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## Notes on Contributors

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**Holger Briel** is Professor of International Business at Monarch University, Switzerland, and Associate Professor and Director of the Programme of Communication & Media Studies at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, People's Republic of China. His research includes intercultural studies, globalisation, visual media and the impact of digital media on today's societies. His latest book, *VisionBytes*, is scheduled to be released later in 2016.

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**Leo Yuan** gained a PhD in Art Administration and Management from the Department of Fine Arts at the National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan. His doctoral dissertation was titled 'An inductive proposal for a system for the revitalization of an intangible cultural heritage: The puppet theater of Taiwan'. He is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Fashion Imaging, MingDao University, Taiwan. Recently he has been focusing on the global impact on traditional local transformations and issues surrounding the cultural and creative industries.

## Editor's Introduction

This is the second issue of the *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies* and it is hoped that it once again will do justice to the breadth of that 'discipline' called cultural studies. The journey begins with a text on Agatha Christie and social research theory, then moves on to Sri Lankan displays of asceticism, goes on further still to film censorship as a social tool in Korea and to the revitalisation of an old Chinese/Taiwanese deity, and finally comes to rest with a poetico-sensual appraisal of the modernisation drive in the Philippines.

Tim Appignani's 'Murder and Emancipation: Agatha Christie and Critical Qualitative Methods' takes its readers along an analysis of the Agatha Christie Miss Marple novels and highlights the approach used as akin to participatory action research in the social sciences. As such, Appignani's defence of Miss Marple's methodology over the more deductive and positivist methodologies of a Hercule Poirot or a Sherlock Holmes is also a validation of such action research in the social sciences: "As Miss Marple routinely demonstrates with her analogies, a logical conclusion depends greatly on whose logic is being applied." The text as a whole is a very good example of successful interdisciplinary research and is of equal interest to literary scholars and social scientists.

Isha Gamlath's 'The rise of popular asceticism in Sinhalese Buddhist culture: Some significant concepts and practices' analyses the historical concept of asceticism in Indian Hindu tradition and then charts its way to Buddhism and Sri Lanka. She is able to demonstrate that modern-day Lankan traditions of asceticism are rooted in the Hindu tradition, but, through a change in religious doctrine and a geographical shift, have taken on new meanings, among them a very strong political one.

Molly Hyo Kim's 'Film censorship policy during Park Chung Hee's military regime (1960-1979) and Hostess Films' discusses the development of the Korean film industry over the twenty-year-long dictatorship in South Korea. She explains the rise of severe censorship during that era and then discusses the enigmatic, continued and easy approval of hostess films at the time. She makes a convincing case for her thesis, which states that these films were allowed despite/because of their lewdness as long as it was framed within a socially and politically acceptable message: that lewd women will get their just rewards and that these are the price to be paid for progress in the country. Under the guise of sexual and social education, they were able to explore visual material readily banned in other films without such a stock message tagged on at the end.

Leo Yuan and Holger Briel's 'The Dilemma of the Revitalization of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Global Homogenization' discusses the rise of the Techno Nezha in Taiwan, one of the most beloved deities in Taiwanese mythology. The image of the god has been updated through the usage of techno music during his festivals and processions and this has given rise to questions of tradition and innovation. The authors maintain that without innovation, traditions are destined to be discontinued and forgotten. At the same time, they are instrumental in keeping at bay an outright cultural takeover of local customs through cultural imperialist practices.

In 'Smell, Space and Othering', Cecilia Fe L. Sta Maria attempts to create the scentscape of a coastal town in the Philippines through embedded, olfactory participation. Her informant is able to break the vicious circle of othering not with words, but with smells. She contends, based on work by Henri Lefebvre, that the olfactory sense has become one of the strongest candidates



for the production of social division and goes on to exemplify this through her narrative. As she writes her report, the narrative itself begins to break up and becomes interspersed with lyrical elements. The disruption of social spaces by the olfactory, linguistically impossible to describe, is mirrored in the breakdown of her own academic discourse. As such, this narrativist sleight of hand prefigures a possible breakdown also of pre-constructed divisive olfactory regimes.

Holger Briel

Editor



## **Murder and Emancipation: Agatha Christie and Critical Qualitative Methods**

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### **Abstract**

Prominent cultural studies scholars, beginning as early as the Frankfurt School and continuing through to today, have routinely identified the mystery novel as a worthy cultural product because it serves to valorize scientism by illustrating the virtue of scientific methods of crime solving. However, this research has neglected to fully consider how other, less empirical, forms of inquiry have also been featured in the mystery genre, particularly in the work of the most widely read mystery author of all time, Agatha Christie. My research highlights Christie's tendency to focus on the utility of qualitative methods that result in emancipatory action for marginalized characters. For Miss Marple, Christie's popular sleuth, this emancipation results from her use of what scholars call a critical qualitative method that enjoins stakeholders in an empowering process of collective inquiry. By establishing that Christie's work evidences progressive social scientific research methods, this article engages with the work of previous scholars who have overlooked the legacy of her novels as purveyors of scientism to the public, and as means of repudiating hegemonic discourses of institutional authority.

**Keywords:** cultural studies, action research, Agatha Christie, crime fiction, scientism, methods

## Introduction

Though few people realize it today, Agatha Christie's global sales of more than two billion books tie her with Shakespeare as the most popular author of all time, with her work impacting the 192 different cultures where translations of her books exist (Curran, 2011). She's been studied by cultural studies, gender and literary scholars, but none have recognized her as perhaps the world's most notable exponent of academic inquiry. The Miss Marple books in particular are often examined by scholars interested in questions of gender identity (Makinen, 2006; York, 2007; Shaw & Vanacker, 1991), but overlooked as models of social science methods. As a sleuth, Miss Marple is sometimes compared negatively to Poirot, who makes explicit references to method and psychology as a means of detection (Bloom, 1990; Wagoner, 1986; Mann, 1981), but this comparison ignores the fact that, like Poirot, Miss Marple adheres closely to the social science paradigm, though with a more profound tendency toward critical methods. In this light Christie's work can be properly understood to have made a significant contribution to cultural life by drawing into the broader discourse of scientific inquiry qualitative social science methods that diverge from the positivist traditions so heavily associated with the scientific method. In so doing she continued the tradition laid out by earlier mystery novelists of using the genre as a means of advancing the public's knowledge of scientific methods, but this time focusing on a different type.

Miss Marple eschews traditional views of authority by working side by side with her suspects to solve crimes through collaboration and qualitative inquiry. Specifically, Miss Marple's approach to sleuthing illustrates the qualitative method of critical inquiry that contemporary methodologists call participatory action research (Chandler & Torbert, 2003) an approach that contrasts sharply with the empirical methods of other fictional detectives. Participatory Action Research (hereafter PAR) is defined by Berg & Lune (2012, p. 259) as an ethnographic method that "embraces principles of participation, reflection, empowerment, and emancipation of people and groups interested in improving their social situation." The central concept behind PAR is that a researcher enjoins a community's stakeholders to collaborate in a process of reflective investigation about a specific local problem in order to craft a solution that the stakeholders can implement. For a mystery novel, what all this means is that the sleuth who investigates the crime is doing so alongside the affected community using that community's particular cultural lens with the goal of advancing their objectives. Though this model of detection is popular today, and often associated wrongly with the earlier work of Arthur Conan Doyle (Rushing, 2007), it was actually Agatha Christie who popularized it. Unlike her predecessor, who promoted empirical scientism (Bayard, 2008), and the hegemonic values imbued therein (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1987), Christie modeled social science methods in her writing, and in the Miss Marple novels these methods take on a critical qualitative form that aims to emancipate victims of marginalization.

By making emancipatory methods of critical inquiry the focus of her novels Christie's work does more than just provide readers with an alternative scientific lesson to the positivist one that some scholars ascribe to the genre as a whole (Rowland, 2001). Christie's novels challenge the conservative ideological subtext pervading the detective fiction produced by other, primarily male, mystery novelists that is rightly criticized for reinforcing the integrity of capitalist hegemonies (MacDonald, 1953; Cawelti, 1976; Rowland, 2001). The presence of critical qualitative methods, like PAR, in some of the genre's most widely read books indicates that mystery novels do contain liberating discourses that align with the social justice mandates found in the critical sphere of the social sciences, and which directly aim to contradict traditional patriarchal values and upset the capitalist hegemony from which they emanate.



## Mystery and/as Science

The notion of mystery fiction as a purveyor of social science research methods is not surprising considering that some of cultural studies' most prominent scholars have identified the value of mystery novels as promoting scientism, with Christie's novels specifically suggested as a site of future research (MacDonald, 1953; McLuhan, 1964). However, this research thread was neglected until the end of the last century when the media emphasis on forensics made it popular again (Schweitzer and Saks, 2007). Tellingly, these recent studies neglect Christie and focus again on the character of Sherlock Holmes, probably because his empirical methods of rational scientific inquiry (Thomas, 1994; Thomas, 1999; Wainwright, 2012; Waddell & Rybolt, 2011) align with the forensic methods now commonly cited as superior by both scholars (Thomas, 1999; Frank, 2003; Van Dover, 2005) and jurors (Meyer, 1999; Schweitzer & Saks, 2007) for their claims to what Reason and Torbert (2001) call positivist empiricism.

While early cultural studies scholars may have been mistaken to group Christie's work along with preceding texts that were structured differently, and promoted an empirical branch of scientism, none of the scholars who considered her work later redressed the error. Instead, those who study Christie's work generally use themes of scientism to distinguish Poirot from Miss Marple as characters along gender lines. Scholars fit Poirot, who is more akin to the great detective archetype (Bargainnier, 1980), into the mold of an empiricist by emphasizing his predilection for order and method (Rowland, 2001; Mann, 1981; Maida & Spornick, 1982). By comparison, Miss Marple's sleuthing is said to be improvised based on intuition and experiential knowledge (York, 2007; Kungl, 2006; Bloom, 1990; Craig & Cadogan, 1981). Poirot's constant references to his 'little grey cells' justify claims that his approach is distinctly rationalist (Mann, 1981) so that Christie's work can be read as extending the long tradition of rhetorically gendering science as a masculine endeavor that affirms patriarchal values (Harding, 1987; Haraway, 1988; Cockburn, 1985). Though Poirot's methods lean towards social sciences, which have been characterized as a feminine counterpart to the natural sciences (Haraway, 1988), the Freudian psychology he employs is predicated on deeply rooted sexist beliefs (Shaw and Vanacker, 1991; Rowland, 2001) that cast him by association as a supporter of patriarchy. Some do credit Miss Marple with being an adherent to method in her sleuthing (Shaw and Vanacker, 1991; York, 2007), even by identifying it as "analogical reasoning" (Bargainnier, 1980), p. 74), but it is never linked to a deliberate practice of social scientific inquiry as such.

In part, this binary view of Christie's sleuths speaks not only to the still prevalent bias toward the empirical sciences as a hegemonic model of knowledge production, but also to the way in which the mystery genre has established gendered sub-genres. The detective fiction that has been attended to by cultural studies scholars is largely the domain of male characters, male authors, and cultures of masculinity that revolve around toughness and survival. The genres of mystery novels now known as "classic" or "golden age" novels have become the domain of the female (Plain, 2001). Just as empirical sciences are frequently treated as male domains (Haraway, 1988), and credited for their place in the male-dominated detective fiction sub-genre (Bloom, 1990), the social sciences, which are sometimes seen as feminine (Coltrane, 1994), are found being promoted in the female sub-genre of classic detective fiction. In this light, scholarship on Christie's work reflects the broader tendency of mystery scholarship to, as Plain (2001) suggests, code logic as masculine in one genre of mystery and feminine in another, in a manner that reinforces gendered biases about the supremacy of male detectives.

## What is PAR anyway?

Action Research is thought by many to have emanated from the sociologist Kurt Lewin (Adelman, 1993), who in 1946 called for a critical qualitative methodology that extended the traditional ethnographic approach (Whyte, 1991). Since then, different forms of action research have developed so that the term “action research” refers to a base notion, practiced largely by educators, that is extended in sociological research to more critically imagined forms, including PAR (Whyte, 1995). Where action research mandates that research be performed within communities using their intrinsic values, customs and culture to craft solutions to the community’s problems (Chandler & Torbert, 2003), PAR takes the critical bent of this model further by calling on the research group to work together with the community stakeholders in order to address only those problems defined by the community as such, and to similarly conceive of only solutions that meet the community’s standards (Whyte, 1991; Greenwood & Levin, 2003). In contrast to action researchers, who don’t adopt a collaborative approach, participatory action researchers seek to establish greater validity in their outcomes by consciously working with, rather than on, the community stakeholders in the research process as they enjoin collaboration to establish a model for problem solving that may outlast the researcher’s presence (Bradbury & Reason, 2003). To do this requires full immersion in the community, which reinforces the notion that PAR is a collective tactic of social improvement for, and by, the underprivileged or disenfranchised (Rahman, 1983; Wicks, Reason & Bradbury, 2005).

A significant difference between the classical model of ethnographic research and any action research is the stated objective of altering the social circumstances of the group or individual under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Where traditional ethnography avers culturally relative decisions about the use of the research, PAR has a very specific and deliberate intention from the outset. Namely, participatory action researchers are seeking to provide greater social equity with their work (Reason & Torbert, 2001). Kemmis & McTaggart (2003), Berg & Lune (2012), and Denzin (2008) all highlight the importance that PAR places on efforts to not only benefit, but emancipate marginalized communities and individuals. The action in PAR is one that emanates from the community in order to strengthen it against institutional strictures, or extrinsic platforms that threaten its members (Rahman, 1983).

## Methods

This study takes the form of a diachronic literary discourse analysis, which, in contrast to the foundationalist approach to scholarly work, sets out to address social inequity through the discursive examination of a literary text. It does this in part through traditional textual analysis that considers the given dialogue, and a reading of it, at the linguistic level (Fairclough, 1995), but also by examining the narrative discourses using semiotic analysis (van Dijk, 1985). Where discourse analysis allows for the interpretation of a text’s meaning in socio-cultural terms (Fairclough, 1995), literary discourse analysis brings key elements of literary analysis to the fore, specifically the understanding of the literary text as artifact (de Beaugrande, 2006). As Maingueneau (2010) explains, literary discourse analysis is sometimes overused, but is ideal as an approach toward texts that exhibit properties requiring interdisciplinary interpretations; i.e., those that cross between the humanities and the social sciences, as Christie’s do.

I study the works of Agatha Christie as components of a larger body of work that routinely depends on similar narrative structures, and thematic elements. In this case, the texts in question are those that best characterize the author’s reputation across cultures, specifically those that

feature one of her most prominent sleuths: Miss Marple. Miss Marple appeared in twelve novels as well as twenty short stories (Curran, 2011). For the purposes of this study only the full novels will be examined as some of the short stories featured other sleuths from Christie's cannon that complicate a study of static methodological patterns.

The discourses I am seeking to explore within Christie's novels are much more specific than those usually employed during discourse analysis. Because the focus of my book is to compare how a specific academic method is illustrated by the investigatory methods of a specific character, I will restrict my analysis to the presence of PAR discourses within Christie's texts, calling on secondary material only in instances where it is useful as an affirmation of accepted literary patterns, or cultural interpretation evidenced by the author.

## Participants and Emancipation

Agatha Christie conjured many notable sleuths in the course of her long career, but chief among them is Miss Jane Marple, an unmarried older woman who first appeared in Christie's 1930 whodunit *The Murder at the Vicarage* when she helps to solve the murder of a neighbor in her small village of St. Mary Mead. Miss Marple appeared as the main character in twelve of Christie's books, with her last case published in 1976, the year of Christie's death. Though Miss Marple's age becomes a subject of confusion as she survives fifty years of dotage, two key character traits remain consistent in her novels. First of all, Miss Marple, unlike other famous literary detectives, holds no official status in the cases she solves. Miss Marple can only be described as a sleuth, not a detective. She is therefore always operating in an amateur capacity, despite running up an impressive record as a sleuth during her golden years (Bargainnier, 1980). Secondly, Miss Marple has a penchant for comparing people she meets with others she has known in her village, and by so doing makes associations about personality, motives, and cultural life that aid her in her sleuthing (Gray, 1990).

Using the taxonomy of practice Kemmis and McTaggart (2003) establish in their review of PAR literature that one can categorize Miss Marple as a reflexive practitioner of critical reasoning. This mode of practice places emancipation front of central as it "...aims to comprehend how a situation has come about as a result of human choices... and to consider how things might be re-constructed so they could be different in the future" (p. 363). Doing so calls for reflection by the collaborators as they practice in order to allow them to re-imagine the world around them through new perspectives that will help them to assess, and change, the situation in which they practice. By re-structuring these settings, institutional practices can be reformed "...so that actors may have different choices from the ones forced upon them by 'the way things are currently'" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 363-364). In the following pages I will explore how Miss Marple constitutes a model participatory action researcher. I will focus first on documenting how Christie positions her as an active participant in the communities where she sleuths, and then how the insider status she is ascribed in the novels affords her the ability to emancipate others through collaborative research.

## Participation

Miss Marple is positioned in varying ways as a participant in the cultures where she investigates. In Miss Marple's debut novel, *Murder at the Vicarage*, the murder takes place next door to her, automatically casting her as a cultural insider. In *The Body in the Library* and *The Mirror Crack'd*, which also take place in St. Mary Mead, her familiarity with Gossington Hall, where the crimes are discovered, and her acquaintance with the suspects, afford her community member status. At other times Miss Marple's credentials as a lifelong villager

distinguish her as a cultural insider capable of interpreting the clues of the case in their proper social context. Miss Marple's life in the village of St. Mary Mead is frequently mentioned in Christie's books as the source of her expertise in the study of human nature (Bargainnier, 1980). As Miss Marple sees it, "...in St. Mary Mead there was always something going on... so many interesting human problems – giving rise to endless pleasurable hours of speculation" (Christie, 1965, p. 5).

Miss Marple occupies a uniquely marginal status herself. She is a spinster, and an elderly one at that, but through the exposition provided by her large network of wealthy and well-born friends Christie suggests that Miss Marple was raised in affluence, and has only become accustomed to her reduced circumstances by virtue of having never married. Miss Marple notes that, "but for the kindness, the really great kindness of [her] nephew Raymond" she would be destitute (Christie, 1952, p. 9). It is because of Miss Marple's marginal status that she is sometimes enlisted by police seeking to borrow from her insight into the cultures where crimes have been committed (Bargainnier, 1980). Investigators have remarked on Miss Marple's ability to interact on equal ground with country squires and shop clerks (Maida & Spornick, 1982, p. 183), as well as her familiarity with the "details of social behavior" of both housemaids and noblewomen (Craig & Cadogan, 1981, p. 167-168). Thus, she represents the "interlocking oppressions" that are manifest within most communities where PAR is practiced (Reason & Brabdry, 2001). The fortunate consequence of her interlocking oppressions is that they suit her disposition for the fieldwork of solving crimes. Miss Marple, like the action researcher, embraces marginality as a means of engaging the community. Marginal zones are prime settings for the work of participatory action researchers (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003), as marginality is incumbent on those who work in those settings. Shaffir, Stebbins, and Turowetz (1980) argue that "if there is one especially well-suited adjective that describes the social experience of fieldwork, it is marginality" (p. 18).

Miss Marple straddles her marginal place in England's class structure to her own purposes just as she exploits the paradoxical views of elderly women as both harmless and cynical. On his first encounter with her, Inspector Craddock notes that, "She was far more benignant than he had imagined and a good deal older..." (Christie, 1950, p. 69). Yet despite this benignity, Miss Marple is also described by her neighbor as "...the worst cat in the village...and she always knows every single thing that happens – and draws the worst inferences from it" (Christie, 1930, p. 5). The perception of elderly spinsters as malicious gossips is a pronounced stereotype in western culture (Caputi, 1993), and one that Miss Marple uses to great effect. By engaging in gossip with other marginalized characters, and by allowing her interest in the affairs of others to be dismissed by those around her as a penchant for gossip, Miss Marple collects valuable clues about the people, places, and things surrounding the mysteries she aims to solve (Shaw & Vanacker, 1991). In this way she exploits her intersectionality by allowing the marginality ascribed to her age and gender to act as a cover under which she can insinuate herself into the investigation and gather the clues needed to solve the mystery.

In practice, gossip is often the form Miss Marple's sleuthing takes, and practice is crucial to PAR. In her village her practicum serves her sleuthing well, but when she travels, Miss Marple adapts her style of gossip to accommodate the subjective viewpoints of the practice settings that she visits where she establishes the first-person social relationships that legitimize her presence in the community, and afford her the insider status she needs to investigate (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 373). During her stay *At Bertram's Hotel* for example, Miss Marple draws on information and access provided to her by the hotel maids by seeking them out in their own quarters where the dynamic of social exchange is more equitable, and therefore more



conducive to revelation. Similarly, in *Sleeping Murder* she realizes that the local female shopkeepers she calls upon won't be comfortable sharing private recollections in the market place, so Miss Marple joins them in a knitting circle where she collects crucial information as they "gab" with her in confidence. Her understanding of these women, and their practice settings, makes it easy for her to induce them to participate in her sleuthing because she demonstrates solidarity with them by performing their customs in the same way PAR advocates (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003). The result of trusting the practical knowledge of those engaged in the act of doing, also leads to more effective and expeditious decision-making that is needed in order for action research teams to proceed with the action of resolving a crisis (Reason & Torbert, 2001).

When the information she evinces through these methods prove useful Miss Marple proves that Walton & Gaffney (1990) are correct "that fact finding and theorizing that tap the wisdom and knowledge of those who work in the system under consideration produce knowledge that is more relevant to practice, and, therefore, in certain respects of greater validity" (Walton & Gaffney, 1990, p. 101). The validity of the information Miss Marple collects is stronger in large part because she understands that communities and their participants act according to "discourses, social relationships, and the histories of the settings they inhabit" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 365). As Gray notes, her tendency to compare people she encounters to the inhabitants of her own village "does not cast crime out of her world but situates it in the center of it" so that the crime becomes just one aspect of the culture where it takes place (Gray, 1990, p. 84). Her approach therefore depends on a distinction in her mind between knowledge and knowing, where knowledge is constituted by one's acceptance of facts as presented, but knowing comes only from the instincts that are honed through practice and experience (Gray, 1990). This quality of "experiential knowing" in the most intuitive and practical sense is specifically what Reason (2002) argues distinguishes action research data. Knowledge is a product of experience, and experience is predicated on action. The knowledge of community members is thusly based on prior active experiences that should be acknowledged, rather than discounted (Reason & Torbert, 2001). In doing so researchers are also affirming the value of community members by highlighting the fact that their longstanding experience privileges them in the research dynamic over researchers and practitioners who have entered the community more recently (Greenwood, Whyte & Harkavy, 1993).

Miss Marple often uses knitting as a way of insinuating herself into the activities of those around her as an unobtrusive presence. In so doing she uses her knitting as a clever form of what fieldworkers call "deflection," a common tactic since "it sometimes proves useful to camouflage the real research questions to deflect attention from the targets of study" (Shaffir, Stebbins & Turowetz, 1980, p. 51). But her knitting is more than just deflection. It also serves her "process of critical reflection" so that she can gather her thoughts and understand "where [the stakeholders] are now, how things came to be that way, and from these starting points, how in practice things might be changed" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 346). For Miss Marple, "what begins as a harmless spinster habit becomes a motif not merely for her gossipy, feminine kind of sleuthing but also for her role as a figure of fate..." capable of "making a pattern of the homely strands of evidence" (Shaw & Vanacker, 1991, p. 80). Her knitting is symbolic of her methods, and of her tendency toward what Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.6) call the "bricolage" of qualitative inquiry, wherein the researcher quilts together the necessary methods, information, and theories needed to solve the problem at hand.

## Emancipation

Given her compromised social status as a poor, elderly spinster, (Makinen, 2006) Miss Marple seems an unlikely candidate to practice the emancipating mode of PAR. Surprisingly though, Miss Marple is frequently called upon for emancipatory action in indirect, but socially inscribed ways (Bargainnier, 1980). Lacking formal authority, Miss Marple's emancipatory work typically comes in the form of voluntary aid to female acquaintances that find themselves embroiled by association with a murder (Bargainnier, 1980). In these cases, Miss Marple fleshes out the crime not to exonerate her associates, but to liberate them from marginalization using the type of humanistic approach to ethnography that is so central to the PAR paradigm (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

For Miss Marple, sleuthing has a practical application. It is not performed for social control, but rather as a means of better understanding the world around her, and, having done so, to be better prepared to "...assist practitioners in identifying and making explicit fundamental problems by first raising their collective consciousness" (Holter & Schwartz-Barcott, 1993, p. 302). She does this firstly by enjoining her discredited friends to help her with her investigations. These collaborations in and of themselves afford her friends with a sense of their value, and a lesson in how to contend with disenfranchisement. As Miss Marple's collaborators aid her in collecting and analyzing evidence, using their own intrinsic understanding of the cultures at hand, they ultimately find that "because only the insider has access to 'inside knowledge' and can thusly counter pose inside knowledge with the external view" they are in fact better suited to the work of sleuthing than the formal authorities whose opinion of them held so much power at the outset (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 373).

Such is the case in *They Do It With Mirrors*. There, the murders and embezzlement that arise in the story are of concern to Miss Marple only in as much they relate to the concerns about Miss Marple's old friend, Carrie Louise. Carrie Louise's sister, Ruth, is the first character to feel that something malevolent is afoot in Carrie Louise's household after a mysterious fire occurs. Acting on this instinct Ruth asks Miss Marple, as an old family friend, to visit Carrie Louise at her home, Stoneygates, to suss out the situation using Miss Marple's well known talent for investigation. Characteristically, the proceeding web of murders, attacks, and poisonings is only finally disentangled out once Miss Marple remembers that Carrie Louise was already unsettled before these things occurred, and that with each malicious occurrence Carrie Louise is further marginalized in the eyes of her family, who portray her as fragile and disoriented. Miss Marple is almost led into this line of thinking herself before she acknowledges a previously dismissed refrain by Carrie Louise that, "*This doesn't seem real*" (Christie, 1952, p. 183). Reality becomes the key focus of Miss Marple's work in this book. In line with the thinking of Fals Borda (1979) she is "investigating reality in order to transform it." Notably, she does this not in terms of the broad society, or the metaphor of reality that concerns philosophers, but, as PAR demands, in terms of "the day to day lived realities" of those around her (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003, p. 377). In so doing Miss Marple uncovers a scheme of embezzlement, murder and deceit all of which hinged on isolating and discrediting Carrie Louise so that her family would unwittingly enable her to be exploited without interference. Had Miss Marple failed to rely on her own intuition, or that of her friend, Carrie Louise might ultimately have been killed. Instead, the book ends with a revised opinion among the family; a more enlightened view of their present circumstances, which affords Carrie Louise the agency and admiration that she had previously been denied.

While disabusing gendered marginalization is a prime motive for Miss Marple's sleuthing (York, 2007; Bargainnier, 1980), it is also a fundamental element of the PAR approach. PAR

prescribes the necessity of providing voice to disenfranchised community members (Reason & Bradbury, 2004). Miss Marple does this by recognizing the power of the marginalized voice, particularly among women. In some cases, the claims she seeks to justify are speculative, as in *The Moving Finger*, where Miss Marple redeems Aimee Griffith's reputation by revealing that Mr. Symington, not Aimee, had ingeniously flooded the town with poison pen letters. Miss Marple even notes that Symington's scheme to murder his wife was based on the assumption that "the police were certain to suspect a woman" once the crime was linked with the sending of vicious letters (Christie, 1942, p. 201-208). Other times the claims Miss Marple sets out to prove are in fact eye witness testimony that formal authorities ignore because of the age, gender, or class of the witness. Such is the case in *4:50 From Paddington*, where Miss Marple is called to action after her friend, Mrs. McGillicuddy, witnesses a murder on a passing train. When no body is found Mrs. McGillicuddy is dismissed as a crank and humiliated. As Miss Marple sets about helping her friend it is clear to the reader that her primary agenda is less about finding the killer than it is about proving that a murder has taken place at all. This agenda typifies an oft-illustrated pattern wherein Miss Marple liberates victims of marginalization by proving their truth claims and dispelling sexist, ageist, classist stereotypes that cast them to social reprobation.

Miss Marple's last case *Sleeping Murder* exemplifies her capacity for empowering others. By chance Miss Marple encounters a young newlywed named Gwenda who fears she is losing her mind because of recurring images she sees in her new marital home. Miss Marple proposes that the images Gwenda considers hallucinations are actually just repressed memories of a toddlerhood in England she had been deliberately kept from knowing about. When this turns out to be the case, Gwenda, aided by Miss Marple, undertakes to unravel why she was brainwashed to forget this period of her childhood. As they wend through the twists of the mystery several women, including Gwenda, learn to value their own accounts, and experiences as meaningful in the face of incredulity. Miss Marple aids these women by encouraging them to engage in what Winter (1996) terms the "reflexive critique" of action research (Winter, 1996, p. 13-14). The reflexive critique demands that collaborators in action research challenge their biases, in this case the biases that the female characters in *Sleeping Murder* had built up against their own sex. For Gwenda, who had originally assumed that her stirring visions of a murder in her new home were hallucinations brought on by a feminine tendency to hysteria, the acceptance of those visions as memories dispelled gendered biases about women's mental frailty, and provided her with a means of accessing her own personal history.

Similarly, Lily, a housemaid who worked in Gwenda's home when Gwenda was a child, has clear recollections of the night the crime occurred, but has kept them secret for years out of concern that what she knows will only be discounted as servant gossip, and that sharing the information would open her up to derogation from authorities, and her chauvinistic husband. Only when Lily shares her life experiences with Gwenda can either one engage in the dialectic critique that Winter (1996) says allows action researchers to make sense of the world, and the dynamics that shape their circumstances. These endeavors are rewarded when they lead to the capture of a sadistic misogynist who murdered his own sister out of jealousy. In the process the two women disabused themselves of the belief that women should subordinate their own "knowing" of truth based on life experience to the "knowledge" of truth assigned by the men in their lives. As in *Sleeping Murder*, where the combined efforts of Gwenda, Lily, and Miss Marple re-shape the present by accurately accounting for the past, Winter says that action research draws on collaboration to create plural structures, based on multiple historical accounts that risk disturbing the status quo, and allow collaborators to internalize the complimentary nature of theory and practice (Winter, 1996, pp. 23-24).

That Miss Marple routinely gathers crucial information from unexpected sources in the aid of emancipating others attests to the validity of PAR's mandate to interview all participants in a community, no matter how marginalized. Rahman (1993) notes the impact of this technique on the newly enfranchised community members in his research following up with past participants in PAR projects. He finds that the "semi educated" community members, like the unnoticed servants of the Christie novel, realize their own potential through the process of being heard and documented. Effectively, Rahman's book echoes the narrative of *Sleeping Murder* in that, true to the action research goals, the process of giving voice to marginalized populations helps people within a community to produce their own "systematically collective knowledge" (Rahman, 1993). In addition to *4:50 from Paddington*, *The Moving Finger*, *Sleeping Murder* and *They Do It With Mirrors*, Miss Marple also unravels the mystery in *A Murder Is Announced* by crediting the seemingly mistaken utterances of the aging Dora Bunner with legitimacy. While Dora is dismissed by those around her as "rather stupid" Miss Marple eventually identifies the killer by noting Dora's tendency to mistakenly refer to Letitia Blacklock as Lotty, Letitia's presumably deceased sister (Christie, 1950). By giving weight to Dora's words, and proving the value of doing so Miss Marple adheres to the feminist research disposition by teaching those around her how significant it is to give voice to the women in our communities that so often go unheard (Powell, 1996), a concept that Denzin and Lincoln (2000) espouse as the bedrock of meaningful qualitative research. Obviously, Miss Marple's lesson to the characters of the book is also a lesson from Christie to her readers; a lesson recurring so often that it can be read as a primary unifying theme in the Miss Marple novels.

## Conclusion

All this documenting of PAR methods is not just about revising opinions of a fictional character, or her author. As my research evidences, Miss Marple solves crimes using practiced methods of social science research that justify the importance of qualitative approaches that are often dismissed today in favor of forensic research that valorizes misperceptions about the validity of deductive, positivist empirical approaches to inquiry. Through Miss Marple Christie provided a useful counter to the overriding presumption toward modes of scientific inquiry that are too often prized for their identification with masculinity (Harding, 1987), and hegemony (Whyte, 1995) and it is in this context that we should interpret these findings.

Contrary to positivist empiricist methods, such as deductive reasoning (Winter, 1996), which is popularly associated with mystery fiction (Bayard, 2008), Miss Marple's approach to crime solving benefits equally from inductive reasoning. Miss Marple does not seek to reduce the evidence in the case, or the suspects in the case to a simple taxonomy that can be generally applied. Her method seeks to be site specific, to account for multiple perceptions of reality, and to allow the multiplicity of meanings within a given community to be understood through that particular community frame. The frequency with which she is able to discern inconsistencies between the reported facts of a case, and the practical realities of those facts is owed to the attention she places on the practices and purposes of the specific communities where the crimes occur. This inductive process then helps her to make sense of the evidence in the crime, rather than letting the evidence of the crime dictate a logical solution. As Miss Marple routinely demonstrates with her analogies, a logical conclusion depends greatly on whose logic is being applied. To deduce which suspect meets the criteria of the culprit, as established by the evidence, first requires that one interpret the evidence in the context of the community where the murder occurred. Over and over Miss Marple proves that to make sense of the empirical evidence in a crime requires qualitative research, but that evidence alone can often be



misleading. In this way the Miss Marple novels highlight the fact that like qualitative and quantitative methods, deductive and inductive methods rely greatly on one another, calling into question the substance of such a dichotomy, and by extension the gendering of methods that a dichotomous view affords.

Not only do Agatha Christie's novels regularly challenge reader's assumptions about valid forms of social and scientific inquiry she also challenges the hegemonic practices that governed England, and its colonial territories, during the twentieth century as well as the patriarchy that was manifestly tied to the empire and its culture of class and gender divisions. In her sleuthing, Miss Marple undermines the logic of patriarchal control simply by proving that women, and elderly unattached women at that, are capable of besting trained criminological experts by drawing on life experiences that many dismiss. Miss Marple's methods illustrate an even more interesting form of upsetting capitalist patriarchy because they not only depend on, but also model, collective community action in the face of social injustice being carried out by the state through its agents, and its adherents. Contrary to those who argue that mystery novels in general serve to reify existing systems of power (Cawelti, 1976), Christie makes a point of positioning both her sleuth, and those she allies with, outside the dominant power structure of the times, most often casting as her villain powerful community authority figures. The repetition of this narrative format indicates that the message of the Miss Marple novels cannot be read as sustaining hegemony, as some suggest is true of the genre as a whole (Cawelti, 1976).

In the Miss Marple novels, method is met with a community minded ethos that inspires her to work in a collaborative, rather than competitive mode. Miss Marple embraces the police officers around her as partners in the same way that she shares her sleuthing with other amateurs she encounters. Though this is usually the case with Poirot, Holmes prefers the gamesmanship of competing against his rival on the police force, Lestrade (Fahlander, 2013), just as the gumshoe private detectives of noir fiction perpetually conflict with the cops that despise them (Plain, 2001). This difference in Christie's narrative model not only aligns with the motives behind PAR, but more broadly with the critical sphere of the social sciences that reject the exploitative nature of traditional ethnographic research methods, just as they reject the white, western, androcentric viewpoints that have too often influenced ethnographic findings. Miss Marple's sleuthing accounts for all viewpoints, and most particularly those that lack established credibility. As a result, she champions the marginalized characters around her in the same way that participatory action researchers seek to emancipate the marginalized communities they work with. This is only possible because in true PAR form, Miss Marple is focused on inducing a solution to community's crisis not just to her own satisfaction, or to the standards of a justice system established to reify hegemonic patriarchy, but rather to the standards of those she tries to help.

When Miss Marple turns her critically minded model of sleuthing into a practicum for her readers she provides an even more salient illustration of the power of community action as a means of resolving community conflict. Despite contemporary critics, who disliked Christie's emphasis on characters over clues (Bloom, 1997), this model better serves the readers' interests by allowing them a chance to guess the culprit themselves. Whereas Sherlock Holmes produces conclusions in a miraculous fashion, that in fact pre-dated forensics research (Frank, 2003; Thomas, 1999), Miss Marple shared her process, her clues, and her methods of interpretation with her collaborators. When she does this, her process is made known to the readers as well, in a manner unlike other detective fiction where the sleuth only reveals their process of deduction after the fact. Consequently, Miss Marple novels teach readers how to, as Shaw and Vanacker (1991, p. 84) say, "read our own world in the novel." As they follow Miss Marple's

process step by step, Christie's readers are not just cataloging clues, they are learning how to interpret them as meaningful artifacts in the cultural studies tradition (Hall, 1997). That Christie's novels were structured in this way suggests that, as an author, Christie herself functioned in a collaborative manner by proffering her readers the chance to join in on the process of sleuthing in the same way that Miss Marple enjoined community members in the narratives. That Christie produced so many novels and stories in her lifetime makes it possible for her readers to not only learn these methods but also practice them when they read her other work.

Though this paper deliberately limits its focus to Miss Marple and her methods, future scholarship may consider re-examining Poirot's approach to detection. In particular, I wonder whether the social science methods Poirot employs, and that have been tenuously equated with the androcentric methods of other detectives, really lack the critical qualitative components documented here in the Miss Marple novels. Just as Holmes laid claim to forensic methods that at the time were no more than science fiction in the mind of Doyle, it is equally likely that for all Poirot's bluster about his dependence on psychology, Christie was merely improvising. Already we can see that as sleuths Miss Marple and Poirot have more in common than previously believed. Perhaps further study will find that Christie positioned all of her fictional sleuths as practitioners of critical, qualitative, and emancipatory methods.

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## **The Rise of Popular Asceticism in Sinhalese Buddhist Culture: Some Significant Concepts and Practices**

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### **Abstract**

The briefest explanation that could be provided for asceticism in the original Theravada Buddhist tradition is that it is a physically and mentally lived enterprise for fulfilling enlightenment (*nibbana*). As such, the enterprise demands serious practical and intellectual commitment. In total contrast to this original Theravada Buddhist concept of asceticism, a contextual frame of asceticism has been developing in Sinhalese Buddhist culture in recent years. The frame will be defined in the present discussion as ‘popular asceticism’. The frame is profoundly influenced by specific developments in Sinhalese Buddhist culture among which are some noticeable concepts and practices. These concepts and practices are assumed in this discussion as part of an underlying structure of a dynamic historical process which exemplifies a framework involving beliefs and practices of diverse social groups in Sinhalese Buddhist culture. The investigation of the practice of *upavasa maghata* (abstinence from killing animals on special ceremonial days), spirit worship and the concept of caste will help comprehend their contribution in forming the ‘popular’ ascetic context in Sinhalese Buddhist culture.

**Keywords:** Buddhist religion, Hindu religion, asceticism, Sri Lankan cultural history

## The ascetic culture in the pre-Buddhist and original Buddhist contexts

The following account will provide an understanding of the original Theravada Buddhist context of asceticism and how it differs from the popular Sinhalese Buddhist context. It thus marks a place of disjuncture, of a breaking up of linear (written) history and its religio-cultural application today in a Sinhalese context.

### Pre-Buddhist ascetics

Excavations in the Indus Valley Civilization (2500-1500 BCE) have contributed to the understanding that before the arrival of the Aryans on the Indian sub-continent, a highly advanced culture had already been flourishing in the north-western parts of India. Surviving material from the Indus Valley Civilization indicates a highly developed spiritual culture in which prevailed religious ideas such as meditation, renunciation, rebirth and liberation from the cycle of rebirth. A figure commonplace in this culture is the ascetic whose image ranges from forest hermit to wandering mendicant. The terms used for expressing the concept of an ascetic in the pre-Buddhist social context, *bhikku*, *sramana* and *brahmana*, are founded on broader meanings expressive of a specific way of living. Ascetics were a distinct social category whose goal was the search for emancipation (*moksa*) through the mediums of ascetic practices (*yoga*) and penance (*tapas*). These ascetics who were often described as *yogin* (one whose mind is yoked), *muni* (silent one), *kesin* (one with long hair) or *vatarasana* (one whose girdle is air (*vata*)), were also celibate, naked or clothed in the most meager of garments and without a permanent abode (Chakraborti, 1973, 5-6). This implies that they represented simplicity and frugality. There were also other dominant categories of ascetics such as the *Ajivaka* (also *Acelaka* or the naked ones) and *Hatthapalekhanas* (those without a begging bowl) and the *Sramanas* (those who strive). The *Sramanas* were wandering mendicants of non-Brahmanic castes. Unlike the *Ajivakas*, the *Sramanas* were dressed in tawny-colored robes. In the course of time, the ideas and practices of the *Sramanas* influenced the sages of the Vedic tradition. The *Sramana* movement was a reaction to the societal changes when kinship groups in the Indian sub-continent were in decline and when a class and caste oriented state formation was progressing.

### Buddhist ascetics

The origins of the Buddhist ascetic fraternity – *bhikku sangha* – stretch to the *sramana* movement. The Buddhist ascetics are often defined as *bhikku* (one who eats begged food or a beggar while striving for liberation from material bondage) and *sramana* (one who strives strenuously for the acquisition for liberation). *Sramana* signifies recluse and wanderer (Anguttara Nikaya, 1.67; Digha Nikaya, iii.16). *Sramana* also range as *samana uddesa* or *samanera* (novice), *samana kuttaka* (one who wears the dress of a *samana*) *samanaka* (some sort of *samana*) and *samana brahmana* or *samana* and *brahmana* who are leaders in religious life. The *sramana* is also described as a son, *puttha*, of the great Sakya, Gothama (Mahavagga, 1.39.6-40.2). The absence of a drastic distinction between *bhikku* and *sramana* is evidence for both terminologies manifesting similar conditions pertaining to the mendicant life. As such, *bhikku* is viewed as *samana* and almsman.

The rise of *bhikku sangha* coincides with the social and political situation of the Middle Ganga Valley region of approximately the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The era represents a pristine freedom entombed within the *gana sanghas*, republics in which decisions were made by assemblies and where the collective ideal was explicit (Chattopadhyaya, 1959, 468). The *gana sanghas*

developed in the region of Magadha in the south-east which existed outside the pale of Vedic culture (Oldenberg, 1881, 7-8). The application of some of the vanishing social realities of the *gana sangha* into the fraternity of the *bhikku sangha*, such as the collective ideal and freedom from class and caste, is what Thathagatha Gothama sought to communicate to the masses. The endeavor was pre-eminently ascetic and intricately linked to the socio-cultural issues of his lifetime – specifically, the gradual rise of a class and caste-oriented society of the Gangetic valley:

In building up his *samghas* the Buddha could provide the people of his times with the illusion of a lost reality of the dying tribal collective. And it was only the great genius of the Buddha which could have built this coherent and complete illusion. Not only did he successfully build up his *samghas* on the model of pre-class society but he took great care to see that the members therein – the *bhikkus* within the *samghas* – lived a perfectly detached life i.e. detached from the great historic transition going on in the society at large, whose course was obviously beyond his power to change. (Chattopadhyaya, 1959, 485)

‘Detachment’ was central for *bhikku sangha*. In order to re-live the classless and casteless simplicity and innocence of the *gana sanghas*, the *bhikku* detaches himself from material bondage. He lives a specific way of life in which frugality is central so that he is content with any kind of robe, alms food, abode and seclusion (Anguttara, 1.240 = Book of the Threes, 3,10,93). The focus of his way of life was the burning away of defilements.

### Asceticism

Asceticism in the Buddhist context is an explicit medium for renunciation from material constraints. It embodies a commitment incorporating such meanings as torment, punishment, penance, religious austerity, self-chastisement, ascetic practice, mental devotion, self-control, abstinence or practice of morality (Rhys Davids and Stede, 1955, 297; Monier-Williams, 1899, 436-7). Asceticism (*tapas*) is described as a way of living incorporating a rigorous personal commitment in a process of burning away of defilements. Pali and Sanskrit meanings of asceticism reveal meanings of hot, warm, to shine (*tapati*) and to be bright as the sun (*divatapati*) (Blair, 1961, 45; Gamlath, 2009, 316; Kaelber, 1989, 22). The process of burning away defilements involves most specifically renunciation from sensory pleasures. The endeavor is the specific focus in Buddhist teachings (Sekha Sutta, 53.23 = Majjima Nikaya, i.358). The Pali meaning of the ascetic (*tapassin*) expands as one devoted to religious austerities, as one who exercises self-control and attains mastery over his senses (Rhys-Davids and Stede, 1955, 297).

Asceticism as practiced in the original Buddhist context differs from asceticism in the pre-Buddhist context. Asceticism in the pre-Buddhist context fluctuated between two extremes:

Asceticism could have had either of two purposes: to acquire more than ordinary powers by extraordinary control over the physical body, as in *yoga* and through *dhayana*, meditation; or to seek freedom from having to adjust to an increasingly regulated society by physically withdrawing from it evidenced by the practice of renunciation at a young age being regarded as a distancing from Vedic ritual and from rules of the normative texts. (Tharpar, 2002,132)

Asceticism in the pre-Buddhist stage was hence a unique effort to acquire either superhuman potential or total renunciation from material constraints (Monier-Williams, 1899, 437). The acquisition of magical potential, in the original Buddhist context, is subordinate to the process of renunciation (*pabbaja*) and removal of material stains (*tapas*). Acquisition of magical potential was clearly not the goal of the *bhikku sangha* although it may have been a significant accomplishment from their way of living.

### Non-violence (*ahimsa*)

The Buddhist theory of non-violence is a cardinal feature within the confines of the Buddhist ascetic life, in the form of abstinence from killing (Saleyyaka Sutta, 41.8 = Majjima Nikaya, i.286; Sandaraka Sutta, 51.9 = Majjima Nikaya, i.344; Pataliya Sutta 54.4 = Majjima Nikaya i.360; 54.6 = i.363; Jivaka S.55.12 = Majjima Nikaya, i.371; Sevita S.114.5 = Majjima Nikaya, iii.47; Culakammavibhanga S.135.5 = Majjima Nikaya, iii.203-4). It is expressed predominantly as *sila* (stem *sil*; *samadhi*; *upadharana*, *silanga*, *silacara*, *silakatha*, *silakandha*, *silacarana*, *silatittha*, *silabbata*, *silamattaka*, *silamaya*, *silasanvuta*, *silasampatti*, *silasampada*, *silasampanna*), the channel for fulfilling total renunciation from material constraints. The *sila* of the ascetic is such that no ascetic harms another (Mahapadana S.14.3.28 = Digha Nikaya, ii.52):

As long as they live, the Arahants, by abandoning the slaying of creatures, are abstainers from the slaying of creatures, have laid aside the rod; they are modest, show kindness, they abide friendly and compassionate to all creatures, to all beings.’ (Anguttara Nikaya, 1.211 = Book of the Threes, 111.7,70 (= ‘having gone forth and possessing the *bhikku*’s training and way of life abandoning the killing of living beings with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly he abides compassionate to all living beings. (Kandaraka Sutta, 51.13 = Majjima Nikaya, i.345-6)

In the pre-Buddhist context *ahimsa* was a magico-ritualistic taboo on life and had nothing to do with ethics. There was no restriction on killing animals for food. The assumption that vegetarianism and *ahimsa* were originally separate ideals but that with the distorted traditions of thought negotiating the introduction of the laws of Manu there arose a ban on meat finds clear expression in Ludwig Asldorf (Alsdorf, 1962). Vegetal substitutes were late and were a part of the movement which was opposed to the ritual of killing animals for sacrifice (Tull, 1996, 227-8). The ban on meat and sacrificial violence was rooted in injury and death (Tull, 1996, 228).

The regular flow of Buddhism into Sri Lanka from India, which has operated as a significant cultural factor in defining the Buddhist way of living, becomes especially strong in the Mauryan period (322-185 BCE). This is when king Asoka (269-232 BCE) committed himself to a propagandist enterprise of popularizing Buddhism within which non-violation of animal life was integral. Concern for animal life exerts its influence on the Indian religious environment with the commitment of emperor Asoka whose services are notable in the form of an imposition of a ban on slaughter of animals (Asokan Rock Edict, 1,3,4) and measures taken among others for the preservation of animal life (Asokan Rock Edict, 2). The edicts are, however, silent on a ban on beef in particular.

## The bull and meat consumption

The food consumption habits of the *gana sangha* social context does not reveal a ban on meat. The slaughter of animals for food formed a vital part of the society in Buddha's time (Rhys-Davids, 1911, 93, 94, 246). The culture familiar to the Thathagatha did not reflect conditions restraining the consumption of meat. The Thathagatha's lineage and household life are testimony to the absence of a ban on consumption of beef. His lineage, the Gothama *gotta*, the stem of which stretches to the *go* (*gava*, *gavi*, *gavassa*, *gavena*, *gavan*, *gavamha*, *gavamhi*, *gavimhi*) has the bull as its totem animal. There is no specific English word which describes *gotta* and includes all those descended from a common ancestor (Rhys-Davids and Stede, 1959, 255). This does not mean there was a totemic or ancestral ban on the consumption of beef (Rhys Davids and Stede, 1959, 254). The food consumed in the household of Suddodhana, the Thathagatha's father consisted of meat: '[A]gain, whereas in other men's homes broken rice together with sour gruel is given as food to slave-servants, in my father's home they were given rice, meat and milk rice.' (Anguttara Nikaya, 1.145).

Theravada Buddhist teachings do not impose a taboo on the consumption of meat although there is a ban on the meat of specific species such as human beings, elephants, horses, dogs (Mahavagga, 6.23.10-13) snakes, lions, tigers, and hyenas (6.13-23). The Vinaya Pitaka records examples of permission for the use of animal substances for a variety of requirements. In cases of illness the tallow of the following animals is permitted to be used as medicine such as that of bear, fish, alligator, swine, donkey as well as the consumption of meat broth (Mahavagga, 6.14.7-15.2; 22.4-25.2). Meat-broth is recommended for the sick *bhikku* (Mahavagga, 6). The Vinaya Pitaka permits the consumption of meat provided the fulfillment of the three conditions of purity, when it has not been seen, heard or suspected that a living being has been slaughtered for the *bhikku* (Jivaka Sutta, 55.5 = Majjima Nikaya, i.369). The Thathagatha himself is recorded as having consumed meat (Waley, 1931-2, 343-54; Reugg, 1980, 234-41). When addressing Devadatta, the Thathagatha explains that it is not absolutely necessary for the ascetic to practice vegetarianism:

Whoever wishes, let him be a forest-dweller; whoever wishes let him dwell in the neighborhood of a village; whoever wishes let him be a beggar for alms; whoever wishes let him accept an invitation; whoever wishes let him wear rags taken from the dust-heap; whoever wishes let him accept a householder's robes. For eight months, Devadatta, lodging at the foot of a tree is permitted by me. Fish and flesh are pure in respect of three points; if they are not seen, heard or suspected (to have been killed for him). (Vinaya Pitaka, 3.171-172)

The sociocultural context in the time of the Buddha is testimony to the assumption that the consumption of beef was a common practice. The occupation of slaughter of animals was fairly widespread in Buddha's time (Rhys-Davids, 1911, 54, 57, 93). The practice of cow veneration is grounded in the post-Vedic era (Brown, 1964, 245-55). The cultic importance of the cow is attributed to the rise of the concept of *ahimsa* (Brown, 1964, 93-4). The Vedic ban on killing cows fluctuates between the cow's ritual importance and the significance conferred to *go* and *gomat* (Tharpar, 1984, 25). There is, however, evidence of *ahimsa* and sanction of the cow in post-Vedic texts (Brown, 1964, 93-4; Hesterman, 1984, 119-127; Schmidt, 1963, 625-55;). The original Vedic context is free of vegetarianism (Bryant, 2006, 194-203; Smith, 1990, 177- 205).

Asceticism, in the Buddhist and pre-Buddhist contexts, was a serious endeavor that required close and constant focus on eliminating material obstacles for the acquisition of enlightenment

(*nibbana*). Asceticism in the original Buddhist context is free from a ban on meat consumption. But a strict ban was imposed on violence toward animals. The meat of specific animals was permitted to be consumed. Since the establishment of Buddhism as the state religion in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. BCE, specific developments in Sinhalese Buddhist society have contributed to the rise of a context which the present study designs as ‘popular asceticism.’ The practice of *upavasa maghata*, spirit worship, and the concept of caste, can be considered as having contributed to the growth of this specific context. They reflect a notable ‘difference’ from the original Buddhist character of asceticism.

### *Upavasa maghata*

The practice of *upavasa maghata*, abstinence from killing animals on special abstinence days, is a specific development in Sinhalese culture which promoted non-violation of animal life. The program negotiates the commitment of Sinhalese kings to maintaining their patronage to Buddhism. The practice of *upavasa maghata* is most profoundly connected to the image of *bodhisattva* (Schmithausen, 2003, 21-46; Rahula, 1951, 247-8). The *bodhisattva* ideal is a specific ideal prevalent in Buddhist thought:

In the discourses collected in the Pāli Nikāyas of the Theravāda tradition, the term *bodhisattva* (or more precisely its Pāli counterpart, *bodhisatta*) is used predominantly by the Buddha Gautama to refer to his pre-awakening experiences, the time when he was ‘the *bodhisattva*’ par excellence. Such usage occurs as part of a standard formulaic phrase, according to which a particular event or reflection occurred ‘before (my) awakening, when still being an unawakened *bodhisattva*’, *pubbe va* (me) *sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisat tass’ eva sato* (henceforth referred to as the ‘before awakening’ phrase). (Annalayo, 2010, 15).

The *bodhisattva* ideal, in Sinhalese Buddhist culture, is a key theme for the perpetuation of primarily, *dhamma* and secondly, conversion. Ancient Sinhalese kings are represented in the light of promoting Buddhism. Their untiring efforts contributed to a consciousness which was free from the true and original spirit of Buddhism. As secular heads of state they are untiringly engaged in the perpetuation of Buddhism and distinguishing themselves in the form of the *bodhisattva* ideal which was not without the absence of a personal program of establishing themselves (Epigraphica Zeylanica, 1,11). Ancient Sinhalese kings, to whom the *bodhisattva* ideal is applied, are described as having introduced *upavasa maghata* (ceremonial abstention from meat on special observance days). Imposition of the order of *maghatha* is attributed to King Sena I in the form of a ban on meat, fish and intoxicating liquor on *Upasatha* days (Culavamsa, 49.49). King Amandagamini decreed not to kill (Mahavamsa, 25.6-7; Dipavamsa, 21.37). Aggabodhi VIII imposed a ban on meat, fish and intoxicating liquors on *uposatha* days (Culavamsa, 49.49). Aggabodhi IV commanded not to slay (Culavamsa, 46.40) and so did Aggabodhi V (Culavamsa, 48.34). Voharika Tissa imposed a ban on bodily injury as penalty (Culavamsa, 36.28).

Alms provided by the kings to the *bhikkhu* community is mentioned as having consisted of meatless items such as rice milk (Mahavamsa, 22.70,74; 24.56), rice (33.28), milk rice and honey (35.79), sugar (30.37, 31.113, 34.6, 32.46, 35.92; Cula. 89.52-3), sugar water (30.38), rice foods with honey (32.39), rice gruel (36.69,100; Culavamsa, 41.98; 42.63-4; 49.88; 50.75; 51.133) rice with oil, cakes, baked in butter and ordinary rice (32.40) sour millet gruel (32.30,49), butter, molasses and licorice (32.46,35.92), clarified butter (31.113), milk (35.65), melons (35.8), milk (37.125; 45.25), milk rice (Culavamsa, 45.2; 89.45), milk broth (Mahavamsa, 38.27), sugar syrup (Culavamsa, 44.66), honey (54.24), oil (54.24), rice with

sour milk (45.25; 51.133), butter (44.66; 89.52-3), melted butter (54.24), sugar, juice of garlic and betel (54.22), fruits (39.48), grain, sweet and sour milk (89.52-3).

### Spirit worship

The worship of spirits or demons (*yakkhas*) has become popular among many Sinhalese Buddhists in contemporary times. Spirit worship reflects the idea of abstinence from meat – a key element in the contextual frame of ‘popular’ asceticism. The spirit cults satisfy personal needs of the people:

Spirit cults, oriented to worldly (*laukika*) concerns, deal with the misfortunes of daily life; Buddhism is concerned with personal destiny, with what is beyond (*lokottara*) the ordinary. It is the ultimate solution to evil, while magical-animism is only a temporary one. And the Sinhalese, both literate and non-literate, both urbanite and villager, both sophisticate and folk, participate in both sub-systems. (Ames, 1964, 41)

The *yakkhas* are offered blood sacrifice (Yalman, 1973, 295-6; 1964, 297). The *yakkha* may be offered ‘five kinds of burned things or three kinds of flesh (*mas tun vage*) i.e. land pig (*uru malu*), air peacock (*madara malu*), sea fish (*magula malu*) which are all polluted condiments (*kili malu*).’ (Yalman, 1964, 131). Fowl, blood and meat were ‘favorites’ of the *yakkhas* (Yalman, 1964, 126). Among fried foods offered to demons are fried rice, oil cakes, *jak* fruit, *manioc*, juggary (sugar) and grain (Yalman, 1964, 122, 124). *Yakkhas* frequent polluted places (Yalman, 1964, 131). They are associated with types of pollution such as blood, death, meat, fried foods, oil cakes, excrement, poison and possession by a goblin (Ames, 1964, 38). The worship of the *yakkhas* signifies that purity can be maintained by abstinence from meat although they have to be appeased by these foods. Purity in food consumption is a key element in the ‘popular’ ascetic context in contemporary Sinhalese Buddhist culture. The ascetic culture which has developed in recent decades in Sri Lanka reveals the taboo of dried fish, meat and eggs, specifically for those who join in rituals related to the *yakkhas*. Food taboos in the form of abstinence from meat are also observed in several instances. Some of the worshippers of *yakkhas* could be strict vegetarians (Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1988, 81). The worship of gods of Hindu origin, however, favored the rise of a ‘popular’ ascetic culture in Sri Lanka through the medium of abstinence from meat consumption. Hence, vegetarianism in Sri Lanka has been observed as cult-oriented, incorporating a personal commitment of the worshipper of some particular god or goddess:

A regular is a strict vegetarian. Sociologically viewed the food taboo demarcates the cult as group apart from the outer world where ‘impure’ food habits prevail. Members are pure as opposed to the impure mundane society round them. On the individual level it is a deliberate act of renunciation that establishes the individual’s strong commitment to the deities of the cult. It is strongly believed that violation of the taboo may cause illness or perhaps death. Even involuntary violation may cause grave anxiety. (Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1988, 81)

There are however exceptions regarding the form of sacrifice offered to a god on account of the specific ‘social status’, as for instance in the case of a god at Kataragama who is of non-Buddhist origin. This god is usually offered the meat of venison and iguana while the meat of peacock was taboo since the bird was the *deva*’s vehicle (Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1989, 175). Pilgrims at Kataragama are repeatedly recorded consuming beef, ham, pork (and being involved in orgies and drinking liquor) (Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1998, 192). This aspect,

however, is not considered a hindrance to the maintenance of an ascetic life style by those who worship this particular god.

While the original Buddhist teachings contained an explicit ban on violence in the form of a ban on beef in the cult of Siva, the doctrine of non-violence begins to become rooted in Sri Lanka by the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. Although the cult of Siva in and its ban of beef in Sri Lanka becomes notable by the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, there is reference to the practice of slaying goats in the port of Manthai, revealed in a particular word on a Sinhalese rock edict – *elumaruwa* (*elu* is goat; *maruwa* is killer). According to Gunawardhana (1979, 160), the killing of goats in Manthai suggests a reference made to the Saiva population who did not eat beef. Not matter whether it was goats or bulls that were killed, what can be assumed is that the imposition of the ban on meat (i.e. beef) in Sinhalese culture is a clear indication of the Hindu Brahmanic influence in Sri Lanka. The ban reveals the spread of the cult of Siva, among other cults of South Indian Hindu origin. Siva worship dates from the Anuradhapura period (Pathmanathan, 2003, 152-6). Siva (also as Natarajah) is one of the most popular and significant images of the Polonnaruwa period (Godakumbura, 1961, 239-53). Archeological evidence is rich in bronze material contributing to the worship of gods of South Indian origin among whom the most significant is Siva (Arunachalam, 1916, 189-222; Indrapala, 2005, 280; Rasanayagam, 1926, 186). Siva worship specifically favored the doctrine of non-violence. The cause for the spread of non-violence is a strong wave of Hinduism stemming from South India by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE which informs such religious cults as Saivism and Vaisnavism. These religions were a result of the arrival of mercenaries, artisans, warriors and mercantile communities from South India, especially during the rule of the Tamil Colas dynasty (c. 900-1100 CE), whose settlement in the island reinforced Tamil influence as in the case of the worship of Hindu deities. These religions are usually more prominently diffused in the areas closer to the northern part of Sri Lanka where most of the Tamils reside and Hindu influence is strong to date, for example in the Trincomalee district (Balendra, 1953, 176-98).

### **The concept of ‘purity of caste’ and meat consumption**

Division of people, on account of the concept of ‘caste’ – a notion of superiority of birth – existed in Sinhalese culture since early times. *Goigama* forms the highest caste in Sri Lanka:

Birth, office, wealth and military authority combined with a specific style of living and conspicuous status symbols made the *radala* a socially privileged group. The clothes they wore and the color style of their head gear too revealed their higher status in society. (Dewaraja, 1972, 63)

The idea of ‘purity of caste’ (*jati*) developed in post-Vedic times and is specifically infused with the concept of one’s social class (Tharpar, 2002, 23). The concept of *jati* was so strong in determining one’s social status that specific foods like beef were considered as taboo for those who were ‘inducted in to higher-caste status.’ (Tharpar, 2002, 66). The idea of ‘purity of caste’ is traditionally assumed as having claims to specific cultural norms which contribute to what the present study defines as ‘popular’ asceticism in Sinhalese culture. ‘Purity of caste’ merges in to Sinhalese culture at a historically early date. ‘Purity of caste’ is considered as an important personal advantage in Sinhalese Buddhist society as it is one that provides social distinction and associates the occupation of those who belong to that caste (Yalman, 1973, 297).



A particular set of beliefs often associates members who belong to a specific caste. These beliefs reveal their centrality for the evolution of a key element within the ‘popular’ frame of asceticism in Sri Lanka – abstinence from meat consumption.

The concept of ‘purity of caste’ has favored the development of the practice of vegetarianism in Sinhalese society. Meat consumption was restricted to the ‘low’ castes such as the consumption of beef by the *berava kula* (caste of drumbeaters in Sri Lanka (Gunawardhana, 1979, 166). The *karava* caste, caste of fishermen, is known as ‘impure’ as its members catch fish as an occupation (Stewart, 2016, 21). An early tradition survives with claims of cannibalism and the *karava* caste (Stewart, 2016, 21). The *sakuro* caste is considered as ‘pure’ on account of their maintenance of forest renunciation and vegetarianism (Stewart, 2016, 22). The *Vellala* caste in Jaffna, in the northern part of Sri Lanka, is reported as having consumed vegetarian food for centuries. (Rasanayagam, 1926, 155)

Specific Sinhalese myths of origin indicate the association between improper sexual relations and meat consumption. In these myths sexual relations between those of low and high castes are considered as specifically improper; for example, sexual relations between a woman of a ‘high’ caste and a man of a ‘low’ caste (Yalman, 1965, 454). The result of a female having sexual relations with a male below her caste will be her being given to a person who belongs to the caste of *rodiya*, the lowest of castes in Sri Lanka (Yalman, 1963, 42-3). The origin myth of the caste of *rodiya* embodies a conception of cannibalism or meat eating as well as sexual relations between a high caste female and low caste male:

Female sexual purity’ was so earnestly sought among those who belonged to the ‘high’ castes that the union between a woman of the ‘high’ castes and a man of a ‘low’ caste was a disgrace sufficient enough to dispel the woman from her family and relatives. (Yalman, 1963, 43).

In such cases the woman is often given to a *rodiya*, the lowest in the hierarchy of castes (Yalman, 1963, 42). A Sinhalese origin myth describes the tale of a woman whose practice of cannibalism was a reason for her marriage with a *rodiya*:

Once upon a time there was a King, Parakrama Bahu, whose daughter, Ratna Valli (Gem Valli), became addicted to flesh. She demanded that some kind of flesh be given to her every day. One day the people who were charged with the duty of finding provisions for the palace could not find any flesh, so they substituted human flesh instead. The daughter liked this so well that she became addicted to it. One day, a barber (or at times a weaver) discovered what was going on. He broke the news to the anxious people whose youths had been disappearing. Thereupon the King expelled his daughter and gave her to a Rodda, a ‘sweeper’ who was a poor relative of the royal household in the palace. The progeny of these two formed the Rodiya caste. (Yalman, 1965, 454)

Consumption of meat, in this case a dreaded affair as it is cannibalistic, is a practice that most often does not agree with ‘normal’ social norms. The girl who commits cannibalism, even though she is of the royalty, is considered as an ‘outsider’ – an outsider from her people, family and, above all, her caste. She cannot continue living within her caste and is therefore made to unite with a man outside her caste, a man of very low and ‘polluted’ status. The myth serves as an important factor for the ‘pollution’ associated with meat consumption. Meat, and this case, not animal, but human flesh, is a strong candidate for ‘pollution.’ The ‘pollution’ is more

overwhelming when it is connected with another element of ‘pollution’ – ‘low’ caste. The connection between meat and pollution is thus strong in the ‘popular’ ascetic context.

## **Conclusion**

This article began by briefly discussing the development of vegetarianism and asceticism in India through anthropological, religious, linguistic and cultural lenses. It then analysed the introduction of Hindu belief systems regarding vegetarianism into Sri Lanka and the subsequent reaction of the Sinhalese community to this religious infiltration. This reaction included the rise of *Upavasa maghata*, spirit worship, and very specific local caste-isms. All of these have favored the growth of a specific frame of ‘popular’ asceticism in Sinhalese culture in recent years. These developments are not in agreement with the original Theravada concept of asceticism or non-violence, but their impact is such that they are pivotal in forming a frame of ‘popular’ asceticism in Sri Lanka.

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## **Film Censorship Policy During Park Chung Hee's Military Regime (1960-1979) and Hostess Films**

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### **Abstract**

Park Chung-hee's military government (1960-1979) purportedly used film censorship to distract the public from political consciousness by controlling political materials in films while condoning censorship control on sexual content. As a result, the production of soft-core adult films soared and became popular among Korean audiences. One such film genre that thrived during this period, so-called hostess films (prostitute films), is worthy of attention for the films' foregrounding issues of class, poverty and other social issues that the state censorship board heavily regulated. In viewing such dynamics between state censorship and film, this article aims to unravel the questions of how the state was willing to turn a blind eye to the explicit sexualization of women in hostess films when film censorship was at its peak and why the social and political aspects of this group of films about female sexual workers were not considered socially relevant by the censorship board, through scrutinizing the interplay between Park's state censorship and hostess films. Furthermore, it offers an analysis of a hostess film, *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn* (Cheong, 1979), as a case study to show how it strategically orchestrates visual and thematic elements to circumvent censorship enforcement.

**Keywords:** film censorship, hostess films, prostitute films, military regime, film policy

*The regulatory apparatus extends beyond any single institution to a “thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions.”*

–Theresa Cronin (2009)

*Where there is repression or censorship, there is also “production,” the calling-into-representation of the very content to be censored, and yet, or rather consequently, this calling-into-representation is never in a position of exteriority to the censorship.*

–Paul Morrison (2013)

## **Introduction: Korean film censorship policy during the military regime**

Films are inevitably influenced by censorship, either as an obligatory or self-regulatory form by the film industry. The terms of censorship exercise strong power over films, specifically to the constituents of the film genre. As Jacobs correctly puts it, “Genre provides a focal point for the permutations of conventions of genre instigated by film censorship” (1997, p. x).<sup>1</sup>

In the case of South Korean cinema, especially during Park Chung-hee’s military regime, state-operated film censorship exerted unprecedented power over film studios and directors. During his military dictatorship from 1960 to 1979, Park revised the Motion Picture Law and its constituting film policies four times (1963, 1966, 1970 and 1973) after his promulgation of Korea’s first systematized Motion Picture Law in 1962. The fourth revision of the law, in particular, dramatically strengthened the censorship measures as part of Park’s national revitalization project, the Yushin system, which was carried out to secure his dictatorship and to heighten the Park regime’s “capacity to suppress the resistance of workers, students and dissident intellectuals against authoritarian rule” (Im, 2011, p. 257).

As a result of the fourth revision of the Motion Picture Law (1973), censorship enforcement became even stricter and films were required to pass multiple censorship viewings. At the initial viewing, scripts were examined by the board. They were examined again after shooting to see if the final product was consistent with the prior assessment. The censors focused on locating and deleting any depiction that was anti-authority or socially/politically realistic and critical. Given these circumstances, film producers and directors alike were increasingly becoming critical towards state film censorship. They attributed the drastic decrease of the film business in the 1970s to this state-operated film censorship.<sup>1</sup>

The Park regime’s state censorship was notorious not only for its draconic, rigid nature but also for its highly inconsistent and irrational measures. During this time, the number of film productions plunged and many realist or socially conscious films became extinct, leaving

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<sup>1</sup>The special survey on the subject, “The Reasons of Recent Decline of Korean Films”, indicates that a majority of producers and filmmakers consider state censorship as one major cause of the decline of Korean films. This survey was originally contained in *The Era of Image* (summer 1978) and is used by An Jae-suk’s “The Study of The Era of Image.” Due to the loss of the original document, I used An Jae-suk’s data.



predominantly apolitical, escapist genre films such as action/martial arts films, melodramas or government-financed propaganda films as major runners.<sup>2</sup> As Kim Shi-moo (2000) states,

A military dictatorship had forcibly seized power in the government, and rather than presenting any fundamental solution for the social contradictions that began to surface in the 1970s, it focused instead on stopgap measures to minimize the anxieties of the public and steer them in a different direction... In the film world, the same irrational laws that had choked the art form since the 1960s were kept in place, albeit with some loosening of restrictions on sexual content. In other words, as a kind of trade-off for repressions on political freedoms, they relaxed ethical strictures to some extent. (p. 27)

Park Jae-yoon (2008) concurs that “sexual content (e.g., prostitution, adultery) was exempt from censorship practices with the military regime condoning sexual subjects in order to divert the public’s attention away from political issues” (p. 123). These scholars share the view that the military government purportedly used film censorship to distract the public from political consciousness by controlling political materials in films while condoning censorship control on sexual content.

### Unlikely birth of hostess films

As mentioned, during this period of military ruling, the Korean film industry was suffering heavily from a decrease in filmgoers. However, one strand of films, so-called, ‘hostess films’ (ho-sŭ-t’e-sŭ’ is a euphemism for prostitutes or bar girls in the Korean context of the 1970s and 1980s) were exceptionally popular, to the extent that they had saved the nearly bankrupt 1970s Korean film industry. This body of films deals with a story of a young girl’s social migration to a city and her gradual downfall instigated by rape or a similar type of sexual trauma. These films are characterized by the exploitive employment of female sexuality as well as frequent rape scenes involving with female protagonists. With the record breaking success of *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* (Lee Jang-ho, 1974, hereafter *Heavenly*) which drew the largest film audience of any Korean film up to that point, *Young-ja’s Heydays* (Kim Ho-sŏn, 1975, hereafter *Young-ja*), was ranked with the highest box office score of the year.<sup>3</sup>

The record-breaking success of these two hostess films was soon followed by dozens of similar films that contained similar prostitute themes and characters. The list includes: *The Woman I Threw Away* [Naegabeorinyŏja, Chŏng So-Young, 1977], *I Am a Number 77 Girl* [Na nŭn 77 pŏnagassi, Pak Ho-t’ae, 1978], *Winter Woman* [Kyŏulyŏja, Kim Ho-sŏn, 1977], *26x365 = 0* [No Se-han, 1979], *Ms. O’s Apartment* [O yang ŭiap’at’ŭ, Pyŏn Chang-ho, 1978] and *Do You Know, Kkotsuni?* [Kkotsunirŭlasinayo?, Chŏng In-yŏp, 1979], all of which were ranked within the box office top three from 1974 to 1979 (Table 1).<sup>4</sup>

Despite hostess films’ overt focus on sexual themes, these films somehow survived censorship regulation and were hugely popular when Park’s notorious film censorship was at its highest. Furthermore, these films demonstrate important social problems that other films could not

<sup>2</sup>According to Park Yu-hee’s research (2012), melodramas ranged from 35% to 52% and action films from 18% to 32% of the total genres of films produced from 1970 to 1979.

<sup>3</sup>*Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* drew 464,308 film viewers to a single theater in Seoul during its 105 days of screening. *Young-ja’s Heydays* drew 361,213 viewers during 87 days. Excerpted from audience documents provided by the KOFIC (Korean Film Council).

<sup>4</sup>The table is made by the author based on data collected from Park (2012, p. 56).

because of the strict censorship rules. For instance, hostess films featured potentially troubling issues such as prostitution, rape in workplaces and working-class poverty while many other films during this period were severely cut by censorship measures even for the depiction of “not being able to afford coffee,” because the representation of poverty was highly discouraged.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, whether focusing on obscenity or on lower class issues, hostess films inevitably bring up an important question – how were hostess films with seemingly “obscene” themes and/or socially sensitive issues, both of which were problematic elements for Park’s censorship criteria, granted permission for public viewing without much alteration? For one thing, the films clearly violated Motion Picture Law No. 9-14 for their “portrayal of prostitutes, prostitution, rape, or illicit sex” but none of the films were accused of this or prevented from having a public release.

In this respect, it is crucial to scrutinize the “unwritten protocols” of Park’s film censorship as much as the written protocols. There was a varying degree of control over films with sensitive social problems presented through hostess heroines. While I do not intend to determine whether or not hostess films came into being as a result of unjust film censorship under the Park regime, my major focus is on the ways in which hostess films accommodated and negotiated the terms of state censorship, particularly in association with the representation of females. In viewing such dynamics between state censorship and film, the following questions are inevitable: how was it possible that the state was willing to turn a blind eye on the explicit sexualization of women in hostess films when military-era film censorship was at its peak? Why were the social and political aspects of this group of films about female sexual workers not seriously considered socially relevant by the government at a time when censorship was so high?

This article aims to unravel the above issues, first by looking at the history of film policies and censorship, particularly during the Park Chung-hee regime. It also examines the interplay between Park’s state censorship and hostess films by viewing censorship records and notes, and comparing major censorship cases during Park’s reign in the 1960s and 1970s. With concern to the implicit deregulation of censorship practices on sexual materials, I include my interviews with two directors who produced hostess films, Kim Ho-sŏn and Lee Jang-ho. Finally, I analyse a hostess themed film produced under Park’s military censorship, *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn* (Cheong, 1979), as a case study to show how this film strategically orchestrates visual and thematic elements to circumvent state censorship enforcement.

### **Park Chung-hee’s film politics (1962-1978) and the enactment of the Yushin film censorship (1973)**

With his military coup d’état on May 16, 1961, General Park Chung-hee seized control of South Korea. Park revised the Constitution which enabled him to suppress rights and the freedom of expression.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in order to prevent possible resistance against his unjust achievement of political power, he immediately declared “Modernization of the Nation” [chogukgeundaehwa] as a national agenda to appeal to the public. The Park regime vigorously used the media to impart his modernization project, for instance by “setting up amplifiers and

<sup>5</sup> See Park’s “The Study of Dynamics of Film Censorship” This case is a Lee Man-hee’s film, *Holiday* (1968), a socially critical, realist film that depicts a poor couple striving to make a living.

<sup>6</sup> The Reconstituted Law (5<sup>th</sup>) No. 18-1. See Bae Su-kyung (2005)’s *The Study of Korean Film Censorship* for more detailed censorship records.

distributed speakers and radio sets to even the remotest villages... the state's broadcast network eventually reached the entire country, and so, therefore, did the administration's anti-communist propaganda and educational messages to the citizens of the republic" (Jeong, 2010, p. 132). Even from the early days of his rule, Park was aware of the potential of film, through which he attempted to earn public control and foreign currency simultaneously.

Soon after his coup d'état, the Park government distributed a press release to major newspapers titled "Recommendation Policy of Superior and Enlightening Films," which stated that the Park government would fully support citizens in watching "publically enlightening" films (Yu, 2004, p. 340). This statement demonstrates how determined Park was to employ film to facilitate state goals. It did not take long for Park to acquire total control over film production, distribution and exhibition by setting up a series of laws and infrastructure, including the Ministry of Public Information (1961), the National Film Production Center (1961), and the Motion Picture Law (1962). On January 20, 1962, the military government ratified its first film policy through the Motion Picture Law, which contained "twenty-two wide-ranging measures regarding the censorship fees, screening permits, producer registration, and importing, exporting and exhibiting films" (Yecies and Shim, 2012).

Park's film policy can be characterized by two major objectives. First, Park attempted to expand the Korean film industry into the global market in accordance with his goal of nation-building and modernization. Second, Park heightened government control over the process of film production through various means of regulation and reinforcement, including double censorship and a studio reward system for making propaganda films.

In systemizing the Korean film industry, the Park government emulated the successful models of Hollywood and Japan. Park mixed the "Japanese ethos of top-down mobilization and the US ideas of technocracy with Korean nationalism to build a national film studio system" (Yecies and Shim, 2012, p. 7). Under this premise, the Park regime demanded very strict standards for film studios. For instance, studios had to be equipped with "more than three 35-mm cameras, a lighting system of more than 60 kW of power, sound recording capabilities, two full-time exclusively employed film directors and more than two contracted actors and actresses" (Min et al., 2003, p. 47). These requirements were unrealistic, especially for mid-sized, independent studios. Eventually, the law forced the studios to merge with each other; 65 small film studios were merged into 16 larger companies and again into 6 major companies until the revision of the law in 1963.<sup>7</sup>

This reduction of the number of studios enabled the government to control films more readily: now with fewer and bigger film studios, the Park administration was able to efficiently intervene in film production, wielding more power over the industry. This also meant that the government worked more closely with the producers and directors of these studios, often making both official and unofficial requests concerning film contents.<sup>8</sup> In my interview with Kim Ho-sun, one of the most prolific Korean directors of the 1970s, he stated, "one phone call

<sup>7</sup> In addition to these requests, the 1963 revision added even more requirements including the minimum studio size of 661.15 m<sup>2</sup> and contracted technicians.

<sup>8</sup> This "unofficial" operation was common under the Park reign. Howards exemplifies the government's retaliation against *Dong-A Daily* in 1975 for criticizing government. "Park pressured businesses to withdraw their advertising contracts with the daily. Park's representatives sent to these businesses were often from the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA)". "Korean Media Bias and Government Intervention in Media." [http://uskoreainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2009\\_Yearbook\\_Howard.pdf](http://uskoreainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2009_Yearbook_Howard.pdf).

from the Ministry of Public Information (where the censorship bureau belonged) could change one film into a whole different other one.”<sup>9</sup>

According to the Motion Picture Law, there were four major criteria under the section covering censorship measures:<sup>10</sup> (1) Films shall not depict anything that damages national authority or disrespects the Constitution; (2) films shall not disrupt national security, public morals, tradition and social orders; (3) films shall not damage the image of any countries that have diplomatic relations with Korea; and (4) films shall not discourage the spirits of citizens. As these terms of censorship highlighted, the foremost concern in regulation of films was to determine whether a given film conformed to the national agenda and if it also sufficiently functioned as a cultural imperative that “cultivates loyalty and a sense of belonging to the nation” (Park, 2010). Indeed, as Yecies and Shim put it, the film industry during this time was reduced, “both literally and figuratively, to the status of a propaganda factory in which all productions were classed as either ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ propaganda” (2012, p. 4).

With the second revision of the Motion Picture Law in 1966, the Park regime strengthened “double censorship” of films. In addition, the censorship viewing of the scripts had to be done twice: first by either the Korean Motion Pictures Producers Association or the Board of Korean Art and Cultural Ethics, and finally by the Ministry of Public Information. This rule may seem “generous”, with the government at least giving priority to producers in assessing films, but in reality, it was nothing more than the government’s strategic attempt to reinforce the industry’s self-regulation before their actual viewing. In any case, final censorship was done and confirmed on the government end, which could nullify the results of the prior censorship by the producers or the Board of Korean Art and Cultural Ethics. Therefore, the term “double censorship” actually meant multiple censorship viewings, ultimately supervised by the government.

In October 1972, Park Chung-hee decreed the Yushin System and issued a Yushin Constitution, which involved the renovation of the existing systems and laws. The Yushin system was established in order to guarantee Park’s lifelong dictatorship and to suppress rising labor demonstrations and public democratic movements against his military dictatorship. Based on Japan’s Meiji Restoration (meiji-ishin), the Yushin system “increased the sense of an impending communist threat among South Koreans, and thus allowed the state to tighten its grip on national discourse, residence records, and the media” (Park, S. 2010, p. 76).<sup>11</sup>

By elevating the bar of regulation, the Park regime actively repressed press media, broadcasting, and film. Shortly after its announcement of the Yushin system, the Park government announced the “First Five-Year Plan for Reviving National Culture and Arts” [munyejoongheung 5 gaenyungaehoe] (1974-1978). This plan included the following goals: “(1) promotion of national studies, (2) propagation of culture to the populace, and (3) introduction of Korean culture overseas” (Park, 2010). On February 2, 1974, *Dong-A Daily*

<sup>9</sup> This interview was conducted by myself on June 15, 2013. Kim Ho-sŏn is also a director who produced a number of hostess films, including *Young-ja’s Heydays* (1975), *Women’s Street* (1976) and *Winter Woman* (1977).

<sup>10</sup> Translation of these terms was done by myself. The actual materials were excerpted from the Korean Film Archive online database on state censorship. They are also available from Bae Su-kyung’s thesis (2005), *The Study of History of Korean Film Censorship*.

<sup>11</sup> Many scholars pointed out that Park’s ideologies were derived from his previous military service in the Japanese army (Yi, 2006; Kim and Vogel, 2011). Park designed the Yushin based on the Meiji Yushin (Reform), the political revolution occurred by the Meiji Emperor.

reported that the Park government had announced the release of 31.2 billion won (approximately 29.1 million US dollars) for the first year, with 72 million won (approximately 40% of the total) to be spent on the film sector.<sup>12</sup> The fund was mostly spent on the production of national films or government-supported propaganda films [gukchekeyounghwa], and also for rewarding scenarios that had pro-government themes.<sup>13</sup>

The criteria that the government set up for the state-sponsored propaganda films elucidate the primary motive behind the Park regime's agenda for films. The criteria were: (1) Films must contain the spirit of "Yushin;" (2) films must be infused with patriotism; (3) films must motivate the public to participate in the New Village Movement; (4)<sup>14</sup> films must encourage the increase of exportation; (5) films must inspire citizens to be efficient and skilful; and (6) films must be cheerful and artistic. During the year 1974, the number of 'gukchekeyounghwa' soared to 38 (27%) from 12 (9.6%) the prior year, and remained around 20% until 1979 (Park, 2010, p. 60).

Although Park's reward system and development plan seemed to aim for the overall growth of culture, it was no more than a systemized attempt by which Park efficiently orchestrated support and control, all of which was intended to force public compliance with the government's agenda. The government also revised the Motion Picture Law (the fourth amendment) in 1974. This newly constituted Yushin Film Law was distinctive in two ways.<sup>15</sup>

First, it administratively maximized government power over films. Under this law, the Park government appointed a Minister of Public Information and Culture, who was in charge of implementing most film-related rules. The revision of the law provided full authority, enabling the minister to permit, prohibit, or cancel an application for a film business. The Minister also had total control over ongoing film productions and could stop a film at any time even if it had passed the initial censorship.

Secondly, the censorship rules were not necessarily modified or added to, but enforcement became more severe. Prior censorship became strengthened; the number of returned scripts was at a mere 3% in 1970 but skyrocketed to 80% in 1975. Some of the concepts that script censorship adhered to, such as "artistic quality" and "ideology," were not clearly described, so these depended on each censor's personal insight.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the censorship around this period was highly subjective and arbitrary; the outcome of the censorship was different depending on each censor and the social mood at a given time. Consequently, it negatively

<sup>12</sup>*Dong-A Daily* (1974, February 2). The Five-Year Plan for the Revival of Culture and Arts: Budget for the First Year.

<sup>13</sup>Gukchekeyounghwa [Government Supported Propaganda Films] were produced from 1974 to 1976. These films' themes were usually anti-communism, war and national development projects.

<sup>14</sup> The major idea of the New Village Movement was to modernize villages and educate villagers through state-sponsored campaigns and assisted by a massive reallocation of government funds as well as by "spiritual guidance." Lankov, A. (2010, Apr. 16) SaemaulUndong Sets Model for Developing Countries" *The Korean Times*.  
[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2012/03/291\\_64301.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2012/03/291_64301.html).

<sup>15</sup> Film scholars occasionally referred the 4<sup>th</sup> revision as The Yushin Film Law implying that the revision took place in accordance with the (political) Yushin system.

<sup>16</sup>See YuSeonHyung (2004)'s "KwaminjokhwaP'urojekt'üwaHosüt'isüYöngghwa" [Kwaminjokhwa Project and Hostess Film] in *KukkawallsangPakchöngghüiShidae* [State and Everyday Life: The Park Chung-hee Period] Seoul: Hanwool Publication; other criteria for script the censorship include plagiarism, copyright and historical validity (p. 366).

affected the film industry. Table 1 demonstrates the dramatic decline in film productions after the enactment of the Yushin Film Law.

Year	Number of Film Studios	Number of Films	Number of Theaters	Number of Film-Goers
1970	23	209	690	166,349,541
1971	23	202	717	146,303,355
1972	20	122	694	118,273,789
1973	12	125	662	114,625,241
1974	14	141	630	98,375,813
1975	15	83	602	75,597,977

Table 1: The decline of the Korean film industry during the early to mid-1970s<sup>17</sup>

### Popularity of hostess melodramas during the Park Chung-hee regime

While the total number of film productions plunged, this period witnessed a stream of hostess films. The emergence of these films was remarkable not only for their number but also for the size of the audiences they drew. Out of the 10 highest-scoring box office films from 1970 to 1979, 8 were hostess films. *Kyung-hyang Daily* (October 1, 1975) published an article titled, “A Boom of ‘Young-ja’ films.”<sup>18</sup> The article reports that out of a total of 75 films produced in 1975, only 3 scored more than 100,000 audience members and these were all hostess-themed Young-ja films.<sup>19</sup> As mentioned earlier in analyzing this pervasion of hostess films, some scholars have argued that the Park administration adapted a new approach that implicitly boosted less socially concerned films by loosening restrictions on sexual materials, which in turn contributed to the emergence of hostess films (Park, 2012; Chung, 2003; Yu, 2004).

Although it would be reductive to read hostess films as a direct symptom of the Yushin Film Law and the censorship practice, it would not be unreasonable to think that censorship provided an environment in which these kinds of films could be engendered. Around the time the Yushin Film Law emerged, hostess and other erotically charged films with female protagonists prevailed at the box office (Table 2).

<sup>17</sup> The table is redesigned based on the data excerpted from Lee Young-il (1988)’s *History of Korean Cinema*. Seoul: KOFIC.

<sup>18</sup> The writer must have used this term, “Young-ja Films” in referring to the prior success of *Young-ja’s Heydays* and other similarly themed films released afterwards.

<sup>19</sup> Author unknown (1975, October 1), “Repeated Failures, Domestic Films Succeed” *Kyŏng-hyangilbo* [Kyung Hyang Daily].

Box Office Ranking/Year	1	2	3	4	5
1972	<i>Animal Woman</i> (Erotic Thriller)	<i>Dark Guest</i> (Action)	<i>Female Teacher</i> (Comedy)	<i>Shaman Island</i> (Horror)	<i>Good Driver, Gap Suni</i> (Comedy)
1973	<i>Witness</i> (War Film)	<i>Farewell</i> (Melodrama)	<i>Female Prison</i> (Drama)	<i>Wedding Dress in Tears</i> (Melodrama)	<i>When Taekwondo Strikes</i> (Action)
1974	<b><i>Heavenly Homecoming to Stars</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<i>Rain of Yesterday</i> (Erotic Thriller)	<i>The Earth</i> (Literary Film)	<i>Kim Doo-hwan</i> (Auto-biography/ Action)	<i>The March of Wives</i> (National/ Propaganda Film)
1975	<b><i>Young-ja's Heydays</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<i>The March of Fools</i> (Youth Film)	<i>Insayeomoo</i> (Fantasy/ Mystery)	<i>Promise of Flesh</i> (Melodrama)	<i>Yong Ho Mun</i> (Action)
1976	<i>Suzanna of Love</i> (Melodrama)	<b><i>Women's Street</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<i>Secret Guest II</i> (Action)	<i>Never, Never Forget</i> (Melodrama)	<i>Run, Don't Walk!</i> (Youth/Drama)
1977	<b><i>Winter Woman</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<i>A Joker in High School</i> (Youth Film)	<i>MaruchiArachi</i> (Animation)	<i>Mischief's Marching Song</i> (Youth Film)	<i>Night Travel</i> (Erotic/Drama)
1978	<b><i>The Woman I Threw Away</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<b><i>Ms. O's Apartment</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<b><i>I am a No. 77 Girl</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<i>Scar</i> (Melodrama)	<i>Sa Hak Bi Gwon</i> (Action/Martial Arts)
1979	<b><i>Heavenly Homecoming to Stars II</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<b><i>The Man I Threw Away</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<b><i>Do You know Ggotsooni?</i></b> (Hostess Film)	<i>Last Cup</i> (Melodrama)	<i>Byungtae and Young-ja</i> (Youth/ Drama)

Table 2: Popular film genres during the 1970s: Hostess films are indicated in bold<sup>20</sup>

As this table demonstrates, hostess films were high-ranked starting in 1974, when the Yushin Film law was instituted. These films were most prominent in popularity and were a cultural force across literature, magazines, and films. Statistically, from 1970 to 1985, the number of novels dealing with prostitute characters was 102 out of a total of 2,918 fictional works published in major literature periodicals and magazines (Yong, 2012). Hostess or sex workers accounted for 87.5% of all female characters in films produced from 1971 to 1979 (Yu, 2003). Reflecting this phenomenon, the press media began to cover the growing popularity of the “hostess woman” around the mid-1970s. One of the most popular industry magazines at the time, *Film Magazine* [YounghwaJapji], serially covered the rise of hostess films and directors as a major historical case of Korean cinema, with articles such as “New Era, New Directors” (August and December 1974), “Screen’s Young Power” (May 1975), and “A Recent Boom of Hostess Films” (June 1975).<sup>21</sup> These articles celebrated the fact that the success of hostess films largely contributed to the rejuvenation of the Korean film industry.

While the commercial contribution that hostess films had established was evident, the critical quality of the films generated polarized reviews. Some critics positively evaluated the films for touching upon relevant social problems such as working-class poverty and social marginalization of peasant women (Yong, 2012; Kim, S., 2010). On the other hand, others

<sup>20</sup> The box office records are available from the KOFIC’s *Korean Film Year Book* from 1972-1978. Seoul: KOFIC.

<sup>21</sup> Except for Hong-pa, all three directors produced hostess films.

problematic hostess films' exploitation of female sexuality, labelling hostess films as "undesirable," "unethical," "obscene," and claimed that they "negatively affect the moral values of the public."<sup>22</sup>

These dichotomized views towards hostess films – whether focusing on obscenity or on socially sensitive issues – lead to one important fact that despite hostess films' problematic elements that conflict Park's censorship criteria, they were cleared for public viewing without much alteration. According to the censorship records for hostess films, such depictions were more than sufficient to violate at least one item under the Motion Picture Law No. 9, clause 14, which indicates, "Prostitution should not be justified on screen." However, none of these films were restricted from public viewing for their explicit portrayal of prostitutes and prostitution.

Furthermore, the apparently problematic issues that these films dealt with, for example, rape (*Young-ja's Heydays*, 26x365=0), adultery (*Women's Street*, *Do You Know Ggosuni?*, *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn*), and poverty (*Young-ja's Heydays*), remained intact despite the fact that these issues had led to major censorship cases with dozens of other realist films including *March of Fools*, *Holiday* and *Night Travel*. The gravest penalty imposed upon hostess films was to not be recommended for exportation (*Heavenly Homecoming to Stars*, *Young-ja's Heydays*).<sup>23</sup> Out of ten major hostess films produced from 1971 to 1979, only two were cautioned for dealing with the theme of prostitution while not being prompted for deletion.<sup>24</sup>

The most frequent comments were class-related, although the producers were not required to reshoot or delete, only advised to exercise "caution" or to be "implicit" at best. Some examples of comments include: "too overt depiction of class difference" (*I Am a No. 77 Girl* and 26x365=0); "poverty should not be seen too explicitly; it might provoke class conflicts" (26x365=0 II); and "it is not appropriate to portray a college girl going into prostitution; drop the name of the heroine's university" (*The Rose that Swallowed Thorns*)."<sup>25</sup>

Among these cases, a 1979 major-hit hostess themed film, *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn* (Cheong, 1979) is a significant example that encapsulates the inconsistencies of the Park administration's censorship operation and the film's attempt to accommodate the terms of the state censors. *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn*, like other hostess films, presented some problematic issues that could have conflicted with the state censors, such as adultery and sexual promiscuity, not to mention prostitution. However, the film strategically circumvents these issues by negotiating the conditions of ideology, visuals, and narrative that would work in its favor in the view of the censors.

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<sup>22</sup> *Young Hwa Jap Ji* [film magazine] 1975. June issue and Dong-ah ilbo [*Dong-Ah Daily*] (1982, April 16) "Stripping Competition of Korean Films".

<sup>23</sup> These records are not open to the public as of the writing of this dissertation (2013). The records were personally retrieved by the author from the Korean Film Archive (KOFA) from June to August 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The university attended by Rose, the heroine, was originally Ehwa Women's University, which was one of the most prestigious women's colleges in Korea at that time.



## A case-study of *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn* (Cheong, 1979)<sup>26</sup>

The main character, Rose (Jang-mi), is a college student from a wealthy family. She is bored with her life and spends most of her time drinking and enjoying random sexual encounters. One day, on a train on her way home, she meets a married, middle-aged man and falls in love immediately. However, their love does not last after his wife discovers the affair and calls Rose's father to send her away. In order to cope with her loneliness, Rose begins working as a "pro bono" hostess, choosing not to get paid in order to keep her pride. After some time, she meets a man named Se-ho and becomes pregnant by him. Soon Rose discovers that he was a quasi-gigolo himself, living with an older woman for money. Rose, devastated, wanders around the city and is eventually hit by a train.



Figure 1: Still from *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn*

One possible factor that might have contributed to *The Rose* passing state censorship is that it features a considerable number of scenes that contain explicit symbols directly relating to major accomplishments achieved under Park Chung-hee's state project, "Modernization of the Nation" (chogukgeundaehwa), during the period of state-led industrialization. Throughout *The Rose*, modern apartments, trains, and bridges (e.g., *Busan Daegyo: Busan Bridge*) that were newly built during the Park regime are frequently seen in panoramic views and/or as backdrops.<sup>27</sup> This kind of strategy was mentioned by Kim Su-yong, one of the major directors of the 1960s. Kim has stated that film directors during the Park regime used to make many "sacrificial shots" or "pleasing shots" for the state censors in order to save risky scenes from deletion (Park, 2010, p. 83). I think that such monumental scenes in *The Rose* could be

<sup>26</sup> I adopt the English title, *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn*, from the Korean Movie Data Base (KMDB).

<sup>27</sup> The Busan Bridge was built in 1976 under the Park Chung-hee government. This bridge makes occasional appearances throughout Rose's visitation in Busan.

considered in a similar context and that they were posited to compensate the potentially problematic issues dealt with in the film.

Furthermore, *The Rose* utilizes these traces of modernization as morally charged metaphors that refer to justifiable punishment for the sexually fallen woman. For instance, the opening sequence begins with a bird's-eye view of modern apartments. The camera flies around the apartment complexes in Echon-dong, the area where Korea's first apartment building was built as a national project in the early 1970s. After showing a lengthy sketch of various apartment buildings, the camera goes into Rose's home. As opposed to the somewhat documentary-like opening scene of apartments, the way the camera shows the inside of Rose's apartment is highly eroticized. Accompanied by the ringing sound of a telephone, the camera slowly traces the phone cord from the living room until it reaches Rose as she picks up the phone, semi-nude in bed. The camera intrusively scans Rose's entire torso from a low angle.

Rose's apartment later becomes a "hub" where most of her sexual relationships take place and where she eventually gets impregnated by a con man.<sup>28</sup> While the introduction sequence that explicates monumental, phallic apartment buildings offers a celebratory depiction of the "development of nation," it also symbolically signals a prelude to Rose's tragedy, which results from her sexual decadence.

This kind of strategy appears again when Rose encounters the man she falls in love with on a train. A majestic view of the running train is seen in the foreground in the establishing shot, with the sun falling behind it. This scene is followed by Rose's appearance, and it becomes a critical motif for Rose's downfall and death, which occur later on. The sequence begins with Rose sitting next to a middle-aged man on a train. She deliberately leans onto the man, pretending to be asleep. The man tries to avoid her by distancing himself from her, and Rose "wakes up" and asks him to buy drinks. The man reveals that he is married, but Rose does not seem to care. He buys the drinks, and Rose more actively seduces him by making him light her cigarette. Soon, the man falls for Rose and they become sexually involved.

After this train sequence, Rose's life dramatically deteriorates. Her sexual relationship with the man is forcibly terminated by his wife and Rose's father. She begins working as a hostess at a bar to escape her loneliness, but her father discovers this and incarcerates her in a mental hospital. Rose's deteriorating life becomes even worse when she learns that she is pregnant by a con man who turned out to be a gigolo. She half-consciously walks around the city, buying toys for her unborn child. The last sequence takes place on a railroad. Rose, holding the toys in her arms, slowly walks along the tracks. She drops the toys and tries to pick them up. She suddenly hears the sound of a train and looks up. The camera shows her emotionless face in extreme close-up, intersecting it with a shot of the train coming toward her. The last shot stops on Rose's emotionless facial close-up and freezes, while the sound of the train continues to flow over the shot.

Cinematically, the train has been a ubiquitous emblem that represents the tension of modernity (Bottomore, 1999; Kirby, 1988). In the social context of South Korea, railroads played a pivotal role in facilitating Park Chung-hee's efforts at rapid industrialization under the modernization project of the 1960s and 1970s. Park installed more than sixteen railways throughout the

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<sup>28</sup> Rose finds out that she is pregnant after she had sex with Se-ho, who previously had come to her apartment.

country to supply raw materials to factories.<sup>29</sup> In addition, expanded railroads greatly contributed to the labor migration from rural villages to urban areas, which involved a large population of young women and men relocating to cities. A number of Korean films, including Kim Ki-young's *Fire Woman* (*Hwa Nyeo*, 1971), reflected this phenomenon by signifying the train as a prelude to the tragic journey that the peasant female protagonists are to face.<sup>30</sup>

In *The Rose that Swallowed Thorn*, representations of apartments and trains perform a double duty – as a safety valve for state censorship and as ideologically-charged motifs that would please the moral codes of the censors. On the one hand, they stand for the “development of the nation,” which was one of the foremost campaign agendas pushed by the Park administration. Such visual presentations of major achievements acquired during the state-led industrialization period were predominant enough that they must have pleased the censorship assessors. On the other hand, the film strategically utilizes such traces of modernity to justify the victimization of the “sexually fallen woman.”

Rose's occupation of these modern places – apartment and train – simultaneously establishes her as a full recipient of modernity and at the same time, as a victim of it.

## Conclusion

Hostess films were engendered and thrived when the Park regime's irrational film policy and censorship laws nearly decimated the Korean film industry. These films persevered the military government's inconsistent and arbitrary censorship operation by simultaneously negotiating the terms of censorship and state ideologies. Such negotiation took place at the expense of women; while the filmic attempts were fruitful at least for the fact that hostess films touched upon relevant issues of society and class, they also potentially solidified the conceptualization of women and of female sexual activity. The generic employment of the sexually fallen woman or the victimized woman was offered to circumvent the censorship intervention under the totalitarian regime. Key hostess films directed by Lee Jang-ho and Kim Ho-sŏn are extraordinary examples of how these films negotiated forced censorship, particularly through their cinematic constructions of women. The study on these particular directors and their film movement, The Era of Image, which imparted the new wave aesthetics and social realism, will be another valuable subject for the field of Korean history, culture and gender studies.

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<sup>29</sup> See “KaniyŏkkwaSaramdŭl” [Stations and People (1082)] for a full article. Retrieved August 8, 2016, [www.culturecontent.com/content/contentMain.do?search\\_div=CP\\_THE&search\\_div\\_id=CP\\_TH E010&cp\\_code=cp0803](http://www.culturecontent.com/content/contentMain.do?search_div=CP_THE&search_div_id=CP_TH E010&cp_code=cp0803). See also the article from *Dong-A Ilbo*, “Park Chung-hee's Railroad Modernization”, December 7, 1965.

<sup>30</sup> *Fire Woman* (Kim, Ki-young, 1971) is an erotic thriller that depicts a peasant woman's sexual falling after her arrival in the city.

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## **The Dilemma of the Revitalization of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Global Homogenization: The Case of Techno Nezha in Taiwan**

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### **Abstract**

This article concerns itself with the rise of a specific kind of representation of the Daoist deity Nezha in contemporary Taiwan, namely that of Techno Nezha. In many celebrations, the traditional figure of Dancing Nezha has been revitalised into the popular deity dancing to techno music. The article further analyses a survey undertaken by Yuan (2013) which came to the startling conclusion that rather than distracting from the spiritual message, Techno Nezha was able to inspire as much religious reverence and awe as the traditional character. Building on this, a theoretical discussion then ensues on how far tradition can be pushed before it loses the very content it attempts to transmit. This is especially relevant in times of global cultural symbolism in which local cultural intangible heritage knowledge is severely challenged.

**Keywords:** Nezha, intangible cultural heritage, traditional culture, Taiwan

## Globalization Today

Some larger countries, and so-called ‘mainstream culture’, rely on their advantages in dominating mainstream media to demonstrate their strength to other smaller countries. This includes specific language communications, the presentation of military strength, political influence, and even cultural interpretations. The changes created by this process are perhaps so slow at times that they are difficult to detect by people in other countries or cultures. An example could be the rise of American fast-food chains and coffee shops throughout the world, but especially in Asia. It is only in retrospect that one realizes how many of them exist. And it is usually only at that late moment that local discussions on globalization and localization commence.

This had already been stated by Appadurai (1990, p. 5): “The central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization. ...Most often, the homogenization argument subspecies into either an argument about Americanization, or an argument about commoditization, and very often the two arguments are closely linked.” The mostly Western cultural hegemony penetrates deeply into local cultures. It is good to remember that much of this hegemony had been created on the back of military aggression and through capitalist endeavours. In the wake of this uneven globalization, individuals and cultural institutions all have to ask themselves a similar question: How far have other cultures entered the local cultural mainstream?

In Taiwan, the question is particularly difficult to answer. After its stormy relationship with the Chinese mainland and its occupation by Japanese troops for 50 years, it is legitimate to ask what local culture is (still) alive? Like other countries with a colonially chequered past, Taiwan is able to display a unique cross-cultural diversity. But that might not be enough; even if Taiwan created its own characteristic hybridity, would this be sufficient to stave off globalization's homogeneity? How could this trend be countered?

On many accounts, globalization issues are worrying, not just for individual regions, but, unsurprisingly, on a global level. Shopping landscapes are being synchronised the world over. This typically means that fewer local products are sold. Included in these neglected local products are also the creative, cultural and religious fields. Thus, this field also includes the fact that the autonomy and leadership of cultural sovereignty in local regions are faced with increasing erosion and compression. When it comes to the linguistic component of culture, according to a UNESCO (2010) project report about half of the more than 6,000 languages spoken today are in danger of disappearing. As the poet Alitet Nemtushkin described,

If I forget my native speech,  
And the songs that my people sing  
What use are my eyes and ears?  
What use is my mouth?

If I forget the smell of the earth  
And do not serve it well  
What use are my hands?  
Why am I living in the world?

How can I believe the foolish idea  
That my language is weak and poor



If my mother's last words  
Were in Evenki?

Alitet Nemtushkin, Evenki poet (UNESCO, 2010)

More extreme globalization theorists even propose “The End of Place”. In the book of the same title, Cresswell (2004) indicated that today one can see the same fast food, the same brands in department stores, supermarkets, restaurants, etc. all over the world. And he wonders where the sense of the local has gone. Moreover, the integration between global economic development and media communication speeds up the disappearance of local distinguishing features. In the foreseeable future, it seems, the world will become homogenized and little sense of place will remain. We will become the one “electronic society” envisioned by Meyrowitz (1985). Perhaps this is just an illusion, perhaps even a manipulated illusion, but fears that the global is undermining the local are at least to be taken seriously.

When viewing globalization from the vantage point of cultural ecology and cultural geography, the “local” consists of human memory, production, identity, and the living space of imagination. However, this process is neither inevitable nor irreversible as the rest of this article will set out to prove. It is hoped that those special local memories are not easily eliminated by electronic and global franchise brands. Some theories can help us further in approaching this challenge. Culture and ecological adaptation theory was founded by Julian H. Steward and set out in his text *Theory of Culture Change: The methodology of multilineal evolution* (1955). He believed that cultural change existed in cultural adaptation, and there in an important creative process called Cultural Ecology. His causal theory of environmental, technical and social systems highlighted the origin of different geographical characteristics and types of environmental culture, such as cultural ways in which humans adapt to the natural resources and the environment and how to survive when faced with other communities. It analyses the relationship between technology and the environment and special ways of development in specific regions. It stipulates that there exists an environmental adaptability of the cultural core(s), and that this would allow an analysis of cultural differences and similarities.

The theory's main ecological significance is “adaptation to the environment”, the assumption that landscape, climate and geography have a possible effect on cultural production and form. As a leader in cultural geography, Carl Ortwin Sauer defined culture as still deeply influenced by cultural and ecological thinking, and held that culture is akin to a super-organism, also to be found outside human society in accordance with the laws of nature and its development. In the mid-1920s Sauer (2009) wrote the article “Recent Developments in Cultural Geography” and proposed the “landscape” term to describe the relationship between people and the environment and a cultural group's use of its products gained from the natural landscape. Culture has always been the driving force shaping the landscape (“built environment”). Therefore, the processes of cultural geography focusing on how people create different meanings in a particular local array usually involves a place to live in diversity, in different cultural landscapes where different people interpret and use cultural material differently. This contemporary sense of culture stretches much further than the high culture of modernism and for some time has included artefacts and practices situated in “ordinary culture”, as Williams (1989) has called it. Furthermore, UNESCO defined culture as “a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO 2010). Local geographical and ecological environments are therefore of an entirely different lifelike appearance. This localism can be strong at times. One's intimate and time-intensive knowledge of a topography does ground in an emotional

attachment to a place and it is only fitting that Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) proposed the term “local love” (topophilia), for this phenomenon. “The term topophilia couples sentiment with place.” In a somewhat conciliatory move in order to negotiate between localism and globalization, Robertson (1992: 173-4) proposed “glocalization” in an attempt to amend the understanding of both globalization and local sentiment. This allows for an understanding of the fact that even though global foods, clothing, vehicles, even Internet messages continuously circulating, a region might more or less still be able to retain cultural practices such as the local festival rituals, religions and dietary habits derived from local plants and animals, spices, minerals, the climate, geographical locations, political, economic and other cultural factors. Each combination produces patterns of different cultures and thus the formation of a global cultural diversity. In the following, this diversity will be discussed in reference to specific festivals in contemporary Taiwan.

### **Marshal Nezha in Taiwanese mythology and his transformation into a Techno god**

Nezha (哪吒) is one of the most important gods in Taiwanese religion. He is also known by other names (Na-zha, Na-ja, Nata and the Third Lotus Prince), but “Marshal Nezha” remains the most used and best known. According to Chinese mythology, Nezha is the reincarnation of a spiritual pearl and is said to have been born in the form of a ball of flesh after his mother had been pregnant for three years. His father dissected the ball and Nezha popped out with red lights glowing from his body and cheeks and golden rays shooting from his eyes. Nezha is said to have been born wearing a golden bangle and a band of scarlet silk around his belly.

One day when Nezha was seven, he was washing his magical scarlet silk band in the Eastern Sea when his actions alarmed the army of the Dragon Palace. The Dragon Lord commanded Yaksha (nature spirits) and the Third Prince to confront Nezha, but they were defeated by Nezha’s golden bangle in the blink of an eye. The death of the Prince angered the Dragon Lord and the news was delivered to the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor ordered the capture of Nezha’s family, but rebellious Nezha refused to comply and instead committed suicide on the spot. Taiyi Zhenren, his teacher and according to some sources the reincarnation of the first emperor of the Shang dynasty, Shang Tang, then used a lotus flower to revive him and at that point Nezha is said to have become a god.

The story of Nezha’s battle with the Dragon Lord of the Eastern Sea is very popular among the Chinese, perhaps because Nezha is also known as the Marshal of the Taoist gods and because of his courage and unparalleled skills. Nezha is therefore worshipped by the people as Marshal Nezha to commemorate his heroic acts. In olden times, Marshal Nezha’s worshippers were mainly warriors, but today Nezha is regarded as the guardian of infants (Nezha’s child image) and also worshipped by the transportation industry (in the image of Nezha riding a hot wheel) for protection in modern Chinese culture. Transportation companies have erected shrines to Nezha in their offices and officials have them in their homes to pray for success and good fortune. There are also mystics in the temples who are said to be possessed by Nezha, and in these cases the mystic (乩童) speaks like a child. Jhang-Yu Wu (2003) wrote that after the 1980s folk belief in Taiwan centered on Ji-Gong Buddha and Nezha, with Nezha being the most popular among mystics. Their role, in the days when Taiwan was an agrarian society, was to provide social services, such as arbitrating in disputes and invoking the gods to solve the villagers’ problems. Even today, Nezha is still revered as a major deity. Traditionally, Nezha worship has taken place within a certain, traditional aural framework which was based on traditional Chinese religious music. But this has changed dramatically over the last ten to fifteen years or so.

“Techno” is an electronic music and dance form originating in the late 1980s in Detroit and has continued its victorious sweep through youth cultures ever since. It is also popular in Taiwan and was introduced into the Taiwanese Yanshui district fireworks parade in 2005. Since then it has gained great popularity in the country and been used at many large events in modern Taiwan. The Din Tao performance was made known to the world in 2009 at the World Games organised in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Forty different Nezha costumes appeared during the opening ceremony of the World Games, with the “gods” wearing sunglasses and white gloves and riding motorcycles. The parade was accompanied by the Chinese pop song “You are my flower” by Wu Bai, rewritten by Zhong-Yao Kuang for a local orchestra. The local audience welcomed the parade with loud and stunning applause and it went on to capture the attention of audiences everywhere (Jhong-Qing, Zhu; 2009).

Techno music is dynamic and is also incorporated in the music of some Taiwanese pop singers’ best-selling songs, such as the above-mentioned song “You are my flower” and the popular song “Bo Peep Bo Peep” by Tsai-Hua Wang. Given the popularity of this music style, it is no wonder that Techno Nezha immediately appealed to many especially younger people as these performances can be seen to have relevance for many people’s modern lifestyles (Yuan, 2014).

This is not the first time that techno music has been twinned with traditional cultural practices. A recent example can also be found in Suzhou, People’s Republic of China. Thus, for the last five years or so, when walking down Guan Qian Shopping Street, the sound of techno music can be overwhelming at times. It originates from the silversmiths’ workshops in which silver is hammered down to the speedy rhythm of this music. While it might be argued that it is the rhythm that lends itself to creating work more speedily, it can also be argued that it is used especially to attract the younger generation. And the trichotomy of contemporary culture–traditional culture–commerce can be seen interacting here. However, the monetary moment might be stronger in this example than is the case in the Nezha complex.

### **Research aim and issues raised**

The remainder of this article will examine the way in which Nezha's reverence and usage in Taiwanese culture has found a unique way of appealing to his heritage while opening up itself to contemporary practices especially designed to attract the younger generation. As such, this practice could be viewed as one possible way of opening up intangible heritage to new and younger audiences and participants. And indeed, this is what will be suggested in the following. In order to do so, a number of questions need to be raised.

What does tradition mean? When Nezha is transformed into a techno god via modern performances, is this still an attribution to tradition? And if the answer is NO, how does one mark the border between tradition and innovation, especially when, by now, the younger generation views Techno Nezha the same way as the traditional Nezha, and also sees him as the seat of spiritual power?

Furthermore, if one wants to revitalize a certain traditional aspect of culture, the typical situation one faces is that this aspect has remained in a fixed state for a long time. Often however, this state is, if not outright rejected, at least benignly neglected by younger generations and thus in the long run condemned to die a slow death. So, shouldn't this traditional form be changed in order to keep it alive, and if YES, how so? Where is the border between tradition and (necessary) transformation?

Lastly, these questions arise against the backdrop of an intensifying globalisation of culture, with cultural practices all over the world showing signs of unifying processes. How can individual cultural practices fit into this picture without losing their specificities? It will be suggested that traditions indeed need to “update” in order to survive in a changing environment, and that this “upgrade” is an advantage in keeping them alive.

### **Tradition and cultural review**

Typically, a revitalization process is undertaken in order to revitalize a tradition and to assure its survival. In order to approach this issue, it is therefore important to understand the terms applied. According to Shils (1981):

“Traditio” was a mode of transferring the ownership of private property in Roman law. Tradition is whatever is persistent or recurrent through transmission, regardless of the substance and institutional setting. It includes orally transmitted beliefs as well as those transmitted in writing. It includes secular as well as sacred beliefs; it includes beliefs which were arrived at by ratiocination and by methodical, theoretically controlled intellectual procedures as well as beliefs which were accepted without intense reflection. It includes beliefs thought to have been divinely revealed as well as interpretations of those beliefs. It includes beliefs formed through experience and beliefs formed by logical deduction.

UNESCO (2002) further defined “traditional culture” as “social practices and representations which a social group considers to have been derived from the past through intergenerational transmission (even if these are recent inventions) and to which the group designates a differentiated status.”

To paraphrase, it seems that there exist at least some beliefs and practices worthy of transmission to future generations, even if they are more recent inventions, and we can call all of these practices traditions. Individuals of a certain (usually older) generation hold that these beliefs ring true and should be kept (alive). Thus, Stuart Hall offers a broad view of culture as the “lived practices” or “practical ideologies which enable a society, group or class to experience, define, interpret and make sense of its conditions of existence” (as cited in Eagleton, 2000).

Similarly, Schafer (1998) discusses the process of tradition and culture in the following:

Clearly, what we must work towards is an understanding that development – like culture – is a dynamic, evolutionary process which is constantly changing, mutating and adapting over time in response to new conditions and altered circumstances. For what is the point of development in the first place if it is not to make improvements in all the various components and dimensions of the cosmic condition?

Thus, there is little doubt that culture consists of dynamic processes based upon the living environment of a given period. Communities and power structures are always in flux and some older traditions can be left by the wayside. If a community decides that certain inherited cultural practices are worth keeping, new ways of doing so might have to be invented. This of course presents its defenders with a philosophical paradox: How to create new ways of celebrating a traditionally fixed cultural practice? Doesn't the idea of tradition actually exclude such a

possibility? In practice though, this kind of adapting traditions happens all the time, and it provides room for necessary and sustained discussions, which take on traditional characteristics themselves, for instance in cultural archives and organisations and through discussions in the media. These discussions themselves are based on actual cultural events taking place. No opera performance without comparison to earlier stagings thereof, no remake film screening without comparison to an 'original' treatment of the subject. Here it is good to remember that the creation of a new “tradition” is just a reaction and adaption to the needs of a new situation in society, which as social adaptation is an inevitable part of change.

No tradition is (for)ever fixed. Shils (1981) indicated that:

[T]he constellation of symbols, clusters of images, are received and modified. They change in the process of transmission as interpretations are made of the tradition presented; they change also while they are in the possession of their recipients. This chain of transmitted variants of a tradition is also called a tradition, as in the “Platonic tradition” or the “Kantian tradition.” As a temporal chain, a tradition is a sequence of variations on received and transmitted themes. The connectedness of the variations may consist in common themes, in the contiguity of presentation and departure, and in descent from a common origin.

In a similar vein, advertising guru Peter Drucker's famous dictum “innovate or die” refers not only to the advertising industry but to most walks of life. When applied to intangible cultural heritage, perhaps we can rephrase it to “revitalize or die”. Indeed, if one insists on maintaining the status quo of traditional culture, without innovation, such cultural traditional practices will be in danger of gradually dying out.

One problem tangible cultural heritage does not have is that of authenticity. In intangible heritage practices, though, it is the recreational process that can only be the guarantor of this authenticity. The “Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage” pointed out that “intangible heritage is constantly recreated, the term ‘authenticity’ as applied to tangible cultural heritage is not relevant when identifying and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.” Along the same lines, Smeets (2004) indicated that:

[...] authenticity in relation to intangible cultural heritage is a moot point; the future will tell whether it is a useful notion in the context of the safeguarding of that part of our heritage. We know by now that it cannot mean “historically correct” as intangible cultural heritage by definition is evolving.

The so-called “traditional” is therefore unable to survive as a pure idea by itself and requires human “users” to enact, amend and/or develop it. People of any period used or created the most convenient or effective means for better/different performances, and therefore were always already involved in creating new artistic forms or content. Typically, a new generation would always change some of the old ways, either out of necessity or out of a different understanding of practicing history. In order for traditions to survive, they need to be reconsidered as rebirth and new opportunity, as individuals typically perform their traditions because they either consider them cognitively relevant to the time they live in or because they have a certain nostalgic longing for practices they remember from their childhood. Especially the latter would not be sufficient to ensure the viability of a certain tradition, as it is specific generation bound and contingent.

One way forward and out of the predicament of tradition vs. innovation might be to view heritage not just as a way to conserve something, but rather to participate in it, to engage it. An interesting application of such an approach can be found in the work undertaken by Thomas Fischer. He conducted research into the heritage of early Jacquard weaving looms in Suzhou. But rather than just being content with a descriptive view of heritage, he attempted to engage this cultural heritage and make it take part of a discursive practice. Fischer (2015, p. 4) explains:

We are investigating the following research questions: Can the operation of the Jacquard loom and its significance in the development of the digital computer be illustrated and modelled digitally so as to generate a set of punch cards, which, if run on a Jacquard loom, produce a textile pattern that explains the functioning of the loom? Could such a textile pattern be produced so as to engage museum visitors with the historical significance of Suzhou's silk weaving, and could the sale of products of this nature be set up to benefit the maintenance of the looms? In other words: Can the Jacquard loom be programmed to tell the story of its past in order to secure its future?

The answers to these questions were all positive and textiles telling their own stories were created: "This visual story was translated into 1278 punch cards, woven on a loom, and integrated into a series of notebook computer sleeves, which we intend to propose as inspiration for products to be offered in the museum shop of No. 1 Silk Factory and in other places in Suzhou" (Fischer 2015, p. 7). This approach had a number of significant advantages over more traditions handling of cultural heritage. Arguably most important was the fact that the next generation was actively involved in physically making use of the material at hand; interactions included a number of diverse practices and tool usage. The outcome was tangible and yet interacted as a cultural catalyst for silicon (computers) and silk. Lastly, the possibility of monetisation was created.

But it was not only practice that was highlighted in the project; due to its successful outcome, its theoretical underpinnings could also be validated, and were summed up as follows:

This [approach] argues for a participatory, re-constructivist rather than conservation-oriented approach to heritage preservation. This approach engages the pattern making and storytelling opportunities offered by traditional arts and crafts to tell stories of these arts' and crafts' long histories with a view to stimulate engagement with, and appreciation of the intangible treasures of arts and craft. It does not conserve arts and crafts in the state they are found in, but engages in their practices in ways that are sometimes time-tested and sometimes new, offering entry points for the appreciation of intangible traditional values, stimulating new interest, introducing young people to traditional practices, and leading to the development of new forms of expression and new ways of making. (Fischer 2015, p. 10)

It is this kind of discursive approach that is also at play when confronting Techno Nezha.

### **The young generation accepts the new image of Marshal Nezha**

As stated above, Techno music is a style of fast and heavy electronic dance music popular in the US and Europe beginning in the late 1980s. At least in the beginning, it was associated with rave party and heavy drug use, especially Ecstasy, and as such was even conceived as an

antipode to traditional musical and recreational culture. Perhaps it speaks for its own historicization process that today it is used as a way to shore up another tradition in another part of the world. However, there is at least one underlying commonality: If Nezha was connected with (mild) rebellion in a social context, the same could be said for techno on an aural level.

Techno music is representative of a certain kind of modernization process and combined with traditional religious Daoist practices, Techno Nezha actually becomes a medium for traditional religion to be transmitted to modern society, an, if one will, invented tradition played out in a living environment. “We have to create a new way to promote Nezha,” said Wen-Zhen Zeng, the secretary of Sinying Taizih Temple Committee when interviewed by the authors in 2013. Obviously, techno is a good way to attract many people but how are techno and Marshal Nezha able to allow themselves to be integrated with such apparent ease? Nezha is a god, but his appearance is marked by his child-like behavior: his dancing of the seven stars step with his golden bangle. The seven stars step is light and quick, but it comes imbued with a kind of choratic dignity. The beats and rhythms of techno in combination with Nezha's steps are an innovative cultural product that is popular with the Taiwanese public of today. In addition, this form of dance highlights the characteristics of Nezha and the cultural dance therefore has the capability to be passed on from generation to the next. Irrespective of whether this will be the case, it will become part of the changing tradition of Nezha celebrations throughout the ages.

### **Survey: Techno Nezha and the young**

In order to ascertain the younger generation's affinity for Techno Nezha, in 2014 a survey of university students from various colleges was undertaken at MingDao University, a well established university in Taiwan with an international student body. Table 1 lists the characteristics of the study participants. The study included 171 female students (59.2%) and 118 male ones (40.8%), with a mean age of 20.55 years ( $SD = 1.99$  years). Of these, sixteen (5.5%) participants always attend temple fairs, 213 (73.7%) attend once in a while, and 60 (20.8%) never attend. A majority of the participants (84.4%) attend temple fairs as audience, 34 (12.6%) serve as staff sometimes, and 8 (3.0%) serve as staff all the time. The most common way for the respondents to have been introduced to Marshal Nezha's myth was television (78.9%), followed by temple fairs (59.2%), the telling of the story of the myth (58.8%), by their elders (38.8%), in school (32.9%), and through performance events (32.5%). Almost 40% (38.8%) of the participants thought that Techno Nezha is a kind of deity, whereas 58.8% think Techno Nezha is a kind of creative performance art piece but not a deity. More than half of the participants 176 (60.9%) believe Techno Nezha would literally bless people, while 36.7% did not think so. In detail, the results are the following:

Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	118	40.8
Female	171	59.2
Age (Mean: 20.55 years, <i>SD</i> = 1.99 years)		
Frequency of attending temple fairs		
Always	16	5.5
Once in a while	213	73.7
Never	60	20.8
Role when attending temple fair ( <i>n</i> = 270)		
Staff all the time	8	3.0
Staff sometimes	34	12.6
Audience	228	84.4
How they had received information about Marshal Nezha's myth		
School	95	32.9
Television	228	78.9
The elders	112	38.8
Video game	43	14.9
Comic book	43	14.9
Story myth	170	58.8
Radio	14	4.8
Temple fair	171	59.2
Performance event	94	32.5
Other	9	3.1
Do you think of Techno Nezha as god?		
Yes	112	38.8
No	170	58.8
Other	7	2.4
Do you believe Techno Nezha would bless people?		
Yes	176	60.9
No	106	36.7
Other	7	2.4

Table 1: Characteristics of the study participants (*N* = 289)

Table 2 lists the descriptive statistics for the cognitive understanding of Nezha's image as opposed to non-Nezha images (see Figure 1). The results show that the scores for the traditional understanding of the image are greater than 4, indicating that the participants strongly agree that the traditional images were like the 'old' Nezha. In contrast, the scores for each techno image ranged from 2.90 to 3.59, suggesting that the participants moderately agree that the techno images were also like Nezha. However, the scores of each non-Nezha image are less than 2, indicating that the participants strongly agree that non-Nezha images were unlike Nezha.



Image	Descriptive		Frequency (%)		
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Tend to be unlike	Neutral	Tend to be like
1. Tradition (cartoon)	4.18	0.96	6.2	16.6	77.2
2. Tradition (statue)	4.33	0.77	2.1	12.5	85.4
3. Tradition (statue)	4.23	0.83	3.1	14.9	82.0
4. Techno (wearing glasses)	2.90	1.22	38.4	29.1	32.6
5. Techno (riding motorcycle)	3.50	1.05	16.3	31.8	51.9
6. Techno (dancing)	3.59	1.04	12.9	31.8	55.3
7. Non-Nezha (Ji-Gong Buddha)	1.41	0.70	89.6	9.3	1.0
8. Non-Nezha (rabbit)	1.17	0.45	96.9	3.1	0.0
9. Non-Nezha (cartoon)	1.55	0.96	86.9	6.9	6.3

Score of 1 to 2 is classified as “tend to be unlike”, 3 as “neutral”, and 4 to 5 as “tend to be like”.

Table 2: Recognition of each image of Nezha

				
Tradition (cartoon)	Tradition (statue)	Tradition (statue)	Techno (wearing glasses)	Techno (riding motorcycle)
				
Techno (dancing)	Non-Nezha (Ji-Gong Buddha)	Non-Nezha (rabbit)	Non-Nezha (cartoon)	

Figure 1

Table 3 lists the comparison of the recognition of Nezha via attending temple fairs. The results indicate that no difference was found in the cognition of the traditional image, the techno image, and non-Nezha images between the participants who attend temple fairs and those who don't ( $p > .05$ ).

Image	Category	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Traditional	(1) Once	229	4.28	0.64	1.51	.131
	(2) Never	60	4.13	0.72		
Techno	(1) Once	229	3.37	1.02	1.32	.189
	(2) Never	60	3.18	0.96		
Non-Nezha	(1) Once	229	1.38	0.50	0.14	.885
	(2) Never	60	1.37	0.47		

\* $p < .05$

Table 3: Recognition of Nezha by the experience of attending temple fairs

Table 4 lists the comparison of recognition of Nezha via attending temple fairs. The results indicate that no difference was found in the recognition of the traditional image, the techno image and non-Nezha images between the participants who serve as staff when attending temple fair and the audience ( $p > .05$ ).

Image	Category	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Traditional	(1) Staff	42	4.33	0.76	0.71	.480
	(2) Audience	228	4.26	0.61		
Techno	(1) Staff	42	3.52	0.94	1.45	.147
	(2) Audience	228	3.28	1.02		
Non-Nezha	(1) Staff	42	1.38	0.55	-0.01	.994
	(2) Audience	228	1.38	0.49		

\* $p < .05$

Table 4: Recognition of Nezha when attending temple fairs

Table 5 lists the comparison of cognition of Nezha between participants who think of Techno Nezha as a deity and those who do not. The result indicates that no difference was found in the cognition of the traditional image between the two groups ( $p > .05$ ). The score of participants who think of Techno Nezha as a god was significantly higher than that of those who did not in both cognition of the techno image ( $M = 3.66$  vs.  $3.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and in cognition of the Non-Nezha images ( $M = 1.48$  vs.  $1.31$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Image	Category	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Traditional	(1) Gods	112	4.21	0.68	-0.75	.455
	(2) Not Gods	170	4.27	0.65		
Techno	(1) Gods	112	3.66	0.89	4.46*	<.001
	(2) Not Gods	170	3.13	1.02		
Non-Nezha	(1) Gods	112	1.48	0.53	2.82*	<.005
	(2) Not Gods	170	1.31	0.46		

\* $p < .05$

Table 5: Cognition of Nezha in the participants who think of Techno Nezha as a god and those who do not

Table 6 lists the comparison of recognition of Nezha between the participants who believe Techno Nezha would bless people and those who do not. The results indicate that no difference was found in the recognition of the traditional image between the two groups ( $p > .05$ ). The score of participants who believe Techno Nezha would bless people was significantly higher than that of those who do not think so in both recognition of the techno image ( $M = 3.61$  vs.  $2.94$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and cognition of Non-Nezha images ( $M = 1.43$  vs.  $1.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Image	Category	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Traditional	(1) Would bless	176	4.28	0.67	1.03	.305
	(2) Would not bless	106	4.20	0.66		
Techno	(1) Would bless	176	3.61	0.91	5.86*	<.001
	(2) Would not bless	106	2.94	0.99		
Non-Nezha	(1) Would bless	176	1.43	0.53	2.10*	.037
	(2) Would not bless	106	1.30	0.43		

\* $p < .05$

Table 6: Recognition of Nezha in the participants who believe Techno Nezha would bless people and those who do not

This survey shows that 73.7% students attend temple fairs just once in a while, a number which is largely in line with general temple visits in Taiwan. They are therefore far from being branded religious fanatics. Even so, most students did not think of Techno Nezha as god, but still a similar percentage of most students believe Techno Nezha would bless people. This belief may have been affected by Techno Nezha's troupes from and in the temples, but it also shows that Techno Nezha is still undergoing an image transformation. According to the photo-choice exercise on the questionnaire, the traditional and modern image of Nezha were both well recognised by the young. Among them there exist both the "weak belief" that the god would bless them and that the god would not bless them. The fact that both groups adhere to Techno Nezha shows the uniting power his image has acquired and also rekindles believers' participation. The question of whether this exemplifies the demise of a certain practice of culture or its rebirth, or simply reflects inevitable transformation, is one that can only be answered in the future.

### Survival means of traditional culture and modern-day hybridity

As can be seen in the survey, Techno Nezha was largely accepted in his new guise, by some even as a god. The acceptance of hybridity in culture(s), as displayed above, is of course nothing new. Throughout the history of mankind, omnipresent migrations of people and ideas have lead to cultural exchanges and acculturations. Hybridized cultures are displayed by humans externally in their daily lives and they are also a way for mankind to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. Two such examples are language and food. In the past, the market and the fair are places of hybridization as 'exotic' merchandize from different places are gathered together in one place and consumed. The supermarket and exhibitions today serve the same purpose today and the development of the internet as a global marketplace has further facilitated this process of hybridization.

Techno Nezha is a performance of cultural hybridization in a specific society. Fiske (1989, p. 25) indicated that "popular culture is made by the people at the interface between the products

of the culture industries and everyday life. Popular culture is made by the people, not imposed upon them; it stems from within, from below, not from above.”

The sources for the creativity in such cultural hybridizations lie in the symbols we use in daily communication, such as the golden arches of McDonald's fame, Hello Kitty's traversing the globe and the abbreviations and emojis used on the internet (LOL, etc.) It becomes clear then that such hybridized cultures have become the bedrock of cultural performativity and are a form of public art, an art created by the application and usage of such daily resources. As much is claimed by Escobar (1995, p. 219):

The analysis in terms of hybrid cultures leads to a re-conceptualization of a number of established views. Rather than being eliminated by development, many “traditional cultures” survive through their transformative engagement with modernity. It becomes more appropriate to speak of popular culture as a present-oriented process of invention through complex hybridizations that cut across class, ethnic, and national boundaries. Moreover, popular sectors rarely attempt to reproduce a normalized tradition; on the contrary, they often exhibit openness toward modernity that is at times critical and at times transgressive and even humorous.

The modern presentation of Techno Nezha has won the favor of the public and is now regarded as a new form of traditional culture. Especially the younger generation think that Techno Nezha is the same as the traditional Nezha who held divine powers. But there is a difference in intensity. Schech & Haggis stated that:

These invented traditions, while usually drawing on the past, tend to be less specific and less binding than their “old” predecessors. They are important in public life, but occupy a much smaller place in the private lives of people than the old traditions did. ... Traditions, whether “old” or “invented,” must be understood as changing practices which can be imbued with different meanings and employed to serve a variety of purposes and interests (Schech & Haggis, 2000, p. 129 & 140)

Traditional displays of culture of different eras has always been challenged by ever-changing environments and they are forced to adapt in order to survive. Tradition is a relative term, and the key to its survival lies in its ability to retain essential factors while adding new elements in order to attract major new audiences. While this kind of movement has always run the danger of losing itself to powerful “extraneous” influences, it would not have survived without them. This is still true in the age of globalization and internet communication.

### **Conclusion: The hidden worries of global acculturation**

In order to allow for differentiated cultural productions and values, these need to be seen in relation to universal values, which themselves exist in various forms and need to be open to dialogue and mutual respect. UNESCO emphasizes cultural diversity, and hopes to establish a global cultural environment on balance, equality of cultural dialogue and exchange. This includes making available materials to sensitive people to the need to not only to protect but to develop of local traditional cultural resources. Globalization and localization in today's societies are equally present, with fast-food joints and national or local festivals staged by individual ethnic groups.

Globalization is not simply the standardization of the world due to the diffusion of the few productions, values and images exported by the West. It constantly creates new diversity. Cultural products and images are distributed and consumed worldwide are received differently depending on the local conditions (political, economic, and social) and by the public, according to sex, age, race, and status social and other factors. They are also reconfigured and hybridized, and those best selling in the local market of the new middle class and riches-nouveaux are often those which have assimilated American cultural influence and maintained its “perfume” by grafting all local elements. This negotiation of meaning at the local level creates products that are not mere copies, as shown by the example of the famous Italian “Spaghetti Western”, which then in turn influenced American cinema.

Mainstream cultural power is no longer only concentrated in the place where a culture is born; it derives from a dynamic trade across markets and cultures to the point that it is almost impossible to imagine local cultural creativity to survive even as marginalized other of globalization. As its underlying economy philosophy is profit maximisation, it only provides respect to the specific cultures of a local market as long as this does not harm its principles. (Johnston, 2000).

So far the theory. The results of the above survey make it clear, though, that there is a continued acceptance of old local traditions when combined with modern cultural phenomena. The new image of Nezha is very popular especially among younger people. It might be speculated that if the same survey had been carried out among older participants, the acceptance level of the new Nezha might be lower than in the present sample. This, however, does not take away from the power of this new image and its contribution to the revitalisation of the Nezha cult.

The results also make clear that we should pay attention to the conservation of central philosophical ideas in intangible heritage rather than judge a cultural practice such as the devotion to a deity by its appearance or indeed his/her soundtrack. Who determines what these central ideas are and how this is done is another issue in need of discussion, but some kind of collective judgment would arguably need to be effected, if the process is to have communal validity.

Even though communication and its tools change with the passing of every dynasty, government and generation and even though the surface of performances of intangible heritage are always slightly different from those of a generation before, the cultural and religious beliefs informing such practices might not, at least in a Taiwanese context. As the survey demonstrated, people still worship Nezha and believe that Nezha can protect their children, no matter what performances are put on.

An additional lesson to be learned from this survey is that if we want to revitalize traditional cultural performances, it is important not to set out to “fix” a tradition stretching back 300 years or so, as is the case for our research object. Tradition is never completely static, never “historically correct” and there is no right or wrong way of engaging it. If a present generation sees it as its mission to transmit these traditional cultures to the next generation smoothly, we may just have to pay attention to the ways in which the young generation likes to engage with and accepts and willingly participates in such revitalizations.

While having marked hybridizations as a positive and necessary development in the revitalization of cultural practices, some dangers do lurk in this process as well. These dangers particularly involve the weakening of the local. As stated above, the power of global

commercial homogenization ought not to be underestimated: “Most people’s cultural tastes and practices were shaped by commercial forms of culture and by public service broadcasting” (Hesmondhalgh, 2008, p. 555). In addition to global brands and the promotion of global products, the acculturation caused by these factors is becoming a norm and shared across the virtual and non-virtual world. Geographical distance is non-existent in the virtual world and people are able to communicate instantly using email, social media or mobile applications. The global flows have therefore facilitated the globalization of society through rapid transmission of information, symbols, money, education, risk and people.

In this globally networked world, cultural practices easily influence each other and “major” cultures have more weight than minor ones. Such a network of technologies, skills, texts and brands, a global hybrid, ensures that the same “service” or “product” is delivered in more or less the same way across the entire network. Such products are predictable, calculable, routinized and standardized (Urry, 2003, p. 57).

Globalized marketing can be viewed a process of deterritorialization. Countries with a more dominant culture globally also make use of these global flows to spread their values and ideas. Some traditional cultures are incorporated into our lives, such as festival celebrations, social taboos etc., while others are incorporated into our education, such as folklore, histories etc. In comparison, the globalization of brands, symbols and even food can be found in each and every corner of our daily lives and our thoughts and behaviors are all affected by these globalized symbols.

Young people in every part of the world are affected by globalization; nearly all of them are aware, although to varying degrees, of a global culture that exists beyond their local culture. Those who are growing up in traditional cultures know that the future that awaits them is certain to be very different from the life their grandparents knew (Arnett, 2002).

And herein lies the challenge traditions face today: The power of the local needs to be strengthened in order to fruitfully cooperate with the global in creating such appealing hybridizations as Techno Nezha. Local cultural practices will and do stay alive, but only through skilled patronage. Techno Nezha may be different from his traditional rendition, but he nevertheless still manages to convey traditional ideas. Nezha has not become another, he has merely learned to dance to a different tune. Interventions such as the one discussed above might just be able to avert the risk of cultural extinction through the application of cultural diversity, beating cultural globalization at its own game.

Our concern may be pointless in the long run as our social imagination only stretches so far into the future; perhaps, having an identical new form of traditional culture throughout the globe will be part of the tradition of humankind then. But for now, cultural distinction is still a powerful tool to pay respect to cultural differences, even if these traditions are dynamic themselves and distinct from some of their own histories.

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## **Smell, Space and Othering**

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### **Abstract**

Currently experiencing social shift from the rural/coastal to the urban, Matnog, Sorsogon, in the Philippines is left with markings of people who live by the coast, who are confronted by poverty, a poverty which can easily be seen in the space they occupy. The present article concerns itself less with seeing, but rather forms a spin-off from the spatial discourse to that of the smell/scent of a woman enmeshed with the space she inhabits and enabling the unfolding of the reproduction of social differences. As a way of knowing, a methodology, in this embodied qualitative research, the scent/smell becomes the agent and the space as the agency of power are both explored as a purview in cultural studies. The sense of smell as a socio-cultural construction that establishes social identity and reifies and reproduces social differences is highlighted and positioned. Extrapolating from field work conducted in Matnog demonstrates that the smell of this rural space is rapidly transitioning to that of the urbane and the smell of women who inhabits that space. Through narrative poetry and the presentation of photographs and verbal analyses, olfactory identities and imprints, social differences, identity and spaces are explored, culminating in the transitional reconfiguration of poverty constructs.

**Keywords:** space, smell, othering, olfactory identity, poverty, Philippines

*Anyone who is wont (and every child falls into this category)  
to identify places, people and things by their smells  
is unlikely to be very susceptible to rhetoric*

Lefebvre, 1984 (translated by Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 198)

## Introduction

In discourse on spaces and spatiality, much of sense making is associated with sensual apperception. Primary concern in this kind of discourse is made through the senses of sight, hearing, touch and taste that establish a clear illustration of the space and spatiality described. The mentioned senses have always been the take-off points that provide lucid accounts and elaborate on the narratives of space and spatiality due to their tangible nature in arriving at accurate images and metaphors to ascribe space. Human senses are vital in elaborating on these types of discourses but there is a lack of studies exploring the realm of the olfactory sense.

Axel and Buck (in Szczepanski and Slezak-Tazhir, 2009), in their research on smell, note that “sensations of smell are most closely connected with human memory by means of molecular techniques” (p. 106). The received smell is perceived by the brain and is stored in the memory center. The smell, when perceived, is then derived from varied meaning associations as contained in the memory of an individual. Szczepanski and Slezak-Tazhir (2009) state that the sense of smell possesses a very rich and diverse arena due to its elusiveness and continuity (p. 103). Possibilities for metaphoric images, words and language can be accounted for by the smell or scent because smell is more directly stored in the brain than the perception through other senses. A scent or smell, as elusive and indescribable as it may seem, leaves a lasting impression that can be triggered whenever semblances of that scent are detected and opens up further possibilities for deriving meaning.

## Nosing Around Space

In the field of cultural studies, which Hall (in During, 2009, p. 99) describes as a “project that is always open to that which it doesn’t yet know, to that which it can’t yet name,” the sense of smell as a starting point in cultural studies affirms this tenet as an expanded “notion of text and textuality, both as a source of meaning” (2009, p. 105) by acknowledging the idea that smell is also a text that can be read and dissected. Smell becomes a site of discourse that is regulated and disciplined to produce and reproduce social differences.

Grounding the discourse of smell in cultural studies considers the field “as a new conceptualization where social and political struggle take place...culture and meaning would be defined as ideology, as institutions...as subjectivities interpolated by these practices and their institutional formation” (Pollock 2003, p. 6). Because cultural studies enable the unfolding of social differences happening in everyday life, the sense of smell can become a medium of knowing and can act as a device for observing. In this article then, smell is taken as an agent and geo-cultural space becomes its agency, its arena.

As an agent of power in the social world, the sense of smell makes possible the evocation of discourses on space because some scents incite negative connotations influenced by the social circles that forms subjective commentaries. Examples are when reference is made to “bad” or “repulsive” smells, or “good” or “acceptable” ones. Such judgments have already been incorporated into the society an individual belongs to and so community members preconceive

attachments to or repulsions of certain scents. Low (2013, p. 691) explains that the “implication [of this] is that they are not only physically transgressive but morally questionable as well.” The varying smells associated with a person or a space lead to the formatted identity that brings about questions of moral standards, of one’s physiological care as influenced by the geographical and cultural space an individual belongs to. Thus, a certain smell can be arbitrarily identified with certain groups of individuals that “mediates both social distance and social proximity” (2013, p. 688) and that might result in discrimination, avoidance and unnecessary judgments.

To elaborate, Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1984/1991) explains that, “bodies resemble each other, but the differences between them are more striking than similarities... [because bodies] imply an analogous difference between spaces” (p. 194). Dissimilarity among bodies is due to the types and kinds of spaces they occupy. Unpleasant smells emanating from individual bodies are part of the olfactory accumulation happening in a certain space due to individuals’ actions, uses, practices, movements, etc. in the space occupied.

Hall notes the value of language and metaphors in the construction of socio-cultural space (in During 1993, p. 105). Taking into consideration the realm of the sense of smell, when a scent is arbitrarily associated with or labeled as a specific space or individual, it designates an identity. The sense of smell in cultural studies discourses becomes an agent of power in society as it establishes “acceptable” and “unacceptable” smells. The nose, through smelling, exerts power by naming certain scents as symbolic of spaces and/or experiences in the space. The sense of smell acts as a conduit for othering as it recognizes and accepts a certain type of scent and rejects other scents not within the boundaries of an individual’s cultural and geographical olfactory space and identity. In a way, the nose then only acknowledges what it has been culturally formatted to sense and is displeased by others. Comprehending social identity is understood and “recognized through the smell of the self as enacted in relation to the other” (Low 2013, p. 692).

As the agency of power, space then is constitutive of these compounded and collected smells that are fully embedded in and absorbed by an individual. Scent/smell composes and aids in the construction of a space because “tangible spaces possess (although these words are not ideal here) a basis or foundation, a ground or background in the olfactory realm” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 197). The smell comprises and evokes further meaning derived through a space that marks the identities of individuals and groups dwelling in it. Negative smells/scents become the associative language and words that constitute several descriptions and ascriptions of a space.

A spatial body... a body so conceived,  
as produced and as the production of space,  
is immediately subject to the determinants of that space:  
symmetries, interactions, and reciprocal actions, axes and planes,  
centers and peripheries and concrete (spatio-temporal) oppositions

Lefebvre, H. (1984, translated by Nicholson-Davis, 1991, p. 195)

When smells are constituted by and for an individual in a specific space, these smells when compounded create their spatial identity because the smell individuals release is constitutive for and of their space, and this scent of the space enunciates the kind of social position they possess. Smell, as agent of power, thus shapes questions of power and identities that are consequential to social distance.

Almagor ([1990], in Low, 2009), stipulates that “meaning is the application of the image of an odour to a context with which that odour is associated” (p. 6); thus, constructed meaning and identity of an individual’s “economic, social and cosmological levels [that] may serve in classifying the natural and social universe” (p. 10, footnote #11). The space’s location enunciates already an individual’s social position that determines his/her spatial practice.

The smell of a space accommodates an individual's smell, and thus further emphasizes the individual’s social position and status. “Intimacy occurs between ‘subject’ and ‘object’; it must surely be the worlds of smells and the places where they reside” (Lefebvre, 1984, in 1991, p. 197); thus, the space and spatial arrangements as objects are not the only determinants in reifying social differences, but the smell/scent of the space emphasize this further and deeply embed the subject or the individual in his/her social position because a particular scent/smell is projected onto the body of the individual.

### Methodology and Purview

In studies on smell, assertion for its methodological process is rooted in qualitative inquiry. Largey and Watson (1972, in Low, 2013, p. 688) in their studies on smell state that in accounting for smell, further associations should be listed and subjected to discourse. Grounded in Goffman’s concept of “individual’s structure of experience – in analyzing sensorial biographical reconstructions” (Waskul and Vannini 2008, in Low 2013) that specifically looks into “olfactive and spatial links” (p. 689), the sense of smell becomes the medium for knowledge that documents and memorializes social experience in a space. Relying on embodied qualitative research, Sandelowski (2002, in Low 2013) proposes the need to “embody qualitative inquiry so as to move beyond Western cultural pre-occupations which separate body from mind, as such approaches the veil the potential of locating the body as a ‘point of departure for any practice of knowing’” (p. 690). Sandelowski (in Low, 2013) further insists that embodied qualitative research argues that observations should take into account the researcher’s senses and integrate them during ethnographic work (p. 690).

Tying an olfactory impression of a space to a person smelling of that space constitutes the opening discourse of this article. Taking into consideration the method of embodied qualitative inquiry in this paper also duly recognizes the “senses [specifically, the sense of smell] as an avenue of embodied awareness where participant observation is enhanced in that both the bodies of the respondents and the researcher are accorded due attention” (Pink 2009, in Low 2-13, p. 691). In the following, I will present an account of scents I smelled in a transitioning space inhabited by economically privileged families. The focal point of smell is a woman who showed me her house and with whom I had several conversations. Thus, as a point of comparison, her smell as associated to the scent of the space and my smell as constructed by my space become the basis for identifying her social identity and the social schema present in her space. Acknowledging that the sense of smell is the most subjective among the senses, I extrapolate from my memories the scent associations constructed for me. In this, I describe her social identity, her space and her experiences in space and how the sense of smell reproduces social differences and othering.

Here, I attempt to answer the question *What am I smelling?* as I narrate how I go about recognizing olfactory social identity and social difference in space. *I name the smell* as to how I experienced olfactory othering of another woman in space. *As I remember the smell*, I produce interweaving discourses on space, othering and reproduction of social differences. I draw you into my thoughts and write in poetic narrative to attempt to capture this sensorial experience

for you.

### Where She Is



Figure 1. Coastal area where some families in Matnog live.

*I can see the rapid urbanization of Matnog, Sorsogon, Philippines, a third class municipality that harbors the pier and the trading center. Upon developing the spaces of the pier and trading center, and as it forwards into urbanization, Matnog, a rural/coastal space, seems to have forgotten the people who live by the coast. As the people who live by the coast experience the transition of their space, the attempted naturalization of urban development through spatial additions and arrangements can be seen.*

*Vision is not the only sense currently re-constructed. As rapid as the spatial transition, the smell of the rural/coastal area is becoming derogatory... and so is the smell of the people who inhabit the space because the urban development project only accepts a sanitized smell, far from the piscine scent of the people and the space – it is rendering their smell as unnatural.*

*Is what I smell of the other and that of the space the truth? If recognition of particular smells is contextual in nature and is associated with an individual's memory, an individual may find other scents repulsive or acceptable. If scents and smell are recognized and associated with an individual's experience, then the way I smell may also be pre-formed for me.*

In a study on spaces experiencing social shifts from the rural/coastal to that of the urban, I say (Sta Maria 2014, p. 41) that “spatial assembly [is effected] to promote urbanity as a way of life that is also cognizant of development and progress making any spaces that is symbolic of rural as something that is poor, backward and counter-progressive.” Therefore, as the space transitions from rural to urban, sense of sight or vision is being conditioned to absorb urban representations. Yet sight is not the only sense that is being re-constructed in the development project.

Urban space, due to its invention as part of modernization, does not exactly have an organic and natural smell because modernization, urban development, is a man-made construct in

relation to space and spatial arrangements. In order to make it more acceptable for people, the scent of the urban space has to be concocted. At the onset of modernization, in which urban development played a major role, acceptable smells become more and more homogenized. If scent is taken as a kind of branding and image formation, then urbanization may have also prescribed particular scents to specific spaces in order to distinguish this type of development. Lefebvre (1984/1991) states that like “everything in the modern world, smells are being eliminated” (p. 197) and that almost all spaces that are heading towards the direction of urbanization release the “hygienic” smell that attempts to eradicate natural smells that can be derived from a space (1984/1991). In these urban spaces, there is that constant need to smell clean; and to smell of its opposite is something that is repulsive and inappropriate.

Urry (2000) further notes that “modern societies are sensitive to smell and institutions organise to prevent those smells which are deemed to be ‘unnatural’ (these may of course include many smells such as rotting vegetables which are quite ‘natural’)” (p. 98). Rural/coastal spaces transitioning to the urban is proliferating an artificial smell that it is attempting to present as “natural”. In a rural/coastal space, a piscine smell is natural because of its geographic location but due to promotion of the urban project so as to be deemed acceptable by the people, the natural and organic piscine scent is being rendered as unnatural by advertising a smell that is associated with that of the urban. This in turn, naturalizes the artificial smell of the urban in a rural/coastal space that is consequential to identifying and associating any smell that is not within the urban parlance as something that should be rejected. Because the urban space is anchored to the concepts of development and progress, the rural/coastal space then takes on the opposing concept. Therefore, any smell associated with that of the rural/coastal space and the people who smell of this space is labeled as poor. And as the space and the individual continue to smell these artificial scents, then what used to be the natural scent becomes rendered as “unnatural” and something to be rejected.

Making the artificial scents emanate from the urban spaces encourages individuals to associate urban development with something imagined as the space to inhabit, the kind of development to choose, and the direction that one should take. Therefore, anything that smells differently does not coincide with the kind of knowledge urban development desires. Urban development smell becomes the more appropriate and acceptable smell for many. In its consistency in making itself reek among spaces, it successfully makes urban development more appealing, acceptable and natural. It follows suit then that the practice of urban development, through its smell, reifies its status as the only way to develop.

Almagor (1990b, in Low, 2009) says that “[s]mells are usually not known in isolation but as ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ accompaniments to human activities in certain cultural, social and physical settings” (p. 5). As part of the urban agenda in formatting a particular scent of the space, rejection and/or acceptance of a smell can also be translated into the kind of space that is preferred, inclusive of its lifestyle, norms, cultures and ways of living. Due to the categorization of smells that are deemed appropriate and inappropriate, smelling a scent that is unfamiliar/unexpected may become functionary in the following ways: (1) as a device for stereotyping people; (2) representing oppositions through “positive” and “negative” pole-categorization; (3) meaning attribution associated with particular smells based on specific contexts; (4) demarcating processes and divisions in society and nature; and (5) as symbols of cyclic processes in culture and nature (Almagor, 1987, in Low, 2009, p. 9, footnote #11).

Smell, when released in a space and by an individual dwelling within it, communicates social differences. Acknowledging the notion that smells are already established in a space due to



practices and uses via individuals, then in the discourse of space and its scent, one can already typecast associative words that connote the social position of both the space and individuals. It is not only the space that reifies their identity in social strata, but further reification happens through and by the individual who smells of it. The establishment of urban spaces and their representations includes a smell that makes one feel special, better than the others, more modern and developed than the other, while the other who does not smell of this space is and may be different.

*As Matnog, Sorsogon continues on with its urban development agenda, will it provide a sensory experience of notions of development?*

*I thought that this urban development project was for everybody... but why does the space by the coast smell differently? Is there something wrong with the way I recognize the smell? Whose scent is different?*

### **What I Smell**

*I looked around her space  
Saw the paved road,  
The path I walked on  
To reach her house.  
Seeing her from the fence made of bamboo,*

*I know that she saw me too.  
We smiled at each other  
as I continue to walk towards her  
to shake her hand.  
She kept looking at me uneasily  
as I feel her eyes  
rolling up and down  
and trying to make sense of what I look like.  
I smiled at her  
And she seemed comforted  
By that smile.*

*She finally asked me  
to come inside her house  
and take photos –  
for us to talk more.*

*I adjust my camera  
and placed it before my eyes,  
properly angled  
to take a photograph  
at eye level,  
ready to click.*

*I can see the inside of her house  
from the door where I was standing.*



*I was ready to click  
but my hands shook.  
I feel my camera  
sliding from my hand.  
I was sweating.*

*I just can't stay long in that space  
it is because of the smell.  
I cannot think of just one word  
to describe that smell.*

*What I recognize  
Is the smell of fish,  
rusty water,  
of clothes washed in that rusty water.  
It smelled of her children's sweat  
Of molds  
Of stuffy, dusty air.  
It smelled of dirt  
that has been attempted to be cleaned  
several times*

*The house – the space is dark  
Too dark  
that I can even smell this darkness  
Looming around the space*

*As I smell this,  
I saw children with small portions of food  
Probably fighting over the last piece on the plate  
Children not being able to move  
Crying just so.  
I can see her hushing the children  
Or probably already silent  
Huddled up in the corner  
Of that house – that space.  
I can see her picking up  
The scattered things on the floor  
Washing the dishes  
Telling the children to clean up.*

*As I smell this,  
I can see her and the children  
Lying down on the floor  
Sleeping – one leg on each other  
Because the house –  
the space –  
is cramped.*

*But these smells are familiar to me.  
I know this scent that reeks  
Of the other houses there.*

*I walked up to her –  
closer.  
I asked her a few questions.  
I can smell her.  
And I think,  
She can smell me too.*

*This time  
I am uneasy.  
I tried avoiding her eyes.  
But she caught my glance.  
We stared at each other  
Each, knowingly.  
Because, she too recognizes her own smell  
And, she knows my smell too  
Which is not her own.*

*I excused myself  
And asked permission  
to take photographs  
Outside her house.  
Instead of taking a picture  
Of the house from eye level  
I lowered my head  
And captured a blurred picture  
of her doorstep*

*I try to take a hold of myself  
And took photos  
Of the outer part of her house.*

*I can only show you  
the photographs  
I attempted to take,  
For you to understand  
what it smells like  
because I cannot  
bottle up that scent  
For you to smell it as well*



*I just can't stay long in that space  
because that smell reeks.  
It creeps up from my toes  
going upwards to my head.  
That smell clamps on my skin and envelopes me...  
until I choke and find myself breathless.*

*I went out and tried to smell something different –  
something that is not of this smell that I recognize  
but refuse to acknowledge.  
I stayed outside and breathed –  
trying to take in any scent.  
Fast and short inhalations.  
But it was too late.  
The smell of that space is already in my pores.*

*The smell of the space/place is overpowering.  
It is wrapping itself tightly myself, pulling me down,  
and forcing me to stay.*

*It is that smell that makes you stop where you are  
in order to inhale everything  
that is presented before you.*

*In that space/place.*

*The smell freezes you –  
forces you to close your eyes  
as it evokes deeply seated emotions of loneliness.*

*That smell tells you to stay  
as if whispering to you that when you leave,  
you will only find yourself back in that space/place.  
It tells you that you have no control over things,  
power relinquished, moving in circles –  
a crumbling of one's spatiality.  
It is that smell that knows no other scent...*

*Only that of despair.  
She knows it too.  
For we both know this scent.*

*I just can't stay long in that space.*

*I want to grab her hand  
pull her out of that space  
and tell her to breathe  
and to smell something else other than this.  
But I just can't do that.*



*What I wish and hope for is that no one smells this and stays.*

## **I Name the Smell**

Space does not exactly release its own smell because it is bestowed by dwellers and inhabitants who use and make use of that space. The ones who release smell are the individuals who constitute such markings in the spaces they occupy. Human bodies are composed of similar substances but what distinguishes one from the other is smell. In determining differences amongst individuals, Borthwick (2000, in Low, 2009) explains that the smell that emanates from an individual's body and as perceived by others becomes a form of othering wherein "an individual defines the self through a difference in smell, and also negates the other as the not-I" (p. 14).

Because the scent or smell is embedded in memory, an individual who has previous associations with particular scents or smells designates specific social constructs and meanings through smell. Low explains that "memory reconstructions emplace them within specific social roles that are emotionally revisited through olfactive recall, situated within embodied social contexts" (2003, p. 698). Therefore, identifying a scent of an individual assigns a specific social identity corollary to an individual's social space and place and vice versa. Once the scent or smell is embedded in memory, then it becomes difficult to erase. Reproduction of social differences is repetitively done as the sense of smell operates to associate and attach labels to an individual and the place he/she inhabits. The sense of smell becomes the agent of power as this sense constructs and re-constructs what is socially acceptable, nasally identifying how one is different from the other. The space, as an agency of power, operates by building boundaries and demarcation lines between areas with smells that are acceptable and those that are not.

## **I Remember What I Smell**

Once smelling begins, the individual imagines and recalls from his/her memory any recognition attached to the smell that provide clear accounts for the meaning of the scent. Tuan (in Urry 2000) further notes that "even if we cannot name the particular smell it can still help to create and sustain the sense of a particular place or experience that has been visited or lived in previously" (p. 97) because one has already associated that scent with a particular space, thing, event or experience. Thus, when an individual smells something, even if he/she comes from a different space and time, imagination and memory still operate in identifying the smell.

Low (2013) explains that "smells and memories operate in conjunction toward shaping self-identity and social relations" (p. 689). Smells are socio-culturally constructed with necessary standards of acceptability and unacceptability which are established by a social group. The smell, in itself, is archived in memory because this is socially and physiologically experienced by an individual (2003, p. 691).

*I may not exactly come from the space where the woman whom I smelled dwells in – I know that my social experience has already constructed a set of scents that have already created clear demarcation lines between what comprises the social life of the woman from Matnog, Sorsogon, and what the acceptable social life and space should be.*

"Smells envelope us, enter our bodies, and emanate from us. Yet when we try to describe smells, olfactory epithets do not quite provide accurate descriptions" Low, K. (2009, p. 4). Difficulty in placing a particular word or phrase to name a particular scent is rendered pointless

because the sense of smell by the nature of its construction results from a union of thoughts that is inextricably linked to varied experiences. This may be the reason why in naming scents one does so based on language ascriptions for other senses. An example would be calling a scent “sour” or “sweet”, which are taste categories, or saying, that a smell is “strong” or “soft”, which are derivations from the sense of touch. Low explains that “sense of smell works alongside sight, and taste, respectively, in one’s reconstruction of past experience... this goes to show the multi-sensorial nature of memory recall” (2013, p. 691).

Miller (in Low, 2009) notes that “the lexicon of smell is very limited and usually must work by making an adjective of the thing that smells” (p. 4) in the attempts at describing the scent experience enabling the derivation of meaning/s communicated by a particular scent. Descriptions of the smell then often become metaphorical and necessitate abstraction because its foundations in linguistic meanings are from memory and imagination. Seremetakis (1994, in Low 2013, p. 693) states that “memory is a culturally mediated material practice that is activated by embodied acts and semantically dense objects” (2013, p. 693). Memory accumulated through and by the physiological senses is deftly recorded. Odors or scents rely heavily on “an odor inventory [based on] observation instead of independent identities because odors are highly contextualized concepts” (Low, 2013, p. 5). Smells are not prescriptive; instead, they are more inscriptive due to their subjective and contextual nature that constructs a certain meaning for a particular scent.

Odors or scents, as stored in the memory of an individual, also provoke emotions. As stored in memory, the perceived scent may bring about emotive language which may be consciously or subconsciously done. The scent becomes a reminder of a specific emotion that is elicited from the individual who makes use of the sense of smell. That is why there are instances when some scents make us happy, sad or probably nostalgic because these smells may remind us of an experience that directly refers to past emotive particularities.

Observations of the scent as metaphorized and imagined become a legitimate account of the scent due to its experiential meaning. Almagor (in Low, 2009) contends that, “meaning is the application of the image of an odor to a context with which that odor is associated” (p. 6). Thus, one smells and identifies the scent dependent on one’s own memory, imaginings and abstractions. Communicative meaning of a scent may be derived through the combination of associative and emotive language that has been embedded in the memory of an individual who senses a particular smell.

Drafting a narrative of scent or smell entails for them to be rendered as cultural signifiers. Lefebvre (1984/1991) notes that “the aim [of] these [scents/smells] should be ‘signifiers’ and to this end words – advertising copy” (p. 198). The smell/scent becomes “the link to that which is signified” (1984/1991). In communication, the scent/smell becomes a composite of the knowledge, thought, experience, event or thing in order to complete the meaning of what the scent/smell means. In constructing meaning, scent or smell are the constituents of “that transportation of everything into the idiom of images, spectacle, of verbal discourse, and of writing and reading” (Lefebvre, 1984/1991). Smell is constitutive of meanings in thought, knowledge, objects and experiences. What is smelled is not specific, instead, a part of a complete knowledge experience to make sense of reality and some kind of truth. The sense of smell memorializes the meanings associated with a particular space.

As mentioned above, the smell of a space contributes greatly to the smell of a person inhabiting this particular space, and thus, constructs a “socially acceptable olfactory identity” (Low, 2013,



p. 689) that is maintained through practice of deodorizing and odorizing in removing malodours and perfuming respectively. This is true as much for a space as it is for an individual.

*In the case of this woman in space, her social identity is maintained by making her remain in the confines of her space. She recognizes her own social identity when she smells others who do not give off a similar scent. She feels then that her smell is unacceptable in other spaces because as she smelled others who do not smell of her and of her space, she remembers that she is not acceptable in other spaces.*

*In the urban project where smells of the urban constantly promote a deodorized and artificial smell (sanitized – to smell clean; floral – to feel happy, among others), what is embedded in the memory of individuals located in transitioning spaces as that of Matnog, Sorsogon, is that their smell threatened, negated the urban space. What is flaunted before her is the scent of development which can be found in other spaces that are not of hers. This makes her feel that she does not belong in this space and that she would need to negate her own smell in order to fit in.*

What we both remember is her olfactory identity that denotes to her something constructed as rural, backward and poor. It has already permeated her pores. This olfactory identity of hers is embedded in her memory and that of mine... a constant reminder of her space, place and location. Embedded in her memory and mine, is her social identity deemed to point to the rural and to poverty. In this kind of sensorial memory, reproduction of social differences occurs because even if I am not smelling her or she is smelling me, the woman will already have recognized that she is different – not of the urban space... not of the developed space... and not of the rich. And, in this smell she will always remember that I made her feel othered when she smelled me; and she too othered herself through her smell.

*As the Philippines take on this urban project, what is constructed is not only the physical addition of spaces but, more so, the sense of smell itself. Through this urban project, we will always remind people who do not smell of the urban space as negated and self-negating identities, socially unacceptable and different. This urban project and the smell that is constructed becomes an olfactory imprint in space that continues to reproduce social differences.*

Odours which bespeak of nature's violence and largesse, do not signify;  
they are what they are in all its immediacy:  
the intense particularity of what occupies a certain space  
and spreads outwards from that space into surroundings."

Lefebvre, H. (1984, translated by Nicholson-Davis, 1991, p. 198)

*I othered her when I smelled her and the space she lives in and we both are still caught in this olfactory net.*

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