

Reliģiski- filozofiski raksti

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Recent Studies on the Interactions Between East Asian, Middle Eastern, and European Cultures in the Context of Contemporary Globalization

This special issue of the *Religious-Philosophical Articles* presents a diverse collection of scholarly works that delve into the rich and multi-faceted cultural, linguistic, philosophical, historical, and socio-economic landscapes of Asia and the Middle East. It places particular emphasis on Korea, China, Japan, and the Arab world within the context of globalization, while also illuminating contemporary issues through the lens of both ancient and more recent histories. The volume explores themes of intercultural exchange, historical evolution, and modern adaptations, offering fresh perspectives on the interactions between Eastern and Western traditions.

The articles dedicated to Korea examine linguistic strategies for language acquisition in cross-cultural settings, the interplay between Christian and Confucian influences in artistic and literary expressions, as well as the conceptual redefinition of identity in the context of globalization and multiculturalism. A comparative philosophical analysis of Korea and China provides deeper insights into shared intellectual legacies and their divergent paths.

The study focused on Japan sheds light on newly uncovered historical connections between Latvia, Japan, and China, offering valuable insights into overlooked cultural and historical linkages.

Regarding the theme of China, the journal encompasses literature, history, philosophy, and social theory. Its articles offer the analysis of Daoist notions of harmony, historical role models, early Han peacekeeping strategies, and the socio-political impact of Lu Xun's revolutionary ideals. Current discussions include the fusion of Marxism with traditional Chinese culture, the implications of digital security legislation, and socio-economic transformations within overseas Chinese communities.

In addition to East Asian topics, contributions related to the Middle East and Arab World focus on religion, literature, and economics. These analyses explore the evolving paradigms of Islamic reformation, models of cultural coexistence in Arab émigré literature, and strategic economic diversification in the Gulf region. Furthermore, the dynamics of China's cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) exemplify the journal's emphasis on cross-regional interactions.

Finally, bridging Asia and Europe, the journal addresses the complex task of translating Buddhist epithets into the Latvian language, highlighting the nuances of linguistic and cultural exchange.

This edition underscores the interconnectedness of global cultures and intellectual traditions, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and innovations that are shaping these regions today.

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Applying the High- and Low-Context Communication Culture Model in the Foreign Language Acquisition Process: The Case of Korean Language in the Latvian Culture Environment

In the global and changing world of the 21st century, the ability to communicate both with representatives of one's own culture and those of a differing one, which requires the learning of different languages, retains importance. However, learning a language is not just about developing certain skills or memorizing grammar. Beyond that, language and its grammar carry information about the culture the language represents and from which it came. The context of language use is equally important, because the employed linguistic tools depend on it. The case of Korean language is a clear example of this – knowing the cultural cues and etiquette is just as important as being able to put together sentences grammatically.

Following the theory developed by Edward Hall regarding high- and low-context communication cultures, this paper examines how the Korean language influenced by its high-context culture is acquired by Latvian students with a relatively lower-context culture as their background. A comparison of cultural practices and their linguistic expressions of both languages is made, enhanced with practical observations of what seems to be the most difficult to acquire from a high-context communication language. It is concluded that it is crucial to have a strong basis of cultural context and that certain aspects of politeness, ambiguous expressions and their practical usage in Korean are the most challenging for Latvian students. It is also concluded that this theoretical examination must be followed by a practical one.

Keywords: foreign language acquisition, cultural context, high- and low-context communication, Korean culture, Latvian culture, applied linguistics

Introduction

In the technological age of the 21st century, the ability to communicate across cultures and languages has become more efficient and simpler due to the advancement of new state of the art technologies, especially the recent boom of LLMs and generative AI. However, it does not mean that this is now the only option or even a preferred way to ensure successful communication. The involvement of humans can still be necessary, especially in case of high-tension and culturally sensitive issues, which is why education in humanities and acquisition of different languages still remain relevant and worth pursuing.

Clearly, learning a new language involves more than developing certain skills or memorizing grammar and vocabulary – language and its grammar carry information about the culture the language represents and from which it came. The importance of cultural context has been much discussed in language education (e.g., in works by Krashen, Byram, Hymes, etc.). Hence, most language textbooks include segments of cultural knowledge and language teachers include anecdotes from their own experience that relate to the culture in which the language is used. However, while there have been attempts to include culture in the language learning process, it can be said that there is still place for some improvement.

The case of Korean language is a clear example, when the cultural context is required to master it; knowing the cultural cues and etiquette is just as important as being able to compose sentences grammatically. From the linguistic perspective, the hardest parts of Korean for speakers of a different language family are certain aspects of pronunciation, learning a whole new writing system, the SOV grammar system and the large amount of grammar points, vocabulary and expressions that have to be mastered. While learning, for example, an Indo-European language when the student already knows a language from this language family, is much less of a problem. Besides all of the aforementioned, the part that can confuse students the most is how and when to use expressions of politeness and grammar with extra connotations in Korean language.

This stems from the lack of knowledge in the language, and, furthermore, from the cultural context thereof.

The current exploratory article will consider this issue in Korean language education through the lens of the high- and low-context culture model, taking examples from the author's own personal experiences teaching Korean language at University of Latvia to students of a Latvian cultural background. The article is divided into an introduction of high- and low-context culture model, followed by an examination of both Korean and Latvian cultures and languages in relation to this model, then provides examples from the learning process and conclusions regarding further research perspectives and improvements.

High/low-context culture model

Among the many cultural theories and models used in cross-cultural communication education, there are few which have been cited as many times as the high- and low-context communication model popularized by Edward T. Hall (Cardon, 2008, 399–400). The proposed theory of contexting and the related model of high- and low-context cultures has largely been explored for economics and business-related studies. In his seminal work “Beyond Culture” (Hall, 1976), which introduced said concepts, Hall talked mostly on the American experience regarding contacts with other comparatively higher-context cultures, while the examples and the overall theory was influential enough to prompt further research, some of which focused on Korea as a higher-context culture (e.g. Kim et al., 1998).

The following quote exemplifies what this cultural model is about.

A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code.
(Hall, 1976, 79, cited in Cardon, 2008, 401)

In other words, a high context involves very little explicit and indirect communication, while a low context operates largely in

explicit and direct communication. Additionally, while this definition encompasses the essence thereof, as Cardon notes in his critical examination of the application of this model, that is as far as it goes. Hall in his later work mostly conducts interviews, but there is little information on the methodology or analysis parts regarding this model (Cardon, 2008, 403). These are the limitations for this model, where there is only a descriptive and largely presumption-based approach, but for the purpose of this exploratory contrast between Latvian and Korean languages and cultures, at present it can be deemed sufficient. Based on this study and the work of other scholars using this model (e.g. Hornikx, & Le Pair, 2017; Wu et al., 2023), a more detailed and data-based and individualistic approach will be developed as part of the author's PhD thesis in the future.

To summarize the main characteristics expected of high-context or context-heavy cultures from Hall's perspective via Cardon – primary messages are implicitly coded, with emphasized politeness and avoidance of conflict; management of information is through ambiguous, slow communication, with special attention to social cues; communication is preferred in person or oral, not written; written communication requires a lot of context; employed language is usually sophisticated, rife with cultural and historical references; truth is relative, and interpretation of rules is quite free, etc. (Cardon, 2008, 418). The usual examples of higher-context cultures include many Asian and Middle Eastern societies, frequently – South Korea. However, it has to be pointed out that assumptions using high/low-context model are just that – assumptions. Thus, the Korean culture in the context of this article will be considered as only a relatively high-context culture that corresponds to some of the criteria.

The opposite side of the spectrum contains low-context (or at least comparatively lower-context) cultures. To summarize the main characteristics, again from Hall's perspective via Cardon – primary messages are explicitly coded and stated at the beginning of communication; issues are openly confronted and politeness is not emphasized; management of information is conducted through precise, detailed and preferably fast

communication, with less attention paid to social cues; short written communication is preferred, not much context is needed due to directness; language employed is usually simple and task-related; truth is absolute and interpretation of rules and contracts is rigid etc. (Cardon, 2008, 418). The examples of low-context cultures include many Western/European societies, sometimes encompassing Baltic countries. It is important to note that Latvian culture has not been considered through this kind of model before, but there are some characteristics which are applicable from the author's own observations, hence, within this article, Latvian culture will be referred to as a relatively lower-context culture.

Notably, the provided characteristics are at the very end of the spectrum in each case and it is better to avoid operating in absolutes, and that all cultures only relatively can be classified as high- or low-context ones, with many typical examples being quite generalized. Other researchers who use this model circumvent this drawback by focusing on the individual context scores of the subjects participating in the research (e.g. Richardson, & Smith, 2007), and this will most likely be the direction of the author's future research. Here, one should consider another important concept proposed by Hall – contexting. In his own words, it is “the process of filling in background data” (Hall, & Hall, 1990, 7). Expanding upon this, it is the ability to fill in the blanks where something is not expressly said, but has to be inferred from social, cultural and other contextual clues. This process differs among individuals, but the cultural background or context of this individual can be considered one of the factors that impacts this process, thus, it is still relevant to first examine the bigger picture and then move on to the individual to see how it is manifested in each case.

Korean culture as a relatively high-context communication culture

As noted above, Korea in Hall's high/low-context culture model is mostly placed between cultures that display high-context communication characteristics. The first noticeable characteristic is the special

attention to politeness that people speaking in Korean must adhere to. Expressions of politeness in Korean are a complex subject¹, especially for second language learners. It is important not only to pay attention to the subject and object in the sentence, which must be shown respect in appropriate circumstances, but it is equally important to show politeness and humility by using appropriate linguistic expression to the addressee or listener. This can be expressed through using different sentence endings, the 1st person pronouns and *hochingeo* (호칭어) or address terms.

Examples:

1. 지민아, 나 간다. (*jimina, na ganda*) Jimin, I am leaving.
2. 선생님, 저 갑니다. (*seonsengnim, jeo gabnida*) Teacher, I am leaving.

Example 1 shows a very close relationship, where the hearer is either a friend of the same age or somebody younger. This can be inferred from the way the other person is addressed, the 1st person pronoun used, as well as the simple sentence ending. On the other hand, example 2 is the complete opposite, where it is clear that a pupil is addressing his teacher, using the appropriate title, a formal 1st person pronoun and sentence ending. It is telling that even without the full background context, we can infer all this just by looking at the employed vocabulary and grammatical structures. Being able to do this can definitely be called a part of the skill in contexting.

These intricate expressions of politeness have remained intact because of the strict hierarchy that was expected in a state run on Confucian ideology during the very long Joseon period, where the teachings emphasize having a specific role to play in one's relationships and respecting the superiors (whether in age or status). Moreover, while state ideology in South Korea currently is no longer Confucianism, nor is the country a monarchy, some of the hierarchical structures and their linguistic counterparts have remained intact. While it is uncertain how

¹ A good overview of this topic in English has been done by Lucien Brown in his 2011 book "Korean Honorifics and Politeness in Second Language Learning".

long they will continue to exist, these expressions currently remain relevant for all Korean language speakers.

Another characteristic of high-context cultures that accompanies paying attention to politeness is avoidance of conflict, as well as ambiguous or indirect communication. In Korean culture, this is well expressed through the terms *nunchi* (눈치) and *chemyeon* (체면). *Nunchi* is the ability to sense what other people are thinking without them explicitly saying so or being able to “read the air in the room” to notice unspoken social cues (Nam, 2015). With *nunchi*, the emphasis is placed on the ability to observe and to listen and with this comes also the ability to stay silent, which in Korea is often praised more than being talkative (Shim et al., 2008, 38). *Chemyeon* is the “face or self-image in relation to others” (Sohn, 2013, 504) and it means watching what one says or what others say, and not inciting unnecessary conflict that could bring shame upon oneself or the other person. This can also be said to be connected to Confucian ideology, since it promotes harmony in relationships and society at large, as well as the overall idea of collectivism prominent in the Korean society.

Another one of Hall’s high-context communication characteristics is preferring the communication to happen face-to-face. In Korea, combining the necessity for formality and the need to pay attention to social cues, there is the need for close connections built over informal or formal in-person interactions, which frequently involve eating and/or drinking. This is most pronounced in the Korean business sphere, as well as office culture, which values its company dinners or *hoesik* (회식). These dinners involve an almost mandatory attendance, which shows the loyalty to the company one works for, as well as respect for the superiors in the company. The main purpose is to foster kinship and closeness, yet these gatherings have also become almost burdensome due to the heavy emphasis on strengthening the hierarchical structure of the company through them.

On the opposite side of the communicative spectrum, if the interaction does not happen face-to-face, there is a need for indirectness and longer expressions of politeness, which can be observed in the letter and

email culture in Korea. From the author's own observations, emails in Korea require several inquiries regarding the receiver's well-being and references to previous exchanges, before indirectly and politely turning towards the actual topic of the correspondence. Additionally, this constitutes an opportunity for the author of the correspondence to show off their Korean language skills by using rich metaphors or relevant sayings, which is another one of Hall's indicators of a high-context communication culture.

To conclude this section, it has to be reiterated that these rather simple examples of observations of Korean culture, communication and language are generalizations, and it can be said that they fit rather well in the high-context communication culture model, but that does not mean that all Korean people and each interaction between them or with them will show exactly these particular characteristics, but rather these examples are a way of introducing Korean culture to learners of Korean language.

Latvian culture as a mixture of low-context and high-context communication cultures

So far, there seems to be no research regarding Latvian culture using the high/low-context communication model. However, according to the author's observations, while Latvian culture does share some of the values of high-context cultures, it is often perceived as a value when one is quite direct and explicit in communication. This could be due to the impact of other countries, as historically the territory of contemporary Latvia has been invaded and subject to foreign powers for extensive periods of time. The cultures like Swedish and German were introduced in the territory, which are said to be low-context ones, as well as Russian, which is considered a high-context culture. The figure below provides a direct comparison between the three countries, made by Erin Meyer's "The Country Mapping Tool".

Due to centuries of these cultural influences, the nature of Latvian culture itself is hard to determine. There is also little scientifically

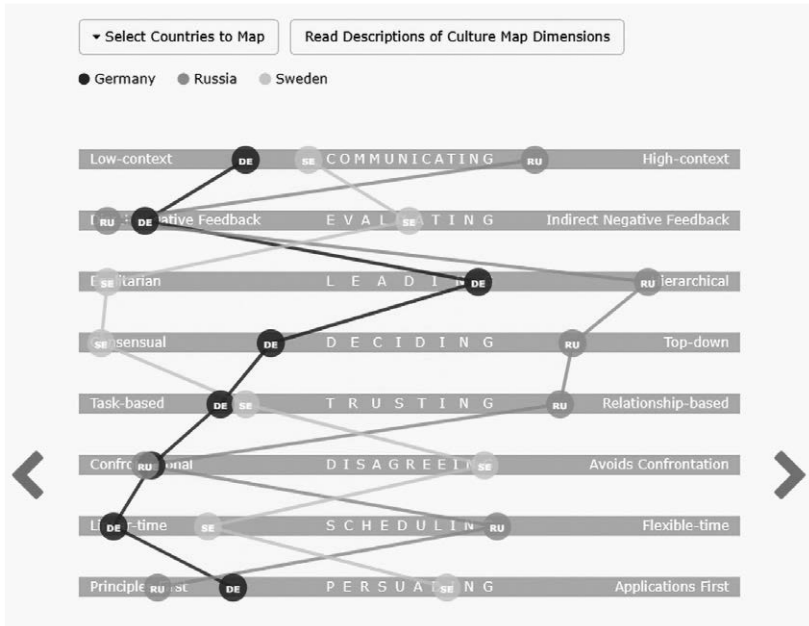


Figure 1. Comparison of German, Russian and Swedish cultures via the Country Mapping Tool (Meyer, 2023)

credible discussion on the neighbouring European countries in the low- and high-context communication culture framework that could be used for reference in Latvia's case. Below, the author provides some of her personal observations regarding the high- and low-context characteristics that could be applied to Latvian culture.

The low-context culture characteristics that could be applied to Latvian culture include primary messages being explicitly coded, intent clearly stated at the beginning of communication, preference of fast and short communication, especially in writing. This can be observed in the workplace, school and public spaces, where fast and direct communication with a focus on accomplishing certain tasks is the key quality and doing otherwise can be seen as unnecessary and a waste of time. The exception to this is definitely when interacting

with friends, close colleagues and family, especially grandparents and parents. Communication there is typically extended and lingers, it can also be less explicit due to the nature of the relationships, but that does depend on the family and person on the case-by-case basis.

It could be expected that politeness would not be a concern for Latvians, but this is an aspect of high context communication that does appear in Latvian communication culture to a certain degree. While it is definitely not as detailed or as pronounced as in Korean, the standard Latvian language has a subtle way of showing respect and politeness towards others. The most obvious is definitely the T-V pronoun distinction, which remains a feature in many Indo-European languages and it originates from the Latin *tu* and *vos* (Sebeok, 1960, 254). In Latvian it is *tu* and *jūs*. Using one or the other to address a person reflects the degree of closeness between the participants of the conversation, with the more formal *jūs* used more between strangers or older people that one does not know that well. This and some other characteristics of formality in Latvian language have been explored in the author's previous article dedicated to formality in Korean and Latvian (Šķestere, 2022). Furthermore, it can be said that Latvians are sensitive to social cues and there is a certain avoidance of conflict (characteristic of high context), but since it is not as observable in language as it is with formality, and it does vary greatly case by case, this will be set aside as undecided, until more research can be done.

Acquisition of Korean culture and language by students with a Latvian cultural background

It is not a novel idea that being able to acquire other languages and cultures requires an understanding of one's own language and culture. It has been expressed by many scholars who delve into language and culture education, like the previously mentioned E. T. Hall, but also Geert Hofstede, Claire Kramsch, etc. In this case, it is the students in Latvia who have to be aware of their surrounding culture and language and how it functions, but from the author's experience that is not always

the case, which makes more research in this direction all the more valuable. This following section will discuss the acquisition of Korean language and culture by students at University of Latvia and how that could be impacted by the differences in communication characterized by high or low context.

At this point, it has been more than 10 years since Korean language became an official part of the curriculum at the Asian Studies Department at University of Latvia and about 8 years have passed since King Sejong Institute opened at the Riga Technical University. The outreach of Korean language and culture has been increasingly expanding in Latvia, with events related to both organized by the two institutions and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea. There certainly is an interest in studying Korean language, as the University of Latvia annually enrolls around 30 students to study the language, most years making it the second most studied language after English.

The question now, after a decade of work on curriculum and study material at the University of Latvia, is how to make studying as efficient as possible, since the bachelor's programme spans only three years. The limited time, as well as the fact that the students have to acquire a language and culture that is vastly different from their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds, form the biggest issue to overcome. Currently, the majority's native language is Latvian, but there is a large number of students with either Russian or another language as their native one. Their cultural backgrounds also vary, with multicultural families being the norm. All of this has to be taken into consideration, as it impacts the study process and the acquisition of Korean language and culture, but the scope of this article is limited to the students with a background in Latvian culture and language.

When comparing the characteristics of Korean and Latvian culture, as well as some of the linguistic components explored in the previous two sections, it is clear that while there is some common ground, there are also numerous differences that can and need to be explored. Hence, it is especially important to introduce key Korean cultural concepts and the nature of high-context communication quite early on, possibly

even from the very first instance of studying or acquiring the Korean language. Introducing these cultural concepts and communication can be prompted by the sources and phenomena the students might already be familiar with – for instance, Korean media, in this case, both traditional media and social media. Not only is it possible to glean a lot of information about Korean culture by just watching Korean dramas, movies and variety shows, there are also social media accounts solely dedicated to explaining Korean customs, practices and everyday life in South Korea. This type of immersion, which can be accomplished both in the classroom and at home in students' own time is especially valuable in a country where actually meeting Korean people can be a rare occasion.

Acquiring the basics of cultural and communicative concepts and being exposed to different media is only the start, what follows is trying to apply this knowledge and master the language itself. Korean language and Latvian language share only slight similarities, as they originate in entirely different parts of the world and belong to different language families. Latvian language is part of the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language tree, and Korean language is said to be an isolated language, part of its own language family. This makes the comparing and contrasting the two difficult and sometimes impossible, but even so, to get a better understanding on how to learn or teach the language, such attempts become unavoidable. Starting from learning vocabulary, moving onto grammatical elements and then finally putting them to use in a context when building sentences are all equally important.

An important part of any language are its pronouns. As shown in Table 1 below, it is possible to make comparisons with the personal pronouns in Korean and Latvian, but this makes for a very contrasting linguistic experience, since there are not that many similarities. However, this can constitute a cultural learning moment or a culture-related episode (coined by Zhu, 2012), an opportunity to highlight the cultural differences of the high- and low-context communication variety. This usually makes the students more curious and aware of the variety of ways one can express oneself in Korean according to politeness level and context.

Table 1. Korean and Latvian personal pronoun comparison
(adapted from Kim, 2008, 86, expanded in Skestere, 2022)

Person 예사말		Korean			Latvian
		높임말	낮춤말		
1 st	Singular	나/내	본인	저/제	Es
	Plural	우리(들)		저희(들)	Mēs
2 nd	Singular	너/네, 당신	당신, 그대	자네, 당신	Tu / Jūs
	Plural	너희(들)	여러분(들), 그대들		Jūs
3 rd	Singular	그/그녀	당신		Viņš / Viņa
	Plural	그들/그녀들			Viņi / Viņas

The highlighted examples of the 2nd person singular in Korean and Latvian already make for a culture learning moment, because there is a lot to note regarding appropriate occasions for use of these pronouns in Korean, which do not constitute many cases, unless the relationship or interaction is highly informal, both in a positive and negative sense. Meanwhile, in Latvian, the 2nd person pronouns *tul/jūs*, as discussed in an earlier section, offer an opportunity to distinguish between formality and informality in address and communication. This is a key cultural learning point – realizing that addressing somebody in Korea has to usually be done either by name and title, or some other form of address, instead of simply informal or formal “you”.

However, not everything in acquiring Korean language can be turned into a lesson of Korean communication culture, sometimes very basic contrastive linguistic work is just about making what feels unfamiliar feel more familiar. In the case of the comparison being done in Table 2 below, it is making the connections between the postpositions used in Korean and noun cases used in Latvian, which basically fulfil the same grammatical function. This part requires the students to be very familiar with the case system in Latvian, but since that is part of school curriculum starting from primary school, as well as some introductory linguistics courses within the study programme, the students

Table 2. Comparison of postpositions in Korean and case system in Latvian (Sķestere, 2022)

Postposition in Korean language	Case in Latvian language
-은/는 -이/가 -께서	Nominative
-의	Genitive
-에게/-한테/께	Dative
-을/를	Accusative
-와/과 -(이)랑 -하고 함께	Instrumental
-에 -에서	Locative
-야/-아, -님	Vocative

usually are prepared. This can help put into perspective the syntax of each language and the mutual interrelation.

After learning the basic structures and syntax, as well as how to employ different expressions of formality discussed in the previous section, the level of proficiency increases, revealing more intricate grammatical structures with subtler connotations showcasing high-context communication. Most of the time, comparisons can be made with an example in Latvian or other known languages, but there are occasions when it is not possible. Then teaching requires an extensive explanation and many examples. In Korean, this can most frequently be seen in grammar that includes certain connotations that do not relate to a direct, easily translatable meaning.

For example, grammatical expressions like **-는 편이다** (*neun pyeonida*) or sentence ending **-나요?** (*nayo*), which have a specific nuance to them and makes speech more palatable, or expresses humility and indirectness, which is a part of high-context communication unfamiliar to Latvian students.

- A. 저는 한국어를 좀 **아는 편이에요**. (I know some Korean. (indirect))
- B. 저는 한국어를 좀 **알아요**. (I know some Korean. (direct))

From the example sentences above, sentence A will most likely give the listener an impression of humbleness and indirectness that is preferred in Korean communicative culture, while B will suggest more of an arrogant and over-confident feeling, which non-native speakers might not discern.

Furthermore, grammatical expressions like **는 편이다** include a word or phrase from which they are constructed, thus, the two examples above are clearly different even in their structural formation, but the meaning of the word included in this grammar is not always consciously thought about by the native speakers. It is necessary to explain to non-native speakers that **편** (*pyeon*) in **는 편이다** means “side”, and it can be compared to being on the one side of something, whether it is closer or farther.

C. **오늘 뭐 먹었나요?** (What did you eat today? (soft))

D. **오늘 뭐 먹었어요?** (What did you eat today? (direct))

The examples C and D make an even more complex case for teaching Korean, because there is no translation in English or Latvian that could properly convey the meaning. Instead, the difference can only be explained by saying that C is more soft and less direct-sounding, which is preferable in Korean culture, while D is more direct and used in contexts and by speakers where being indirect or direct does not matter as much. Once again, this requires a much more thorough explanation and many examples with a context, and is usually acquired in the intermediate stage of Korean language learning.

Besides these, there is also the form **는 것 같다** (*neun geot gatda*), which, similarly to the previous forms, can be used to sound more indirect and unsure of what one is saying, even if one is very certain of the fact. This form in its variations is frequently used in refusals to avoid offending the other party by being too direct in expressing the inability to do something for them or with them. The example E below in Korean culture would represent the more socially and culturally acceptable way of refusing and saying that one cannot do something, while the example F, while formal, sounds too direct and does not include a sufficient emphasis on having a good excuse for it. In Latvian culture, this would

usually not be an issue or it would be expressed with other linguistic tools.

E. 오늘 못 할 것 같습니다. (I cannot do it today (indirect and formal))

F. 오늘 못 합니다. (I cannot do it today (direct, but using the same formality))

Similarly, another interesting form is the sentence ending **=/을게요** (*eulkeyo*), – while it makes the speech more indirect, it also softens it and gives the impression of helping the listener. Despite the very outwardly similar grammatical forms and translations, the examples G and H carry different connotations. The example G sends the message to the listener that the speaker will do something for them, in their stead, and sounds rather unassuming and softer, while the example H is a more unspecific way of stating a similar meaning, but without the added connotation, which makes it more general.

G. 제가 할게요. (I will do this. (softer and more indirect))

H. 제가 할 거예요. (I will do this. (direct))

To conclude, these are just some of the examples from the author's personal experience of the instances that the students at the University of Latvia find more difficult to discern at first, due to not finding anything relatable in their own language and culture. Beyond these grammatical structures, there is learning of a variety of metaphors, proverbs and other expressions, which sometimes correspond to an existing figure of speech in Latvian, but very frequently they are completely unrecognizable. A similar aspect is learning to pick up more of social cues and the concept of *nunchi* discussed previously. These can be mastered with a long exposure to Korean language, which is simply impossible in the brief period of three years, hence, this is usually left to master's level studies and/or external or extended studying that the students carry out themselves.

Conclusions and future research

While there are certainly limitations and lack of concreteness involved with the high- and low-context culture model, it does help to

put into perspective the characteristics of Korean and Latvian communication culture, revealing similarities or differences. It shows that there are ways of organising and categorizing cultural context according to the preferred ways of communication, relationship building and sharing information etc. Both countries occupy territories which have acquired cultural enrichment from their neighbours, as well as endured the encroachment of outside forces, and that has left a mark on the respective cultures, with Korean society being highly influenced by Confucianism and related philosophical ideas, whilst Latvian society carries the imprints of Scandinavian, German and Russian cultures. Of course, this is not an exhaustive characterisation of both of these cultures, but it does explain certain cultural contexts, which reflect on the language and communication, constituting valuable knowledge.

The paper has also provided consideration of the different linguistic components that are connected to these cultural contexts, more specifically focussing on expressions connected to politeness and ambiguity. Both languages have some linguistic phenomena related to this to a certain degree, confirming that while there are differences, there are also enough similarities for reference and the rest can be carefully explained. The main challenges that were shown in the paper primarily related to putting these concepts into practice and familiarizing the students with the culture, when their cultural background is pronouncedly different. It can be concluded that, to overcome these challenges, it is important to include learning moments of culture into the classroom, as well as to present to the students different types of media related to the topics for an easier immersion.

The final challenge for the students and the teacher is the actual communication with the target language speakers. Here, the knowledge of cultural context can be the key, even more so than knowing the correct grammatical form or right expression. Here, it is crucial that learners themselves seek conversation with native speakers and try to learn and understand more of the cultural context alongside the language. This is not always possible; thus, one solution is to encourage students to attend events where such communication is possible. For example,

the University of Latvia in collaboration with National Library of Latvia has established a Korean conversation club, where the students learning Korean and native speakers can meet, get to know each other and speak Korean, discussing a wide variety of topics, which facilitates more natural culture learning moments. This is one of the ways for lessening the learning curve that comes with attempting to learn a language and culture that is very distinct from one's own.

Further research after this exploratory article will be directed toward defining the characteristics of high- and low-context cultures more clearly, specifically regarding Korean and Latvian cultures. Then conducting a case study involving Latvian students learning Korean will be possible, using various methods such as discourse analysis, surveys, interviews and classroom observation. A more practical approach employing statistical analysis will permit to test the theoretical framework of high- and low-context cultures. While research like this is highly case-specific and frequently cannot be generalized, it seems that contrasting languages, which also illuminate the contrasts between cultures and the rich cultural context needed to understand and acquire them, can be fruitful and meaningful for emphasizing the requirements for advancing language education and improving the overall language education curricula.

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Beyond Confucian Constraints: The Protestant Christian Perspective in Na Hye-Seok's Literary and Artistic Endeavours¹

The late 1910s and early 1920s encompassed a period of profound religious and ideological upheaval on the Korean peninsula. Emerging intellectuals boldly repudiated Confucianism, the bedrock of Joseon (조선) dynasty's ideological framework, casting it as pernicious. This intellectual cohort perceived Confucian tenets as obstructive to societal metamorphosis, prompting the widespread publication of scathing critiques in major newspapers and magazines. Na Hye-seok (나혜석, 1896–1948) emerged as an eminent literary figure who fervently embraced Protestant Christian ideals amid this transformative milieu. This study meticulously examines the contributions of Na Hye-seok, lauded as Korea's inaugural female modern artist and a pioneering advocate for women's rights. During her sojourn in Japan in the late 1910s, she collaborated with female students to publish a magazine championing women's rights and castigating early marriage through poignant short stories. Furthermore, Na Hye-seok embraced the prevailing Protestant Christianity, interweaving its ethos into her literary creations and actively seeking to promulgate it as a social movement. Such endeavours were not isolated to her alone but mirrored a pervasive trend among intellectuals of the era. This study intricately dissects the process by which Na Hye-seok transcended prevalent anti-Confucian sentiments among female intellectuals, adopted Protestant Christian ideals, and sculpted her vibrant literary oeuvre.

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Moreover, it scrutinises the ramifications of Na's literary accomplishments, rooted in Protestant Christianity, on modern Korean literature, women, and society at large.

Keywords: Confucianism in Korea (한국 유교), Protestant Christianity in Korea (한국의 개신교), Na Hye-seok (나혜석), Korean literature (한국 문학), ideology (이데올로기)

Introduction

Na Hye-seok: Korea's exemplar of the "New Woman"

The term *Sinyeoseyeong* (신여성 新女性 New Woman) is used to describe women who received modern (근대 近代) education on the Korean Peninsula between the Beginning Period to Open Ports (개항기 開港期) and the Japanese occupation. Also known as *Sinyeolja* (신여자 新女子), these individuals pursued secondary or higher education, espousing novel values and attitudes that starkly diverged from the prevailing societal norms. This often instigated controversy, which in turn drove social change.

Na Hye-seok (나혜석, 羅蕙錫, 1897–1948) epitomizes the Korean "New Woman", renowned as the nation's inaugural female Western painter, a practitioner of feminine literature, and an activist in the contemporary women's rights movement.

The objective of this study is to examine the literary characteristics of Na Hye-seok. As with any writer's literary domain, an understanding of hers cannot be achieved in isolation. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of Na Hye-seok's literary output, it is necessary to consider the contextual backdrop of Confucianism's decline and her personal engagement with Protestant Christianity. This paper proposes that Na Hye-seok's integration of Protestant Christian ideals with her critique of Confucian values positioned her as a pioneering figure in modern Korean literature and feminist thought.

It is notable that Na Hye-seok's sojourn in Tokyo (1913–1918) had a profound impact on her literary output, artistic creations, and personal life. This period coincided with momentous changes on the Korean peninsula, marked by the onset of the Japanese occupation in 1910,

which ushered in a transformative era. The most significant upheaval in the arts and culture was the result of ideological shifts. Emerging intellectuals argued that the Confucian philosophy, which had been in place for centuries, should be replaced with a new, independent nation, Joseon. A significant number of individuals, particularly those who had received their education in Japan, advocated for the replacement of Confucianism with Protestant Christianity.

Na Hye-seok's arrival in Japan coincided with a period of intense criticism of Confucianism on the Korean peninsula. Here, she encountered Protestant Christianity, which she rejected in favour of embracing Protestant Christian principles. She actively engaged with female Christian students in Japan, adopting Protestant Christianity as her faith. She sought to embody the Christian spirit through her art, social activism, and daily life. For her, religion (Protestantism) served not as an evasion of her homeland's ethnic reality but as a tool to surmount life's challenges. The anti-Confucian and pro-Christian traits in her literary works are readily apparent. It is noteworthy that, despite her involvement in anti-Confucian activities and her portrayal as a fervent Protestant Christian, in her later years, she eventually embraced Buddhism.

Existing research on Na Hye-seok's literature

This study aims to explore the characteristics of modern Korean Protestant Christianity (Protestantism) and the writing of a "New Woman" reflected in the literature of Na Hye-seok. To achieve this, I will examine the changes that occurred around her before and after the period of her literary activity, as well as her life.

Research on Na Hye-seok commenced in the 1990s. The initiation of Na's literary studies dates back to the discovery of her short story "*Gyeonghi* (경희)" by Seo Jeong-ja (1988) in 1988. Since the 2000s, she has been acknowledged as one of Korea's leading female writers, and the publication of her complete works has laid the foundation for further research.

Na Hye-seok's literature has been primarily assessed through two lenses: women and religion (mostly Christianity). During an era when

modern thought was evolving, abandoning Confucianism in pursuit of new ideas, Na Hye-seok's engagement with Protestant Christianity emerges as pivotal in understanding her literature.

Kim Mi-yeong (2004) stands as a prominent researcher who explored the relationship between the Korean "New Woman" Na Hye-seok and Christianity. By examining Na Hye-seok's influence on the next generation of "New Woman" such as Kim Il-yeop (김일엽, 金一葉, 1896–1971) and Kim Myeong-sun (김명순, 金明淳, 1896–1951), Kim Mi-yeong was the first to assert that Na Hye-seok's literature was influenced by Christianity. Nevertheless, according to Kim Mi-yeong's research, Christianity served as a tool for Na Hye-seok. However, this instrumentalization (도구론, 道具論) of Christianity needs a more nuanced examination.

Jeong Hei-seong (2005) analyses the "New Woman" Na Hye-seok from a more religious perspective. Jeong argues that even after Na Hye-seok distanced herself from Christianity religiously, she retained her Christian beliefs/ideas. However, it is challenging to comprehend the enduring impact of Protestant Christian beliefs on Na Hye-seok, despite her later conversion to Buddhism in 1933.

Kim Yun-seon's (2008) study delves deeply into the relationship between Na Hye-seok's literature and the influence of Protestant Christianity. It presupposes that Na accepted Christianity as her faith and seeks to identify traces of religion in her literature. Kim Yun-seon's attempt to discuss Na's Christianity within the framework of literature is commendable.

Although it is not a literary research, Han Dong-min's (2023) research sheds light on a different facet of Na's life. By examining over 90 photographs from Na Hye-seok's photo album held in the Suwon Museum of Art, Han extrapolates insights into her later life. According to this research, photographs related to Haeinsa Temple (해인사, 海印寺) and Bulguksa Temple (불국사, 佛國寺) indicate Na Hye-seok's connection with Buddhism. Additionally, it suggests that, from 1938 until just before the liberation in December 1944, she led the life of a painter rather than a writer while residing in the Sudeok Inn near Sudeoksa

Temple (수덕사, 修德寺) in Yesan, Chungcheongnam-do Province. In her later years, she transitioned from Christian to Buddhist ideas, expressing her artistic soul through art rather than literature.

This study concurs that establishing connections with Protestant Christian thought is crucial to understanding Na's literature and aims to explore the influence of Protestant Christianity in Na's literary works. However, this study does not conclude here; it also examines the trend of "Confucian Criticism" that contributed to Na Hye-seok's acceptance of Christian ideas. The fact that Na Hye-seok wrote for the magazine *Hakjigwang* (학지광, 學之光), at the forefront of Confucian Criticism, underscores its significance. The prevalent atmosphere of strong criticism of Confucianism among the New Intellectuals (신지식층, 新知識層) in the 1910s, coupled with the acceptance of Christianity as the foundation for new ideas, exerted a profound influence on Na's literature.

To this end, this study will be organised as follows: Section 2 will delve into the Confucian Criticism of the 1910s, centred on *Hakjigwang*, while Section 3 will examine Na Hye-seok's personal life and her relationship with Protestant Christianity. Section 4 will offer the discussion of the relationship between Na Hye-seok's literature and Protestant Christianity.

The disappearance of the old idea and the emergence of the new religion

The ideological clash between Western Modernity (서양적 근대, 西洋的 近代) and Eastern Tradition (동양적 전통, 東洋的 傳統) emerged in the 1900s. However, by the 1910s, the term "Western Modernity" had gradually become the prevailing paradigm. Naturally, Confucianism, which had served as the ideological bedrock of the "Eastern Tradition", came under scrutiny. Confucianism was even implicated as a contributing factor in Joseon's subjugation to Japanese colonial rule. The traditional Confucian ideology was deemed to be in need of substantial improvement or even elimination to pave the way for Joseon's transformation into a modern, independent nation.

The early 20th century in Korea was characterised by profound socio-political upheaval. Following the 1910 annexation of Korea by Japan, the Korean peninsula underwent significant changes under Japanese colonial rule. This period saw the implementation of policies aimed at assimilating Korean culture and suppressing Korean identity, which led to a strong intellectual and cultural resistance among Koreans. Furthermore, global events, such as the First World War, also influenced the intellectual climate, as ideas about self-determination and modernity spread worldwide. These external pressures prompted a reassessment of traditional values and the search for new ideological frameworks, which had a significant impact on Na Hye-seok and her contemporaries. The Japanese colonial administration's efforts to modernise Korea included the introduction of new educational systems and exposure to Western ideas, which further facilitated the shift from Confucian values to modern ideologies such as Protestant Christianity (Jeon, 2004, 38).

In order to fully comprehend the significance of Na Hye-seok's contributions, it is imperative to contextualize her work within the broader intellectual landscape of the era. The early 20th century saw a robust critique of Confucianism, which was increasingly perceived as an obstacle to modernization and national independence. This critique constituted part of a broader intellectual movement among Korean scholars who sought to replace Confucian ideals with Western concepts, including democracy, equality, and individual rights. Protestant Christianity was not only embraced as a religious faith, but also as a source of progressive values and social reform. The spread of Protestantism provided a platform for advocating for women's rights, educational reforms, and social justice, aligning with the aspirations of many "New Women" like Na Hye-seok. These intellectual movements provided an optimal environment for the germination of new ideas and literary expressions, which had a profound influence on Na Hye-seok's work.

At the forefront of this ideological shift in discourse was the periodical *Hakjigwang*. Founded in Tokyo, Japan, during the Japanese occupation by a group of Korean students, it made significant contributions

to Korean academia and thought. Notably, it played a pivotal role in introducing new literary schools of thought and influencing literary creation. Its roster of writers included Hyeon Sang-yun (현상윤, 玄相允), Yi Gwang-su (이광수, 李光洙), Kim Ok (김억, 金億), Jeon Yeong-taek (전영택, 田榮澤), Kim Dong-in (김동인, 金東仁), Ju Yo-han (주요한, 朱耀翰), and Byeon Yeong-ro (변영로, 卞榮魯), representing not only their contemporary era but also the entire history of Korean literature. Na Hye-seok was among these influential figures. Intellectuals of the period, including Na Hye-seok, employed the knowledge acquired during their studies in Japan to critique Confucianism. The ideological transformations on the Korean peninsula in the 1910s signified a decline in Confucian ideals and the rise of Protestant Christian ideas. *Hakjigwang*, with its diverse group of contributors, became a critical voice in this transformation. In addition to the articles that critiqued the rigidity of Confucian norms, the journal highlighted the benefits of adopting Western philosophies and Christian ethics. This suggests that Christianity exerted religious and ideological influence on the so-called New Intellectuals (신지식층, 新知識層) such as Na Hye-seok. These Christian ideas were further disseminated by intellectual elites.

The decline of Eastern traditions, Confucianism

The introduction of so-called “Western Modern” ideas to the Korean peninsula began in the late 19th century. Until 1910, a tense opposition persisted between the old and the new, marked by a sharp division in perspectives. On the one hand, there was a belief that Joseon should embrace Western technology and new civilization, akin to Japan. On the other hand, there was an opposing view that Joseon should resist imperialist aggression while safeguarding its national identity.

However, this conflict proved short-lived. Following Japan’s forcible annexation of Joseon in 1910, some nationalist intellectuals, aiming to preserve the “Eastern Tradition”, embraced imperialist ideas and colonialism. Simultaneously, many others recognized the significance of the independence movement and opted to go abroad. Living in places

like Manchuria, they continued the struggle for independence from Japan. Consequently, the ideological confrontation between “Eastern Tradition” and “Western Modernity”, which had lingered in tension until the 1900s, gradually tilted towards the latter in the 1910s. During the Japanese occupation, “Western Modernity” superseded “Eastern Tradition”. Some intellectuals contended that “Tradition” was detrimental to the country, considering “Confucian Thought” as the root of “Eastern Tradition” and advocating for its elimination (Yeom Bok-gyu, 2011) With the influx of new science, technology, religions, and ideas to the Korean peninsula, the Confucian Tradition found itself marginalized. These new ideological discourses were crafted by young elites who had studied abroad in Japan. While they later spearheaded the cultural development of Joseon, they also adopted pro-Japanese sentiments, aligning with Japan and attempting to enlighten Koreans. Na Hye-seok was a notable individual among these young elites. In their midst, the evaluation of Confucianism took on an increasingly negative tone. They endeavoured to identify the reasons for Joseon’s colonization, attributing it to Confucian ideas. They posited that Confucianism had lost its political value and social utility, with some even denying Confucian moral ethics (Seo, 2019, 235–236).

The elite group pivotal in the decline of Confucian thought on the Korean peninsula is referred to as the New Intellectuals (신지식층, 新知識層). Emerging in the 1910s, they took the lead in the intellectual circles of the Korean peninsula. Not easily defined by a single term, Park Chan-seung (1992, 110–111) describes them as “a group of young intellectuals who studied abroad in Japan and other foreign countries in the 1910s and returned after absorbing new knowledge, ideas, and values.” Im Gyeong-seok (2003, 3–4) defines them as “a social group that perceived the reform of Joseon society from colonial times to Western Modernity as a historical task of the time.” Lee Tae-hun (2008, 22–24) refers to the “New Intellectuals” as “Korean students in Japan in the 1910s concerned with the question of where to lay the foundation for the regeneration of Joseon, which had lost its sovereignty at that time.” Based on these various definitions, it can be

seen that the “New Intellectuals” were a group of people who understood Western Modernisation through studying abroad. It is important to note that they considered it an important mission to create a new country, a modern independent nation, using the Western knowledge they had acquired. Na Hye-seok was one of the New Intellectuals. She was one of the new intellectuals, and the journal *Hakjigwang* was written by the new intellectuals. In particular, the writers of *Hakjigwang*, including Na Hye-seok, strongly criticized Confucianism on the Korean peninsula at the time through their articles.

Confucian critical discourse and *Hakjigwang*

The early 20th century in Korea was a time of significant socio-political change, with the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 being a pivotal moment. During this period, there were attempts to integrate Korean culture and suppress Korean identity. Japanese colonial rule sought to bring about a systematic modernisation of the country, including education reforms and exposure to Western ideas. These changes prompted a re-evaluation of traditional values, particularly Confucianism, which was seen by some as a contributing factor to Joseon’s subjugation. Some scholars have suggested that Confucian values, such as strict social hierarchies and filial piety, may have hindered the process of modernisation and national independence.

In this context, the magazine *Hakjigwang* played a significant role in representing the intellectual shift. *Hakjigwang* was founded in Tokyo by Korean students who saw a need for a platform to critique Confucianism and advocate for Western modernity and Protestant Christianity. The periodical was used by contributors such as Hyeon Sang-yun, Yi Gwang-su, and Kim Dong-in to disseminate new ideas that challenged the status quo. These intellectuals put forth the idea that a transformation of Korean society could be achieved through the adoption of democratic principles, individual rights, and gender equality, aligning with Protestant Christian values. The selection of contributors was based on their ability to influence and represent these emerging

ideas, with the aim of ensuring their relevance to the magazine's mission. In order to ensure the relevance and impact of their content, *Hakjigwang* selected contributors based on their intellectual influence and alignment with the magazine's stated goals. This strategic selection served to enhance the magazine's credibility and its role in advocating for socio-political reform.

Hakjigwang represented a literary periodical of the Korean Overseas Students' Association (조선유학생학우회, 朝鮮留學生學友會) established in Tokyo, Japan, in 1914 by Kim Byeong-ro (김병로, 金炳魯), Choi Pal-yong (최팔용, 崔八鏞), and others. Launched in April 1914, it concluded its publication in April 1930 with its 29th issue, produced biannually. The magazine's format varied, with issues 1 and 2 in B5, issues 3 to 28 in A5, and the 29th issue as a renewal edition. Initial publishers included Kim Byeong-ro and Choi Pal-yong. Contributors (authors) encompassed figures like Hyeon Sang-yoon (현상윤, 玄相允), Jang Deok-su (장덕수, 張德秀), Na Hye-seok (나혜석, 羅蕙錫), Choi Seung-koo (최승구, 崔承九), Choi Du-seon (최두선, 崔斗善), Jeong No-sik (정노식, 鄭魯湜), An Hwak (안확, 安廓), Kim Chan-yeong (김찬영, 金瓚永), Song Jin-wu (송진우, 宋鎭禹), Yi Gwang-su (이광수, 李光洙), Kim Ok (김억, 金億), Sin Seok-wu (신석우, 申錫雨), Jeon Yeong-taek (전영택, 田榮澤), O Sang-geun (오상근, 吳祥根), Yi Byeong-do (이병도, 李丙燾), Kim Do-tae (김도태, 金道泰), Jin Hak-mun (진학문, 秦學文), Kim Myeong-sik (김명식, 金明植), Seo Chun (서춘, 徐椿), Lee In (이인, 李仁), Choi Seung-man (최승만, 崔承萬), Choi Hak-song (최학송, 崔鶴松), Lee Il (이일, 李一), Kim Jun-yeon (김준연, 金俊淵), Kim Dong-in (김동인, 金東仁), Ko Yoeng-hwan (고영환, 高永煥), Park Seok-yun (박석윤, 朴錫胤), Park Seung-cheol (박승철, 朴勝喆), Ju Yo-hwan (주요한, 朱耀翰), Hong Yeong-ho (홍영후, 洪永厚), Byeon Young-ro (변영로, 卞榮魯), Kim Woo-pyeong (김우평, 金佑樺), Sin Tae-ak (신태악, 辛泰嶽), Kim Seok-song (김석송, 金石松), Byeon Hi-yong (변희용, 卞熙瑢), Min Tae-won (민태원, 閔泰瑗), Lee Seong-hae (이성해, 李星海), Hong Sun-hyuk (홍순혁, 洪淳赫), Jeong In-sub (정인섭, 鄭寅燮), Hong Byeong-sam (홍병삼, 洪秉三), Kim Yun-kyeong (김윤경, 金允經), Lee Heon-gu (이헌구, 李軒求), and

others. Their contributions to Korean academia and thought, extending beyond their era to the present, are highly commendable. In particular, the magazine exerted a profound influence on the introduction of a new literary style and the generation of literature. The content spanned treatises, travelogues, essays, poems, plays, novels, and articles. One can assert that it functioned as the voice of young and emerging intellectuals proficient in shaping innovative discourses.

Writers associated with *Hakjigwang*, including Na Hye-seok, aspired to modernise Joseon and secure its autonomy similar to the West's modernisation. Notably, Na Hye-seok published “Ideal Wife (이상적인 부인)” in 1914 and “Miscellaneous Emotion – A Letter to Sister K (잡감-K언니에게 여함)” in 1917 in *Hakjigwang*. These works unveil the anti-Confucian sentiment of the period, her dedication to enlightenment, and her embrace of Christian ideals. In “Miscellaneous Emotion – A Letter to Sister K”, Na Hye-seok found in the Bible the justification for recognising the personal worth of Korean women, asserting their status should be respected in society (Ephesians 5: p. 22, p. 25). This consciousness is also evident in a short story “Gyeonghi”, to be explored later in this research.

The writers affiliated with *Hakjigwang*, representing the emerging intellectual class, perceived themselves as a cohort of youthful individuals poised to actualize the prevailing ideals of their era. They characterized their identity as being a type of “prophet” endowed with a novel spirit distinct from the preceding generation (Lee, 2008, 22–25). The discourse during that period presented two conceivable trajectories for Joseon society: West (서양, 西洋) or East (동양, 東洋), Civilisation (문명, 文明) or Barbarism (야만, 野蠻), and New (신, 新) or Old (구, 舊). The West was construed as emblematic of civilization and the new, contrasting with the East (or Oriental), which was perceived as synonymous with barbarism and the old. Embracing “Western Modernity”, therefore, was regarded as an indispensable element in the journey towards civilization. In stark contrast, Confucian thought was viewed as antiquated and deserving rejection, representing an Outdated Old Way (구습, 舊習) of thinking.

Within this binary opposition, even moral considerations were dichotomized into two factions. The second issue of *Hakjigwang* featured Chu Seong-in (1914, 2) who authored “Dodeokron (도덕론, 道德論, Moral Theory)”, delineating Western morality as egalitarian and Eastern morality, particularly Confucianism, as hierarchical, with a particular emphasis on the negative aspect of Confucian thought, which was obedience. Western morality, on the other hand, was delineated by key principles such as universality, justice, ideals, progress, and independence, posited as the standard for the new era. Eastern morality was considered a vestige that must be discarded, as it implied discrimination, submission, adherence to old customs, and conservatism.

In an article titled “*Gengoabandobuhyeong* (근고아반도부형, 謹告我半島父兄, A Letter to My Father and Brother)” published in the third issue of *Hakjigwang*, Mi Ho-saeng (미호생, 眉湖生) highlighted detrimental customs that Koreans ought to rectify (Mi, 1914, 8–9). These included aspects like Buddhism during the Goryeo period and Confucianism in the Joseon period. The fourth issue of *Hakjigwang* continued this critique, specifically targeting Confucian rituals. The criticism of Confucianism persisted into the fifth issue, with Song Jin-wu’s (송진우, 宋鎭禹) “*Sasanggaehyeok* (사상개혁, 思想改革論, Theory of Thought Reform)”, which underscored Confucianism’s exclusivity to other religions and ideologies, positing that this exclusivity hindered Joseon from embracing new civilizations for an extended period. Consequently, the exclusivity of Confucianism was seen as a barrier to freedom of thought in Joseon (Song, 1915, 2–3).

In essence, the entrenched “Eastern Tradition” of Confucianism served as a formidable impediment to the emerging trajectory of the age, despite the imperative of embracing a new civilization being the paramount task of this era. The emerging intellectual class contended that Confucianism’s inclination towards nostalgia was incongruous with the zeitgeist. They criticized it for its failure to acknowledge and rectify erroneous customs, positing that, as a consequence, Joseon had regretfully become an anachronism, ultimately facing doom.

Simultaneously critiquing Confucianism, the new intellectual class sought a novel ethical standard in Christianity, particularly Protestantism. The proponents of *Hakjigwang* argued that Protestant Christianity, considered a “Religion of Strength” or “Powerful Religion”, was indispensable for surmounting obstacles and fostering societal improvement in colonial Joseon. This viewpoint was not confined to a few individuals; rather, many members of the emerging intellectual class, including figures like Na Hye-seok, identified with Protestant Christianity. A significant number were affiliated with the Joseon Christian Youth Association in Tokyo (동경조선기독교청년회, 東京朝鮮基督教青年會). The proponents asserted the necessity for a new religion in colonial Joseon, contending that this religion should empower the weak. They posited that Christianity, particularly Protestantism, was the apt choice for this role.

Moreover, the proponents perceived the genesis of Western civilization as intricately tied to the Protestant Christian spirit. Their argument rested on the premise that the principles of equality, equity, and humanitarianism advocated by Protestant Christianity facilitated the emancipation of classes, thereby propelling industrial development and economic revival. This perspective was elucidated in an article titled “About Labours (노동자에 관하여)” by Kim Cheol-su (1916, 10–13) from *Hakjigwang*. While the logical structure of this argument may not be inherently flawed, it prompts reflection on whether Joseon, with its distinct political, economic, and historical trajectory compared to the West, could indeed follow the same developmental path.

Certain scholars, such as Kim Soon-seok, posit that Protestant Christianity possesses the potential to unify the national spirit (Kim, 2012, 89). To surmount the challenging circumstances of colonization and usher in a more promising societal paradigm, proponents argue for the necessity of a singular national spirit, advocating that Protestant Christianity is the ideal candidate. They contend that the national spirit of Goryeo (고려, 高麗, 918–1392) derived from Buddhism, while the spirit of Joseon was deeply intertwined with Confucianism. In envisioning the new Joseon, the emerging intellectual class asserts

that Christianity should serve as its foundational national spirit. Jeon Yoeng-taek (1917a, 19) scrutinised Confucianism as a detrimental force on Joseon, contending that it lacks the capability to cultivate an ideal societal framework in his article “The Theory of Whole Life (전적생활론)”, featured in the 12th issue of *Hakjigwang*. In *Hakjigwang* No. 13, under the title “The Destruction of the Old Customs and the Construction of the New Customs”, they advocate for Christianity as a religion worthy of salvaging the entire Joseon populace (Jeon, 1917b, 56). These intellectuals, perceived Protestant Christianity as a global ideological cornerstone, and, furthermore, as a new academic and philosophical foundation. It is underscored as a religious philosophy crucial for steering the transformative journey of Joseon society.

The critical analyses of Confucianism found in *Hakjigwang* offer insights into the intellectual milieu of that era. Na Hye-seok, the author of *Hakjigwang*, an international student in Tokyo and a Christian, likely harboured reservations towards Confucian ideas even before her conversion to Protestant Christianity. Therefore, when scrutinizing Na Hye-seok’s literary works from a Christian perspective, it is essential not to disregard the prevalent climate of Confucian criticism during that period. Christianity did not emerge spontaneously on the Korean peninsula; rather, it emerged as an alternative to Confucianism. Na Hye-seok did not perceive Protestant Christianity as an absolute ideology or religion to unquestionably adhere to; instead, she viewed it as a substitute for Confucianism or the “Eastern Tradition”. While Protestant Christianity undeniably played a pivotal role in Na’s life and literature, especially during her formative years, the fact that she later embraced Buddhism underscores that Christianity was not an unequivocal or absolute faith for her.

The life and art of Na Hye-seok, the New Woman

Na Hye-seok, born in 1896, was the fourth of five children in Sinpung-dong (신평동), Jangan-gu (장안구), Suwon-si (수원시), Gyeonggi-do (경기도). Her family’s lineage traces back to Naju (나주),

and her patronymic is Jeongwol (정월, 晶月). Her father, Na Ki-jeong (나기정, 羅基貞), served as a judge in the Gyeonggi-do Observation Department (관찰부) during the Empire of Korea (대한제국, 大韓帝國, 1897–1910) and held positions of leadership in Siheung (시흥) and Yongin (용인) during the Japanese occupation. Essentially, Na Hye-seok grew up in affluence without encountering significant financial challenges.

Upon graduating with top honours from Jinmyeong Girls' High School (진명여자보통고등학교) in 1913, Na Hye-seok, guided by her second brother Na Gyeong-seok (나경석), opted to pursue further studies in Japan. Tokyo stood as a conventional educational destination for the new intellectual class of that era. Enrolling in the Oil Painting Department (유화과) at Tokyo Women's Art College (도쿄여자미술전문학교), she aspired to become a painter. At that time, around 30 female Korean students were studying in Tokyo, and she distinguished herself as the most exceptional among them. Introduced by her brother, Na yeong-seok, she formed a romantic relationship with Choi Seung-gu (최승구, 崔承九, 1892–1916), a friend already married but passionately in love with her. Choi Seung-gu, a promising poet studying at Keio University in Tokyo and the editor of *Hakjigwang*, a magazine amplifying the voices of the new intellectual class, tragically succumbed to lung disease in 1916, profoundly impacting Na Hye-seok's life. In the aftermath, she expressed her emotions in a work titled "To the Girl who was Reborn (회생한 소녀에게)". In 1917, a year after Choi Seung-gu's demise, Na Hye-seok embraced Protestant Christianity, undergoing baptism at the Korean United Church of Christ in Tokyo. The prevailing sentiment among the new intellectual class favoured Christianity over the perceived outdated Confucianism. In this atmosphere, Na Hye-seok actively contributed articles not only to *Hakjigwang* but also to magazines established by associations of female international students, such as Women's World (여자계, 女子界). Notably, she authored literary works challenging the prevalent practice of "early marriage (조혼, 早婚)", which was widespread at the time, and underscored the individuality of women. Her most renowned work, "Gyeonghi," was published in 1918. This short story, narrated from

a female perspective by the protagonist “I”, is considered the first feminist literature in Korean literature and gained widespread popularity, being likened to Lee Gwang-su’s “Heartlessness” (무정, 無情), the inaugural modern novel in Korean literature. Returning to Korea from Japan in 1918, Na Hye-seok participated in the March 1 Movement (삼일운동) in 1919, facing approximately five months of imprisonment due to her involvement in independence activism. Subsequently, she married Kim Wu-yeong (김우영, 金雨英, 1886–1958), a lawyer. After espousal, the couple relocated to Manchuria, China, where she continued her artistic pursuits in painting and writing. Although she entered her high-level works in various competitions and held several exhibitions, this study primarily focuses on Na Hye-seok’s literary contributions, omitting an examination of her achievements as a painter-artist. Na Hye-seok believed that her path represented a new trajectory for all Korean women, irrespective of their location in Korea, Japan, or China. She persistently wrote self-consciously feminine texts, particularly those candidly addressing her experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing, which stirred significant social controversy.

Her sojourn to Europe in pursuit of a new world ushered in transformative changes both in her art and life. Her involvement with Choi Rin (최린, 崔麟, 1878–1958), encountered in Paris, became a significant issue upon her return home, ultimately culminating in her divorce from Kim Wu-yeong in 1930. Subsequently, she authored works providing candid confessions about her love affairs, marriage, and divorce, which startled society at the time. Her 1934 miscellany, “A Confession of a Divorce (이혼고백장, 離婚告白狀)”, and her 1935 miscellany, “While Entering a New Life (신생활에 들면서)”, fully articulate her notions of free love. However, despite the new intellectual class’s insistence on rejecting Confucian ideas and championing modernization, societal transformation did not unfold as swiftly as Na Hye-seok envisioned. Particularly, the notion that extramarital affairs represented the behaviour of enlightened individuals, equating sexual desire with appetite, faced widespread condemnation. Eventually, even her family and friends distanced themselves from her. The societal

criticism and ridicule she endured, exacerbated by financial struggles and the agony of being unable to see her children, led to her physical and mental deterioration. In the end, she wandered around Sudeoksa Temple (수덕사, 修德寺) and Haeinsa Temple (해인사, 海印寺) in the late Japanese period, barely sustaining her artistic endeavours until her eventual decline and passing.

Protestant Christianity in Na Hye-seok's life

In order to gain a more specific understanding of the role of faith, particularly Protestant Christianity, in Na Hae-seok's tumultuous life, it is crucial to explore the ways in which Christianity permeated her life and art. This exploration will enable us to better comprehend her literature.

The motivations behind Na Hye-seok's conversion to Christianity can be traced to her personal experiences and intellectual environment. Her exposure to critical discourse on Confucianism and the embrace of Protestant ideals by the intellectual community in Japan had a significant influence on her. The subsequent loss of her lover, Choi Seung-gu, who was a Christian, and the solace she found in Christianity further reinforced her faith. Furthermore, the progressive ideals espoused by Christian feminists in Japan, such as Hiratsuka Raichō, provided a framework that resonated with her own aspirations for women's rights and personal freedom.

Na Hye-seok attended a Protestant church since her childhood, embodying Protestant Christianity before acquiring any ideas or theories. As mentioned earlier, her time studying in Tokyo appears to be when she was most deeply immersed in Christianity.

Na Hye-seok was baptized as a Christian in Tokyo. Personal motivations, such as the influence of the critical discourse of Confucianism on her religion and thought, must be understood alongside the consideration of Japanese religious policy at the time.

To comprehend Japanese religious policy, an understanding of Yanagihara Kichibee (柳原吉兵衛) is essential, since he was referred

to as an imperial evangelist. Educating Koreans in his own way, he believed that education was paramount, emphasizing the Japan-Korea One Body policy (내선일체, 内鮮一体). In other words, he thought that through education, Japan could align Korean culture with that of Japan. He believed that it was preferable for pro-Japanese Koreans to educate their compatriots, and for this purpose, Koreans who would become educators needed exposure to Japanese culture. According to his education-centred philosophy, Japan had to invest in Korean women who would become mothers and future educators. Yanagihara sponsored female Korean elite students abroad, using Protestant Christianity as a tool. He gathered young and intelligent Korean women to study Christian doctrine, fostering a sense of religious solidarity and organizing various activities centred around women. His ultimate goal was to instil Christian ideas in the future female leaders of Korea and Japan. Evaluations of Yanagihara's approach to evangelism can be mixed (Park, 2007, 129–141). However, it should not be overlooked that this Japanese use of Protestant Christianity is likely to have influenced Na Hye-seok, as well. There was a hidden intention to naturally Japanize Joseon, and it may have been possible to instil a kind of Elitism (선민의식, 選民意識, pride of a chosen people) that made Korean female students studying in Japan feel special.

At that time, the proportion of Christians among female students studying in Japan was about 10 times higher than the proportion of Christians in the general population in Joseon (Park, 2007, 52). Hence, there was a significant gap between what the general public thought of Christianity and the thoughts of the new intellectual female students thereof. Additionally, there were only three mission schools for girls in Joseon: Severance Nursing School (세브란스 간호학교), Ewha School (이화학당), and Pyongyang Union University (평양유니온대학). In contrast, Japan had more mission schools, contributing to the development of education with Protestant Christianity and providing opportunities for women from East Asia, including Korea, to receive education in Japan. Given these circumstances, it is evident that studying in Tokyo was an opportunity for Na Hye-seok, who had been a Christian since

her time at Samil Girls' School (삼일여학교), to advance her faith and become more active in religious activities (Lee, 2002, 50–52). Additionally, meeting Japanese people who were fellow Christians and feminists was enough to influence her life, especially her encounter with Hiratsuka Raichō (平塚 らいちょう), who published the first female literary magazine in Japan, *Seitō* (青鞜) in 1911.

Na Hye-seok's deeper engagement with Christianity unfolded through *Hakjigwang* and a romantic involvement. As previously emphasized, Na Hye-seok was a prominent contributor to *Hakjigwang*, where she and other writers shared a critical stance towards Confucianism and embraced Christianity as a foundational source for innovative ideas in Joseon. This collective intellectual movement likely played a significant role in shaping Na Hye-seok's perspectives. Furthermore, her romantic entanglement with Choi Seung-gu, a Christian, undoubtedly had profound personal and literary implications. The abrupt demise of her lover, Choi Seung-gu, left her in a psychological void, wherein Christianity may have served as a source of solace. The episode of bidding farewell to Choi Seung-gu due to his demise, subsequently encountering Kim Wu-yeong, and marrying him in a church in 1917 vividly illustrates the eminent significance of Christianity in Na Hye-seok's life. In a condensed timeframe, she grappled with the loss of her lover, the death of her father, and the challenge of falling in love with a new fiancé under challenging circumstances. Whilst these life experiences eroded her confidence, they simultaneously contributed to her spiritual and emotional maturation, evident in her literary works.

Following her baptism, Na Hye-seok became more actively involved in literature, expressing her religious views through works such as the short story "Gyeonghi" and the essay "To My Granddaughter Who Was Reborn (회생한 손녀에게)". In 1919, she participated in the March 1 Movement as a female student alongside Park In-deok (박인덕, 1896–1980) and Kim Maria (김마리아, 1891–1944). Subsequently, in April 1920, she married Kim Wu-yeong, a Christian, at the Jeongdong Chapel Church in Seoul. Considering this sequence of events, Na Hye-seok expressed Christianity not only in her literary endeavours but

also as a form of practical engagement in the independence movement. She embraced Protestant Christianity as an inner strength to navigate the challenges of Joseon's realities and her personal tribulations, thereby fostering the endurance necessary for her literary pursuits.

However, after her divorce in 1930, Na Hye-seok distanced herself from Christianity and embraced Buddhism. Attending Buddhist lectures at Jogyesa Temple (조계사, 曹溪寺), she officially became a full-fledged Buddhist in 1933. The transition to Buddhism occurred later in her life, driven by a combination of intellectual and emotional factors. Na Hye-seok was disillusioned by the perceived limitations of Christianity and sought a deeper spiritual fulfilment. She found solace in Buddhist teachings. Her subsequent works reflect this shift, incorporating Buddhist themes such as impermanence, self-realisation, and inner peace. For instance, her literary and artistic works from this period frequently address the transitory nature of life and the pursuit of enlightenment, thereby demonstrating a profound integration of Buddhist principles into her personal and creative expression (Kim, 2004, 76). Despite the shift in religious affiliation, Na Hye-seok's artistic prowess continued to flourish. Her recognition as a painter was affirmed with a prize at the Imperial Japanese Art Exhibition in 1931, restoring her sense of pride. Some argue that her conversion to Buddhism provided her with a renewed lease on life. In her final years, Buddhism became a guiding force, preserving the "artistic soul" and "Buddhist *bodhicitta* (보리심, 菩提心)" as the dual pillars of her existence. Throughout the 1930s, she embarked on journeys to scenic locales and temples across the country, passionately painting. From 1938 to 1944, Na Hye-seok lived and breathed as a painter Na Hye-seok, utilizing the Sudeok Inn near Sudeoksa Temple as her base (Han, 2023, 38).

Undoubtedly, Protestant Christianity served as the paramount religious pillar in Na Hye-seok's life and literature. However, preceding this phase, she harboured anti-Confucian sentiments, and in her later years, Buddhism strongly influenced her beliefs.

Nevertheless, it becomes evident from an examination of several of her works that the Protestant Christian experience wielded the most

substantial influence on her literary output. These specific manifestations will be scrutinized in the subsequent section.

Na Hye-seok's literature

In the early 20th century, Korean Christian literature was characterised by works set during the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. The literature in question delved into the themes of national independence and liberation through the lens of Christianity, as well as the recovery and hope that can be found amidst the devastation of war. Initially, Christian fiction was primarily concerned with the dissemination of Christian doctrine and ethics. However, during the Japanese occupation, works emerged that aimed to raise national consciousness and capture the spirit of resistance. Following the liberation and throughout the Korean War, numerous novels depicted the devastation of war, reconstruction, and personal spiritual growth. These Christian novels depicted the resolution of social and moral issues from a Christian perspective and explored the impact of the Christian faith in the context of social change in Korea. Notable authors include Kim Dong-ri (김동리) and Hyun Ki-young (현기영), whose texts delved deeply into Christian themes and reflected the social and historical conditions of their time.

Among the authors under consideration, Na Hye-seok, who also wrote Christian works, is of particular interest due to her tumultuous life, her status as an intellectual female writer, and her religious transformation. Na Hye-seok's literary and artistic works are distinguished by their integration of Christian themes within the context of early 20th century Korean literature. In contrast to numerous contemporaries who concentrated on traditional Confucian or secular modern themes, Na employed Christian principles to contextualise her feminist and social critiques.

In order to fully comprehend the distinctive nature of Na Hye-seok's contributions, it is imperative to undertake a comparative analysis of her works with those of other contemporary Korean writers and similar Christian texts. This comparative approach will serve to highlight

the distinctive manner in which she integrates Christian themes within the broader literary landscape. This study will, however, focus on the literature and life of Na Hye-seok.

The presence of Christianity in Na Hye-seok's literary corpus

Within the comprehensive compilation of Na Hye-seok's oeuvre, meticulously curated by Lee Sang-kyeong (이상경), there is a discernible cluster of twelve distinct literary works. Among these, four prominently exhibit thematic elements centred around God and Christianity. These noteworthy compositions encompass "Gyeonghi", published in 1918, "To the Granddaughter who was Reborn", "*Guang* (광, 光)", and "That Woman in Paris (파리의 그 여자)", which saw publication in 1935. Of particular interest is the temporal alignment of the first three, all of which were unveiled in the seminal year of 1918.

As previously indicated, Na Hye-seok underwent the sacrament of baptism in 1917 during her academic pursuits in Tokyo. The subsequent year marked a pivotal juncture in her literary endeavours, with a notable surge in the production and publication of works steeped in religious themes.

Gyeong-hi is a human. Then, she becomes a woman, and subsequently, she is a person before being a woman. She is a Woman of the Universe before she is a Woman of Joseon. She is the Daughter of God before being the daughter of Mrs. Lee Cheol-won, before Ms. Kim. In any case, she is undoubtedly human. [Interruption] She prostrates herself and prays in unison. God, the Daughter of God is present. Father, my life is blessed with many gifts. Observe, are my eyes and ears not active? God, endow me with infinite brilliance and strength, and I will labour with all my might. Reward or punish me, do as you please (Na, 2000, 103–104).

The protagonist Gyeonghi can be considered a manifestation of Na Hye-seok herself. In the narrative, Gyeonghi directs her prayers towards God, thereby establishing her identity as a woman within the sanctuary of the universe and explicitly identifying herself as a "daughter of God". This identification is of particular significance as it stands in stark

contrast to the Confucian emphasis on filial piety and patriarchal hierarchy. By addressing God as her father, Gyeonghi rejects the Confucian father-figure's control and instead finds empowerment in her relationship with a divine, egalitarian Father.

Moreover, Gyeonghi's Christian faith serves as a source of inner strength and self-realisation. In the face of her father's insistence on an unwanted marriage, which symbolises the oppressive Confucian social norms, Gyeonghi turns to her faith for solace and guidance. Her prayers and connection to God provide her with a renewed sense of purpose and self-worth, enabling her to envision a life beyond the constraints imposed by traditional Confucian values.

This transformation through Christian faith is not merely a personal victory; it is also a broader statement on the potential for ideological shifts to empower women and foster social change. In order to gain a deeper insight into Na Hye-seok's distinctive approach, it is beneficial to conduct a comparative analysis of her works with those of her contemporaries. While numerous writers of the period, such as Yi Kwang-su, also critiqued Confucianism and explored Christian themes, Na Hye-seok's integration of Christian ideals into her feminist narrative is particularly noteworthy. In contrast to her contemporaries, who frequently depicted Christianity as a moral framework, Na employed it as a means of fostering personal and social empowerment. This distinction is evident in her nuanced portrayal of female protagonists who find strength and identity through their faith.

Gyeonghi's heightened spirituality is revealed when she prays to God, receiving infinite light and blessings, overwhelmed by a sense of mental fulfilment and spiritual ecstasy. Ultimately, she pledges to God that she will exert her utmost effort in the ministry. The Christian faith depicted in "Gyeonghi" delineates the process of a woman's self-discovery through God's glory and blessing, along with her acknowledgment of faith and potential in her life and future. It materializes as a practice aiming to transform the passive existence of a woman subdued by prevailing patriarchal beliefs and institutions – an endeavour to replace the patriarchal beliefs underpinning Confucianism with Christian ideals

(Go, 2000, 229). Furthermore, Christian elements are also discernible in the imagery and language employed throughout the narrative. For instance, the repeated references to “light” and “blessing” serve to reinforce the notion of divine intervention in Gyeonghi’s journey. The utilisation of Christian symbolism serves to illustrate the transformative potential of faith in the context of Gyeonghi’s journey of self-discovery.

In early modern Joseon society, Western Christianity was characterized more as a practical administration of enlightenment fervour than merely a religion or faith. In other words, the acceptance of Protestant Christianity was not confined to individual faith but intricately linked with the desire for self-transformation and the mental resolve to bring about change. Therefore, the Christianity of Joseon, as referred to here, differs somewhat from Western Christianity. It represents both a religion and an idea serving as an alternative to Confucianism and other ideologies.

The central character, Gyeonghi, derives her self-confidence, affirmation, and commitment to practice and realization in life from her religious beliefs and passion. Consequently, Gyeonghi’s journey of self-discovery and transformation of consciousness is intricately linked to her Christian faith, emphasised by a steadfast religious sense of being a daughter of God.

In the context of her connection to Protestant Christianity, one of Na Hye-seok’s most notable works is “To the Granddaughter Who Was Reborn”. The phrase “grandmother’s gospel (할머니의 복음)” appears in this work, serving as a symbol of Na Hye-seok’s desire to embody feminine writing and Christianity through her creative expression. “To the Granddaughter Who Was Reborn” is an epistolary fiction crafted by a grandmother to her granddaughter who has recuperated from an illness. However, the grandmother and granddaughter are not related in the traditional sense of kinship. Instead, this is the story of a woman who was unwell and another woman who nursed her back to health, leading to a relationship of grandmother and granddaughter.

The first-person narrator of the short story, “I”, discovers a lonely woman, “you”, without a mother and separated from her grandmother, shedding tears as she recalls losing her beloved friend to lung disease

a year ago. Regretful about failing to provide comfort to her friend by forsaking her studies and tending to her through vigils after her passing, “I” dedicates herself to the care of “you”, the recipient of the letter. After nursing “you” with utmost sincerity and devotion to alleviate her regret and resentment, “you” eventually recovers from the illness. Grateful, the recovered “you” calls “I” her grandmother, remembering her own grandmother who cried and battled with fever in her final moments. Through this, the “I” and the “you” establish a grandmother and granddaughter relationship.

Now referred to as “grandmother” by the “you”, the “I” kneels down and offers a prayer of thanks to God for the granddaughter’s recovery, reintroducing the Protestant Christian concept of “God”. The grandmother’s ability to revive the ailing girl is elucidated in the story using a Christian term – the “gospel”.

It was never my own strength that propelled me to do this. It was all because my grandmother’s gospel was dancing inside me. Amidst my moments of wonder, I must have dreamt of great inspiration. In any case, this gospel that fell from your red lips has infused my parched spirit with vitality and ignited a fire in my feverish flesh. (Interruption) But, my dear grandddaughter, I aspire to be an angel (Na, 2000, 103–104).

“Gospel”, a term employed in Christianity, is not a phrase commonly used in everyday life in Korea. Gospel denotes good news, and within Christianity, it signifies the life, teachings, and path of salvation attributed to Jesus. Na Hye-seok incorporates this specific term into her work. However, in her narrative, it is not Jesus who imparts the gospel but rather the grandmother. “Grandma’s Gospel” serves as an expression of Na’s feminist inclinations and Christian influence. The grandmother in Na’s story is the caretaker and healer of the sick, engaging in prayer and gospel preaching. “Grandmother’s Gospel” can be perceived as a “Koreanised (조선화, 朝鮮化)” manifestation of Protestant Christianity crafted by Na Hye-seok. She aligns the image of a grandmother, marginalized in the male-centric Confucian society, with the God of Christianity, appending a “gospel” bearing a Christian

message. Ultimately, Na Hye-seok forges her own literary expression within the ambit of Christian influence.

Despite Na Hye-seok's deep immersion in Buddhism since 1930, Christian characteristics emerge in "That Woman in Paris", published in 1935. Here, Na Hye-seok underscores the significance of the Bible and draws parallels between the struggles of global literary figures such as Shakespeare and Tolstoy with those of Jesus. This implies that Na Hye-seok perceived literature to be as sublime as religion. Moreover, it suggests that she continued to hold a high regard for the Christian spirit even after embracing Buddhism. It also illustrates that, while Protestant Christianity constituted a significant part of her ideological backdrop, it was not absolute.

Protestant Christianity in Na Hye-seok's fictions revolves around self-confidence and the determination to enlighten one's country. God occasionally assumes a role in aiding individuals resisting misconceptions (daughter of God), while at other times, God appears in a "Koreanised" form (grandmother) to preach the gospel and save lives. Furthermore, it contributes to elevating the value of literature as a cherished idea irrespective of religious beliefs. Hence, comprehending her literature is challenging without grasping the Christian spirit embraced by Na Hye-seok.

Na Hye-seok's literary and artistic works are distinguished by their integration of Christian themes within the context of early 20th century Korean literature. In contrast to numerous contemporaries who concentrated on traditional Confucian or secular modern themes, Na employed Christian principles to contextualise her feminist and social critiques.

For example, in comparison to contemporaries such as Yi Kwang-su, who likewise critiqued Confucianism but from a largely secular perspective, Na's works are distinguished by their explicit incorporation of Christian narratives. Yi's works frequently addressed nationalism and moral reformation, though they lacked a robust religious foundation. In contrast, Na's short story "Gyeonghi" employs Christian imagery and language to challenge Confucian gender norms, portraying the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening through her faith. This approach not only provided a moral framework for her

critique but also offered a vision of personal and societal transformation grounded in Christian ethics.

Protestant “Chamsarang (참사랑)” in Na Hye-seok’s non-fiction

The direct translation of the Korean term “Chamsarang (참사랑)” into English is “True Love”, but it is more nuanced than that. This is because the biblical term “Charity” is used in Korean Christianity as a translation of “Chamsarang”. In other words, “Chamsarang” is a Koreanised Christian term. Na Hye-seok often employed this concept in her essays.

“A Review of Becoming a Mother (모된 감상기)” is another of Na’s most famous works, published in four issues of the magazine *Dongmyeong* (동명, 東明). It is an essay about her maternal instinct. She honestly expresses her difficult experiences in a patriarchal society, articulating her maternal instinct from a feminist and anti-Confucian perspective. In other words, she confesses to the challenges of motherhood, which were difficult for Koreans to understand at the time. She even describes her mother’s suffering as a terrible curse from God. According to Na Hye-seok, motherly love is not something that happens naturally from the beginning but is developed through nurturing. Despite the extreme expression of a mother’s suffering, Na Hye-seok believed that by becoming a mother, sacrificing the present, and having hope for the future, she could meet God and go to Heaven (Lee Sang-gyeong, 2000, 249). This process of motherhood was the way to practice true love. In this way, we can see Christian characteristics through words such as God and Heaven. However, what is more important is the use of the concept of “Chamsarang”. Na Hye-seok directly mentions “Chamsarang” in “Reply to Mr. Baek Gyeol (백결생에게 답함)” in 1923.

We, as women, are never unhappy to be women. We harbour no envy towards men, engage in no quarrel over rights, and make no demands for equality or absolute freedom. All we can hope for and realise is that we can live in “Chamsarang” (Na, 2000, 238).

Na Hye-seok argued that women should aspire to and embody true love. For her, the way to practice “Chamsarang” was to live “a life of harmony, understanding how to love one another, cherishing one another, and assisting the weak” in “Questions and Answers Between Couples (부처간의 문답)” and “a life of not forgetting oneself” in “Happiness of Not Forgetting Myself (나를 잊지 않는 행복)”. This can be interpreted as the path of persecution and self-reflection. Persecution is the humanity emphasized in Protestant Christianity, and self-examination is the “Chamsarang” that Na Hye-seok herself discovered. In the end, self-reflection and Christian charity can be viewed as Na Hye-seok’s “Chamsarang”. The “Chamsarang” that emerges in Na’s non-fiction literary works is a literary expression extending beyond Christian charity. It is also linked to the reflective mindset of the new intellectuals under colonial rule.

Conclusion

This study has centred on Na Hye-seok’s literary creations and religious transformation, delving into her evolution and metamorphosis as a symbolic figure of modern Korean women. In particular, it has scrutinised her religious journey, with a focus on the 1910s when she distanced herself from Confucianism amidst the social changes on the Korean peninsula and embraced Protestant Christianity while studying in Tokyo. To gain a better understanding of these social changes and Na Hye-seok’s acceptance of Christianity, the study has examined the movements of the new intellectual class against Confucianism during that time.

Through her literature, Na Hye-seok realistically depicted Joseon in the 1910s as it started to shift away from Confucian traditions. The critique of Confucianism and the introduction of Protestant Christianity in her works distinctly reflected the changing consciousness of the new intellectual class of the time, especially among the new women. Specifically, in works such as “Gyeonghee”, “To the Granddaughter who

was Reborn”, and “That Woman in Paris”, I analysed how she integrated and expressed Christian values and faith in her femininity and art.

The religious and ideological transitions from Confucianism to anti-Confucianism and Protestant Christianity in Na’s literature had a profound impact on her work, as well as on her daily life, artistic activities, and social movements. This study emphasises that her work can be interpreted through the lens of women and religion and suggests how her femininity and religious beliefs interacted and developed. Furthermore, for her, Protestant Christianity is not merely a religion but an idea.

In doing so, she has crafted a distinctive body of work through the three pillars of modern thought, the fusion of religions, and the exploration of her own identity. Her works provide rich discursive meaning for the life and identity of women in modern Korea. Na Hye-seok’s literature has made a significant contribution to modern Korean literature by exploring women’s growth and rebirth, love, and hope from various perspectives under the influence of Christianity. Additionally, it offers a glimpse into the religious and ideological changes on the Korean peninsula in the early 20th century.

At the time, Na Hye-seok navigated a new path for Korean women’s literature in conjunction with Protestant Christianity. She was also an artist who demonstrated that religious experiences and ideas could be employed to reform society and create art. She used her Christian experience as a tool to explore her own identity and adapted it to the Korean reality of the time. Through her work, Christianity in Joseon was more actively incorporated into the lives and literature of Korean women. However, it should not be overlooked that Christianity was also absorbed by the new intellectual class through the ideas of Confucian criticism.

Future research should explore the Buddhist features in Na Hye-seok’s literature and art to gain a deeper understanding of her writings, as well as the literature and thought of the Korean peninsula in the early 20th century.

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Baekseong, Minjok, and Minjung: Renaming the “People” Amidst Multiculturalism and Global Migration in Korea

The present research aims to explore different concepts referring to the “people” in the Korean language. It specifically highlights *minjok* (민족) and *minjung* (민중), and delves into their historical, sociological, and theological valences in consideration of the contemporary context of multiculturalism and transnational migration in Korea. The central argument is that although the theological notion of *minjung* helps us develop a more inclusive picture of citizenship and nation, the term *minjok* cannot be fully dismissed in referring to the collective subjectivity in the history of liberation in the case of Korea. *Minjok* is often associated with the anticolonial movements and the postcolonial process of nation-building in Korea after its liberation from the Japanese occupation period (1910–1945). However, this concept is highly contested and often is accused of proliferating the idea of oneness, uniformity, and purity in conceiving of the nation against the contemporary era of globalization, multiculturalism, and trans/international migration. This strand of thought can be found in contemporary public theologies that attempt to inherit the legacy of *minjung* theology. Although the present research focuses on the positive aspects of envisioning *minjung* as the historical and social subject of Korean society, it will propose *minjung* as an additive, rather than a replacement, to *minjok*. *Minjok* and *minjung* are not two contrary concepts but complementary ones, since *minjung* requires *minjok* to carry on the historicity and collective memory of the mass, which has the transformative power to work in and against social structures. Without the memory of *minjok*, hospitality to the Other (in the Levinasian-Derridean sense) in the era of globalization, multiculturalism, and trans/international migration is neither perceptible nor conceivable.

Keywords: *minjung*, *minjok*, Korean studies, hospitality, postcolonial studies, global migration, globalization, multiculturalism

Introduction

The demographic change in the Korean population in the past two decades is pronounced in comparison with other Northeast Asian countries in the region. The anticipated decline of population in Korea, which now has become reality with the devastating birth rate, proliferated the state-doctrine of multiculturalism. The capitalistic demand for labour force caused social, political, and economic anxiety in Korean society. The population decline was first perceived as a potential economic threat, and then it was translated into the need for the social, political, and even ethical norm of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism or *damunbwa* was and still is a political goal for Korean society in various institutions. The political and social discourse about immigration goes beyond the typical bifurcation of left and right. The Lee Myung-bak administration (2008–2013) and the Park Geun-hye administration (2013–2017), both from the rightist party (Hannara Party and Saenuri Party – both refer to the same party; Hannara changed their name to Saenuri in 2012), supported and continued the state policy of *damunbwa*. Even the current administration led by President Yoon Seok-yeol maintains the policy. The government's support of multiculturalism has been promoted and communicated to the public through various means, including but not limited to the public advertisement by Kobaco (Korea Public Service Advertisement Council) and the textbooks for primary school published by the government-influenced printing presses.¹ According to the data provided by South

¹ See, for example, *Damunbwa Poyong – Haengbokeul Chaerwo Juneun Saram*. Directed by Yoon Seok-Ju. Divot Pictures, 2008. Available: https://www.kobaco.co.kr/site/main/archive/advertising/5/572?cp=1&pageSize=8&sortDirection=DESC&arcUse=true&arcCategory=5&metaCode1=broadcast&metaCode2=psa_new_004&metaCode3=psa_new_004_004&adtManufactureYear=&adtDefaultYear=false [last viewed 15.05.2024]. *Damunbwa, Ihaerwa Sotong*. Directed by Kang Dong-Su. 아프리카 프로덕션, 2013. Available: https://www.kobaco.co.kr/site/main/archive/advertising/5/708?cp=1&pageSize=8&sortDirection=DESC&arcUse=true&arcCategory=5&metaCode1=broadcast&metaCode2=psa_new_004&metaCode3=psa_new_004_004&adtManufactureYear=&adtDefaultYear=false [last viewed 15.05.2024].

Korea’s Ministry of Justice, the total number of foreign residents comprises 2,245,912. As of the end of 2022, the number of foreign residents in Korea showed an increase of 14.8% compared to the previous year.² 2022 marked the highest increase in multicultural marriages. The marriage between Korean nationals and foreign nationals increased by 25.1% compared to 2021.³

The state doctrine of multiculturalism that arose from the moral, social, and political consensus in agreement with the logic of capitalism in the context of declining birth rate together with the demand of globalization challenged the traditional self-understanding of the collective Korean subjectivity in history and politics, can be summarized as *minjok*. The concept of *minjok* took an important position in the anticolonial struggle against the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945. It maintained its political significance in the post-colonial process of nation-building that accompanied economic rebuilding after

² *Yearly Status of Foreign Residents Relative to the Population*. 연도별 인구대별 체류외국인 현황. Statistics provided by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea. Available: [https://www.moj.go.kr/moj/2412/subview.do#:~:text=%EC%97%B0%EB%8F%84%EB%B3%84%20%EC%9E%A5%EB%8B%A8%EA%B8%B0%20%EC%B2%B4%EB%A5%98%EC%99%B8%EA%B5%AD%EC%9D%B8%20%ED%98%84%ED%99%A9\('18~'23,%EC%A0%84%EB%85%84%20%EB%8C%80%EB%B9%84%2014.8%25%20%EC%A6%9D%EA%B0%80%ED%95%98%EC%98%80%EC%8A%B5%EB%8B%88%EB%8B%A4](https://www.moj.go.kr/moj/2412/subview.do#:~:text=%EC%97%B0%EB%8F%84%EB%B3%84%20%EC%9E%A5%EB%8B%A8%EA%B8%B0%20%EC%B2%B4%EB%A5%98%EC%99%B8%EA%B5%AD%EC%9D%B8%20%ED%98%84%ED%99%A9('18~'23,%EC%A0%84%EB%85%84%20%EB%8C%80%EB%B9%84%2014.8%25%20%EC%A6%9D%EA%B0%80%ED%95%98%EC%98%80%EC%8A%B5%EB%8B%88%EB%8B%A4) [last viewed 15.05.2024].

³ Yewon Park. Last Year, Multicultural Marriages Increased by 25.1%, the Largest Increase Ever, Influenced by the End of COVID-19. Published online on 29 November 2023. KBS (Korean Broadcasting System). Available: <https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/pc/view/view.do?ncd=7829375#:~:text=%EB%A1%9C%20%EC%A0%84%ED%99%98%ED%96%88%EC%8A%B5%EB%8B%88%EB%8B%A4.-,%EC%A0%84%EC%B2%B4%20%ED%98%BC%EC%9D%B8%20%EC%A4%91%20%EB%B8%B4%EB%AC%B8%ED%99%94%20%ED%98%BC%EC%9D%B8%EC%9D%B4%20%EC%B0%A8%EC%A7%80%ED%95%98%EB%8A%94%20%EB%B9%84%EC%A4%91%EB%8F%84%202021,%EC%9D%98%20%ED%98%BC%EC%9D%B8%EC%9D%80%2013.2%25%EC%98%80%EC%8A%B5%EB%8B%88%EB%8B%A4> [last viewed 15.05.2024].

the war. This concept still holds an enduring importance as it functions as the ideological ground for the reunification with North Korea. However, it is contested by the conceptual development and implementation of multiculturalism in contemporary Korean society. The state-doctrine of multiculturalism fundamentally contradicts the continuation of the one, pure, and time-surpassing *minjok*.

In contemporary Korean, Korean American, and even Korean-Asian theologies, there is a tendency to prioritize *minjung* over *minjok* due to the threat represented by the latter concept, which consists of leading to exclusionary or even discriminatory politics. It would be worth exploring this phenomenon of prioritizing *minjung* over *minjok* in various sites of academic and colloquial discussion. However, this paper has been intended to bring to the fore the question of whether it is fair to introduce *minjung* as the adequate and ethically desirable concept to replace *minjok* in reconceiving of the Korean subjectivity in history and politics. While being attuned to the potential danger of exclusionary politics in emphasizing *minjok*, the author contends that *minjung* and *minjok* are not mutually exclusive and contrasting, but that they are complementary. *Minjung* is not a desirable replacement for *minjok*. Rather, it is an additive to *minjok* that carries the historical memory of the mass that has the transformative power to work in and against social structures. In the era of globalization, multiculturalism, and trans/international migration, dismissing *minjok* for the sake of *minjung* can be misleading since the memory of alienation and violence in the past that constitutes *minjok* can play an important role in articulating and bringing in practice the hospitality to the Other.

Minjok and minjung

The colloquial meaning and the scholarly use of the term *minjok* and its translation into English is subject to debate in academic disciplinary and political contexts. The meaning of the term is often simply translated as “ethnic group”, “nation”, or “race”. Brian Myers is a Korean studies scholar who translates *minjok* as “race” instead of nation, tribe,

or ethnic group (Myers, 2010). Vladimir Tikhonov (also known as Pak Noja in Korea) prefers the term ethno-nation to refer to *minjok* (Tikhonov, 2018, 474–503). Although its translation can vary, there are semantic implications and common characteristics that we can deduce from either translation. The Korean people as a whole, regardless of South and North, regardless of the political structure from monarchy in previous dynasties to contemporary democracy, is referred to as *minjok*. *Minjok* presupposes homogeneity. The constituents of *minjok* include language, blood-based kinship, and most significantly, the shared memory of the past. The fundamental characteristic of this concept is that *minjok* is conceived as the subject of history. In other words, *minjok* is regarded as the one, pure, time-surpassing, and uniform subjectivity that transcends material conditions of history. *Minjok* transcends territorial designations. It is not confined by the borders between nations that keep changing over time. *Minjok* entails the immaterial spirit that continues to manifest itself over the linear period of time.

There are fewer disagreements concerning the translation of *minjung* since it is often translated as “people”, “the public”, or “the mass.” It is a South Korean variant that was created to avoid using the word “*inmin*,” which has a strong communist connotation due to North Korea’s historical preference to use this term in their conception of the people as an economic and social entity in proletariat revolution, although the meaning has been distorted in contemporary North Korea with the Kim family’s regime.

Minjung is distinguishable but not separable from the concept of *minjok* as both concepts denote the collective social, historical, political, and moral agency. They are not separable, but they are not the same (Kwon, 2007, 13–34). One of the academic disciplines that developed the notion of *minjung* in Korean studies scholarship is theology and studies of religion. *Minjung* still remains a very important concept in contemporary Korean scholarship in postcolonial theology. The theological side of the discussion revolving around the concept of *minjung* is represented by minjung theology. The ideas of *minjung* are typically associated with *han* (sorrow, powerlessness, resentment) originating

from the shared experience of suffering of the ethno-nation during the Japanese occupation of Korea. According to Andrew Eungi Kim, minjung theology can be classified into three main periods of development. The initial stage of minjung theology focused on the economic exploitation of labourers. The subsequent development of minjung theology was more centred around democratization movement. Its origin can be traced back to the 1970s or before, and is often introduced as the Korean version of liberation theology. This periodization of its origin signifies Korea's rapid industrialization and urbanization (Kim, 2022). In the 1980s, during the period of political struggle against the military dictatorship in Korea, *minjung* theology flourished as an academic resistance against political oppression. However, it was not limited to academic spaces, such as theology departments within universities or seminaries. *Minjung* theology was expressed in social activism of protestant pastors (e.g., Moon Ik-hwan) and Catholic priests and organizations (e.g., Catholic Priests Association for Justice – 천주교정의구현전국사제단). Moon Ik-hwan's famous speech at the commemoration ceremony of Lee Han-yeol and the Catholic organization's struggle to expose the massacre during the Gwangju Uprising and a student activist Park Jong-chul torture death incident exemplify the religiously inspired social activist groups in Korea that gathered around the notion of *minjung*. This concept has been reinterpreted with a theological lens to identify injustice and call for ethical response from the believers and the faith communities. The third phase of minjung theology extended its horizon of ethical concerns for human rights, gender equality, and peace. The concept of minjung developed along the line with the developing foci of analysis and activism.

Minjung is contrasted with *minjok* in the sense that the former puts diversity and inclusivity forward as the fundamental constitutive element of the collective historical and political subjectivity. Unlike *minjok*, *minjung* is understood as not a static or immutable entity. *Minjung* appears in the movement of expansion and contraction (Kim, 1993, 21–47). *Minjung* is an *anamnestic* entity that is always in the process of making new memories.

Minjung theologies’ contestation of *minjok*

Both *minjok* and *minjung* have political and moral implications when used in academic spaces. It is arguable whether it is always the case when they are used in a descriptive manner. However, when either is used in prescriptive account of Korean society to critique and attempt to make constructive contributions, the ongoing preference of *minjung* over *minjok* is noticeable. Despite the historical centrality of the concept of *minjok* during the colonial occupation of Korea by Japan and in the post-colonial political landscape of the Korean peninsula, *minjok* is often understood as an obsolete notion for any political agenda and moral reasoning. Especially, in the contemporary era of globalization, multiculturalism, and transnational and international migration, *minjok* is neglected in propositions for moral justification for political action. Moreover, *minjok* is sometimes accused of being immoral or inappropriate for bringing justice and equality to society. It has the danger of leading to exclusionary politics, as it designates individuals into dichotomous groups: those belonging to *minjok* and those not belonging to it.

Minjung is a very influential alternative that arises from the aforementioned line of critique of *minjok*. The legacy of *minjung* theological tradition continues to this day in contemporary discourses within the discipline of Christian social ethics and theological ethics in educational and ministerial spaces. *Minjung* theology in both Korean-speaking and Anglophone spaces expands the area of *minjung* theology by seeking intersectional approach to interpret, analyse, and critique various phenomena and structures of injustice and violence. Andrew Eungi Kim remarks that *minjung* theology is now extending its horizon of perception and critique to contemporary ethical concerns in Korean society, such as human rights issues regarding foreign migrant workers and income polarization (Kim, 2022). Feminist/womanist, postcolonial, ecological, queer theorist, and critical race theorist appropriation of *minjung* theology is worth noting among the numerous strands of the contemporary *minjung* theology. Among those appropriations of *minjung* theology in contemporary theology, the scholarship, the tendency to

critique the concept of *minjok* and the attempt to propose *minjung* as its replacement are worth highlighting. The concept of *minjok* is criticized for being too ethno-centric and therefore, too exclusionary toward those who are not deemed to belong to the Korean nation.

It seems to be a valid critique based on their moral framework that primarily concerns hospitality for the stranger based on Deuteronomic account of “foreigner” and the doctrine of creation in Christian theology. However, I think it also overlooks the ethical value that *minjok* may carry when put forward to conceive of hospitality for the incoming foreign migrants to Korea. It would be arbitrary and nebulous to fully dismiss the concept of *minjok* when they claim to develop a non-Western and Korean-specific “post-colonial” indigenous theological reflection and ethical discernment. The attempt to dismiss *minjok* for the sake of *minjung* is either Westernizing or Asianizing the Korean-specific history of anti-colonial struggle.

It must be emphasized, that the so-called Asian theological or Asian-American theological critique of *minjok* aiming to put it in line with other post-colonial theologies of race, nation, and migration does not do justice to Korean theology or Korean studies in general. The attempt to expand *minjung* to develop an intersectional approach in dialogue with other critical theories by requiring the full dismissal of *minjok* is highly inappropriate. It neglects the danger of totalizing Korean theology or Korean studies in general as a mere subset of Asian theology, Asian-American theology, or other forms of racialized theologies. The attempt to replace and dismiss *minjok* for the sake of expanded applications of *minjung* can proliferate another form of totalization and intellectual violence. Moreover, it glosses over the transformative power that memory can play when *minjok* is properly conceived as the subject of memory and shared experience.

Minjok and hospitality to the stranger

As represented by Ahn Byung Mu, *minjung* theology pays profound attention to the arbitrary power dynamics involved in social ethics that

systematizes norms to concretize a system of dominance and order (Ahn, 1995, 37). This concern resonates with the ethical concerns of Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler. Levinas posits ethics as the “first philosophy”. Levinas’ ethics is known as ethics of alterity or ethics of encounter. The Kabbalistic influence on his thought can be understood in the wider philosophical branch of Jewish philosophy that concerns the appearance of the Other, the stranger, *ger*. Levinas’ ethics of alterity does not provide an exhaustive list of norms or ideals based on the first-person comprehension of those norms and subjectively originated struggles to achieve them. Rather, his ethics of alterity denotes the phenomenon of the appearance of the Other as the basis of ethical reflection. Ungraspability and unobjectifiability characterize what Levinas means by “the Other” (Levinas, 1979). In Levinas’ thought, the Other refers to an ungraspable, radically different, and completely foreign entity. The Other appears to the self as an ethical demand.

Despite *minjung* theology’s traditional and ongoing attempts to prioritize *minjung* to *minjok*, it seems that dismissing *minjok* in ethical discourses on hospitality, diversity, and inclusivity in multicultural society can be misleading. *Minjok* and *minjung* are not separable while becoming more distinguishable in the era of global migration and multiculturalism. Meanwhile, when this distinguishability aims to decry *minjok* as immoral, it would forgo the important position that *minjok* can play in conceiving of hospitality based on memory and imagined reversibility.

Minjok stands at the centre of the discourse about reunification. It functions as both ideological ground and moral justification. As Andrei Lankov argues for the importance of perceiving North Korean people as *minjok*, instead of resource or labour force, and the importance of perceiving the land of North Korea as “our land” for cultivation and development, instead of natural resources to be exploited (Lankov, 2020). Dismissing the concept of *minjok* can lead to reducing the immigrants to the object of exploitation, instead of the historical subject who are involved in reflecting on the past experience for cohabitation in the present and

future. *Minjok* denotes the shared memory of suffering in the case of postcolonial Korea. In the context of postcolonial Korea, *minjok* enables the conception of hospitality based on the historical memory of suffering. The collective memory of injustice and violence embedded in *minjok* from the time of its conception in modernity makes Korean society capable of articulating and understanding what displacement and homelessness might mean for the incoming immigrants. *Minjok* can certainly be the founding stone of arbitrary exclusion and discrimination. To prevent developing in this direction, *minjok* requires *minjung*. Integrating *minjok* and *minjung* in conceiving of hospitality to the Other reminds us of another term toward which multicultural society may need to envision as the collective subject of history and political action. That term is *baekseong*. Reimagining the concept of *baekseong* as the historical and political subjectivity that embraces struggles of *minjok* and *minjung* can be fruitful in this regard. In other words, for theological discerning and ethical reflection, extending the horizon to *baekseong* while integrating *minjok* and *minjung* can contribute to indigenous theology that conceives of the people as the collective agent of political action in history.

The shared syllable *min* in *minjok* and *minjung* denotes “the people” in itself. Paying close attention to the meaning of *min* and redeeming its meaning can be ethically relevant for our era of globalization. *Min* is a Sino-Korean term that signifies another Sino-Korean word, *baekseong*. This term has its own history, different interpretations and applications. If we parse it, the hidden implication can be made more explicit. *Baekseong* means “a hundred surnames (last names)”. *Baekseong* presupposes diversity. In the field of Korean history, together with *minjung*, *baekseong* has been a key term that challenges the aristocratic and text-based studies of Korean history in the traditional sense. *Baekseong* can be helpful in considering who the subject of Korean history is, and what it consists of. What redeeming the notion of *baekseong* teaches is that *minjok* and *minjung* already presuppose and are preconditioned by plurality and historical movement of expansion and contraction.

Dismissing *minjok* for the sake of *minjung* is artificial and inappropriate. Over-emphasizing *minjung* leads to seeing only what “happens

to” the embodied existence, but not what “is in” the political body as the carrier of memory. It discards the potential for visiting the memory of suffering, oppression, and violence of the collective historical agent embedded in the self-conception of *minjok*. It also discards the tradition of oppression in the past that calls for response in the present toward the future. Revisiting the struggle of *minjok* in the present moment of multiculturalism and global migration directs the aim at reducing the precarity and vulnerability of the others who reveal themselves to *minjung* while involved in the process of becoming *baekseong*. *Baekseong* pertains to becoming rather than being.

The memory of the historical wounds of *minjok* can be the starting point to conceive of the reversibility of suffering of the Other. It is necessary to leave cautionary notes about the concept of *minjok* since it refers to the unique site of moral imagination and reflection for the case of postcolonial Korea. This paper aimed to provide the often neglected and dismissed concept of *minjok* despite its promising aspect for Korea-specific ethical and theological discourses about immigration and cohabitation in this globalized world. Despite its strong theological scent, thinking through the notion of *minjok*, *minjung*, and *baekseong* does not have to remain a phenomenon unique to Christianity or a particular religion. Our relation to political action based on interaction with memory while facing the appearance of the Other in reflecting who we are as historically, socially, and culturally embodied beings may point to a mystical or theological ground, although it is not necessarily theistic.

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Modernization of Korean and Chinese Philosophy: Shared and Divergent Evolution of Concepts

This article explores the modernization of Korean and Chinese philosophy, tracing the shared roots and divergent trajectories of their conceptual evolution. It examines how traditional philosophical frameworks, such as Daoism, Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, and indigenous thought, have been reshaped under the pressures of modernization, industrialization, and political change. Key themes include the integration of Western religions and philosophies into the East Asian spiritual environment, with a particular focus on Christianity and Marxism. The article illuminates locally developed philosophical concepts and methods that have emerged through intellectual exchange, such as the synthesis of Marxist dialectics with ancient Chinese dialectical concepts or the integration of Confucianism and Christianity in Korea. It demonstrates how philosophical traditions have been adapted to serve national agendas and examines the interaction between theory and practice. The analysis highlights the unique paths these traditions have taken while reflecting broader trends in East Asian intellectual history.

Keywords: philosophy, Korea, China, modernization, Christianity, Marxism, East Asian philosophy

Korea and China shares a common philosophical heritage, particularly Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. However, as Sool Park correctly points out, these nations "... reached a turning point between 1860 and 1900, when traditional philosophical systems were largely replaced by Western norms" (Park, 2021, 13). In this context, the examples of

Korea and China are particularly interesting in a comparative perspective, considering that the modern intellectual thought of both countries, despite many similarities, has developed in separate directions. By the 19th century, intellectual modernization in Korea was closely tied to the export of Western literature and education, particularly promoted by Protestant missionaries whose worldview aligned with the Protestant awakening movements in Europe and America. Additionally, Korean traditional shamanism, which was widespread among the rural population, facilitated the spread of Christianity as a religion of revelation. At the same time, Confucianism dramatically lost its ethical relevance, as the Kingdom of Joseon, a hierarchical society characterized by dominant servitude, societal segregation, and discrimination, struggled to keep pace with the dynamic changes of the era (Choi, 2006). All of this led to a growing interest in Korea in “Western knowledge”, which became associated with Christianity as a carrier of modern technologies and knowledge. This also encompassed Western philosophy, characterized by a high level of abstraction and a methodology rooted in elaborate theoretical constructs. Very soon, Korean philosophers began to develop intellectual thought in diverse directions: from sharp critiques of Western thought to deep comparative evaluations. However, they did not create as pronounced a synthesis of Western secular materialistic traditions with the ancient philosophical discourse of East Asia as seen in China. These differences are not merely the result of later developments, such as the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and Korea’s independence, accompanied by the tragic division into South and North Korea. Their origins can already be traced to the second wave of Western knowledge transmission, which began in the early 19th century and was driven by Protestant missionaries and their intensive translation efforts.

As Lihua, Kaifang, and Lifang correctly point out: “Owing to the influence of long-standing traditions and rulers’ adherence to Confucianism, Christianity found it difficult to gain traction in China without finding a point of convergence compatible with traditional Chinese ideology and culture, resulting in an emphasis on Western classics. Due to its unique historical circumstances, Korea presented

a completely different response compared to China in the process of accepting Christianity. The crucial difference lay in the fact that shamanism was revived, while Confucianism (known as a religion in Korea) declined in Korean society. It was during this age of shamanic revival that Christian missionaries arrived on the Korean Peninsula” (Li et al., 2024, 11). If, in the context of Christianity, Koreans found some, albeit complex, analogies with shamanism, Western philosophy was embraced largely due to the occupation resulting from imperialist aggression by their East Asian neighbour, Japan. This led to an equally enthusiastic adoption of Western philosophy, paralleling their acceptance of Christianity in the religious sphere. Meanwhile, more empirically oriented Chinese thinkers embraced European secular and empirically grounded philosophies to a much greater extent, closely integrating Western thought with China’s traditional philosophical systems. The early Chinese reformists and thinkers who adopted Western ideas, such as the pioneer of globalization Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao (1873–1929), known as both the father of Chinese nationalism and the father of Chinese liberalism, dedicated much of their efforts to analysing questions of practical societal transformation. As early as 1902, Liang introduced Marx to China (Liang, 2023), marking the beginning of the broader reception of Marxist philosophy. This reception soon engaged in a dialogue with classical Chinese culture, as exemplified by Guo Moruo’s (1892–1978) 1925 essay imagining a conversation between Marx and Confucius (Bauer, 1989). Introduced during the early 20th century, Marxism became central to Chinese modern philosophy, particularly under Mao Zedong (1893–1976), who reinterpreted Marxist dialectics through the lens of ancient Chinese dialectical concepts. A dynamic interplay between Confucianism, Daoism, and Marxism facilitated innovation, allowing ancient ideas of duality to adapt to contemporary practices. It should be noted that Marxism in East Asia – and in China in particular – is still often misinterpreted worldwide, frequently failing to account for the intellectual and social context in which it took root. This becomes evident when comparing the intellectual evolution of China and Korea, which was shaped not

only by internal but also external factors. Like Christianity in Korea, Marxism in China did not arrive as an ideology imposed by conquerors, as was the case in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe. Additionally, we cannot equate Chinese Marxist philosophy with the dualistic framework of Western thought, which establishes an ontological separation between a determinative principle (such as mind) and that which it determines (matter or body) – a structure that has profoundly influenced Western Marxism as well. Chinese Marxism, by contrast, exemplifies a highly pragmatic and adaptive approach, aligning itself with ancient Chinese philosophical concepts and emphasizing the interconnectedness of all things (Tian, 2005). The earliest professional Chinese Marxist philosophers, such as the renowned scholar of classical Chinese culture Qu Qiubai (1899–1935) and Ai Siqi (1910–1966), emphasized the inseparability of theory and practice in understanding Marxism. They harmonized it with the Chinese concept of *Tongbian* (通變, “Tradition and Change” or “continuity through change”). This concept later became central to the philosophy of Mao Zedong, who, like other intellectuals striving for China’s modernization (e.g., Lu Xun, 1881–1936), “... made use of Western thought” to complete his vision of what China should become (Allinson, 2022, 402). According to the concept of *Tongbian*, “human social existence and “external existence” are not separate but are two aspects of a single continuum” (Tian, 2005, 136). Mao’s interpretation of dialectics (*biàn zhèng fǎ*, 辩证法) integrates the essential principles of Chinese philosophy, drawing from the dialectical heritage of the Book of Changes (*I Ching*), Daoism, and Confucianism: the unity of knowledge and action (*zhi xing he yi*, 知行合一), the conception of wholes (*zhèngtǐ guānniàn*, 整體觀念) and complementarity in opposition (*xiāngfǎn xiāngchéng*, 相反相成). Mao’s theory differs from the understanding of unity and struggle of opposites in Hegelian philosophy. He interpreted this principle rather as a situation where each opposing force requires the other as a necessary condition for its existence. While generating constant struggle, this also ensures continuity (Tian, 2005). His dialectics thus diverge from the Hegelian framework of thesis, antithesis, synthesis, and the negation of negation. Instead, Mao’s dialectics

emphasize the coexistence and mutual dependence of two distinct aspects of existence. Owing to the Confucian tradition, Chinese and East Asian philosophy places a strong emphasis on practical applications, always focusing on the specific realities of natural and social situations rather than engaging in theoretical speculations. It is therefore not surprising that, following the economic reforms of the second half of the 20th century, China could develop the idea of using capitalism to build socialism – a notion that would have been entirely impossible in the former Soviet Union, mired in theoretical constructs detached from real life. The synthesis of traditional Chinese philosophy and Marxist-inspired dialectics is also reflected in the implementation of various local and regional projects in contemporary China. For example, in the work “The Governance of China in the New Era: Breaking the Cycle of Rise and Fall” (2022), Li Junru emphasizes that “... knowledge is acquired through practice and must return to practice, which means knowledge is to guide practice, be tested by practice, and be enriched and developed in practice” (Li, 2022, 58). At the same time, he highlights that “It’s necessary to conduct investigations and studies into particular cases so as to reveal universal general laws and form correct decisions” (Li, 2022, 58).

Simultaneously, let us remember that the popularity of Marxism during the Japanese occupation was also immense in Korea. For example, between 1910 and 1945, 111 articles on individual European philosophers were published in Korea, where “... Marx was the most widely studied figure (thirty-one articles), followed by Kant (nineteen), Hegel (eleven), Nietzsche, Eucken, Lenin, Spencer, Heidegger, Feuerbach, Husserl, Bergson, and Rickert” (Linding Pedersen et al., 2024, 19). Despite the differences in the development of Korean and Chinese philosophical thought, the potential and actual similarities between the intellectual traditions of these two East Asian countries remain underexplored. These similarities are closely tied to the harmonization of Western dialectics with traditional East Asian thought, the emphasis on the unity of theory and practice, and the broad reception of European materialist philosophy, particularly Marxism. Regarding the first generations of Korean thinkers to study philosophy as an academic discipline,

their fascination with Marxism, especially dialectical materialism, is no coincidence. This philosophical approach was closer to East Asia's traditional spiritual teachings, emphasizing the unity of the spiritual and material, as well as theory and practice, which stands in contrast to the generally transcendental, abstract, and dualistic tradition of Western thought. In this regard, it is essential to remember the writings of early Marxist philosopher from Korea during Japanese colonialism – Pak Ch'iu (박치우 [朴致祐], 1909–1949), who sharply criticizes the disconnection between theory and practice in Western world outlook (Tikhonov, 2019). As Jin Y. Park explains, when interpreting Pak Ch'iu's legacy: "When we think about action and praxis in the context of philosophy, we tend to think of them in isolation from theories or ideas and postulate their relationship through a linear and temporal scheme. We think that philosophy is about ideas, and that once we have ideas, we may or may not apply them to reality, which is called praxis. Pak defies this sedentary way of thinking and claims that in philosophy, the two sides work simultaneously: action and praxis are not a stage that comes after thinking or philosophizing. According to Pak, philosophizing itself should be action and praxis" (Park, 2023, 17). It must be understood that this stance is deeply rooted in Korea's once-dominant Confucian tradition, particularly Neo-Confucianism, considering that in the 17th and 18th centuries, several Korean scholars emphasized the unity of mind and practice, arguing that ethical and cognitive understanding must be inseparable from real-life application. Korean Neo-Confucian philosophers were familiar with the doctrine of "the unity of knowledge and action" (zhi xing he yi 知行合一) by the prominent Chinese thinker Wang Yangming (1472–1529), which was popular across East Asia. However, considering the dominant conservatism in Korea's intellectual life, where Zhu Xi (1130–1200) was regarded as the nearly indisputable authority in the Chinese context, Wang Yangming was often criticized. For example, the Korean Confucian classicist Yi Hwang (Toegye, 1501–1570) (Youn, 2015, 410) believed that intellectual understanding must be actualized through ethical practice. Similarly, Yi I (Yulgok, 1536–1584) emphasized the importance of action in moral cultivation (Kim, 2014).

Jeong Yak-yong (Dasan, 1762–1836) went even further, combining Neo-Confucianism with the Silhak (Practical Learning) movement. He explicitly championed practice as central to knowledge, arguing that wisdom is meaningless unless applied to improve society and governance. His works often criticized abstract Confucian theorizing, advocating a hands-on approach to ethical living. This is vividly reflected in his attitude toward politics, as he believed that “Justice in politics is an absolute necessity for moral as well as political success” (Shin, 2013, 98). At the same time, his close ties with the Catholic community and the undeniable influence of Christianity on his worldview, evidenced by Dasan’s cataphatic orientation and his concept of the Supreme God (Sangje 상제, 上帝) (Uhm, 2020), prompt a re-evaluation of Christianity’s significant impact on Korea’s intellectual tradition. This influence becomes particularly evident later, during the second wave of Christianity, marked by the expansion of Protestantism, as the synthesis of Confucianism and Christianity gained traction. It is important to note that in Korea, even later in the 20th century, Christian philosophers sought to harmonize Christian values with Confucian ethics, while also emphasizing justice and social harmony. In this sense, Dasan serves as a pioneer and a trailblazer. One can fully agree with Donald L. Baker that “To prove the existence of the Lord Above, Dasan didn’t use the argument from design so widely used by theists in Western history. He wasn’t particularly interested in how the world came into existence. He was more concerned about how best to get people to act properly. His God was not a Creator. Nor, even though Dasan argued Finding God in the Classics that belief in God was essential if people were going to be able to overcome their desire for the easy road of pleasure rather than the hard road of duty, was Dasan’s God a judge who rewarded good behavior and punished bad. There is no heaven or hell in Dasan’s theism. Dasan remained Confucian enough that he believed that doing good in order to earn an individual reward or avoid an individual penalty was not really doing good. He still defined morality as placing concern for the common good ahead of concern for personal benefit. His God was a Confucian God, and his morality was Confucian morality” (Baker, 2012, 53–54).

The role that Marxism assumed in China within the context of societal modernization was, to some extent, taken over by Christianity in South Korea, specifically the “Minjung theology”, or Minjung Sinhak (민중신학): theology of the people. This theology played a central role in the fight for human rights and freedoms during periods of political oppression under military dictatorships, which promoted a radical South Korean version of capitalism (Kļaviņš, 2021). However, as Andrew Eungi Kim and Daniel Connolly correctly point out, this was less about “worldly” (institutionally affiliated) Christianity – whose representatives also actively supported the dictatorships – and more about “unworldly” (rebellious and countercultural) Christianity, which existed parallel to the mainstream and influenced Korea’s modernization process from a different perspective (Kim, Connolly, 2024).

Regarding South Korea, after the fall of the military dictatorships, philosophy became closely linked to issues identity, while continuing the themes of existentialism and phenomenology that had already begun in Korea after liberation. The situation of South Korean philosophers shortly after the Korean War is aptly described by Cho Eunsu: “Following the Korean War, most scholars reacted to the former popularity of Marxism by occupying themselves with inquiries into German idealism, existentialism, pragmatism, and analytical philosophies. The shift in philosophical interest away from Marxism was also partly due to extreme censorship after the war. Founded in 1953, the Korean Philosophical Association reflected the philosophical interests of the scholarly community. There was considerable public interest as well. Young people, who felt devastated by war and oppressed by various societal problems, readily welcomed the numerous textbooks on Western philosophy and existentialism that appeared in this period” (Cho, 2002, 179). The philosophical tradition of North Korea and the concept of Juche (주체) are highly specific and have thus far remained practically unexamined in academic circles. Emphasizing self-reliance, Juche serves as evidence of the incoherence between theory and practice. Nevertheless, in its theory, it integrates nationalism – adapted to Marxist terminology – with elements of Confucianism, forming a specific ideological hybrid (Kim, 2023).

In South Korea, on the other hand, Christian existentialism, influenced by figures like Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) and Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), has deeply resonated with the intellectual trend amidst the new conditions of industrialization and a changing environment. These ideas were particularly influential during post-war reconstruction, addressing issues of individual responsibility. At the same time, in the context of Korean Christian philosophy, outstanding figures emerged who are noteworthy both in the realm of social practice, such as Ham Seok-heon (1901–1989), the provider of non-violent resistance ideas and often referred to as the “Gandhi of Korea,” and in the offering of a synthetic worldview, such as Ryu Yongmo (1890–1981, pen name Tasŏk), who incorporated elements of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism into his interpretation of Christianity (Kļaviņš, 2024). Simultaneously, Korean academic philosophers – unlike the first professional modern Korean philosophers, who had completely excluded East Asian philosophy from their perspective (Kļaviņš, Kūlis, 2021) – began to increasingly return to this spiritual heritage. Already during the 1950s, Pak Chong-hong (1903–1976) turned his attention to Korean traditional thought. Utilizing his proficiency in classical Chinese, he engaged in the study of Korean Confucian classics. According to Cho Eunsu “Pak Chong-hong’s rediscovery of Korean thought set the stage for its elevation to the level of a valid discipline” (Cho, 2002, 179). Even more so, contemporary Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han (born 1959) has engaged in the analysis of East Asian philosophy, using it as a tool for critiquing the Western intellectual tradition (Knepper et al., 2024). From the perspective of the renaissance of traditional East Asian heritage, contemporary Korea incorporates both Buddhism and Confucianism in addressing modern challenges, including in fields such as applied science. For instance, the principles of Ūisang’s (625–702) Seal Diagram – he being the founder of the Chinese Huayan school of Buddhism in Korea (Hwaŏm (華嚴)) – have been applied to the digital realm and the virtual reality of cyberspace. This is grounded in the notion that his Seal Diagram symbolizes the interconnectedness of all existing phenomena (Yi, 2025, 12).

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), academic philosophy is marked by its engagement with both traditional Chinese thought and Western philosophical traditions, including Marxism, Confucian revivalism, pragmatism, and ecological philosophy. Chinese philosophers reinterpret Marxism in the context of social development and globalization, striving to apply dialectical materialism to contemporary challenges. For example, Zhang Yibing (born 1956), who publishes under the pseudonym Zhang Yibin¹, explores these themes extensively. Equally significant is the focus on Confucian revivalism, which addresses ethical, social, and ecological issues while reconnecting with China's cultural roots. Prominent figures in this area include Chen Lai (born 1952), who has offered a profound philosophical reinterpretation of classical Confucian texts.² A highly significant contemporary Chinese philosopher who has integrated Western philosophical methods, including phenomenology and pragmatism, with traditional Confucian thought is Tu Weiming (born 1940). He emphasizes that Confucianism and Western philosophy each have distinct strengths and limitations. According to Tu, Western traditions excel in analytical reasoning and scientific inquiry, whereas Confucianism offers profound insights into interpersonal relationships and moral self-cultivation. He advocates that a dialogue between these traditions can lead to a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of human existence.³ The legacy of Daoism in modern China is particularly evident in ecological philosophy, which tackles topics such as the harmony between humanity and nature and critiques of anthropocentrism. Philosophers like Liu Xiaogan (born 1947) delve into various aspects of Daoist reinterpretation, including the application of Daoist principles to the theory of fuzziness, an important

¹ Available: <https://njunju.nju.edu.cn/EN/8b/01/c7285a166657/page.htm> [last viewed 06.12.2024].

² Available: <https://www.phil.tsinghua.edu.cn/philen/info/1015/1045.htm> [last viewed 06.12.2024].

³ Available: <https://iep.utm.edu/tu-weimi/> [last viewed 06.12.2024].

framework for developing artificial intelligence.⁴ Additionally, much like contemporary Korean thinkers, Chinese philosophers actively engage with phenomenology, postmodernism, and analytic philosophy, often critiquing these traditions through the lens of Chinese intellectual heritage. Both Chinese and Korean colleagues in the 20th and 21st centuries have assessed their common ancient heritage under new circumstances, exploring its potential for dialogue with Western philosophy. Korean philosopher Yoo Weon-Ki (born 1964), for example, emphasizes that the claim that Western philosophy is analytic while East Asian philosophy is non-analytic oversimplifies both traditions and ignores their internal diversity. This is evident when considering that Neo-Confucian philosophers engaged in detailed and structured argumentation about metaphysics and ethics: “We could clearly see that they tried hard to find and offer a reasonable ground to prove their claim, above all, for the goodness of human nature. This is clearly an argumentative attitude, not an expository one” (Yoo, 2018, 56). A very focused comparison of Western and East Asian philosophical methods has been attempted by the Chinese philosopher and historian Fung Youlan (1895–1990) in his monumental work, “A Short History of Chinese Philosophy” (published in several revised editions). There, he compares East Asian (Chinese) and Western philosophies, succinctly defining what he considers to be the two dominant methods in philosophy: “... the positive and the negative.” His explanation is as follows: “The essence of the positive method is to talk about the object of metaphysics, which is the subject of its inquiry; the essence of the negative method is not to talk about it. By so doing, the negative method reveals certain aspects of the nature of that something, namely those aspects that are not susceptible to positive description and analysis” (Fung, 1997, 340). According to Fung Youlan, “In the history of Chinese philosophy, the positive method was never fully developed; in fact, it was much neglected. [...] On the other hand, the history of Western philosophy has not seen a full development of

⁴ Available: <https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/Xiaogan-Liu-2086894854> [last viewed 06.12.2024].

the negative method. It is the combination of the two that will produce the philosophy of the future” (Fung, 1997, 342).

For comparing the evolution of Korean and Chinese philosophical traditions from the shared East Asian intellectual heritage of the past to the present, the following table could be proposed:

Aspect	China	Korea
Ancient Legacy	Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism	Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism
Colonial Influence	Limited direct colonization, focus on self-strengthening, Western learning, and Christianity	Japanese occupation shaped philosophy as resistance, incorporating Western learning and Christianity
Modernization Approach	Marxism, Confucianism, Western synthesis	Confucian ethics, the synthesis between Christianity and local tradition
Focus of Thought	Dialectics of contradiction and systemic reform	Ethical self-cultivation and communal well-being
Relation to Tradition	Integration with societal practice, synthesizing Marxism and ancient Chinese philosophy	Preservation of ethical and spiritual heritage
Global Influence	Globally oriented New Confucianism and synthetic philosophy have gained considerable interest worldwide	The global appeal of universal ideas rooted in the search for national identity

Conclusion

While both Korean and Chinese modern philosophies share a common ancient heritage and face similar modernization challenges, their trajectories differ due to historical and political contexts. Chinese philosophy leaned towards systemic and ethical transformation through societal practice, whereas Korean philosophy emphasized ethical reform,

highlighting cultural identity. In China, the adoption of Western philosophy (especially Marxism) led to a rapid, practice-oriented synthesis of foreign intellectual heritage and ancient Chinese philosophy, resulting in the universal application of new concepts arising from modernization. In Korea, alongside the revival of East Asia's ancient spiritual heritage, Christianity and issues of national identity have been particularly influential, providing unique individual experiences for global recognition.

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Jauni fakti par Latvijas, Japānas un Ķīnas vēsturiskajiem saskarsmes punktiem

Šajā rakstā atspoguļoti jaunākie zināmie fakti par Latvijas iedzīvotāju vēsturiskajiem saskarsmes punktiem ar Japānu un Ķīnu, kuri iepriekš bijuši maz pētīti. Daļa informācijas Latvijas okupācijas gados nebija pieejama un tikai salīdzinoši nesen atkal ir celta gaismā.

Raksta pirmajā daļā apskatītas atsevišķas Baltijas vāciešu un latviešu aktivitātes Japānas un Ķīnas izziņāšanā miera periodā. Otrajā daļā aplūkoti dažādi militārie konflikti Austrumāzijā, kuros, būdami Krievijas pakļautībā, vai vēlāk jau neatkarīgas Latvijas laikā bija iesaistīti latvieši vai Baltijas vācieši. Rakstā apskatīts Bokseru dumpis Ķīnā (1899–1901), Krievijas–Japānas karš (1904–1905), Ķīnas–Japānas karš (1937–1945) un citi militārie konflikti, kuros piedalījās Latvijas iedzīvotāji.

Kaut arī latviešu dalība militārajos konfliktos beidzās ar lielu skaitu kritušo, izdzīvojušie pievērsās dažādām nodarbēm, tomēr neliela daļa kaujas gūto pieredzi izmantoja Latvijas neatkarības cīņās. Bez tam tālais ceļojums uz karadarbības zonu, uzturēšanās Ķīnas teritorijā zināmā mērā paplašina zināšanas par šo tālo reģionu un tā tautām.

Atslēgvārdi: latvieši, Japāna, Ķīna, Baltijas vācieši, militārie konflikti

Ievads

Āzijas pētniecība Latvijā politiskās nebrīves un citu apstākļu dēļ ir samērā jauna zinātnes nozare. Oficiāli akadēmiskas Āzijas studijas Latvijā tika izveidotas tikai 20. gadsimta 90. gados līdz ar Āzijas studiju nodaļas iedibināšanu Latvijas Universitātē. Ņemot vērā šo apstākli,

daudzi jautājumi Latvijas un Āzijas vēsturiskajās attiecībās joprojām ir maz pētīti un tikai pēdējos gados sāk nākt gaismā jauni, iepriekš nezināmi dati.

Vēsturiski Latvijas un Austrumāzijas attiecības, pēc autores domām, veidojušās un attīstījušās apgriezta trijstūra formā. Trijstūra augšējā garā mala simbolizē fizisko attālumu starp Latviju un Austrumāziju senatnē, ko bija grūti pārvarēt garā, tālā, dārgā un bistamā ceļojuma dēļ, kā arī informācijas iegūšanas grūtības. Tādēļ šim senākajam attiecību periodam raksturīga netieša saskarsme, kontakti no tālienes – vēstules, dienasgrāmatas, retas ziņas presē, reti ceļojumi, bet pastiprināta publikas interese ierobežotās informācijas dēļ. Senākajā saskarsmes periodā ar Japānu šīs iespējas bija limitētas elitāriem sabiedrības slāņiem, kā, piemēram, Baltijas vāciešiem, tomēr no 19. gadsimta beigām šajās norisēs iesaistās arī latvieši.

Latvijas un Austrumāzijas attiecību tuvākajam posmam raksturīga pakāpeniska dažādu šķēršļu novēršana, lai savstarpēji apmainītos ar informāciju un paplašinātu sadarbību. To atviegloja ne tikai dažādu tehnoloģiju attīstība, bet arī noteiktos posmos labvēlīgāki vēsturiski politiskie apstākļi, īpaši Latvijas neatkarības gados.

Baltijas vāciešu aktivitātes Japānas un Ķīnas izzināšanā

Senākajam zināmajam periodam Austrumāzijas izdibināšanā atbilstu Baltijas vāciešu aktivitātes aptuveni no 18. gadsimta līdz 19. gadsimta beigām – gan Austrumāzijas valodu studijas, gan reliģiju, tautu pētniecība, ceļojumi uz Austrumāziju un to apraksti, mākslas objektu kolekcionēšana, eksotisko Āzijas augu kolekcionēšana un dārzu izveide. Daļu informācijas par Austrumāziju un tās preces Baltijas vācieši ieguva no kontaktiem ar Rietumeiropas zemēm, kurām bija savi seni tirdzniecības ceļi. Baltijas vācieši Rietumeiropas kontaktus ar Āziju atspoguļojuši arī Latvijā. Par šiem jautājumiem raksta autore ir stāstījusi savās iepriekšējās publikācijās (Haijima, 2014).

Šajā rakstā autore vēlas pievērsties jauniem faktiem šajā jomā. Pēdējos gados atklājas arvien jaunas ziņas par Baltijas vāciešu aktivitātēm

Austrumāzijā – tāpat tās bija lielāka apjoma, nekā līdz šim apzināts, jo parādās arvien jaunas personības un to aktivitātes, par kurām iepriekš nebija zināms vai kuras bija maz pētītas.

Tā, piemēram, pavisam nesen nākuši gaismā fakti, ka Baltijas vācietis Konstantīns fon Rengartens (*Konstantin fon Rengarten*, 1864–1906), kurš dzimis Latvijā, 1894. gadā no sava dzīvokļa Rīgā, Miera ielā 12a, uzsāka četru gadu ceļojumu apkārt pasaulei, pārsvarā kājām. Viņš apmeklēja Ķīnu un Japānu, četrus mēnešus pavadīja, ceļojot no Nagasaki uz Jokohamu, kur viņam sekojusi Japānas slepenpolicija (Konstantin Konstantinovic). Ceļojums noslēdzās 1898. gadā, atgriežoties Rīgā. Drīz pēc tam Rengartens publicēja vairākas grāmatas par apmeklēto zemju etnogrāfiju un kultūru, kā arī ar viņu tika noslēgts līgums par 100 lekciju kursa novadīšanu gadā. Interesants ir fakts, ka šīs publikācijas iznāca ne tikai vācu valodā, bet tika tulkotas arī igauņiski (Selart, 2024, 53) – tas norāda uz viņa ietekmi Baltijā, kur visi iedzīvotāji neprata vācu valodu. Interesanti, ka Rengartens jau 19. gadsimta beigās rakstīja par japāņu sieviešu diskrimināciju. Savukārt, ejot kājām cauri Krievijai, ceļā uz Tālajiem Austrumiem, Tomskā, viņš piezīmējis, ka no aptuveni 3000 sastaptajiem iedzīvotājiem tikai apmēram 150 bijuši skaidrā (Konstantin Konstantinovic).

Rengartena atstātās publikācijas sniedz daudzveidīgu informāciju par dažādiem reģioniem un to tautām, kas nav pietiekami analizētas.

Iespējams, ka Rengartena vēlmi apmeklēt Āziju cita starpā varēja veicināt ziņas par Piliņu Katrīnas (?-?) ceļojumiem pa pasauli un Āziju, kuras pāris gadu iepriekš bija parādījušās Latvijas presē. Piliņu Katrīna kā virsīnženiera ģimenes mājskolotāja kopā ar darba devējiem bija devusies ar tvaikoni no Odesas uz Vladivostoku, pa ceļam iepazīstot Āzijas pilsētas, to vidū 1891. gada aprīlī viņa apmeklēja Nagasaki (Katrīna Piliņa).

Laikraksts “Balss” 1891. gada 25. septembrī sāk publicēt Piliņu Katrīnas ceļojuma aprakstu “Brauciens ap Āzijas pasaules daļu”. Savukārt 1892. gada 16. oktobrī šo pašu ceļojuma pārstāstu ar nosaukumu “Ceļojumu vēstules” (iespējams, lai uzsvērtu kā turpinājumu iepriekš publicētajām Piliņu Katrīnas ceļojumu vēstulēm) sāk publicēt arī ““Dienas Lapas” Feļetona Turpinājums” (No Eiropas līdz Āzijai).

Japāni ceļotāju patikami pārsteidz kā strādīga, tīrīga un laipna tauta: “Japānas fūrmanis (dženerikšs), amatnieks, kupčis, vēl maz pazīstami ar eiropiešu civilizāciju, tomēr atstāj mācīta cilvēka iespaidu, kauču ēd ar spieķīšiem un sež uz kāju soliēm. Var mierīgi ieiet ļaužu drūzmā, tak netapsi grūsts un nosmērēts, kā tas manā plašā tēvijā bieži atgadās.” (Piliņu Katrīna, Nr. 159, cit. no: No Eiropas līdz Āzijai).

Nav izslēgts, ka Rengartens ir lasījis Piliņu Katrīnas dienasgrāmatu. Atsevišķās epizodēs abu autoru viedokļi pārsteidzoši sakrīt, piemēram, aprakstot atsevišķas epizodes Krievijā un Ķīnā. Vērojot ķīniešus Vladivostokā, viņa uzsver atšķirību starp “krievu un ķīniešu izpriecāšanās”, rakstot: “Pie pēdējiem nekad nenākas redzēt valstošos žūpas, ne sadauzītus ģimjus, ne kaušanos, bez kā nepaiet nevieni krievu svētki. Arī ķīniets iedzer savu suli (tā sauc viņa brandavīnu), bet tas viņā neuzbudina trāķisko instinktu.” (Piliņu Katrīna, Nr. 199, cit. no: No Eiropas līdz Āzijai)

Konstantīns fon Rengartens nav vienīgais vācbaltietis, kurš bijis saistīts ar Āziju, – tas norāda uz Baltijas vāciešu savstarpējām ciešām saitēm Baltijas reģionā. Cits baltvācietis, Otto fon Rozenbergs, kurš bija dzimis Rīgā un pazīstams ar Japānas studiju izveidi Krievijā, mira Igaunijā, par ko sīkāk stāstīts autorei iepriekšējās publikācijās.

Līdz šim nav pietiekami novērtētas baltvāciešu savstarpējās saites Baltijas reģionā, kuras paver jaunas iespējas pētniecībai. Cits svarīgs apstāklis Baltijas vāciešu izpētē ir viņu aktivitātes Krievijas Impērijā, kur viņi ieņēma vadošus administratīvos un akadēmiskos amatus, tajā skaitā saistītus ar Āziju. Tikai nesen atklājies, cik liela bija baltvāciešu loma diplomātisko attiecību veidošanā starp Krieviju un Austrumāzijas valstīm, bet Latvijā par to vēl ir maz publikāciju.

Militārie konflikti Austrumāzijā un Latvijas iedzīvotāju iesaiste

Līdz šim ļoti maz pētīta ir Latvijas saistība ar dažādiem militārajiem konfliktiem Āzijas reģionā, šai ziņā jauni dati sākuši atklāties tikai nesen, pēc informācijas nepieejamības perioda Latvijas okupācijas laikā.

Kā skaidro Ēriks Jēkabsons, latviešu atrašanās militārajā dienestā līdz 19. gadsimtam bija ļoti ierobežota. Tikai 19. gadsimta otrajā pusē zemnieku kārtai piederīgajiem Vidzemes, Kurzemes un Vitebskas guberņas latviešiem pavēras iespēja kļūt par virsniekiem, ko viņi samērā plaši arī izmantoja, jo trūcīgie zemnieku dēli varēja iegūt izglītību bez maksas un nodrošināt samērā labu stāvokli cariskās Krievijas sabiedrībā. Bez tam latviešu virsnieku nopelni Krievijas vēsturē ir patiesi ievērojami (Jēkabsons, 2006, 74). Tā, piemēram, vēlākais neatkarīgās Latvijas Bruņoto spēku virspavēlnieks, armijas ģenerālis, visu šķiru Lāčplēša ordeņa kavalieris, Latvijas kara ministrs (1931–1940) Jānis Balodis (1881–1965) (Jānis Balodis) savu karjeru uzsāka ar mācībām cariskās Krievijas karaskolā.

Ģenerālis Balodis nāca no mazturīgas ģimenes Ziemeļvidzemē. Dēla laišanai vidusskolā vecākiem trūka līdzekļu, tādēļ Balodis izvēlējās karavīra gaitas. Kā raksta Aleksandrs Grīns (1935), tā kā sveštautiešus cariskās Krievijas armijā turēja pēc iespējas tālāk no viņu dzimtenes, Balodis izvēlējās Latvijai vistuvāko zemi Lietuvu, kur iestājās Kauņas garnizona pulkā un vēlāk Viļņas karaskolā. Uz Baloža personību lielu iespaidu esot atstājušas divas epizodes viņa dzīvē. Viena bija Daugavpils stacijā, kur, brīvdienās atgriežoties mājās no Viļņas un gaidot vilcienu, pie Viļņas kadetu grupas, kas sarunājās latviešu valodā, pienācis vecs virsnieks ar kuplu bārdu un sācis runāt latviski. Izrādās, tas bijis dzejnieks Andrejs Pumpurs – Lāčplēša garīgais tēvs. Šķirdamies no jauniešiem kadetiem, sirmais tautas dzejnieks, tos svētīdams, sacījis: “Lai jūs būtu kur būdami, un jums klātos kā klādamies, nekad nekaunāties atzīties, ka esat latvieši.” (Grīns, 1935)

Interesanti, ka paralēli lielam skaitam latviešu, kuri tika uzņemti mācībām karaskolās, tautā auga nacionālā pašapziņa.

Par otru epizodi, kas ietekmējusi Baloža personību, A. Grīns raksta, ka Krievijas-Japānas karā J. Balodis pats savām acīm pieredzējis, “cik varens pretinieks ir nacionāla gara pilns karavīrs. Tādi viri ir japāņi, kas atkāpšanos uzskata par negodu un turas līdz beidzamai” (Grīns, 1935).

Krievijas sakāve Krievijas-Japānas karā arī parādīja, ka Krievija nav neuzvarama lielvalsts, un, iespējams, šo karu pieredzējušie latvieši

virsnieki varēja izdarīt personīgus secinājumus. No tiem, kas palika dzīvi, Ē. Jēkabsons ir sīki izpētījis latviešu virsnieku gaitas pēc Japānas-Krievijas kara, viņu ceļi bija daudzveidīgi, tomēr daļa, kā J. Balodis, gūto pieredzi izmantoja vēlākajās cīņās par Latvijas neatkarību. Tālāk rakstā apskatīti dažādi militārie konflikti, kuros Krievijas armijas sastāvā rūdījās latvieši.

Bokseru dumpis (1899–1901)

Pavisam nesen parādījušās liecības, ka Bokseru dumpī, kas sākās Ķīnā 1899. gadā, Krievijas armijas sastāvā piedalījās kopumā ap 15–20 latviešu izcelsmes virsnieku, vairāki sanitārārsti un farmaceiti, kā arī vairāki simti ierindas karavīru (Jēkabsons, 2024, 32).

Bokseru dumpis (patriotiski noskaņotu politiķu apvienība “Dūre taisnības un miera vārdā”) bija vērstas pret ārvalstu un kristietības iespauda pieaugumu valstī. Lai aizsargātu ķīniešu ielenktās diplomātiskās pārstāvniecības, savu karaspēku uz Ķīnu nosūtīja Lielbritānija, Francija, Itālija, Vācija, Japāna un ASV, kā arī Krievija. Asiņainās cīņās līdz 1901. gadam starptautiskie spēki apspieda sacelšanos (Jēkabsons, 2022, 154).

Bokseru dumpja apspiešanā piedalījās virkne latviešu izcelsmes virsnieku, piemēram, Latgales latvietis poručīks Jānis Kantinieks, kurš kā Novokijevskas karaspēka nodaļas rotas komandieris piedalījās Hunčunas cietokšņa ieņemšanā, vēlāk pārgājienos Čaiho upes foršēšanā, apšaudēs un kaujās līdz 1901. gada 15. augustam. Par varonību kaujās Kantinieks saņēma III šķiras Svētā Staņislava ordeni ar šķēpiem un štābkapteiņa dienesta pakāpi. Karadarbībā Ķīnā piedalījās vēl divi latgaliešu virsnieki – 3. Austrumsibīrijas strēlnieku pulka štābkapteinis (no 1901. gada aprīļa arī kapteinis) Boļeslavs Vorkals, kurš tika apbalvots ar III šķiras Svētās Annas ordeni un III šķiras Svētā Staņislava ordeni ar šķēpiem, kā arī 20. strēlnieku pulka un 157. kājnieku pulka podporučīks Romāns Taškanovs (īstajā vārdā Romualds Taškāns) un daudzi citi (Jēkabsons, 2022, 154).

Latviešu karavīru gaitas atspoguļotas tālaika Latvijas presē, kas līdz šim ir maz pētīta. Samērā plašu un labu aprakstu par pieredzēto

karagājiena laikā presē atstājis “latviešu savvaļnieks” – kāds kurzemnieks E. B., kurš 1900. gada 3. augustā tvaikonī “Herson” kopā ar citiem brīvprātīgajiem, 16. strēlnieku pulku un vairākiem desmitiem žēlsirdīgo māsu no Odesas devās uz Portarturu, ko sasniedza pēc 42 dienu ceļojuma, kur tika iedalīts minētajā 16. strēlnieku pulkā (E. B., 1901, cit. no: Jēkabsons, 2022, 157).

Krievijas-Japānas karš (1904–1905)

Nākamais būtiskākais militārais konflikts, kurā bija ierauti latvieši un Baltijas vācieši, bija Krievijas-Japānas karš (1904–1905). Daļa iesaukto cariskās Krievijas armijā nonāca pret savu gribu.

Generālis Jānis Balodis vēl pēc Otrā pasaules kara atcerējās pieredzētos traģiskos brīžus Daugavpils dzelzceļa stacijā 1904. gada nogalē, kad viņa divīzijas pulki sāka 50 dienas ilgu ceļu uz Harbinu, lai no turienes dotos uz fronti: apmēram 30% karavīru veidoja Latgalē un Ilūkstes apriņķī mobilizētie rezervisti. Vairākas sievietes “ar bērniem un bez tiem” nogūlušās vilciena priekšā uz sliedēm, lai “kavētu savu apgādnieku aizvešanu no mājām”, bijušas “raudas un vaimanas”, kamēr ceļš “ar grūtībām” atbrīvots (Jēkabsons, b. g.).

Baltijas kara flote tika nosūtīta karā ar Japānu, tā radot precedentu iesauktajiem nokļūt fiziski tuvāk vienai no Āzijas valstīm. Ceļojums uz Japānu bija ilgs un mokošs, tas noslēdzās ar Krievijas sakāvi.

Rūdolfs Bangerskis, daloties atmiņās par Krievijas-Japānas karu, atzīmējis, ka visus “karš ar Japānu .. pārsteidza gluži negaidīts” (Bangerskis, 1958–1960, 187–188). Kara sākumā Krievijas pusē noskaņojums bijis optimistisks: “Pirmās ziņas laikrakstos un arī pārrunas daļā virsnieku radīja bravūrīgu noskaņojumu, proti: mazā Japāna, kas uzdrošinājusies uzbrukt lielajai Krievijai, ir jāsoda, un to arī sodīs. Japānu vietā sāka jau lietāt nievājošus nosaukumus – *popoški*, *makāki*. Laikrakstos bija lasāmi spriedelējumi par to, vai pēc Japānas sakaušanas to pārvērst par Krievijas guberņu vai atsevišķu Japānas apgabalu.” (Bangerskis, 1958–1960, 187–188)

Bangerskis arī atzīmējis, ka uz karalauku tika sūtīti ne tikai vissliktākie šāvēji, bet arī vissliktākie ieroči, lai uzlabotu savu vietējo vienību

kvalitāti (Bangerskis, 1958–1960, 185). Savās atmiņās Bangerskis ir sīki aprakstījis gan ceļu uz Ķīnu, gan karadarbību visās detaļās, novērojumus un personīgo viedokli. Jaunam karavīram viņa dienasgrāmata būtu gan noderīga rokasgrāmata aizsardzībai karalaukā, gan kara pieredzes stāsts, kur atsegtas vissīkākās detaļas. Bangerskis karošanu uzskatīja par savu profesiju un visās kara šausmās meklēja profesionālu risinājumu.

Krievijas-Japānas karā iesaistījās arī Baltijas vācieši kā kara ārsti vai armijas personāls, šis jautājums tikai nesen ticis apzināts.

Karadarbībā kopumā piedalījās vismaz 179 latviešu tautības kadra virsnieki (lielākā daļa kājnieku daļās), kā arī apmēram 60–80 iesaukto virsnieku (praporščiku) galvenokārt kājnieku daļās un artilērijā, apmēram 60–80 sanitārārstu, farmaceitu un kara ierēdņu, kā arī 2500–3000 karavīru un jūrnieku (Latvieši Krievijas-Japānas karā).

25. kājnieku divīzija, kas veidoja Daugavpils pilsētas garnizonu, 1904. gada novembrī uz Tālajiem Austrumiem tika nosūtīta pilnā sastāvā (Daugavpili atgriezās 1906. gada pavasarī), turklāt tajā bija samērā augsts latviešu kadra virsnieku īpatsvars (starp viņiem – arī vēlākie Latvijas armijas ģenerāļi Jānis Balodis, Ādams Kreicbergs u. c.), un tā bija papildināta ar rezerves virsniekiem, citu kategoriju karavīriem un sanitārārstiem (Bangerskis, 1958–1960, 185).

Saglabājušās liecības par ģenerāļa Jāņa Baloža gaitām Krievijas-Japānas karā: “Nopietnās kaujās ģen. J. Balodis sāka piedalīties no janvāra beigām. 1905. g. 22. februārī bij liela kaujas diena. Ģenerālis cīnījās pie Juhautun sādžas, ienaidnieks bija jāizsūt no ieņemtā stāvokļa. Abas armijas nonāca līdz durkļu cīņai. Te kāds japānis ar rokas granātu J. Balodi smagi ievainoja. No vienas granātas šķembeles bij sadrumstalots kreisās rokas stilbs, no otras ievainots plecs. Ar lielām grūtībām izdevās novērst ievainotās rokas amputāciju (Kara ministrs, 1932, 82, cit. no: Jēkabsons, 2022, 177). Kaujas lauku laimīgi izdevās pārmainīt ar slimnīcu Harbinā. Slimnīcu, kurā guleja J. Balodis, bij ierīkojusi Liepājas Sarkanā krusta nodaļa, kādēļ ārsti un māsas bij no dzimtenes, latvieši un vācieši. Galvenais ārsts bij vācietis Kelterborns, viņa palīgs latvietis Fogels. Arī divas māsas bij latvietes. Priekšzīmīgā kopšanā ģenerālis drīz atspirga, lai gan tikai pēc divām nedēļām Kelterborns

1905. gada revolūcijas cēloņiem. Vēl būtiskāk bija tas, ka pēc Cušimas Krievija, kurai līdz tam bija pasaules trešā lielākā flote, zaudēja jūras lielvalsts statusu, bet tās bruņoto spēku reputācija tika smagi iedragāta (Metuzāls, 2022, 65).

Karā ar Japānu piedalījās arī iesauktie, brīvprātīgi armijā pieteikušies vai tajā profesionāli dienšie latviešu mediķi, veterinārmediķi un farmaceiti. Starp viņiem bija vismaz pieci profesionāli armijas kara ārsti (Jēkabs Alksnis, Krišjānis Kalniņš, Hugo Pētersons, Aleksandrs Liepiņš, Aleksandrs Balodis), kā arī apmēram 40–50 no rezerves iesauktie ārsti, kuri dienēja karaspēka daļās, lazaretēs un hospitāļos, kā arī Krievijas Sarkanā Krusta ārstniecības iestādēs, kurās strādāja arī vairākas latviešu žēlsirdīgās māsas (Latvieši Krievijas–Japānas karā).

Karavīrus uz fronti pavadīja arī mācītāji. Karadarbības zonā darbojās vairāki latviešu luterāņu mācītāji – Kārlis Avots (1. Mandžūrijas armijas mācītājs), Kārlis Feldmanis (2. Mandžūrijas armijas mācītājs), Jēkabs Drizulis, Ernests Aunings (Auniņš) un Kārlis Augusts Rumpēters.

Daži no viņiem informēja Latvijas presi, turklāt K. Feldmanis to darīja ļoti detalizēti, aprakstot redzēto ceļā, slimnīcās un citur. Cita starpā viņš labi raksturoja ceļu, ko izgāja praktiski visi latviešu karavīri, virsnieki, kara sanitārierēdņi (ārsti, veterinārārsti un farmaceiti), kā arī kara ierēdņi, kas pa Transsibīrijas dzelzceļu devās uz karalauku: “[..] 23. janvārī atvadījos no savas Seces draudzes Kurzemē un 29. janvārī devos ceļā uz tālajiem austrumiem, paklausidams ģenerālkonsistorijas uzaiicinājumam būt par mācītāju otrā Mandžūrijas armijā, apkopt Latviešu un Vācu tautības evaņģēliumaticīgos kareivjus viņu garīgās vajadzībās.” (Feldmans, 1905, 65–69)

Braucot pa Transsibīrijas dzelzceļu: “Braucām gar Tulu, Rjažsku, Samaru, Sizraņu, Zlatoustu, Čeļabinsku, Omsku, Krasnojarsku. [..] Kurzemē lepnas muižas, glītas zemnieku ēkas, kupli dārzi, labi iekoptas druvas, zaļi meži; te reti kāda muiža, zemnieku mājas nabadzīgas būdiņas, sādžu tuvumā nekādu koku, nedz dārzu. Lopus redz stāvam zem klajas debess. Laidari un staļļi rādās būt nepazīstama lieta. [..] Pa lielākai daļām braucām pa stepēm, bezgalīgi plašiem lidzenumiem, kur viss kā izmiris.” (Feldmans, 1905, 65–69)

Tuvošanos Ķīnai Feldmanis apraksta šādi: “Tagad braucām pa Aizbaikalijas kazaku zemi. [...] Pie dzelzceļa pietātnēm iesāka rādīties visādi līdz šim neredzēti svešinieki, Mongolieši, Burjati, Ķīnieši. Melniem, rupjiem matiem, brūniem, sen nemazgātiem vaigiem, ģērbušies raibās, nodriskātās, netīrās drēbēs. Jo tālāk braucām, jo vairāk redzējām Ķīniešus. [...] Vakarā nokļuvām Mandžūrijas stacijā. Nu bijām Ķīnā.” (Feldmans, 1905)

Vairāki latviešu virsnieki, karavīri un jūrnieki – apakšpulkvedis Indriķis Lediņš, poručiks Aleksandrs Vinters, podporučiks Gustavs Mangulis un citi – regulāri sniedza informāciju par norisēm un pieredzēto latviešu preseī dzimtenē, faktiski daļēji pildot kara korespondenta pienākumus (Latvieši Krievijas–Japānas karā).

Savukārt Pāvils Lasmanis (literārais pseidonīms P. Larenko) kā Portarturas laikraksta “Novij kraj” redakcijas sekretārs pastāvīgi uzturējās Portarturas cietoksnī visā tā aplenkuma laikā, sniedzot regulārus ziņojumus par norisēm cietoksnī (Latvieši Krievijas–Japānas karā).

Šie materiāli joprojām nav pietiekami pētīti un varētu sniegt interesantas liecības.

Latviešu karavīri ciņās izcelās ar lielu drosmi: “Ā. Sprincis februāra naktī, saņemot pavēli ar trim rotām un brīvprātīgajiem izsist spēcīgu japāņu aizsardzības posteni ar ložmetējiem, pielavījās bez neviena šāviena pie japāņu ierakumiem un pirmais metās tiem virsū; “japāņi bija pārsteigti nesagatavoti, apmēram 200 cilvēku tika nodurti, pārējie bēga, pametot trīs ložmetējus, četras kastes ar ložmetēju municiju un ložmetēju lentas. Ā. Sprincis bija smagi ievainots ar diviem durkļa dūrieniem, taču palika ierindā līdz uzbrukuma beigām.” Savukārt podporučiks T. Krūmiņš “naktī, apzinoties japāņu ieņemtā ierakuma pie Golubinaja Buhta nozīmi, pēc savas iniciatīvas ar 25 strēlniekiem metās uzbrukumā zem flangu un frontāla uguns, pirmais ieleca ierakumā un atbrīvoja to no japāņiem, neskatoties uz iegūto tiešo ievainojumu”. Podporučiks E. Kalniņš apbalvots arī ar Zelta ieročiem (Jura zobenu; *Георгиевское оружие*), Portarturas cietoksnī, komandējot aizredutes bateriju, “neskatoties uz stipru ienaidnieka artilērijas uguni, sekmīgi ar padotajiem četriem lielgabaliem turpināja kauju vēl tad, kad bija palicis tikai viens

lielgabals un pēc tam, izšāvis divus beidzamos šāvienus, metās ar saviem kareivjiem durkļu uzbrukumā un atsvieda japāņus no baterijas, pie tam tika ievainots abās kājās”. Turklāt kārtējā kaujā pēc izveseļošanās E. Kalniņu šķembas smagi ievainoja kaklā, mugurā, plecā, celī, gūžā un žoklī. Cietoksnim kapitulējot 01.1905., viņš brīvprātīgi devās gūstā kopā ar kareivjiem (saskaņā ar padošanās noteikumiem, virsniekiem tas nebija jādara).” (Latvieši Krievijas–Japānas karā)

Atmiņas par Krievijas–Japānas karu ir atstājis arī Mārtiņš Peniķis: “Pirmā lielā kauja, kurā piedalījos, notika 1904. gada 31. jūlijā – kalnos, kādus 35 km uz austrumiem no Ļaojanas pie Jušuļinas kalna pārejas. Te cīnījās krievu X korpusa pulki ar japāņu Kuroki armijas daļām. Rīta agrumā japāņi ar pēkšņu uzbrukumu pārsteidza 122. pulku vēl lauka nometnē, kā arī pa labi no mūsu pulka atrodošos 9. divīzijas 2. brigādi. Vienā rāvienā japāņi kaujas iniciatīvu pārņēma savās rokās, un nākošajā nakti krievi bija spiesti atiet dažus kilometrus. Pēc mēneša piedalījos arī lielā kaujā pie Ļaojanas, kur japāņu trīs armijas vairāku dienu ciņās, apņēmot krievu kreiso spārnu, piespieda krievu Mandžūrijas armiju lielā steigā atiet līdz Mukdenai.” (Armijas komandieris, 1931, 478–479, cit. no: Jēkabsons, 2022, 175)

Kaujās krita apmēram 200–250 latviešu tautības karavīru un jūrnieru, tostarp 12 virsnieki (Latvieši Krievijas–Japānas karā).

Krita arī daudzi vācbaltiešu izcelsmes virsnieki, piemēram, 85. kājnieku pulka štābkapteinis Aleksis Pētersons (Rīga), 18. strēlnieku pulka apakšpulkvedis Ādolfs Brinks (Kuldīga), Mandžūrijas armijas Austrumu vienību komandieris generālleitnants Teodors fon Kellers (*Theodor von Keller*), 100. kājnieku pulka praporščiks Heinrihs fon Heikings (*Heinrich von Heyking*), 12. kājnieku pulka apakšpulkvedis Karls Feldmans (*Karl Feldmann*; Kurzemes mācītāja dēls, pirms kara dienēja 113. kājnieku pulkā Latvijā) un citi. Pārējie kritušie bija ierindas karavīri galvenokārt no kājnieku daļām.

Pieļaujams, ka kritušo latviešu jūrnieru skaits varētu būt vismaz 50–60 vīri (tikai Cušimas kaujā uz bruņukuģa “Navarins” 13 no 509 bojāgājušajiem bija latvieši). Turklāt krita arī daudzi vācbaltiešu izcelsmes jūras virsnieki, piemēram, Cušimas kaujā krita eskadras

jaunākais flagmanis kontradmirālis Dmitrijs fon Felkerzāms (*Dmitri von Fölkersahm*) no Rucavas pagasta Papes muižas, 2. ranga kapteinis Bruno fon Fītinghofs (*Bruno von Vietinghoff*) un citi.

Daudz bija ievainoto un gūstā kritušo. Ap 150–200 latviešu karavīru un jūrnieku nokļuva gūstā, no kura tika atbrīvoti 1905. gada beigās – 1906. gada sākumā. Turklāt poručīks Mārčiņš Šoke par to, ka gūsta laikā izglāba imperatora monogrammu, kas bija piestiprināta pie pulka karoga (acīmredzot paslēpjot to pie sevis), 1906. gada 24. novembrī ar pavēli kara resoram tika uz mūžīgiem laikiem ieskaitīts 19. strēlnieku pulka sarakstos (Latvieši Krievijas–Japānas karā).

Krievijas–Japānas karš bija nepopulārs ne tikai Baltijā, bet arī pašā Krievijā, kur vienkāršā tauta to uzskatīja par bezjēdzīgu. Tā kā karadarbība norisinājās Ķīnas teritorijā, bojā gāja ap 20 tūkstošu Ķīnas civiliedzīvotāju.

“Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskā partija izvērta aktīvu kara propagandu. Kara muzejā ir interesanta skrejlapa, izdota 1904. gadā, kā ilustrēta lapīņa, kur ir uzrakstīts: “Krievijas lācis sarijies Baltiju, Kaukāzu, Poliju, Somiju un tagad aizrijuies Mandžūrijā un tagad ir aizmirsis, ka vienīgais ceļš uz mājām ir kļuvis par šauru.” Sabiedrība bija pilnīgi skaidrs, ka tas ir kārtējais Krievijas impērijas ekspansijas mēģinājums un ka gan Baltija, gan Polija, gan Somija bija tādas pašas iekarotas teritorijas un pret šo ekspansiju ir jācīnās.” (Šīs dienas acīm, 2024)

Krievijas sakāve Krievijas–Japānas karā norādīja uz nepilnībām Krievijas iekšienē, grāva cara Nikolaja II valdības prestižu un provocēja 1905. gada revolūciju Krievijā, savukārt daļa karu izdzīvojušo latviešu, kas bija guvuši pieredzi Krievijas–Japānas karā, to izmantoja cīņās par Latvijas neatkarību.

Pirmais pasaules karš, Latvijas neatkarīgās valsts veidošana

Nākamais posms Latvijas un Austrumāzijas attiecību vēsturē ir Pirmais pasaules karš, kas daudzus latviešus aiznesa uz Krievijas Tālajiem Austrumiem, tai skaitā latviešu sarkanos strēlniekus, kuri

cīnījās par boļševiku nākšanu pie varas Krievijā, jo viņiem bija apsolīts, ka boļševiki panāks Latvijas neatkarību. Šajā posmā īsi pirms Latvijas neatkarības pasludināšanas Krievijas Tālajos Austrumos izveidojās latviešu nacionālās organizācijas, kuras sāka vest pirmās diplomātiskās sarunas ar Japānas valdību, izskaidrojot savu identitāti, neatkarības centienus un lūdzot atbalstu Latvijas neatkarības atzīšanai, kas vēlāk arī tika saņemta.

Taču arī šis vēsturiskais posms nebija bez starpgadījumiem. Šajā laikā, kad Latvija tikko bija pasludinājusi savu neatkarību, japāņiem nebija lielas izpratnes, kas latvieši un Latvija ir. Daži nespēja izprast, kādēļ latviešiem vajadzētu militāri atbalstīt Krieviju, kas bija Japānas ienaidniece.

Šāda pārpratuma dēļ 1919. gadā notika incidents pie Bočkarevas stacijas Krievijā. Par spīti brīdinājumiem no Latvijas puses un franču sabiedrotajiem, seržants P. Čanka ieradās Blagoveščenskā, lai reģistrētu 32 brīvprātīgos, kuri vēlējas pievienoties Latvijas nacionālās armijas Imantas pulkam. Japāņi latviešu brīvprātīgos arestēja. Par spīti tam, ka Latvijas un Francijas pārstāvji lūdza latviešus atbrīvot, kapteinis Suemacu, nospriedis, ka tie ir boļševiki, latviešus nošāva, sakrāva kaudzē, uzlēja degvielu un aizdedzināja. Bojāgājušo kauli tika apglabāti netālu no Bočkarevas stacijas mežmalā. Vēlāk japāņi par incidentu atvainojās un izmaksāja kompensācijas cietušo ģimenēm (Krasnais, 1938, 350).

Ciņa par nacionālās identitātes jautājumu, latviešu centieni apliecināt sevi kā tautu, kas norisinājās 19. gadsimta beigās, joprojām nav noslēgusies.

Turpinot Neatkarības kara tēmu, arī nesen atklājies fakts, ka Latvijas Neatkarības karā bermontiādes laikā kaujās izmantoja arī Japānā radītās Arisakas šautenes, kā liecina Kara muzeja krājumā esošās fotogrāfijas, kas uzņemtas 1919. gada rudenī. Tās Latvijas armijas rīcībā bija nonākušas no Pirmā pasaules kara vācu armijas trofeju noliktavām Latvijā. Pirmā pasaules kara laikā Japānas armijas kara pulkveža Nariakiras Arisakas konstrukcijas dažādu paraugu šautenes un karabīnes sava karaspēka vajadzībām bija iepirkusi Krievijā (Ekmane, 2024, 80).

Ķīnas-Japānas karš

Ķīnas-Japānas karš oficiāli tika pasludināts 1937. gada 7. jūlijā, kaut gan karadarbība norisinājās jau no 1931. gada. Japāņi varēja Ķīnu iekarot jau kara sākumā, ja vien ķīniešiem palīgā nenāktu Padomju Savienība, īstenojot unikālu slepeno operāciju, kurā būtiska loma bija dažiem latviešiem. Viens no viņiem bija aviators no Naukšēniem – Jēkabs Alksnis.

PSRS dalība Ķīnas karā pret Japānu tika noklusēta līdz pat Gorbačova perestroikai. Tas skaidrojams ar to, ka Padomju Savienība, sperot šādu soli, bija pārkāpusi starptautiskās vienošanās, jo oficiāli taču PSRS nebija pieteikusi karu Japānai. Vienīgais ceļš, kā piegādāt Ķīnai bruņojumu, bija ar aviācijas palīdzību, šīs slepenās operācijas vadītājs bija aviators Jēkabs Alksnis. Bīstamajos lidojumos avarēja trešā daļa, ja ne puse lidmašīnu (Ņikišins, 2023).

Reaģējot uz daudzajiem negadījumiem pārlidojumu laikā, Alksnis izstrādāja rekomendācijas, kuru mērķis bija mazināt avāriju skaitu, tomēr viņa centieni netika novērtēti. Staļina “pateicība” bija savdabīga – jau pēc pāris nedēļām Alksni atbrīvoja no visiem amatiem un apcietināja. Nē, ne par biežajām lidmašīnu avārijām, bet gan par “dzimtenes nodevību”.

Pratināšanas laikā viņu nežēlīgi sita un spīdzināja, līdz Alksnis “atzinās” [visticamāk, neesošos noziegumos – A. H.], ka jau kopš 1922. gada esot Latvijas spiegs, bet kopš 1936. gada darbojoties slepenā un kontrrevolucionārā latviešu nacionālistu organizācijā, kas iefiltrējusies Sarkanās armijas rindās. Spriedums te varēja būt tikai viens – nāvessods nošaujot. Arestēja arī Alksņa sievu Kristīni Medni, kurai piesprieda astoņus gadus lēģerī. 1946. gadā viņu atbrīvoja, bet pēc pāris gadiem atkal apcietināja, un brīvībā viņa tika vien pēc Staļina nāves. Abu dēls Imants nonāca bērnunamā kā “tautas ienaidnieka” atvase. Savukārt mazdēls Viktors, bēdīgi slavenais “melnais pulkvedis”, 20. gadsimta 80. gadu otrajā pusē bija viens no dedzīgākajiem Latvijas neatkarības idejas pretiniekiem un aizstāvēja savvērestības teoriju, ka Tuhačevskis un viņa domubiedri tiešām esot plānojuši nogalināt Staļinu, par ko arī tikuši nošauti. Stāsta pat, ka VDK arhīvā viņš esot uzgājis kādu 1932. gada

ziņojumu, kurā, atsaucoties uz tālaika Latvijas kara atašeju Maskavā, minēts, ka Latvijas militārajai izlūkošanai esot savi cilvēki Sarkanās armijas vadībā, piemēram, tāds Jēkabs Alksnis (Ņikišins, 2023)...

Alksnis ir tikai viens no daudzajiem piemēriem, ka latvieši pēc kalpošanas Krievijas armijā tika apsūdzēti, represēti, nošauti vai izsūtīti.

Secinājumi

Latvijas izcelsmes karavīru, ārstu iesaiste Krievijas impērijas armijas militārajās operācijās Austrumāzija 19. gadsimta beigās un 20. gadsimta sākumā, bieži piespiedu kārtā, deva iespēju latviešu karavīriem iegūt kara pieredzi, ko daļa izdzīvojušo vēlāk sekmīgi izmantoja, cīnoties par savas valsts neatkarību.

Šajā posmā neliela daļa latviešu, kuri piedalījās karadarbībā, nonāca Ķīnas teritorijā un guva pieredzi šajā reģionā. Daudziem tā bija pirmā saskarsme ar Āziju. Par Āzijā piedzīvoto tika ziņots uz Latviju gan vēstuļu formā, gan mutiskos stāstījumos, tā paplašinot sabiedrības zināšanas par šo reģionu. Būtisks ir apstāklis, ka šo latviešu vidū bija arī kara korespondenti, kuri netiešā veidā Latvijas presē ienesa ziņas par Austrumāzijas reģionu kopumā. No šī vēstures perioda saglabājušās arī daudzas vēstules, kuras nav pietiekami pētītas un var sniegt interesantu perspektīvu uz tālaika notikumiem pasaulē, latviešu pirmo tiešo saskarsmi ar Āzijas tautām. Lasot latviešu karavīru dienasgrāmatas, kur aprakstīta liela drosmē, uzbrūkot japāņu ierakumiem, rodas priekšstats, ka latvieši pirmajās tiešajās saskarsmēs ar Āzijas tautām vērtēja sevi kā pārākus par aziātiem, nebaidījās no viņiem un apliecināja to kaujas laukā, tomēr šī teorija vēl būtu pamatīgāk jāpēta, lai sniegtu galējo apstiprinājumu. Tāpat iespējams, ka daļa latviešu šajā periodā brīvprātīgi pieteicās karadienestā, zinot, ka tiks nosūtīti uz fronti Āzijā, un to darīja dažādu iemeslu dēļ, arī lai gūtu kara pieredzi. Arī šis apstāklis būtu jāizzina sīkāk. Vēsturiskajos materiālos no šī perioda – vēstulēs, dienasgrāmatās, publikācijās presē – vērojama arī nacionālās pašapziņas celšanās, kurai bija būtiska loma cīņās par Latvijas neatkarību un nacionālas valsts veidošanu.

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New Facts About the Latvian Historical Points of Contact With Japan and China

This article reflects the latest known facts about Latvian and Baltic German points of contact with Japan and China in their historical perspective, which have previously been little studied.

Some of the information was not available during the years of the occupation of Latvia and only recently was brought to light again.

The first part of the article examines certain activities of Baltic Germans and Latvians in exploring Japan and China in the period of peace. The second part of the article is dedicated to various military conflicts in East Asia, where Latvians or Baltic Germans were involved while under Russian rule and also later – in the period of independence. The article views the Boxer Rebellion in China (1899–1901), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), and other military conflicts involving the residents of Latvia.

Although Latvian participation in military conflicts resulted in numerous casualties and the survivors took different paths, a small part of participants used their war experience in the Latvian independence struggle. Furthermore, the long journey to the war zone and their stay in the territory of China also to some extent expanded their knowledge about this distant region and its peoples.

Keywords: Latvians, Japan, China, Baltic Germans, military conflicts

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Daoist Notion of the “Interconnectedness of Man and Nature” in the Literature of Shen Congwen – the Case of “Ecosophy WH”

The works of Shen Congwen are a very good example of interconnectedness between man and nature and the importance adhering to the notion of place when talking about the ecological self in Arne Næss’s ecosophy where he emphasizes that the man is created by the orders given by the nature. The aim of this article is to explore the notion of Ecosophy WH and the meaning of the ecological self in the works of Shen Congwen. The article will consider three different perspectives – self-realisation, place-person and qualities of the place-person.

Keywords: Shen Congwen, ecosophy, West Hunan, Arne Næss, Daoism, China

Daoism has deep roots in Chinese religion and, furthermore, a very strong influence on artistic, ethical, and philosophical concepts, especially on the relationship between humans and nature. The notion of interconnectedness of man and nature is present in the famous Daoist classics “Daodejing” (Ch. 道德经) and “Zhuangzi” (Ch. 庄子). The Daoist philosophy of “letting go of the world” to escape from the pursuit of “rank, wealth, and prestige” resonates with the unity between the man and nature, which is represented in various mediums – landscape paintings, songs, and literature – both classical and modern.

One of these examples is Shen Congwen (Ch. 沈从文), who is the most notable representative of the “Native Soil Literature” (Ch. 乡土文学) – an apolitical literary movement at the beginning

of 20th century China that expresses aesthetic beauty and wisdom of traditional lifestyle in rural villages in contrast to the atomization and secularity of the city. A large portion of Shen's works touch upon different elements of local folklore, religion, traditions, and authentic representations of the Miao minority lifestyle. This can especially be seen in his work "Border Town" (Ch. 边城), where the narrator describes high mountains near the riverbank which are covered with green bamboo and the cottages are in harmonious order with their surroundings inhabited by people who physically and philosophically correspond to the concept of "Children of Nature".

The study aims in re-evaluating how humans interact with non-human environment and how they are shaped by it in the literature of Shen Congwen by using Arne Næss's "Ecosophy T" – "Ecosophy Tvergastein". One's personal ecosophy or relationship with the human and non-human nature is narrowly defined by the place. Næss's philosophy is unique, because he encourages everyone to create their own "Ecosophy X", where X stands for our bioregional home or sense of belonging.

The main idea of Arne Næss's "Ecosophy T" serves as the working theory for this research where the author develops a further interpretation, namely: "Ecosophy WH" – the "WH" standing for West Hunan (Ch. 湘西) – Shen Congwen's birthplace, the main source of inspiration, and the location where most of his literary works are set.

Similarly to Næss, Shen Congwen has also developed a very deep and extensive identification with a certain location and knows its geology, biome, history, and traditions of the Miao minority living there. The first-hand experience of his nature wanderings or *friluftsliv* around the region of West Hunan is directly reflected in his works.¹

The aspect of humanism in Shen Congwen's works explicitly correlates with Næss's thoughts on humility, love for others, and respectful treatment of all beings present in the ultimate philosophies of Buddhism, Daoism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Shamanism, and Paganism.

¹ See: "Holiday Fruit Congee", "Long River", "In a Private School", etc.

The main objective of this study includes determining the ecological self² from a non-anthropocentric perspective by:

- Studying of the self-realization by including the principles of compassion, frugality, and humility.
- Studying of place-person – the significance of a place when shaping one’s attitudes, worldviews, and spiritual beliefs.
- Portraying the qualities of the place-person from an anti-urban and anti-bureaucratic viewpoint.

Arne Dekke Eide Næss (1912–2009) was a Norwegian philosopher who coined the term “Deep Ecology” – a non-anthropocentric perspective on the value of nature and living beings. Næss’s notion of ecosophy defines oneself no longer as a part of the personal ego or the organism but a genuine part of all life (Næss, 2008, 173).

Næss’s philosophy is very closely related to human-nature relationship practiced in Daoism, namely, the concept of the unity of heaven and humanity (Ch. 天人合一) where the relation of both is never alienated or antagonistic.

However, first it is important to determine that “heaven” in this case should never be translated literally but figuratively as “nature”. The “Yellow Emperor’s Classic” (Ch. 黄帝内经) states that “man is born with the breath of the universe and grows with the laws of seasons” (Zhuang et al., 2023, 188–200).

This philosophy is very pronounced in the works of Shen Congwen, where he describes the simple and humble lives of Miao ethnicity country folk in West Hunan. What makes Shen Congwen special is his apolitical stance and not being a part of any literary movement e.g. The League of Left-Wing Writers (Ch. 中国左翼作家联盟) which allowed him to develop his own cultural and ethnic stance in literature. He also criticized the initial stages of penetration of modern civilization into China (Zhou et al., 2019, 40).

² The ecological self basically is human self – active emotions of love and compassion expand one’s self and awareness which facilitates giving attention to the nature and the things surrounding it (Naess A. *The Ecology of Wisdom*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008, 35).

It is worth mentioning that West Hunan is a descendant of the ancient mythical Chu Kingdom (Ch. 楚国) which was an ethnically and culturally rich region in today's Hunan and Hubei provinces. West Hunan's picturesque beauty was relatively unaffected by the Chinese landscaping and was a relatively well-kept secret from the outsiders. Its green mountains, rivers, caves and cliffs are hard to access even now.

In contrast to the majority of authors who wrote about life in the city, Shen Congwen focused on his home – he is known as the most famous representative of “Native Soil Literature” (Ch. 乡土文学) which seeks “rural utopia”. This type of literature has three distinct characteristics: 1) narrator's depiction of his/her rural childhood home; 2) allegorical meaning of the countryside, and 3) description of socially marginalized characters (Ng, 2001, 81–102).

Since the 1920s, he had begun to compose regional fiction which dealt with traditions of West Hunan – local dialect, folklore, religious customs, and mountain folk. Shen Congwen's writing started from his personal memories of events and his childhood in the area. These vignettes served as prototypes for some of the characters – Cui, San-san, Ling and Xiao. The narrators in the author's works are very specific about nature – specific trees, animals, types of bamboo; the ring-necked pheasant that comes to the house to feed, or mussels with shells good for collecting are just a few examples. Local beliefs that resemble clear elements of animist and nature worship are also a very important part of his works, for instance; tree whose branches are placed for relief from tiredness, and the description of a house of tutelary deity who helps boar hunters (Kinkley, 1987, 114–117).

Self-realization

According to Næss (2008, 81–82), self-realization is the identification of oneself with all living beings – sentient or not, instead of solely within the framework of personal ego. The process of self-realization includes three stages of development – from ego to social self and from the social self to metaphysical self, however; the identification with the non-human nature, such as our home, is largely ignored.

The three Taoist virtues (Ch. 三宝) – humility (Ch. 朴), compassion (Ch. 慈) and frugality (Ch. 俭) are found in chapter 67 in the Taoist classic of Daodejing. “Here are my three treasures: the first is gentleness; the second is economy; and the third is shrinking from taking precedence of others” (Waley, 1984, 225).

These three virtues work in tune with Næss’s idea of self-realization, that we cannot flourish and realize ourselves if we destroy other’s home and interfere with their self-realization which includes the ultimate norms of non-violence, humility, and gratitude (Næss, 2008, 38).

According to Wang (2020, 161), Shen Congwen is aware of modernity’s menace towards natural world and traditional life, which is based on intertwining of human life and nature and people can never divide themselves from the planet.

For instance, the very beginning of the work “Border Town” (边城) already gives vivid descriptions of people, their lifestyle and the living conditions in the remote and hard-to-access area of Chadong (Ch. 茶峒) village. The houses in the village are built based on a harmonious relationship with the surroundings without trying to subdue nature by changing the landscape with artificial or exploitative methods, such as creating dams to change the course of the river or practicing agriculture. The instance of remote areas of West Hunan serves as an example where one’s personal ego is in harmony “Walls of yellow earth and pitch-black tiles, neatly placed there for all time and in harmony with the surroundings on every side, brought the viewer a sense of extraordinary joy” (Shen, 2009a, 11), and sometimes dominated by the laws of nature: “Those who suffered the harm stared right back, speechless over their loss, as if it were just one more unhappy and unavoidable act of nature” (Shen, 2009a, 10).

Although life in Chadong might seem rather harsh and remote but it is governed by the principles of selfless community and humility “the ferry crossing was owned by the whole community” (Shen, 2009a, 2), as well as the boatman’s story when he adopted Cui (Ch. 翠翠), who was abandoned by her mother. The boatman is described as a frugal, humble and hardworking person: “I’m paid for my work: three pecks of rice and

seven hundred coppers. That's enough for me. Who needs this charity?" (Shen, 2009a, 2). An example of humility and non-violence is the protagonist Cui: "Nature had brought her up and educated her, making her innocent and spirited, in every way, like a little wild animal. Wholly unacquainted with cruelty, never worried, and never angry" (Shen, 2009a, 5). The themes and portrayals of people, their characters, relationships and environment in the works of Shen Congwen are completely juxtaposed to the newly-emerging "New Sensationalists" (Ch. 新感觉派) in the 1930s Shanghai that focused on developed consumerism, poverty and squalor, East-meets-West confrontation, fast paced urban life, alienation as well as perverse pleasures in the Metropolis. One of the New Sensationalists Mu Shiyong (Ch. 穆時英) in his "Shanghai Foxtrot" (Ch. 上海狐步舞) provides the following description: "People living in heaven are leading a befuddled life as if drunk or in a dream, which is evil, corruption, and degeneration. The people in hell are struggling on the death line, which is heavy, hungry, and dark."³

The above-mentioned example shows that the urban society in Shanghai (and not only there) is solely driven by the personal ego either to seek worldly pleasures or for the sole reason of survival without any sense of community or moral norms. Shen Congwen's story "The Husband" (Ch. 丈夫) also shows the city values corrupting the souls of the rural people with the vices of opium dens and brothels: "Through their business, they gradually turn into city people. Slowly they grow estranged from their country villages, and slowly they learn the vices that are useful only to city folk" (Shen, 1995, 31).

However, the close-knit rural society of Chadong, even in the time of crisis when the great flood from the mountains that took away many villagers' homes and livelihood, was able to transcend the "ego" and save those in danger even if it meant their demise. "These daring souls typified the local people: they had an eye for their own gain, but also

³ See: Yue F. Neo-Sensationalists' Imagination of Shanghai – A Comparative Study between Shanghai and Shanghai Foxtrot Dance. *The International Conference on Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies*, 185–190, DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/4/20220395.

for helping other folks. They were equally joyful when salvaging people and property...” (Shen, 2009a, 10).

Also, the short story “Sansan” (Ch. 三三) shows the unselfish and kind hearted nature of Sansan’s mother, whereas Sansan has still not fully perceived the ways of life in the village because of her young age. This can be observed in an episode where a stranger approaches her home to do some fishing, even though the custom said that the water in front of one’s house belonged to them. “Sansan, we’ve got plenty; let him fish” (Shen, 1995, 226). The communal relationships among the villagers are very strong, especially among the people who live in remote areas. “Before leaving, the friend would stop by the house and share the larger fish from his catch with Sansan’s family” (Shen, 1995, 227).

Studying of place-person

Even though Næss did not clearly define the notion of “place-person” but he mentions that place is a major factor of determining one’s attitudes, likes and dislikes, and general outlook – it tyrannizes, imposes itself, and gives orders (Næss, 2008, 57).

As described by Shen Congwen, West Hunan was a place forgotten by history – while China underwent development under the feudalist system, West Hunan was still in a primitive or semi-primitive state. The Miao still had the collective association of villages led by tribal alliance and clan rule. The economic system was based on free labour and was exempt from centralized taxes or without outside appointed officials in control. West Hunan was known as an unassimilated state until the reign of Yongzheng Emperor (Ch. 雍正) (1723–1735) of Qing that led to Han-Miao cultural clash that ended in armed Miao uprisings, however; the Miao still maintained their traditional folkways (Zhou et al., 2019, 86).

The works of Shen Congwen had a great influence of the Chu shamanic culture, especially the works of Qu Yuan (Ch. 屈原) – “Chu Ci” (Ch. 楚辞) and “Nine Songs” (Ch. 九歌). In the essay “Preface to West Hunan” Shen Congwen mentions that many places where Qu Yuan

travelled could still be identified. Shen Congwen also talks about magic Nuo⁴ rituals performed by the Miao in the countryside in his poem “Shaman’s Love” (Ch. 神巫之爱) and a chapter from his “Fengzi” describe the stage-by-stage execution of Nuo (Ch. 雉) rituals – shaman’s garments and tools (cow horns, magic swords, and willow kerchiefs). Shamans were in charge of chanting and carrying out sacrifices and the rest of the folk joined in with the singing (Kinkley, 1987, 126).

In the chapter of “Fenghuang” (Ch. 凤凰) in his work “Recollections of West Hunan” (Ch. 湘西散记) Shen Congwen still mentions magic-shamanic practices done by the Miao, such as; *fanggu* (Ch. 放蛊) – a voodoo practice of sending insects into the bellies of enemies, as well as the use of *Chenzhou amulets* (Ch. 辰州符)⁵ (Zhou et al., 2019, 104).

The people in the ancient Chu Culture had strictly shamanic / animistic worldview and they believed that there is a close relationship between men and beasts, mountains and islands, spirits and demons and that the spiritual guide of the community is the wizard / shaman (Zhang, 1987, 112).

Chu pantheon of Gods was personified and consisted of semi-anthropomorphic features, half-animal deities, and other spirits and demons, for instance the mountain beast in Qu Yuan’s “Nine Songs”. The significance of animism leads to a consciousness of universal love and liberty which also includes a more liberal approach to pre-marital sexual unions and elopement that are also widely discussed in the author’s works.

The work “Border Town” provides various influences of traditional religious thought enmeshed with everyday lives of the people, such

⁴ Nuo rituals among the Miao are connected to the worship of Mother Nuo – a warrior goddess Nuomu (Ch. 雉母) whose exorcist powers are depicted in ritual dramas by the Miao religious specialists. The Nuomu myth is also related to the flood myth and forming of incestuous relationships with her brother Nuogong (Ch. 雉公).

⁵ Magical Daoist amulets that originated in the Chenzhou Prefecture in Hunan Province.

as private and communal festivals and celebrations, as well as worship of different anthropomorphic deities and recitation of shamanic chants. According to Tapp (1989, 59–94), some of the Miao shamanic chants have Taoist influences.

The female protagonist Cui in “Border Town” recites the “Song of Summoning Gods” (Ch. 迎神巫歌) that consists of some of the eight saints (Ch. 八仙) from the Daoist pantheon – Guan Fuzi (Ch. 关夫子), Zhang Guolao (Ch. 张果老), Weichi Gong (Ch. 尉迟恭), and Iron Crutch Li (Ch. 铁拐李), as well as generals from the Qing dynasty – Hong Xiuquan (Ch. 洪秀全) and Li Hongzhang (Ch. 李鸿章) (Shen, 2009b, 95–96).

The same shamanic chant can be found in “Shaman’s Love” (Shen, 2009b, 378–379).

This shows that the Miao traditional religion has a lot of elements from other religions, such as Taoism. Another passage in “Border Town” shows a strong belief in the Fengshui principles “Everybody says the excellent feng shui here, the geomancy, is propitious for the emergence of great men” (Shen, 2009a, 71).

According to Wang (2020, 167), the language used in Shen Congwen’s works can be described as “animistic” – where humans are allowed to experience nature in a bodily way – by sight, sensation and smell, without setting one apart from it.

The works of Shen Congwen include various phrases with hidden meanings, such as “A big fish is going to bite you. He’s going to bite you” (Shen, 2009a, 87).

In this case, the grandfather talks about the protagonist Shunshun (Ch. 顺顺) who wants to marry Cuicui and might kidnap her or have pre-marital relations with her. Miao are also well-known for their love song tradition where the would-be husband sings to woo the would-be- bride during the night, only when she responds with a song, does she agree to be his wife – this tradition is richly described in the “Border Town”. “If you prefer the horseman’s move, I’m sure he will sing passionate songs during the day and tender ones in the moonlight, like a nightingale, singing his throat out until he spits blood!” (Shen, 2009a, 92).

In many cases, the author compares the potential suitors with different songbirds, such as; song sparrow, nightingale whose songs “carried Cuicui away to heaven” (Shen, 2009a, 110).

The next morning, she recounts her dream to her grandfather. It involves fantastic imagery of flying above cliffs and creeks, picking up a leaf and giving it to an unknown entity. This symbolism can possibly be related to ecstatic practices of shaman’s chanting where the soul leaves his body to travel to spirit realms for a certain purpose – whether to communicate with spirits and deities or prognosticate. In this instance, the song can be compared to expression of universal love that even allows transcending bodily or personal ego boundaries. The short story “Shaman’s Love” also positions folk songs and shaman’s chants as a very important part of people’s everyday lives: “How the shaman beckons auspiciousness from heaven by riding clouds and travelling mists remains unknown and puzzling to the people. However, the shaman’s songs and his graceful and mesmerising dance brings happiness and joy in the hearts of Yunshi Village people” (Shen, 2009b, 379).

Qualities of a place-person

The aim of this part is portraying the qualities of the “place-person” from an anti-urban and anti-bureaucratic viewpoint. Even though Shen Congwen has spent some part of life in various metropolitan cities like Beijing and Shanghai with the aim to learn, yet his naïveté and ideals were starting to waver when he had a conversation with his cousin Huang Yushu, who said the following: “What ideals? And how will you study? You know that there are 10,000 college students in Peking at the moment, who after graduation will have nothing to do go around looking worried about what to do next” (Kinkley, 1987, 69). During the years he spent in the city, he underwent many a hardship – failing university entrance exams, being short of money to pay for tuition and destitution left him with emotional trauma. This resulted in his feeling of uprootedness in the city. His later years in Shanghai added to his anguish; in his works, he noted that wealth and power are the true enemies

of the hungry young man. His 1929 work “A Small Matter in Big City” (Ch. 大城中的小事情) describes the exploitation of workers in modern factory setting, the characteristics of cramped workspace, big noise, poisonous air, monotony and spiritual poisoning (Kinkley, 1987, 105).

This shows Shen Congwen’s scathing criticism towards everything urban, but by the end of 1920s he started to create vivid regional fiction. One of Shen Congwen’s most popular short stories “The Husband” is an excellent example of author’s anti-urban sentiment, in this story he shows vices of the city that have already permeated harbour town in West Hunan and the changes left on the people who are exposed to this environment. The story talks about women who leave their mountain villages, stone mills, newborn calves and their husbands “through the offices of an acquaintance” (Shen, 1995, 30) just to go to the city. Shen Congwen mentions that the girls from the countryside are spoiled, which happens very gradually, thus focusing on the women who made their choice to leave for the city to make the husband’s life better in the countryside, as the main subject who is exposed to the vices of the city. However, it can be deduced that the alluring news of seemingly better and easier life in the city has already reached into the remote areas of the village and corrupted the women’s husbands: “Therefore many a young husband sends his wife away after marriage, while he stays at home farming and minding his business” (Shen, 1995, 31). At the same time, the story shows that it is customary for women to go outside of the Huang village to earn money, however, the roots of this custom are related to poor soil, labour-intensive agricultural practices that can only physically be carried out by males, as well as a large portion of the share goes to the “top” – a notion that is still left unexplained by the author, whether it means the villages further on top of the mountain or stands as a figurative meaning for a type of tax to the administrative units at the time.

However, the story provides a contrasting description of complete changes in wife’s character and appearance and the loss of her innocence and naïveté, as well as the gradual realization of the husband that he has lost his wife: “At this point the husband tends to think of the chickens

and piglets back home, as if they were the only friends really true to him, his only family” (Shen, 1995, 32–33).

The story describes the husband as a naïve and hard-working young man, whose mind is always occupied with harsh, yet simpler and purer life in the countryside. Even though his wife tries to calm him down with some simple presents, but he ultimately breaks down and during the night both of them return to the countryside. The premise of this story and “Changing Water” (Ch. 换水) by a Hui minority writer Li Jinxiang (Ch. 李进祥) is almost identical – where people from countryside are forced to leave their native land and abandon their customs in order to suffer humiliation in the city’s underworld solely for survival. After having suffered enough mental and physical abuse by her patrons, the female protagonist Yang Jie and her hard-working Uyghur husband returned home where “Qingshui water is the best water, it can wash away any disease!” (Li, 2009, 97).

Both instances shown by two authors from completely different cultural backgrounds express the same idea of uprootedness once entering urban setting and the inevitable loss of cultural identity and a complete abandonment of traditional lifestyle. The above analysis from the perspective of Shen Congwen’s explicit anti-urbanism works in concert with the tenet of “Interconnectedness of Man and Nature”, especially for the cultures that display strong relations and beliefs in nature. To sum up the analysis of this part, Shen Congwen indirectly mentions that the main qualities of a place-person are those dictated by the environment – humility, frugality, sense of community in close-knit societies in remote regions without any interference from the outside, and, in contrast, the atomization, cruelty and egoism in urban areas. However, in contrast to previous stories, Shen Congwen’s story “The Lovers” also sets negative examples that show peasants’ benightedness and being too set in their ways.

Conclusion

The development of ecosophy WH is a very elaborate process, where the ecological self is determined by several factors – physical

location and living conditions, cultural, social and even religious factors, and finally positioning oneself as an entity that is a part, not separate or above the nature. In his pastoral works, especially “Border Town” Shen Congwen emphasizes the unity of man and nature without placing one’s personal or social ego above it or by artificially changing the nature to suit one’s needs. The case of “Border Town” shows that people of the Chadong village are subjected to natural processes – even if it sometimes means demise or irreversible loss of property and livelihood. Habitation in sometimes harsh and austere conditions described by the author has shaped the protagonists’ characters as humble, frugal and community-oriented – the three treasures of Daoism that are observed by the villagers without even realizing it.

The “orders given by the nature” play crucial roles in the shaping of place-person’s worldviews, spiritual beliefs, preferences and dislikes, even from times as ancient as the Chu Kingdom. In this case, piety towards processes taking place in the nature is the basis for the animistic Miao worldview and their spirituality, that is shown by the importance of shaman as the spiritual leader of the community and worship of ancestors, anthropomorphic deities, and nature spirits.

Shen Congwen’s strict anti-urban and anti-bureaucratic attitude clearly determines the qualities of place-person – humility, frugality and a sense of community.

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Changes and Contemporary Wisdom of Role Model Culture in Ancient China

In the ancient Chinese society of political ethics, role models, as an important carrier of moral education in ancient China, were respected by successive rulers because of their vivid and intuitive image, their value of guiding the people into a common practice, and their power of indoctrination. In the top-down active promotion, upward and downward effect of the dissemination of practice, and gradually formed a unique Chinese characteristics of the role model culture. The ancient Chinese role model culture has a long history, whilst containing a rich ideological and practical system: that is, what a role model is, what a role model is for, what a role model can do and what is the use of the role models. With the help of deities, bright kings, saints and other role models, the role model culture realizes the function of correcting people's hearts and beautifying customs; relying on official indoctrination and spontaneous learning of civil organizations, it penetrates deeply into the levels of political governance, family education, school education, as well as personal cultivation, and spreads to the fields of politics, economy, society and culture, so as to realize the function of penetrating and regulating through imperceptible influence and, finally, forms the network system of role model indoctrination practice combining central government and local government.

Keywords: role models, role model culture, indoctrination

In China, there is a proverb that the power of role models is infinite. As a vivid, graphic and visual carrier of moral education in ancient China, role models play a value-pointing and spirit-guiding role. Role models are not only relatable, honourable and credible, but also touchable, sensible and learnable. The public in the role model

of infection and inspiration actively learn and imitate, to see the wise, shaping the character of the utility. Based on the recognition of a role model and the value of its manifestation, ancient Chinese society opened the excellent style of respecting, selecting and learning from role models. In the process of promoting and learning from role models, a role model culture was born, in which the true, good and beautiful qualities contained in heroes and moral models were pursued and promoted as value goals. Chinese role model culture has a long history of accumulation, and in the long theoretical exploration and rich practice, it has formed its own unique ideological and practical system: that is, what a role model is, what a role model does, what a role model can be, and what a role model can be used for.

Role models and role model culture: What is a role model?

In ancient Chinese culture, there are a large number of records about role models. For example, the saying “One who keeps company with vermilion becomes red, and one who keeps company with ink becomes black” reveals the infectious effect of role models, and the saying “See good people and emulate them” reflects the motivating effect of role models. From the etymological point of view, “Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters” explains that “Bang, used to correct crossbows” (Xu Shen, 2018, 165), that is, a corrective tool for crossbows, Han Feizi extends its meaning to “Bang is used to correct what is wrong”. The word “yang” refers to the style and paradigm. The combination of “bang” and “yang” can be understood as a paradigm or style for correcting wrongdoing. The earliest use of the word “model” as a stand-alone term comes from the poem “Overlooking the Mirror Pavilion” by Zhang Ci of the Song Dynasty, which reads, “Called a large round mirror, the ripples are born from it. There is no harm in mixing clouds and shadows, but the example is naturally formed” (Hoe Zhang, 1985, 114), which means “look” or “appearance”.

The role model culture has a long history in ancient China, and it is both a product of social development and the result of individual

self-consciousness enhancement. According to the form of role model culture, we can understand the role model culture from the three forms of material culture, spiritual culture and institutional culture of role models.

Firstly, the material culture of role models is the material manifestation of the culture of role models. The material culture of role models is a kind of “imprint” of the influence of role models in the material world, with the purpose of infecting and inspiring people to take role models as examples and actively learn to emulate them. Physical entities contain the inspirational, educational and demonstrative values of role model culture. For example,

Memorial tablets, ancestral temples, garden mausoleums, memorial archways, statues, plaques, tablets, brick carvings and other objects, whose main function is to commemorate, commend and promote the loyal ministers and righteous officials, filial piety and virtuous grandchildren, and women of honour and martyrdom as the representative of the maintenance of the national rule and the social order who have made an exemplary role and made outstanding contributions (Pang Shenwei, 2014, 40).

There are also various halls, lounges, pavilions, terraces, pavilions, platforms, chambers, lanes and so on, which are given a special commemorative significance. For example, the Tianwen Terrace and Xingyin Pavilion commemorating Qu Yuan, and the Nvhuaiqing Terrace honouring the chaste women of the Qin Dynasty. In addition, there are also many books and documents used to record exemplary figures and deeds, such as: “Shiji-Annals of Xiang Yu”, and “The Book of Shu – Zhuge Liang’s Biography”.

Secondly, the spiritual culture of role models is the basic form of role model culture in the spiritual field. It includes the guidance of people’s thoughts and moral concepts by the words and deeds of role models themselves, the leadership of social customs, and the expectation, reverence and inheritance of the spirit of role models. The spiritual culture of role models has a more lasting influence than the material culture of role models, and this influence permeates people’s ideological concepts, value judgments and social norms, which has become the “DNA” engraved

in people's spiritual world and an important part of the Chinese spirit. People's worship, recognition and remembrance of heroes and role models are manifested in their self-confirmation and self-manifestation of the spirituality of role model culture. For example, there are various folk legends, stories, fables, songs, dramas, commemorative articles and literary works, etc., that promote heroic role models, such as "The Story of Hua Mulan's Journey from the Army", "The Foolish Duke Moves the Mountain", "Jingwei Filling the Sea", and so on.

The institutional culture of role models refers to the normative institutional treaties formulated, promulgated and implemented by certain organizations to honor and reward role models. It includes not only the normative system and operational mechanism to ensure the effective operation of practical activities such as the discovery, selection, dissemination and promotion of role models, such as laws, regulations, rules, disciplines, institutions, policies, etc., but also cultural traditions, customs and ethical norms that have been formed in society for good deeds and good deeds of the good and righteous people. Examples include the ancient system of praise and honor, the system of filial piety and honesty, and nine-pin system of central government.

The material, spiritual and institutional forms of role model culture together constitute the three dimensions of role model culture, which interpenetrate and influence each other, and become an inseparable organic whole of role model culture (Pang Shenwei, 2014, 42–43). In the system of role model culture, role model material culture is the foundation, role model spiritual culture is the soul, and role model institutional culture is the guarantee. Each form of role model culture has unique value and significance, which comprehensively highlights the multiple dimensions of role model culture.

The rationality of a culture of role models:

What is a role model for?

Ancient Chinese society attached great importance to moral education through the "teaching by example" of role models, and sought

to inspire people to cultivate their moral character through role models. This requires role models to be virtuous and upright in their own thoughts, words and deeds, as the saying goes, “If you want others to be upright, you must first be upright yourself”. If you cannot do so yourself, then “do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you”. As the “Analects” of Confucius emphasizes, “If one’s own conduct is upright, orders will be followed without the need for commands; if one’s own conduct is not upright, commands will not be followed even if given” (The Analects of Confucius, 2004, 65). The great Chinese educator Confucius also proposed: “If one cannot rectify oneself, how can one rectify others?” (The Analects of Confucius, 2004, 68). The so-called “correct body”, i.e., virtue is correct, heart is correct, speech is correct, body is correct, only “correct body” of the role model will have the power to inspire, call and emit light. That is why role models must first correct themselves in order to be exemplary. At the same time, only when the role model achieves the ideal personality of morality, can he convince people with virtue, transform people with virtue, and truly become an example of “inner saint” and “outer king”. Just as in “Rituals – University”, the rationale for constructing the “Inner Sage and Outer King” role model is: “In ancient times, those who sought to make the world a better place, first ruled their country; those who aimed to rule their country, first aligned their families; those who wanted to align their families, first cultivated their bodies; those who wished to cultivate their bodies, first corrected their hearts” (Zhu Xi, 2020, 5).

How can education by example be carried out? In traditional Chinese culture, we attach great importance to the “teaching through actions rather than words”, which means that under the subtle guidance of role models, more people will be inspired to imitate and learn from them, so that their actions will prevail over their words and the unity of words and deeds will be realized. As the saying goes, “Teaching is about setting an example; the superior does it, and the inferior follows suit” (Ban Gu, 2018, 187). Zhu Xi emphasized in the “Four Books, Chapters and Sentences. Collected Notes University Chapters and Sentences” that “the upper acts on the lower, and the lower is effective, and is quick

to influence” (Zhu Xi, 2020, 11). “He believed that the upper produces all kinds of moral demonstrations to the lower, and the lower imitates this and that to the upper, and the successive production of such demonstrations and imitations occurs even faster than the shadow following the shape and the echo following the sound” (Pang Shenwei, 2014, 62).

As the ethical and moral norms of ancient China, the “Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues” implicitly influenced the social order and guided the moral choices and judgements of the people. The “Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues” provided the standards and scope of practice for the indoctrination of role models as exemplars of feudal ethics. “In the Chinese Confucian ethical and moral system, an order of role model education was established, characterized by “the ruler as the guide for the subject, the father as the guide for the son, and the husband as the guide for the wife”, embodying the “monarch as the example of the subject, the father as the example of the child, and the husband as the example of the wife” law of imitation” (Pang Shenwei, 2014, 62). This system shaped, to a certain extent, the social atmosphere of the lower following the upper, and established the upper as the model for the lower, worshipping the typical. The so-called “superiors” generally referred to role models such as kings, fathers and husbands, whose words and deeds became the objects of worship and admiration for the so-called “inferiors” such as subjects, people, children and women. The king, as the highest moral example in ancient Chinese society, was also defined as the highest example of moral ideal personality in the state. The moral cultivation, spiritual quality, value pursuit, and social spirit of the general public depended to a large extent on the example and exemplary role of the king himself. Just as, “the king, the original of the people, the original clear is flowing clear, the original turbid is flowing turbid” (Xun Zi, 2001, 121), Confucius said: “Governing is about being upright. If you lead with integrity, who would dare to be dishonest?” (The Analects of Confucius, 2004, 62); “When the ruler honors propriety, the people will not dare to be disrespectful; when the ruler values righteousness, the people will not dare to be disobedient; when the ruler cherishes trustworthiness, the people will not dare to be

insincere. If this is the case, then people from all directions will come, carrying their children in their arms” (The Analects of Confucius, 2004, 66). The role of rulers in teaching by example and modelling is crucial. If the ruler is diligent in cultivating himself, disciplining himself, and setting an example for the people, the people will actively learn and follow suit in order to enhance their cultivation.

In ancient Chinese society, the family was an important field for the emergence and formation of a role model culture, as well as a cultural soil for individuals to cultivate an ideal personality. Enlightenment, daily education and a favourable atmosphere in the family enable family members to establish good moral knowledge and thus form noble moral qualities. “Father guides son, husband guides wife” emphasizes the role of the father as a role model in the family, who is the main implementer and guide of family education, and plays an important role in guiding and demonstrating to other members of the family. “Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters” stresses: “Father is the head of the family, the one who leads and instructs” (Xu Shen, 2018, 79). “Baihu Tong” (On the Meaning of the Six Periods) states, “The father is also the ruler, who teaches his son by the law” (Ban Gu, 2018, 191). These tenets clarify the identity of the father as the subject of role modelling education in the family, while the children become *ex officio* objects of education.

In ancient Chinese society, the school was also an important venue for the formation and transmission of a role model culture. In ancient societies, teachers generally referred to scholars who were the possessors of “dao yi” (character and knowledge). Teachers as the main body of the scholars became the authority in the hierarchical structure of “above to below”. The teacher’s duty is to enlighten and educate students’ ideological and moral concepts, as stated in “Ritual Records of Wen Wang Shizi”: “Teachers are those who teach things and explain virtues” (Dai Sheng, 2022, 94). “Teacher is the model of the people” (Dai Sheng, 2022, 94). “Teachers, too, are people to be emulated” (Liu Baonan, 1988, 30). Teachers’ education and wordless teaching have a silent guiding effect on students and directly promote the development of students’ ideological and moral character.

The legitimacy of a culture of role models: What can role models do?

How to manifest the efficacy of role models? This was an important proposition of the ancient Chinese culture of role models, and it was also the focus of the rulers' moral education. By selecting examples of high morality and integrity and disseminating them amongst the public, the state combined feelings and reasoning with interest motivation, so that the public would be infected and inspired, and gradually agree with them and imitate them. This is the general way for role models to exert their effect, and the aim is to influence the people through role models, i.e. the direction of "role models to the people", so as to realize the effect from the outside to the inside. The purpose of role – model education is to enable the people to become role models, that is, in the direction of "people to role model", achieving the influence from the inside out. It aims to turn the example of self-discipline into the example of self-discipline, so as to truly demonstrate the purpose and effect of the culture of example in educating the people and transforming them into customs. So, how can the external role model demonstration be internalized into the individual's conscious pursuit? Ancient China's discourse on role models advocates that role models should be integrated into the development of individuals as an important reference for their growth, and emphasizes self-awareness and self-improvement through self-reflection, prudence and deliberation. Confucius stresses "internal introspection", Zeng Zi's "I am always introspecting myself" and Mencius' "self-reflection" and "seeking to reflect on oneself" – all these principles emphasize the persuasion that if an individual wants to achieve self-improvement in morality, he needs to engage in reflection and introspection of his own words and deeds in the first place. As it is said in "Advising Learning": "If a gentleman learns from his studies and examines himself daily, then he knows and acts without fault" (Xun Zi, 2001, 121). Traditional Chinese culture also emphasizes that after reflection, introspection and deliberation, aspiring scholars should act and learn like role models. Confucius said, "When three

people walk together, there must be one who can be my teacher. I will choose the good and follow it, and the bad and correct it” (The Analects of Confucius, 2004, 33). “When I see a virtuous person, I think of becoming like them; when I see a non-virtuous person, I reflect on myself internally” (The Analects of Confucius, 2004, 17).

Role model culture in practice: What is the use of role models?

In ancient China, the image of role models was widely celebrated, not only in classical texts, but also reproduced and interpreted in practice. As a result, the culture of Chinese role models sprouted, took shape, developed, and was constantly advanced and enriched with the evolution of history and the promotion of practice. In primitive society, in order to survive, people worshipped and imitated diverse and pluralistic role models. People imitated “gods” with special powers in their imagination, as well as animals that were smarter and stronger than themselves. With the gradual enrichment of social life and the improvement of people’s level of understanding, living customs and totem worship began to play an important role in people’s lives. Myths and legends, such as “Nuwa Mending the Sky”, “Chang’e Running to the Moon”, and “Yugong Removing the Mountain” were widely known among the people, gradually cultivating a sense of reverence and admiration for these role models. Later on, the worship of man gradually became dominant, while The Clanlord, by virtue of their superior wisdom and noble qualities, gained more and more authority in social life. “Yao, Shun can’t teach ... those who are good at teaching” (Xun Zi, 2001, 161). The Sui’en’s, Shennong’s, and Fuxi’s became the most primitive role models. “Yi Chuan – Department of Rhetoric Under the Biography” described “Shennong’s endeavours, including his work in crafting ploughshares from wood and developing tools such as the Lei hoe, which served to benefit and educate society” (Nan Huaijin, 2017, 279). Clan members in the clan leader’s personality inspiration, whether in religious ceremonies, clan meetings or common labour are like a shadow. As written in

the “Book of Songs” in the “Da Ya” section, “Juan E” chapter: “With support and with wings, with filial piety and virtue, to lead and to hope, how noble and upright the gentleman is, a model for all directions” (Kong Qiu, 2018, 131).

In class society, due to the political and economic support of the state, the active promotion of the king, and the development and improvement of school education, the culture of role models gradually penetrated all levels of social life, forming a specialized and systematic activity of role model indoctrination. The content of indoctrination included not only the requirements for the rule of kings and rulers at all levels, but also the discipline of morality and behavioural norms for the common people; the channels of indoctrination included both top-down and bottom-up promotion, as well as the active cooperation of civil society; and the paradigm of indoctrination infiltrated into the political, ritual and diplomatic arenas, as well as into the family, the school, and the personal realm. The historical practice of indoctrination by example has been perfected based on Confucianism as the core, ritual as the norm, the Zhou as the beginning, and the gradual development of the Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties.

The rulers of the Xia and Shang dynasties believed in heaven and advocated violence, which did not win the hearts of the people and led to their eventual demise. To the Western Zhou Dynasty, with the Duke of Zhou as the core of the ruling group of slave owners and aristocrats, on the basis of learning from the demise of the Xia and Shang Dynasties, strongly emphasized the role of “respect for morality”, and the example of indoctrination has gradually evolved into a strategy of governance and the art of domination. The Zhou Dynasty emphasized that the rulers should “match heaven with virtue” and “respect virtue and protect the people”, and in specific political practices, the kings should follow the rituals in the sacrificial activities to achieve filial piety and respect for heaven; in the political rule, they should be diligent in their own government and set an example for the people, and become a moral model in order to be “a rule in all directions” and “a model in all directions”. The rites of sacrifice, the rite of educational inspector, the rite of

old age, the rite of village wine and the rite of village archery, which are closely related to the life of the people, became the channels for the practice of role model culture. The rites of sacrifice taught the people to value filial piety; the rite of educational inspector taught the people to respect their teachers and virtues; the rite of old age taught the people to respect their ancestors and filial piety; the rite of village wine taught the people to respect their virtues; the rite of village archery taught the people to respect their scholars; and the implementation of these rites created a culture of role modelling and edification in the whole of society.

During the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States period, a hundred schools of thought competed with each other, and there were “ten schools”, as outlined in “Han Book of Arts and Letters”, with each school of thought successively promoting its own doctrines and advocating and setting up ideal personalities and role models that were needed for the governance of the country. People with these moral qualities may become objects of admiration and worship, such as the benevolent, gentleman, sage, and saint promoted by Confucianism, the “great man” proposed by Mencius, who “cannot be obscene to the rich and noble, cannot be moved by the poor and lowly, and cannot be subjugated by the mighty and the powerful,” what Taoism admires is the true man, the supreme man and the god who have reached the realm of “removing oneself from the world”, and what Mohism admires is the chivalrous man who “kills for the benefit of the world” and the brave and righteous man who dares to self-sacrifice. Facts have proved that “Gong Sun Yan and Zhang Yi, the later advocates of the theory of combining verticals and horizontal lines, were able to move between countries with their excellent dialectical skills, and became the figures of the world who were ‘When he is angry, the feudal lords tremble; when he is at peace, the world is at rest’ (Zhang Fan, 2001, 50).

During the Warring States period, the rulers specifically set up examples of filial piety to encourage the public to follow suit. It is recorded in “Strategies of the Warring States: The Strategies of Qi”, that “the infant son (A daughter named Ying Erzi of the Northern Palace), was filial to her parents, and pawned off her ornaments to support

them, and did not marry until she was old” (Liu Xiang, 2015, 131). At the same time, the rulers attached importance to the establishment of moral norms centred on filial piety as a means of maintaining social order and administering the state. The example of “filial piety” became a model for people to follow and learn from.

Since the Han Dynasty, Confucian ethical thinking and values have gradually become the mainstream official ideology, known as “Dismissing the Hundred Schools and Exclusively Respecting Confucianism”. Confucianism advocates the human order of “justice between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, order among elders and children, and trust among friends”, as well as moral requirements such as “filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty and trust”, “propriety, righteousness, honesty, shame” “warmth, goodness, respect, thrift and obedience” became important standards for setting examples. During the Two Han Dynasty, the rulers issued a series of edicts, taking those with good conduct (filial piety and fraternal duty) and those who worked hard to produce (hard work) as role models for the behavior of the common people, and, on the basis of setting up role models, they issued edicts encouraging and rewarding role models. For example, in the twelfth year of Emperor Wendi’s reign (168 BCE), “individuals demonstrating filial piety were awarded five bolts (pi) of silk, while those displaying fraternal respect and diligence in agriculture were granted two bolts of silk” (Ban Gu, 2006, 20). The Han Dynasty also fully demonstrated the efficacy of the ruler’s example. The ruler personally practiced social moral code of conduct, or respect for teachers, or pro-ploughing, or depending on the school, or Fengchan, such as: Emperor Wen’s pro-ploughing “began to open the field of registration, ploughing to persuade the people,” “Han Dynasty monarchs of all types of moral role models to vigorously recognize and reward, not only verbal advocacy, but also material and other aspects of the reward. The targets were usually filial sons, loyal ministers, honest officials, chaste women and righteous women. Sometimes, gentlemen were given silk and wine as a token of appreciation, and individuals were even awarded marquis for their noble behavior” (Wang Xiaohua, 2014, 84). Therefore, from

the Han Dynasty gradually formed the value orientation and social atmosphere of respecting loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and virtue, and the role model characters who practice filial piety ladder, loyalty and integrity, chastity, and virtue and righteousness are also revered by the people. The Chaju system was a bottom-up system of selecting officials implemented during the Han Dynasty, and the criteria for Chaju were mainly “filial piety and honesty”, “virtuousness and goodness”, and other subjects. Under the promotion of the system, a number of filial sons and virtuous men emerged, such as Kong Fen, Cai Shun and Wei Biao. In addition, the government also celebrated role models by writing books, and the society gradually formed a favourable atmosphere in which everyone abided by filial piety and respected virtue – for example, “The Book of Filial Piety”, “Biography of a Woman”, “Female Commandments”, “Saying Yuan – Establishing the Festival”, and so on.

The Tang dynasty attached great importance to the promotion of role models throughout the country. The imperial edict of Emperor Gaozu of the Tang Dynasty that changed the name of the dynasty to amnesty mentioned that “filial sons and grandsons, righteous husbands and women, and the gates of the village will be honoured” (Luo Ming, 2016, 113). The government praised moral role models by giving a plaque to hang over their gate or erecting a honorific arch to show recognition, granting of official titles, writing their biographies in history books, painting their pictures, carving their deeds in stones and writing them in inscriptions, building shrines for them, granting them posthumous titles, giving the special treatment for their children and grandchildren in terms of schooling, employment, etc., the leniency of laws, the summons of the emperor, giving them corn and silk, and exempting them from paying taxes, and so on. The people of the Tang Dynasty praised the moral example of filial piety and virtue. Furthermore, it was said that “A man who is filial and obedient to his elder brother is a man of honour”. It was pointed out in “Book of the Old Tang Dynasty”: “If we praise loyalty, we can persuade officials to be honest; if we highlight filial piety, we can stimulate human morality; if we promote righteousness, we can suppress the welfare of the people; and if we

respect the elderly, we can enhance the customs of the people” (Old Tang Shu, 1995, 3120). The Tang government maintained the order of feudal human relationships by honouring those filial sons and grandsons who lived with their parents and taking care of them, served their parents, cured their parents as typical filial sons and grandsons, such as Xiaoyi County was originally known as the Fuzhou County, because there was a filial son in the county called Guo Xing, his behaviours of filial piety and respect for the elderly touched the Tang Emperor Taizong, and therefore Emperor Tang Taizong renamed Fuzhou County to Xiaoyi County, in order to commend and praise the merits of this filial son. In terms of government officials, the Tang government carved and erected the Moral and Political Monument to promote the model of official virtue and set up examples of good, honest, and competent officials for the officials in the world, so as to achieve the purpose of consolidating the power and maintaining the order.

In the Song Dynasty, the activity of praise was an important path of Role Model Education, and its scope was wider and the way was more standardised. The objects of praise mainly included loyal ministers, honest officials, filial sons, righteous husbands, righteous women, righteous families, recidivists, cohabitants, and recluses. The government set up professional institutions and regulations to honor ethical and moral exemplars, “and the emphasis on the norms of the Confucian ethical code gradually became a social trend in the Song dynasty” (Pang Shenwei, 2014, 82). Wang Qinruo and other editors of the Song Dynasty wrote in the Book of Yuan Turtle: “The king’s selection of high righteousness and exceptional behavior was aimed at stimulating morality and promoting human morals” (Wang Qinruo, 1985, 1653). At the same time, the Tang and Song dynasties for the implementation of moral education, the people into a custom, the ruling class through the book to promote moral models, not only compiled the “Biographies of Filial Sons” “The Biographies of Exemplary Women” “The Rules for Ministers” “Shaoyang Zhengfan” “Biographies of Filial and Friendly Brothers” “Lizhong Jie Chao” and so on, but also wrote books with warning and reference significance, such as “Records of the Exposed Treasonous Cliques” and “Records of

the Rebellious Ministers”. The academy is a bright flower in the history of Chinese education, and in the Song and Yuan dynasties it had already become a specialized institution and a place for example and edification. With “filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty and faith” as its teaching objectives, the academy disseminated the content of role model education through lectures, and guiding the students to follow the examples of the sages and learn from them by means of the academy’s rituals. Under the example and inspiration of teachers and sages, students can strengthen their self-cultivation and truly become virtuous men and women who are loyal to the king, love their relatives and respect their elders.

During the Ming Dynasty, the recognition and promotion of moral role models not only inherited the fine traditions of the Tang and Song dynasties in terms of ideology and system, but also deepened and expanded the ways and channels. With the development of the Cheng-Zhu Theory, the rulers paid more attention to the use of moral models to guide people’s thoughts and behaviours, in order to maintain the feudal ethical and hierarchical order of “ruler, subject, father and son”, and to strengthen the concept of “filial piety when entering the family, and loyalty to the ruler when leaving the family”. At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, the Great Ancestor of the Ming Dynasty, issued “The Six Orders for the Teaching of the People”, which prompted the people to comply with the relevant ethical and moral requirements by issuing lists and decrees in the name of the Emperor, as well as promoting loyalty, filial piety, righteousness and moral integrity in the form of theatre, novels and the art of rapping. The Ming government regarded loyal and righteous officials, filial sons and daughters, virtuous women and righteous husbands and women as social models, and rewarded these role models both materially and spiritually. As a result, the moral standard of “loyalty, filial piety, honor and righteousness” became deeply imprinted in the minds of the people and was regarded as the most fundamental moral value required in traditional society.

During the Qing Dynasty, the Qing government, in an effort to win the hearts and minds of the Han Chinese people to maintain its rule, promoted loyalty, filial piety, and modesty to new heights.

The Kangxi Emperor formulated the Sixteen Articles of the Holy Oracle, and during the Yongzheng period, the Sacred Oracle Guangxun was formed, which was even more detailed than the Sixteen Orders, giving the public a unified national programme of example and education. The Qing Dynasty set up the example of “filial sons, loyal ministers, incorruptible officials and chaste woman” to educate the public on morality, and disciplined the subjects through the Rewards and Punishment of the national code, and through the State Code of Rewards and Punishments to rectify the subjects, and through the construction of ancestral halls, the compilation of genealogies, and family rules and regulations to educate the people by way of role models. Emperor Yongzheng once said to the meritorious minister, Nian GengYao: “Be an example for the generations to come, so that future generations will envy and salivate” (China’s First Historical Archives, 1999). The selection of role models had become a tool of indoctrination to maintain class rule. The outstanding feature of the role model culture in the Ming and Qing dynasties was the importance of respect for the elderly and women’s chastity, for example, the emperor held a banquet for a thousand old men, and the government rewarded the elderly with a crowns, plaques, and financial incentives, and at the same time, it also enacted a law to protect the absolute authority of the elderly in the family, “You and other old people than back to the township wells, each tell the neighbours, and make sure to be filial piety and brotherly love as the most important thing, and this is to change the wind and easy to the root of customs, etiquette and resignation of the root. This is the root of changing customs and customs, the root of etiquette and resignation, not shallow and fresh” (Liu Jinzao, 1988). The Ming and Qing dynasties paid great attention to the issue of women’s chastity, advocating the extreme concept of chastity, and labelling the extremely harsh behavior of women’s modesty and martyrdom, and there is a column of “Biography of Women” in the “Local History” of almost every place. Women’s education doctrine has been greatly developed and the emergence of a number of women’s educational works. During the Ming Dynasty, there were works such as “Inner Teachings” written by the Empress Renxiao of the Ming Chengzu,

Xie Jin's "Biographies of Women Through the Ages" and Lu Shoujian's "Models for Women" among others. In the Qing Dynasty, there were texts like "Women's Studies" "Legacy Regulations for Educating Girls" and "Records of Women's Conduct and Speech" among others.

Social studies and township covenants were a kind of folk organization prevalent in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and were also an important resource for the practice of role model indoctrination. The social school is a grass-roots educational organization targeting the children of the people, echoing the official school, complementing and supplementing each other, and becoming an important channel for role model indoctrination at that time. Originally, the township agreement was only a form of mutual aid and mutual exhortation, but in the Ming Dynasty, the township agreement began to become an important way to teach the people by example and an important way. The social studies transmitted the ethical and moral norms demanded by the rulers through teachers who were both moral and academic, with the aim that the concept of "filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty and trust" would be rooted in the hearts of the children from childhood, laying the foundation for them to become "good people" when they grew up. In this process, role models and their deeds are embedded in the *Xiaojing* (Classic of Filial Piety), the *Facts of Filial Piety*, and so on, and role models play an indirect role in teaching. Hyanggyo carries out its activities with the help of Hyanggyo's preaching to recognize the good and correct the bad and the oracle's preaching to persuade people to turn to the good. In the preaching of "Commendation of Good and Correction of Evil", a large number of cases make clear the standard of good and evil, highlight the value of the good, and then play the role of example and edification. In the propaganda of the oracle, with the help of article-by-article explanations of the oracle, such as "Sixteen Articles of the Oracle", with stories or illustrations attached, such as "Explanation of Imperial Edicts in Images" for the preaching, so that people in the process of studying the concrete and vivid deeds of role models were deeply infected and inspired to understand the spiritual qualities of the role models and consciously internalized, the power of the role models to teach and educate can be brought into play accordingly.

Insights from the ancient Chinese culture of role models

In ancient China, the culture of role models has gradually evolved into a strategy and art of governance over a long period of history and rich social practice. With the theoretical support of the trinity of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, as well as the extensive practice of multiple channels in the family, society, individuals and schools, role model indoctrination was able to be carried out in society as a whole, with far-reaching effects on later generations. However, role model culture in this historical period was centred on the ethical principles and moral norms of Confucianism, and premised on a strict class and ruling order. Although the practical activities of role model education achieved better results in society, such as: purifying the people's morals, stabilising the social order, and cultivating true gentlemen and sages, the ultimate aim of role model education was still to cultivate the agents and tamers needed by the ruling class. Therefore, we should look at the practical activities of role model education in this historical period dialectically, inherit in criticism, and provide historical reference for role model education in the present period of our country.

Ancient Chinese role model culture is based on the cultivation of one's moral character and the unification of the family, and extends to the governance of the country and the pacification of the whole world, "through the shaping of the political pattern of pluralism and unity, compatibility and inclusiveness, the common rule of kings and ministers, and the commonwealth of the world" (Chen Wenhua, & Zhang Guangbin, 2023, 26–31), and the continual refinement of the integration of the ancient Chinese social order. The ancient Chinese culture of role models as a cultural pattern of Chinese civilization reveals its unique wisdom in contemporary Chinese national governance: firstly, to learn from the best, to learn from excellent people or groups; "Among the role models of various countries, all those that are in line with the trend of progress in history are the wealth of human civilization" (Zhang Yaocan, 2014, 7–8, 24), and there are useful cultural practices that can be learnt

from each other. Secondly, we should take the initiative to emulate them, and endeavour to teach by example, unite knowledge and action. Thirdly, we should aspire to be role models, but not to replace them, so as to achieve beauty and commonality!

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Overlooked Peacekeeping Strategy of the Early Eastern Han: Insights from the Monument of Mount Yanran

The Eastern Han regime (25–220 CE) was one of the most powerful states in the ancient world. At its height, it controlled territories stretching from present-day Korea and Mongolia in the north to Vietnam in the south, and reaching as far west as Central Asia. Despite its strength, the military power of the Eastern Han has often been overlooked, as the state traditionally emphasized civil bureaucracy, guided by Confucian principles. However, in 2017, a Mongolian research team discovered an ancient monument within its territory; the inscription was later confirmed to be “Proclamation Plaque at Mount Yanran”, as described in the *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Later Han). This discovery sheds light on the underappreciated military capabilities of the regime. Through the examination of General Dou Xian (?–92 CE) – the key contributor to the monument – and his influential family, this paper argues that the Eastern Han regime relied heavily on military families to safeguard its borders. This study offers a preliminary analysis, more on a conceptual level, of the zenith of Eastern Han military prowess, a topic that has historically been underemphasized.

Keywords: Eastern Han regime, Dou Xian, Dou Rong, Proclamation Plaque at Mount Yanran, military might

Eastern Han regime as a “demilitarized” Confucian State

The conventional portrayal of the Eastern Han regime often depicts it as a Confucian State, characterized by the dominance of classicism and the significant role played by Confucian learning and knowledge

in the government and society (Watanabe, 2009). In this perspective, learning the Confucian classics is seen as a crucial pathway, if not the sole means, for social and court advancement. As a result, much research on the Eastern Han regime has focused on classicists and their associated affairs, highlighting several factors that contributed to the prominence of classicism.

One such factor is the introduction of “apocryphal texts” (*Chenwei*) for interpreting the Confucian classics. When Liu Xiu (later known as Emperor Guangwu) proclaimed himself emperor, he cited an apocryphal text presented to him by his subordinates as evidence of his rightful claim to the throne. The text contained the statement, “Liu Xiu will dispatch his army and capture the man who does not know the Way; *maojin*, cultivating the good deeds, will become the Son of Heaven.” The phrase “*maojin*” is an ideographic riddle consisting of two components of the character “*Liu*” – “*mao*” (the fourth of the 12 Earthly Branches) and “*jin*” (gold or metal). The unmentioned part is “*dao*” (knife). This riddle suggested that Liu Xiu, after cultivating his good deeds, would become the Son of Heaven, and Western Han imperial family would regain the throne (Lu, 2003, 117).

Consequently, Emperor Guangwu established this apocryphal text as an authoritative interpretation of the Confucian classics, emphasizing that his decisions were based on it. He also ridiculed officials who were unaware of the apocryphal text in order to promote its learning. Simultaneously, he sought to prevent others from using similar stories to claim legitimacy from apocryphal texts. In 56 CE, the emperor announced an edited institutional version of the apocryphal text (Ban, 1964, 1223). Subsequently, the study of Confucian classics and the apocryphal texts became fashionable throughout the realm.

This emphasis on Confucian learning and the adoption of apocryphal texts as authoritative interpretations contributed to the promotion and dominance of classicism within the Eastern Han regime. Scholars and officials began to prioritize the study of Confucian classics and the newly established apocryphal texts as essential for achieving recognition and advancement within the government and society.

By recognizing these factors, researchers have sought to understand the significant role played by classicism in shaping the Eastern Han regime.

The domination of Confucianism within the Eastern Han regime was further reinforced by the fact that emperors themselves, including Emperor Guangwu and subsequent rulers like Emperor Ming, Emperor Zhang, and Emperor He, studied Confucian classics from a young age (Xu et al., 2011, 400–401). Emperor Guangwu's early education in the Imperial Academy in Chang'an indicates that even during the late Western Han period, elite individuals already favoured the study of classics. This tradition of learning Confucian classics continued with subsequent emperors of the Eastern Han regime.

The practice of studying classics from a young age by the rulers created a cultural expectation within the ruling class, encouraging others to follow suit in order to gain favour with the emperor and ministers. Many individuals sought to learn Confucian classics and apocryphal texts in an attempt to enter the government and secure promotions. Quoting classics or making reference to apocryphal texts to consolidate their opinions became a common practice for ministers to strengthen their arguments and gain influence with the ruler and other officials (Xu et al., 2011, 270–277; Yan, 2015, 366–377). As a result, the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Confucian classics became crucial for obtaining positions of power within the government.

This emphasis on Confucian classics as a prerequisite for entering the government led to the marginalization of other forms of knowledge and skills. While Confucian classics were highly valued and considered essential for decision-making within the Eastern Han regime, other areas of expertise were often overlooked or undervalued in comparison. The regime's focus on Confucianism and classicism further reinforced the dominance of this intellectual tradition and marginalized alternative perspectives and knowledge systems.

However, alternative perspectives that could contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the regime's complexity were often neglected, including the significance of military culture. Emperor Guangwu's announcement in 31 CE to abolish universal military service, which

exempted male adults between the ages of 23 and 56 from the mandatory two-year military service. Instead, *ad hoc* commandery troops were formed through the recruitment of volunteers who were rewarded with grains and money (Van de Ven, 2000, 35). This abolition of universal military service has been interpreted as a deliberate measure to undermine military affairs in the Eastern Han regime, consequently leading to a lack of emphasis on the study of military culture during this period.

In an essay by Lei Haizong in 1940, he emphasized that Emperor Guangwu's policy of abolition eradicated the military spirit of the Chinese people for many centuries to come, hindering the development of military careers. Lei referred to this policy as having transformed Chinese culture into what he termed "demilitarized" (Lei, 1940). Lei's perspective had a significant impact, as subsequent researchers paid little attention to the importance of military affairs in the first half of the Eastern Han period.

However, Mark Lewis challenged Lei's argument in a recent article, proposing that the decision to abolish universal military service was driven by cost-saving measures, prevention of potential rebellions, and increased efficiency in the chain of command, rather than an intentional undermining of the military's significance. Lewis further emphasized that the abolition actually resulted in the rise of frontier generals with military power and their troops in the following centuries. The realm heavily relied on military elites and local volunteers, both Han and pacified non-Han peoples from frontier areas, who manned the defensive line and formed expeditionary armies. Lewis shed light on the collapse of the Eastern Han regime, partially attributing it to an excessive reliance on non-Han troops without considering their tribal ties, which resulted in a lack of loyalty to the Han regime (Van de Ven, 2000, 33–75). This investigation also inspired further examination of the skills required to manage non-Han peoples as an asset or special skill to ascend the social ladder.

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Lewis primarily concentrated on the latter half of the Eastern Han period, dedicating only minimal discourse to developments in the first century CE. Consequently, the significance of military culture during the early Eastern Han era,

including the roles played by influential families with military legacies, has not received commensurate scholarly attention.

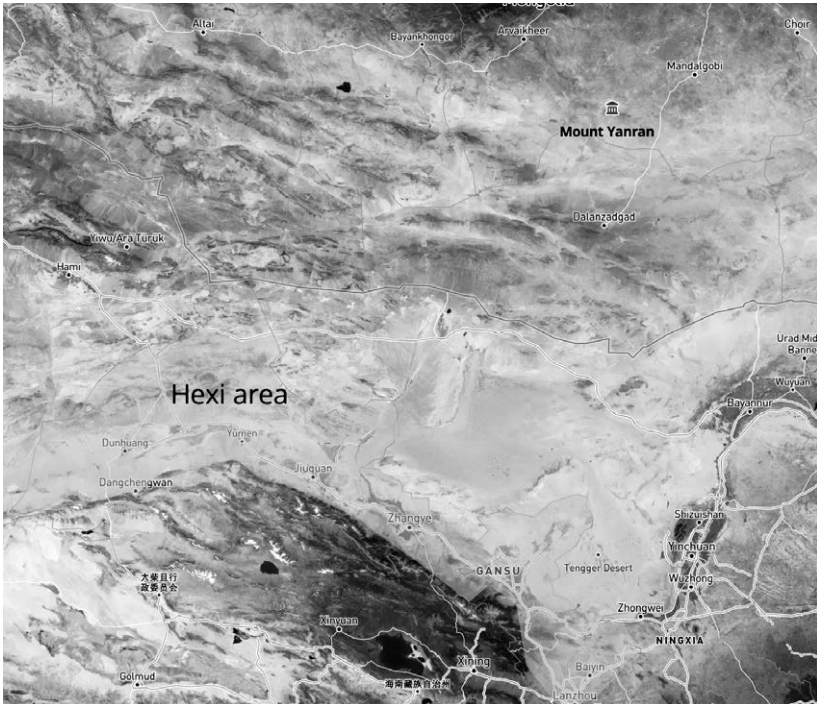
Discovery of the monument on Mount Yanran

The notion that the Eastern Han regime was demilitarized during its early stages poses challenges to understanding its military successes by the late first century CE. The scarcity of material evidence from this period, especially regarding ancient geography, has meant that much of the information about the regime's military campaigns and achievements has been derived solely from transmitted texts.

This situation changed in 2017, when a Mongolian archaeological team was dispatched to the summit of Mount Hangai following reports of a newly discovered inscription. Due to the inscription being written in ancient Chinese, the Mongolian archaeologists were unable to fully decipher its content or reconstruct the entire text. Consequently, the Mongolian government invited Chinese scholars to collaborate on the investigation. From 27 July to 1 August 2017, a joint research team comprising Chinese and Mongolian experts conducted a thorough study of the site (ONCC, 2018). After a series of analyses and comparisons with existing transmitted texts, the team confirmed that the inscription was the “Proclamation Plaque at Mount Yanran” (*Feng Yanran Shan Ming*), as recorded in the *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Later Han), dated 89 CE (Ban, 1964, 815–817).

Although the discovery initially sparked a brief surge of interest, it quickly faded from public attention due to the lack of further updates from either Mongolian or Chinese scholars. Nevertheless, this finding provides crucial material evidence that corroborates the historical account of the “Proclamation Plaque at Mount Yanran” and marks the farthest extent of the Eastern Han military expeditions.

“Proclamation Plaque at Mount Yanran,” as documented in the *Hou Hanshu*, is an inscription authored by the eminent historian Ban Gu (32–92 CE) under the directive of General Dou Xian (?–92 CE) (Ban, 1964, 814). This epigraphic evidence, engraved in 89 CE and



Map 1. Location of Mount Yanran confirms with the discovery of the stele

recently unearthed on Mount Hangai in Mongolia, provides indispensable geographical insights into the Eastern Han territory. It validates the recorded military confrontations with the Northern Xiongnu and delineates the northernmost boundary reached by the Eastern Han forces. The plaque thus serves as an invaluable primary source for appraising the military prowess of the Eastern Han regime *circa* 90 CE.

Moreover, “Proclamation Plaque at Mount Yanran” constitutes a critical historical record and tangible testimony of the Eastern Han regime’s triumph over the Northern Xiongnu in 89 CE. The monument was installed by the army led by General Dou Xian following their successful campaign against the nomadic adversaries, a customary practice

in ancient China to celebrate military achievements (Kern, 2000, 1–2). The inscription details the battle’s narrative, the tribulations endured by the troops, and the valour of the general and the emperor. It exemplifies the might and grandeur of the Eastern Han regime and its commitment to safeguarding its frontiers from external incursions, a commitment that was immortalized by the plaque’s laudation of the regime’s virtue and potency (Ban, 1964, 814–817).

The contextual framework provided by the plaque is an invaluable perspective for understanding the Eastern Han military expeditions and the pivotal leadership of General Dou Xian. However, it is essential to recognize that the narrative of the plaque may omit certain critical details that are essential for a holistic understanding of the campaign.

Story not recorded in the inscription:

Dou Xian as a convict

Solely perusing the inscription, it imparts something along these lines – the campaign was commanded by General Dou Xian, who was a uncle of the emperor. However, the story behind this is more interesting than expected.

One aspect not addressed in the plaque is the campaign’s instrumental role in exonerating Dou Xian and protecting his family from potential capital punishment. Before the campaign, Dou Xian had been placed under house arrest for his involvement in a plot against a prince of a kingdom (Olberding, 2013, 204). As the brother of the regent Empress Dowager Dou (?–97 CE) (Ban, 1964, 813–814; De Crespigny, 2017, 121), his release and subsequent leadership of a military campaign against the Northern Xiongnu were contingent upon a perceived threat to the Eastern Han border. The validity of this threat is not clearly established in the *Hou Hanshu*, which only suggests Dou Xian’s eagerness for redemption and the Southern Xiongnu’s readiness to launch an offensive against the antagonistic Northern Xiongnu. Following these events, Dou Xian was appointed as General of Chariots and Cavalry and took command of the military offensive.

Additionally, the overlooked narrative pertains to Dou Xian's lack of prior military experience. *Hou Hanshu* meticulously notes that Dou Xian and his younger brothers secured governmental roles primarily through their esteemed familial connections, notably a marriage alliance with the imperial family. Dou Xian's previous appointments were confined to the imperial palace and the capital, where, as a General of the Household, he was responsible for training military cadets in the capital.

This examination suggests that Dou Xian's military leadership was not founded on a wealth of experience but rather on the influence and connections of his familial ties, particularly those of his sister, the regent Empress Dowager Dou, as noted by scholars such as Rafe de Crespigny (De Crespigny, 2017, 121). Dou Xian's rapid ascent was further facilitated by the Dou family's considerable network within the court and the military reputation associated with their lineage.

The omission of Dou Xian's lack of military experience, his assignment based on familial connections, and the influence of his sister, the regent Empress Dowager Dou, are critical factors that should be considered when evaluating his leadership in the campaign against the Northern Xiongnu in 89 CE.

Descendant of the Dou family: A renowned military lineage

Military families, celebrated for their esteemed traditions and deep-rooted connections within the martial sphere, were pivotal in the consolidation and maintenance of power during the early stages of the Eastern Han regime. These lineages fortified their positions within the imperial court through strategic marriages and the accumulation of honours, allowing them to exert considerable influence over statecraft and policy. Dou Xian was a notable descendant of such a family; his ancestor, Dou Rong (16 BCE – 62 CE), was a warlord who controlled the western boundary of the Eastern Han regime at its formation in 25 CE, prior to his eventual submission to the regime.

The *Hou Hanshu* chronicles that Dou Rong was the scion of bureaucratic family. Unlike his contemporaries from prestigious official

families, the Dou lineage had waned by the time of his birth, with his immediate ancestors bereft of governmental roles. Compounded by the premature demise of his father, the onus fell upon Dou Rong as the eldest son to assume the role of provider and caretaker for his mother and younger siblings (Ban, 1964, 795). To seek a way to ascend the social ladder, Dou Rong answered the call of the government to suppress the uprising in around 6–8 CE (known as *Jushe* period) under the regency of Wang Mang (45 BCE – 23 CE). Dou Rong soon got promoted for his understanding performance, and he was ennobled as Lord of Martial Establishment in 7 CE (Ban, 1964, 795). This accolade not only augmented Dou Rong’s social standing but also facilitated connections with high-ranking officials, thereby solidifying his professional trajectory.

In a strategic familial alliance, Dou Rong arranged the marriage of his sister to Wang Yi (?–23 CE), the Excellency over the Masses and a kinsman to Wang Mang (Ban, 1964, 795). Following Wang Mang’s ascension and the establishment of the Xin regime in 9 CE, Dou Rong was inextricably linked to the imperial lineage. This matrimonial alliance was decisive in Dou Rong’s career. A notable post-marriage transformation was the authorization for Dou Rong and his kin to settle in the capital, Chang’an. This relocation signified the ascendance of the Dou household, elevating them to the circle of capital elites. As documented in the *Hou Hanshu*, Dou Rong managed to integrate himself with high-ranking officials and the imperial kin, and he forged connections with “local magnates and other influential entities” (Ban, 1964, 795). This expansion into the echelons of government and association with prominent figures significantly bolstered both his personal standing and that of his family, suggesting that the Dou family’s power within the realm had perceptibly increased.

However, the policy of Xin regime was not welcomed by traditional power as well as commoners, the rebellions soon raised in various parts of the regime. In 23 CE, the political landscape of China underwent a dramatic transformation with the fall of Wang Mang, who was killed during a riot in Luoyang amidst further widespread unrest. This event

precipitated the rapid decline of the Xin regime, setting the stage for the resurgence of the Han regime under Liu Xuan, who led the Green Forest (*Lulin* 綠林) troops and declared himself Emperor Gengshi of the restored Han (Ban, 1964, 796).

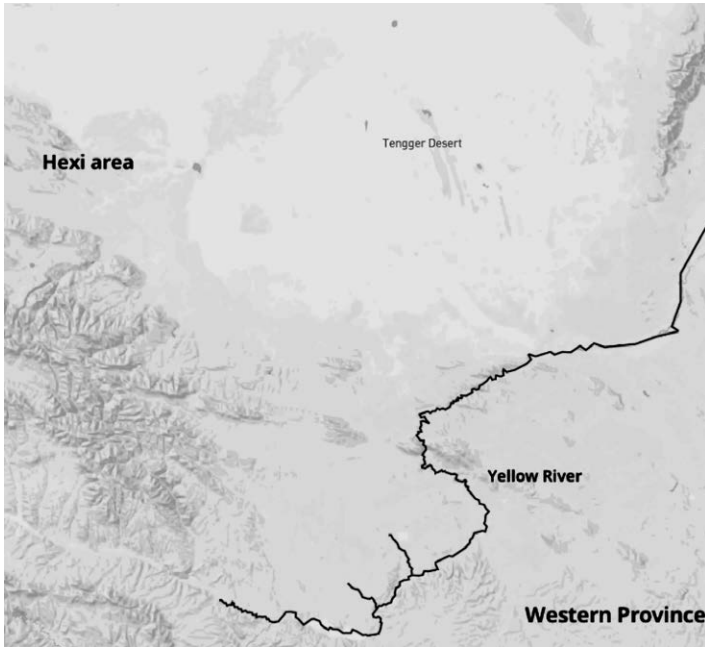
Dou Rong, who had been appointed as General of Boshui and was stationed at Xinfeng Commandery, found himself in a critical and precarious position. With the fall of Wang Mang and the subsequent defeat and execution of Wang Kuang by the uprising forces, the responsibility to defend Chang'an – the imperial capital – fell squarely on Dou Rong's shoulders.

Ultimately, Dou Rong chose to submit to the forces of Emperor Gengshi, led by Zhao Meng (fl. 1st century BCE – 1st century CE), the Grand Marshal (Ban, 1964, 796). This decision was pivotal. By agreeing to surrender and aligning his forces with Zhao Meng, Dou Rong played a crucial role in allowing the Green Forest troops to pass through Hangu Pass unchallenged, thereby avoiding a potentially costly military confrontation. His submission facilitated the rapid occupation of Chang'an by Emperor Gengshi's forces, thereby consolidating the emperor's control over the former capital of Western Han and legitimizing his claim to the throne.

In recognition of Dou Rong's capabilities and his compliance, and simultaneously to curtail his influence among the capital's elite and thereby consolidate the governance of the new regime, Zhao Meng recommended Dou Rong to Emperor Gengshi for the role of Governor of Julu Commandery (Ban, 1964, 796). This significant administrative position, overseeing the northeastern segment of the Central Plains and located far from the capital, was strategically chosen.

However, Dou Rong had a strategic interest in securing a position in Hexi area, motivated by its potential benefits for his family's security and prosperity. He initiated his proposal by seeking consensus within his family, recognizing that their relocation would be essential for his plans, as records.

Dou Rong personally persuaded his brothers by articulating the uncertainties of the current political landscape, "Whether



Map 2. Part of the Yellow River (Hexi area)

All-Under-Heaven will be in peace or at war is still unforeseeable. Hexi area is affluent and fortified, bordered by the Yellow River as a natural defence. With over 10,000 trained infantry and cavalry stationed in the Zhangye Affiliated State, we could effectively blockade all river crossings in times of crisis, ensuring our self-defence. This area is ideal for preserving our lineage” (Ban, 1964, 796).

Securing Dou Rong’s desired position required not only familial consensus but also external political backing. After gaining his family’s approval, Dou Rong sought the endorsement of Zhao Meng, whose recommendation proved critically important in Dou Rong’s eventual appointment by Emperor Gengshi as Commandant of the Zhangye Affiliated States. Zhao Meng’s support, which facilitated this appointment, underscored the strong bond of trust and mutual respect between

the two men, as well as Emperor Gengshi's reliance on Zhao Meng's judgment. Following the appointment, Dou Rong and his family expanded their influence and power in the Hexi region until they relocated to Luoyang, the capital of the Eastern Han regime, in 37 CE.

Members of the Dou family: Experts in military and frontier affairs

After Dou Rong arrived in the capital, he was no longer assigned to administrative roles in other regions. Instead, he was granted honorary titles, with his primary function being to offer counsel on frontier affairs. For example, when King Xian of Suoju sent an envoy to the capital in 41 CE seeking the appointment of a senior official, Dou Rong was the first individual consulted by the emperor (Ban, 1964, 2923).

Subsequent generations of the Dou family, including figures such as Dou Gu (?–88 CE) and Dou Lin (?–59 CE), were initially appointed through the *yin* privilege. This privilege allowed certain members of the Dou family to demonstrate their inherited knowledge of military affairs and expertise in dealing with non-Han peoples – skills that could be regarded as a form of “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1984, 13).

Dou Gu, a cousin of Dou Rong, was appointed by Emperor Ming in 56 CE to confront the Xiongnu and establish connections with the Western Regions. This decision was made in part because the Eastern Han regime had enjoyed internal peace for a considerable period (Ban, 1964, 810), and Emperor Ming sought to follow the example of Emperor Wu of the Western Han by expanding Han influence. Dou Gu's selection was based on his “thorough understanding of frontier affairs” (Ban, 1964, 810), which was undoubtedly influenced by the Dou family's long-standing presence in the Hexi region and their connections with the Western Regions, including the former Kingdom of Suoju.

A further example occurred in 58 CE, when the Luoyang government re-established the office of Protector of the Qiang, thereby strengthening Han administrative control in the region and enhancing the central court's authority in dealing with the Qiang (Ban, 1964,

2880). Dou Lin, another cousin of Dou Rong, was appointed to this position (Ban, 1964, 2880). Prior to this appointment, Dou Lin had served as an internuncio and had no prior experience in management or administration. However, his father, Dou You, had settled in the Hexi region in 23 CE alongside Dou Rong before the family moved to Luoyang. Dou Lin's appointment as Protector of the Qiang was based on his membership in the Hexi branch of the Dou family and his familiarity with the Qiang, acquired from his time living in Hexi.

This appointment underscores the consolidation of the Dou family's reputation as a key source of talent for managing relations with non-Han peoples. Similar to Dou Gu's appointment as overseer of military operations against the Xiongnu, Dou Lin's appointment reflected the Dou family's established expertise in frontier affairs and their ability to manage non-Han groups effectively.

All of these accomplishments were inherited by Dou Xian, the general who led the 89 CE military expedition that reached Mount Yanran. Some may question why this significant chapter in the history of the Eastern Han regime has been largely overlooked. My ongoing research suggests that the Dou family's involvement in the political coup of 91 CE led to their exclusion from government service for several decades. Following this event, the so-called "military family" virtually disappeared from Eastern Han history. Subsequently, the regime relied on capable individuals for specific military campaigns but deliberately limited their ability to make sustained contributions. This approach helped maintain the stability of the regime but also contributed to its increasingly demilitarized nature.

Summary

This paper seeks to demonstrate that the Eastern Han regime was once a formidable power in the ancient world, despite its long-standing depiction as a demilitarized Confucian state. The discovery of "Proclamation Plaque at Mount Yanran" provides tangible evidence of the Eastern Han's military strength. Through an examination of

General Dou Xian's family, this study reveals that the regime relied on certain military families to supply officers for military and frontier affairs.

Dou Rong, the founder of the Dou family, was a self-made military officer whose reputation and legacy benefited his descendants. Subsequent generations of the Dou family were appointed to significant roles in military and frontier administration, even when they lacked direct experience in such matters.

This paper serves as a conceptual exploration, noting that further research is necessary to deepen our understanding of the Eastern Han's military structure and its reliance on hereditary military families.

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Sparta and the Formation of Lu Xun's Revolutionary Spirit

Lu Xun's text "The Soul of Sparta" was academically influenced by the knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome that came from Japan and China, and in reality it was closely related to the international and domestic environment of that time. Through his translation and interpretation of the Spartan spirit, Lu Xun aimed to instil a sense of national pride and resilience among his compatriots. He believed that by emulating the Spartans' commitment to valour and self-sacrifice, the Chinese people could overcome their challenges and achieve national rejuvenation. The spirit of the Spartans, as portrayed by Lu Xun, serves as a metaphor for the kind of national character that he believed was necessary for China to stand strong in the face of adversity. By highlighting the importance of individual strength and collective spirit, Lu Xun was advocating for a transformation in the national character that would empower the Chinese people to fight for their rights and dignity, and to take control of their own destiny. The revolutionary spirit in "The Soul of Sparta" continue to resonate in his later writings.

Keywords: Lu Xun, "The Soul of Sparta", revolutionary spirit, national character

Introduction

Lu Xun (1881–1936), at birth named Zhou Shuren, and later renamed Zhou Zhangshou, was a renowned modern Chinese writer, thinker, and revolutionary. He is one of the founders of modern Chinese literature and is honoured as a “literary giant” and “cultural banner bearer.” Lu Xun’s works deeply reveal the various maladies of the society at the time, launching fierce criticism against feudalism and imperialism, while also expressing deep sympathy for the people and a firm belief in the future.

Lu Xun’s “The Soul of Sparta” is a work from his youth, which is not only his first published literary work but also his first work in which he attempted to transform the national character through literature and generate his own revolutionary spirit.¹ The article was published in “Zhejiang Tide”, a student magazine initiated by Lu Xun’s fellow Zhejiang compatriots. “The Soul of Sparta” aspires to inject a masculine character of fighting against the enemy into the Chinese national character. By praising the story of the Spartans who fought against the invaders with their lives and blood, it aims to inspire Chinese youth to rise up against foreign aggression, especially against the aggression of Russia against China in the early 20th century.

The debate surrounding “The Soul of Sparta” has been longstanding, questioning whether it is an original “creation” or a “translation.” This discussion also touches on the topic of “Lu Xun’s first translation” and the evolution of modern literary styles. In terms of “Creation” or “Translation”: Scholars are divided on the classification of this work. Some argue that the narrative, key themes, and character archetypes closely resemble those found in Herodotus’ “The Histories”, suggesting that “The Soul of Sparta” might be Lu Xun’s inaugural classical Chinese novel with artistic embellishments (Li, 1987; Wu, 1991; Wu, & Zhou, 2003; Gao, 2015). In 1903, Lu Xun published six translations, including

¹ In fact, regarding whether this is Lu Xun’s first work, whether it is original or translated, please refer to the discussions of later literary scholars. The author of this article tends to believe that this is Lu Xun’s first original work.

“Sorrowful Dust” and “The Soul of Sparta”. There is a divergence of opinion among scholars regarding which of these can be considered his first translation. While some contend that “Sorrowful Dust” holds that title (Cui, 2007; Chen, 2012), whereas others propose “The Soul of Sparta”. Technically, “Sorrowful Dust” is often cited as Lu Xun’s first translation, but in a broader sense, both works are sometimes seen as his inaugural translations (Jiang, 2018; Jiang, 2021; Fu, 2020).² Based on the discussions, scholars have examined the writing techniques and material sources of “The Soul of Sparta” (Fu, 2021; Li, 2022), and some of them paid attention to the influence of “Zhejiang Tide” on Lu Xun’s character (Zhou, 2022).

The aforementioned discussions have yielded fruitful results and provided a solid foundation for the development of this article. This article does not delve into the creation of “The Soul of Sparta” nor discuss its literary significance among Lu Xun’s many works. Instead, it examines the relationship between Sparta and the formation of Lu Xun’s revolutionary spirit. Specifically, it investigates how Sparta shaped Lu Xun’s revolutionary spirit, why Lu Xun chose Sparta, how the theme of Sparta influenced the expression of Lu Xun’s revolutionary spirit, and what impact it had on his subsequent works. This is a significant case that illustrates the tremendous role of cultural exchange between the East and the West during China’s revolutionary era. Moreover, this exchange is multi-dimensional, involving interactions between the West and China, the West and Japan, as well as China and Japan. Revolutions can be national in nature, but certain spiritual attributes are universal and shared.

² Li Dongmu believed that the term “Sparta” referred not only to an isolated phenomenon in Lu Xun’s work “The Soul of Sparta”, but also served as a link in the construction of modern discourse on “national character”. From this perspective, “The Soul of Sparta” is no longer merely an “early work” in “Lu Xun Research”, but represents a continuum of spiritual history from Liang Qichao to Lu Xun. Li Dongmu, Liang Qichao and Zhou Shuren in the Construction of Sparta Discourse: From “Sparta” to “The Soul of Sparta”. *Journal of Social Sciences, Jilin University*, 4, 2022.

Ancient Western learning and the current state of the East: The motivation behind Lu Xun's creation of "The Soul of Sparta"

While studying in Japan, Lu Xun's engagement with Western classical studies primarily occurred through two avenues: the Japanese conduit and the Chinese conduit. Before Lu Xun wrote "The Soul of Sparta", he had access to a variety of historical materials, including Herodotus' "Histories" and Plutarch's accounts of the Battle of Thermopylae. There were books such as "History of Greece and Rome" by Miyagawa Tetsujirō published in 1890 by Bunkodo, and "History of the Greek-Persian Wars" by Shibue Tomo published in 1896 (Fu, 2021, 24–26). The story of the Battle of Thermopylae was widely circulated in Japan during the Meiji period, which was related to the society's admiration for military heroism at the time. In 1902, Tokyo Kyokudo Hall published "The Bushido of Sparta", which not only reflected the popularity of the Spartan story in Japan but also had a certain impact on the formation of Japanese militarism (for more detailed information about Sparta in Meiji Japan, see Li, 2022, 183–185). For example, Japanese women sending their troops to the battlefield with the wish for them to "die in battle" exemplified a form of worship for military sacrifice and a beautification of war.

However, scholars' attempts to identify the direct Japanese sources of "The Soul of Sparta" are futile.³ Considering that Lu Xun had only been studying Japanese for a little over a year and completed this work in a very short time,⁴ it suggests that "The Soul of Sparta" is likely a result of his compilation and creative writing based on existing materials.

³ Kitaoka Masako and others have conducted detailed research on Lu Xun's time at the Hongwen Academy but have not found a specific source for this novel. Tamotsu Kunimoto, in his research, also mentioned that despite extensive searches, the original draft of "The Soul of Sparta" has not been found.

⁴ Lu Xun himself said: "At that time, I was just beginning to learn Japanese, and I didn't fully understand grammar, yet I was eager to read. I didn't quite understand the books, yet I was eager to translate" (Lu, 2005, 4).

One of the reasons supporting this viewpoint is that, Lu Xun's novel includes content not found in the known documents of both Chinese and Japanese sources, such as the scene where a warrior who returned home due to eye disease is faced with his wife's suicide. Therefore, until the Japanese materials Lu Xun relied on are discovered, it is reasonable to consider "The Soul of Sparta" as an original work with a nature of compilation. Meanwhile, This work reflects Lu Xun's profound understanding and re-creation of historical materials, as well as his intention to inspire the national spirit through literary works.

Beyond resources from Japan, Lu Xun also gained knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome through Chinese academia which was itself influenced by Japan greatly at that time. Following the failure of the 1898 Reform Movement, the conduit for the influx of new knowledge shifted from Western sources to Japan, with Chinese scholars at the helm of periodicals that facilitated this transmission. In Chinese, there was "History of All Nations" compiled in classical Chinese by Okamoto Kankei in 1878, which was later reprinted by Shanghai Wenyuanshang, with the sixth volume dedicated to the history of Greece. Liang Qichao, emulating his Japanese counterparts, established a comparative framework of Chinese and Western civilizations, using ancient Greece as a paradigm for Western classical governance and scholarship. A new cohort of knowledge seekers emerged, with Japanese-studying students at the forefront as translators. They traced the roots of modern legal and political theories to ancient Greece, sparking debates between Republicanism and Authoritarianism. Chinese scholars receptive to these new ideas also engaged in dialogue, employing Western academic frameworks to categorize and integrate Chinese and Western knowledge. However, they discovered that the Western subjects could not bypass the legacy of Greek tradition.⁵ Greek knowledge was assimilated

⁵ For instance, prior to the Wuxu Reform, disciples of Kang Youwei joined forces with Sun Yat-sen in Japan to establish the Datong School, which aimed to educate the offspring of Chinese expatriates. Initially established in Yokohama, the school later expanded to Tokyo with the founding of a higher institution, the Datong Advanced School. Compared to the Shiwu School, the Datong School

into the common intellectual repertoire and adeptly applied by the new learning groups to navigate the precarious conditions of the late Qing Dynasty. This application revealed a complex interplay between political and academic discourse, presenting a multifaceted context within the entanglement of power and scholarship.⁶

Lu Xun's "The Soul of Sparta" selectively acquired the content from these Chinese sources in terms of historical facts and translations. For example, the translation of Xerxes, the son of Darius, as Ze Ershi comes from "History of All Nations", and the depiction of "clothing the first peak" is from "History of Greece and Rome". He also drew heavily from "A Brief History of Sparta", including the portrayal of Spartan women, which was almost unchanged in his novel.⁷

in Japan, with fewer restrictions, should have been able to better embody the educational vision of Kang Youwei's followers. According to the "Proposed Syllabus for Tokyo Datong Advanced School" as documented in the "Qingyi Bao", the curriculum encompassed a range of subjects including "World Civilization History I", "History of Human Progress II", "Political Science III", "Western Academic Cases IV", "Logic V", "Japanese Language and Script VI", "Lectures from Japanese Schools and Comparative Philosophy VII", and "Recent Domestic and International Affairs and Students' Memos VIII". Ancient Greek figures such as Plato and Aristotle were most likely covered in the section dedicated to "Western Academic Cases".

⁶ Yan Fu championed the cause of logic, while Wang Guowei and Cai Yuanpei advocated for aesthetics, aiming to address the shortcomings within traditional Chinese culture and education. Radical factions, drawing inspiration from Sparta, promoted martial education and military nationalism, challenging the entrenched cultural and military paradigms, as well as the conservative inclinations. Greek knowledge was not just assimilated into the educational objectives of the Qing dynasty; it also ignited the flames of revolutionary fervour. Concurrently, scholars diligently compiled monographs on Greek history, fostering the specialization of Greek studies. The Chinese Quintessence School looked to ancient Greek philosophy as a model for reviving the pre-Qin schools of thought. Meanwhile, figures such as Zhang Taiyan, Jiang Zhiyou, and Wang Guowei engaged in a deeper reassessment of both Chinese and Western philosophical traditions.

⁷ Despite accusations that "The Soul of Sparta" plagiarized "A Brief History of Sparta", a comparison of the two texts reveals significant differences. "A Brief History of Sparta" is an academic work, while "The Soul of Sparta" is closer to a literary piece. See Li, 2022, 178.

In the initial period of encountering Meiji Japan, the Chinese perspective limited him, but it also allowed him to shine and display his talents. It is undeniable that the intellectual climate and knowledge experience of Meiji Japan played an extremely important and irreplaceable role in Lu Xun's growth from an obscure student to a renowned novelist. However, it is equally important to emphasize that the students who crossed to Japan to study came with Chinese issues and the aspiration to solve them, carrying a strong sense of Chinese consciousness and spirit (Fu, 2021, 23). Japan's acceptance and promotion of the Spartan story contrast sharply with Lu Xun's attitude. Lu Xun's interest in the Spartan story was more out of admiration for the powerful spirit of ancient civilizations and the hope to inspire and defend his homeland, which was then facing the danger of foreign aggression and division. He showed great interest in Liang Qichao's revised translation of Byron's "The Lament of Greece in A Record of the Future of New China" in 1902 and bought Byron's poetry when studying at the Hongwen Academy. A few years later, Lu Xun strongly opposed the blind worship of Western aggression and culture, criticizing the "praise for the white man's heart of plunder" in "On the Bias of Culture and Against the Evil Voice". Lu Xun's attitude reflects his profound understanding and critical thinking of cultural and historical stories, as well as his emphasis on Chinese traditional culture and national spirit. He tried to inspire national pride and the determination to resist foreign aggression by drawing upon and reconstructing historical narratives.

In this era, Lu Xun's essays were often analysed and debated within the context of vast historical and cultural frameworks, showcasing his exceptional global perspective and his distinctively sharp insight. Moreover, Lu Xun himself stood at a pivotal historical moment at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries. The incursion of China by the Eight-Nation Alliance, the Russo-Japanese War, and the 1905 Russian Revolution – all occurred within the first ten years of the new century, with Northeast Asia teetering on the edge of war and revolution. One can only speculate about the thoughts and concerns that weighed on the young Lu Xun as he pursued his studies in Japan amidst

such a backdrop. It is clear that even in his early writings, Lu Xun had delved into the annals of human progress, the chronicles of Western natural sciences, and the narratives of European Romantic literature and art. His aim was to scrutinize the twilight of the 19th century and the dawn of the 20th century's civilization from a broad, global historical standpoint.

The revolutionary spirit in “The Soul of Sparta”

“The Soul of Sparta” marked the beginning of Lu Xun's attempt to instil revolutionary spirit and to reform the national character through fiction.

The main content of “The Soul of Sparta” is derived from the Battle of Thermopylae during the Greco-Persian Wars, but Lu Xun has adapted this story with distinctive characteristics.⁸ If compared with Herodotus' account, this point will become very clear. The novel first depicts the Battle of Thermopylae shortly after the dawn of civilization illuminated the Western world. When millions of the Persian army tried to cross the pass of Thermopylae to invade Greece, three hundred Spartan warriors bravely resisted the Persian forces, fighting to the death and sacrificing themselves for their country. Then, the narrative shifts to focus on one of the three hundred warriors who, due to an eye condition, was forced to leave the battlefield and return home to reunite with his wife. However, his wife, ashamed that he did not perish in battle, chose to commit suicide in front of him. Being pregnant, she would not bear a child who would be a coward like her husband. After his wife's death, the husband, filled with remorse but eventually finding courage, died the next year on the battlefield of the Battle of Plataea, where the Persian army was decisively defeated. When the victorious Spartans came to clear the battlefield and found his body, the witnesses were recounting the story of the wife who had made him brave. The soul

⁸ According to Lu Xun himself, the difficult and obscure style of writing in “The Soul of Sparta” was influenced by Yan Fu.

of Spartan women, who were willing to sacrifice themselves for their country, put any coward to shame, leaving them no place to stand.

Through such a depiction, Lu Xun crafted an impressive image of the “national hero” Spartans, praising the national spirit of the pioneers and its inspiration to the followers (Fu, 2020, 34). The Spartans, who valiantly fought to the end against the Persian forces in the Greco-Persian Wars, embody the quintessential nationalistic fervour. Lu Xun viewed the Spartan ethos of “advancing into combat and perishing if not triumphant” as the wellspring of their spirit, with “perishing if not triumphant” at its very heart. Through his narrative, Lu Xun aspired to ignite a spirit of valour among his compatriots: for the Chinese nation to pursue autonomy and liberty, they must confront mortality with the same determination as the Spartans who battled the Persian invaders. Consequently, the novel’s endorsement of Spartan martial valour was intended to instil a robust and indomitable character into the Chinese national psyche, one willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for the nation.

Lu Xun also employed the tale of the Spartans to articulate his aspiration for the Chinese populace to embrace a spirit of courage and selflessness, which he deemed vital for the nation’s endurance and flourishing amidst external threats and internal decay. From the perspective of the inter-generational transmission among the Spartans, He cited the words of a Spartan warrior, “I died in battle following the national law, and I tell my Spartan compatriots,” to illustrate that the spirit of “perishing if not triumphant” would undoubtedly be passed down forever. He used the heroic deeds of the Spartans resisting the invasion of the powerful Persians to express his innermost feelings: a nation should fight to the end against its enemies, and dying to save the country and its people is a supreme glory. “What is the honour like! What is the glory like!” Lu Xun stated that the will of the Spartan warriors to fight to the death against the enemy comes from the mothers who send their sons to the battlefield and the wives who send their husbands to the battlefield.

As individuals, the warriors are integrated into the national community composed of family and friends. Subsequent generations would be inspired by the fearless spirit of those who died for their country and

would not fear death. Their heroic deeds would be repeatedly praised and sung by the people, ensuring that the national spirit would be passed down through the continuous retelling of heroic deeds, enduring for eternity. Through this article, Lu Xun conveyed his deep reflection on national character and his call for a spirit of patriotism and self-sacrifice, which he believed to be crucial for the revitalization of the Chinese nation (Gao, 2015, 6).

To better express revolutionary themes, Lu Xun did not hesitate to employ various literary techniques, creating a story full of drama and emotional tension. For instance, although Herodotus' "Histories" and Plutarch's accounts do mention a Spartan warrior who returned to Sparta due to an eye injury and later died in the Battle of Plataea, Lu Xun's novel took this basis and dares to imagine and create. In the novel, the protagonist Aristodemus did not die in the Battle of Thermopylae but returned home due to an eye injury. His wife, mistaking him for a deserter, felt ashamed and ultimately chose suicide. This plot is a fiction of Lu Xun, not a historical record. Through such narration, Lu Xun not only enhances the dramatic nature of the story but also deepens the portrayal of the characters' inner world, allowing readers to more profoundly feel the extreme emphasis on courage and honour in Spartan culture. Additionally, Lu Xun fabricates a love triangle story, adding complexity and appeal to the plot. Aristodemus' wife was pursued by Cleitus during her husband's absence. The character of Cleitus plays a key role in driving the plot of the novel, and his actions and choices add more conflict and twists to the story (Li, 2021, 188–198).

These narrative devices not only heighten the dramatic tension of the story but also mirror Lu Xun's deep reflections on honour, bravery, and self-sacrifice. Through these invented tales, Lu Xun articulates the reverence for warriors and disdain for cowards that are central to Spartan ethos, as well as the pivotal role of female figures in propelling the actions of their male counterparts. The literary reimagining of historical events serves to underscore that "The Soul of Sparta" is a piece of literature rather than a straightforward historical account. Such narrative methods are prevalent in literary works as they amplify the themes and

emotional resonance. Lu Xun's inventive approach, reallocating the actions of one individual to another, is a quintessential literary device. It showcases the author's selective engagement with and creative reshaping of historical facts. This reshaping is not aimed at deceiving the reader but at more effectively communicating the author's ideas, emotions, and artistic ambitions. By delving into the textual analysis and argumentation of "The Soul of Sparta", we can regard it as a literary creation by Lu Xun that draws upon historical materials (Fu, 2020, 31). This also highlights Lu Xun's masterful craftsmanship and unique perceptiveness in the realm of literary creation. Further research and findings on Japanese sources would undoubtedly enrich our understanding of this work by Lu Xun, offering additional dimensions and depth.

Besides, these literary techniques made the content more accessible to Chinese readers, thereby attracting a wider audience and exposing more people to the spirit of revolution. To some extent, these techniques helped Lu Xun to "Sinicize" this fictional Spartan story, making it more in line with the aesthetic habits and cultural background of Chinese readers. These fictional characters and plots, although not found in historical records, add unique artistic charm and profound cultural connotations to Lu Xun's novel. The story of Aristodemus indeed contains many fictional elements that enhance the literary effect of the story but deviate from historical records. According to historical sources, Aristodemus, due to an eye condition, did not participate in the Battle of Thermopylae, but he did die heroically in the subsequent Battle of Plataea. However, Lu Xun has profoundly shaped this historical character in the novel, adding fictional plots and dialogues to reveal the character's inner world and social background.

Fundamentally, Lu Xun's revolutionary spirit finds precise articulation in "The Soul of Sparta". Through the translation and reinterpretation of this work, Lu Xun emphasizes the spirit and qualities of masculinity, loyalty, and bravery. The crux of "The Soul of Sparta" lies in the notion that the strength or weakness of a nation is determined by the spirit and soul of the individuals within that nation, as well as their collective ethos. The robustness and resilience of individual spirits and

the collective courage and willingness to sacrifice are what constitute an ideal national character (Liu, 2020, 63). In other words, Lu Xun's motive for creating "The Soul of Sparta" was to inspire and transform the national character of China by drawing upon the collective spirit of the Spartans, who faced similar destinies and circumstances as the Chinese people in history. The key to transforming the national character lies in reshaping and disciplining the soul and spirit of individuals within the nation. Only when every person within the nation possesses a strong, powerful spirit that is adept at struggle and willing to sacrifice, can the country and the nation be full of hope, and their national character and citizenry be impeccable and invulnerable. Here, the historical facts themselves are not as important; rather, the literary rhetoric intensifies the author's expressive intent.

Influence and its continuation

Lu Xun's revolutionary spirit is not only reflected in "The Soul of Sparta", but it is also continued in many of his subsequent works. The revolutionary spirit and national temperament established in "The Soul of Sparta" continue to resonate in his later writings.

Before writing "The Soul of Sparta", Lu Xun had engraved three seals: "Literature has deceived me," "A Scholar in Military Uniform," and "A Sword-Wielding Scholar," expressing his own martial spirit. However, it was in the preface to "The Soul of Sparta" that he first called on the youth with a martial and masculine spirit:

The Spartan soldiers fought to the death, and the entire army was annihilated. The military atmosphere was bleak, and the spirits of the brave roared during the day. After the Battle of Plataea, the great enmity was avenged, and even now, when reading history, one still feels a breath of life. I now pick out its anecdotes to leave to our youth. Alas! Are there men in the world who are unwilling to be inferior to women? There must be those who will throw down their pens and rise up.

After "The Soul of Sparta" and during his study in Japan in the following years, Lu Xun penned five articles that subtly explored

his inquiries into national and citizen character issues, marking the nascent stage of his critique of national character (Chen, Lin, Fei and Qu, 2020). These articles include “The History of Mankind” (1907), “On the History of Science” (1907), “On the Disadvantages of Following One Cultural Trend” (1907), and “On the Power of Mara Poetry” (1907).

These works reveal the continuation of the revolutionary spirit that Lu Xun engendered in “The Soul of Sparta”, which is evident from his admiration for Byron and Nietzsche. In “The History of Mankind”, Lu Xun directly traced the grand history of human origins from the perspectives of biology and evolutionary thought;⁹ “On the History of Science” demonstrated Lu Xun’s comprehensive understanding of the development of Western natural sciences;¹⁰ in “On the Disadvantages of Following One Cultural Trend”, Lu Xun keenly analysed the difficulties and drawbacks that emerged in the historical progress of capitalism by the late 19th century; finally, in “On the Power of Mara Poetry”, Lu Xun retraced the development of European Romantic literature, and on this basis, he passionately called for spiritual warriors, the Maro poets, to “use their pens as knives” to save the weak and impoverished China (Liu, 2020, 62). Lu Xun’s promotion of figures like Byron and Nietzsche,

⁹ This article can be viewed as an essay that scrutinizes the concept of national character. Within its pages, Lu Xun meticulously examines the various theories of human phylogeny and their historical development, presenting a wealth of empirical evidence and compelling examples to illustrate how scientists have interpreted the evolution of the human species in modern times. This discourse underscores the shared origins of humanity and the ongoing transformation of our species, effectively challenging the inherent notion of innate racial inequality embedded within the concept of national character.

¹⁰ Even as Lu Xun embraced the enlightening tenets of European thought, he maintained a critical perspective on the bounties of material civilization. He approached modernity with a nuanced understanding, recognizing both its potential and its pitfalls. This balanced view of modernity’s role in societal evolution set the stage for Lu Xun’s critical reflections on modernization, which in turn informed his burgeoning “anti-modern” philosophy. Lu Xun’s thought was thus characterized by a dialectical engagement with the complexities of progress, ensuring that his legacy remains a rich source of contemplation on the interplay between tradition and modernity.

who embody a “relentless struggle against the enemy” spirit and a strong will in his works such as “On the Power of Mara Poetry” and “On the Disadvantages of Following One Cultural Trend”, is entirely consistent with his promotion of the martial spirit in “The Soul of Sparta”. In “On the Power of Mara Poetry”, Lu Xun calls for a Byronic “spiritual warrior” with “strength like a huge wave”: “Like a raging torrent and a fierce wind, sweeping away all false decorations and bad habits, looking back and forth, not knowing what was there before; the spirit is vigorous and uncontrollable, fighting to the death, and must save his own spirit; if he cannot defeat the enemy, the fight will not stop.” In “On the Disadvantages of Following One Cultural Trend”, Lu Xun, while introducing the modern Western philosophical trend that is “filled with the spirit of reactionary destruction,” particularly admires Nietzsche, stating, “What Nietzsche yearns for is a will that is unparalleled, a superman almost divine.” It is clear that the influence of Schopenhauer’s will-to-life philosophy on Nietzsche and the strong will displayed by Byron in his poems such as “Manfred” is one factor which cultivated the spirit of the poet, but we couldn’t ignore prominent position of the Spartan spirit in Byron and Nietzsche’s philosophical lineage as well.

From the continuity of these contemporary works, it can be seen that after the formation of Lu Xun’s revolutionary spirit, it exhibited an incredibly steadfast hue. So, Lu Xun’s “The Soul of Sparta” transcended the realm of literature, serving as a profound political and cultural manifesto. It represented a continuation of his patriotic sentiments, urging the Chinese populace to embrace a spirit of defiance and tenacity against external threats. By portraying the Spartans as embodiments of bravery and selflessness, Lu Xun subtly encouraged his countrymen to introspect on their national identity and to strive for a comparable degree of dedication and bravery. His cultural acumen was evident in his selective assimilation of the Spartan ethos, Byron’s poetic vigour, and Nietzsche’s philosophy of will, tailoring these to China’s specific needs to craft a novel literary tradition. Lu Xun perceived in the Spartan ethos, as well as in Byron’s and Nietzsche’s works, a reservoir of strength and inspiration that could be harnessed to

transform and bolster the Chinese national character. He was convinced that by integrating these influences, China could cultivate a literature that would be not only potent and motivational but also instrumental in propelling societal and cultural advancement.

In the era of the Fourth of May Movement, a time of great upheaval, Lu Xun's revolutionary spirit took on new forms that were mirrored in his literary output. He was dedicated to deconstructing the status quo and critiquing the national character, while drawing upon the spiritual wealth he had accumulated during his studies in Japan to envision a constructive path forward. As he stated in the preface to "Call to Arms", the novels of the Fourth of May era were born from the aspirations he harboured during his time overseas. Lu Xun's unwavering advocacy of masculinity, loyalty, and bravery was evident, and he was equally vocal in his condemnation of the literary temperament that stood in opposition to these values. Through numerous essays and stories, he decried the softness, ambiguity, and moderation that he perceived in the Chinese national character, championing instead a robust and virile spirit and the "beauty of strength," aiming to instil a martial vigour into the Chinese national psyche, in line with the message of "The Soul of Sparta". In his prose poems "Such a Warrior" and "In the Faint Traces of Blood", he evokes the figures of Byron, Nietzsche, and Spartan warriors, embodying the image of the relentless and defiant warrior who has seen through the deceptions of fate. "Such a warrior", regardless of the soft overcoming the hard through trickery, "nods in the same way," and no matter what noble titles are bestowed, "he raises the spear!" Even "In such a situation, where no one hears the battle cry: peace. Peace... But he raises the spear!" Changing customs is a battle too, and thus, in the seemingly tranquil daily life and literary endeavours, the "spear" is indispensable.

In his later period, similarly to his earlier praise of the Spartan warriors, Lu Xun created in his novels the archetypes of the Chinese nation that embody the spirit of unyielding self-improvement: Yu the Great and Mozi, as depicted in "The Flood" and "Against Aggression". Lu Xun wrote "Against Aggression" in August 1934 and "The Flood" in November 1935, using the form of fiction to counter the notion that

“the Chinese have lost their confidence,” which he considered a form of nihilism regarding the Chinese nation. In September 1934, between the creation of the two stories, he wrote an essay criticizing this form of nihilism:

Since ancient times, we have had people who work diligently, people who work hard with all their might, people who plead for the people, and people who sacrifice themselves for the law [...] Even the so-called “official history” that serves as a genealogy for emperors, generals, and ministers cannot always conceal their brilliance. These are the backbone of China.

The overall structure of “New Tales of the World” shows that Yu the Great and Mozi are such figures representing the backbone of China. Just as there is a close spiritual connection between Nietzsche, Byron, and “The Soul of Sparta”, there is also a close spiritual connection between Mozi and Yu the Great (Gao, 2015, 6–7).

Lu Xun’s commitment to cultural self-betterment and his defiance against blind xenophobia and self-abasement have profoundly shaped Chinese culture. His literary legacy is marked by a celebration of strength and masculinity, courage and loyalty, evident from “The Soul of Sparta” to “The Flood” and “Against Aggression”. His reverence for an unyielding masculine ethos and critique of the oblique and gentle feminine spirit are emblematic of his cultural identity. It is fair to say that there is a spiritual continuum in Lu Xun’s work, from praising the Spartan spirit to becoming the pillar of the nation’s soul, which constitutes a vital cultural legacy he bequeathed to posterity. His writings continue to inspire a spirit of self-reliance and critical thought, urging individuals to assume responsibility for their personal growth and societal advancement, while embracing the world and its myriad influences.

Conclusion

The publication of “The Soul of Sparta” in “Zhejiang Tide” was a significant moment that highlighted Lu Xun’s role as a cultural critic

and a nationalist thinker whose revolutionary spirit includes keywords like strength, masculinity, courage and loyalty. It was a clear indication of his desire to use literature as a means to inspire national consciousness and to provoke thought on the nature of Chinese identity in a time of crisis. Through this, Lu Xun was not only offering a critique of the status quo but also providing a vision for a stronger, more assertive Chinese national character.

During his early studies abroad, Lu Xun was undoubtedly a staunch nationalist. However, his focus on rethinking and discussing the transformation of the national character was unique. He did not advocate for the use of force and violence to conclusively resolve China's issues. In his view, such approaches were not beneficial for the robustness of the nation-state or for the discipline of the national character. "The Soul of Sparta" tells us that even when engaging in resistance and undertaking the systematic project of transforming the national and ethnic character, the primary focus should be on the spirit of the nation, that is, the "soul" of the nation, and the spirit of individual struggle, combat, and sacrifice. In short, the ideal model of Chinese national character is akin to that of the Spartan warriors.

Unlike other revolutionaries who were primarily driven by political change, Lu Xun's distinctiveness stemmed from his deep-seated commitment to the intrinsic nature of humankind and their spiritual well-being. His philosophy, deeply rooted in the human experience, aimed at a transformation that was more profound than mere political upheaval – it was a revolution of the psyche and the ethos. This approach was distinctly Lu Xun's own, a method of delving into the national psyche that was unparalleled. For Lu Xun, the path to national rejuvenation began with a personal one, advocating for a shift in the very core of one's being as the precursor to a collective national metamorphosis. He believed that by cultivating a robust sense of identity and spirit within each citizen, the bedrock for a nation's vigour and advancement would be laid. Thus, Lu Xun's vision was not just about external reforms but about a profound internal evolution that would, in turn, redefine the national character and drive the nation forward.

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Capital Issue and Socialist Market Economy in the New Era: An Analysis From the Perspective of Cultural Symbiosis of Marxism and Fine Traditional Chinese Culture

Guiding and regulating capital scientifically in the process of Chinese modernization and ensuring that capital serves the goals of Chinese modernization is an important issue in contemporary China. The solution to this issue should be drawn from two key intellectual resources. The first is Marxist political economy, which centres upon the analysis of the capital issue. Marx's analysis of capital, particularly in Volume I of *Das Kapital*, reveals the essence of capital through social relations and replaces empirical positivism with the force of abstraction, thereby analysing the characteristics and operation laws of capital in the production process of capitalist society. The second resource is Chinese fine traditional culture, which reflects political wisdom, governance strategies, and value orientations, including the ideas of "Shan" (善, felicity) and "Yi" (义, appropriateness), "Tian Xia Wei Gong" (天下为公, The World Belongs to All) and so on. Marxism and Chinese traditional culture share points of convergence. Together, these two intellectual resources provide scientific insights and critical guidance for understanding the capital issue in the socialist market economy of contemporary China, harnessing better the positive role of capital as a factor of production while mitigating its negative effects.

Keywords: the issue of capital, the healthy development of capital, cultural symbiosis, fine Chinese traditional culture, Volume 1 of *Das Kapital*

As China enters a new era, the issue of capital has garnered increasing attention in the socialist market economy. Volume I of *Das Kapital*, as the culmination of Marx's thought, delves deeply into the operational

mechanisms of capital in capitalist production and provides a theoretical framework for understanding the capital issue under the conditions of socialism in China. However, as capital spreads into the realm of social and cultural life, its impact on society and culture has progressively expanded (Zhaozi, 2024, 162). In some cases, discussions on the issue of capital have transcended the economic perspective and require an interpretation that integrates both economic and cultural studies. Therefore, the issue of capital in the process of Chinese modernization is not only an economic problem but also a cultural one. This means that in the contemporary context of China, the question of “how to facilitate a meaningful dialogue and integration between the fundamental principles of Marxism and traditional Chinese culture, so that capital can be scientifically guided and regulated under socialist conditions to serve the goals of Chinese modernization” is an urgent issue awaiting resolution. Accordingly, this paper will first examine the profound and precise analysis of the capital issue in Volume I of *Das Kapital* from the perspective of Marxist political economy, elucidating the characteristics and operation laws of capital in capitalist society. Subsequently, from the perspective of cultural dialogue, it explores the basis of symbiosis between Marxism and traditional Chinese culture, and explains the revelation of capital operation under the conditions of socialist market economy in the context of this cultural symbiosis.

Methodology of researching the issue of capital

Marx transcended the classical political economy, primarily through his approach and methodology in studying the capital issue. The relation between capital and labour serves as the central axis and guiding thread for understanding the issue of capital (Zhang, 2019, 40). By comparing the research methods of classical political economy and Marx's on the study of capital and labour, it can be seen that Marx critically inherited the ideas of classical political economy in terms of the perspective of the problem and research methodology, and thus was able to develop a profound analysis and research on capital issue.

Exploring the essence of capital through a perspective of social relations

From the late 14th century to the mid-18th century, the development of modern handicraft-based capitalist production drove the formation and evolution of relations between capital and labour. Under the impetus of various factors including the opening of the New Voyages, the rise of absolute monarchies, the growth of commerce and handicrafts, and the continual expansion of colonialism, mercantilism peaked in the 15th and 16th centuries. Simultaneously, the establishment of labour relationship primarily relied on state-enforced legal measures. In the 17th century, political philosophers represented by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed theories of private property and ownership relation, which gradually brought the ideas of labour entitlement and property privatization into public view. In the 18th century, the concept of capital and the recognition of the value of labour were systematically expressed for the first time in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). David Ricardo further Smith's theories in *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817), introducing labour theory of value (LTV). Indeed, the classical political economy also focused on the research on the capital issue and attempted to reveal the relation between capital and labour. Classical political economists abstracted a series of concepts from reality, including division of labour, money, and value, making economic research clearer. However, their observations and analysis of "capital" "profit" and "rent" were consistently limited to regarding them as mere "things", viewing the subjects of study solely as economic elements. How could they accurately unveil the underlying laws? Obviously, this research perspective ultimately led to a confusion of phenomena with their essence.

Admittedly, Smith's view of labour as the fundamental principle of private property suggests a degree of recognition of the social relations reflected by capital. However, Smith's intuitive approach to the issue led him to merely conflate the amount of labour expended in producing commodities with the value of labour determining the value of commodities,

thus attempting to prove that “equal quantities of labour always have the same value” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 57). Similarly, Smith viewed labour as “the mere sacrifice of rest, freedom, and happiness” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 56), but failed to see labour as an indispensable life activity for humans. It is evident that Smith only saw labour with the attributes of a “thing”, i.e., the wage labour as elements of the economic process. However, he did not perceive the labourers themselves or the socioeconomic relations inherent in wage labour. Hence, this is a case of a theory that observation of things, not of man. Furthermore, Smith regarded capital as synonymous with the material prerequisites of production, a typical representation of classical political economists equating “capital” with “things”. He believed that all inputs into material production constitute capital, and there is a positive correlation between the input of stock and the quantity of industry productions (Smith, 1981, 277). Smith’s theoretical perspective and fundamental views led to an implicit conclusion that wage labour and capital share a natural, eternal, and absolute relationship. In summary, the classical political economy regarded the relation between capital and labour as a purely quantitative relation of “things”. However, this perspective merely perceived the material appearance of society, failing to grasp its essence. Hence, this doctrine inevitably suffered from the most strange and contradictory dilemma.

Where Marx transcends previous political economy lies in his recognition of the socioeconomic relations inherent within the material appearances of society. Marx identified the human factors in the relations between capital and labour. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx observed labour as “life activity”, noting that it is not merely a superficial act of sacrificing personal enjoyment but rather “a means to satisfy the need to maintain physical existence” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 276). He also noted that labourers had become “a living capital, and therefore an indigent capital” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 283). This implies that as soon as labourers cease from working, they forfeit their interest and livelihood. Therefore, it is said that “the worker produces capital, capital produces him”, and “the worker exists as a worker only when he exists for himself as capital” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 283).

In this sense, Marx recognized explicitly that both the labourers within the relation between capital and labour and the labourers excluded from it were subject to capital.

Also, Marx introduced social relations containing the human factors into the discussion of capital, emphasizing that capital is fundamentally a kind of social relation. In Volume I of *Das Kapital*, Marx acknowledged the contribution of E. G. Wakefield, who discovered that “capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons, established by the instrumentality of things” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 753). In fact, as Marx stated in *Wage Labour and Capital* (1847), “A Negro is a Negro. He only becomes a *slave* in certain relations. A cotton-spinning jenny is a machine for spinning cotton. It becomes *capital* only in certain relations [...] *Capital*, also, is a social relation of production. It is a *bourgeois production relation*, a production relation of bourgeois society” (Marx, & Engels, 1977, 211–212). Negroes and spinning machines have in themselves the attributes of persons and things; they are not inherently capital, and become capital only when the labour force of the Negroes or the operation of the spinning machine is cashed out as an equivalent into a certain quantity of commodities, do they become capital. By a relation of production belonging to a certain historical social formation, which is concretely manifested in capitalist society in the form of domination over labour, Marx transcended the intuitive thinking of classical political economists. Thus, he stripped away the false appearance of capital, revealing its true essence, and found the correct approach to the research on capital.

Substituting empiricism with the force of abstraction

The ultimate aim of *Das Kapital* is “to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 10). For this purpose, Marx starts from the appearances of division of labour, labour, and value in the capitalist society, and based on ample materials, grasps the inherent regulations of these appearances, i.e., the intrinsic connections between the characteristics and forms of operation of capital. This

is another key aspect where Marx transcended the previous political economy – substituting empiricism with **the force of abstraction**.

In Marx's own words, "In the analysis of economic forms, moreover, neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 8). The force of abstraction is the method by which humans use abstract thinking to strip away external, incidental, non-essential connections from the complex phenomena, thereby discerning the inner, necessary, essential connections of things. It is also an inherent unity of "method of inquiry", i.e., realistic method and "method of presentation", i.e., German-dialectical method (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 17). The study of political economy that appeals to the force of abstraction means stripping away all incidental factors to reveal the true form of capitalist production. In fact, classical political economy had a certain degree of abstraction, but unfortunately, due to the lack of abstraction, it still ended up as "crude empiricism" (Zhuang, 2023, 55).

To be specific, influenced by the paradigms of natural sciences and Locke's philosophy, the classical political economy relies on intuitive perception based on the chaotic reality of capitalist society. In delving into the capital issue, the classical political economy conducts a profound insight "from the concrete to the abstract", deeply penetrating the surface appearances. It then adopts an empirical method to comprehend the general significance of things, thereby completing a process that "attenuates the comprehensive visualization to abstract determinations" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 38).

However, grasping reality merely in general terms is insufficient to reveal the necessary connection between the reality as appearance and the production relations as essence. For example, when the classical political economy grasps bourgeois production in general terms and mistakenly considers it as "one eternally fixed by Nature for every state of society" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 92), it overlooks the most abstract and universal form of value inherent in bourgeois production. This form of value makes bourgeois production a special labour product with historical characters, yet it is ignored in the view of the classical political

economy. In other words, because the classical political economy only extracts the specific attributes of the production mode of a certain era and generalizes it as common to all eras, the specificity of the value form, commodity form, and its historical development is naturally overlooked by the classical political economy (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 91–92). This is so-called “interpreting social facts completely as physical facts” (An, 2023, 56), wherein the classical political economy studies historical phenomena with historical characteristics as if they were natural phenomena of nature.

Moreover, grasping reality merely in general terms is still insufficient to delve into the historical premises of appearances, which limits the theoretical abstraction of the classical political economy and thus restricts its ability to grasp the essential regulations of real appearances. For example, the classical political economy occasionally examines labour from varying qualitative or quantitative perspectives, yet this research lacks consistency, treating labour at times under its quantitative aspect and at other times under its qualitative aspect (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 91), and even examining labour quantitatively is more mainstream. It also does not make a completely clear distinction between labour as value and labour as use-value. This is because “it has not the least idea, that when the difference between various kinds of labour is treated as purely quantitative, their qualitative unity or equality, and therefore their reduction to abstract human labour, is implied” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 91). Therefore, the seeming abstraction of thinking does not only fail to correctly understand social contradictions but also is limited by the reality of abstract regulations, which are mistakenly seen as a natural manifestation of capitalism, possessing eternal objectivity. To dispel the illusion of ahistorical empiricism and objectively argue the historicity of capitalist production, it is necessary to transcend the former methods of inquiry.

Marx transcends the empiricism of previous political economy with the force of abstraction. Achieving the dialectical unity of “the first procedure attenuates the comprehensive visualization to abstract determinations” and “the second leads from abstract determinations by way

of thinking to the reproduction of the concrete” implies that the study of the capital issue should be divided into two steps (Marx, & Engels, 1986, 38). First, through the veil of empirical representation, secondary and non-essential factors are stripped away to abstract the specific objects of study – a formal abstraction conducted by the classical political economy. However, merely attaining the first step is evidently insufficient. Thus, it is necessary to proceed with the second step, which involves refining, authenticating, and comprehending the abstracted specific objects through theoretical analysis, thereby revealing the essence and determinations of capital’s characteristics and operational laws. This is a cognitive process of translating “the material world reflected by the human mind into forms of thought” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 19).

In *Das Kapital*, Marx makes abstract concrete entities like profit into value, then investigates capitalist production based on this value, ultimately elevating value to concrete surplus value, thus grasping the essence of the capital issue through surplus value. Throughout this process, the complete cognitive path of “sensory concrete – abstract thinking – rational concrete” (Zhuang, & Lu, 2023, 85) manifests as the ability to observe specific objects like profits, the capacity to deduce abstract essence, and the capability to synthesize the results derived from abstract thinking. This enabled Marx to use the force of abstraction to analyse the capital issue, to gain the understanding that capital has the attributes of both factors of production and relations of production in a general sense, and to examine the characteristics of capital and the operation laws in a specific social formation, i.e., in a capitalist society.

The issue of capital in the capitalist society

Capital emerges from the evolution of the commodity economy. It is neither a category that exists naturally nor one confined solely to capitalist societies. Additionally, capital exhibits different characteristics and laws in various social formations. Summarizing the features of various social formations, obtaining an understanding of general production, and gradually narrowing down to the analysis of the characteristics and

operational laws of capital in the process of production in capitalist society constitute Marx's approach to analysing the capital issue in Volume I of *Das Kapital*.

Capital characteristics of the production process in capitalist society

In the capitalist society, the capital in the process of production encompasses both material and social forms, constituting the characteristics of capital in production. These characteristics are manifested in value transfer, value augmentation, dominance, and profit-seeking.

The characteristic of capital in the process of production lies in the attributes of constituent elements of production. Capital as a constituent element of production exhibits two characteristics. In the capitalist production process, capital functions to transfer value or create value, with different factors playing distinct roles. Marx referred to the part of capital that represents "the means of production, raw materials, auxiliary materials, and the instruments of labour", and "does not, in the process of production, undergo any quantitative alteration of value" as "constant capital" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 219). During the process of production, the use value of means of production such as tools, machinery, factories, containers, raw materials, and fuel, which serve as the constant capital, undergoes alterations, and the value is transferred to the new products. The means of production, placed in different stages of production, often undergo value transfer in different ways. For example, factories and containers gradually transfer their value to new products over successive production processes, while raw materials and fuel are transferred to new products in a one-time manner during the process of production. However, regardless of the form in which value is transferred, the value of constant capital is transferred to the new products, which is the first characteristic exhibited by capital as a constituent element of production. Besides, Marx designates the portion of capital represented by labour force, which undergoes a change in value during the production process, as "variable capital"

(Marx, & Engels, 1996, 219). In the process of production, labourers' labour force not only produces the value of labour force but also generates surplus value, bringing about changes in quantity and creating new value, i.e., value augmentation, which is the second characteristic exhibited by capital as a constituent element of production.

In addition, the characteristic of capital in the process of production lies in the attributes of the conditions of production. In capitalist society, the conditions of production manifest in capital exerting economic dominance over everything, constituting the third characteristic of capital. Capital holds dominance over the labour force of labourers. Since in capitalist society there is a "separation of labour from its product, of subjective labour power from the objective conditions of labour" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 570), the capitalists, who control the means of production, utilize money to purchase free labour force and instruments of labour for production. At this point, the capitalists' goal is not the production of commodities but rather the realization of exchange value itself – this is precisely what distinguishes the capitalist from the ordinary possessor of money (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 163–164). When capitalists purchase labour force with money and trade based on the value of labour force, they acquire dominance over the labour force from labourers. This dominion is a manifestation of the inequality in relations between capital and labour: superficially, capital and wage labour engage in equivalent exchanges in the labour market based on the principles of commodity exchange; in fact, the *Manava Dharma Sastra*, originally belonging to the backward slave system, exists in developed capitalist societies in another form (Yang, 2022, 142) – this unequal contractual form being the modern wage-labour system, with the working class being the most deeply oppressed group. The daily maintenance cost of labourers' labour force is not equivalent to their actual daily expenditure, and labourers are excluded from the product of labour, as well as enslaved by the shackles of the wage-labour system. After labourers have repaid all the wages paid by capitalists, driven by the impulse to extract surplus value to the utmost, capitalists will not allow labourers to stop producing; instead, they must fully

utilize the labour power they have purchased, compelling labourers to cease work only after completing a sufficient duration. Furthermore, capitalists' pursuit of profit is endless, manifested in endless exploitation of labourers. However, once labourers choose to escape from this wage-labour system, it means that they must face a survival crisis. This is because the result of the capitalist production process is that labourers are excluded from the product of labour, losing ownership of it, and further producing the conditions of production that absorb their surplus labour (Uchida, 2011, 204). From this perspective, capitalists' dominance over the labour force of labourers is a manifestation of the personification of capital – essentially, it signifies the dominance of labourers by capital, which is also a manifestation of capital's dominance over all things.

Besides, capitalists are likewise subject to the dominance of capital and simultaneously exhibit a tendency towards profit-seeking. This necessitates beginning with the question of why capitalists are compelled to extract surplus value to the utmost, which is related to the general laws of class society and the inherent characteristics of capitalist society's pursuit of capital. From a general perspective, the "pursuit of surplus labour" itself is a common objective law in various class societies, hence "wherever a part of society possesses the monopoly of the means of production, the labourer, free or not free, must add to the working time necessary for his own maintenance an extra working time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owners of the means of production" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 243). The ruling class that monopolizes the means of production will inevitably exploit and oppress the ruled class. Capitalist society is no exception. In capitalist society, during the process of value augmentation, surplus value created by wage labourers is expropriated by capitalists without compensation. From a particular perspective, "profit-seeking" is an inherent tendency of capital and is essentially linked to the value augmentation of capital. When the profit-seeking nature of capital is intertwined with capitalist production relations, it manifests in the pursuit of maximum surplus value. Marx studied the process of capital production in the stage of free competition capitalism. In this stage, there is a fierce competition among

capitalists to gain survival advantages. Capitalists, by means of increasing surplus value, reducing production costs, and swiftly completing the cycle of buying and selling, achieve rapid capital accumulation and subsequent wealth accumulation. To meet the internal demand for capital accumulation, capitalists continuously increase surplus value to drive the expansion of capital reproduction. The greed of capital for profits compels capitalists to constantly expand the scale of production, and correspondingly, the labour force of wage labourers becomes a tool to achieve the expansion of production scale and satisfy capitalists' profit-making. In fact, besides pursuing surplus value, capitalists have no choice in a competitive environment. Even in the fatherland of free competition like England, if individual capitalists are willing to shorten working hours, market structure and government intervention may force them to maintain or adjust certain time standards to uphold industry uniformity and competitiveness (Marx, & Engels, 1985, 209). Hence, it can be observed that capital manipulates capitalists, compelling them to engage in profit-seeking activities – this is also a manifestation of capital's dominance over all things.

To sum up, the four characteristics – value transfer, value augmentation, dominance, and profit-seeking – are interlocked and mutually conditioned in the production process of capitalist society.

Operational laws of capital in capitalist production

In capitalist society, the process of production in capitalist society can be categorized into two types: single and continuous. Both adhere to the laws governing the creation, appropriation, and reproduction of surplus value. In essence, the operational laws of capital are the laws of the production of value. In this process, capital exhibits four key characteristics: value transfer, value augmentation, dominance, and profit-seeking. Thus, these characteristics combine with the conditions of capitalist production, manifesting an ardent pursuit of surplus value and an incessant desire for capital expansion. The operational laws of capital encapsulate these manifestations.

The process of production in capitalist society not only creates use values but also facilitates the creation and augmentation of surplus value. During the process of singular production, capitalists do not halt labour once labourers have replicated the value of their labour force. It is because the capitalists' aim is to obtain surplus value that "this moment" merely realizes the production of use value and value transfer. At this juncture, "the value so advanced has not expanded, no surplus value has been created, and consequently, money has not been converted into capital" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 201).

In order to obtain surplus value, capitalists lengthen the working hours, capturing the discrepancy between the value of labour-power and the actual value of the products of labour. Due to the labourers working under the supervision of capitalists and the fact that all labour products belong entirely to the capitalists, this discrepancy is created by the labourers under compulsion for the capitalists. The resultant new value exceeds the value initially paid by the capitalists to the labourers, constituting surplus value. Therefore, the process of acquiring surplus value is "nothing but the continuation of the former beyond a definite point" (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 205), dividing the labour time of labourers into necessary labour time and surplus labour time. The former refers to the labour time for reproducing the value of labour-power, whereas the latter represents the unpaid labour time for capitalists to produce surplus value. This additional labour, i.e. surplus labour, beyond the time required to compensate the labourers' wages is "the source of *surplus-value*, of profit, of the steadily growing increase of capital" (Marx, & Engels, 1985, 233). However, due to objective limitations imposed by physiological and social moral factors, capitalists cannot indefinitely and directly extend the length of the working days. Moreover, such blatant exploitation would prompt the increasingly empowered proletariat to launch resistance movements when it becomes intolerable. Therefore, capitalists achieve this through more covert means. They curtail the necessary labour time and correspondingly alter the ratio of necessary labour time to surplus labour time of the working day to increase the surplus value. To distinguish between surplus value obtained

by directly prolonging the working day and surplus value obtained by adjusting the ratio of the two types of labour in the working day, Marx termed the former “absolute surplus value”, and the latter – “relative surplus value” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 320).

The production of relative surplus value is achieved by shortening necessary labour time and extending surplus labour time. Shortening necessary labour time, that is, reducing the time required for labourers to reproduce their value of labour-power, will lower the value of labour-power. Lowering the value of labour-power will inevitably lead to a decrease in the value of the material means of subsistence needed for the reproduction of labour force, implying an increase in the labour productivity of the production of the material means of subsistence necessary for the reproduction of labour force. Therefore, corresponding measures must be taken to transform the technical conditions, social conditions, and the conditions of production in order to enhance the productive power of labour. Additionally, since the value of material means of subsistence also includes the value transferred from the means of production, it becomes inevitable to increase the productive power of labour in the sectors producing the means of production related to the production of means of subsistence. Ultimately, the reduction in the value of labour-power is attributed to the result of the increase in the productive power of labour in various sectors of society – which is also the condition to produce relative surplus value. The production of relative surplus value objectively stimulates the advancement of the level of social productive power of labour. Individual capitalists may seek to achieve surplus value by adopting new technologies, improving the productive power of labour in their enterprises, and reducing the individual labour-time required to produce commodities, thereby making the individual value of commodities lower than the social value, in pursuit of the surplus value between the social value and the individual value, i.e., “extra surplus value”. Thus, the pursuit of extra surplus value becomes the direct purpose for enterprises to enhance productivity.

In fact, the process of production in capitalist society is not isolated. From the perspective of correlation, social production undergoes

the same stages repeatedly, hence “The conditions of production are also those of reproduction” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 565). Social reproduction is divided into simple reproduction and reproduction on a progressively increasing scale.

This type of production, when capitalists invest all surplus value into consumption, and other conditions remain unchanged, constitutes simple reproduction. Firstly, in simple reproduction, the surplus value created by labourers in the process of production is partly returned to the labourers themselves in the form of wages, while another part is appropriated by capitalists without compensation. Yet it is inevitable for labourers who, in order to sustain themselves and their families, must labour to earn wages, implying continuous creation of surplus value for capitalists. It is because that “his [labourer’s] employment lasts only so long as he continues to reproduce this fund” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 567). Secondly, not only does variable capital originate from labourers, but all capital does. Initially, capitalists rely on some form of primitive accumulation unrelated to the others’ unpaid labour; after several cycles of reproduction, the originally advanced capital was consumed by capitalists, and at this point, any capital is “accumulated capital, capitalised surplus value” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 583). Finally, the production and personal consumption of labourers are crucial conditions for capitalist reproduction, since in simple reproduction, “the working class, even when not directly engaged in the labour process, is just as much an appendage of capital as the ordinary instruments of labour” (Marx, & Engels, 1996, 573).

Reproduction on an increasingly expanded scale, determined by the essence of capital and the system of capitalist social production, refers to the process in which capitalists allocate a portion of surplus value to augmenting means of production and labour force, investing them into production on an increasingly expanded scale. Its manifestations primarily include the following aspects: firstly, surplus value is transformed into additional capital in this process, generating new surplus value, which, in turn, is transformed again into additional capital, propelling the cycle of

capital expansion. Initially, the additional capital used for reproduction on an increasingly expanded scale is capitalized surplus value. Secondly, reproduction on an increasingly expanded scale always exploits labourers, and the scale of exploitation continuously increases as additional capital is used to purchase labour force.

Hence, although capitalists seem to pay equivalent money to purchase labour force, this money is surplus value created by labourers without compensation. Moreover, capitalists can appropriate a portion of workman's labour without paying equivalents, thereby extracting more living labour from workers. In reproduction on an increasingly expanded scale of capitalist society, capitalists continuously utilize surplus value to expand production, exploit labourers, and acquire more surplus value, which is the essence of capital accumulation. At the same time, capital and the capitalist conditions of production both perpetuate themselves on an ever-expanding scale, which is the operational law of capital in the production process of capitalist society.

The issue of capital and its resolution in the socialist market economy from the perspective of cultural dialogue

Volume I of *Das Kapital* encapsulates Marx's intellectual essence and serves as a fundamental guide for understanding the capital issue in the process of Chinese modernization. Moreover, there are deep-seated points of convergence between Marxism and traditional Chinese culture. Situating the capital issue within the framework of dialogue between these two resources enables a more comprehensive exploration of the practice and development of a high-standard socialist market economy, offering deeper insights into the intellectual and cultural foundations behind contemporary economic phenomena in China. Altogether, Marxism, as the fundamental system with a guiding role in China's ideological domain, can only fully realize its practical potential when it is organically integrated with China's unique historical and cultural context.

The symbiotic foundation of Marxism and traditional Chinese culture in modern China

Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture share a deep symbiotic relationship. The integration of these two intellectual resources provides a cultural perspective that complements political economy in understanding and addressing the capital issue, while also offering a strong theoretical foundation for the development of China's socialist market economy. In this context, capital in the socialist market economy follows the fundamental principles of socialism: its role lies in both its function as a constituent element of production and its capacity to optimize resource allocation efficiency. Moreover, within China's specific cultural context, capital operates according to the ethical principles and political-philosophical values of traditional Chinese culture: it should function to realize modern China's pursuit of social harmony, collective interests, and equitable distribution.

First, The Marxist labour theory of value is compatible with the ideas of "*Shan*" (善, felicity) and "*Yi*" (义, appropriateness) in traditional Chinese culture. Marx's theory of the dual nature of labour distinguishes between abstract labour, which produces exchange value, and concrete labour, which creates use value. He explains that the increase in new value is generated by the abstract labour embodied in the commodity of labour force. Thus, capitalists seek to maximize the efficiency of labour to extract surplus value and realize capital accumulation. Marx's exposition of the relations between capital and labour objectively reveals the capitalist system's inherent contradiction between formal equality and substantive inequality, uncovering the exploitation and injustice faced by labourers in the capitalist labour market. This form of critique reflects Marx's views on equality and justice, which align with the ethical ideas of "*Shan*" and "*Yi*" in traditional Chinese culture.

"*Shan*" is achieved in productive relationships of thriving community (Ames, 2021, 195), which means it is a kind of relational idea of positive and harmony common good; "*Yi*" is one's sense of appropriateness that enables one to act in a proper and fitting manner

(Ames, 2021, 103)¹. Both Marxism and traditional Chinese culture emphasize a people-centred dimension. That is, to promote the principles of justice and proportionality in the acquisition of wealth by people in society, to safeguard the fruits of the labour of the working class, and to satisfy and guarantee to the maximum extent possible the realization of the fundamental interests of the majority. In modern China, the pursuit of common prosperity in both material and spiritual life is paramount to the people's desire for a better life. To realize this vision, it is essential to safeguard labourers' rights while wisely balancing capital accumulation with social responsibility.

Second, the inevitable trend of capital accumulation and the vision of the future society put forward by Marxist theory on the basis of the characteristics of capital and its operation laws are compatible with the Confucian idea of "*Tian Xia Wei Gong*" (天下为公, The World Belongs to All) in traditional Chinese culture. In addressing the anarchic nature of capitalist production, Marx points out that as capital accumulates, the organic composition of capital increases, with a growing proportion of constant capital and a decreasing proportion of variable capital, resulting in a reduced demand for labour. However, the supply of labour continues to grow alongside capital accumulation, leading to a contradiction between surplus labour and capital accumulation. Thus, the more capital accumulates, the more impoverished the working class becomes, forming an industrial reserve army. Capital accumulation

¹ Both "*Shan*" and "*Yi*", including the related concepts mentioned in this article, are core concepts of Chinese philosophy and embody the core spirit of Chinese philosophy. One of the distinguishing features of Chinese philosophy is the difficulty of summarizing its meaning with a precise word or concept in Western language. Usually, the understanding of the core concepts needs to be established in each specific context in order to obtain the specific connotation. In addition, another distinguishing feature of Chinese philosophy is that its concepts are rich in connotations, which are determined in specific contexts, thus requiring the interpreter to choose the most reasonable interpretation based on the context. Based on this, the application of the core concepts of Chinese philosophy in this paper is based on the realistic context of socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics, which is related to the context of realizing common prosperity, the essential requirement of socialism (author's footnotes).

inevitably exacerbates the contradictions between production relations and productive forces in the capitalist society, and these social contradictions become increasingly universal. When the concentration of the means of production and the socialization of labour can no longer be contained within the capitalist framework, that framework will collapse, signalling the downfall of capitalism. The proletariat will, based on the achievements of the capitalist era, reconstruct “individual ownership” into a collective ownership of the means of production, creating a society founded on shared ownership.

The Confucian ideal of “*Tian Xia Wei Gong*” is from *The Book of Rites* (《礼记·礼运》):

People not only love their parents, bring up their children, but also take care of the aged. The middle-aged are able to put their talents and abilities to best use, children are well nurtured, and old widows and widowers, unmarried old people, orphans, childless old people, and the disabled are all provided for... This is universal harmony (大同).

It emphasizes the unity of the state and society, and the pursuit of social harmony, aligning closely with Marxism’s goal of achieving common prosperity. In modern China, addressing social polarization caused by capital’s inherent tendencies and expanding the middle-income group are major issues for the socialist market economy. It is imperative to gradually reduce disparities between urban and rural areas, regions, industries, and incomes, and to ensure that the fruits of development are widely shared by the people.

Lastly, the dialectical perspective on capital control and guidance in Marxism complements the Taoist philosophy of “*Wu-Wei*” (无为, does nothing) and its emphasis on harmony with nature, which seeks to align the operations of the cosmos with the proper functioning of the political state (Ames, 2021, 256). Marx’s attitude toward capitalism is not one of absolute negation. For example, he acknowledges the unprecedented material wealth created by capitalist society and the role of the bourgeoisie in overthrowing feudalism and monarchies, which not only paved the way for modern democratic institutions but also accelerated the labourers’ revolutionary movement. Therefore, although capital in

capitalist society has demonstrated the characteristics of value transfer, value augmentation, dominance and profit-seeking, as well as the social nature of the bourgeoisie's oppression of the proletariat, to a certain extent, it still has historical merits that deserve to be recognized. Thus, Marx's view of capitalism and capital is dialectical. Related to Marx's dialectical understanding of capitalist society is his dialectical understanding of capital: If capital is left unchecked, it will intensify social contradictions. Conversely, if capital control and guidance are handled dialectically, it can advance in a way that benefits social production.

The Taoist principle of "*Wu-Wei*" offers a political philosophy of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and between individuals and society, advocating for governance that follows natural laws rather than imposing strict control, which manifested in the governance dialectic of "pursuing only natural activity" (顺其自然). In modern China, the relation between government and market is a crucial aspect of the socialist market economy. The underlying logic of effectively managing the relationship between government and market lies in scientifically grasping the dialectical relationship of capital control and guidance, reflecting the dialectics of Marxism and the governance wisdom of "*Wu-Wei*". This requires better leveraging the role of market mechanisms to create a fairer and more dynamic market environment, optimizing resource allocation efficiency and maximizing benefits. At the same time, it is essential to address the inherent shortcomings of the market economy, such as its blindness and delays, by effectively utilizing government functions. This involves introducing more flexible management and regulation in the operation of capital, avoiding the pitfalls of excessive market intervention while also preventing the unchecked expansion of capital.

Insights into the operation of capital in the socialist market economy from the perspective of cultural symbiosis

In modern China, Marxism and traditional Chinese culture have a symbiotic foundation, which provides us with new theoretical

perspectives and practical guidance for grasping the capital issue, as well as scientific theoretical resources and intellectual and cultural foundations for building a high-standard socialist market economic system. By combining the essence of both Marxism and traditional Chinese culture, the capital issue can be scientifically guided and regulated within China's unique cultural context, fostering the healthy development of capital.

Against the backdrop of accelerating global capital flows, capital and capital logic have permeated all aspects of the global trade system, evolving into new economic models and production relations, such as platform capitalism and crowdsourcing production relations (Lan, 2023, 95–102). We are witnessing the early signs of monopolistic tendencies in the internet industry, where leading internet companies leverage their advantages in scale and technology to reap excessive monopolistic profits. Supported by both private and financial capital, these companies rapidly grow into massive internet platform industries. Meanwhile, this industry is also penetrating and spreading into financial markets, contributing to the creation of an internet financial bubble to some extent (Zhang, 2022, 37–38). It can be said that new economic models and production relations have given rise to certain facts and phenomena in China, driven by the logic of capital's unchecked expansion, which has various degrees of impact on people's lives. A direct manifestation of this is the trend of private and civil capital penetrating sectors such as education, healthcare, and media. When capital excessively intervenes in the public goods sector, the fairness and quality of basic education, the accessibility of healthcare services, and the principles of safeguarding public health, as well as the security of ideological communication, could face material and spiritual challenges from unchecked capital expansion. Apparently, there are signs of unchecked capital expansion in China that require urgent attention and solutions.

In this context, China ought to maintain cultural confidence in its management and regulation of capital, ensuring that Marxist principles are integrated with China's specific realities and traditional culture to establish a high-level socialist market economy system tailored to China's specific realities. Key reforms should be advanced in critical areas such

as taxation and finance. Also, the utilization of capital should respect and adapt to China's unique cultural context, avoiding the blind imitation of Western capitalist development models. This implies the following tenets: firstly, under socialist conditions, the socialist relations of production constrain capital as a key factor of production, determining its form, proportion, and internal characteristics, thereby fundamentally shaping its nature and behavioural laws (Xi, 2024, para. 10). The sound growth of capital has become the core objective of the construction of a new development pattern, and the regulation and guidance of capital is an intrinsic need for the advancement of the process of Chinese modernization. Secondly, we should fully explore the contemporary values of ethics, morality and political philosophy in traditional Chinese culture, deal with the capital issue in a dialectical manner, attach importance to people's well-being, and pursue long-term social harmony and stability, so as to achieve common prosperity. The above two principles permeate the whole process of capital operation in the process of Chinese modernization. Specifically, from the perspective of cultural symbiosis, there are three key insights into the operation of capital in the socialist market economy:

The first, fully developing and nurturing productive capital while restraining predatory capital, and improving the institutional framework of value-generating economies, are crucial. In the context of socialism, capital still could be highly dynamic, fostering innovation, enhancing market flexibility, and promoting the efficient and rational use of resources. Therefore, the government agencies should focus on providing friendly policy support, a standardized and rule-based financing environment, and a fair and competitive market order for the financing of innovative enterprises. At the same time, the government must always be vigilant against the erosion of capital interests and maintain its original intention of serving the people through continuous self-revolution (Zhaozi, 2024, 166), and resist the negative impact of rent-seeking behaviours on the market and the people. Besides, the government should also guide capital markets to increase inclusivity and precision in supporting emerging industries, new business models, and new

technologies, while promoting patient capital (capital that is willing to make long-term investments and withstand short-term fluctuations). To guide more capital markets to pay attention to and support start-up and early-stage science and technology-based enterprises, to empower the development of new quality productivity with capital, to fully stimulate the people's sense of subjectivity and the spirit of initiative, to unleash the potential for technological and managerial innovation, and to promote industrial transformation and upgrading.

The second, a dialectical approach must be taken to address the capital issue within the socialist market economy. On the one hand, in response to phenomena such as platform monopolies, market disorder, capital penetration into public service sectors, stock market manipulation, and the suppression of labour costs, it is necessary to clearly delineate institutional boundaries, regulate capital misconduct through the "visible hand," and guide capital to serve the macroeconomic development and people's livelihoods under the conditions of the socialist market economy, while Improving the socialist macroeconomic governance system. On the other hand, preventing the unchecked expansion of capital does not mean abandoning it. Instead, it requires fully leveraging capital's role as a constituent element of production, fundamentally defining the nature and operation laws of capital under socialist conditions, and guiding capital towards orderly development. This ensures that capital serves the comprehensive development of both individuals and society, while using market mechanisms to realize socialist goals. Therefore, while unswervingly consolidating and developing the publicly owned economy, it is necessary to allow capital to operate and develop in a compliant manner, to encourage, support and guide the non-publicly owned economy, to promote the combination of an effective market and a competent government, to stimulate the vitality of the market mainstay, and to guide the non-publicly owned economy to always operate in a compliant manner that meets the essential requirements of Chinese modernization.

The third, as China has solved the problem of basic subsistence and achieved a comprehensive victory in poverty alleviation, coupled with the rapid rise of global platform capitalism (Sennett, 2023, 8–9),

a greater vigilance is required to guard against the risk of capitalists shirking their social responsibility in the employment relationship (Lan, 2023, 101). There is a need to further emphasize the social responsibility and ethical norms of business owners, ensuring that capital in the market economy bears greater social responsibility. This will ensure that the operations of capital contribute to the overall welfare of society, maintaining fairness and stability. Therefore, the system of “distribution according to work as the mainstay with multiple forms of distribution existing alongside it,” must be upheld, with special emphasis on the third distribution. The tertiary distribution focuses on charitable and public welfare activities, allowing the fruits of economic development to better benefit all people. Through the creation of a friendly social environment and the introduction of relevant safeguard and preferential policies and other promotional actions, the high-income group will be motivated to follow the traditional Chinese morals and ethics, and follow the essence of Chinese modernization, which is the common prosperity of all the people, and voluntarily and non-compulsorily invest in public welfare undertakings, so as to realize the complementary effect of “the wealthy helping the less fortunate”.

Conclusion

Marx conducted a systematic and profound analysis of the capital issue in *Das Kapital*, which reflects his ability to summarize the wisdom of the times through theoretical abstraction and generalization. In the volume I, Marx discerned the essence of capital through socioeconomic relations, using the force of abstraction to grasp the capital issue and successfully breaking through the cognitive limitations as well as theoretical insufficiencies of classical political economy. Furthermore, he shifted his research focus from the general laws of commodity exchange to the capitalist conditions of production with particularity, and eventually turned into the realm of the capitalist process of production to analyse the characteristics and operational laws of capital: In capitalist society, capital exhibits four main characteristics, i.e., value transfer,

value augmentation, dominance, and profit-seeking, which manifest in an intense pursuit of surplus value during its motion. However, with the production of surplus value and capital accumulation, irreconcilable contradictions arise within capitalist society, ultimately leading to its demise.

In the context of China having entered a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, we should recognize that Marx's analysis of the capital issue under capitalist conditions offers significant insights for the socialist market economy. Moreover, the integration of Marxism with traditional Chinese culture in modern China provides a new cultural perspective symbiosis for discussing the capital issue. The political philosophy, dialectical methods, and value orientations embedded in Marxist analysis of the capital issue have deep-seated points of convergence with the ethics, political philosophy and value orientations of traditional Chinese culture. This offers theoretical resources for grasping the capital issue and practical guidance for promoting the healthy and orderly development of capital. From the perspective of cultural symbiosis, the socialist market economy must fully develop and nurture productive capital and improve the institutional framework of value-generating economic systems. Also, it is essential to leverage capital's role as a constituent element of production, guiding its orderly operation within a regulatory framework to serve the comprehensive development of both individuals and society. Finally, it is crucial to uphold and improve China's fundamental socialist economic system and the distribution system based primarily on labour contribution, with multiple distribution methods coexisting. It is essential to manage the relations among the three types of distribution, guiding capital to assume greater social responsibility in the market economy and better safeguard the collective interests of society, as well as social fairness and stability.

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The Historical Examination and Value Significance of “Asiatic Mode of Production” from the Chinese Perspective

The concept of the “Asiatic mode of production” was introduced by Marx in the “Preface to the Critique of Political Economy”. The “Asiatic mode of production” has the tribe as its vehicle of existence, and the tribal community as its form of organization. The specific characteristics of the “Asiatic mode of production” have three main aspects: first, the communal system as land ownership, second, the self-sufficient natural economy, and third, the authoritarian nature of the rule. At the same time, the study of “Asiatic mode of production” has profound theoretical value and practical significance. The study of the “Asiatic mode of production” demonstrates that we must continue to develop the cause of modernization, discover the significance of civilization, break the bounds of historical development, and tap into the spiritual dynamics of the times.

Keywords: Asiatic mode of production, China, modernization

The “Asiatic mode of production” is an important concept in Marx’s theory of the five major social forms. As a key link in the phasing of civilization, “Asiatic mode of production” was prevalent in the Oriental countries and had a far-reaching influence on the development of civilization in the Oriental countries in terms of their political systems, economic models and social forms. It is the existence of the “Asiatic mode of production” that makes the Eastern civilization contrast with the Western civilization. The study of the value and significance of the “Asiatic mode of production” will help us to understand and clarify

the course of the development of world civilization, and to perceive the richness of the civilizations of the East and the West.

Basic connotations of the “Asiatic mode of production”

The “Asiatic mode of production” was proposed and continuously refined by Marx. The “Asiatic mode of production” relies on the organizational vehicle of the tribe as a unit, follows a strict hierarchy in its social structure, and establishes a tribal community in its organizational form.

Formulation of the theory of the “Asiatic mode of production”

Marx’s “Asiatic mode of production” is a constantly deepening and perfecting theory. In 1859, Marx proposed in “Preface to the Critique of Political Economy”: “In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as progressive epochs of the socio-economic order.”¹ Marx profoundly summarized and summed up the five major forms of social development in the course of the world, and regarded the “Asiatic mode of production” as the first manifestation of the economic form of human society and an important mode of production.

Later, in “The Future Results of British Rule in India”, “Asiatic Society” appeared for the first time in Marx’s writings, discussing in detail the social development of Asiatic countries represented by India, and distinguishing Eastern countries from Western countries. In “The Critique of Political Economy (1857–1858 Manuscripts)”, Marx placed the “Asiatic mode of production” in the chapter titled “Forms of Pre-Capitalist Production” and discussed in detail the economic and social contents of the “Asiatic mode of production”. In addition, the terms “Asiatic” and “Asiatic mode of production” also appear several times in the first volume of Marx’s “Capital”, and in the same way

¹ Marx, K., & Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 2. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2012, 3.

as in “The Preface to the Critique of Political Economy”, they are all related to the terms “Ancient” “Feudal” “Medieval” etc., for example, “The scope and significance of Asiatic, ancient, and medieval commerce have always been underestimated by their predecessors, and, on the contrary, have been unusually overrated. On the contrary, it has now become fashionable to make an unusually high estimate of them”². After Marx read Morgan’s “Ancient Society”, he pointed out that the socio-historical stage in which the “Asiatic mode of production” was situated was not necessarily confined to primitive societies alone, but could have existed within the time span of slave and feudal societies.

In summary, Marx asserts that the “Asiatic mode of production” is an indispensable mode of production in human society. Geographically, it is distributed in Eastern societies, represented mainly by Asiatic countries. Historically, it existed not only in primitive societies, but also in slave and feudal societies.

Vehicles for the existence of the “Asiatic mode of production”

Typical Asiatic modes of production existed in ancient Eastern countries, such as India and pre-Western Zhou China. The “Asiatic mode of production” took the tribe and rural commune as the basic form of social organization. Under this mode of production, the tribe was the main unit of socio-economic activity, and people produced and lived on a tribal basis, jointly occupying and using land and other means of production.

The tribal unit is the carrier of the “Asiatic mode of production”. In his work “The German Ideology”, Marx, when referring to the forms of development and characteristics of the division of labour at various stages of social history, systematically elaborated on “tribal ownership”, which was characterized by the “Asiatic mode of production”. At this time, the level of productive forces was relatively low, and the production

² Marx, K. *Capital*. Vol. 3. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1975, 372.

structure of the tribes was relatively homogeneous, mainly combining nomadic pastoralism and agriculture. “It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture.”³

In terms of social structure, the “Asiatic mode of production” followed a strict hierarchy. “The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.”⁴ Furthermore, it is due to the strict hierarchy that the ruling class becomes the dominant class by holding the power of the state. At the same time, since primitive societies, politics and economics in Eastern societies have often been closely intertwined, and after the rulers had supreme power, they often directly dominated socio-economic production.

Forms of organization of the “Asiatic mode of production”

The tribal community was the organizational form of the “Asiatic mode of production”. The community is a natural tribal community. In the case of nomadic people, for example, the way the community operates is influenced by natural conditions and even changes the natural environment. People tend to settle based on the abundance of pasture, the suitability of the climate, and the availability of water. This primitive community is constantly changing in response to external climatic, geographic, and physical changes. In other words, the environment created people, and at the same time people created the environment. This tribal community is the objective environment and basic carrier for the existence of the “Asiatic mode of production”.

The tribal community is not only influenced by natural factors, but at the same time is a vivid reflection of social relations. In “The Critique

³ Marx, K., & Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 2, 148.

⁴ Ibid.

of Political Economy (1857–1858 Manuscripts)”, Marx specifically analyses *The Forms of Ownership in Asia* in the chapter *Capitalism as Various Forms Prior to Production*, where Marx states that “the first premise is first and foremost that of a naturally constituted community. The family and the family which expands into a tribe, or the tribe formed through intermarriage [between families], or the union of tribes.”⁵ From the individual to the family and from the family to the tribe, the tribal community is bound by blood ties and strong kinship ties between its members. This blood relationship not only forms the basis for the existence of the community, but also determines the organizational structure and social relations within the community. At the same time, the family is the basic unit of the tribal community, which expands through reproduction, and then forms a larger tribal family and tribal organization. The tribal community under the “Asiatic mode of production” also had a certain code of conduct, including food, clothing, reproduction and so on, and while they continued to create their own needs within the community, they also formed a set of moral concepts and behaviours to maintain the stability of the order of the community.

Specific features of the “Asiatic mode of production”

The “Asiatic-style society” based on the “Asiatic mode of production” was a special type of ancient society in the Oriental countries, which represented the distinctive features of ancient Asia, and was manifested as a special social form in terms of the mode of production, the economic system, the political system and the social structure. Conceptually, the “Asiatic mode of production” was dominated by agricultural communal ownership, and the mode of production was a self-sufficient natural economy with an authoritarian leadership core to maintain and stabilize the social order.

⁵ Marx, K., & Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 3. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2012, 725.

Communal land ownership

The “Asiatic mode of production” is not only a historically general but also a geographically specific category, referring to the special type of ancient societies of the Eastern countries. In the case of Eastern societies, the “Asiatic mode of production” was based on communal ownership of land and was linked to relatively stable, closed agricultural production.

At the level of ownership, the basic characteristic of the Asiatic mode of production is its basis on communal ownership of land. Marx said that ownership of the means of production in the “Asiatic mode of production”, especially land ownership, was communal. The “Asiatic mode of production” is a form of communal ownership in the form of a commune. “In most of the basic forms of the Asiatic, the unity of the sum total which overrides all these small communities is expressed in the higher owner and the sole owner, and thus the commune is expressed in the hereditary possessor”⁶. In the direct reflection of land ownership, the land belongs to the state or the monarch. But at the level of the producers, the land is not owned by them individually, but is communally owned by the state.

The communal form of ownership is also expressed in the uniformity of the distribution and consumption levels. Communal property is uniformly distributed and consumed under the principle of public ownership. On the one hand, communal property is used as a public reserve, as insurance against uncontrollable natural risks. On the other hand, communal property was used to pay for the daily expenses of the community itself, such as wars and sacrifices. And concerning the distribution and consumption of property, “in places such as the Slavic and Romanian communes, for the first time, the dominion of property in the most primitive sense of the term territory appeared.”⁷ It is undeniable that the economic unity of domination influenced the emergence

⁶ Marx, K., & Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 3, p. 726.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 727.

and development of autocratic rule. Economic domination of property contributed to the generation of political despotic dominance.

Self-sufficient natural economy

In terms of forms of production, the “Asiatic mode of production” lies in the natural economy of self-sufficiency. Marx pointed out that “this property is created within the commune through the combination of handicrafts and agriculture, so that the commune is able to be self-sufficient and contains in itself all the conditions for reproduction and expansion of production.”⁸ And in this, the “Asiatic mode of production” was founded on the agricultural basis of the Eastern societies. Oriental societies have a favourable geographical environment, suitable climate, fertile soil and sufficient water, which provide the basic environment and material conditions for the development of agriculture. Among them, land is the prerequisite and foundation of the mode of economic development and economic ownership, “Land is a great testing ground, an arsenal, providing both means of labour and labour materials, and a place for the community to live, i.e. the foundation of the community.”⁹ On the basis of the means and objects of labour provided by the land, the workers use the tools of labour to carry out their work on the land, thereby creating communal wealth.

The natural economy of self-sufficiency is expressed in two main dimensions: the form of organization and the content of labour. In terms of organizational form, the “Asiatic mode of production” is characterized by the independence of the commune from the outside and the inside. Specifically, in a self-sufficient natural economy, small communes are independent of each other. Within the commune, the individual, together with his own family, worked independently on the land allocated to him. In concrete terms, the “self-sufficient natural economy” is reflected in the combination of agriculture and handicrafts. Because of the self-sufficient economic model and the closed social structure, with

⁸ Marx, K., & Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 3, p. 726.

⁹ Ibid.

stable labour content and labour environment, the natural economy is more resistant to risk, and the tribal community tends to be more closed. Members of the community have relatively few exchanges with the outside world, and this stability enables the tribal community to maintain its unique characteristics and traditions throughout history. In terms of culture and social structure, the stability of the tribal community drives the development of its distinctive culture and customs.

Authoritarian nature of rule

The “Asiatic mode of production” was dominant and authoritarian in its form of governance. The State had supreme political power, comprehensive economic power and pervasive social power. At the same time, in order to maintain monarchical and centralized power, the ruling class could control economic resources and interfere in social activities at will, thus forming a state system of centralized power and monarchical dictatorship.

It is an essential feature of the “Asiatic mode of production” that it is ruled by an authoritarian centralized power to guarantee the functioning of the organization, with the government having the function of total interference, on the basis of which a monarchical and authoritarian state system is practiced. Marx pointed out in “The Critique of Political Economy (1857–1858 Manuscript)” that the commonality within the tribal body is expressed in the fact that “the unity is either represented by the head of one of the families in the tribe, or is manifested in the connection of the individual heads of families with each other.”¹⁰ According to Marx, in ancient Oriental Asia, the state was the supreme being over all small communities and enjoyed supreme power, while the king was the “father of the community” and enjoyed despotic power. As to the causes of this despotism, Marx offered a geographical explanation, arguing that despotism was influenced by the unique climatic and soil conditions of the region.

¹⁰ Marx, K., & Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 3, 727.

In the element of geography, the irrigation engineering system of agriculture is used as an example to compare the agricultural irrigation methods in the East and the West. In the West, in Egypt, Persia, etc., agriculture mostly used the flooding of rivers to fertilize the fields, and the rising waters of rivers were used to fill and irrigate the canals. Conservation and common use of water were the basic irrigation requirements, which led to voluntary associations between private individuals; in contrast, in Eastern societies, agricultural irrigation was mostly undertaken by centralized governments. The Asiatic plateau formed a vast desert area and arid region, the natural water conditions were relatively poor, the construction of canals, river dams and other water conservancy projects for artificial irrigation has become the basis of agricultural production in the Eastern countries. Marx pointed out: "The irrigation canals, which played a very important role among the peoples of Asia, and the means of transport, etc., manifested themselves in a higher unity, that is, in the cause of the autocratic government which overrode the small communes."¹¹ Due to the large geographical area and limited civilization, the people could not produce a union from the bottom to the top, and therefore a centralized government was needed to take charge and build irrigation facilities. The state uses rural communes as the basic social organization and manages these communes in social life. This form of organization helped the state to concentrate its resources on the construction of large-scale projects and gave rise to the Asiatic autocracy. It is worth mentioning that this idea was later discussed in detail by Weitheff in his book "Oriental Despotism".

The value and significance of the "Asiatic mode of production"

Thorough theories often reflect the real concerns of the times. In terms of its value and significance, in China, for example, under the long-standing role of the "Asiatic mode of production", China's

¹¹ Marx, K., & Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels*. Vol. 3, 727-728.

politics, culture, society and other aspects have been greatly influenced by the “Asiatic mode of production”. China should, on the basis of understanding the theoretical significance, base itself on history, develop innovations for the times, promote modernization and explore the way forward, seek to rid itself of the negative aspects of the “Asiatic mode of production”, inherit the excellent traditional culture and vigorously develop advanced productive forces in the light of the times.

Focusing on theory and discovering civilizational significance

As a transitional form in the stage of transition from primitive to civilized societies, the “Asiatic mode of production” was the prevailing mode of production in early human societies. The “Asiatic mode of production” connected primitive societies with civilized societies and served as a bridge between the two societies.

The “Asiatic mode of production”, as a special form of transition from primitive society to class society, is an important stage in the evolution of human civilization. It reflects the transformation of the mode of production and the socio-economic structure of human society under specific historical conditions, and has had a sustained and far-reaching impact on the development of subsequent civilizations. The “Asiatic mode of production” was a combination of “communal and authoritarian” modes. At the practical level, the communal economic model provides a model for economic development in the world today. For example, the experience of the management of rural communes provides guidance for the organization of today’s society and promotes the management and improvement of social organizations. At the theoretical level, the “Asiatic mode of production” is an important theoretical concept for the phasing of civilization. The “Asiatic mode of production” occupies an important position in Marx’s theory of the phasing of civilization, and is the first of the five major stages of social development, representing the phasing of civilization in world history and providing a theoretical framework for the development of world civilization.

In addition, at the level of civilizational exchanges, the “Asiatic mode of production” represents the diversity and interactivity of world civilizations. The world’s cultures are rich and diverse, and the civilizations of different regions have specificity and particularity, and do not have complete unity and consistency. Marx, on the other hand, summarized the universality of world civilization development by exploring the particularity of civilizations in various countries, extracted universal laws from the particularity, and comprehensively understood the characteristics and laws of the process of civilization development.

Building on history and breaking development constraints

When Marx referred to the Oriental societies represented by Asia, he predicted the future development of Oriental societies from the perspective of “past, modern and future”. The “Asiatic mode of production” was an important factor in the creation of the Eastern Question. Based on history, paying attention to the “Asiatic mode of production” can help us understand where we “come from”, and then discover the future direction of the road from history. Marx once mentioned that in order to maintain the smooth development of the Eastern societies facing the transition from pre-modern to modernization, the backward countries should take the initiative to learn from other countries. And this has been learnt from China, Japan and other countries in history.

Only by delving into history can we better advance towards the future. With the development of China’s modernization process, we need to fully pay attention to China’s historical process and specific national conditions. Chinese society, which has long been in the “Asiatic mode of production”, has a strong and tenacious traditional structure that has continued the development of history and civilization through a cycle of nearly 2,000 years of dynasties. Despite several dynastic changes, it has always been a change within the agricultural civilization and the form of agricultural productivity, and no break in civilization has ever occurred.

However, a strong and stable social structure inevitably brings about deep-rooted traditional issues. Therefore, in order for China to truly

modernize, it must first free itself from the constraints of the “Asiatic mode of production”, from the undesirable characteristics that are not conducive to the practice of modernization, and truly “get rid of the problems brought about in Asia”. Firstly, we must overcome the “isolation”, “closedness” and “stagnation” of Chinese society under the influence of the old mode of production. In particular, there is a need to continuously improve technological innovation and achieve a leap in the mode of production. Secondly, in the “Asiatic mode of production”, authoritarianism was the dominant colour of social development, and the freedom and rationality were easily neglected. And such problems need to be stressed by the society of modernity. One of the essential conditions for a modern society is to implement a social atmosphere of democracy, rationality, and science, which is what the “Asiatic mode of production” society needs to supplement.

Tapping into spiritual dynamics in the light of the times

Engels once commented that China was the last civilization to be based on a combination of agriculture and handicrafts. Therefore, China is distinguished from India, Japan and other Oriental countries, and China’s social structure and historical development are special. Marx regarded “Asiatic”, including China, as the oldest and most primitive social form of mankind. As far as its influence is concerned, the “Asiatic mode of production” has profoundly influenced the way of life of traditional Chinese society as well as people’s cultural and ideological concepts, contributing to China’s long-term stability in the agricultural era and its greater achievements in economic and social development.

In retrospect, the “Asiatic mode of production”, as represented by China, can only be revitalized and energized by responding to the times and actively innovating. In the face of the traditional mode of production, China needs to be guided by the major strategic issues of social development in the Orient, and to examine how it can discover innovative factors in its tradition that are conducive to future development. For example, the outstanding traditional culture will be coalesced into

an outstanding spirit that is recognized by all people and coalesced in the hearts of the general public, which will in turn transform spiritual power into material power, and promote stable and healthy development of society. Based on the “Asiatic mode of production”, Eastern societies have inherited from ancient times important social connotations such as social justice, collectivism, and social cooperation on the basis of communal land ownership. These outstanding spirits should be carried forward, in keeping with the development of the present age, so as to inject the necessary spiritual elements into the process of modernization.

To sum up, the theory of the “Asiatic mode of production” put forward by Marx provides a road guide for the development of modernization in the world from the perspective of the process of social and economic development. The “Asiatic mode of production” highlights the differences between the development paths of modernization in the East and the West, and it mainly highlights the form of social development in Asiatic countries represented by China. The theory of the “Asiatic mode of production” inspires us to continuously promote the modernization of today’s society in an all-round way, to adjust and optimize the mode of production according to the country’s own resource endowments and existing foundations, to develop the modern productive forces, and to promote the all-round modernization of the country.

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Public Security Risks and the Response of Chinese Legislation in the Digital Age

The rapid development of digital technology has led to great changes in people's lifestyles and social structure in China, such as digitalisation of behaviour, intelligentization of tools, virtualisation of scenes, and platformisation of the economy. At the same time, new public security risks have emerged in Chinese society, such as the social deconstruction risk, the risk of negative technological value, and the risk of technological instrumental value. Although China's legal system has already made some responses to the public security risks of digital technology, there still remain some risk-associated problems, such as the lack of public security risk prevention obligations of digital technology, and unclear provisions on the sharing of responsibility for digital technology risks. During the prevention of public security risks of digital technology in China, the system of public security risk prevention obligations in the digital era should be further established, the principle of reciprocal public security risk responsibility should be clarified, and the public security risk responsibility allocation system for multiple technology subjects should be improved.

Keywords: digital age, public security risk, legislative evolution

The Chinese social change in the Digital Age

Technology is the product of society and the accelerator of society, – “Network information technology is society” (Castor, 2001, 5–6). Since

the advent of the 21st century, China has experienced rapid development in the field of network information technology and other technologies. The extensive use of these digital technologies has led to great changes in people's lifestyles and social structures, and these changes have shown certain characteristics.

The first is the digitalisation of behaviour. The development of information technology has created a realistic virtual digital space, which gives each person the new digital attributes and characteristics except the biological characteristics, such as facial biometric features has been the tool of information technology. This has brought human life into the state of "digital existence". At the same time, the connection and transformation of behavior and data are becoming more and more close, and people are guiding their own behavior through data, and also transforming their behavior into digital in the process of using information network information technology. Simultaneously, social governance has also become more dependent on information means, and the development of digital government has made it more convenient; there are currently 808 million registered users of China's national government service platform, and many government matters can be completed digitally.

The second is the intelligentization of tools. Accompanied by the rise of emerging network information technology such as big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence, the tools of production and means of life on which human society relies are becoming intelligent, and autonomous driving and intelligent robots are widely used in China. On 22 September 2019, the world's first commercial licence for autonomous driving was issued in Wuhan, and 51 cities in China currently promulgate pilot and demonstration policies for autonomous driving vehicles. Autonomous driving has begun to operate commercially. This kind of intelligent society is neither the "fluid society" in which time changes space, as Bauman calls it, nor the society in which dynamic space changes and constructs time, according to Custer (Shuhong, & Zhou, 2023, 210). Rather, it requires a new understanding of a new spatio-temporal state and logic of development.

The third is the virtualisation of scenes. Since China's full-featured access to the world Internet on 20 April 1994, China's level of Internet development has ranked second in the world for seven consecutive years, and the number of Internet users in China will reach 1.092 billion in 2023, with a large number of Internet users constructing a rich new virtual scene of existence. This virtual society breaks the traditional concept of space-time based on physical perception and co-presence. This virtualised scenario gives rise to a new spatial order, in which, on the one hand, people in close proximity are gradually estranged from each other, and, on the other hand, people who are far away from each other are physically connected.

The fourth is the platformisation of economic. During the process of the application of digital information technology, people's behaviour is more easily linked and focused together. As a result, the platform economy occurred in the digital era, and platforms have become the dominant form of the digital economy and formed a new type of digital ecology with a platform-centred architecture (Li, 2004, 130). Organisations focused on digital business are gaining increasing economies of scale by creating online platforms that match buyers and sellers of a wide range of products and services, with the result that "a small but powerful number of platforms dominate the market" (Schwab, 2016, 10–11). The highly concentrated marketplace gives rise to huge economic benefits, and where has become the target of many new types of crime. Over the past decade, a large number of online platform giants emerged in China, which dominate and influence people's lives. 2023, there were 915 million users of online shopping and 945 million users of online e-payment.

Public security risks of digital society in China

The German sociologist Ulrich Beck mentioned in *The Risk Society* that the faster and deeper the development of science and technology, the more risks there are. The rapid development of digital technology, represented by network information technology, has brought human society into a high-risk digital era while bringing great changes. Highly

intelligent digital technology on the one hand affects the traditional social behaviour and the basis of behaviour, and creates a huge risk of deconstruction of the traditional social structure; on the other hand, the highly developed digital technology itself is accompanied by the risk of public security because of its own technical limitations and the lagging nature of the means of social management. Especially with the rapid development of artificial intelligence, the public security risk caused by science and technology has increasingly begun to attract the attention of the world, such as on 14 May 2024, the United States and China government officials in Switzerland for the first time on the issue of artificial intelligence safety talks.

(i) Risk of social disintegration in the digital age

In the digital age, people are engaged in an intensive social reform movement and are experiencing dramatic changes in technology, productivity and social organisation. Information technology has built digital networks without borders, and the structure of such digital networks has revolutionised the way in which people are connected to each other, turning the physical world into a flat structure. The social changes in the digital era are fundamental, because digital technology, represented by network information technology, has changed people's behaviour, thereby restructuring the way of production organisation, reshaping the way of life, rebuilding the social structure, and recreating the social functioning mechanism. Compared with the industrial society, the digital society has completely different connection methods, behavioural patterns, knowledge systems, value systems and social structures. On the one hand, people are interconnected and no longer limited by physical space because of network information technology. On the other hand, people are becoming more and more distant because of networked information technologies, and people in close physical proximity are becoming more and more estranged.

The disintegration of territoriality from its cultural, historical and geographical significance and its reintegration into a functional network or collage of imagery has led to the replacement of local space by mobile

space (Castor, 2001, 465). This fluid society breaks through the fixed boundaries of established societies, geo-boundaries, institutional boundaries, interpersonal boundaries, etc., and various heterogeneous elements merge and intertwine to form new hybrid societies. According to the sociologists, “contemporary social order, or global disorder, is a fluid structure, a centreless collection of symbolic economies in space” (Rush, & Earley, 2006, 6). Digital information technology has disintegrated the ways and foundations of people’s social interactions, the old social order is gradually being dislocated and weakened, people do not interact in traditional social places and spaces, and social moral constraints and institutional constraints are not functioning. The deconstruction of the foundations of society by information technology has led to a sudden rise in public security risks. Against this backdrop, whether there can be a rational social structure and whether attention can be paid at all times to adjusting the interests of the various strata of society to an optimal state will be the key issue in determining whether the social system can function in a benign manner, and whether the reform can be fully successful (Lenski, 2018, 2).

(ii) Public security risks of digital technologies

The public security risk caused by digital technology is not only a theoretical state of danger, but in fact digital technology risks have been presented in reality, and some risks have even been transformed into criminal phenomena. From the viewpoint of the application process of digital information technology, the social public security risk caused by digital information technology may be manifested as the public security risk arising from the limitations of the technology itself, and may also be manifested as the risk arising from the application process of digital information technology as a tool. The former could be called as the risk of the negative value of digital technology, and the latter could be called the risk of the instrumental value of digital technology.

1. Negative value risks of digital technologies

The negative value risk of digital technology refers to the risk inherent in the process of the development and use of digital technology due

to the defects and limitations of digital technology itself. Digital information technology is a product of human wisdom after the development of digital technology to a certain stage, information technology is not the highest technology, so it is bound to have certain limitations, especially the discovery of new digital information technology and the use of the process is bound to exist in a certain degree of security defects and risks, the defects of these products themselves or the limitations of people's understanding of the security of information technology is bound to pose a threat to social life or risk. For example, the security risk of technical failures in airline networks, the battery safety risk of electric cars, the risk of traffic accidents caused by self-driving cars misidentifying objects, and so on. In addition, due to the historical limitations of human understanding of network information technology, some information technology risk temporarily cannot be cognitive by the existing cognitive ability, such as we don't know the strong artificial intelligence robot has a sense of crime or not, and so on. With the continuous development of digital information technology, the harmfulness of network information technology risks in some unknown areas may be constantly proved. Digital information technology is a double-edged sword, while actively promoting the development of digital information technology, it is also necessary to pay attention to the shortcomings and risks of digital information technology itself.

2. Instrumental value risks of digital technologies

The risk of the instrumental value of digital technology refers to the public security risk that, in the process of using digital information technology, offenders may take advantage of loopholes in the management of digital information technology or flaws in the system in order to commit illegal and criminal acts. Digital information technology appears as a tool for production and life of human society, its nature is a tool, and the tool has strong social and public attributes, improper management and use of which is prone to social and public security risks. In recent years, digital information technology has been rapidly developed and commercialised in China, but the regulation and governance of digital information technology has lagged behind, with certain

omissions in the management and standardisation of cyberspace, digital information technology has been exploited by some illegal and criminal actors, and cyberspace crime has developed into a major form of crime in China. Cyberspace has not only given rise to new high-tech crimes, but has also become the space, medium, way and means for traditional criminal activities such as “theft, robbery and fraud”, which is a side effect of the “double-edged sword” effect of science and technology in social development. In China, the number of cybercrimes has accounted for one third of the total number of crimes, making it the number one type of crime, and in 2023, a total of 437,000 cases of telecommunication network fraud were uncovered.

Flaws of legislation on public security risks of digital society in China

Although scholars have yet to form a theoretical consensus on the public security risks of digital information technology (IT) and have yet to conduct a typological analysis of the risks of digital IT and their prevention, the fact is that China’s legislative response to the risks of digital IT has already begun quietly.

(i) Legislative evolution of public security risks in the digital age

1. Prevention of public security risks in the digital age

First of all, in order to regulate the use of data, the basis of information - data collection, use and other behaviours, China has strengthened the protection of information and data, and has now established a data protection framework based on three major laws, namely, the Network Security Law of the People’s Republic of China, the Data Security Law of the People’s Republic of China, and the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Personal Information, which have made macro-specific institutional provisions on the way of access to data and information, the means of access, and the content limits of access. These legislations on data and information protection have reduced the risk of information abuse in the field of digital technology and regulated the process of data and information collection and use.

Secondly, a governance framework system has been established for the algorithmic arithmetic-based AI research and development behaviour of commercial giants. At the macro level, programmatic documents such as Principles for the Governance of a New Generation of Artificial Intelligence – Developing Responsible Artificial Intelligence and A New Generation of Artificial Intelligence Development Plan have been issued; at the micro level, Measures for the Administration of Generative Artificial Intelligence Services, Administrative Provisions on Algorithm Recommendation for Internet Information Services, Administrative Provisions on Depth Synthesis of Internet Information Services Management Provisions and other departmental regulations have been issued. In the society of economic platformisation, network information platforms are in a monopolistic position, and people's life behaviours are in the uneasiness of algorithmic constraints and control. The introduction of legal norms in the field of algorithms ensures a certain degree of fairness and transparency of algorithms.

2. Regulation of digital technology offences

Along with the deep integration of digital technology into social life, the digital sphere has become another pole of Chinese society, and public security in the digital sphere has become an important part of public security in Chinese society. At present, information network crime has become the first main area of crime in China, and the risk of public security in the digital sphere has been highlighted. In the face of the sudden increase in the risk of digital information technology, Chinese legislators have not taken into account the requirements of the due value of legislating network information technology, but rather have made urgent and extensive use of Criminal Law to block digital information technology offences, which are becoming the mainstream form of crime in risky societies.

Since the promulgation of the current Criminal Law in 1997, China has approved 12 amendments to the Criminal Law, many of which relate to the governance of digital information technology risk crimes, for example, the Criminal Law amendment (VII) is aimed at responding to crimes committed against computer information systems, added

the crime of illegally obtaining computer information system data, illegally controlling computer information system, providing intrusion, illegally controlling computer information, system program and tool; Criminal Law Amendment (IX) to deal with the high incidence of network information technology crimes and regulatory dilemma, three new cybercrimes have been added: refusing to fulfil the duty of Information Network security management, illegally using information network and helping information network criminal activities. These amendments to the legal system concerning the punishment of digital technology public security offences have filled in some of the gaps in the governance of digital technology public security risks, but they do not fundamentally solve the problem of preventing and controlling digital technology public security risks.

(ii) Omissions in the legal regulation of public security risks in the digital age

Although China has improved its legislation on the risks of network information technology in order to meet the challenges of public security risks brought about by the fissile development of network information technology in recent years, the legislative response has been hasty and one-sided, and has not resulted in a clear regulatory mindset, leading to the existence of a number of legal regulatory omissions.

1. Lack of public safety risk prevention obligations for digital technologies

China's concept of digital information technology development should shift from emphasising the efficiency of digital information technology development to placing equal emphasis on both the efficiency of digital information technology development and the fairness of information technology responsibility. In the context of the era of vigorous development of network information technology, the government and enterprises have paid more attention to the development and wide application of digital information technology and less attention to the issue of preventing the public security risks of digital information technology. This has led to the neglect of a large number of public security risks

arising from digital technology in the course of its development and application, a mismatch between the demand for risk prevention and the supply of the system, and the emergence of an absentee public security risk system.

In fact, under the rapid development of digital information technology over the years, the public security risks arising from digital technology are not only reflected at the level of its application, but the risks of the technology itself cannot be ignored. However, at present, China has enacted more legislation to regulate the application of network information risk as a tool, paying less attention to the issue of the negative value risk of network information technology, and has not given much consideration to the technical risk responsibility of technology developers. Currently, the amendments to the Criminal Law have established a number of offences relating to the risk of network information technology tools, but the issue of the criminal liability of developers of defective AI products in the process of AI technology development has not been given much attention, such as the legal liability of the designers of AI products in the event of loss of personnel and property caused by the risk of the AI products themselves.

2. Lack of principles for allocating responsibility for public safety in digital technologies

In terms of fair digital information technology risk distribution rules, digital information technology subject usually gets more benefit and undertakes less risk responsibility. In fact, digital information technology risk responsibility subject should bear the same risk responsibility as commensurate with the benefits of technology, however, the current legislation is insufficient in this respect.

Baker described the failure of modern information technology risk regulation phenomenon as “organised irresponsibility”, that is, information technology risk regulation subject responsibility is unclear, and the responsibility of multiple digital technology subject is absent (Gao, & Xing, 2017, 63). AI and other modern scientific information technology will subvert the basis of traditional legal relations, break

the existing legal liability system, the emergence of new subjects and types of liability. The future legislative response needs to address the sharing of responsibility between multiple subjects (Jiao, 2010, 99).

Legal responses to public security risks in China

Based on the current legislative status of China's digital technology public security risk, the response to China's digital technology public security risk needs to further improve the legal system under the concept of risk prevention.

(i) Establishment of the obligations system to prevent public security risks in the digital age

Along with the gradual maturation of the application of digital information technology, the transitional social form has basically taken shape. The national public security risk prevention and control policy on digital technology should also be gradually established from unilateral encouragement of development to emphasis on development and risk prevention. The government and its departments should effectively assume the responsibility of regulating the public security risks of digital technology, so as to reduce the occurrence of public security hazards of digital technology.

Firstly, the prevention of public security risks in digital information technology should be achieved through administrative norms. The public security risk caused by digital information technology is a matter involving administrative behavior, information technology risk regulation of the primary basis that is administrative norms, the standards of information technology public security risk often need to cite administrative norms. Therefore, the most direct and effective means of information technology risk control is administrative norms. Such as, the telecom fraud crime criminal punishment has been little effect in China, but the development of telecommunication fraud and other cybercrime has been initially curbed through the formulation of the "Internet Information Service Management Measures" and other

administrative norms, which strengthen the network service provider's network security management obligations as well as to strengthen the administrative organs of the network crime control collaboration.

Secondly, the management of serious public risks of digital information technology should be supplemented by criminal norms. In the face of the prominence of digital information technology risks in the risk society, the prevention and control of new types of risks in the risk society by means of Criminal Law is necessary and legit (Ye, 2018, 88). The realisation of risk control cannot be achieved without the safeguard of Criminal Law, and when the risks have already been transformed into socially hazardous behaviours in large quantities, the other non-Criminal Law norms can no longer be effectively adjusted, and this makes it necessary to consider the intervention of Criminal Law norms in that particular behaviour. Therefore, Criminal Law norms can only be used as a necessary supplementary means of network information technology risk control, but not as a preventive means of information technology risk offences. On the one hand, government departments should strengthen the supervision of information technology research and development of information technology by risk-making subjects such as network information technology developers and users, and pay attention to the security loopholes and defects of digital information technology itself, so as to ensure that the risk of negative value of digital information technology itself is within a reasonable and controllable range, and thus reduce the possibility of the crime of negative value risk of information technology. On the other hand, the government should regulate the process of using digital information technology tools, bring into play the value of their legitimate use, and reduce the risk of cyber information technology being used as a criminal tool. For example, in response to the high incidence of cyber information technology crimes and regulatory dilemmas, Criminal Law Amendment (IX) added three cybercrime offences, namely, the offence of refusing to fulfil the obligation of information network security management, the offence of illegally using information networks, and the offence of assisting in the criminal activities of information networks. However,

at present, there are still some problems, such as ambiguous standards for the identification of offences in cyberspace, and gaps in government supervision, which require the government to strengthen supervision and clarify the standards.

(ii) Clarifying the principle of reciprocal responsibility
for public security risks

The mechanism for generating digital technology public security risk offences indicates that digital information technology risks originate from multiple risk-responsible subjects, and that the allocation of responsibility among multiple digital information technology public security risk-responsible subjects is the key to the regulation of digital information technology risk offences. In order to promote rapid economic and social development, the government and enterprises pay more attention to technological innovation and development, and even ignore the existing public security obligations in terms of technological innovation. Once the relevant subjects of digital technology make technological breakthroughs or the technology is widely used, they usually obtain huge economic benefits. Driven by huge benefits, technology subjects have a strong motivation to innovate and promote technology application. However, at the same time, they are less responsible for the social and public risks caused by the technology, and the legal norms are more tolerant to the technological risks. As the influence of digital technology becomes more and more widespread, the degree of social tolerance for public security caused by digital technology must be redefined and regulated, so that those who profit from the application of technology also bear the responsibility for public security risks, and the reciprocity of rights and responsibilities can be realised. Therefore, the effective way to improve the regulation of public security risks arising from digital information technology is to set up the risk responsibility of multiple responsible subjects in accordance with the principle of reciprocal risk responsibility, and to incorporate those digital security risk factors into the scope of the responsible subjects that have been removed from the boundaries of traditional regulation.

(iii) Improvement of the system for allocating responsibility for public security risks among multiple technical subjects

Responsibility for the risks of digital information technology should be shared between those who develop and those who apply digital information technology. This includes the developers, users and maintainers of digital network information technology, as well as all those who use digital network information technology in the governance of society, all of whom should bear the corresponding responsibility for their actions. In the governance of public security risks of digital information technology, China may improve the responsibility of the main risk makers of network information technology based on the risk creation of the main risk makers of network information technology, according to the principle of reciprocity of rights and meanings. So as to ensure that the negative-value risks and instrumental risks of digital technology are compressed to the minimum, and the incidence of harmful consequences of digital technology risks is reduced to a minimum, the obligations of digital technology risk makers to ensure the safety of digital technology and the procedures for the safe use of digital technology should be clarified through legislation, and the causal relationship between digital information technology risks and harmful consequences should be strictly defined through legislation, the rigorous law enforcement and supervision should be carried out.

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An Analysis of Social Concept in Guangdong's Overseas Chinese Hometowns During Modern Times – a Case Study of Toisan Overseas Chinese Hometowns

In the aftermath of the Opium War in 1840, modern Chinese society was confronted with a multifaceted predicament, wherein the processes of modernization and the retention of traditional cultural practices were inextricably intertwined. This phenomenon was particularly prevalent in Guangdong, particularly in the overseas Chinese hometowns of Toisan (台山), wherefrom a significant number of people migrated overseas. The remittance brought by overseas Chinese promoted the development of the financial industry, urbanization and education in the local society. This was accompanied by a collision of concepts pertaining to economic production, public affairs management, as well as marriage and love in the overseas Chinese society with those of the traditional rural society. During this period, the juxtaposition of modern and traditional concepts was not a dichotomy, but rather, a synthesis of traditional humanistic care and the pursuit of modern civilization. This synthesis was characterised by the coexistence of modernization and localization.

Keywords: modernization, overseas Chinese hometowns (侨乡), social concept of Toisan

Introduction

Among the social changes that have occurred in modern China, those occurring in rural areas are particularly noteworthy. In particular, in the southern Chinese region, the tradition of overseas Chinese migration can be traced back to the Song Dynasty. Following

the Opium War, a significant influx of overseas Chinese was observed in South China. These individuals hailed not only from the urban centres of the region but also from rural areas, and they played a pivotal role in the social transformation of these local communities. As early as the 1930s, scholars such as Chen Da identified the contribution of overseas migrants to the modernization of overseas Chinese village societies.¹ Subsequently, scholars built upon and expanded upon the research ideas initially proposed by Chen Da. Lin Jinzhi, Zhuang Weigui, and others from the economic field have conducted research examining the modern period of overseas Chinese investment in overseas Chinese hometowns, with the objective of promoting the modernization of overseas Chinese society.² A number of scholars have conducted research in overseas Chinese hometowns with the objective of gathering data and analysing the contribution of overseas Chinese individuals in the realms of politics, education and public welfare within these communities.³ In recent years, research on the social and cultural evolution of overseas Chinese hometowns has gradually emerged as a distinct area of study. Firstly, the theory of “Transnationalism” has

¹ Chen Da. *The Southeast Overseas Chinese and the societies of Fujianese and Cantonese*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2011.

² Lin Jinzhi, & Zhuang Weigui (eds.). *Selected Materials on the History of Overseas Chinese Investment in Domestic Enterprises in Modern Times (Guangdong Volume)*. Fuzhou: Fujian People's Publishing House, 1989.

³ Lin Jinzhi, Li Guoliang, & Cai Xinglong (eds.). *Overseas Chinese in the Chinese Revolution and Construction*. Fuzhou: Fujian People's Publishing House, 1993; Ren Guixiang, & Zhao Hongying. *The Relationship between Overseas Chinese and the Kuomintang and the Communist Party*. Wuhan: Wuhan Publishing House, 1999; Ren Guixiang, & Li Yinghui. *The Relationship between Overseas Chinese and the Construction of the State*. Nanjing: Nanjing University Publishing House, 2015; Zhuang Guoguo. *The Interrelationship Between Overseas Chinese and China*. Guangzhou: Guangdong Higher Educational Press, 2001; Zheng Fuye. Overseas Migration and the Evolutions of the Educational Structure in River Delta Emigrant Towns during Modern Times. *Studies on South China Sea Issues*, 4, 1996; Qiao Yinwei. Overseas Chinese in Pujiang during the Late Qing Dynasty and Their Education Managed by Overseas Chinese. *Journal of Huaqiao University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2, 1999.

been introduced to explain the interaction between overseas Chinese and overseas Chinese hometowns. Duan Ying has also analysed the impact of the public welfare and charity traditions of overseas Chinese on the daily life of the villagers, the construction of the rural society, and the cultural production of the villages.⁴ Secondly, she analyses the role of overseas Chinese on the social life and cultural change of the hometowns of overseas Chinese from three perspectives: the characteristic architecture of the hometowns, the demographic groups, and the clans of the hometowns. The distinctive architectural heritage of the diaspora has consistently been a focal point of scholarly interest. Researchers have sought to elucidate the contemporary diaspora's capacity for accommodating Western cultural influences through an examination of architectural manifestations.⁵ Shen Huifen, in contrast, employs a gender-theoretical and visual approach to examine the role of wives left behind in overseas Chinese villages within the context of their families and societies. This contributes to the advancement of scholarship on women in overseas Chinese villages and their societies and cultures in the modern era.⁶ In his study of the Kaiping Guan clan in Guangdong, Canadian Chinese scholar Yuan-fong Woon examined the impact of overseas remittances on the social structure and cultural organization of overseas Chinese between 1885 and 1949. He similarly posited that overseas Chinese were the driving force behind social change and

⁴ Duan Ying. Transnational Networks, Philanthropic Traditions and Hometown Society: A Case Study of De Village in Songkou, Meizhou. *Journal of Sun Yat-sen University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 4, 2013.

⁵ Zhang Guoxiong. The Active Acceptance of Western Culture by the People in the Overseas Chinese Hometown as Evidenced in Kaiping Diaolou. *Journal of Hubei University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 5, 2004; Zhang Yinglong. Input and Output: A Comprehensive Analytical on the Cultural Attributes of Guangdong Overseas Chinese Hometowns – Focusing on the Architectural Cultures of Wuyi and Chaozhou Overseas Chinese Hometowns. *Journal of Overseas Chinese History Studies*, 3, 2006; Tan Jinhua. *An In-depth Study of the Architectural Decoration of Kaiping Diaolou and Villages*. Beijing: China Overseas Publishing House, 2013.

⁶ Huifen Shen. *Chino's Left-Behind wives: Families of Migrants from Fujian to Southeast Asia, 1930s–1950s*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press and Hong Kong University, 2012.

the preservation of traditional culture. Furthermore, Huachen indicates that in the course of advancing the modernization of their places of origin, overseas migrants also reinforced the cultural customs of their societies of origin.⁷

In essence, the scholars' studies focus on the overseas Chinese as the primary subject and examine the interrelationship between the overseas Chinese and Guangdong's overseas Chinese society. It is posited that during the modern period, overseas Chinese played a pivotal role in the modernization of Guangdong's overseas Chinese society. Furthermore, the overseas Chinese hometowns is regarded as a distinctive form of contemporary Chinese countryside. It is notable that the overseas Chinese society originated from the traditional Chinese rural society. Like other modern Chinese villages, it faced the same challenge of reconciling tradition and modernity. This posed the question of how to navigate the tensions between these two forces. As the overseas Chinese are a mobile group, the squire group, overseas Chinese households and non-overseas households in the overseas Chinese community have produced different social concepts from other non-overseas traditional rural societies in Guangdong. This is an aspect that should be taken into account in further studies of modernization and change in traditional rural societies of modern China in South China. Consequently, an investigation into the conceptual conflicts and integration encountered by contemporary overseas Chinese communities, coupled with an analysis of the "subjectivity" and "adaptability" of Guangdong's overseas Chinese societies, will facilitate a more profound examination of the potential for the advancement of China's traditional local societies and cultures.

⁷ James L Watson. *Emigration and Chinese Lineage the Mans in Hong Kong and London*. Berkeley: Berkeley University of California Press, 1975; Presidential Address Virtual Kinship Real Estate and Diaspora Formation The Man Lineage Revisited. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 63(4), November, 2004, 893-910.

The formation of the overseas Chinese hometown of Toisan in modern era

The formation of overseas Chinese hometowns has its own special historical background, not the overseas Chinese abroad, their hometown on the formation of “overseas Chinese hometowns”. It refers not only to China’s immigrant output, according to the consensus of most scholars, the formation of overseas Chinese hometowns have four important conditions: a large number of overseas Chinese family members, close ties between home and abroad, remittances, commodity economy developed, high level of culture and education.⁸ The important connotation thereof is that due to the close contact between overseas Chinese and their overseas Chinese family members, thus showing different characteristics from non-overseas hometowns in social, economic and cultural aspects. Although overseas Chinese have been going abroad since the Tang and Song dynasties, the formation of overseas Chinese hometowns did not begin in the Tang and Song dynasties. Due to the “sea ban” policy implemented by the Ming and Qing dynasties, overseas Chinese have long been regarded as permanent residents in the country of residence, and it was stipulated that they were “not allowed to return to the mainland”, so the political, economic and cultural ties between the overseas Chinese and their hometowns were severed, and their relatives did not dare to admit that someone in their family had gone abroad. Their relatives did not dare to recognize that anyone in their families had left the country. Therefore, the connection between overseas Chinese and their hometowns in China is not too close, and they have no influence on their hometowns, and there is not much difference between them and other villages in the same period of time, so they cannot be regarded as forming overseas Chinese hometowns.

Following the initial Opium War between China and Britain in 1840, the overseas Chinese population in Guangdong became increasingly integrated with their hometowns in China. This historical

⁸ Fang Xiongpu. *The Encyclopedia of Overseas Chinese (Volume on Hometowns)*. Beijing: China Overseas Chinese Publishing House, 2001, 803.

context shaped the formation of the Overseas Chinese hometowns. In the 197 years preceding the Opium War, the rate of Chinese overseas immigration was gradual and the scale was modest. The primary locations of immigration were the commercial towns situated along the coasts and harbours of Southeast Asia. Following the Opium War, the number of immigrants increased markedly, reaching 7–9 million in the 1910s.⁹ The precise period during which overseas Chinese hometowns were established is a topic of contention among scholars. Some posit that the formation of these hometowns can be traced back to 1893, a year marked by the introduction of a special policy by the Qing dynasty. “As of now, regardless of the duration of their stay abroad, merchants and civilians overseas are generally permitted to return to their homeland for livelihood and property acquisition. Their going abroad for business purposes is also allowed.”¹⁰ This decree marked the conclusion of the “sea ban” policy and the formal acknowledgment of the right of overseas Chinese to engage in maritime activities. This paved the way for overseas Chinese to enjoy the freedom to travel back and forth to China, maintain ties with their homeland, and preserve their familial connections. The establishment of overseas Chinese hometowns was a pivotal outcome of this decree.¹¹ Nevertheless, when analysing the freedom of overseas Chinese to travel abroad, it is imperative to consider

⁹ Zheng Min, & Liang Chuyi (eds.). *Research Collection of Overseas Chinese History (I)*. Beijing: Ocean Press, 1989, 5. The American scholar C. F. Remer estimated the number of overseas Chinese to be 7 million during the period of 1899–1913 in his book *China's Foreign Trade*, cited in Tu Kaiyu. *Overseas Chinese*. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1934, 75.

¹⁰ “自今商民在外洋，无问久暂，概许回国治生置业，其经商出洋亦听之。”

¹¹ The original designation of the document, the “Supplementary Treaty Between China and Britain,” stipulates: “Any Chinese national who expresses a willingness to emigrate or to undertake work in any place under British jurisdiction, or in other overseas locations, is permitted to enter into a contract with a British subject as proof of their intention to do so. “Regardless of marital status or intention to bring dependents, individuals are permitted to proceed to any trading port and board British vessels without hindrance” (原称《中英续增条约》) 规定: “凡有华民情甘出口, 或在英国所属各处, 或在外洋另地承工, 俱准与英民立约为凭, 无论单身或愿携带家属一并赴通商各口, 下英国船只, 毫无禁阻”。)

not only the formal abolition of the previous regulations, particularly in the Guangdong region, but also the broader socio-political context. In 1860, the Qing government was compelled to sign the Sino-British Treaty of Beijing, which served as the legal foundation for Britain, France and other Western powers to recruit Chinese workers within China. This resulted in a significant influx of indentured Chinese workers in the Guangdong region, and the original policy of prohibiting Chinese individuals from travelling abroad was also relaxed, enabling Chinese workers to pursue opportunities in foreign countries. The original policy of prohibiting Chinese from emigrating was also relaxed, rendering the migration of Chinese workers abroad a legal act. This effectively nullified the Qing government's decree of prohibiting merchants from going abroad. Subsequently, the connection between overseas Chinese and their hometowns has been reinforced, and the volume of remittances sent back to their hometowns through "Shui Ke" (水客), merchants engaged in the trade of goods), money changers, and banks has increased, particularly in the Toisan area, where there is a strong bond between overseas Chinese and their hometowns, and a more pronounced impact on their hometowns. In light of these developments, the Qing government decided to abolish the "sea ban" policy in 1893, as it deemed the formation of overseas Chinese hometowns to be an important demarcation line. This indicates that as Guangdong's overseas Chinese hometowns were gradually established, local villagers were undergoing the Hundred Days' Reform (戊戌变法), during which the Qing dynasty initiated the Foreign Affairs Movement (洋务运动) and the Guangxu Emperor endeavoured to implement political reforms. This resulted in the modernization of the economy, education and culture in some areas. However, in general, these regions remained within the framework of feudalism, with traditional Chinese culture retaining its dominant position.¹² The formation of Toisan's overseas Chinese hometown is a phenomenon that can be traced back to the 1860s. In 1851, gold was

¹² Fei Sheng. *Reclaiming Jinshan*. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 2021, 113.

discovered in Melbourne, Australia, and Toisan Chinese Lei Yamei disseminated the information to her hometown. By 1852, there were already groups of Chinese miners in the Victoria Goldfields. The Pacific Rim Gold Rush of the 1860s provided an opportunity for individuals seeking a way out of Guangdong's Pearl River Delta, particularly in the Toisan, Xinhui, and Kaiping regions. In 1868, China and the United States signed the Treaty of Peking, which included Article V, a legal provision regarding the legal exchanges between the people of China and the United States.¹³ This treaty provided legitimacy for the movement of merchants and people between China and the U.S. The majority of these merchants and people originated from the Toisan, Xinhui, and Kaiping regions of Guangdong. Following the 1860s, Toisan's overseas Chinese gradually became more closely connected to their hometowns. The remittances they brought with them had a significant impact on the society of Toisan. In the modern period, Toisan County in Guangdong Province constituted the epicentre of the four overseas Chinese communities. The Ningyang Cunzhi (宁阳存牒), a document written by the county magistrate, Li Daoping, during the Guangxu period, offers a concise account of the changes that occurred in Toisan.

The territory of Ningyi was originally unproductive and arid, and the local customs have perpetually emphasized frugality and simplicity. Since the Tongzhi era, numerous individuals who ventured abroad have returned to China with capital. They have erected houses, presenting a completely refreshed appearance. In the aspects of clothing, transportation, and diet, they exclusively pursue grandeur. Concerning matters of marriage, there remains a competition for extravagance and luxury, and the social ambiance has undergone a substantial transformation.¹⁴

¹³ Yan Qinghuang. *Chinese Overseas Workers and Qing Dynasty Officials: The Protection of Overseas Chinese by China during the Late Qing Period (1851–1911)*. Beijing: China Friendship Publishing House, 1990.

¹⁴ “宁邑地本瘠苦，风俗素崇俭朴。自同治以来，出洋之人多获资回华。营造屋宇，焕然一新。服御饮食，专尚华美。婚嫁之事，犹斗靡奢华，风气大变。” Li Daoping, *Ningyang Cun Du*, printed in the Yue Dong Sheng Cheng g, The twenty-fourth annum of the reign of Emperor Guangxu, 1899, 65.

The county of Toisan was formerly known as Xinning (新宁), and its former name was Ningyang (宁阳). This was its sobriquet. Li Daoping's account demonstrates how the traditional frugal way of life in Toisan was transformed by the introduction of a "foreign style" of living, influenced by the growing power of overseas Chinese. In comparison to the average income of the local population, the foreigners introduced a greater level of affluence, which led to significant changes in Toisan society. These changes were observed in various aspects of daily life, including residence, dress, food, marriage, and lifestyle. The traditional frugal lifestyle of the local people also underwent a transformation. Li Daoping explicitly highlighted that this shift began during the Tongzhi period (1862–1875), when the foreigners introduced a greater level of affluence. From the Tongzhi period (1862–1875 onwards). Furthermore, the demographic composition of the labour force in Toisan underwent a transformation.

A comprehensive investigation into the livelihood of the people in Toisan indicates that, with respect to men, approximately six to seven tenths have emigrated abroad. One to two tenths are engaged in business or farming and fishing within the country, and one to two tenths are idle and refrain from engaging in productive activities. In the instance of women, approximately eight to nine tenths are eating without work, and merely one to two tenths are involved in productive work.¹⁵

The conflict between the modernization process of Toisan and traditional indigenous concepts

Since the formation of the overseas Chinese community in Toisan, the people in the overseas Chinese community have had contact with overseas countries in all aspects of their daily lives. As a result of

¹⁵ “查台山人民生计，以男子言，出洋者约占十之六七，在国内从事商业或从事耕渔者约占十之一二，其坐食不事生产者约占十之一二。以妇女言，坐食者约占十之八九，其从事生产者又仅占十之一二而已”。Huang Tiezheng. “Toisan County Middle School Fundraising Plan”. *Special Edition for Fundraising to Support Hu Principal's Study Abroad in Taichung*, 1930.

the entry of overseas resources and changes in the political and economic situation overseas, their mindsets have undergone significant transformation. Concurrently, traditional culture has exerted a profound and pervasive influence on the overseas Chinese community.

The overseas Chinese remittances in Toisan have played a significant role in the evolution and transformation of the overseas Chinese society in Toisan, particularly in the expansion of the financial sector. The term “overseas Chinese remittance” is used to describe the transfer of funds from overseas Chinese individuals to China. These funds are primarily used for the support of family members, charitable donations and investment. It should be noted that this is not a trade in foreign exchange.¹⁶ In the pre-modern era, the traditional rural Toisan family's economic income was primarily derived from land ownership. Landlords employed laborers to generate the value of production, with some farmers receiving meagre wages from landlords to support their families.¹⁷ The substantial inflow of remittances has had a significant impact on the traditional economic structure of Toisan's overseas Chinese villages. Given the generally low level of economic development in these communities, remittances are primarily utilized to support family livelihoods. They serve to address the daily necessities of family life, gradually becoming a crucial source of income for overseas Chinese families. Food, clothing, housing, and transportation are all dependent on remittances to sustain daily life. The volume of remittances from Toisan overseas Chinese is among the highest in the four overseas Chinese hometowns and even in Guangdong overseas Chinese hometowns.

Given their involvement in international finance and international postal operations, remittances play a distinctive role in China's balance of payments, increasing the country's foreign exchange reserves, enhancing its financial and foreign trade capacity, and connecting Chinese and

¹⁶ Zhang Xiaoxin. *Continuity and Transformation: An In-depth Study of the Management Policies of Guangdong Remittance Industry from 1949 to 1956*. Guangzhou: Jinan University Press, 2017, 1.

¹⁷ Tong Xin. The Livelihood Issues in Taishan. *Taichung Fortnightly Journal*, Issue 5, 1929.

foreign postal transportation. As overseas Chinese remittances continue to flow into Toisan, the Toisan overseas Chinese financial industry is experiencing accelerated growth, becoming a prominent contributor to the local economy. The financial industry has emerged as a crucial economic sector for overseas Chinese investment. In 1890, Taicheng Ren'an Pharmacy operated overseas Chinese remittances, with a capital of 1 million. Subsequently, a head office was established in Hong Kong, while a branch was set up in Guangzhou. During the Republic of China period, there were 12 new-style banks, 1 private trust company, in excess of 160 gold and silver money changers, and 2 foreign savings associations in Toisan.¹⁸

The development of the financial industry in the overseas Chinese hometowns of Toisan has given rise to the concept of mercantilism and influenced the traditional farming concept. The growth of the financial sector in overseas Chinese communities in Toisan has led to a shift in social perceptions, with local residents increasingly viewing those engaged in business as occupying a more esteemed position within the social hierarchy. This marks a departure from the traditional view of businessmen as belonging to a lower social class, challenging the long-standing scholar-peasant-industrialist ranking system.¹⁹ Furthermore, they considered business to be their primary objective and land ownership as a supplementary pursuit. The population mobility that characterised the diaspora has facilitated the sale of land by families in the diaspora, enabling them to provide financial support for overseas Chinese. This has intensified the flow of land in the diaspora through diversified land transactions, thereby affected and changed the traditional principle that family land is not to be bought and sold.

¹⁸ Taishan Financial Compilation Group. *The Financial Chronicle of Taishan*. Taishan: Taishan Financial Compilation Group, 1988, 14.

¹⁹ "Shi Nong Gong Shang" formed the social hierarchy in ancient China, which was ranked according to the degree of social contribution. "Shi", referring to scholars and officials, occupied the first position; "Nong", referring to farmers, was the second; "Gong", referring to skilled craftsmen, was the third; and "Shang", representing merchants, was the fourth.

The substantial inflow of overseas remittances has played a pivotal role in the emergence of Toisan's overseas Chinese social urbanization. In the modern era, Chinese migrants from Toisan have predominantly settled in North America, particularly in the United States. They have established businesses in major urban centres across the country, or have secured employment in manufacturing and service industries. As a consequence of the long-term settlement in North America, which has been profoundly influenced by industrial civilization, the Chinese have experienced a profound degree of westernisation. They engage in investment activities through remittances or by returning to Toisan, thereby contributing to a significant degree of urbanisation. This urbanisation, which represents the most notable manifestation of the development of rural markets, is evidenced by the gradual transformation of the original countryside bazaars into small towns and similar municipalities. One such municipality is Toisan Duanfen hometowns Tingjiang Wei. Some municipalities were designed from the outset to be market-centred, establishing locations for year-round commercial trade exchanges that were similar in their function to the beginnings of modern commercial cities. This evident intention to create a public social space demonstrates the significant influence of modern urbanisation in Toisan.²⁰ Following the completion of the Xinning Railway, there were in excess of 100 commercial ports in Toisan County, resulting in the formation of a modern urban-rural commercial network in Siyi.

The formation and development of municipalisation in Toisan's overseas Chinese villages has prompted a re-evaluation of the traditional approach to governing public affairs based on clan lineage, paving the way for a more modern concept of public management services. In the traditional mode of governance of village affairs, decisions are typically made collectively by traditional clans. In a document from the Republic of China, the individual responsible for overseeing the establishment of a new trade market asserted that the existing market was

²⁰ Official documents of the Republic of China, cited in Zhang Guoxiong. *Lingnan Wuyi*. Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 2005, 148.

dominated by clans and could only be accessed by members of clans with identical blood relationships. “In the Tingjiang River basin (汀江流域), which encompasses approximately twenty miles in all directions, more than 20,000 individuals of diverse surnames reside in clustered communities. Within this basin, despite the existence of market towns to some extent, their scale is outdated and the facilities are rudimentary. This is by no means adequate to satisfy the desires of all people and provide them with the necessary space for manoeuvring. The organization is constricted, dominated under the sway of one clan, pervaded with the atmosphere of a patriarchal society, and leaves no latitude for people to move freely... Recognizing this, it is contended that all people have an urgent necessity to rise up and jointly establish a new market.”²¹ The establishment of new markets is intended to provide a means of circumventing the influence of clan power. It is designed to be accessible to all local people and to reflect the economic activities in the field. It is based on the concept of equal sharing of public operating space, which represents a challenge to the traditional rural clan concept. Currently, public space is limited to the use of the family by the blood-related family.

Following the twentieth century, the accelerated municipalisation of Toisan’s overseas Chinese society saw a significant influx of townspeople into urban areas. This resulted in a conceptual shift whereby the traditional concept of the family was confronted with the impact of the modern sense of freedom and equality. As evidenced in contemporary newspaper archives, the traditional Chinese patriarchal concept was undergoing a significant transformation. Prior to the modern era, Toisan exhibited a pronounced patriarchal ethos, wherein the authority

²¹ “我汀江流域，纵横约二十余里，各姓聚族而居者，逾二万人。在此流域中，并非绝无圩市惟是规模陈旧，设施简陋，殊不足以履各姓人之欲望，而供各姓人之回旋；其组织狭隘，支配于一姓一族势力之下，充塞宗法社会空气，更不容各姓人以自由回旋之余地……有见及此，以为各姓人有急起共组新市场之必要。” Republic of China Public Calf, cited in Zhang Guoxiong. *Lingnan Wuyi*. Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 2005, 148.

of parents was held in high regard. At that time, it was described, as follows:

Ever since the advent of overseas Chinese, having been exposed to the notions of freedom and equality overseas, upon their return to the homeland, equipped with economic might, they have arisen to assert their civil rights and are no longer disposed to tolerate the oppression of their parents. Consequently, the authority and directives of parents have been significantly undermined. Formerly, the large-family system in Toisan was highly consolidated, with multiple generations residing together and sharing meals and accommodations. But presently, the small-family system is gradually being embraced. Newly married couples are setting up new families of their own and are disinclined to cohabit with their parents, siblings, and sisters-in-law, nor do they depend on their old families for support any longer.²²

It is evident that patriarchal ideologies and traditional notions of parental authority have been significantly eroded by the influx of overseas Chinese, who have introduced a new set of values centred on freedom and equality.

The concept of marriage is evolving in overseas Chinese hometowns, as evidenced by the emergence of new forms of unions that challenge the traditional patriarchal system of designated arranged marriages. In these communities, the role of parents and matchmakers is being redefined, and individuals are increasingly exercising agency in the choice of their marital partner.²³ This is also reflected in the local press, "Amid the vehement call for free love, a significant number of young men and women have acquired the autonomy to choose their

²² "近代以前,台山的宗法观念浓厚,家长的威权超越一切。当时有人描述,"自从有华侨以来,因为他们在海外受过自由平等思想的熏陶,回到祖国来,挟着经济的力量,便起来主张他们的民权,再不甘忍受家长的压迫,所以现在家长的命令和威权,扫地殆尽力了。台山从前大家族制度很巩固,数代同堂,食宿不分,但现在小家庭制度渐渐采用,新婚夫妇另外组织新家庭,不愿再和他们父母兄弟妯娌同居,不再仰给他们的旧家庭了。" *The Present Situation of Mount Tai and Our Way Out. Ju Zheng Monthly Magazine, 1929.*

²³ "Parental Instruction and Matchmaker's Word": It implies that the marriage of children ought to be determined by their parents and facilitated by a matchmaker.

marriages.”²⁴ “In light of the ubiquity of divorce cases in this locale, virtually every woman who petitions for divorce is granted it. Moreover, in each instance, the man is adjudicated to provide compensation in the form of alimony. Even within a day, multiple divorce cases are ruled in favour of the women.”²⁵ The aforementioned evidence illustrates that unmarried young people in this locality are entitled to autonomy with regard to marriage, and that married women are similarly entitled to autonomy in relation to divorce. This reflects the greater independence enjoyed by Toisan overseas Chinese women in comparison to non-overseas Chinese women.

Nevertheless, the influence of this novel approach to matrimony on the conventional family perception of marriage in the overseas Chinese communities has been relatively constrained, with traditional ethical values continuing to exert a dominant influence. As evidenced by the news and commentary surrounding women published in *Xinning Magazine*, the concept of a free union marriage is not acknowledged or endorsed by Toisan residents, who have been exposed to foreign influences for nearly a century. Consequently, the conventional approach to marital union persists as the dominant paradigm within Toisan society. Amongst those constrained by the traditional Confucian ethics, the men conformed to the ancient conventions such as “mutual respect as if treating a guest” and “not dismissing one’s original spouse even in poverty”, while women adhered to the archaic adage of “following the rooster if married to a chicken and following the dog if married to a dog.” Despite experiencing certain dissatisfaction, over the course of time, they became accustomed to it as a matter of course. Thus, among couples of the old-fashioned kind, there were inevitably some confrontations in their youth, but they naturally developed mutual love

²⁴ “在这自由恋爱的呼声当中，有不少青年男女，得到了婚姻自主权。” Reasons for Divorce among Free Lovers. *XinNing Magazine*, 1931.

²⁵ “按本邑离婚案之盛，以前推事黄汝瀛任内为最，凡女子请求离异者，几于无一不准，且无一不判男子方面补回赡养费，乃至一日之间，判准离异案数起。” Reasons for Judgment against Zhen Ruijin’s Divorce. *Xinning Magazine*, No. 26, 1932.

and respect in their old age.”²⁶ As can be observed, the author of the new style of marriage does not believe that free love and the high rate of divorces are indicative of a societal shift. Instead, the author suggests that marriages arranged by parents, which often involve couples who have been in love for an extended period, represent a continuation of traditional practices. The number of Toisanites who, like the author, espoused a negative attitude towards free love and the new style of marriage, or even openly opposed it, is significant, as evidenced by the report in *Xinning Magazine*. “Subsequent to the betrothal, the elder brother of the girl affirmed that the behavior of the pair was morally unacceptable, thereby triggering extensive public discourse. Consequently, the man, daunted by the public censure and in view of his reputation, contemplated sending a letter to terminate the engagement.”²⁷ This is a local pair of “male and female faculty” who are free to meet and engaged. However, some individuals discuss their free love and marriage in a manner that is contrary to accepted moral standards. As a result, the man became fearful of the potential consequences and chose to withdraw from the marriage, which ultimately caused significant distress to the woman. The matrimony was originally a two-person affair, but it was ultimately disrupted by the intervention of relatives. Despite the long-standing contact between Toisan and Western culture and its relative enlightenment compared to other mainland Chinese counties, the area of marriage remains subject to significant social and ethical constraints.

²⁶ “束缚在旧礼教底下的人，男的守着‘相敬如宾’‘糟糠不下堂’的古义，女的守着‘嫁鸡随鸡嫁狗随狗’的旧说，虽然有点不如意，久之遂习为固然。所以旧式的夫妇，少年时不免有多少反目，到老来自然相爱相敬。” Reasons for divorce among free-lovers. *Xin Ning Magazine*, No. 3, 1927.

²⁷ “诂订婚之后，女之大伯，谓两人如此行为，有伤风化，因之人言啧啧，而男方也因人言可畏，”名誉所关，拟贻书退婚。” Marriage between male and female teachers. *Xin Ning Magazine*, No. 25, 1922.

The process of modernizing Toisan and incorporating traditional indigenous concepts

In the modern period, the overseas Chinese hometowns in Toisan were closely connected with the outside world, and local education and social relations also exhibited a more pronounced tendency towards modernization. The social concepts of the overseas Chinese people were markedly distinct from those of the traditional rural population. This is evidenced by the coexistence of modern and traditional concepts within their ideology and consciousness.

The dedication of overseas Chinese society to traditional Chinese humanistic care and the pursuit of modern civilization are both important, and this is more typical of Toisan education, especially Toisan girls' education. In comparison to non-overseas hometown areas, the level of modernization in the education sector in Toisan overseas Chinese hometowns is striking. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was a notable surge in the enthusiasm of overseas Chinese in Toisan for providing financial support to establish schools. This led to the closure of private schools and the establishment of new schools, which played a pivotal role in advancing the field of education in overseas Chinese hometowns. The rationale behind this is that Toisan is still predominantly agrarian, and the overseas Chinese population is generally characterized by a low cultural level, with a significant proportion of individuals lacking basic literacy skills. In their overseas lives, they were subjected to bullying and had low literacy levels. They were reluctant for their descendants to follow in their footsteps and become impoverished farmers like them. Secondly, the late Qing Dynasty established new types of modern schools in the Republic of China, which were then popularized throughout the country. Overseas Chinese were eager to accept scientific knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of traditional teaching methods. Therefore, they were more interested in donating to schools that taught modern scientific knowledge.²⁸

²⁸ Yang Xueling. *Reform and Opening-up and the Overseas Chinese from Fujian*. Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, 1999, 204.

“Statistical evidence indicates that between the years 1912 and 1945, Toisan overseas Chinese individuals and organizations collectively donated the construction of up to 78 primary and secondary educational establishments”.²⁹ In this regard, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education inspector commended the advancement of education in Toisan as a model for emulation, saying that “Within the jurisdiction of the county, the educational infrastructure is exceptionally developed, surpassing that of other regions in the province with respect to primary and secondary schools. The construction of school edifices frequently demands an investment amounting to tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of yuan.”³⁰

On the one hand, the overseas Chinese villages in Toisan placed a particular emphasis on women's education, with the objective of fostering the positive character traits traditionally associated with Chinese women. In the 1930s, Chen Da (陈达) observed that overseas Chinese communities in Chaoshan (潮汕) placed a greater emphasis on women's education than those in the interior of China. This was evident in the equal education of children and the expectation that daughters would enter the workforce, similar to their male counterparts, or that women would support their husbands in business. It was anticipated that upon reaching adulthood, the daughters would assume roles in the same commercial establishments as their male counterparts. Alternatively, upon marriage, the women could provide financial support to their husbands, enabling them to contribute to the family business.³¹ Notably,

²⁹ The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the People's Government of Taishan County. *The Chronicle of Overseas Chinese in Taishan County*. Taishan: The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the People's Government of Taishan County, 1992, 120–126.

³⁰ “县境之内，学校发达，甲于全省中小学，校舍之建筑动辄用资数万乃至十数万元。” Compiled by the Education Department of Guangdong Province. *The Report on the Inspection of School Affairs across Guangdong Province by Provincial Inspectors in the 17th Year of the Republic of China*. Zhenping Printing Bureau, 1929, 112–113.

³¹ Chen Da. *The Southeast Overseas Chinese and the societies of Fujianese and Cantonese*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2011, 198.

the rise in female education is aligned with the pragmatic and utilitarian approach to education among the overseas Chinese. The overseas Chinese also considered the potential benefits of enhancing the level of women's education in order to strengthen their status upon marriage. It was perceived that women were not primarily responsible for maintaining the family's economy, and thus parents sought to prolong their daughters' education in the hope of enhancing their status upon marriage.³² In the light of these considerations, overseas Chinese encouraged their daughters to pursue studies, while simultaneously advocating for the admission of female students to educational institutions managed by overseas Chinese or the establishment of women's schools. In March 1907, the Qing government promulgated China's inaugural charter for women's colleges, entitled "The Ministry of Education of Women's Primary Schools" (学部奏定女子小学堂章程), comprising 26 articles. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education issued the "Charter of Women's Teachers' Training College" (学部奏定女子师范学堂章程). The Chinese government enacted legislation that guaranteed and facilitated the advancement of women's education. In 1908, Toisan founded the Shushan Girls' School, thereby creating a legally recognized space for women from Toisan to pursue their education. Subsequently, the overseas Chinese community in Toisan was characterized by a proliferation of educational institutions for girls.³³ At that time, the people of Toisan believed that the need to develop women's education was mainly to make women become "good wives and mothers", which was conducive to family harmony and the development of society and the country. Firstly, "Women are the mothers of the citizenry. Throughout history, the mothers of eminent and heroic figures have invariably been virtuous and sagacious." Only when women acquire education for themselves and possess knowledge and wisdom can they educate their offspring effectively and become good mothers. Secondly, "A man must have a virtuous and supportive spouse in order to concentrate single-mindedly on lofty enterprises. If women do

³² Chen Da. *The Southeast Overseas Chinese and the societies of Fujianese and Cantonese*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2011, 210.

³³ A correct view of girls' education. *Xinning Magazine*, No. 6, 1913.

not receive education, not only are they unable to assist men but they will also constitute an impediment.”³⁴ Hence, women only accept education in order to assist their husbands to achieve a career.

Conversely, the education of women in contemporary Toisan overseas Chinese communities prioritized the nurturing of contemporary independent personalities and the involvement of new women in societal development. The traditional women of Toisan “Roughly eight or nine out of ten individuals are unearned beneficiaries, whereas merely one or two out of ten are engaged in productive activities [...] Women merely know to rely upon the provisions from their husbands who are thousands of miles distant, like caged birds.”³⁵ However, the demographic structure of the hometown and the role of women in social life have undergone significant changes due to the large-scale migration of young and middle-aged men to work abroad. As a result, women are now not only responsible for family care but also for assuming leadership roles in the production and financial management of their families. The traditional concept of a woman’s lack of talent as a virtue is no longer aligned with the evolving context of overseas Chinese hometowns. The women of these communities are increasingly pursuing education outside the home, driven by intrinsic motivation and shaped by a growing consensus both within and beyond their communities.³⁶ It is therefore essential to facilitate their transition towards greater independence, enhance their consciousness and capacity for self-reliance, and ultimately become

³⁴ 第一, “女子者, 国民之母也。古来伟人豪杰, 其母未有不贤明者”, 女子只有自己接受教育, 有学识有智慧, 才能教育好子女, 做个好母亲; 第二, “夫人必有贤内助, 而后能专心一志于远大之事业。女子不学, 则不独不能为男子之助, 又从而牵累之。” Xinning’s promotion of women’s education by organizing a governmental women’s teacher’s college. *Xinning Magazine*, No. 10, 1909.

³⁵ “坐食者约占十之八九, 其从事生产者又仅占十之一二。” “妇女们只知仰给于处在万里外丈夫的供给, 如笼中之鸟。” Huang Tiezheng. Toisan County Middle School Fundraising Plan. *Special Edition for Fundraising to Support Hu Principal’s Study Abroad in Taichung*, 1930.

³⁶ Remarks on International Women’s Day (March 8th). *The Special Edition for the Commemoration of International Women’s Day (March 8th) of Women Teachers’ College*, 1937, 12.

agents of change in the development and progress of the countryside. Consequently, the Toisan Qiaoxiang women's education programme diverges from the conventional focus on traditional women's issues, instead incorporating subjects such as agriculture, rural economy and cooperation, and practical production and labour. This approach enables students to gain first-hand experience of nature and cultivate their interest and proficiency in scientific labour. Toisan places a distinctive emphasis on the training of female educators. The majority of female teachers in primary and secondary schools are of overseas Chinese descent.³⁷ At a fundraising event held in New York City, the principal of Toisan Women's Normal School, Chen Wanhua, delivered a speech to an audience of overseas Chinese:

*The objective is to cultivate the students of female teachers, equipping them with foundational knowledge and wisdom in relation to others, oneself, the family, society, and the state. Furthermore, the students are equipped with professional expertise, enabling them to pursue diverse roles upon graduation. These include teaching in rural areas, engaging in industrial and commercial activities, or pursuing agricultural matters.*³⁸

The objective of this training is to elevate the status of women in Toisan from a dependent class to one that is economically self-reliant. Furthermore, students were deployed to rural areas to serve as rural guides, thereby facilitating the gradual enhancement of the cultural, economic, and agricultural conditions in rural Toisan.³⁹ Some female

³⁷ The List of Current Teaching Staff. *The Commemorative Album for the Inauguration of the New Campus of Taishan County Women's Rural Normal School*, 1934.

³⁸ “我们欲陶养女师的学生，使有对人、对己、对家庭、对社会、对国家的基本智识外，还授以职业上的智能，使她们毕业后分别到乡村去，可以当教师，可以从事工商，可以当农作。” Chen Wanhua. Speech in the Welcoming Conference for Taiwanese Overseas Chinese. *Women's Division School Journal*, No. 26, 1936.

³⁹ “使台山的妇女从依附男子以生活的阶层中变成一个经济上可以独立的人。又这般把学生分发到农村去，变成农村的指导者，使台山乡村的文化上、经济上、农业上均逐渐有相当的改进。” Chen Wanhua. Speech in the Welcoming Conference for Taiwanese Overseas Chinese. *The Journal of the Women's Normal School*, No. 26, 1936.

students returned to their hometowns after graduation to assume teaching roles in elementary schools or to engage in public service, thereby contributing to the advancement of female education in Toisan's overseas Chinese villages and to the transformation of their society.

The modern Toisan overseas Chinese society has not entirely eschewed the traditional concept of education; rather, it has sought to reconcile this with the demands of modernity. The village school, a folk institution for early childhood education in ancient China, constituted the principal mode of grassroots education in China for hundreds of years. The schoolmasters were held in high esteem by the townspeople, not only as teachers but also as exemplars of virtue. This was true in Toisan as well. However, with the advent of new-style education, the efficacy of village schools came under increasing scrutiny. Towards the end of the Qing Dynasty, *Xinning Magazine* published a plethora of comments that were highly critical of private school education. The magazine highlighted that the teachers at Toisan's traditional teachers were either unable to educate their students effectively, resulting in a multitude of shortcomings and bad habits, or they themselves were unprofessional and did not fulfil their duties as educators. On the other hand, the educators may be unduly harsh, resorting to corporal punishment, which not only inflicts physical harm but also erodes the students' sense of honour and shame. Conversely, some educators may be excessively pedantic, focusing solely on memorization, which can also have detrimental effects on the students' physical well-being and their sense of honour and shame. "Alternatively, they are excessively pedantic and fail to consider the most effective pedagogical approaches, instead relying on rote memorization, which severely impairs students' practical abilities."⁴⁰ The educational methods and content employed by private schools were perceived to be monotonous and of an uneven quality. Furthermore,

⁴⁰ “台山的塾师或者无法有效地教育儿童，放任其各种缺点和不良习惯；或者自身懒惰，不尽师职；或者对学生过于严苛，动辄体罚，致使学生既身体受损，又丢掉了廉耻之心；或者过于迂腐，不讲究教育方法，只叫学生背书，以致学生动手能力极差。” Speech on Improvement of the Sook Teacher. *Xinning Magazine*, No. 1, 2, 5, 1909.

the calibre of teaching staff was deemed to be unsuitable for the needs of Toisan society at the beginning of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, at a time when the development of education was still in its infancy, in areas that were relatively isolated and where the introduction of national education was not yet feasible, the village school represented the most convenient and practical means of providing children with an education. Consequently, despite disapproval, Toisan was unable to completely eliminate the existence of the village school. To address this, officials were sent from time to time to inspect the village school and to institutionalize the management of the village school in order to ensure the quality of the education that children received in the village school. This was done by adopting modern educational management methods. Furthermore, in the context of remote Toisan schools, overseas Chinese have drawn upon the tradition of joint family and clan efforts to construct and administer village institutions, thereby actualized their aspiration to establish educational facilities. Firstly, the former village school or ancestral hall was transformed into a school or a new-style school through the collective efforts of the family name or fundraising. Secondly, donations were made to transform the village school or ancestral hall into a school or construct a new-style school. This approach addressed the challenge of inadequate funding for the construction of school buildings among the Chinese overseas Chinese. Additionally, it ensured the preservation of traditional educational institutions, with the majority of these school buildings representing a blend of Chinese and Western architectural styles. They have become a distinctive feature of the local architectural landscape.

The social concepts of Toisan's overseas Chinese community are inextricably linked with the industrial and commercial society's interpretation of rights and obligations, as well as the traditional acquaintance society's prioritization of love over profit. In Chinese society, the concept of acquaintance social relations holds particular significance, with the most dynamic feature in daily life being "relationship-centredness" or "relationship determinism". In social interaction, the manner in which the other person is related to oneself, and the nature of that relationship,

determines how the other person and other related matters are treated.⁴¹ A review of the correspondence of overseas Chinese reveals that when Hong Kong and mainland merchants and banks deliver remittance letters to overseas Chinese, they do not charge handling fees for relatives who are close to the owners of the merchants and banks, such as parents and siblings, and so forth. Nevertheless, for more distant relatives, the overseas Chinese who send the remittance letters proactively offer a “tea fee” to the merchant or bank in the letter. The term “Tea Fee” has its original meaning in Chinese culture as a gesture of affection, friendship, and shared tea-drinking among friends and relatives. This meaning can still be observed in Chinese letters. Nevertheless, in the context of the delivery of remittance letters from overseas Chinese, the term “tea money” is understood to signify either a “handling fee” or a “service fee”. This situation is exemplified by the Hong Kong Heng An Tai Chan Kwong Kam letter, as illustrated:

Dear Kuan Guan (观光),

In respectful response [...] Mr. Wu Futian (伍福田) granted me 20 yuan as tea money and 130 yuan for travel expenditures. I have received and verified all of them without any discrepancy [...] Concerning the matter of Jingtang (景堂), 20 yuan is supposed to be presented as tea money [...] Nevertheless, taking into account that the construction of his house is nearly accomplished and he is in urgent need of funds. He will move in at the beginning of April and will require even more money then. Furthermore, his mother's disposition is such that she is never empathetic. I do not dare to withhold it from him at present.⁴²

Chan Kwong Kam (陈光锦) received two acquaintances of the “tea capital” in the form of silver. The use of the verb “give” indicates that the relatives are the primary agents in expressing gratitude. The phrase “should be dedicated” suggests that, from the perspective of the sender

⁴¹ Yang, Guoshu. Social Orientation of Chinese People: A View of Social Interaction. In: Yang, Guoshu Yu, Anbang. *Chinese Psychology and Behavior: Theory and Methods*. Taiwan: Guiguan Book Company, 1992, 106.

⁴² *Letter from Chan Kwong Kam, Heng On Tai, Hong Kong, to Chen Kuan Guan (March 23, 1922)*. Collection of Jiangmen Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum.

of the money, there is a rationale for fulfilling the obligation to “offer the tea”. The decision of whether to collect the “tea money” and, if so, what proportion to collect, is at the discretion of the individual within their own social circle. This is exemplified by the case of Chan Kwong Kam and Peng Qing (彭清), in which Chen ultimately did not make any deductions from the “Tea Fee” due to the financial pressures facing his family and the difficulties he was experiencing in dealing with his mother’s meanness. This relationship was characterized by a warmth and helpfulness between relatives, rather than being primarily driven by commercial considerations.

The principles of rights and obligations are also a prominent feature of social relations in overseas Chinese hometowns. Since the modern era, overseas Chinese have invested in the construction of their hometowns through a substantial inflow of remittances. This has been done with the intention of promoting the social, economic and cultural development of overseas Chinese hometowns. As a result, overseas Chinese governance has emerged as a significant force. There was a gradual increase in awareness of the rights of overseas Chinese, overseas Chinese families and the silver letter delivery companies Jin Shan Zhuang (金山庄) and Patrolling Horse (巡城马). In 1922, the Toisan County, Duanfen town (端芬镇), Shandi Market Business Council (山底墟商务议事所) published the “Market Stores to Collect Registered Letters” directive, which mandated that the envelopes of foreign registered letters be opened and that fees be charged for the remittance of banknotes. This measure was met with significant discontent among the overseas Chinese.⁴³ The right to private and personal rights is of great importance to overseas Chinese individuals who have resided overseas for an extended period of time in

⁴³ 观光吾兄大鉴：敬复者……伍福田赐吾茶金廿元，注来往数银一百叁十元，已一切查收照交不悞……景堂之事，应奉茶资廿元……惟思其屋工将竣，需财孔亟，四月初旬入伙，尤更需金，且其母亲性质总不原情，吾今未敢扣他。Duanfen Chamber of Commerce’s Case of Siphoning off Foreign Money is Canceled without Hope. *Duanfen Magazine*, No. 3, 1923, “Clan News” 6–7 cited in Liu Jin. Yinxin Fees and Changes in Social Concepts of Overseas Chinese Communities in the Pearl River Delta. *Wuyi University Journal*, No. 2, 2011, 74.

an industrial and commercial environment. The money sent home by overseas Chinese individuals is primarily intended to support their families. Overseas Chinese individuals believe that the commission charged for remittances is an unreasonable form of exploitation that infringes upon their economic interests. Consequently, they are compelled to take action in response to the infringement of their economic interests.

From the 1860s onwards, the close ties between overseas Chinese and their hometowns resulted in a continued influx of remittances and foreign cultures into Toisan. Consequently, the overseas Chinese hometowns in Toisan gradually exhibited a tendency towards modernization. The urbanization of local social life, the financial exchange industry and the prosperity of modern education have facilitated the gradual development of individuality, liberation, equality, freedom, an emphasis on business and the rules of rights and obligations among the residents of Toisan Overseas Chinese hometowns. These concepts have impacted the traditional rural society's ideas of agrarian culture, inherent power of the clan or clans and the feudal patriarchal family relations. Nevertheless, the villagers in the overseas Chinese community demonstrate a notable degree of adaptability and initiative. While they have adopted certain aspects of modern civilization, they have not entirely discarded the traditional social concepts that continue to meet the needs of the times. In this context, we observe the emergence of social concepts that integrate and coexist with "foreign" elements, reflecting the unique circumstances of coexistence between Chinese and Western cultures and the integration of modern and ancient civilizations during the period of transition in modern China. Furthermore, this phenomenon reflects the particular circumstances of the coexistence of Chinese and Western cultures, modern civilization and ancient civilization during the transitional period of modern China.

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The Shifting Paradigms of Power: Religion, Globalization, and the Emerging Islamic Reformation

The article explores the compatibility of Islamic traditions with the 21st century, framing it within historical parallels to the European Reformation. Drawing on theories by Max Weber, Antonio Gramsci, and Ninian Smart, it examines how ideological and geopolitical rivalries among Muslim-majority nations resemble a “Muslim Reformation”. Instead of economic modernization or mass mobilization, this reformation centres on religious soft power competition. Key players include Turkey, blending religious influence with political ambitions; Saudi Arabia, shifting toward a more outward-facing Islam while retaining conservative practices; UAE, promoting tolerance and apolitical Islam; Iran, focusing on Shiite militias and ideological outreach; Indonesia, advocating humanitarian, pluralistic Islam and democratic values; Morocco, projecting moderate Islam.

This competition shapes the global image of Islam and sparks debate on the role of religion in governance and society. While Indonesia stands out for its democratic approach and reinterpretation of Islamic teachings, broader progress remains hindered by authoritarianism and the enduring influence of political Islam.

Keywords: religious anthropology, multiple reformations, Muslim reformation, moderate Islam

The study of religion in international relations presents a challenging and often contentious domain. Traditional Western perspectives have long maintained that religion and international politics are separate spheres, with little to no intersection. However, a closer examination

of the global landscape reveals a different reality. A common belief has been that modern globalism is predominantly shaped by a Christian or “Western” paradigm, where the anthropological essence of globalization aligns with the Westernization of the world. This perception held true for centuries, particularly when Europe enjoyed economic and political dominance – a power dynamic that manifested through colonial empires, which began to unravel in the aftermath of World War II. The post-colonial era that followed was marked by a shift in global power dynamics.

As we entered the 21st century, new centres of economic power emerged, particularly in East Asia and the Indian Ocean region. China has taken the lead, followed by India, with nations like Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia – often referred to as the “Asian Tigers” – playing significant roles. This raises a critical question: what ideological framework will guide these newly rising powers?

In 1994, Singapore’s former Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, introduced the concept of “Asian values”, a notion that was swiftly embraced by Malaysia’s leadership. This ideology was further refined by overseas Chinese scholars, including Confucianism expert Tu Weiming, who articulated a framework that contrasts sharply with Max Weber’s theory of the “Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism”. The tenets of “Asian values” emphasize prioritizing society over the individual, upholding the family as the foundation of social order, resolving conflicts through consensus rather than contention, and promoting racial and religious tolerance (Jenco, 2013, 237–258).¹ In an influential interview given to “Foreign Affairs” in 1994, Lee Kuan Yew explained that societies influenced by Confucian culture – such as those in Korea, Japan, China, and Vietnam – are rooted in a set of core values: thrift, hard work, filial piety, loyalty to the extended family, and allegiance to state authorities (Kim, 1994).

¹ It is important to note that “Asian values” in academic discussions are often evaluated as a stereotype.

The People's Republic of China has been actively promoting "Asian values" as a potential ideological foundation for a new centre of global power on the Pacific's shores (Zhang, 2013). If one considers Confucianism as a form of religious tradition, these values reflect principles deeply embedded in the religious and cultural fabric of East Asia. Lee Kuan Yew attributed the distinctive nature of this East Asian approach to historical and genetic factors, suggesting that societies develop unique characteristics after centuries of isolation or conquest, shaped by specific social challenges and historical experiences.²

Echoing these sentiments, Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, critiqued Western advocacy for human rights and freedoms, viewing it not as a pursuit of humanitarian ideals but rather as a strategy for continued domination. Today, there is a clear resurgence of "Asian values" as a tool for international influence, signalling the rise of a new centre of globalization rooted in non-Western principles.

Simultaneously, another potential centre of influence is emerging within the Islamic world, which is formulating its own globalization agenda. However, the landscape of Islamic civilization is marked by internal divisions, with various actors vying for influence and competing interpretations of Islamic faith. The most significant challenge to the global influence of Islam remains its association with terrorism, particularly considering recent events in Europe and the Middle East. Incidents such as the tragic murder of French schoolteacher Samuel Paty and atrocities committed by groups like the Islamic State have unfortunately reinforced negative perceptions of Islam.

This article aims to explore the complex and evolving interplay between religion and international relations, focusing on the paradigm emerging from the Islamic world. By examining this non-Western

² The Chinese Dream, linked to Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CCP, signifies the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". Introduced during Xi's 2012 visit to the "Road to National Rejuvenation" exhibit, it reflects his political vision. The concept emphasizes milestones such as achieving a "moderately prosperous society" by the CCP's centenary in 2021 and advancing national rejuvenation by 2049.

model, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the shifting ideological foundations that are reshaping global power dynamics in the 21st century.

Let us begin with several recent headlines from newspapers:

- “NYT: Muslim migrant gets life in prison for jihad bombing on subway in 2017.”³
- “France: Muslim migrant who murdered police officer had Qur’an and prayer rug in his scooter.”⁴
- “France: Muslim migrant who murdered police officer watched videos glorifying jihad before attack.”⁵
- “France: Muslim migrant who stabbed police officer to death was screaming ‘Allahu Akbar.’”⁶
- “Finland: Muslim migrant gets four years in prison for bringing his 13-year-old wife to the country.”⁷
- “Bangladesh: Muslim mob tears down newspaper office, attacks Hindu homes.”⁸

These examples illustrate the recurring theme of terrorism often associated with Islam in contemporary media narratives. In recent

³ Available: <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2021/04/nyc-muslim-migrant-gets-life-in-prison-for-jihad-bombing-on-subway-in-2017> [last viewed 21.09.2024].

⁴ Available: <https://jihadwatch.org/2021/04/france-muslim-migrant-who-murdered-police-officer-had-quran-and-prayer-rug-in-his-scooter> [last viewed 21.09.2024].

⁵ Available: <https://libertyfirst.org/new-york-city-muslim-migrant-gets-life-in-prison-for-jihad-bombing-on-subway-in-2017/> [last viewed 21.09.2024].

⁶ Available: https://www.bing.com/search?q=%E2%80%9CFrance%3A+Muslim+migrant+who+stabbed+police+officer+to+death+was+screaming+%E2%80%98Allahu+Akbar.%E2%80%99%E2%80%9D*&pc=GD01&form=GDAVST&ptag=3515 [last viewed 21.09.2024].

⁷ “Hovioikeus tuomitsi Irakista lapsivaimon tuoneen miehen neljän vuoden vankeuteen,” Yle, April 15, 2021.

⁸ Available: <https://jihadwatch.org/2021/04/bangladesh-muslim-mob-tears-down-newspaper-office-attacks-hindu-homes> [last viewed 21.09.2024].

decades, there has been a politically correct assertion that terrorism is unrelated to religion and that Islam is fundamentally “a religion of peace.” However, the prevailing approach appears to be shifting. It is becoming increasingly evident that certain terrorist acts are carried out in the name of Islam and that Islam may possess intrinsic structures that can be interpreted to legitimize terrorism as a form of religious conduct. This acknowledgment is not confined to Western discourse but is echoed by leaders of Islamic countries. A pertinent example is Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who, during a speech at Al-Azhar University on the occasion of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday, called for a reform of Islam, urging the eradication of extremist ideas from the religion.⁹

Such calls for reform are not to be dismissed lightly, especially in the aftermath of tragic terrorist incidents, such as the attacks in Paris, and elsewhere. However, this raises several challenging questions: How can Islam be reformed to eliminate extremist interpretations? Is it possible to cleanse Islam of radicals who preach hatred and intolerance in the name of God? Can a state impose religious change without the cooperation of official religious institutions? What sort of ideas are represented by Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi: are they reflection of European, or Middle Eastern political and religious concern?

To explore the reasons why Islamic political movements gained support since the 1970s, it is essential to define the meaning of “Political Islam” or “Islamism”. In Western discourse, Islamic political awareness often brings to mind militant groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Gaza. This association is influenced by the belief in a “fundamentalist Islamic threat,” which frames Political Islam as a deviation from authentic religious values. However, this view is limited because it reduces the discussion to radical examples and dismisses the broader motivations or historical contexts that shaped these groups. Scholars

⁹ Khalil al-Anani, Sisi’s Appropriation of Islam Undermines Egypt’s Religious Soft Power. Berkley Forum. Available: <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/sisi-s-appropriation-of-islam-undermines-egypt-s-religious-soft-power> [last viewed 21.09.2024].

like Charles Hirschkind challenge this narrow perspective. He argues that Political Islam should not be seen as an unexpected mix of religion and politics but as a response to modern societal challenges (Hirschkind, 1997, 12). Similarly, Joe Beinin and Joe Stork define Political Islam as movements that base their actions on Islamic texts, blending traditional values with modern methods to address contemporary issues (Beinin, & Stork, 1997, 4).

Munir Fasheh highlights the variability within Political Islam. For some, strict religious interpretations can be a tool for liberation and social revolution. Salwa Ismail identifies two main types of Islamism: Radical Islamism: groups that seek political and social change through violence. Conservative Islamism: movements that work within government structures to promote religious objectives (Fasheh et al., 1982, 15). These forms of Islamism connect with different parts of society, reflecting the unique circumstances in which each movement developed. To truly understand Political Islam, one must consider the diversity within its interpretations and actions. Movements emerge in response to specific historical and social contexts, and reducing them to stereotypes limits our understanding of their complexities. These are complex issues that require careful consideration from scholars, politicians, and theologians. As a historian, I will attempt to provide an analysis grounded in the historical evolution of Islam.

The historical and ecclesiastical context of Islam

Islam emerged in the 7th century within the harsh desert environment of the Arabian Peninsula, among Bedouin tribes constantly on the brink of famine. As the historian Bernard Lewis has argued, brigandage was a common practice among these tribes, a means of supplementing their meagre resources. When Muhammad established the Umma (community), it did not wholly supplant the social customs of pre-Islamic Arabia but instead integrated them into its framework. Pre-Islamic practices concerning property, marriage, and tribal relations were retained, although there were significant transformations (Lewis, 1993, 40ff).

One fundamental shift was the replacement of blood ties with faith as the primary social bond. Equally transformative was the new conception of authority: Muhammad, as the leader of the Umma, derived his authority not from tribal consensus, which was always subject to revocation, but from divine mandate. This shift in the source of authority from public opinion to God, who vested it in Muhammad as His chosen Apostle, was crucial in shaping the future of Islamic governance and political thought (Lewis, 1993, 40ff).

The Umma held a dual character; it was both a political entity and a religious community. Muhammad served as a kind of Sheikh for this new tribe, yet it was simultaneously a theocracy where religious and political objectives were inseparably intertwined. Unlike the Christian tradition, which distinguishes between the realms of church and state (as exemplified by the early Christian opposition to the Roman Empire), Islam did not develop a clear separation between religion and governance. This integration of spiritual and political authority remains influential in contemporary Islamic thought, where the idea persists that the ultimate goal for a Muslim is the establishment of a global Caliphate.

The early Islamic state was consolidated through violence, and Muhammad demonstrated considerable skill in wielding power. Economically marginalized and unable to rely entirely on the hospitality of the Medinese, he turned to the profession of arms. Raids on Meccan caravans were considered legitimate acts of war, enhancing the wealth, power, and prestige of the Umma. The Battle of Badr in March 624, where a small Muslim force under Muhammad's command surprised a Meccan caravan, was celebrated as a divinely sanctioned victory in the Qur'an, marking a shift in the nature of Muhammad's revelations.

Initially, Muhammad's preaching in Mecca was poetic, prophetic, and religious. However, following the violent conflict, subsequent revelations addressed practical matters of governance and the distribution of spoils, including captives. The victory at Badr allowed for a backlash against Jews and, eventually, Christians, who were accused of falsifying their scriptures to conceal prophecies of Muhammad's advent. This marked a turning point where Islam began to adopt a more aggressive

stance toward outsiders (Watt, 1961; Donner, 2010; Wansbrough, 1977; Cook, 2000; Armstrong, 2006; Crone, 2004).

Comparative religious anthropology: Islam and Christianity

A brief comparison between Islamic and Christian anthropologies is warranted. In the Christian tradition, humanity is created in God's image, as stated in Genesis: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27) The New Testament reinforces the idea of humans as close collaborators with God (John 5:19; John 14:26; John 17:20-23), a notion that laid the foundation for later developments in human rights. The approach of this writer is anthropological, meaning that basic religious texts contain the principles that deeply shape the society and culture formed around a given religion. Over time, historical development adjusts these principles to align with surrounding cultural, political, and historical pressures, as well as current ideologies. However, the core anthropological principles remain intact.

In contrast to Judaism and Christianity, the Qur'an presents a different view of humanity. It emphasizes the subservience of humans to God, describing man's creation from a mere drop of mingled sperm to be tested (Qur'an 76:2) and asserting that humans and jinn were created solely to worship God (Qur'an 51:56). Even before Adam's creation, his role as a slave was predetermined –his purpose was to fear his Master and to be obedient in order to gain entry to heaven. The Qur'an also emphasizes human insignificance by describing man's origins as "sticky clay" (Qur'an 37:11) or "black mud" (Qur'an 15:28), underscoring his lowliness in relation to Allah.

This religious anthropology influences Islamic political structures, where the ruler reflects the image of God and relationships between individuals and authority mirror the divine-human relationship of obedience and submission.

To sum up: the historical and theological roots of Islam reveal the complex interplay between religion, politics, and violence that has

shaped its development. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing contemporary issues of extremism and for exploring possibilities for reform. While leaders like President al-Sisi call for a purification of Islamic thought, the deeper challenge lies in reconciling the enduring legacy of the faith's foundational structures with the demands of modern pluralistic societies. This remains a critical area of inquiry for scholars, policymakers, and religious leaders alike.

It may be posited that the incompatibility of Islamic traditions with the 21st century is linked to factors such as low literacy rates, limited participation in scientific progress, and a lag in technological innovations. These factors can be traced by, first, following patterns seen in the Reformation of the Catholic Church in Europe, and second, by examining the more extensive historical transformations which could be termed an "Extended Reformation". This broader movement included the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the emergence of democratic institutions, the Masonic movement (characterized as non-Church Christianity), and the rise of Deism in philosophy.

The impact of Reformation theology on economic behaviour and societal attitudes forms a crucial part of Max Weber's much-debated thesis. According to Weber, the teachings of Protestant Reformers – particularly within the Calvinist tradition – instilled a "Spirit of Capitalism" that enabled Protestant nations to economically outpace their Catholic counterparts. He emphasized that the principles of discipline, thrift, and industriousness provided the foundation for economic growth. Central to Weber's argument was the altered concept of a "calling", or *Beruf* which sanctified work, thereby motivating Protestant societies to not only be more productive but also to save and invest, fuelling future economic expansion.

Antonio Gramsci, the founder of the Italian Communist Party, also analysed the Protestant Reformation. Unlike Engels and Kautsky, who focused on figures like Thomas Müntzer and the Anabaptists, Gramsci

emphasized Luther and Calvin. For Gramsci, the Reformation was a genuine national-popular movement capable of mobilizing the masses. He viewed it as a paradigm for the profound “moral and intellectual reform” that Marxism sought to achieve. In Gramsci’s perspective, the Reformation embodied a philosophy of praxis, intertwining politics and philosophy (Namli, 2019).

To develop this discourse, it should be noted additionally that Ninian Smart introduced a novel methodology in the study of religious history by proposing that multiple Protestant Reformations occurred. According to Smart, these included: the Lutheran Reformation in Germany (beginning in 1517), the Zwinglian Reformation in German-speaking Switzerland around 1522 – which soon gave rise to various Anabaptist movements – and the Calvinist Reformation in French-speaking Switzerland and France, dated to 1534. The English Reformation similarly began in 1534 (Smart, 1976). According to him, the diversity of the Reformations in Europe, was not a singular, unified event but rather a series of distinct movements arising in different regions and contexts, because each had its own theological, cultural, and political dynamics, such as the Lutheran Reformation, the Zwinglian movement, Calvinism, and the English Reformation.

The emerging power centres in Islam

Drawing from such frameworks, we can explore the idea of a “Muslim Reformation” and its potential consequences. Unlike Weber’s theory, this would not involve a caliphate driven by economic modernization either. Nor would it resemble Gramsci’s mass mobilization. Rather, the dynamics at play resemble Ninian Smart’s notion of religious soft power – a competition for geopolitical influence. This struggle for the heart of Islam pits key powers against one another, as they vie for ideological dominance in the Middle East and Asia:

1. Turkey, historically the seat of the last caliphate, exemplified by figures such as Muhammed Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen movement (*Hizmet*).

2. Saudi Arabia, the guardian of Islam's holiest cities.
3. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which promote a militarized interpretation of Islam.
4. Indonesia, advancing a humanitarian and pluralist version of Islam that reaches across faiths globally and appeals to non-Muslim, centre-right forces.
5. Morocco, which uses religion to position itself as the face of moderate Islam.
6. Shiite Iran, driven by the ideological fervour of its revolutionary principles.

The four significant European Reformation movements shared common elements, yet each developed unique characteristics within its own tradition. Similarly, a reformation within Islam would likely reflect both shared principles and distinctive national or sectarian traits.

The ongoing rivalry among Islamic states on the global stage could influence the emergence of a more tolerant and pluralistic interpretation of Islam. At the core of this competition is a deeper debate within the Muslim world about the relationship between state and religion. This debate centres on the extent to which the state should enforce religious morals and the role of religion in education, the judiciary, and political life.

While the four major European Reformations shared certain elements, each developed distinct theological and institutional characteristics. A similar process can be anticipated in the evolution of Islam.

In the 1960s, Saudi Arabia, with Pakistani collaboration, launched a state-driven Islamic diplomacy campaign initially supported by Western powers as part of the Cold War effort to contain communism. Saudi funding primarily targeted non-violent, ultra-conservative religious and cultural institutions across the globe, with tacit or explicit government approval. Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Saudi Arabia shifted its religious outreach strategy to include both soft power and direct support for militant groups in response to specific geopolitical circumstances, such as in Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and Iran (Litvak, 2017).

However, with the rise of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's religious diplomacy has taken a different turn, emphasizing a more tolerant and outward-facing Islam. High-profile gestures, like the visit to Auschwitz by Muslim World League officials, aim to reshape the kingdom's image. Despite these symbolic acts, internal policies remain largely unchanged, with bans on public non-Muslim worship and limited religious freedoms still firmly in place.

Iran, meanwhile, has focused its religious outreach on cultivating Shiite militias and fostering political and paramilitary alliances rather than promoting religious piety. In Southeast Asia and West Africa, however, its efforts are more aligned with religious and social issues, mirroring Saudi approaches in some respects.

The UAE have sought to position itself as a hub of religious tolerance and cosmopolitan openness, fostering interfaith dialogue and promoting state-controlled, apolitical Islam. The UAE's approach, driven by figures like Mohammed bin Zayed, has included creating their own religious training institutions, thereby competing with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Morocco in shaping Islamic education. The country's success in this area is underscored by high-profile events such as the 2019 visit of Pope Francis and the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity (Lappin, 2020).

Turkey, under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has combined religious soft power with hard power strategies, using the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) to legitimize military interventions and to promote Turkey's influence in regions like Syria, Libya, and Somalia. Erdoğan's efforts to restore Turkey's historical influence include projects like the construction of grand mosques and the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque, signalling his ambition to reassert Turkey's leadership in the Muslim world (Lappin, 2020).

Indonesia, under President Joko Widodo, has emerged as a proponent of "moderate" Islam, positioning itself as a counterbalance to the more conservative and militant interpretations of Islam promoted by Saudi Arabia and Iran. The establishment of the International Islamic University (UIII) in West Java aims to challenge the influence

of Saudi-backed institutions like the Islamic University of Medina. Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, has taken significant steps to promote a humanitarian Islam aligned with the principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Burhani, 2012, 564–581).

Conclusion

The ongoing competition for religious soft power among Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE, Turkey, Qatar, and Indonesia is less about implementing genuine notions of moderate Islam and more about enhancing their regional and global influence. This struggle plays out against the backdrop of authoritarian regimes that prioritize control over human rights and democratic freedoms.

In this context, Indonesia stands out as a unique case – being a democracy and promoting an inclusive, humanitarian form of Islam that seeks to address outdated theological concepts. The efforts by Nahdlatul Ulama to reinterpret Islamic teachings in light of modern values present a formidable challenge to the state-sponsored religious projects of other nations.

How long a potential Islamic reformation might take remains uncertain, but history has shown that religious transformations can often defy predictions and unfold in unexpected ways. The term “moderate Islam” continues to be defined by its alignment with pluralism, modernity, and democratic ideals. Yet, despite public condemnations of extremist violence, many so-called moderate factions remain tied to political Islam and advocate for Sharia law in varying forms.

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**Models for Peaceful Coexistence and Exchange
of Cultures in Arab Emigration Literature:
from Culture Ambassadors of North Mahjar
to *Mezzaterra* of A. Soueif**

The tradition of peaceful and respectful cultural exchange has always been strong in Arab emigration literature, may it be written in Arabic, English, or French, and it has coexisted with the tradition of depicting cultural contact as a violent clash. The most notable “culture ambassadors”, who saw their aim or special mission as the reconciliation of the East and West, were the bicultural, bilingual North Mahjar writers in the beginning of the 20th century in the USA, including the world-famous Gibran Khalil Gibran (known also as Kahlil Gibran). Another powerful trend was shaped among the francophone Lebanese emigration writers, and one of its most notable representatives is Amin Maalouf, whose work *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* (*Les Identités meurtrières*, 1994) contains his views on contemporary problems related to culture contact and identity formation. In anglophone Arab emigration literature, a bright example is presented by Ahdaf Soueif, an Egyptian British writer who describes the examples of complementary harmonious cultural identity hybridization formed in Egyptian professional and intellectual society about the mid-20th century. The writer herself represents this type of culture identity hybridization, and she enjoys the possibilities granted by globalization, such as international mobility, development of information technologies and communications. She feels at home both in Egypt and in the United Kingdom but understands that she is rather a citizen of the world who has a metacultural perspective. Continuing the tradition of Arab Mahjar writers, Ahdaf Soueif considers herself a cultural mediator whose task is to promote peaceful coexistence and

mutual enrichment in culture contact, criticizing discrimination and prejudices, shattering negative stereotypes. *Mezzaterra* or “the common ground”, as described by Ahdaf Soueif, is an imaginary space where cultures come in contact and overlap, the place where multicultural people feel truly at home and where they belong. In this study, additive cultural identity hybridization as a positive outcome of multicultural identity crisis and adaptation to life in the contemporary globalized world is discussed, examining manifestations and representations of this model in Arab emigration literature during the last century.

Keywords: Arab emigration literature, Arab Mahjar, Amin Maalouf, Ahdaf Soueif, *Mezzaterra*, cultural identity hybridization, cultural mediation, culture ambassador, peaceful coexistence

The main theme of emigration literature in general is the experience of migration, including the complex and often painful process of adapting to another culture, understanding one’s own cultural identity, its stability or mutability (Weiner, & Richards, 2008, 101–116). Likewise, Arab emigration writers focus on recognition and demonstration of one’s cultural identity in contact with a foreign culture, as a result of which the immigrant integrates or does not integrate into the society of the new home country (Elmeligi, 2020, 3). Regardless of the working language, Arab emigration literature generally studies the life paths and roles of Arab immigrants and their children in Western society, examining the options available to them and fighting for new opportunities, as well as debating the status and cultural belonging of these multicultural people (Hassan, 2014, 80, 158; Elmeligi, 2020, 2–6; Charron, 2015, 69–73). In particular, anglophone Arab emigration literature talks about the immigrant’s crisis of adaptation, struggle with conflicting feelings, clash of incompatible values, as well as the sense of partial belonging to each of the incompatible cultures, and these works are usually autobiographical or include autobiographical elements (Hassan, 2014, 80). In anglophone Arab emigration literature, an established tradition and a particularly important topic is the question of intercultural understanding and intercultural dialogue, in which the bicultural person takes on the role of cultural translator, messenger or mediator (Hassan, 2014, xii).

The spacetime and structure of these novels is based on the cycle of migration – departure, life in a foreign culture and return, as well as the corresponding transformations of the immigrant’s identity, which determine the attitude towards both cultures: an approach of fusion, hybridization of both constituent cultures or rejection of one of them (Elmeligi, 2020, 3). Cultural identity is represented as fluid and changing in a situation of culture contact (Elmeligi, 2020, 4) and adaptation as the formation of a new, hybridized narrative of self-identification, which describes the characters of the “West” and “East”, as well as explains the immigrant’s values, motivations for actions and relationships with other characters in the novel (Elmeligi, 2020, 4–6).

According to W. Hassan and R. El Enani, the works of Arab emigration writers also often display features characteristic of colonial or post-colonial literature, namely, recognition of Western culture as superior and a sense of inferiority in the first case (El-Enany, 2006, 36, 150–151, 194–196) and the resistance of a representative of subordinate people to the hegemon in the second case (Hassan, 2014, 128, 182). Arab emigration writers’ feeling that they simultaneously belong to two cultures, two homelands, often prevents them from taking an unambiguous stand on the side of the “oppressed” or the “oppressors” (Hassan, 2014, 80).¹ The conflict of cultures and ideologies becomes an internal, psychological struggle and manifests itself in the formation of an unstable or hybrid identity, which is depicted in autobiographical and semi-autobiographical literary works. The argumentation in the aforementioned texts is made using the binary opposition “Occident/Western World” || “Orient/Arab World”, which is the basis of both the colonial discourse and its counter-discourse (Hassan, 2014, 4–10). Therefore, it is possible to argue that the habitual (*default*) environment of Arab emigration writers is the contact zone of languages and cultures, where, under the influence of many factors, either peaceful or hostile cultural contact takes place. Accordingly, some Arab emigration writers

¹ See also several articles in: *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*. L. Al Maleh (ed.). Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V., 2009, for instance, Al Maleh, 2009, 11.

such as A. Rihani,² A. Maalouf (1998, 3) and A. Soueif (2004, 1) write about the dialogue and hybridization of cultures, feeling they belong to both the West and the Arab world at the same time, while others, such as M. Kahf³ and T. Salih,⁴ talk about culture clash leading to internal and external conflicts.

Consequently, it is possible to categorize Arab emigration literature written in different countries, languages, and time periods according to the typological features of hybrid cultural identity described or demonstrated by the writers, and this categorization may be formed in accordance with the theoretical research in the field of identity, especially, multicultural identity in the contemporary globalized world. For instance, as Keri E. Iyall Smith points out, in the course of multicultural identity formation, separate (original) cultural identities are usually not assimilated or changed independently of each other, but elements of both (or more) cultures are combined into a new, hybrid variant, although extreme variants are also possible – a complete assimilation into the “Other” culture or its rejection, separation from it, sometimes even with a hostile attitude (Iyall Smith, 2008). “Hybridity encompasses partial identities, multiple roles, and pluralistic selves” (Iyall Smith, 2008, 5). In other words, living in the area of contact between cultures, an individual sometimes has two (or more) parallel or competing identities, that is, a doubled (dual, split, composite) identity and “double consciousness” (Iyall Smith, 2008, 6–7), and their complete or partial fusion creates the new, unique hybrid identity. One of the most characteristic features of this kind of identity is a sense of simultaneous belonging and non-belonging to each of the original cultures, which

² A thorough discussion found in: Hajjar, N. (2010). *The Politics and Poetics of Ameen Rihani: The Humanist Ideology of an Arab-American Intellectual and Activist*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, for instance, p. xi.

³ See, for instance, an interview with the writer in: MacFarquhar, N. (2007). *She Carries Weapons; They Are Called Words*. *The New York Times*, May 12. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/12/books/12veil.html> [last viewed 21.09.2024].

⁴ Salih, T. (1982). *Tayeb Salih Speaks: Four Interviews with the Sudanese Novelist*. C. E. Berkley, & O. H. Ahmed (transl. and eds.). Washington, D.C.: Office of the Cultural Counsellor, Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Sudan, 23, 41.

is formulated as the simultaneous status of “own” and “stranger” in each of them, with a potential opportunity to move to another partially “own” cultural space at any moment (Iyall Smith, 2008, 4). However, as K. E. Iyall Smith explains, although in the past the emergence of hybrid identities has usually occurred as a result of violence, oppression, for example, under conditions of colonization or occupation, in an attempt to stabilize a fragile dual or split identity (Iyall Smith, 2008, 5), and was rather a consequence of negative experiences and a source of psychological suffering, in today’s globalized world a hybrid identity develops naturally and people who possess it are better adapted to the modern environment, because they are able to overcome language and cultural barriers, feeling at home in both the local culture and the global one in the cosmopolitan cultural environment (Iyall Smith, 2008, 4).⁵ In a globalized world, the formation of a hybrid cultural identity also becomes a way to protect and preserve local culture in the context of global culture (Iyall Smith, 2008, 6). In any case, the process of multicultural or hybrid identity formation is difficult and complicated, as it includes the process of resolving somehow this “double consciousness”, reconciling the conflicting identity components, which usually happens during a severe identity crisis (Weiner, & Richards, 2008), and this process is further complicated by the blurring or even total denial of existence of the concept of identity in the postmodern world (Izenberg, 2016, 302).

Multicultural writers and researchers, including postcolonial theorists and Arab emigration writers, describe various variants of identity hybridization, usually analysing their personal experiences and observations in a multicultural environment. The alternatives presented by them can be roughly categorized following the categories outlined by K. E. Iyall Smith who characterizes the possible outcomes of cultural globalization as “differentiation, assimilation, or hybridization” (Iyall Smith, 2008, 3). Semiotic analysis of culture, mainly based on the works of the philosopher and semiologist U. Eco (1976; 1984) and the analysis

⁵ For that reason, it is more meaningful to examine hybridization of cultural identity without linking it to the processes of colonization or occupation, but rather as an outcome of culture contact of any kind, with neutral connotations.

developed by Y. Lotman, the founder of the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics (Lotman, 1992; 2002)⁶ allows to scrutinize the manifestations of each mentioned outcome in the literary text as the structure of underlying culture code, developing a more precise typology. The division is based on the way in which the elements of both (or more) cultural codes are combined, including value systems, hierarchies, status symbols, systems of social prohibitions, and other elements that have strong emotional connotations. The hybridization of cultural environment and cultural identity is not simply a mixing of elements of both cultures or an alternative use according to the mood, but rather a complicated process, during which the selection of elements of the cultures to be juxtaposed, the resolution of conflicts, as well as the definition of the position of the multicultural person in relation to both cultures takes place. It manifests itself in the way in which the author constructs the space-time, value system and imagery with the help of language, creating a system of conceptually linked semiotic signs that indicate the “Self” and the “Other”, the good and the evil, the praiseworthy and the condemnable, the openly expressed and the hidden. The word choice determines how the units of cultural codes are characterized, and binary oppositions are formed, what connotations and hidden meanings are embedded, and, finally, how the text is connected to the norms of one, two or more cultures, as well as literary heritage (canon). While rejection of a constituent culture is one of the possible outcomes in the forming of multicultural identity, as is hybridization with internal conflict, a more favourable outcome is the additive⁷ or complementary hybridization of

⁶ Likewise, albeit to a lesser extent, based on the J. Kristeva’s and M. Riffaterre’s concepts of intertext and intertextuality, which can be understood as a kind of the semiotic analysis of culture in a narrower sense, that is, recognizing the connection of a certain text with other texts. See Riffaterre, M. (1990). *Compulsory Reader Response: The Intertextual Drive*. In: *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. M. Worton, & J. Still (eds.). Manchester: Manchester University Press, 56; Still, J., & Worton, M. (1990). Introduction. In: Worton, M., & Still, J. (eds.). *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 16.

⁷ The term is adapted from studies in multilingual language acquisition, based on the division between the additive and subtractive bi- or multilingualism. See, for

culture identity which may be observed, if the multicultural person does not experience significant internal and external conflicts when trying to combine the requirements and value systems of two (or more) cultures. This type of hybridization of cultural identity often occurs when a person is already multicultural when exposed to another culture, has not experienced discrimination or colonization trauma, and does not have to violate the social prohibitions of the native culture while adapting to the new environment, or if it is possible to violate these prohibitions without any painful consequences.

This type mainly appears in the works of emigration writers of Lebanese and Egyptian origin, as a tendency to formulate a combined hybrid Arab-English/“generic Western” or Arab-French/“generic European” cultural space, to which the writers feel they belong more than to any one culture. The additive culture identity hybridization is characterized by international mobility and feeling “at home” both in Arab countries and in the corresponding Western country (in the reviewed works – France, Great Britain, USA), and, quite often, by the desire to promote a peaceful dialogue, exchange and resulting hybridization of the two cultures within society as a whole. For example, North Mahjar writers⁸ – the first Arab-American writers who started a new literary trend in the beginning of the 20th century in the U.S.A. (Mahdi, 2013, 1396–1397; Badawi, 1975, 182) – not only felt belonging to both cultures (Arab and American) and maintained a strong link to them, but also tried to develop and mutually enrich them, acting in

instance, Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 37; Cenoz, J., & Genessee, F. (1998). Psycholinguistic Perspectives on Multilingualism and Multilingual Education. In: *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education*. J. Cenoz, & F. Genessee (eds.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 24.

⁸ Using the term according to the tradition established by M. M. Badawi: see Badawi, M. M. (1975). *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 179–180, 196–198; also: Civantos, C. (2015). Migration and Diaspora. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Arab Culture*. D. F. Reynolds (ed.). Cambridge University Press, 293–310.

the fields of literature, culture and politics as cultural ambassadors.⁹ As Leila Al Maleh explains:

They were the first cultural mediators between East and West, finding themselves as they did in the conciliatory position of being able, through the medium of English, to dispel misgivings about each culture and establish genuine intellectual rapprochement between the two traditions. Furthermore, their mediatory function extended to reconciling faiths, Islam and Christianity, in their country of origin (Al Maleh, 2009, 4).

If it is assumed that the most important feature of the additive type of culture hybridization is the lack of significant internal or external cultural conflict, then the “in-between”, indefinite identity, described in detail by the anglophone postcolonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as characteristic of the inhabitants of the post-colonial world, including herself (Spivak, 2002, 48), might be considered a subtype of the additive identity hybridization path. Spivak explains that she and similar multicultural people do not belong to one specific culture or to several at the same time, but to the space between two worlds (*in-between*), which is their real, new national identity, because they have no real opportunity to return to one of the native lands. They feel at home in the “space between” cultures and enjoy the simultaneous non-belonging to two worlds, because it gives an unprecedented freedom to look at both cultures and societies from a distance, from a universal human point of view, as well as not belonging to and obeying any hierarchy, including caste rules, which are mandatory for “natives” (Spivak, 2002, 48–49). And, for instance, the Arab emigration writer Mikhail Naimy, both in his novel *Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul or The Pitted Face* (translated into English by the author, 1952)¹⁰ and the anglophone allegory *The Book of Mirdad: The Strange Story of a Monastery Which Was Once Called the Ark* (1948)

⁹ In particular, A. Rihani, who, in fact, started this tradition. See, for instance, Bushrui, S. (2012). Introduction. In: *The Prophet: New Annotated Version*. London: Oneworld Publications, xi.

¹⁰ The original full version in Arabic published in 1949 (نعيمه، ميخائيل: مذكرات الأرقش).

describes the spiritual, mystical, generic-Christian identity as the basis of such a distanced, universal cultural identity, which stands above national differences, national conflicts and human self which has name, origin, level of education, belonging to a social class, etc. A similar approach shows the North Mahjar writer Gibran Khalil Gibran who uses images recognizable in both Arab and Western culture to create a “common denominator” of two cultural codes, discarding overly culture-specific elements, specifically, avoiding the mention of literary works, religious texts or geographical names that too strongly indicate a certain culture, but including elements common to both cultures. The resulting texts had universal appeal as they could be understood and appreciated by readers from different cultures. For example, the world-famous Gibran’s *Prophet* (1923) was described as “not filled with any kind of dogma” and “available to anyone whether they are Jewish or Christian or Muslim.” This probably explains why the book, since the first publication, “has never been out of print,” is called “perennial classic,” which “has been translated into more than 50 languages and is a staple on international best-seller lists. It is thought to have sold tens of millions of copies” (Shoku, & Hegarty, 2012).

Similar ideas reappear and are further developed in Arab emigration literature of the end of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century, for instance, the francophone writer of Lebanese origin, Amin Maalouf, who explains in his work *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* (English translation published in 1998; the original in French: *Les Identités meurtrières*, 1994) that he has a harmoniously formed, compatible, homogeneous double identity – Arab (Lebanese) and French (Maalouf, 1994, 10)¹¹, and the anglophone writer of Egyptian origin, Ahdaf Soueif who advocates for culture hybridization in which the “best” elements of different cultures are combined (Soueif, 2004, 1–27). As representatives of the intellectual elite, both A. Soueif and

¹¹ A. Maalouf’s positive attitude to France is emphasized and discussed in detail in: Maalouf, A. (2012). *Discours de réception à l’Académie Française*. Available: <https://www.academie-francaise.fr/discours-de-reception-de-amin-maalouf> [last viewed 21.09.2024].

A. Maalouf feel not only as citizens of the world belonging to both cultures, but also as intercultural interpreters and experts in multicultural communication whose task is to promote peaceful coexistence and exchange of knowledge. This does not mean that these writers do not address existing problems in intercultural communication; on the contrary, they criticize the shortcomings of both Western and Arab countries, as well as the manifestations of racism, discrimination, and intolerance in both cultures, trying to popularize their own – peaceful, enriching, respectful – version of multiculturalism. For example, A. Maalouf is described as a representative of the francophone variant of “transnational” identity, who on the one hand belongs to two or more cultures, and on the other, is partially alien to all of them due to his hybridity (Johae, 2009, 289–302). The cultural space of A. Maalouf is mainly the Francophonie, combining the franco-French literary tradition with the influence of Lebanese Christian culture and Arab literature. Consequently, his works may be included in the category of hybrid or “transcultural” francophone literature, as described by Germain Moïse Eba’a and Jean-Marcel Essiene (Eba’a, & Essiene, 2019, 16–17). On the other hand, A. Soueif’s hybrid cultural space is mostly created from the elements of Anglophone-British and Arab-Egyptian secular culture, which the writer tries to harmoniously combine. The post-colonial critic W. Hassan describes A. Soueif as the heir of the project of culture translation and hybridization started by the North Mahjar writers, in particular, A. Rihani, and, in some sense, also a follower of E. Said’s thought, because in her novels she explores the “politics of empire” that influenced 20th century England, Egypt and USA (Hassan, 2024, xiv, 28–32).

A. Soueif, married to a British literary critic and poet and constantly traveling between London and Cairo, describes her perception of living in a multicultural, globalized environment connected by transport and communication technologies:

I had thought it made no difference where one lived: Cairo, London, what was a four-and-a-half-hour flight? We were citizens of the world and the world was fast becoming more connected. I saw

the difficulty only in terms of the personal life: on the one hand, how much would I miss my family, my friends, the sun, the food, the – life? On the other, what was life worth without this miraculous new love? (Soueif, 2004, 1)

The writer collected her reflections on the formation and existence of a multicultural identity and a hybrid cultural space in the collection of essays *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground* (2004), in the preface of which she explains the conclusions drawn from her experience. The writer defines *Mezzaterra* as a hybrid cultural space, as a “common ground with avenues into the rich hinterlands of many traditions” and “a meeting-point for many cultures and traditions” whose inhabitants are all those who live “between” cultures (Soueif, 2004, 6–8). The place is valuable precisely because it allows to experience every culture and language simultaneously from two positions: as belonging to it and as a “stranger”; as something new, unfamiliar or old, traditional; from one’s own or another’s cultural point of view, with one’s own eyes or with someone else’s:

The rewards of inhabiting the Mezzaterra are enormous. At its best it endows each thing, at the same moment, with the shine of the new, the patina of the old; the language, the people, the landscape, the food of one culture constantly reflected off the other. This is not a process of comparison, not a ‘which is better than which’ project but rather at once a distillation and an enrichment of each thing, each idea. It means, for example, that you are both on the inside and the outside of language, that within each culture your stance cannot help but be both critical and empathetic (Soueif, 2004, 8).

Furthermore, the writer explains that this mentality of a “citizen of the world” arose in a special environment where she spent her youth, and she nostalgically remembers:

Growing up Egyptian in the Sixties meant growing up Muslim / Christian / Egyptian / Arab / African / Mediterranean / Non-aligned / Socialist but happy with small-scale capitalism. On top of that, if you were urban / professional the chances were that you spoke English and / or French and danced to the Stones as readily as to Abd el-Haleem [...] In Cairo on any one night you could go see an Arabic, English, French, Italian or Russian film. One week the Russian

Hamlet was playing at Cinema Odeon, Christopher Plummer's Hamlet at Cinema Qasr el-Nil and Karam Mutawi's Hamlet at the Egyptian National Theatre. We were modern and experimental. We believed in Art and Science. We cared passionately for Freedom and Social Justice (Soueif, 2004, 5).

According to A. Soueif, the secular, multicultural Egyptian intellectual elite of the 1960s believed that they lived in the overlapping zone of several cultures, perceiving themselves as “occupying a ground common to both Arab and Western culture, Russian culture was in there too, and Indian, and a lot of South America” (Soueif, 2004, 6). In this environment, identity was not perceived as something that must be defined and defended because, as the writer describes the beliefs of her youth, “The question of identity as something that needed to be defined and defended did not occupy us. We were not looking inward at ourselves but outward at the world. We knew who we were. Or thought we did” (Soueif, 2004, 6).

The formation of this particular environment was initially inspired by the French culture, starting with Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt and the European scientific and cultural exploration project initiated by Khedive Muhammad Ali; however, from 1882 until the Egyptian revolution in 1952, it developed mainly under the influence of the British Empire,¹² and shortly after that, in the 1960s, as described by A. Soueif, in the atmosphere of socialism and pan-Arabism. A characteristic feature of Egyptian secular-intellectual culture of that time was the tendency to look for the brighter side of all cultures, to believe in the best, in the unity and brotherhood of mankind, recognizing the kinship between the best of Western and Arab culture, as, for example, that the ideals and scientific principles of Western and Arab-Islamic culture are identical and have been formulated in parallel in both Western sources and in the Qur’an and Sunnah; that the West respects its own values and consistently acts in accordance with them; and, finally, that exactly in

¹² Some insights into this process might be found in: Mansfield, P. (1972). *The British in Egypt*. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston.

the name of these Western values, they fought against the West's own hegemony and colonialism (Soueif, 2004, 6–8). A. Soueif describes this outlook, as follows:

This territory, this ground valued precisely for being a meeting-point for many cultures and traditions – let's call it 'Mezzaterra' – was not invented or discovered by my generation. But we were the first to be born into it, to inhabit it as of right. It was a territory imagined, created even, by Arab thinkers and reformers starting in the middle of the nineteenth century when Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt first sent students to the West and they came back inspired by the best of what they saw on offer. Generations of Arabs protected it through the dark time of colonialism. A few Westerners inhabited it too: Lucy Duff Gordon was one, Wilfred Scawen Blunt another. My parents' generation are still around to tell how they held on to their admiration for the thought and discipline of the West, its literature and music, while working for an end to the West's occupation of their lands (Soueif, 2004, 6).

A. Soueif portrays the same cultural environment in her novel *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992), in which it is depicted as utopian, idealistic land of lost happiness, destroyed by the harsh reality. Indeed, the representatives of the multicultural, secular intellectual elite, the inhabitants of *Mezzaterra*, soon feel out of place in Egypt, as there is a gradual return to a traditional and even conservative Islamic, patriarchal, xenophobic culture, which had been suppressed for some time and persisted mainly in family life and gender relations. The writer also describes herself as a resident of *Mezzaterra*, and, in relation, explains the reasons why she decided to leave her homeland. After its disappearance in Egyptian reality, *Mezzaterra* still exists in the space of the mind, in the hybrid cultural space, parallel to the real countries and societies in Egypt, the USA, Great Britain, which are criticized in comparison to this utopian construct. The novel also describes examples of existing hybrid cultural spaces, such as the Arab diaspora in London. From the writer's point of view, the ideal hybrid personality, as described in the novel, is harmonious, consisting of Eastern and Western elements, and it allows to look, act and feel like one's own in both cultures, without creating either internal or external

conflicts. The hybridity of the author's own cultural identity is evidenced by the changing point of view – sometimes from the point of view of representatives of one culture, sometimes from the other, as well as from an intercultural position, as a result of which both cultures are alternately or even simultaneously defamiliarized. As “Self/Own people” the writer portrays Westerners, especially Londoners open to other cultures and secularized Egyptian emigrants in London, while “Strangers/Others” are the racists, sexists, xenophobes and religious extremists both from Arab and Western society.

The basis of the novel *In the Eye of the Sun* is the binary opposition “The East/real Egypt, Cairo” || “The West/idealized and real Great Britain, the USA, New York, Brooklyn”, in which the image of Egypt is basically connected with the patriarchal Egyptian family, the oppressive atmosphere in society, the arbitrariness, moodiness, wilfulness, brutality of men as contrasted to the powerlessness, submission, and silence of women are vividly portrayed (Soueif, 1992, 68, 85, 89, 91, 130, 135, 137, 144). The peaceful Egypt of the past, open to the world, appears as an unattainable land of lost happiness, and the present Egypt is shown as an environment gradually overwhelmed by superstition, darkness and cruelty, in which fear reigns: on the one hand, from Allah, who forces many to follow religious laws more and more strictly, to the point of fanaticism, to find fault in oneself, to repent; on the other hand – from the arbitrariness and repression of the authorities, from the brutality of policemen and soldiers, from stormy political events, war and revolutions. Against this background, discrimination against women also increases, and the dark, previously often hidden, invisible sides of Egyptian society come to light: the support of the large family turns into exaggerated control aimed at consistently justifying the man and condemning the woman in all things (Soueif, 1992, 113–114, 120–121). As a result of the segregation of women, specific subcultures of women and men are formed, which have so little in common that they do not even share topics of conversation; they exist parallel to each other, maintaining double standards. Within the chastity culture, female sexuality is denied and suppressed, resulting in sexual dissatisfaction. There is no

solution to this problem, and women accept their powerless position by releasing their anger and frustration at other subordinate women, or by finding solace in fatalism and religious fanaticism. Although some of its negative characteristics are mentioned, the Western image is created as the positive pole of a binary opposition, made of components opposite to the Egyptian image. Some of these positive components include freedom, security, independence, equality of a woman in society, as well as people's initiative, active problem solving, free will, and most importantly, freedom from guilt and sin. Also, in general, the Western cultural environment is characterized as supportive of education and science, peaceful, stable, and humane. The West is a place to escape from problems, start a new life, create a new identity, blend into a crowd of anonymous people, heal heartache; but also a place from which to isolate, living in nostalgic memories of the homeland, the lost land of youth; and finally, as a place where one intends to realize dreams, but stumbles upon a harsh reality that does not quite match the idealistic image of the West.

In *Mezzaterra*, A. Soueif describes how, while living in London, she felt that the images of Arabs and Arab culture were distorted, misrepresented in British media and literature: "I know that I am not alone in the experience of alienation; there are hundreds of thousands of us: people with an Arab or a Muslim background living in the West and doing daily double-takes when faced with their reflection in a Western mirror," and she wonders: "Was this misrepresentation reciprocal? If I were an American or British person living in Egypt, and if I knew Arabic well enough to read the mainstream Arabic press, would I constantly be brought up short by skewed accounts of my history and culture?" The writer emphasizes:

It was impossible – apart from a few notable exceptions – to find in the media of the West coherent interpretations of all this that did justice to the people of the region and their history. If the New World Order was a mechanism to control the Arab and the Muslim worlds then I felt that the media of the West was complicit in it; for they always represented those worlds in terms that excused or even invited the imposition of control (Soueif, 2004, 3–4).

A. Soueif advocates not only objective representation of the Other, but, especially, respectful exchange and fusion of cultures on the basis of common values, for peaceful coexistence, condemning all attempts to subjugate and conquer, all instances of discrimination and hate speech (for instance, Soueif, 2004, 4, 26), in particular, sorting of people according to their outward appearance: those who appear to belong to one of the hostile parties are automatically counted among its supporters, while those whose affiliation is difficult to determine by appearance are required to immediately declare a certain position that forces multicultural people to give up part of their identity. To illustrate her views, she vividly describes own experience during the school years in London, when she was forced to make a certain choice between two groups:

I went to school in London briefly when I was thirteen. Mayfield Comprehensive in Putney. There, the white girls thought I was white (or thought I was close enough to white to want to be thought of as white) and the black girls thought I was black (or close enough to black to make identifying with the whites suspect). But that did not mean I could associate freely where I chose; it meant that I had to make a choice and stick with it. And whichever group I opted for I would be despised by the other. After three months I refused to go to school. Thinking about it now, I see this as my first serious exposure to the 'with us or against us' mentality; the mentality that forces you to self-identify as one thing despite your certain knowledge that you are a bit of this and a bit of that (Soueif, 2004, 4–5).

In fact, *Mezzaterra* of A. Soueif resembles, in some aspects, the Third Space as described by the post-colonial critic H. K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994). According to H. K. Bhabha, the whole humanity, starting from the end of the 20th century, suffers from a sense of disorientation and a constant search for what lies “outside” the ordinary: traditional categories of human classification, such as social class and gender, are disappearing, and therefore there is a desire to use any characteristic that could be used as a basis for identity construction, for instance, race, generation, workplace, place of residence or sexual orientation (Bhabha, 1994, 1). These features are declared to be the basis of cultural differences and discussed in the zone of cultural and linguistic

contact, some “in-between” (Bhabha, 1994, 2) or the “Third Space”, in which the mentioned features overlap or exist simultaneously next to each other (Bhabha, 1994, 36). In this kind of intercultural spaces, or areas of cultural interaction, contradictions in the identities of individuals or whole groups caused by overlapping cultures are discovered and discussed, and new ways of defining and articulating the cultures involved are found (Bhabha, 1994, 2, 36). The spaces also include power struggles between groups belonging to different cultures, while the “geopolitical space”, whatever its definition and nature, is evaluated and questioned (Bhabha, 1994, 3, 6). The intercultural border in this case does not mean an insurmountable barrier, but a reference line across which there is movement back and forth, leaning in favour of one or the other culture and gradually combining them. Due to the overlapping of two cultures, the binary logic underlying each culture is destabilized, and the intercultural perspective allows to see cultures as if from the outside (Bhabha, 1994, 1–5). Thus, presenting one’s own culture to a representative of another culture inevitably involves the basic concepts of the addressee’s (“Other”) culture, emphasizing differences, and thus monocultural “purity” is lost. In addition, H. K. Bhabha believes it possible that in today’s world, global or international culture should be conceptualized as an intermediate space of intercultural communication, which would be rooted not in cultural differences, diversities or exotic aspects of multiculturalism, but in expressions of cultural hybridity. Such an approach is diametrically opposed to the cultural diversity approach, which is based on the recognition and determination of certain cultural barriers (Bhabha, 1994, 36–37). As H. K. Bhabha explains, migrants live in a hybrid cultural space that automatically begins to form when they move to live elsewhere; this space is “beyond” the boundaries of the two cultures, and intercultural translation, mixing, and juxtaposition of cultures takes place (Bhabha, 1994, 7). In order to maintain a peaceful dialogue between cultures, it is necessary to maintain this neutral space where intercultural discussions take place, and also understand that basic concepts do not exist in reality, that they are defined for a specific purpose and only make sense within a specific discourse,

because in the process of cultural representation, which takes place in the “Third space” or in the interspace, the intercultural space, cultural symbols do not have forever fixed, unchanging properties: in each act of communication, these symbols are translated, re-interpreted and read anew (Bhabha, 1994, 36–37). Meanwhile, the process of displaying one’s identity is not the confirmation of some predetermined identity, because it always includes the reproduction of an identity image and presenting it in relation to a present or imagined “Other”, who is used as a background or a referent for declaring one’s difference (Bhabha, 1994, 45). The displayed identity does not always coincide with a person’s inner sense of identity, because the former is constructed according to the dominant discourse in the given communicative situation, including the a priori knowledge about “Self” and “Other” embedded in it, as well as prejudices and stereotypes, such as the signifiers “skin colour/race”. By “knowing” or “understanding” the colonized subjects within such a discourse, the need to control, govern and “civilize” them is justified, assuming, for example, “the white man’s burden” (Bhabha, 1994, 51, 77–83). Thus, H. Bhabha claims that the flow of migrants and the influx of migrants into the metropolis, as well as the involvement of these people in the life of the metropolis and the desire to change its cultural identity, are direct consequences of Western colonialism and imperialism, which spread the colonial discourse and thus contributed to the emergence of its counter-discourse: namely, the colonial discourse makes one believe that the metropolis is superior to the peripheries and colonies and therefore creates a desire to move there and emulate its inhabitants; on the other hand, migrants – bearers of the anti-discourse – want to break down the colonial hierarchy because they occupy the lowest rank in it, but do so by using the ideology of the dominant discourse and acting within it (Bhabha, 1994, 6, 77–80).

In the contemporary, globalized, multicultural world, it is essential to explore the existing patterns of peaceful coexistence of cultures, and on this basis, build new ones, adapting them to today’s realities. Therefore, studies of diaspora life, cultural contact and hybridization of identity become particularly relevant, especially that migration has increased

in unprecedented proportions since the beginning of the 21st century, mainly from less developed countries to North America and the EU (Feinstein et al., 2022). According to the World Bank Group report, about 184 million people live outside their country of origin, of which about 20% are refugees (World Bank Group, 2023, 44–57). In such a situation and taking into account that the world is interconnected by the communication technologies of the 21st century, there is an urgent need to promote positive, inspiring examples of culture contact and of peaceful coexistence among people with diverse views and lifestyles. Hopefully, examples provided by the mentioned Arab emigration writers over the span of a century, starting with North Mahjar and ending with A. Soueif, would inspire such positive models to follow instead of deepening misunderstandings and growing enmity between cultures. Becoming acquainted with peaceful models of coexistence proves that it is indeed possible and achievable, and that negative emotions, hatred, and violence are not a necessary outcome in culture contact.

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On the Quest for an Esoteric *Lingua Franca*: The Spiritual Adventures of Three Young Arab Emigration Writers in the “New Babylon”

Since the end of the 19th century, New York has been traditionally compared to the city of Babylon mentioned in the Book of Revelation to John, mainly because of its multiculturalism, power, riches, splendour, and loose morals. Just like the ancient metropolis, New York gathered people seeking truth, fortune, or both from all over the world. An environment, characteristic of the modern globalized world, gradually took its shape, and, as the result, hybrids of various cultures and religions emerged and thrived. Three Arab emigration writers, Kahlil Gibran, Mikhail Naimy, and Ameen Rihani, became actively involved in these turbulent hybridization processes and attempted to find a new, unified religion that would save the humankind. The results of their spiritual quest and their message to the world is expressed in three anglophone literary works that appear to be a synthesis not only of Christianity and Islam, but also of Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Theosophy, and various esoteric beliefs. The present study explores the catalysing elements and stages of this synthesis.

Keywords: Arab Mahjar, Arab Christians, Freemasons, the Baha'i Faith, Theosophy, the Statue of Liberty

More than a hundred years ago, three young Arabs, Ameen Rihani, Kahlil Gibran and Mikhail Naimy, left their secluded native villages of the picturesque Mount Lebanon and moved to the busy, multicultural cities of the U.S.A. which, at the time, were often dubbed

the rich but depraved New Babylon (Wilson, 2016, 69–72). Arriving in New York, they sailed past the enormous, recently erected (in 1886) Statue of Liberty, the “symbol of immigration during the second half of the 19th century” (Christie, 2015, n. p.). As Rihani (1911) described an immigrant’s impressions at the first sight of the New York harbour,

And is this the gate of Paradise,” he asks, “or the port of some subterrestrial city guarded by the Jinn? What a marvel of enchantment is everything around us! What manifestations of industrial strength, what monstrosities of wealth and power, are here! These vessels proudly putting to sea; these tenders scurrying to meet the Atlantic greyhound which is majestically moving up the bay; these barges loading and unloading schooners from every strand, distant and near; these huge lighters carrying even railroads over the water; these fire-boats scudding through the harbour shrilling their sirens; these careworn, grim, strenuous multitudes ferried across from one enchanted shore to another; these giant structures tickling heaven’s sides; these cable bridges, spanning rivers, uniting cities; and this superterrestrial goddess, torch in hand ... Salaam, this enchanted City! (34–35).

Still, most probably, the three immigrants were unaware of the controversial symbolism of Lady Liberty as the epitome of American society and its values, and, in particular, the link between its many aspects and their future literary activity. By end of the 19th century, the statue was usually seen as the personification of American freedom of religion and speech (Hieronimus, & Cortner, 2016, 28–57); however, some religious fundamentalists and conspiracy theorists believed that the statue was “pagan and idolatrous” (Cronley, 2016, 232). For them, it exhibited the “pollution” of Christianity in America by Eastern religions, in particular, with “heathen” or “Satanist” symbols and rituals embodied in a “female divinity as the ultimate symbol of evil.” The “names used for this invented composite goddess included the Whore of Babylon, Jezebel, Semiramis, and the Queen of Heaven” that, as the fundamentalists explained, showed also in the Catholic cult of Virgin Mary (Hieronimus, & Cortner, 2016, 231). As the cornerstone of the statue was consecrated by the Freemasons, there was later much speculation

about Masonic symbolism of the statue,¹ in particular, its relation to Isis and thus, again, to the mentioned evil female deity (Rhoades, 2013, 215). In short, there were people who perceived Lady Liberty as the great Whore of Babylon that was installed to show to the initiated that a new age had begun in the world, the rule of the U.S.A. as the rich, multicultural, and depraved country that was mentioned in the Bible.²

In the 19th century, it was quite usual to label “great metropolises” such as Manchester, Paris, Chicago, and, in particular, London and New York with the name of New Babylon, mentioned in the Book of Revelation to John; sometimes, the comparison was extended to the whole U.S. as the melting pot of nations and the centre of immigration and business. Often, this comparison was positive, emphasizing wealth and achievement; however, simultaneously, it implied depravity and damnation. The skyscrapers were often compared to ziggurats; as they were built actively in the last fifteen years of the 19th century, they were seen as signalling further transformation of New York to New Babylon. This comparison had become a cliché, and it seems that everyone was aware of it in either in its positive or negative sense; for instance, while some religious people saw in this likeness signs of God’s wrath and imminent fall, artists and businessmen celebrated the opportunity to live in the centre of cultural diversity and riches (Ross, 2016, 69–72). And indeed, New York could be seen as a rich, multicultural city on hills by the waters,³ the meeting-place of businessmen and politicians, ruling

¹ Later, Rihani showed his understanding of this symbolism and related controversies in *The Book of Khalid*. He observed that the people of Lebanon would “rebaptise as the Statue of Liberty” “the limed bronze Statue of Mary the Virgin” in Kasrawani and added, “Masonry, even to-day, raises around it her mace” [...] “Only this I know, that between the devil and the deep sea, Mary the Virgin shall hold her own. For though the name be changed, and the aim-box thrown into the sea, she shall ever be worshipped by the people. The Statue of the Holy Virgin of Liberty it will be called, and the Jesuits and priests can go a-begging” (Rihani, 1911, 258).

² This tradition is continued even today, e.g., see, for instance McCullough, R. (2011). *The Whore and her Mother: 9/11, Babylon, and the Return of the King*. Precious Oil Publications.

³ Rev. 16-18 (King James Version (KJV)).

over “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”⁴ The riches of the world flowed into the land, and “the merchants of the earth” were “waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies,”⁵ including

*The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, [...] and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,
And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.*⁶

The speed of transportation and access to communications increased; comfortable liners from American, British, German, and French companies competed in crossing the Atlantic Ocean (Rieger, 2005, 158–190). Many things appeared without which our world would be unthinkable, to just to mention railroad, automobiles, electrical devices, sound recording, telegraph, telephone, and rubber (Cumò, 2007, xiii–xvi). The belief in science and technology progress as a solution for the problems of humankind was echoed in travel literature and science fiction of the day, for instance, in the works of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. Despite some minor economic crises, people were optimistic, and New York might be rightly called the busy market-place (Shearer, 2016, 78–90), full of “the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters”⁷ where prophets, soothsayers, mystics, quacks, and scientists could present and exchange their ideas (see Blake, 2006, 3–47; Shearer, 2016, 75–110).

Ameen Rihani, the eldest of the three emigrants and the founding father of Arab emigrant philosophy and literature, joined the trend, characterizing the West in *The Book of Khalid* as the land of “organisation and power, where Science and Freedom reign supreme” (Rihani, 1911, 246) and the home of “the material comforts of life” symbolized by “the American millions” (301). However, the writer noticed the spiritual

⁴ Rev. 17:15 (KJV).

⁵ Rev. 18:3 (KJV).

⁶ Rev. 18:12-13 (KJV).

⁷ Rev. 18:22 (KJV).

poverty of the West, stating that it worships “false and unspeakable divinities” such as “the gods of wealth, of egoism, of alcohol, of fornication” (288).⁸

He called, furthermore, “lust of gain [...] a plague” (197)⁹ and exclaimed that the Occident could be saved only by a new religion coming from Orient, the “land of origination, where Light and Spirit first arose” (246), “for Society must be redeemed [...] speedily” (vii):

*O my Brothers [...] there is but one star in this vague dusky sky above us, for you as for myself. And that star is either the last in the eternal darkness, or the first in the rising dawn. [...] Yes, we are to-day at a terrible and glorious turning point, and it depends upon us whether that one star in the vague and dusky sky of modern life, shall be the harbinger of Jannat or Juhannam.*¹⁰ (141–142)

Following the example of Rihani, both Gibran and Naimy tried to find this new religion (Bushrui, 2014, 40) and to express it in a “new scripture” (Bell, 2010, 40). Composed in English, “a universal language” (Rihani, 1911, 14; also see Bell, 2010, 40), each of these three books presents an attempt to formulate a new code of values that would unite the adherents of various religious groups; thus, it would end religious strife and segregation that perpetuated oppression and prevented the spiritual revival of both Orient and Occident (Bushrui, 2014, 40–45). For that reason, these books depict new prophets endowed with qualities of Jesus, Zarathustra, and Muhammad as well as with mysterious Arab names, Khalid¹¹, Almustafa¹², and Mirdad;¹³ they seek the Truth, endure hardships in quests, often in some imaginary

⁸ Compare to Rev. 18:2-3 (KJV), “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her...”

⁹ Compare to Rev. 18:4 (KJV), “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

¹⁰ Paradise or Hell (Arabic).

¹¹ “The Eternal One” (Arabic).

¹² “The Chosen One” (Arabic).

¹³ “The Repeatedly Returned One” (Arabic).

or semi-mythical lands, and, finally, reach the ultimate understanding of God, celestial Love, and human life. Wishing to save the humanity, the three prophets speak to their disciples who record these words of wisdom in new holy books.

The Book of Khalid (1911), the first of these “new scriptures” and the first ever anglophone Arab emigration novel, was written by the eldest of the three, Ameen Rihani (1876–1940)¹⁴ who immigrated to the U.S.A. in 1888 (Darraj, 2005, 180). The book talks about the great dreams and futile attempts of Khalid, a “new Muhdi”¹⁵ (Rihani, 1911, 8), to reconcile and unite “the Orient and Occident, the male and female of the Spirit” (245). Khalid asserts, “Indeed, every religion is good and true, if it serves the high purpose of its founder. And they are false, all of them, when they serve the low purpose of their high priests” (294). Born in Baalbek, “a city with a past as romantic as Rome’s, as wicked as Babel’s” (14) that “gave the world many a saint and martyr along with its harlots and poets and philosophers” (19), having “lived in a cave in the wilderness of New York for five years” (8), which reminds the reader that the prophet of Islam Muhammad received his revelation in a cave in the mountainous wilderness near Mecca, “Our Prophet” (8) Khalid walks his own “Via Dolorosa” (28) just like “the Carpenter” (28) Jesus to the bitter end. Trying to revive the Arab Empire, he preaches at a mosque that a political reform is possible only based on a reform in religion, wishing to “free al-Islam [...] from its degrading customs, its stupefying traditions” (320). The audience attacks him and calls an infidel;

¹⁴ In Arabic: أمين الريحاني – ‘amīn ar-rīḥānī or ar-reihānī.

¹⁵ According to Twelver Shi’ah tradition, Mahdi is the twelfth Imam. Born in the 9th century, he is still alive but invisible. The believers should be ready for his return and support him, as he will purify the faith, liberate the humankind from falsehood, and start the golden age of justice, wisdom, peace, and affluence. See Madelung, W. al-Mahdi. In: *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online (EI-2 English)*. P. J. Bearman (ed.). Available: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0618 [last viewed 23.02.2024]. On different interpretations see Sonn, T. (2004). *A Brief History of Islam*. John Wiley & Sons, 96; 208–210; 146; Nasr, S. H. (1989). *Expectation of the Millenium: Shiism in History*. New York: State University of New York Press, 19.

the “new Muḥdi” flees followed by the angry crowd throwing stones at him as at *ash-Shaytan ar-Rajeem*¹⁶, the Accursed Satan, in Islamic tradition (330). In the end, expelled by the Ottoman authorities and rejected by Arabs, he disappears in the desert. As Rihani spent much effort desperately trying to solve the problems of both the West and the Arab world, *The Book of Khalid* appears to be a largely biographical work, mirroring the writer’s aspirations and disillusionments (Bushrui, 1999, n. p.).

The second book, *The Prophet* (1923), was written by Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931)¹⁷ who was seven years younger than Rihani and arrived in the U.S.A. in 1895 (Bushrui, 2010, 175–180). It contains words of wisdom spoken to the people of “the city of Orphalese” (3) by Almustafa, “the chosen and the beloved” (Gibran, 1923, 3) and has rather similar ideas concerning the principles of the new, unified religion as *The Book of Khalid*. However, that might be explained by the common background of both writers, their “affinity of vision” (Bushrui, 1999, n. p.), and the fact that, after meeting Rihani for the first time in Paris in 1910, Gibran, apparently, was inspired by his ideas. For some time, Gibran referred to Rihani as *al-mu’allem*¹⁸ and even illustrated the first edition of *The Book of Khalid* (Bushrui, Jenkins, 1998; Bushrui, 1999, n. p.). The list of other possible influences on Gibran’s famous book is long. For instance, Gibran was fascinated by Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra* during his study in Paris in 1908–1910, as its author “convincingly and audaciously adopted the towering figure of a prophet from the East as his mouthpiece” (Bushrui, 2010, 4). Therefore, the name given by Gibran to the seeress who listens to the teachings of the prophet, Almitra (Gibran, 1923, 5), might suggest the angelic divinity Mithra of Zoroastrianism, with the Arabic definite article *al-* added, possibly, for the symmetry with Almustafa. Furthermore, it is known that he “was conscious of the exalted place of the Qur’an in Arabic literature and its simultaneous

¹⁶ “The one who must be punished by stoning [lapidation]” (Arabic).

¹⁷ Versions of the writer’s name in English: Gibran Khalil Gibran and Jubrān Khalil Jubrān; in Arabic: جبران خليل جبران – *žubrān ḥalīl žubrān*.

¹⁸ The teacher (Arabic).

potency as a spiritual, social, and literary source of inspiration” (Bushrui, 2010, 4), which might explain his use of the name Almustafa. However, it appears that Gibran meant mainly Islam as understood by mystics, for instance, “the Sufi poets; in particular Jalal al-Din Rumi, honoured among many as the greatest mystical poet in history” (Bushrui, Jenkins, 1998, 77). Thus, according to Bushrui (2010), Gibran’s works show the

... desire to merge the Sufi Muslim tradition with the Christian mystical heritage of his background – a dream realized in his portrayal of Almustafa, the eponymous prophet, both a Christ figure and the universal man of Muslim civilization – representing the literary and philosophical meeting-point between the spiritual traditions of East and West. (9)

However, in a letter to Mary Haskell, Gibran asserts,

My art can find no better resting place than the personality of Jesus. His life is the symbol of Humanity. He shall always be the supreme figure of all ages and in Him we shall always find mystery, passion, love, imagination, tragedy, beauty, romance and truth (April 29, 1909, Chapel Hill papers, qtd. in Bushrui, & Jenkins, 1998, 9).

The last book, named *The Book of Mirdad: The Strange Story of a Monastery Which Was Once Called the Ark* (1948), was written by Mikhail Naimy (1889–1988)¹⁹, who emigrated in 1911 (Bell, 2010, 251–264). Unlike Rihani and Gibran who were Maronites, Naimy belonged to Greek Orthodox Church, which introduced him to the Russian culture. In his native village, he studied in a Russian Orthodox school, then was sent to continue his education in the Russian Teacher’s College in Nazareth, and, finally, was awarded a scholarship at a Russian Orthodox seminary in Ukraine (Bell, 2010, 253). It seems that Naimy’s wide reading of Russian literature, in particular, Leo Tolstoy, lead him to the criticism of the Church doctrine, development of own approach to God, and the idea of reconciliation and merge of religions through love (Imangulieva, 2009, 152). In New York, he joined the revolution in Arab literature already started by Arab emigrants and soon became

¹⁹ In Arabic: ميخائيل نعيمة – *mīḥā’īl nu’aima*, sometimes (incorrectly) read as *na’īma*.

one of the main theorists and prolific writers of Arab Mahjar literary school, enriching it with his knowledge of Russian culture and literature (Bell, 2010, 257)²⁰. Naimy is well-known for his literary biography titled *Sab'ūn*²¹ (1960), in which he described the whole history of Arab Mahjar as a literary and philosophical school. For instance, he described how he joined a theosophical society during his studies at the University of Washington and how it had become the “principal philosophy” not only of his life and writing but also of many other Mahjar writers. Furthermore, he explained how Arab emigrant writers adopted and developed the ideas of mysticism, Sufism, Freemasonry, Hinduism, and Buddhism (Bell, 2010, 255–262; Moreh, 1975, 99–100). However, his “new scripture” (Bell, 2010, 40) reminds of Leo Tolstoy’s call to part with all possessions, live in austerity, and serve the destitute for the love of God (Imangulieva, 2009, 193–194). The book tells the story of a mysterious, silent stranger Mirdad who arrived to “The Ark,” a monastery built by Noah after the Deluge “upon the highest peak” in “Milky Mountains”²² (Naimy, 1948, 5). He was allowed to stay as a servant, and for seven years he brought luck and riches to the monastery; however, later he “unsealed his lips” and “gave vent to what his silence had so long concealed, and it burst forth in torrents so irresistible that all companions were caught in their sweeping rush” (16). Mirdad explained to the monks the essence of religion, persuaded them to distribute the wealth of their monastery and their belongings to the poor, and lead them away, leaving behind only their senior who initially opposed his teachings:

²⁰ A thorough discussion of the influence of Russian culture and literature on Naimy’s beliefs available in Imangulieva (2009).

²¹ *The Seventy [years of life]* (Arabic). Published in Arabic in three parts: المرحلة الأولى المرحلة الثانية المرحلة الثالثة/ بيروت دار نوفل ٢٠١٧.
النعيمة، ميخائيلي: سدعون... حكاية العمر

²² The three root consonants of *Lubnān*, the Arabic word for Lebanon, are *lbn*, which means “milk”. Therefore, the Arabic name of Mount Lebanon, *Jabal Lubnān*, can be translated as “Milky Mountains”.

And he marched before them down the slope, his noble head uplifted, his steady gaze searching the distance, his holy feet barely hitting the ground. When they had reached the rim of the pall of the sea, forming a vaulted passage in the sky illuminated with a light too wondrous for human words, too blinding for mortal eyes [...] as if the Master with the seven had been detached from the mountain and were walking on the mist straight into the vault – into the sun. (18)

The prophets, their messages, and their quests might feel vaguely familiar and attractive to readers coming from various backgrounds, as, by close reading, it is possible to recognize well-known elements of myths as well as of secular and religious texts that are juxtaposed and interwoven in a harmonious whole. For that reason, the best known of the three books, Gibran's *The Prophet*, suits all kinds of secular or religious ceremonies, including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim (Shoku, & Hegarty, 2012, n. p.). Hence, in a book on Sufism, Gibran Kahlil is called "the Sufi of Lebanon" and his works are cited on at least forty occasions (e.g., Siddiqui, 2014, 153); on the other hand, the followers of the Baha'i Faith declare that *The Prophet* was inspired by Baha'u'llah (e.g., Langness, 2014, n. p.). Likewise, about *The Book of Mirdad*, the mystic Osho said, "If I am to make a list of the great books, that will be the first" because it is "a parable, a fiction, but containing oceanic truth" (Keerti, 2012, n. p.). The writers purposefully created books of such a universal appeal, as they believed that all religions, in fact, are different versions of one universal faith. As Rihani explained in his "Literary Will" (1931),²³

I am a believer in the unity of religion, for in its mirror I see reflected the images of all Prophets and Messengers: Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Socrates, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and Baha'u'llah... They have all come from one source, and their faces merge and unite and become reflected in one unified face, a most holy symbol representing the face of God Himself. I counsel you to adhere to unity. In theoretical terms, religion is that luminous living link between man and his one and only God. In spiritual terms, religion is the joy derived from discovering, without mediation, the mysteries that lie

²³ Translated from Arabic and edited by S. B. Bushrui and A. Mutlak, in Bushrui (1999).

behind this unique link. In practical terms, religion is, above all, the recognition of the Divine Truth spoken by whoever has taught a single letter from the book of love, of piety, and of charitable deeds. It is also in following the example of those teachers and emulating them in thought, word and deed – each of us according to his capacity; for God has burdened no soul with more than it can endure.

The most attractive feature of the new hybrid religion is the belief that pure and chaste Love must be the basis of all human thoughts and deeds that reminds of the New Testament, for instance, “Love does no harm to the neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law.”²⁴ Thus, Khalid explained the essence of this new religion, “Everything in life must always resolve itself into love” because “love is the divine solvent” and “the splendour of God”²⁵ (Rihani, 1911, 295). Similarly, Almustafa asserted that

*Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;
For love is sufficient unto love.
... Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself. (Gibran, 1923, 8)*

Finally, Mirdad summarized this philosophy in simple words,

*Love is the Law of God.
You live that you may learn to love. You love that you may learn to live.
No other lesson is required of Man (Naimy, 1948, 45).*

In short, the three “new scriptures” appear to be built on the basis of Christianity combined with a great number of heterogeneous elements, collected from many religions and cultures of the world. Therefore, to understand, at least partially, how these literary works were shaped, it is necessary to explore the environment in which the three Arab emigrants were raised as related to their adaptation and success in the rebellious, multicultural intellectual atmosphere of New Babylon.

Analysing the background of these three Arab emigrants, first of all it must be noted that they were Arab Christians: Ameen Rihani

²⁴ Romans 13:10 (New Living Translation).

²⁵ An allusion to Baha'i Faith, as Baha'u'llah is literally “The Splendor of God” (Arabic/Persian).

and Kahlil Gibran were Maronites, while Mikhail Naimy was Greek Orthodox (Bushrui, 2014, 40). They were born and raised among “the sacred cedar groves and snowcapped mountains” (Bushrui, 2014, 40), in the conservative environment of Christian communities of Mount Lebanon, then part of the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire. Since the times of St. Maron,²⁶ who lived an ascetic life in these mountains and inspired a whole community of followers, these steep slopes have been famous for numerous saints, ardent believers, and monasteries. Mountain retreats among pine forests with clear, cool air were a good place for contemplation; in addition, in the mountain strongholds, religious minority groups such as Christians and Druze could defend themselves against all kinds of invaders and preserve their ways of life for centuries. Their secluded villages, cut off by the snow in winter, have always been isolated, patriarchal, and conservative,²⁷ and both Maronite and Orthodox Christianity of these mountains tend towards the stern medieval version even today. This heritage might explain the concentration of the three Arab emigrant writers on religious and moral themes as well as hint at the possible prototypes of communities of believers, religious leaders, and sermons. In addition, images related to the nature of their homeland appear in their works, for instance, the solitude and desolation of Altar Peak monastery in *The Book of Mirdad* (Naimy, 1948, 5), “the snow-capped mountains at the feet of which the lily and the oleander bloom” (Rihani, 1911, 125) as well as “unreachable heights... among the summits where eagles build their nests” in *The Prophet* (Gibran, 1923, 54).

Furthermore, the wish of the three Arab emigration writers to reconcile warring religious groups might stem from their childhood experiences in the atmosphere of fanaticism, religious segregation, and sectarian strife. According to the “Report on International Religious Freedom” (2013, n. p.), in Lebanon, the society has been divided for centuries into numerous segregated and too often aggressive religious

²⁶ A contemporary of St. John Chrysostom.

²⁷ Described in vivid detail in *The Book of Khalid* (Rihani, 1911, 181–210).

groups. In particular, this situation was recognized and developed under the rule of the officially Islamic Ottoman Empire where Christian and Druze communities of Mount Lebanon developed a specific, quite independent, mentality. The millet²⁸ system established by Sultan Mehmet (Boosahda, 2003, 5) allowed non-Muslim communities to follow their own laws as long as they paid taxes to the Empire and followed the rules that restricted free movement of dhimmis²⁹ (Ofeish, 1999, 101; Hasebe, 2013, 231). This, however, perpetuated religious segregation and self-identification according to religious affiliation rather than nationality or ethnicity (Boosahda, 2003, 5) and resulted in the official division of Mount Lebanon between the Druze and Maronites in 1843 (Ofeish, 1999, 101), which, in turn, laid a firm foundation to confessionalism as the system of government in Lebanon. Consequently, today, Lebanon has eighteen recognized religious groups, fifteen versions of civil law (Ofeish, 1999, 110), a strict division of political power between Maronite, Orthodox, Sunni, Shia, and Druze leaders (Ofeish, 1999, 106–108), constant tension among sects and political parties, and a long history of civil wars.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, religious segregation and disagreement already manifested itself as spiritual and intellectual rebellion against Ottoman order and values. Seemingly conforming to the Ottoman laws and, apparently, unnoticed by the authorities, Christians preserved and developed own national identity as different from Turks and Muslims; furthermore, the cultural gap between Muslim and Christian communities widened with every generation. The education of non-Muslim children was not controlled by the government and often even not by the religious authorities of their communities but rather by Western missionaries of different denominations coming from different countries (Hasebe, 2013, 232–234). Missionary education had an emphasis on the local Arabic dialect and Western culture rather than classical Arabic language and literature and Quran (Moreh, 1975,

²⁸ Certain religious minorities, mainly, Christians and Jews, in a Muslim country.

²⁹ The status of non-muslims under Sharia legislation.

84). In these institutions, students “benefited both in terms of receiving instruction in their native language and of acquiring access to Western culture and modernity through a Western language;” thus, “a young generation of non-Muslims emerged [...] still members of their communities, but imbued with Enlightenment values” (Somel, 2005, 256). It appears, however, that they had a rather uncritical, idealistic view of the West as the home of all freedom, progress, and knowledge. As the result, when encountering Western thought, Arab Christians did not have any religious or cultural barrier, while Arab Muslims most often reacted with a defence of Islam and traditional values (Haddad, 1970, 89). Most important, the missionaries helped strengthen “an ethnic consciousness based on language” through “native-tongue instruction in missionary schools” (Somel, 2005, 256) which sometimes developed into the idea of liberation from Turks and revival of Arab Caliphate (Haddad, 1970, 89). It is not surprising that many Christians supported “radical nationalism which inspires one to gain independence and autonomy”, as well as “liberalism” that regarded “Ottoman rule as oppression”, and called for “the liberation of brethren” from it (Hasebe, 2013, 242).

In addition, the contact with missionaries from various countries introduced multiculturalism and multilingualism as well as the notion of international, universal freedom, brotherhood and love that contrasted not only with the atmosphere of the Ottoman Empire, but also with the way of life of Christian communities of Mount Lebanon. Carried away by the idealism of their enthusiastic teachers and spiritual guides, the students of missionary schools became “increasingly aware of the stagnant, corrupt, and oligarchic structure of their community administrations” and “increasingly critical of their church institutions” (Somel, 2005, 256). Protestant missions played an especially important role in the translation and popularizing of the Bible, hymns, and Christian literature; at the same time, they were spreading criticism of local feudalism, clergy, and religious dogma (Moreh, 1975, 86). On the other hand, under the strict censorship of the Ottoman Empire, it was not possible to criticize or even question the established values, social order, or politics (Badawi, 1975, 179–180). The culture, traditions,

education, and government of the Ottoman Empire supported only the specific Ottoman mentality; in short, they were pro-Turkish, thoroughly Islamic and very conservative (Hasebe, 2013, 232); similarly, local Christian communities were patriarchal, traditional, and resisted any change. As the inevitable result, many Christians who would not emigrate for economic or political reasons did so to find religious and intellectual freedom (Badawi, 1975, 180). Therefore, the upbringing of Ameen Rihani, Kahlil Gibran, and Mikhail Naimy in Christian communities within the Ottoman Empire, obviously, explains the spirit of rebellion in their life and literary works, their affinity with the Western culture, and their criticism of the Arab world.

Furthermore, there simultaneously was an overall trend among both Muslims and Christians in the Arab world towards religious mysticism, as “at the end of the nineteenth century, the question of soul, its traits, qualities, and destiny after death was a subject which preoccupied Arabic religious magazines as well as secular and scientific periodicals” (Moreh, 1975, 96). These themes were discussed in the liberal press from the point of view of Sufism and even Freemasons, for instance, by the well-known Arab Freemason Jurji Zaydan who believed that “all religions treated this problem in a confused way” and attempted to find scientific explanations of this subject, in particular, in discussions with Catholics from 1897 to 1911 (Moreh, 1975, 96). The participants in such disputes usually were

Catholic intellectuals [as well as] secular intellectuals, graduates of the Protestant Syrian American College who were influenced by Western ideas, and who tried to introduce the scientific way of thinking into the Arab world, and were known as Freemasons or subject to their influence. (97)

According to Moreh (1975), there was an all-encompassing struggle between the Catholic Church and Freemasonry at the time (98). In this way, various Christian teachings were juxtaposed with secular and ancient philosophical ideas, for instance, the idea of pre-existence of the soul. Moreh (1975) explained that Protestants and, in particular, the graduates of the Syrian American College “were among leading

American Masons” (98); in fact, Arab Christian intellectuals “were weary of religious massacres” and hoped to “unite Arab intellectuals against Ottoman despotism” by the “Masonic principles of mutual tolerance, unfettered liberty of conscience, and human brotherhood, and the watchword of ‘Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity’” (99). It must be noted that the first Masonic lodge was founded in Beirut in 1862; “many lodges were later founded in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, and were joined by eminent Arab poets, writers and journalists” (99).

Considering that Freemasons were as active in the U.S.A., it is not surprising that “the most extreme revolutionary poets and writers of the Mahjaris were said to be Freemasons” (100). For instance, as Moreh (1975) explained, Mikhail Naimy admitted that he was a Mason³⁰ as well as Ameen Rihani and Gibran Kahlil who were said to be Masons by their contemporary Cheikho (100). Quite consequently, in the opening chapter of *The Book of Khalid* we read that the book as a “modern Arabic Manuscript” was found “in the Khedivial Library of Cairo, among the Papyri of the Scribe of Amen-Ra and the beautifully illuminated copies of the Koran” with enigmatic drawings on the cover, such as “a New York Skyscraper in the shape of a Pyramid”³¹ and “The Stockbrokers and the Dervishes” (i).

Taking into account this complex background, the three Arab emigrants were already well prepared for success in the U.S.A. because of their affiliation with the Western culture, liberal Christianity, and mysticism; their rebellion against dogma and oppression; and no major cultural barriers that would prevent their integration. In addition, they arrived at a time when the Westerners took a great interest in the Orient and its culture. According to Bushrui and Jenkins (1998), this was “an age when East and West finally touched and the peoples of the world awoke to the voices of a larger humanity,” with “the great poets of the West embracing the East – Yeats’s translation of the *Upanishads* and Eliot’s epiphany as he first read the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*”

³⁰ See also M. Naimy’s autobiography *Saba’un (The Seventy)*.

³¹ A possible allusion to Masonic symbolism and, at the same time, to ziggurats as characteristic of New Babylon.

(1). This sometimes grew into an obsession with the Orient, ridiculed in *The Book of Khabid* (Rihani, 1911, 83–88); to mention but one characteristic example, the artists and intellectuals of Boston then “dabbled with spiritualism and orientalism against an ‘exotic’ backdrop of Turkish carpets, jade bowls, water pipes, fezzes, pointed slippers, and Maeterlinck’s Neoplatonic broodings on death and preordained love” (Bushrui, Jenkins, 1998, 4). The interest in religions, old and new, increased, as the Bible and the traditional Christianity appeared obsolete to the followers of the new scientific and quasi-scientific theories; in particular, intellectuals and artists of the West awaited a prophet from the East that would bring them the true faith. People turned away from the traditional Christianity to exotic religions, including not only Buddhism and Hinduism but also neo-paganism and experimental spiritual practices; for instance, F. Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1892) was welcomed as an alternative spiritual message for people disappointed in Christianity (Stack, 1983, 80–84). Theosophy was an established movement, popularizing ancient eastern wisdom, for instance, Buddhism and Hinduism, and reviving interest in esoteric and occult ideas in the modern age³² (Godwin, 2013, 17–20). About the same time, the Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer started to publish *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (first edition in 1890) that showed the connection between various myths, religions, magic, superstitions, and folklore, finding many common traits and motifs recurring throughout the history. In the end of the 19th century, Bab and Baha’ullah brought the Baha’i Faith from Persia to the U.S.A.; it at once became an organic part of this movement, uniting the great religions – Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism – into a new entity (Miller, 1974, 193–200). Especially attractive to a multicultural society must have been the belief of the Baha’is that the mankind needed not only a spiritual *lingua franca*, but also a linguistic one to bring universal peace and harmony (Langness, 2013, n. p.). No wonder

³² *The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* by Helena Blavatsky was published in 1888.

that people of artistic circles of Boston were charmed by the young Gibran and saw in him an Oriental prince of an outstanding power and beauty whose destiny was to become a prophet some day (Bushrui, & Jenkins, 1998, 3). This also largely explains the popularity and influence of *The Book of Khalid*, *The Prophet*, and *The Book of Mirdad* which further develop the same tradition.

Thus, the three young Arabs from mountain villages survived the mind-bending experience of emigration and adaptation to life in the U.S.A and reached success as leading writers and thinkers of “the great melting pot” that fused languages, cultures, and religions. Apparently, they enjoyed American freedom and vigour that allowed them to create freely and exchange ideas with educated, open-minded people. Their upbringing as Arab Christians prepared them to the life in Western culture, while the experience of diversity and conflicts of the Middle East helped offer solutions to the problems arising in the newly shaping multicultural environment, including advice how to bring mutual understanding among “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues”³³. Their being emigrants from a land with a strong religious tradition helped them to resist the temptations of New Babylon and to notice the ills of the overly materialistic culture, comparing greed and depravity of its citizens to the idealism of saints and hermits of Mount Lebanon. Moreover, they tried to save New Babylon from the imminent spiritual death and, consequently, the fall by providing it with a new religion that would lead such a heterogeneous society to harmony and mutual understanding. While they did not originate the image of the East as the cradle of civilization, the true source of spirituality, and the home of the prophets, they used it as a universal symbol, common to the great religions and a possible basis for their unification. Most important, Ameen Rihani, Kahlil Gibran, and Mikhail Naimy developed a philosophy of universal love and peace and expressed it in books of lasting value.

³³ Rev. 17:15 (KJV).

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Knowledge-Driven Economic Diversification: Scenario Analysis for Future Trajectories in the UAE

In recent years, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have embarked on an ambitious journey towards economic diversification, with the aim of achieving a twofold increase in economic activity by 2035 while reducing dependence on oil production (PMO, UAE, 2023). This paper employs scenario analysis, a forecasting tool commonly used in finance and economics, to explore the impact of economic diversification on the UAE economy. It evaluates two potential scenarios and focuses on advancements in four key economic sectors: manufacturing (especially electric automotive), information technology (IT), tourism, and finance. The study outlines expected economic growth with increased investments in these sectors and explores collaborations with foreign partners, such as potential partnerships with companies as the Chinese electric vehicle manufacturer BYD, to accelerate development efforts. The findings suggest a preference for moderate investment levels over an 11-year period as a more resilient approach to achieving the ambitious growth targets within the set timeframe.

Keywords: economic diversification, gross domestic product, international financial hub, investment, IT hub, tourism

Introduction

As the UAE chart the path towards a more diversified economy, the imperative for robust strategic planning and foresight becomes increasingly evident (Due-Gundersen, 2024; Al-Baity, & Mustafa, 2018). The UAE are adapting to the new global reality by intensifying efforts to transition its economy from oil dependence to a knowledge-based, innovation-focused model. This strategic shift aligns with the vision outlined for 2031, aiming to double the size of economic activity within said timeframe.

This strategic shift reflects the nation's commitment to fostering sustainable growth and resilience amidst evolving global economic dynamics. Consequently, there has been a concerted effort to diversify economic activities into non-oil sectors, including tourism, finance, real estate, and technology (Alsharif et al., 2017).

The primary objectives of the "We the UAE 2031" vision include doubling the country's GDP from the current level at AED 1.49 trillion to AED 3 trillion, increasing investment in new economic sectors such as the green economy, the digital economy, and smart investments benefiting from digital transformation, thereby generating AED 800 billion in non-oil exports (PMO, UAE, 2023). The vision specifically targets increasing the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP to AED 450 billion and the foreign trade sector to AED 4 trillion. The UAE have made significant progress in economic diversification, with the non-oil sector now contributing slightly above 80% of the country's total GDP (Shadab, 2023).

Over the last 25 years, the UAE have undergone a remarkable transformation, shifting away from the primarily oil-dependent economy. In the early 1990s, oil exports comprised over 70% of GDP. Recognizing oil price volatility and the need for diversification, the UAE government implemented strategic policies and invested heavily in infrastructure. Initiatives in free zones, notably the Jebel Ali Free Zone, tourism, aviation, real estate, and financial services have been pivotal in this transformation (Schiliro, 2013).

This paper assesses the impacts of how economic diversification efforts on the UAE's future across key sectors aligned with its vision: manufacturing (specifically automotive), finance, IT, and tourism. Using scenario analysis, the study evaluates potential outcomes, particularly regarding the establishment of an electric vehicle industry. By mapping out anticipated economic expansion from increased investments, the paper offers insights to policymakers into pathways for sustainable growth and prosperity in the UAE.

Literature review

The imperative of economic diversification in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, especially for oil-dependent nations as the UAE, is a key focus in contemporary economic scholarship. The benefits of economic transformation are traced back to Adam Smith who argued that it is prudent for nations to diversify their economic activities across various sectors, spreading risk, and promoting long-term stability and growth (Smith, 1776). This view has been supported by more recent empirical research consistently highlighting the fact that dependence on natural resources can hinder long-term growth (Frankel, 2012; Venables, 2016).

While some research suggests a positive link between resource abundance and growth, overall, resource-rich nations tend to develop more slowly and face greater vulnerability to economic shocks (Badeeb et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Han, & Heng, 2024). Despite abundant natural resources, many resource-rich countries, as those in Africa, struggle with low living standards. Frankel (2012) and Von Haldenwang and Ivanyna (2018) identify factors contributing to economic instability in such nations: volatile resource prices, weak institutional quality, susceptibility to conflict, and mismanagement of resource revenues (Williams, 2011). These challenges underscore the transition of resource abundance into economic hardship. As resource-rich nations aim for economic diversification, the need for robust strategic planning becomes evident. Ait-Laoussine & Gault (2017) highlight impediments to diversification,

particularly among oil exporters, such as inconsistent government policies and weak governance.

Cabrales & Hauk (2011) and McGuirk (2013) argue that heavy reliance on natural resource rents can stifle economic growth due to weakened accountability. Matallah (2020) coined the term “resource curse” to highlight how resource-rich countries often lag in economic growth and development compared to resource-poor ones. Lin and Cai (2023) highlight China’s “resource curse”, linking natural resource dependence to GDP growth volatility due to fluctuating resource prices. The MENA region, abundant in oil and gas, illustrates this paradox, facing economic vulnerabilities due to volatile oil revenues (Muhamad et al., 2021).

The Ukraine-Russia conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic further exemplify how oil price fluctuations can hinder global economic growth (Hsu et al., 2023). G10 economies demonstrate the adverse effects of resource dependence, including the “Dutch disease”, which limits the development of other sectors (Ze et al., 2023).

Despite its reliance on natural resources, the UAE have a clear diversification strategy aligned with long-term success models as Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia. This strategic approach is crucial for sustainable development, ensuring macroeconomic stability and growth, especially for resource-dependent economies (Muhamad, 2023).

Countries with diversified economies can compete better globally, leveraging comparative advantages across sectors rather than relying on a single commodity. Ricardo’s theory of comparative advantage (Ricardo, 1927) underlines this economic principle, supported by recent scholars, who emphasize how export diversity enhances economic performance and competitiveness (Aker, & Aghaei, 2019). Transitioning to innovative economic structures is vital for sustainable growth (Bista, 2019). Shahzad et al. (2021) observed that export diversification fosters green development and global market competition, contingent upon good governance and institutional quality (Carrasco, & Tovar-García, 2021).

Economic diversification in the MENA region is influenced by several key factors. Firstly, Human Capital Development is crucial, with

investments in education and vocational training essential for fostering a skilled workforce and the emergence of new industries (Kaya et al., 2019; Schiliro, 2013). Higher levels of educational attainment strongly correlate with economic diversification, equipping the labour force with necessary skills (Jolo et al., 2022).

Secondly, Institutional Quality and Governance are crucial for economic diversification. Effective legal and regulatory frameworks are essential, enabling countries to manage resource wealth and foster broader economic development (Matallah, 2020). Strong institutions enhance investor confidence, facilitate growth in non-resource sectors, and ensure property rights while reducing corruption (Lashitew et al., 2021). The rule of law significantly influences economic diversification (Jolo et al., 2022). Institutions empower countries to manage resource wealth effectively, as seen by Botswana's successful diversification driven by prudent diamond revenue management. Similarly, the UAE's governance improvements have stimulated foreign investment and diversified its economy beyond oil (Lashitew et al., 2021).

Thirdly, Financial Development is vital for economic diversification. A well-developed financial sector provides capital for diverse industries, supporting SME growth and efficient resource allocation (Harding, & Javorcik, 2011). Access to credit fosters entrepreneurship and innovation, reducing reliance on natural resources. The UAE's advanced financial infrastructure, including hubs as DIFC and ADGM, plays a pivotal role (Lashitew et al., 2021).

Fourth, Firm Dynamism, Entrepreneurship, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are pivotal. A vibrant private sector, with dynamic firms and robust entrepreneurial ecosystems, drives innovation and competitiveness. Lashitew et al. (2021), highlight "competitive capabilities", emphasizing firm dynamism and innovation capacity. Successful diversification hinges on vibrant private sectors, as seen in Malaysia's SME promotion strategy and the UAE's support of startups.

The UAE's "Projects of the 50" initiative aims to advance the country over the next 50 years, emphasizing entrepreneurship and long-term economic sustainability. It focuses on improving the country's

rank in the Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) (currently ranked 16th out of 190 countries (2020) in the ease-of-doing-business index). The UAE's entrepreneurial ecosystem has shown remarkable progress, rated the best globally by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Hil et al., 2023), with a National Entrepreneurial Context Index (NECI) score of 7.7 (2023), (from 5.8 in 2019). Additionally, it ranks 32nd among 132 economies in the Global Innovation Index (WIPO, 2023), reflecting its investments in innovation, technology, and research and development policies.

Positioned as a top destination for foreign investment, the UAE also experienced robust economic growth, at nearly 4% in 2023, coupled with controlled 3% inflation, fostering an entrepreneurial-friendly environment. Additionally, it secured second place globally for greenfield FDI and third in Emerging market rankings in 2023. The UAE also rank second in the MENA region and 27th globally (2018) in the Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum, 2024), consistently excelling in infrastructure and macroeconomic stability.

Methodology

This study employs a scenario analysis approach to assess the potential impacts of economic diversification in the UAE. Scenario analysis, a strategic planning method, facilitates the development of flexible long-term plans by exploring various plausible future scenarios. Unlike traditional forecasts, scenario analysis does not rely on historical data to predict future outcomes; instead, it considers possible development patterns and pivotal historical turning points (Mustafa, 2016). This methodology proves particularly valuable in the context of economic diversification, where numerous variables and uncertainties must be considered.

The analysis focuses on four key sectors crucial to the UAE's diversification strategy: the establishment of an electric vehicle industry, information technology, tourism, and finance. Two distinct scenarios are developed – the preferred scenario and the less preferred scenario – to evaluate the potential outcomes of increased investment and strategic

initiatives within these sectors. The construction of these scenarios is backed by published estimates relating to the rapid global expansion of electric vehicles and key economic initiatives driving economic diversification efforts.

Results and discussion

The preferred scenario (Scenario 1)

This plan emphasizes the four main sectors explored in this paper as key components for ensuring the long-term success of the national economy, aligning with the UAE Vision 2031's primary objectives such as doubling the country's GDP and substantially increasing non-oil exports, among other goals.

Establishment of a new electric vehicle industry

The global shift to sustainable energy offers the UAE a significant opportunity to diversify into the Electric Vehicle (EV) market. Investing in EV manufacturing and infrastructure aligns with the UAE's sustainability goals, reducing reliance on oil revenues. Developing the EV industry can create high-skilled jobs, drive innovation, and enhance energy security. Leveraging advanced manufacturing capabilities, strategic location, and energy sector expertise, the UAE can become a regional EV production leader. Partnerships with global automotive and technology companies can facilitate knowledge transfer and local innovation (Muhamad et al., 2021). Key factors for success include technological shifts in transportation, increasing EV usage, improvements in alternative energies such as solar, and better battery storage (Mustafa, & Al Shawwa, 2019).

The UAE have initiated efforts to introduce locally-manufactured EVs, such as the Rabdan One, backed by Dubai-based NWTN. This marks the inception of the UAE's EV industry, as highlighted by the Ministry of Technology Adoption and Development. It is also part

of the “Operation 300bn” program, which aims to double the manufacturing sector’s GDP contribution to Dh300 billion by 2031, up from Dh133 billion in 2021.

The global EV market saw substantial growth in 2023, with nearly 14 million new EVs registered (Xu, 2024), bringing the total to 40 million. This trend, driven by bans on petrol cars in countries like China and many European nations, is expected to continue, potentially reaching 105 million new EV sales in 2035. China is leading this transition, with New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) growing 31.8% year-on-year in early 2024, capturing a 31.1% market share (China SCIO, 2024).

In our preferred scenario, collaborating with Chinese EV producer BYD offers several advantages:

First, Market Leadership: China hosts over half of the world’s EVs, with BYD being the largest producer in Q4 2023, accounting for 35% of global EV exports in 2022 (IEA, 2023).

Second, Battery Production: BYD is the second-largest EV battery producer, with a 16% market share in 2023.

Third, Economies of Scale: BYD’s extensive facilities and vertical integration provide significant cost advantages (CICC Research, 2024).

Fourth, Supply Chain Control: BYD controls its entire supply chain (Cao, 2024), offering a substantial competitive edge (Chen et al., 2024).

Fifth, Global Expansion: BYD is expanding its global footprint, with factories in Thailand, Brazil, Hungary, and Uzbekistan, and plans to establish new facilities in Mexico, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The UAE, with their superior infrastructure, constitute an ideal entry point into the MENA region, as affirmed by the Global Competitiveness Report 2018 (WEF, 2019).

Sixth, Strategic Partnerships and Investments: The UAE’s inclusion in BRICS and ongoing Chinese investments and construction projects, amounting to \$ 36.16 billion, highlight strong strategic collaborations (Yenigun, 2022; Fulton, 2019; Yu, 2023).

Lastly, in terms of innovation, China ranks 12th in the Global Innovation Index, demonstrating significant progress. Additionally, China ranks 8th for innovation outputs (Dutta et al., 2023).

This analysis highlights the strategic benefits of partnering with BYD, leveraging their market leadership and production capabilities to strengthen the UAE's EV industry. Continuous investment and collaboration in this sector are essential for sustaining growth, promoting resilience, and enhancing competitiveness.

The proposed site for establishing an electric vehicle industry (Vehicle City in Abu Dhabi) spans approximately 30 km², with a long-term production target of up to three million electric vehicles by 2050. This includes electric battery production, the entire supply chain, and the establishment of a research and development centre dedicated to advancing battery technology. The addition of a research and development centre is poised to significantly enhance the country's innovation capabilities. This initiative aligns with the government's strategic vision for fostering technological progress and economic diversification, reinforcing the nation's global competitiveness. The centre's primary focus will be on enhancing electric battery performance, aiming to increase energy density from the current 200–300 Wh/kg level (Niu et al., 2024) by adopting Solid-State battery technology, potentially replacing the widely used Lithium-Ion battery. Additionally, efforts will target reducing battery-pack costs, currently around \$ 100 US (Orangi et al., 2024), and enhancing recharging speed to compete effectively against internal combustion engine vehicles.

The UAE have shown leadership in the renewable energy sector within the GCC, evidenced by a significant increase in solar energy capacity. This growth highlights the UAE's dedication to leading the region's shift towards diverse and sustainable energy sources. Through strategic expansion of its solar energy infrastructure, the UAE solidify their position as a key player in the region's sustainable energy development (Nassar, 2024).

In this scenario, the research and development centre, in collaboration with Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi, is expected to serve as a hub for employing elastic solar panels to cover car bodies, generating electricity for the batteries. This capitalizes on the UAE's approximately 350 sunny days per year. Factories will feature

solar panel ceilings to generate up to 50% of the electricity required to operate them, setting a milestone in the industry. This initiative aligns with the UAE's efforts to reduce emissions and increase reliance on clean energy, as outlined in the UAE's Green Agenda – 2030.

For stage one, an initial investment of approximately five billion dollars is required to establish the first phase of the EV industry, with the aim of producing 200,000 EVs and electric batteries by 2027. The target market is the MENA region and Africa. We estimate that globally, the cost of EVs will match that of internal combustion engine vehicles by 2026/2027. For stage two, an additional five billion dollars investment is needed to reach the production of 500,000 EVs by 2030, with the entire supply chain, including electric batteries.

Currently, the operational cost of EVs is, on average, less than half that of internal combustion engine vehicles. Consequently, the sales of EVs are expected to increase significantly beyond 2027. In China, EV sales have surged over the past four years, capturing a 31.1% share of the motor vehicle market in the first quarter of 2024. Chinese EV producers dominate the local market, which is the largest automobile market globally, accounting for approximately one-third of the global market share in 2021 (Peredy et al., 2022). These producers are beginning to penetrate the global EV market. We anticipate that the Chinese government will ban internal combustion engines by 2030, earlier than currently announced. Similarly, most European countries are expected to ban internal combustion engines between 2030 and 2035. As a result, we project that EVs will constitute three-quarters of global automobile market sales by 2030. Based on the expected spread of EV sales worldwide, the final stage of our diversified scenario aims to reach a production capacity of one million EVs per year with ten billion dollars additional investment.

To achieve economic diversification and compensate for the decline in oil income, the UAE must adapt to the global shift from internal combustion engines to electric vehicles. This transition is expected to lead to roughly, a 15% decline in global oil demand, decreasing, from a peak of 102.9 million barrels per day in 2024 (IEA, 2024), to approximately 87.5 million barrels per day by 2035. We expect the competitive

pricing of electric vehicles to drive their widespread global adoption beyond 2027. By enhancing government income through increased revenue from taxes and strengthening the UAE's position as a modern economy in the MENA region, the country will secure financial stability, sustainable economic growth, and position itself as a global leader.

Based on 2023 prices, the estimated one million EV sales by 2035 in the preferred scenario are expected to generate approximately \$ 30 billion. This figure is projected to reach \$ 45 billion, considering an average inflation rate of approximately 3.5% per annum. These sales will account for roughly 5% of GDP, which is expected to reach \$ 950–1050 billion by 2035. Additionally, this scenario is expected to create up to 60,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2035, significantly boosting employment in the sector. The positive impact on government revenue through Value Added Tax and corporate tax will further strengthen the economy.

Advancement in the IT sector

The exponential growth of information technology shapes global economies by driving innovation, efficiency, and connectivity. For the UAE, investment in the IT sector is crucial for economic diversification, job creation, and sustainable growth. The IT industry offers high-skilled employment opportunities and boosts productivity across various sectors (Jolo et al., 2022). Strategic initiatives such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy, Smart Dubai, and Dubai Internet City have positioned the UAE as a regional tech hub. Further investments in IT infrastructure, cybersecurity, and digital skills development can accelerate the UAE's digital transformation and attract global tech companies (Muhamad et al., 2021).

The UAE are enhancing their IT infrastructure and establishing a dynamic artificial intelligence (AI) ecosystem through agreements with international firms. This strategy included appointing the world's first minister for AI in 2023, highlighting the UAE's commitment to AI (Pashentsev et al., 2024, 94). Building on successful digital

government initiatives, political support is needed to move key services – such as tax filings, applications, regulatory compliance checks, and payment of fines – to interoperable digital platforms. Ensuring high-quality, complete, and accessible data is essential for these digital initiatives' success.

The UAE's strategy includes establishing a dedicated centre for IT and AI, tentatively named UAI Oasis. This hub aims to emulate Silicon Valley's success by attracting significant investments and international companies, fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem with a strong focus on innovation. UAI Oasis will serve as a magnet for global tech talent and investment, positioning the UAE as a central player in the global AI landscape. Continued investment and development are key to sustaining the IT sector's growth, fostering resilience, and enhancing competitiveness.

The UAE's strategic location serves as a bridge between Asia, Europe, and North America, where major AI centres are located. This geographical advantage, combined with the country's high investment attractiveness, world-class infrastructure, and strong strategic partnerships with China and India through BRICS, as well as longstanding relationships with Europe and North America, provides the UAE with a comparative edge in establishing an AI hub. To leverage these strengths, this scenario recommends forming a committee of international experts from the USA, Europe, India and China to guide the development of UAI Oasis. Additionally, a fund of up to \$ 30 billion should be established for acquiring promising startups worldwide and forming strategic partnerships with leading AI companies. These efforts will strengthen UAI Oasis, attracting international companies and top-tier talent, particularly from India, to work for these international firms based in the hub. This comprehensive approach will ensure that UAI Oasis attracts global businesses and fosters innovation and growth within the UAE, solidifying its position as a leading centre for AI and IT development.

Competing with global AI hubs like Boston, London, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Toronto, the UAE must make an effort to differentiate.

Its established reputation as a bold innovator already attracts companies like SparkCognition, which recently announced the opening of its first international office outside the US in Dubai. Developing a distinct UAI (United Arab Emirates AI) brand will further draw talent and businesses from around the globe to test and develop AI technologies in the UAE. Additionally, hosting key international conferences and fora on AI is another strategic move to establishing the UAE as a hub for global experts and entrepreneurs, positioning it as the centre of AI startups in the region and fostering a dynamic technical community. However, achieving this requires building a strong AI talent hub and providing necessary support to businesses to navigate international markets. Governments can play a crucial role by offering guidance, financial support, and coordinating trade missions and joint ventures.

One notable collaboration under this initiative is that of the UAE with Microsoft, which has committed to investing \$ 1.5 billion in G42, a leading AI company in the UAE, for a minority stake and board membership. This partnership will support the establishment of a \$ 1 billion fund aimed at boosting AI skills in the UAE and developing advanced AI solutions using Microsoft Azure across various industries and markets in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. Such high-profile collaborations are crucial for enhancing the UAE's AI capabilities and fostering a robust AI ecosystem. Further strengthening these efforts, the Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technology Council (AIATC), established in January 2024, is responsible for developing and implementing policies and strategies related to research, infrastructure, and investments in AI and advanced technology in Abu Dhabi. In March 2024, the AIATC announced the establishment of MGX through a partnership between Mubadala and G42, highlighting the UAE's commitment to advancing their AI infrastructure.

In this preferred scenario, we anticipate that improvements in the IT sector, driven by the international AI hub, UAI Oasis, will require up to \$ 30 billion in investment over the next decade. This initiative is projected to contribute an additional \$ 60 to \$ 80 billion annually to the UAE GDP, accounting for up to 8% of the GDP. Furthermore, we

expect the creation of up to 80,000 additional direct and indirect jobs in the IT sector by 2035.

Expansion in the tourism sector

The UAE's investment in world-class infrastructure and cultural attractions positions the country favourably for attracting a diverse range of tourists. Enhancing eco-tourism and cultural tourism can further diversify tourist demographics and mitigate seasonality impacts (Schiliro, 2013). The UAE stand as a prominent global tourism destination, strengthening their position through unique projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing the tourism sector's growth and attracting international visitors. In 2023, the UAE recorded approximately 24 million international tourist arrivals, approaching the pre-pandemic peak of slightly over 25 million in 2019. Despite the country's popularity, the UAE trail behind the world's most competitive European destinations. To compete effectively on a global scale, the UAE must continue developing their tourism potential.

The UAE possess significant comparative advantages in the global tourism sector. Notably, the country is distinguished by its four major international airlines – Emirates Airlines, Etihad Airways, Air Arabia, and Flydubai – serving as pivotal links between Asia and Europe, as well as North and South America.

This strategic positioning enables convenient accessibility, with approximately one-third of the world's population reachable within a four-hour flight and around two-thirds (5.35 billion people) within eight hours. Additionally, the UAE boast the best infrastructure in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, as published by the World Economic Forum. According to the Global Competitive Report 2023, the UAE rank fourth globally in terms of infrastructure quality (Uppink Calderwood, 2019). This recognition underscores the UAE's commitment to developing world-class facilities, enhancing their appeal as a leading destination for both business and leisure travellers. Furthermore, the country has attained significant recognition in

the global tourism landscape, securing the top position in the region and ranking 18th globally in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) for 2024. This achievement marks a notable ascent in global rankings (from 25th in 2019) (World Economic Forum, 2024).

Numerous initiatives to develop the UAE as a sought-after tourist destination are underway. In this context, it is proposed to focus on collaboration with Chinese travel agencies to leverage the UAE's membership in BRICS and attract more Chinese international tourists. With over 87 million Chinese travellers going abroad in 2023, the goal is to attract 10 million Chinese tourists by 2035. This target aims to surpass the number of visitors from Western and Eastern Europe, who accounted for approximately 30% of international tourists (around 8 million) to the UAE in 2023. This strategy capitalizes on the growing trend of Chinese outbound tourism, expected to continue in the coming decade. We recommend collaborating with tourist agencies to design a product that will allow the Chinese outbound tourist to spend a short spell holidaying in the UAE, en-route to a second destination, rather than simply using UAE as a connecting airport. This strategy will increase the contribution of the tourism sector to the UAE economy.

Regional initiatives play a crucial role in elevating the tourism industry within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Achieving the right balance between cooperation and competition among destinations is vital. The proposed unified tourist visa for GCC countries will enhance the region's tourism industry by facilitating seamless travel for tourists between the UAE and other GCC destinations. This unified visa will allow member states to present the GCC as a connected destination, enhancing accessibility and stimulating key performance indicators such as length of stay, average spending, and overall attractiveness.

Expanding into the medical tourism sector presents a significant opportunity for the UAE given their strategic location. Establishing state-of-the-art medical facilities, staffed with highly trained physicians and specialists, can attract patients seeking high-quality treatment from

the MENA region. Integrating wellness and recuperation facilities further enhances the appeal of the UAE as a premier medical tourism destination, contributing to the diversification and growth of the economy.

Furthermore, the expansion of the cruise sector has brought numerous benefits to Dubai. Collaborative efforts through alliances such as “Cruise Arabia” aim to promote the Arabian Gulf as a premier destination for cruise ships globally. Expanding cruise-related infrastructure and services to other emirates like Abu Dhabi can significantly boost the appeal of the UAE as a cruise destination, solidifying its position as a leading hub for maritime tourism in the region.

The UAE expect the tourism sector’s contribution to the country’s GDP to rise to 12% in 2024, amounting to 236 billion dirhams, up from 11.7% in 2023, equivalent to 220 billion dirhams. Doubling the number of international tourist arrivals to 50 million by 2035 is anticipated to generate an estimated \$ 180–190 billion in total revenue (at 2035 prices). This increase is envisaged to boost tourism’s share of GDP to around 18%, contributing an additional \$ 90–95 billion. Furthermore, the creation of up to 300,000 additional direct and indirect jobs by 2035 will significantly support the overall economic development of the UAE.

Expansion in the financial sector

The financial landscape of the UAE has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven by the integration of traditional banking practices, advancements in Islamic banking, and cutting-edge fintech innovations (Alblooshi et al., 2022). This sector is characterized by the rapid adoption of digital technologies and innovative financial solutions, with increasingly integrated digital platforms and advanced cybersecurity measures. This synergy has improved the accessibility and efficiency of financial services and positioned the UAE as a global hub for financial innovation and digital banking solutions. The presence of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) underscores the UAE’s commitment to financial sector development.

The UAE's strategic location, advanced infrastructure, and favourable regulatory environment position it as an ideal financial hub (Lashitew et al., 2021). Regulatory reforms by the UAE Central Bank have fostered a more robust and transparent banking environment, encouraging greater financial inclusion and accessibility.

Bank mergers not only expand the customer base and product offering but also embrace technological advancements, reimagining banking in the modern age. The UAE have a long history of bank mergers, beginning in 2007 when the National Bank of Dubai (NBD) merged with Emirates Bank International (EBI) to form Emirates NBD (Kumar et al., 2011). This was followed by the creation of First Abu Dhabi Bank, the largest bank in the UAE, through the merger of the National Bank of Abu Dhabi (NBAD) and First Gulf Bank in 2017 (Matherly et al., 2021). In 2019, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank completed a three-way merger with Union National Bank and Al Hilal Bank (Al Naeemy, 2020). These mergers aim to create larger, more competitive institutions, achieve cost savings, and enhance technological and organizational infrastructure. Furthermore, the acquisition of Noor Bank by Dubai Islamic Bank in 2020 (Jalloul, 2021) resulted in the creation of the UAE's largest Islamic bank.

**In our preferred scenario for this sector, we propose
the following**

Firstly, we propose continuing the consolidation process by merging Emirates NBD and First Gulf Bank to create a powerful First UAE International Bank by 2025/2026. This new entity, envisioned as the UAE's version of HSBC, would initially focus on expanding within the Gulf region by 2028. It would then extend its reach into the MENA region by 2029/2031, and ultimately target global expansion, particularly in Asia and Africa, by 2035. This strategy aims to position the UAE as a major player in the international banking landscape, supporting the country's economic growth and development and reinforcing the banking sector as the backbone of the modern economy.

Secondly, as the country has introduced Sharia-compliant fintech solutions and expanded its range of Islamic financial products, catering to both domestic and international markets, we propose the merging of the top two Islamic banks in the UAE: Dubai Islamic Bank and Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank. This merger would establish the First UAE International Islamic Bank by 2025/2026. In subsequent stages, it is suggested to expand operations into the Gulf region by 2027/2028, the broader MENA region by 2029/2031, and globally to countries like Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and beyond by 2035.

Thirdly, to further enhance the UAE's global image and attractiveness as a financial hub, we propose restructuring its financial markets in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. This can be achieved by implementing new regulations designed to attract promising startup companies, enabling them to raise capital from the MENA region and Asia through Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) in the UAE. The objective is to increase the number of publicly listed companies from the current 160 (approx.) in both the Dubai Financial Market (DFM) and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) to an ambitious target of 800. Additionally, revising transaction fees for stock trading is being recommended to reinforce the UAE's financial sector, aiming to increase trading volume tenfold by 2035. These strategic changes will significantly enhance the UAE's status as a leading financial centre.

Fourthly, we propose enhancing the UAE's strategy by adopting new rules and regulations to position itself as a main hub for digital currencies worldwide. This approach will facilitate Binance Holdings Ltd. (a global company that operates the largest cryptocurrency exchange in terms of daily trading volume of cryptocurrencies) to establish its global headquarters in the UAE, ensuring the country's leading position in the burgeoning field of digital currencies. Such a move will not only solidify the UAE's status as a global financial innovator but also attract significant investment and expertise in this rapidly evolving domain.

Implementing these initiatives would enhance the UAE's position as a financial hub and strengthen its standing on the global finance

landscape. This scenario estimates that improvements in the financial sector would contribute an additional \$ 30–35 billion annually to the gross domestic product of the UAE and create up to 10,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2035. These enhancements would not only drive economic growth but also ensure the UAE remain at the forefront of global financial innovation and competitiveness.

Overall outlook of the preferred scenario

In the preferred scenario, we estimate that the aggregate return from the investment in the establishment of the electric vehicle industry and expansion in the other three sectors would contribute an additional \$ 225–255 billion (adjusted for 2035 prices and considering an average inflation rate of approximately 3.5%). This contribution would account for roughly 22.5–25.5% of the GDP of the UAE, which is expected to reach \$ 950–1050 billion by 2035 (Figure 1). Furthermore, this scenario is anticipated to create up to 450,000 direct and indirect jobs, mainly

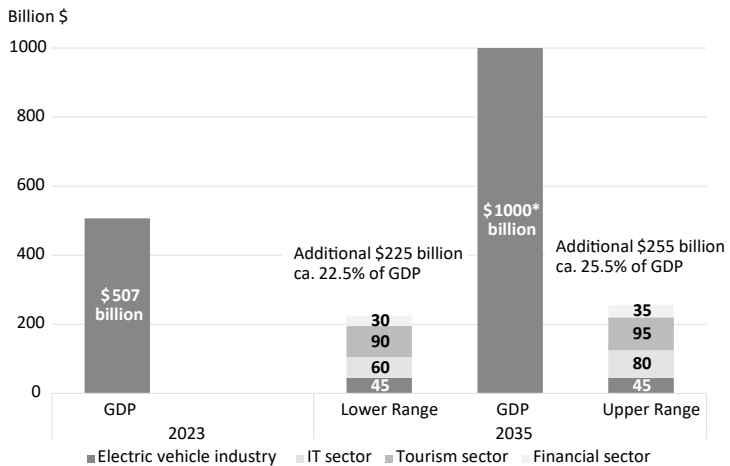


Figure 1. Preferred scenario

* Assuming real GDP growth rate of ca. 3% p.a.

in the tourism sector, by 2035. These developments would significantly strengthen the UAE's economy, enhance its global competitiveness, and provide substantial employment opportunities.

The less preferred scenario (Scenario 2)

Scenario 2 considers the same type of economic diversification, albeit at a lower and more prudent level of projections in each of the four sectors: IT, tourism, finance, and electric automotive manufacturing. The following analysis shows how this level of investment would not lead to the level of economic growth that the country is aspiring to achieve within the timeframe it has set itself, and it is therefore being considered as the less preferred scenario. This includes the following projections:

Firstly, the established electric vehicle industry faces strong competition from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, already heavily investing in their own electric vehicle industries. This competition could decrease estimated sales to 750,000 by 2035, generating approximately \$ 34 billion (adjusted for 2035 prices).

Secondly, in the IT sector, the establishment of the Artificial Intelligence hub, UAI Oasis, encounters strong international competition from the USA and China, as well as regional competition from Saudi Arabia, which focuses on developing AI capabilities under its Vision 2030. Israel also presents strong competition due to its leading position in the global IT and AI sectors. This intense competition could result in generating only approximately \$ 40 to \$ 60 billion (adjusted for 2035 prices).

Thirdly, in the tourism sector, strong international competition primarily from Saudi Arabia, which aims to welcome 150 million tourists by 2030, could reduce the expected number of international tourist arrivals to 40 million by 2035. This reduction is expected to generate a total revenue of only \$ 144–152 billion, with additional revenue amounting to \$ 54–57 billion (adjusted for 2035 prices).

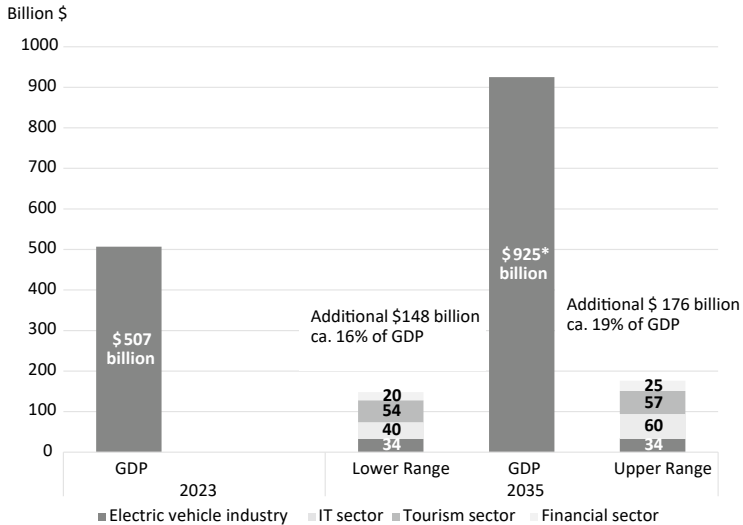


Figure 2. Less preferred scenario

* Assuming real GDP growth rate of ca. 2.25% p.a.

Finally, in the financial sector, global competition and innovation, particularly the increased use of cryptocurrencies, will create new opportunities for global investment, reinforcing strong competition. In the less preferred scenario, this could reduce the financial sector’s contribution from \$ 30–35 billion annually in the preferred scenario to \$ 20–25 billion (adjusted for 2035 prices).

By adopting this pessimistic outlook of the less preferred scenario, the establishment of the electric vehicle industry and improvements in the other three sectors are estimated to contribute an additional \$ 148–176 billion at 2035 prices. This will account for roughly 16–19% of the gross domestic product of the UAE, which is expected to reach \$ 875–975 billion 2035 as per the projections in the less preferred scenario (Figure 2).

Conclusion

The pursuit of economic diversification through knowledge-driven sectors represents a strategic imperative for the UAE, as the country seeks to mitigate the risks associated with its traditional reliance on oil revenues. The scenario analysis presented in this study highlights the potential trajectories that the UAE's economy could follow, depending on the likely return on investment in four different productive sectors and strategic partnerships formed in the coming years.

The preferred scenario envisions growth through sustained investments in the electric vehicle industry, IT, tourism, and financial services, driving GDP contributions, employment opportunities, and enhancing UAE's global competitiveness.

In this scenario, we estimate that the aggregate return from investments in the electric vehicle industry and expansion in the other three sectors will contribute an additional \$ 225–255 billion (adjusted for 2035 prices and considering an average inflation rate of approximately 3.5%). This contribution would account for roughly 22.5–25.5% of the GDP, which is expected to reach \$ 950–1050 billion by 2035. The establishment of an electric vehicle industry, in collaboration with global leaders such as BYD, is projected to generate approximately \$ 45 billion. Similarly, advancements in the IT sector, facilitated by the creation of the UAI Oasis hub, promise to position the UAE as a central player in the global digital economy, contributing an additional \$ 60–80 billion. Tourism, boosted by targeted initiatives to attract diverse visitor demographics and the development of eco-tourism and medical tourism, is expected to contribute an additional \$ 90–95 billion. Finally, the evolution of the financial sector, characterized by mergers, fintech advancements, and a strategic focus on digital currencies, would enhance the UAE's role as a leading international financial hub, contributing an additional \$ 30–35 billion to GDP. This scenario is anticipated to create up to 450,000 direct and indirect jobs, mainly in the tourism sector, by 2035, significantly strengthening the UAE's economy.

Conversely, the conservative scenario highlights potential challenges and competition that could hinder the UAE's diversification efforts, resulting in an additional GDP contribution of \$ 148 billion to \$ 176 billion. These challenges include intensified competition from regional and global players in all four sectors studied. The electric vehicle industry could see estimated sales decrease to about \$ 34 billion by 2035 (adjusted for 2035 prices), while the IT sector may generate only \$ 40–60 billion. In tourism, additional revenue is expected to reach around \$ 54–57 billion. Lastly, in the financial sector, global competition and the rise of cryptocurrencies are anticipated to reduce contributions from \$ 30–35 billion in the preferred scenario to \$ 20–25 billion. These factors collectively contribute to the projected decrease in economic output across these sectors in the conservative scenario.

Overall, this study supports UAE's economic diversification away from oil dependence. Both scenarios show significant benefits. However, outcomes will depend on environmental, economic, and geopolitical factors beyond government control. Leveraging its location, infrastructure, and leadership, UAE can navigate global economic dynamics for sustainable growth. Continued investment in knowledge-based industries and international collaborations is crucial for achieving the targets of Vision 2031 and ensuring long-term economic stability and prosperity.

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China's New Dynamic Cooperation Paradigm with The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) plays a crucial role in global oil supply, collectively producing around 13 million barrels per day and holding significant proven reserves. However, in response to shifting energy dynamics and economic transformations, GCC countries are prioritizing diversification away from oil dependency. This paper examines China's evolving engagement with the GCC, highlighting the dual focus on oil as a strategic commodity and the broader economic cooperation facilitated by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). By analysing the implications of this partnership, we emphasize the importance of transitioning towards a post-oil framework that includes sustainable and knowledge-based industries, addressing key challenges such as labour dependency and subsidized utilities. Furthermore, we explore the growing significance of investment, trade, and tourism as essential components of the Sino-GCC relationship. Collaborative efforts under the BRI framework offer significant opportunities for GCC countries to enhance economic resilience, promote sustainable development, and strengthen strategic partnerships in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Additionally, these efforts position GCC countries as key players in regional trade and tourism networks.

Keywords: Dynamic Cooperation, Economic Partnerships, Oil Supply and Energy Security, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Introduction

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) plays a pivotal role in the global oil supply, collectively producing approximately 13 million barrels per day and holding an estimated 530 billion barrels in proven reserves – about one-third of the world's total (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2021). However, in light of evolving global energy dynamics and economic shifts, GCC countries are increasingly focusing on diversifying their economies away from oil dependency. In this context, China has adopted a new engagement approach with the GCC, emphasizing oil as a strategic commodity while also supporting broader economic cooperation. The diplomatic paradigm between China and the GCC increasingly centres on oil, as evidenced by China's average import of 11.3 million barrels per day in 2023, with approximately 4.65 million barrels sourced from GCC countries (Statista, 2023). Over the past decade, China-GCC relations have steadily strengthened, establishing a robust foundation for future cooperation. Both parties are well-positioned to strengthen their ties, with China leveraging the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to foster mutually beneficial partnerships that go beyond oil, focusing on development through infrastructure investments (Zhang, 2022).

This paper delves into the nuances of China's evolving cooperation strategy with the GCC, focusing on its oil-centric nature while also addressing the critical transition towards a post-oil framework. By analysing the strategic, economic, and geopolitical dimensions of this partnership, we provide insights into its implications for regional and global affairs. Furthermore, we investigate how GCC countries are diversifying their economies to establish sustainable, knowledge-based industries, addressing significant challenges related to foreign labour dependency, public sector employment, and heavily subsidized utilities.

This underscores the urgency for sustainable economic development in the region, especially as the BRI offers a pathway for integrating the GCC into the broader narrative of global economic cooperation led by emerging markets (Huang, 2023).

The GCC and China: Strategic energy partnerships and global oil trade dynamics

The GCC countries hold a significant portion of the world's proven oil reserves, positioning them as central players in the global energy market. Together, the GCC nations – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain – account for approximately 30% of global oil reserves (Al-Maamary et al., 2017). This extensive resource base emphasizes their substantial share of international oil exports, with Saudi Arabia alone contributing around 10% of the world's crude oil supply. Collectively, the GCC countries produce over one-fifth of the global oil output (Mirzoev et al., 2020). Their strategic export capacity not only drives global economies but also cements their role as key influencers in international oil supply and energy policy.

From 2000 to 2022, China's economy experienced remarkable growth of over 1,480%, accompanied by a sharp increase in oil imports from less than 1.5 million barrels per day in 2000 (Andrews-Speed, & Dannreuther, 2011) to approximately 10.2 million barrels per day in 2022 (Wang et al., 2024). In that year, China imported \$ 287 billion worth of crude petroleum, with Saudi Arabia being the largest supplier, contributing \$ 56.1 billion¹. This positions China as the world's largest importer of crude oil. The significant rise in China's oil imports reflects its rapid economic expansion and escalating energy demand.

¹ This data is sourced from the official website of China's Customs Authority, which publishes preliminary trade and economic reports annually. Available: <http://english.customs.gov.cn/statics/report/preliminary2022.html> [last viewed 19.11.2024].

As China continues to emerge as a critical player in the global oil market, it has increasingly turned to the GCC countries for its oil supply. Meanwhile, advancements in shale oil extraction have led to increased domestic production in the United States, resulting in a significant reduction in its oil imports. Consequently, the Gulf countries have redirected their exports to China. In 2022, the GCC exported over 4.2 million barrels per day of oil to China, more than double the volume exported in 2014. By 2023, China's crude oil imports had risen by 10% from the previous year to 11.3 million barrels per day², with the GCC supplying an average of approximately 4.65 million barrels per day.

Saudi Arabia remains the GCC's largest oil exporter to China, supplying nearly 1.75 million barrels per day in 2023, followed by the UAE at around one million barrels per day. China's oil-centred strategy of cooperation with the GCC underscores its focus on securing reliable energy supplies to sustain its economic growth. This strategy involves long-term agreements and investments in the GCC's oil sector to ensure a steady flow of crude oil. The partnership highlights the mutual economic benefits and strategic interests shared by China and the GCC nations in the global oil market.

From 2014 to 2023, trade between the GCC and China, measured in billions of U.S. dollars, fluctuated significantly due to oil price variations, with the lowest average price at \$ 43.29 per barrel in 2016 and the highest at \$ 94.53 per barrel in 2022. The highest trade exchange occurred in 2022, reaching \$ 315.79 billion, followed by \$ 286.1 billion in 2023, and the lowest at \$ 134.2 billion in 2016 (Figure 1). GCC imports from China steadily increased, peaking at \$ 112.81 billion in 2023, while exports to China rose significantly, reaching \$ 208.95 billion in 2022, the highest in the period. Oil exports to China also showed fluctuations, peaking at \$ 152.9 billion in 2022 and the lowest at \$ 36.93 billion in 2016. Despite periods of volatility, trade between the GCC and China

² Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, "U.S. Crude Oil Exports and the Global Market". Available: <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61843> [last viewed 19.11.2024].

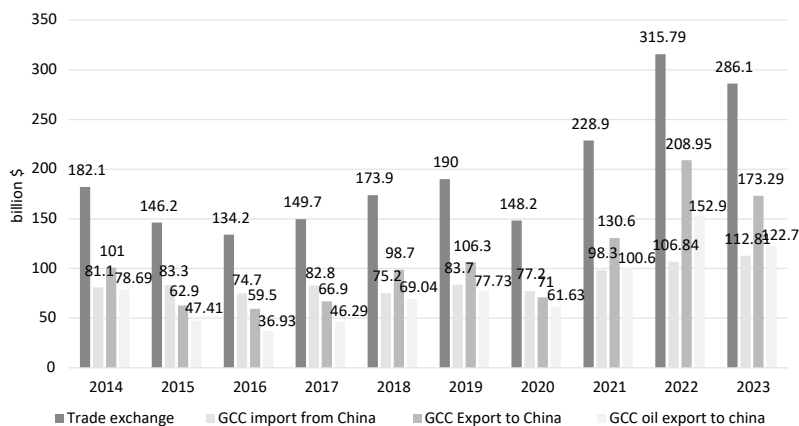


Figure 1. Trade exchange between the GCC and China (in billions of dollars)

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data extracted from different sources.

has generally grown, with 2022 and 2023 marking particularly high levels of economic activity and oil exports.

China-GCC Free Trade Agreement: Strengthening economic and strategic investment ties

The pursuit of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between China and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) marks a significant step in Sino-Gulf relations, reflecting shared goals to enhance economic integration and strategic alignment. After 20 years of negotiations, 90% of the issues have been resolved, signalling a strong commitment to finalizing the agreement (Al Shidhani, & Baig, 2024). This collaboration aligns with China's Belt and Road Initiative and the GCC's "Pivot to the East" strategy, highlighting a mutual drive for economic diversification beyond oil. Despite the GCC's central role as China's primary energy supplier, both sides are expanding cooperation into technology, services, and renewable energy.

The FTA has the potential to boost non-oil trade, investment, and innovation, while fostering industrial efficiency and addressing climate change. It positions GCC countries as key re-export hubs for Chinese goods and strategic players in global trade (Hashem, 2021). Additionally, the partnership reflects broader geopolitical trends, with China's growing influence in the Middle East offering Gulf states a chance to diversify their economic and strategic ties while maintaining relations with Western allies. A finalized FTA would cement this dynamic partnership, unlocking opportunities across sectors such as AI, logistics, and renewable energy, bolstering the region's global economic standing.

Between 2005 and 2017, China's investments in the broader Middle East reached \$ 156 billion, with Saudi Arabia receiving the largest share – \$ 30.18 billion (Houlden, & Zaamout, 2019). Notably, Chinese investments focused on port infrastructure, special economic zones, and petrochemical industries, exemplified by SINOPEC's operations in Yanbu and Duqm, and the Khalifa Port Free Trade Zone (Akhavan, & Akhavan, 2020). These efforts align with Saudi Vision 2030, further integrating the GCC into global trade networks. In 2017, China and Saudi Arabia signed \$ 65 billion in deals, enhancing economic collaboration. These projects utilize local feedstock to produce chemicals for export and China's market, reducing imports. SABIC and SINOPEC strengthened this partnership through joint ventures (Tilsted, & Bauer, 2024). China's \$ 2.5 billion investment in Middle Eastern chemicals emphasizes industrial self-sufficiency, while investments in port construction support GCC logistics ambitions, enhancing regional infrastructure.

From 2019 to 2024, Gulf-China investment ties deepened, with China committing \$ 10 billion to industrial projects in the UAE and Saudi Arabia's \$ 10 billion Yanbu refinery (Yang et al., 2020). By 2023, Saudi Arabia acquired a 10% stake in a Chinese refinery, and both countries advanced sustainable technologies, including a \$ 5.6 billion electric vehicle partnership with Chinese automaker Human Horizons. In August 2023, Mubadala Investment Company acquired a Belgian biopharma firm's Chinese operation, and Dubai Financial Market's

agreement with Shenzhen Stock Exchange highlighted growing financial collaboration. These efforts culminated in the China-GCC Forum for Industries and Investment in 2024, where President Xi Jinping emphasized aligning the Belt and Road Initiative with GCC development strategies. Gulf investments in China surged to \$ 5.3 billion in 2023, a 1000% year-on-year increase, mainly in petrochemicals and joint ventures. Additionally, Gulf sovereign wealth funds are expected to direct \$ 1–2 trillion into Asia by 2030.

This surge in investment highlights the GCC's shift from fossil fuels to innovation and clean energy, positioning China as a key partner in the GCC's renewable energy ambitions. The rise of public-private partnerships signals the growing societal and economic benefits of Gulf-China relations. Additionally, Investcorp's launch of a \$ 1 billion investment platform with China Investment Corporation (CIC) underscores the strengthening of economic ties, with a focus on high-growth sectors like healthcare, logistics, and consumer markets. This collaboration reflects the GCC's growing prominence in global investment and China's commitment to deepening partnerships with emerging economies.

Gulf sovereign wealth funds are expected to channel \$ 1–2 trillion into Asia, particularly China, by 2030, reflecting the GCC's long-term strategic focus on diversifying beyond fossil fuels into innovation and clean energy. With China's leadership in the global clean energy supply chain, the collaboration supports GCC renewable energy goals through public-private partnerships.

Investcorp's launch of the \$ 1 billion "Golden Horizon" platform, in partnership with China Investment Corporation (CIC), strengthens Gulf-China economic ties by targeting high-growth sectors like healthcare, logistics, and consumer markets. The platform aligns with the GCC's pro-business policies, strategic privatization mandates, and economic diversification. With deep roots in the GCC and expertise in mid-market investments, Investcorp enhances bilateral industrial cooperation, reinforcing its role in driving mutual economic transformation and fostering sustainable growth. This initiative boosts both regions' global investment standing.

Strengthening Sino-GCC economic and strategic partnerships: The Belt and Road Initiative and BRICS

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, has significantly transformed its economic and strategic relationships with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, establishing a new paradigm based on mutual benefits and shared interests. The BRI seeks to improve infrastructure, trade, and connectivity across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, with the GCC playing a pivotal role due to its strategic location and rich energy resources. As Blanchard (2018) highlights, "China's emphasis on infrastructure development in the region under the BRI framework signals its intent to play a long-term strategic role in the Gulf."

Through the BRI, China has deepened its ties with GCC nations, particularly in sectors like infrastructure, energy, and logistics. Major Chinese investments in GCC infrastructure, such as ports and railways, have supported regional development while furthering China's long-term interests in securing energy supplies and expanding trade routes. This "strategic nexus between energy security and regional connectivity" (Al-Tamimi, 2017) underscores the importance of the BRI in Sino-GCC cooperation. The UAE stands out as a key partner in this relationship, acting as a critical logistical hub for Chinese trade through the BRI. The UAE's world-class infrastructure, particularly in ports like Jebel Ali, makes it an indispensable partner for China in both trade and investment. As Almezaini (2020) points out, "The UAE's modern infrastructure and its ambition to become a global logistics centre dovetail with China's broader BRI objectives, making the UAE a focal point of Beijing's investment strategy in the Gulf."

Energy cooperation also remains a cornerstone of the Sino-UAE relationship within the BRI framework. The UAE, China's second-largest trading partner in the Arab world, plays a crucial role in China's energy security. Chinese firms have invested in UAE oil and gas projects, while the UAE has looked to China for renewable energy solutions, particularly solar energy. As Al-Tamimi (2019) observes, "the UAE's role in

China's energy security under the BRI extends beyond hydrocarbons, positioning the country as a long-term strategic partner in renewable energy collaboration." Moreover, the BRI aligns with the GCC's economic diversification goals, such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the UAE's Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, which seek to reduce dependence on oil exports by promoting industries like tourism, logistics, and manufacturing. This alignment highlights the "mutual alignment of economic strategies between China and the GCC countries" (Ehteshami, 2018), showcasing the BRI's critical role in shaping Sino-GCC relations.

Digital transformation and expansion in Sino-GCC cooperation

As the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) evolves, economic cooperation between China and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is increasingly diversifying, moving beyond traditional energy exchanges to encompass more advanced sectors. For the United Arab Emirates (UAE), this shift has been particularly pronounced. In addition to its role as a vital energy partner, the UAE has emerged as a crucial player in China's digital and infrastructure ambitions. The UAE's Vision 2030 framework, which aims to reduce the nation's dependence on oil, aligns with the BRI's objectives by promoting investment in technology, logistics, and renewable energy sectors. This alignment has enabled both countries to pursue joint projects in sectors like artificial intelligence, clean energy, and smart city initiatives, positioning the UAE as a leading partner in China's Middle East strategy (Zhu, & Hua, 2020).

Additionally, the development of industrial and free zones like Dubai's Jebel Ali Port has enhanced Chinese investment in the UAE's logistics and manufacturing sectors, reinforcing its position as a regional trade hub. As Song (2021) emphasizes, "the UAE's strategic location and its progressive economic policies have made it a natural partner for China in the BRI framework, allowing both nations to harness the potential of global trade routes." This partnership is further strengthened by high-level visits and bilateral agreements underscoring the UAE's pivotal role as a gateway for Chinese goods into the MENA region.

China's Digital Silk Road initiative has also found a willing partner in the UAE, which is actively pursuing digital transformation goals. Cooperation in 5G technology, e-commerce, and fintech has further deepened ties between the two nations. Wang (2022) notes, "the digital cooperation between China and the UAE under the BRI umbrella is not only economically significant but also a step toward shaping the future of global governance in the digital domain." This focus on technology and digital infrastructure illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of Sino-GCC cooperation, particularly with the UAE, which combines China's technological expertise with its own strategic location and business-friendly environment to create new economic opportunities.

Furthermore, the New Silk Road Initiative (NSRI) has gained traction among all GCC members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), underscoring a collective ambition to enhance regional connectivity. Notably, the NSRI includes projects like "Industrial Park – Connecting Ports, Two-Wheel and Two-Wing Approach," aimed at building China-driven industrial parks in key GCC cities connected to regional ports. These initiatives aim to foster business clusters, enhance trade flows, and streamline supply chains, presenting significant opportunities for GCC nations to diversify their economies and promote sustainable development through targeted infrastructure projects (Zhao, 2020; Wang, 2021). Moreover, they provide access to essential funding sources needed for the successful execution of large-scale infrastructure projects (Alshahrani, 2020). The role of the AIIB in financing these projects further enhances the integration of the GCC into China's broader strategic framework.

In addition to energy and infrastructure, the BRI's focus on technology and digital innovation offers significant opportunities for the Gulf region, especially as GCC countries aim to reduce their dependence on oil. The Gulf states are strategically positioned within the BRI framework, playing a critical role in fostering regional partnerships and facilitating project development, particularly in the realm of energy and trade. As essential trade hubs, these countries leverage the BRI to enhance their global influence and support the development of infrastructure in

allied nations such as Pakistan and Egypt. Projects like the Suez Canal Area Development and the Gwadar port development are pivotal for enhancing connectivity between Asia and Europe. The BRI's Digital Silk Road, in particular, offers a platform for technology partnerships, helping the GCC nations boost their digital infrastructure. Even amidst challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted supply chains and resources, the GCC countries have prioritized technology-driven collaboration with China, underscoring their long-term commitment to digital transformation and economic diversification (Al-Tamimi, 2021; Wang, 2022). This focus on digital innovation will play a crucial role in shaping the future of economic cooperation between the Gulf states and China.

China's partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) creates opportunities for collaboration on economic initiatives aimed at mutual development and infrastructure investments (Sharma, 2020), while also driving diversification beyond oil and facilitating investments in renewable energy, technology, and trade (Khan, 2021). This partnership aligns with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), enhancing connectivity and positioning the Gulf as a crucial link in the New Silk Road (Zhang, 2022). The BRICS New Development Bank, aimed at funding infrastructure projects, offers GCC nations access to financing for initiatives that support diversification and sustainable growth (Ma, 2023). This collaboration underscores the shared interests of China and the GCC in fostering regional stability and economic resilience. Saudi Arabia and the UAE play a pivotal role in BRICS, aiming to strengthen their ties with rapidly growing economies such as China and India. Together, these countries represent 42% of global oil supply, highlighting their significant influence in the BRICS group (Kazelko, & Semeghini, 2024).

Conclusion

The evolving relationship between China and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries represents a strategic partnership with far-reaching implications. While the foundation of this cooperation

remains deeply rooted in energy, particularly oil, both sides have recognized the need to diversify and expand their economic ties. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) plays a pivotal role in this transformation, fostering infrastructure development, enhancing trade routes, and creating new avenues for collaboration across a range of industries, including renewable energy and technology. As the GCC nations continue to shift towards more sustainable, knowledge-based economies, China's engagement, particularly through investments and partnerships, aligns with their broader goals of economic diversification and innovation. This dynamic partnership not only strengthens regional ties but also positions both China and the GCC as influential players in the global economic landscape. Moving forward, the integration of these diverse economic strategies will continue to shape the future of Sino-GCC relations, driving mutually beneficial growth and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world.

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**Buddhas epitetu atveide latviešu valodā
(par piemēru ņemot Šāntidēvas traktātu “Bodhičarjāvatāra”)**

Starptautodu salīdzinājumi un translatoģijas jautājumi kļūst arvien nozīmīgāki mūsdienu globalizācijas laikmetā, kad Āzijas un Eiropas kultūras nonāk aizvien ciešākā saskarsmē un līdz ar to rodas vēlme un nepieciešamība vairāk tulkot svešvalodās dažādus tekstus, tai skaitā literāros un reliģiskos. Pētījums attiecas uz rakstisko translatoģijas nozari un pievēršas semantiskam terminoloģijas salīdzinājumam sanskritā, tibetiešu, angļu un latviešu valodā.

Galvenais izpētes objekts ir buddhas vārda sinonīmi, kas bieži sastopami reliģiskajos tekstos. Šai gadījumā par pamatu izvēlēts indiešu filozofa Šāntidēvas traktāts “Bodhičarjāvatāra”, kas ir viens no visvairāk tulkotajiem budisma traktātiem visā pasaulē.¹ Teksts sākotnēji sarakstīts sanskritā, bet pēc iztulkošanas tibetiešu valodā to galvenokārt izmantojuši tieši tibetiešu budisti (Nelson, 2016, 405). Kopš 20. gadsimta tas ir ļoti izplatīts visā pasaulē ne tikai budistu kopienās, bet arī citu lasītāju vidū (Brassard, 2012, 6). Visvairāk tulkojumu ir pieejami angļu valodā, bet līdz ar budisma, un it īpaši tibetiešu budisma skolu, izplatību Latvijā par aktuālu jautājumu ir kļuvusi tulkojuma pieejamība un terminoloģijas atveide arī latviešu valodā. Par priekšrocību budisma terminu tulkošanas procesā uzskatāma baltu un indiešu valodu tuva radniecība un ar to saistītās morfoloģiskās un fonētiskās līdzības.

Šobrīd autore strādā pie šī teksta tulkojuma no tibetiešu valodas latviešu valodā, tādēļ ir būtiski galvenos jēdzienus salīdzināt arī ar sanskrita un angļu valodas analogiem. Tā kā teksta saturs saistās ar bodhisatvu pašpilnveides ceļu, kur praktizētāju galamērķis ir kļūt par buddhām, lai palīdzētu visām

¹ Luiss Oskars Gomezs ierindo to kā trešo visvairāk tulkoto indiešu budisma tekstu aiz “Dhammapadas” un “Sirds sūtras” (Gómez, 1999, 262–263).

dzīvajām būtnēm, tad vārds “buddha” šeit minēts ļoti bieži. Bet liriskā dzejas stila dēļ, kādā sarakstīts teksts, izmantoti vairāki tēlaini epiteti. Tibetiešu un angļu valodas tulki ir izvēlējušies dažādas pieejas buddhas epitetu atveidei, tāpēc šī pētījuma galvenais mērķis ir salīdzināt sanskritā, tibetiešu un angļu valodā lietotos buddhas vārdus, lai atrastu atbilstošāko pieeju latviešu valodā – gan attiecīgajam tulkojumam, gan arī budisma terminoloģijai vispār. Pētījuma rezultātā autore uz salīdzinājuma pamata piedāvā savus ieteikumus par terminu un personvārdu atveides metodēm, kurus iespējams izmantot arī citu valodu ipašvārdu un citu jomu tulkojumos.

Atslēgvārdi: tulkošanas teorija, etimoloģija, terminoloģija, budisms, tibetiešu valoda

Teksta izvēle, avoti un izpētes metode

Par pētījuma pamatu izvēlēts viens no galvenajiem mahājānas budisma tekstiem – Šāntidēvas (z.*Antideva*)² traktāts “Bodhičarjāvātāra” (*bodhicaryavatara*). Tas pieder pie izcilākajiem mahājānas budisma sacerējumiem Indijā, kā arī ir viens no visvairāk studētajiem reliģiskajiem tekstiem tibetiešu budisma tradīcijā. Franču valodas tulks Isidro Gordi to apraksta kā “dārgakmeni, kas grezno budisma dimanta kroni” (Shantideva, 1995, 6).

Traktāts ir sacerēts Indijā sanskrita valodā 8. gadsimtā, un par tā autoru tiek uzskatīts budistu mūks Šāntidēva no Nālandas klostera universitātes. Viņš bija pazīstams dzejnieks un filozofs, kurš īpašu uzmanību pievērsa pastāvīgai apziņas morāles izkopšanai, izvirzot to par svarīgāko aspektu pašpilnveides ceļā uz atbrīvošanos (Goodman, 2016). Šis ir viens no retajiem mahājānas budisma tekstiem, kas pilnībā saglabāties arī sanskritā, tomēr mūsdienās pieejamais sanskrita manuskripts ir pierakstīts samērā vēlu, vairākus gadsimtus pēc oriģināla tapšanas. Tas atrasts Nepālā un datēts ar 14. gadsimtu (Brassard, 2012, 6).

Jau 8. gadsimtā tika veikts pirmais tulkojums tibetiešu valodā, vēlreiz teksts tika iztulkots 10. gadsimtā, un šis pēdējais variants tika

² Sanskrita vārdi šajā rakstā transliterēti saskaņā ar starptautisko Hārvardas-Kjoto sistēmu (*The Harvard-Kyoto Convention*). Tibetiešu vārdi – saskaņā ar amerikāņu tibetologa Turela Vailija (*Turrell Wylie*) izstrādāto un pasaulē atzīto sistēmu.

pārskatīts un uzlabots 11. gadsimtā (Melis, 2005, 210) un iekļauts tibetiešu budisma kanona Tengjur³ sadaļā.⁴ Līdz ar to jāsecina, ka mūsdienās pieejamie tibetiešu valodas tulkojumi ir senākas izcelsmes nekā saglabājušies sanskrita oriģinālteksti, un tas piešķir tibetiešu tekstiem īpašu pētniecības vērtību (Śāntideva, 1997, 8).

Pirmos teksta tulkojumus eiropiešu valodās veica Luī de la Valē Pusēns (*Louis de la Vallée Poussin*) no 1892. līdz 1907. gadam franču valodā un Bārnets Laionels Deivids (*Barnett Lionel David*) 1909. gadā angļu valodā. Kopš tā laika ir publicēti daudzi tulkojumi gan no sanskrita, gan tibetiešu valodas.⁵ Mičiganas Universitātes budisma studiju profesors Luiss Oskars Gomess (*Luis Oscar Gómez*) uzskaita vairāk nekā 28 tulkojumus dažādās mūsdienu valodās (angļu, dāņu, hindi, nevari, ķīniešu, norvēģu, spāņu, vācu u. c.), kas izdoti 20. gadsimtā (Gómez, 1999, 333–335). No šī piemēra redzams, ka budisma idejas ir izplatītas gan Āzijas valstīs, gan Rietumos. Tās pauž cilvēku garīgās tieksmes un ideālus, kas it īpaši spilgti aprakstīti pētāmajā Śāntidēvas traktātā. Valstīs, kurās valda demokrātijas principi, cilvēka garīgie pilnveidošanās ceļi ir ļoti dažādi, un šajā tekstā kā piemēru iespējams iepazīt pakāpenisku sevis pilnveidi budisma izpratnē.

Līdz ar tibetiešu budisma skolu izplatību Latvijā aktuāla ir kļuvusi tulkojuma pieejamība arī latviešu valodā. Šobrīd autore strādā pie šī teksta tulkojuma no tibetiešu valodas, salīdzinot galvenos jēdzienus ar sanskrita analogiem. Tā kā teksta saturs saistās ar bodhisatvu pašpilnveides ceļu, kur praktizētāju galamērķis ir kļūt par buddhu, tad vārds “buddha” šeit minēts ļoti bieži. Liriskā dzejas stila dēļ, kādā sarakstīts teksts, vārda “buddha” vietā izmantoti vairāki tēlaini epitēti. Tibetiešu un angļu valodas tulki ir izvēlējušies dažādas pieejas buddhas epitētu

³ Tib. *bstan gyur* (burtiski: ‘mācību tulkojumi’) – indiešu budistu zinātnieku traktātu tulkojumi.

⁴ Starp Dunhuanas bibliotēkas manuskriptiem ir atrasta arī cita, isāka tibetiešu teksta versija, kas, domājams, nāk no 8. vai 9. gadsimta. Sīkāk tibetiešu tulkoto tekstu vēsturi ir pētījuši Akira Saito (Saito, 2019) un Stīvens Heriss (Harris, 2021).

⁵ Sīkāk par tulkojumiem skat. Barbaras Nelsones (Nelson, 2016) un Oskara Gomesa (Gómez, 1999) pētījumus.

atveidei. Daži izmantojuši tiešu tulkojumu, citi – transkribētu fonētisku atveidi no sanskrita, vēl citi ir kombinējuši abas šīs metodes vai arī izmantojuši tikai vienu vārdu – “buddha” (neņemot vērā oriģināltekstā minēto epitetu). Šī pētījuma galvenais mērķis ir salīdzināt sanskritā, tibetiešu un angļu valodas tekstu versijās lietotos buddhas epitetus, lai atrastu piemērotāko pieeju latviešu tulkojumam – gan attiecīgajam tekstam, gan budisma terminoloģijai vispār. Par priekšrocību budisma terminu tulkošanas procesā uzskatāma baltu un indiešu valodu tuvā radniecība un ar to saistītās morfoloģiskās un fonētiskās līdzības.⁶

Pētījumi par starpvalodu un translatoģijas jautājumiem ir ļoti nozīmīgi mūsdienu globalizētajā sabiedrībā, bet budisma tekstu tulkojumiem un terminoloģijas izpētei ir īpaši svarīga loma Baltijā un Latvijā. Mūsdienu eiropiešu valodās pieejami samērā daudzi individuāli budisma tekstu pētījumi un tulkojumi, bet gandrīz katrā publikācijā īpašvārdi un termini, un to tulkošanas pieejas atšķiras. Līdz ar to terminoloģijas salīdzinošā analīze var sniegt ieguldījumu virzībā uz vienota standarta izstrādi kaut vai vienā valstī. Kā teicamu piemēru var minēt 9. gadsimtā Tibetā izstrādāto bilingvālo (sanskrita-tibetiešu valodas) etimoloģisko vārdnīcu “Mahāvĵutpati”,⁷ kur buddhas epitetiem ir veltīta visa pirmā nodaļa ar 79 sinonīmiem (Mahāvĵutpatti, 2011)⁸. Turklāt tika publicēts arī tulkošanas un transkripcijas jautājumiem veltīts traktāts “Madhĵavĵutpatti”⁹ ar oficiāli apkopotiem zinātnieku norādījumiem, kam turpmākos gadsimtos visi tulki stingri sekoja. Šeit detalizēti

⁶ Sikāk par abu valodu līdzībām skat. latviešu sanskritologa Valtera Negriba rakstā (Negribs, 2020).

⁷ Parasti atsaucēs tiek izmantots šis sanskrita nosaukums, kas nozīmē “Lielā etimoloģijas [vārdnīca]” (*maḥavyutpatti*). Nosaukums tibetiešu valodā ir – “Pēc valdnieka pavēles [izstrādātā] lielā [vārdnīca] precīzai izpratnei” (*bkas bcad bye brag tu rtogs par byed pa chen mo*).

⁸ Konkrētais izdevums ir papildināts arī ar ķīniešu valodas ekvivalentiem un publicēts digitālā versijā Taivānā.

⁹ Šis ir sanskrita nosaukums, kas burtiski tulkojams kā “Vidus etimoloģija” (*madhyavyutpatti*). Nosaukums tibetiešu valodā ir – “Vārdu pielietojums divos sējumos” (*sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*).

skaidrots katrs buddhas apzīmējums un atsevišķi analizēti arī buddhas epitētu un sinonīmu atveides principi (Braarvig, 2015).

Šis raksts pievēršas tulkošanas teorijas jomai no salīdzinošā aspekta. Īpaša uzmanība veltīta terminoloģijas semantiskajai un fonētiskajai atveidei, bez tam ir būtiski uzsvērt, ka rakstā izmantota kvalitatīva (attiecināma uz semantiskiem un fonētiskiem raksturlielumiem), nevis kvantitatīva pieeja (attiecināma uz skaitlisku informāciju). Tas nozīmē, ka ir atlasīti un komentēti svarīgākie buddhas epitēti, neņemot vērā to lietošanas biežumu un neizdarot secinājumus, kas izriet no tā. Atlases kārtība un salīdzinājums veikts hronoloģiskā tulkojumu tapšanas secībā, t. i., sākot no oriģinālvalodas – sanskrita – un noslēdzot ar autores ieteikumiem latviešu valodas tulkojumam.

Izpētes process tika veikts četros etapos. Pirmkārt, tika aplūkoti divi angļu valodas izdevumi – 1) tulkojums no tibetiešu valodas, ko veica budisma praktizētājs un skolotājs Stīvens Bačelors (*Stephen Batchelor*), un 2) budisma skolotāja, pētnieka un tulkotāja Alana Vollesa (*Alan Wallace*) un viņa sievas Vesnas Vollesas (*Vesna Wallace*) darbs. Šajos tulkojumos pārsvarā lietots vārds “buddha”, nevis specifiskie epitēti, tāpēc rakstā tie izmantoti galvenokārt, lai noteiktu pantus, kuros vispār parādās buddhas vārds. Otrkārt, izvēlētie panti tika salīdzināti ar Vidhušekhara Bhatačarja (*Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya*) izdoto sanskrita-tibetiešu valodas paralēlo tekstu, lai izslēgtu tos gadījumus, kuros sanskritā lietots pamattermins “buddha” (Bhattacharya, 1960). Treškārt, tika analizētas vēl trīs publikācijas, kurās salīdzinoši vairāk parādās dažādi buddhas epitēti.¹⁰ Ceturtkārt, balstoties uz autores personīgo pieredzi, kā arī uz pirmo trīs etapu rezultātiem, tika izdarīti secinājumi par buddhas epitētu atveidi latviešu valodā.

Tā kā latviešu valodā ir runa par tulkojumu no tibetiešu valodas, tad arī salīdzinājums vairāk balstās uz tiem angļu valodas tulkojumiem, kas veikti no tibetiešu valodas. Tāpēc aplūkots tikai viens tulkojums no sanskrita, ko veikuši Vesna un Alans Vollesi (Šāntideva, 1997). Šis darbs uzskatāms par vienu no pamatīgākajiem un precīzākajiem teksta

¹⁰ Detalizēti skat. turpmāk tekstā.

variantiem angļu valodā, jo vispirms tulkots sanskrita teksts, pēc tam piesaistīts arī tibetiešu teksts, bet komentāros ir analizētas abu versiju atšķirības (Melis, 2005, 214–215). Vēl ir aplūkoti divi Rietumu tibetologu darbi – visagrākais “Bodhičarjavatāra” tulkojums no tibetiešu valodas, ko veica Stīvens Bačelors (Šāntideva, 1979), un viens no pēdējiem jaunākajiem tulkojumiem – budisma pētnieka un budisma skolotāja Aleksandra Berzina (*Alexander Berzin*) darbs (Shāntideva, 2001–2024), kas, pēc autores domām, atzīstams par viskvalitatīvāko no visiem angļu valodas tekstiem. Salīdzinājumam izmantoti arī divi tibetiešu budistu izdevumi – Padmakara tulkotāju grupas agrākā tulkojuma versija (Shāntideva, 1997) un vēlākais rediģētais izdevums (Shāntideva, 2011). Izvēlētie avoti paver iespēju daudzpusīgam salīdzinājumam – ir pārstāvētas dažādas tulkošanas metodes (gan grupas, gan individuālā, gan tekstuāli salīdzinošā). Bez tam ir iespējams salīdzināt tibetiešu un Rietumu tulkotāju pieejas, kā arī izvērtēt pašu tibetiešu tradicionālos un mūsdienu budistu tekstu tulkojumus.

Buddhas epitētu salīdzinājums sanskritā, tibetiešu un angļu valodā

Aplūkojot oriģināltekstu, jāsecina, ka gan buddhas vārds, gan arī vairāki tā sinonīmi parādās itin bieži. Daļēji epitētu lietojums varētu būt saistīts ar teksta saturu, bet lielākoties tas izmantots dzejas metrikas un atskaņu labad. Gan sanskritā, gan tibetiešu valodā teksts ir veidots dzejas pantu formā un tāpēc ir ļoti nozīmīgs un interesants materiāls prosodijas studijām. Stingri noteiktās metrikas dēļ ļoti būtiska ir attiecīga garuma un sastāva vārdu izvēle. Teksts abās valodās ir sadalīts četrtrindu pantos. Oriģināltekstā sanskritā izmantoti dažādi pantmēri ar uzsvērtām un neuzsvērtām zilbēm (piemēram, *indravajrA*, *upendravajrA* un *vīyoginI* ar 11 zilbēm rindā, *zizulIIA* ar 11 un 12 zilbēm divās rindās, *anuStubh* ar 8 zilbēm rindā u. c.), kuros noteiktā regularitātē seko uzsvērtās un neuzsvērtās zilbes (Nyaupane, 2009, 10, 12, 13, 35, 36).

Sanskrita dzejā ir ļoti stingra metrika, kur uzsvērtās un neuzsvērtās, garās un īsās zilbes mijas noteiktā ritmā dažādos veidos (Bernert, 2005).

Tibetiešu literārajā valodā, kas veidojās līdz ar budisma tekstu tulkojumiem no sanskrita, vienlaicīgi tika pārņemti arī daudzi gramatikas, stilistikas un metrikas elementi. Bet šeit nav specifiski izstrādātu pantmēru kā sanskritā vai latviešu valodā (Berzin, 2009). Tibetiešu dzeja rakstīta vienāda garuma rindās (visbiežāk tās ir 7, 9 vai 11 zilbes) ar regulāri uzsvērtām zilbēm un brīva stila atskaņām rindu beigās. Konkrētajā tekstā ir izmantota 7 un 9 zilbju struktūra.

1. tabulā ir apkopoti analizējamajā tekstā lietotie buddhas epitēti sanskritā un to ekvivalenti tibetiešu valodā. Pārsvārā tibetiešu vārdi no teksta atbilst etimoloģijas vārdnīcā “Mahāvĵutpati” dotajam standartā tulkojumam, izņemot divus pēdējos epitētus, kuri vārdnīcā nav iekļauti. Tādēļ arī epitēti tabulā ir sakārtoti tādā secībā, kādā tie minēti šajā vārdnīcā (Majāvĵutpatti, 2011). Iekavās dotas tās zilbes, kas dažkārt pantmēra dēļ tiek izlaistas.

1. tabula. Vārdi sanskritā un tibetiešu valodā

Sanskrits	Tibetiešu valoda
buddha ¹¹	sangs rgyas
*bhagavat	*bcom ldan
tathAgata	de (bzhin) gshegs (pa)
sugata	bde gshegs
jina	rgyal (ba)
muni	thub pa
nAtha	mgon (po)
munindra	thub dbang
munipungava	thub pa skyes

¹¹ Kā pamatforma sanskritā šajā uzskaitījumā izmantots lietvārda celms, kas nav iesaistīts locījumos.

Sanskritā viena vārda zilbes tiek rakstītas kopā, bieži vien veidojot salikteņus, bet tibetiešu rakstībā katru zilbi atdala ar punktu, tādēļ arī transliterācijā tās ir dotas atsevišķi. Tibetiešu valodā katra zilbe (izņemot izskaņas *-ba*, *-pa* un *-po*) ir atsevišķa morfēma ar savu nozīmi, bet sanskritā viena morfēma var ietvert vienu vai vairākas zilbes. Saskaņā ar tibetiešu tradicionālo tulkošanas pieeju, kas 9. gadsimtā bija noteikta pat ar likumu, pārsvarā visi personvārdi un nosaukumi tika atveidoti pēc nozīmes, ļoti reti izmantojot transkripciju (Hugon, 2020, 201).¹² Tādējādi arī visi 1. tabulā dotie vārdi ietver nozīmes tulkojumu, nevis fonētisko atveidojumu. Pārsvarā tulkojuma semantika ir precīza vai atvasināta no sākotnējās idejas, vienīgi vārdam “bhagavat”, kas atzīmēts ar zvaigznīti, ir samērā atšķirīga nozīmes konotācija. Par to diskutēts tālāk tekstā, analizējot angļu un latviešu valodas tulkojumu variantus.

Tā kā latviešu valodā tiek gatavots tulkojums no tibetiešu valodas, tad 2. tabulā tibetiešu vārdi salīdzināti ar trim angļu valodas tulkojumiem no tibetiešu valodas. Ar defisi atzīmēti tie gadījumi, kuros epiteta vietā lietots vārds “Buddha”. Aiz šķērsvītras dots otrs atveides variants, kas izmantots attiecīgajā tekstā, bet zvaigznīte norāda, ka vārds tekstā ir papildus paskaidrots zemsvītras piezīmē.

Sanskritā un tibetiešu valodā netiek izšķirti lielle un mazie burti, bet, tā kā eiropiešu valodās personvārdi un pseidonīmi rakstāmi ar lielo burtu, tad tulkojumā pirmo skaņu parasti atveido ar lielo burtu. Šī neatbilstība skaidri parāda problēmu, kas rodas, mākslīgi lietojot lielos burtus. Dažkārt angļu valodas tulkojumos buddhas vārdi rakstīti ar lielajiem burtiem, citkārt – ar mazajiem. Kā novērojams Padmakara grupas agrīnajā tulkojumā, ar lielajiem sākuma burtiem pārsvarā (bet ne vienmēr) dotas vienskaitļa formas, bet daudzskaitļa formās izmantoti mazie burti. Šāda pieeja būtu piemērota sanskritam vai latviešu valodai, kur katram lietvārdam ir noteikts skaitlis. Bet tibetiešu valodā vārda skaitli var nojaust tikai pēc konteksta, līdz ar to atveidojumā var rasties neprecizitātes.

¹² Tibetiešu skolotāju personīgajos sacerējumos un komentāros šai ziņā bija brīvāka pieeja un sastopami vairāk fonētiski atveidojumi.

2. tabula. Vārdi tibetiešu valodā un angļu valodas tulkojumos

Tibetiešu valoda	Alexander Berzin	Padmakara Group (1997)	Padmakara Group (2011)
sangs rgyas	Buddha	Buddha / buddhas	Buddha
bcom ldan	Vanquishing Master	Lord Buddha	Lord Buddha
de (bzhin) gshegs (pa)	Thusly Gone	buddhas, those thus gone	Blissful One
bde gshegs	Blissfully Gone	blissful ones	those who go in bliss*/ blissful Buddhas
rgyal (ba)	Triumphant	-	-
thub pa	Sage	Mighty One	-
mgon (po)	Guardian	-	protector
thub dbang	King of Sages	-	mighty Sage*
thub pa skyas	Sage, Foremost of Beings	-	mighty Sage, the greatest of the kind

Nedaudz raksturojot katru no angļu valodas tulkojumiem, jāsecina, ka terminoloģijas ziņā (arī salīdzinot ar iepriekš minētajiem Stīvena Bačelora un Vollesu izdevumiem) visprecīzākais ir Aleksandra Berzina tulkojums. Viņam ir arī plaša pieredze budisma mācību mutiskajā tulkošanā un tibetiešu valodas pedagogijā. Kā viņš pats raksta, “Bodhičarjāvātāras” tulkojums ir viens no viņa pēdējiem darbiem, kas tapis ciešā sadarbībā ar tibetiešu budistiem un budisma meistariem (Berzin, 2003–2024).

Savukārt Padmakara grupas teksts ir vairāku tibetiešu mūku un budisma praktizētāju kopdarbs (Melis, 2005, 243). Agrīnā 1997. gada versija attiecībā uz buddhas vārda lietojumu nav pārāk precīza un konsekventa. Rediģētā 2011. gada teksta versija ir nedaudz detalizētāka, ar vairāk skaidrojumiem, tomēr jāatzīst, ka tā ir precīza tikai pirmajās divās nodaļās, kur zemsvītras piezīmēs doti paskaidrojumi un tulkojumi gan no tibetiešu valodas, gan arī no sanskrita, norādot attiecīgos

vārdus transliterācijā. Tālākajās nodaļās buddhas vārdi un epitēti nav sīkāk skaidroti un to atveidojumos vērojama nekoncekvence. Jāsecina, ka mūsdienu tibetiešu tulkojumi (angļu valodā) nav tik precīzi un sistemātiski kā senie tulkojumi no sanskrita tibetiešu valodā. Piemēram, bieži vien tiek dota priekšroka sanskrita vārdam “buddha”, neņemot vērā konkrētajā vietā izmantoto specifisko epitētu.

Rodas jautājums, kādēļ mūsdienu tulkojumos, un jo sevišķi pašu tibetiešu tulkojumos, netiek ņemti vērā specifiskie epitēti? Vai precīzs īpašvārdu tulkojums nav būtisks Rietumu auditorijai, un svarīga ir tikai teksta idejiskā un praktiskā jēga? Vai leksiska precizitāte bija būtiskāka, nododot tekstus mūkiem un skolotājiem senajā Tibetā? Iespējams, ka tomēr šim faktam ir vairāk saistības ar vispārējo pieeju tekstu tulkošanai. Kad Tibetā ienāca budisms, svēto rakstu tulkošana bija nacionāla misija, tas bija valsts mēroga pasākums, kas tika veikts ar centralizētu valdības rīkojumu un finansējumu (Hugon, 2020, 200).¹³ Daudzi mūki visu dzīvi veltīja tikai svēto rakstu tulkošanai un rediģēšanai, līdz ar to viņi strādāja ar lielu pienākuma apziņu – ļoti precīzi un sistemātiski (Raine, 2010, 150).

Mūsdienās tas ir vairāk vai mazāk individuāls darbs vai vairāku indivīdu kopdarbs, kam nav nacionāla vai starptautiska mēroga nozīmes. Bieži vien tas nav tulkotāju pamatdarbs, par ko viņi saņemtu atalgojumu, tādēļ tam nav iespējams veltīt pietiekami daudz laika un pūļu (Raine, 2010, 151–152). Bez tam lielākā daļa tulku mūsdienās ir iesaistīti ģimenes dzīvē, līdz ar to viņiem ir daudzi citi svarīgāki pienākumi.

Buddhas epitētu atveides problemātika latviešu valodā

Latviešu valodā ir ļoti minimāli pieejami tiešie tulkojumi no sanskrita vai tibetiešu valodas. Atsevišķi sanskrita tekstu fragmenti atrodami sanskrita un jogas teorijas pētnieka Valtera Negriba interneta

¹³ Otrajā tulkošanas periodā pēc 11. gadsimta tulkojumus biežāk sponsorēja vietējie valdnieki un tulkošanas procesiem vairs nebija tik centralizētas pieejas (Raine, 2010, 146).

vietnē.¹⁴ Alternatīvās medicīnas speciālista, endokrinologa Valda Pīrāga redakcijā ir izdota grāmata “Ājurvēdas pamati”, kas tapusi sadarbībā ar latviešu un indiešu medicīnas speciālistiem (Pīrāgs, 2017). Šī raksta autore tulkotājumā no tibetiešu valodas ar Margaritas Putniņas komentāru tulkotājumumu no angļu valodas ir publicēti trīs tibetiešu budisma klasiskie teksti: “Bodhisatvu 37 prakses” (autors – Thogme Zangpo), “Gangas Mahamudra jeb Ūdens kristāls” (Tilopas pamācība Nāropam) un “Cēlās mācības vienīgais mērķis” (Džigtens Sumgons). Bet traktāts “Bodhičarjāvātāra” latviešu valodā pieejams tikai budisma tekstu tulkotāja, jurista Edgara Līvmaņa interneta vietnē, kur viņš piedāvā savu tulkotājumumu Stīvena Bačelora angļu valodas versijai (Šāntideva, 2023).

Tādēļ tālākajā tekstā raksta autore pārsvarā piedāvā savus ieteikumus un komentārus. 3. tabulā doti galvenie buddhas epitēti sanskritā un tibetiešu valodā, trešajā kolonnā redzami iespējamie atveides varianti latviešu valodā.

3. tabula. Vārdi sanskritā, tibetiešu un latviešu valodā

Sanskrits	Tibetiešu valoda	Latviešu valoda
buddha	sangs rgyas	Buddha
bhagavat	bcom ldan	Godājamais / Uzvarētājs
tathāgata	de (bzhin) gshegs (pa)	Tathāgata (Tā aizgājušais)
sugata	bde gshegs	Sugata (Labi aizgājušais)
jina	rgyal (ba)	Uzvarētājs / Karalis
muni	thub pa	Muni (Viedais, Svētais)
nātha	mgon (po)	Aizstāvis
munindra	thub dbang	Munindra (Viedo valdnieks)
munipungava	thub pa skyes	buddhas – dižās būtnes

¹⁴ Valters Negribs ir latviešu izcelsmes indologs, kurš ieguvis filozofijas doktora grādu Oksfordas Universitātē (<https://sanskrits.lv/>).

Daži vārdi ir starptautiski daudz lietoti, izplatīti un arī Latvijā lielam lasītāju lokam zināmi, tādēļ tiem iespējama transkripcijas metode no sanskrita (iekavās autore piedāvā arī tulkojuma variantus). Citi sanskrita vārdi doti tikai tulkojumā, jo plašai auditorijai nav pazīstami, tādējādi transkripcija radītu neizpratni.

Ja tiek izvēlēta fonētiskās transkribēšanas metode, tad, neskatoties uz to, vai teksts tiek tulkots no starpvalodas (šai gadījumā – tibetiešu) vai no sanskrita, galvenos īpašvārdus un terminus, kas nāk no sanskrita, tomēr ieteicams atveidot no šīs valodas. Tibetiešu valoda pieder pie sinotibetiešu valodu saimes, tibetiešu-birmiešu valodu grupas, un tai nav nekādas radniecības ar latviešu valodu, līdz ar to atrast līdzības un analogus būtu ļoti grūti. Bet sanskrita un latviešu valodas kā indoeiropiešu valodu radniecība ir jau pierādīta un apspriesta daudzos pētījumos.¹⁵ Bez tam latviešu valodā atšķirībā no angļu, vācu u. c. eiropiešu valodām ir garie patskaņi un mīkstie līdzskaņi, kas iekļauti arī sanskrita alfabētā, tādējādi padarot atveidi vēl precīzāku. Tāpēc viena no iespējam ir atveidot buddhas epitetus fonētiski, piemēram, Tathāgata, Sugata, Muni, Munindra utt. Līdzīga pieeja izmantota arī senajos budistu rakstu tulkojumos no sanskrita ķīniešu valodā, kur, piemēram, izcilais tulks SjuanĶans definēja piecas netulkojamās terminu kategorijas *vu džun bu faņ* 五種不翻 (Shang, 2010):

- mantras un lūgšanas,
- daudznozīmīgi jēdzieni,
- mērķa valodā neesoši jēdzieni,
- praksē un valodā jau ieviesušies transkribēti jēdzieni,
- vārdi ar svētu nozīmi.

Tomēr visiem sanskrita un tibetiešu īpašvārdiem ir noteikta semantiska jēga, kas avota valodas lasītājiem ir uzreiz uztverama, bet tulkojuma mērķa valodas lasītājiem transkripcijā neatklājas. Tāpēc vārdu nozīme būtu jāskaidro zemspītras piezīmēs, komentāros vai īpašā vārdnīcā pielikumā. Cita iespēja ir mēģināt vārdus tulkot latviski

¹⁵ Ir izdotas salīdzinošās vārdnīcas (piem., Lasdin, 1954; Valerjans, 2015; Linde, 2018), kā arī vēsturiski un valodnieciski pētījumi (piem., Ivbulis, 2013; Chatterji, 1968).

saskaņā ar to nozīmi (skat. 3. tabulā 3. kolonnā iekavās), ņemot paraugu no tibetiešu klasiskajiem tulkiem. Vēl jāatzīmē, ka dažiem vārdiem sanskritā ir daudzslāņainas nozīmes, kā, piemēram, *buddha* vai *muni*, un tiem jebkurā gadījumā būtu vajadzīgs plašāks skaidrojums. Ir arī citi epitēti, kuriem nav nepieciešams izmantot transkripciju, bet tos var viegli un saprotami iztulkot latviešu valodā, piemēram, Uzvarētājs¹⁶ vai Aizstāvis¹⁷. Protams, arī šeit būtu labi ilustrēt budisma konotāciju, specifisko nozīmi sikāk skaidrojot zemsvītras piezīmēs, kā norādīts diviem minētajiem vārdiem.

Par spīti sanskrita un latviešu valodas tuvajai radniecībai un līdzībai, saistībā ar transkripciju tomēr parādās dažas grūtības, piemēram, pat vārda “buddha” atveidē. Sanskrita vārds tiek rakstīts ar diviem līdzskaņiem ढ [d] un ढ [d^h]¹⁸, no kuriem otrajā skaņās *d* un *h* ir nedalāmas, bet izrunājamas kā balsīgs līdzskanis ar aspirāciju. Bet latviešu valodā otro skaņu nav iespējams atveidot citādi kā tikai ar divu burtu palīdzību – *dh*. Angļu, vācu un citās eiropiešu valodās šī vārda transliterācija sakrīt ar transkripciju “buddha”. Bet latviešu valodā saskaņā ar LR Ministru kabineta noteikumiem par personvārdu pareizrakstību vienā vārdā nedrīkst sekot divi vienādi līdzskaņi, piemēram, *dd*.¹⁹ Lidz ar to viens no tiem būtu jāsvītrot, kā rezultātā rodas vārds, kam sanskritā ir pavisam cita nozīme un kas nesaistās ar Buddhu Šāķjamuni un budisma mācību. Lidz šim latviešu valodas tradīcija šajā vārdā otrais sanskrita burts ढ [d^h] ir svītrots, iegūstot vārdus “buda”, “budisms”, “budists”. Šajā gadījumā pilnībā tiek ignorēta vārda etimoloģija, jo atvasinātā lietvārda pamatā ir

¹⁶ Par Šāķjamuni Buddhu ir teikts, ka viņš uzvarējis četrus dēmonus, kas viņu kārdinājuši meditācijas laikā. Tie bija: 1) garīgo sārņu uzkrājumi, 2) maldi, 3) nāve un 4) kārdinājumi (Saito, 2017, 20).

¹⁷ Visu dzīvo būtņu aizstāvis, kurš pasargā no ļaunām domām, ļaunām īpašībām un ļaunām rīcībām.

¹⁸ Šeit skaņu atveide kvadrātiekvās norādīta starptautiskajā fonētiskajā alfabētā (IPA).

¹⁹ Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 114: “Noteikumi par personvārdu rakstību un lietošanu latviešu valodā”, 11.2 punkts: “Personvārdu rakstībā un atveidē nelieto šādus līdzskaņu dubultojumus: *bb, cc, čč, dd, ff, gg, ģģ, hh, k k, ķ ķ, pp, ss, šš, tt, vv, zz, žž.*” (Aksenoks, 2004–2018)

darbības vārds बुद्ध [bud^h], kas burtiski nozīmē ‘atmosties’ (atvasinātās nozīmes – ‘apzināties’, ‘domāt’, ‘izprast’, ‘uztvert’). Pievienojot burtu *d* un galotni *a*, tiek iegūts pagātnes divdabis lietvārda nozīmē ‘tas, kurš ir atmodies’ (Norman, 1997, 29). Tādēļ autore atbalsta indoloģijas profesora Viktora Ivbuļa ieteikumu (Ivbulis, 2012) un budisma skolotāja Helmūta Ancāna viedokli (Ancāns, 2011, 3) arī latviešu transkripcijā izmantot visus šī vārda burtus un rakstīt “buddha”.

Cita problēma rodas, lietojot lielos sākuma burtus. Kā jau minēts, sanskritā un tibetiešu valodā nav lielo un mazo burtu, bet tie ir obligāti latviešu valodas pareizrakstībā. Bez tam lielo un mazo burtu lietošana latviešu un angļu valodā lielā mērā atšķiras. Tāpēc latviski būtu vēlams rakstīt lielos sākuma burtus tikai tādā gadījumā, ja minēts vienas konkrētas personas vārds (piemēram, Buddha Šākjamuni). Turpretī, ja ar to pašu vārdu tiek apzīmētas vairākas nekonkrētas personas (piemēram, tagadnes, pagātnes un nākotnes buddhas), būtu ieteicams lietot mazo burtu, kā tas, piemēram, darīts Padmakara grupas agrīnajā tulkojumā. Diemžēl šos gadījumus ne vienmēr ir iespējams skaidri izšķirt, jo tibetiešu valodā dzimte, persona un skaitlis lietvārdiem netiek norādīts, turklāt dzejas formā tiek izlaisti arī daudzi citi gramatiski un leksiski elementi (Berzin, 2009). Bez tam mahājānas budisma tekstos ne vienmēr ir skaidri nodalāmi gadījumi, kad pieminēts vēsturiskais Buddha Šākjamuni, kāds konkrēts transcendentālais Buddha vai arī buddha kā abstrakts, pārda-bisks speks. Neskaidrību gadījumos atliek šādas iespējas: 1) piesaistīt sanskrita tekstu (bet jāņem vērā, ka tā var būt vēlākas izcelsmes teksta versija un tādēļ atšķirties no tibetiešu tulkojumā izmantotā oriģināla vai arī var būt atgrīzenisks tulkojums no tibetiešu valodas); 2) mēģināt atrast precīzāku nozīmi teksta oriģinālvalodas klasiskajos budistu komentāros; 3) konsultēties ar pieredzējušiem tibetiešu budisma meistariem, kuri labi pārzinātu attiecīgā teksta mutiskās tradīcijas pārmantojumu.

Literāro un reliģisko tekstu tulkošanā no Āzijas valodām ir jāizdara izvēle arī zilbju savienošanā un dališanā, jo rakstības likumi arī šeit ir atšķirīgi. Sanskritā pastāv ierāža veidot garus salikteņus, bet tibetiešu valodā gandrīz katra zilbe ir atsevišķa morfēma vai pat atsevišķs vārds. Latviešu valodā arī nereti tiek veidoti gari salikteņi, un, lai gan pagaidām

4. tabula. Divu vārdu salīdzinājums

Sanskrits	Tibetiešu valoda	Latviešu valoda
bhagavat (angl. <i>glorious</i>)	bcom ldan (angl. <i>conquerer</i>)	Godājamais / Uzvarētājs
jina (angl. <i>victorious</i>)	rgyal (ba) (angl. <i>king, ruler</i>)	Uzvarētājs / Valdnieks

attiecībā uz budisma īpašvārdiem un terminiem šādas ieražas nav, tomēr varētu domāt par jaunvārdu radišanu, piemēram:

- Tathāgata – Tāgājis (Tā aizgājušais),
- Sugata – Labgājis (Labi aizgājušais),
- Munindra – Viedkungs / Viedvaldis (no vārdiem – viedais kungs, viedais valdnieks, svētais valdnieks).

Runājot par nozīmes tulkošanu, dažreiz sanskritā un tibetiešu valodā parādās visai ievērojamas atšķirības. Tad nu tulkotājs var izvēlēties nozīmi no oriģinālvalodas (šeit: sanskrita) vai no konkrētā teksta izejas valodas (šeit: tibetiešu). Šāda problēma parādās, piemēram, saistībā ar diviem iepriekš jau minētajiem buddhas epitetiem, tādēļ 4. tabulā tie vēlreiz doti atsevišķi, salīdzinājumam iekavās norādot burtisko angļu valodas tulkojumu.

Tibetiešu valodā abu vārdu nozīmes ir ļoti tuvas, tāpēc domājams, ka šeit agrākie svēto rakstu tulkotāji vairāk ņēmuši vērā tieši vārdu etimoloģiju, mēģinot pēc iespējas atdarināt sanskrita vārdformas. Pirmajā piemērā sanskritā lietvārdam *bhaga* ir pievienots sufikss *vat*, bet tibetiešu valodā pagātnes formas darbības vārdam *bcom*²⁰ ir pievienots sufikss *ldan*.²¹ Šiem sufiksiem abās valodās ir līdzīga funkcija – tie norāda, ka attiecīgajai personai piemīt iepriekš minētais vai tā ir apveltīta ar to. Bet nozīmi nesošie vārdi ir gana atšķirīgi: *bhaga* – ‘cieņa’, ‘varenība’, ‘izcilība’, ‘skaistums’, ‘veiksme’, ‘labklājība’, *bcom* – ‘uzvarēt’, ‘iznīcināt’, ‘pārvarēt’, ‘triumfēt’, ‘apspiest’.

²⁰ Izruna latviešu valodā – [čom].

²¹ Izruna latviešu valodā – [den].

Otrajā piemērā sanskrita vārds *jina*²² norāda uz buddhu kā “uzvarētāju”, bet tibetiešu vārds *rgyal*²³ var būt gan lietvārds (‘karalis’, ‘valdnieks’), gan arī darbības vārds (‘uzvarēt’, ‘gūt virsroku’, ‘pakļaut’, ‘pārspēt’). Šai gadījumā pievienots sufikss *ba*, lai veidotu lietvārda formu. Budisma kontekstā pārsvarā tiek piesaistīta otrā nozīme, kura, kā redzams, tieši sasaucas ar pirmā piemēra semantisko vērtību. Šādos gadījumos varbūt tomēr precīzāka varētu izrādīties sanskrita teksta versija (ja tā nav atgriezenisks tulkojums no tibetiešu valodas).

Vēl cits savdabīgs aspekts, kas atklājas, tulkojot personvārdus, ir dzimtes lietojums. Vēsturiskais Buddha Šākjāmuni bija vīrietis, un visa mācība tika orientēta uz mūkiem vīriešiem. Tībetā klosteros tika uzņemtas arī mūķenes, bet viņas vairāk nodarbojās ar praktiskas dabas rituāliem un lūgšanām, retāk un mazāk pievērstoties rakstiem un traktātu studijām. Arī visi budistu tulki senatnē bija vīrieši (Raine, 2010, 146). Tikai pēdējos gadu desmitos mūķeņu budisma prakses un studiju iespējas tiek pielīdzinātas mūkiem, piemēram, Gelukpa novirzienā tikai 2011. gadā pirmo reizi tika īstenota sieviešu ordinācija augstākajā līmenī (Kelsang Wangmo, 2012). Tomēr sanskrita tekstos visi buddhas vārdi un epitēti ir doti vīriešu dzimtē, arī tad, ja ir runa par transcendentālajiem buddhām, neminot nevienu konkrēti. Tibetiešu valodā šiem personvārdiem dzimte netiek norādīta un līdz ar to nav nosakāma. Sanskritā ir pat trīs dzimtes, t. sk. arī vidējā, kas tomēr ne senatnē, ne mūsdienās netiek izmantota buddhas apzīmējumiem. Bet latviešu valodā gan lietvārdiem, gan arī tos raksturojošajiem īpašības vārdiem ir tikai sieviešu vai vīriešu dzimte, trešās izvēles nav. Tādējādi uz mūsdienu dzimumu līdztiesības fona rodas dilemma, kā nosaukt buddhu, ja praktizētāja ir sieviete un ja viņa tiecas kļūt par buddhu. Pagaidām šai problēmai nav risinājuma, jo latviešu valodā vīriešu un sieviešu dzimtes lietojums ir iesakņojies pārāk dziļi un aptver pārāk plašu ar lietvārdiem saistītu vārdu spektru teikumā, kā arī ar Valsts valodas likumu ir noteikts, ka visiem personvārdiem

²² Izruna latviešu valodā – [džina].

²³ Izruna latviešu valodā – [gjel].

ir jānorāda sieviešu vai vīriešu dzimte, pievienojot attiecīgās galotnes (Aksenoks, 2004–2018, 12. punkts).²⁴

Secinājumi par personvārdu atveides metodēm kopējā kontekstā

Tulkošanas metode un īpašvārdu atveide lielā mērā ir atkarīga no mērķauditorijas un mērķa teksta formas. Tā, piemēram, klasiskie budistu tekstu tulkojumi, kas veikti no sanskrita tibetiešu valodā, bija domāti budistu mūkiem un budisma skolotājiem, kuri visu dzīvi veltīja budisma praksei un apskaidrības sasniegšanai. Teksti tika apgūti un skaitīti no galvas, tādēļ ļoti būtiska bija ritmiska dzejas forma. Bet mūsdienās budisma teksti ir domāti plašai auditorijai, kuras lielākā daļa nav budistu mūki, un, iespējams, to lasītāji pat nav pieņēmuši budistu solījumus. Šie cilvēki lasa budistu tekstus kā garīgo literatūru vai daiļliteratūru, varbūt tikai vienu reizi, nemaz nerunājot par iegaumēšanu no galvas.

Tādēļ plašāku atzinību iemanto tādi tulkojumi, kas ir stāstījuma formā, vieglā, saprotamā valodā, kā, piemēram, Vollesu darbs, lai gan attiecībā uz buddhas u. c. personvārdiem tajā nav vērojama īpaša konsekvence un precizitāte. Traktāta idejas šeit ir skaidrotas dziļāk un pamatīgāk, par pamatu ņemot dažādas teksta versijas, kuru pieejamība un salīdzināšana globalizācijas laikmetā ir jauna un būtiska iespēja arī lasītājiem pašiem. Šeit un arī Aleksandra Berzina tulkojumā izmantota brīvā stāstījuma forma un konsekventa personvārdu un epitetu atveide, kas gan padara tulkojumu sarežģītāku un garāku nekā oriģināls, tomēr spēj precīzāk pārnest nozīmi. Aleksandrs Berzins īpaši ir piedomājis par terminoloģiju un īpašvārdu sistemātisku atveidi, tādēļ, pēc raksta autores domām, šis teksts ir vērtējams kā viens no precīzākajiem tulkojumiem.

Tomēr joprojām ir arī daudzi tulkotāji, kuri dod priekšroku poētiskai un ritmiskai dzejai, kas ir īsa, simboliska, bez liekiem vārdiem un vismaz daļēji atbilst oriģinālo tekstu formai. Noteiktu atskaņu un ritmikas sistēmu gan nevienā no angļu valodas tulkojumiem nav izdevies

²⁴ Likuma 15. punktā minēti arī daži izņēmumi, bet tie neattiecas uz vārdu “buddha” un buddhas epitetiem.

novērot, bet īsā, kompakta forma četrriņķu pantos ir saglabāta, piemēram, Bačelora un Padmakara grupas tulkojumos. Šādā formā dažkārt nav ērti un piemēroti konsekventi atveidot personvārdus. Tādēļ, ja galvenās idejas un nozīmju konotācijas šie vārdi īpaši neiespaido, tad varbūt šādā gadījumā varētu arī orientēties uz ērtu un saprotamu izteiksmi mērķa valodā, pieskaņojot to pantu ritma vajadzībām.

Klasiskie budisma teksti un svētie raksti pārsvarā ir ļoti koncentrēti un simboliski, īpašvārdos un personvārdu epitetos dažkārt iekļauta svarīga simbolika un asociācijas, kas mūkiem un praktizētājiem varētu būt zināmas, bet ir svešas plašākai auditorijai. Tādēļ vismaz pirmajā pieminēšanas vietā būtu nepieciešami izvērsti skaidrojumi uzreiz aiz teksta daļas vai zemsvītras piezīmēs. Būtu ieteicams norādīt precīzus sanskrita vai tibetiešu valodas terminus transliterācijā un skaidrot to daudzslāņainās nozīmes. Šādi iespējams papildināt arī poētiskās, ritmiskās un tiešās tulkošanas metodes. Tibetiešu autori un arī daži citi tulkotāji aiz katra dzejas panta pievieno komentārus, kas, no vienas puses, mēģina pietuvināt teksta formu oriģināla skanējumam, no otras puses – arī precīzi un izvērsti skaidro nozīmi. Šis varētu būt viens no labākajiem risinājumiem, kas būtu ļoti piemērots arī teksta praktiskai lietošanai, piemēram, budisma prakses centros Rietumvalstīs. Viena no pieejām, ko autore personīgi ieteiktu un kas jau ir tikusi izmantota, tulkojot latviski “Mahājānas budistu tekstus: Sirds sūtru, Dimanta sūtru, Altāra sūtru” (Baltgalve, 2021), ir – kopējo idejisko nozīmi un interpretācijas skaidrot aiz katras teksta sadaļas vai panta, bet terminu un īpašvārdu valodnieciskos aspektus skaidrot zemsvītras piezīmēs.

Senatnē tibetieši pievērsa īpašu uzmanību precīzai īpašvārdu un terminoloģijas atveidei tieša tulkojuma formā, tāpēc, sākot no 9. gadsimta, tika izstrādātas valsts mērogā izmantojamas budisma terminu vārdnīcas un izdoti oficiāli rīkojumi. Tulkošanas process notika centralizēti darba grupās, kas sastāvēja no tibetiešu mūkiem un sanskrita zinātniekiem no Indijas (Raine, 2010, 150). Arī mūsdienās tiek domāts par šiem jautājumiem, tiek rīkotas speciālas konferences un izstrādāti tulkošanas projekti, kuros sadarbojas budisti ar valodniekiem un zinātniekiem (Saito, 2017, 24; Raine, 2010, 153–156; Translation Conference, 2011). Dažas

tulku komitejas ir pat izstrādājušas specifiskus tulkošanas noteikumus (piem., Guidelines for Translation, 2024). Tomēr šie pasākumi un noteikumi vairāk attiecas uz angļu valodu, kas tiek izmantota starptautiski un plašā mērogā. Latviešu valodas vidē vēl nav izvēsta šāda diskusija, jo trūkst pētnieku – valodnieku un rakstu tulkotāju, kuri varētu strādāt pie budisma terminu standartizācijas, balstoties uz tekstu pirmvalodām (pāli, sanskritu, tibetiešu, ķīniešu vai mongoļu valodu). Tādēļ pagaidu risinājums varētu būt vārdnīcas pievienošana attiecīgajam izdevumam indeksa vai pielikuma formā, kas parādītu konsekvenci vismaz vienā tekstā vai viena tulkotāja darbos.

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Epithets of Buddha in the Latvian Language (at the example of the “Bodhicharyavatara” by Shantideva)

The era of globalization has endowed cross-language comparisons and issues of translatology with increasing importance. Asian and European cultures come into a closer contact. This results in need and aspiration to create a growing number of translations into foreign languages, including the translation of literary, as well as religious texts. This research concerns written translation studies and focuses on a semantic comparison of terminology in Sanskrit, Tibetan, English and Latvian languages.

The main object of the article is the name “buddha” and its synonyms that are very frequent in Buddhist writings. In this case, the treatise “Bodhicharyavatara” by Indian philosopher Shantideva – one of the most translated Buddhist texts in the world – is chosen as the basis. This text was originally written in Sanskrit, but after being translated into Tibetan, it became most wide-spread among Tibetan Buddhists (Nelson, 2016, 405). Since the 20th century, it has been translated into many languages, and has become very popular throughout the world, not only in Buddhist communities, but

also among general readers (Brassard, 2012, 6). Most translations have been rendered in English, but with the spread of Buddhism, and especially Tibetan Buddhist schools in Latvia, the availability of Buddhist texts and terminology in Latvian language has become a topical issue. The close historical relationship between Baltic and Indic languages can be mentioned as an advantage in the process of translating Buddhist texts, because both languages reveal many morphological and phonetic similarities.

Currently, the author is working on the translation of the “Bodhicharyavatara” from Tibetan into Latvian, therefore it is important to establish the main concepts and to compare them with their Sanskrit and English equivalents. Since the content of the treatise is related to the bodhisattva path of self-cultivation, where the ultimate goal of practitioners is to become a buddha, the word “buddha” is mentioned rather often. Owing to the lyrical style of the text various figurative epithets are used, and Tibetan and English translators have chosen different renderings of buddha’s epithets. Hence, the main goal of this study is to compare buddha’s names used in Sanskrit, Tibetan and English languages in order to find the most appropriate approach in Latvian – both for the relevant translation and for the translation terminology in general. In conclusion, the author offers recommendations regarding methods of either transcribing or translating personal names that can be useful also for translations in other fields and into other languages.

Keywords: Translation theory, etymology, terminology, Buddhism, Tibetan language

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