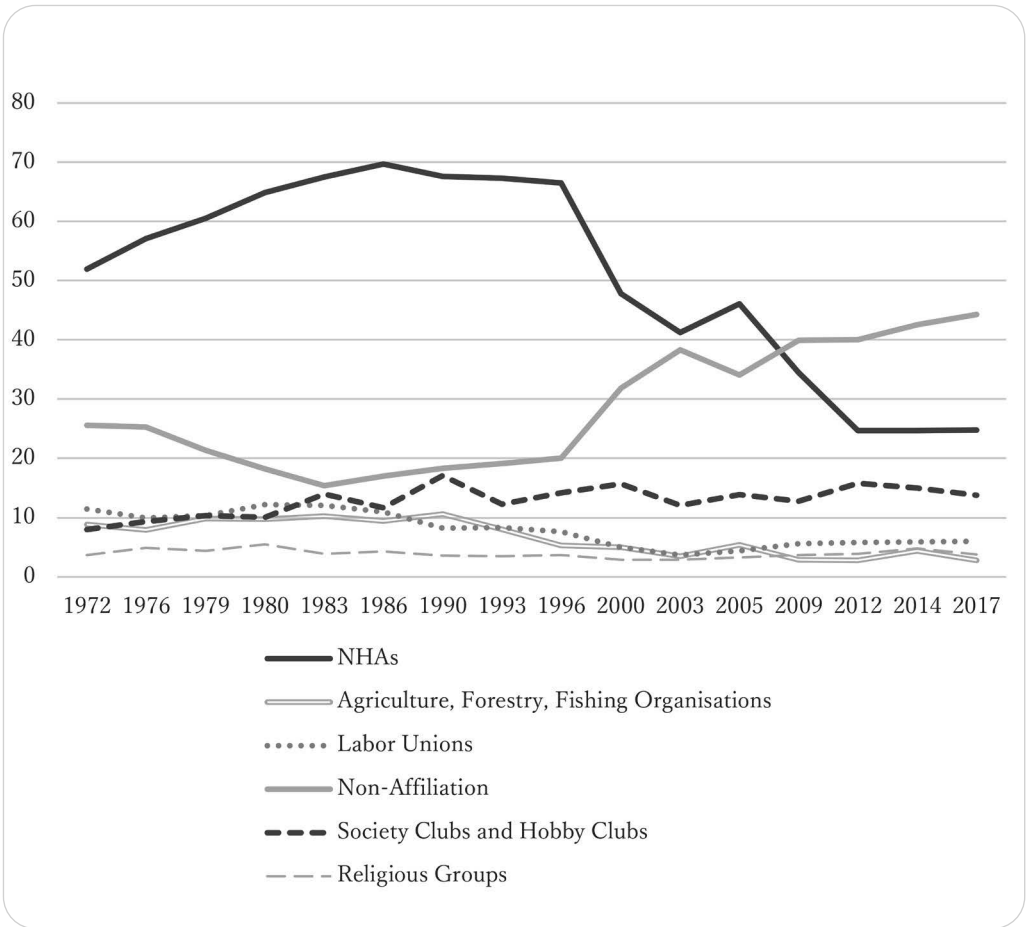
According to a study based on interviews with 9 parliamentarians and 91 local assemblymen in a region of western Japan from 1974 to 1980, political leadership of NHAs tended to be held by people with the same conservative attributes as those during the 1960s unless a constituency consisted of over 70 per cent migrants, because of the lack of cohesion of migrants (Wakata 1981: 161–165). In a survey conducted by the above-mentioned APFE (Association for the Promotion of Fair Elections) after the national unified local elections of April 1983, 19.2 per cent of voters in the 23 wards of Tokyo stated that the NHAs with which they were affiliated had recommended candidates. This figure was 39.4 per cent in cities with 50,000 to 100,000 residents and 42.9 per cent in towns and villages with less than 50,000 residents (APFE: 1983). In 1985, political scientist Ichiro Miyake pointed out that the impact of NHAs' actions in election campaigning was significant due to their organisational size, even if only some of them were committed to political campaigns (Miyake 1985: 21). Although there is no data on what percentage of NHAs campaigned in the 1970s and 1980s, according to the 2008 nationwide survey conducted by Tsujinaka and others, 14.3 per cent of NHAs responded that they would "always" carry out election campaigns, 21.2 per cent answered "sometimes", 15.3 per cent answered "previously" and 2.5 per cent answered "recently begun" – in other words 53.3 per cent in total (Tsujinaka et al. 2009: 179–180; 2014: 164–165). It is unclear whether the "election campaigns" of these answers included "non-campaign" activities such as inviting politicians to gatherings of the NHAs.

10 Tsujinaka et al. also made a graph from the same APFE data (Tsujinaka / Pekkanen / Yamamoto 2009: 26) but it was deleted in the English translated version in 2014.

11 The percentage might have differed in urban areas where hobby/sports clubs were more active than in provincial areas. According to a survey in three areas in Tokyo in 1972, the membership rate in NHAs (and in fire and crime prevention associations) was 34 per cent and in recreation/sports clubs 23 per cent, whereas labour unions had 10 per cent, religious organisations 5 per cent, consumer groups/citizen movements 1 per cent and none 25 per cent (White 1982: 153).

It is also unclear how much political impact the community policy had, but the number of Progressive Local Governments had declined by the 1980s. In 1978, candidates supported by the LDP were elected in gubernatorial and mayoral elections of Kyoto, Yokohama and Okinawa, which were also the targets of Operation TOKYO of the Ministry of Home Affairs, and in 1979 the gubernatorial elections in Tokyo and Osaka were won by ex-bureaucrats of the Ministry of Home Affairs, who were supported by the LDP. These victories symbolised the conservative resurgence.

Figure 3: Participation rate in NHAs and other organisations (in per cent, 1972–2017)



Source: Compiled by author, based on the data from the surveys on general elections by the APFE (Association for the Promotion of Fair Elections)

Conclusion

In Europe and the United States, it is said that "1968" was a turning point in politics, culture and society. A book titled *1968 in Europe*, published in 2008, claimed that "nobody today seriously doubts that European societies were fundamentally transformed as a result of the events of '1968'" (Klimke / Scharloth 2008: 7).

However, in Japan, the social movement of 1968 has been regarded as a temporary historical episode. This was not because Japan's movement in the late 1960s was necessarily small. The Japanese student revolt of 1968 shared a common social context with those of Europe and the United States, such as the spread of TV media and protests against the Cold War order (Oguma 2018a). Moreover, the Japanese movement was a reaction to the social change caused by economic growth, such as internal migration, urbanisation and the rapid increase in college enrolment rates (Oguma 2015). In other words, the Japanese student revolt was one of the reflections of the social change that the LDP feared. However, what happened in Japan after 1968 was a reorganisation of social structures and a conservative resurgence. This reorganisation was achieved through the dispersion of industry away from metropolitan areas and the implementation of community policies, and resulted in the reconstruction of the LDP network in both of rural and urban areas. This Japanese "long 1960s" led to the difference in the historical legacy of "1968" between Japan and the West.

The conservative resurgence shaped the stereotype of Japan in the 1970s and later. In 1979, Ezra Vogel's *Japan as Number One* portrayed Japan as a country that had avoided the harmful effects of modernisation and urbanisation. In the Japan that Vogel portrayed, modern technology and traditional values coexisted. Public investment had created stunning highways and modern factories. Japan boasted high productivity, low crime and unemployment rates, well-ordered schools and the maintenance of community norms (Vogel 1979). But such a Japan was not the result of tradition, but a temporary phenomenon that emerged from the political and economic conditions of the "long 1960s".

It is unclear whether the industry dispersal policy and the community policy were intentionally planned as a unified policy package, although there are some politicians such as Kakuei Tanaka who were involved in both processes. Industry dispersion in the 1960s and 1970s was not only the consequence of government policies, but also a result of the aggregation of clientelism of individual LDP politicians and the preference of the manufacturing industry for low wages. Having said that, all conservatives, such as LDP politicians and chairmen of NHAs, shared the same fear of migration and urbanisation that could weaken their status. This fear became the common motivation which drove all of these policies even if they did not have a unified big picture.

Once migration to cities had ceased and the people were reorganised into local networks, it became easier for the LDP to access voters. The rate of sup-

port for the LDP in the late 1970s increased not only among farmers and fishermen and in provincial areas, but also among clerical workers and labourers and in urban areas. Masumi Ishikawa, who observed local politics as a journalist, pointed out that even if farmers became manufacturing labourers or clerical workers, they did not leave the LDP network if they stayed in the same area (Ishikawa 1995: 210). Although Ishikawa did not explain clearly why migration ceased, how farmers could become labourers and clerical workers without migration and why they were reorganised by the local network of the LDP, the present article corroborates how this became possible, considering the social policy context. The fact that NHAs and other local organisations in the 1970s and 1980s developed significantly in urban areas can explain the increase in the rate of support for the LDP also in urban areas.

That said, this article dose not contradict previous theories. It has been posited that the conservative resurgence was due to the LDP's compensation policy or policy changes such as the enhancement of social welfare and pollution regulations. Another theory claims that the introduction of the LDP general leadership election in 1977 in which rank-and-file party members could vote attracted the urban middle class and labourers (Nakakita 2013). However, the dispersion of industry and the Model Community Project, accompanied by many public works and subsidies, were themselves compensation policies. The fact that the LDP gained greater access to a large number of residents through the increased number of NHAs might have facilitated the adoption of new policies and the introduction of the general leadership election in that more voices were heard from the grassroots.

This article also explains the background of voting behaviour in Japan as revealed by previous studies. Ikuo Kabashima analysed the data of the 1986 general election and found that the voting rate was higher among lower educated voters than more educated ones, unlike in other developed countries. According to Kabashima, the lower the educational background, the older the age and the less urbanised the area in which voters lived, the more likely they were to turn out to vote (Kabashima 1988). Shirō Sakaiya analysed the data of the survey by the APFE and concluded that this type of voting behaviour was not found from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, and it only became apparent after the 1967 general election (Sakaiya 2013). The demographics described by Kabashima overlap with those of the core members of NHAs, and Sakaiya's finding is consistent with the description of socio-political change in this article.[12]

The phenomena described in this article are not necessarily specific to Japan. Many "sweat shop" factories utilising cheap female/immigrant labour flourished

12 After the 1990s, as shown in Figure 3, participation in NHAs declined sharply to around 25 per cent by 2012, and the LDP was heavily defeated by the Democratic Party in the 2009 general election. However, following the failures of the Democratic Party at the time of the Fukushima nuclear accident of 2011, the LDP gained power again with its victory in the 2012 general election. The absolute percentage of votes for the LDP and its coalition partner KOMEITO has hovered consistently around 27 per cent since 2012, but the total absolute percentage of votes for opposition parties has stagnated at around 20 per cent, while the abstention rate has been around 50 per cent (Oguma 2018b).

in suburban areas in the United States as the hollowing out of the manufacturing industry from the city centres unfolded in the 1970s and 1980s (Sassen 1988), although these did not necessarily lead to community organisation or conservative voting. In the 1960s and 1970s, conservative administrations in Asia urged citizens to form local resident organisations, such as Bansanghoe in South Korea, Barangay in the Philippines and RT/RW in Indonesia. The social changes that took place in Japan's "long 1960s" should be noted not only as a turning point in modern Japan, but also as a pattern that can be found in other parts of the world.

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Crisis and Self-Sufficiency:
The Left and Its Challenges During the Long 1960s in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This paper argues that Sri Lanka's leftist movement encountered structural challenges while attempting to transform Sri Lanka's dependent economy during the long 1960s. This process culminated in the global economic crisis of the 1970s. The predominantly Trotskyite left initially championed import substitution industrialisation in the period after Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain in 1948. Eventually, during the crisis of the 1970s, it was forced to radicalise its approach. It began to focus more on achieving self-sufficiency in key agricultural products. The left's reflexive bias toward industrialisation, however, undermined its attempt to reconceive development from an agrarian perspective. The left experienced an enduring setback during the elections of 1977, which ushered in the neoliberal transformation of Sri Lanka. The article explores the consequences of the left's historical neglect of the agrarian question during the long 1960s and the fateful implications of its delayed engagement with rural communities.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, leftist movements, Agrarian Studies, development transitions, Marxism

The global order that we have known for decades is unravelling. A crisis that has been decades in the making appears to be coming to a head in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pressures on the existing global order are creating space for alternative visions. Exploring the historical dynamics in the periphery may offer ideas for future possibilities amidst the current disorder.

In this context, the question of self-sufficiency has emerged with renewed force (Helleiner 2020). The concept was long thought to be banished to a bygone era. Powerful global institutions had made clear that "there is no alternative" to the free market consensus. But the urgency of our moment means

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that self-sufficiency once again offers an important signpost for understanding the *longue durée* of colonialism and its aftermath in the form of persistent global inequality.

We seek to analyse the great lessons of the tumultuous period of the long 1960s to clarify this point. We are interested in the concept of self-sufficiency that emerged, not from the hegemonic centres of the globe, or for that matter, the regional power centres, but from the periphery of the Global South. In this regard, Sri Lanka[1] has been at the forefront of major questions. It was colonised for four and a half centuries by the Portuguese, Dutch and finally the British. It presents the conundrum of a society that has interacted with modern forms of state-making for centuries.

Sri Lanka's postcolonial history anticipated major global shifts. Its movements for independence, which Sri Lanka achieved in 1948, were subdued compared to other countries in the region. But the vibrancy of its leftist movement – including perhaps the most successful Trotskyist party anywhere in the world, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) – put critical questions on the post-independence political agenda. Sri Lanka's left grappled with challenges facing other poor, predominantly agrarian countries that also attempted to break the long cycle of dependency. It moved from opposition to government over the period analysed here. The shift culminated in the crisis of the 1970s.[2] The left encountered enormous obstacles just as it became junior partner in a coalition government, the United Front (UF), which lasted from 1970 to 1977. Moreover, the left was constrained by the political dynamics of the coalition. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), one of Sri Lanka's two dominant bourgeois parties at the time, led the UF.[3] The SLFP in turn was led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who had earlier become the world's first female prime minister in 1960.

The left was ultimately crushed; first by global economic recession in the early 1970s, then, in 1977, by a reinvigorated right, led by the other bourgeois party, the United National Party (UNP). The UNP initiated one of the world's earliest experiments in neoliberalism, known locally as the "open economy".[4]

1 For purposes of continuity throughout our article, we use the term Sri Lanka, instead of its earlier name of Ceylon, which was changed in 1972. The shift in the country name reflects the post-independence struggles around the island's identity, including past colonial and present ethnic exclusions.

2 Technically, the first actor of the left to join a government was the Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party (VLSSP), a breakaway of the LSSP led by Philip Gunawardena, which joined SWRD Bandaranaike's Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) government formed in 1956. But it remained an outlier among the left until the formation of the majority left's coalition with the SLFP led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike in 1964. The VLSSP, however, gave an impetus to early land reform efforts.

3 We use the term bourgeois party to refer to the left's own self-understanding of its interaction with other political parties of the time. It was prevalent in the polemical debate. Although the left also participated in parliamentary democratic institutions, it distinguished its own role from bourgeois parties by foregrounding its vision of socialism. It argued that this would require the eventual transcendence of capitalism. See Abhayavardhana (2001) for discussion of the ways in which this tension between short-term and long-term goals played out in the left's political strategy.

4 Our goal in highlighting Sri Lanka is to situate it in a global trend. Specifically, we emphasise the way in which it anticipated the structural adjustment programmes that were imposed on many Southern countries during the 1980s. In large part, the failure of the left in Sri Lanka during the 1970s crisis created a

This meant paring back the welfare state and establishing Export Processing Zones (EPZs). The UNP government also took a hard-line stance on ethnic issues, leading to violent riots against the Tamil community in 1983, which triggered a devastating 26-year long civil war. But Sri Lanka's policy experiments and ideological debates during the long 1960s continue to make it a crucial place from which to preview a renewed global discourse of self-sufficiency.

In addition, the debates across leftist parties reveal much about Sri Lanka's social formation, particularly the challenges of social transformation. When Sri Lanka was pushed to the edge by economic crisis, aggravated by the capital strike during the global economic downturn of the 1970s, the concept of self-reliance began to take shape.[5] It was a radicalisation in terms of both the Sri Lankan left's own pre-existing emphasis on import substitution and trends echoing across the Third World at the time (see also Amin 1974: 19). For example, a foundational document of the period, the Arusha Declaration in Tanzania of 1967, argued: "In order to maintain our independence and our people's freedom we ought to be self-reliant in every possible way and avoid depending upon other countries for assistance" (Arusha Declaration 1967: 18).

In Sri Lanka, the Five-Year Plan of 1972–1976, published in late 1971, offered a tantalisingly brief description of self-reliance, which we distinguish from the concept of self-sufficiency. As the authors of the Plan put it, "in regard to the balance of payments, [the Plan] adopts a strategy which will rescue the country from its present predicament and establish an increasingly self-reliant base for future growth" (Five-Year Plan 1971: 11). The concept of self-reliance here appears to describe a long-term process to strengthen the capital base, which reflected a broader attempt to construct the "Third World" as a political project.

The Five-Year Plan also referred to the need to increase the "production of essential food items such as fish, milk, eggs and fruits and by gearing the production of consumer goods to the needs of the masses" (Five-Year Plan 1971: 12). Furthermore, it also explicitly referred to the underlying concept of self-sufficiency with respect to the staple of rice.[6] The Arusha Declaration made a similar point by referring to the need to become "self-sufficient in food, serviceable clothes and good housing" (Arusha Declaration 1967: 17).

space for the right to take advantage of its weakness and to impose an alternative vision of the economy. This occurred in conjunction with, but was also distinct from, the emerging imposition of "fiscal consolidation" by global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank on countries facing looming debt crises. These Western-dominated institutions increasingly hegemonised the field of international development, while the Soviet Union and China underwent their own profound transformations toward the end of the Cold War.

5 The capital strike by the West, as Sri Lanka shifted to the left, compounded the declining terms of trade. These trends made the path of import substitution a necessity. We owe this point to conversations with a prominent Sri Lankan political economist, the late SBD de Silva, who repeated it to one of the authors in several conversations.

6 The Five-Year Plan set the following goal: "Increasing paddy production to achieve self-sufficiency in 1977" (Five-Year Plan 1971: 37). Furthermore, on the question of milk important for nutrition, it set another significant goal: "During the Plan period the increases in domestic production of milk will be sufficient to replace all imports of full cream milk powder as well as butter fat and skimmed milk for the condensery" (ibid.: 54).

Thus, in our understanding, self-sufficiency points to the immediate question of working people's consumption assured by local production. Furthermore, self-sufficiency refers to the challenge of securing working people's daily reproduction – particularly food, a challenge that is more evident during crises. Our primary method is to outline what was meant by self-sufficiency by examining the ideological debates of the period from 1953 to 1977. We draw out the implications of this concept by focusing specifically on the left's handling of the agrarian question in Sri Lanka. We choose 1953 as a starting point because of the Great Hartal; a massive protest opposing a World Bank-inspired attempt to cut the rice ration. It spurred the collapse of the UNP government in 1956 and the rise of the SLFP as an alternative bourgeois party. Later, the majority faction of the left decided to participate in a coalition with the SLFP in 1964. The coalition gained power in 1970 but was eventually defeated in 1977. The hope of the long 1960s were dashed in Sri Lanka as elsewhere across the world, in the massive crisis of the 1970s.

Writing at this time, the political scientist James Jupp summarised the paradoxes of the 1970s crisis. He framed the "test of state enterprise in Sri Lanka" as a question of "whether the plantation sector can continue to produce as efficiently as before and whether the country can become self-sufficient in rice, thus freeing its diminished exchange resources for the import of industrial equipment and raw materials" (Jupp 1977: 635). As he further noted, "in 1973 Sri Lanka was spending 47 per cent of its import bill on food, while 71 per cent of raw materials used in manufacture were imported" (ibid.).

Despite the left's herculean efforts, it collapsed and was discredited during the critical moment of Sri Lanka's transition to an open economy in 1977. The UNP took power, and the left was defeated in a manner from which it has never recovered. Or as Ronald Herring, an important rural sociologist working on the agrarian question in South Asia, articulated: "So severe was the economic crisis of the early 1970s that there is a sense in which the complex of policies in place at the time, and the political forces associated with them, were inescapably delegitimised in popular perception" (Herring 1987: 327).

This is not to deny that the left in Sri Lanka won crucial victories during the period under study, including the defence and expansion of universal healthcare and education. Sri Lanka achieved relatively high Human Development Indicators in the region. Wealth inequality also decreased, thanks especially to food subsidies such as the rice ration. But even Sri Lanka's strong welfare state faced powerful headwinds. These included the structural decline in terms of trade for Sri Lanka's export crops (Herring 1987: 326, Shastri 1983: 3) and a long period of capital outflows (De Silva 1985, Shastri 1983: 5–6). These trends crystallised in the 1970s crisis.[7]

7 For terms of trade, Herring notes: "Though the economy was exporting substantially more in 1975 than in 1960, those exports had a purchasing power little more than one-third the smaller volume of exports in 1960" (Herring 1987: 326). For capital outflows, Shastri points out that "according to one calculation for the

The agrarian question from the bottom up

We do not analyse the failure of the left and the triumph of the class project of neoliberal globalisation as inevitable. Instead, our goal is to identify the ways in which the left ceded the agrarian question to the right. This created contradictions within society that were ultimately exposed during the economic crisis of the 1970s. We analyse this shift on two levels: 1) How did it shape the eventual crisis, paving the way for neoliberal regime's ascendance? and 2) How do the questions implied by this period remain urgent and relevant today?

The 1970s crisis pushed the left in power to the breaking point. As revealed in the Five-Year Plan, the left began to take food production more seriously. But by then it was too late. Drought, youth insurrection and myriads of other problems exploded. The left had been circumscribed in its approach because of its earlier attempt to prioritise an industrial over an agricultural worldview. We argue that the bias reflected the nature of the left's social base, especially the urban working class, from which it had historically mobilised.[8]

Our argument, however, is not simply that the left was hobbled by an exclusive emphasis on industrialisation. Rather, by the time it realised the critical necessity of achieving self-sufficiency in food in particular, it was overwhelmed. Or as one commentator on the Five-Year Plan noted, the country's shift to domestic food production was admirable as a long-term goal but could not resolve the immediate scarcities when food imports were restricted (Balakrishnan 1973: 1168). Critically analysing the challenges faced by the left requires a deeper appreciation of the day-to-day burdens of managing the economy once the left had come to power.

In contrast, the right, led by the UNP, had taken the historical initiative on the agrarian question. Since even before independence, it had framed the agrarian question in terms of the expansion of smallholder agriculture. The Green Revolution strategy of the 1960s to import inputs such as fertiliser put more pressure on the balance of payments. The import/export situation became untenable in the 1970s. Sri Lanka was forced to radicalise its efforts under extremely unfavourable global conditions. These developments provoked multiple crises in the balance of payments, fiscal sustainability and mass unemployment.

18 year period from 1952 to 1969, private capital transfers from Britain to Sri Lanka amounted to Rs. 87.2 million while the amount transferred from Sri Lanka to Britain was Rs. 315.7 million (Calculation by Sri Lanka, Ministry of Planning in 1975: 104)" (Shastri 1983: 6).

8 A second-order argument could be made as to why the left was concentrated among the urban working class in the first place. The bias was embedded in global Marxist ideologies of the time. Furthermore, there was far less direct confrontation between elites and the colonial state in Sri Lanka compared to other countries in the region, which presumably would have required rural mobilisation. In either case, these hypotheses would require a more sustained analysis of the articulation of international and national factors that shape the strategies of leftist movements in different countries. This question lies beyond the scope of our paper. For our own purposes, we make our argument about the left's urban bias to clarify our main point about the left's blind spot vis-à-vis the agrarian question. Specifically, we postulate the type of broader social mobilisation implied by the question of self-sufficiency.

Drastic measures taken by the United Front (UF) government included further nationalisation, including that of the country's main source of foreign exchange at the time, the plantation sector (Herring 1987: 328, De Silva 1985).

By the time the left started thinking on a national scale about the agrarian question, it was already consumed by the need to manage the crisis. Nevertheless, its failure contains seeds for a renewed critical appreciation of the question of self-sufficiency. We conceive this discussion as part of a much longer scholarly project. Our argument is an initial attempt to grapple with this question through a sympathetic critique of the left's legacy in the long 1960s, as revealed in the crisis of food production in the 1970s. We recognise the massive historical challenges the left faced. To do them justice requires sustained meditation on these paradoxes for which there were and are no easy answers.

We advance this argument vis-à-vis the bulk of existing scholarship on both the Sri Lankan left and Sri Lanka's post-independence challenges. Broadly speaking, we ground our analysis in the tradition of political economy that emerged in response to the social movements and struggles of the long 1960s. The growing predominance of ethnic conflict and, eventually, civil war, provoked a shift in academic analysis toward a focus on ethnicity, culture and law. This includes the more recent frames of peace, conflict and transitional justice that continue to define much of the scholarly debate. We attempt, however, to revive the long-dormant tradition of political economic analysis. Drawing on such work, we propose an alternative explanation of the decline of the left beyond the standard narratives of the left's capitulation to Sinhala majoritarian nationalism and compromises made with bourgeois parties.[9] Instead, we highlight the difficulty the left faced in building a diverse constituency among working people across the urban/rural divide.

At the same time, we draw deeply from the language and analysis of the mostly left-oriented authors of the period. The gravity and clarity of their writing offers an extremely useful approach for grappling with the challenges of our own time, even though we critique their assumptions. We develop our argument using the empirical materials of a relatively under-explored archive, including the previously mentioned Five-Year Plan, debates in the dissident journal *The Young Socialist* (1960–1970) and later (post-1977) analyses by left and non-left authors in the *Lanka Guardian*. We argue that they offer fertile ground for inferring the dynamics of the period.

In addition, we acknowledge the long trend of agrarian scholarship on Sri Lanka. We use the left's archive, however, to make a much more specific point

9 This line of thinking is especially prominent even in the otherwise subtle historical analysis of Kumari Jayawardena's work. She tends to attribute the left's failings in a reductive manner to the "petty bourgeois" class origins of its leadership (see, for example, Jayawardena 1987). We instead place more emphasis on the urban bias of the left. Specifically, we observe the difficulty the left faced in organising the country's vast rural constituency, and the need to frame this contradiction as an explicit theoretical and political problem. The left postponed this task until it had already arrived in power in the 1970s, at which point it was besieged by intractable crises.

about the difficulties of social mobilisation to transform agrarian relations. There has been extensive study of elite attitudes toward the peasantry across a range of studies (Brow / Weeramunda 1992, Herring 1988, Moore 1985, Moore 1989, Samaraweera 1981, Shanmugaratnam 1985). We take this approach further, to look at what the process meant from the bottom up. We analyse the obstacles to achieving a broad coalition that included people who are often categorised as either urban working class or peasantry.

We move beyond existing Marxist debates about worker-peasant alliances by foregrounding the overlap of low-income groups across the rural and urban divide, as represented in the category of working people. We theorise working people who, despite their diverse positions in relations of production, encounter a whole set of cross-cutting issues rooted in the shared circumstances of their reproduction, of which the question of food is a critical aspect. Toward this end, we see our analysis of the Sri Lankan left as contributing to theorising the concept of working people in the global South (Shivji 2017; for a foundational gendered analysis of the question of self-sufficiency, see also Mies 1999). Self-sufficiency is a lens to analyse the struggles of working people, which form the background of our analysis of the Sri Lankan left's ideological debate. The concepts are necessarily related. Self-sufficiency is not just about balancing the economy from an expert perspective but requires the active involvement of working people in defining their basic needs.

Defining the Left

For purposes of narrative convenience, we use the term left to refer both to a specific set of actors and, in a deeper, Gramscian way, the "common sense" that permeated the two dominant left parties of the time, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and Communist Party (CP), and their dissident factions. But we recognise that the left is not a theoretically homogeneous category. We acknowledge that it has been a movement riven by splits and open conflicts. We provide a brief sketch of the trajectory of the left both before and after independence to clarify some of these differences (for other overviews, see Amerasinghe 1998, Fernando /Skanthakumar, eds. 2014, Wickramasinghe 2015). Our goal is to concretise the long-term historical dynamics described above with real people and actors.

The Sri Lankan left originated in the colonial-era labour struggles, when students returning from abroad took a far more ideological role vis-à-vis the style of business unionism that predominated at the time (Jayawardena 1974). These students formed the LSSP in 1935, from which dissidents split and formed the CP. The latter was represented first and foremost by SA Wickramasinghe, who

became a Member of Parliament (MP). Thus, at the moment of its birth the Sri Lankan left was the product of a historical irony. Trotskyists were the founders and Stalinists were the breakaways (Woodward 1962: 308).

The LSSP remained the main source of theoretical innovation, especially its chief economist, NM Perera, constitutional scholar Colvin R. De Silva, and historian Leslie Goonewardene. From its ranks emerged the politicians and activists who would eventually define its legacy, burnished by their role in anti-colonial struggle. The party gained representation in parliament from 1947 onwards.[10] It could count on about 10 MPs in a legislature of 95. Eventually by 1956 it gained around 15. It fluctuated between 10 and 15 until it reached the zenith of its power in 1970 and won 20 seats in a 151-person legislature. The Communists achieved a smaller, but not insignificant representation throughout the same period.[11] The numbers alone do not reflect the outsize impact of the leftist parties on policy debate.

Given the overwhelming focus on the parliamentary path, the LSSP, especially its pre-eminent theoretician Hector Abhayavardhana, developed its justification for alliances with the party that supposedly represented the "national bourgeois", the SLFP. The SLFP itself was formed in 1953 from a split from the "comprador bourgeois" UNP, whose founder, DS Senanayake, belonged to a powerful elite family. The split by SWRD Bandaranaike, leader of the SLFP, from the UNP was both an opportunistic move in elite political competition and an attempt to mobilise a different social base. Voters generally viewed the SLFP as the party more representative than the UNP of Sri Lanka's "five classes": teachers, indigenous physicians, Buddhist clergy (the Sangha), workers and farmers. The bulk of these groups constituted what Marxists might refer to as the "petty bourgeois". The SLFP, in cultivating its nationalist politics – both with respect to its Sinhala Buddhist constituencies as well as on the international stage by moving closer to the Soviet Bloc – created a break in Sri Lanka's postcolonial history.

The LSSP eventually joined a political coalition with the SLFP in 1964, after the latter became prominent in national politics following its victory in 1956

10 Many of the participants of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India, Ceylon, and Burma eventually joined the LSSP, but they were also initially represented with five seats in the parliament elected in 1947 (Amerasinghe 1998: 82).

11 Women who stood out among the MPs include Vivienne Goonewardene (LSSP) and the British-born Doreen Wickremasinghe (CP), both of whom built their own careers on the basis of engagement in various activist causes such as the anticolonial movement and educational reform, and who happened to be partners of LSSP and CP leaders. Nevertheless, the fact that they often remained subordinate to men both in the actual organisational structure of the leadership – a familiar trend within the leftist movement – and the mainstream political narrative demands a proper reading against the grain of the archive. Of the few existing studies available, these include a collection of short biographical sketches (Muthiah et al. 2006) and Jayawardena's (2016) comparative study. Further engagement through archival work, however, would need to be done to incorporate both the empirical question of female representation within the leftist movement and beyond this, to interrogate gender in broader terms as a "useful category of historical analysis", to use Joan Scott's (1986) phrase. We keep these questions in mind throughout our article, weaving them into our own social analysis based on existing coverage in the literature and our own (limited) ability to make inferences.

on the back of the Great Hartal of 1953. The LSSP's decision to join with the SLFP resulted in the split of a small faction, the LSSP(R), in 1964. The breakaway group included distinguished representatives such as the politician Edmund Samarakkody, the political theorist V. Karalasingham and the trade unionist Bala Tampoe, all of whom continued to prioritise extra-parliamentary struggle over parliamentary politics.

At the same time, as political scientists such as Robert Kearney and Janice Jiggins (1975) note, a growing frustrated rural youth population did not find its concerns represented among the dominant left factions, even the dissidents of the LSSP(R). They were attracted to various international movements, including the legacy of Che Guevara, the ongoing struggle in Vietnam, and Mao's China (Abeysekera 1979). From this diverse coalition emerged "New Left" factions heavily influenced by the Communist Party-Peking Wing. The CP-Peking Wing had split from the CP primarily for international reasons, due to the Sino-Soviet split of 1963.

The division was reinforced when the LSSP and CP eventually joined forces with the SLFP to form the United Front (UF) government of 1970.[12] Leftist factions that promoted insurrection, drawn largely from the CP-Peking Wing, coalesced around the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, or People's Liberation Front). The JVP combined an incongruous mix of theories and ideologies. It planned a nationalist-infused revolt against the failures of the left in power to resolve the concerns of unemployed rural youth. This was known as the First JVP Insurrection of 1971.[13]

These trends dovetailed with the origins of militancy in this period among the Tamil people primarily living in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Because the Sri Lankan left ceded the agrarian question to the right, the latter was resolved in a way that prioritised Sinhala smallholder cultivation. Moreover, after 1956 and the passage of the Sinhala Only Act, Tamils were increasingly discriminated in state employment and cut off from access to patronage through the state. In response to ethnic majoritarian policies, the Federal Party campaigned on the plank of regional autonomy. It broke away from the Tamil Congress and became the dominant Tamil parliamentary party by the late 1950s. By the 1960s, Tamil nationalism was on the rise. It coalesced under the banner of federalism,

12 The LSSP had three Ministers in the Cabinet, up until they were expelled in 1975, while the CP had one.

13 Authors such as Kearney and Jiggins (1975) offer an extended analysis of the role of Sri Lanka's alliances with various global powers, including the Soviet Union, and the subsequent help its UF government received from around the world to crush the JVP Insurrection in 1971. To compare, the Communist Party of India (CPI)-Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPM) split in India in 1964, which further evolved into Naxalism, represented by the Communist Party of India-Marxist Leninist (CPI-ML). China supported the latter ideologically. In contrast, China had far less of a role to play in the emergence of the JVP in Sri Lanka. In fact, it turned a blind eye to the Sri Lankan government's suppression of the Insurrection in 1971. The CP-Peking Wing led by N. Shanmugathasan had support from China. But despite its role in the anti-caste struggle, it was eclipsed by Tamil militancy in the North and the JVP in the South.

particularly in the face of the Sinhala Only language policy and discrimination against non-Sinhala groups in state employment.

The incongruence between the Tamil nationalism of the Federal Party and the class politics of left parties led to a confrontation between their two constituencies in the predominantly Tamil electorates in the North. The LSSP theoretician and politician V. Karalasingham, who had contested and lost against the Federal Party Leader S.J.V. Chelvanayakam in the parliamentary election of 1960, wrote an influential pamphlet, published by the *Young Socialist* in 1963, titled, "The Way Out for the Tamil Speaking People – The Minority Problem and the Ceylon Revolution". In that essay, he acknowledged the overwhelming support for the Federal Party, but he also addressed the futility of such support without a national vision and socialist programme. In subsequent years, the left also gained ground among the oppressed caste constituencies. But this trend, too, reflected the lack of possibilities for a coalition between the left and the Tamil nationalist mainstream.

Tamil youth became radicalised in the 1970s due to the discriminatory policies of standardisation in the state university system, which allocated places based on majoritarian principles. Newly formed Tamil militants drew inspiration from diverse and at times contradictory ideological quarters, including national liberation struggles such as in Palestine as well as Zionism and the formation of Israel. The possibility of armed struggle became more tangible in the aftermath of the JVP Insurrection in 1971 and the break-up of Pakistan through Indian intervention. These small emerging groups of armed militants considered a similar type of intervention after insurrection.

In the longer historical context, the politics of ethnic minorities in the regional periphery were also shaped by concerns about land, particularly colonisation schemes to increase agricultural production, which began during the late colonial period and expanded after Independence. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the lending arm of the World Bank, arrived in Sri Lanka during its first Mission to the country in 1951. It subsequently released a significant and extensive Report of close to 1,000 pages titled *The Economic Development of Ceylon*. In the report, which was eventually published in 1953, it pushed for the expansion of agriculture through colonisation schemes. However, these initiatives, which were implemented in tandem with patronage networks, were perceived as efforts to expropriate Tamil lands and gerrymander the system to reduce minority representation. Given this context, we identify a relationship between the agrarian question and national question. Only by reckoning with the concerns of working people on the periphery can we analyse the sources of discrimination that were appropriated and deflected by the Tamil nationalist elite.[14]

14 Building on this perspective, we argue that the long arc of Tamil nationalism from the late colonial period to the rise of Tamil militancy in the 1970s cannot be reduced to economic grievances. Tamil society itself was divided by class and caste divisions. Rather, the over-determination of Tamil nationalism and its culmination in a protracted armed conflict requires further analysis of the workings of nationalist ideology,

In the South, the left's dissident youth factions coalesced under the JVP. The JVP embarked on a far more Sinhala chauvinistic struggle in its Second Insurrection in 1987. The JVP had been suppressed after 1971 but many among the youth who had been jailed were eventually "rehabilitated" and released in the mid-1970s. The JVP began shifting toward open democratic politics. The Jayewardene regime, however, proscribed the party again after the 1983 anti-Tamil riots. The regime used the JVP as a scapegoat, erroneously referring to them and other left parties as "Naxalites". It blamed these groups for the massacres to distract from the participation of key elements of its own government in organising the violence.

The JVP's membership changed as it was forced underground. It also shifted further to the Sinhala nationalist right on the national question. It began to see its exclusive role as defender against Indian invasion. The threat appeared to manifest concretely when the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) arrived in Sri Lanka in 1987. The IPKF attempted to police an initial ceasefire between the Government of Sri Lanka and Tamil rebels. The JVP blamed the Government for "inviting" the IPKF, and it took up arms against the state. It was crushed by a vicious counterinsurgency in the South in 1989.

In the North, the youth factions engaged in a long, violent period of consolidation eventually leading to the "sole representative of the Tamil people" politics of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by the late 1980s. A significant chunk of this narrative has been covered in one of the most searing indictments by the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) in an important work written in the thick of armed conflict, titled *The Broken Palmyra* (Hoole et al. 1992). The LTTE eliminated most of its competitors and even dissent within the Tamil community by the late 1980s and ensured the subordination of Tamil politics to its military separatist project. These trends within both the Sinhala and Tamil polity represented the failure of the left in general to tackle underlying social problems that had alienated youth constituencies in the previous era. Moreover, these insurgencies further hardened the repressive apparatus of the state (Abhayavardhana 1975).

In this context, general assumptions about social change through industrialisation, which had hegemonised the left, continued to shape the inchoate attitudes of militant youth.[15] We further acknowledge that while these attitudes were crystallised in the left's discourse, they broadly permeated the general understanding of pre- and post-independence elites as well. The SLFP, for example, became associated with the programme of industrialisation after independence.

political mobilisation and external influences. The latter include India's support for Tamil militancy at the moment when Sri Lanka shifted away from India's pro-Soviet stance towards alignment with the United States, under the neoliberal regime of JR Jayewardene in the late 1970s.

15 There are a few examples of attempts to break free from this theoretical straitjacket. These include post-Maoist analyses by intellectuals affiliated with groups competing with the JVP. They aimed to capture the same social group of unemployed youth and farmers.

In addition, the left's more refined thinking on the subject enables us to grapple with this problem in a more explicit way. Although the JVP, for example, broached the need to engage with agrarian issues, its pre-eminent focus was on capturing state power rather than theorising what it planned to do afterwards. Thus, we focus on the contradictions in the left's thinking insofar as it was represented by those who held positions of political power during the long 1960s, especially in the LSSP and CP.

The Right's solution to the agrarian question

We must grasp the prevailing social relations of production rooted in agrarian structures and the way in which the left responded to them.[16] Although often a less prominent aspect of mainstream narratives of the left in this period, we argue that the agrarian question structured its strategic choices. Since the late colonial period, the question of the ways in which rural communities would be incorporated into the economy had been articulated in terms of land colonisation, especially in the Dry Zone in the North Central and Eastern parts of the country (Jayasekara / Amerasinghe 1987, Herring 1988, Moore 1989, Samaraweera 1981).

Elite politicians, most famously the founder of the UNP, DS Senanayake, used the issue of Sinhala peasants who had been evicted from Crown Lands during the British colonial period as a way of claiming their ability to represent the masses. Their emphasis on trusteeship, however, in contrast to social mobilisation for the purposes of anticolonial struggle, meant that the politically subdued transition from the British to the Sri Lankan ruling class did not require framing peasant question in terms of agrarian reform. Moreover, the majoritarian framing portrayed Upcountry Tamils, descendants of indentured labourers who arrived from India during the colonial period, as outsiders. Elites justified the disenfranchisement of Upcountry Tamils at Independence in 1948 on this basis (see Samaraweera 1981 for a historical overview of this problematic).

The elites predominantly within the Sinhala community negotiated on the issue of land colonisation. They established a compromise between Kandyan Upcountry and Low Country communities by excluding other ethnic communities, especially Upcountry Tamils. Moore (1989: 196) notes:

> While building anti-plantation sentiments into the Sinhalese nationalist myth was not in the direct interests of the Low Country elite which dominated the nationalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s, it was a price which had to be paid for broadening the movement. The latent challenge to the Low Country elite's own position could be, and was, minimised by focusing the interpretation of the plantation episode on those areas where the disjuncture between village and plantation was extreme, i.e. in the Kandyan areas.

16 We use the term "social relations" of production as a shorthand for the totality of interconnected moments of production, distribution, exchange and consumption explicitly outlined by Marx (1993) in the *Grundrisse*.

This manoeuvre had important effects on the political strategy of the left. As Moonesinghe put it, "politically, [DS Senanayake] believed, that in creating a landed and house owning peasantry he would have a Maginot Line against the LSSP and deprive it of the support amongst the more poverty striken [sic] elements in the Western and Southern littoral" (Moonesinghe 1962: 51; see also Jayasekara / Amerasinghe 1987: 35–36).

The Sinhala elites who would eventually take charge of the postcolonial state developed their own paternalistic relationship toward the peasantry, based on a "tutelary or custodial attitude". This meant that little would change in the transition from a British to Sri Lankan ruling class (Moore 1989: 197–198; Samaraweera 1981). Elites, represented predominantly by the UNP, conceived the peasantry's problems as an issue of landlessness rather than land redistribution. They designed massive irrigation schemes, including the Gal Oya scheme in the East, regardless of the costs incurred.[17]

Despite their diverse intra-left backgrounds, Trotskyists and Stalinists agreed on the basic critique of this approach. They criticised agricultural schemes due to their apparent inefficiency (see Moonesinghe 1962: 53, Wickremasinghe 1951). Referring to the Gal Oya irrigation scheme in Eastern Sri Lanka, for example, LSSP dissident Edmund Samarakkody wrote in the *Young Socialist*:

> Much has been said about this "Development" but the resulting reality is the extension of subsistence agriculture covering nearly one million human beings and a continuous draw on the finances of the state. The idealising of what Marx called "the idiocy of rural life" cannot be a substitute for economic development of the non-plantation agricultural sector. (Samarakkody 1964:16)

The bias toward "efficient" agriculture and consequently the need to prioritise industrialisation shaped the left's critique of the right in general. The crisis of the 1970s, however, forced those in power in coalition government to take the question of food production far more seriously, as evidenced by the emphasis of the Five-Year Plan. We return to this point later when discussing the outcome of the left's transition from opposition to government.

In the meantime, because the left postponed the question of transforming agrarian relations, the right pursued unopposed an approach focusing narrowly

17 Important continuities can be observed between the Gal Oya and Mahaweli irrigation schemes. The Gal Oya scheme constituted an early effort to increase land available for cultivation in Eastern Sri Lanka, while the Mahaweli scheme covered a much larger area of the rural South and extended into the North-East. The accelerated development of the latter came to symbolise the JR Jayewardene regime's "Open Economy" after 1977, including increased dependence on prominent global institutions, such as the World Bank, for aid. See, for example, Gamini Dissanayake's interview with the *Lanka Guardian*: "The accelerated scheme will have so many spin-off effects. We see it already. 118,000 acres will be covered by the Maduru Oya scheme … a larger area than Minneriya, Polonnaruwa and Medirigiya … private enterprise has moved in little shops have come up … as the jungle is being cleared, trucks and bull-dozers … workshops, repair shops … small canteens … stores … later there will be hospitals and schools, cinemas, … co-ops … a whole new economy is taking shape, and there is a sense of bustling growth … the multiplier effect of all that will be tremendous" (Dissanayake 1981: 25). Despite the staccato transcription of this interview, the dramatic imagery follows from the elite framing of the agrarian question. Later ethnographic studies of changing perceptions of rural Sri Lanka offer critical descriptions of the ways in which the state's relationship vis-à-vis society was constructed based on *longue durée* assumptions about reviving a morally decaying village (Brow / Weeramunda 1992).

on agricultural productivity, in conjunction with powerful global institutions such as the World Bank.[18] From its first mission in the early 1950s into the 1960s, the World Bank prioritised agricultural production over industrialisation. As a result, the focus on farming in colonisation schemes meant that sustaining agricultural production required increasingly expensive agricultural inputs imported from abroad during the Green Revolution of the 1960s (Jayasekara / Amerasinghe 1987: 45).

Moreover, smallholding farming communities became dependent on state support. Peasant constituencies were mobilised politically through the nationalist discourse of resurrecting the traditional village combined with the objective of extending individual ownership, rather than by challenging social hierarchies in rural communities (see Jupp 1977: 640). Class differentiation within the predominantly Sinhala peasantry increased. Land colonisation schemes were meant to address land fragmentation, share cropping, mortgaging and even distressed sales. Many landlords were absentee owners, who retained parcels of land while pursuing increasingly urban consumerist lifestyles (Shastri 1983). Although land concentration did not necessarily expand rapidly, ownership of land buttressed a politically active constituency of rich smallholders and middle-class urban clerical workers (Moore 1989: 185).

Consequently, elites were able to block efforts to pursue land reform (Jayasekara / Amerasinghe 1987: 41–42). The Paddy Lands Act was passed in 1958 through the efforts of the SLFP's coalition partner, the Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party (VLSSP), which was led by Philip Gunawardena.[19] But land reform was constrained. The central plank, the formation of Cultivation Committees, was co-opted. Tenancy rights were watered down (Moore 1989: 205). Elites instrumentalised agricultural extension services for their own purposes. Finally, although cooperatives offered a new distribution system, they encountered difficulties in transforming production in the rural economy, in the absence of a bigger push for land reform. As Ronald Herring, debating the agrarian question, puts it:

> These policies have diverted land questions from aggregate or class-welfare issues to local questions of allocation – who should benefit? – and thus channelled political energy into particularistic connections with powerful brokers and bureaucrats. (Herring 1988: 615)

18 In many ways, this echoes the contemporary debate about the need to radicalise the concept of food security from the perspective of food sovereignty. See, for example, Edelman 2005: 339.

19 See Woodward for a description of Gunawardena's "anti-democratic and dictatorial tendencies," and more importantly, his eventual isolation within the Bandaranaike Cabinet (Woodward 1962: 319). Abhayavardhana (2001), among other theorists on the left, criticised Gunawardena as well. Nevertheless, Gunawardena was rare among the left at the time in considering a progressive solution to the agrarian question, although he shared many of the elite's paternalistic assumptions about the peasantry on this issue (Moore 1989: 199). In addition, his Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, GVS De Silva, went on to produce heterodox analysis of the agrarian question in the 1970s (reprinted in Silva 1988). Silva questioned the linear trajectory of urbanisation long before such analysis became a standard part of the repertoire of postcolonial and postdevelopment studies, and which in Sri Lanka anticipated the seminal work of Abeysekera (1985).

On the one hand, the significant extension of the smallholder sector countered the dispossession of smaller farmers (Moore 1989: 183). On the other hand, this meant the radical politics of landless people were conservatised because they were drawn into thinking as small landowners (Herring 1988: 615).

Dunham and Abeysekera explain what followed from this framework and the corresponding difficulty of conceptualising a redistributive approach to the agrarian question from a leftist perspective: "In Sri Lanka low wages had traditionally been supported through welfare measures; today self-sufficiency in rice has been almost achieved – though not by land reform. It has been done through state-aided colonisation schemes which left vested interests and social conflicts in the countryside more or less untouched" (Dunham / Abeysekera 1987: 14). Thus, in Sri Lanka, the solution to both the agrarian question and the question of self-sufficiency articulated in terms of food sidestepped the class confrontation. The latter would have been necessary for substantive redistribution and to transform the structure of rural social relations.

The agrarian question from the perspective of the social periphery

For the left to challenge local elites would have required grappling with critical yet neglected components of the agrarian question. First and foremost, it would have required a deeper investigation of the gendered division of labour in the household. Conceptualising the peasant household as a constituent unit of the traditional village community maintained social hierarchies, which prevented the increased mobilisation of *all* working people, not only men, to achieve land reform and other redistributive measures. The left continued to accept the static image of the countryside. Seeing women as agents embedded within social relations would instead have required challenging patriarchal norms, and thus a completely different understanding of the agrarian question – one that would prioritise the question of social reproduction in more comprehensive terms.[20]

Even in the absence of such efforts, the social welfare state that expanded after independence still generated broad gains for the population, including women. Jayaweera notes:

20 With the triumph of the open economy in 1977, elites exploited women's labour by undermining the basis of their livelihoods in rural areas. Many women had to migrate to work in the garment factories in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and as migrant domestic labour in other countries to sustain their households, because the UNP government slashed the social safety net. The state facilitated the super-exploitation of women's labour by undermining their social reproduction in the countryside. Critical analysis of gender must include this class dimension. This is also different from the "socially conscious" microfinance approach, epitomised by individualised self-employment schemes, that now dominates the question of gender in the countryside. Again, because the left frequently ignored gender during the period we examine, later civil society organisations recuperated gender in a way that did not necessarily point to broad social transformation. The latter goal would require political confrontation with dominant social forces.

> Male literacy rates of the population over 10 years rose from 76.5% in 1946 to 85.6% in 1963 and subsequently to 90.5% in 1981. Female literacy rates rose more steeply from 46.2% in 1946 to 67.1% in 1963 and 86.5% in 1981 and the gender gap narrowed appreciably, particularly as male and female literacy rates of the school age population reached near parity by the end of the sixties. (Jayaweera 1990: 52)

However, ideological defence of the welfare state did not involve the theory and practice of transforming agrarian relations. Institutions such as the Women's Rural Development Societies did not have the theoretical ballast to conceive these organisations as a radical means for challenging gendered hierarchy. The latter would have required articulating gender in terms of active participation in political movements that confront the dominant order.

Consequently, the under-representation of women in texts on the period, and the difficulty of engaging the question of gender broadly, represents a major blind spot in the left's discourse. In many ways, this continued to reinforce the patriarchal attitude of political leadership across the ideological spectrum, despite the occasional appearance of female politicians of national stature, including, of course, the rise of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the world's first female Prime Minister. The question of gender during the period demands a proper reading against the grain of the archive, beyond the scope of this essay.

The second decisive limitation of the left's analysis of the agrarian question related to the predominant emphasis on land colonisation, especially in the Dry Zone in the North Central and Eastern parts of the country, and its implications for non-Sinhala communities. For example, the plantations in the Upcountry were shielded from takeover until the moment in which Sri Lanka was already facing severe economic crisis during the 1970s. This paralleled difficulties in achieving land reform in the Wet Zone in the South-West of the country.

The plantations were run by Agency Houses, which repatriated profits from export sales abroad throughout the post-independence period. When the UF government nationalised large Upcountry estates in the early 1970s, significant damage had already been done to the economy, especially from declining investment in re-planting (De Silva 1985). Beyond the immediate goals of producing tea (and to a lesser extent, rubber) for export, the continued division between land colonisation for a predominantly Sinhala peasantry and exploitation of plantation workers meant that the latter were ignored in late attempts to achieve self-sufficiency in food.

Initially, the left, especially the LSSP, attempted to oppose the disenfranchisement of the Upcountry Tamils in 1948. As it saw things, the UNP was attempting to undermine its voter base. Writing in 1961 in the *Young Socialist*, the LSSP leader Colvin R De Silva, for example, prioritised the working-class identity of estate workers in general:

> Let it be stressed in the first place that "the rural people of this country" are not a homogeneous mass. On the contrary the rural people of this country are remarkably variegated from any point of view other than the geographical fact of their rural residence.

> For instance, a whole army of wage workers interpenetrates the rural mass. We refer here not only to the urban workers who reside in rural homes but also to those wage workers who live and work in the country side. The best known amongst these are of course the village people who work on estates but there are as large a number of wage workers in other occupations. Whatever hits the working class of his country hits this section too. (De Silva 1961: 86)

When the left became involved in coalition politics after 1964, however, its attitude toward the Upcountry Tamils shifted. It began to see them in terms of a communal constituency. This was rooted in a narrower understanding of the challenges and exclusions facing Upcountry Tamils. The left often saw Upcountry Tamils from a paternalistic point of view. Or, as even a sympathetic observer such as Samarakkody put it, they were "wage slaves condemned to be inarticulate and virtual beasts of burden for nearly a hundred years in their new home in Ceylon" (Samarakkody 1964: 15). Incredibly enough, even this may be considered a relatively progressive judgement compared with the attitudes of later leftist groups such as the JVP, which began to see Upcountry Tamils not even as mute and incapable, but rather as direct invaders from India.

The Upcountry Tamils, beyond their role as wage workers, had a potential stake in the break-up of plantations and the setting up of a cooperative system to transform agrarian relations. Their participation could have provoked the restructuring of the economy in a way that would have made Sri Lanka less dependent on food imports. Instead, because of the left's tacit acceptance of the right's framing of the agrarian question in Sinhala majoritarian terms, even when the UF nationalised the plantations, the left conceived it as a top-down process that did not fundamentally require breaking up the plantation system and redistributing land. As a result, the reforms were easily reversible. Plantations were re-privatised in the 1990s. This was the inevitable consequence of the left's difficulty in engaging with the agrarian question through the broad participation of diverse communities in the project of land reform. Accordingly, the agrarian question inevitably had implications for the national question (for explicit theorisation of the national question more broadly from a left perspective, see Uyangoda 1979).

In the North, the particular stronghold of the Tamil minority in the Jaffna peninsula, there was increased land pressure. This led to colonisation schemes in the Vanni, which is contiguous with the North Central Dry Zone. Simultaneously, greater accumulation from the intensive cultivation of cash crops, such as onions and chillies, in Jaffna created social tensions within its rigid caste system. The landless labour from mainly oppressed caste communities sought to break free. The CP-Peking wing led by N. Shanmugathasan gave leadership to a major struggle against untouchability that was launched in October 1966.

That struggle – which could be considered the first armed struggle in Sri Lanka's postcolonial history – struck an irreversible blow to untouchability. The rise of Tamil nationalism in the 1970s, however, politically deflected the

anti-caste mobilisations. Still, an important outcome of this struggle was the significant change in the social relations of production in the palmyra palm sector. In 1972, the UF government gave the Palm Development Co-operative Societies, whose members are exclusively oppressed caste toddy tappers, the monopoly on the tapping, distribution and processing of toddy. This measure greatly uplifted the social and economic situation of that community. It was an example of the potential path toward a self-critical understanding of the relationship between agrarian and industrial production. It remains an initiative full of implications that were underexplored in the theorising of the left of the period.

The trajectory of industrialisation

Given its relationship with its urban working-class base, the left's preferred strategy was an emphasis on industrialisation, which it hoped to achieve through nationalisation. It pursued this approach almost exclusively until the economic shocks of the 1970s, at which point it was forced to think more about import substitution in terms of necessities, especially food production, as well. The left generally avoided the agrarian question until that critical point because of its urban bias. While it could mobilise its urban working-class base to put pressure on the state to pursue industrialisation, it continued to face challenges in adopting a similar strategy of mobilising the peasantry and landless in the countryside.

The left's preference for industrialisation, however, was not simply a rehash of the debates about primitive socialist accumulation that dominated, for example, the early Soviet Union. Instead, the left's approach reflected the specific challenges imposed by the legacy of colonialism in Sri Lanka. Colonial capitalism had created infrastructure, such as ports and railways, that facilitated the transfer of wealth to the metropole from the plantation economy, reinforcing Sri Lanka's dependency even after it gained independence. Moreover, this created a proletariat as well, from which the left gained significant membership. In response to these trends, the left's goal throughout the long 1960s was to diversify industrial production. It thought it could achieve this through state ownership of industry. The assumption was that industrialisation would accordingly resolve the agrarian question by absorbing the rural population in modern industries.[21]

The left assumed that a surplus in agricultural production could be invested in industrial manufacturing. LSSP dissident Edmund Samarakkody argued in 1961 why the left should support efforts to pursue industrialisation. He wrote the following remarks in the *Young Socialist*, before the majority faction of the left joined the coalition with the SLFP in 1964:

21 The Five-Year Plan did also raise the question of rural industries, but in general the focus of the left leading up to the crisis was on developing a heavy industrial base.

> It is not just a question of diversification of the economy that poses itself but a bold plan of industrialisation with the aim of speedily making the industrial sector (manufacturing industries) the larger and the prominent sector leading to converting an agricultural economy into an industrial economy. Given such a perspective a development plan geared to such a perspective the working class (proletariat) will necessarily begin to play a prominent and dynamic role. (Samarakkody 1964: 66)

Samarakkody among others assumed that, barring an increase in productivity, Sri Lanka would not be able to sustain its population. Or, as he argued in a subsequent article: "In 1950, 50% of Ceylon's gross national products were obtained from Agriculture. In the same year Industry (including Cottage Industry) accounted for only 5% of the gross national product" (Samarakkody 1964: 19; see also Karalasingham 1963: 34, Moonesinghe 1962: 51, De Silva 1961: 87). For much of the left, the challenge was to increase productivity. The consequence was that the plan for the left privileged expert knowledge, comparable to the way in which the market was reified by the ideologues of the right. The plan became an abstract, impersonal force that required short-term sacrifices, whether top-down or bottom-up, to achieve higher living standards in the long-term (Perera 1961; for a self-critique, however, see Goonewardene 1980).

After the 1956 change in regime from the UNP to SLFP, even the mainstream parties began to operate in the framework of state intervention. As Jayasekara and Amerasinghe note, a National Planning Council was created and "the allocation for industries in the Ten-Year Plan increased to 20% from the 4.7% in the Six Year Plan of the former government" (Jayasekara / Amerasinghe 1987: 41). According to Colvin R. De Silva, one of the chief architects of the LSSP, writing in 1961, the degree of state investment measured progress toward socialism as such; or as he put it, "the LSSP conceives of economic development in terms of state investment activity" (De Silva 1961: 82).

De Silva among others recognised that further expansion of the welfare state was circumscribed by the degree to which the state could take control of "the surplus investment capacity of the capitalist class" (De Silva 1961: 83–84). Leftist critics of the LSSP's coalition with the SLFP from 1964 onwards tried to explain the deviation from apparently successful examples of import substitution industrialisation by arguing that the entire Sri Lankan capitalist class was unable or unwilling to challenge the dominant imperial relations in order to invest more in industrial manufacturing (Karalasingham 1963: 35, Samarakkody 1964: 72). But regardless of its participation in or opposition to coalition with the SLFP, the left's thinking across party lines was defined by the goal of industrialisation.

Because Sri Lanka lacked strategic raw materials and instruments of production, left politicians prioritised "self-sacrifice" to provision the base for industrialisation (see, for example, De Souza 1970). This appeared to undercut the redistributive emphasis of the welfare state. Anticipating the austerity that the UF government would impose during the 1970s, future UF Finance Minister

N.M. Perera made the following call in the *Young Socialist* in response to the SLFP Finance Minister's Budget Speech in 1961:

> It would mean a completely new approach to the whole problem of taxation based on a period of austerity for all. It would mean the social ownership of all the commanding heights of the economy. It would mean a Plan which will spring from the people for the fulfilment of which they will gladly make sacrifices. In short, it means the first steps in the task of socialist building. (Perera 1961: 88)

The neoliberal right today often makes the facile argument that the left failed to attract investment from outside during this period. Contextualising the left's constraints, Jupp instead argued that Sri Lanka was unattractive to private capital quite simply because "[i]ts domestic market is very small. Heavily capitalised concerns in paper making, chemicals or cement were unlikely to have been financed from domestic or foreign private capital" (Jupp 1977: 634).

During the 1960s, the state took over and invested in enterprises that required more capital, including intermediate and investment goods. In reviewing this period, Shastri notes that the "relative share of intermediate products increased from 26 percent in 1962–64 to about 35 percent in 1970, while the production of investment goods showed only a marginal increase from 8 to 12 percent" (Shastri 1983: 7). Capitalists during this period mainly occupied the consumer goods sector. At the same time, the share of consumer goods as a proportion of total production dropped from 65 per cent in the early 1960s to 50 per cent by 1970 (ibid.).

This expansion of the public sector in production and its ambiguous relationship to the private sector created further problems. According to Gunatilleke "the result [was] that large parts of the public sector became increasingly inefficient and the private sector, with the exception of a few pockets such as the tourist and gem trades, lost its incentive for growth and investment" (Gunatilleke 1978: 12). Consequently, Jayasekera and Amerasinghe argue that import substitution:

> [...] tended to concentrate on the production of non-essential goods that were often of a sub-standard quality. These industries had no significant impact on the unemployment problem. On the whole the import substitution strategy contributed little to either planned development or to building up a firm industrial base. (Jayasekera / Amerasinghe 1987: 43)

This tendency compounded the obstacles the left faced during the 1970s crisis. After coming to power, it confronted multiple crises in the balance of payments, fiscal sustainability and mass unemployment. The Sri Lankan left struggled with the question of sustaining the economy. In desperation, it began to articulate the need for mobilisation to create, for example, rural industries (Five-Year Plan 1971: 14–15). But having failed to organise in the countryside up to that point, the left was circumscribed in its action. It took power in a coalition at the precise point when it lacked the rural mobilising capacity to resolve the overwhelming crisis.

We provide a Table below from the Five-Year Plan, which provides the structure of the economy in 1970 and the UF Government's plan for development over the next six years. Significantly the highest annual growth rate of 10% was to come from industry. Industry was supposed to absorb the reduction in the share of agriculture in the GDP. With the economic crisis of the 1970s, however, the plan was not successful. Nevertheless, it gives useful clues to the overarching vision of the UF, especially in its conceptualisation of the relationship between agriculture and industry.

As hopeless as it may seem from the present vantage point, many on the left assumed that they could push through the ensuing difficulties of the "transition period". But the consequences in terms of social crisis would be felt sooner rather than later. The upshot is that unlike many other democratic socialist experiments during the Cold War that were smashed by direct imperialist intervention – the most famous example perhaps being the coup in Chile in 1973 – the trigger for the collapse of Sri Lanka's experiment, although no doubt severely restricted in room for manoeuvre, was its own contradictions.

Table 1: Sectoral Contribution to Gross Domestic Product, 1970 and 1976

Sector	1970		1976		Annual rate of growth in %
	Value in million Rs.	Share of each sector in %	Value in million Rs.	Share of each sector in %	
(1) Agriculture	4,264	36.3	5,671	33.7	4.9
Tea (includes processing)	810	-	953	-	2.8
Rubber (includes processing)	328	-	374	-	2.2
Coconut	593	-	727	-	3.5
Paddy	951	-	1,433	-	7.1
Other	1,582	-	2,184	-	5.5
(2) Industry	1,523	13.0	2,692	16.0	10.0
(3) Construction	771	6.5	1,094	6.5	6.0
(4) Services	5,202	44.2	7,365	43.8	5.9
(5) GDP at 1970 factor cost prices	11,760	100.0	16,822	100.0	6.1

Source: Five-Year Plan 1971: 28

Reproducing class divisions

How did these contradictions play out in practice? Although the state took over diverse industries, it did not necessarily transform the social relations of production. Later authors such as Shanmugaratnam have identified this limitation in terms of the distinction between statisation versus the democratisation of production relations (Shanmugaratnam 1985: 77; see also Jayasekera / Amerasinghe 1987: 49, for reference to the "unsuccessful idealistic experiments" of the UF Government in particular).

The left's strategy of seeking solutions through the state, especially by gaining access to state power through coalition politics, faced many constraints and limitations. The postcolonial state in Sri Lanka had limited resources and few avenues for redistributing limited capitalist resources, many of which were tied to metropolitan capital. It did not have much room to manoeuvre during the crisis of the 1970s. Whereas Western theorists confronted monopoly capitalism in their respective countries, a similar form of local monopoly capital did not emerge in Sri Lanka capable of providing higher living standards, and with which workers could have negotiated for a bigger slice of the pie. Therefore, the state was pushed to participate in the capitalist law of value that required investment. A section of capitalists could thereby operate within the parameters of an ostensibly statist economy (see Shastri's (1987) use of Kalecki's related concept of the "intermediate regime"). The Sri Lankan left's theorisation of the struggle against imperialism did not necessarily call for the transformation of social relations; rather, it primarily demanded state ownership of property.[22]

The narrowing of the political horizon shaped the ideology and practice of urban working-class organisations, especially trade unions. Trade unions affiliated to political parties negotiated the needs and concerns of their members with employers or, in the case of public sector enterprises, the state. Many of the Ministers in charge of these public sector institutions were in fact from the SLFP. This further complicated the relationship of the trade unions traditionally aligned with the left parties. They attempted to negotiate with the SLFP leaders of the UF Government in the 1970s. Meanwhile, the expansion of the public sector as an avenue of employment had started earlier. By 1963, public servants belonging to trade unions had become three quarters of the bureaucracy. Half of the urban trade unions' membership was public servants (Kearney 1966: 399–400).

22 This framing appears even before the LSSP famously joined the coalition with the SLFP in 1964. In particular Colvin R. De Silva articulated an early criticism of the CP in 1954 by identifying nationalisation as the litmus test for the development of socialism. He argued that a report by the CP does not contain any "anti-capitalist measure whatsoever". Specifically, he argues, "Nationalisation has disappeared altogether; there is no nationalisation measure proposed even against foreign capital. It is an 'anti-imperialist' programme which is not anti-capitalist!" (De Silva 1954: 2–3).

The predominant solution among trade unions was to obtain employment rather than challenge hierarchies in the social division of labour. Similarly, this trend reflected the left's difficulties in organising workers in smaller private enterprises and agricultural labourers, who were much harder to access, versus the public sector workers who were concentrated in major government institutions. This challenge also speaks to the point made by those on the left who had engaged with the agrarian question when reflecting on the period. In a retrospective interview in the *Lanka Guardian*, for example, Ariyavamsa Gunasekera and Kalyananda Thiranagama argued that organising the peasantry "is a difficult and painful job. It is also less profitable than organising the Trade Unions" (Gunasekera / Thiranagama 1979: 16).

Left political parties that came to power in coalition governments starting in 1956 used the state to obtain employment and other benefits for their members. But they often did this without challenging the fundamental assumptions of capitalist production that continued to shape social life. As a result, the role of trade unions not only included collective bargaining but securing the industrial peace. Similarly, workers' struggles often articulated reformist and Sinhala majoritarian assumptions (Kearney 1965: 121, Kearney 1966: 407 Shastri 1983: 8). As Abeysekera (1979) noted in the *Lanka Guardian*, for example, urban trade unions were less likely to condemn the UF Government's massacre of youth during the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)'s First Insurrection of 1971.[23] Furthermore, when the left parties retreated from their earlier progressive stances on the national question as well, the trade unions followed suit. They increasingly remained silent on anti-minority measures (Jayawardena 1987; Wanasinghe 1965).

The failure to confront fundamental gendered, ethnic, religious, and caste divisions meant that the labour movement was able to achieve gains for its predominantly Sinhala working class and middle-class membership only so long as local capitalists accepted the class compromise. This truce ended in 1977. The difficulty of the deepening struggle afterwards enabled the super-exploitation of a female gendered working class from rural areas, ethnic minority communities and other marginalised groups, who had not been included in the earlier historic compromise.[24]

In addition, the left faced the challenge of mobilising youth from the subordinate strata in the 1960s and beyond, along with the resulting pressures this

23 Abeysekera's elaboration is important here: "To quote Samarakkody again, 'the failure of the working class to be even articulate against the murders and atrocities of the government (in 1971) is the measure of the disorientation of the working class that had taken place through coalition politics since 1964 and of the process of absorption into the trade union apparatus into the capitalist state structures which had been taking place.' Indeed one may ask whether the excessive preoccupation with economic struggles at the trade union level was not one of the factors that determined reformist political positions" (Abeysekera 1979: 12).

24 At the same time, we also recognise the ways in which historical victories of the labour movement could be re-articulated during later struggles by diverse groups of workers. For example, many female export manufacturing workers opposed pension reform in 2011, fending off police battalions in places such as the Katunayake Export Processing Zone. The difference is that these struggles are embedded in their experience of the double burden of work in the factory and reproductive labour in the household.

created. Abeysekera (1979) argued that even though the "petty bourgeoisie" appeared split between the new and the old, the concerns of the latter, such as small farmers and shop owners, were expressed in a growing movement of frustrated youth who had not obtained employment in the public sector. As Abeysekera put it, "both these bear the same ideological relationship to the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class and that this ideological relationship is enough to merge them into a single class" (Abeysekera 1979: 12). The momentous election of 1956 had come to symbolise the promise of a general reaction against the English-speaking elite who had been over-represented in state employment and higher education until that point. The mobilisation of the petit bourgeois base of the SLFP came back to haunt the UF Government. The failure to realise the promise of 1956 – which had signified the project to achieve broad social gains for upward advancement among Sinhala-speaking subordinate strata – had, by the 1970s, sharpened the frustration of rural youth.

The contradictions of these struggles became manifest in the tension between the aspirations generated through the expansion of the welfare state versus persistent inequalities in the quality of education, in addition to constraints on the growth of job opportunities (Jayaweera 1990: 64). Accordingly, the issues facing the youth across the country also reflected the left's difficulties in transforming the social relations of production. Alternative strategies of resistance, from youth insurrection to ethnic separatism, varied greatly in terms of their political consequences.

The left's dominant approach throughout much of the long 1960s meant prioritising industrialisation over agrarian transformation. The left wanted to expand industry according to a comprehensive plan. When it encountered severe political economic obstacles to achieve its goal of industrialisation, the emerging neoliberal right capitalised on this mistake. The right, led by the UNP under JR Jayewardene, articulated the virtues of participation in the global economy.

Opposing state ownership, the UNP in its rhetoric anticipated the emerging authoritarian populist defence of the "little man" (Hall 1979). The UNP was able to play on the contradictions of the social democratic state, as Hall might have put it, and the apparently rigid bureaucracy that had been constructed. Jupp illustrated its appeal: "Reiterating a proposition from earlier platforms the UNP told the voters that 'if you have a little property of any kind, a small business or a small house, you are by that much independent. If property through the country is widely dispersed in millions of private hands, the power which resides in the ownership of property is also dispersed and power cannot be used coercively'" (Jupp 1977: 638).

This shift toward the right traced the contours of the urban/rural divide, especially the left's further alienation from rural constituencies. The left began to contemplate the possibilities of rural mobilisation in the middle of the multiple crises of the 1970s. But by then it was too late to engage in the type of

base-building that would have enabled it to pressure the state to enact transformative policy during an especially constrained period. Instead, the left experienced a moral crisis. It found itself supporting a government involved in the brutal suppression of a revolt that cost the lives of thousands of youths during the JVP Insurrection of 1971. Repressive elements of the state took the initiative. The left's rather late attempts at further land reform failed due to the class interests of its senior partner in the coalition government, the SLFP, which was beholden to the landed elite. These developments ensured a dialectic of violence, which would continue to define Sri Lanka's political trajectory beyond the 1970s. The ethnic conflict turned into a full-blown civil war that eventually ravaged the country.

The global conjuncture

Given where the left ended up, ideologically disoriented and politically crushed, it may seem odd to return to the point at which it failed. But we find it useful to do so because the problems that the left confronted remain with us today. Moreover, the value of its experiment requires sustained interrogation of multiple factors that had both positive and negative consequences. Even as we analyse the left's apparent strategic mistakes, we also acknowledge its legacy. By many measures inequality in Sri Lanka was lower during the long 1960s than at any other point since independence. This parallels the experience around the globe of the "Golden Age" of the welfare state.

The reality is that the left in Sri Lanka, as in much of the rest of the world, faced similar challenges overcoming the political economic constraints on the welfare state in its long-term struggle for socialism. Rather than explaining these as a failure to maintain its political independence vis-à-vis bourgeois parties, or the "petty bourgeois" class background of its political leadership, we argue that the fundamental challenges the left in Sri Lanka faced reflected the limitations of the pressure it could exert on its leaders in power. The challenges of the 1970s crisis forced the left to begin thinking explicitly in terms of self-reliance. Moreover, self-reliance is a goal we must distinguish from the question of self-sufficiency. The need to achieve self-sufficiency in food, particularly, became palpable during the crisis in a way that demands critical analysis of the left's earlier attitude toward the agrarian question.

We also acknowledge the external dimension during the same period. Sri Lanka was at the forefront of the Non-Aligned Movement. Later, along with other countries, it also grappled with the declining terms of trade that shaped the relationship between former colonial powers and the countries they had colonised. The proposal for a New International Economic Order, formulated

in the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development by eminent economists such as Raul Prebisch and Sri Lanka's own Gamani Corea, sought to improve terms of trade for the Third World's primary commodity exports.

But with the ultimate defeat of these efforts in Sri Lanka and abroad, the articulation of neoliberalism and ethnic majoritarian politics became dominant. The upshot is that debates that reckon with the left's strategic limitations are again becoming relevant during the current period of global crisis. Once again, Sri Lanka must grapple with the question of self-sufficiency. Whether or not the country experiences a sovereign debt crisis, for example, participation in the global market carries its own dramatic risks. Sri Lanka's vulnerabilities have been exposed during the economic depression triggered by the Great Lockdown. In this context, the political frustrations of marginalised and dispossessed communities may be articulated in either a left-wing or right-wing populist direction. The latter contains potentially dangerous and irreversible consequences for democracy in Sri Lanka, even though the country is the oldest electoral democracy in Asia, with its universal suffrage reaching back to 1931.

Sri Lanka, much as during the crisis of the 1970s, is facing a moment of reckoning along with the rest of the world. If we are to approach the crisis differently this time, we must also understand what happened that specifically led to the 1970s crisis. As we have argued, the Sri Lankan left postponed sustained engagement with the agrarian question, which was appropriated by the right. Instead, its predominant method was to pursue state ownership of industry.

But its fundamental conceptualisation of planning remained an abstract, expert approach that dictated rather than listened to working people in the formulation of their needs. Leftist authors of the time may have chafed against this claim. They might have argued, for example, that self-management in state enterprises was taken seriously.[25] Or that the Five-Year Plan engaged with the question of mobilisation to build up rural industries. But we argue that the challenges the left faced while attempting to govern show that base-building across the urban/rural divide remained the pre-condition for its other efforts.

We are taking neither a nativist nor anti-modern position in emphasising the agrarian question. Instead, we argue that specific questions raised by Sri Lanka's working people require explicitly understanding the ways in which their demands are embedded in daily tasks of reproduction. These include the critical question of achieving self-sufficiency in food and other basic needs. To approximate the immediate needs and concerns of working people does not mean imposing a reactionary nostalgic outlook on their livelihoods. Rather, it means extrapolating from working people's lives, experiences and demands the fundamental implications for transforming social relations of production.

25 See Goonewardene 1980 and Skanthakumar 2015 for reference to experiments in "Yugoslav-style" self-management.

Accordingly, we propose the need to theorise self-sufficiency in terms of a holistic understanding of the relationship between the basic needs of working people and their mobilising capacity to obtain what they need. Whether this ultimately means Sri Lanka must produce specific products or create different, inter-related industries depends entirely on the form of engagement and patient listening involved in organising with diverse communities and their social institutions, such as cooperatives. This includes articulating the relationship between different types of struggles – for example, capturing land through squatting, thereby redistributing it. Ultimately this process leads back to the question of what the left does not only in opposition but also in power: specifically, the way in which it triangulates the relationship between party, movement and state.

Finally, we must re-emphasise that the left's push for self-reliance in the 1970s, and the implicit question of self-sufficiency, emerged against the background of the *longue durée* of dependency. Keynes made a similar argument during the nadir of the Great Depression of the 1930s. As he put it in an article titled "National Self Sufficiency" in 1933:

> But over an increasingly wide range of industrial products, and perhaps of agricultural products also, I become doubtful whether the economic cost of national self-sufficiency is great enough to outweigh the other advantages of gradually bringing the producer and the consumer within the ambit of the same national, economic and financial organisation. (Keynes 1933: 2)

We quote Keynes for the purpose of intellectual provocation.

During a crisis period when the world no longer took capitalism for granted as the sole destiny of humanity, Keynes's critique encourages renewed reflection about what kinds of political economic experiments are possible. In his essay, even though he comes off as an anti-communist and uncritical of colonialism, Keynes contrasted these productive experiments in self-sufficiency with a narrower emphasis on what he called "economic nationalism". He recognised that ideological flexibility is required to grasp the broad range of potential arrangements countries may adopt in response to crisis.

The current conjuncture in Sri Lanka, which occurs amid the unravelling of the neoliberal order, contains the potential for different political economic trajectories. The danger of a fascist turn exists; either from within the nationalist regime now in power or the forces that it has cultivated and encouraged. Such actors allude to the language of self-sufficiency in tandem with economic nationalism, xenophobia and attacks on minorities. Our contention is that progressive and internationalist actors should not concede self-sufficiency to the nationalist right. Rather, a working people's politics across the rural-urban divide must provide a vision of self-sufficiency linked to economic democracy, emphasising freedom, equality and coexistence if it is to head off the threat.

From our own historical perspective, we view self-sufficiency as the first step in a longer project to reconstruct the coordinates of global solidarity previously

embodied in the now ideologically defunct Non-Aligned Movement. Sri Lanka's experience with these challenges during the long 1960s created an important platform for global engagement. It is our hope that at the very least grappling with these questions intellectually today could in turn identify the challenges facing working people across the Global South. Toward this end, we remain inspired by the radical spirit that animated the long 1960s, even as we must confront its consequences that still shape our orientation toward the future.

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The Cultural Politics of "Spring Thunder": The Naxalbari Movement and the Re-framing of Bengali Culture in the 1960s

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Abstract

This article tracks the radical turn in Bengali politics and culture and from the late 1960s, ushered in by the ultra-leftist Naxalbari Movement in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal. The movement initiated a search for a Maoist revolutionary praxis that could decisively liberate the dominant Bengali cultural sphere from its moorings in colonial and semi-feudal bourgeois class interests. The counter-hegemonic cultural praxis of the Naxalbari Movement repeatedly evaded its confinement within the diktats of a hardened party line (of the Communist Party of India – Marxist Leninist, which led the movement) but remained rich with multifarious possibilities, openings and narratives. The transgressive vision of this movement led to iconoclastic acts of destroying statues of deified cultural figures, publicly burning canonical books and assaulting higher academic institutions as sites of the propagation of a repressive culture. This article foregrounds the Naxalbari cultural debates along two distinct axes – the received tradition of Bengali culture from the colonial era and the internal schisms among intellectuals and cultural workers sympathetic to the broader objectives of the revolutionary culture articulated through the Naxalbari movement.

Keywords: India, Naxalbari, Maoism, West Bengal, politics, Spring Thunder, bhadrolok

Introduction

This article delineates the radical turn in Bengali cultural productions especially in terms of the co-constitutions of the spheres of the "cultural" and the "political", which arose in the wake of the Maoist Naxalbari Movement from the late 1960s in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal. While we focus primarily on the cultural debates raging amongst Bengali intellectuals and activists associated with the movement, the political repercussions of Naxalbari, in the period under review, had a far more expansive pan-Indian presence. For instance, Maoist insurrections and their associated socio-cultural imaginaries swept over

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vast tracts of Punjab and Bihar in northern India and the Telangana region in the southern part of the country.[1] Mao Zedong's "Little Red Book" rapidly became a powerful and ubiquitous symbol of social change in this period: visible as much on elite academic campuses of metropolitan cities such as Kolkata or New Delhi as in dusty provincial towns and rural peasant settlements. It would not be a historical exaggeration to suggest that the multiple currents of the Naxalbari Movement ushered in a new political geography of radicalism that continues to inspire resistance against the Indian state even to this day (Shah / Jain 2017).

The domain of culture, far from being a secondary element of "superstructure", became a central concern of the movement in West Bengal between the years from 1967 to 1972. Historically, Marxism had already provided a strong ideological framework for what Sunderason (2020) has identified as the "partisan aesthetics" in Bengali cultural productions from the 1930s and 1940s under British colonial rule: this ideological framework was critical for articulating class inequalities, colonial domination and the brutal exploitation of subaltern populations including the peasantry. The harrowing events of the 1947 Partition of British India, the subsequent focus on attending to the human tragedies of the Partition, the forced segregation of the Bengali cultural milieu between West Bengal (India) and former East Pakistan and the re-making of national identities led to an inevitable dilution of the cultural focus on revolutionary political change. The Naxalbari intellectuals tried to powerfully re-align culture with what they saw as its one over-riding objective – to create the conditions for a total revolutionary transformation of society. What was needed was a decisive re-orientation of the field of culture that could powerfully negate everything that had preceded the Naxalbari moment of eruption – such as instances of ossified Bengali bourgeois (or *bhadrolok*) world-views detrimental to the cause of political revolution.

In order to explore how politics and culture were co-determining each other during the course of the Naxalbari Movement, we examine a large but eclectic archive of writings comprising (primarily Bengali) films, political pamphlets, poems, party manifestos and journals, novels as well as a large collection of memoirs from the Naxalbari era. The exploration of this archive, consisting of "canonical" texts as well as less eminently known authors and their works, shows how culture from the very onset of the movement became critical to the broader political visions (including armed revolution) for supplanting the hegemonic class-character of the Indian state. The article highlights the latent tensions between the spheres of the "cultural" and the "political" – sometimes running parallel to each other, at other times coming dangerously close and

1 Sumanta Banerjee's *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* (1984) is a detailed history of the Naxalbari movement that traces its spread in other parts of India such as Punjab, Bihar and Telangana (then within Andhra Pradesh); see especially pp. 216–220.

threatening to subsume the former into the later. The re-articulation of a properly progressive culture linked to Maoist praxis was meant to be a decisive blow for obliterating bourgeois socio-cultural domination (as in the urban Bengali culture in West Bengal) – steeped as it was in the "twin evils" of (neo)colonialism and semi-feudal modes of production.

The Naxalbari intellectuals were primarily engaged with the linkages between state, society and cultural practices in a process of historical continuity. They denounced the cultural milieu dominated by the Indian national bourgeoisie – with its intergenerational privileges of colonialist education reserved for a propertied class of social elites. This denunciation was also targeted against existing Bengali aesthetics grounded in Marxist social realism, at least from the 1940s, which failed to fully integrate literary activism with the demands of a properly revolutionary politics. Aesthetic dimensions of literature became rather unimportant by themselves and secondary to political activism for Naxalbari intellectuals.

This is also apparent from the relative lack of theoretical reflections on aesthetics amongst the major literary figures associated with the movement: the sole purpose of writing was to become the Maoist "spark" that would set off the revolutionary conflagration. The pressing task was to wipe the slate clean and make a fresh beginning after centuries of accumulated bourgeois aesthetic decadence. Naxalbari intellectuals aimed a savage critique not only at past writers, but against literary dissenters who failed to either re-produce the political tenor demanded by Maoist revolution or were not members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) – CPI(ML) – leading the Naxalbari Movement.[2] The task of culture was to constantly uphold the lived experiences of poverty and suffering of landless labourers and workers – only the repeated representation of such experiences could pierce through the veil of bourgeois obfuscation of culture and herald revolutionary change. This was reflected in the attitude of poets and authors of the period, not only those directly associated with the CPI(ML), but those who were primarily sympathetic to the broader objectives of the movement as well.[3] This lack of clarity regarding the formal and stylistic elements of culture and aesthetics among Naxalbari intellectuals, paradoxically, has germinated multiple possibilities of interpretation and literary innovations, even to this day. The possibilities of literature for addressing

2 For example Saroj Dutta, the poet and editor of the CPI(ML) party organ *Deshabrati*, attacked almost every major cultural figure and journal, including those that were sympathetic to the movement, in his editorial entitled *Potrikar Duniyay* ("In the World of the Magazine"; Dutta 1999: 81–196). During the period of his association with the Naxalbari Movement, however, Dutta failed to offer a clearly defined aesthetics – in contrast to his engaging polemics in the 1940s on the question of the representation of decadence in literature, with figures such as Buddhadev Bose and Samar Sen.

3 The poet Birendra Chattopadhyay in an interview claimed that the state's atrocities were such that it was not possible to think of what makes good poetry; instead, unpoetic journalism had to be used (discussed in Sengupta 1997: 222). His poem *Mundohin Dhorguli Ahlade Chitkar Kore* ("Headless Corpses Shriek Out in Fun") became as much a testimony of a troubled time as Nabarun Bhattacharya's poem *Ei Mrityu Upatyaka Amar Desh Na* ("This Valley of Death is Not My Homeland"; both published in 1972).

social inequalities, the possibilities of resistance, the possibilities of the coming revolution – all have evoked myriad experimentations with forms, genres and styles of representation, as resonances of the Naxalbari moment. Transcending the narrow confines of the CPI(ML) "party line" on culture, one of the primary legacies of "the time of revolution" in West Bengal was to tease out a literary imagination that would be receptive to exposing the engrained violence of social domination. The long cultural afterlife of Naxalbari, decades after the movement was violently crushed, attests to the transformative promise of revolution.

The literary and aesthetic culture that emerged around the movement and continues to attract ideological commitment in the present can be broadly categorised into three distinct but over-lapping groups. In the first instance were the cultural workers and intellectuals directly committed to the movement – often affiliated with the CPI(ML) – who celebrated the movement as the fundamental pathway for liberation from bourgeois political and cultural domination. Utpal Dutta's play *Teer* ("Arrow", 1967), depicting the brutality of rural exploitation, or Swarna Mitra's[4] novel *Grame Chalo* ("Let's Move towards the Village"), first published in 1972 and exhorting young activists to move to villages to experience the lives of landless labourers, testify to a committed revolutionary culture. The second group of productions includes those that remained critical of the violent excesses of the CPI(ML) yet shared a distinct sympathy and intimacy with the movement. This group includes films like *Padatik* (1973) by Mrinal Sen, produced during the last stages of the movement, as well as novels, memoirs and poems by activists and sympathisers writing after the movement had subsided. The third category of productions, finally, comprises those that revisit the Naxalbari era as a source of continuing revolutionary inspiration, decades after the actual waning of the movement. Revolution here appears often as a spectral event from the past haunting the present to tease out the inequities and societal stagnation in the contemporary period. Nabarun Bhattacharya's novel *Herbert* (first published in 1993) is perhaps one of the best-known novels in this category. It is beyond this article to exhaustively discuss this vast and growing archive; instead it attempts to foreground some of the thematic issues underscoring Naxalbari cultural politics.

"High culture" and its reactionary tendencies

One of the distinct themes of the Naxalbari politics of cultural representation was its resistance to received hierarchies of a "high culture" sanitised of all traces of subaltern and peasant elements. The historically sedimented cultural

4 Utpalendu Chakrabarti (b. 1948), who wrote novels and stories in the 1970s under the pseudonym Swarna Mitra, later became an activist film-maker. He made several feature films, short films and documentaries, which often focused on political activism and the violence of the nation state. There is scarcely any substantial discussion of his life and works:

"heritages" of the so-called "Bengal Renaissance" of the nineteenth century, with its pantheon of iconic figureheads such as Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar[5] or Rabindranath Tagore,[6] was ceaselessly attacked by the Naxalbari intellectual vanguard for their moorings in a colonial extractive economy and unquestioning dissemination of a comprador bourgeois ideology. The Naxalbari intellectuals repeatedly interrogated the grand narratives of Bengali cultural refinement from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as ideological smokescreens validating the continuing social privileges of the educated Bengali bourgeoisie – the main beneficiaries of the economic depredations under colonialism and the class enemies of the exploited peasantry and industrial workers.

Such critique of bourgeois art was not, however, an innovation of Naxalbari politics. Socialist realism, depicting the suffering of the poor and the destitute and celebrating the subversion of the bourgeois power structure by the masses, became the fulcrum of Marxist art in leftist cultural wings from their very inception in the 1930s and 1940s. Party orthodoxy in the undivided Communist Party of India (CPI) attempted to regulate the sphere of art; yet, as Moinak Biswas suggests in discussing the history and legacy of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) (also known as *Bharatiya Gananatya Samgha in Bangla*), the absence of persecution like that in the former USSR enabled committed Indian artists to easily go beyond the determinations of any strict orthodoxy (Biswas 2018). This led, however, to fierce debates about the role of culture and especially the threat posed by modernist "decadence" to the revolutionary spirit of culture.

Already in the 1930s and 1940s, Saroj Dutta,[7] who later became the principal ideologue of the CPI(ML), had entered into a fierce debate with mainstream modernist and Marxist authors and poets such as Buddhadev Bose and Samar

5 Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (1820–1891), a 19th-century educator and social reformer famous for his crusade for widow remarriage (later made into an act in 1856), enjoyed an iconic status among educated Bengalis. He was also the writer of the famous Bengali primer *Barnoparichay*. He simplified Bengali prose and rationalised the Bengali alphabet. However he later suffered criticism from certain Marxist schools (including the Naxalites) for allowing a British army camp on the premises of a Hindu college during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 of rebellious British soldiers against British rule. For further information on Vidyasagar see Asok Sen's *Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and His Elusive Milestones* (1977).

6 Rabindranath Tagore (1961–1941) was a poet, author, thinker, painter, lyricist and composer who enjoyed an iconic status as the poet laureate among the Bengalis. He was the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize in literature for his collection of devotional songs called *Gitanjali* in 1913. He was criticised later by certain Marxist schools, including the Naxalites, as a bourgeois poet, as he came from a family of landlords and enjoyed a privileged status throughout his life. For further information on different aspects of Tagore's writings and politics see *The Cambridge Companion to Rabindranath Tagore*, edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri (2020).

7 Saroj Dutta (1914–1971), a Marxist intellectual and politician, started his career in *Swadhinata*, the party organ of the undivided Communist Party of India. He is well known for his raging cultural debates in the 1930s and 1940s with major Marxist literary figures from Bengal, like Samar Sen or Buddhadeb Bose, on the relationship between radical politics and poetry. He later joined CPI(M) in 1964 after the first split of the communist party. After the Naxalbari incident he played an important role in the establishment of CPI(ML). He became the editor of *Deshabrati*, the Bengali organ of CPI(ML). In 5 August 1971 he mysteriously disappeared and it is claimed that he was killed secretly by the police. For further information on Saroj Dutta, see Sukhendu Sarkar's edited volume on Dutta titled *Morone Meleni Chhuti – Saroj Dutta: Srishti o Sonkolpe* (2014).

Sen.[8] Dutta argued that decadence should not be a subject matter of art as in "ultra-modern poetry". He also asserted that the language or theme of politically committed artists should be communicable to the masses and should directly influence revolution. Utpal Dutta's play *Teer* (1967), produced immediately after the massacre of rural peasants in the Naxalbari region of northern West Bengal, closely approximated such ideals of absolute socialist realism and portrayed revolution directly on stage. *Teer* was disparaged by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) – CPI(M) – however, for supporting the "left-adventurism" of Naxalite radicals. Even the IPTA denounced the play despite their avowed commitment to all political art.

Hemanga Biswas,[9] the celebrated communist folk singer, commented on how the Bharatiya Gananatya Samgha, after the establishment of CPI(M) in 1964, started operating under the diktats of this party, though it was initially established as a common platform for all performers of people's art irrespective of their party affiliations (Biswas 2012: 134–144). Amidst fierce cultural debates on the relationship between political commitment and culture, the CPI(ML) party line increasingly determined the efficacy of cultural practices by its exclusive ability to foment radical political activity.

In order to counter the dominant bourgeois culture Saroj Dutta led a frontal attack on the hallowed figures of the "Bengal Renaissance" along with a denunciation of the educational institutions, such as the universities, for propounding the myth of a reactionary, bourgeois cultural system as sacrosanct. He wrote a series of articles justifying the violent actions of urban student groups who burned books, attacked educational institutions and broke statues of Indian nationalist leaders like M.K. Gandhi or J.L. Nehru, along with those of intellectual figures of the Bengal Renaissance such as Rammohan Roy.[10] Saroj Dutta attacked the hegemonic Bengali intellectual tradition as immersed in the colonial policies of creating a privileged land-owning class of English-educated *dalal* or *touts* of British imperialism, who had gone on to facilitate the dominant bourgeois class character of the post-independence Indian state. Other notable

8 To follow the debate see *Adhunik Lekhokder Obostha* ("The Position of Modern Writers", 1938) by Buddhadeb Bose (see Das 2003: 375–376), *Chhinno Koro Chodmobesh* ("Destroy the Disguise", 1938) (Das 2003: 379–384), *Oti Adhunik Bangla Kobita* ("Ultra-Modern Bengali Poetry, 1940) (Das 2003: 381–384, and 387–392, two articles of the same name by Saroj Dutta); and *Oti Adhunik Bangla Kobita* ("Ultra-Modern Bengali Poetry", 1940) by Samar Sen (Das 2003: 385–386). The essays have been archived in *Marxbaadi Sahitya Bitarka* ("Marxist Literary Debates"), edited by Dhananjay Das (2003).

9 Hemanga Biswas (1912–1987) was an Indian singer, composer and political activist who wrote in Bengali and Assamese and was inclined towards communist ideology. He was famous for composing people's songs and mixing local folk music with left-leaning activist songs. He was a member of the Indian People's Theatre Association. For a brief introduction to Biswas see the blurb of his book *Ujan Gang Baiya* (2012).

10 See articles by Saroj Dutta published in *Deshabrati* in 1970–1971, such as *Murti Bhangar Somorthone* ("Supporting the Breaking of Statues", 60–66), *Boi Porano Prosonge* ("On Burning Books", 67–70), *Gandhi Prosonge* (76–79), *Subhash Bose Prosonge* (80–86), *Vidyasagar Prosonge* (87–88) and *Prafulla Chandra Ray Prosonge* (88–95), collected in *Saroj Dutta Rachana Sangraha*, Volume 1 (1993).

Naxalbari sympathisers such as Binoy Ghosh[11] and Asok Sen[12] (Sen 1977) corroborated this standpoint, although remaining critical of the excessive emphasis on violence in Dutta's writings. Binoy Ghosh, a veteran scholar of the Bengal renaissance, revised his celebratory account of the nineteenth-century achievements of Bengali culture to suggest that they were "an exaggeration"[13] and "nothing but a historical hoax by the end of the 19th century".[14]

In place of the dominant cultural currents, Naxalbari intellectuals extolled the lived experiences of the rural peasantry as the substratum for constructing an anti-hegemonic and emergent cultural milieu. Notable intellectuals of the Naxalbari Movement such as Kanu Sanyal[15] and the iconic Charu Mazumder[16] repeatedly urged the urban activists and student comrades to immerse themselves in rural Bengal: to experience the life of the landless labourers or the dispossessed indigenous Adivasis to wage the people's war, as well as to learn the languages, idioms and expressions of an authentic and egalitarian people's culture. Appropriately enough, the immediate provocation for the movement came from an isolated incident in a little known rural settlement called Naxalbari in northern West Bengal. On 24 and 25 May 1967,[17] a violent confrontation between police forces and local peasants over a disputed land title led to the death of eleven men, women and children, as well as a police officer. This incident decisively set the stage for a large-scale transformation of leftist politics in West Bengal, leading to increasing radicalism and the adoption of armed revolution as the mandate of Communist vanguardism.

11 Binoy Ghosh (1917–1980) a journalist, sociologist and commentator on Bengali culture and intelligentsia from the 1940s to 1970s was well known for his critique of the so-called Bengal Renaissance, a celebration of 19th-century colonialist intellectuals and the enlightenment they supposedly brought to India. For a detailed account on Binoy Ghosh see the Bengali newspaper article "Shatabarsha Periye Gelen Binoy Ghosh, Sanskritir Sahar Nirbikar" by Sudhir Chakraborty in *Anandabazar Patrika*, 8 July 2018.

12 Asok Sen (1927–2015) was an economist and social scientist who wrote on figures of the Bengal Renaissance such as Vidyasagar and Rammohan Roy. For further information on Asok Sen see *Alochanachakra,* Volume 41, Special Issue on Asok Sen (2016) edited by Chiranjib Sur.

13 Binoy Ghosh, *Banglar Nabajagriti: Ekti Otikatha* (originally published in 1979 in *Aneek*) in *Banglar Renaissance* (Chakrabarty 2006: 27–43).

14 See p. 191 in *Bongiyo Nabajagaran Ekti Mulyayan* (pp. 191–200; originally published in English in *Frontier* in 1971, Dashadhikari 2013: 191–200).

15 Kanu Sanyal (1932–2010), a major architect of Naxalbari movement and a founding member of the CPI(ML), announced the formation of the party on May Day in 1969 in a public rally beneath the monument Sahid Minar. His Terai Report in 1968 is a detailed firsthand account of the Naxalbari incident. After the death of the movement's biggest leader, Charu Mazumdar, he critiqued the foundation of CPI(ML) and distanced himself from the party. He committed suicide in May 2010. For further information see Bappaditya Paul's *The First Naxal: An Authorized Biography of Kanu Sanyal* (2014)

16 Charu Mazumdar (1919–1972), the main leader of the movement, who achieved iconic status as the leader of the Naxalbari revolution, though he came from a family of landlords, became a full-time communist worker and a leader of the Tebhaga peasant movement in 1946. Later he became a dissident voice within CPI(M) after its formation in 1964. He wrote the famous pamphlets called "Eight Documents" on the possibilities and crisis of an Indian peasant revolution. These documents played a vital role in the Naxalbari movement. He was the Chairman of the CPI(ML) party from its inception until his arrest and death in custody in 1972. For further information see *The Role of Individual in the History Charu Majumdar in the Naxal Movement: A Case Study* by Monalisa Basu, PhD dissertation, University of Calcutta, 2017.

17 For a catalogue of what happened in the 1960s that led to the Naxalbari movement one may refer to Arup Kumar Das's *Ganajuddher Dinapanji (1960–1979)* ("Daily Catalogue of the People's War, 1960–1979").

Moreover, the key intellectuals and leaders associated with the Naxalbari Movement found much of their revolutionary inspirations not only in the immediate context of Maoist China but also in the anti-colonial wars waged by Vietnamese peasants against the imperialist French and American forces, in the Black Panther Movements in the USA and in the student protests against authoritarianism in Mexico. The genocide in erstwhile East Pakistan and the subsequent war for Bangladesh's independence provided a vast internationalist context and imaginary for framing the Naxalbari Movement as an emancipatory people's war led by peasants and students against the brutal might of an exploitative state.[18] Not only Mao's *Little Red Book* but also Carlos Marighela's manual on urban revolutionary warfare provided possible routes to combat the repressive Indian state and destroy the stranglehold of the country's bourgeoisie over the country's wretched masses.[19]

By the very late 1960s, a savage and protracted guerrilla war would come to engulf not just rural West Bengal, but also the everyday urban landscape of Kolkata. Charu Mazumdar famously reiterated the Maoist line that "political power flows from the barrel of a gun" and called for the termination of ideological class enemies. The years from 1969 to 1972 in particular would see horrific incidents of torture, revolutionary terror, extra-judicial killings, assassinations and pitched street battles between young Naxalbari activists on the one hand and an uneasy coalition of police forces and cadres of "reactionary" political parties like the Indian National Congress and Communist parties opposed to the Maoist line, on the other. The CPI(ML), especially after 1969, adopted revolutionary terror as a key strategy of the Naxalbari Movement and emphasized the policy of *khotom* or the annihilation of landlords, reactionary political opponents and the police as class enemies. Annihilation was, for the CPI(ML), the only justice for those who supported and upheld an oppressive social order that perpetuated the exploitation of the poor and the deprived.

The state responded with equal ferocity – indiscriminately killing, maiming and torturing young people picked up randomly as potential Naxals. Entire neighbourhoods in Kolkata, especially with their complex geographies of serpentine lanes, like Dum Dum, Baranagar or Tollygunge, became virtual war zones where Naxalite cadres with their crude bombs, improvised guns (famously called "pipe-guns") and switch-blades waged an unequal but bloody fight with the sophisticated arsenal of the police forces. Killings led to counter-killings as police

18 Sumanta Banerjee in *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* (1984) has extensively discussed the impact of the war for independence in Bangladesh on the Naxalbari Movement and the ideological debates surrounding this war within the CPI(ML) (see especially pages 233-243).

19 The impact of international radical politics and the revolutionary theory of the 1960s milieu on the Naxalbari movement has been discussed in detail by Marius Damas in the section "Theories about Revolution and Revolutionary Theory: An Overview" of the "Introduction" to his book *Approaching Naxalbari,* which discusses the impact of revolutionary thinkers such as Che Guevara, Amilcar Cabral, Regis Debray and Carlos Marighela (Damas 1991: 1–62).

officials such as Runu Guha Niyogi[20] gained fearsome notoriety for their "expertise" in horrific forms of torture during routine interrogations. "Third-degree" – the euphemism for slow, methodical and savage torture of convicts, popular amongst Indian police forces since colonial times, became the norm in countless prison cells and lock-ups all over West Bengal and Kolkata. This period of unmitigated violence and pain affected poets and artists of the period, including both CPI(ML) activists as well as those sympathetic to the movement. Nabarun Bhattacharya's poem *Ei Mrityu Upatyaka Amar Desh Na* ("This Valley of Death is Not My Homeland"), for example, became an iconic text describing the brutality of the state against activists with a note of despair and rage. There were also strong critiques of the indiscriminate violence perpetrated by the revolutionary party cadres on police personnel from humble backgrounds or upon the activists who were expelled from the CPI(ML) with charges of disloyalty and suspected as agents of the state. Memoirs by erstwhile activists such as Krishna Bandyopadhyay[21] or literary works by authors like Saibal Mitra[22] repeatedly evoke the fearsome nature of violence witnessed during the Naxalbari years.

Naxalbari and the crisis of Indian "leftist politics"

A crucial element behind the rise of the Naxalbari Movement in West Bengal was the social history of the state following India's independence in 1947 and the role of Communist party politics in this history. Indeed, the decades from the 1940s saw enormous socio-political upheavals affecting the entire province and particularly the city of Kolkata. The infamous Bengal Famine of 1943[23] completely decimated rural Bengal and led to the desperate migration of millions of famished peasants to Kolkata. The uncertainty and fluctuations in the world markets during the Second World War years meant that Kolkata's industrial outputs, particularly jute, were badly affected. If on the one hand thousands of

20 Runu Guha Niyogi, a police officer in the 1970s, was infamous for the extra-judicial murder of suspected criminals including Naxalbari activists. He was also accused of the torture and rape in custody of convicts and pre-trial detainees. The most well-known case against him was filed by Archana Guha, a Naxalbari activist arrested in 1974, on grounds of torture and rape causing her partial paralysis. For further information see Saumen Guha's *Battle of Archana Guha Case Against Torture in Police Custody: Arguments, Counter-arguments and Judgement at the Trial Court* (1998).

21 Krishna Bandyopadhyay is a prominent feminist left-leaning activist from West Bengal who was involved in Naxalbari politics in her youth. It is difficult to find any detailed study on her except her own short memoirs and accounts (Bandyopadhyay 2008, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

22 Saibal Mitra (1943–2011) was an author activist involved from his youth in the student movement. He wrote several books on the communist movement and student politics. Many of his novels, such as *Agrabahini* and *Agnir Upakhyan*, present a critical account of the Naxalbari movement. See also Mitra's *Panchti Bajra-nirghosher Upanyas* (2011).

23 The Bengal famine of 1943 was largely a man-made famine in Eastern India that occurred as a result of British taxation policies, hoarding, black-marketeering and the acute economic crisis created by the transference of wealth to maintain British troops during the Second World War. For a recent study on the Bengal famine see Janam Mukherjee's *Hungry Bengal: War, Famine and the End of Empire* (2015).

former industrial workers were finding themselves without a livelihood, the once secure middle-class homes were equally racked by fears of unemployment, immiseration and poverty. The 1947 Partition of India, marked by ferocious communal violence, ultimately saw a vast deluge of refugees from East Pakistan to the newly formed state of West Bengal and especially Kolkata.

By the end of the 1940s even the pretence of Kolkata's colonial era glory as "the second most important city of the British Empire" had dissipated as the city and its urban fringes filled with impoverished squatter colonies of refugees. Around this time, the undivided Communist Party of India (CPI)[24] gained a powerful presence in both Kolkata and Bengal politics by advocating for the dispossessed refugees. The precarious refugee communities found a new hope, especially in Kolkata, in the Communist ideologies of social equality and perceived the ruling nationalist Congress Party as mainly allied with a powerful block of urban corporate elites and propertied rural landowning classes or *jotdars*.[25] Even after independence, the absence of a significant land reform programme not only accentuated the wealth of the *jotdars* but led to harrowing levels of poverty amongst the rural peasantry. The Tebhaga Movement in West Bengal[26] had already established the ability of the Communist Party to mobilise the peasantry as a revolutionary force in Bengal politics – as a matter of fact, Naxalbari leaders like Charu Mazumder were initiated into peasant insurgency through the Tebhaga Movement.[27] The Food Movement[28] in West Bengal further established the ability of Communist groups and especially the CPI party

24 The Communist Party of India (CPI) is the oldest existing Indian Communist Party and was officially founded on 26 December 1925. It is currently one of the eight national parties of India. For further reference see "Brief History of CPI" at https://sites.google.com/a/communistparty.in/cpi/brief-history-of-cpi (accessed 28 May 2021).

25 *Jotdars* were wealthy owners of vast tract of lands, mainly from the upper caste, for whom the *bargadars* or landless peasants worked. These land divisions were created during the rule of the East India Company in Bengal as part of its taxation policies.

26 The Tebhaga Movement took place between 1946 and 1947 in eastern India against the *jotdars* when peasants demanded one-third (the word Tebhaga means one-third) of the total produce. The peasants in certain cases broke into the granaries and snatched their one-third share. The movement was supported and led by the CPI and it was partly successful, as some *jotdars* willingly surrendered the one-third share of crops to the peasants. For further information on the Tebhaga Movement see Kunal Chattopadhyay's *Tebhaga Andoloner Itihash* (1987).

27 The repeated and continued failure of the Indian state since independence to address the crisis of the landless labourers oppressed by the colonial system of taxation and the unchallenged social and economic power of the landed gentry created a situation of armed rebellion more than once. The Tebhaga uprising in Bengal in 1946–1947 and the Kakdwip uprising of 1948 exemplify such peasant movements backed by the Communist Party of India. The Kisan Sabha - the peasant front of the CPI - lacked the conviction to continue with the violent agitation, however, and accepted the Bargadar Act of 1951 to settle disputes between sharecroppers and landlords passed by B.C. Roy, the Indian National Congress Chief Minister of West Bengal. See *Tebhaga Andoloner Itihash* (Chattopadhyay 1987: 71–99).

28 The Food Movement took place in West Bengal twice, in 1959 and 1966. The continuing food crisis, due to the practice of the hoarding of crops and the corruption of Public Distribution System, produced a famine-like situation that led to spontaneous violence and food riots in 1959 and 1966 under the Indian National Congress Chief Ministers B.C. Roy and Prafulla Sen, respectively. The Price Increase and Famine Resistance Committee (PIFRC) of the CPI that had led the movement curtailed it in 1959. In 1966 it recurred with rampant violence and confrontations between police and agitators in which Nurul Islam, a school student was killed. For further information see Sibaji Pratim Basu (2019).

structure to organise spontaneous but mass youth movements to address social inequalities in both rural and urban contexts.

However, by the early 1960s, the CPI was increasingly losing its revolutionary character and was seen as leaning towards a reformist agenda of electoral politics and parliamentary participation. The stage was set for a radical turn in Communist politics, as the seething anger of dispossessed masses could no longer count on the CPI to usher in the long-promised revolution. In the opening chapter of his book *An Approach to Naxalbari*, activist Asit Sen[29] traces the maturation of Maoist politics in the 1960s due to the inherent pacifist and revisionist tendencies of the original Communist Party of India in the post-independence period (Sen 1980: 1–36). This led to the initial split in the CPI in 1964[30] leading to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) – CPI(M).[31] Despite its subversive rhetoric, however, the CPI(M) participated in West Bengal's electoral politics in 1967 and enjoyed a formidable presence in the United Front coalition government in the state, which managed to end the unbroken Congress Party rule in West Bengal since 1947. The uneasy relationship between Communist and non-Communist parties of the United Front, however, failed to bring any political stability to a state that was witnessing escalating violence, economic distress and mass discontent amongst radicalised youth populations. Successive elected governments in West Bengal followed in the short span from 1967 to 1970 and finally President's Rule – the suspension of the state government and imposition of direct rule by the centre – was imposed on the state, which was rapidly shifting towards the Naxalbari moment of Revolution.[32]

29 Asit Sen (1920–1996) established the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in 1964 for ideological discussions on the subject. He was a supporter of the anti-revisionist revolutionary line within the CPI(M) party. Later, after being expelled from CPI(M) on 30 June 1967 for supporting the Naxalbari uprising, he became a member of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) in 1968. Even after presiding over the rally on 1 May 1969 when the formation of CPI(ML) was announced, Asit Sen distanced himself from the party on the grounds of the authoritarianism and lack of democracy within the party. Late, he penned a critical account of the movement in 1980. For further reference to Asit Sen see *Asit Sen: Jibanpanji* ("Asit Sen: A Timeline", Dashadhikari 2012–2013: 295–304).

30 The Communist Party of India (CPI) was split into two with the creation of Communist Party of India (Marxist) on 7 November 1964 due to the inner party clash based on arguments against revisionism within the CPI that attempted to defer the path of revolution, and the nationalist line taken up by CPI during the Indo-China War in 1962 (Sen 1980: 1–36).

31 In 1962 nationalist political parties like the Indian National Congress made an attempt to shift the focus from mass agitation using jingoistic nationalism in the context of the Indo-China War, and there was discontent within the CPI for officially taking a nationalist position against China. This and the repeated backtracking from the question of revolution turned out to be some of the major reasons behind the first split in communist party in 1964 and the formation of CPI(M) (Sen 1980: 1–36).

32 When the CPI(M) came to power in alliance with Indian National Congress (INC) to form the United Front government under Ajoy Mukherjee in 1967, defeating Prafulla Sen from INC, it created enormous hope among poor peasants and the revolutionary faction of CPI(M). But this hope was shattered by the denunciation of the revolutionary line after the events in Naxalbari by the conservative parliamentarians inside the CPI(M). The rebellious group in CPI(M) continued to organise violent agitation against the landowning classes and were expelled by the party. The government failed in the state four times between 1967 and 1972 and President's Rule was declared thrice in this period until the establishment of the INC government led by Siddhartha Sankar Roy on 20 March 1972. The 1972 INC government ruthlessly broke the Naxalbari movement, killing thousands of youths across the state. For a more comprehensive account see Sumanta Banerjee's *India's Simmering Revolution* (1984).

In the meantime, ideological dissensions between the moderates and the radicals within the CPI(M) – especially on the question of revolution – between 1964 and 1969 had resulted in further fragmentation of Communist party politics in the state, culminating in the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) or CPI(ML) on the anniversary of Lenin's birth in 1969. The CPI(ML) decisively marked a break with electoral politics and committed itself to the Maoist revolutionary ideologies of class warfare.[33]

If the CPI(ML) provided the party structure and a dedicated mass following of young comrades to advance the cause of armed Maoist revolution, the "charismatic leadership" was provided by Comrade Charu Mazumdar (or CM to his admirers). The main course of action of the Naxalbari Movement came from Charu Mazumdar's famous *Eight Documents*, written and circulated among activists between 1964 and 1967 (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 1: 17–62).[34] Mazumdar's call for the "Spring Thunder" (as the Naxalbari incident was called by the Communist Party of China on Peking Radio immediately afterwards)[35] demanded a break with all reactionary and representative ideals of political mobilisation that characterised most of the other dominant Communist parties in India such as the CPI and the CPI(M). Moreover, Naxalbari intellectuals saw their contemporary movement as a continuation of a long lineage of subaltern armed struggles led by impoverished rural peasants and Adivasis against the depredations of their exploiters, such as colonial administrators, landowners and money-lenders. For instance, they suggested strong linkages between the armed revolution in the wake of Naxalbari to earlier instances of peasant resistance such as the Tebhaga movement and the 1947–1951 Telangana peasant uprising (against exploitation by feudal lords).[36]

33 The CPI(ML), the third communist party of India, was formed from a faction of the co-ordination committee (AICCCR) of rebel leaders of the CPI(M) party on 22 April 1969 (Sen 1980: 61–85). Suprakash Ray (the pseudonym of Sudhir Bhattacharya), a prominent ideological sympathiser with the Naxalbari Movement, demonstrated through a study of the history of Communism in India between 1928 and 1968 how the pacifist line of thinking within the dominant communist parties such as the CPI paradoxically precipitated the radical Maoist turn in Indian Communist thought in the 1960s (Ray 2010).

34 Kanu Sanyal, a principal CPI(ML) member closely allied with Mazumdar, in his document *Naxalbari Somporke Aro Kichu Katha* ("More on Naxalbari", Dashadhikari 2010: 273–290) suggested how the idea of armed resistance as a means of mass politics in Indian Communist thought came from Charu Mazumdar's *Eight Documents*. Kanu Sanyal summarises the arguments of the *Eight Documents* as follows: "The CPI(M) is a revisionist party. This must be unmasked so that India's liberation can proceed by following the Chinese path. Immediate tasks are armed resistance and the creation of a secret guerrilla group; setting fire to landlords' houses and snatching their guns are also important duties. The masses should be mobilised by means of 'action' instead of a political campaign, so that mass organisation and movement are no longer needed" (p. 280, translation by the authors).

35 Published subsequently in *People's Daily*, the organ of the Central Committee of Communist Party of China on 5 July 1967 (Ghosh 1992: 228–231). The title of a 1970 *Peking Review* article "A Single Spark Can Start A Prairie Fire" (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 2: 294–298) demonstrated how the Chinese Communist Party perceived the Naxalbari event and Charu Mazumdar's subsequent actions as the revolutionary fire.

36 For the relationship among these movements see Tarun Ray's *Tebhaga-Telangana-Naxalbari* (Ray 1989: 9–26).

A poem titled *Agami* ("Future") by Mridul Dasgupta[37] drew a broad historical arc connecting spontaneous Adivasi rebels of the Santhal Rebellion,[38] the Tebhaga peasant insurgents, the foot soldiers of 1857 rebellion[39] and the anti-colonial extremists with the Maoist heroes of Naxalbari:

> It was a similar night, motionless, spectral air;
> Pistols roaring now and then, this time
> Binoy, Badal in another name has won the balcony war,
> Son of Surja Sen piercing the air-conditioned air entered the gorgeous club;
> Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav reached Kolkata with a different name by then;
> Sixty thousand soldiers and Mangal Pandey with fixed perfect target
> Reverses the Guns;
> Suppose, another night like this, in Jallianwala Bagh
> Dyer's gun snatched by that precious lad
> Dronacharya Ghosh!
> Think; Think the festival that day! From Baranagar Ganga
> Come out once more
> Three hundred young men.[40] (Dasgupta 2017: 245)

The poem attempts a twisting of historical time – for such is the nature of revolutionary exuberance that shatters the stranglehold of bourgeois notions of linear causality and historical chronology. The nationalist heroes of early twentieth-century anti-colonial armed resistance such as Binoy, Badal and Surja Sen occupy the same temporal space as the martyred heroes of the nineteenth-century Santhal rebellion such as Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav, as well as Mangal Pandey, the leader of the 1857 Mutiny. The experiences of state repression connect those massacred at Jallianwala Bagh[41] by the British General Dyer during the colonial period with the young Naxalite comrades butchered in northern Kolkata's

37 Mridul Dasgupta (b. 1955) is a journalist and poet. His first collection of poems *Jalpai Kather Esraj* (1980) contains several poems on the violent revolutionary upsurge and atrocities of the state. The current poem is originally from that collection. For more on Mridul Dasgupta and collection of his works see Mridul Dasgupta's page on the Milansagar website: http://www.milansagar.com/kobi/mridul_dasgupta/kobi-mriduldg.html (accessed 29 May 2021).

38 The Santhal Rebellion, popularly known as Santhal-Hool, took place in today's Jharkhand in Eastern India. It was an uprising of Santhals against the colonial British administration and local landlords that started on 30 June 1855. The movement was led by Sidhu, Kanu, Chand and Bhairav. It was brutally suppressed by the British government and ended by 1856. For further reference see "Civil Rebellions and Tribal Uprisings" by Bipan Chandra and others (Chandra et al. 2012).

39 The Revolt of 1857 was an Indian uprising also popularly known as the Sepoy Mutiny and First Indian War of Independence. It started on 10 May 1857 as a mutiny of Indian soldiers under the British army in Meerut and erupted in other mutinies and civilian uprisings in the upper Gangetic plain and Central India. For further reference see *First Major Challenge: The Revolt of 1857* by Bipan Chandra and others (Chandra et al. 2012).

40 Dasgupta 2017: 245; written sometime between 1970 and 1979, translation by the authors.

41 The Jallianwala Bagh massacre occurred on 13 April 1919 when, suspecting a possible insurrection, the Acting Brigadier General Reginald Dyer ordered British troops to open fire on a group of peaceful unarmed people gathered in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, Punjab to celebrate the Indian festival Baisakhi. 379 people were killed and over 1200 grievously injured. For further reference see V. N. Dutta's book *Jallianwala Bagh* (2021).

Cossipore-Baranagar area.[42] The act of resistance is personified in the figure of the Naxalite revolutionary poet Dronacharya Ghosh[43] snatching the gun from General Dyer, the man who initiated the Jallianwala Bagh genocide.[44] Mrinal Sen's[45] film *Kolkata 71* set in 1971 is an almost real-time depiction of violence and mass agitation that similarly showed the continuities in historical experiences of exploitation and deprivation leading to the revolutionary time of the Naxalbari Movement. It opened and closed with scenes of street violence as well as police brutality. It made its nameless narrator-protagonist an angry twenty-year old youth who carries the burden of a "thousand-year-old" history of exploitation, hunger and rage. Four different stories representing four different time periods before and after the decolonisation of India portray repeated cycles of suffering and exploitation of the poor in the film. Sen used to roam around the city capturing shots of mass agitation and violent confrontations for use in his films (Sen 2015: 105). The difference between politics and its representation is collapsed in *Kolkata 71* as the cinematic moment approximates Kolkata's street-politics in real time.

Intellectual vanguardism

From its very inception, the Naxalbari Movement celebrated (primarily urban) intellectual and political vanguardism, with its key leaders claiming foreknowledge of the revolutionary upheavals – in spite of its repeated invocations of spontaneous, armed resistance by rural subaltern populations. Sushital Roychoudhury,[46] one of the Naxalbari pioneers as well as an internal critic of the

42 The Cossipore-Baranagar massacre was an infamous police operation in that area, located in South 24 Parganas, near Kolkata. This brutal attack and mass murder of young men suspected of being Naxalites happened on 12 and 13 August 1971. The death toll was claimed to be between 80 and 100 though no official record was provided. The dead bodies were carried in hand-pulled carts and dumped into the Baranagar Ganges. For further reference see Economic & Political Weekly 1971.

43 Naxalite martyr poet Dronacharya Ghosh was tortured to death in police custody on 6 August 1972. He was a partner of the social activist and fellow revolutionary Krishna Bandyopadhyay. For further reference see Dronacharya Ghosh's *Gronthito O Gronthito Kobita o Dinolipi* (2013).

44 Saroj Dutta, in his article *Murti Bhangar Somorthone* ("Supporting the Breaking of Statues", Dutta 1993: 60–67) invoked the same legacy of a continuity of subaltern uprisings in Indian history and placed the Naxalbari Movement in a longer lineage of anti-colonial resistance and peasant movements.

45 Mrinal Sen (1923–2018) was one of the most important Bengali filmmakers, who directed several political films throughout his career and won several national and international awards. His set of three films *Interview* (1971), *Kolkata 71* (1972) and *Padatik* (1973), known popularly as the Calcutta Trilogy and made during the turbulent period of Naxalbari, critically focused on the crisis of the period and its politics. For more about his work and politics see his memoir *Tritiyo Bhuban* (2015).

46 Sushital Roychoudhury (1917–1971) was one of the major ideologues of the Naxalbari movement. He participated in the Tebhaga Movement and during the first split of the Communist party took the pro-Chinese line and went with the CPI(M). He was on the editorial board of *Deshahitaishi*, one of the organs of CPI(M) until his expulsion from the party for supporting Naxalbari in 1967. After joining CPI(ML) he acted as editor of *Deshabrati* and *Liberation*, its Bengali and English party organs, at different points. He distanced

movement, drew attention to this contradiction inherent in the CPI(ML) style of politics after the first party congress in 1970, in two documents.[47] In the second document (Dashadhikari 1999: 1–20) Roychoudhury criticised Charu Mazumdar's prophetic assertion that 1975 would be the date of the revolution's fulfilment[48] as unwarranted intellectual vanguardism. While the unplanned emotive exuberance of Mazumdar's assertion could be understood as folly, it also marked a break from bourgeois rationalisation of the gradual and linear unfolding of democracy through electoral politics. The Naxalbari Movement made an epochal break with such an evolutionary historical unfolding of politics and instead laid bare a revolutionary horizon that demanded sacrifice, spontaneity, bloodshed (if necessary) and an unshakeable faith that the moment of revolution has already arrived.

The CPI(ML) leaders cited the example of Naxalbari as an instance of taking revolution beyond the chambers of rational discussions and long drawn out debates. Charu Mazumdar, in the second of his Eight Documents, had disparaged the transformation of the communist party into a debating society, which is a bourgeois tendency to defer political mobilisation and action (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 1: 25–26.) Therefore what was urgent for Mazumdar was to bypass the long process of mobilisation through mass organisations, ideological indoctrination of peasants and industrial workers, and the gradual movement from economic demands to a struggle for political power.[49] Moreover, with the formation of the CPI(ML), a "cult of personality" had also evolved around the figure of Charu Mazumdar, supported by his close allies including Asim Chatterjee,[50] Saroj Dutta and Kanu Sanyal. Mazumdar's authoritarian leadership brooked no ideological opposition within the CPI(ML) and any attempts to bring up alternative modes of political mobilisation by party members led to their immediate denunciation as reactionaries and expulsion from the party.

himself from the CPI(ML) in 1970 after expressing his ideological differences with the central party line through two documents. For more articles and references on Sushital Roychoudhury see *Ananya Sushital* (Dashadhikari 1999).

47 One of them was famously known as *Purna's Document* (Dashadhikari 1999: 21–36) after the underground pseudonym of Sushital Roychoudhury. The other, written around the same time, but not released until after his death, is called *Hatakari Baamponthi Nitike Protihata Korun* ("Resist the Foolhardy Left Principles", Dashadhikari 1999: 1–20).

48 See Mazumdar's "By 1975 Millions of Indian Masses will Create a Great Epic of Liberation" (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 2: 116–118).

49 Yet it can be argued, following Suniti Kumar Ghosh, that mass politics, ideological work and economic struggle were not totally abandoned in the early works of Charu Mazumdar despite the emphasis on guerrilla action and the quest for political power (see Suniti Kumar Ghosh, Charu Mazumdar O Communist Andolone Biplobi Dhara, Dashadhikari 2009: 224–242). A relationship developed between these two forms of struggle, at least during the early phase, as reflected in the Eight Documents (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 1: 17–62). Later, the former line was abandoned, as decided at the 1970 CPI(ML) congress (Dashadhikari 2009: 226).

50 Asim Chatterjee (b. 1944) was one of the most prominent student leaders of the CPI(ML) party from its inception. In 1971 he broke with the party owing to his difference with their views on the liberation struggle of East Pakistan. He then formed the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee of CPI(ML) as a separate faction of the movement. He is popularly known as "Kaka" (Mazumdar Volume 2, 2012: 334).

On 23 April 1972, in a prophetic last meeting between Charu Mazumdar and Suniti Kumar Ghosh,[51] Majumdar agreed to call a meeting and engage in self-criticism.[52] Archives would show how Charu Mazumdar's last letter written to his wife on 14 July 1972 (which fell into the hands of the police and precipitated his eventual arrest) reflects the leader's intention to review some of his positions when he finally concedes that "there has been widespread criticism in the party … Revisions will be made".[53] Yet that moment of self-criticism and opportunity for course-correction would never arrive, as he would be arrested on 16 July 1972 and died in custody of cardiac arrest on 28 July 1972.[54]

Notwithstanding the authoritarian tendencies within the CPI(ML) leadership, the latent socio-economic tensions exposed by the movement provoked a fecund exchange of ideas between various Communist parties in the 1960s that has remained unmatched till today. In this ideological "war of positions", primarily carried out in multiple political journals, even the Naxalbari intellectuals often strayed far from the CPI(ML) party orthodoxies.

The Naxalbari vision of the political did not remain confined to the struggle for the control of the state despite their emphasis on the capture of political power through violence. It also meant addressing the contradictions between landless peasants and the complex nexus of feudalism, capitalism and colonialism/neo-colonialism. The CPI(ML) party leadership emphasised armed guerrilla action over mass mobilisation and economic struggle.[55] They also minimised the importance of argumentation. However, parallel to this call for direct action, a "culture of critique" informed by a "negative dialectics", as Ranabir Samaddar had put it (2019: 279), meant that Naxalbari intellectuals engaged in animated debates in radical left-leaning journals.[56] These journals functioned beyond the

51 Suniti Kumar Ghosh (1918–2014) was the editor of the English party organ of the CPI(ML) called *Liberation*. After Saroj Dutta's disappearance in 1971 he also took charge of the Bengali organ *Deshabrati*. Following Charu Mazumdar's death he published a self-critical view of the movement in *Frontier*. Later he formed another faction of the party called COC, CPI(ML) with Jagjit Singh Sohal. He is also the author of several important books on social sciences including *India and the Raj* and *The Indian Big Bourgeoisie* (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 2: 333).

52 Suniti Kumar Ghosh discussed this meeting of 23 April 1972 in his articles *Sesh Dekha* ("Last Meeting") and *Charu Mazumdar O Communist Andolone Biplobi Dhara* ("Charu Mazumdar and the Revolutionary Line in the Communist Movement"), reprinted in *Ebong Jalark* (Special Issue on Charu Mazumdar; see Dashadhikari 2009: 196–205, 224–242). This magazine has reprinted original documents and writings by a variety of Naxalbari activists.

53 Charu Mazumdar quoted in the newspaper report "Letter led to Arrest of Majumdar" published in *Hindustan Standard,* Calcutta, Tuesday, 18 July 1972 (Dashadhikari 2009: 59).

54 See newspaper reports "Letter led to Arrest of Majumdar" in *Hindustan Standard*, Calcutta, Tuesday, 18 July 1972 and "Charu Majumdar Dead" in *The Statesman*, Calcutta, Saturday, 29 July 1972 (Dashadhikari 2009: 58–60, 85–87).

55 See "Political Resolution of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)" (Ghosh 1992: 46–54).

56 Madhumay Pal discusses the more politically inclined magazines that grew around the critical questions raised by the Naxalbari event in his collection of original documents on the movement. He writes: "Three issues of *Krantikaal* were released after 1964. The magazine *Chinta* was released from 1965 onwards […] Since 1967 *Dakshindesh, Purbadesh, Bhitti, Puber Hawa, Chhatrafouj, Commune, Abad, Kalpurush, Ghatanaprabaha* and many more journals and magazines have left the impression and testimony of the political debates of the age, which can itself be a subject of research" (Pal 2017: 131–132).

political authoritarianism that characterised the party organs of the CPI(ML) – *Deshabrati* (in Bengali) and *Liberation* (in English).[57] *Deshabrati* was founded by Naxalbari sympathisers within the CPI(M) after they were expelled from that party for supporting the Naxalbari uprising and forcefully thrown out of the management of the CPI(M) organ *Deshahitaishi*.[58] With the formation of the CPI(ML) on 22 April 1969, *Deshabrati* became the pronounced party organ of the CPI(ML). Some people associated with *Deshabrati* refused to join the CPI(ML) and expressed their objections. But these dissident supporters of the movement were alienated from the magazine when it became the party organ.

It is also important to keep in mind that, even before *Deshabrati* was founded, another magazine called *Chinta* propagated radical thought beyond the hegemony of any party (Sen 1980: 30). *Dakshin Desh* is another prominent political journal that articulated notions of armed revolution even before the Naxalbari event of 1967 (Sen 1980: 39).[59] Although journals such as *Chinta* and *Dakshin Desh* inveighed against the CPI(ML) policy of abandoning mass organisation, they also insisted upon the need for revolution. These groups also wrote against the propaganda and false hope generated by the CPI(ML) and the latter's intolerance of dissent and blind leap into guerrilla action.[60] The *Dakshin Desh* group chose to maintain the Coordination Committee of Revolutionaries, even after a large number of its members left to form the CPI(ML) party.

Criticism emerged as the strongest element of the Naxalbari movement, with its counter-hegemonic and confrontational style of politics. The CPI(ML) repeatedly tried to silence criticism, denouncing dissenting opinions of even the most committed comrades as revisionist. Paranoia and conspiracy theories were spread about dissenters and the party increasingly adopted an anti-intellectual posture.[61] Charu Mazumdar proposed that comrades not read too much, as books might distract them from the diktats of the party, the real harbinger of revolution.[62] Relying heavily on Chinese Marxism and the theories of Mao Ze-

57 Apart from these political journals, literary journals such as *Aneek* and *Anustup* in Bengali and the social science journal *Frontier* in English contained more critical and creative debates on Naxalbari. Although they did not have any particular party affiliation, they nonetheless acknowledged many of the Naxalbari criticisms of the Indian state and the dominant social and intellectual classes.

58 After the expulsion, which occurred on 28 June 1967 (following the Naxalbari uprisings on 24 and 25 May of that year), the Naxalbari supporters formed *Deshabrati* as their mouthpiece on 6 July 1967.

59 This group formed a separate organisation called the *Maoist Coordination Committee* (MCC) on 20 October 1969 to continue their struggle and produce their own Naxalbari legacy. For details see "Co-ordination Committee o CPI(ML)-r Songe 'Dakshin Desh'-er Somporko—MCC-r Jonmo" published in 1994 by MCC (Pal 2017: 246–253).

60 See "CPI(ML)-er Rajnoitik Prostab Somporke Koekti Katha" (Pal 2017: 237–245) and "Kakshar Siksha Nin: Bam Line Borjon Korun" (Pal 2017: 75–79) in *Dakshin Desh* magazine in the years 1969 and 1974, respectively.

61 See discussions in *Naxalbari and Indian Revolution* (Sengupta 1983: 112–116), originally translated from the Bengali book *Biplab Kon Pothe* (1970).

62 See Mazumdar's "A Few Words to the Revolutionary Students and Youth" (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 2: 61–69).

dong, often without considering their appropriateness for the Indian context, he insisted that young party comrades read only a few writings by Mao, as well as *The Quotations of People's War* published by the Central Committee of the great Communist Party of China (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 1: 80). He promoted experience as a mode of knowledge acquisition for Naxalite radicals, who were required to share their lives with destitute peasants and landless agricultural labourers. Through its attack on bourgeois historiography and knowledge, the CPI(ML) leadership erected its own foundational principles, marked by adventurism and the personality cult of Charu Majumdar. This also gave a romantic aura to the revolutionary violence that appealed mostly to middle-class student groups, rather than proletarian workers or peasants. Sambhu Rakshit[63] in a poem[64] titled *Rajniti* ("Politics") makes a powerful and self-reflexive critique of this romanticisation of urban youth members relocating to the villages for political radicalism. He writes:

> When I return to the village with the kinship of my progress
> I feel scared; Sunshine, water, the rage of farmers all seem false to me
> …
> Honestly speaking I do not love the village and all that; I don't even think of doing anything for the village
> It seems my only task is to
> Study the awakened eyes, arms, faces, and prophesy the future.[65]

If 1975 was the year prophesied by Charu Mazumdar as the successful fulfilment of the Naxalbari Revolution, then Sambhu Rakshit's poem (published the same year) exposes the deep sense of estrangement felt by urban radical youths sent to live with the rural peasantry in whose name the revolution was supposed to be waged.

Poetics and politics of revolution

Decades before the brutal killing of peasants in Naxalbari in 1967, Saroj Dutta had already offered a trenchant critique of modernist Bengali literature, influenced by a Freudian emphasis on the individual psyche, as a distraction from the path of historical materialism (Dutta 1993: 51–57). More broadly, the CPI(ML) insistence on political art that focused only on the question of revolution made personal intimacy and the individual psyche superfluous. On the one hand, this

63 Sambhu Rakshit (1948–2020) was the youngest poet among the Hungrealists, the experimental group of poets and authors from West Bengal in 1970s. For more on Sambhu Rakshit and his works see Sambhu Rakshit's page on the Milansagar website http://www.milansagar.com/kobi_8/sambhu_rakshit/kobi-sambhu-rakshit.html (accessed 29 May 2021).

64 Published in the 1975 special issue on politics of the magazine *Kolkata*.

65 Rakshit 1975: 68, translation by the authors.

led to a proliferation of literature depicting the miseries of the working poor and the revolutionary artist's sacrifice, which became increasingly suffused with masculine fantasies of revolutionary violence and courage against all odds. Immediately after the Naxalbari event, when Ajit Pandey[66] composed his famous song "Terai Weeps oh/ weeps my heart/ Naxalbari field weeps/ For seven daughters" (translation by authors) dedicated to the martyrs, Charu Mazumdar requested that he change the word "weeps" to "burns" as a means of foregrounding the emotional tenor of rage against oppression rather than the pain of loss. On the other hand, this reductive approach to revolutionary art invited internal criticism and doubt regarding the leadership in various cultural productions. An excessive emphasis on revolutionary praxis undoubtedly prevented CPI(ML) affiliated intellectuals and artists from developing a clearly defined aesthetic theory of their own. Nonetheless, the party orthodoxy's repressive tendency initiated a wide-ranging practice of interrogating cultural forms and aesthetic expressions emanating both from the past as well as the CPI(ML) leadership.

As suggested earlier in the article, Utpal Dutta's[67] 1967 play *Teer* ("Arrow", Dutta 1995: 215–326), written and performed about the Naxalbari police action against the peasants, remains one of the most powerful examples of the cultural expression favoured by CPI(ML) intellectuals such as Saroj Dutta.[68] *Teer* exposed the hypocrisy and reactionary tendencies of the mainstream communist parties associated with the CPI(M)-led United Front government in West Bengal. In the play, when Adivasi leaders organise an uprising against *jotdars* under the patronage of the ruling CPI(M) party, the communist leader Siben characterises it as an American-led capitalist conspiracy, while at the same time seeking help from the US government to curb the revolution. This exposes his hypocrisy and serves to strengthen the revolutionary upsurge. The stage set was designed with six window frames placed high up on the stage, exposing the faces of a suit-wearing capitalist, a *kurta*-clad *jotdar*, a Congress leader wearing a *khuddar* cap, a newspaper editor and a woman wearing loud make-up (representing the consumerist bourgeoisie) – suggesting the tight-knit association among repressive elite groups ranged against the subaltern Adivasis. The faces of the leaders of the mainstream communist parties – such as the CPI(M) – periodically appear in the sixth window, thus exposing the communist parties' collusion with dominant

66 Ajit Pandey (1937–2013) was a popular singer with leftist sentiments with thirty albums to his credit and was famous for political and folk songs. He was also elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly from West Bengal under CPI(M) in 1998. For more on Ajit Pandey and his works see Ajit Pandey's page on the Milansagar website: http://www.milansagar.com/kobi/ajit_pandey/kobi-ajitpandey.html (accessed 29 May 2021).

67 Utpal Dutta (1929–1993) was a highly celebrated political playwright, theatre director and actor (both on stage and in films) from West Bengal. He was also known as a Marxist intellectual and scholar with expertise on dramatic art and Shakespeare. For more information on Utpal Dutta see the opening page of his book *Towards a Revolutionary Theatre* (2009).

68 Utpal Dutta visited Naxalbari to see the situation himself and interviewed some of the militant peasants and their wives. He also met Charu Mazumdar at his house in Siliguri before composing the play (Dutta 2009: 87–89).

social elites. Each face thus represented a particular counter-revolutionary force. The play denounced how CPI(M) leaders (like Siben) failed the subaltern peasantry by collaborating with the *jotdars*, making false promises of revolution and ultimately mobilising state repression against the rebelling peasants. The play's significance lies in its depiction of solidarity networks among various indigenous groups from northern West Bengal, who gradually relinquish their divergent faiths and prejudices in order to pursue revolutionary violence.

While Dutta later conceded that the Naxalbari event was exaggerated in his play, he also pointed out that – "When the volley of police bullets mow down the women in Prasadujot,[69] only a 'pure' intellectual, disdaining taking sides, could remain unmoved" (Dutta 2009: 90).[70] Violence and rage became privileged literary affects to represent social inequalities and demand redress. These affects dovetailed with the Naxalbari call for the termination of class enemies and modes of oppression. While *Teer* remains a powerful paradigm for cultural productions committed to the Naxalbari cause, its portrayal of collective struggle among poor peasants had little impact on later works depicting Naxalbari, which largely focused on the struggle, suffering, angst and crisis of middle-class activists.

Sexuality and the feminist critique

The real-time politics in artistic productions did not prevent criticism of the dominant Naxalbari party line, despite its celebration of the revolutionary impulse. Mrinal Sen's film *Padatik* ("Foot Soldier", 1973) is one such example of critical intimacy with Naxalbari politics by a politically sensitive artist. The protagonist, Sumit, is a Naxalite youth who finds safe haven in the apartment of an affluent woman who is separated from her husband. The woman, who undoubtedly belongs to the privileged bourgeoisie, sympathises with the movement because she lost her activist brother in the revolution. Made in 1973, the film shows the final phases of Naxalbari as it was fragmented by police brutality and internal conflict within the CPI(ML) hierarchy. Sumit is increasingly alienated by his growing criticism of the party line, and his radical comrades

69 The village in the Naxalbari area where the 24–25 May 1967 confrontation between police and demonstrating peasants took place.

70 Even after his fallout with the CPI(ML) party line, Dutta continued to support Naxalbari forms of politics in staging plays that related to the legacy of past anti-colonial peasant resistance, such as *Titumeer*, depicting the eponymous leader of Wahabi movement, or that criticised non-violent politics, such as *Manusher Adhikare*, which was based on the crisis of the exploitation of Blacks in the United States. For more on his works and politics see his book *Towards a Revolutionary Theatre* (2009). After his separation from the CPI(ML), when he was arrested for supporting the party and subsequently released (allegedly by surrendering to the government according to some of his critiques), he became an ardent critique of the CPI(ML) party line. He wrote in *Frontier* using the pseudonym Rafiqul Islam, expressing his critical views (Islam 1969: 37–40).

ultimately abandon him over his doubts about the real objectives of revolutionary violence. The film manages a sensitive but sustained depiction of conflict within CPI(ML) politics, where authoritarianism reigned and debate meant expulsion from the party.

In the film, sexual conservatism and petty bourgeois conventional morality, moreover, lead the CPI(ML) leadership to suspect that Sumit is having an affair with his hostess. His life and relationship are scrutinised as he is increasingly suspected of having strayed from the heroic path of revolutionary sacrifice. Although anxiety over the intimate lives of radical activists began appearing in aesthetic productions related to the movement in the early 1970s, Naxalbari's revolutionary discourse failed to address questions of sexuality and gendered intimacies, except through ideals of sacrifice, rejection and denunciation. Recent scholarship on the Naxalbari movement, authored by Mallarika Sinha Roy (2011) and Srila Roy (2012), focuses on the movement's gendered and personal aspects, concentrating primarily on the experiential lives of female activists. Sumit's alienation in *Padatik* may have been caused by his failure to live up to the idealised model "of the 'revolutionary youth' – an uncompromising, honourbound and somewhat naïve young activist who lived and died in that enchanting high tide of radical politics" (Sinha Roy 2011: 67), which is predominantly masculine in nature and "remains one of the most definitive characterisations of the Naxalbari movement" (ibid.).

Control over the personal lives and sexuality of men and women was a regular practice within the revolutionary party. When reflecting on their revolutionary lives, many erstwhile activists' accounts reveal a self-reflexive and critical view of the movement. In her memoir on Naxalbari, Krishna Bandyopadhyay, a Marxist and Feminist activist from Bengal, criticised the patriarchal culture within the CPI(ML) rank and file, while also acknowledging the movement's impact on her later life (2008: 52–59). She described how her lover and comrade Dronacharya Ghosh interrupted an intimate moment between them to ask her to read a book by Mao Zedong on class struggle among Chinese peasants. Perhaps he did this because he thought sexual intimacy with a comrade might distract them both from the path of revolution. While Bandyopadhyay celebrates the Naxalbari movement and the ideological emancipation it offered her, she remains critical of party orthodoxy and anxieties surrounding the sexual lives of young activists.

In the novel *Atta Natar Surjo* (2013) by Ashok Mukhopadhyay, Krishna Bandyopadhyay is portrayed as the fictional character Panchali, whose love for the revolutionary poet Dronacharya Ghosh is ultimately frustrated because of his ideological commitment to asceticism. The novel seems to have drawn upon real life accounts such as Krishna Bandyopadhyay's memoirs (Bandyopadhyay 2008, 2017a–c), which discuss sexual conservatism as part of the revolutionary

activist ideology, and Dronacharya Ghosh's diary (2013), which testifies to his discomfort with sexual relationships.

The novel moves on to show Panchali's second relationship with Nirupam, another comrade from the revolutionary party, after Dronacharya is killed in police custody. The party leadership proscribes this second relationship, and many of her male colleagues resent her supposed lack of sexual fidelity and failure to perform the role of a bereaved widow devoted to the memory of her martyred comrade. As Srila Roy correctly observes – "The irony is that within the radical redefinition of marriage in the movement [...] the labels of 'wife' and 'widow' were largely rendered redundant. Yet, women were made to perform symbolic (and actual) roles that served to restore middle-class codes and expectations of womanhood" (Roy 2012: 79).

Panchali's relationship with the party remains ambiguous throughout the novel. Despite being a middle-class, liberated woman, she has a marginal position within the party. Yet as a female revolutionary, she often expresses a dissenting opinion on certain party ideologies. Once she refuses to abide by the CPI(ML) party's injunction of *khotom*, or "murder", of a male comrade who tried to molest a woman staying in his shelter. She protests, stating that sexual abuse and power plays were regular occurrences within the party, and murdering the perpetrator might not solve the problem. Krishna Bandyopadhyay's multiple accounts (2008, 2017a–c) are framed in the novel as a critique of authoritarianism and patriarchy within the party. The novel depicts the final phases of the Naxalbari Movement as marked by bitter internal schisms and fragmentation over questions of ideological orthodoxy and suffocating debates over moral pretensions.

The novel ends in 2010, after a time lapse of several years. By now, Panchali has become a social activist, and we see her arriving at a tribal village in Jhargram to protest against a police encounter with some Adivasis falsely framed as Maoists. Witnessing children in the village staging a mock confrontation between police and protesters, Panchali remembers her Naxalbari past and her two lovers who gave their lives for the revolutionary cause. She realises that the battle between the state and the revolutionaries continues in a different form. The novel acknowledges the limits of mainstream Naxalbari politics and yet, at the same time, reveals its subversive potential as a radical promise of revolution to redress social inequalities.

The sexual and moral conservatism idealised by the CPI(ML) was part of the general revolutionary consciousness of the period, as reflected in the intellectuals who broadly supported the movement. Samaresh Basu,[71] who penned

71 Samaresh Basu (1924–1988) was a major Bengali writer and was a part of the Trade Union movement and the Communist Party of India for a brief period. In 1949–1950 he was jailed when the Communist Party was declared illegal. He wrote a number of novels on the Naxalbari movement such as *Manush Shaktir Utsha* ("Power Comes from People", 1974) or *Mahakaler Rather Ghora* ("Chariot Horse of Time", 1977). His works also dealt deeply with human sexuality and he faced charges of obscenity twice, for his novels *Bibar* (1965) and *Prajapati* (1985). For more on his works see *Samaresh Basu Rachanabali* Volume 7 (Basu 2002: 5–7).

a number of novels depicting Naxalbari, was bitterly criticised in the pages of *Frontier* for his 1968 novel *Patak* ("The Fallen") for imagining "a Naxalite going straight to a brothel after having a fierce battle with the police" (Chattopadhyay 1968: 15).

Saibal Mitra, an active participant and supporter of the Naxalbari line of politics, was similarly disparaged for his representation of sexual relationships in his 1978 novel *Agrahabini* (Mitra 1990). The novel depicts most of the major political events and internal debates of the movement up to the death of Charu Mazumdar and fragmentation of the party. The firebrand revolutionary, Ajit, is the central protagonist. His intimacy with a Santhal woman and assumption of a Santhal way of life by giving up his middle-class revolutionary identity is severely criticised by the party leadership. He is expelled from the party and eventually killed by police after his erstwhile comrades inform upon him. The novel perhaps shows the crisis of the bourgeois leadership of a revolutionary party, which wanted to share lives with the poor tribal peasants but did not expect their comrades to transgress sexual proprieties of class and ethnic identities. These cultural texts, emerging especially in later stages of the Naxalbari Movement, were no doubt sympathetic to the broader ideological aims of Naxalbari, yet manifested the severe strain placed on bourgeois revolutionaries in their attempts to transcend class and social position through revolutionary self-making.

Continuations

The Naxalbari vision of political transformation and its critical impetus for representing the violence of class domination led to the emergence of a radical group of writers even after the end of the movement. While they wrote stories and novels focusing on the movement, they were also invested in portraying the abject poverty and exploitation of contemporary society that created the grounds for revolution. Nabarun Bhattacharya[72] is one such writer whose collection of poems, *Ei Mrityu Upatyaka Amar Desh Na* ("This Valley of Death is Not My Homeland") published first in 1972 (republished in 2004), is broadly based on state violence and brutality toward Naxalbari supporters. The collection's title poem refers to the extra-judicial murders of eight young activists at Amdanga in Kolkata. Throughout his career, Bhattacharya's work continued to refer to social differences, the exploitation of the poor and the subjugated, and the latent possibility of revolution's eternal return – transcending the inten-

72 Nabarun Bhattacharya (1948–2014) was an experimental Bengali fiction writer and poet with strong radical left sensibilities who started his creative career in the 1970s and became popular in the 1990s. His works touched upon social exploitation, political resistance and neo-liberal consumerist culture. He was the son of the renowned author Mahasweta Devi and playwright Bijan Bhattacharya. For more on Nabarun's work and politics see *Nabarun Bhattacharya: Aesthetics and Politics in a World After Ethics* (Bhattacharya et al. 2020).

tionality of both the state and organised political parties. Traces of the Naxalbari movement as a subversive moment of radical politics continually surface in his works.

His 1993 novel *Herbert* returns to the theme of Naxalbari and reflects the emotive and unpredictable connections between past revolution and memory in post-1990s neo-liberal, consumerist and apparently counter-revolutionary urban Kolkata. The eponymous character, Herbert, is deeply consumed by his belief in ghosts and necromancy. He calls the spirit of his nephew Binu, who was a Naxalite activist killed by the police during the fiery decade of the 1970s. Later, in a dream, Herbert learns of Binu's diary, hidden behind a picture of the Hindu deity Kali in their household.

The novel employs a strange suturing between past and present, between Herbert's emotional closeness to Binu, who was a foot-soldier in the Naxalbari movement, and Herbert's present role as a spirit medium who can converse with ghosts. Under the influence of Binu, Herbert had served as a messenger and supplier of arms for the movement in the 1970s. In the post-revolutionary world, he becomes a local medium informing people about the condition of their dead relatives suffering in the other world. Eventually, he commits suicide after being accused of fraudulent activities by the members of a rationalist society. When his body is placed in an electric furnace, an explosion suddenly blasts the cremation ground. We later learn about the sticks of dynamite lying dormant inside Herbert's mattress from the time they were secretly stashed there by Binu at least two decades earlier.

In Suman Mukhopadhyay's 2005 cinematic adaptation of *Herbert* the viewer is shown the Bengali words *Pulisher Kukur Debi Roy Hushiyar*: "Police Mongrel Debi Roy Be Careful!" scrawled on the door of the crematorium furnace just before it closes with Herbert's body inside, referring to Debi Roy, a police officer during the Naxalbari period infamous for torturing revolutionaries in custody. This warning flashes just before the furnace door closes, leading to the huge explosion. Similarly, the memory of revolution acts as a warning: apparently meaningless and disconnected to the present, but imbued with the unconscious political imagination of eruptive revolutionary violence. The police chief investigating the strange case of terrorism that exploded Herbert's dead body quotes Foucault, acknowledging that it is a far reach for our political establishment to tell when and where such explosions may occur. Binu's absolute faith in revolution is compared ironically with Herbert's equally powerful faith in ghosts. The possibility of revolution lies beyond any calculative set of logical possibilities. The novel suggests that nobody knows where the dynamite of revolution is hidden, as the unconscious effect of Naxalbari lingers beyond our knowledge, even after it is presumed to have been safely consigned to the past.

The critical intellectual tradition of the Naxalbari movement witnesses two parallel potentialities between orthodoxy and dissent. While it is clear why dissent should be important to culture, the need to attempt to build a counter-hegemonic orthodoxy, despite rightful criticism, cannot be denied. Despite strategic follies, such as reducing guerrilla action to individual terror and indulging in such actions without creating a proper popular base, the counter-hegemonic orthodoxy of the Naxalbari movement sought an alternative to the hegemonic political, social and cultural apparatus. A revolutionary movement may be understood as a response to structural exploitation, compelling resistance against the pervasive social realities in which exploitation is rooted.

While accounting for the all-encompassing nature of such a violent critique, one must also understand the limits imposed by the revolutionary orthodoxy of a party that appropriated, reduced and streamlined such a critique into an immutable line of action. While sexual and moral conservatism was a part of Naxalbari politics, the movement also offered alternative ways of life and liberation for middle-class women (and men) from their traditional roles within the family. Like gender, caste hierarchies were subverted in the movement as well, although an inadequate understanding of caste and a sweeping valorisation of the class oriented analysis by Naxalbari activists limited such subversion. In the villages, young comrades encountered landless labourers of lower caste origins.

Santosh Rana,[73] an active participant in the Naxalbari movement who was born to a marginal caste, asserted that the antagonism and exploitation of landlords was not based on feudal power alone.[74] Identity politics had a major role to play, and Rana observed that questions of caste or tribal identity were not properly addressed by the communist parties in India, creating a serious lacuna in understanding on the part of the Naxalbari leadership. The fact that the Naxalbari movement did not discuss caste or ethnic identity, or subordinated these to questions of class struggle alone, is a topic of frequent reflection for former activists.

Asok Rudra, a social scientist writing in and around the Naxalbari milieu who had strong sympathies for the movement, remarked on the misevaluation of the Indian state as semi-feudal by Indian Marxists, asserting it to be "Brahminical" instead. He believed that the counter-revolutionary ideology of caste had been used to naturalise and maintain exploitation (Rudra 1981: 2133–2135, 2137, 2139, 2141, 2143–2146). In an article entitled "Bhojpurer Krishok Sangram", originally published in *Aneek* in 1981, Gautam Bhadra addresses the uprising of the Mushahar community in Muzaffarpur, demonstrating that the peasants'

73 Santosh Rana (1944–2019) was an active revolutionary leader of CPI(ML) who came from a lower caste family of Gopiballavpur in Midnapore, West Bengal. He is famous for organizing guerrilla warfare in the Debra-Gopiballavpur area of Midnapore district in 1967–1970. Later he had an ideological fallout with Charu Mazumdar on the question of the Bangladesh Liberation war. He was a life long activist and a social commentator (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 2: 336).

74 Santosh Rana, "Comrade Charu Mazumdar Prosonge Kichu Katha" (Dashadhikari 1998, Part 2: 151–171).

exploitation was not only feudal but caste-based. The caste position of the exploited was constantly reinforced through physical and sexual violence. The landless labourers who resorted to counter-violence were compelled to do so in order to protect their *izzat* or "honour" (Bhadra 1989: 33–64). According to Bernard D'Mello, the second phase of the Naxalite movement between 1974 and 2003, often considered Maoist, addressed questions of gender and caste discrimination much more explicitly (D'Mello 2018: 16). These debates were integrated into Naxalbari's critical discourse of revolutionary thinking, which transformed Indian political thought and social activism. Many erstwhile revolutionaries carried these discussions forward into a variety of critical, creative and activist scenes.

Charu Mazumdar proposed the birth of a new human – the production of a different political subjectivity through the practical critical activities of activists from bourgeois backgrounds living and sharing lives with the landless labourers.[75] This idea of a new subjectivity was not altogether a myth. New collaborations developed between young educated people from elite backgrounds and lower-middle class youth, challenging the existing social hierarchies. This experience is reflected in a novel like *Hajar Churashir Ma* ("Mother of 1984", 1974) by Mahasweta Devi, where we see Brati, a Naxalite youth from an upwardly mobile family, who is killed in a police encounter along with his comrade Somu, from a more humble background (Devi 2010).

Another novelistic representation of this experience is *Communis* by Raghab Bandyopadhyay, published in 1975 under the pseudonym Sankar Basu (Basu 1975). *Communis* is a non-elite way of pronouncing the word communist, which suggests the reception, appropriation and transformation of communist principles among the less privileged sections of society. Even if we concede that Naxalbari politics, particularly as expressed within the CPI(ML), was simplistic and weak, its impact on Bengali intellectual and cultural life cannot be denied. The Naxalbari dogma emphasised practice divorced from theory. This led to what Sushital Roychoudhury called *tarahurobad* or the "ideology of hurried action" (Dashadhikari 1999: 13). While the Naxalbari path can be criticised for its fetishisation of practice, practice remains an alternate means of theorising Indian society and politics, with the potential to open up new paradigms of thought.

75 See Mazumdar 's 1970 letter titled "The Birth of the New Man" (Mazumdar 2012, Volume 2: 143–144).

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Between the Local and the Global there Lies the Nation: Selected Stories of the 1960s in Lahore

Anushay Malik

Abstract

Labour and student activists in Pakistan were part of the global movement of the 1960s with its sense of expanded possibilities. This article explores how this political imagination was expressed in Pakistan, focusing on local stories oriented around Lahore. Using the 1960s as one particular window to look at the aspirations of ordinary people, this essay shows that even though students and workers alike hoped for a change in the status quo, there was no one typical national experience of this decade. Any historical narrative that assumes that there is a Pakistan with one imagination in any decade necessarily imposes erasures in order to construct a neat story of what the 1960s in Pakistan "truly" was. Through newspaper articles and police reports, some everyday stories of that time are selected and used to differentiate the common picture of experiences of the 1960s in Pakistan.

Keywords: Pakistan, 1960s, history, stories, socialism, labour, students, imaginations

Sheikh Muhammad Rashid was born in 1915 in Sheikhupura district in the Punjab. This information, and the vast majority of his life as described in his autobiography *Juhd-e-Musalsil* ("*Continuous Struggle*", Rashid 2011), doesn't seem too relevant to a history that sifts through historical evidence searching for things that touch the already familiar tropes of the nation. Sheikh Muhammad Rashid appears in this narrative at a particular moment: he was the founding member of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), a major political party in Pakistan. As a peasant leader, he would come to be remembered as *Baba-e-Socialism* ("Father of Socialism"). In the late 1960s after the social movement successfully brought an end to the regime of General Muhammad Ayub Khan, the Pakistan People's Party formed the government in what was then West Pakistan.

Perhaps now the first sentence of this introduction appears more relevant. It establishes that Rashid matters because he was connected to ostensibly greater, more political, more important things. It is not a coincidence that in one of the

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obituaries that discusses his life and legacy, his brief association with the Muslim League, the main party that pushed for the demand for a separate state for Muslims in colonial India, is put front and centre (Dawn 2002). It does not matter if his autobiography starts by describing his village and includes accounts of how deeply his revolutionary desires affected his home life. His second wife, Shakeela Khanam Rashid, was already the principal of a college in Lahore when he married her. She would go on to work as an ambassador and as a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan. However, in his autobiography, she seems to be not very relevant. In one of his obituaries she is mentioned only using her first name and in another she is only "his widow" (ibid; Azad 2002). When we focus on Baba-e-Socialism, Shakeela Khanam becomes only visible as a wife and a widow. When we focus on the nation, Sheikh Rashid becomes visible only as crucial to the story of the PPP. In sharp contrast to a narrative that gives agency to political parties and state ideologies, Rashid makes an explicit link between the politics he pursued and his personal life, and the literal translation of one of the subsections of his book is "the deep relation between personal life and political life" (Rashid 2011: 51).

In this essay I argue that the specific forms that political lives took in Pakistan in the 1960s were both local and global. The aspirations Rashid had, for instance, to work with agricultural labour, first working with the Muslim League and then the Azad Pakistan Party, were derived from his personal experiences, his local environment in Punjab and from the expanded imagination of the time. Rashid's story is part of a set of experiences that people shared in the 1960s and that were specific to that decade. The global imagination produced by the Cold War and anti-colonial thought was felt by individuals like Sheikh Rashid in areas across Pakistan.

That it was shared does not mean that it was the same across various accounts, nor does it mean that people in present-day Pakistan can hear the terms used by Sheikh Rashid to describe his ideological predilections, such as "socialist" or "revolutionary", and assume they know what he was talking about. Those terms did not have the same meaning as they do today. Nor did they have the same meaning across Pakistan. Why use them then? Because what they did signify was an openness of the imagination, a belief that coming out on the streets could fundamentally alter the way power operated and worked in Pakistan.

Sheikh Rashid only connects his socialism explicitly to Marx and Engels briefly and in snippets. For instance, in 1952 he attended a regional conference in China where he heard lectures on Marxism and felt that they described many of the things he had already seen and felt (Rashid 2011). The feelings that he describes, the political movement and sentiments he became part of, their "distinctive fever and fret", as David Scott puts it, belong to Rashid, his time and his "historical present in a way that it does not – because it cannot –

belong to ours […] a horizon of possible futures that are not, any longer, ours to imagine" (Scott 2004).[1]

It is true that Rashid was a socialist and revolutionary and peasant leader, but it is also not the only truth. There was no *one* historical imagination nor was there one space of experience owned equally by all members who identified as being of the left.[2] He was socialist, but simultaneously was thankful to God for having kept him away from the evils of alcohol. He immersed himself in the Muslim League's politics, but was very critical of the landlords who patronised it. The specificity of this time, the difference between his time and our own in present-day Pakistan, is that these categories were not as oppositional. He could wear all these hats at the same time. The open imagination, the open future of the time is crystallised in this choice – in the ability to make this choice.

The historical imagination of the 1960s was revolutionary across the world, but to assume that there was something unique to the form that it took in Pakistan is to assume that there was a singular Pakistani imagination in the first place. No matter how closely we have read our Benedict Anderson, how truly we believe that the community of the nation is imagined and does not exist beyond the sentiment of commonality created by the things we read and the stories we tell (Anderson 2006) we tend to fall back on describing "Pakistan in year X" (as if there was one) and throw around statements such as "Pakistan was a country made for Muslims" as if the mass exodus of populations in 1947 did not shock anyone at the time. This is the point I want to begin with, that the past, and in this case the 1960s in Pakistan, really was a different country in which people had different ideas of the form their futures would take.

Moving away from the fixity of categories like the nation is possible by focusing on smaller, local stories and highlighting how they were inspired by global movements and ideologies. These local stories draw attention to how the history of Pakistan in the 1960s, when told as one story, is a story of our assumptions more than it is a story of the aspirations, hopes and political actions of people. How can we find such small, local stories? What can they tell us that the more "important" stories of major political parties, of those who have touched official power, of those who are explicitly tied to the nation's manifest tropes, do not?

This essay is an indication of what the answer to that question could be with specific reference to the 1960s. Much of the material that my observations rely on comes from work I have done for a series of projects on labour, and specifically the left, in Pakistan in the last decade. I make references throughout to some of the sources I have accumulated. Specifically, in this essay, to

1 Scott here is talking about C.L.R. James classic, *The Black Jacobins*.

2 I take this idea from Reinhart Koselleck's *Sediments of Time*. It comes across through all his essays, but perhaps most powerfully in the translator's note that describes why they chose to translate a word ("*Zeitschichten*") as "sediments" that could have just as easily translated as "strata". This, they say is because "sediments" captures the idea that "there are multiple historical times present at the same moment, layer upon layer pressed together." (Hoffman / Franzel 2018: xiv).

the progressive newspaper the *Pakistan Times*, to two of my interviews and to National Assembly Debates. However, the main set of sources that this paper relies on are the records of the Special Branch of the Punjab police, and these require a short introduction.

Until recently, this source was closed off to researchers for national security reasons (or so I was told). Every fortnight, the Special Branch of the Punjab police would put together a summary of all the material they had collected. These were accounts of activities of organised workers, of students and – overwhelmingly in the 1950s and 1960s – of communists and those believed to be engaging in seditious activities. These Fortnightly Police Abstracts of Intelligence (henceforth FPAI) are a very detailed resource and I have used them here, but the real gems were to be found in the Daily Situation Reports (henceforth DSR). Several hundred pages per year make them very unwieldy as a source, but by the time I was given access to these documents I had done interviews and archival work, yet – even though I believed I knew what I was looking for – there was much that was unexpected. Here, in this essay, I have compiled just some of the unexpected. I make no attempt to draw a clean conclusion from these stories. However, they do show some very interesting trends. Using these trends as threads I argue that the tapestry of the history of Pakistan that is familiar, that is known, is not the only history we need to pay attention to if we want a better understanding of what mattered to people in the 1960s, what their aspirations were. These stories show that it is problematic to assume that we can reach back and, as Pakistanis, understand what Pakistanis in the 1960s hoped for and dreamed of and thought was possible – only because we think that the past is *our* past.

What made the 1960s in Pakistan a different country was the tenor of the imagination. Workers considered Marxist texts alongside discussions of what Islamic socialism meant in other Muslim countries. Communists and advocates of provincial autonomy met regularly with workers, students and university lecturers in study circles to read these "radical" texts and think about what they meant for their own context. Not all groups who came to these circles shared the same vision or agreed on what socialism meant, but the belief that the status quo could be shaken by collective action was very much in the air.

Most of this essay focuses on the stories of labour and students who were actively mobilising during the 1960s against the backdrop of the movement of 1968–1969 that would emerge on the streets of Pakistan to remove General Muhammad Ayub Khan. This story of expanded imaginations and heady possibilities is interrupted by the last section, which focuses on the war of 1965. That section shows that this story of an expanded imagination is not really an alternative history at all, but a partial one. Far from being complete stories, these stories are told more in the nature of random findings in the archival record of the 1960s. The attempt to capture scattered stories is a deliberate methodo-

logical choice in this article, which is influenced by my reading of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Good Day Columbus*, in which he shows how the imposition of a central theme on the historical record is an act of power intended to imbue the object, in this case the nation or the country, with a historical importance that observers at the time may not have given. This version of writing around a central theme then creates other erasures which only the acknowledgement of the "messiness" of the historical record can capture (Trouillot 1990). The stories then are an attempt to decentre the nation and capture (or at least glimpse) the messiness of the imagination of the 1960s.

Workers, students and intellectuals in the 1960s drew on a global repertoire of radical ideas that had been developing since the beginning of the twentieth century, bringing in a mix of Islam, socialism and anti-colonialism to the everyday meaning of a progressive life. Within Pakistan in the 1960s, the results of a survey distributed to university lecturers, religious leaders and others in 1969 indicated that the strongest disagreement between groups was not over religion at all, but centred on the issue of whether or not private property was an inalienable right. In spite of this disagreement, a set of ideas that referenced socialism and was based on some idea of redistribution was gaining popularity at the time (Jawed 1975).

Socialism in the 1960s was about hope, freedom and the coming together of anti-colonial aspirations. The idea that decolonisation and socialism translated into an expanded idea of political possibilities in North India and in the areas that became Pakistan in the twentieth century is not new (Ansari 1990, Ali 2015, Raza 2020), but it is an essential part of the story that explains the expanded political imaginations of students and workers in Pakistan in the 1960s.

The anti-Ayub agitation of the late 1960s

> It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nation, of moral economies and unjust rule. (Appadurai 1996: 7)

A social movement emerged in Pakistan between 1968 and 1969 and directed its ire against General Muhammad Ayub Khan, the dictator in power in Pakistan. Accounts of this time paint a picture of a movement drawing people from all over the country united in the struggle to bring down Ayub Khan (Ali 1970a, Jones 2003, Khan 2009). This section will show how the movement against Ayub Khan was, in some ways, not about Ayub Khan at all. It was an imagining of a more equitable future for everyone. At this point, the call for "socialism" captured exactly these demands for redistribution and equality.

The history of the movement itself has generally been dominated by the rise of the Pakistan People's Party, the political party led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a

charismatic, personally wealthy politician who firmly held the helm of the movement and told its participants what they wanted to hear; that there would be Islamic socialism in Pakistan, that land would go to the tiller and the factories would be owned by the workers. Just a few years later, Bhutto would end up stabbing his supporters in the back by denying them party tickets and declaring that the strength of the street would be met by the strength of the state (Jones 2003, Ali 2005). Such a narrative gives pride of place to Bhutto. However, focusing on local dynamics can show that the movement, as it spilled out onto the streets, created its own possibilities (Jones 2003).

Labour's global and local imaginings in the 1960s

The strength of labour was part of a longer story of organisation that could be traced back to the development of labour organisations during the inter-war period in India. A trend that could be observed from the 1930s onward was that "labour" became "a useable category of political identification" (Ahuja 2020: 1067, 1112). Attempts were made to depoliticise Indian labour and limit the autonomy of trade unions. These measures were only partially successful because labour itself had become a political term that workers could wield along with labour laws and ideas of welfare, part of labour's expanded horizon of expectations that constituted this time period (Ahuja 2019).

The power of labour in Pakistan in the 1960s was also rooted in its global importance (the idea that labour and particularly industrial labour would be central in social movements) and in the local specificity of Lahore's development. One of the largest railway workshops in the region was located in the north of Lahore and the numerical and organisational strength of labour based in these workshops meant that they were a force to be reckoned with even in the post-Partition context when labour was much weaker, having lost its all-India networks (Azhar 2019, Asdar 2013). This local specificity of the development of labour power in Lahore took place alongside an idea of historic destiny. As Azhar shows, workers in the railways in Lahore read communist texts and invited communist party members in the 1950s and 1960s to their meetings in the same way that they had invited Khilafat supporters in the 1920s, but retained their own autonomy throughout. In the moment of decolonisation, the workers' belief in their own importance was an important base from which they engaged with national movements.

Across the decolonising world, labour pushed independence movements to include leftist demands such as redistribution on their agenda; this happened within the Indian context as well (Plys 2020: 20).[3] This may not have been

3 This recent book by Kristin Plys has a wider argument that this article is indebted to, about how the ideas exchanged around and within the Indian coffee houses and the autonomous spaces created by labour's actions contributed to a particular ecumene of collective identity that activists were able to draw on long after independence.

successful in bringing about long-term changes in class structure, but it did play a role in how workers imagined their role within the nation. By the 1960s in Pakistan, this older story of mobilisation had a concrete effect on the strength of labour. Specifically, it allowed for the continuity of networks in spite of repression.

The theme of state repression of the communists in Pakistan, beginning with the banning of the Pakistan Communist Party in 1954, is well known and has been explained as part of Cold War politics, the desire of the Pakistani state to get closer to the United States and the specific moment of the signing of military pacts with the US (Levi 1967, Lubna 2010). This should have meant that 1954 spelled the end of progressive politics in Lahore, but in fact the relationships of progressives in Lahore were not just based on membership in the Communist Party. Bonds of friendship and meetings in study circles, coffee houses and union offices continued even after the Communist Party was banned (Malik 2013, Aziz 2008). To give just one concrete example, in November 1965 a group in Lahore publicly demanded that mill managements needed to be held accountable and that peasants displaced in the 1965 war should be compensated. The men who were present at the meeting included Communist Party members (Fazal Elahi Qurban), the head of the Tonga workers union (Sandhi Khan) and a member of one of the railway workers' unions (FPAI 15 November 1965). This shows that in spite of the Communist Party being officially banned, ex-Communist Party members were able to mobilise, combining workers' demands from the informal and formal sectors.

The imagination of workers had come to agree on certain demands, including nationalisation, anti-imperialism and worker protections (Ahmad 1978, Azhar 2019). As Tariq Ali has shown, the participation of workers within this movement further increased "a realization of their own strength" (Ali 1970b: 44), which translated into workers continuing to demand higher wages and mobilise for better working conditions even in the face of subsequent police repression.

Even after workers were violently forced to end their strikes and hand back the factories, there is evidence that they continued to exert a great degree of control in their neighbourhoods up until the 1970s at least. Altaf Baloch, a labour leader in Lahore in the late 1960s for instance, was part of a meeting that took place in December 1970 in which he and members of the left-leaning National Awami Party "explained the significance of [the] red flag" to the workers (FPAI, 31 December 1970: 26), while at another meeting held by railway workers in 1970, the workers criticised the government for not agreeing to hold elections on the basis of class while simultaneously remembering the actions of Nasser and the work he did for the Arab people (FPAI, 15 October 1970). This nod toward Nasser was part of a broader trend of acknowledging international movements at this time. The awareness of what was happening across the world, when not all workers could read, was a product of organising and study circles where stories were exchanged and people explicitly identified

with the global movements of the time. Hussain Naqi, for instance, who was a student in Lahore at the time of the Suez Crisis, described how hundreds of students gathered in Lahore's Nishtar park, alongside railway workers, to protest (interview by author with Hussain Naqi, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Lahore, 16 July 2008).

These snippets cannot give us a complete picture. However, they do show us that anti-imperialist movements and socialist ideals resonated with the workers of Lahore before and after the anti-Ayub movement. The mobilisation of labour during the movement and particularly, demands such as the one asking for elections to be held on a class basis, were important indicators showing how socialist ideas were translated into concrete policy recommendations that centred labour.

Students' global and local imaginings in the 1960s

> Be they in East Pakistan or be they in West Pakistan, they are our own sons and daughters, they are our grand-sons and grand-daughters and when anything happens to them our heart goes in sorrow. (NAPD 1969: 304)
>
> A section of impressionable youth has fallen a victim to the machinations of the Opposition elements and is being exploited by them for ulterior motives. (NAPD 1969: 308)

Turning to the story of students during the movement, it may be possible to discern a rather distinct thread of how the movement of 1968 was told from the students' perspective. Both quotes above are from men who were members of Ayub Khan's cabinet and were part of a National Assembly session discussing the political situation in the country. The first quote is from a speech made by Abdus Sobur Khan, who had previously been involved with peasant movements in what was then East Pakistan, while the second was from Vice-Admiral A.R. Khan, who was from the army, and so it is only logical that they would have different interpretations of 1968. The sentiments expressed in these quotes contrasted starkly with the positions young people themselves were taking.

Crucially, they also contrasted with what politicians had told young people in the time leading up to 1947. For instance, during the Muslim League election campaign, students in the Punjab were actively encouraged to be part of the mobilisation (Talbot 1980: 77). In the 1960s however, Ayub Khan, shortly after coming to power encouraged students to "study seriously" and avoid politics, which he equated to "paths of chaos" (Pakistan Times 1961). This view comes across in other works on student politics in the 1950s and 1960s as well (Bajwa 2015, Ahmed 2000). However, the mood of these young people in the 1960s was not one in which they were about to back down.

In the 1960s students in Pakistan drew on a creative engagement with transnational currents of anti-imperialism and religious identity from the wider student movements that were erupting across the world (Bajwa 2015, Nelson 2011).

In newspapers of this time, pictures of students emerging in large crowds to protest against Indian action in Kashmir could be seen alongside students protesting against the Vietnam War. Reactions to both the global and the local were perfectly compatible in the 1960s. Even before the movement of 1968–1969, student protests in the earlier part of the 1960s in Pakistan were oriented against university ordinances that limited the autonomy of student unions and were intended to curtail student politics (Bajwa 2019).

However not all the student protests that took place in the 1960s were clearly against legislation or against Ayub Khan's dictatorship. These protests were taking place at a time when students were already mobilising in support of Fatima Jinnah, the sister of Quaid-e-Azam, the founder of Pakistan. In the 1965 elections she stood against Muhammad Ayub Khan. Again, this portion of the story of student politics is dominated by this event. This is of course an important part of the story, but this essay is all about getting beyond the imposition of a central theme dominated by the national frame, in this case, by Ayub Khan. How can we go beyond this frame? How can we catch glimpses of the everyday actions of students at this time? In order to describe this section of the article, I will go beyond the FPAI and look directly at the Daily Situation Report (DSR) to get an idea of the forms that student protest took after Fatima Jinnah lost the election in January 1965.

In the months that followed the election of 1965, there were many instances of students mourning the loss of the election. For instance, 200 college students in Khairpur broke the gates of a high school and encouraged the younger students to raise slogans of "Sardar Ayub Murdabad" (DSR, 14 January 1965), but the ones that I want to draw attention to are the ones that are clearly drawing on this imagination of students as powerful and assertive, but channelling this power toward challenging the status quo in their everyday lives. One of the protests that stands out from this time is one undertaken by 400 girls in the Model Town girls' high school in Lahore. It stands out because it indicates how the protests from this time were about more than elections, military rule and protests involving the nation. Crucially it also gives us one small insight into the gendering of involvement in Pakistani social movements in the 1960s.

The students went on strike in the middle of January 1965, initially demanding that their headmistress should be allowed to return to work (DSR 15 January 1965). Quite clearly, the students felt that their headmistress was being punished, and they had reason to believe this as she was not the only teacher who had her posting changed right after the election. The girls marched to the Model Town Society where they met the military official, a retired Brigadier who handled matters such as postings, and were told that the headmistress had not been removed but had applied for ten months' leave and would be back after that time. It was clear that the Brigadier thought the matter was resolved. However, as the girls were leaving, the police report states, some of them became

"unruly [and] pelted stones on the Society's buildings, smashing some window panes" (ibid.). Shortly after this incident, these girls further expanded their demands. In response to the Brigadier's insistence that their headmistress had willingly applied for leave, the students' list of demands included that she not be granted the leave she had applied for. They also demanded that a cafeteria be opened in the school, old furniture be replaced and electric fans be installed (DSR 16 January 1965). Sporadic mentions of their protest between the 16th and the 21st of January show that the students kept their strike going. The last mention of this protest is on 21 January, when the report simply states that the students of the girls' high school were intent on continuing their strike and that a "reconciliation meeting held between the Model Town society and the girls' parents did not prove fruitful" (DSR 21 January 1965).

My reading of this incident and what followed is influenced by recent events in Pakistan that have exposed the actions of complicit administrations in repressing the grievances of students, particularly young women. This is important to note because if "history is always – to some extent – about oneself" (Trouillot 1990: 19) I may be guilty of reading into this archival record a similar sort of dynamic to the one we are seeing in present-day Pakistan, where the MeToo movement has empowered young women to say things and be taken more seriously than they have been in decades. Nonetheless, I cannot help but feel that the rage expressed by the Model Town high school students was a protest against the dismissive attitude of authority figures and an attempt to claim space that had been denied to them previously. It cannot be a coincidence that out of all the protests mentioned over the massive volume of reports on 1965, this appears to be the only student protest where parents were called in. I am arguing here that the expanded possibilities of the 1960s allowed for things like 400 female students in a girls' school to go on strike to press for a diverse array of demands. The focus on Ayub Khan and elections misses out on these aspects of the local that show us that the political protests of students in the 1960s translated into challenges to the status quo in a multiplicity of ways.

The police reports also show that far from the Vice-Admiral's contention at the beginning of this section that young people were being manipulated, young people actually appear to be trying to stand up for each other's rights and to report on matters that affected all of them. For instance, in a meeting of the Sindh University Students in Hyderabad, their speeches included a warning to the Principal of the Government Girls' College, who had been reportedly ignoring her students' demands (DSR, 1 February 1965). Therefore, by the time the movement against Ayub Khan emerges at the end of 1968, students already had networks that they could call on.

In the late 1960s students and workers took to the streets in Pakistan's major cities as other students did across the world. Pakistani students who were studying abroad were part of these global protests as well. Pakistani students from

the 1960s whom I have spoken to over the years took part in student protests in London, Cambridge and Paris. Hearing their accounts was not very different from reading Sheila Rowbotham's classic, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (2001). There was the same sense of wonder, a coming of age at a time when norms – historical and sexual – were all changing, but nonetheless there was a strong awareness of difference. In Rowbotham's classic, the moment of a violent encounter with an Algerian man in Paris was one way in which her story encountered difference. There was no resolution to that encounter, but the feeling of all being one and yet not, was left hanging in the air. Gender, race and class divided students' experience of protest and their position within it. It is no surprise then that some of these students chose to come back to Pakistan to be part of what they saw as "their" struggle.

In this respect, one of the interviews that will always stand out for me was with Asad Rahman, who has since passed away. He was interviewed multiple times and the complete story of his political activities is evident in most of them (Akbar 2011: 267–299). Rahman and his friends ended up returning from London, where they were studying, to help the Marri tribe in the Balochistan province of Pakistan wage a guerrilla war against the Pakistani state. By his own account, one of the things that they struggled with was that they did not speak the same language as the Baloch. It had to be learned. On what basis then were Pakistanis one people? On this basis: Rahman and his friends would spend years learning the language and being part of a struggle that, on the surface, had nothing to do with them. This was one of the most important impacts of the long 1960s in Pakistan: it created community out of nothing, a sense that you were dreaming of the same future of radical possibilities. Here, I want to argue, is one of the central points that affected young people in particular in Pakistan in the 1960s. Their leftist and socialist beliefs were perfectly compatible with being Pakistani, not because this socialism lacked form, but because the idea of what Pakistan could be was very much open. Their desire for regional autonomy was Pakistani. Far from being seditious, it was a different understanding of what Pakistan could be.

In Pakistan in the 1960s change was believed to be possible. When students supported Fatima Jinnah in the election, when they protested against the Vietnam War, they were doing so at a time when workers and labour particularly could bring out thousands onto the street. This was to a large extent because of the presence of the large Mughalpura workshops in Lahore, but it was also because of the industrial development that had taken place under Ayub Khan's regime, building an entire new industrial settlement in the south of Lahore in Kot Lakhpat. The presence in protests of these workers, who were also demanding the nationalisation of industry and an end to imperialism alongside more specific demands like adjustment of wage rates, meant that their interests and those of the students allied at crucial points.

This is not, however, a neat narrative of alliances between progressive coalitions. As the war of 1965 showed, there were instances of hyper-nationalism shown by the same groups that this essay has been describing as "revolutionary". The celebration of war and the desire for a nationalist triumph foreshadowed what would happen in 1971. The moment of the heady 1960s in Pakistan then, expressed in the successful overthrow of General Muhammad Ayub Khan, ended up becoming just that: a moment.

"Pakistani" representations of the 1965 war

The India-Pakistan war of 1965 was a short and geographically limited war. The short time in which the war was fought, and the way in which it tends to be told as a story of two countries in conflict, misses out on the way in which this international event had divergent local consequences. The 1965 war was experienced differently in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and in West Pakistan, particularly Punjab, where a barrage of nationalist propaganda constantly stressed the immediacy of the war. In interviews, in writings on the student movement and in fiction of this time period the sense comes across very explicitly that many people from Lahore would have gone and joined the army if they could (Butt 2000: 14, Haq 2000: 116, Suleri 1989: 120).

Pictures from newspapers of the time convey a sense of what it must have felt like to be in Lahore during 1965, but the images of bombed buildings and houses photographed from a distance tell a visual story that also conceals what existed before the moment in which the picture took place. Following Caren Kaplan, what is "unseen" in these distanced images of the effects of the war? At one point Kaplan in *Aerial Aftermaths* (2018) focuses on the image of the destroyed World Trade Centre after 9/11. Drawing on the conversations of architectural historians and planners she argues that nationalist sentiment gave a meaning to these images that rendered invisible the pre-histories of these spaces, histories such as those of diverse neighbourhoods and the people displaced by megascale construction (ibid.: 17). Similarly, the images of 1965 in the *Pakistan Times* strongly convey this sense of being under siege. What if we were to try and find images of not one Pakistan, but two? Looking through the stories in hindsight, was there a difference in the way that the former West and East Pakistan and their associated concerns were represented?

A series of three images that appeared on the front pages of the *Pakistan Times* within one week of one another capture the difference in the imagining of West and East Pakistan during the war quite starkly. The first was of a large protest meeting held outside Mochi Gate in Lahore in 1965 to protest the arrest of the Kashmiri politician, Sheikh Abdullah (Pakistan Times 1965a).

The discussions on Kashmir, which drew hundreds out onto the street in 1965, contrasted quite sharply with the second image, printed just a few days later, of houses destroyed when a cyclone hit East Pakistan (Pakistan Times 1965b). Right under this picture there was a news article containing details of a protest meeting that was planned for the 17th of May in Lahore. The meeting was to continue protesting the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah, almost as if news of the cyclone and of thousands being killed was reaching West Pakistan from a distant, disconnected place. The third and final picture was of this second protest meeting. It appeared on the front page of the Pakistan Times on the 18th of May and once again featured a large crowd of people (Pakistan Times 1965d). The article covering the protest, placed right next to the picture on the front page, told the reader that "thousands of people belonging to all shades of opinion participated enthusiastically in the Protest Day" (Pakistan Times 1965e). One day before this, the news reports had indicated that the cyclone that hit East Pakistan had been so severe that parts of what is now Bangladesh were still completely cut off (Pakistan Times 1965c).

These images and the associated newspaper reports give us a glimpse into why the Tashkent declaration, the ceasefire that officially ended both the war in 1965 and the continuing hostilities, would be viewed differently in East and West Pakistan. The ceasefire in West Pakistan, and particularly within Punjab, was viewed with nothing short of horror whereas in the Eastern wing, it was much more likely to be viewed with relief (Khan 1999: 76, 118). This is not the place to go into the details of how the liberation movement in Bangladesh emerged, but it can be argued that the picture of students and workers emerging across East and West Pakistan in November 1968 on one platform demanding the removal of Ayub Khan, misses out on this earlier history of the 1960s. Specifically, the erasure of what was happening in the areas that were called East Pakistan was already taking place in the nationalist imaginary in the 1960s, with the focus on war with India.

Beyond just the images, this is also true of public pronouncements regarding the war of 1965. For instance, those who donated to the war, such as industrialists in Lahore, were celebrated in the *Pakistan Times* (otherwise known for being a progressive paper in Pakistan) and their names were listed along with the amounts they had donated toward the war effort. The same paper also had reports of labour unions asking workers to increase production and keep working in view of the national emergency (Pakistan Times 1965f, Pakistan Times 1965g). Similarly, in 1966, the National Awami Party, in its own Central Working Committee meetings in 1966, gave celebratory statements about the armed forces who "had blazoned a glorious path" (NAP 1966). This is not to say that all progressive groups were supportive of the war effort, but the sentiment definitely existed and, over the short period of the war, became more pronounced.

The fact that individuals, socialist and otherwise, abandoned their struggles against the status quo and the establishment to suddenly declare that they were all in this together, that they were willing to go so far as to join the army in order to protect the country, was partially because the threat felt so immediate. It can be argued that it was this immediacy of the threat that created what can be called an identification effect producing the idea that "we are all in the same boat" (Trouillot 2001: 132). In Lahore quite early on, reports came in of families trying to move out of the city and into the interior to be safe (DSR, 8 September 1965). As the fighting escalated labour leaders went further than just asking for workers to increase production and appealed to workers to donate to the Defence Fund and to "whole heartedly cooperate with the factory owners" (DSR, 15 September 1965). Reports of other incidents can be read between the lines to show how workers were also actively mobilising to support the war effort. In November for instance, a group of workers that included a prominent railway union leader met under an organisation called the "Pakistan Trade Unions Emergency War Committee" (DSR 20 November 1965). Quite clearly such an organisation already existed to allow for unions to mobilise during the war.

For instance, the Combined Opposition Parties (the same group that had supported Fatima Jinnah's election earlier that year) discussed the Kashmir situation in August 1965 and adopted a resolution offering full support to the freedom fighters in Kashmir (DSR, 27 August 1965). The Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Lahore, a platform for anti-colonial sentiment, ended up passing a resolution that asked for Pakistan and Afro-Asian nations to support Kashmiri people and their liberation (DSR, 28 August 1965).

Final remarks

The stories covered in this paper show quite clearly that the 1960s were a time of expanded possibilities. Labour and students within localities in Pakistan imagined themselves to be part of wider transnational identities. This did not mean that their identity as "socialist" or as "labour" came to dominate and thereby erase all other aspects of who they were. This is an important point because the construction of history around a clear central theme assumes such a dominance. The history of individuals and everyday lives does not have that kind of clarity. The messiness of history does not mean, as this essay has tried to show, that there was no direction. Labour in the 1960s may have imagined itself as Pakistani, but it clearly tried to imagine a program of redistribution. Students in 1965 may have failed to get Fatima Jinnah elected to power, but they did manage to push against the status quo and against established authority. Finally, the story of the progressive 1960s was also punctured with moments

of violence and nationalist exclusion. During the war, redistribution appeared suddenly less urgent than national security. In this moment the identification of people especially within the Punjab with a narrowly constructed national identity appeared to limit the radical edge that their demands and organisation had exhibited immediately before. The movement of 1968–1969 would still take place in spite of this, but the claim that it was a collective movement that emerged across the country for the same reasons appears less convincing.

There is an important lesson here for those of us who continue to engage with national history even though global histories have increasingly become the discipline's mainstay: namely, that there is value in the attempt to trace the local manifestations of politics and examine how these local contexts provided the experiences and the lens that people used to look outward toward the global. Tracing these stories allows us to use them to push back against the central organising theme of the nation.

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The Long Shadow of the Cold War:
The Cold War Policies of the United States towards Asia and their Impact on Indonesia

Research Note

Baskara T. Wardaya

Abstract

In its Cold War policies toward Asia, the United States aimed at seeking economic recovery and geopolitical stability while controlling the process. Along with securing Southeast Asia as an important market and source of raw materials for itself and its allies, the intent was also to rehabilitate Japan and other Cold War allies. In Indonesia these policies resulted in US support for the massive anti-communist purge that began in Indonesia in 1965. This paper intends to show that in Indonesia, the US these policies were a success, as shown by the ouster of President Sukarno and the massive purging of the alleged members of the Indonesian communist party (PKI), as well as the installation of a new and pro-Western government. These successes, along with the benefits that accrued, left the United States reluctant to press the Indonesian government to deal with issues related to the purge. The refusal of the Indonesian government to deal with the 1965 anti-communist purge, in turn, has made it impossible for the purge's victims and survivors to seek justice and reconciliation on the matter. As a result, decades after the end of the Cold War, they continue to suffer from its impact.

Keywords: Cold War, United States, Indonesia, 1965, anti-communist purge, history

Defining the Cold War as "the rivalry that developed between the two superpowers – the Soviet Union and the United States – as each sought to fill the power vacuum left by the defeat of Germany and Japan", Tucker (2017) argues that on each side the rivalry leaders believed that they were compelled to extend their national hegemony to respond to the other's "aggressive" actions. In responding to each other's actions, they used bluff, pride, simple animosity as well as personal and geopolitical ambitions and other means (Tucker 2007: 11).

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When discussing US Cold War policies in Asia, Gaddis (2007) observed that the United States "would seek economic recovery and the geopolitical stability it seemed likely to bring, but only where it could control that process and count on quick results: hence the emphasis on rehabilitating Japan, together with securing whatever markets and raw materials it might need from Southeast Asia" (Gaddis 1997: 62). The US political strategy can be summarised in four important points: 1) during the Cold War the US sought economic recovery in Asia and the geopolitical stability it seemed likely to bring; 2) the US did so only where it could control the process and count on quick results; 3) one of the results expected was the emphasis on rehabilitating Japan; and 4) another expected result was securing whatever markets and raw materials it might need from Southeast Asia.

As one of the countries of interest in Southeast Asia, Indonesia was among the sites for the implementation of these US foreign policies in Asia. This was clearly reflected, for instance, when in 1961 US President Kennedy's undersecretary of state Chester Bowles explained to Indonesia's President Sukarno that US Cold War policies in Asia were intended to help build a "stable group [of] independent Asian nations as [an] offset and counter to Chinese Communist power". This was to be achieved, according to Bowles, by building "an arc of stable and free Asian states based on Japan, Indonesia, India and Pakistan".[1] In a document called "Draft Memorandum on East and Southeast Asia", Bowles further explained that the US goal for the region was: "the gradual economic integration of the free Asian rim land, from Japan and Korea to India and Pakistan".[2] He then stated that "[i]n the long run, such integration is the only viable basis for increasing political cooperation and for coordinated security planning by the free states of the region".[3] Bowles believed that such policies would require the United States to take on the role of a "military shield for the developing nations of South and Southeast Asia" and "the major outside contributor to technical training, economic planning and economic development".[4]

Using these comments on US Cold War policies toward Asia as a starting point, this article will show that in Indonesia, the United States sought to rejuvenate Indonesia's troubled economy under the government of President Sukarno by supporting initiatives to remove the president from power and to destroy the political party that had become the main support for the president, namely the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). When this finally occurred, the

1 Draft Memo on East and Southeast Asia, 20 March 1962, Thompson Papers, Box 7, John F. Kennedy Library, pp. 26–27.

2 Draft Memo on East and Southeast Asia, 20 March 1962, Thompson Papers, Box 7, John F. Kennedy Library, pp. 28.

3 Draft Memo on East and Southeast Asia, 20 March 1962, Thompson Papers, Box 7, John F. Kennedy Library, pp. 28–29.

4 Draft Memo on East and Southeast Asia, 20 March 1962, Thompson Papers, Box 7, John F. Kennedy Library, pp. 32.

US began to help the succeeding government repair Indonesia's economy while encouraging the government to open its doors to foreign investment, particularly from Japan. Of course, this enabled the US itself to gain better access to Indonesia's market potential. At the same time, the departure of President Sukarno and the destruction of the PKI opened new opportunities for the exploitation of Indonesia's raw materials by the US and its allies.

The following findings are based on library research, especially on literature concerning US policies toward Indonesia during the Cold War and the 1965 anti-communist purge. The paper particularly relies on the research of John Lewis Gaddis (2007), who investigated materials available after the end of the Cold War, and research done by Bradley Simpson (2010), whose use of primary documents from the US National Archives revealed the strong connection between US Cold War policies toward Indonesia and the reorientation of Indonesia's economy and politics after 1965. While Gaddis excellently summarised his observations on US Cold War policies in Asia and Simpson brilliantly described the important role of the US in the changing of Indonesia's economic and political orientation, neither discussed the impact of the purge on the Indonesian government and the victims of the purge. Therefore, this paper intends to continue and enrich their studies by further exploring the missing period. The results are presented using the narrative-analytical method defined by Loeb et al. (2017) as a "descriptive analysis [which] characterizes the world or a phenomenon by identifying patterns in data to answer questions about who, what, where, when, and to what extent" (Loeb et al. 2017: vii). We will thus examine this period to guide us through an overview of the Cold War policies of the United States in general and their impact on Indonesia in particular.

US Cold War policies in Indonesia

Although not a major site in the Cold War, Indonesia was deeply affected by the international rivalry. This was true especially when the two chief opponents in the rivalry, the United States and the Soviet Union, sought to carve out a sphere of influence in Indonesia (Wardaya 2007). When the US began to implement its Cold War policies toward Asia, it made Indonesia a major focus in Southeast Asia (Gaddis 2007). As mentioned above, the US policies comprised efforts to pursue economic recovery and geopolitical stability; to control the process and count on the results; to rehabilitate Japan; and to secure Southeast Asia for its market and as a source of raw materials.

In the case of Indonesia, the implementation of these policies resulted in US support for the ouster of President Sukarno and the massive anti-communist purge that swept Indonesia in 1965 and afterwards. The purge – also called

the "1965 Affair" the "1965 tragedy", "1965 events" or simply "65" – resulted in mass killings of civilians and was one of the largest mass killings during the Cold War period. As Geoffrey Robinson has stated, it "was comparable to some of the most notorious campaigns of mass killing and imprisonment of the post-war period, including those that occurred in Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda" (Robinson 2018: 4). Moreover, the purge "far surpassed other campaigns that have become iconic symbols of authoritarian violence in Latin America, such as those in Argentina and Chile" (Robinson 2018: 4).

Seeking economic recovery and geopolitical stability

In the 1960s, the US was concerned about the economic instability of Indonesia. This was because the country's economy was in very serious trouble, which was feared to have implications for other Southeast Asian nations. While the Bank of Indonesia was running a US$300 million foreign exchange deficit, the industrial sector was barely able to manage, due to the difficulties in accessing foreign commercial credit, spare parts and raw materials (Simpson 2010: 164–165). In such a situation massive capital flight occurred while corruption was rampant. For ordinary Indonesian families it was even difficult to satisfy their daily basic needs. After returning from a visit to Jakarta, an IMF official described the debt level of Indonesia as not only bad but also "extremely unusual – a debt probably worse than any other case in recent history".[5] The economic situation was so unstable that the government was unable to formulate a 1965 budget (Simpson 2010: 164–165).

In politics, beginning in 1950 Indonesia had embraced the parliamentary system of democratic government. However, due to frequent unresolved rivalries among the existing political parties and pressures from the Army, in 1959 the system was abandoned. Influenced by the Army, President Sukarno discontinued the parliamentary system and replaced it with what he called a "guided democracy", in which he ruled as a near-absolute leader. Under this "guided democracy" Sukarno built close relations with the PKI. He even increasingly relied on the communist party for political support. This development worried Washington. Concerned about the growing threat of the communists, "US officials [...] looked to the [Indonesian] armed forces as a counterweight" (Simpson 2010: 32). They believed that "[s]o long as Sukarno remained in power and the Army remained on the defensive, the PKI would continue to grow in strength, until Indonesia eventually became a 'modified Communist regime'" (Simpson 2021: 138). Soon US policymakers began to look for an opportunity that could be used as a trigger to change Indonesia's economic and political direction. In particular they looked

5 Memo of Conversation, "Indonesian Economic Stabilization and Debt Rescheduling", 26 July 1966, Record Group 59, Central Files, 1964–1966, E 1, Indonesia, United States National Archives.

for a pretext that could be used to remove President Sukarno from power and to destroy his main political support – the PKI.

The opportunity came when in the early hours of 1 October 1965, a group of left-wing Army officers, who called themselves *Gerakan 30 September* or the "September 30th Movement", launched a secret military operation in Jakarta. They kidnapped and killed six generals, who were the top leaders of the Indonesian Army (Hearman 2018: 12–13). Before it was clear who the culprits behind the military operation were, one of the surviving Army commanders, the right-wing Major-General Suharto, claimed that the PKI was the sole mastermind of the killings. Under Suharto's command, all newspapers were ordered to close, except two Army-owned newspapers.[6] The claim that the PKI was the mastermind of the incident was subsequently used by Suharto and his supporters as a pretext for a nation-wide military operation to purge members of the PKI and those suspected of having a connection with the communist party (Roosa 2008).

The purge began in mid-October 1965 when victims were apprehended, detained, interrogated and tortured. Many of them were taken to special sites where they were summarily executed. Their bodies were buried in makeshift mass graves or thrown into nearby rivers (Cribb 1991: 81, Robinson 2017: 474). In the ensuing operation, the purge not only targeted PKI leaders and official members but also members of organisations that were considered to have a connection with the party (Cribb 1991, McGregor et al. 2018). Beginning in 1969 those who had survived the detentions and mass killings in Java were sent to Buru Island, a penal island located in the Moluccas, in the eastern part of the country.

The anti-communist purge took place in different parts of Indonesia, from Aceh in the northernmost territory of the country (Melvin 2018) to the island of Timor in eastern Indonesia (Kolimon et al. 2015). The heaviest purges, however, took place in the provinces of Central Java, East Java and Bali (Cribb 1991). The main perpetrators of the violence were military personnel, but in the actual killings they were often aided by members of anti-communist paramilitary and civilian groups (McGregor et al. 2018: 14.) In total, it was estimated that at least half a million Indonesians were killed in the purge (Kammen / McGregor 2012, Robinson 2018, Hearman 2018).

After destroying the PKI and other leftist elements, Suharto moved to gradually evict President Sukarno from his position. On 11 March 1966 he pressured the president to sign a letter which would give him "executive authority" (Robinson 2018: 65). With this letter in hand, Suharto became the *de facto* leader of Indonesia. He immediately seized the moment by removing all obstacles to his effort to take over the nation's highest office. In March 1967 the Indonesian Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (whose membership Suharto

6 Namely *Angkatan Bersendjata* and *Berita Yudha* (Hearman 2018: 71).

had modified) declared Suharto as Acting-President, and in March 1968 it declared Suharto the President of Indonesia – Sukarno's rule was officially over. Suharto, as the all-powerful new leader of Indonesia, established a government called *Orde Baru* or the "New Order" (Robinson 2018: 3).

The United States welcomed the new government, especially knowing that Suharto was willing to reverse many of President Sukarno's policies, particularly by opening itself up to close collaboration with the US and its Cold War allies. The July 1966 edition of the US-published *Time* magazine, for example, exalted the destruction of the Indonesian communists as "the West's best news for years in Asia" (McGregor et al. 2018: 2). For the adherents of the so-called "domino theory" (Tucker 2007: 26), the defeat of the communists in Indonesia was a particular source of relief. For them, preventing Indonesia – an important "domino" in Southeast Asia – from joining the communist side of the Cold War was indeed necessary to prevent other "dominoes" in the area from following suit. Moreover, the defeat of Indonesian leftist elements was equally necessary to open doors for US economic interests as well as geo-political interests in Southeast Asia.

Controlling the process and counting on quick results

On the surface, the removal of President Sukarno from power and the destruction of the PKI appeared to be simply an Indonesian domestic affair, in which the United States was merely a passive bystander that was grateful for these circumstances. But a deeper look shows that this was not the case. As the events in Indonesia unfolded, the US was closely observing. As part of its Cold War policies toward Asia, Washington was actively (albeit covertly) supporting the elements within the Indonesian Army that worked to ouster Sukarno and destroy the communist party. Even if American officials were not in total control of the events, they tried to intervene as much as they could to influence the dynamics of the process, anticipating that, as Gaddis observed, the results of the process would serve US interests.

Prior to the 1965 purge in Indonesia, for instance, US Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Roger Hilsman had stated that the United States was "in a position to press discreetly for a re-direction of Indonesia's economy toward a more rational pattern which cannot help but affect the country's political orientation".[7] This statement clearly reflected Washington's desire to control the economic and political dynamics of Indonesia.

For US foreign policy officials, especially for those who subscribed to the "domino theory", there had been a strong view that a failure to prevent Indonesia from being taken over by the communists would cause other nations of

7 Letter from Hilsman to Cornelius Gallagher, 12 July 1963, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1963, POL 1, Box 3940, United States National Archives.

Southeast Asia to follow and "fall" under communist domination (McGregor et al. 2018: 9). The fact that despite maintaining relations with the West, Sukarno had also been maintaining close relations with the socialist bloc of the Cold War certainly worried these officials. They were similarly upset that during the first half of the 1960s PKI membership had continued to increase and that Sukarno was building an ever-closer alliance with the political party. Even as he moved closer to the socialist countries, US officials observed, Sukarno began to distance himself from the West, such as by withdrawing Indonesia as a member of the United Nations and forming the so-called CONEFO (Conference of the New Emerging Forces) in January 1965 as a challenge to the UN (Hearman 2018: 12).

Responding to these political dynamics in Indonesia, the United States did not want simply to watch events unfold. Instead, it decided to get involved, albeit secretly. As Simpson explained, "for Washington to stand by helplessly while the world's fifth largest country 'went Communist' would present one of the great anomalies of the Cold War" (Simpson 2021: 146). To prevent this from happening, Simpson further explained, policymakers in Washington sought to implement an "expanded program of covert action to exploit the increasing social and political polarization in Indonesia and to provoke a violent clash between the Army and the PKI or a military coup against Sukarno" (ibid.: 146). More explicitly, US officials worked "to entice the PKI into a coup attempt or some other rash action in the hopes of provoking a violent response by the Army" (ibid.: 174).

In August 1964, US officials began to work on intensifying the rivalry between the PKI and the Army. This was necessary to create a particular political situation in which there would be a confrontation between the PKI and the communist supporters on one side, and the Army with its anti-communist forces on the other (Simpson 2013: 45). The idea was to create a situation in which the PKI would be provoked to launch a coup, but a coup that could be easily suppressed. Reflecting the intention to create such a situation, in February 1965 United States Ambassador to Indonesia, Howard P. Jones, said: "From our viewpoint [...] an unsuccessful coup attempt by the PKI might be the most effective development to start a reversal of political trends in Indonesia."[8]

Soon the US government under the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, with the support of US Cold War allies, began to seek ways to provoke the PKI into launching a coup. One of their methods was to spread propaganda that the Army was planning to stage a coup, to lure the PKI to pre-empt it. To give the impression of a political crisis, the administration began to recall its diplomats from Jakarta, claiming that this was done in anticipation of a "coup" by the Army (Roosa 2013: 31).

8 Presentation by Howard Jones at the 1965 Chief of Mission Conference, n.d. Howard Jones papers, Box 22, Hoover Institution.

As the Indonesian Army carried out the anti-communist purge, the US government was closely following what was happening (Simpson 2013: 43). From Jakarta, the new US Ambassador Marshall Green assured Secretary of State Dean Rusk that the reemergence of the PKI was being prevented: "The Army, as well as Moslem political groups who have vested interest in preventing the resurgence of the Communist that has been decimated by wholesale massacre," he told Rusk, "will prevent a renaissance of the PKI."[9]

As the massacres were being conducted, the US was also providing the Indonesian Army with small arms, communication equipment and medical supplies. Despite its limited amount, the aid that Washington provided was an important gesture towards the Indonesian Army. For the Army, the assistance was a sign that Washington did not object to the ongoing purge. Instead, Washington was giving the "green light" for the "wholesale massacre" (van Klinken 2016: 99). At about the same time, Robert Martens, an American Embassy official in Jakarta, was helping the Indonesian Army by providing lists and details of known communists, which later were used by the Army to track down the communists to arrest or execute them (Kadane 1990: 1, 22).[10]

When eventually Sukarno was removed from power and the PKI, too, disappeared from the Indonesian political scene, the United States moved to help Indonesia's economy recover, thereby providing political stability (Simpson 2010).

Rehabilitating Japan

Gaddis's observation about rehabilitating Japan as part of US Cold War policies in Asia also clearly reflected US policies toward Indonesia. When the process of removing the threat to US interests in Indonesia was completed, the United States began to help the Suharto government re-direct the country's economic and political orientation in a way that would be beneficial to the US and its allies, especially Japan. Considering Indonesia's previous policies to have been anti-Western and closed to foreign investment, the US encouraged the Suharto government to build close collaboration with the US and its allies.

Among the assistance that the United States offered to the new government was to coordinate financial aid for Indonesia in order to rebuild the country's economy. However, the US did not want to do this task directly. Instead, it asked Japan to carry out the task, although certainly under US supervision. This was in part because at this time the US government was facing congressional restraints on foreign aid and also because the US was focusing on the conflict in Vietnam (Simpson 2010: 212). According to Simpson (2010: 212), "US officials still saw integration with Japan and the regional economy as the

9 Memorandum of Conversation, Document No. 191, 14 February 1966; see also Keefer 2001.

10 Not all American politicians, however, agreed with what Washington was doing in Indonesia; see van Klinken 2016: 105. See also Bellamy 2012: 211.

logical goal of Indonesian development and consequently desired that Tokyo carve out a role commensurate with its interests". These officials believed that "the economies of Japan and Indonesia are complementary" (Simpson 2010: 212) and that compared to any other country, Japan was the country that most needed Indonesia's raw materials, especially oil.

Japan was more than happy to accept. Believing that "Japan should play a leading role in constructing the Indonesian economy" its foreign minister promised that his government would make assistance to Indonesia a "high priority" (Simpson 2010: 212). The foreign minister knew that by coordinating international financial assistance and closely collaborating with the new government, Japan would have greater access to Indonesia's raw materials. Moreover, he also knew that this effort would help Japan to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of Indonesians, since during the Second World War Japan had conquered Indonesia under brutal military rule and had stolen millions of barrels of oil from the country (Simpson 2010: 100).

Officials in Washington were pleased with Tokyo's cooperation, believing in the importance of a "close liaison with [the] Japanese" while viewing Japan as the "only major free world country able to exert substantial influence in Indonesia".[11] In the words of James Thomson, a foreign policy official at the Johnson Administration, "[t]he Japanese are being set up as our front men".[12] While tasking Japan with the coordinating job, the United States was also hoping to assist the Indonesian Army in building a regime of government that was not only moderate and responsible, but also economic-minded (Simpson 2010: 207).

It should be noted that, like the United States, Japan was not merely a bystander in the process of unseating president Sukarno in 1965, nor was it a passive recipient in the outcome of the changing of government in Indonesia. It had worked hand in hand with the United States in the process of ousting the president. In late October of 1965, for instance, while Sukarno was still officially President, Japan had covertly shifted its support from Sukarno to Suharto. It had also secretly sent rice and textiles to opponents of President Sukarno. At the same time Japan was also suggesting that other countries "do something extra in the field of economic assistance for Indonesia" and claiming that an Army-dominated government would be "so much better" for the country.[13]

11 Telegram 1623 from Tokyo to State, 4 November 1965, Record Group 59, Central Files, 1964–1966, POL 23-9, Indonesia, United States National Archives.

12 Note from Thomson to Komer, 18 March 1966, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume 26, p. 422.

13 Telegram 1623 from Tokyo to State, 4 November 1965, Record Group 59, Central Files 1964–1966, POL 23-29, Indonesia, United States National Archives.

Markets and raw materials

Reflecting Gaddis's observation, the opening of Indonesia's doors for foreign investment, in turn, also provided the United States with greater opportunities for access to Indonesia as a market for its exports, as well as those from Japan and other Cold War allies. The departure of President Sukarno and the destruction of the PKI were almost immediately followed by negotiations between the new Indonesian government and foreign investors. According to Simpson, beginning in early 1967 "a steady stream of prospective foreign investors descended upon Indonesia. […] Scores of US companies sent representatives to Jakarta during the first half of 1967. [...] The bulk of them were small or medium-size firms involved in raw materials extraction and production: mining, timber, independent oil, chemical and fertilizer companies, and the banks that financed them" (Simpson 2010: 243). In April 1967, for instance, two trade missions came to Jakarta from Oregon and San Francisco. They came to represent "midsize firms exploring concession possibilities in timber, plywood, chemicals, mining, and oil".[14]

The arrival of US companies in Indonesia was soon followed by companies from US Cold War allies, such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia and France (Simpson 2010: 244). Within a few months after the arrival of trade missions, executives from leading firms met with top officials from Indonesia's new government in Geneva, to discuss the newly-opened opportunities to invest in Indonesia (Simpson 2021: 245). It was not surprising, then, that in October 1967 the American Embassy in Jakarta reported to the US States Department that the Hotel Indonesia, the main hotel of Jakarta, was "crowded with businessmen from the US, Western Europe, Japan and neighboring Asian countries" seeking investment opportunities.[15]

Among the arriving American companies, a mining company called Freeport Sulphur was probably one of the companies that benefitted most (Poulgrain 2020: 251). Even as the anti-communist purge was still taking place in parts of the country, officials from the company were already negotiating with the Indonesian Army to cut a deal to exploit the gold mine located in West Irian, now West Papua (Poulgrain 2020: 256, 261; Simpson 2010: 231–232). Called "Erstberg", the site being negotiated was one of the largest copper and gold deposits in the world (Poulgrain 2020: 256). According to Poulgrain, by 2011 the company "was one of the two largest mining enterprises in the world", with an overall revenue of just under US$19 billion in 2010 (Poulgrain 2020: 262). According to one report, in 2018 alone Freeport Sulphur (now called Freeport Indonesia) accumulated profits as high as US$4 billion dollars.[16]

14 Indonesia Bi-Weekly Economic Summary, 18-31 April 1967, Record Group 59, SNF, 1967–1969, E 2-2, Indonesia, United States National Archives; AICOC Information Bulletin 830, April 1967.

15 Airgram A-189 from Jakarta to State, 14 October 1967, Record Group 59, SNF, 1967–1969, E 2-4, Indonesia, United States National Archives.

16 https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2018/12/20/ (accessed 13 June 2021).

The opening of Indonesia to Western nations' markets became public when in April 1967 the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States declared that the new government of Suharto had abandoned the policy of "rigid state control of the economy" pursued by the previous government and was now willing to open itself to market forces. The same ambassador also encouraged the United States and other nations to "cooperate with Indo[nesia] under favorable terms in developing the nation's rich natural resources".[17] From that time onward foreign companies competed with each other to gain market share in Indonesia. As reported by the Dutch newspaper *De Volksrant*, a "fierce international competitive struggle for a favorable position in the Indonesian market has broken out".[18]

Since then, US exports to Indonesia have continued to increase. By 2019, for instance, Indonesia was the United States' 34th largest goods export market, worth US$7.7 billion. As reported by the US government, US exports to Indonesia include mineral fuels, oilseeds, oleaginous fruits, machinery, wood pulp, food waste, animal feed, soybeans, cotton, wheat, dairy products, distiller grains and services exports such as travel, financial services and intellectual property.[19]

Impact of US Cold War policies toward Indonesia

For the United States, the ouster of president Sukarno and the PKI from the Indonesian political scene meant the removal of two major obstacles to the integration of Indonesia into the Western political and economic system (Simpson 2008: 2). The integration was seen as necessary, since the archipelagic nation of Indonesia was not only rich in natural resources, but also the largest nation in Southeast Asia, while strategically located between mainland Asia and Australia. To guarantee that its political and economic regime would not turn again to the "wrong" side, the US and its Cold War allies supported the authoritarian Army-dominated government of President Suharto. During the post-1965 period the support of this government resulted in an obvious reluctance to press the Suharto regime to deal with the 1965 mass killings. Consequently the 1965 Affair left compelling and lasting legacies in Indonesia until today, as for example:

17 "International Envoy Stresses Nation's Needs, Chances for Private Firms to Aid Development Effort Profitably" (International Commerce, 17 April 1967); "Indonesia Enacts More Measures to Attract New Investors, Bring Back Firms Formerly Active There" (International Commerce, 15 May 1967); "Post-Sukarno Welcome Mat: Indonesia Courts Firms It Earlier Ousted in Bids to Improve Deteriorating Economy" (Wall Street Journal, 18 April 1967).

18 Airgram 806 from The Hague to State, 26 May 1967, Record Group 59, Central Files, 1967–1969, T7, Indonesia-Netherlands, United States National Archives; Winters 1966: 57.

19 Official Website of the Office of The United States Trade Representatives, https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/southeast-asia-pacific/indonesia (accessed 10 June 2021).

1) *A long-ruling undemocratic government*. The "success" of the anti-communist groups in the 1965 purge ushered in President Suharto's government, which was militaristic and authoritarian (Challis 2001). During its three-decade rule (1966–1998), public discussion on issues related to the 1965 massacres was forbidden. People were allowed to discuss the issues only if the discussion was along the lines of the government's narrative of the 1965 events (Bevins 2020). To prevent people from creating their own narratives, the government produced and used a particular narrative of the 1965 Affair resting on two basic assumptions: the PKI was the sole mastermind of the 1 October 1965 incident, and the subsequent massacres of the suspected members of the PKI were thus justified. These two points were needed by the Suharto government to rationalise its rule and to control people's memory of the massacres. From the *de facto* transfer of power from Sukarno to Suharto in 1966 until the latter's fall in 1998, the government unswervingly exploited the narrative of the 1 October incident and the mass killings of 1965 as a "master narrative", giving rise to policies that warranted the "dominant role of the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) in the nation's life, the circumscription of political parties, Islam, and civil society, and the ruthless suppression of dissent" (Simpson 2008: 2).

Throughout the government's militaristic rule, these policies resulted in unspeakable human rights violations, superficial stability in the name of *pembangunan* ("development"), excessive use of state violence, manipulated general elections and the repression of civil society (Simpson 2010). In the meantime, during the same period many foreign companies invested in extractive mining operations, which over the years seriously harmed the Indonesian environment, such as the gold and copper mining operations in Papua.[20] Likewise, substantial damage was done to Indonesia's tropical rainforest due to similar extractive mining activities in many other parts of the country (Simpson 2008: 258). Even years after Suharto's reign had ended, Indonesia was still haunted by its legacies of widespread corruption, repression of freedom of speech, environmental degradation and the use of religion for political purposes (Simpson 2010: 4).

2) *A culture of denial*. From the early days of its rule, the government of President Suharto persistently denied any concept of truth-telling about the 1965 massacres. It rejected any narrative that was different from the "master narrative" it had created and refused to have an open discourse on the massacres. On the contrary, shortly after taking power, the Suharto government produced narratives that repeated the claim of PKI's central role in the killings of the generals and that served to justify the anti-communist massacres.[21]

Instead of allowing any open discourse about the massacres, the Suharto government relentlessly produced anti-communist propaganda. The propaganda

20 For the history and politics of the discovery of the gold and copper mines in Papua see Poulgrain 2015.

21 Among others, the Suharto government published a monograph on a "coup attempt" by the September 30 Movement in Indonesia. See Notosusanto / Saleh (1971).

was not only directed against the PKI but also against 1965 survivors and their families – or against anyone who entertained leftist ideas (McGregor et al. 2018: 16). With this propaganda the government continuously "warned" the people of the *bahaya laten* ("latent danger") of the PKI and leftist ideas in general. One of the government's aims in creating such a narrative and propaganda was certainly to generate fear among the populace so that it would be easy to control them (Marching 2017: 17–38).

Under Suharto's rule, no one responsible for the massacres was ever held accountable for what they had done. Rather, they were regarded as "heroes", amongst which Suharto was one. Meanwhile, the victims of the massacres were considered to have deserved their punishment because they had participated in a coup against a legitimate government. Not a single effort was made by the Suharto government to deal with the massacres or to open any dialogue with the massacres' survivors (Santoso / van Klinken 2017).

In 1998 the Suharto government fell, but its legacy of denial continued. The narrative on the PKI as the mastermind of the 1 October 1965 killings of the generals remained. Likewise, the propaganda about the PKI as a latent danger did not cease. This remained the case even as no official policy by the government was ever issued to address problems related to the 1965 mass violence, let alone alleviate the sufferings of its survivors. At the same time, propaganda on the importance of preventing the revival of the PKI (*kebangkitan* PKI or PKI *baru*, "new PKI") can be found everywhere, as if the PKI was still in existence. In state schools, students learn about the 1965 Affair only from textbooks that tell solely the government's version of the events. Even today, many official archives on 1965 are heavily guarded by the government (Eickhoff et al. 2017: 455).

In 2004 the Indonesian parliament passed a law on the formation of a truth and reconciliation commission to deal with the events of 1965. But in 2006 the Constitutional Court declared that the law was unconstitutional and repealed it. Since then, efforts to revise and revive the law have been unsuccessful (Hearman 2018: 3, Eickhoff et al. 2017: 455). In 2008 the government assigned the National Commission on Human Rights (*Komnas* HAM) to investigate gross human rights violations during the 1965 Affair. For three years the commission conducted nationwide research and investigation into the events of 1965. When in 2012 the commission submitted an 850-page report, the government simply rejected it (Eickhoff et al. 2017: 455).

3) *Suppression of discourse.* In line with the Suharto government's legacy of denying truth-telling about the events of 1965, succeeding governments also suppressed attempts outside the state's control to discuss topics related to the 1965 tragedy. Any event that the government thought could challenge its official narrative of the 1965 Affair would be attacked by paramilitary groups,

often accompanied by the local police. As Eickhoff et al. (2017: 458) put it, "efforts to suppress demands for justice continue actively, both as a matter of public policy and among shadowy civilian groups enjoying military protection".

In September 2017, for instance, a mob of hundreds of people surrounded and attacked a legal aid centre in Jakarta where scholars and 1965 survivors were going to have a public event on the 1965 tragedy. For two days the centre and surrounding area were attacked and seized by the mob, with many aging survivors inside fearing for their lives. The attack ended only after the police intervened and dispersed the mob (Hearman 2018: 3).[22]

When in April 2016 the government sponsored a national symposium on 1965, many people came to join. They were excited about the symposium, thinking of it as a sign that the Indonesian government was finally willing to deal with the issues of 1965. To the excitement of the 1965 survivors and activists, at the end of the event recommendations for resolving the problems from 1965 were declared. But as time went on, the recommendations were never transformed into government policies (Santoso / van Klinken 2017: 594–608).

When Joko Widodo, a former businessman, was elected president in 2014, there were hopes that he was going to take the initiative to address the issues of 1965 and open the discussion. After all, in his presidential campaign, he had been supported by democracy and human rights activists. Born in 1961, he was only four years old when the 1965 massacres took place, and therefore needn't fear being labelled a "communist" even if he chose to help the 1965 survivors. Again, however, the hopes were dashed. In October 2015 Widodo said that he would not apologise to the victims of the 1965 mass violence. Similarly, in June 2017 the president blatantly and almost literally repeated Suharto's expression in suppressing his political opponents when he said: "Show me a PKI member, [and] I'll bash him" (Rizal 2020: 262).

4) *The survivors' suffering*. Today many of the purge's survivors are still traumatised by what they endured during the violence of 1965 and afterward. They still carry with them the stigma of being "traitors" to the nation. Many of them remain afraid to discuss their experiences except to personally trusted persons (Bevins 2020: 253, Marching 2017). In their advanced age, many of the survivors live in abject poverty and are socially marginalised, with very limited access to economic support and health services. Often, family members of 1965 survivors are also afraid to say anything about their family background, as if their parents or grandparents were criminals. As Bevins (2020: 251) describes, in Indonesia being considered a communist "marks you for life as evil, and in many cases, this is seen as something that passes down to your offspring, as if it were genetic deformity".

22 See also https://nasional.tempo.co/read/910039/detik-detik-penyerangan-kantor-lbh-jakarta/full&view =ok (accessed 25 May 2020).

Not surprisingly, decades after the former political prisoners were released from prison, they still carry with them the stigma of being "communist" and "traitors to the state". Because of this, they have had to remain watchful (*berjaga-jaga*) against any undesirable consequences (Roosa et al. 2004: 137). For them, the legacies of the 1965 Affair continue and are still being lived every single day of their lives. Examples of the affairs' survivors who had to carry such stigma can be found in the life stories of former political prisoners such as Magdalena Kastinah (Rahayu / Ismunanto 2018: 45–54), Toegiman Tugiatmojo (Tugiatmojo 2018: 27–29), a man from the Ledhok Ratmakan neighborhood in Yogyakarta (Wardaya 2013: 129–130) or a woman from the village of Prambanan, Yogyakarta (ibid.).

As Subrahmanyam (2010) noted, with the signing of the peace treaty in Paris on 19 November 1990 the Cold War officially ended. In Indonesia, however, the legacies of the Cold War continue to persist, as shown by the observations above. At the time of the writing of this article the Indonesian government continues to refuse to acknowledge (let alone apologise for) the mass killings of the alleged communists as part of the implementation of US Cold War policies in Indonesia. Because of this, the impact of the Cold War continues to haunt Indonesia, while the survivors of the purge continue to suffer.

Summary

Gaddis observed that the Cold War policies of the United States in Asia were aimed at economic recovery and geopolitical stability, controlling the process, rehabilitating Japan and opening the Southeast Asian market to foreign investors. However, Gaddis did not discuss how these policies were implemented in Indonesia, especially with regard to the 1965 events. The United States' Asian Cold War policies towards Indonesia became very clear in the position that Washington took towards the ouster of President Sukarno and the mass killings of the alleged members of the PKI, as well as in the emergence of the New Order government. The success of the implementation of these policies and the benefits the United States gained from their implementation made Washington unwilling to press the Indonesian government to deal with the impact of the purge. The absent of such pressure, in turn, left the Indonesian government less willing to deal with the consequences. In this context, it has remained almost impossible for the purge's victims and survivors to seek justice and reconciliation on the matter. For them, even decades after the Cold War, its impact continues to burden them.

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Book Reviews

Mirjam Lücking, *Indonesians and their Arab World: Guided Mobility among Labor Migrants and Mecca Pilgrims*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021. 276 pages, $28.95. ISBN 978-1-5017-5312-1

The Arab community has long been rooted in Indonesia and is assigned a comparatively higher stratum in society compared to other "foreigners" in the country. From the early years of Indonesian or even Nusantara history, the societies of the archipelago dealt with numerous arrivals from Europe, the Far East or other parts of Asia – such as the Portuguese, Dutch, Indians, Chinese, Japanese and Arabs. The role of the Arabs, however, is a particular one, especially for Indonesian Muslims, and they are the focus of this book by Mirjam Lücking.

The Arabs in Indonesia vary in terms of their country of origin in the Middle East. Dating back to the thirteenth century and the introduction of Islam to the archipelago, there have been Egyptians, Swahili, Somalis, Hadhrami (the diaspora from the Hadhramaut in Yemen) and now Saudi Arabians. To Indonesians, however, they are all considered "Arabs" as they all speak Arabic. The admiration of Indonesians for those of Arab descent is evident in the numerous followers of the many schools (branches) of Islam, from Sufi orders to schools of theology. The distinctiveness of this community is manifested in the existence of enclaves of *Kampung Arab* (Arab districts) in many cities and towns in Indonesia even until today.

Mirjam Lücking portrays these people of Arab descent in detail in her work entitled *Indonesians and their Arab World: Guided Mobility among Labor Migrants and Mecca Pilgrims* (2020). Yogyakarta and Central Java, as the heart of Javanese culture, and Madura, with its unique and particular society, prove very interesting as the major research sites. The findings of the ethnographic fieldwork in these three regions provide a rich collection of the views of Indonesians toward those of Arab descent. Interestingly, the admiration of Indonesians for Arabs is due mostly to their religious mastery – as they are from the centre of Islam – as well as their integration culturally into society.

Another interesting aspect of Mirjam Lücking's book is her investigation of the concept of "being Arab" or "Arabness". Many Indonesian Muslims are emotionally attached to Arabs not only in terms of religion but also culturally and economically. Many Indonesians enthusiastically visit Saudi Arabia for motives of pilgrimage (*hajj* and *umrah*), study and work. Upon returning from the Arabian Peninsula, they are to some degree endowed with a certain "Arabness". The author's exploration of many rural areas in Java and Madura through

close observations and deep interviews presents a picture of this perception of "Arabness" among the Javanese and Madurese.

The mobility of these groups is regulated, mediated or controlled by different institutions, which is why Lücking introduces the term "guided mobility". In the last two decades some 220,000 Indonesians annually went on the *hajj* pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, another 600,000–900,000 annually went on an *umrah* pilgrimage (a less strict form) and about 1.3 million Indonesians are working in Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UEA. To organise this mobility many regulations and agencies have been established, either at governmental or private levels. Still, this quite significant mass mobility causes many problems and challenges for Indonesian society. The author portrays these aspects as well, from an interesting angle.

While Javanese may have relatively high perceptions of those who return from Saudi Arabia, especially from *hajj* or *umrah* pilgrimages, conversely there is less respect for migrant workers. Increased engagement in social activities undoubtedly increases the social status of both pilgrims and migrants, however, which is what the writer refers to as social mobility.

Regardless of the prestige of Arabs from the "heartland" of Islam, especially with regard to Islamic teachings or piety, many Indonesian Muslims have different and even negative perceptions of Arabs, especially in light of the latter's treatment of Indonesians and migrant workers. For Indonesians, Arabs may be superior in terms of religious values and wealth, but they believe that Indonesians surpass Arabs in terms of good manners, the perception and treatment of women, and also the democratic level of their country (pp. 117–119).

With the term "Arabisation" Lücking refers to another perspective of the ongoing Islamisation in Indonesia. Currently, increasing numbers of Indonesians are returning from Arab countries. Even as they gain respectful attention from society, the rise in followers of Arabs and Arabness in Indonesia is linked to a certain growing fear among many Indonesians, an "Arab-phobia" (pp. 130–131). The involvement of some Hadhrami-descendants and Saudi-educated Indonesians in certain conservative and extremist ideologies worries some Indonesians, as they fear that such groups might spoil the reputation of a good and tolerant Indonesian Islam. The phenomenon of "Arabness" has become a popular theme in the media – in terms of fashion, music, movies, etc. – and may be seen more as a mixed style integrated into local tastes rather than as a purely Arab import, a view that should ease anxiety about threats to Indonesian culture.

All in all, this is a must-read book for Indonesianists or Indonesians studying Islam in Java and Madura. The author's angle in viewing "Arabs" as an important orientation for Indonesian Islam, and Arabness in Indonesia from a mobility perspective, is interesting, especially through the use of ethnographic methods. Although this work has broadly covered Arabs and Arabness and their connection to migration, it would have been very interesting as well to have in-

cluded the group of Indonesians married to Arabs. The fondness of Indonesians toward Arabs in terms of naming – combining Indonesian and Arabic names – could be also elaborated as a reflection of the social mobility of many Indonesians toward the status of middle-class Muslims. Finally, this volume should provide greater insight into the uniqueness of Indonesian Muslims and stimulate further studies on this fascinating population.

Muhammad Wildan

Kusaka Wataru / Iga Tsukasa / Aoyama Kaoru / Tamura Keiko (eds), 東南アジアと「*LGBT*」の政治—性的少数者をめぐって何が争われているか [*Southeast Asia and "LGBT" Politics: What Is Contested on Sexual Minority?*]. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2021. 388 pages, ¥5,400. ISBN 978-4-7503-5164-3

In March 2020, 34-year-old Hendrika Mayora Victoria Kelan was elected as the chairperson of the Village Consultative Body (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa, BPD) in Habi, a small coffee- and cacao-producing village in East Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia. Under Indonesia's decentralisation policy, such elections are not unusual, and Hendrika's election would have not been anything particular, except for the fact that Hendrika is a transgender person. This makes her the first transgender person to successfully become a public official in Indonesia – a landmark event after more than two decades of Reformasi. However, numerous surveys indicate that many Indonesians do not accept LGBT individuals as equal.

Four years earlier, in 2016, Geraldine Batista Roman was elected as Representative of Bataan's 1st district, making her the first transgender person elected to the Congress of the Philippines. She took up the seat that was previously held by her mother, a common pattern in many political families in the country. Her election was celebrated as a breakthrough for LGBT rights, as the Ladlad LGBT party had failed to win a seat in two previous elections (in 2010 and 2013). However, to date there is no openly gay politician in the Philippines.

These two events may seem unrelated (Hendrika and Roman do not know each other), but they illustrate the contemporary conditions of and challenges faced by transgender people (and the LGBT community in general) in Southeast Asia, a region that has long been known for its sexual and gender diversity. Since the early 2000s, all countries in the region, except Brunei, have established legislation that prohibits any form of discrimination based on sex (and sexual orientation). Nonetheless, LGBT people still find it difficult to have safe spaces. This book takes up these issues in a fresh way with interdis-

ciplinary approaches that make it valuable reading for students of Southeast Asian Studies.

The book opens with a preface by two of the editors, Kusaka Wataru and Iga Tsukasa, on the contested spheres of sexual citizenship and the hegemony of religion and family ideology of the nation state, all areas that LGBT individuals have to negotiate and identify with. The advancement of LGBT rights in the region depends much on how their country's political actors tolerate the LGBT community. On this basis, the subsequent chapters of the book are grouped into six parts that reflect the socio-political conditions of the LGBT community in each country in the region (except Brunei): exclusion, conditional inclusion and social acceptance.

The first part provides an overview of how LGBT individuals are perceived under the dominant cultural values. It consists of two chapters: on the naming and vocabularies (old and new) that express sexual diversity in the region, by Imamura Masao; and on the LGBT representations in Southeast Asian films (produced after 2010), by Sakagawa Naoya.

Part two, on "Nation, Religion- and Family-based Exclusion", consists of three chapters. Okamoto Masaaki discusses the controversial debate on the classification of LGBT as a mental illness in Indonesia (2016–2017); Iga Tsukasa describes the failed LGBT inclusion under the Pakatan Harapan, the ruling coalition in Malaysia (May 2018–February 2020); and Miyawaki Satoshi examines the conservative position of the Philippines' Catholic Church on LGBT, despite social acceptance since the early 2000s.

The book continues with a discussion on how governments (either local or national) develop LGBT-inclusion policies under the logic of capitalism. Here, the development of Pattaya's entertainment district (Thailand) as a welcoming space for LGBT during the Cold War is explored by Hinata Shinsuke. Tamura Keiko presents a paper on Singapore's civil society movement for LGBT rights as human rights (since the early 2000s).

Part four, "Family- and Citizenship-based Conditional Inclusion," written by Oda Nara, focuses on the development of policy and social norms in Vietnam on same-sex marriage and gender change (2015–2020). A column on the burgeoning discussion on LGBT issues in Laos – led by the American Embassy in 2012 – is added by Omura Yusuke.

How government's official policy creates contradictions and exclusion in society is the core question of the next part of the book. The three chapters depict the development of the LGBT rights advocacy movement in Myanmar since the early 2000s (Kojima Takahiro), the social conditions of *bakla* individuals with reference to the LGBT movement in Cebu city (Kusaka Wataru) and the process of institutionalising the same-sex partnership certification system in Osaka, Japan, since 2018 (Shingae Akitomo).

Finally, the sixth part is entitled "Another 'Liberation' in Everyday Politics". Its first article, by Hatsukano Naomi, reflects on the influences of international actors and local human rights NGOs in fostering LGBT acceptance in Cambodia (since the early 2000s); the second, by Kitamura Yumi, focuses mainly on the struggle of LBGT acceptance in Indonesia's Christian churches (since 2016). The book ends with a chapter by Aoyama Kaoru on the complex relations between the market, religion, human rights ideals and the politics of the nation-state in the progress (and regression) of LGBT rights in the region.

This book is the result of a collaborative research project under the support of the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), led by Kusaka Wataru from April 2016 to March 2019. For this project Kusaka Wataru has successfully assembled Southeast Asia specialists from different universities across Japan. As a result, each chapter of the book is written with a deep understanding of each country's social context and with rich references to local/vernacular literatures. Each chapter makes its own contributions to the discussion on specific LGBT questions in a particular Southeast Asian country. In that way, readers can read any chapter according to their own interest or familiarity; they can engage with the thick description and strong empirical analysis. However, this approach limits our reading to the boundaries of each nation-state – an issue of overreliance on specific country-studies that haunts Southeast Asian Studies. It seems there is an underlying presumption that each LGBT question stays isolated and may not necessarily relate or be compared to other countries in the region.

The chapter on the same-sex partnership system in Osaka appears somewhat out of the book's area of focus, especially as the editors do not show its relevance or argue that the Japanese system may provide an alternative model for Southeast Asia beyond the constitutional path that Taiwan has achieved in securing same-sex marriage since 2019. The book also does not discuss the possibility on how ASEAN might offer a supra-national institutional framework for the inclusion of LGBT rights in domestic laws and policies, as the ASEAN SOGIE caucus, the only regional network of human rights activists, has tried to implement since 2011.

The book uses the term "sexual minority" to refer to the LGBT communities in the region. It is a specific term that was first adopted by the Japanese LGBT activists to advance their cause in Japan. It later gained acceptance as the politically correct term, along with the introduction of the same-sex partnership certification system by local governments (since 2015). The book does not discuss whether or how this particular term is suitable to describe or capture the diverse LGBT communities in Southeast Asia and their specific issues as analysed in each chapter. These concerns aside, this book is an important addition to the general discussion of LGBT rights in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Although the book is currently only available in Japanese, students of Southeast Asia Studies who do not read Japanese can benefit from the bibliography as a guide to local references. Furthermore, it can serve as a platform for future collaboration with Japanese scholars.

Jafar Suryomenggolo

Cherian George / Gayathry Venkiteswaran, *Media and Power in Southeast Asia*. (Cambridge Elements: Politics and Society in Southeast Asia). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 71 pages, €15.00. ISBN 978-1-1084-6788-9

In the 2021 World Press Freedom Index (WPFI), which ranks 180 countries, 10 out of the 11 countries in Southeast Asia can be found on the bottom half of the list. Certainly, this has something to do with Southeast Asia's long history of authoritarianism, with censorship policies and threats to journalists that limit media practices. However, classifying the region into free/non-free categories oversimplifies the issue because it negates the positive changes that have occurred in each country.

Even if the media is considered "not free", Cherian George and Gayathry Venkiteswaran argue in *Media and Power in Southeast Asia* that countries in Southeast Asia are "unfree in markedly different ways" (p. 3). The book tries to capture the nuances of these differences within the context of the relationships between the media, government, civil society and the private sector, where structural changes and democratisation processes might or might not be impacted by the changes in relations between them.

The book's main thesis centres on four issues – media freedom, independence, pluralism and safety – whose developments have been challenged by "trends towards commercialisation, digital platforms and identity-based politics" (p. 2). The first chapter criticises the current scientific frameworks on the comparison of media systems, which tend to be Eurocentric; it simultaneously debunks stereotyped concepts such as "Asian values/culture" and "development journalism" (p. 8). Such concepts are often applied uncritically to Asian societies to evaluate their political and media systems using the lens of Western liberal democracy. The current models are not transferable to the colourful Southeast Asian context, which makes modelling the Southeast Asian media system a challenging undertaking. The authors do not attempt to build a model but rather capture these nuances through five analytical themes that structure the book.

Using Malaysia, Myanmar and Indonesia as case studies, the second chapter deals with the question of political change and its effect on media practices

and policies. This chapter traces the role of media and civil society during democratic transitions in those countries. Inevitably, due to its publication date in 2019, the book cannot capture the latest political developments in the three countries, especially in Myanmar and Malaysia, where the old powers returned to their former positions by subverting the power of the reformers. These unexpected events affirm the authors' cautionary statement at the book's conclusion that it is imprudent to make any predictions about political developments in Southeast Asia. Media and power relations in the region should thus be understood as being in a condition of constant flux rather than at rest.

Chapter 3 highlights the persistence of authoritarianism in Singapore through the People's Action Party (PAP), the only regime in Southeast Asia that has ruled without interruption since its first electoral victory in 1959. Many lessons can be learned about Singapore's unprecedented media policy as a supportive instrument of the regime, such as "calibrated coercion" (p. 24) or "differential censorship" and "selective liberalisation" (p. 26). The Singapore experience breaks the tenet of the positive correlation between democracy and the level of socio-economic progress of a country, because although Singapore is categorised as "very bad" (ranked 160th) in the 2021 WPFI, it still enjoys a high-income economy.

The next chapter discusses the enduring themes of media studies, such as media commercialisation, (cross-)ownership and conglomeration. The focus is on the interplay among the political elites, their cronies and media moguls to advance each political and/or business agenda so as to form an oligarchy. On the one hand, politics controls the media to perpetuate the political agenda, especially during an election period. On the other hand, the media can comply for commercial reasons or can criticise the status quo through independent media and media in exile. This chapter is suitably representative because it takes Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, the Philippines, Myanmar and Thailand as its case studies.

Chapter 5 raises a recently popular theme around the globe: the increasing polarisation in society caused by identity-based politics amid soaring open access to media and political space. The state has the ability to implement "selective silencing" (p. 42) to discriminately silence the vulnerable through regulatory instruments controlling defamation, blasphemy, sedition and lèse-majesté. The two case studies for this chapter describe the actions of right-wing intolerant groups, in which certain Muslim groups are the victims of discrimination, in Myanmar, or the perpetrators of persecution, in Indonesia. Social media is highlighted in its capacity as a platform for spreading populist rhetoric and hoaxes by cyber armies that exacerbate the crisis.

The concluding chapter examines the extent to which the internet causes disruption in the political space and democratisation process in Southeast Asia through the examples of Vietnam and Malaysia. The authors identify

three periods of internet adoption in the context of power struggles between the ruling and the opposition parties: the stage where the opposition groups were able to take advantage of this technology, then the stage of repression from the government, followed by internet colonisation by the ruling group to regain control and continue coercion against the insurgents.

The work closes with the statement that democratisation cannot have a singular interpretation. From a theoretical point of view, this plurality of meaning represents the position of the authors, who problematise democracy around "the idea of participation" (p. 10) – that is, where politics and the media are seen as public spheres in which elements of society struggle to send their ideas and opinions across various platforms in an attempt to be relevant.

In contrast to many studies about Southeast Asia that tend to concentrate on internationally applicable concepts rather than genuinely discovering new knowledge from the ground, this theoretical position is in line with the authors' methodological choice, which inductively addresses the dynamics of Southeast Asia's political/media culture. It enriches the theoretical building of media studies as a whole while contributing to scientific debates that question the extent to which a media system can travel to different societies.

It is worth mentioning that the authors are from Singapore (C. George) and Malaysia (G. Venkiteswaran), and there are many case studies from these two countries (e.g., Chapter 3 is almost entirely about Singapore). This leads to the question of proportionality of representation of other nations in the region, with Laos, Brunei and Timor-Leste not represented at all in this study. This oversight – either by choice or limitations of the research – does not increase their relevance in scientific discourses. It is probably the major weakness of this book, which the authors themselves acknowledge on page 3.

The method of comparison of this study, which is not based on countries, is a strength because it serves to break the boundaries of "container thinking" (p. 9,) which sets geographical boundaries on the unit of analysis. By concentrating on case studies, the authors succeed in generating new concepts, something that would be impossible if they deductively applied analytical categories from existing concepts. In general, this method renders the volume sufficiently informative despite its modest page count.

Subekti Priyadharma

Satoshi Nakano, *Japan's Colonial Moment in Southeast Asia 1942–1945: The Occupiers' Experience*. London: Routledge, 2020. Xi, 274 pages, £36.99. ISBN 978-0-3674-8446-0

This quite unusual history of the Second World War in Asia describes the war almost entirely from a Japanese perspective. At its heart are four less-known documents written by four officials in the service of the Japanese army and the colonial administration, who had been sent to different regions of Southeast Asia during the war and produced accounts detailing their findings and experiences. On the basis of their writings, Nakano composes a broadly chronological story of Japanese warfare and administration in the areas under their command. Nakano's argument is somewhat hidden in this narrative: that the attack on and subsequent occupation of Southeast Asia was the key "moment" (as the title states) in the eventual fall of the Japanese Empire.

In the first chapter, Nakano shows that the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) became concerned with Southeast Asia only very late, less than two years before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Once the war had broken out, two schools of thought developed in the course of the army's strategic planning, which are labelled as "seize the moment" and "circumspect". Advocates of the former called for extensive expansion and subjugation of the areas conquered by the IJA, whereas representatives of the latter camp argued for a more comprehensive assessment of Japan's political and more importantly economic interests in the region. They preferred a policy of long-term cooperation to annexation and exploitation.

Chapter 2 addresses the formation of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (GEACPS) and discusses if the "circumspect" camp had any influence upon the decision-making of the Japanese government. The GEACPS was based on the assumption of what Nakano calls a "racial war", a conflict between "the East", held together by the notion of pan-Asianism, and the Western imperial powers. However, as chapters 3 and 4 describe, the scheme was not a panacea for all problems created by the war, and especially the degree of independence enjoyed by the members of the GEACPS remained particularly vexing. The question had initially been left open by way of semantic juggling, promising to give each nation its proper place (*sono tokoro*), but as the economic situation of the GEACPS deteriorated (described in detail in chapter 3), calls for greater independence grew louder among its members. The Japanese eventually found themselves in "a labyrinth with no way out" (p. 177), which forced them to postpone the official inauguration of the GEACPS until November 1943. By then, Burma and the Philippines had been granted independence, though in turn this move angered the Indonesians, who had expected to be given the same status. The collapse of the GEACPS, which is detailed in a rather brief final chapter, seemed a logical consequence of the scheme's inherent contradictions.

Within this narrative of logical consequences and causalities, the author's argument sounds conclusive: that the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia was a crucial factor in the decline of its empire. This argument works of course only on the assumption that Japan having an empire – in Korea, Manchuria and, from 1937, on the Chinese mainland around Nanjing – was justified and unobjectionable. Not only will a Chinese or Korean scholar probably take issue with this premise of the book; it is also interesting to note that Nakano seems to accept some assumptions and claims of the nationalist wing among Japanese historians without discussing (let alone critically examining) their arguments any further. Nakano's reluctance to engage with the wider historiographic debate is certainly a weak spot in his work. However, before the author is accused of colluding with right-wing revisionists it should be remembered here that his aim is to describe the Japanese experience and give an account of the war period from a Japanese vantage point rather than to strive for comprehensiveness or impartiality. Not least, this approach is also reflected in the bibliography, where writings in Japanese clearly dominate those in other languages (mainly English) by far.

But this is not the only problematic aspect of the book, with language also causing confusion on occasion. The book is an English translation from the original Japanese version published in 2012. The translation is generally good, but there are still quite a few examples of poorly constructed sentences or oddly chosen words that puzzle the reader with their obscure meaning. Take the "colonial moment" from the book's title, which doesn't seem to be the best choice to describe a three-year period of war and occupation. Other examples include the "circumspect" approach to dealing with Southeast Asia (p. 28), which appears to mean "comprehensive" or "broader view"; the term "self-existence" (p. 38) instead of "self-sufficiency"; or the use of "scheme" (*boryaku*), where "option" seems a better choice (p. 170). And finally, it remains unclear what the "mechanism of Burma's independence" (p. 172) is supposed to be.

That said, the book is a welcome addition to the literature on the Second World War in Asia, as it provides an informed survey of the internal workings and decision-making of the Japanese government and army command. Even better, these insights come by way of numerous translated extracts from the Japanese sources that form the basis of the book, which are unavailable to scholars not familiar with the Japanese language. Still, a thorough polishing of the language would have enhanced this feature. In contrast to this provision of a multi-faceted picture derived from varied sources, the author seems less interested in their interpretation or in developing an argument – and when the latter does come through, it fails to convince. At the least, some more references to the "bigger issues" that inform historical debates in various ways would have been desirable.

Tilman Frasch

Alain Arrault, *A History of Cultic Images in China: The Domestic Statuary of Hunan*. Translated by Lisa Verchery. Hong Kong / Paris: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press / École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2020. 200 pages, US$60.00. ISBN 978-988-237-105-7 (hb)

This book is an important contribution towards the as yet unwritten history of cultic statues in China. Like most scholars, Arrault sees the advent of Buddhism from the 2nd century CE onwards as a crucial moment, introducing anthropomorphic statuary and ritual traditions of consecration in order to make the divine statues come alive. One might add that there already existed a much older tradition of making representations of humans in China. When placed in graves, such images serve the deceased and even take on their post-mortem punishment instead. Outside the grave they are used to represent a specific person in rituals of healing or harming. These figurines do not serve as an object of worship and they never resemble the persons they represent. In rituals, the connection is made by writing a name on the effigy and/or attaching a birthdate or some part of the person's body, such as hair or nails.

The statues analysed in this book were not collected through fieldwork, but stem from private or museum collections. The French photographer-filmmaker-sinologist Patrice Fava first discovered them on the Beijing art market and his collection forms the core of the materials studied by Alain Arrault. An important task for the author therefore was to reconstruct their socio-religious context, for which he created a detailed database of the more than 3000 statues. One unique feature is that these statues often contain written materials that identify them and list the names of their sponsors and sculptors. As Arrault (pp. 14–16, 19, 20) points out, the oldest known such statue (now in a Chinese private collection) dates back to 1594, and the majority come from the three counties of Anhua, Ningxiang and Xinhua westward of modern Changsha. They reflect a ritual culture also identified as *Meishan* (梅山) that covers southwestern China and is similar to the *Lüshan* (閭山) ritual culture in the Fujianese regions.

The author stresses that the statues came from domestic altars and not from communal temples (pp. 25ff). The physical appearance of the altars is discussed at the end of the book (pp. 148–156). I would have liked a brief comparison with communal statues. Certainly most of the Hunan statues have a connection to the religious world beyond the household. They include national deities such as Guan Yu (關羽), but more importantly the Kitchen God and his wife. Such statues often end up on the domestic altar because of a personal connection between the family and the deity, such as a pilgrimage or support during illness. Unfortunately, the book's discussions of individual deities are not always in line with current scholarship. For instance, rather than during the late Ming (pp. 37–38), Guan Yu was already widely worshipped long before and several temples are attested locally by the early 14th century.

Discussed next are local deities. The reader learns a lot about long-term connections between statues and worshippers, local history as remembered in later stories and ritual traditions. The deities described in this section are predominantly martial figures. One of them had actively fought bandits during his lifetime (pp. 50, 53) and others are known for their exorcist prowess (pp. 53ff). For the ritual masters who worshipped these figures, they were allies in ritual performances.

In the section on ancestors, Alain Arrault argues that the examined statues show that ancestral worship was not limited to the worship of tablets with names written on them. While I agree, these ancestral statues often hold ritual objects (pp. 68ff) and/or contain a consecration document that clearly indicates that the people they represent have been initiated as (lower level) ritual specialists. Thus, they are so much more than ancestors embodying a family line, but powerful figures on a par with ordinary deities. Unlike tablets they can intercede with the supernatural world on the worshippers' behalf. In some cases described in the book I would have been much more sceptical of the historical narrative. It is quite common to claim "Great Ancestors" on the basis of a shared family name to create a link with the hallowed Yellow River plains as the land of origin of Sinitic culture. More plausible are ancestors from nearby (pp. 78ff). These were selected to intercede on behalf of the sponsor(s) of the statues for a specific health benefit (e.g., pp. 79, 85–86, 89–90, 127–128, 129–130, 144) or to celebrate the initiation of the deceased into a higher order (e.g., pp. 80–85, 86–87, 89). As a result, they are much more than regular objects of ancestor worship, but have become deities.

A substantial group of statues consists of the Masters, mostly extra-family figures who were the ritual teachers of the sponsors. To some extent this category overlaps with the earlier category of local deities, who were also martial figures or exorcist masters, but were then more personally connected to the sponsor in terms of ritual transmission.

Compared to the detailed analysis of the statues, Arrault's discussion of the ritual traditions is relatively concise (pp. 103–120 and 157–160). For more detailed discussions we can consult the work of David J. Mozina (*Knotting the Banner*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2021) and others that are still forthcoming. In my opinion, the very fact that these traditions are so important in the documents indicates that these were not purely domestic altars, but had a much broader ritual context. The book's relative lack of background in the ritual aspects does produce some problems: I wonder, for example, whether the name of the ritual tradition of the "Sovereign of the Origin" or *Yuanhuang* (元皇, pp. 112–116) was not originally "Dark Sovereign" or *Xuanhuang* (玄皇). Xuan was an imperial taboo character because of the personal name of the Kangxi Emperor Xuanye (玄燁), which meant that the character was often replaced by *yuan* throughout the Qing pe-

riod. Related to this is the translation "Zhang Zhao the second Lord" for 張趙二郎 (pp. 114–115), which surely means "the two Lords Zhang and Zhao". According to David Mozina (see above, pp. 179–180), the ritual specialist first takes on the body of the first Celestial Master (i.e., Zhang Daoling 張道陵) and then the even more powerful Dark Emperor (Xuandi 玄帝, called Yuandi 元帝 during the Qing), who was named Zhao Gongming (趙公明). "Dark Sovereign" and "Dark Emperor" are essentially synonyms. It made good sense to name one's ritual tradition after this figure.

In addition to the elaborate consecration documents, the statues contain a variety of objects to represent a life force (e.g., medical substances, but unlike elsewhere no dead insects) as well as life in a more literal sense (organs out of silk). Interesting (and new to this reviewer) is the medical discussion of the various healing substances, which might also explain why these statues can be used in praying for health (pp. 130–139).

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, which will provide an excellent starting point to the religious culture of the western part of the Hunan region. Even despite the above mentioned weaknesses, it is a marvellous book. It is well translated, richly illustrated and deals in extensive detail with the domestic statuary of Western Hunan. It is part of a series of books that have already come out or will come out very soon on the religious culture of the region, putting it on the map in the same way that earlier scholarship elucidated the religious culture of Taiwan and parts of Fujian.

Barend ter Haar

Usha Sanyal, *Scholars of Faith: South Asian Muslim Women and the Embodiment of Religious Knowledge*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020. 409 pages, 10 illustrations, $65.00. ISBN 978-0-1901-2080-1

The existing scholarship on madrasas in South Asia, which investigates the sociopolitical aspects of these religious schools, is mostly based on madrasas for male students. Madrasas in South Asia are a parallel system of education for learning about Islam. The subjects one may study include the Qur'an, Islamic theology, Islamic jurisprudence and worship rituals, among others. During the last three decades women's madrasas have become so popular that they now outnumber those for men[1] – a trend that is linked to increasing literacy among women.

The book *Scholars of Faith* by Usha Sanyal takes up this new development and provides a highly welcome addition to the research on madrasas by providing a

1 According to the official website of the largest madrasa examination board in Pakistan, http://www.wifaqulmadaris.org (accessed 15 October 2021).

detailed picture of two madrasas for women: the Jami'a Nur al-Shari'at madrasa in Shahjahanpur, a small town in Uttar Pradesh, North India, and the online madrasa of Al-Huda International. The book's core argument is that the implications of Muslim women's religious education for social change must be understood through the nexus of women's education, the domestic realm and the community. The agency acquired via the attainment of religious knowledge is exercised by women in a context where gender norms constrain their opportunities for action.

The study's strength lies in its combined analysis of the traditional madrasa in North India and the online education course by Al-Huda International. The second half of the book focuses on the latter, a highly structured organisation that emerged in Pakistan in 1994. Since then, Al-Huda International has spread rapidly to other parts of Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora in Great Britain, Canada, the United States and parts of the Middle East. Initially Al-Huda International attracted educated, upper- and upper-middle-class Pakistani women, though currently, its students represent a broad spectrum of income categories. Since its relocation to Canada (and the US), it has especially attracted middle-class, second-generation, English-educated South Asian Muslim women. The online madrasa brings together the diaspora communities and provides a unique space for debate. The students are based in different parts of the world and bring their own perspectives and experiences to the classroom.

After completing their studies, the graduates of both the traditional madrasa and Al-Huda International have to balance their enthusiasm for preaching Islamic values with the societal norms and expectations of their respective environment, with regard to age, gender and their duties towards parents, in-laws and husbands. Madrasas are considered avenues of upward mobility for the students as their knowledge of the shari'a increases. However, if, on the one hand, this education gives them agency, this agency is circumscribed by social norms. The experiences and goals of the students of Al-Huda International and the Jami'a Nur al-Shari'at madrasa are therefore a major research topic of the book.

Scholars of Faith starts with a chapter about the author's field experiences at the madrasa Jami'a Nur al-Shari'at. The male guardians of the madrasa function as the gatekeepers – an image that nicely mirrors the real-life experience of the female students and graduates and a helpful approach to the documentation of the fieldwork findings by the author. She describes the many efforts made by the male administration of the madrasa and its dedicated staff, which is overlooked in many studies. Their detailed biographies inform the reader about the machinery behind a structure that works smoothly despite limited resources. This is followed by a detailed overview of the daily rhythm of prayers and studies inside the madrasa. The detailed narrative about a day in a madrasa boarding school then takes the reader on a journey to the parts where entry is limited. Women's madrasas do not allow the entry of male visitors and the practice of

veiling and seclusion further protects the students from outsiders. The descriptions of the classroom environment take the reader through detailed imagery. These accounts of the students' everyday lives paint a vivid picture of a madrasa's activities and daily routines. The humble living conditions are portrayed without judgement – a rarity in most literature about madrasas.

After these detailed field descriptions Usha Sangyal turns to the question of how young South Asian women apply the teachings of the madrasa to their daily lives and how they balance them with their place in public and private spheres. The fifth chapter provides examples by following the life trajectories of some graduates of the two madrasas studied. The author shows that the students' internalisation of the madrasa's worldview gives rise to a sense of obligation to teach what they have learned. Their studies shape their lives after graduation, defining the meaning of life for the former students as well as their rights and duties in the world. However, the trajectories of the graduates profiled are quite different. Some went on to teach at madrasas, while others found this too challenging and left these demanding and low-paid teaching jobs. One of them started a small neighbourhood school for girls, intending to give them basic Islamic classes in the afternoons. She felt that "the girls needed guidance with daily life skills such as how to dress, how to carry themselves, and how to live in an Islamically correct manner" (p. 218). In her opinion the madrasa is a place for discipline and nurture, "which encourages students to develop a habitus through predictable routines and responsibilities throughout the day" (p. 222).

The online madrasa of Al-Huda International emerged as part of a broader worldwide phenomenon of women's movements in the Muslim world that the famous anthropologist Saba Mahmood, who wrote about the mosque movement in Egypt, characterised as "piety movements". Following the same pattern as the description of the Jami'a Nur al-Shari'at madrasa earlier in the book, the book introduces the people behind the organisation in great detail, as well as highlighting the similarities between Al-Huda International and the popular South Asian preaching movement Tablighi Jama'at. The teachings attach great importance to the values of personal piety, patience, adherence to norms of Islamic behaviour, female segregation and the acceptance of male authority in the family. Sanyal contextualises Al-Huda International as a Muslim reform movement, which shares with all the nineteenth-century reformist movements their readiness to adopt the latest technology to disseminate their views as widely as possible. It thus uses a hybrid organisation model incorporating the properties of secular schools and concepts and methods taken from the world of business and marketing, emphasising the optimisation of time, resources and technology to achieve its goals.

The author's observations of the online madrasa are especially interesting since online madrasas are quite a recent format that has grown in popularity during the last 10 years with increased access to the internet. The online platforms

have become particularly important for smaller ex-pat Muslim communities that lack madrasas in their vicinity. The online community of the Al-Huda International "sisters" is based on the shared goal of studying the Qur'an and Islamic teachings, thus providing a powerful source of support and affirmation in a diasporic context.

Al-Huda International is unique, as the organisation is run by Farhat Hashmi, a female scholar whose audio lectures are very popular amongst men and women. In her lectures, also available online and as audio cassettes, the madrasa founder speaks authoritatively, directly and colloquially while paying attention to every detail of the Arabic texts, the literal, figurative, contextual meanings and the association of meanings. She integrates Qur'anic material with modern science, technology and the everyday realities of the students. Her embrace of science and technology in a life lived following the teachings of the Qur'an shows her students that they can become modern, tech-savvy orthoprax Muslim women. She believes that educated women can bring about change in society and "loosen the hold of the ulama on society by studying the Qur'an and finding out for themselves why certain things are forbidden, rather than taking the ulama's word for it" (p. 318). Her exegesis focuses on inner personal transformation as the key to outward changes in behaviour, in order to become a servant of God.

The book highlights that while the acquisition of religious knowledge is empowering, the madrasa graduates in both cases are aware of the need to find a fine balance between their desire to preach what they have learnt and society's expectation of obedience. They must be careful not to transgress gender and age hierarchies and social expectations. The process of change is a negotiation over a lengthy period between the community's expectations of a woman's role and the text-based knowledge of shari'a norms that the madrasa students practice. The study by Usha Sanyal helps understand the subtle differences between the male madrasas, which focus on sharpening sectarian profiles through debates and competitions, versus the female madrasas, which adopt a more subtle approach when expressing their sectarian identity through worship and rituals. The book furthers the discussion of shared concerns arising at the nexus of female religious scholars' agency and social position. Finally, the detailed case studies enable readers interested in gender and Islam to zoom in on the intricacies involved.

Faiza Muhammad-din

Johanna Hahn, *Mythos und Moloch: Die Metropole in der modernen Hindi-Literatur (ca. 1970–2010)*. Heidelberg: CrossAsia E-Publishing, 2020. 284 pages, open access (online) or €26.90 (print). ISBN 978-3-9467-4271-5

The present volume, which is a revised version of a dissertation submitted at Heidelberg University, constitutes an important contribution to the field of modern Hindi literary studies by providing an overview of the most prevalent motifs and topoi occurring in the city-themed novels, short-stories and selected poems. Johanna Hahn explores a corpus of works belonging to the Hindi canon (by Manglesh Dabral, Mridula Garg, Kamleshwar, Sara Rai, Bhisham Sahni and others), without denying the importance of lesser-known narratives, occasionally juxtaposing her chosen works with analogous texts in English, as well as referring to Bangla literature or works of popular culture such as Hindi cinema.

Contrary to its title, *Myth and Moloch: The Metropolis in Modern Hindi Literature (ca. 1970–2010)*, the monograph investigates changes in the North Indian literary sphere beginning from 1947 up to 2010. The scope of the study explains its selective nature, and consequently most of the works are not analysed thoroughly. Instead, the author concentrates on theorising the significance of the city in Hindi literature, as well as answering the crucial question: "Which literary images and conceptions of the city and society are furnished and through what kinds of narrative strategies?" The selection of primary literature was content-driven (or, as the author says, dictated by "content-systematic criteria") and hence, the city appears here not merely as a background but as the core theme of the text.

In her introduction, the author proposes that Hindi urban literature forms a privileged sphere for reflections and critical inquiries concerning modern developments and discourses on social and national belonging, in conscious opposition to global English-language discourses and patterns of interpretation. She further argues that Hindi literature, as a dominant mode of literary production in North India, possesses a certain political power, functioning as an "authentic" mode of representation for non-English speaking readers. At the same time, the author acknowledges the reality of Hindi publishing post-1950s, with writers recruited predominantly from academic circles, often with a Hindi or English literature background, which could explain their interest in combining the potential of Hindi as a "subaltern" medium with postmodern ways of storytelling. The writers of this new generation are, according to Hahn, "creators of the textual city" (p. 226), combining writing and telling, academic competence and journalistic approaches with literary merit.

The author investigates works by more than sixty authors, categorising literary discourse in mainstream Hindi literature on the basis of recurring themes and motifs and subjecting the corpus of urban literary texts to a critical classification with regard to their function and meaning. She uses the concepts

of "urban ethos" (Georg Simmel) and "city as text" as instruments of analysis, seeing her texts as forming and deforming the view people have of a city. Hahn argues that Hindi urban literature has had a stabilising effect on social as well as national identity formation processes of the Hindi-speaking middle classes in India, as can be seen in the continuous use of older figures of thought and models of social utopia.

Focusing on the recurring motifs, Hahn identifies three phases that this genre underwent – the post-1947 phase of industrialisation and modernisation (only marginally treated in the volume); the phase of capitalism and technological development between 1970 and 1990 that saw the proliferation of various utopias and dystopias, themes of fear and alienation, discourses of the self and the other, etc.; and the third, post-1990 phase, characterised by the use of postmodern methods of narration and experimentations with form.

The book is structured along five chapters, followed by a list of Hindi authors (interestingly the Urdu author Saadat Hasan Manto is also included) whose works are discussed in the volume. The first two chapters outline the popular and stereotypical representations of Mumbai as a city of illusions, *urbis prima indis* or a demon, then proceed to the analysis of the most prolific literary topographies – local spaces, such as a tea stand or a footpath, which build a cognitive structure for the perception of the protagonist. Hahn identifies three ways of designing spatial descriptions – the micro view of local spaces, the "supertotal vision" of a flaneur (p. 110) and sensory cognitive triggers. The figure of the flaneur, so well researched in Western literatures, has thus far not been the subject of a thorough investigation in the context of South Asia. The current study, through an examination of dozens of narratives, identifies three distinct shifts between the 1960s and 2010s: from the flaneur as a stranger in the city, to the alienated outsider struggling with the familiar cityscape, to the non-normative, mad figure of the 1990s, reflecting the state of the nation.

Chapter 3 demonstrates the idea of "chaotic modernity" by focusing on narrative responses that entail social critiques and utopian alternatives for sharing the urban space. Works of Rajendra Awasthi, Jitendra Bhatia, Manoj Rupra and others are shown as either subscribing to the ideals of (neo)Marxism or offering conservative critiques of capitalism.

The fourth chapter, "Of Citizens and Strangers: Urban Belonging and Identity", examines postcolonial city literature focused on the protagonists' search for their own and the nation's identity. Hahn focuses on two works published in 2002 by Kashinath Singh and Uday Prakash, presenting two distinctive ways of storytelling. Singh's insider perspective of a Benares *mohalla* (roughly, "neighbourhood") is contrasted with Prakash's non-citizen gaze; both, however, are shown as deconstructing the clichés associated with the traditional ethos of coexistence in a mega-city.

There are some minor inaccuracies in the book, and the quotations are not accompanied by transliteration of the original Hindi if a published English or German translation already exists. Personally, I do not consider this a convincing choice, given the intended academic readership. Transliteration could have helped expose the Hindi terms, scarcely used in the volume, which could have been an excellent occasion to familiarise the readers with the vernacular vocabulary. For instance, the author offers a short investigation of a few Hindi verbs describing activities of the Indian flaneur, the *sarakmāp*. But the reader, confronted with the German translation of a passage from Alka Saraogi's novel, is not able to determine whether the term is used in the text itself or how frequently (p. 115). Not all the titles are accompanied by a date of publication or identification of their genre; for example, short stories include only the date of publication of the collection and not the stories themselves. Considering the number of books analysed in the volume, and the fact that the author switches between periods, languages and genres, often referring to works published before the period in focus, such an omission can create confusion (for instance, Nasira Sharma's short story is dated 2011, thus slightly extending the period declared in the title, p. 93; and Amritlal Nagar's work lacks a genre identification, p. 114). The list of authors at the end of the volume is not particularly helpful, since it does not include the names of the works analysed.

The volume might have profited from engaging in the larger discussion of the vernacular canon (the author herself notices that Hindi city literature does not have a canon, p. 17) or trying to form a more comprehensive aesthetic theory of post-1970 Hindi literature by engaging in the discussion on periodisation and origin of the genre – as do Hindi literature critics such as Gopal Ray, who recently revisited the widely accepted periodisation undertaken by Ramchandra Shukla, or Indranath Madan, who dated the origin of the modern Hindi novel to 1936. Still, the thematic approach presented by Hahn is one of the most practiced in Hindi literature scholarship and engages in a dialogue with similar recent works by Vasudha Dalmia and Nikhil Govind.

One wonders, however, why the author chose the period of post-1947 as her primary focus, since she does not explicitly state her methodological intention in this regard. The pre-1947 literature was also not devoid of city narratives and even earlier authors like Premchand developed an interest in the emerging middle class in urban spaces like Benares at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, considering the wide range of source material analysed, which is a particular strength of the volume, such shortcomings do not diminish the value of the book and it will surely prove to be a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate on world literature and the place of South Asian literatures within this paradigm.

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