

CHIN/WCL 3342: Tales of East Asian Cities

# CHIN/WCL 3342: Tales of East Asian Cities

*DR. LI'S TALES OF EAST ASIAN CITIES CLASS, FALL 2022*

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We started contemplating on this project in the summer of 2022. The idea is a result of multifold: 1) I've always been interested in e-publishing and want to contribute to it. 2) In 2022, I published an edited volume [Affective Geographies and Narratives of Chinese Diaspora](#), published by Palgrave MacMillan. 3) I am a big advocate for students' works. I am always amazed at some good-quality work of my students and would like to promote it to the world. The OER platform is perfect, as it would take a much shorter time for their work to reach the world. I would like them to produce something they are proud of and can share with their friends and family when they get out of my class. All these points led us to start brainstorming this project in summer 2022.

This course, "CHIN/WCL 3342: Tales of East Asian Cities," already has a good structure for a book. I have divided the course contents into six major cities in East Asia, including Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo, and Seoul, with us covering a new city every two weeks. I replaced the original final project with an OER project, which is the biggest assignment and assessment for the class. The course contents have determined the OER book format easily: that the chapters are named after the cities and each chapter includes an introduction of the city coauthored by the group, as well as their individual sections that involve critical analysis of the literature and films of that city. And I redesigned the weekly contents toward this goal. In the beginning of the semester, we have students sign up for each city and group them according to the cities. Students of each city present the history, tourist attractions, and other media information related to the city every two weeks. Every couple of weeks, we have students learn about OER knowledge and concepts, and we work on creating the OER book in Pressbooks with OER librarians Ariana and Kate. We were hoping through this project for students to not only obtain the critical analytical skills but also learn about e-publishing, Pressbooks, and copyright. Most importantly, through this project, they have learned to work with each other as a group and as a class, which they did not get to do as much during the pandemic.

I am excited to see the final product and am very proud of it. First of all, even though some students found the assignment confusing in the beginning, as it's the first time we are trying this out, in the end, everyone followed the format and chapter guidelines nicely. Second, many of the students' works are amazing, not only exposing the readers to the new media and literature that are worth reading and watching, but also demonstrating interesting, in-depth discussions. Third, the book has shown students' intense interest in the subjects they pick, as well as the group work and self-learning they have put in. It really looks good as a student-authored e-book. I think this will inspire other educators and students to adapt the model and produce more e-books. Meanwhile, this OER publishing format allows us to share works faster and more conveniently than the traditional form, enabling many more to benefit from our work.

– Dr. Melody Yunzi Li

Working with Dr. Li's class on this project was an exciting opportunity as our first collaboration to support an [open pedagogy](#) assignment, one that "engages students in using, reusing, revising, remixing and redistributing open content." The timing worked out perfectly, as our capacity to support open education increased with Kate joining Ariana in the library's OER team. From the very beginning of this project, we felt it was important to center student rights and privacy, and used the list of [key questions to consider around licensing issues](#), provided by the Rebus Foundation, as a guide when planning aspects of the assignment. The questions include:

- "Can students in your class project choose whether to openly license their work or not?"
- "How do students want to be cited and attributed in their work and future derivatives?"
- "What if they do not want to be cited at all and prefer to be anonymous or keep their work private?"; and several more.

These questions strongly influenced the collaboration on this project, and led to our developing processes for students to 1) decide whether or not they want to openly-publish their work, 2) select which license to apply to their work, if they publish openly, and 3) determine how they want to be attributed in the work, including options to be attributed anonymously or with a pseudonym. We strived for, and hope we lived up to, this “[informed open pedagogy](#)” approach throughout the rewarding experience of seeing students’ efforts come to life and be shared with a broader audience. This was a great learning experience for us and we look forward to continuing to support faculty and students in their creative and innovative open assignments.

– Kate McNally Carter and Ariana Santiago

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# PART I

## BEIJING



*Skyline of Beijing Capital by Henry Chen*

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# I. Politics

ANONYMOUS 1

## Politics of Beijing

In contemporary China, Beijing is at the heart of Chinese politics. For instance, the National Party Congress is hosted every five years within Beijing. Moreover, the leader of the Chinese Community Party (CCP) lives in Beijing as well. This makes Beijing the heart of all decisions, but also an area where many actions are taken due to the symbolic and iconic nature as the heart of China's politics.

In this section, the significance of Tiananmen Square will be discussed, as well as some notable political protests that took place in Beijing. Moreover, the protests that take place in Beijing are seen as much more defiant due to the proximity to the political heart of China. However, it is also this centrality that gives these protests much more potential for change. Hence, they seem to be more significant when they do occur.

## The Significance of Tiananmen Square

Tiananmen Square, while more widely known outside China for the protests that took place there, is very notable in its own right. In fact, it was at Tiananmen Square where The People's Republic of China (PRC) was established. Because of this, it is seen as core to the identity of Chinese politics. Today a very large mural of the PRC's first leader, Mao Zedong, is very visible and iconic at this location.



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## Notable Protests in Beijing

### Tiananmen Square Massacre – June 4th, 1989

Without a doubt, Tiananmen square is the most notable protest to ever occur in Beijing, as the world watched history be made. During this incident, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), was ordered to attack a group of protesting students in Tiananmen Square. These students were protesting for freedom and democracy. The show of force in the Tiananmen Square Massacre was telling of what the future of the party was to hold.

The world watched live coverage of the students protesting, and then that of the crackdown. BBC estimates that the



death toll from the event was 10,000, but due to the nature of the incident, there are no accurate figures (“Tiananmen Square Protest...”). Below is a video by BBC which breaks down some of the events of the Tiananmen Square Massacre from the front lines.



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Today, the Tiananmen Square Massacre still remains a highly sensitive and censored incident. For instance, even phrases as simple as “8964” a reference to 89/6/4, the date of the incident are censored (Kuek Ser). Moreover, even less direct phrases such as “8的平方”, or the square root of 8, which is 64, are censored (Kuek Ser). Of course, such censorship increases as the date of the event nears, CNN reports that Chinese netizens refer to it as “internet maintenance day” (Griffiths).

## Sitong Bridge Protest – October 13th, 2022

Ahead of the 20th Party Congress, where Xi Jinping was expected to receive a third term, the spirit of protest was in the air in Beijing once again. One brave individual placed a banner in Beijing. BBC reports that after the man placed the banner, he used a loudspeaker to shout: “Go on strike at school and work, remove dictator and national traitor Xi Jinping! We want to eat, we want freedom, we want to vote!” (Wong). The timing of this protest was no coincidence. The phrases on the banner were no less provocative. They read:

不要核酸要吃饭 不要封控要自由 不要谎言要尊严

不要文革要改革 不要领袖要选票 不做奴才做公民

translated into English, this reads:

We don't want nucleic acid testing, we want food to eat;

We don't want lockdowns, we want freedom;

We don't want lies, we want dignity;

We don't want Cultural Revolution, we want reform;

We don't want [dictatorial] leaders, we want elections;

We don't want to be slaves, we want to be citizens.

This translation comes from language log, a blog from the University of Pennsylvania, with the poster being Victor Mair. The true significance of this banner lies not only in its provocative messaging, but its location and timing. In a state where it is clear to understand you are being censored, actions of free speech require both bravery and sacrifice. These posters later spread onto university campuses throughout the world. The following image is a group of posters put up at Stanford University:



By Suiren2022 – Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=124766648>

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## Media Attributions

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## 2. Economy/Culture/Religion

PEIJUN ZHAO AND YESENIA BERNAL

### Basics of China's Economy in Three Videos:



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### Overview of Beijing's Economy:

#### Agricultural Sector

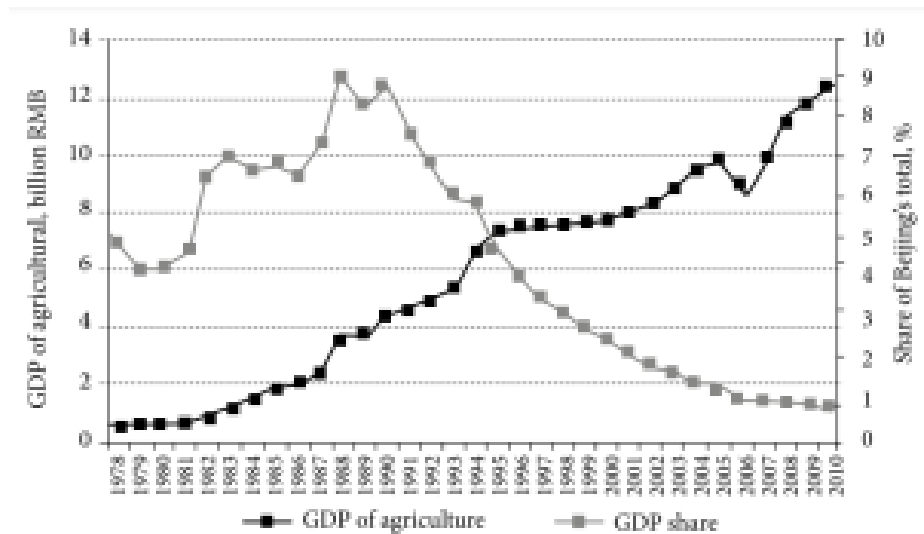


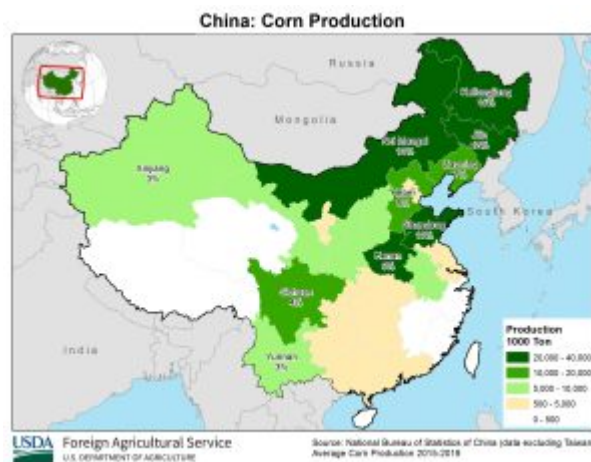
Fig. 1. Agricultural outputs and share of GDP in Beijing

(Yang et al. 629)

China's economy originally started out largely agricultural before rapidly increasing in productive outputs after opening up to foreign trade and investments in 1979 (Morrison 1). To understand this, we can discuss Yang et al. (2012), which highlights the interdependence between the agricultural and urban sectors of Beijing between 1982 and 2007. Though Beijing's large population requires a developing agricultural sector to feed its people, the economic output of agricultural products is consistently lower than technological investments. This is observed in Figure 1, where the share of GDP from agricultural goods sharply dropped after the 1900s (Yang et al., 629). As such, most of the primary crops consumed in Beijing, including rice and corn, are produced south of the city, primarily in Jiangsu and Shandong provinces.



(USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, 2019)



(USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, 2019)

## Economic Output





*Skyline of Beijing Capital*

As a city, Beijing has one of the highest PPP-adjusted GDPs in the world and is prophesied to have the 5<sup>th</sup> highest GDP in the world by 2025 (Dobbs et al. 3). For reference, GDP is defined as the “gross domestic product,” or the total monetary value of goods and services produced in a specific area. As different countries have different purchasing power, the monetary wealth of a country should be adjusted according to the purchasing power of the currency in that country. Consequently, Beijing places 9th in China with a PPP-adjusted GDP of 950.671 (Jacobs 1). As these values are varied based on the country and economic output, the GDP ranking of Beijing may rise to 8th place next year, while Moscow (rank 8) may shrink due to decreasing manpower and economic production from the events of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Notably, Shanghai’s PPP-adjusted GDP is ranked 7, which is the highest in China, and has a PPP-GDP output of 1,018.815 (Jacobs 1). Overall, China’s total PPP-adjusted GDP is 27,206.09 billion, and Beijing accounts for 3.5% of China’s total GDP (Zhou 1).

To understand why Beijing’s economic output is integral to China’s economy, it is important to identify the main sectors that account for Beijing’s economy. The first sector regards the real estate and housing district. Beijing is home to 145 of the top 500 companies in the world, slightly surpassing the United States’ 124 top companies (Flannery 1). The United States capitalizes in the defense, airline, tech, retail, entertainment, healthcare, and wholesale industries. In comparison, China’s main sectors focus on chemical, energy, engineering, transportation, and commercialized banking (Harper 2). These companies include the State Grid Corporation of China, Sinopec, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Sinochem, China Life Insurance Company, the Bank of China, and China Mobile (Flannery 2). Furthermore, China’s top two universities, Tsinghua University and Peking University, make Beijing a top destination for both students and industries wishing to grow. However, it is notable that these companies gear their investments internally through China and do not have sufficient international Western investments (Zhou 1). Based on these assessments, it is understandable that Beijing’s real estate and automobile sectors are also valuable due to the need for highly paid workers and exceptional students wishing to enter the workforce.

Another notable sector of Beijing’s economy includes the Central Business District, which encompasses the location for many of the Top 500 Fortunes to set headquarters and access well-established city planning, media coverage, and cooperation among high corporate profiles (Yang 1). This diverse set of investments results in Beijing having one of the world’s highest GDPs.

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## Culture and Religion



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The capital of China has long stood the test of time, long before the start of the first century. Throughout the centuries, Beijing has collectively created its own culture that is rich and diverse in multiple ways. The capital has developed its form of language, food, religion, and unique festivals. In this case, the main focus will be on a brief overview of some of Beijing's culture with some background information on its aspects.

## Language

Mandarin Chinese is known to be the most widely spoken language in the world. The history of the language came from being a Beijing dialect. Initially, historians and researchers noted the language of Mandarin to come from as early as the Yuan Dynasty. Following the Yuan Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty began using a Nanjing dialect when Nanjing was the capital. However, the Beijing dialect became the secondary official tongue after the Ming Dynasty changed the capital from Nanjing to Beijing. At the start of the Qing Dynasty, the Beijing dialect was declared the official tongue. About halfway through the Qing Dynasty, Emperor Yongzheng proclaimed the Beijing dialect to be the official spoken Chinese language for official affairs (Guo 220). Towards the later years of the Qing Dynasty, officeholders were just some of the people speaking the Beijing dialect. The dynasty tried to declare the dialect as the common tongue during this time.

Notwithstanding the end of the Qing Dynasty, there was still a debate about whether the Beijing dialect should be officialized as the common tongue. At this point, Beijing remained the Republic of China's capital and became more popular than the other dialects. Towards the end of the Republic of China era, an agreement was created to officialize the Beijing dialect as the national tongue in 1924 (Guo 220). More than thirty years later, the National Language Reform Conference voted for the Beijing dialect to remain the national tongue, renaming it Putonghua, also known as the Common Tongue (Guo 220).

Although the Beijing dialect went through several tries to become the common tongue, the dialect did not stop changing and modifying. Mandarin can be categorized into three subgroups spread throughout central, northern, and western China (Chai 99-100). Even the subgroups have different tones and grammar structures. The different tones and grammar structures help identify the difference between Cantonese, Shanghaiese, and other similar languages spoken in Beijing.

## Food

Part of Beijing's culture is made up of the food popularized in the capital and has spread throughout the world. One of those dishes is the Peking Roast Duck. The Peking Roast Duck is known for its tedious preparation and crispiness. The preparation begins with force-feeding a specific duck breed for about six months. Once the duck is ready for cooking, it is slaughtered, plucked, and cleaned. Air is then puffed through the neck so that the flesh and skin are loosened from one another. Afterward, the duck is smeared with water, honey, and vinegar mixture and set to dry for three days. After the three days have passed, the duck is grilled in a special oven while still hanging. The duck is served with side dishes, such as hai xian sauce, sesame-seed rolls, sweet bean sauce, spring onions, and thin-like pancakes (Insight Guides 196-198).

Another dish that has become popularized in Beijing is the Instant-Boiled Mutton. The original cuisine has to be prepared carefully and precisely with particular ingredients. The broth is made with chopped green onion, dry shrimp, mushrooms, and ginger in a pure copper pot heated by charcoal. The ideal mutton pieces come from the fore shank, back neck, and hind shank. These pieces are then cut to approximately 0.9 millimeters thick, 13 centimeters long, and 3.3 centimeters wide (Guo 222). Once the mutton is cut and ready to cook, it is dipped in the boiling broth for a few seconds and then dipped in the sauce of choice. The sauce used as a dip for the mutton pieces is a mixture of fermented shrimp sauce, Chinese leek flower, chopped cilantro, fermented bean curd, and ginger. Hot chili oil is another side sauce that



can be used for mutton. Other dishes accompanying the mutton include tofu, sesame biscuits, napa cabbage, buckwheat noodles, and mung bean vermicelli. The meal ends with leftover enriched broth and sweet pickled garlic.

Although other main dishes are part of Beijing's culture, the other part of its cuisine is street food, also known as "Beijing tapas." According to Guo, "Beijing tapas are small portions of a great variety of delicacies that can be enjoyed as appetizers or snacks or as a complete meal when an adequate amount is consumed" (223). Some street foods include jian bing, xian bing, or meat skewers. More street foods are offered in Beijing for an affordable price throughout the capital.

## Religion



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Beijing has come a long way with its religious affiliation. In 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) declared itself to be atheist, as well as for its members (Chai 281). Nonetheless, the country has officially recognized five other religions: Islam, Catholicism, Daoism, Protestant Christianity, and Buddhism. Confucianism started becoming popular again after the Cultural Revolution halted this religious practice (Insight Guides 162). The citizens can practice these different religions as long as the members are integrated into a state-sanctioned temple or church. However, other religions have not been recognized by the constitution and can also be known as "underground churches." The members of these underground churches usually meet in people's living spaces for services.

## Festivals

Beijing celebrates national and local festivals and holidays throughout the year. One of the local events that Beijing celebrates is the Beijing International Music Festival. The Beijing International Music Festival was established in 2004 and is celebrated every year in October. The event sponsor, the Beijing International Music Festival and Academy, allows students, artists, and faculty members to perform and present their musical talents. Additionally, students participating in the event can compete in the Concerto Competition and potentially win an award at the Gala Finale Concert (Quan 2021).

Another festival that is popular in Beijing is the Yuyuantan Cherry Blossom Festival. The festival is celebrated yearly during the springtime, between March and May. More than thirty species available at the park make up more than two thousand cherry trees. The cherry trees were initially received as a gift from Japan in the 1970s when both countries reinstated their diplomatic ties ("Best Time," n.d.). Although the two countries reinstated their diplomatic ties in the seventies, it would take more than a decade before the first festival was celebrated in 1989 ("Tips on Yuyuantan," n.d.).

## Recap

Although many more cultural factors make Beijing, these elements offer a glimpse of what makes up the capital.

To better understand Beijing's culture, consider making a trip to the capital in the near future to have a first-hand experience.

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### 3. Tourist Attractions

HANNAH R

#### The Forbidden City



Forbidden City, Dongcheng, Beijing, China © Unsplash

The Forbidden City is China's largest and best-preserved ancient building. From 1406 to 1420, it was home to 24 emperors, their families, and servants during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Yongle emperor, Zhu Di, moved the capital, as well as his own army, to Beijing and began building a new heart of the empire. He deemed it the Forbidden City. Some important structures in the city are the:

1. Wu Meridian Gate: also known as the Five-Phoenix tower, the southern entrance to the imperial palace
2. Hall of Supreme Harmony: used for official celebrations, and to receive high officials; behind throne are incense burners that signify the obedience of all other kingdoms
3. Imperial Garden: built in 1420 and remains unchanged in its original layout, festivals such as Dragon Boat Festival & Mid-Autumn Festival

# The Temple of Heaven



Temple of Heaven, China © Unsplash

The Temple of Heaven is China's largest existing complex of ancient sacrificial buildings. In 1420, under emperor Yongle, it was the holy place for the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties for annual ceremonies of prayer to Heaven for a good harvest. It started out with a Hall of a Prayer for Good Harvests before expanding in 1534, as ordered by Emperor Jiajing.

On top of being an ancient temple, the Temple of Heaven is also a huge park. Inside there is a temple complex composed of three main parts: Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, Imperial Vault of Heaven, and Circular Mound Altar. When strolling through the park, you will see local people doing various kinds of leisure activities like singing, dancing, playing instruments, playing chess, practicing kung fu, tai chi, etc.

## Temple of Heaven Ritual Steps

Pre-Ceremony: Program approval and rehearsal

Days Prior:

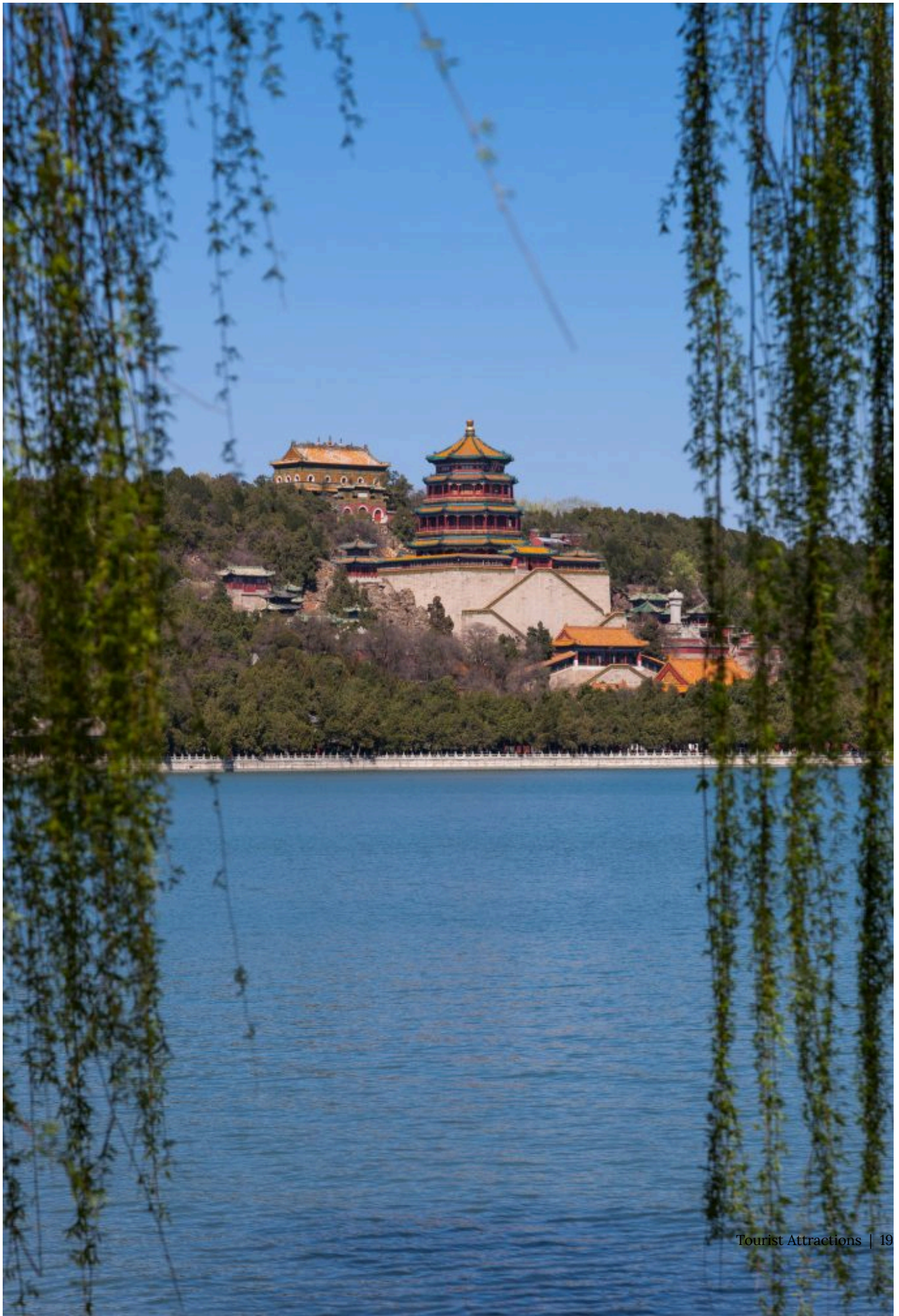
- Incense in Vault of Heaven
- Tablets in Circular Mound Altar
- Sacrificial Articles in Storehouse of the Gods
- Stay in the Hall of Abstinence

#### Day of Ceremony

1. Welcome Deities
2. Animal Sacrifices
3. Three Rounds of Offerings
4. Removal of Offerings
5. Burning of Some Offerings

# Summer Palace





The Summer Palace is the epitome of classical Chinese architecture due to its garden design and construction. The largest royal garden in Beijing, it features the Halls of Happiness in Longevity, Jade Ripples and Yiyun, and the Hill of Longevity. It was initially conceived by the Qing emperor Qianlong between 1750 and 1764 as the Garden of Clear Ripples. The sacred building combined political, administrative, residential, spiritual, and recreational functions within a landscape of lakes and mountains.

It was destroyed during the Second Opium War of the 1850s and reconstructed by Emperor Guangxu. It wasn't until 1924 that it was restored and used as a public park. 90% of the garden offers space for enjoying views and spiritual contemplation. There are many modest garden buildings such as the Tower of the Fragrance of Buddha, the Tower of the Revolving Archive, the Wu Fang Pavilion, the Baoyun Bronze Pavilion, and the Hall that Dispels the Clouds. Due to its high level of preservation and maintenance of the property, the Summer Palace remains a major influence on subsequent oriental garden art and culture.

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## “Iron Hands”: A Short Film By Johnson Cheng



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<https://uhlibraries.pressbooks.pub/chin3342fa22/?p=5#oembed-1>

In 2017, Johnson Cheng released a short film shot in Beijing called “Iron Hands.” On Johnson Cheng’s website, the short film is described as follows: “As a 12-year-old girl prepares for her final test trying out for the traditionally all-boys Chinese youth Olympic weightlifting team, she makes an unlikely connection with the gym’s reclusive groundskeeper.” The groundskeeper may look like a simple worker, but as the story unfolds, we learn his importance in the short film. We will analyze most scenes in the short film on how history cannot repeat itself but can rhyme.

The first few seconds of the short film start with a black screen as someone yells. The screen then changes to some running tracks with several adolescents running. Compared by size, the petite runner is the slowest and gets shouted at to run faster. The camera follows their movements until it reaches the groundskeeper sweeping the sand. He is silently observing the adolescents while he is working. The following scene changes to show several weights marked with the 2008 Beijing Olympics logo while someone is knocking off the screen. The girl yelled at to run faster in the first scene is the one doing the off-screen knocking. She wants the groundskeeper to open the gate for the weightlifting gym at six in the morning. She is ambitious to keep practicing her weightlifting strategies.

A few scenes later, all the adolescents practice their weightlifting strategies while the groundskeeper cleans some weights in the corner of the room. Although the groundskeeper wants to ensure that all the weights are clean, the team’s coach tells him, “How many times do I have to tell you... these old weights are useless now. And these. Get them out of my sight.” The groundskeeper hesitates but obliges and takes the weights to another room where other old weights are already there.

The groundskeeper returns to the gym and notices that the girl is still practicing her weightlifting technique. She can lift the weight in a squatting position but cannot get herself to stand up. He flips the light switch several times, signaling the girl that he is closing up, but she does not pay attention. He goes up to her and tells her he is closing the building for the day, but she tells him to give her a few more minutes. He tells her to practice tomorrow, but she informs him that tomorrow is her last chance to prove that she can be part of the weightlifting team.

This next scene starts to change the trajectory of the groundskeeper’s character. The groundskeeper tells the girl to straighten her back when she lifts. She looks back at him, confused, but follows his instructions. This time, she can lift the weight and stand up simultaneously but fails to lift the weight past her head. The groundskeeper tells her to try again and keep her back straight, not arch. Once she can stand, he tells her to flex her core and push. This time, she can do the complete form without failure. From how the groundskeeper guided the girl through her weightlifting, he gave the impression that he knew what he was talking about by observing other weightlifters or having experience.

Once the girl puts the weight down and the groundskeeper walks away, she goes after him and asks, “I saw you cleaning the weights earlier... Do you like weightlifting?” The groundskeeper stops walking and hesitates to answer. At this moment, we can tell that there was more than him enjoying weightlifting. Instead, he answers her, “If no one takes care of the weights... they’ll get thrown away.” She brings him one that had been in the pile he was cleaning a few scenes before and asks, “How about this one?” She tries to figure him out, but instead, he answers that it is getting late. He avoids answering her questions, confirming that he hides the truth from the girl.

This following scene proves that it can be hard to let go of the past. At the 6:15 minute mark, we can see that the groundskeeper is holding another old weight that the girl had handed him a few scenes before in his vicinity. He does a double-take to his right on something that is off the screen. When the camera pans to what he is looking at, we can see a red tank top marked with the word “China.” Since the girl is trying out for the youth Olympic weightlifting team, is it that the tank top the groundskeeper has is from the Olympics? After looking at some reference pictures from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, there was enough evidence to conclude that that was the same tank top used by the weightlifting team. He may be part of the weightlifting team if he has the same tank top. However, something must have happened that prevented him from participating in the Olympics. In the following scene, he removes the tank top from the hanger and places it in front of himself while looking in the mirror. He looks discontent with his reflection before placing the tank top back on the hanger.

In the scene, we see that the day has come for the girl's last opportunity. The girl must prove that she can keep her spot on the weightlifting team. The coach is starting with the heaviest weightlifter and going down the list. Waiting for her turn, someone from out of the screen whispers to her and catches her attention. She turns her attention to the direction she is being called and is tossed a hand wrap for use. She smiles, and the groundskeeper enters the screen. As he starts sweeping, he tells her, “Back straight. Don’t arch.” The girl then goes for her turn and lifts the 35 kg weight successfully. Everyone claps for her, including the groundskeeper. The girl takes off the hand wrap and leaves it on the bench. She walks away with the coach but briefly turns around to bow to the groundskeeper. The groundskeeper nods back and watches her go. He made sure to be there as support and encouragement. These actions could be part of why the groundskeeper could not participate in the Olympics. Maybe he had no one who supported or encouraged him.

The last few scenes are like the groundskeeper reliving his past. After everyone leaves, the groundskeeper notices the hand wrap on the bench. He picks it up and starts wrapping it around his hand. He takes a deep breath and picks up the weight that the girl lifted. He can still lift the weight, although he struggles and grunts a bit. He smiles to himself while still holding the weight in the air. He is most likely reminiscing about when he would compete at the Olympics. After a few moments, he gently puts the weight down on the ground and pats the weight from both ends. He steps back and walks away towards the front left side of the screen. After the groundskeeper leaves the screen, there is a sound like a light switch, and the screen goes black. It is almost like he is saying goodbye to a chapter of his life that he could not finish. That may be why he worked in the facility in the first place, so he could relive his moment of what could have been.

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## 5. 北京之春 Analysis by Anonymous 1

ANONYMOUS 1

### 北京之春

#### The Legacy and Meaning of the Beijing Spring as Expressed by the Stars

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#### Statement of Purpose

The Beijing Spring is an event that is not quite as well known by those outside of China. However, this event was the catalyst for future protests and pro-democracy movements in Beijing. This event largely took place in the years 1978 and 1979, while the People's Republic of China (PRC), was under the rule of Deng Xiaoping. Being just soon after the Cultural Revolution, which had ended only a few years earlier in 1976, the scars from such social unrest remained upon the people. The purpose of this essay will be to explore the themes and motives of the artists during this time, as expressed by their artwork, as well as share the stories of the artists and other pro-democracy actors in this movement.

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#### Introduction

One documentary, going quite fittingly by the name *Beijing Spring*, details the events surrounding a few notable individuals and artists around this time. More specifically, it revolves around a group of artists known as 星星, or the Stars. The group wished to produce art which was somewhat unaccepted at the time within China, such as impressionist or other types. They decided to host an exhibition outside of the National Museum of China, hanging their art from the gates of the fences, nailing it to trees, or simply placing it on the ground in the case of sculptures. Because of this, the group had created quite a controversy. Messages left by visitors had very mixed sentiments, although those highlighted in the documentary were, for the most part, positive. Two pieces from this exhibition, 人民的呼声 (People's Cry) by Ma Desheng and Old Summer Palace: Rebirth (圆明园) by Huang Rui will be analyzed.

Before this analysis begins, it should be noted that the one bias which is clear and consistent throughout this documentary is that, for the most part, these are the voices of the members of the Stars who left China and Beijing. This does not invalidate, but rather shapes the perspectives and voices of these individuals. It is only something to be kept in mind as the analysis of their works and the events of the Beijing Spring are undertaken.

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## Part One: Exhibition Art

### *People's Cry – Ma Desheng*



Source: Beijing Spring Cropped due to screenshotting

In regard to this work, the artist states: “There was a work called ‘People’s Cry’ There were some little houses below on the painting, Beijing style. Little bungalows. Many hands are stretched out the top. There are angry hands, begging hands, helpless hands. All kinds of hands, accusing hands” (Beijing Spring). While this does come directly from Ma Desheng, the source of this work, it is difficult to accept that this is all there is to this work.

For instance, the choice of color creates a striking image for the viewer. By choosing only two colors, black for the canvas and white for the details, the artist creates a work that is striking despite the amount of empty space. The black is very dark and unknown, eliciting some feeling of dread, especially as the houses below seem to fade away into it. The accusing hand, pointing directly at the viewer does not come from the homes as the other hands do, rather it protrudes from the darkness. Moreover, it seems that all hands are the people’s but this hand, unless it is that of those who have already slipped into the darkness. It could perhaps be those who conduct suppression, or those who are co-conspirators or collaborators of it.

This work appears to me at a high level to be about the struggle for freedom of expression in Beijing. Without it, there is darkness. As it is constricted away from the people, some feel angry, some reach for help, some hope for something in return. Thus, at a deeper level it shows the emotions that people have towards the restriction of freedom of expression within Beijing. Some hope for help, some wish to take action, others ask for something in return.

### *Old Summer Palace: Rebirth – Huang Rui*



Source: Beijing Spring  
Cropped due to screenshotting

Another notable work at this exhibition is known as Old Summer Palace: Rebirth and was created by Huang Rui. One quote from the documentary, *Beijing Summer*, states: “He used the remains of the Old Summer Palace such as doors, stones, pillars, and then he personalized them, depicting human beings. The feeling is supporting each other and standing up. This represents China awakening”. Notably, during Beijing Summer, the Old Summer Palace was a group of ruins which artists frequented to go and paint (Beijing Summer).

Overall, this work establishes in the viewer a feeling of togetherness. There are the people, made of stone, standing near one another, somewhat longing. It is unclear if the leftmost tall stone is meant to represent a person as well as the shape

is not quite as clear. But the stones which remain on the group appear like they could create perhaps one more person. Once again, the use of color makes this painting quite striking. In reality, the stones of the Old Summer Palace are not black, they are white. This instills the impression that the artist was hoping to convey the feelings of hardship that they and those around them have suffered. However, although the end of the Cultural Revolution was only shortly before, to speak poorly of this time was not and is not generally accepted.

This work is rather intriguing because of the contrast between the simplicity of expression and how universal the message is, and the reaction that would follow. Moreover, because this area was a place that artists frequently went to paint as previously mentioned, it creates a clear case for how freedom of expression is being limited. Surely, reality can be depicted, unless it is of sensitive events. But, as artists begin to express their feelings and interpret the world around them, it appears to have crossed the line.

The Stars were forced to remove their artwork, under the guise of an issue regarding “social order” (Beijing Spring). The officer who came to the exhibition, simply demanding the artwork be removed, the artist retorted, stating that there was no legal right for this to happen, but the officer insisted nevertheless (Beijing Spring). Then, a sign was erected which prohibited exhibitions in this location. In a sense, this practice of creating some form of plausible deniability became standard to stifle basic individual freedoms. The artists were not told they could not create their artwork, but rather that they could not place it where it was, yet it was clear that the location was not the underlying issue.

Due to the very clear message of this artwork and the reaction that followed, several pieces of information can be retrieved. What can be understood from this piece of artwork (as well as others around it), and the reaction it received is that there was a form of forced amnesia that was beginning. In no way is the idea of rising from ruins or ashes controversial, this is a common form of metaphor. Rather, it was the nature of who the message was directed to and for what reasons that the artwork was restricted.

Furthermore, there is a great irony in the use of color in this piece when combined with the analysis of the use of color in Ma Desheng’s People’s Cry. In the previous artwork, it was analyzed to show how the darkness is a form of restriction or oppression. By extension into this piece, as the work was censored, it truly was the emotions of the people being censored and restricted, giving new meaning to the use of color in this piece.



## Part Two: Post Exhibition Art

### *Boy with Disco – Yan Li*



Source: Beijing Spring  
Cropped due to screenshotting

In the words of the artist of this piece, Yan Li: “I think I love disco because it demonstrates life. The rhythm, the power, and the enthusiasm” (Beijing Spring). The content of this piece of work really captures that rhythm, power, and enthusiasm. However, what is most curious isn't the colors, which quickly captivate the viewer, but rather the individual at the top of the painting, peering in from a place which lacks such color, seemingly entranced as they intently watch the dancers. Once again, this work seems to associate cooler, darker colors with control or a shortfall of freedom. Moreover, this work in particular seems very inspired by western clothing as the dancers are seemingly wearing bell bottom jeans, which were very popular in the 1970s, especially in America.



Above all else, I believe that this work captures the feelings of curiosity that young people had during the Beijing Spring. The world suddenly appeared to be opening up to them. Many young people went to the street and danced to the sound of this new disco music, opening up a new kind of freedom previously unknown.



Source: *Beijing Spring*  
Cropped due to screenshotting

However, much like the previously held exhibition which was very informal (i.e., not sanctioned by any government body), dancing faced the same ban (Beijing Spring). However, with the spirit that the young people had created with their newfound freedoms, there was little that could be done to truly prevent them from pursuing it in the short term. Instead, it simply moved to their homes and private (Beijing Spring).

### *Contemporary Youth (Triptych 3) – Yan Li*



Source: Beijing Spring Cropped due to screenshotting

Last of the pieces that will be explored is Contemporary Youth (Triptych 3) by Yan Li. This painting explored what the next steps were for the democracy-seeking youth. Instead of going out, they were instead, in their homes, where they could be less restrained. There were several pieces by Yan Li which explored this period of time. All had themes of vibrant color as in the piece shown above.

However, what is most striking to me is this work's use of transparency. None of the objects or people in the room appear incredibly solid, unless contrasted with the background or the floor. This gives quite a feeling that we are not exploring a point-in-time within the room, but rather the fact that there is constant motion throughout the room. I believe this work displays the room and objects over a period of time, as sometimes we would observe the objects which are somewhat covered, and other times they would be completely visible. The objects in the room are not separated by distance, but rather by time. Furthermore, to continue the common theme of the use of color, the objects in the background that constrain the individuals tend to be darker, with colors such as brown and black, whereas the objects in the room are much more colorful. This once again could be a reference to how their freedoms and beliefs feel constrained by the world they live in. This is especially true when the faces and body positions of the individuals are considered. Despite the vibrant colors, the individuals look rather solemn. They are free, but only in a limited setting.

Ultimately, I believe this work is representative of the idea that the life of the youth was very vibrant but becoming more and more restrained. Yes, they had the freedoms to do as they wished in their homes, but how could they be sure this freedom wouldn't be constrained in the future as well? Moreover, the pro-democracy movement was not immune to persecution, so the future did not look bright for these individuals (Beijing Spring). Soon after, there was an arrest and a sentencing, and it was clear to many members of the Stars that it was time to move on (Beijing Spring).

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## Conclusion



Source: Beijing Spring Cropped due to screenshotting



Source: Beijing Spring Cropped due to screenshotting



Source: Beijing Spring Cropped due to screenshotting



Source: Beijing Spring Cropped due to screenshotting

In all, four works have been explored. Two of which represent China's political situation and upheaval and two which represent the mood of the people at the time of the Beijing Spring, particularly the Stars and other young people. When contrasting the two, something profound occurs. The works showcased outside the museum, which focused on themes of oppression and reconnection were much more solemn. However, the works that expressed the emotions and the excitement of the young people, their excitement for change, were much more vibrant. Nowhere else is this more evident than in the contrast of the use of color between these two sets of work. The first two contain much cooler colors, with emotion created through darker colors, namely black. In contrast, the works which express the younger people contain warmer colors, yellow, red, orange, and colors and figures that pop at the eye. This shows that while the people felt the weight of the situation they were in, they privately were quite optimistic and open, at least to some extent.

These works show how the movement for democracy in Beijing spring made the Stars and other pro-democracy individuals only showed individuals the unfortunate bounds of their freedom. First, it was shown how the people feel persecuted by a deafening darkness, unsure of how to act in Ma Desheng's People's Cry. Second, it was shown how these individuals were not free to remember the past, and how the banning of the exhibition ironically led to Huang Rui's Old Summer Palace: Rebirth to suddenly become more meaningful in light of its restriction, as it was the people who had been turned to the same darkness in Ma Desheng's People's Cry. Next, the works post exhibition ban were explored, where it showed the curiosity of the individuals taking place in the Beijing Spring through Yan Li's Boy with Disco. Lastly, it is ultimately discovered that the individuals are truly limited in their freedoms as shown in Yan Li's Contemporary Youth (Triptych 3), which shows the colorful people, much like those who were dancing in Boy with Disco, sitting around, solemn about their apparent bounds.

The Beijing Spring seemed to fizzle out. Many of those who truly desired freedom no longer wished to remain in the country. However, the legacy of the Beijing Spring undoubtedly lives on in Beijing. The memories of those that participated or witnessed it will always be there. This is exemplified by the many protests that have happened in Beijing since then, such as the Tiananmen Square Protests which led to the 1989 massacre and the Sitong Bridge protests in October 2022. Moreover, the recent protests at Tsinghua University had students shout sayings such as “Democracy and the rule of law, freedom of expression” (AFP – Agence France Presse). This is very similar to the “Demand political democracy!” and “Demand artistic freedom!” shouted all the way back in 1979 (Beijing Spring). Beijing, while being the heart of the CCP, is also at the heart of the pro-democracy movement as well. It is here that the spirit of the Stars lives on.

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### Media Attributions

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- Boy with Disco © Yan Li
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- Contemporary Youth (Triptych 3) © Yan Li



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# 6. Internal Migrant Identity in *Us and Them* (2018)

## by Hannah R

HANNAH R

### Abstract

*Us and Them* (2018) is a Chinese romance film on the importance of place in forming identity and shaping motivation. Taking place in the economically-accelerating Beijing of the late 2000s, it tells the story of Fang Xiaoxiao and Lin Jianqing, from the same hometown in Yaojiang, who live and work in Beijing and travel home every year for the New Year holiday. Over a decade, the two constantly move from place to place, both geographically and emotionally. The film vividly illuminates the transformative experiences of foreigners or migrants who go back and forth between homes. This essay argues that the identity of migrant workers is inexplicably linked to their past. In heightening the emotionality of the internal migrant experience, the film is a case study of the current issues and represents the effort of a Chinese female director to validate the struggles of Chinese youth.

## Introduction

*Us and Them* (2018) directed by Rene Liu is a Chinese romance film on the importance of place in forming identity and shaping motivation. The script was written by Zhang Yibai and is based on Rene Liu's short story *Home for Chinese New Year*, published in 2011. In the first two weekends of its release, *Us and Them* earned \$191M; the movie's overall success made Liu the first female Chinese filmmaker with a film earning over one billion yuan. In addition, at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, Netflix bought distribution rights to the film everywhere outside of China. Liu remarked, "I am honored that the film was chosen as Netflix's first Chinese language original film" (Pag-Iwayan, Jessica).

Currently, there is no existing literature on the film. The objective of this analysis is to showcase the film's deeper implications for an Eastern audience and hopefully spark academic discussion.

## Traveling to and from Home

This film addresses the cultural pressures that can spring from Chinese collectivism. When Fang Xiaoxiao and Lin Jianqing make the annual return home for Chinese New Year, they are accompanied by millions of others rushing home



to reunite with their families (Image A)<sup>1</sup>. This widespread tradition—known as Chunyun or the Spring Festival Travel Rush—is “the largest human migration on earth annually” (Eiko Cheng). Although this is essential to maintaining tight-knit communities within Chinese culture, it can be difficult for young migrant workers who come from urban cities. The main characters in *Us and Them* demonstrate this difficulty because they must constantly update concerned friends and families about their lives in Beijing. As a result, their drive to succeed is motivated by the approval of others.



**Image A** Opening scene of *Us and Them*.

Although both characters come from the same hometown in Yaojiang, their childhood environments are crafted in a way that reflects their unique experiences and identities as internal migrants. The audience gains glimpses of Fang Xiaoxiao and Lin Jianqing's distinctive childhoods when return home to celebrate Chinese New Year. Rene Liu uses a variety of shots, angles, lighting, and color to distinguish the homes of Xiaoxiao and Jianqing visually.

## Shots and Angles to Create Home

Xiaoxiao's experience of returning home reveals the intrusive nature of tight-knit communities. The scene opens at a high angle, extreme long shot that centers the audience in the crowded village square and shrinks Xiaoxiao in her environment (Image B). As she simultaneously speaks to her inquisitive neighbors and passes the doors of their apartment complex, the camera switches back and forth between medium-full shots and long shots that emphasize the sudden and sporadic attention given to her by her neighbors. Voices are heard asking a flurry of questions such as “Didn't your mom come with you?” and “When will you marry and have a baby?” It isn't until Xiaoxiao reaches the privacy of her own home that she can take a deep breath (Image C). The camera captures this intimacy through her body language: she lets out a sigh of relief and turns to fully face the camera, no longer pressed to shield herself from its intrusion. The lack of community privacy witnessed through these shots explains why Xiaoxiao is set on marrying a Beijing native who owns a property in the capital. Her desire for obtaining a Beijing Hukou is intrinsically linked to her desire for privacy and peace. For Xiaoxiao, a home is a place free of interrogation, a moment's relief from the chaos of

1. All images and quotes without citations are from the film itself.

life. Therefore, portraying Xiaoxiao's overwhelming childhood experience in Yaojiang through multiple long shots and angles reveals her identity as a Beijing migrant and her desire to secure a house of her own.



**Image B** The first of a few shots capture Xiaoxiao's home in Yaojiang. Xiaoxiao wears a blue jacket.



**Image C** Xiaoxiao closes the door and all becomes quiet.

In contrast, Jianqing's return to his quiet and tender upbringing highlights his petulance and arrogance as a young adult. Jianqing returns home to his father cooking in a warmly-lit kitchen that basks in the soft hues of the sunlight. The counter displays an array of food cooked in celebration of the Chinese New Year. In the coziness and abundance, Jianqing sneakily saunters in from the right side, initially out of frame. His introduction into the shot makes him appear like an invader in his own home because of the spontaneity of the unprompted action while his positioning closer to the camera causes him to dominate his father who is hunched over a large soup pot (Image D). Moreover, Jianqing's complaints about the sticky buns or the lack of dish variation identify him as a self-indulgent child with no regard for his father's efforts in cooking. This leads the audience to question the formation of his identity and desires. Throughout the film, Jianqing generally struggles not with finding a house but with recognizing the qualities that make a home. Despite being raised in a loving and nurturing environment, his father's constant care and attention make Jianqing unaware and unappreciative. This inability to recognize his father's efforts to raise Jianqing culminates when he asks his father, "Or what else would you do? Stay in this crappy restaurant for the rest of your life?" Ultimately, Jianqing's growth in the film comes from learning how to appreciate the home his father created.



**Image D** Jianqing as he walks into the kitchen. His father is played by Tian Zhuangzhuang.

## Visualizing Community in Homes

Both Jianqing and Xiaoxiao are raised in a culture that devalues personal privacy, but the way they are questioned is very different: Rene Liu captures these differences by utilizing a range of shots and color palettes. For Jianqing, life updates don't begin until everyone sits around the dining room table. Instead of a flurry of interrogation, the elders in Jianqing's life raise questions slowly and curiously in the inviting yellow lamplight. The voices are huddled and gathered in an intimate circle—they don't feel like shots fired from multiple people at a single target. When the two interrogation scenes of Jianqing (Image E) and of Xiaoxiao (Image F) are directly compared, the differences in the technical elements become clear. For Jianqing, the director constructs a warm, nurturing home in which curiosity comes from a loving place. The director focuses on close-up shots at eye level and she bathes the scene in saturated browns and dimly lit yellows. A faint glow emits from the circular table and illuminates the faces of the people gathered around it. This establishes a mood of openness centered around celebration and camaraderie. Conversely, Xiaoxiao is raised in a distant, cold environment of exhaustive badgering. The lackluster gray of the apartment building and the faded, brown pillars creates monotony and dull homogeneity. Xiaoxiao's environment seems to demand conformity. Through various filming techniques, the director sets the stage for the conflicts that each character must overcome.



**Image E** Xiaoxiao and Jianqing around the dinner table with the close friends and family of Jianqing's father.



**Image F** Xiaoxiao as she walks to her apartment door and answers questions from her neighbors.

## Conclusion

*Us and Them* explores the major themes of adolescent identity and motivation. The film illuminates the migrant struggles of Chinese youth, specifically in searching for an identity that reconciles the past experiences of one's hometown and the present circumstances of one's conditions. By constructing environments through cinematic elements (e.g. shots, camera angles, lighting, and color), the film makes sense of the change in the character's internal and external worlds. Though Xiaoxiao and Jianqing do not succeed in staying together, they do succeed in creating separate homes in the city that reflect or transcend their homes in Yaojiang. Their converging stories support the importance of place in identity formation, specifically for young migrant workers. Most importantly, *Us and Them* gently reminds individuals that homes are created by the community and carried in one's heart.

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# 7. Farewell my Concubine (1993) Analysis by Peijun Zhao

PEIJUN ZHAO

## *Farewell my Concubine (1993)*

**Directed by Chen Kaige (5th Generation Director)**

"A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another."

-Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (March 1927), Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 28

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## Introduction

While Mao Zedong was born a Chinese peasant and lived to see the sunset of China's Era of Imperialism, he would later live to become the paramount ruler over a quarter of the global population and establish the world's largest Communist regime. The Communist Chinese Revolution was a sociopolitical movement that started in the 1920s and continued after the Proclamation of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949 (Retief and Wessels 302).

Chen Kaige directed the 1993 film *Farewell My Concubine*. The movie focuses on the love triangle between three characters: Dieyi, a revered Peking Opera actor who is a hidden homosexual; Xiaolou, who is Dieyi's childhood friend and stage partner; and Juxian, a prostitute who escaped from the House of Blossom brothels. This film originally premiered on January 1, 1993, in Hong Kong and received positive reviews internationally through its cinematography and touching story (Kristof 2). In China, though, this movie has been forbidden, primarily for its themes of homosexuality, suicide, and a depiction of turmoil during the Communist period in China, before being re-released with censored scenes (Kristof 1).

The following analysis will argue how the director, Chen Kaige, actually uses this movie to criticize the Communist Party and the Cultural Revolution for the historical destruction of Chinese culture, restriction of free will, and penchant for violence. Furthermore, director Chen effectively emphasizes the emotional trauma of his characters through close-up shots, shadows, and color contrasts on the screen. The next section will first include a brief history of Chen Kaige and the Cultural Revolution.

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## Background Information

*“So if Chairman Mao is our Red-Commander-in-Chief and we are his Red Guards, who can stop us? We will make China Maoist from inside out and then we will help the working people of other countries make the world red...and then the whole universe.”*

-Red Guard Leader Quote from “China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao Counternarratives” (2022), Vol 1, p. 184.

Chen Kaige, born in 1952, is known as one of the leading figures among fifth-generation film directors in China (Lee 1). He was born in Changle, Fuzhou, where his father was a well-known director (Chua and Chiao 2). During the Cultural Revolution, Kaige joined the Red Guards, which was a student-led social movement working to cleanse the Chinese people of impurities. However, what erupted during this period was chaos. Numerous students were encouraged to “out” their own family members to their friends to gain loyalty and acceptance in the Communist Party. Kaige, similar to his peers, denounced his own father and later spent much of his time working in rural China (Chua and Chiao 2). However, as he started growing up, he started regretting his decision to expose his father to the Red Guards (Chua and Chiao 3). As he moved back to the city, he was emboldened by his own experiences as a part of the social movement and wanted to portray his emotions through his film, eventually producing *Farewell, My Concubine*.

As a fifth-generation director, Kaige’s goal was to identify more free and unorthodox storytelling that was different from the ideological purity of the Cultural Revolution cinema (Lee 4). Rather than portraying a politically charged message about heroic military struggles, Kaige’s films focus on the stories of ordinary people. Though some of the Fifth Generation Movement ended after the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, many film directors, such as Director Kaige, continue to embed these values into their filmmaking (Lee 1). With this information in mind, we can start understanding why Kaige was motivated to direct *Farewell my Concubine*.

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## Purpose of this Analysis

The three main points of this analysis include the following: the destruction of culture, the restriction of individual liberty, and violent, mob-like mentalities.

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## Destruction of Culture

To begin, Peking opera is a form of theatrical performance that started in the 1790s and is regarded as one of the cultural treasures of Beijing (Mittler 377). Known for its fast movements, colorful outfits, archaic dialogue, and singing, Peking opera is a staple of Chinese tradition. However, we see the rapid decay of Peking Opera artifacts after the Communist Party takes over in three sections of the film.

After the Sino-Japanese War, China was in a state of disrepair as supplies were low and the mentality at that time prioritized loyalty to the dominant government party. This notion is visible in the movie at 2:04:50, when many of the original opera house props are missing from the stage compared to the beginning of the movie (Kaige, 23:59). Instead of colorful lights and banners, red flags overcast every section of the opera house, almost to the point of oversaturation. Because the seats have been destroyed by the war, the spectators sit on the empty ground in low lighting. There are also numerous Chinese-themed banners, portraits, and posters hung from each section to emphasize the dominance of politics in the opera house. The audience sees a physical decrease in traditional props, which have been replaced with

nationalistic flags. During this scene, Dieyi is forced to perform in front of these individuals because of a previous performance to cater to the Japanese soldiers. As Dieyi makes a mistake, Xiaolou apologizes to the guests before the soldiers in the front start singing the National Anthem. Overall, Kaige's camera angle captures the dark shadows above the stage and suggests to the audience the decline of Peking opera's popularity.



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 23:59)



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 2:04:50)



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 2:12:33)

this opinion, he's immediately shunned by the increased number of youth in the population. Xiaosi, the orphan that Dieyi raises, harshly rebuked Dieyi, stating that the laboring masses are the people now. Later, whenever someone approves of the contemporary opera, all of the young students applaud. This all occurs while the images of Mao Zedong, the rising sun, and the Imperial Palace all project on their faces and the background, painting them red. Though Dieyi later punishes Xiaosi for going against his teaching of Peking opera, Xiaosi declares that Dieyi is breaking the law by not promoting Chinese nationalism enough, which causes him to separate himself from his home. Nevertheless, this scene

The second time the audience notices the destruction of culture is during the rise of the Chinese Communist Party. In this next scene, Dieyi tries to talk with younger people in the troupe about what he thinks about modern operas and stage performances (Kaige, 2:12:33). For example, he mentions how the outfits aren't colorful enough and the backdrops are too realistic compared to traditional Peking opera. There is not enough emphasis on ambiance, acrobatics, and movement in China's newfound contemporary operas, which are focused on the Chinese Revolution and Mao Zedong. However, when he brings up

shows how the Chinese Communist regime has persuaded younger individuals to degrade traditional Peking operas for those favoring a political agenda.

The third moment that culture is emphasized and lost occurs during the Cultural Revolution. During the 1966 Cultural Revolution Bill, the government aimed to preserve Chinese communism by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society (Kaige, 2:24:02). During this time, many families, including those of Juxian and Xiaolou, have to burn all their traditional items. In this scene, they start tossing their antiques into the fire, including artwork, clothing, jade cups, and everything else. Here, we see their despair as the fire burns brightly in front of them, dispersing smoke and ashes throughout the house. Desperate and lonely, they turn to each other for solace during this trying time. As they drink from the jade glasses and shatter them against the floor one last time, they try to make the most of their dying tradition. Kaige highlights their despair and sadness over the loss of culture through the darkness of the room and the bright flames of the fire illuminating their sad faces. Nevertheless, these three moments highlight the destruction of Chinese culture and traditions through the erosion of Peking Opera.

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(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 2:24:02)

## Restriction of Liberty



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 1:20:30)



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 1:44:16)

Kaige also criticizes the Chinese nationalistic movements during the 20th century for the constriction of independent thought through Dieyi's struggles with self-expression. To begin, Dieyi was forced numerous times to perform for the Japanese crowd during their occupancy, either at the opera house or at headquarters (Kaige, 1:20:30). However, when the nationalistic part later regained control of the government, the Chinese community enacted revenge on Dieyi and the opera house for having performed for the Japanese (Kaige, 1:44:16). During a mock performance, the members of the Nationalistic party wave flashlights and flags at his

performance in an effort to distract him and worsen his performance. In this scene, director Chen effectively utilizes metaphors and lighting to represent the constriction of civilian freedom. Dieyi tries to run off the stage in this smoke-filled building after he is pressured to keep singing, and the soldiers start running onto the stage. Regardless of where he goes, he is surrounded by soldiers with flashlights pointed into his face. The lights pointed at Dieyi's face represent Dieyi's feeling of constriction and suffocation.

The soldiers also start beating Xiaolou up after someone says, "Can we let him get away with speaking up for the Japanese?" (Kaige, 1:44:40). There are two powerful messages instilled in this section. First, the onset of a nationalistic pariah amongst soldiers allows for limited options on what civilians can respond with. As long as one person says something, the rest will follow, as long as there is some kind of nationalistic thought. Secondly, if civilians don't abide by the rules or even promote the groupthink of the dominant party, whether that is the Japanese or the Chinese, then they are treated with violence. People are beaten up, lives are lost, as with Juxian's unborn child, and traditional Chinese artwork is burned. Kaige demonstrates how restricted his characters feel in light of this nationalistic, warlike mentality. The smoke in the background, the darkness of the stage, and the casting of the room in chaos only highlight the ever-growing desperation and constriction of the social movement.



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 1:4:40)



## Mob Violence



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 2:08:08)

Director Kaige also criticizes the Chinese Communist Party for its blatant mob violence through the lighting and bright color contrasts. In this first scene, Yuan Shiqing, the Count attracted to Dieyi, is set to be executed and has been denounced as a “tyrant” despite his great love of Chinese culture (Kaige, 2:08:08). Xiaolou and Juxian can only watch as this man they asked for help previously is denounced in the face of a crowd. The most important part is when Xiaolou, looking away from the crowd in this scene, asks, “Only execution can satisfy the people’s anger... execution?” Remarkably, Kaige highlights the absurdity of this situation by setting the brightly lit blue

and yellow flags behind him as the protagonists look at the camera with ghastly vistas on their faces. No longer can the protagonist, Xiaolou, lead the people like the king he portrays through his acting. He is merely a forced bystander, watching as innocent people are executed and tortured. As the crowd remains in the shadow behind him, this camera angle almost begs to ask the audience how this mob-like mentality unfolded.

The mob-like mentality also unfolds through the story of Xiaosi during the Communist regime’s indoctrination of the youth. During this period, numerous adolescents were inspired to join the Red Guards and leave their own families if they were suspected of disloyalty. When directing this scene, Kaige likely utilized his own experiences of outing his father (Chua and Chiao 1). For example, after a soldier reports Xiaolou and his troop to the Red Guards, Xiaolou is forced into the interrogation room (Kaige, 2:31:38). In the room, an incredibly bright light casts a shadow on the sword that Dieyi gave Xiaolou long ago. The oil on Xiaolou’s face marks his fatigue and lack of hygiene. Repeatedly, Xiaolou is asked personal questions that Xiaosi knows the answers to. As he is subjected to torture, he is also forced to admit all his crimes in front of Xiaosi, including his convoluted childhood, his wife’s former prostitution, and Dieyi’s homosexuality. All of this suffering stemmed from the mob-like indoctrination of the Communist regime.



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 2:31:38)



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 2:35:40)

Chen Kaige’s climactic scene at the end of the film fully demonstrates the violent mob mentality when the entire troupe is persecuted in front of the village. Red banners paint the scene red, like blood, and the air is filled with nothing but smoke and fire. Each troupe member, excluding Xiaosi, is forced to put on makeup and wear disparaging signs as the Communist Party yells at them. Dieyi, who has been implicated in this mess, tries his best to simply put on the makeup and walk through the streets calmly. The camerawork here focuses on the constant red—from either blood or the bright, wispy flags—to emphasize the bloodshed

resulting from the Cultural Revolution.

Dieyi's following monologue only emphasizes Kaige's harsh rebuke against the Communist regime:

"You think disaster just falls from the sky? No. We have come step by step towards this fate. It's retribution. I'm despicable, and I have been so for a long time. But now even the King of Chu is on his knees begging for mercy. Can Beijing Opera survive? It's doomed, isn't it? This is what's called retribution!" (Kaige, 2:41:05)

This line refers not only to the depreciation of Peking opera but also to the Chinese people's acceptance of the Communist Regime's use of violence against its own people. The phrase "we have come step by step towards this fate" indicates that the violent mobs throughout the play are the lack of empathy the Communist Party has towards its people and vice versa. Had more people spoken up about the regime rather than allowing its leaders to indoctrinate the youth and push for extremism, then there would not have been as much bloodshed as noted during the Cultural Revolution. The scene later ends with sad music in the background, emphasized by the fire burning in front of them.



(Kaige, *Farewell my Concubine*, 2:41:05)

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## Conclusion

While the Cultural Revolution was a movement intended to revitalize China through groupthink, its execution caused the rapid decline of culture, individual freedoms, and safety. However, this is not the extent of the film. More messages about the relationship between fate and free will are emphasized through Dieyi's choices and the quotations about fate given by each character. There is also a message about homosexuality and a depiction of modern women in the film. Nevertheless, director Chen does a masterful job highlighting the clear corruption and destruction resulting from the Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party.

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## PART II

# TAIPEI

## 8. Culture/Religion

DANIEL LI

### Culture



*Taipei Night Market*

Much of Taipei's rich culture is integrated in its many large and vibrant night markets located throughout the city. Many of these night markets started out as food stalls or hole in the wall restaurants in street corners of by temples. These small markets would usually be frequented by migrant workers and locals to rest and eat as food costs were lower. Overtime as the city grew in size and economy, the more affluent population of Taiwan and Taipei took notice of these markets which would help it grow exponentially. While these night markets are certainly very popular tourist's destinations, it serves as an important part of the city's night life and economy for the locals. The markets provide a large number of jobs and wealth for the city along with a place for culture to thrive. While they had begun as food stalls, they would eventually grow to include many different activities such as carnival style games along with the selling of many different products such as shoes and clothes influencing the fashion of the locals.

Food is an extremely important part of Taipei culture and this can be experienced from the night markets as the sell a variety of local specialties and dishes famous to Taiwan. Some examples of this would be the tapioca milk tea. The world famous tapioca milk tea which can be found in many tea shops around the world originated and was invented in Taiwan. Many notorious Chinese foods have been popularized by these night markets such as the stinky tofu and beef noodle soup as the KMT had brought these dishes over after escaping from the mainland. Dishes such as the oyster omelet are local specialties served with oysters from Taiwan.

### Film

Another important part of Taipei culture is their film industry which was made famous by first and second wave film directors. The Golden Age of cinema in Taiwan would be around 1980-1990 and going all the way to the 2000s and these would be known as the new wave and the 2nd wave. These were considered realist movies as they searched upon

the rapidly growing economic and political scene of Taiwan and its history. These new films would be made famous from emerging experimental directors who would create these experimental movies to showcase the life and history of people from the past during heavy government censorship to their current present. Usually having a low budget, films would be creatively shot using real locations, backgrounds, environments, and sounds making it very well shot and relatable to the viewers. Taipei would become a focal point and setting for many of these movies as it is the capital city of Taiwan. Films such as the “City of Sadness” by Hou Hsiao-Hsien and “Taipei Story” by Edward Yang would become influential new wave films and directors. While those films would become famous during the new wave, the film “In our Time” created by four directors would be credited with starting this golden age of cinema as it depicted the life of the ordinary person in different stages of life.

## Religion

Religion in Taiwan is very open to many different types of cultures from around the world though the majority of their beliefs are the traditional ones such as Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion. Buddhism and Taoism alone occupy over 60% of the religious beliefs in Taiwan. A unique feature of this is that many of these religions would be worshipped at the same temples. This is partly due to Japanese occupation from 1895 to 1945 which would force any non-Buddhist religions to worship in secret at Buddhist temples.

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## 9. Tourist Attractions

HELEN HA

Taipei is a beautiful city filled with many attractions. Whether you are interested in history, culture, religion, or shopping and recreation, there is something here for you to enjoy. Some highlights of tourism in Taipei include the 228 Peace Memorial Park, the National Palace Museum, Jiufen, Guandu Temple, and the Taipei 101.

### 228 Peace Memorial Park



*The 228 Memorial Monument*

At the heart of Taipei, this park has a very long and intricate history. Initially known as Taipei New Park, it was renamed in 1995 to remember the victims of the 228 Incident and the Taiwanese people who had suffered from ethnic conflicts, clashes between the government and citizens, and historical misunderstandings. At the Taipei 228 Memorial Museum within the park, patrons can learn more about this historic tragedy. This story begins on February 27, when a cigarette



vendor was beaten with a pistol, and her merchandise and money were both confiscated. This stirred up a swarm that led to agents opening fire on the crowd, killing an innocent civilian. This event resulted in mass protests on February 28. While the people were protesting outside of the governor-general's office, many were shot without warning, and thus, this erupted into unrest. The Kuomintang violently cracked down on locals, and it very quickly became a horrific massacre. This event became taboo and was not spoken of for nearly half a century. At the center of the park sits the 228 Memorial Monument. The cube-shaped design symbolizes rebuilding orders after the incident.

Around the park are plenty of places to discover, rest your feet, and enjoy the scenery. There are Japanese elements visible such as a garden, a pond, pagodas, and even an outdoor performance venue. You will be able to see the different borrowed elements from European, Japanese, Chinese, and Taiwanese cultures.

## National Palace Museum



*The National Palace Museum*

If you are a fan of art, then definitely make time to go to the National Palace Museum. It houses over 700,000 ancient imperial artifacts from both China and Taiwan. From collections of decorative carvings, paintings, ceramics, jade and religious objects, and ceremonial bronzes, the historical range at this museum is truly outstanding. Even within a single category, such as ceramics, pieces range over multiple dynasties, and even back to Neolithic times. The museum offers free guided tours in English at 10am and 3pm, but if you prefer to go at your own pace, then you could try an English

headphone guide, which costs around \$5 USD. This place has also been compared to the Louvre, which shows how noteworthy it is in terms of art.

## Jiufen



A-Mei Tea House

As seen in the image above, the scenery and red lanterns hanging from the buildings are reminiscent of Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. This small town was founded during the Qing dynasty and stayed a relatively isolated village until the discovery of gold during the Japanese occupation. After World War II, gold mining declined, and presently, this town exists mainly as a popular tourist destination that remembers and celebrates Taiwanese history and culture. Locals also recognize Jiufen as the setting for the film *City of Sadness*, which depicts the 228 Incident. Travelers coming to visit this town might feel like they are crossing the border between dimensions as the road runs up along villages and graveyards. The strings of red lanterns and winding stairways often covered with evening fog will truly transport you to a magical world.



## Guandu Temple



Guandu Temple, Beitou District, Taipei City, Taiwan

Guandu Temple is the oldest Mazu temple in northern Taiwan with a history dating back to 1661, although construction did not actually begin until around 1712, when a Buddhist monk from China brought with him a golden statue of the goddess Mazu. There are many different shrines here dedicated to several deities. One of the peculiar things about this temple is that it is built into the side of a small mountain, which has a cave that has been converted into a pathway that brings you to another beautiful shrine. Along the walls are statues that depict the twenty-eight heavenly emperors and at the end of the hallway is the shrine room that houses the giant shiny bronze statue of the thousand-armed Guanyin. The room, albeit small, has spectacular detail along the walls and there is a small balcony on a cliff in the front of the shrine that overlooks the Danshui River where you could rest and enjoy the views.



## Taipei 101



*Taipei 101 and Taipei Nan Shan Plaza*

If you are looking to shop, then Taipei 101 is your place to go. Taipei 101 is impossible to miss, as it towers above the city like the gigantic bamboo stalk it was designed to resemble. At a whopping 508 meters, it held the title of “world’s tallest

building” for several years and up until 2011, it also held the title of the world’s tallest green building. To accommodate such a tall building, there is a pressure-controlled lift that goes at 1,010 meters per minute that makes the trip from the ground level to the eighty-eighth and eighty-ninth floor observation decks a mere forty seconds. An outdoor deck on the ninety-first floor can be open on some occasions, given that the weather allows for it. There is also a massive gold colored iron wind damper that keeps the tower stable through typhoons and earthquakes. Decent food courts can be found in the basement to nourish yourself after a long day of shopping on the first five floors, which are taken up by one of Taipei’s swankiest malls.

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## 10. Analysis by Helen Ha

HELEN HA



228 Monument

### Introduction

Museums are often considered to be authorities when it comes to providing objective and accurate historical depictions and information to the general public. In Taiwan, where tourism makes up a significant part of their economy, museums are a popular destination to learn more about Taiwan's history and culture. However, as they are curated by humans with their own biases and perspectives, it is expected that certain details may be highlighted or diminished at the whim of the curator. I will go in depth about how museums and their authority on the facts they put forth influence ideas of national identities, explore the significance of the 228 Incident and explain how it played an integral part of Taiwanese identity, and show how that information is presented in the memorial museum. Lastly, I will be analyzing how Taipei's historical and cultural values are shared through tourist attractions, specifically the 228 Peace Memorial Museum and how these values end up getting lost in translation when they try to cater to tourism and foreigners.

## Museum Authority and Influence on Ideas of National Identities

First, I would like to point out how museums serve as an authoritative figure on national identity and are pivotal in visitors' understanding of a nation and its history. As Fiona Mclean states, museums “are very much implicit in the social and political agendas of the 21st century. In particular, narrating the nation in the museum increasingly becomes a task of narrating the diversity of the nation and for engaging in a politics of recognition” (Mclean 1). From this, we begin to understand and see that museums can be very selective in what they educate the public about and will leave out certain aspects of history either to promote or follow the political affiliation of its founders or appease their gracious sponsors. For example, Mclean mentions how “the museum has had to address the questions of whose history is being constructed and whose memories are being negotiated by the museum, and ultimately whose voices will be heard and whose will be silenced,” showing how museums ultimately have the power to teach the public about history while also leaving some other aspects out such as diversity or non-hegemonic ideas (1). The general public often has the assumption that museums fully and accurately portray history and cultural artifacts completely and objectively without leaving anything out, but the decisions on what information the public receives is more complicated than we would expect. Not all museums are inclusive and represent the diversity reflective of people's lived experiences.

## 228 Incident and Its Historical Importance



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uhlibraries.pressbooks.pub/chin3342fa22/?p=79#oembed-1>

To highlight some issues with how information is presented in museums, I would like to talk about the 228 Incident and its historical meaning to Taiwanese people. On February 27, the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau received information regarding a shipment of illegal cigarettes being distributed and sold. While investigating businesses, they encountered a woman who was selling these illegal cigarettes and confiscated both her product and her earnings. As she held onto the officer's leg, begging them to give back what was rightfully hers, she got beat up by a pistol, and this commotion brought a lot of attention toward them. Witnesses were outraged at this unfair treatment to this woman and, being overwhelmed by the swarm, one of the agents opened fire, which unfortunately ended up being fatal for a civilian. This resulted in many protests and unrest that lasted for three to four months. From February 28 to March 7, the Kuomintang viciously repressed locals. After March 7, reinforcements from the Mainland arrived, and these crackdowns became even more violent. Soldiers would fire upon innocent and unarmed people in order to instill fear in others with the hopes of restoring order. By the end of the month, it was estimated that thousands of people were killed by the Nationalist army (Shattuck). Some students who were even tricked into maintaining order during the rioting turned themselves in only to end up being imprisoned or executed. Taiwan, as a whole, was terrorized by the military and its government, and people began to vanish and were never heard from again. These massacres were then followed two years later by the capture, imprisonment, and torture of people which we now refer to as the White Terror. This was thirty-eight years of martial law, which lasted until the end of 1987. People were encouraged to turn against their family and friends to report and turn in “communist spies” in an effort to eradicate red power in Taiwan. Over 100,000 people were imprisoned, and over 1,000 were executed.

Depending on the person, the 228 Incident holds a different historical importance. For some, the date is just a day off and

an accident that escalated to the extreme. For others, it is a reminder of the painful and sorrowful events that occurred over seventy years ago. But beyond the individual perception of the 228 Incident, the deeper significance of this event was that throughout this time period, the Taiwanese people were fighting for their national identity. They were tired of being controlled by the Japanese and Chinese. The scars of these tragic events are still felt throughout Taiwan today, but there are many things being done to rectify these past transgressions. President Lee Tung-hui officially apologized in 1995 for the government's actions during the incident, and he began to push for an open discourse about Taiwan's past (Shattuck). For something that was taboo and never spoken of for the longest time, the invitation to openly discuss Taiwan's troubled past was a huge leap forward in healing Taiwanese people's deep wounds. Additionally, to address the victim's families that were impacted, the 228 Memorial Foundation provides them with compensation. They also maintain the documents related to the white terror. Today, just a few blocks away from the Presidential Palace in Taipei, the memories of the victims and the details of the event are preserved in the 228 Peace Memorial Park and museum. The museum is located at the very radio station that protesters stormed on February 28 to broadcast their rallying cries, and features a sculpture that honors the victims. The sculpture has a beautiful engraving that essentially states that in order to overcome serious tragedies in society, we must work together as a whole and we must work together to take care of each other and treat each other with compassion and sincerity to get rid of hatred and resentment and to bring about everlasting peace.



## 228 Peace Memorial Museum Lost in Translation



228 Memorial Park Pagodas

This memorial has a deep history rooted within it and as such, has great meaning to the locals. Therefore, it is unsurprising that tourists who want to know more about the incidents that took place will flock to this museum. However, due to the differences in language, sometimes, the meanings and significance of the events that transpired would end up being understated when presented to a foreign crowd. One example is how subtle nuances between the Chinese and English descriptions can completely change the context of the event being transcribed (Chen and Liao).

To reiterate, museums have great power when it comes to educating the public about nations and national identity (McLean). In this specific scenario, the museum is educating tourists about the tragic 288 Incident and its importance to Taiwan's national identity. Because the museum is heavily expected to present information as accurately as possible about this occurrence, there is a lot of authority that comes with the information that this museum puts forth. However, in order to accommodate tourism, since it is the majority of Taiwan's economy, there needs to be translations so foreigners will be able to also understand Taipei's troubled history. When translated to English, the direct translations

of the Chinese words are used, which often leads to the meaning of that event being lost. Chen and Liao give a nuanced example as to when direct word for word translation changes the context and meaning of the sentence.

“(ST) 此外，民眾也遷怒外省人，濫施報復。走避不及的外省民眾遭到圍毆，本省籍民眾則受到巡邏憲兵、軍隊的槍擊或毆打，全臺陷入大規模混亂狀態。

[Besides, the public took their anger out on wàishěngrén, and retaliated. Some wàishěngrén could not escape and were beaten by běnshěngrén. Běnshěngrén were shot or beaten by patrolling military police or troops. The entirety of Taiwan was in large-scale chaos.]

(TT) In addition, the public took their anger out on non-Taiwanese civilians, and retaliated. Some non-Taiwanese civilians were beaten by Taiwanese people; some Taiwanese people were shot or beaten by armed forces. Taiwan was in chaos” (Chen and Liao 62).

This passage describes a conflict between “wàishěngrén” and “běnshěngrén,” which respectively translates to “non-Taiwanese people” and “Taiwanese people” when translated to English in the museum information. The nuance that is lost in English is that these two terms have long been used to describe those who came to Taiwan during and after the Internal Civil War and those who came before Japanese colonization in 1895. However, Chen and Liao argue that the use of “Taiwanese” and “non-Taiwanese” is very open to more than one interpretation, given Taiwan’s current controversial political status. It has been contested that the meaning of the term “Taiwanese” has shifted from an ethnic term for “native Taiwanese” to a political term for “citizens of Taiwan.” Therefore, in the modern context, the difference between non-Taiwanese and Taiwanese typically does not refer to geographical boundaries but to political identity (Chen and Liao 62). Most foreign tourists would simply recognize any citizen of Taiwan as Taiwanese, rather than understanding those subtle nuances about “insiders” or “outsiders” that were significant to the Taiwanese people. In Chinese, the history and culture are captured in the words used to describe the people, but foreigners would be unable to recognize that significance due to potential limitations of the language. The identity of “Taiwanese” encompasses more meaning than a direct English translation can capture.

## Conclusion

As Taiwan continues to navigate its complex political identity and the national identity that the Taiwanese people want to claim for themselves, tourism will continue to play a role in shaping that identity. Globalization is a major factor influencing cultures around the world, especially in Taiwan, where tourism is an important part of the economy. The information presented in museums is how foreign tourists understand Taiwan’s history and culture. By understanding what is being shown and how, Taiwan can influence how other foreign parties view their country, or at least teach foreigners what values they prioritize and their national identity.

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## II. Analysis by Daniel Li

DANIEL LI

### **The importance of Taiwanese night markets and reason for their popularity locally and globally.**

The Night markets of Taiwan are known to be a must-see attraction for tourists when visiting as it is unique in nature when compared to other countries. Visiting these markets allow foreigners to experience and see the local culture in an authentic manner and this is what makes them so unique and special. Night markets have become ingrained as a fundamental part of Taiwanese culture and society since they provide rich social activities and important employment opportunities to the local population. The history, creation, and popularization of the night markets are important to understand how it became a staple of Taiwanese culture and economy.

The first thing that must be understood is that night markets are popular in many Asian cultures especially those in south-east Asia such as China which is important to Taiwanese night markets. After World War 2, China would go through a period of civil war where the end result would be the loss of the KMT (Kuomintang) and the rise of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) causing the KMT to retreat and take over the island of Taiwan establishing the ROC (Republic of China) and a different form of government than mainland China. This means that even though China and Taiwan are under different forms of rule and government, they share the same or very similar cultures and traditions such as foods, holidays, religion and night markets. These similarities and influences can be easily found in modern day Taiwan just from the famous dishes served at street stalls in the night markets. In this way, just as night markets have existed in China for a very long time, the first known night market in Taiwan started in 1899 though they would not become popularized and grow until after the KMT left to Taiwan.

These night markets would start out as a group of food stalls or hole in the wall restaurants around street corners or nearby religious temples. They would be a popular place for migrant workers and locals to eat delicious dishes at a reasonable price while also being a place for socialization. The markets would grow in size over time as the economic situation in Taiwan grew and more night markets would begin to pop up all over the country. Taipei being the capital of Taiwan has some of the most famous night markets in Taiwan while also being one of the cities with the most markets. Taiwan has around seventy-night markets around the country while thirty of them are located in and around Taipei. One of the reasons for such large popularity and rapid growth of this industry is due to its ability to provide a large number of employment opportunity to the local population. Known as the “night market army” they represent a large portion of Taiwan’s labor force. In 2013, it is estimated that there were upwards three hundred and fifteen thousand street stalls in Taiwan employing over half a million people which is over 2% of Taiwan’s population and over 3% of the active labor force. The most famous market and largest night market is the Shilin Night Market, it has five hundred and thirty-nine stalls along with other food courts and street side attractions. The night markets of Taiwan have not only brought a great number of employment opportunities but also great economic benefit to the city itself from its daily transactions. While it is hard to come up with an exact number as most vendors are unwilling to reveal their income amounts, it is estimated that on average a vendor can make around \$1130 USD a month though it is believed they make much more than this. In a study done in 1991, it showed that many vendors especially the ones which sold food were earning around \$3200 USD per month. In 2008, street vendors generated about \$16 billion USD in revenue which accounted for around 4% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) that year. Overall, not only have street markets helped reduce unemployment for the population, it also contributed greatly to the economic growth of the country.

Another reason for its popularity and fame worldwide is the food culture and specialties made famous by these night markets. Many of these dishes are foods that originated in China after having been brought over by the KMT and popularized by the street stalls. Examples of this would be the beef noodle soup which originated in China and was brought over to Taiwan once the KMT fled and became a staple of night market food vendors and restaurants. The famous stinky tofu known to be very foul smelling on the outside but tasty once its eaten is sold at most night markets was also invented in China but popularized by Taiwan later on. The oyster omelet is a dish which can be seen at most food stalls in the markets as its seafood made from oysters in Taiwan. Taiwanese fried chicken made to be bite sized and with a variety of different flavors to eat as you explore the night market. Soy sauce braised foods are often sold which are just the normal chicken, egg, tofu but braised in soy sauce to give it its flavor. Fried sweet potato balls are also a common form of sweet dessert coming in many different flavors. Finally, the bubble tea or milk tea which is known and sold all over the world is not only a famous drink in Taiwanese night markets but was also invented and created in Taiwan. The bubble milk tea was said to be invented in the late nineteen eighties but no one can be certain who did it as there are many disputing claims as to who first put tapioca pearls into milk tea. Regardless, bubble tea would become famous in Taiwan first before spreading to the U.S in the nineteen nineties and go viral.

As the night markets expanded and Taiwan grew, night markets and its street vendors would also expand their business into more than just food. In the nineteen sixties; toys, garments and other accessories would start to be sold in the markets. In the nineteen seventies; handicrafts, Chinese medicine and international goods would make an appearance in the markets. In the nineteen eighties, night markets would begin to have gift shops and high-quality cloths/shoes along with many vendors and festivities bringing it to how it is in the modern day. Night markets became a popular and common place for the locals of each city to meet, hangout, socialize, and find something to eat. This lively night life of Taiwan became ingrained in its popular culture becoming a staple of this nation's identity. Now, it is not uncommon to see high quality products being sold in night markets or famous brands selling their shoes or cloths. The increase in the products being sold, the wonderful food and the lively night life brought by the night markets would eventually attract global attention bringing in many tourists and a new avenue of income from this newfound publicity.

While there are many different night markets in Taiwan, there are a few which are more well known and visited by foreigners for various reasons. The first would be the Shilin Night Market, this its known as both the first Taiwanese night market but also the biggest night market. Next there is the Raohe Night Market. The Raohe Night Market is known to extend down a single street and is most well known for its variety and choice of foods available. Then there is the Huaxi Night market or otherwise known as Snake Alley Night Market which is very well known for its snake-based products and food. The Ningxia Night Market while smaller than the others mentioned, can still be found to have everything the others do and also be a local favorite to visit. These are only a few of the more well known night markets but there are many more each with their own quirks and specialties, but all of them share the same similarity of being a melting pot of culture and tradition. The Taiwanese night markets are a place for locals to have fun, socialize and eat great food in a festive mood while also being a great boost to the economy and labor market for the surrounding areas. It has brought global attention and increased the tourism in the country helping Taiwan benefit by spreading its culture globally. Having started as small street stalls and vendors after World War 2, these night markets have become an immovable part of Taiwanese life and culture.

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PART III  
TOKYO

## 12. History and Politics of Tokyo

NICHOLAS POWELL

### History

Tokyo's meteoric rise to become the largest city in the world originally began in a small fishing village named Edo. The city grew after the Tokugawa Shogunate arrived in 1603 and established it as the de facto capital of Japan, launching the Edo period (1603 – 1867). Edo became the social and political center of the country while the de jure capital remained in Kyoto with the emperor. In 1868, the Emperor toppled the Shogunate in the Meiji Restoration and moved to Edo, officially renaming it Tokyo.

Following the Meiji restoration, The Meiji Period (1868 – 1912) was a time of great social and political change as the country began modernization and fell under the influence of other nations. Western powers forced Japan to sign one-sided treaties, advancing the desire to grow both militarily and economically. These radical reforms led to a financial crisis in the mid-1880s, which helped the establishment of the Bank of Japan and a large reform of their currency.

The population of Tokyo and other cities further increased during the Taisho period (1912 – 1926) as education improved and the country moved towards a consumerism lifestyle. Japan joined World War I on the side of the allies, hoping to improve relations between themselves and other western nations. Western powers rejected their proposals and legislation such as the Exclusion Act passed in the US Congress, prohibiting immigration from Japan despite their efforts. The economic situation in the country hit a low point after the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 destroyed much of Tokyo with its unrelenting shaking and fires. Over 140,000 people had been reported dead or missing and over 300,000 homes were destroyed in the aftermath. Massive spending increases followed the tragedy in the attempt to repair the city's ruins.



*Tokyo from above during World War II*



*Tokugawa Ieyasu Examining the Head of Kimura Shigenari at the Battle of Osaka Castle*

The Showa period (1926 – 1989) began shortly after and, although it began strong, the greatest disasters had yet to come. The spending increases following the earthquake only worsened the economic collapse during the Great Depression. As its imperial ambitions grew, the country's political situation allowed the military to take control of the government in the early 1930s. The Pacific theater of World War II broke out in 1941 with Japan joining the Axis powers opposite their World War I allies. With Tokyo being the capital of Japan, the war had a massive impact on the city. By the war's end, the allies had bombed Tokyo 102 times. When the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki finally proved that Japan could not win the war, Japan



surrendered. By this time, the population of Tokyo had fallen to 3.49 million; nearly half of its 1940 population. In May 1947, the new Constitution of Japan took effect and Tokyo's current 23-ward system fell into place.

In the 1960s, Japan experienced a period of rapid economic growth, leading to Tokyo's current state today as the largest city in the world with a metropolitan area population of 37.5 million and a population within the city proper at 14 million. Modern Japan continued to expand and contract through the Heisei period (1989 – 2019) where, because of the success of the cities, the countryside has been rapidly shrinking as more and more people move for better opportunities.

As Japan enters the Reiwa period (2019 – present) Tokyo and the entire country face steep challenges. Its shrinking population and abandonment of the countryside will have to be addressed in the near future and although these challenges are tough, Japan and its capital have proven their resilience through the eras of history.



*Modern-day streets of Tokyo*

## Politics

Japan is separated into several administrative districts called prefectures. Tokyo is both a city and a prefecture with the two being independent in the same way that New York City exists alongside New York state. The prefecture encompasses several smaller cities and towns while the Tokyo Metropolitan Government administers the city and its 23 special wards. These special wards also function similarly to independent cities themselves. Though other cities can establish special wards themselves, none have chosen to, making Tokyo unique among Japan's cities.

Tokyo is the capital of Japan and the home of the Emperor who is the ceremonial head of state with no governmental powers. The government operates under the Constitution of Japan with legislative, executive, and judiciary branches similar in many ways to the structure of the United States. This similarity is unsurprising as the US had a large hand in shaping the Japanese constitution after its defeat in World War II.

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[TOKYO'S HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, AND POPULATION](#)

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## 13. Economy/Culture/Religion

罗叶(LUO YE)

### Shinto

In Japan, Shinto is the native belief system that predates historical records. Sacred scriptures and founders do not exist in Shinto. Shinto is also not a religion of propaganda or preaching, as it is deeply rooted in Japanese culture and tradition. The word Shinto means the way of the gods which most Japanese take to heart. As part of its art, Shinto differs from other religions in several ways, from shrines to architecture to traditional arts like theater, writing, and calligraphy, the famous kagura dance, and court music (gagaku), a dance form that originated in Tang Dynasty China.



*Photo Taken by Gio Almonte*



*Photo Taken by Dave Weatherall*

The introduction of Buddhism to Japan triggered an internal conflict, but subsequently, The two religions coexisted and even complimented each other, considering Buddha as one of the gods. Shinto became the official religion of Japan during the Meiji era. It was a common practice to invoke Japanese creation myths to construct a national identity, to appoint Shinto priests to positions of political authority, and to separate Shinto from Buddhism. After World War II, Shinto and the country were split apart. Japanese people still practice Shinto today, going to shrines and praying at home altars. Talismans are offered at shrines for a variety of purposes, including protection from traffic, good health, commercial success, and safe delivery of babies.



Photo taken by Lily Tsutsumida

### Matsuri/parade

Matsuri as the Japanese call it is just a parade that the Japanese do to celebrate the gods of Shinto. An integral part of Japanese festivities are parades, in which the kami (Shinto god) of the nearby shrine rides in a mikoshi (palanquin) around the town. In addition to elaborately adorned floats, many festivals feature musicians who play drums and flutes while riding the floats as they parade around the town. Events each have their own unique characteristics. Fireworks / Hanabi (flower – fire) are a traditional Japanese tradition celebrated all over the country between July and August.



Photo Taken by Sofia Monterio



Photo Taken by Julie Fader

### Hanami/Flower seeing

Traditionally, hanami has been practiced since ancient Japanese times. Historically, the tradition goes back to Nara (710-794). It is believed that flower watching originated in the Chinese Tang Dynasty. Poetry, philosophy, and literature have been influenced by hanami in many ways. Due to the speed at which the flower died, the uniqueness of the sakura became apparent pretty quickly. A tradition of viewing sakura has been established ever since.





Photo taken by Atul  
Vinayak



Anime

*Photo taken by Lika Watanabe*

Almost everyone knows anime. It has its roots in Japan. It is loved and watched all around the world. It has also gained and inspired industries like China to create their own version of anime. However Anime is simply Japanese animation. There is nothing special about it. The only difference is the art style it was created in. Osamu Tezuka, one of Japan's most well-known anime creators, launched the type of animation that the majority of people are familiar with in the 1960s, paving the way for anime we know today. It's often believed that anime first appeared in the early 20th century. Anime is so prevalent in Japan that there are monuments, other landmarks, and sites devoted to the anime culture and its artists. For instance, the area of Akihabara, which is close to the center of Tokyo, has a lot of businesses and places to go that are associated with anime. The Akihabara streets are filled with specialty goods, manga, video games, and souvenirs.



*Photo Taken by Bruce Tang*





Photo Taken by Gwen King

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# 14. Tourist Attractions

ELIZABETH COTHRAN

Tokyo is home to many of Japan's most iconic sites, from historical buildings to bustling centers of modern pop culture. The following examples are only a sampling of the wonders lying within the city.

## Natural Beauty

### Imperial Palace

The Imperial Palace is where Japan's Imperial Family lives and was built where Edo Castle (Tokugawa shogunate) once stood in 1888. It was destroyed during World War II, but rebuilt to look the same as before. Guided tours are offered year-round in English and Japanese, but no buildings are entered. On January 2nd and February 23rd the public can enter the inner grounds for New Year's and the Emperor's birthday, respectively.

### Parks

Shinjuku Gyoen National Park was a residence of the Naito family in the Edo period that became the Imperial Family's. It is a wonderful place to go cherry-blossom viewing, with over a thousand cherry trees.

Ueno Park is the largest natural area in Tokyo, and it connects conveniently to museums, the lovely Shinobazu pond, Toshogu Shrine, and the Ueno Zoo, Japan's oldest.

## Shopping Districts

### Ginza & Kabuki-za

Ginza has been Tokyo's busiest shopping center for many years, and is located where several ancient roads converged. On the weekends, traffic is barred for ease of shopping. This is a great place to explore and buy some souvenirs.

Located in Ginza, the Kabuki-za theatre is where you can see traditional Kabuki performances that last for hours, eat food, and get a bit rowdy. It is a much more relaxed atmosphere than American theatres.

### Akihabara

An essential shopping destination clustered around Akihabara Station, this is where you'll find anime, manga, and video game-related goods, as well as electronics stores and various themed cafes. Like Ginza, on Sundays the main street is closed to cars to allow free shopping by pedestrians.

### Harajuku & Meiji Shrine

The Harajuku neighborhood is the surroundings of Harajuku station, known for its unique fashions as well as the blending of old and new. There are many eclectic street styles and youth trends that have sprouted from its streets. Balancing this modernism out is the presence of the Meiji Jingu shrine, which is dedicated to the spirits of Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken.

## **Additional Landmarks**

### Shibuya Crossing

Shibuya Crossing is the busiest pedestrian crossing in the world, letting up to around 3,000 pedestrians cross the road at once. It is often featured in movies or videos about Tokyo as a prime example of busy city life.

### Tokyo Tower & Tokyo Skytree

Tokyo has not one, but two large towers standing over the city. Tokyo Tower was built in 1953 when the NHK needed a broadcasting tower, and its design was inspired by the Eiffel Tower. At the time of being built, it was the tallest freestanding tower in the world at 333 meters, but was surpassed many times since, finally by Tokyo Skytree in 2010. Tokyo Skytree is another broadcast tower that is now the tallest of its kind at 634 meters. It replaced Tokyo Tower as a primary radio broadcast tower for the region due to the interference of high-rise buildings. It is the tallest structure in Japan and the third tallest building in the world.

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# 15. Lolita Fashion

ELIZABETH COTHRAN

Lolita is a fashion style and subculture that emerged in Japan beginning from the 1980s, but has spread all around the world. Its exact origins are highly debated and mostly unclear, but closely related to both Harajuku's youth culture of forming style tribes in the streets and gothic visual *kei* bands. The term "Lolita" is mostly unrelated to the 1955 Vladimir Nabokov novel of the same name, apparently chosen only to reflect the concept of "youthful femininity." In fact, many practitioners of Lolita have no knowledge of the novel's content. The term encompasses a constellation of related subtypes and aesthetics, but is unified by features such as bows, lace, bouffant skirts that fall to the knee, etc. Lolitas stand out on the street as anachronistic, spectacular living dolls, often being misinterpreted by others as being "in costume" or showing off a fetish. To Lolitas themselves, however, the fashion is externalizing their inner young maiden without relinquishing an adult's intelligence. Through hyperfeminine material fashion and performance, Lolitas embody their own personal ideal "girl" positioned against the flow of society and time.

Lolita fashion is inspired by a combination of Rococo and Victorian clothing and Japanese *kawaii* culture. Rather than take from these time periods directly, it is more accurate to say that general ideas from them have been appropriated, like Victorian children's silhouettes and Rococo's ornate detail. These features and *kawaii* aspects like whimsical prints and stuffed animal accessories confer onto Lolitas nostalgia for an imagined Western childhood. Lolitas adorn themselves this way to present ideals of innocence and femininity. The modesty of Lolita's almost full-body coverage and figure-obscuring shape discourage those who may look at the wearer sexually, protecting a Lolita from the gaze of men and adult sexuality. This aspect of the fashion has been called naive, as men who fetishize Lolitas do exist and police have been stationed where large numbers of Lolitas gather in Japan to protect women from such men. However, Lolitas themselves have no intention to seduce men through their dress. Lolita is worn as self-indulgence and escapism for the wearer, to a higher degree than most fashions. This can be linked to participants in *kawaii* culture's tendency to surround themselves excessively with cute things they love to look at. Lolitas develop a very particular sense of cuteness that they then use to please themselves and affirm their identity as *otome* or maidens.

This *otome* identity is divorced from gender and age and exists more as a philosophy held by those who identify with it, a way to toe the line between girlhood and womanhood with a distinct sense of what is cute and beautiful. Most members of the Lolita community are women, but men also wear the fashion, including Mana, a visual *kei* guitarist who created his own Lolita brand and avoids speaking in public to maintain a feminine image. Lolitas rebel against the expectations of modern Japanese society for women by stepping away from it rather than trying to counter it directly. They embrace an anachronistic, fantastical conception of Western female childhood and use it as a shield against contemporary life by focusing on enjoyment over adult obligation and conformity. Hyperfemininity here goes beyond what is palatable to society into something that only this kind of maiden can enjoy, a quiet and unfrontational protest that would rather exist peacefully apart.

In addition to appearance and material goods, there is a performance aspect to the identity of Lolita. Putting on this kind of clothing and going out to Harajuku or another place is an important act of asserting Lolita identity, but devoted Lolitas may also change the way they move and speak. When posing for photos, Lolitas often stand in childlike and delicate ways, such as pointing their toes inward or tilting their heads slightly. They call to mind the dolls they are imitating. For a Lolita, the more fragile, the better. Additionally, Lolitas in Japan have revived and modified *joseigo*, or women's speak, for their own purposes. *Joseigo* comes from the schoolgirl culture of the 1920s, when a new kind of woman, the *shoujo*, or young girl, appeared due to girls' schools creating a defined period between childhood and marriage that let girls develop an adolescent culture. This girls' speak was first derided before being embraced as feminine and desirable, and is nowadays associated with high-class women due to its waning prominence. Lolitas adopted this way of speaking to

create the image of a ladylike princess and used it in online communities to reflect their identities. Lolitas are not well-liked by the media, so their adoption of this desirable form of speaking has caused mixed feelings.

Innocence, femininity, and nostalgia. This is women's armor against a society they feel they do not belong to, expressed in frills and high socks. The princesses of Lolita maintain their maidenhood at any age and indulge themselves in what brings them joy, cute and beautiful things.

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## 16. Analysis by 罗叶(LUO YE)

罗叶(LUO YE)

How shinto is incorporated in Japanese anime

Japanese culture has always been very interesting. The food, society, history and entertainment. However, during recent years people have been more interested in Japanese culture and society, since anime has been gaining popularity. It has gained so much popularity that people of other nations go to Japan and try to learn the culture and language. People are amazed how Japanese culture and society are almost similarly portrayed in anime; mostly their way of life. The lifestyle of a Japanese person is very interesting because their way of life is mixed in with their religion Shinto. The anime movie “Spirited away” by Hayao Miyazaki portrays many symbols of shinto in their movie. This film demonstrated many Japanese values that Japanese follow to have a better life.



Photo Taken by Kentaro Toma

What is Shinto

Before talking about how shinto is embedded in Japanese society and how the anime movie Spirited away represents that. A quick introduction of shinto is needed to really understand the concepts of the movie. Shinto which translates to “way of the gods” is an ancient Japanese religion. It does not have a founder nor a time period which the religion started. The goal of Shinto is to ensure harmony between humans and the kami.

Shinto is a polytheistic religion; however, one thing that is interesting in Shinto religion is that when a person dies the spirit of the person that passed away becomes like a god. In return, the Japanese people respect the dead because they have reached that level in their afterlife. Shinto religion is a very unique religion because the Japanese people practice their own religion without even knowing. It is part of their way of life. Additionally, Shinto does have many rituals as any other religion. One ritual is the shrine's etiquette. In Edward Yagisawa's article, it illustrates and teaches the person on how to enter a shrine the respectful way: the shrine etiquette. Yagisawa states, “Before entering the torii gates, bow slightly, and when entering, walk on the side of the path to the shrine rather than in the middle. The middle of the path



Photo Taken By Steven Chua

and the torii are for the gods, not for humans. On the way to the shrine, you will see a small pavilion with a basin filled with water; this is called the *chozuya* and this is where you purify yourself before approaching the main shrine. Fill the ladle with water and pour some water on your left hand, then right hand. Next, clean your mouth by holding the ladle in your right hand again and pouring some water into your left hand and rinse lightly – don't wash your mouth directly from the ladle! Finally, hold the ladle vertically, allowing for the remaining water to trickle down the handle and clean it. When you reach the shrine you are now finally ready to pay your respects. It is a bit of a long ritual but the steps are Bow slightly ,Gently toss a coin into the box in front of you. The amount of money does not matter; just because you used a 500 yen coin, it does not mean that there is a higher chance of your wishes coming true. Many Japanese people believe that using a 5-yen coin increases their chances of finding a significant other, since *go-en* is homophonous to the Japanese word meaning “relationship.” However, this is nothing more than an urban legend; gods existed before the yen currency did ,Ring the bell if there is one 2 or 3 times to signal to the gods that you have arrived ,Deeply bow twice until you reach a 90 degree angle ,Clap twice, with your left hand slightly in front ,Pay your respects, remembering to thank the gods as well ,Deeply bow once.” (Yagisawa) This ritual is very important to Japanese people mostly the water cleansing because in the shinto religion water purifies people from their impurities and sins.



Photo Taken By Gio Almonte

### Spirited away and shinto

In the movie, the shinto religion is integrated within the movie. *Spirited Away* is about a 10 year old Japanese girl named Chihiro, who, with her parents, are moving to a new town. The parents took a wrong turn and ended up in a dead end and a building was in front of them. The parents decided to investigate what was in the old building. Chihiro did not want to go in because she felt something was wrong. In this scene, Chihiro follows the shinto rules that she instinctively values and follows. She knows that what her parents are doing is wrong. however she was scared of being left alone so she decided to go anyway. As they proceeded



Photo Taken By Kentaro Toma

to enter the building they saw an old train lobby which astonished them. However as they went further in they and went through the other exit they saw an abandoned theme park. They were curious and went out to investigate more; however , it was at that moment that their lives would change. When the parents went deeper into the abandoned theme park they saw some food and started eating it without permission. However, Chihiro did not because she had a bad feeling about it. As they continued eating they got fatter and fatter. Then when the nightfall came they turned into pigs.

Then as she got scared she ran as she was running when she saw a bath house and she ran to it when she did the ground filled with water, then she saw a train that stopped in front of the bath house. When the doors opened she saw how many yokai and gods were getting out of the train and she was afraid and went to hide. In this specific scene when the ground starts to fill up with water it is a sign of purifying as i mentioned before. Since the ground is dirty the kami cannot touch the ground hence the ground fills up with water when the train comes in to drop off the kami. A boy named Haku helped her by getting her to calm down and help her on how she can turn her parents back to normal which was hard. So Haku told her to get a job at the bathhouse so she can be protected. There she starts her journey to find a way to turn her parents back to normal. Furthermore, in the movie Chihiro was assigned to the big blob monster that was coming in the bath house. Nobody wanted to attend him therefore chihiro was forced to attend. As the big blob monster came in he left a big pile of mud and other nasty things on the floor. People were disgusted because it smelled and looked bad. When the Big blob monster went in the bath he polluted the whole water and nobody wanted to add clean water so chihiro had to do it by herself. As she struggles to add more clean water people were expecting for her failure. However as she activated the clean water people were surprised. Then she was assigned to wash the blob monster back and as she did she found something that was stuck in him and she tied a rope around it and started pulling as people saw that they were motivated to pull with her. As they pulled thousands of unclean came out of him and was cleansed of all the nastiness. To the people surprised it was a water dragon spirit which he was very powerful and rich and rewarded chihiro with something very important that she would use later on. This scene is one of the symbols of shinto because as I mentioned before water is a purifying element that purifies uncleanliness and sins. also in the shinto religion they believed that people are positive and clean people and are born without sin and only things impure or sinful can damage the person. And to get rid of the impurity and sinfulness is to be cleansed with water and to ask other people for help to be cleansed. When the water ritual is over the person is cleansed and sin free. This scene has a lot of symbolism of the shinto religion. It also adds to how some people in Japanese society will treat you when you ask for help. Some people will ignore you and other people will think that person is unworthy and nasty. However it also shows how some people will help you in your darkest situation and those people are rewarded at the end.



*Published by Joseph Luster*

#### How shinto is incorporated in Japanese anime

Shinto is incorporated in Japanese culture because the whole base of the shinto religion is how to treat others and nature. If one is unbalanced there will be chaos in their belief . Anime, manga, and video games often focus on Shinto in Japanese popular culture. Pop culture in modern Japan is greatly influenced by Shinto religion, the core of Japanese culture and



*Published by Wallpaper access*

history. This has made Japan very famous and has done a lot of business over the last few decades. Since then, Japanese culture has spread all over the world. Without anime, Japanese culture would not be very famous as it is today. Now why do Japanese people incorporate shinto into their art and entertainment? One reason is obvious enough: it's a part of Japanese society that how they live, it's their way of life. However in other cultures like Korean culture they have their dramas but really do not incorporate their religion into their entertainment. So, why do Japanese input and create entertainment with the religion of shinto in the background? The answer in a way is obvious but at the same time is not. One theory is because the Japanese entertainment industry is trying to paint a picture to the rest of the world "how they really live" meaning they are trying to make an illusion to attract more people to japan and capitalize from it. The Japanese entertainment industry tries to create this fictitious but at the same time realism to viewers. An example will be Spirited away. It mixes realism with fantasy. In the first few senses you can see the realism of the anime. How Chihiro and her parents are moving into a new place and get lost on their way to the new place. After they take a wrong turn in the street there are abandoned shinto shrines. It is common in japan to see shrines all over the place and sometimes abandoned. The second theory is similar to the first theory, which is that the Japanese artist and entertainment industry are trying to paint a picture not to the outside world but to the people of japan. Why because Japan is known to be a closed off country and is also known to be a conservatative country within the people mostly older generations. So the Japanese artists and entertainers are trying in a way to convince the people of Japan to open up more to have more emotion in their everyday life. To have some excitement and not only live as a robot every day.



Photo by Kentaro Toma





Photo by Kentaro Toma



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# 17. Tokyo's Work Culture

NICHOLAS POWELL

## Tokyo's Work Culture

For many people, living and working in Japan could be seen as somewhat of a dream. The opportunity to live and work in a foreign country, especially one so relevant in today's pop culture, could be a life-changing experience. Working in Japan could very well be a worthwhile experience for many people, but many others don't know exactly what they are getting into.

With its status as the largest metropolitan economy in the world, Tokyo is a major hub for foreign workers in Japan. Though the amount of foreign citizens is low, there are over 560 thousand foreign nationals living and working in the Tokyo prefecture. Business trips to Tokyo are very common among major companies with some of the largest companies in the world based in the city. Sony, Honda, and Cannon, among many others, are massive global companies that are all based in the city.



*Pedestrians crossing perhaps the most famous scramble intersection in the world, in Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan. Taken from Hachikō square.*

Before we can talk about Japan's work culture, we must first understand how Japan's society is organized more broadly. Unlike most western countries, Japan is a collectivist society as opposed to an individualistic society. In a broad sense, they are more conscious of the surrounding people than we are in the west, and they give priority to the collective as opposed to the individual in a society. This translates into small things like being quiet on public transport, picking up after themselves more often, and being more reserved in a public setting. This way of life can have huge benefits like public transport, but it can also have downsides like the loss of self and the more conformist nature in the expression of one's identity. It also has some much bigger impacts, like their use of language, their lifestyle, and the way their work culture has developed.

In Japan, the most important thing you can do in a job is to be present. It matters less whether you are being efficient with your time or you are keeping up with all your responsibilities, and more about whether you were there with your colleagues with the appearance of making progress. Their lives revolve around their work to the point that taking a vacation is frowned upon as abandoning their colleagues. Even if you're more productive than the guy sitting next to you, maybe you get skipped over for that promotion because you were out sick for a few days while your neighbor was present and supporting their colleagues. While that may not seem like a massive issue, it has many knock-on effects on society at large that have effects today. These issues will only grow as time goes on without significant intervention, and solving these problems is much easier said than done.

As of 2020, the birth rate in Japan was at 1.3 births per woman, and since the pandemic has only sharply declined. The latest estimate of the Japanese population as of October 2022 was 125.5 million, down from the 2020 estimate of 126.6 million, showing just how quickly the population is decreasing. Japan also has one of the oldest populations in the world, with recent estimates stating that 29% of the population is older than 65. Population decline is currently one of the biggest issues facing the country.



*Drinking in Japan*

Due to the significance that Japan's society has put on being present at work, many young people are not getting out to meet people as often as us in the west. Instead of going out with friends at the end of the workday, they either are too exhausted from working all day or go out to drink with their colleagues. The drinking culture in Japan is massive, and it is mostly expected of an employee to go out drinking with their colleagues at the end of the day to celebrate. While this is a kind of getting out and around, it's obviously not the same as meeting new people or having fun with friends.

The coronavirus pandemic has only accelerated this trend. By keeping everyone inside and closing bars, young people were getting out and meeting new people even less than normal. So while the closures may have been necessary to protect the people in one of the most densely populated cities in the world, the effects of the pandemic will permeate much longer than in other areas simply by exacerbating existing issues.

For those who see Japan through the lens of anime and manga, you may see a place like Akihabara and similar places in Tokyo and end up with a vastly different perception of the city than what exists in reality. Take the very same industry for example, where these issues are highly pronounced in various anime studios and manga publications. *Wonder Egg Priority* was an original anime that aired in the winter 2021 season from studio CloverWorks. The studio, based in Suginami, Tokyo, had three different anime airing in the same season. This was highly unusual, with most large studios putting out two or three shows a year at most. It became clear pretty early on that there were some production issues, with one episode getting delayed a week, causing the finale to slip a whole three months due to scheduling issues.

In a now-deleted tweet, we found out just how bad the situation really was in-studio. After being wheeled into an ambulance twice and receiving a drip at the hospital, animation producer Shota Umehara returned to the studio after only five hours where he says, "It's wonderful to have something that is more important than your life." This sentiment was echoed by other staff members with one commenting, "On average, every animator working here has lost around 10 kg of weight." While this case is on the far extreme end of these problems, most big studios aren't much further behind in terms of impossible-to-meet deadlines and long working hours. In even more extreme and rare cases, Japanese workers have experienced *karoshi*. *Karoshi* (過労死) is a Japanese word specifically meaning "death from overwork." When your language has a word that specifically refers to when someone dies from working too much, it may be time to change something.



*CloverWorks Logo*



After raising all of these problems, why would anyone want to work in Tokyo? There seems to be a significant amount of downsides. What upsides could possibly make it worth the risk?

While these work culture issues may still plague older and larger companies, many new and smaller companies alongside branches of foreign companies do not share the same problems. The Japanese government and the companies themselves also claim they are trying to fix the issue. It's now mandatory to take at least five vacation days a year and in 2018, an anti-karoshi law was passed to both study and spread awareness of the issue. The government has also added more national holidays over time, allowing for more time off. These are just some of the many initiatives and laws passed by various bodies and companies to help stop the problem. Though it won't be an overnight fix, the issues are slowly getting better and with the proper knowledge, it becomes drastically easier to navigate between which companies should be avoided and which companies should be sought after.

Setting boundaries in a work environment is also very important to establish a healthy work-life balance. Going out to drink with colleagues can be fun, but spending the entire day after work with people from work can just make the whole day feel like work. Working in Tokyo also brings many benefits in other ways. Employment stability is very high in the country due to its collectivist organization and non-confrontational attitude. Being fired is a rarity unless you do something egregious to the company or completely illegal. In many industries, especially tech, there is a high demand for workers, so finding a good job may be easier than in other cities. Healthcare in Japan is also better than in many other countries, something Americans will probably find enticing.

The city itself is another amazing benefit. Being the largest city on the planet with nearly 40 million people opens many opportunities, both personal and professional. Tokyo has more Michelin Star restaurants than any other city in the world and can cater to any budget with thousands of options, even outside normal Japanese dishes. The public transport system allows you to get from Tokyo to anywhere else in the country, both fast and cheaply. Within Tokyo, the special wards of Tokyo all offer something unique. Whether it be Akihabara's unique atmosphere or Shinjuku's entertainment, Tokyo has something for everyone.

As long as you keep the problems in mind, working in Tokyo or anywhere in Japan can be a life-changing and worthwhile experience. Though there are numerous issues with the work culture in the country, those problems can be overcome with both time and effort. It may not be the perfect experience of your dreams, but there are plenty of positives of working in Tokyo that can easily outweigh the negatives.

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PART IV  
SEOUL



## 18. History

EDIRIN AKONOGHRERE

### The History of Seoul

Seoul is the capital city of South Korea. It is officially known as the Seoul Special City and is the largest metropolis in South Korea. The city is located along the famous Han River and is home to many great companies like Samsung, LG and Hyundai which significantly aids the economy and the name of the country on a global level.

As a result of its global status, Seoul has hosted several global conferences and major athletic games (Fischer). According to an article by The Age, Seoul is considered one of the leading cities in technology and the number one tech capital of the world (Ramachandran). Gangnam and Digital Media City serve as important technology hubs.

The Samsung logo, consisting of the word "SAMSUNG" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, centered within a light gray rectangular background.

*Image by Samsung Company*



*Image by LG Company*

Over the years, Seoul has been the capital city of several Korean governments including Baekje, Joseon, the Korean Empire, Goryeo (as a subsidiary city), and the current South Korea. The history of this great city stretches back about 2,000 years “to when Wiryeseong, the capital of Baekje, was located on the banks of the Hangang River in the southeastern part of what is now Seoul” (SeoulSolution). The inhabitants of Baekje, one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, are thought to have founded the city of Seoul in about 18 BC. The city began expanding significantly after it was chosen as the Joseon dynasty’s (1392– 1910) capital in 1394.

In the nineteenth century, advancements in engineering, technology and construction, helped shape the idea of what is modern-day Seoul. With the opening of a port at the end of the nineteenth century, development on electrical infrastructure, railroads, streetcar tracks, parks, waterworks systems, schools, and hospitals begun.

In the early twentieth century, the city of Seoul fell under the colonial influence of Japan and remained a Japanese colony from the year 1910 until 1945. The colonial period brought about industrialization, which in turn led to unauthorized dwelling zones around the city. These zones were quickly incorporated within Seoul’s boundaries, which allowed for the city to be transformed into a new residential area. Upon the advent of the country’s independence in 1945, the city was officially renamed Seoul Metropolitan City (SeoulSolution).

Basking in the glory of its newly found independence and delighting in the joy and happiness that came with freedom, the city grew and flourished. Unfortunately, this façade of joy and peace was quickly taken away when the country was pushed to war by its opponent, North Korea in 1950. With five years of peace and freedom behind it, South Korea went into war with the north and fought until the end of the war in 1953. This war that went on for three years straight was known as the Korean War. The city of Seoul was greatly affected by the fighting and in no time was brought to ruins.

However, with light at the end of the tunnel and hope gleaming in a bleak reality, the city of Seoul found its feet in no time after the war. The city developed into a megalopolis in around fifty years with the help of swift economic growth. Seoul quickly overcame various urban difficulties to establish itself and develop into a smart city where over ten million people live happily. As opposed to its European counterparts, the country of South Korea industrialized and developed out of its hardship and established itself as a global force.

Between the 1960s and the 70s, Seoul experienced great issues from housing shortages to illegal settlement areas which was mainly because of poor social infrastructure and intense population inflow. The Seoul Metropolitan Government accessed the issues at hand, took up the task, and began by “establishing a basic infrastructure by expanding roads, building apartment complexes in illegal settlement areas, and constructing the Cheonggye Overpass and Yeouido Island” (SeoulSolution).

In the 80s and the 90s, Seoul had resolved most of its urban issues and began focusing on progressing and improving the city. The Asian Games in 1986 and the Olympic Games in 1988, to which South Korea was a host, contributed to this progress and improvement.



Image by CHRISTOPHER LEIDY on Pinterest

“As a result of this extensive infrastructure development project, Seoul was able to secure a considerable, high-standard urban infrastructure network consisting of public transportation, roads, waterworks, and sewage systems. However, the relentless development also produced some serious side effects, such as destruction of the natural environment, damage to historical resources, and the breakdown of communities” (SeoulSolution).

As information technology advanced and inhabitants’ demands for a better quality of life increased in the 2000s, Seoul’s urban management strategy changed to focus on building a sustainable city with cutting-edge IT. As of today, Seoul is still an ever-changing and blossoming city with various prospects and opportunities for its citizens. After two millennia worth of history, colonialism, and war, Seoul is still the golden child of the Korean Empire.

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## 19. Food and Nightlife

MIKAYLA FAIRES

South Korea has a rich food and nightlife culture. Food is important to South Koreans. Food brings families together, which is vital to creating a strong bond. Meals are elaborate with many banchan (side dishes), rice, and a main dish like soup, noodles, or meat. Coworkers eat together on their lunch breaks to strengthen their bond. Coworkers and friends will go out to drink and Norebang (karaoke) to relax and have fun.

### KIMCHI



*Image by jcomp on Freepik*

Kimchi is a spicy fermented cabbage served in almost every Korean meal. Kimchi has different varieties, including radish, water, and cucumber kimchi. Communities produce large amounts of kimchi together in late autumn, so every family has enough throughout the winter. Basic kimchi has cabbage, garlic, scallions, ginger, gochugaru (chili powder), fish sauce, onion, and salt. When Koreans started using agriculture, they had to preserve their food in salt to keep it from freezing during the harsh winters. Kimchi is in writing during the Goryeo period when cabbage entered Korea. Originally, kimchi had radish because it was a local crop.

### TTEOKBOKKI



*Image by jcomp on Freepik*

Tteokbokki are spicy rice cakes made from rice flour, gochujang (Korean chili paste), gochugaru (Korean chili flakes), soy

sauce, sugar, garlic, and Korean soup stock. Popular add-ins are fish cakes, eggs, and scallions. Tteokbokki is a popular street food sold in food stalls, markets, and restaurants in Seoul.

### **JJAJANGMYEON**



*Image by jcomp on Freepik*

Jjajangmyeon is noodles in black bean sauce, traditionally with pork belly and pickled radish. Jjajangmyeon is a popular take-out food, and it's a tradition to eat Jjajangmyeon when moving houses because it's an easy and convenient meal. Jjajangmyeon came from China in the late nineteenth century when Chinese men were sent to Korea by the Chinese military. It was a cheap meal to produce so everyone could eat after a long day.

### **SEAWEED SOUP**

*Image by 30000006475 on Lovepik*



Koreans eat seaweed soup on their birthday because during the Goryeo Dynasty, “people started noticing whales eating seaweed after giving birth. Traditionally the soup symbolizes and honors Samsin Halmoni, a goddess who helps women through pregnancy and childbirth.” Eating seaweed soup on one's birthday is a way to show respect “for the one that brought them into this world.”

### **MYEONGDONG NIGHT MARKET**





Image by jcomp on Freepik

The Myeongdong night market is a famous market in Seoul that sells lots of street food. Popular foods include, but are not limited to, tteokbokki (spicy rice cakes), Korean fried chicken, Gimbap (very similar to sushi), dumplings, fish cakes, and mochi. Myeongdong market is visited by locals and foreigners every day.

### **NORAEBANG**

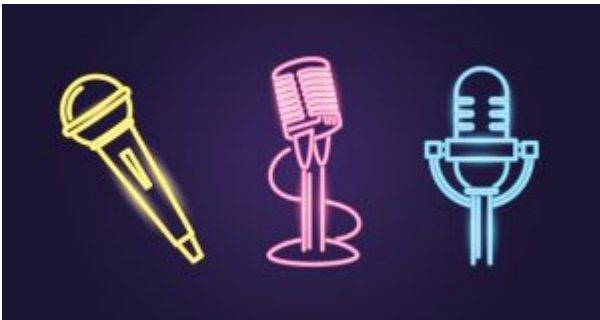


Image by gstudioimagen on Freepik

Noraebang is a popular activity after drinking with friends. Noraebang is done in a private room, not among strangers, which makes it less embarrassing. The rooms include big TVs, couches, tables, disco lights, and karaoke machines. Customers can order food and drink as well. There are many Noraebang places in Seoul.

### **SOJU**



Image by jcomp on Freepik

Soju is a colorless, distilled alcoholic beverage that comes in different flavors and is available in many restaurants in Seoul. Soju is the most popular alcoholic drink in Seoul and has specific rules. A person has to be served a glass of soju by someone else and must hold it with two hands to show respect. They must also drink the glass in one shot. If someone is offered a glass by their elder, they must accept it. Another popular drink is a soju bomb, where soju and beer are mixed.

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- Soju bottles and Korean side dishes on the menu



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## 20. Tourist Attractions

ANDREA OBAYA

### Seoul: The City with Everything for Anyone

Seoul is the capital of South Korea, considered the “Asian New York” or the “New York of Asia.” It is made up of twenty-five districts, with one of them -Gangnam- being known as the “Beverly Hills of South Korea.” Seoul is an exquisite, popular tourist destination, rich with history and a diverse lifestyle where there is a little bit of everything for everyone. Everyone, from foreigners to Koreans themselves, strive to someday make it their home or at least have the opportunity to visit, stay and fully take in the city of Seoul and with the popularity of K-pop and the rise of the “Hallyu” wave, it has now become a hotspot for tourists -almost like how it is for anime fans and Japan. From historical landmarks and architecture to a thriving food and nightlife culture to a bustling commerce market for fashion and consumerism, Seoul has so much to offer. Here are some places one can visit when planning their upcoming visit to Seoul.

For the history and architecture buffs, Seoul has a rich history dissipated across its 233.7 mi<sup>2</sup> area with its prominent and distinguished architecture encompassing the distinct form and style of architecture seen not only in Seoul, but also other Asian countries like China and Japan. Now, Seoul's architecture, depending on the area, is a mix of traditional Asian architecture seen in traditional Japanese or Chinese houses, historical buildings and temples, but there is also some modernism in its architecture as one would see in modern cities like New York City or Tokyo. To experience and see this time capsule of history that has been preserved over time, a definite hotspot to visit would be the Gyeongbokgung Palace with the Gwanghwamun Gate.

Considered as an epitome of Korean history, Gyeongbokgung Palace is the largest of five palaces built during the Joseon dynasty -the last Korean dynasty- and is where one can stand and embrace Korea's history, while Gwanghwamun Gate serves as the palace's entrance. Other notable mentions to visit are King Sejong's statue located nearby, Bukchon Hanok Traditional Village where one can also take in traditional architecture and housing, and for fans of war history, the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) is a remnant of the Korean War along with the War Memorial of Korea, which is filled with military memorabilia and tributes to the war.



Gwanghwamun Gate. Original Title: “The Gates of Gyeongbokgung Palace” by @guineapig33 is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.



Bukchon Hanok Traditional Village. Original Title: "People Walking on the Street" by Lena Heckendorn.

sometimes K-pop idols or trainees come out to exercise or run out here. As a bonus, if one visits at night, they will get the treat of Banpo Bridge.



Banpo Bridge. Original Title: "Seoul Best Attractions" from Seoul Metropolitan Fire & Disaster Headquarters is licensed under CC BY - SA 4.0.

considered "overrated", there is also Cheonggyecheon, which is also a popular date spot in both K-dramas and real life and also has a body of water where one can have a nice walk.



DMZ. Original Title: "DMZ - Tour Paju, South Korea - 5 Sep 2013" by USAG Humphreys is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

For the K-pop and K-drama lovers out there, there are also hotspots to visit and live out one's K-drama fantasies and fandom power. To start off, the Han River is an icon in K-dramas and it appeals to K-pop fans as well. Anyone that watches K-dramas knows that the Han River is a hotspot for dates or to enjoy a day outside. Many K-dramas are filmed here, so it is well-known and

Again, if anyone has seen K-dramas, most scenes with a night shot and a romantic scene at the Han River, usually show a waterwork display that happens where water falls in a half-rainbow shape with many colors illuminating it like a rainbow. This attraction is also at the Han River, creating a perfect K-drama moment for any fan. Other hotspots are Lotte World which is an indoor amusement park (also very popular and commonly seen in K-dramas), and KStar Road which is a street in Gangnam where all the luxury brand stores and K-pop companies are, and as a bonus, there are what are called "GangnamDols." These "GangnamDols" are little statue dolls dedicated to K-pop groups such as "Girls' Generation," "Super Junior," "BTS," and many iconic groups. Plus, if someone is an "oldie" K-pop fan who really loves "second generation" groups, this is the place to go. Lastly, if the Han River is





Lotte World. Original Title: "Lotte World Interior" by @cactusbeetroot, is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.



Cheongcheon. Original Title: "Cheongcheon" from LERK, is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.



GangnamDol for the group "Super Junior." Original Title: "K-Star Road, Gagnam, Seoul" by Matt Kieffer, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

For those who are just traveling for adventure, have no specific fascination with a place, or are just on a family vacation, there are, of course, places you can add to your itinerary. If one loves exercising or being with nature, one can go hiking at Bukhansan National Park which has a serene atmosphere, and one can also visit and/or stay at the Jingwansa Temple.

If one really enjoys this temple or prefers a different spiritual retreat per say, there is also the Jogyesa Temple and Bongeunsa Temple. There are also shrines to visit such as the Jongmyo and the Jeoldusan Martyrs Shrine -the latter also perfect for history buffs. And if one just wants pure nature, there is also Nami Island. That would be a great start to a morning and then later in the afternoon, one can do some shopping. There are many places to go shopping, especially for clothes, as Koreans are also known for having a great fashion sense. Some places include the COEX Mall with hundreds of little stores inside it and the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) -Seoul's fashion district- but there are many local stores and stands where one can buy, depending on their tastes and budget.



COEX Mall. Original Title: "2019 GO TO Seoul 0401-99" by Sunline Liu is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

If one does not like shopping much or did not come to shop and is more of a "leisurely afternoon" and/or "art lover" person, there are also museums one can go and spend their afternoons in, such as the Seoul Museum of Art or National Museum of Korea. Lastly, to conclude a long day of hiking or shopping etc, one can enjoy and be immersed in Korea's street food and nightlife culture. There are many streets and stands to choose from with some of the most popular being Gwangjang Market, Namdaemun Market, and Myeongdeong. If you just prefer



Bukhansan National Park. Original Title: "Beautiful autumn colour on the trail detour of Y Valley, Bukhansan National Park, Seoul, South Korea" by @metrotekker is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.



Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP). Original Title: "Dongdaemun Design Plaza at night, Seoul, Korea" by Eugene Lim is licensed under CC BY-2.0.





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Gwangjang Market. Original Title: “Gwangjang Market” by Kars Alfrink is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

To conclude, for those who are just into sightseeing and want to check off tourist attractions around the world, Seoul also has its share of tourist attractions such as the N. Seoul Tower which is similar to Tokyo Tower but for Korea -also popular in K-dramas,- especially the older ones. For those who are invested in world politics, there is also the Blue House, which is where the president of South Korea resides in. Overall, Seoul is very diverse in nature, lifestyle and as a city itself: there is something for everyone so that anyone can enjoy their visit and stay in Seoul. It has a good mix of rural country and modern city life that it is adaptable to fit anyone's taste and even if none of the categories apply to someone, there are attractions for everything and everyone such as book-lovers or paranormal/haunted location enthusiasts etc. There is something for every interest and there will be something or somewhere to go that will make Seoul a memorable and enjoyable city.

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## 2I. Analysis by Edirin Akonoghre

EDIRIN AKONOGHRE

### ***Train to Busan*: The Korean Zombie Film Phenomenon**

Over the past few years South Korea has taken the world by storm with its media and entertainment industry. The phenomenon which of Kdrama is highly unforgettable. Many wonder how the Korean media became such a key player in global entertainment. It was a slow but growing process in which Korean entertainers worked hard at honing their craft and promoting themselves effectively. The true moment when it showed that the Koreans were here to stay was when the Korean film *Parasite* directed by Bong Joon-Ho won the 2019 Oscar for the Best Picture. This made it the first non-English-speaking film to win this Oscar since its inception. It was truly record-breaking and noteworthy, and at that moment the eyes of the world truly turned to South Korea to see if it can live up to this greatness. Truly ever since then, the country has done nothing but churn out critically acclaimed and great cinematic and television pieces.

In this section, I will be analyzing the Korean zombie film phenomenon, *Train to Busan*. It is an amazing piece of art directed by Yeon Sang-ho, written by Park Joo-suk, and produced by Lee Dong-ha. It features popular faces like Gong Yoo, Jung Yu-mi, Ma Dong-seok, Kim Su-an, Choi Woo-shik, Ahn So-hee, and Kim Eui-sung.

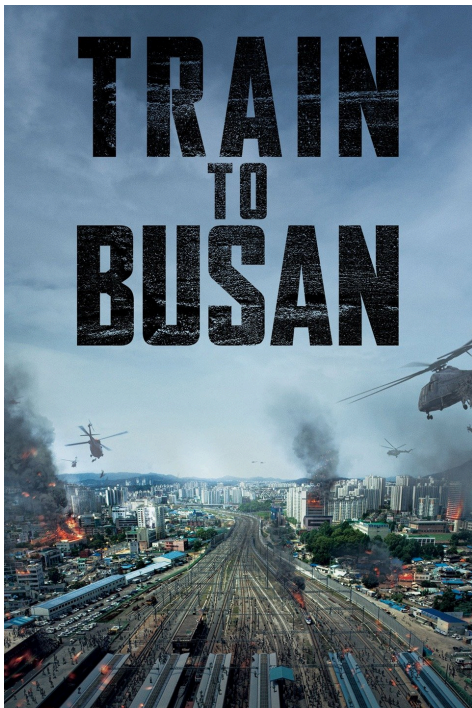


Image by Rotten Tomatoes

The film begins with a car going into some sort of a quarantine zone. We are introduced to a farmer who argues with the scientist all wrapped up in protective gear about burying his hogs again. The scientist assures him that none of that will happen this time and he is wrapped up in protective gear because of a bio-spill not too far off from where they are located. He lets him know that what is going on is merely precautionary and that it will be over soon. The farmer drives off talking and complaining to himself, his phone in the front seat beside him begins to ring. He struggles to reach the phone and is distracted from the road when he hears a loud sound. He comes down to take a look at what happened and notices that he ran over a deer. The farmer checks his car to make sure it was not affected in the collision and takes a

look at the deer and complains about how the day just keeps getting terrible for him. He drives off eventually and the camera then focuses on the deer. The deer lying in his own pool of blood looking quite dead makes a little movement and suddenly with the sound of joints trying to adjust itself, the deer stands up and looks around. The camera then pans to its eyes that are white all over.

Right after this scene we are introduced to the hedge-fund trader Seok-woo (Gong Yoo) who resides in an opulent apartment with his mother and daughter Su-an, a ten-year old who is well aware that her parents are no longer together. The following day is Su-an's birthday, and the night before her father gets her the same gift he got her for Children's Day this year. In a bid to makeup for his mistake, he asks her what she would like instead of what he got her. She tells him that she would love to go spend her birthday with her mother in Busan. Although Seok-woo and his wife have constant disagreements and barely get along, the one thing they equally have interest in is their daughter. Su-an had told her mother that she would come by train herself, but her father was not comfortable with it. At first, he promised her that they would be able to do that next week, but Su-an begged for the trip to be the following day.

After much convincing from his daughter, Seok-woo grudgingly agrees to travel with his daughter when she takes the KTX train to visit her mother in Busan out of guilt. He meets a bunch of high school baseball players on the train, including the young lovers Jinhee and Young-guk, as well as a young married couple, the bulky Sang-hwa and the pregnant Seong-gyung. They barely notice the brief TV and online news reports of unusual disturbances erupting in various areas. Up until a teen girl comes into the just-departed train and bites a conductor, her skin covered in black and blue veins and her teeth chattering with insane rage. The conductor soon starts to exhibit the same signs. The KTX train moving at 155 miles per hour is swarming with milky-white, fast-moving undead, and there is nowhere to hide from their exponentially growing numbers.

A full-fledged zombie action-horror directed by Yeon Sang-ho, the man behind the gruesome and bone-chilling animated films *The King of Pigs* and *The Fake*, which were also unflinchingly horrifying portraits of the hypocrisies and emotional violence of contemporary Korean society, opens with this. It is one of the most unexpected genre offerings from South Korea in recent years. It is both a comfort and an odd let-down to find that *Train to Busan* has no desire to distort its genre-derived aspects beyond recognition given Yeon's kind of ruthless, almost brutal, temperament toward his characters. But make no mistake, Korean genre filmmakers have the skill and guts to compete against studios many times their size. *Train to Busan* stomps to death those meager, imaginatively challenged zombie pictures that have been a hallmark of low-budget horror since the completion of George Romero's *Dead* trilogy, much as *The Wailing* rips the skullcaps off any garden-variety possessed-by-the-devil horror masterpiece (all of which have themselves been remade more than once by other filmmakers).



*Image by IndieWire*

The movie employs a winning formula that combines the Hollywood style of stacking creatively designed and expertly executed set pieces on top of one another with a more East Asian sensibility that favors physically intense action and bold-faced melodramatics without the use of CGI. Despite *World War Z*'s larger scope, its computer-rendered human hills of shambling zombies pale in comparison to, for example, the jaw-droppingly raw stunt in *Train*'s pivotal chase scene, which features dozens of zombies forming a horrifying sheet of human carpet behind a speeding train.

A standout sequence in which our remaining protagonists, led by Seok-woo and Sang-hwa and equipped with a baseball bat, a riot policeman's shield, and knuckles tightly wrapped in duct tape, must pass through a car filled with oncoming traffic is Yeon's complete control over complex action set-pieces. Yeon makes excellent use of typically mundane spaces like the restroom and the luggage compartments, or routine situations like the train entering tunnels at certain points. The sequence strikes the ideal balance between heart-stopping thrills and adrenaline-pumping excitement, making it one of the best "we have to bust a few zombie heads to save loved ones" scenes ever captured on film (or digital pixels).

Yeon does not neglect his characters either. They do, however, appear to be more like genre archetypes than actual people, and their literary and originality are not as intriguing (and occasionally scary) as in his earlier films. However, I must disagree with the claim that he uses clichéd tear-jerking story twists, particularly in the last third. True, perhaps he should not have given Gong Yoo so many "moving" close-ups, but overall I agree with Yeon's decision to not assume the worst about people aside from Yong-seok, the movie's one truly hateable villain, who nevertheless has a strangely touching moment when he flashes back to the memory of a childhood trauma just before the zombie virus completely takes over his brain.

Viewing the movie, it is easy to understand that its true stars are the unidentified extras who play the zombies. They are vicious, frightening, and occasionally funny, and it works really well when they suddenly go from normal, everyday soldiers, high school students, and salarymen into body-contorting, growling beasts. The DP worked with martial arts coordinator Heo Myung-haeng and his Seoul Action School staff, special effects makeup artist Gwak Tae-yong and his team, "body movement composer" Park Jae-in, who allegedly looked to the inhuman yet graceful movements of animated characters in movies like *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* to come up with the choreography for the zombie's distinctive, jerky movements, and special effects makeup artist Gwak Tae-yong and his crew Lee Hyung-deok. To turn



stuntmen and extras into such cunning creatures, lighting supervisor Park Jeong-woo and editor Yang Jin-mo used their amazing skills to achieve their transformation.

*Train to Busan* satirizes a number of delicate local issues while careening at top speed and deftly creating a great deal of excitement and thrills among viewers. The film is peppered with pointed allusions to current events and controversies, including the disastrous sinking of the Sewol ferry and the tragic loss of many teenage lives, the foot-and-mouth disease epidemic of 2010, which forced farmers to slaughter more than one million pigs, and other recent events and controversies.

In all, I found *Train to Busan* to be an amazing piece of work. The beauty of the story and its execution is without words amazing and truly breath-taking. The actors did such a good job conveying the emotions and the lives of these characters and gave us the audience the room and ability to get to know and understand them better. With *Train to Busan*, the K-factor ruling the world is unarguably phenomenal.

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## 22. Analysis by Mikayla Faires

MIKAYLA FAIRES

*Image by Freepik*



K-pop has the best marketing in the music business. K-pop is Korean pop music that has grown in popularity over the past few years. They have fans everywhere and a growing fan base here in the United States. Many popular groups have been to the states, including BTS, TWICE, and BLACKPINK. Their popularity is due not only to their talent but also to their marketing teams. The marketing for K-pop is on another level. From unique and beautiful photo shoots to bright colors and cool designs, what is not to love? K-pop groups have music video teasers and concept photos for every comeback. A comeback is when a K-pop group or soloist releases a single, mini or full-length album. The K-pop industry makes comebacks a big deal. Each release has a title track (the main song) for marketing the album. The title track will have a music video, and the group will perform it at multiple music competitions. A K-pop company will have a photo shoot with their K-pop group to promote their album. They will take group and individual shots and post them on social media to get fans excited about their upcoming release. K-pop companies will also release music video teasers to reel in fans and get them interested in their new album.

*Image by qeaql-studio on Freepik*



K-pop albums come in different versions with multiple photo concepts. The most popular concepts are cute, girl/boy crush, and elegant. Included with the albums are photo cards, and for pre-orders, fans will get extra photocards and a poster. The pre-order goodies are for encouraging the fans to buy their new release. Many people buy K-pop albums for photo cards, which is why photo card collecting and trading are popular. I went to a photo card trading social on campus, and everyone had their binders full of photo cards on the table. We went around the table and looked at everyone's photo cards.



*Image by Freepik*

Exciting variety shows like Inkigayo, Music Bank, and Music Core are on the air for K-pop groups to perform their title tracks. Recordings of the shows are on YouTube and fan cams, which are individual of each member in the performance. Each member has a camera on them and another camera filming them together. Studio Choom is a YouTube channel that films K-pop group's title tracks from their comebacks in high quality. K-pop fans look forward to Studio Chooms videos whenever their favorite K-pop group releases a new album. YouTube videos also draw in new K-pop fans.



*Image by pikisuperstar on Freepik*

V-live is a platform where K-pop idols talk to their fans. K-pop fans have notifications on and are ready for when they go live. Every time a group or group member goes live, it is all over K-pop Twitter. Many K-pop fans have fan accounts on Twitter, either dedicated to their favorite group or member. Promo is spread throughout Twitter because fans will talk about every update a group has since they are excited. Being a K-pop fan is more than listening to their favorite groups because they absorb themselves in it. V-live builds an emotional connection between the K-pop fan and the member because they feel like they know them. Seeing K-pop groups behind the scenes is intimate, even if they are not showing every aspect of their lives. Seeing K-pop groups as people instead of idols makes fans like them more.



*Image by mindandi on Freepik*

Another way fans can be intimate with K-pop groups is through fan signing events. Fan signing events are when a K-pop group sits at a long table while fans go down to the table and meet each member. Fans can bring something with them so the members can sign it. Not only do companies promote their groups as a whole, but they also promote their members individually. Concept photos from each concept will have individual pictures of the members. This marketing tactic starts the bond between the K-pop fan and the member. Every fan has a bias for their favorite groups. A bias is their number one idol in the group. For example, my bias in TWICE is Sana.



*Image by starline on Freepik*

K-pop is more prevalent in the states than J-pop, but they cater to their Japanese audience. K-pop is popular in Japan, and K-pop groups sometimes release Japanese versions of their popular songs and albums 100% in Japanese. It is not rare for K-pop groups to have Japanese members. TWICE, one of the most popular 3rd generation girl groups, has three Japanese members, including Sana, Momo, and Mina. TWICE has 9 Japanese albums and 12 Japanese singles.



*Image by studio4rt on Freepik*

Many K-pop groups have a light stick. Light sticks are handheld sticks that light up, and each group has a uniquely crafted light stick that represents them. For example, Cherry Bullet's light stick looks like a gun because their group name has, "bullet" included. Instead of phone flashlights, light sticks are used at K-pop concerts to light up the crowd. Sometimes the K-pop groups will tell the audience what color they want them to put on their light stick for certain songs. Light sticks have different modes, such as flashing, strobe, solid, and multicolored lights. Many fans have them, even if they do not attend K-pop concerts. Some people use their light sticks when the power goes out. During the freeze in 2021, many K-pop fans used their light stick when the power went out for a long time. Some K-pop fans like to display their light sticks and personalize them.



*Image by pikisuperstar on Freepik*

K-pop fandom names make being a K-pop fan part of a family. The fandom name for the group TWICE is Once. The fandom name for BLACKPINK is Blink. Blink is a fusion of black and ink. Stays is the fandom name for Stray Kids, and their slogan is "You Make Stray Kids Stay." They display it at the end of their music videos. People like to feel like they belong somewhere. K-pop fans are proud to be in their fandoms. Being in a fandom is not just about the music. They also support each other when someone is going through a hard time. Fans interact with each other through social media like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.



*Image by mego-studio on Freepik*

The closest marketing I have seen for an artist on a K-pop level is Taylor Swift's marketing team. Taylor Swift is one of the most popular female artists in the music business. Her marketing is excellent but falls short of K-pop marketing. Her album "1989" had 13 "Polaroid", pictures which reminded me of K-pop photo cards. Her album "Lover" did not have photo cards but had four versions, with pages from her diary, pictures of her, and a poster. This album reminded me of K-pop albums because they usually have four versions of each album. When One Direction was a group, they had photo books like K-pop groups have, except they did not come with posters or photo cards. Taylor also has types of vinyl available for each of her albums. Where she lacks in marketing is social media. She does not post as many concept photos and music video teasers as K-pop companies do. She may post music video teasers, but they are not on the same level as K-pop videos. Many times they are a clip of the music video without much editing.



*Image by Drazen Zigic  
on Freepik*

During the Reputation World Tour, she had light-up bracelets for the audience. The bracelets were given out for free at the concerts and had a basic design. They only had one setting, which was a white light. The bracelets lit up in sync, and one of the designs was a snake. Taylor partnered with PixMob for the bracelets. Projectors on the ceiling shot out infrared light beams onto the bracelets to light them on in different shapes. Shawn Mendes also collaborated with PixMob for his tour in 2019. K-pop light sticks are expensive because they have different settings, colors, and decorations. During the 1989 World Tour, Taylor had small LED sticks and bracelets that turned different colors and flashed to the beat of the songs. They were only supposed to be on during the night of the concert. Every fan got one when they arrived at the concert venue. The sticks and bracelets do not have any designs or colors when they are off. During the Red Tour, they had light sticks that said, "THE RED TOUR," which were made of foam and did not light in sync. Many new K-pop light sticks have Bluetooth features that sync them at K-pop concerts.

*Image by macrovector on  
Freepik*



TWICE albums are the only K-pop group that has different CDs for each album. There are nine members, so nine types of CDs could be in each album. Each CD has one of its pictures on it. No one else in the music business has different CDs. Another marketing tactic that K-pop does that no one else has done before is partnering up with a food company and putting a photo card in it. BLACKPINK collaborated with Nabisco's Oreos, and the packaging is black and pink with a random 1 out of 4 photo cards.

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## 23. Korean Beauty Standards Weight on Society: Movie Analysis by Andrea Obaya

ANDREA OBAYA

### *200 Pounds Beauty's* Weight on Today's Entertainment Industry

Like religion, the entertainment industry varies in each country but like the gods in different religions, these celebrities in the industry are held to a “god-like” standard and placed onto a pedestal to worship, both expected to be “perfect.” The difference is that gods are considered perfect in all ways and are allowed to make mistakes without being judged while celebrities are meant to be “perfect” with no flaws to them and are not allowed to make mistakes as they are subject to civilization’s criticism that is the tabloids and the people themselves. Though each country has its variations of these “perfect, god-like” celebrities, filed under the codename “ideal types” or “beauty standards,” South Korea has one of the strictest molds to follow for its gods that go by the title “idols” –their female deities having the most scrutinizing perfection to achieve. Indirectly starting in 1997, K-pop (Korean pop music) was starting to become popular with groups such as Seo Taiji and the Boys and H.O.T, but S.E.S’s debut set the standard for the “visuals” in K-pop. When S.E.S debuted, their concept was very “fairy-like, youthful,” which became an aspect for future girl groups to have, and one member, Eugene, was known for her natural visuals in that she became known as the first “visual.” To this day, she is still recognized for her visuals. After S.E.S, many groups started following this concept and made it an official position in both boy and girl groups, designated to the “prettiest” member who was closest to meeting the Korean beauty standards. As time went by, this idea to be a visual applied to all members as they were all expected to be beautiful in the eyes of the Korean beauty standards and would become stricter over time, to the point that it was no longer about talent nor natural visuals, but molded and fabricated beauty through plastic surgery. It has become such a norm in South Korea to get plastic surgery in order to reach these Korean beauty standards or else one would have to face the criticism and judgment of Korean citizens (netizens) and though, Korea has been lowering its standards a bit in recent times, it is still very detailed and closed-minded to unrealistic levels that there have been articles, movies, songs, and dramas addressing this issue by focusing on loving oneself and accepting one’s own natural beauty -like the film *200 Pounds Beauty*.

Based on Yumiko Suzuki’s manga *Kanna’s Big Success!*, *200 Pounds Beauty* is a 2006 musical romantic comedy about an overweight woman named Hanna who is a phone sex worker and is also the singing voice for popular idol Ammy while in love with the director, Sangjun. After constant humiliation from Ammy and others and an interrupted suicide attempt, she decides to get plastic surgery and disappears for a year. When she returns as a “beautiful” woman, she auditions for her old job as Ammy’s singer and ends up getting signed as an artist. At the end, she realizes that looks are not what matters as it did not truly make a difference and made her a worse person, acknowledging she was beautiful all along and accepting who she was. This movie was commercially successful as it was not only entertaining, but also called out the industry for the beauty standards set on idols. Both the movie and soundtracks are considered classics as the main song, “Maria,” is still covered by idols today.

As mentioned earlier, the Korean beauty standards are very strict and detailed. Both men and women have their own, separate beauty standards set upon them, but the one for females is more excruciating than the one for men. Men, for the most part, are expected to be tall and in shape, and no judgment goes beyond that, but women are judged to the finest imperfections found on them. The general Korean beauty standard for women consists of an “overall innocent look: small face, big eyes, [and] slim body”<sup>12</sup> but it goes much more into detail. Besides having a very slim

body with no curves and pale skin, most of the attention goes into the face as they highly regard small faces that give that youthful look: female idols are desired to have a pointy nose, plump lips, “v-shaped” jawline, straight eyebrows, and large eyes with double eyelids. For their skin and body type specifically, the skin needs to be white and flawless while the body needs to make an “S” shaped when in profile mode and “X” shape in frontal mode with a straight shoulder line and long legs<sup>12</sup> that usually should not be too muscular –a saying is that if an idol puts their feet together and straightens their legs, no parts of their legs should touch together or they would be considered to have too much muscle. Though no person could have 100% of these qualities, usually the “visuals” are those who naturally have most of these qualities or got plastic surgery to appeal to these standards more. As the industry is shifting towards having more “authentic” artists, more current idols are speaking out about these standards and spreading the message of loving oneself. Besides the common example of BTS with their “Love Yourself” album concept, artists like Hwasa from Mamamoo and Amber from f(x) have been known for speaking out against the beauty industry. Hwasa has been criticized by many for supposedly being fat and she has relayed the story of how she got harshly rejected by companies for being “fat” and how she was told she would never make it in the industry because of her looks. But she is a very popular idol now, and she uses her platform to spread the message of loving oneself. There is a video where a fan asks for her advice about dieting and she yells at them “Just eat!,” implying at them to not diet. A quote from her also says “If I don’t fit into this generation’s standard of beauty, then I will have to become a different standard.”<sup>10</sup> Amber also goes against the standards by having a tomboy appearance and she has always advocated for being herself, explaining that if she can be an inspiration for future generations, she wants to help make a positive change as there is so much negativity in the world and wants to make the world a better place for people.<sup>10</sup>



Bomi from “Apink” representing the youthful image with “V-shaped” chin in Korean beauty standards. Original Title: “Yoon Bo-mi of Apink at a fan signing in Sangam in July 2018” by @redpanda0419 is licensed under CC BY-4.0.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uhlibraries.pressbooks.pub/chin3342fa22/?p=111#oembed-1>

Returning back to *200 Pounds Beauty*, the character of Ammy is meant to embody these standards. Though she does not meet 100 percent of those standards, she meets the expectations of trying to match a somewhat Western-look, also embodying the saying that says “Visuals first, talent later.” This saying is commonly used as it is known to be said that talent can be taught, but visuals cannot, which is ironic, as idols usually get plastic surgery, and the visuals usually tend to have sub or lead vocal, dance, and rap positions (though there are exceptions). As mentioned in the plot summary of the movie, Hanna provides the singing voice for Ammy as Ammy can only dance and perform but cannot hold a tune and the reason she is the star and not Hanna is because Hanna is overweight and Ammy has the ideal body type. This is clearly seen throughout the first quarter of the film but is directly acknowledged in the bathroom scene after Hanna is humiliated by Ammy by tricking her into wearing a dress Ammy also wore to emphasize their different body types. In the bathroom, Sangjun reprimands Ammy for her joke but not for reasons of morality as he tells her that he wants to continue a lavish lifestyle but Ammy is messing that up by messing with Hanna. Unbeknown to them, Hanna is in the restroom listening. Sangjun admits that he does not really like her and is only nice to her because she will keep both his and Ammy’s career and lifestyle afloat, openly saying that Hanna should be the one to feel sorry for herself because she has talent but is ugly and fat while Ammy has no talent but is sexy and beautiful.<sup>7</sup>

Hanna is repulsed and criticized for the first quarter of the film because of her weight and this is emphasized through the other characters, mostly through Ammy, and the camera shots. Before the bathroom scene mentioned earlier, when Hanna arrives at the little room in the club where Sangjun and others are at, as she makes her way to sit next to Sangjun, the other men in the room look at her and have a repulsed expression on their faces. The director also brings out Koreans’ true sentiment about body shaming in that bathroom scene as he shoots Ammy and Sangjun’s conversation from a level point of view as a way of emphasizing that they are acknowledging their thoughts in a straightforward manner. The scene of Hanna crying in the restroom after overhearing them is shot from above in a bird’s eye view, as if the camera represents Koreans looking down on her. Throughout the film, we see references of this Korean beauty standard through, not only Ammy’s constant reminders of how different they are, but also in other scenes where there are posters of CF’s with female idols that Hanna’s friend, Jungmin, points out as “treasures” for men while average women are “gifts” and then there are those like them called “rejects.”<sup>7</sup> Also, during one of her phone sex sessions, one of the male customers asks her what her body size is while he excites himself and she makes up the numbers by saying her bust is 34 inches, waist is 24 inches and hip is 36 inches, which excites him more and represents the ideal, average body size.<sup>7</sup> Her overweightness is also brought out in “comedic” scenes that poke fun at Hanna’s weight such as the paramedic flashback scene where she has to roll herself over since the paramedics cannot move her and when she falls through the stage floor when dancing.<sup>7</sup>

Now, Korea is known for making plastic surgery a commodity and idols especially undergo plastic surgery, as mentioned earlier, to meet these specific beauty standards. Through the use of idols undergoing this procedure, it has become popularized by Koreans to get work done to look better and that life will be better if they are pretty as appearances do matter over there. This is seen through Hanna as she tries to commit suicide through carbon monoxide poisoning until she gets interrupted by one of her phone sex customers who happens to be a plastic surgeon<sup>7</sup> -serving almost like an ad sent from heaven above (exhibited yet again by another bird’s-eye view shot) that says “Don’t kill yourself, the answer is in plastic surgery to make your life better.” When she meets with him to convince him to do major surgeries on her, she mentions how this will literally let her live a life as she felt she died the day she overheard Sangjun in the restroom. After agreeing, they are going over what facials she would want, emphasizing this idea of living up to these standards the industry and the nation have set while also idolizing Western culture as she mentions she wants Kate Moss’s nose.<sup>7</sup>

After she recovers a year later, she cries looking at herself as she feels happy and then goes out onto the street happily and buys the dress she had always wanted but could not because of her weight. She also goes by the alias “Jenny” as she becomes a new person.

The scene right after she gets plastic surgery is critical in showing the significance of these beauty standards to Koreans and how much impact it could have on a person. When she is walking down the street, a song that sings “I’m a beautiful girl” plays as everyone stares at her and when she goes to the mall and car dealership afterward, she accidentally makes a guy fall off his Vespa, is flattered by a car salesman and gets out of paying a ticket because of her beauty.<sup>7</sup> The film’s message is showing that someone can get away with anything if they are pretty, as when the delivery guy falls in love with her and the man who she crashed into and the police officer both pardon her for the crash because she was pretty.<sup>13</sup> The director also brings this out in his editing as any scene where the male gaze (not including Sangjun) is fixated on Hanna, it happens in slow motion with a glow around her as the brightness is increased around her, emphasizing the angelic beauty, thanks to her plastic surgery. Though the film does highlight the good aspects that come out of plastic surgery, as the message of the film is to love oneself, it also plays “devil’s advocate” and shows how one can lose themselves to their new identity. Sure, in the beginning of the film, it was a positive thing for Hanna to get plastic surgery as she is receiving the love and admiration of people that she never had, but as the film progresses, she denies her previous self and demonizes her as a monster, which is ironic, and starts losing the people around her through her actions. In the scene where Hanna is reprimanding Jungmin for falling for a guy, who is scamming her for money, Hanna indirectly insults Jungmin as she is considered ugly and knows he does not love her as she has suffered the same fate as well. Jungmin serves as the voice of reason for Hanna and reminds her in a scene that the women men consider “treasures” do look like her, but if they got plastic surgery to look like that, they are “monsters” and men will not want them. She is essentially telling her that she does not recommend telling Sangjun the truth, but if she feels so confident in her new look, to go for it, but he will not reciprocate as her beauty is a lie. At dinner with Sangjun afterwards, she does convince Sangjun to not demonize plastic surgery and see the positive effect it can do to someone, but he does acknowledge he would not want his girl to have work done, leading to Hanna not telling him the truth. At the end, after pushing away her father, losing Jungmin, and realizing Sangjun still only sees her as a product of the company, she learns that it did not matter if she looked better as Sangjun still did not love her and ended up losing her closest friend. The irony of it all is that after she signed as “Jenny” and the surgeons deemed her “too perfect,” Sangjun’s brother, who also runs the company, suggests she get plastic surgery to make her eyes a bit bigger and raise her nose up a bit, showing that society will never be satisfied and no one is perfect.<sup>7</sup>



*Kim Hyeon Sook who portrays Jungmin in “200 Pounds Beauty.” Original Title: “Kim Hyeon Sook in September 2011” by Acrofan is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.*

The film concludes with Jenny’s concert, where she exposes her past self as a form of closure and wanting to be honest with her fans before Ammy exposes her truth. In return, the people chant “It’s okay” and encourage her to sing, admiring her bravery and consoling her for her past misfortunes. At last, she accepts her past self as she had a soul and embraces both Jenny and Hanna into her future.<sup>7</sup> The film shows that no matter how much plastic surgery a person gets to look ideally as expected or how much one does to please someone, authenticity is preferred, as it is more real. As the K-pop genre is switching to a more authentic look, it validates the ending a bit. Sadly, though people want authenticity more now, the film does imply that even though there is a lesson to this film, plastic surgery is and will still be very heavily applied in Korean society as it is shown at the end of the post credit that the plastic surgeon’s office is filled with women who want work done on themselves like Hanna’s and the viewer sees Jungmin there asking to get plastic surgery everywhere like Hanna did. Jungmin being at the surgeon’s office represents society that even though society knows it is not real and it is better to be one’s true self; even the most moral of people are pressured into getting plastic surgery as a way of getting accepted into society. Even the scene where the audience tells Hanna that everything is okay, it is another way of saying society approves of her now as the shock and noises people made when they saw Hanna’s old self is repulsive and they tell her it is okay now as she is now approved by society and its standards.

Though this movie came out sixteen years ago, the message still lingers about plastic surgery and fabricated beauty vs natural beauty. Idols are coming out more with the truth on their plastic surgeries but most still hide it and play it off as natural. Though more people are now more accepting of beauty flaws or now see aspects of the beauty standards that were once not well received, such as monolids, “cat-like” eyes or round faces, the idea of plastic surgery is still prominent in Korea’s society, especially in the media. K-dramas (Korean dramas) such as “My ID Is Gangnam Beauty” and “True Beauty” both have an emphasis on women having to please society with their appearances and be accepted into it or be outcast by it. “My ID Is Gangnam Beauty” is a 2018 drama that centers around a college student who was bullied throughout middle and high school and decides to get plastic surgery before starting college. When she enters college, everyone is amazed by her beauty and is heavily admired and complimented, being admitted into society, just like Hanna was when she released herself from the hospital. Afterwards, people start to see her through her plastic surgery/natural beauty lie and she starts to get isolated from society that once accepted her because they now see her as a monster for



getting plastic surgery, the same message Jungmin relays to Hanna when she wants to tell Sangjun the truth. The drama received praise as well for calling out Korea's beauty standard and this weight society puts towards women and their appearances. Though "True Beauty" (2021) has a female protagonist who does NOT get plastic surgery, she is an outcast through bullying because of her looks and she learns how to do her makeup to give her a more beautiful appearance when she transfers schools. The only problem is that two of the boys there have seen her previous self and she has to hide her past in order to not be recognized or exposed for her "ugliness." Again, this recurring theme of having to be beautiful for society is still prevalent in today's time, showing how after sixteen years, society has not changed much and though in both dramas, she does end up with the male lead, ironically both played by Cha Eun-woo from Astro, who accepts her for who she is and for her past self, it is still shown that he would not have liked her or it implies that had she not gotten surgery, she would not have caught his attention before, as the audience did with Hanna when they accept her bravery and new look.

The idea of having the perfect body also still lingers in pop culture, but throughout music, more artists are expressing their opinions on how Korea needs to change. The film starts with the idea that Ammy is the star because she fits the standards and Hanna does not, but toward the end, Hanna normalizes the idea that idols are humans too and this is what society does to people as she felt forced to get plastic surgery in order to live life. An example of a song that brings out the standards in a misogynistic way is Park Jin Young (JYP)'s 2015 single, "Who's Your Mama." In the song, he starts off by asking a woman what her waist and hip size is while in the video, he is checking her out. The whole song then is basically JYP singing about if a woman does not have a beautiful, sexy body that fits the Korean standard, he would not look at her nor be interested in them. He is asking who their mom is as to ask how they raise a goddess of a daughter because her body is driving him crazy, all while having women shake their hips and butt for the choreography as he dances with them.<sup>6</sup> Again, he is speaking of society's thoughts that if one does not fit the Korean beauty standards, they will be shunned or not treated as equal to someone who does fit it.

Again, idols are speaking out more on this issue, mostly through their music. In a 2018 interview, when speaking on being in the industry for over a decade and what she would like to change, artist and Girls' Generation member Tiffany Young mentions how she would want to normalize idols, saying how they are humans too and they laugh, cry, fight, have snot coming out of their noses once in a while, and are not perfect. Both Itzy's 2020 hit "Wannabe" and (G)-Idle's 2022 hit "Tomboy" are two examples of women in the industry exuding confidence and speaking out about the industry and wanting to break free of those standards. Both female groups sing about the freedom to be themselves. Itzy repeats "I don't wanna be somebody. Just wanna be me, be me. I wanna be me, me, me," "There's no need to be something, I'm the best when I'm myself," and for the people, they say "It's none of your business. I do my own business,"<sup>5</sup> stating that they feel bad and selfish for being themselves but it should not concern anyone but themselves; while (G)-Idle sings about being a tomboy, which again goes against Korea's beauty standards, and how they ask a boy (referring to society) if they "want a blond Barbie doll" to which she responds "It's not here. I am not a doll."<sup>1</sup> Both songs exude confidence in who they are and go against prejudice with the visuals for the music video, showing Itzy doing what is not expected of them like letting loose, breaking plates, and walking a runway without shoes while (G)-Idle make dolls of themselves but not the typical Barbie dolls and they kill the Ken doll as a way of killing society's prejudice over them. The Barbie reference also ties back to the film as Hanna is seen with a Barbie doll and how she wanted to be a Barbie to fit the beauty standards. When her dad hands her back the doll and she does not accept it, it is a moment of closure for the audience, as she did become a Barbie in the physical sense but is becoming hollow inside like the doll. When Jungmin asks her why she did not take the doll if it's from her "biggest fan," it is her rejecting herself, like (G)-Idle rejecting what the industry has done to them.<sup>3</sup>





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uhlibraries.pressbooks.pub/chin3342fa22/?p=111#oembed-2>

In conclusion, the message of *200 Pounds Beauty* still applies to today as the idea of being perfect idols still lingers in the industry, with plastic surgery still encouraged and society still condemning these artists for not fitting beauty standards or wanting to openly express themselves. While more artists do speak out more on this issue, some also become afraid to say anything due to society's repercussions as they can get criticized more for it, leading to idols becoming traumatized and ending their life to end the hate. Two examples were Sulli and Hara, who were both idols and though they were considered visuals of their groups, they were both scrutinized by the public for their past mistakes and thoughts, especially Sulli who was very open minded and Koreans did not like the way she thought or expressed herself. Like Hanna attempted to do, they both ended up committing suicide within a month from each other, and that opened people's eyes on the toxic nature of the industry and the internet. This film demonstrated how toxic these beauty standards could be and is a wakeup call to Koreans to stop expecting so much visually from their idols and focus more on the talent. The audience in the film was rooting for and making rich a person who got by with their looks while reprimanding the talent in an industry that requires talent: it subtly points out how society is blind as they never figured out that Ammy and Hanna/Jenny have the same voice. This film brings out what society does not see and wants them to be aware of the "gods" they are worshiping and making rich while also the pressure they are putting on people, especially their female deities of idols. It was a call to action for Korea to change their thoughts/perceptions and still is today a cry for help.

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## 24. Analysis by Anonymous 2

ANONYMOUS 2



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PART V  
SHANGHAI

## 25. History/Religion

ZAHRA GOKAL

### Shanghai's History

#### Early History

Shanghai was not originally known as Shanghai; a simple fishing and agricultural village, it was known as Hudu back in its early era. In its early days, Shanghai was not a significant area in terms of population growth or economic status. Its coastal location ensured its status as a great port within the coming years. The population gradually increased and the village officially rose to a higher status during the Song dynasty (960-1126), turning into a market town. During the Yuan dynasty in 1291, it became an official city.

#### Ming Dynasty

During the Ming Dynasty, Shanghai's reputation as a port grew. A wall was erected around the city in order to ward off Japanese pirates and to make sure the shipping industry was not affected at all. The city had a cotton and textile industry to maintain as well, growing rapidly by the time the next dynasty came around. The population was almost 200,000 by the time the 17th century came along.



Early Shanghai – Yan Zhongmin, Wikimedia Foundation

#### Opium Wars

The East India Company explored Shanghai in hopes of finding spices or opium to trade. Opium was illegal in China, but Britain offered it to be a profitable trading good and initiated a war. The Opium Wars took place from 1839 to 1860. Britain won the first Opium War with the Treaty of Nanjing, allowing Shanghai's port to be open to all foreigners including the French, Americans, and British. They were allowed a certain portion of the city to occupy while the rest of the natives stayed in another location.

#### Republic of China and WWII

A revolution took place in 1911 which established China as a republic, thus putting an end to the dynasties. Immediately following this, Shanghai experienced many more major events. The Chinese Communist Party formed in Shanghai in



1921 due to power struggles in the new republic. This time period was also the center of an opium struggle. The city took in many refugees from the Holocaust in the 1930s during World War II. Shanghai was divided into a Western and Eastern half: its Western half, which housed European settlers, grew four times as much as the Eastern half, which housed Chinese citizens.

World War II was tough on Shanghai, as it became a battlefield quite a few times. On January 28, 1932, the city was bombed by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service, to which China retaliated. The battle eventually came to a standstill. This event was known as the January 28 Incident or the Shanghai Incident.

In 1937, the Battle of Shanghai took place, the first of many battles which signified the Second Sino-Japanese War. Many Chinese parts of the city fell during this time, and assassinations happened left and right. The Japanese continued to occupy Shanghai until their surrender in August 1945.

In 1949, the Communist Party took over Shanghai. People who were considered counter-revolutionaries were targeted and killed.

## Shanghai Today

Today, Shanghai stands as a center of economic life, building up the city's famous skyline. It is the largest city in China by population, reaching almost 25 million people.

Despite this, it is also at risk of flooding due to climate change. The main problems today are air and water pollution in Shanghai. Poor water quality means that it can get into one's system, while poor air quality means a tougher time breathing. More environmental efforts are underway in order to improve life quality in Shanghai.

## Shanghai's Religions

Shanghai has a diverse population and a rich history, having been influenced by a variety of religions around the area. The city recognizes five religions (Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism, Islam, and Protestantism), but the Chinese Communist Party is atheist. One of the biggest religions in Shanghai is the Chinese folk religion, which consists of ancestors, spirits, and deities.

According to Council on Foreign Affairs, as of 2020, Shanghai is:

- 31.8% Agnostic
- 30.8% Chinese folk-religionist
- 16.6% Buddhist
- 7.4% Christian
- 6.8% Atheist
- 1.8% Muslim
- 0.4% Daoist
- 0.2% Other



Muslims in Shanghai, 2019. Council on Foreign Relations (Aly Song/Reuters)

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## 26. Economy/Politics

JORGE I. ALCOCER

### Economy & Transportation

Shanghai has one of the largest seaports in the world and has a major industrial and economical importance for China: Shanghai contributed more than 3 trillion Renminbi (USD 448 billion) to China's GDP in 2017. Shanghai was also of China's first seaports to be open to western trade which enabled it to become the leading city in China's commerce. Shanghai is also one of China's leading manufacturing and industrial centers and the city's machine industry has been key in China's modernization plans.

For a long time now, Shanghai has been China's leading city for industrial and manufacturing services due to several factors including: the availability of a workforce that was large in size, highly trained, skilled, and technologically innovated. Shanghai also has access to a scientific research center that supports industrial endeavors, a long standing tradition of receiving cooperation from producers, and an internal and external communications system that is well coordinated with supply facilities.

The iron and steel industries in Shanghai were one of the first to be established in China. In the 1950s, the introduction of blast furnaces caused Shanghai's iron and steel industry to grow then later, in the 1970s, iron and steel companies started creating new facilities in the northern region of Shanghai one of which was the Shanghai Baosteel Group Corporation which has been one of the world's largest enterprises in the 21st century. Shanghai also has two major banks: the China Construction Bank and the Bank of China, both of which serve as administrative branches to China's Ministry of Finance. Meaning that they are responsible for management and disbursement of capital investment funds.



*"In Shanghai Port" by ddefranza is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.*



*"Three Giants – Shanghai" by blake.thornberry is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

Shanghai is one of China's largest centers for major transportation. The central city acts as both a seaport and a river port. Being located near the Huangpu River allows Shanghai to have a harbor that allows ocean transports to sail through the river and into the city. During the 1950s, many of the districts in Shanghai were used as different specialized sections such as some sections being used for storage and others being used as transportation maintenance and repair resources. Now there are at least 125 docks and 19 terminals throughout Shanghai and its districts. Shanghai's railroad system began construction in the 1870s but was later reoriented in the 1940s in order to balance exports and domestic development necessities. Recently, in 2011, a high-speed rail line connected Shanghai and Beijing, greatly reducing the travel time between both cities.

## Politics

In general, the Shanghai Municipality is overseen by the central government within Beijing. During the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, China began to reorganize their governmental systems and levels of hierarchy and in 1967 the Shanghai Municipal Revolutionary Committee became the dominant governing system in Shanghai after much disarray between revolutionary parties attempting to seize control of the city.

Later, the Shanghai Municipal Revolutionary Committee was replaced by another municipal government body that was made up of several offices, commissions, and bureaus under the control of an elected body called Shanghai People's Congress. This government body serves as a policy advisory and administrative function that also serves as a link between the national government located in Beijing as well as the local governments surrounding Shanghai's municipality.



"Shanghai municipal government building" by tsuihin - TimoStudios is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

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## 27. Tourist Attractions/Culture

AMALIA M. COGBILL

### Tourism in Shanghai

Shanghai is one of the biggest and iconic cities of China. On average, Shanghai brings in over 118 million visitors annually. One of the most iconic landmarks of Shanghai is the Bund, also known as Waitan. Waitan translates to mean “Outer Beach”. This water walkway is just under a mile, yet it is the perfect way for tourists to see the skyscrapers and colonial buildings. Dating to the 1840s, the Bund was built by the British after the First Opium War. It is a tourist spot that is bound to attract history and photography lovers.



*“The Bund at Night” by Tali Slutsker of Wikimedia Commons is licensed under CC-BY-SA*



*“Pearl Tower from the Bund Shanghai China” by Haluk Comertel is licensed under CC-BY*

The Waibaidu Bridge is a tourist spot that people can see while touring the Bund. Waibaidu Bridge spans across the Suzhou Creek. It was first built in 1856, and then in 1908, the bridge was rebuilt out of steel. Tourists can enjoy the scenery from the bridge. Waibaidu Bridge is also a popular tourist spot for honeymooners.



*“Waibaidu Bridge Shanghai” by Kallerna is licensed under CC-BY-SA*

Another tourist destination of Shanghai is the Jade Buddha Temple. Jade Buddha Temple was originally built in 1882 to house two jade Buddha statues. The statues were brought to China by a Burmese monk named Huigen. During the Qing dynasty revolution in 1911, the original temple was destroyed. The temple was rebuilt in 1928. Today Jade Buddha Temple is a temple that is home to around 70 monks. The jade statues that the temple houses are both porcelain pieces carved out of white jade. When visitors walk in the temple, they will see a seated Buddha statue front and center, they will also see the reclining Buddha statue. In addition to these two statues, tourists will be able to see other Buddha statues and artifacts. While visiting this temple, tourists are able to dine at its vegetarian restaurant.



*“Jade Buddha Temple” by Stefan Fussan is licensed under CC-BY-SA*

One tourist destination of Shanghai that will be attractive to families is Disneyland Shanghai. This theme park opened in 2016, and is a unique combination of Chinese culture and Disney. Visitors can see attractions such as Enchanted Storybook Castle, which boasts to be the largest and tallest of all Disney theme parks, and the Gardens of Imagination. Visitors are encouraged to visit Disneyland Shanghai during the week as tickets are more expensive on weekends. Just as they are encouraged to visit Disneyland Shanghai during the week, visitors are discouraged from visiting during Chinese New Year, Qingming Festival, which occurs in the beginning of April, and the Dragon Boat Festival, which occurs in the beginning of June.





*"Enchanted Storybook Castle of Shanghai Disneyland" by Fayloo is licensed under CC-BY-SA*

Shanghai Museum is a must-see tourist destination. The museum first opened in 1952, it houses around 120,000 objects, and this museum boasts to have "one of the finest collections of art in China." (Amy Tikkanen, "Shanghai Museum", *Britannica*). Shanghai Museum has five floors with eleven principal galleries. These galleries have sculptures, jades, ceramics, paintings, and bronzes from the Ming and Qing dynasties. The museum also houses Neolithic tools and weapons. One of the highlights of Shanghai Museum, is the life-size, terracotta horse and two warriors from the tomb of Qin Emperor Shihuangdi, the first emperor of China. The Shanghai Museum is bound to be a great interest to tourists who love history.



*"Shanghai Museum" by Ted McGrath is licensed under CC-BY-NC-SA*

When touring the magnificent city of Shanghai be sure to dine on local cuisine. One dish that Shanghai is known for are xiaolongbao also known as soup dumplings. Traditionally served in bamboo baskets, these dumplings are usually filled with a hot broth that will contain either pork, vegetables, or seafood. The most highly recommended place to get xiaolongbao is from Jia Jia Tang Bao restaurant. Another dish that is a must-have in Shanghai is steamed crab. The crabs are tied with strings, and they are steamed in bamboo baskets. The locals can be fussy when it comes to steamed crab, when one can eat male crabs versus female crabs. Beggar's Chicken is another specialty of Shanghai. This dish has folklore in its origins. The story is that a beggar was walking along a road, when he finds a chicken. He intended to eat the chicken, but he did not have a stove, so he covered the chicken with mud, and he baked it in a fire. The emperor smelled the chicken cooking, and he demanded the recipe. Today this chicken is prepared by being sealed in lotus leaves, and then wrapped in wax paper and mud. The chicken is then baked slowly for up to six hours. The most highly recommended place to find this dish is at a restaurant called Xindalu, which is located on the Bund. All in all, Shanghai is a city that will be on every tourist's bucket list.



"Xiao Long Bao at Nanxiang Mantou Dian" by Eason Lai of Wikimedia is licensed under CC-BY-SA



"Beggar's Chicken" by Kwong Lee Cheng is licensed under CC-BY-NC-SA

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# 28. Perceptions of Reality & Imagination of Life in Shanghai (Analysis of Suzhou River) by Jorge I. Alcocer

JORGE I. ALCOCER

**Abstract:** *Suzhou River* (2000) is a Chinese drama and romance film about a tragic love story that depicts the grittiness of urban life in contemporary China. Taking place in modern Shanghai, the film follows the lives of four different people living in the city: the anonymous Narrator, Mei Mei, Madar, and Moudan. The film specifically follows their romantic relationships with one another with the Narrator being both our point of view in which the film is shot and the person telling the stories. The film depicts the blurred lines between the reality of the situations happening as well the imaginative and inconsistency of narrators recounting of the story. This essay argues that *Suzhou River* and its themes of perspective, reality and imagination are indicative of how director Lou Ye perceives Shanghai and causes the audience to question the reality of the situation in Shanghai.

## Introduction

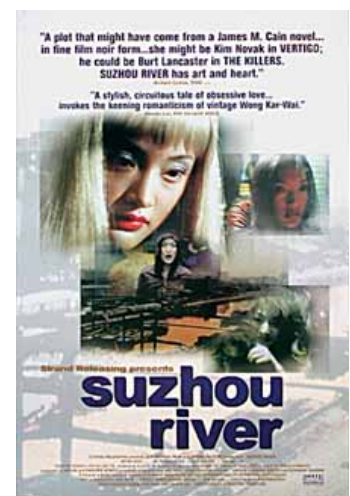
*Suzhou River* (2000), director Lou Ye's second film, depicts a tragic love story taking place within modern day Shanghai. Upon release, *Suzhou River* was generally very well received, however it was not shown in China after Lou Ye screened the movie at the International film festival Rotterdam with permission from Chinese authorities and was subsequently banned from filmmaking for two years. However, since then the film has now been authorized in China. The film revolves around the romantic relationships between Madar, a motorcycle courier, Moudan, the daughter of a vodka smuggler, Mei Mei, a nightclub performer, and the Narrator/ videographer.

## The Narrator



Opening scene of *Suzhou River* (captured from the film)

The story begins through the eyes of the narrator who is riding down Suzhou River and we see through his eyes the state of the riverside. We see shots of dilapidated buildings and the dirty, murky water. Our narrator states that *Suzhou River* tells multiple stories which makes it “the filthiest river”. This evokes a feeling in the audience of what we will be expecting to see throughout the film: a sense of murkiness and deterioration. The narrator says that he is a videographer and claims to film anything as long as he's paid although “you might not like what you see because cameras don't lie”.



Advertisement of *Suzhou River*

The narrator is never shown physically and is only constructed through his monologues performed as a voiceover in certain scenes throughout the film. Making the story be told through his first-person view using his camera shows the importance of the camera points of view in constructing the story while capturing the narrator's own personal perspective of the events unfolding before him. This gives the narrator the control and ability to manipulate what the audience is allowed to see, forcing onto us his limited perspective on the events. The narrator gives us a glimpse into his own reality; one which he cannot change. He is only given the ability to manipulate what he shows us but he himself cannot change those events that have happened.



*Mei Mei through the Narrators perspective (captured from the film)*

When the narrator meets Mei Mei, and later starts going out with her, we see how the narrator's perspective begins to be juxtaposed with a third person narrative as we see him telling the story of Mei Mei using his camera. A connection we can make between the film and the culture of Shanghai is Mei Mei's character and how she ties in with the idea of the modern girl in Shanghai. She smokes, works at a nightclub, and drinks beer, characterizing many of the classifications used for modern girls who lived on speed and stimulation (*The Man Who Was Treated as a Plaything*, 14).



*The Narrator switches to a third person perspective (captured from the film)*



*Use of warm lighting in Madar & Moudan scenes (captured from the film)*

### **Madar & Moudan: Questioning of Reality**

The narrator serves as the connecting point between the beginning story in first person to the now third person narrative telling of the story of Madar and Moudan. Being the one who narrates Madar's and Moudan's story allows him to create his own imagined story. We see examples of this when the narrator, whilst narrating the story, says things like "what else?" "Let me think" and "what if". The use of these words shows how there is a lack of credibility and truth to how the narrator is retelling the story of Madar and Moudan. This creates an imagined and idealized setting in which Madar and Moudan now reside.

The third person points of view as well as the warmer lighting seen in certain scenes is used to dictate Madar and Moudan's story as an intense romantic relationship between the two within a controlled atmospheric scene. This suggests that Madar and Moudan's relationship is the stereotypical love story. However, it is only fiction and contrasts against the reality of the narrator and Mei Mei's relationship. Their relationship, in contrast with Madar and Moudan's, is characterized by closeup, almost suffocating shots that create a claustrophobic feeling to the narrator and Mei Mei's relationship.

## **Narrator Vs Madar: Collision of Reality and Imagination**

When Madar reenters into the current timeline along with the narrator, it allows for the plot of the Madar-Moudan story to commence once again, only this time Madar is the one in charge of telling the story and takes away the narrator's control. At this point the lines between reality and imagination are starting to blur, as the narrator's world, which we have perceived as reality, and Madar's world, which we have perceived to be mostly fictional, are starting to collide and overlap with one another. In certain scenes, we see Madar assuming the 1st person point of view similar to our narrator's point of view and we occasionally see them interacting within these scenes. Both characters share similar experiences as we see the narrator searching for Mei Mei within the crowds of Shanghai during her disappearances, and Madar who is searching for his lost lover Moudan. The narrator and Moudan are beginning to share similar points of views in the narrative, prompting us to question what is imagination and what is reality.

However, when Mei Mei begins to interact with Madar, Madar believes that Mei Mei is Moudan. Mei Mei and Moudan are almost exactly identical, different only in how they're dressed and how they act (both characters are in fact played by the same actress Zhou Xun). Mei Mei at first pushes away Madar and rejects his idea that she is Moudan and doesn't really believe Madar and Moudan's story much less her own role within that story as a replacement for Moudan. In that sense, Mei Mei rejects the idea of such a romantic and almost fantastical love story, believing it to be fictional.

## **Death of the Third Person View**

After the deaths of Madar and Moudan, we no longer see the third person point of view and the rest of the film plays out through the eyes of the narrator. The narrator is asked by the police to identify the bodies of Madar and Moudan and after seeing their bodies, runs off to find Mei Mei to tell her what happened. Mei Mei was pushed into a dramatized romantic scenario when she had a sexual encounter with Madar, believing that she could be Moudan and caving into the desire for a fantastical love story. However, she is brought back into reality when she sees the cold, dead bodies of Madar and Moudan, realizing that Madar never loved her but rather loved Moudan. Mei Mei now finds herself disillusioned about reality and love, discovering that reality does not have the capacity to harbor the extravagant and nonsensical thing that is love. Finally, after the conversation Mei Mei has with the narrator, which ties back to the beginning voice over, we find out that Mei Mei has disappeared, leaving behind a note that reads: "Find me if you love me."

We then see the narrator on a boat drifting down the Suzhou River, drinking a bottle of Buffalo Grass Vodka with the affirmation that he is not Madar, and will not go find Mei Mei. In a way Madar represents a better idealized version of the narrator who does embark on a journey to find his long-lost lover. However, it is only an idealization from the narrator and not something he believes he can become since he is only a narrator, tasked with only showing us his experiences, unable to manipulate the story happening in front of him even if it happens to be his own which is why he sits and waits for the next story to start.

## **Perception of Shanghai**

In accordance with how we view this film and connect it with modern day Shanghai there are a couple of key elements shown throughout the film that illustrate this comparison. For one, there are many shots in the film showing the dilapidated river side of Suzhou River which can cause a bit of a dissonance to the viewer as Shanghai is often perceived as a beautiful and wealthy city and commonly referred to as the "Paris of Asia". Shanghai is also one of China's largest cities responsible for generating a large amount of China's wealth which in contrast, is not something we see represented in the film. This coincides with the overall message of the film and causes the audience to question our own perceptions of Shanghai as a city and the people living there. The unfortunate truth is that despite Shanghai being such a large, beautiful city, it is still stricken with poverty and economic polarization along with a suburbanization of impoverished areas in Shanghai resulting in an exclusion of lower class citizens from better employment, better housing opportunities, and better income.

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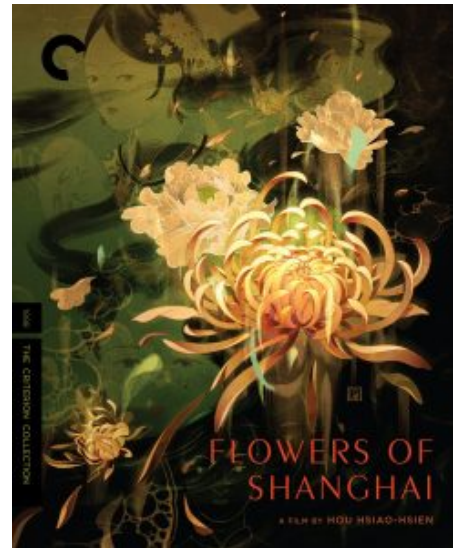
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## 29. The Identity of a City: Flowers of Shanghai (1998) by Zahra Gokal

ZAHRA GOKAL

### *Flowers of Shanghai (1998)*

*Flowers of Shanghai* (1998) directed by Hou Hsiao-Hsien is a beautiful, dream-like movie set in 19th century opium-riddled Shanghai. In the movie, women in a brothel house (known as a “Flower House”) go through many challenges involving each other and their patrons. The film is described to be seductive, hazy, and disorienting, according to a number of reviews on rottentomatoes.com. Throughout this vibrantly-colored movie, the viewer watches all that happens through the lens of an onlooker from afar, observing silently. The director’s goal is not to take the viewer on a plot-driven journey; rather, he emphasizes how a certain scene feels. The slow, hazy feel of the movie could be compared to how opium itself feels: euphoric, relaxed, and addictive. Hou Hsiao-Hsien incorporates many aspects of Shanghai into the movie, packing in its rich history and culture into many long but intriguing scenes.



### Shanghai and Opium

Earlier, it was mentioned that the movie was hazy and had a slow nature to it; this is because opium was prevalent in the film. Every character smoked opium, a highly addictive drug that puts the user in a euphoric state of mind with a slower heart rate. Most of the movie is shadowed by opium smoking, with hookahs being in every room and in nearly every scene. This is significant in the way that it subtly but effectively gives the viewer a sense of what Shanghai was going through at the time.

The Opium Wars took place in China from 1839 to 1860. Opium was initially illegal in China due to its highly addictive nature, but the British wanted to import the good to China regardless. Many foreign traders were illegally importing opium into China, with the Chinese government close on their tail. After many events leading to rising tensions, war was declared by the British and lasted from 1839 to 1942, ending with the Treaty of Nanjing. Of the terms of the treaty, China was required to pay Britain a sum of money as well as allow Britain to own Hong Kong Island. China also had to open more ports around the country to allow more trading to occur. Shanghai was one of the ports, which was one of the main catalysts in allowing it to transform into a significant economic hub.

The second Opium War was initiated by several more skirmishes and incidents between the Chinese and British. This time, the French joined Britain's ranks as well. This war lasted from 1856 to 1860 and resulted in the legalization of opium importation by negotiations in Shanghai. In addition to this, according to the treaties of Tianjin decided in 1858, China was required to provide residence to foreign representatives in Beijing and open more ports to Western trade among other settlements. In 1860, the Chinese government signed the Beijing Convention, ceding part of the Kowloon Peninsula to Britain.

Fast forward to the events of *Flowers of Shanghai*: the characters are seated around a table, lounging in individual rooms, and conversing with each other all with opium smoke surrounding them. It has been over 20 years since the importation of opium was legalized in China, so naturally, it became engrained into their society, used as devices for leisure and poison. As mentioned earlier on in this essay, the slow scenes represent the slowness of one's body and state of mind while intoxicated with the effects of opium. The vibrant colors blurred in with the beauty of the surroundings coincide with the calm high that comes along with the drug. After ingesting it, problems seem miniscule. One's pain seems to disappear. The women in the film experience pain and hardship, but it feels fleeting to the viewer watching from afar. It washes away with the beauty and quietness of the voices, music, and warm hues. The movie itself may as well be an overarching metaphor for opium itself, if not the identity of Shanghai as a whole.



## Symbolism

There are little details around the limited space there is within the setting of the flower house that have some sort of symbolism. As the surroundings are shown to the viewer, many things pop out at once: a hookah, pieces of pottery, and paintings on the walls. These are small reminders of a greater

society outside the flower house: China — more specifically, Shanghai — in the 1880s. Many of these items were granted and paid for by customers of the flower girls, for the flower girls.

The colors of the movie are clear: warm colors which include reds, oranges, and yellows. Very rarely is there a different color as the main color of the movie. Red is one of the main colors in Chinese culture, and is typically worn during weddings. Traditionally, red is the color of love, passion, and anger. These are all themes in the flower houses. Patrons pay the girls for sex and company, which comes with intense passion and longing. Events of the movie prove that

attraction and attachment also comes with being with one another for long: Master Wang had been calling for Crimson for a couple of years, and the two of them developed feelings for each other that turned sour as the movie progressed. Wang fell for Jasmin after Crimson refused to marry him, which angered Crimson. Wang promised to compensate her for it by paying her debts, but as he still had feelings for her, he broke all her possessions in a rage after finding out she may have slept with someone else. Wang eventually married Jasmin, who cheated on him with his nephew.

Orange and yellow are shown a great deal in the movie as well. Both colors represent happiness and wealth, two qualities that one can use to describe the patrons in the brothel house. Many scenes show the wealthy men talking and playing drinking games over a table in a dining room, surrounded by their regular flower girls and the servants in the house. If they are regulars, it would mean they have enough money to continue going for years on end. Many decorations, pottery, and furniture in the houses were granted and paid for by these patrons of the flower girls, for the flower girls.



## Social Customs and Hierarchies

The regular patrons in the flower houses are clearly upper-class citizens within the realm of business and social life. Master Wang himself was said to have a promotion and move from Shanghai to Guangdong with Jasmin toward the end of the movie.

Despite being surrounded by the luxuries brought to them by their customers, however, the flower girls live a life of slavery. They are bought as young girls and are brought up and trained by their flower house “aunty,” and when they come of age, they start working. Their source of income depends on how they perform for the men who come in for them. If they behave and can sell themselves well, the man who comes to see them may decide to buy them something they want. A good amount of the money the flower girls earn goes to their aunty regardless of how much they make. They are exploited, sexualized, and abused in this industry they never asked to work for. They can only hope to get married to one of their patrons before they grow older and the valued beauty of their youth expires.







These girls, unfortunately, are seen as objects in the grand scheme of the movie. Even their names are those of valued objects: Jade, Emerald, Crimson, Pearl, and Jasmin. Even then, each of the girls have distinct goals and desires that are seen in the movie.

Jade wants to marry one of her patrons, Master Zhu. While together, they make promises to each other to be married and be together forever — and die together. Jade takes this to the next level as she decides for the two of them to drink raw opium

and die in the room together, but Master Zhu calls for help and they are saved as the other girls in the house feed them the antidote. The situation is solved as Master Zhu agrees to sponsor her so she could be freed and get married to someone else who comes along.

Emerald wants to be free. Her aunty tells her that she bought Emerald for \$100 as a child, and her worth has risen significantly over the years — around \$3,000. During various moments of the film, Emerald tries to negotiate this price with the aunty and manages to get the sponsorship of her patrons to finally free herself from the flower house.



Crimson's and Jasmin's story were told earlier and Pearl did not have a main role in the film, but each one of them had their own grievances. At the end of the day, these girls were victims. They were betrayed by society and even by their own aunts, driven to turn against each other and do whatever they can to rise to the top in a battle to survive.

Shanghai's identity runs through their blood. The blur of the flower house and their melancholic souls are what shapes them, but they did not let any of their hardships break down who they are. They still have passion, beauty, and youth in their hearts over the tough years, just as the city of Shanghai does after being broken and humiliated. Through Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Shanghai lives in the flower girls, the flower house, and the elements of Flowers of Shanghai. Despite it all, it lives on.



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## 30. Analysis by M. Cogbill

AMALIA M. COGBILL

Red Mandarin Dress

Introduction:

Created by Qiu Xiaolong, Inspector Chen Cao is a detective of the Shanghai Police Bureau. The author Qiu Xiaolong was born in Shanghai, and he became known for poetry and as a writer in China before he moved to the United States. He currently resides in St. Louis, Missouri where he teaches literature at Washington University. Qiu currently has twelve books in his Inspector Chen mystery series, one of the books in this series is called Red Mandarin Dress which was released in 2007. In this mystery novel, Inspector Chen gets a case of a serial killer killing women, and dumping their bodies in public places. One thing that makes this serial killer unique is that the killer dresses the bodies of these women in red mandarin dresses. In addition to its unique serial killer mystery, there are other unique aspects such as the character of Inspector Chen, as well as the politics and culture featured in the book. One thing that the readers of this mystery novel may notice is the similarities between Inspector Chen Cao, the main character and Qiu Xiaolong, the author. In addition to the similarities of character and creator; Qiu Xiaolong, the author uses his character of Inspector Chen to introduce readers to Chinese culture

Inspector Chen Cao:

Inspector Chen Cao is the main protagonist in Red Mandarin Dress. In the world of literary detectives, Inspector Chen is unique especially when compared to American literary male detectives. With American fiction male detectives such as James Patterson's Alex Cross or Lee Child's Jack Reacher, it is not uncommon to read about these characters drinking coffee or an alcoholic beverage; however, Inspector Chen cannot tolerate either of these, and this is one of the aspects that makes him unique to readers. Another side to Inspector Chen that makes him unique is a literary side. Just like his creator, Inspector Chen is very literate, and he is a poet. He studied English at Beijing Foreign Language University; he has written a translation of T. S. Eliot's poetry, and he writes poetry when he is not working as a police officer. The backstory of Inspector Chen is that he wanted to be an English scholar; however, at the time of his graduation from university, the government at the time would assign employment, and the government assigned Chen to be a police officer. When reading this mystery novel, one will notice that there are some similarities between the main character and the author. For example, one similarity between Inspector Chen and the author Qiu, is that they have degrees in literature. In Red Mandarin Dress, there is a scene in which Inspector Chen is telling his superior that he has enrolled in a literature program at the Shanghai University, and why this program is important to him as his superior does not understand Inspector Chen's interest in a program that does not involve police business. "Literature used to be my major- English literature. To be a competent investigator in today's society, one has to acquire as much knowledge as possible." (Qiu, Red Mandarin Dress, p. 6). This scene demonstrates the literature scholar of Inspector Chen. Like his protagonist, Qiu Xiaolong is a scholar of literature. He has a Ph. D. in comparative literature from Washington University in St. Louis. His main character Inspector Chen has a degree in English literature from Beijing University. In addition to being literature scholars, both Inspector Chen and Qiu Xiaolong are both published poets. When he is not doing police work, Inspector Chen studies and writes poetry. He is a published poet, he has published some of his own work, and he has published translations. One example of this is that Inspector Chen has published a translation of T. S. Eliot's poetry. His creator Qiu Xiaolong is also a poet and an expert of T.S. Eliot. He has had some poetry books published such as Lines Around China and 100 Classic Chinese Poems. The latter of these examples is a translation, which is another similarity between the main protagonist and the author. In other words, one can see a bit of the author in this character, they

are both literature scholars, poets, and have published translations of poetry. The point is that it is clear that the author put a bit of himself into his main character, which in general, is not uncommon for writers to do. While Qiu Xiaolong may not be solving mysteries, it is obvious that literature and poetry are important aspects that he put into his main protagonist Inspector Chen. While both Inspector Chen and Qiu are literary scholars, there is a difference. Inspector Chen is a big fan of classical Chinese poetry, the author Qiu Xiaolong is not. "It is everywhere. What is the reason? Is it a one-party rule? Is it something deeper in Chinese culture, because a legal culture does not have deep roots? Is it absolute power corrupting absolutely? The chief inspector does not have all the answers. Like all Chinese, he is just coming to terms with all that is changing around him." (Qiu Xiaolong, "For Creator of Inspector Chen, China is a Tough Case to Crack", New York Times. 2007). As Chen would say, "Literature is of significance for a thousand autumns." (Qiu, Red Mandarin Dress, p. 11). Another similarity in this novel between the author and the main character has to do with the Cultural Revolution. Both Inspector Chen and Qiu Xiaolong have been affected by this historic era of China. At the time of the Cultural Revolution, Qiu Xiaolong was in his teen years, when he was sixteen, Qiu became ill with bronchitis. This resulted Qiu avoiding being sent to the countryside to be re-educated. Like his creator, Inspector Chen was growing up at the time of the revolution. Perhaps it is because the Cultural Revolution occurred during his adolescent years, Qiu Xiaolong made this historical event a part of this mystery novel. Historical events that people experience when they are young, can greatly influence them. In Qiu Xiaolong's case, he chose to make this historical era, a part of his main character.

#### Analysis of the Color Red:

Red Mandarin Dress is the fifth book in the Inspector Chen Cao series. In this mystery, a serial killer is murdering young women. Before dumping the bodies of these women in public places, the killer dresses the body in a red mandarin dress, hence the title. One can argue that there is symbolism in this and the color red in general. Of all colors, why did the author of this novel choose to make the mandarin dresses red? He could have chosen blue or pink, but he chose red. There are three reasons to make the mandarin dresses red. One reason is because red is the symbol of China. In other words, the color red is important in Chinese culture, so it would make sense to make the dresses red. The other reason to make the mandarin dresses red in this novel, is because the color red stands out. In the mystery novel Red Mandarin Dress, the serial killer is disposing of the bodies of these women in public places. It is obvious that the killer is not trying to hide these bodies. In fact, the killer wants the bodies found quickly, so it would make sense to choose a red mandarin dress, it is a color that stands out. "There he glimpsed an alien object, red and white, in the pale ring of the island lamplight." (Qiu, Red Mandarin Dress, p 2). The killer wants to bring attention to the woman who has been killed, and where he or she has dumped it. "What he had taken as a white lotus root turned into a shapely human leg glistening with dewdrops. Nor was it a sack, but a red mandarin dress that encased the body of a young woman, probably in her early twenties." (Qiu, Red Mandarin Dress, p. 4). Psychologically, red is a color that people notice. Statistically, red cars get pulled over by the police than any other color. The point is that the killer wanted these bodies of these women to be found quickly, because he or she was trying to send a message and make a point. "'Murder! Red mandarin dress murder!'" (Qiu, Red Mandarin Dress, p. 4). A third reason to make the mandarin dresses red in this mystery novel has to do with the reader. On the cover of this book, the color red is featured on the front. There is part of a woman on the front cover, she has red around the base of her neck, and she has on red lipstick. This is important to consumers, because it is eye-catching. Whether this book is on the shelf of a library or bookstore, or if a person sees this title advertised for Kindle or Audible, they will notice this book, because the color red on the cover. Thus, the color red is very important in this novel.

#### Analysis: Politics

When reading the mystery novel Red Mandarin Dress, one should take note of politics in the book. The author Qiu

Xiaolong shows the readers what politics were like in 1990s Shanghai. Shanghai is considered to be the birthplace of communism in China. Throughout the book *Red Mandarin Dress*, politics play a crucial role in. It becomes very clear in the first chapter during a scene in which Inspector is awakened by a phone call from a man named Zhong Baoguo from the Shanghai Legal System Reform Committee. "That particular committee, a new institution under the Shanghai People's Congress, exercised no direct authority over him, had never contacted him," (Qiu, *Red Mandarin Dress*, p. 5). From this scene, readers can already get the sense that politics are important in this book and in Shanghai. In this scene, Zhong Baoguo is calling Inspector Chen to request that he, Chen look into a legal case though the outcome is Chen turns down the request as he is about to go on vacation. In the second chapter of this book, there is a scene in which the character of Yu, who is Chen's partner, has been summoned to the office of a superior named Inspector Liao by a Party Secretary. The three characters have a meeting about the case that is plot of the book. They discuss that fact that the newspapers in Shanghai have been referring to the killer as "The first serial sex murder in Shanghai," (Qiu, *Red Mandarin Dress*, p. 16). The conversation goes on with, "because of media control, they had never been reported." (Qiu, *Red Mandarin Dress*, p. 16). This conversation shows that government has some control over the media, and that the government cares about what the media reports to the people. "These murders are a slap in the face to the police bureau... The Class enemy is trying to sabotage the great progress in our reform, damaging the social stability by causing panic among the people. So let us focus on those with deep-rooted hatred for government." (Qiu, *Red Mandarin Dress*, p. 17). This quote from Party Secretary Li, demonstrates that government cares very much about the media, what the media reports, and what the people read. In this chapter, it was not until the Party Secretary left the room, that the inspectors Yu and Liao were able to discuss the case. Another example of politics in this book is in chapter three. There is a scene in which Inspector Chen is having a conversation with an old friend of his who owns a restaurant. Chen's friend suggests to him that he leave the police force, and come work with him, because Chen has connections. "But Chen knew better. His connections came from his position. Once out of that position, most of his "friends" would evaporate into thin air." (Qiu, *Red Mandarin Dress*, p. 26). This scene demonstrates that Chen has connections and privileges simply, because he works in police force. In other words, Chen's job and the politics go hand-in-hand. These connections include his friends and his apartment. This is a very political time period, in which *Red Mandarin Dress* takes place, which is 1990s Shanghai.

#### Conclusion:

*Red Mandarin Dress* by Qiu Xiaolong, is a mystery novel about a serial killer who murders young women, dresses them in red mandarin dresses, and dump their bodies in public places. It is a novel where its main protagonist Inspector Chen who has a lot in common with his creator Qiu Xiaolong such as poetry and literature. *Red Mandarin Dress* is a novel where the color red and politics play important roles. These features are the elements that make this mystery novel worth reading.

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PART VI  
HONG KONG

## 31. History/Politics

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The History of Hong Kong is a story of the power and influence of the British Empire. The early 19th century saw the British Empire expand further around the globe due to its global naval hegemony. This saw the British trade network expand around the globe facilitating the transfer of luxury goods back to England so cheaply even the lower classes could afford them. Three key luxuries were controlled almost totally by the Qing Empire on China: porcelain, silk, and tea. Britain imported massive amounts of these products while China imported negligible amounts of British goods. This imbalance of trade caused great concern in the British government offices in London.

For years the British searched for a solution to this problem. The British believed the Qing government by allowing trade only through the port of Guangzhou (Canton at the time) and forced foreign traders to sell their goods to a cartel of Chinese trading groups for domestic consumption artificially restricted trade and prevented British goods from being bought. British traders also discovered a commodity that the Chinese were eager to buy, opium. Smuggled by European traders into China, opium was a highly addictive drug that quickly spread throughout southern China causing a great many social problems. The British government began encouraging the production of opium and its smuggling to offset the trade balance with China. Chinese officials in 1838 alarmed at the rapid increase of drug addiction sent Imperial Officials to Guangdong to enforce the Imperial ban on opium. He confiscated the European traders inventory of Opium and destroyed it (Welsh 13-16).

This action caused both anxiety and glee in London. Without opium Britain would continue to lose money trading with China. But the destruction of British merchant stocks without 'fair trial' or compensation, the proclamation any merchants selling Opium in future would be executed gave the British government cause for war with China. This is the leadup to the start of the first Opium War, 1839-1842. Qing China being technologically behind the industrializing Britain had little hope of winning the war. British steam powered and ironclad warships destroyed any Chinese force attacking and bombarded several cities forcing them to surrender. The Qing government realizing they could do nothing to stop the British attacking their entire coast quickly asked for peace terms. The British imposed harsh terms, a punitive indemnity for the destruction of the opium, war reparations, extraterritorially guarantees for British citizens, repealing the ban of opium, opening of five more ports to foreign trade, and the secession of the island of Hong Kong to the British (Welsh 16-21).

Hong Kong was chosen by the British because of its geographical location, geology, and sparse population. Hong Kong is an island at the end of the Kowloon Peninsula. Hong Kong is located a short distance from the city of Guangzhou which was the primary port of foreign trade, even after Britain forced more ports to open. The peninsula is a mountainous region that provided good ground for defense if the new colony was attacked. The water around Hong Kong is naturally quite deep allowing for large ocean-going ships to dock at the harbor. The mountainous region also allowed for water reservoirs to be constructed in the valleys to provide water for the colony. The region around Hong Kong is sparsely populated in 1842 with only a few fishing villages on or around Hong Kong (Welsh 17). Robert Fortune an English botanist, on a secret mission to learn how to grow and manufacture tea, described Hong Kong "Hong-Kong Bay is one of the finest which I have ever seen: it is eight or ten miles in length, and irregular in breadth; in some place two, and in other six miles wide, having excellent anchorage all over it, and perfectly free from hidden dangers. It is completely sheltered by the mountains of Hong Kong on the south, and by those of the mainland of China on the opposite shore; land-locked in fact on all sides so that the shipping can ride out the heaviest gales with perfect safety." (Carroll 13)

British Colonial Officials decided that Hong Kong's primary role is to act as a commercial city that also provided a base for Britain to extend its diplomatic and military influence throughout the region. This decision would have significant impact on the development of Hong Kong. Unlike Canada, Australia, or South Africa the British government would not



encourage British people to settle the new Colony. Instead the British Government in London would designate Hong Kong a Crown Colony. This meant a Governor General would be in charge of the colony and only accountable to London. The small geographical size of the new Colony would mean that the Governor General would not only be in charge of the whole Colony but also act as de facto mayor of the City of Hong Kong itself (Carroll 20-25). Gradually the colony developed port facilities around Victoria Harbor. Few large trading companies moved from the headquarters in Canton to Hong Kong for several decades until the Taiping Rebellion. This rebellion spread across central and southern China spreading chaos and destruction. Worried about their investments the merchants moved from Guangzhou to Hong Kong. This guaranteed their protection with British troops and ships. Alongside the Western trade companies seeking safety were thousands of Chinese refugees (Welsh 22-30).

The development of Hong Kong's residential areas follows two distinct classes. The wealthy and privileged Western Merchants built houses on the slopes of Mt. Victoria. The poor Chinese workers built their residences near the docks where they worked. These areas were densely populated and generally ungoverned. The Colonial government made an informal agreement with the local tongs (traditional Chinese trading families/companies). (Carroll 18-19) The Colony's budget was very small. Because it was a free port, there were no tariffs levied on goods entering or leaving the colony. This took away a major source of revenue for the colony who then had to rely on finances coming from Parliament in London to fund the Colonial Government. Because of the small budget government in Hong Kong was correspondingly small. This meant the government had little desire to take on municipal responsibilities, sanitation, water distribution, public safety etc. Instead, they allowed the Chinese to govern themselves under the direction of the tong organizations (Welsh 25-26).

The Second Opium War (1856-1860) further destabilized Qing China and expanded the territory of Hong Kong. The New Territories, the Kowloon peninsula up to the Shenzhen River, was forcibly leased to Great Britain for 99 years. This expansion allowed Hong Kong to cross Victoria Bay and develop Kowloon. The city grew in prosperity and population throughout the 19th century. But as a city focused of business and trade taxation was minimal. Therefore, the city held or sold monopolies on certain goods. The largest and most profitable monopoly being opium, accounting for over 1/3 of the colonies budget in the 1880s. The opium monopoly would continue the Japanese occupation of the city in 1941 during World War 2 (Carroll 19). The Colony would continue to develop and grow through the late 19th and early 20th century. Though its status as the main port for exports for China would be rivaled with the city of Shanghai by 1920. Hong Kong continued to exist as a place of refuge and stability after the Qing empire fell and China was consumed with warlords fighting for control. The government gradually changed during this period as well. The colonial governor began appointing influential businessmen to his advising council for the colony. This included two seats for native Chinese businessmen who would serve as the mouthpieces for the Chinese communities in Hong Kong (Welsh 35-42). This prosperity and stability ended after the Japanese attacked European and American territories on December 7th and 8th 1941.

By December 18th Hong Kong was under total Japanese occupation. This occupation was brutal for the civilians living in Hong Kong for both Chinese and Westerners. The colony was placed under marshal law and enforcement was brutal. The Japanese forcibly deported Chinese residents. The colony's population fell from 1.6 million in 1941 to 600 thousand in 1945. The people living in the city faced brutal rationing of food, heating/cooking oil, and other necessities. The economy of the city declined sharply as the trade the city relied on stopped. It is estimated that during the years of occupation over 10 thousand civilians were executed by the Imperial Japanese army and numerous other atrocities were committed: organized rape, forced labor, stranding civilians on islands to starve, torture (Welsh 45-52, Carroll 80-92).

The Japanese garrison of Hong Kong surrendered to allied forces on September 16, 1945, and a military administration was formed. Civilian government was reestablished in May 1946 with the arrival of Governor Mark Young. World War 2 shattered the colonial institutions of European countries. Britain was almost bankrupt fighting World War 2 and the ease of which the Japanese conquered European colonies shattered the myth of indomitable European military might (Li 28-29, Loh 27-28). Recognizing this change Young proposed a radical plan that would create an elected council that

would have some authority over municipal matters and increasing the representation of the Executive council of the Governor. Young hoped that allowing Hong Kongers a greater representation and power in government they would become more loyal to Britain instead of the Chinese Nationalists or Communists. They the dominate forces in mainland China who both advocated for ending the colonization and domestic interference by Europeans (Goodstadt 44-45).

Young had to retire as Governor General in 1947 and was replaced by Alexander Gram. Gram was an arch conservative who undid all reforms Young was able to implement in his short time as governor. Gram would focus his attention on preparing Hong Kong in case of attack. The Chinese Communist Party, lead by Mao Zedong, defeated the Chinese Nationalist party forcing them to flee to Taiwan. Gram and he British government in London was concerned with communist agitation in the colony and ignored all thoughts of democratization. This lack of government support for democratization would continue until the 1980s (Goodstant 50-55).

The economy of Hong Kong rapidly rebounded after the end of World War 2. Though its main source was no longer trade but manufacturing. With the communist victory in the Chinese civil war trade with Mainland China severely dropped. While the communist oppression of factory owners and capitalists forced many to flee, and they moved to Hong Kong. During the 1950s Hong Kong grew as a hub of light manufacturing, focusing on clothes and consumer goods and electronics. Hong Kong continued to be a major source of banking and finance for all of Asia. As colonies across Asia gained independence, they received loans and financing from Hong Kong banks to build their nations. This growing economy served to create a robust middle class in the colony that soon began to produce art and culture that would quickly gain worldwide fame (Li 30-31, Carroll 152-155).

As a British colony Hong Kong had easy access to the technology and films of Britain and America from the earliest days of cinema in the 1910s. The freedom of expression allowed in Hong Kong soon became the hub for Mandarin and Cantonese language films. Hong Kong starting in the 1960s began producing films that would become famous around the world. The films portrayed the lives of Hong Kongers and they also drew great inspiration from the gangs and organized crime that was prevalent throughout Hong Kong for decades. In the 1970s action films from Hong Kong gained popularity in America and Britain. The face of Hong Kong Action was Bruce Lee whose proteges would continue to make film popular around the world, the most famous actor being Jackie Chan. The growth in the 1970s of Hong Kong cinema provided the fuel that the boom years of the 1980s and 1990s. Hong Kong was the third largest producer of movies in the world during this time, behind the US and India (Welsh 460-466).

During the 1960s and onwards the Hong Kong people would often agitate for more representative government. These waves of pro-democracy calls often coincided with recessions in the colony. The colonial government ignored these calls and often implemented harsh crackdown on the protesters. The height of the violence occurred during 1967 when there was a devastating bombing campaign. The police report responding to over 1,100 bombs, found or detonated, during that year and explosions killed 52 police officers and civilians (Carroll 146-155). Alongside pro democracy protests there were some Hong Kongers calling for reunification with mainland China under the Chinese Communist Party. This position became increasingly popular after the death of Mao Zedong and new Chinese leaders moderating government policies. The improving economy of China in the 70s and 80s meant Hong Kongers were less fearful of rejoining. This call for reunification came from both Beijing and people in Hong Kong. The rise of decolonialization and the collapse of the British Empire caused Britain to realize it could no longer hold onto Hong Kong as a colony. Starting in 1980 Britain and China held series of talks on a potential handover of Hong Kong back to China. Culmination occurring on December 19, 1984 with a joint declaration from Britain and China that Hong Kong would be handed over on January 1, 1997 when the 99 year lease on the New Territory expired. This guaranteed the domestic autonomy of Hong Kong for 50 years from the Government in Beijing (Li 31-35).

This declaration caused joy and consternation in Hong Kong. The British government wanting to keep influence in Hong Kong began a series of reforms to develop Western political institutions in Hong Kong (Scott 26-36). First of these being a report on political reforms in 1985 that called for public elections to a legislature that had actual political power. This was not full democratization for it called for a gradual introduction of democracy to Hong Kong. It also created an

appointed electoral college who would vote for the Chief Executive of the city, replacing the Royal Governor position. Key to this was permitting business societies and trade union seats in the legislature and guaranteed appointments to the electoral college. This means that businesses in the chamber of commerce, tourism union, airline operator association each elect representatives and electors that create laws or vote for the Chief executive. Britain began implementing these reforms in 1985 and they progressed until the handover in 1997 (Loh 30-34, Scott 31). It is important to note that Hong Kong never had a complete general election. When the handover occurred, business and the general public had equal number of seats in the legislature and the electoral college elected the Chief Executive not the public.

After the suppression of the Tiananmen Square protests in China in 1989, many Hong Kongers were afraid the Chinese government would do the same in Hong Kong. This caused an exodus of educated and prosperous Hong Kongers to emigrate to Australia, Britain, Canada, and the US (Scott 161-163). Post-Handover not many things changed within the city for many years. Many political parties and students would continue the call for increased democracy. The Chinese government ensured that democracy would no longer progress in Hong Kong cracking down on many pro-democracy protests over the years (Loh 31-36). The biggest change occurred in 2019 when the Hong Kong Legislature began debate on a new National Security Bill. This bill would effectively end freedom of speech in the city and impose harsh punishments on anti-government protesters, newly included category being pro-democracy protestors. This legislation caused protests that were attacked by police and turned into riots (Dapiran 31-35). The disturbances lasted for months and the largest protest peaked at around 1 million people, about 1/6 of Hong Kong's total population. The bill was suspended because of the public backlash but the protests continued turning into a prodemocracy movement. The protests only ended in January/February 2020 with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (Dapiran 545-550).

During the pandemic the legislature took the bill back up and passed the law. The government arrested and charges hundreds of protestors that demonstrated against the bill after its passing. The government forcibly shut down several newspapers, others closed before they were forced to. Banning two prodemocracy parties and arresting prominent prodemocracy activists (Dapiran 558-590). In 2021 the Legislature passed an electoral reform bill that increased the number of legislative seats allocated for business to 30, shrink the number allocated to publicly elected representatives from 35 to 20, and create 40 seats whose representatives would be elected by the electoral college. Also increasing the size of the electoral college from 1,200 members to 1,500. These seats given to ex-government officials (Bradsher and Ramsey).

These actions have drawn sharp criticism from Western countries. The situation in Hong Kong once front and center in the News about China has lost the attention of the international news media. Instead, eyes are turning to Taiwan to see if China will try and take control of the island nation, fulfilling the One China Policy. This shift of attention has taken the most powerful tool prodemocracy activists have in Hong Kong, western media attention. Therefore, going forward, it is expected to see Hong Kong continue to be integrated into the Chinese political system more fully.

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## 32. Religion, Culture, and Traditions

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### Religion

Traditions and beliefs are very important aspects of many East Asian cultures. However, in Hong Kong, the majority of people are actually non-religious. Around 54.3% of Hong Kongers are non-religious, while the next largest percentile is of Buddhists and Taoists. The remaining population is made of of believers in the Protestant faith, Roman Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, and the Sikh faith.

People in Hong Kong have much more religious freedom compared to China, which can be attributed to strong Western influence from the British colony. To many, religion is not a big aspect of their lives, while to others, certain practices of traditional Asian philosophies are prevalent in their lives even if not these people do not practice these beliefs religiously. Confucianism is the most significant of these traditional Asian philosophies, and derived from the Chinese philosopher Confucius, the teachings place great value on tradition and rites. In fact, Confucianism is so important in Hong Kong that the 3rd Sunday of September is deemed “Confucian Day.”

Buddhism and Taoism are also large aspects of religious Hong Kong. Because Buddhism is an important religion in China, much of Hong Kong is largely influenced by Buddhism, with much of the popular tourist destinations being monasteries, statues, or temples. As for Taoism, over 1 million Taoist followers reside in Hong Kong as of 2022, practicing simplicity, harmony, and a strong connection with nature. Some important Taoist temples are the Tin Hau Temple, the Wong Tai Sin Temple, and the Che Kung Temple.

As for the other religions, Christians and Muslims make up a notable part of the population. The Roman Catholic church was established in Hong Kong in 1841 as a mission prefecture, so many catholic schools and welfare programs that opened taught Roman Catholicism. Protestantism also derived from the settling of churches in 1841. On the other hand, many Indonesian and Pakistani people make up the Muslim community, but there are also plenty of Chinese, and thus Hong Kong people, who practice Islam. There are many educational facilities, financial aid, and medical care opportunities that opened due to these Muslims.



Confucius Birthday Celebration (2019)

### [Tian Tan Buddha | Detailed Guide to Hong Kong Big Buddha](#)

*Tian Tan Buddha (Big Buddha) as one of the most popular tourist attractions*

## **Culture**

There are many perspectives within Hong Kong culture. As most families in Hong Kong are nuclear families, there is commonly a great emphasis on filial piety. As a result, superstitions and economic status may influence marriage as parent approval is necessary. Apart from this, many people in Hong Kong use their English names instead of their Chinese names.

Unsurprisingly, Cantonese is the most widely spoken language in Hong Kong, with English as its close second. Mandarin comes in third, with other dialects following behind. An important explanation behind the mix of cultures in Hong Kong can be attributed to the cultural fusion between the many influences on Hong Kong. The Han Chinese are the biggest influence, but the neighboring Guangdong province shares many similarities to Hong Kong, including majority Cantonese-speaking people. Additionally, Western influence has had its impact on Hong Kong as well, originating from an abundance of trade and travel as well as the British colonization. Obviously, the British influence cannot be ignored, which is why the second most spoken language is English instead of Mandarin. Furthermore, Hong Kong is known for its educational and social activism, resulting from Western influence, parallel to its comparatively free economy in contrast to mainland China. Thus, the Hong Kong economic and social circles are composed of more materialistic, wealth-conscious, and high-fashion elites, with the younger generation being more likely to reject tradition.

What do people in Hong Kong do for fun? Since Hong Kong has 2/5ths of the land being parks and greenery, recreation



in Hong Kong is outdoors-focused. Tai Chi Chuan, kite flying, picnicking, hiking, and cycling are only a handful of the outdoor activities Hong Kongers enjoy. In 2008, Hong Kong even hosted the Equestrian sports of the Beijing Olympics.

### **Traditions**

Many of the popular traditional events in Hong Kong come from that of China, such as Chinese New Year. It is the biggest festival of the year, and in Hong Kong, it is tradition to parade through Tsim Sha Tsui and watch fireworks explode over Victoria Harbor. Other notable festivals are the Dragon Boat, Mid-autumn, and Hungry Ghost festivals, which originate from China.

Other festivals are based on religion, including the Tin Hau Festival celebrating the Buddhist and Taoist goddess of the sea Tin Hau's birthday, as well as the Cheung Chau Bun Festival, which celebrates Buddha's birthday and the Taoist god Pak Tai.



*Fireworks in Victor Harbor during Chinese New Year*

### **Links**

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## 33. Tourist Attractions

ANONYMOUS 3

Whether you are looking for rich historical sites, cultural hubs, or modern shopping and eating, you are bound to find what you are looking for as a tourist in Hong Kong. Some of the most popular tourist attractions in Hong Kong include Victoria Peak, Tian Tan Buddha, Shek O Beach, and Temple Street Night Market.

### Victoria Peak

Victoria Peak is the tallest point in the city, measuring out to 1,811 feet tall. This popular peak is available to get to by walking, bussing, or taking the historical peak-tram. There are multiple different hiking paths available depending on skill and strength. The peak-tram is 130 years old, making it the longest running tram in the world and will take you up to the top amongst the beautiful foliage and views of the hill. Up at the top of the peak, you can find the Peak Tower, a modern shopping and food mall. The peak also boasts one of the best panoramic city skyline views of Hong Kong, making it a must see attraction.

### Tian Tan Buddha

The Tian Tan Buddha is the largest sitting buddha in the world and represents the spirit, culture, and success of Hong Kong, as well as the harmonious relationship between man and nature that is so valuable to the city. Tian Tan translates to “altar of heaven” and was completed in 1993. Surrounding the Buddha is the Po Lin Monastery, as well as 6 smaller buddha statues. These statues are called the “Offerings of the Six Devas” and represent the things necessary to reach Nirvana according to Buddhism. These statues are flowers representing generosity, a lamp representing patience, incense representing morality, ointment representing zeal, fruit representing meditation, and music representing wisdom.

### Shek O Beach

Shek O Beach is just one of Hong Kong’s beautiful beaches. While one may not think of the bustling city as a great relaxing getaway, the geography makeup of Hong Kong has over 100 beaches and 260 outlying islands, boasting many beautiful coastline beaches. One of the most popular beaches for tourists and locals is Shek O Beach, cradled between two mountains. The name translates to “Rocky Bay”. It is fairly easy to access from the city. Next to the coastline is a quaint little village where one can eat local food, shop, and explore before or after spending the day at the beach.

# Temple Street Night Market

Temple Street Night Market is a must visit when exploring Hong Kong. This bustling, vibrant, and diverse night market offers a unique experience for everyone. This street lays between two temple complexes, and was originally used to serve food to temple goers. Now, you can find a variety of cheap clothes, food, and souvenirs from vendors lining the street. Some of the most popular dishes you can find at the Temple Street Night Market are Chili crab, steamed fish, deep fried squid, skewers, and bubble egg waffles. Not only can you purchase these goods, but one can also find fortune tellers and Cantonese opera singers performing for market visitors along the street which provide a unique and interesting experience.

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## 34. Analysis by Drew Kratochvil

DREW KRATOCHVIL

Hong Kong has a unique institution in its political system the functional constituency. A functional constituency is the seat or seats assigned to a business or labor organization in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. Each organization sets the rules for how the seat(s) is filled. This institution is not a relic of formal governmental systems long ago. This feature was created by the British government in 1985. How is it possible for a vibrant western democracy, Britain, to enfranchise businesses like citizens? The functional constituencies are a formalization of an agreement that the British rulers of Hong Kong created with Chinese elites to co-opt them to support the British rule of Hong Kong. But why continue this undemocratic deal when creating the foundations for Hong Kong democracy. The British government, Chinese officials, and Hong Kong elite argue that Hong Kong's unique history, economy, and geography melded together to create a system that was better than full democracy. This is wrong, the system is more destabilizing than either a full democracy or non-democratic rule. This is because of the contradictions within Hong Kong politics.

First, we must examine how Functional Constituencies came to exist. Hong Kong was a rural fishing are before the British annexed the island from China in 1842. Hong Kong was built from scratch importing its political, legal, and economic institutions from Britain. Hong Kong was established as a Crown Colony, meaning the colony was overseen by Parliament in London directly. Being a Crown Colony the Governor General was the only authority in the colony and could only be replaced by Parliament in London. This period is known as the executive led era of Hong Kong Politics. It is marked as total rule by the Governor General of the colony being in power with minimal input from anyone in Hong Kong, responding only to directives from London (Carrol 20-25).

This issue of no local representation came to a head in 1894 when a group of British bankers, traders, and landlords, based in Hong Kong, petitioned Parliament in London. They demanded a Colonial Assembly. They would manage more of their own affairs and control government expenditures. This proposal would enfranchise around 800 men out of a population of 221 thousand, of whom 211 thousand were ethnic Chinese. This was unacceptable to the Government in London stating that a representative council would be incompatible with the decisiveness necessary to manage the colony (Loh 23-24). They made a deal with the merchants they would not give them official positions in the Colonial government but several unofficial advisory positions in an Executive Council. They would have access and influence in the government but no formal power or authority. 2 of the 6 initial members were given to ethnic Chinese merchants. This action began the absorption of Hong Kong elites into the government (Li 22-23). This relationship between consulting the 'expertise' of the businessmen by the political establishment is the foundations functional constituencies would later be built on.

The influence of these business elites would push back against any economic or political reforms that did not benefit them. Even to the detriment of Hong Kong's long term prosperity or stability. Hong Kong governance changed forever after the British reassumed control of Hong Kong after World War 2. The myth and prestige of the British Empire was shattered and Britain did not have the will or ability to reimpose total control over all its colonies and had to select which ones it was going to make the effort to keep. Hong Kong was one of these colonies. Britain wanted to retain diplomatic, economic, and military influence in China and East Asia. Many colonial officials believed the status quo before World War 2 would be sufficient to retain control of Hong Kong. However there were reformers in the government who believed democratic reforms would be essential to keep on Hong Kong in Britain's sphere of influence (Carrol 225-230).

These democratic reforms were attempted by Governor General Mark Young, the first Governor General since Japanese occupation ended. He proposed a municipal council that would manage the municipal affairs of the city that would be elected by the people. This reform was strenuously resisted by those in London and in Hong Kong who benefited from the current system. Young had to retire in 1947 for health, and was replaced by Governor General Alexander Grantham.

He was an ardent opponent of democratic reforms believing they would undermine the control Britain had over the ethnic Chinese majority in Hong Kong (Loh 35). This retreat from reform would haunt the Hong Kong government as the situation in China changed greatly in the coming years.

The events occurring in China during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s spilled over into Hong Kong. The gradual rise of China as a power that could stand up to Western countries gave hope to Hong Kongers who demanded political changes. This rise in nationalism meant that a movement for Hong Kong independence and alignment with Taiwan which was ruled by the Kuomintang, anti-communist opponents of the CCP in Beijing, party at that time. In 1956 Kuomintang rhetoric from Taiwan and long standing social and economic strain erupted into riots in Hong Kong calling for independence (Li 26). These riots were put down by police force and gradually the situation calmed down. Several government officials proposed social reforms years before that would have lessened the upheaval, perhaps even avoid it altogether. But the business members who had sway in the Legislative Council vehemently opposed these reforms arguing that they would damage businesses and the economy (Loh 48-49). The reforms never passed. The economy improved in Hong Kong the per capita GDP increasing from HK\$3,588 to HK\$4,775 from 1962 to 1965 but much of this wealth remained in the hands of the business elite (Loh 30). This wealth inequality created a duality to Hong Kong wealthy business elites, and the workers living in Dickensian squalor. Without reforms in 1966 riots again occurred across the city calling for reforms

The conditions for the poor people in the colony were not addressed after 1956 and continued to cause anger erupting into riots again when the economy went into recession in 1965. Again the police ended the riots through a violent crackdown that lasted a few short months. Inspired by the Cultural Revolution occurring in Mainland China riots erupted again in 1966 that slowly morphed into a long anti-government bombing campaign (Li 26-27). The height of the violence occurred during 1967 when there was a devastating bombing campaign. The police report responding to over 1,100 bombs, found or detonated, during that year and explosions killed 52 police officers and civilians (Carroll 146-155). Finally the government established several commissions to investigate the causes of the riots and implement reforms. Better labor regulations, increasing the number of advisory bodies for the government, and giving opportunities for public opinion to be expressed to the government. These reforms were structural and not fundamental but they prevented future major upheavals through the 1970s (Loh 30). The political and business elites being ardently opposed to reform caused this violence to occur. Only relenting to reform prevent a full revolution from the lower classes of Hong Kong.

As mainland China developed Britain became increasingly concerned with maintain influence within Hong Kong but found the structure they created now worked against them. With the end of the 99 year lease of the New Territories the British Government were anxious about Hong Kong's future. Meeting with Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping it was obvious that Hong Kong would be reunited with the mainland when the lease ended, even if Britain refused. Therefore the British opted to voluntarily and peacefully transfer the territory as to retain influence and increase goodwill with the rapidly developing Chinese state (Li 40-42). Both London and Beijing began a campaign to woo Hong Kong elites as they held the greatest influence in the territory. What became a key piece of rhetoric in this transfer was how the lack of democracy became key to Hong Kong's success. Hong Kong was portrayed by Britain as a barren rock turned into a prosperous capitalistic paradise. That Hong Kong should continue this close relationship after the handover in 1997. Beijing argued they had the most to lose if instability rocked Hong Kong so they had a vested interest in working with Beijing. The rapidly expanding Chinese economy was also a strong pull for the Business elites in Hong Kong as reunification meant easier access to the Chinese market. Beijing also emphasized the 50 years of Hong Kong Autonomy that was part of the Joint Declaration meaning the Business elites had little to worry about the Chinese government nationalizing their businesses (Li 42-46). This campaign won many of the Business elites in Hong Kong to support Beijing over the British during the handover. Britain wanting to maintain influence in the territory after the handover had to instead look at a new source of support they had previously ignored, the common people of Hong Kong.

Britain had 12 years, 1984-1996, to implement reforms that would weaken the influence of the Chinese government in Hong Kong without angering the current power structure in Hong Kong that could change it the moment the handover



occurred. A compromise had to be made. They released a Green Paper on how Britain would prepare Hong Kong for the handover. In the paper the British government restated that Hong Kong would be a business focused city, but that it was time to begin introducing democracy to Hong Kong. This would begin with local elections to a municipal council to help run the city of Hong Kong. Then elections would be held to fill seats in a newly created legislature and elect a Chief Executive, ending the position of Governor General. These elections would not be based on Universal Suffrage but a complex electoral system, that would maintain elite power. One half of the legislature would be based on geographical districts, voting districts of equal population that would elect a representative by first past the post. Second would be the Functional Constituencies electing  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the Legislative Council, consisting of business, industrial, and labor organizations. Third and finally was the electoral college which was 400 members,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of members coming from leaders in the business, commercial, and financial sectors. A  $\frac{1}{4}$  consisting of professionals, lawyers, doctors, engineers, professors etc. A  $\frac{1}{4}$  from labor, grassroots, religious and other sectors. Finally the last  $\frac{1}{4}$  from political figures in Hong Kong, member of the LegCo and District Councils. This was done to appease the elites who were wary of the introduction of democratically elected representatives. They feared the democratically elected representative were a threat to the status quo. The Legislative Council (LegCo) was made up of 60 members, 10 elected by the electoral college, 30 by the functional constituencies, and 20 directly elected (Loh 32-34). The plan was over time to expand the membership of the Electoral College and the LegCo by gradually increasing the number of directly elected members and legislative seats (Li 48). Beijing was furious at the introduction of democracy to Hong Kong and rejected the results of the first election in 1997 causing several elections to be redone (Li 52).

Colonial Hong Kong's budget was the responsibility of the British Treasury Ministry in London. As Hong Kong had no natural resources to extract to fund the colony nor could it raise taxes or tariffs for fear of losing business it was perpetually short of money. This caused the government to have a laissez-faire attitude toward business and social conditions. Situated next to the Chinese mainland Hong Kong witnessed the collapse and chaos of the Qing Dynasty and the Warlord period. Stability was the aim of the government, as stability would foster economic growth improving people's lives and generating more stability. This was the governing philosophy of Hong Kong since its founding. Low taxes and low regulation would attract businesses and grow the territory's economy. This aligns well with the elites view of what makes Hong Kong a prosperous city (Loh 67). This fitting well with Beijing and the Communist Party base their legitimacy to govern on the simple principle of stability and economic prosperity (Li 51).

This government nonintervention had a flip side as well when companies facing financial difficulties called on the government for subsidies or bailouts the government said no. Often pointing to the lack of funds available as a convenient reason. But it was the flipside of free market the government would not intervene to tax your profits nor would it support you if those profits vanished. Though the most pain would be felt by the workers who lost their jobs if a business had to shrink or go bankrupt. This changed after the handover and the businesses had authority and power in the legislature, as functional constituencies (Loh 31-32).

In a 2004 session of the LegCo Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa resigned citing health reasons, but a series of scandals involving government and business corruption caused a crisis of legitimacy in the government. These involved cooperation between the government and business for land development of public land and reclaiming land for development from the sea (Loh 36). This represented the breaking of a key source of legitimacy, the free market and government nonintervention in business. Now the government was supporting businesses at the cost of public interests and investments. This event showcases that formally bringing in business elites into government ensures the government will favor business interests over the public good. A business tycoon stated "Even if some local businesses are curing favor from Beijing, benefits received are private to those individual and are economic in nature. It is no one's business" (Loh 36). This statement ignores the power business have in the formal political process and favor from Beijing could be used to influence domestic Hong Kong policies.

Another avenue for reform is taxation, here the business elites show their steadfast refusal for reforms. Only the top 33% of income earners pay an income tax in Hong Kong. Those who pay this tax believe they should have a greater

say in government than those who do not earn enough to pay income tax. The rich believe that without their guiding hand in politics that the poor would bleed them dry to fund welfare programs. They view these programs as a cause of laziness and welfarism in the working classes (Loh 35, Li 168-170). Business elites also called for no representation without taxation model where only those paying taxes would have a vote. Another stated that moving towards universal suffrage against the wishes of Beijing would create “chaos”(Loh 36).

The Chinese government also want to prevent any increase in democracy in Hong Kong. The Chinese Communist Party view Hong Kong as a hot bed of disruptive people and forces. Many journalists and artists fled arrest in China for the safety of Hong Kong. The CCP has for years sought to incorporate Hong Kong into the Chinese political system ending its autonomy. It was hesitant to do so right away because Hong Kong provided enormous amounts of capital and expertise to develop the Chinese economy. In recent years the Chinese economy is no longer reliant to Hong Kong capital or expertise. This caused a crisis with the Business elites as they were no longer indispensable to the Chinese government. They had to acquiesce to Chinese government demands or risk losing their business, wealth, or even freedom. The functional constituencies having so much power in the legislature ensures that with support of any popularly elected legislature they can pass a bill. This gives the policies and changes to the constitution the veneer of a democratically supported action.

The Chinese is now able to flex its power more forcefully over Hong Kong to end its autonomy. This took its greatest form in 2019 with the introduction of the National Security Law. This law would require the extradition of those under arrest to courts in mainland China for trial for breaches of national security. Among the thing categorized were anti-government expressions in public. This would end the freedom of the press and cause several political parties to be disbanded (Hong Kong One Year after...). This lack of ability for the public to have any significant influence on politics in Hong Kong and the government's new policies caused massive protests that lasted for months and condemnation of the national Security bill from foreign nations. Only ending when the Covid-19 pandemic struck in 2020 (Bradsher and Ramsey).

The Functional Constituencies in Hong Kong have been used since the 1990s as a tool for the elite to maintain power in Hong Kong. Hong Kong has had its political ideology focused on efficiency and economic growth. This is used to justify the suppression of the majority of the population in Hong Kong to being politically ineffective at best and apathetic at worst. This focus on business leaves those of the lower classes working for little pay to increase profits as high as possible for business. What little freedoms the lower classes had under English rule have been dismantled by the Chinese government to end a political thorn in their side. Functional Constituencies are a false hood of expertise and meritocracy. Instead they place their interests above all others even if it will cause crises further down the line.

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## 35. Analysis by Anonymous

ANONYMOUS 3

### The Importance of Cantonese Preservation in Hong Kong

When one thinks about the Chinese language, Mandarin is usually the first to come to mind. Mandarin is currently used for many international business affairs, the national language of mainland China, and the native tongue of many Chinese emigrants around the world. However, it is important to acknowledge that Mandarin is not the only Chinese language. In some parts of the world, Cantonese is the most prevalent Chinese language. One place in particular that proudly speaks the Cantonese language is Hong Kong. Amongst its extensive history and blending of cultures, Cantonese has remained an important part of the identity of Hong Kongers. Since the sovereignty of Hong Kong was handed over to China twenty five years ago, there is no doubt that efforts to popularize Mandarin into the region are far and wide. While some are in favor of these changes, many opposers fight to keep the Cantonese language and tradition from becoming a language of the past. Cantonese is an important language to preserve in Hong Kong in order to illustrate its unique culture and history, and differentiate and maintain its independent identity from mainland China.

The Cantonese language has an extensive history, and many believe that the language became recognized way back in the Tang dynasty. It is said that it was spoken by many people moving to the southern regions of China. (Lo). These southern regions were very popular in international trade and business, and therefore became an important language to speak and quickly popularized. Cantonese became the dominant language in Hong Kong as immigrants closely migrated from these southern areas, bringing along many aspects of that region such as the bustling lifestyle and of course the Cantonese language. Throughout British rule from 1841 to 1947, Cantonese remained the dominant language along with English. In modern times, Cantonese is still spoken primarily in the Guongzhou region of China, Macau, and Hong Kong. There are roughly 60-100 million Cantonese speakers in the world today, including the diaspora of Chinese immigrants (Li).

In Hong Kong today, Cantonese remains the dominant native tongue. It is spoken by 96% of the population (“Mandarin Noted”). However after the Chinese handover, many are concerned that Mandarin will slowly overtake Cantonese as the primary language. Mandarin is becoming much more popular as the main language of instruction and formal language classes are common in almost 70% of primary schools (Kuang). On the other hand, formal Cantonese classes are lacking in the Chinese curriculum. While still spoken at home, the language is not supported by the Education Bureau who instead focuses its Chinese language courses on Mandarin. This lack of formal education worries some residents, who claim that the lack of formal education is a strong deterrent in trying to maintain the teaching and importance of Cantonese to the younger generations.

Amongst these changes come the fight to preserve and keep alive the language in Hong Kong despite the ever-growing popularity of Mandarin. One reason why Hong Kongers believe that their native language is so important to preserve is because it preserves the unique culture of the region. Many enriching poetry writings and paintings are done in traditional characters. One important difference between written Cantonese versus written Mandarin is the fact that Cantonese is written in traditional characters compared to the simplified characters of written Mandarin. The arts scene

is especially prominent and important in Hong Kong, and traditional opera, films, and more use Cantonese. The language captures the feeling and history of Hong Kong and can be best enjoyed when performed, listened to, and viewed in the native tongue (“5 Reasons”).

Hong Kong cinema was extremely influential after the second world war, with a majority of these successful films being in Cantonese. From martial arts films to romance films, there was no shortage of Cantonese cinema. Popular stars such as Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee were native Hong Kongers and their Cantonese language on film provided authenticity to the films. One of the most famous directors, Wong Kar-Wai, who moved to Hong Kong as a child also chose to use Cantonese in many of his films in order to capture his history and memories of growing up in Hong Kong. Using the region’s native tongue, the films were really able to encapsulate the culture, history, and emotions of Hong Kong at this time. If Hong Kong films were spoken in anything other than the dominant language, it would not have been as authentic and real. While the Hong Kong cinema industry is not as prominent as it was before the handover, these films remain extremely popular even today and capture the culture of Hong Kong during these periods with the important factor of language (“Movies and Film”).

Cantonese is known as a very vernacular language and therefore reflects the history and changes throughout time. The language has lots of slang and spoken words which can really show the culture of specific times throughout culture (“5 Reasons”). Specific Cantonese idioms and proverbs are common and showcase the values, attitudes, and cultural importance of the people of Hong Kong (“Is the Cantonese”). Furthermore, Cantonese is a language with many tones and expressions, and the sing-song sound of the language reflects the energetic, free, and diverse lifestyle and culture (Li). It is important to maintain this important attitude to encompass the traditional feeling of Hong Kong when bargaining at night markets or sharing a meal over dim sum. Today, many young Hong Kongers speak what they call “Kongish”, which is a mix of English and Cantonese. This mix represents the history of the region and provides a unique identity for younger generations. This mix of English could be seen as another way that Cantonese is losing its authenticity, but while there is a mix of the two languages, young locals create their own mixes and therefore a unique culture and identity as opposed to completely cutting off Cantonese altogether.

Lastly, one of the most important reasons why Cantonese should be preserved as the main language of Hong Kong is because it differentiates itself from mainland China. While there are continuous debates over how much control China has and should have over Hong Kong, there is no denying that the lifestyle, attitudes, and personality of the region is unique and differs from the mainland. Many Hong Kongers continue to protest and fight for limited mainland control, and the push towards Mandarin worries people that the loss of Cantonese will inherently represent a loss of independence. They fear that a loss of the language will signify that their culture and freedom will be taken too, and instead conform to the homogeneous culture and law of the mainland.

One might argue that because sovereignty of Hong Kong was handed over to China, Mandarin is necessary to learn for the future of the region. However this argument goes against many local Hong Kongers who continue to fight for independence and autonomy instead of trying to homogenize with the mainland. There is no denying that Mandarin is an important language to learn especially with the significance of China’s global business influences and Hong Kong’s general relations with mainland China, however there are ways to promote the education and preservation of the native language while also teaching Mandarin as any other foreign language. It becomes much more of a concern when the emphasis is put on Mandarin instead, signifying it as a large shift and more important language than Cantonese in Hong

Kong which alters the culture and history of the region. Amongst the resentment and fight for political and economic freedom, this fight for language is a large symbol of independence that crosses many fields.

Overall, Cantonese holds much more importance in Hong Kong than one might think. Although it is still the primary language spoken by Hong Kongers, Mandarin is quickly spreading in popularity and locals fight to prevent their native tongue from being taken from them. They were able to maintain the language throughout British rule, and hope to maintain it throughout the future as well. Not only is Cantonese important to preserve because it represents their unique culture and history, but it also allows Hong Kongers to differentiate themselves from mainland China. There are many different ways that Cantonese can be preserved in Hong Kong. One main way is to create mandatory formal education classes in school just as Mandarin classes have been seen increasingly in recent years. An emphasis on modern pop culture including films and music being produced in the native language can continue to emphasize and appreciate the language not only with locals but also the international community. Lastly, preserving Cantonese shows Hong Konger's strength, pride, and passion for continuing to fight for individuality and independence in order to fully embrace its unique characteristics.

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# 36. Analysis by Chloe Li

CHLOE LI

## Hong Kong and Techno-Orientalism

### Overview

The East, or what the West refers to as the “Orient,” is an othering geopolitical, cultural, and social concept that has been constructed to maintain Western economic, cultural, and political hegemony over the East. This concept, known as “Orientalism” has branched off since industrialization into a new form, known as “Techno-orientalism” where the West embodies the East through hyper-technological lenses, promoting the idea that the East Asians are humanoid creatures living in a post-futuristic world. Not only does Techno-orientalism bring misrepresentation to the East socially, but the ideology also hypersexualizes East Asian media in a way that strips all meaning and history from the East. Thus, since Hong Kong cinema has had such an incredibly large impact on East Asian media, it is not surprising that Techno-orientalism has infiltrated the Hong Kong media scene and has commodified the aesthetics into shallow, and unrecognizable representations.

### I. Introduction

Robots, cyborgs, flashing neon lights in a foggy city of hustling workers. To understand techno-orientalism, we must first discuss orientalism and the history it comes from. According to Edward Said (1979), who was one of the first people to coin the term “Orient” in context with the East and West, “Orientalism” is the theory and practice used by the West to dominate and control the East through projected perspectives of the East. By purposely misinterpreting the East via the media, the West bolsters its hegemony in political and economic forms to keep Eastern power at bay, whether or not the East actually presents a “threat.”

Diverging from that concept, “techno-orientalism” is thus the hyper-technological and futuristic portrayal of the Orient, most commonly depicted from East Asian influences. Techno-orientalism has permeated into many forms of media, but the same image of robots and cyborgs that greatly resemble East Asians with soft, non-Eurocentric features living in a dystopian city creates a general basis for which techno-orientalism operates: that East Asians are unfeeling, brainwashed, futuristic sub-humans in need of Western liberalization. This representation runs parallel to the basis of Orientalism, where Western (more specifically, White) saviorism maintains the idea of Western supremacy, justifying its interference in non-Western regions.

Much of this techno-orientalist discourse stems from the 1980s, during the boom of Japanese industry, especially in media and technology. Think anime, Sony, automobiles, and Nintendo, where their rising influence diffused into the Western economy at an almost alarming rate never seen before. As the West fears the rising East, they also attempt to mimic and “borrow” from that Eastern success without ever returning to the reality and authenticity of the East. Thus, by combining this fear-mongering and admiration, they reach a conclusive ideology of the techno-orientalist aesthetic that fetishizes the East whilst maintaining the hyper-technological success brought by the East because apparently, such success can only belong to the West—progress in science and technology is only acceptable in the hands of the West, else the result is an apocalyptic, un-human world that retains primitive and undeveloped culture, displacing the East from the present while simultaneously projecting the East as stuck in the worst outcome of the past and the future.

## II. An extended analysis of techno-orientalism: A discussion about techno-orientalism and gender

Let us now discuss techno-orientalism and its relationship to gender. In general, the connection between the Patriarchy and Whiteness is already closely intertwined and can be summarized by the portrayal of power by Whiteness and men that systematically dominate non-Whiteness and non-masculinity. (Rich) White men thus hold authority and all diverging systems of oppression are created to serve white men and their desires. This comparison, however, also includes the dynamic between the West and the East, where the West presents itself as a dominating establishment and paints the East under the light of a weak, docile, and dependent region that absolutely implores the West for interference and help. As a result, the East is constantly compared to that of a woman. Unsurprisingly, people from the East (in this case, East Asian people) are characterized to be more feminine, regardless of their gender.

Otherizing has this effect of making the other party homogeneous and uniform. Techno-orientalism otherizes East Asia, unable to make a distinction between East Asians, creating inescapable stereotypes that apply to everyone from East Asia. East Asian men and women alike are hypersexualized and infantilized, with an abundance of common tropes: East Asian Men are non-masculine, weak, unathletic, just like their female counterparts.

It's easy to turn fear into fetishization, with East Asian women being the victim of hyper-sexualization and infantilization. Did I mention that this fetishization comes from a place of white men's desires? It is not a coincidence that the way pedophiles target people who are subservient and docile mirrors the way Asian fetishizers target East Asian women because they believe them to be easier to (man-) handle and more likely to be passive and compliant.

So, how does this orientalist discourse relate to our discussion of techno-orientalism? Well, techno-orientalism, with its love of unfeeling robots, cyborgs, and sub-humans, preserves this affinity to servile entities. Robots are sub-human to humans; they are servants that are created to complete the work of humans and can be altered to do anything for humans. Then, what does this make of East-Asians, who are seen as robotic creatures that are efficient in their work even though they are incapable of making their own decisions? It is all a product of white saviorism and their unstoppable fetishization of the East.

In an attempt to both diversify white men's' pool of desirable targets while also placing a façade over the idea that East Asians are all the same, here are a couple of stereotypical examples of East Asians that constitute white hyper-sexualization and infantilization. Firstly, the Asian woman living in her home country during the war is saved (physically and metaphorically) by a white soldier and is taken away from her home to a "better place." Next, the edgy and sarcastic Asian woman who happens to be really good with technology and serves as a side quest for the main male character to dominate. These women often have colorful or short hair and present a rebellious attitude. Another example is the mature Asian woman who uses her exotic body to deceive her enemies. The list goes on.

## III. Hong Kong media scene and the Wong Kar Wai phenomenon

In Hong Kong, a diverse array of entertainment and culture can be found through its long history of media production. Much of its fame can be attributed to its cinema industry which boomed during the 1980s and 1990s. Many films created during this time brought about great success due to the unique feelings brought to screen via the camera angles and youthful gaze. A combination of western and Asian culture alongside a new generation of quickly growing urbanization captured the vivid and fast-paced cityscape of Hong Kong through the lenses of these films. Some of

these iconic films were directed by John Woo (Bullet In The Head – 1990), Ringo Lam (City on Fire – 1987), Tsui Hark (Once Upon a Time in China – 1991 to 1997), and most notably, Wong Kar Wai.

Wong Kar Wai was a cinematic genius of his time, with his movies In the Mood for Love (2001), Chungking Express (1994), and Fallen Angels (1995) filled with stunning visuals and sentimental soundtracks winning the hearts of watchers all around the world. In the Mood for Love was nominated in 2001 the Palme D'or at the famous international Cannes Film Festival, proving the global impact that his films had on the cinema industry.

Decades later, the “gen-z” of social media has developed a gripping fascination around Wong Kar Wai’s works, especially surrounding his cinematography. Magazine covers, photo shoots, Pinterest boards and many more platforms had sudden surges of interest in the Wong Kar Wai aesthetic. It was as if Wong Kar Wai had just re-released these films into the entertainment circle of the new generation.



*Bullet in the Head (1990)*





*In the Mood for Love (2001)*

#### **IV. Wong Kar Wai and anti-orientalism**

Although I cannot say that the purpose of Wong Kar Wai's films was to directly combat modern orientalism and techno-orientalism, the image and impact brought forth by these visual-heavy films sets a drastic contrast between Western perspectives on East Asia and what modern East Asian cultures actually represent. In the 2001 movie *In the Mood for Love*, a notable observation about the setting and mood of the movie is that the film romanticizes pre-modern/modern 1960s British Hong Kong. In a way that does not make implicit one-sided commentary on the political and social conditions of that historical era, the movie presents a love story that simply happens to exist during that time while still engaging in the time period's environment. Another example from Wong Kar Wai's films is *Chungking Express* from 1994, where the blurry yet starkly dynamic cinematography that portrays 1960s Hong Kong utilizes dark saturated colors that contrast the neon city lights of Hong Kong city life. However, the gentle usage of this urban landscape is merely the background to the characters in the movie, never overwhelming the pace and obstructing the viewer of the purpose of the film.

In contrast, Western media with East Asian influences provide a rather gross interpretation of East Asian cities as a whole. The homogenization of large East Asian cities into one giant metropolis can be seen in movies such as *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). This American movie is set in a dystopian society where the city is heavily influenced by the neo-lights and futurism of Tokyo, while the white male protagonist explores the setting filled with East-Asian inspired technology and people portrayed to be exotic and foreign. In the sci-fi movie *Cloud Atlas* (2012), the film is packed with images of robotic sub-humans that eerily impersonate East Asians where some of these robots work as sex slaves, enforcing the idea that East Asians are hypersexualized creatures of desire. A more recent example is the game *Stray* (2022), which follows a cat around a cyberpunk themed city that engages East Asian cityscapes. Even if the game is non-threatening, the concept of using East Asia as an aesthetic speaks volumes of the fetishization of the East. To take

a look at the difference between Wong Kar Wai's portrayal of East Asia versus American portrayal of East Asia is to wholly prove the techno-orientalist ideals that permeate East Asian media.



*Fallen Angels* (1995)

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