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Notes on Contributors

Article 1: Making Sovereignty Mean Something: Native Nations and Creative Adaptation

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Article 4: The Ancestors of a New Society: The Tribes (Buzoku) and their Journey through the Misunderstandings of the Japanese Countercultural Scene

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Article 5: The Three Epochs of Hong Kong Lolita Subculture: Cultural Hybridization and Identity Construction

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to IJCS Issue 6.1! The Editorial Team of the issue hopes that the articles contained herein will be as thought-provoking and inspiring as those from previous issues.

While our last issues were written under the continuing threat of COVID-19, this issue has come together at a time when at least some parts of the world are slowly gaining poise again and hope of the waning of the virus is gaining pace. The big question is of course, what have we learned from this sudden and global rearrangement of life circumstances, oftentimes concomitant with grief, suffering and sorrow? While many are perhaps nostalgically hankering for life to return to a normalcy experienced before the outbreak, it is becoming increasingly clear that life post-COVID will not resemble the times of pre-COVID.

Too much has changed in the meantime: travel cultures have undergone re-evaluation with air travel and cruises not viewed as innocent entertainment anymore, but rather as major contributors to the climate crisis. Some governments are even considering banning short-distance air travel altogether, as the positive climate effects of scaled-down economics became too blatantly obvious to ignore/deny any more.

Another major change has affected the place of science in society. Today, many more people question the legitimacy of science (and, by extension, of governments and the media) and refuse to follow sound advice seen as unproblematic before. It seems that while neighbourly help has boomed during the pandemic, mutual institutional support has rather de- than increased. A case in point was the national scrambling for vaccines in the European Union, with some European ideals quickly and unceremoniously being jettisoned.

This divide was not only evident on an institutional and political level, though; it also engulfed individuals and economic developments. The rich quickly became richer, the stock markets sped up their decoupling from the economy, and those precariously employed were most often the ones stuck in the frontline in the fight against the virus, unable to safely retreat to an oftentimes more comfortable home office or, even better, become a digital nomad and do one's influencer work from a villa in Bali. Governments spent billions on crisis management and it can be rightly feared that the times of laissez-faire economics will be coming to an end.

There is much to do then, and especially so for cultural studies.

The first essay in this issue, **Making Sovereignty Mean Something: Native Nations and Creative Adaptation** by Michelle Watts studies the reinvention of First Nation Tribes in the USA. It is based on interviews the author conducted with Native Nations leaders in Alaska and the lower 48 states, and demonstrates how Native Nations adapt to their unique circumstances to make sovereignty meaningful. Many of them are purposefully modernizing by creatively adapting to their circumstances, leveraging economic tools, and integrating their own evolving cultural practices. Watts succinctly argues that while *modernization* implies following a Western developmental path, *purposeful modernization* is driven by the choices of the people instead.

The second article by Hwee Ling Perline Siek and Cheng Ean Catherine Lee, is entitled **The Influence of National Cultural Attributes on Locally Produced Designs: Case Study of**

Malaysian Design and analyses design practices in Malaysia. The state of Malaysia is a multicultural state and while there have been majority and majority religion-driven guidelines on national cultural design since the 1970s, actual practice finds the design scene thriving throughout the country. This vibrancy cuts across all areas of design such as comics, animation, commercial advertisements, printed materials and graphics. The study adopts a quantitative research approach with results derived from the content-analysis of 18 Malaysian designs using a visual preference survey by Malaysian experts from the design industry. The results and discussion from this study are then able to shed light on cultural production in multicultural times and are poised to become best practice examples for a more and more globalised society at large.

The next article, **Does an Upcycling Kimono Practice Support Recycle-oriented Cultural Sustainability? Japanese College Students' Perspectives** by Minako McCarthy discusses issues with upcycling old kimonos in Japan. Its theme corresponds with the previous article in that design plays an important role in it, a design that is based on modern-day fashion axioms, but that is also aware of recycling issues and cultural heritage themes. As McCarthy clearly demonstrates, just because some traditional clothes have been relegated to hyper-formal events in Japanese society, this does not mean that the heritage transfer involved, for instance the handing down of kimonos from mother to daughter, will necessarily discontinue. Fashion trends can be sustainable and also speak to heritage concerns, if one is so inclined. It seems that many younger and well-educated Japanese women do see this aspect of fashion as well and react positively to it, thereby acting responsibly without neglecting the heritage and elegance of traditional fashion.

Staying in Japan, **The Ancestors of a New Society: The Tribes (Buzoku) and their Journey through the Misunderstandings of the Japanese Countercultural Scene** by Yaxkin Melchy, tells the story of one part of what is normally referred to as the Hippie movement in Japan during the late 1960s and 1970s. Buzoku, generally translated as The Tribe (or The Tribes), was a transnational collective of artists, poets, and activists, who became one of the most vital Japanese counterculture voices. The author makes it clear that they were at the core of a cultural renewal in Japan, going beyond mere superficial hippie lore and contributing to an overall cross-cultural approach to spirituality and arts.

Finally, Shuk-fan Fanny Wong and Wai-sum Amy Lee's **The Three Epochs of Hong Kong Lolita Subculture: Cultural Hybridization and Identity Construction** analyse the female-oriented Lolita subculture phenomenon born around 1990 in Harajuku, Japan and subsequently exported to Hong Kong. They explore this development from a thoroughly postmodern historical and socio-cultural point of view. Based on interviews and material collections, they find that there are three major epochs of Lolita subculture development in Hong Kong and that the Lolita phenomenon has dramatically changed female viewpoints and practices in relation to it and to society at large, subverting the male gaze in the process. The study also indicates that the development of Hong Kong Lolita subculture shows a positive impact of cultural hybridization, creating an imagined community for the participants to share their beliefs and dreams freely.

Happy reading, please stay healthy and enjoy this issue of the *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*!

Holger Briel
Editor-in-Chief

Making Sovereignty Mean Something: Native Nations and Creative Adaptation

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Abstract

Scholarship regarding Native Nations has often focused on the problems of Native Nations caused by a brutal history of genocide, repression and forced assimilation. Relatively little attention has been paid to how Native Nations creatively adapt to their circumstances in a continual process of reinvention. This article provides insights into Native Nations through examples in the lower 48 states and Alaska. This study, based on 16 interviews the author conducted with Native Nations leaders in Alaska and the lower 48 states, demonstrates how Native Nations adapt to their unique circumstances to make sovereignty meaningful, because of and in spite of federal legislation that seeks to govern Nation Nations. Ultimately, I argue that many Native Nations today are purposefully modernizing by creatively adapting to their circumstances, transforming systems of governance, and leveraging economic tools, integrating their own evolving cultural practices. While *modernization* implies following a Western developmental path, *purposeful modernization* is driven by the choices of the people. While change was forced upon Native Nations in numerous, often devastating, ways since colonization, they have nevertheless asserted agency and formed governments and economic institutions that reflect and reinforce their own cultural norms. This article highlights examples of how Native Nations and the lower 48 have adapted given the very different circumstances created in part by state and federal policies such as the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA).

Keywords: creative adaptation, economic sovereignty, gaming, governance, Harvard Project on American Indian Development, indigenous, purposeful modernization, the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)

Introduction

For too long, we have read about the difficulties of Native Nations and depredations against Indigenous people. When scholars have paid attention to Native Nations, it is often to chronicle atrocities, those that are easily seen when the government sought to exterminate Indigenous peoples, as well as the less visible ones inflicted through various federal policies since colonization. This article explores the way Native Nations in the United States employ purposeful modernization, defined as intentional development, and creative adaptation, defined as reacting to circumstances in inventive ways (Hosmer, 1999) to further integrate cultural practices into their communities and make sovereignty meaningful. This article explores examples of Native Nations in the lower 48 and Alaska, discussing how Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) have influenced their development and notions of sovereignty in very different ways, contributing to distinct ways of reinventing themselves.¹

The Meaning of Sovereignty

A brief review of definitions of sovereignty reveals a wide variety of opinions, particularly concerning Indigenous peoples (Porter 2002). At the most basic level, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) (n.d., p.18) defines sovereignty simply as “the authority to self-govern.” As Krasner (2001) and Waltz (1979) point out, for most, if not all states, sovereignty is constrained in some way. Ruckstuhl (2017) asserts that sovereignty always falls “within the prescribed conditions dictated by the settler state” (p. 40). The opinions of Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall have had a lasting impact on notions of sovereignty in the United States; his depiction is echoed over one hundred years later in President William J. Clinton’s Executive Order 13175, which describes tribes as “domestic dependent nations” with “inherent sovereign powers over their members and territory” (Clinton, 2000).

Hosmer and Nesper (2013) explain that the sovereignty of Native Nations emerges from the competing claims between Indigenous and “colonialist legal/constitutional frameworks” (p. 13–14). Scholars point out that sovereignty is a European rather than Indigenous concept (Ortiz, 2002; Deloria, 1996; Lerma, 2014). Fenelon (2002, p. 134) describes the tension between Native Nation, state, and federal governments as a form of “dual sovereignty” that varies considerably for each Native Nation. Bruyeel explains the notion of a “third space of sovereignty” on the fringes of the US political system, neither in nor out, continually resisting the dictates of prevailing powers in “postcolonial conflict” (2007, xvii). For many Native Nations, power historically was dispersed among many leaders within a Native Nation rather than centered in a hierarchical system; the ability to formulate their own system of governance has far-reaching impact on socio-economic conditions as well as culture. Wilkins (2015) expounds on the all-encompassing nature of sovereignty: “It is about more than political boundaries; it defines nothing less than our living, collective power which is generated as traditions are respectfully developed, sustained, and transformed to confront new conditions” (para. 1). Thus, sovereignty is an underlying force that influences multiple facets of life, allowing Native Nations to exercise agency in the way their communities develop and change.

¹ This article developed from a multi-year study conducted in several different states. I have no Indigenous heritage and am a settler in the United States; my interest in these issues came after years of studying Indigenous groups in other countries, which brought forth a desire to know more about the rich heritage of Indigenous peoples in the United States while doing research for my dissertation. This article incorporates Indigenous voices based on 16 interviews conducted for this study; these interviews were held in Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, and by phone but does not pretend to be representative of any Native Nation.

Indigenous Themes in the Social Sciences

Scholars observe the gaps in past research involving the Indigenous and governance across disciplines. Aufrecht (1999) documents that for many years tribal governments were rarely featured in the field of public administration. He speculates that this paucity is due to assumptions that Native American governance systems do not fit into “our models of the world” (Aufrecht, 1999, p. 375). Cornell opines that Indigenous governments were often viewed as “poor facsimiles” of governments, not worthy of scholarly attention (2020, personal communication). While Ronquillo (2011) counters that by casting a wider net outside of what is strictly considered public administration, neglect of Indigenous themes is less evident, Mason (2000) asserts that “for most Americans and even most elected officials, what happens in Indian Country might as well be happening in Antarctica” (p. 7). Nonetheless, change is on the horizon. Post-colonial theorists and Indigenous scholars challenge Western assumptions about social science concepts, such as the focus on the state as well as the nature of sovereignty (Lightfoot, 2016). Moving away from “intellectual hegemony” (Wilmer, 2016, p. 2) means including Indigenous issues and scholars in all disciplines.

The Harvard Project

The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (HPAIED), in conjunction with the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management and Policy of the University of Arizona, has been a prolific producer of works relevant to Native Nations. Cornell and Kalt (2003) argue for a nation-building approach that incorporates sovereignty, institutions, and a development strategy that fits the culture of the Native Nation. In this and other HPAIED scholarship (Cornell and Kalt; 1998; 2000; 2003; 2006; Jorgensen & Taylor, 2000), the central findings are reiterated that sovereignty, institutions, leadership and cultural fit, matter in forming and maintaining effective Native Nation governments. The Harvard Project’s work has been criticized by some scholars for being overly simplistic and prescriptive (Mowbray, 2005; Mowbray, 2006; Sullivan, 2006). Mowbray (2006) objects to the uncritical acceptance and application of the Harvard precepts in Australia, which he argues are not justified by the evidence presented. Sullivan (2006) alleges that the Harvard program has become a “product and brand, sold by and selling the Harvard Project itself” (p. 4). Perhaps this critique is reflective of the ways that it is adopted by some rather than the work itself. I argue that Harvard’s work has a significant place in highlighting issues critical to the success of Native Nations that have a practical application for Native Nations, but that more scholarship about Native Nations is needed; in particular, the contribution Indigenous scholars will be invaluable in the academic literature across disciplines.

Modernization, Purposeful Modernization, and Creative Adaptation

Theories of modernization shed light on how the policies of the United States government historically have contributed to the creation of tribal governments that reflect Western norms and structure. Rostow’s (1960) stages of growth provided a foundation for modernization theory; he predicted that countries would pass through five stages as each became a mature capitalist economy, thought to go naturally with a Western-style democracy (Mazrui, 1968). O’Neill (2004) professes, “Clearly ethnocentric and, at best, paternalistic, modernization theory shaped the foundations of American Indian policy from the development of the first boarding schools and reservation land allotments to the Indian New Deal and Termination” (p. 5). Hosmer (1999) adds, “modernization theory argues for the inevitability of assimilation” (p. 8); cultural change was seen as a necessary step in achieving true development defined by Western standards (Hosmer & O’Neill, 2004). While modernization theory is no longer

accepted uncritically, ideas about cultural change and development still favor Western models without adequately accounting for difference (Hosmer & O’Neill, 2004). Purposeful modernization incorporates the idea of agency; development does not have to occur from the top down. Hosmer (1999), through a close examination of two Native Nations, advances the notion of purposeful modernization and creative adaptation. He holds up the examples of the successful transformation of the Metlakatlan and Menominee economies as adaptations without sacrificing culture. This is not to say that cultural change and loss do not occur, but rather to acknowledge the role of Native Nations in influencing transformation.

Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA): Background

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) brought important changes and opportunities for Native Nations in the lower 48 (casinos are not legal in Alaska, with just a couple of exceptions). Gaming on reservations began to gain traction in 1987 after the Supreme Court’s decision in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* sanctioned Indigenous rights to operate casinos without state interference. To increase regulation of gaming, Congress passed IGRA in 1988 (Meister, Rand, & Light, 2009). IGRA has transformed the relationship between the federal government and Native Nations by requiring a compact between the state and Native Nation, forcing Native Nations to negotiate with the state over the terms of gaming, what Corntassel and Witmer (2008) refer to as “forced federalism.” States gain leverage over Native Nations by threatening to set up casinos near reservations unless Native Nations pay for exclusivity rights (Meister, Rand, & Light, 2009; Corntassel & Witmer, 2008; Hansen & Skopek, 2011). Nevertheless, some Native Nations employ gaming and other economic endeavors as tools of economic sovereignty.

Native Nations consider gaming a sovereign right; several respondents (R. Smith, personal communication, July 26, 2017; A. Crotty, personal communication, April 17, 2018; D. Montoya, personal communication, February 2, 2018) noted that casinos have cultural foundations in traditional Indian games. Gaming has become an important economic force for many Native Nations; moreover, respondents in the lower 48 mentioned several ways that gaming has benefited the community, including raising cultural awareness, improving education and infrastructure, as well as providing public services, such as police and fire departments. It is important to note that gaming has uneven and often negative effects.² Below, this article discusses specific examples of Native Nations in the Lower 48 using gaming as well as other economic and political tools to purposefully modernize.

Acoma Pueblo

The Acoma Pueblo Tribe of New Mexico was among the first to establish gaming facilities in the Southwest; leaders have used the profits to benefit community and culture. Acoma members were able to purchase back lands taken away during colonization. While casino profits have diminished considerably as competition has increased, the Acoma continue to move forward with cultural initiatives, such as a project with the Language Conservancy to develop an 11,000-word Karis electronic dictionary, workbooks and a language app to preserve and spread knowledge of the language (R. Concho, personal communication, April 18, 2018).

² These effects are not the focus of this current study but are discussed in depth in sources such as Cornell (2008) Corntassel and Witmer (2008), Light (2008), Lee (2014), Akee, Spilde and Taylor (2015), Wilkins and Wilkins (2017) and Hansen (2010; 2020). In addition, discrepancies in earnings from gaming between Native Nations are well documented by the American Gaming Association.

The Acoma realized that cultural loss was likely to occur because so many of their children left the Pueblo to go to school. The quality of the Bureau of Indian Affairs School spurred many to travel away from the Pueblo daily, some even going to boarding schools. To reverse this trend and afford children better opportunities on Acoma territory, the Acoma people opened a new school in July 2018 with a focus on STEM and Native language immersion (R. Concho, personal communication, April 18, 2018).

The Acoma Pueblo form of government does not follow a Western model; instead, its government follows tradition in several ways. First, there are no elections; government positions, including governor, lieutenant governor, a 12-member tribal council, and sheriffs are appointed by *caciques*, the traditional tribal leaders. Appointments are often a surprise to those appointed. Second, women do not hold office. Third, there is no separation between church and state in their government. Finally, those in government participate in almost all aspects of the community—Lt. Gov. Concho might be sitting in an office on one day; on another, he is performing a traditional duty (many of which are secret to those outside the community) or helping to dig an irrigation ditch (R. Concho, personal communication, April 18, 2018). The Acoma Pueblo's style of governance falls outside of the Western model but is not unusual for the pueblos of New Mexico; most do not allow women to hold political positions (Gilbert, Muller, Day, & Sanchez, 1999; Prindeville, 2004). Thus, even while they are running businesses such as casinos, hotels, and travel stops, and becoming increasingly connected to the outside world through the Internet, they are closely guarding and nurturing their own traditional values.

The Navajo Nation

In relatively proximity to Acoma Pueblo, the Navajo Nation is strikingly different, in size and cultural adaptations. The Navajo is the largest tribe in the United States, with over 300,000 enrolled members spread over territory in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah that stretches over 27,000 miles. A brief look at history sheds light on how the Navajo are adapting despite historical repression.

The Navajo Nation has a tribal court system that it considers a cornerstone of cultural preservation (A. Crotty, personal communication, April 17, 2018); this system was established after many decades of battles with the federal government. Historically, Navajo cultural norms were actively repressed by the military and federal government. The Navajo people were held at Bosque Redondo in the mid-1860s; there the U.S. army divided them into villages and set up a system of justice with the commander of Fort Sumner as judge. In 1883, the Commission of Indian Affairs set up “Courts of Indian Offenses” that allowed Navajo judges, but only if they followed Western cultural norms and styles of dress. Some traditional practices, such as polygamy, acting as or seeing a medicine man or woman, and even giving wedding gifts were classified as crimes (Yazzie, 2003). Nonetheless, the courts began to shift toward Navajo customs in the 1890s, with courts conducting proceedings in a manner more similar to tribal meetings. The Navajo Nation worked against federal attempts to exert greater control over the Navajo by creating its own court system, modeled after the state court system, essentially co-opting the dominant system as a way of warding off federal control. In the 1980s, the Navajo reintroduced Navajo methods and conceptions of justice, including “peacemaking” and the “Fundamental Laws of the Dine” (Yazzie, 2003, para. 10). This system incorporating traditional values has thrived: Navajo Nation Supreme Court Raymond Austin explains that the Navajo Nation has been on the forefront of the tribal legislative movement, establishing tribal laws and courts that reflect Navajo culture (Austin, 2009).

The Navajo face significant economic challenges, suffering from a brain drain and economic drain; 80 cents of every dollar leaves Navajo territory to be spent outside the reservation (A. Peterman, personal communication, April 16, 2018). To change this, Navajo leaders are exploring many options, including bringing data centers to Navajo land, training Navajo youth as tour guides and engaging in ethnotourism. Synthesizing definitions from Ethnotourism.org, this term refers to travel in which tourists participate in the activities and culture of distinct tribal or ethnic communities (2016). Some Navajo offer tourism experiences that take advantage of the lack of electricity and communications in some areas to allow tourists to experience views unobstructed by power lines, a chance to get away from electronic distractions, and the opportunity to stay in traditional Navajo Hogan (A. Crotty, personal communication, April 17, 2018). An example of a Hogan offered on the Air BnB website how the lack of infrastructure is turned into an asset, rather than a deficit, while bringing up questions of cultural appropriation:

The Hogan is a traditional Navajo dwelling. First and foremost a home, a traditional Navajo Hogan is also the center of Navajo ceremonial activity. It is considered sacred. A stay here is an experience. This experience will offer one an insight as to how the Navajo lived not terribly long ago... It is a place of quiet positivity. A lovely place to rest and experience life, if for a brief while as the Navajo did. Again, it is an experience. An interaction with Navajo culture. A place of learning. It is not the Marriot. It is not a five star hotel. It is a five billion star in the sky hotel. (Hogan 2 Glamping on Navajoland)

Ethnotourism is a form of creative adaptation to the Western model of economic development. On one hand, it takes the traditional model of Western tourism, often well-insulated from local culture, and transforms it into a potentially mutually beneficial cultural exchange. Delegate Crotty points out, it is a way for tourists to learn about the Navajo and find out they are not “the stoic peoples that live in teepees or whatever they have watched in movies” (A. Crotty, personal communication, April 17, 2018). In a 2005 Master’s thesis, Malecki argues that the commoditization of culture can promote cross-cultural exchange. This kind of economic development, while not without drawbacks, presents an alternative for local communities who might not be able to sustain other types of enterprises and discourages development that might alter the landscape. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that renting a Hogan to tourists could be seen as harmful to culture, monetizing it and sharing it with those who lack a full comprehension of it.³

Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe

The Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe of Washington State has struggled historically after losing an estimated 90% of the tribe during colonization, according to its website. The tribe obtained federal recognition and reservation land in the 1930s. It was one of the first 10 tribes to be self-governing (W. R. Allen, personal communication, August 9, 2017). Moreover, they, along with 26 other tribes in Washington State, forged an agreement with the governor, providing for yearly meetings, facilitating a closer relationship and greater potential to work out mutually beneficial solutions to issues facing the Native Nation and the community at large (W. R. Allen, personal communication, August 9, 2017).

³ Unfortunately, at the current time in the Fall of 2020, tourism on the Navajo reservation, like many economic endeavors, is simply not possible during the pandemic.

To facilitate economic development, they created an Economic Development Authority, the Noo-Kayet Development Corporation (NKDC), that facilitates Native Nation enterprises. Currently, the tribe is one of the largest employers in its area. It has leveraged casino revenue to diversify its own economic activities, as well as to leverage federal, state, or non-profit resources. This has been a boon for infrastructure (on and off the reservation), community services, and cultural programs. They invest in their youth through a strong educational support system that includes a scholarship program.

Pala Band of Mission Indians in California

Likewise, the Pala Band of Mission Indians in California have used their political and economic resources to empower their people and create economic sovereignty. It has leveraged casino funds and other business endeavors, such as a quarry, to produce opportunities for the tribe and local community. They contribute substantially to local infrastructure projects that benefit communities off the reservation: they run a charter school open to non-natives and have started Native language programs in the elementary schools as well as online (R. Smith, personal communication, July 26, 2017).

The Pala Band of Mission Indians use casinos to highlight culture and advance education. Their casinos have displays that draw attention to the cultural sites casino visitors might not be aware of. Their website emphasizes the “Planet Pala” approach to conservation and explains the casino’s sustainable practices and “green culture” (Pala Casino website, accessed 6/26/20). According to Chairman Robert Smith, casino funds allow all of their young people who want to attend college to do so, funding the majority of their education and only requiring some contribution by the student to ensure the student is invested in completing their education. Moreover, gaming funds have been used to build traditional structures, such as sweat lodges (R. Smith, personal communication, July 26, 2017). Thus, the funds from casinos not only make Pala Band a powerful economic force locally, they also allow for cultural revitalization.

Wyandotte Nation

Lacking a land base, the Wyandotte Nation has forged its own economic path by forming a corporation, the Wyandotte Tribe of Oklahoma (WTOK) to handle economic development and sharing the fruits of its labor with the local community. The tribe owns three casinos, in addition to enterprises in the food and entertainment industry. The Wyandotte provide considerable revenue to the state through casinos and taxes. Moreover, when the town could no longer afford a local police force, the tribe took on this responsibility- their police department serves both the town of Wyandotte as well as the Wyandotte Nation. Through Wyandotte enterprises, the tribe has been able to provide health care funds for every member each year, scholarships for all who attend college, and funds toward masters’ degrees as well (Chief Friend, personal communication, June 13, 2018; Wyandotte Nation website).

The Wyandotte Nation proactively promotes culture and education, such as through an innovative internship program students gain experience in Wyandotte enterprises. Moreover, the students are given an orientation to the Wyandotte culture, which includes traveling to important historic sites to learn about their ancestors (Chief Friend, personal communication, June 13, 2018). In fact, according to the Wyandotte’s website, WTOK developed “Wyandotte YOUiversity’s Leadership Development Program” a 4-year program to develop leadership skills that was awarded a bronze achievement medal in August 2020 by the Brandon Hall Group.

The examples above show how Native Nations are forging their own paths, seeking to modernize in ways that often incorporate tribal values. The circumstances that each Native Nation faces are influenced by a long history of depredations and problematic federal policies that have sought to forcibly incorporate the Indigenous into mainstream society. As it became clear that neither trying to force Native Nations to remain on reservations or force them to assimilate into mainstream society were successful, Congress, in coordination with a small group of Alaska Native leaders, attempted a profoundly different system in Alaska. Below, the article explores the unique circumstances in Alaska that have influenced Native Nation adaptation.

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)

Alaska's history and its late entry to the United States has meant different paths for Alaska Natives than the Indigenous peoples in the lower 48 states. Alaska's system is unique in that Alaskan Native land claims were settled by the formation of native corporations mandated by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, an experiment that remains controversial. One reason for this is the corporate, for-profit culture, which necessitates responsiveness to shareholders, many of whom no longer reside in the community which the corporation purports to serve (Blatchford, 2013). Tribes who chose to participate in ANCSA, which the vast majority of Alaskan tribes did, renounced claims to land and were required to form regional and village corporations to manage the land and economic activities (Dombrowski, 2007). Only Alaskan Natives born by December 18, 1971, received shares in the corporations. The corporations gained title to 45.5 million acres of land and the gradual transfer of \$962.5 million. In exchange, Alaskan Natives gave up claims on 360 million acres of land—all of Alaska (Chaffee, 2008; Blatchford, 2013). ANCSA has shaped the Alaska Native experience in many ways, including making recognition of sovereignty and the very existence of tribes in Alaska a contested issue, demonstrated by varying legal opinions and decrees from Alaskan governors over the years. In 1988 the state Supreme Court Alaska ruled that tribes do not exist in Alaska; it held that Stevens Village, "like most native groups in Alaska, is not self-governing or in any meaningful sense sovereign... there are not now and never have been tribes of Indians in Alaska as that term is used in federal Indian law" (*Native Village of Stevens v. AMP* 2d 32, Alaska 1988). Subsequent orders from the governor's office did little to clarify the situation, such as Governor Steve Cowper's vague acknowledgment that "We contend that many Native Alaskan groups could qualify for tribal recognition under federal law, although some would not" (Cowper, 1990, para. 3). Governor Walter Hickel argued that recognition was incompatible with the policy "that Alaska is one country, one people. The state of Alaska opposes expansion of tribal governmental powers and the creation of 'Indian Country' in Alaska" (Hickel, 1991). In 2000, Governor Tony Knowles pointed out that "Tribes existed in Alaska before the formation of the United States and the State of Alaska. The existence of tribes in Alaska, and their inherent sovereignty, has been recognized by all three branches of the federal government" (Knowles, 2000, para. 3). It was not until 2017 that Alaska State Attorney General Lindemuth issued a definitive opinion; she elucidates that tribes have always existed and have the full recognition of all level of the U.S. government "The law is clear. There are 229 Alaska Tribes and they are separate sovereigns with inherent sovereignty and subject matter jurisdiction over certain matters" (Lindemuth, 2017, p. 16). Lindemuth's opinion is a milestone for Native Nations in Alaska in terms of legal recognition that may help tribes struggling for political power and resources (R. Peterson, personal communication, February 23, 2018). The fact that the very existence of tribes in Alaska was still in question in 2017 is emblematic of the struggle of Native Nations in Alaska. Some Native Nations have thrived in conjunction with Alaska Native corporations; others have thrived despite them.

Cook Inlet Region

Greg Razo, a lawyer and Vice President for the Government Contracting for the Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), an Alaska Native Corporation, opines that federal Indian policy toward Alaska has created “some amazing institutions” (G. Razo, personal communication, July 6, 2017). Many of these institutions have generated resources used to benefit Native Nation members and promote cultural preservation. For instance, CIRI is a hugely profitable corporation; CIRI’s website points out that as of 2013, CIRI has distributed over \$1 billion to shareholders, more than the total awarded to all corporations in Alaska with the ANCSA settlement, \$962.5 million. In 2003, CIRI set up an Elders’ Trust, which confers \$450 per quarter to elders deemed eligible as long as trust money remains. The CIRI Foundation, according to their website, has given away over \$30 million in grants and scholarships to further Alaska Native education.

Razo notes that ANCSA did, in effect, stop the development of tribes in many ways and take away their source of revenue by giving corporations the land. Rick Harrison, Co-Chairman of the of the Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, explains that from his perspective, corporations have diminished the status of tribes by taking away their traditional land base and creating a divide between those born before 1971 and those born after 1971 (the “after-borns”) that were not part of the ANCSA settlement. In his view, some corporations do not “play well with the tribes” (R. Harrison, personal communication, July 27, 2017). Despite this tension, the Chickaloon Village has found ways to bridge some of the gaps they encounter such as by finding funding, and working with one of the CIRI non-profits, to establish a clinic that is open not only to tribal members but also the community around them. Moreover, the Chickaloon Nation has established a tribal court, an Elder’s Council as a local dispute mechanism, and a peace officer program to provide tribal policing, allowing for the insertion of culturally appropriate resolutions to conflicts. The tribe negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the state court so that when possible the tribe is given an opportunity to be part of the sentencing, a relatively unusual relationship with state courts. Their tribe has also established a school that is open to non-native children, one of the few tribal schools that goes all the way from kindergarten to twelfth grade (R. Harrison, personal communication, July 27, 2017). The Ya Ne Dah Ah School “Ancient Teachings School” was singled out for an award by Harvard Project in 2002 (Venegas 2005).

Southeastern Alaska

The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) is the tribal governing council located in southeastern Alaska. CCTHITA is not affiliated with the Alaska Native Corporation of the area, Sealaska Corporation, but it does collaborate with it on economic and cultural initiatives to benefit Alaska Natives in the region. In a phone interview, the President of the CCTHITA, Richard Peterson, notes that tribes in Alaska have empowered themselves in a struggle has been shaped in many ways by ANCSA. President Peterson explained that the council’s structure was modeled after Western constructs, with cultural adaptations over time (R. Peterson, personal communication, February 2018). CCTHITA has developed a legal system based on traditional values and norms. Moreover, CCTHITA has its own enterprises through the Tlingit-Haida Tribal Business Corporation (THTBC). Through THTBC, CCTHITA acquired KIRA, a Colorado-based federal contracting firm that has administered over one billion dollars’ worth of government contracts; President Peterson described KIRA as “a major force in government contracting. KIRA is the vehicle the tribe needs to generate unrestricted revenue to eventually give us the ability to expand service to our tribal citizens regardless of service area” (Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska [CCTHITA], 2018, para 2). In other words, these resources facilitate the

provision of services for its geographically dispersed population. CCTHITA is striving for “economic sovereignty” (Schoenfeld, 2017, para. 2), which in turn allows for greater cultural salience, such as the construction of a cultural immersion park in Juneau Alaska (R. Peterson, personal communication, February 23, 2018).

Metlakatla

The Metlakatla Indian Community resides on the Annette Islands Reserve and provides a different perspective on the impact of ANCSA and how it has shaped Native Nations’ ability to forge their own destiny. The people of Metlakatla opted out of ANCSA; their territory is more akin to reservations in the lower 48 than the situation of the majority of Alaska Natives. Respondents in Metlakatla took clear pride in the choice their community made to not join the ANCSA settlement and become the only reserve in Alaska. Gavin Hudson, a member of the tribal council, asserts that this path was chosen in order “to maintain sovereignty over our land, water, and people. We determine our future. No amount of money can compensate us for those things, which are priceless” (G. Hudson, personal communication, June 13, 2017). A long-serving tribal council member explained that, by declining to join ANCSA, those in Metlakatla did not “extinguish our right to subsist or our sovereignty,” whereas tribes who are part of ANCSA have to fight for sovereign rights (Anonymous, personal communication, June 12, 2017). Metlakatlans operate the “largest tribally-managed fishery in the United States” (Department of Fish and Wildlife Metlakatla Indian Community, 2017, p. 9). The wealth of their salmon hatchery is shared on feast days when possible, with food provided for the whole community (G. Hudson, personal communication, June 13, 2017). Metlakatlans forge their own path on an island, geographically isolated but increasingly connected to the world through commerce and the Internet.

It is fascinating to note that among those interviewed, those in Metlakatla were passionate about the benefits of not partaking in ANCSA, while many of those interviewed on the mainland appear to feel just as strongly that ANCSA had allowed them to pursue sovereign development (G. Razo, personal communication, July 6, 2017, R. Worl, personal communication June 15, 2017). It is somewhat ironic that leaders Alaska’s only reserve sees itself as a better alternative to the system set up to avoid historical issues of reservations in the lower 48. Of course, it’s important to bear in mind that Metlakatla has a unique historical path, and it cannot be easily compared either to reservations in the lower 48 or the situation of Native Nations in Alaska. Outcomes have been shaped by unique circumstances as well as the choices leaders have made.

Policy and Culture

Federal policies that affect Native Nations have contributed to what one respondent characterized as a pendulum-relationship, as policies and relations swing back and forth over time (A. Crotty, personal communication, April 17, 2018). These changing policies have often made traditional practices more challenging. For example, in 1871, the young United States ended the policy of making treaties with Native Nations and began policies that encouraged assimilation, dislocation, and termination of Native Nation tribes before swerving into an era self-governance and self-determination, later tempered by the forced federalism wrought by IGRA (Corntassel & Witmer, 2008). Under the Trump administration, there have been numerous obstacles. Many positions at the BIA have gone unfilled or only briefly occupied, creating obstacles for Native Nations seeking to work with the BIA on projects and goals, such as converting land to trust (R. Peterson, personal communication, February 23, 2018).

Moreover, a former Trump-appointed Bureau of American Indian Affairs official, Gavin Clarkson, lectured tribal delegates at the Tribal Interior Budget Council meeting in 2017 on how privileges, such as the subsistence rights considered essential by Native Nations, constitute special privileges and added that special considerations are racist (G. Clarkson, personal communication, July 27, 2017). It is this very notion, that achieving equality means that Native Americans and Alaska Natives be denied the right to exclusive practices such as hunting and fishing on their lands, which jeopardizes their ability to live a traditional life. These rights are not “equal” in the sense that they are not the same rights as everyone else- for instance, giving everyone the same rights to traditional Indigenous hunting grounds means that Indigenous inhabitants have to compete with the larger populace of residents and tourists. Respecting cultural norms and ancestral lands is not a matter of seeking equality, but gaining or preserving certain traditional ways of life. This cannot be achieved by seeking to make everyone the same, but rather by recognizing difference.

In 2017, the Alaska Governor’s office reached an agreement with 17 Native Nations allowing them to begin the process of taking over child protection services. The Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact, put into force in 2017, gradually transfers much of responsibility for child welfare to 18 Native Nations in Alaska with the possibility of tribes eventually assuming control of all of the child welfare services. The compact recognizes the capacity of Native Nations to handle child welfare situations, reduces the workload for the Office of Child Services, and results in better, more culturally appropriate outcomes for Indigenous children (Alaska Tribal Child Welfare Compact, 2017, p. 2). This agreement is unprecedented in the United States; the vice president of the Alaska Federation of Natives noted that it will “change the trajectory of our future” (Borromeo quoted in Tiano, 2018); in other words, this is a transformative agreement likely to lead to more such accords. Transitioning duties to Native Nations fosters better relations and likely more efficient services (Cornell & Kalt, 2003). Such accords are essential in enabling Native Nations to follow their own cultural norms and practices while increasing the likelihood that Indigenous children can remain in their communities. This act is not without controversy; when challenged in court a U.S. District has ruled that the law is based on race and therefore parts of it are unconstitutional (Kelly 2018). Nonetheless, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the constitutionality of the ICWA in its 2019 ruling deciding *Brackeen v. Bernhardt*.

Conclusions

In spite of the obstacles of state and federal policies, Native Nations today are asserting their culture and political power, often modifying governance structures to combine elements of Western and traditional Native American systems. As Cornell and Jorgensen (2020, p. 13) point out, Indigenous Peoples are involved in “nation rebuilding, a return to the tradition of collective self-government that sustained those peoples for many generations before European arrival on the North American continent, revitalized and revamped to serve Indigenous purposes in today’s very different circumstances.” Moreover, Native Nations are transforming their positions vis-à-vis colonizing powers through economic sovereignty (Schoenfeld, 2017). Economic power is not just coming from gaming and Alaska Native corporations; while both are sources of increased economic and political power, a subtler and less studied force is that of Native Nation leaders as entrepreneurs and chief financial officers of their economic resources through a diverse array of economic initiatives.

While this article seeks to highlight the positive developments of Native Nations in the United States, it cannot be denied that modernization has been historically forced upon Native Nations,

and that if colonization had not taken place, their paths would have likely been completely different (Johnson 2010). One can question whether or not purposeful modernization is possible in this historical context. This article argues that within the context of a history of exploitation and dominance, creative adaptation leads to intentional development, allowing some Native Nations to change in the way they see fit, implementing cultural practices in their own way. Native Nations have overcome tremendous obstacles to continue to care for their communities and self-govern. Sovereignty has many meanings; it is not merely the ability to govern without interference from other government entities but rather to operate in one's interests with the constraints imposed by other powers in a continual give and take. Sovereignty is the right of Native Nations to express their own distinct cultures and traditions in the way that they choose. It is part of the way Native Nations continue to reinvent themselves, forming new institutions that reflect an evolving culture that remembers the past while adapting and innovating for the future.

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**The Influence of National Cultural Attributes on Locally Produced
Designs: Case Study of Malaysian Design**

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of national cultural attributes on locally produced designs (i.e. comics, animation, commercial advertisements, printed materials and graphics). Drawing from the inconsistent results of past literature on influences of national cultural attributes on design; it is considered an under-researched area of the important role of cultural values on designs, specifically in the Malaysia context, in which cultural differences among different ethnic groups exist. Because of the paucity of research in this area, this study adopted a quantitative research approach with results derived from the content-analysis of 18 Malaysian designs using a visual preference survey by six experts from the design industry in Malaysia. This study incorporates two stages of sample screenings of a visual preference survey with brief interviews; results show that Malaysian designs need to adhere strictly to requirements and specifications set by the Malaysian authorities; incorporation of Islamic values and code of conduct to reflect the racial harmony and national ideology; and some unique characteristics of the respective ethnic groups in Malaysia were not upheld, thus, they gradually disappeared and/or were blended in the designs. The results and discussion from this study extend the literature on Malaysian design and provide practical implications on how local design industries could produce designs which abide by the boundaries of a Malaysian pluralistic society.

Keywords: national cultural attributes, Malaysian design, multicultural society

Introduction

Malaysia is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-cultural society (Haji Ishak, 2010) which consist of various groups of ethnicities such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, Kadazan, Iban, and Baba Nyonya for example. In 2020, it had an estimated population of 32.73 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). A moderate Islamic country, 67.4% of the population are “Bumiputera”, known as indigenous group (Malays and aboriginals), 24.6% of them are Chinese, 7.3% of them are Indians and 0.7% of them are of other ethnicities (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). In 1971, the Malaysian government defined the Malaysian culture through the formulation of a National Culture Policy, which has been serving as guidelines for designing, formulating and sustaining a common national identity. The three principles of the national culture are: it must be based on the indigenous culture of this region; suitable elements from other cultures may be accepted as part of the national culture; and Islam is an important component in the formulation of the national culture (National Department for Culture and Arts, 2020).

Culture, a social construct is part of the human development and it contributes to the expansion of identity of individual and a group of people through cultural traits (Mohd Khalis and Mustaffa, 2017). Very few studies have researched this topic within a Malaysian context. Even these studies come to varying results. Thus, one study claims that cultural values do exert an influence on design, as proven by a systematic review of 15 years of research related to culture and website design. This research supported the thesis of a localisation of cultural values and cultural markers on website design. Moura, Singh and Chun (2016) concluded that the role of culture, in particular cultural values of countries, continues to be an important factor reflected on website designs. Tong and Robertson (2008) scrutinised a power distance culture, namely the Malaysian one, analysing language, layout, colour, pattern and images of existing Malaysian websites and found that it is not easy for designers to develop a sophisticated understanding of the culturally sensitive visual interface design for websites. The study concluded that the lack of supporting guidelines and the differences in representation of a multi-cultural society like the Malaysian one has made it more difficult for designers to identify an appropriate model for website design (Tong and Robertson, 2008). On the other hand, one study claimed that there is no evidence of the generalisability of characteristics of product design identity and the agreement and preference of a multi-ethnic society (Zainal Abidin et al. 2015). Another report revealed that visual images and symbols in locally produced designs might give the markets an impression of Malaysia as being increasingly conservative and religious, worrying at least some (Cheong and Fernandez, 2014). Hence, due to the limited studies on the influences of national attributes and cultural values on designs, this is considered an under-researched area, specifically in the Malaysia context.

In addition, Malaysian designers are using innovative processes and creative flair for their designs while working within the constraints of cost, time, and close deadlines. The designers are also facing challenges of creating designs which take into consideration religious sensitivity and abide by policies set by relevant authorities in Malaysia. Due to these constraints faced by Malaysian local designers, it has been a challenging issue for them to create a Malaysia-look design based on characteristics of Malaysia national culture. This study sets out to address this under-researched area by examining the extent of influence of national cultural attributes on locally produced designs (i.e. comics, animation, commercial advertisements, printed materials and graphics). The results of this quantitative content-analysis (18 Malaysian designs, reviewed by six design experts within in Malaysia) will contribute to the literature on Malaysian design,

and provide additional insight and understanding as to how the local design industries could act within the boundaries of a pluralistic society such as Malaysia.

Literature Review

Elements of Design

A design element has a basic symbolic equivalence which carries the designs meanings, this could for example include points, lines and area. For instance, a triangle, visually can be seen as three dots, or three lines joined together, or it could carry the areas (triangle in blue). When the size or shape or colour of a design changes, it carries a different concept and explanation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Basic Design Means



The classification of design elements can be from nature, such as clouds, lightning, the ocean, flowers, people, and animals; from man-made items, such as a factory, buildings, equipment and transportation vehicles; from the arts, including dance, cartoons, paintings, sculptures, patterns and photographs; or from our daily lives, using all kinds of daily necessities such as electrical appliances, toys, stationery and furniture. The elements of design serve as a strong visual expression and have an inherent impact on the construction or reconstruction of dots, lines or areas and divisions, alongside the arrangement, layout and colour (Landa 2005; White 2011).

Graphic design characteristics and its attributes such as colours, photography images, illustration, typography, size and materials may enhance the product recognition and often lead to consumer actions in purchasing a product (Abdul Rahman, Bidin and Lim 2017). Past studies revealed colours, photographic images and technology, illustrations, typography, size and shape, materials, orientation of the design and image, as well as ratios from the principles of art and design are among the design attributes that convey meaning and also drive purchasing behaviour (Silayoi and Speece 2007; Aday and Yener 2010; Clement and Kristensen 2013; Adam and Ali 2014). In particular, visual attributes on any package design act as a visual communication which “produce different meanings to a certain culture, age, gender, special promotions and others” (Abdul Rahman, Bidin and Lim 2017, p. 145).

Design also plays a crucial role in understanding cultural practices. Therefore, it is important that designers should know the technical part of design such as the elements and characteristic in creating comics, animation, commercial advertisements, printed materials or graphics; one of the essential factors is to understand the matter from within the culture of Malaysian society.

Malaysian Culture and Design

Culture is equivalent to a nation’s “soul” or “spirit” and can be displayed in the forms of arts, literature, tradition, belief and lifestyle. Culture is a cultivated behaviour which comprises of distinct spiritual, emotional and intellectual patterns, or it is the way of life that is followed by a certain group of people. According to Idilfitri (2016), culture is intangible and discovered

only when the meaning of culture is practiced by insiders through symbols, pictures, objects, words, or gestures. Scholars have identified five basic characteristics of culture: learned, shared, based on symbols, integrated and dynamic (O'Neil 2007; Bueno 2012). First of all, culture is not genetically inherited but it is learned subconsciously from families, peers, institutions and mass media through the process of enculturation. Secondly, culture is shared between members of a group. Thirdly, culture is based on symbols which have meaning when people in a culture agree on their usage. For example, language is a symbolic component of a culture. Fourthly, all aspects of culture are related to one another because culture is interconnected, hence, culture is integrated. Lastly, culture is not constant and if one component in a culture changes, it is likely that the entire culture will change, therefore, proving its dynamism.

Malaysia is practicing multiculturalism, which is defined as “a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognises and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organisation or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organisation or society” (Rosado 1997, p. 3). As a moderate Islamic society since its independence in 1957; most Malays are Muslims while other ethnic groups such as Chinese and Indians have the freedom to choose their religion and have the right to practice their culture. Due to the preponderance of Malays in the country, Islam is central to and dominant in the Malay culture. To discuss a religion or ethnic group with design, for example, Islam forbids the use of animal imagery in decorations, especially creatures that have been forbidden or proscribed by the Islamic law such as pigs and dogs. The acceptable decorative imageries for Malays are flowers, leaves, geometric patterns, “Quranic” scripture, as well as the crescent moon, which is a traditional symbol of Islam also found on the Malaysia national flag (Siek and Chen 2012). In addition, the symbol of “ketupat” (glutinous rice) is based on a plaited diamond shaped rice dumpling which uses coconut leaves and is also commonly seen in Malay graphic print. Oil lamps, which are known as “pelita” or “panjuti”, are also an example of Malay design in which oil lamps are lit during the days before the “Hari Raya” celebration to attract spirits and angels to descend and bring blessings to Malay homes.

The Chinese and Indians are Malaysia's other two ethnic groups. Chinese are the second largest population in Malaysia, after the Malays. The majority of Chinese people practice Buddhism; other religions such as Confucianism and Taoism are also practiced. They prefer images or shapes that symbolise wealth and good fortune, such as the dragon and phoenix. The dragon symbolises the son of heaven, ultimate abundance, prosperity, and good fortune, and it is also a symbol for the Chinese emperor. The phoenix, on the other hand, symbolises the empress, represents strength and is considered the most important of the winged animals. Another symbol which is relevant to Chinese culture and design is the golden pineapple, which symbolises gambling luck (Giacchino-Baker 1996; Siek and Chen 2013). Lastly, Indians are the third largest ethnic population within Malaysia, and they are known for their fascination with bright hues. They tend to use peacocks, a national animal of India, as well as swans, lotus flowers, mangoes, mango leaves and sun rays as patterns in their drawings, greeting cards, and fabrics.

National Culture Policies and Design

The National Culture Policy (1971) serves as a guideline in designing, formulating and sustaining the national identity of Malaysia. For example, on 16 September 2010, the “1 Malaysia” campaign had the goal of preserving and enhancing the unity of the nation and highlighted ethnic tolerance with guidelines stating that national culture must be based on the

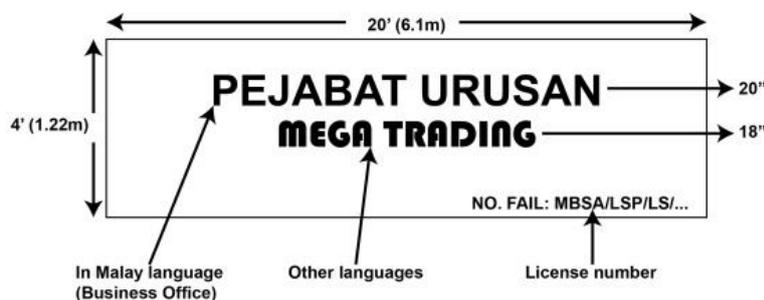
indigenous or Malay culture, although suitable elements from other cultures may be accepted as part of the national culture (Latif et al. 2012). The authors further claimed that Islam is treated as a key component in moulding the national culture of Malaysia (Latif et al. 2012). Given the unique Malaysian aspect of a mixture of religions in an Islamic country, the government promotes Islam above all other religions (Razali and Hands 2017).

The Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1984 (PPPA) is another policy which also has had an influence on Malaysian designs. This Act governs the use of printing presses, as well as printing, importation, production, reproduction, publishing, and distribution of publications in Malaysia (as according to PPPA Act 301 section 3(1): 7). Under the PPPA, the Ministry of Home Affairs Malaysia monitors all publications which include articles, notes, report, writing, statement, sound, music, caricatures, and photographs. The Minister reserves an absolute discretion for him/herself in granting or revoking printing licenses, restricting or outright banning publications that are likely to endanger the national security interest or those which could create social unrest. All content and service providers are responsible for ensuring their content development, production, commercial messages, and news production follow this Act. All printing presses such as printing, importing, selling, circulating and distribution that offer to do any of these things require a license which must be granted and renewed on an annual basis. Failure to apply for a license may result in a jail sentence of up to three years and fines up to MYR20,000 (US\$4,906) (as according to PPPA Act 301, section 5(1): 9).

When the Internet and social media became popular, in 2001 an industrial self-regulatory association known as the Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia (CMCF) was set up to regulate the electronic content in Malaysia, including broadcasting, mobile, and Internet. The association enforces the “content code” to ensure that digital content reflects the national interest. It supports the national policy objectives set out in the Communication and Multimedia Act (1998). If the content breaks the provisions of the “content code”, a fine not exceeding MYR50,000 (US\$12,265) will be imposed, and/or the offending party will be asked to remove the content or cease offering the content (as according to CMA’98, DA’57 Revised’83). A local council in Malaysia, for example, Kuala Lumpur City Hall, known as DBKL, enforces the laws and terms of licenses issued by the Licensing and Petty Traders Development Department for creative activities and business community. The local council by-laws stipulate that the national language, Malay language, must be used for all public signboards but other languages are permitted if they are not as noticeable (Ariffin, Husin and Melaka 2013). Under the by-law 5(1), the display of words and texts on a signboard or banner must be either in the Malay language (national language) by itself, or together with other languages. The letters of the words of a signage in the Malay language must be given priority and have a larger size than other languages (see example of Malaysia signage in Figure 2).

Figure 2

A Sample of Visual Advertising Signage by DBKL



(Adopted from: Guidelines sample from City Hall)

Therefore, the national culture policies such as the National Culture Policy (1971), the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1984 (PPPA) as well as guidelines from the Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia (CMCF) in 2001, the Licensing and Petty Traders Development and the by-law 5(1) by local councils greatly influence local designs. Malaysian designers have begun to explore their indigenous identity and incorporated local culture and tradition into design work as the way forward in creating an identity for Malaysian designs (*The Star Online*, 11, September, 2017). “Integrating these traditional design elements into contemporary design is seen as an approach towards sustaining the nation’s heritage values as *genius loci*” (Shuaib and Enoch 2014: 59).

Identification of Malaysian National Culture Attributes

The development of Malaysian national culture comprises three key principles (Suhaili et al. 2019: 408): “archipelago cultures are the core of national culture, while the second principle includes other appropriate and reasonably acceptable cultures through a continuous assimilation and adaptation process. In the third principle, Islam is considered an important element in the national religious culture”. Malaysia is a multi-ethnics nation encourages a multitude of cultures to coexist in the country. “The three ethnic groups in Malaysia – Malay, Chinese and Indian, are ‘treated pluralistically by the government, and each ethnic group has been able to retain its cultural identity through the maintenance of individual languages, religions and traditions” (Tong and Robertson 2008: 1). As shown in Figure 3a, the three congruent circles representing the three ethnic groups, are intersecting each other, characterise the interaction among the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The interaction and integration processes between these multicultural groups in Malaysia have been ongoing since before Malaysia gained its independence in 1957 through both daily interactions and government policies and as a result “the diverse cultures in Malaysian society have been preserved, making Malaysia a nation rich with a variety of cultures” (Suhaili et al. 2019: 408-409).

On another note, the Malaysian national culture has layers and attributes that are identified and categorised into four levels: (1) individual attribution, (2) cultural attribution, (3) social attribution, and (4) national attribution. Figure 3b shows that the basis of the Malaysian national culture lies in the national attribution, followed by social, cultural and lastly individual attribution. In order to achieve national unity, it is crucial for the nation to engage as a united and progressive unit through the policies and initiatives to achieve unity, integrity, and social cohesion among its citizens. The following discussion of the four categories of national culture attributes (see Figure 3b) was adopted from past literature (Nuechterlein 1979; Trowler 1988; Liao 2007).

1. Individual attribution – self-esteem and appearance/image.
2. Cultural attribution – language, custom, religions, ethnicity and values.
3. Social attribution – manipulation, hegemony and pluralist.
4. National attribution – defence of interest, moral values, and national order.

Figure 3a

The Structure of the Three Main Ethnic Groups in Malaysia

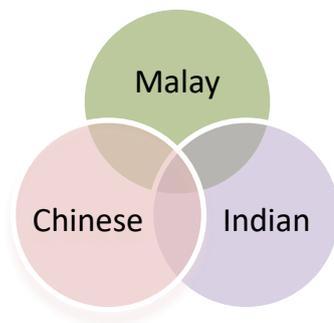
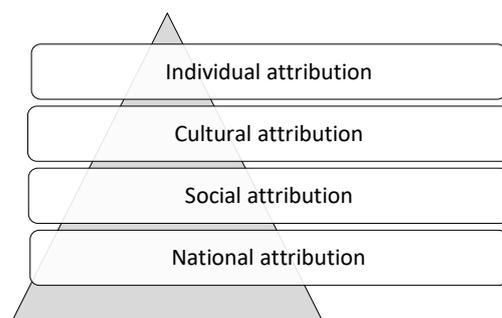


Figure 3b

Attribution Consists of Four levels: Individual, Cultural, Social, and National



1. **Individual attribution:** Individual attribution relates to individual's personal traits. This attribute is defined in two parts: (1) self-esteem: the feeling of having respect for oneself and confidence in one's ability; and (2) appearance: the ability to present oneself freely in public.
2. **Cultural attribution:** Culture is the way of life of a group of people. Language, customs/norms, beliefs, races, and values are all part of culture. Language refers to the preferred text, customs/norms, and religions that bear relevance or similarity between ethnic groups. For example, Malays and Indians use their right hand to eat mixed rice while Hindus and Taoists avoid the consumption of beef. Race refers to the ethnic groups in the country, whereby intermarriage between people of different races groups are considered "mixed" culture. Values refer to one's judgement of what is important in terms of self-significance, family, or good moral values.
3. **Social attribution:** It is based on three theoretical models of media bias, which are the Manipulation model, Hegemonic model and Pluralist model (Trowler 1988). The Manipulation model refers to media as being co-manipulated by capitalists, wealthy, powerful social classes, and the government. The Hegemonic model refers to unintentionally adopted ideology which is being manipulated by social players, and

results in the populace being dominated. The Pluralist model indicates that power is distributed among many groups which allows one to self-determination.

4. National attribution: Based on the study of the classification of Nuechterlein (1979), national interests are classified as survival interest, vital interest, major interest and peripheral interest. Other scholars have further concluded that the classification of Nuechterlein's survival interest is similar to a defensive interest, which comprises of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national defence, and ethnic status. Vital interest encompasses interests involving the economy and trading, which include national image, foreign trade, industrial raw materials and energy. Major interest and peripheral interest can be seen in the World Order as exchange programmes, financial assistance, investment, sports activities, and cultural activities (Liao 2007).

Research Questions

Drawing on this literature, the two research questions (RQ) guiding this study are:

RQ1: What are the key elements in the design produced by local designers in Malaysia?

RQ2: How do Malaysian national cultural attributes influence locally produced design?

Methodology

Research Approach and Procedure

The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of Malaysian national cultural attributes on locally produced designs. A quantitative research approach was adopted with data collected through quantitative content analysis of a final 18 sampled designs by six experts who have a range of 5 to 22 years of working experience in the Malaysian design industry. A content analysis was carried out to identify the message characteristics embedded in the design samples that represent Malaysian national culture through sample screening based on a visual preference survey (Lindkvist 1981; Tesch 1990). A total of 120 design samples were randomly collected from magazines, newspapers, social media, product branding advertisements, recruitment advertisements, greeting advertisements, fashion, comics, cartoons, animations, symbols, and business signages, all produced during 2014 (see Appendix 1). These designs were locally produced and varied in different categories of design, in which some are still in use at the time of the writing of this paper. The selected samples are divided into four categories: commercial advertisements; symbol and signage design; textile and fabric design; as well as cartoons, animations and comics.

Through the filtration of samples by the industry experts, two stages of sample screenings were carried out. In the first stage, the 120 design samples were pinned onto six pieces of A2-sized soft form board with each soft form board carrying 20 designs. Through this process, 53 samples were filtered out, based on a visual preference survey, aimed at gauging the opinions of the experts in selecting the designs which contain elements of Malaysian national culture. Each expert was individually asked to rate the sample based on the representation of cultural imagery of Malaysia in the design and only designs that received >50% of the votes were retained. At the end of the first stage, 67 designs were selected to undergo the second stage screening. In the second stage, 49 out of 67 samples were filtered out through a rating selection, using a five-point Likert scale, on the level of representation of Malaysian cultural imagery. Only samples with a mean score of 3.5 and above were retained as the final samples for the

content analysis; therefore, after the second stage of screening, the final sample for the content analysis became 18.

Data Analysis

The quantitative content analysis of these 18 local design samples was carried out with six Malaysian design industry experts in Malaysia together with one of the authors of this paper. These industry experts were: (A) an Art Director in an advertising agency, (B) the Head of Department and Lecturer for the visual communications programme in a private college, (C) a comic artist, (D) a graphic designer, (E) a Programme Leader and Lecturer for the design communications programme in a private university, and (F) a Lecturer for a design communications programme in a private university. The experts were comprised of three Chinese, two Malays and one of mixed parentage (Indian and Chinese). Table 1 reveals the background information of the six industry experts.

Table 1
Backgrounds of Six Industry Experts

Industry Experts	Years of working experience in the Design field	Design Profession and Nationality
A	19	Art Director, in charge of above-the-line advertisements and handling a medium size design studio (Chinese)
B	17	Head of Department for graphic design in a private higher educational institution (Chinese)
C	17	Full time comic and animation artist (Chinese)
D	22	Senior graphic designer in a design studio (mixed parentage of Indian and Chinese)
E	18	Programme Leader for graphic design in a private higher educational institution (Malay)
F	5	Lecturer for graphic design in a private higher education institution (Malay)

Development of Coding Scheme

A coding scheme was developed to identify the four categories of attributions of Malaysian national culture. The aim of the coding scheme was to comb the data for themes, ideas and categories, as well as to mark similar passages of text with code labels for easy retrieval at a later stage for further comparison and analysis. The scale measurements for the coding scheme are mainly grouped under “yes” or “no”. The numerical code “0” was assigned if there were no or inconspicuous attributes of the specific description of the local designs, and “1” was assigned if the answer was “yes”. Coding was applicable to the three categories – individual, social and national attributions. Under the cultural attribution, the customs/norms and religions were coded as yes/no, except language, race and values. For language, the numerical code “0” is assigned if there is no language involved, “1” is Malay; “2” is English; “3” is Chinese; and “4” is mixed languages. For races: “1” is Malay; “2” is Chinese; “3” is Indian; “4” is others; and “5” is mixed races. For values: “0” is assigned if there is no significant value; “1” is presenting good moral values; “2” is having the same value towards family; “3” is having the

same value towards self-significance, and self-worth; and “4” is toward other values. See Table 2 for the coding scheme.

Table 2
Coding Scheme

Category	Categorical variables	Scale Measurement	Description
Individual attribution	self esteem	1 = Yes	Confidence, achievement, respected by others, respects others
		0 = No	Lack of confidence, not respected by others
	appearance	1 = Yes	Able to present oneself freely in appearance
		0 = No	Not able to present oneself freely in appearance
Cultural attribution	languages	1 = Malay	Malay preferred for text
		2 = English	Free to use other languages to present text, prefers English
		3 = Chinese	Free to use other languages to present text, prefers Chinese
		4 = Mix	Free to mix languages
		0 = No	No languages involved
	customs/ norms	1=Yes	Present customs that are relevant or similar to other ethnic group
		0 = No	No relevant custom
	religions	1=Yes	Present in relevant or similar religion with other races
		0 = No	Not present with religion
	races	1 = Malay	Particular about whether one is the same ethnicity: Malay
		2 = Chinese	Particular about whether one is the same ethnicity: Chinese
		3 = Indian	Particular about whether one is the same ethnicity: Indian
		4 = Other	Identified and grouped as non-Malay, non-Chinese, or non-Indian
5 = Mixed		Mixed races/parentage	
values	1 = moral value	Present good moral values	
	2= family value	Having the same value towards family	
	3= self-value	Having the same value towards self-significance, self-worth	
	4 = other value	Toward other values	

		0 = No	No significant values
Social attribution	manipulation model	1=Yes	Controlled by wealthy and powerful social class
		0 = No	No significant values
	hegemony model	1=Yes	Unintentionally adopted the ideology or was being manipulated by social players and being dominated.
		0 = No	No significant values
pluralist model	1= Yes	Self determination	
	0 = No	No personal voice, personal opinion not heard by society	
National attribution	defence of nation interest	1=Yes	Defends against potential sub-cultures from foreign institutions
		0 = No	No personal vice or opinion
	moral values	1=Yes	Benefits and protects the Malaysian public
		0 = No	No significant values
	national order	1=Yes	Establishes a peaceful national system, without resorting to conflict
		0 = No	Unrestricted

Composite Reliability Test (reliability test among experts' selection for the content analysis)

To identify the relationship between the four categories of local designs, a composite reliability analysis was conducted. The aim of the coding was to comb the data for themes, ideas, and categories; similar passages of text were marked with a code label for easy retrieval at a later stage for further comparison and analysis. One author coded the direction of treatment of the symbolic meaning contained in the visual data of the samples by identifying relationships between the categories (Holsti 1969), exploring the properties and dimensions of categories, and uncovering patterns and testing against all the sample designs (Bradley 1993). In addition to the author, two informants were recruited as independent coders to analyse the 18 sample designs. A total of three coders agreed to independently code the sample and to check the inter-coder agreement following the formula by Holsti (1969) as stated below:

Reliability: $2M / (N1 + N2)$, where M is the number of coding decisions in which two coders agree about.

N1 & N2 are the total number of judgments made by both coders. $Reliability = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$

Whereas the Composite Reliability (CR) is: $CR = \frac{N \times (average.reliability)}{1 + [(N - 1) \times average.reliability]}$

The results of composite reliability would show the consistency with which the three coders agreed on the symbolic meaning contained in the visual data of the samples; CR is related to the properties of its components, but is also affected by weighting, and the extent to which the components themselves are correlated with each other. A high composite reliability is indicated by a value of ≥ 0.90 , whereby the data is considered to be relatively reliable due to the lack of errors. However, a low composite reliability that corresponds to values of ≤ 0.50 would indicate that the scheme is not acceptable, and the coding scheme needs to be revised. Wimmer and

Dominick (1983) suggested that if the reliability coefficient of the content analysis reaches 0.9, then it fulfils the minimum requirement. Kassajian (1997) indicated that a value of 0.85 is acceptable. The dependability of the research findings in this paper was established by the transparent coding process, and whenever the percentage of agreement did not reach 0.85, the coding scheme was revised (Schamber 2000).

Results and Analysis

The analysis was based on the 18 samples that were said to be designs representative of Malaysian national culture. These samples were recruitment advertisements in newspapers, commercial advertisements in magazines, urban roadway billboards, business signage in business districts, signage along the motor highways and office buildings, textile and fabric design on costumes, cartoons broadcasted on national television (TV) stations, 2D animation screened in cinemas, as well as comics which had been approved for sale in all primary schools. Table 3 reveals the observed key elements of the 18 samples identified by the six industry experts. These results answered the research questions on the key elements found in the designs produced by local designers in Malaysia as well as addressed the influence of Malaysian national cultural attributes on locally produced designs.

Table 3

Key Elements of Design Sample (18 designs)

Samples			
	Sample 1	Sample 7	Sample 13
Key elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Porcelain store signage. The business is owned and run by ethnic Chinese. ▪ Malay language must be given priority in the display in the signage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Bola Kampung</i> - a Malaysian animated TV series about ‘kampung’ (village) boys who are crazy about football. ▪ Endorsed the national ideology. ▪ Aired on national TV channel, must be in the Malay language. Movie launched with English and Chinese subtitles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cosmetic advertisement with Malay target customers. ▪ Applied a full-face mask (except for the eyes), did not violate the official injunction.
Samples			
	Sample 2	Sample 8	Sample 14
Key elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chinese stationery shop. ▪ Malay words describing the function of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The most popular comic among Chinese primary students and parents in Malaysia with two main characters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The image design has a longer skirt than the standard female toilet signage. A typical women toilet sign symbol

- business are bigger than the company name in English and Chinese.
- Malay language is used to describe the function of this business entity.
- All five fingers must be drawn, regardless of the proportions of the body, arm, leg, feet, and head of the characters. All cartoon characters must be drawn with the full complement of five fingers, as it might kill the creativity and inspiration of youngsters.
- Teaches the audiences and readers to have positive thinking, good moral values, and live in harmony with different ethnic groups.
- displayed at the public toilet in the expressway’s rest area.
- Implements the Malay women dress code.

Samples			
Key elements	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business signage for money exchange and remittance services for individuals to send and receive money worldwide through the International Money Express. ▪ Malay words have to be the most visible in the signage. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A very popular comedy superhero cartoon series from 1998 to 2002 on the national, government-owned TV Channel 2. ▪ The series shows violence but gained popularity because of the typical Malay language accent spoken by the main character, a Sikh policeman. ▪ Continuous enforcement of good moral values and national ideology to create generations of people with moral values, good deeds towards personal, 	<p style="text-align: center;">Sample 15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The image of an elevator signage with female passenger in Malay traditional costume. ▪ The elevator signage in a local bank, a passenger elevator signage indicating the location of the elevator. ▪ Implement a common code of conduct.

family, social, and nation.

Samples			
	Sample 4	Sample 10	Sample 16
Key elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The image of harmony among different ethnicities (Malays, Indian, and Chinese). ▪ Various ethnic groups come together in harmony by sharing one language. ▪ Portrays various ethnic groups living together in harmony. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Hong Kong movie promotional billboard advertisement for <i>The Monkey King: Journey to the West</i>. ▪ The pig was not welcome by the authorities due to Malay cultural sensitivity. ▪ Majority of Malays disputed the image of a pig due to Islamic norms. ▪ Icon of pig was omitted from the advertisement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Malay traditional costume, in accordance with Islamic norms that forbid animal imagery as decoration. ▪ Portrays successful woman dressed with a long, loose two-piece dress which are often colour-coordinated and have nice textures.

Samples			
	Sample 5	Sample 11	Sample 17
Key elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial sector talent enrichment programme which prepares graduates to develop their career in the financial service industry, supported by the Association of Banks in Malaysia. ▪ Equal opportunity is given to various races. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Australia-based company Servcorp presented a festival greeting via the company's mascot, a wombat wearing Malay traditional costume, but it was retracted because some Muslims mistook the wombat for a pig. ▪ The advertisement was retracted from the billboard. ▪ The majority of Malays reported the image 'looks like' a pig. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kebaya – a tight-fitting two-piece dress made from sheer materials, adorned with brocade or floral pattern embroidery. ▪ A traditional costume, worn with batik wrap-around skirt, for Straits-born Chinese, descendants of Chinese immigrants having come to the Malay Archipelago. ▪ Gradually disappeared and merged into the Malay society.

Samples			
	Sample 6	Sample 12	Sample 18

Key elements	▪ Job vacancy advertisement must project all ethnicities to avoid penalty under racial discrimination.	▪ A popular advertisement in Malaysia that was awarded the Best Use of Branded Content in 2014 by the Malaysian Media Specialists Association (Creative Greats, 2014).	▪ Malaysian Cheongsam, worn during formal gatherings. Batik in Malaysia depicting humans or animals are rare because of Islamic norms. Worn during festival occasions.
	▪ Portrays various ethnic groups happily working together.	▪ Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) portrays features of successful women usually dressed with a headscarf.	▪ More baggy and did not follow the typical symbol of image preferred by the Chinese.

Composite Reliability Analysis

There were 18 design samples with a total of 234 elements (18*13 analysed elements). Based on the data analysis, the reliability test results reached 0.9, which was an acceptable threshold number. Overall, the results of the analysis for reliability test for all variables had a moderate to excellent reliability ($0.70 \leq \text{samples} \leq 0.91$). Reliability coefficients were moderate ranged from 0.50-0.74; good/substantial 0.75-0.9; and excellent/almost perfect >0.90 . The final results presented by all three coders (identified as A, B and C) were >0.91 -0.99, therefore showing an excellent reliability score. For example, the CR for individual attribution had excellent reliability score of self-esteem=0.97 and appearance=0.99. The composite reliability analysis for all four categories and among coders is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Reliability Test

Category	Information indication	A & B	B & C	A & C	CR
Individual attribution	Self -esteem	0.90	0.90	0.93	0.97
	Appearance	0.97	1.00	0.97	0.99
Cultural attribution	Language	0.9	0.93	0.90	0.97
	Custom/norms	0.83	0.77	0.70	0.91
	Religions	0.90	0.93	0.93	0.97
	Ethnicities	0.80	0.77	0.83	0.92
Social attribution	Values	0.77	0.77	0.87	0.92
	Manipulation model	0.70	0.70	0.93	0.91
	Hegemony model	0.90	0.87	0.93	0.96
National attribution	Pluralist model	0.73	0.70	0.8	0.90
	Defence of interest	0.93	0.87	0.93	0.97
	Moral values	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.98
	National order	0.97	0.97	1.00	0.99

Discussion and Conclusion

From the results, the portrayal of good moral values, national ideology, and national unity is a must for the nation. Although Malaysia is considered a moderate Islamic society, it is very much Islamic-oriented. This can be seen in sample designs 12, 13 and 14, which concur with Razali and Hands (2017), that is, that the Malaysian government promotes Islam above all other religions. Hence, any national order is geared towards defending the nation's interest. In this matter, it is obvious that having good moral values is the key element in establishing a peaceful system to ensure that all the ethnic groups of different religions can live in harmony (Shuaib and Enoch 2014). This element is evident in the sample designs. Through the integration of national ideology, some sample designs reflected the harmonious multi-racial character of the people, without stereotyping a particular racial group or gender; the traditional values and backgrounds of the people are being preserved and upheld (see sample designs 4, 5 and 6).

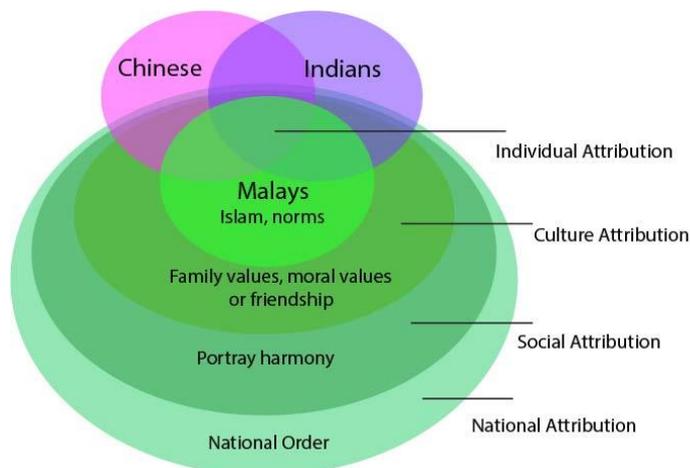
Meanwhile, the social, cultural and individual attributes are key influences on designers. These influences can be seen from design contents that give prominence to the Malay language by the way of allocating more text, brighter colours, larger fonts, outstanding displays, as well as in local commercials and movies, which are recorded in Malay with other languages as complementary text (Latif et al. 2012; Ariffin, Husin and Melaka 2013). The prominence of the national language is apparent in sample designs 1, 2 and 3. In addition, there is also a harmonious blend of norms in the design elements, followed by sensitivity towards cultural habits such as avoiding the usage of forbidden images, and modest dress codes for Malay women in their daily life or for non-Muslim women in official gatherings and events as according to the guidelines provided by the National Culture Policy (1971), PPPA (1984) Act 301, and Communication and Multimedia Act (1998). We can view this national culture attribute embodied in the sample designs 10, 11, 12 and 13.

The unique characteristics and regulations in Malaysia might give viewers the impression that it constrains creativity; yet, the positive side of having such characteristics and regulations help Malaysian designers to be more strategic when expressing their creativity, and to develop ways that accommodate the national cultural attributes as stipulated in the National Culture Policy (1971). The results indicated that design characteristics in Malaysia are strongly influenced by a Malaysian national culture. Although Islam and Malay culture form an important part of the national culture, elements from other cultures (such as Chinese and Indian) may be accepted as part of the national culture. The acceptance of other cultures in design should be aligned with the policies and guidelines set by the Malaysian government and local councils. The integration of national, social, cultural and individual attributes within the Malaysian national culture framework enables Malaysian designers to produce designs which symbolise racial harmony, national ideology, and Islamic norms. In addition, local designers are able to recognise and respect cultural and religious differences for peaceful coexistence between the people in Malaysia, given that Malaysia is recognised as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-cultural society.

Figure 4 illustrates the formation of Malaysia's social order in the identification of national cultural attributes. The three congruent circles intersecting each other represent the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia which interact with each other frequently in their own way. The key intersection of the three circles is reflected as individual attribution; while the four tangent circles are placed and grouped with the circle labelled as "Malay" indicated Islam, a religion practiced mainly by the Malays, is an important element in the national religious culture. The

structure of the social order begins at the individual attribution and gradually progresses to the furthest outer circle labelled as “national attribution”. The basis of the Malaysian national culture lies in the national attribution, followed by social, cultural and lastly individual attribution as shown in Figure 3b. Hence, the social order in Figure 4 reflects the influence of the four categories of national culture attributes on local produced designs discussed in the result and analysis section.

Figure 4
The Social Structure of Malaysian National Culture



Drawing on the result analysis, we conclude that: (1) Malaysian designers need to learn and fulfil the requirements and specifications set by the Malaysian authorities in their design to avoid any issues of racial discrimination and conflict, but at the same time produce designs which reflect the harmony of the nation; (2) designers are to incorporate in their design the Islamic values and code of conduct determined by the Malaysian government; (3) designs that symbolise racial harmony, national ideology, and Islamic norms are gradually appearing; (4) different ethnic groups who have lived together for a long period of time have adapted to each other and appreciate each other’s merits due to the indirect influence of the designs; and (5) when unique characteristics of the respective ethnic groups are not upheld, they will gradually disappear or are assimilated.

The present study was an attempt to examine the influence of national cultural attributes on 18 samples of locally produced designs through a visual preference survey of six design industry experts in Malaysia. The framework of national cultural attributes was derived from the review of literature on design and cultural studies in Malaysia as well as with reference to the national culture policies and guidelines of the Malaysian government and local councils. We believe future studies could carry out interviews with government authorities in order to further strengthen and elucidate the validation of Malaysian culture through the formulation of the National Culture Policy in 1971 and its influence on locally produced designs. It is the intention of this study to ultimately contribute to the expansion of literature on Malaysian design, as well as to provide practical insight into how the local design industries can react within the boundaries of a pluralistic society such as the Malaysian one in the process of creating creative designs.

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Does an Upcycling Kimono Practice Support Recycle-Oriented Cultural Sustainability? Japanese College Students' Perspectives

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Abstract

Kimono (a traditional Japanese garment worn by women) has played an important role in Japanese indigenous cultural origins. Ecological and sustainable ideas have inherently existed in kimono culture within this lifestyle. Since the United Nations announced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the Japanese government has focused on creating healthy spaces with a sustainable direction in mind. However, textile-related product recycling rates were relatively low in Japan at the time. This empirical study used SDGs as a conceptual framework to examine Japanese college students' perceptions of kimono upcycling practices and challenges. A mixed method was used to analyze the data. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to college students in June 2019 in Liberal Arts at a national women's university (n=155). The findings showed that interest in kimono upcycling moderately correlated to those and an interest in western garments upcycling (.578; $p < .01$). The relationship between these variables was significant (Chi-square: 48.471; $p < .001$). In the qualitative analysis, a coding method was used to explore common themes of students' awareness and knowledge of upcycling kimono practices and found four strong themes to be present. The students perceived that upcycled kimono items connected to preserving family memories, whereas others noted upcycled items were used for sustainable resources. Also, three common challenges were found: practicality, technical issues, and people's awareness. Some students also associated items with Japanese cultural preservation. College students' attitudes and perceptions towards cultural sustainability engagement could therefore be a crucial mediator during sustainable development drives.

Keywords: college student, Japan, Kimono, recycling, sustainable development, upcycling

Introduction

Since the rapid adaptation of western clothing during the postwar period, the Japanese kimono has gradually been disappearing from daily usage in contemporary society (Assmann, 2008). Japanese people's lifestyles have been transformed into adapting western clothes; people wear kimonos to only formal events, such as weddings and graduations (Valk, 2018). Similarly, *yukata*, a kimono-style casualwear, has also seen declining usage. Shimizu (2008) explained that *yukata* was worn as a bathrobe or casual daily wear before the western garments became popular. Today, *yukata* is still worn by different age groups and genders but mainly as summer festival attire.

Along with the social transformation, a kimono recycling practice has become popular in Japan due to the scarcity of fiber production and supply during the early postwar period (Ogata, 2013). Since western clothes were introduced, people stored their unused kimonos. As a result, individual households still have large quantities of high-quality silk kimono materials in their closets. These kimonos have been sold at second-hand kimono shops, which became popular in the late twentieth century (Valk, 2018). Today, kimono and obi (sashes) are used to reinvent fashionable accessories, such as scarves, gloves, shoes, and handbags (Assmann, 2008; Valk, 2008). Creating new products from reusable clothes is called *upcycling*, defined as “uniqueness of bespoke production, scarcity and preciousness of material, emotional engagement with past experiences and memories and craft skills of making” (Fletcher, 2014, p.118). The sustainable upcycling concept can be applied to used and unneeded kimonos to remake distinguished stylish garments and accessories. Although an upcycling practice contains the idea of preserving the material along with users' precious memories, it has not become a leading practice. This empirical study investigates Japanese college students' recycling-orientated cultural sustainability awareness and interests and their perceptions of kimono upcycling implementation challenges.

Overviews of Textile Recycling and Sustainability in Japan

Since the United Nations announced its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the aim has become popular among different industries worldwide (UNESCO, 2017). Each country and society, business, educational institution, group, or individual focuses on creating healthy spaces aiming in a sustainability direction. In May 2016, the government of Japan established its SDGs Promotion Headquarters in order to set its own goals along with the SDGs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). One emphasis area was creating a recycling-based society (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Although the agenda discussed waste management in different ministries, textile waste and recycling were not noted in the white paper.

Prior to the SDGs promotion, the Japanese government has focused on the 3Rs, reducing, reusing, and recycling. In 2009, Japan hosted the *Regional 3R Forum in Asia* and established similar for promoting the 3Rs while waste issues have become a social and world problem (Minister of the Environment, 2010). The reducing concept is connected to waste management, whereas the reuse approach helps extend the products' life cycle (Fletcher, 2014). The concept of 3Rs has received much social attention. Dr. Wangari Muta Maathai of Kenya, a 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, has promoted the concept of *mottainai*, which incorporates the 3Rs (Wangari, 2011). The expression using the Japanese word, *mottainai* (what a waste), contains the meaning of avoiding having waste; it illustrates the motivation behind Japanese people's cultural behaviors, such as storing used or unused kimonos in their closets for generations and recycling them by donating them to second-hand stores.

The Japanese government swiftly reacted to the SDGs, establishing action platforms and sharing the objectives with different ministries. Generally speaking, Japan is known as one of the leading nations for recycling sources. People strictly separate reusable portions from waste in their daily practices. Their sustainable behavior particularly helped enhance the current plastic waste recycle rate, which was 84% in 2019 (Brasor, 2019). However, Oba (2019) explained that the rates could be misread that the 84% can be classified into three categorical processes: 56% by a thermal process, 23% by material recycled, and 4% by chemicals recycled. Although the recycling rate appears to be successful, some procedures could severely impact environmental and societal issues during the process. By the late 2010s, the government has enforced various recycling regulations and laws, such as those for food, containers, vehicles, and home appliances (Ministry of the Environment, 2018); however, textiles or garments-related regulations have not been issued nor discussed as environmental issues.

In the annual report from the Ministry of the Environment Government of Japan (2016), the overall recycled rate for all reusable resources (e.g., paper, home appliances, plastics, food, and textiles) has increased from 7.4 % (1990) to 16.3 % (2013). The statistics showed that people's awareness of and attitudes towards recycling have been improving. However, textile-recycling rates remained relatively low in Japan. 766,000 tons of textile and garment waste were generated in 2007 and 836,000 tons in 2014. Both years' recycled rates were only 0.2 % (Minister of the Environment, 2017). The rest of the waste could have been piled up in a landfill. Uchimaru, Kimura, and Sato (2013) speculated that the technical reason for textile recycling has to do with the fact that in order to reuse the fiber sources, a garment needs to be separated into each fiber type; however, many clothes consist of various types of fibers, which makes it challenging. Nowadays, advanced technology is widely known to produce recycled fibers using polyester and nylon fiber waste and products; polyester and nylon zippers, buttons, and other notions can be processed to become granulated, decolorized, and then be used as raw materials and then fibers (iTextiles, 2014). This technology seems to contribute to waste management. For example, in order to recycle cotton and polyester blended fabrics, these two fibers require to be separated into pure components; however, the separation process is quite challenging; therefore, various cotton/polyester-blended garments were widely produced and could after usage be disposed of in waste containers (Hou, Ling, Shi, Yan, Zhang, Zhang, & Dai, 2018; Kimura, Hanamitsu, Kurahashi, & Kimura, 2010; Zou, Reddy, & Yang, 2011).

Moreover, various leading companies have been involved in recycling. For example, an automobile interior manufacturer, Howa Textile company (n.d.) has implemented reusing off-cut waste fabric to create felt top mats. Another leading textile manufacturer, Teijin, in 2002 introduced chemical recycling technology using polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles to create recycled polyester (Teijin CRS, 2007; Bettin, 2014). Since then, the government has endorsed recycling bottle technology to transform them into flakes and then pellets and create various recycled polyester garments and other related products (Minister of the Environment, 2012). This technology may have contributed to the PET bottle recycled rate. It might therefore be speculated that people's recycling and sustainability mindsets may have improved because of the various textile manufacturers' efforts.

Textile Recycling in Apparel Sector in Overseas

In the apparel and textiles sectors overseas, various manufacturers and companies also aim for different sustainability improvements to reduce environmental impact: sustainable consumptions and productions (Jørgensen & Jensen, 2012; Fletcher, 2014), reducing environmental waste through pattern making approaches (McKinney, Cho, Zhang, Eike, &

Sanders, 2020; Rissanne, 2008), utilizing the innovative technology to recycle fibers (He, Wei, Liu, & Xue, 2015; Teijin CRS, 2007), and educating consumers about the lifecycle of cotton products (Blue Jeans Go Green™, 2006). In 2016, the United States recycling rate was less than 20 % of overall clothing waste, approximately 12.8 million tons. For example, in 2017, from all the footwear waste generated, 13.6 % was recycled, 16.9 % was burnt with some energy recovery, and 69.5 % ended up in landfills (The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2017). Although the textile recycling rates were different between Japan and the United States, the latter's textile waste has been increasing for years. The majority of the textile waste ended up in piles in the landfill, which is a universal tendency because of the popularity of fast fashion, which is known as a rapid production with inexpensive and trendy clothes (Fletcher, 2014) in quick succession.

In general, due to the large amount of recyclable material, a donation or reusing concept could become a widespread practice along with sustainable development. Regardless of people's environmental interests and mindfulness, most consumers donate their used textile products to charities; however, at the same time, those people also dispose of their goods through regular traditional disposal mechanisms (Weber, Lynes, & Young, 2016). Over the last 10 years or so, upcycling has increased in popularity among various eco-conscious designers, fashion students, and other professionals (Alegria, 2009; Stewart, 2014). The apparel industry in different countries and regions also makes an effort to become more sustainable; however, at the moment recycling rates continue to remain fairly small.

Cultural Resources into Sustainability

The United Nations implemented 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) targeted for completion by 2030. One goal focuses on “Culture [as] a driver and enabler of sustainable development and essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda.” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 19) This agenda could perhaps be improved upon via the cultural characteristics of Japanese people with their recycle-oriented nature. As already mentioned above, reservation of used kimonos as a sustainable practice has inherently existed in Japanese culture for some time due to cultural values and *mottainai* behaviors.

Many second-hand recycled stores sell different textile products and clothes. Exclusive, expensive vintage clothes are most popular among sophisticated fashion-conscious people in different generations in Tokyo (Yagi & Yuasa, 2018). In other words, vintage clothes would capture people's attention and sell well, even at a higher price. However, some recycled clothes, including kimonos, may never have a chance to be sold, as they are not centrally displayed in these stores. Fletcher (2014) pointed out that recycling is a popular and easy practice for storeowners and consumers alike because it does not challenge radical innovation and adjustment. As a result, “[R]ecycling on its own ... will never bring big change.” (Fletcher, 2014, p. 126) When examining the 3Rs practice, it appears reasonable because an individual can start and achieve the goals. However, due to its long-range goals, the effectiveness of sustainability may not have a large impact.

Based on the vintage and recycled product relations, one way to achieve the SDGs is to upcycle products to make a new, highly valued product from discarded or unwanted items (Flowers & Gorski, 2017). Unlike recycled clothing, the upcycling practice may attract various people's attention because its concept is reborn into a new product using various unique used and vintage pieces of clothing. Recycled kimonos could be the ideal upcycled items because of their exclusiveness and antique heritage. Who would be the end-users of kimono upcycling

products? It was noted earlier that eco-conscious people could swiftly and positively react to this practice. For example, an American fashion designer incorporated pre-used fabrics to remake new garments to maintain her ecological mindset. She was also attracted to kimonos and other vintage textiles' aesthetic values (Billingsley, 2009). Some fashion professionals from the U.S. are fascinated to use old kimono materials for upcycling products. This indicates that there could be much demand for unique and distinctive products.

Practicability would be the main element for achieving these SDGs. To examine the kimono construction, the kimono consists of various rectangular panels, which are already intended to avoid waste. As a result, kimonos can be efficiently recycled; the seams can be easily removed because kimonos are traditionally hand-sewn. All panels can return to the kimono's original rectangular flat pieces, reusing the material to make any western clothing or accessories. When laying out kimono panels and western dresses side by side, interestingly enough, both the kimono and the basic western dress patterns come to the same length in yardage (Yanagisawa, Ishida, Ito, Ishige, & Watanabe, 1971). A kimono's versatility helps producers recreate different products and lead to a feasible cultural approach.

Although the kimono and other unneeded items in people's closets could become treasure resources for upcycling, "Fast Fashion has been a hallmark of the fashion industry for several years, and it has virtually characterized the market over time" (Štefko & Steffek, 2018, p. 7). The growth of fast fashion has led to textile waste and negatively affected our environment (Yoo et al., 2021). Many fast-fashion brands are very popular. However, recently at least some of them have begun to cherish different sustainable approaches. For example, UNIQLO launched a recycling and reusing program (UNIQLO n.d.), while H&M has invoked sustainability endorsements for organic items and recycled materials. Fast fashion and recycling/upcycling could live together when people's awareness of sustainability increases and fast fashion outlets create more sustainability goals for the goods.

Research Methodology

In this study, SDGs were used as a conceptual framework. Three research questions were posed to analyze students' perceptions of kimono culture and motivation for sustainability relations.

1. What is college students' awareness and level of knowledge regarding upcycling practices using kimono?
2. What are their interests regarding upcycling practices of old kimonos compared to used western garments?
3. What are the challenges of implementing upcycled kimono products in their daily practices?

Site and Participants

The empirical research piece at hand used a survey method to examine college students' awareness, interests, and challenges in kimono upcycling practices. 155 undergraduate and graduate students in Liberal Arts at the National Women's University in Japan participated. Their age range was from 18 to 25 years old. The university is known as one of the Japanese elite universities in Liberal Arts education that supports women's educational development with international relations and helps foster their global leadership. Selecting this university as a research site is beneficial because it can examine the next global leaders' attitudes and perspectives regarding sustainability issues.

The questionnaire consisted of dichotomous, multiple-choice, and some open-ended questions (Appendix A). Since the students were Japanese and a few Chinese exchange students, the Japanese version of the questionnaire was distributed (Appendix B). The data collection period was June 2019. The research involved human subjects. Before conducting the research, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the researcher's home university reviewed the application and approved it. Informed consent forms were also handed out to the participants before the survey.

Data Analysis

A mixed method was used to analyze the data. The dichotomous questions were analyzed by using SPSS version 26, a standard statistics software, here to explore students' awareness and interests in upcycling kimonos and sustainability practice. A qualitative method was utilized to further analyze the data. The researcher translated the participants' answers into English and examined them to find common themes by counting the frequency of words and phrases manually.

Findings

In a quantitative analysis, the two items, *kimonos possession* and *understand sustainability*, did not have any relationship with *interest in kimono upcycling* and *interest in western garments upcycling*. The findings showed that *interest in kimono upcycling* moderately correlated to those and *interest in western garments upcycling* (.578; $p < 0.01$). The relationship between these variables was significant (Chi-square: 48.471; $p < .001$). In addition, neither of the other variables, such as major distinctions, age, or class level explained their interests in upcycling kimonos nor did any previous experiences with upcycling.

Figure 1

Chi-Square Test Between Interest in Kimono Upcycling and Interest in Western Garments Upcycling

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	48.471 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction ^b	45.880	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	48.480	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	48.136	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	145				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.54.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The following figure showed the other overview. 37 % of students have never heard of the word sustainability, nor they know its meaning. 62 % of students possess one or more kimonos. 33.8 % of students noted that they are not interested in upcycling kimono, whereas 66.2 % said they are interested in upcycling kimono. Moreover, 31.7 % of students answered that they are not interested in upcycling western garments, while 68.3 % of them noted that they are interested. Although the results explained that students were more interested in upcycling western garments, the percentage ratio was quite similar.

Figure 2

Comparison of Students' Interests in Kimono Upcycling and Western Garments Upcycling

		Interest Western Upcycle		Total	
		0	1		
Interest Kimono Upcycle	0	Count	34	15	49
		% within Interest Kimono Upcycle	69.4%	30.6%	100.0%
		% within Interest Western Upcycle	73.9%	15.2%	33.8%
	1	Count	12	84	96
		% within Interest Kimono Upcycle	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
		% within Interest Western Upcycle	26.1%	84.8%	66.2%
Total	Count	46	99	145	
	% within Interest Kimono Upcycle	31.7%	68.3%	100.0%	
	% within Interest Western Upcycle	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Note: 0= No interest; 1= Interest

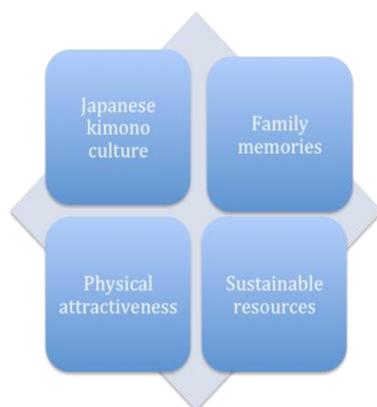
Internal reliability can be measured by Cronbach's Alpha or Kuder-Richardson (KR-20). In this study, the data were at a dichotomous level. Therefore, KR-20 was used for examining Cronbach's Alpha value. The value exceeded .70 between the above two variables. This indicates that the items fit together and are internally consistent.

Figure 3

Internal Reliability Between Interest in Kimono Upcycling and Interest in Western Garments Upcycling

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.733	.733	2

Further open-ended questions helped find the details of their knowledge or awareness of upcycled kimono products and practice. The questions asked, were: *When and where did you see kimono upcycled products; How did you feel about them?* (Appendix A). In the survey, four themes regarding their awareness and knowledge of upcycling kimono practices were found (Figure 4): to perceive physical attractiveness, to keep family memories, to maintain Japanese kimono culture, and to endorse reusing existing sources.

Figure 4*Students' Knowledge or Awareness of Upcycled Kimono Products and Practice*

Many students explained upcycled kimono products' appearances and physical features; such voices descriptions were "neat", "chic", "cute", "soft", "smooth", "gorgeous", "exclusive", "original", and "attractive", because of various colors and motifs. Others expressed: "Design-wise, upcycling kimono products are for middle-aged women" and "My grandma may like the items". Interestingly, several students already owned upcycled products that were made by their grandmothers. Their reactions were regarding their product appearances and their precious memories of previous kimonos, their grandmother, and their family. Furthermore, another student recalled, "I had memories that my grandma made into a pouch using her old yukata". At the same time, another student noted, "A kimono upcycled garment keeps one of my great family memories". Many noted that it is a good way to retain Japanese culture and customs through upcycling. On the other hand, a student pointed out, "A kimono does not need to be transformed into a new product," which means the kimono itself should be kept in its original form.

Moreover, some students connected upcycled kimonos to sustainable resource practice. A student pointed out that kimono upcycling is an "innovative idea for reusing kimonos". Also, the other participants voiced that it is a "good practice for using a used fabric as a new resource" and "good for our environment". Although their responses were varied, and most perceptions were positive, some students left the answer blank. Some of those students who did not answer these questions belonged to the group who had also answered that they were not interested in upcycled kimonos.

Kimono Upcycling Implementation Challenges

Compared to the previous responses, many students answered the various challenges of implementing upcycling kimono practice. Three common challenges were found (Figure 5): practical issues, technical challenges, and awareness of upcycling and sustainability.

Figure 5
Implementation Challenges of Upcycling Kimono Practices



First, practical issues were most visible and dominated. Students noted that the challenges were the products' cost and time to remake. Upcycling products tend to be costly because it would take time to create them. Several students questioned whether in times of the popularity of fast fashion expensive upcycling products would actually sell. Another student pointed out, "Is old kimono material strong enough to remake it into a new one?" Moreover, some raised questions regarding hygiene and sanitation matters because of the age and use of the kimonos. Many students also linked this major challenge to the practical implementation issues.

The next challenge was related to technical matters. Students noted that the lack of upcycling skills and knowledge could be the main challenge for implementing the practice. Many pointed out that they do not know how to use a sewing machine. Some students asked, "Who would be able to create upcycled products?" Other students suggested that providing how-to videos through YouTube or using social media to reinforce knowledge based on this concern would be helpful.

Finally, people's lack of awareness could also be a serious issue. This challenge had the most diverse opinions: Lack of awareness of sustaining the current clothes, awareness of exclusiveness, awareness of strengths and weaknesses of upcycled fashion, and awareness of sustainability. People's lack of awareness could impede kimono upcycling practices. For example, participants anticipated that "used" and "second-hands" sound less attractive. Some questioned why people would pay more money for those old clothes. Others explained, "The challenge would be people's attitudes towards our gorgeous kimono culture". Moreover, a student pointed out that only a few people making a great effort would not change the entire lack of awareness culture; thus, it would not be efficient.

One answer noted regarding water conservation; "After gathering all the used kimonos, we would need to dry clean them all. This process tends to use a large volume of water." Sustainable practices may not always lead to a positive impact. The student looked at the larger picture and rightly predicted the negative consequences of this practice.

Finally, many participants explained challenges but also described practical suggestions. Some proposed that exposure to practice and products would garner more attention. Others explained that we would need to show the advantages of recycling, because "People would not know about the upcycled kimonos because those people are only interested in new clothes and do not have a chance to know that upcycled products." Another practical suggestion is to implement

a recycling box so that people can donate their old clothes easily. This idea can be implemented anytime on a micro-level and could expand to other communities and institutions.

Discussion

The findings showed that students who were interested in kimono upcycling and western garment upcycling had similar profiles; however, slightly fewer students were interested in kimono upcycling than those who were interested in western garment upcycling. Since more than half of college students possess kimonos, familiarity may not be the major reason that they were less interested in upcycled kimonos than western garments. The Japanese people's lifestyles have changed greatly over the last century. Beginning in 1928, industrialization allowed society to adapt and produce sewing machines (Gordon, 2011). The dressmaking boom that began in 1945 led to the rapid spread of home sewing machines. Later, the advanced development of industrial sewing machines helped to increase the use of ready-to-wear apparel. Kimono production used only hand-sewn techniques but the increasing use of sewing machines may have lead people to create western-style clothing instead (Cliffe & Eicher, 2017).

Another prominent transformation was when women's education started; western-style uniforms were gradually socially accepted and implemented in schools. In the 1920s, an increasing number of girls' schools gradually allowed western-style school uniforms (Namba, 2012). Functionality could have been the major reason for schools and society to implement western-style school uniforms. For example, a kimono wraps around the entire body, which comes together at the front and is held together by multiple cords. When the wearer moves around, the cords can become loose and easily expose the body's front and impede movement. On the other hand, a western dress has a zipper or button closure, can easily be taken on and off and is unlikely to hinder the wearers' movement. Functionality was a therefore a good reason that both boys and girls wear western school uniforms in current Japan.

Although many participants noted that they own kimonos, their daily wear is western-style clothing. Therefore, they would also be more interested in upcycling western clothes and which would be a natural response. Slightly less than half of the students noted that they had seen upcycled kimono products. This finding may explain why students' interest levels in upcycling kimono products were less prominent than for western garments because their reactions had been formed based on their experiences seeing the actual products. They may not have been easily able to visualize the connection between kimonos and upcycled kimono products.

On the other hand, a few students did possess upcycled kimono products, connected to their family memories. Those who currently possessed the products noted their particular sweet and nostalgic memories especially regarding their grandmothers who had made these items. Family and cultural attachments come into upcycled products. This concept could be similar to a Japanese family possessing family crests and passing them on from generation to generation. Family crests are a Japanese tradition and "appear on some formal clothing, and businesses and organizations have adapted the concert for commercial purposes" (Hornun, 1986, p.1) and symbolize family ties and close relationships (*Family Crests of Japan*, 2001). The family crest culture then explains why some people treasure the cultural artifacts because they relate to families and pass the tradition onto next generations.

Many students also connected items to Japanese cultural preservation. They responded that upcycled kimono products helped to retain Japanese culture. Many students aligned the transformation of the kimono as a new product with their positive views. In contrast, a few

other students noted that they could not find a reason for transforming old kimonos into new garments. A few respondents noted that upcycling kimonos discourages Japanese cultural heritage; they would rather maintain the kimono's original form. They may have perceived the kimono as more of a cultural artifact than mere clothing. This answer could be a natural reaction to the fact that people cherish their cultural heritage and kimono costumes' legacy (Francks, 2015) passed down through generations. Janigo, Juanjuan, and DeLong (2017) pointed out, "Emotional connection may have played a role in individuals' decisions to keep upcycled items" (p. 277). These positive and negative responses explain that they attach to the traditional form of kimono that sustains their cultural heritages.

The last common theme was that participants related upcycled kimono products to sustainable resource preservation. Compared to the first three themes, not many students responded that this practice connects to sustainability. However, several participants pointed out that reusable resources could help save our environment. As noted earlier, since 2016 the government of Japan has actively promoted its sustainability platforms (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). The rules and regulations could have influenced the participants' sustainability behaviors.

Based on the common themes, students' reactions to the upcycled kimono products were dominated by the latter's physical attractiveness, such as colors, patterns, motifs, and textures. There were also comments that the products were more for older people. These perceptual differences were unique. Although the students' responses to questions of sustainability connected to upcycling were low compared to the other three themes, some examined sustainability connections were described as implementation challenges. Students noted that the challenges for upcycling kimonos appear to lie in practical issues and technical matters, all part of concerns of remaking new garments and accessories. In this case, collaborating with apparel companies or individuals would enable upcycling practices to become feasible; however, another issue could be the costs. Unlike massive production, an upcycling product becomes a one-of-a-kind or exclusive one, which means that the process tends to take time and is costly. However, the participants pointed out that consumers might not want to spend higher than usual prices for the upcycled products. Some students suggested that promoting the concept as saving our earth would prompt more people to buy these products.

The results of the upcycling kimono practice survey can also be explained by SDGs sequences. When people have quality education (SDG #4) to understand that an individual's action leads to retaining our environment, the communities and countries help reduce inequality (SDG #10) by less having a mass production by preventing child labor or eschewing sweatshop conditions (UNESCO, 2017). This improvement helps produce sustainable cities and communities (SDG # 11) by reasonable consumption using a recycling approach and creating upcycled products (SDG #12). Although the SDG's 12th goal particularly focuses on water, energy, and food as responsible consumption and production (United Nation, 2020), including textiles that they wear and purchase, may lead to changing their views and behaviors. Also, the 12th goal contains the infinity symbol, which entails focusing on recycling and upcycling. Ultimately, this sequence becomes a positive climate action (SDG #13) because it conserves water and naturalistic energy when people recycle or upcycle their garments.

The Ministry of Environment (2018) explained the university and other academic institution's role as "to support the development of a proper international framework for the circulation of resources and the overseas expansion of waste management and recycling industries" (p. 58). Innovative interdisciplinary student engagement would help maintain the recycling-based

society. However, this study's data showed that students' awareness and interest in recycling and upcycling practice might need to be sharpened.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be generalized to college students' perceptions in Japan. The samples and the site were selected purposely; however, choosing different colleges for the study could lead to different results due to the make-up of the student bodies. Since the research location for this study was an elite university whose objective is to foster globalized initiatives, the students may have been more conscious of sustainability relations than at other institutions. However, even in this study, over one-third of the students did not know the meaning of sustainability.

Moreover, exploring male or other gender students' perceptions, different age groups, and majors might very well provide different results. Another limitation would be the translation of participants' answers. Although the researcher is the translator/transcriber and a native speaker of Japanese, the translations could slightly differ when replicating a similar study. Cross-checking data with other native speakers in a similar field would ensure that the results are valid across the board.

Implications and Conclusion

Although recycling practices have improved in Japan, there still exists limited literature and research on upcycling practice, products, and consumers' perceptions. There were no longitudinal Japanese studies in this area of research. This challenge has not only been seen in Japan. Likewise, there were only limited studies regarding upcycling products in other countries, such as Korea, China, and New Zealand (Kim, Jung, & Lee, 2021; Yoo, Jung, & Oh, 2021; Koch, 2019). Lack of research in this area was also the main reason for this study to have been undertaken.

Although the kimono has played a central role in the study of the origin Japanese's indigenous cultures, after World War II people have moved toward western attire instead. Nevertheless, they do possess knowledge of the legacy of traditional kimono culture (Francks, 2015). Japanese also have a characteristically recycle-oriented culture. This trait is advantageous for contributing to upcycling practices. However, further investigation is needed to study this cultural trait and its existence among the younger generations. In this research, various practical challenges were noted by college students. Likewise, Janigo et al. (2017) explained: “[A] primary disadvantage is the labor intensiveness of the work, including careful deconstruction of used clothing. Making a profit could be challenging, considering there seemed to be a limit to how much people might be willing to pay” (p. 272-273). When the major challenges are reexamined and a way is found to resolve them, upcycling kimonos could become the next recycling-oriented sustainable practice among Japanese people and others. Unlike mass-produced fast-fashion garments, upcycling kimono products could become exclusive and unique properties. Upcycling is tightly connected with slow fashion, which is to “reduce amounts of new clothing purchased from retail stores, slow the cycling of clothing through one's wardrobe, and keep clothing out of waste streams by extending its usable life” (Janigo et al., 2017, p. 276). The upcycle concepts and processes could work in different countries and their cultural artifacts to sustain their legacies.

In this study, not many students in a Japan university did connect upcycling kimonos to sustainability in order to reuse their cultural resources. This result would be one of the interesting findings which seem to suggest that more work needs to be done to safeguard cultural heritage. Textiles might not have been the center of their foci for this. It would be stimulating to explore why they tended not to regard their unneeded used clothes for recycling practices.

Although the SDGs are today's popular universal concepts the world over, some students still were not aware of sustainability goals. Some of them had never even heard of sustainability. Expanding the awareness of upcycling and spreading sustainable concepts would contribute to reusing any and all available cultural resources. Recycle-oriented cultural sustainable development is neither a burden nor does it negatively affect the environment. Shen, Richards, and Lui (2013) explained that when consumers do not have sufficient knowledge regarding sustainable products, they might not realize they are sustainable. Likewise, college students may lack knowledge of recycling kimonos to be used to make new garments. When people and students possess upcycling background knowledge, they can decide whether to recycle used clothes and update them as upcycling products.

Moreover, the issue could be that usage of sustainability has not been standardized in Japanese society or even worldwide despite their inclusion in the SDGs. Park and Kim (2016) pointed out that there is “no clear consensus on what it means to be “sustainable” for fashion companies or brands and how sustainability, as it is perceived by consumers, can be measured” (p.1). Likewise, sustainability is defined literally as “sustain” and “ability” in Japanese. As a result, some Japanese may not think in further detail about these issues, which is evident from many blank or “Do-not-know” answers.

Lastly, people may face technical challenges to remake clothes; however, this issue can be successfully approached and alleviated by different industry sectors. Kusakabe (2013) suggested that sustainability can progress when social capital, such as political and government support becomes higher, and that citizens will greatly participate in sustainable development. The Japanese government has already regulated other recycled products; many people actively seem to preserve useful resources already. Textile and garment recycling regulations could and perhaps should be the next laws and regulations to be implemented in order for people to recognize textile recycling as a major supporting practice for the SDGs to have been achieved by the year 2030.

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Appendix A

University of Hawai'i Questionnaire in a Research Project



Minako McCarthy, Principal Investigator

Tentative title: Slow Fashion Concept Upcycled Kimonos as Recycle-oriented Cultural Sustainability

Background questions: Please circle MOST applicable for you and fill in the blank

- a) Sex: Male, Female, Others
- b) Ethnicity: How do you identify yourself? _____
- c) Age: please specify your age if you don't mind. _____
- d) Class level: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or others
- e) Major: _____
- f) First Language you speak: _____

Please answer the questions shown below. Choose the best applicable answer

1. How often do you purchase new clothes?
 - A) More than once a year
 - B) Once a year
 - C) Every two-three months
 - D) Once a month
 - E) Twice a week
 - F) Once a week
 - G) Others; please specify _____
2. Where do you purchase your clothes?
3. How do you get rid of your clothes?
 - A) Give to siblings or friends
 - B) Sell or donate to thrift shops
 - C) Leave in your closets
 - D) Threw in the trash bin
 - E) Others; please specify _____
4. Do you own a Kimono? Yes or No

(ア) If so, how many kimonos do you own? _____
5. Do any of your family members own a kimono? Yes or No
 - A) If so, how many and what kind do they own? _____

6. How often do you wear kimono?
 - A) More than once a year
 - B) Once a year
 - C) Once in several years
 - D) On some special occasions/ events
 - E) Never wore
7. How do your life and kimonos are related together? Any experiences, perceptions, or preferences?
 - A) Several times year
 - B) Once a year
 - C) Once in several years
 - D) Special occasions or events, such as weddings etc...
8. How do kimonos and your daily lives connect? Please describe your experiences, family customs, or any unions.
9. Have you recycled (up-cycled) kimono to other garments (articles)?
Yes or No
10. If so, can you tell me the details? What items have you made into? How were your experiences?
11. Have you seen any recycled (up-cycled) garments using kimonos?
Yes or No
12. If so, can you tell me the details? When and where did you see it? design, color, etc...
13. How did you feel about those upcycled kimono garments or articles?
14. Sustainability contains various meanings. What does sustainability mean to you?
15. Would you be interested in recycling (up-cycling) your own clothes into a new garment?
Yes or No
16. If so, can you describe any particular garments that you would like to make it? (someone to make it for you?)
17. Would you be interested in recycling (up-cycling) your own or second-handed kimono into a new garment?
Yes or No
18. If so, can you describe any particular garments that you would like to make it? (someone to make it for you?)
19. What do you think are the challenges to implementing recycling (up-cycling) kimono to current young generations?

Thank you for participating in the questionnaire.



Appendix B



University of Hawai'i
Questionnaire in a Research Project
 Minako McCarthy, Principal Investigator

Tentative title: Slow Fashion Concept Upcycled Kimonos as Recycle-oriented Cultural Sustainability

アンケート参加者情報：それぞれ当てはまる情報にチェック、もしくは貴方の情報を書き込んでください。

- A) 性別： 女性、男性、その他
- B) 出身： _____（日本の場合、都道府県；海外の場合、出身国をお願いします）
- C) 年齢： _____もしよろしければ 貴方の年齢を書き込んでください。
- D) 学年： 1年生、2年生、3年生、4年生、その他_____
- E) 専攻： _____
- F) 第一言語： _____

下記の質問にお答えください。当てはまる項目を一つ選ぶ、または答えられる限りお願いします。

1. どのくらいの頻度で新しい洋服を購入しますか？
 - A) 数年に一回
 - B) 一年に一回
 - C) 2、3ヶ月に一回
 - D) 1ヶ月に一回
 - E) 2週間に一回
 - F) 1週間に一回
 - G) その他 具体的に教えてください _____
2. 主にどのようなお店で洋服を購入しますか？
3. 古い洋服はどのように処分しますか？
 - A) 身内に譲る
 - B) リサイクルショップなどに寄付もしくは売る
 - C) 処分せず、保有する
 - D) 粗大ゴミにする

- E) その他 具体的に教えてください _____
4. 和服（着物など）を所有していますか？ はい、 もしくは いいえ
5. もし、お持ちの場合、何着の着物を所有していますか？ _____着。
6. 貴方の家族や親戚の方は和服（着物など）を所有していますか？
はい、 もしくは いいえ
7. もし、お持ちの場合、大体のべ何着の着物を所有していますか？ _____
8. どのくらいの頻度で着物を着ますか？ 当てはまるものにチェックをつけてください。
- A) 一年に数回、
B) 一年に一度、
C) 数年に一度、
D) 特別なイベント（結婚式やその他）などの時、
E) 一度も着たことがない
9. 貴方の生活と着物はどのようにつながっていると思いますか？ 経験、家族などの関わりや、意見、好みなど、どんなことでも構いません。
10. 着物をリサイクルして新しい服や小物などを製作したことはありますか？
はい、 もしくは いいえ
11. もし製作したことがある場合、どのようなものを作られましたか？そして、その経験はどのようなものでしたか？
12. 今まで和服（着物など）をリサイクルし新しく生まれ変わった服や小物を見たことがありますか？
はい、 もしくは いいえ
13. 見たことがある場合、いつ、どこでそのような新しく生まれ変わったものを見ましたか？その和服（着物など）や小物の色やデザインなどはどの様なものでしたか？

14. その新しく生まれ変わった和服（着物など）や小物に対しての感想をお聞かせください。
15. サステイナビリティという言葉を目にしたことがあると思いますが、いろいろな意味を持っている概念、言葉です。**貴方が思う**サステイナビリティの定義、意味をお教えてください。
16. 古い洋服をリサイクルし、新しい洋服や小物を作ることに興味がありますか？
- はい、 もしくは いいえ
17. 興味がある場合、どのような洋服や、小物を作りたいですか？もしくは誰かに作ってもらいたいですか？
18. 古衣着物をリサイクルし、新しい洋服や小物を作ることに興味がありますか？
- はい、 もしくは いいえ
19. 興味がある場合、どのような新しい洋服や、小物を作りたいですか？もしくは誰かに作ってもらいたいですか？
20. 新しい洋服が手軽に手に入るこの世の中、古い洋服、和服をリサイクルし、新しい服や小物を作るということを現在そしてこれからの方々がこのようなことを試みるとしたら、どのような課題があると考えますか？

アンケートのご協力をありがとうございました。😊

The Ancestors of a New Society: The Tribes (Buzoku) and their Journey through the Misunderstandings of the Japanese Countercultural Scene

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Abstract

Buzoku 部族, generally translated as The Tribe (or The Tribes), was a transnational collective of artists, poets, activists, and young people who soon became one of the most vital Japanese counterculture voices. Between 1967 and 1980, they participated in what they called “building a new society into the shell of this civilization” in the Japanese islands. Despite scholars and mass media’s recent interest in their lives and literary works, there are common misunderstandings resulting from characterizing Buzoku as the Japanese hippies, or fūten. This paper focuses on the transition period (1965-1968), going from the foundation of the prior group named Bum Academy to the formation of Buzoku. This article recounts this part of their history to show that this transition was vital for forging Buzoku’s identity and original ideology guided by a cross-cultural approach to spirituality and arts. They used a range of synchronization, translation, appropriation, and juxtaposition skills to set the bases of a “dreamed” community of tribes. This research shows that at least one countercultural collective in Japan’s sixties scene was involved in complex linguistic, artistic, and spiritual synchronizations with the global scene while simultaneously practicing the art of embodying the dream of building a new civilization.

Keywords: Buzoku, countercultural, fūten, hippie, Nanao Sakaki

Introduction

Buzoku 部族, generally translated as The Tribe (or The Tribes) was the name adopted by a group of artists, poets, activists, and young people that between 1967 and 1980 participated in the creation of what they called “a new society into the shell of this civilization”¹ in the Japanese islands. During this time, the group, originally divided into five “tribes”, founded three communes and meditation centers, printed a newspaper, attempted for communitarian agriculture and business, hold artistic parades, poetry readings, and took part in environmental and spiritual activism. Despite its short existence, their collective experiences and artistic works served as a precedent for the Japanese countercultural movements, the alternative media, and the artistic sensibility of the next generations.

Because the group was strongly inspired and nurtured directly by the beatnik and the American countercultural ambient of the sixties’ decade, specially through Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg, it is often associated with the beatnik, hippie and fūten generational identities. However, as Nagasawa Tetsuo one of the founders of Buzoku has clarified in many interviews, the members of these “tribes” did not identify themselves with these names, but rather perceived their groups as part of a transnational movement of many tribes that were creating a new culture and building a new civilization. Even though the group was mainly formed by Japanese, they also received people from other nationalities and participated in varied translation projects. Despite their members settled in different locations and found different paths in life, the movement shared a common origin in the “Bum Academy” (Bamu Academī バム・アカデミー or sometimes written as ^{バム・アカデミー} 乞食学会) a previous group of vagabond poets founded by Nanao Sakaki, Yamao Sansei, Nagasawa Tetsuo and Akiba Kenji, which adopted the name from a suggestion of Gary Snyder, who connected the way of life of these Japanese artists with Jack Kerouac’s novel called *The Dharma Bums*.

Today, Buzoku’s life stories and works are becoming powerful voices in the Japanese literary and cultural scene. For example, the Tokyo Poetry Journal issue on the Japanese beatnik scene “Japan & The Beats” (vol. 5, 2018) and the Spectator Magazine issue titled “The Japanese Hippie Movement” (vol. 45, 2019)² focus their attention on Buzoku’s poets. Even before this, episodes from Buzoku’s time had attracted Gary Snyder’s biographers’ attention, and Nanao Sakaki is still a well-known name for almost all the beatnik generation scholars. Moreover, recently, Buzoku’s founder’s poetry, particularly Nanao Sakaki and Yamao Sansei’s works, has come into the spotlight of Transpacific and Japanese environmental and cultural criticism (Nagakari 2004, Thornber, 2012, 2014, Teranishi 2015, Masami, 2017, Melchy, 2017). The recent bibliography illuminates Buzoku’s contributions to the ecological literature and the connections between Japanese counterculture, environmentalism, and spirituality. Also, Buzoku’s legacy is now becoming perceived by the Japanese mass media as containing valuable teachings and messages for current environmental issues (Yamamoto, 2020).

¹ The theme was initially coined by the Industrial Workers of the World labor union, commonly known as wobblers. Gary Snyder echoes this theme in his article “Passage to more than India”, published in *Earth House Hold. Technical Notes & Queries To Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries*, New York: New Directions, 1969. Buzoku’s manifesto (*Buzoku sengen*) of 1967 appropriated this theme. This appropriation introduces the main topic of this paper: the countercultural synchronizations, appropriations, and juxtapositions carried by the Japanese members of Buzoku.

² Nihon no hippī mūvumento. We are the primitives of an unknown culture. Spectator Magazine Vol. 45. (2019)

Despite all this new interest and recognition to the influence of their life and works, to a curious observer not being Japanese nor being part of the Japanese countercultural generation, there are still gaps and obscure parts in Buzoku's history that make it challenging to identify their protagonist, their movements, the particularities of Buzoku's "ideology," and the origins of their ideas and dreams. Nevertheless, there is a considerable number of sources and documents: the memories written by Buzoku's founders: Yamao Sansei and Pon (Yamada Kaiya), the pictures taken by notable photographers such as Fukushima Kikujirō, the Buzoku's publications, magazine articles, and interviews. However, most of these materials are not available in libraries or bookstores, and they scarcely circulate beyond the countercultural and underground scene. I have found one of the major archives in Hobbito-mura, an alternative life center located in Ogikubo, Tokyo, that was founded as a commune. Hobbito-mura holds a library, a cafeteria, a meditation room, and a free-of agrochemical vegetable shop. Among the many projects carried in Hobbito-mura, one especially significant in preserving Buzoku's memory has been a cycle of interviews with the protagonists of the Japanese counterculture called "Countercultural Archive: My Blue Sky" (Kauntākaruchā ākaibu: Watashi no Aozora). The recorded interviews and other valuable materials in the Archive have been uploaded by Makita Kikori on his Youtube channel.

In this paper, I want to focus on the "period of transition" (1965-1968) that goes from the foundation of the "Bum Academy," by a group of poets that gathered in a cafeteria in Shinjuku, to the formation of "Buzoku," a transnational collective that soon became one of the most vital voices in the Japanese counterculture. This article attempt is to show that this transition was vital for forging Buzoku's identity and original ideology, which defies the stereotypical notions around many countercultural discourses. This originality also helps us understand Buzoku's criticism of the material civilization (busshitsu bunmei 物質文明) and their connections with the international beatnik scene. As this historical recount tries to show, Buzoku was fundamentally a movement seeking to create an alternative global modern culture guided by a cross-cultural approach to spirituality and arts. They used their poetical and artistical complicity, translation skills, and networks to set the bases of a "dreamed" community firmly rooted in work, "primitive" and "ancestral wisdom" while engaging in a cross-cultural vision of modernity that was synchronized with the generational spirit of the sixties. Buzoku's seed and its legacy were born amidst many processes of synchronization, translation, appropriation, and juxtaposition carried by artists, hitchhiking travelers, and very young people. The Buzoku seed began at a coffee lounge called Fugetsudō in the Shinjuku area and then moved to a farming landscape, a volcano island, and a building in the suburbs.

This article is based on an extensive history of Buzoku published in Spectator magazine volume no.45 titled "The Japanese Hippie Movement: We are the primitives of an unknown culture" (2019), particularly on the manga there included, titled "The Japanese Hippie Movement" by Akata Ryūchi 赤田 祐一 and Sekine Myū 関根美有, and the interview to Nagasawa Tetsuō and facsimile documents included in that issue. It also integrates some Yamao Sansei's memories to be found in the book: *The narrow path: Family, Work and Beloved things (Semai michi. Kazoku to shigoto to aisuru koto*, 2018), the testimony of Miyauchi Katsusuke (1987) and an anonymous special feature on Buzoku's poetical parade held in Miyazaki, published by the Shūkan Dokubai magazine in 1967. I also decided to include some photographs from the *The Tribes Diary (Buzoku shinbun*, 1967) and Fukushima Kikujirō photographic essays in *The postwar youth, part II. Ribu and Fūten (Sengo no wakamonotachi, part II ribu to fūten*, 1981).

Fugetsudō Coffeehouse

Fugetsudō Coffeehouse (風月道 喫茶店) was a coffee shop and music lounge located in the district of Shinjuku (3-chōme) near to the East exit of Shinjuku Station in Tokyo. The medium-sized business opened from 1951-1973. It was owned by the record entrepreneur and wealthy painting collector Goro Yokoyama and managed by Yamaguchi Mamoru. It was a popular meeting place for Japanese and international countercultural artists, beatniks, and hippies in Tokyo during the sixties.

According to Akane and Sekine, during the fifties and early sixties, the Shinjuku district was characterized by cheap hotels that received many low-budget international travelers who came to the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. Among those travelers was the journalist John Wilcock, who published in 1965 the travel bestseller *Japan and Hong Kong on Five Dollars a Day*, in which Fugetsudō is described as the hotspot of the Japanese artistic vanguard.³ John Wilcock's book led to the popularization of Shinjuku among many young travelers from around the world making Fugetsudō an ideal place for encounters between Japanese and Foreign backpackers, artists, and travelers. According to Yamaguchi Mamoru, the interaction between foreigners and Japanese raised a shared sense of solidarity (Akata and Sekine 2019, 53)

Fugetsudō is described as a place where people could sit for many hours just by consuming a coffee cup. It is described as a two-floor classic coffeehouse with a cosmopolitan ambient. The first floor was a common meeting point for artists, young people, and travelers, while the second floor was a well-known meeting point for the Japanese Student Political Activists of Zengakuren (全学連). It was frequently compared with the famous Greenwich Village District cafeterias of Manhattan. Also, it was the meeting point for a translation study group that gathered every night. Fukujima Kikujirō display twenty pictures, along with an introduction on Fugetsudō. His pictures capture the atmosphere of the Shinjuku coffee shop, as seen on Figure 1.

³ Time after, it would be called the “meca” of the Japanese hippies and an avant-garde spot visited by artists such as Ono Yoko, Terayama Shūji, and Akaji Maro (Akata and Sekine 43–44)

Figure 1

Interior of Fugetsudō Coffee shop in Shinjuku (Fukushima 福島, 1981)



Among the people participating in Fugetsudō study and translation group was Nanao Sakaki, a vagabond poet and frequent visitor who used to approach friendly to the different people gathered in the coffee lounge. Yamao Sansei says that whenever he was always penniless, Nanao was a natural leader and a confident person who always figured the way somebody would invite him some drink (Yamao 山尾, 2018, p. 41). Despite his eccentricity, or maybe because of it, Nanao was also a natural leader for many young people, among them Yamao himself and Nagasawa Tetsuo, a young poet and Sanskrit translator who used to hang out with Nanao in Fugetsudō. Fugetsudō was the place that hosted the translation study group and later became the “meeting point” of Bum Academy members and a place that fostered their contact with foreigners. Yamaguchi also remembers Fugetsudō as the place where a kind of “tribal” ideology appeared around 1965, when all the Translation Group members appeared dressed in Ainu attires and with a strange new appearance. According to Yamaguchi he could feel that at this point the group had already formed an ideological basis and become a community (Akata and Sekine 54) ⁴. Nonetheless there was still some way to go before the formation of Buzoku

⁴ According to Akata and Sekine, the “Bum Academy” group had already departed from the Fugetsudō ambient by 1965. (54)

in 1967. This transition period is characterized by the group's first public demonstrations as The Bum Academy.

The “Bum Style”

In 1965, Nanao Sakaki, “Nāga” (Nagasawa Tetsuo), Yamada Kaiya, Yamao Sansei, and the senior high school student “Namo” (Nagamoto Mitsuo) formed a new group they called Bum Academy (Bamu Academī バム・アカデミー or sometimes written as 乞食学会). Bum Academy forged a collective identity based on literary translations and practices of wandering through the Japanese islands that Nanao began to learn and promote around a decade before. Nanao's school of wandering was built on a set of appropriations and juxtapositions of Asian and Japanese spiritual wandering narratives (haiku poets and Buddhist sages), the visions on wandering and nomadism by indigenous peoples, and the beatnik countercultural wandering narrative. Nanao's forged these visions in his own life and wandering practice, in such a way that people used to call it simply as Nanao's style, or what Yamao Sansei calls “the way of the vagabonds” (放浪者の道).

Regarding the term “Bum”, it was adopted by Nanao and his followers, who were inspired by Jack Kerouac's novels. According to Miyauchi, the writer and Zen practitioner Gary Snyder, once named, in a joking manner, Nanao's Sakaki group as the “Bum Academy” due to their style that resembled the hitchhiking poets described in Kerouac's novels. In addition to this, almost all Nanao's friends had read Jack Kerouac's novel *On the road*, and probably, the novel *The Dharma Bums* (The book appeared translated into Japanese until 1973 translated as *Zen hippie* 禅ヒッピー). For instance, Miyauchi who was 17 or 18 years old at the time, had *On the road* as a model for a way of life to follow (Miyauchi, 1987, p.153) For Miyauchi, a charming aspect of the beatnik generation was their approach to Buddhism. (p.153). Moreover, according to Miyauchi, the Japanese “bums” were enchanted by the beatnik's writers' ideals of a “return” to the primitive, spiritual, and wild (荒野) amidst a civilization perceived in crisis (p.154-155). Also, Yamao Sansei reflects on the foundation of the Bum Academy and his connection with Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, as follows: “When I was a university student, I read Jacks Kerouac's *On the Road* and was knocked down by his book. Then, I was just an insignificant private tutor, but my soul wanted to beat.”⁵

According to Yamao Sansei, since before the foundation of the “Bum Academy,” Nanao instructed young people, who often approached him looking for advice, to embark on long journeys across the country without or almost without money. To travel without money was the only condition that Nanao set out to these younger people overwhelmed by their lifestyles. Yamao relates in his memories an episode on how Nanao instructed a friend called Shirasu Ryū (Shiro) who used to work in a juvenile detention facility (鑑別所) in Nerima:

- Your eyes are dirty— said Nanao.
- I can't bear looking at your dirty eyes, so please embark on a long journey—repeated Nanao.
- And how should I do that travel— asked Shiro.

⁵ 学生の頃、ジャック・ケラワックの『路上』を読み、その本にぶっとばされていた僕は、形の上ではしががない家庭教師だったが、魂はビートのつもりだった。(Yamao, 2018, p.43)

- Take out your pants— replied Nanao. When Shiro obediently took off his pants, Nanao took a scissor he had neat to him and cut the pant legs to half, transforming the garment into short pants.
- Now put that on and set out to your trip— said Nanao.
- Yes, replied Shiro, putting on his cut pants, and despite owning just one or two hundred yens, he departed from Tokyo to Kagoshima by hitchhiking.
(Yamao 山尾, 2018, p. 38)⁶

As revealed by the previous episode, Nanao was very serious about traveling without money as a way to purify one's life. The instruction of traveling without money may force people to perform two actions that seemed necessary for Nanao: to walk long distances and to connect with other people. Nanao knew this by experience, and as an admirer and translator of Kobayashi Issa haikus and Milarepa chants, he also knew that these experiences were constituent parts of ancient and spiritual paths for discovering our true self. Nanao's style differed from the common ways of travel promoted by the burgeoning "material civilization" testing people self-confidence and determination. In a time in which modernization had provided Japanese society with effective means of transport that had become a consumable commodity, Nanao's way would force people to travel, opening our body, mind, and senses to the risk of a broader experience of discovering the material and non-material connectedness with others.

To sum up, "The Bum Academy" was a cross between paths, between Nanao's vagabond way grown in Japan's streets and country roads during the fifties and early sixties and the attempt of Nanao and his followers to synchronize this way with their admired American beatnik peers. This counter-cultural synchronization materializes in the term that Yamao Sansei uses to name the Bum Academy: ^{バム・アカデミー} 乞食学会 a neologism that translates and synchronizes a Japanese word and a Buddhist term with an American beatnik identity flag. Fugetsudō's translation circle and the experience of encountering with international beatniks were some of the factors that facilitated this counter-cultural synchronization. Literature and poetry became translation vehicles for this group of young artists exploring their spiritual path around Nanao's and Gary's figures. The friendship between these admired Japanese and American poets was seen as a bridge that connected spiritually young Japanese voices with those of their American peers.

In 1966 the Bum Academy organized The First Festival of the Bum Academy in Shinjuku. The next year, they organized a Second Festival, which the invitation was published in the Psyche Journal no. 001 (April 5th of 1967) designed by Pon and Toshie Nakazima. In this Journal appear an invitation signed by Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, and Paul Krassner to manifest against the war and for peace; also appear a poetic manifesto in Japanese and English divided into eight sections arranged in a design of Buddhist inspiration (Designed by Yamada Kaiya).

⁶ 「君の眼は汚い」

とナナオが言った。

「君の眼は汚くて見るに耐えない。旅に出なさい」

とナナオが言った。

「ようやく旅に出るんですか」

とシロは尋ねた。

「君のズボンを脱げ」

とナナオが言った。シロが素直にズボンを脱ぐと、側にあったハサミでそのズボンを半パンに切手、

「それをはいて旅に出なさい」とナナオは言った。

「はい」

とシロは答え、半パンに切られたズボンをはくと、百円か二百円のお金は持っていただろうが、そのまま東京から鹿児島へ向かって、ヒッチハイクの旅に出て行った。(p.38)

It also appears the invitation to the poetical parade “Revolution by Love” (Designed by Toshie Yakazima). It also appears Gary Snyder’s text “Buddhism & the coming revolution” translated into Japanese by Nagasawa Tetsuo. (with a picture from July 1963 of Nagasawa, Snyder, and Ginsberg in Kyoto).

The Bum Academy carried out its Second Festival titled “Revolution by Love. Poem reading, Free Words & Music”. The pamphlet of the event has written the names Nanao Sakaki, Gary Snyder, Phillip Whalen, Franco Beltrametti, Harry Hoogstraten, Yamao Sansei, Nagasawa Tetsuo, and Akiba Kenji. Also, it has written: “Bring shōchū and goats! Bring a wonderful kiss! Bring dandelions and flowers of renga, and also bring your frustration! A Gathering and a Parade for a Prophecy of Destruction of Human Beings” (p.51.)⁷ At this Festival, the Bum Academy poets carried out a Poetical Parade that announced the “collapse of the world” (sekai no metsubō 世界の滅亡). The parade departed from Toyama Heights to Shinjuku station’s west exit. The next day was carried a poetry reading in the Meiji Yasuda Hall (新宿西口安田生命ホール)⁸. The festival was followed the same year by a Third Festival in Miyazaki city (August 20-21, 1967) and a fourth Festival carried in 1968 in Kagoshima city. As Akata and Sekine note, this festival was carried just three months after the massive parade called Human Be-In that gathered around 30 mil people in San Francisco, suggesting that there was an intense transpacific dialogue among these young scenes. Also, it seems that during this period appeared among the Bum Academy the slogan “We are the primitives of an unknown culture” (ware ha mada shirarezaru bunmei no genshijin de aru ワレラハ未ダ知ラレザル文明の原始人デアル).

The Born of Buzoku as a Tribe of Tribes

In the Japanese context, Buzoku history is the story of a “tribe” among other tribes of the sixties. For instance, the suffix 族 is used to refer to the collective gathered around a specific place or identity: Fugetsudō-zoku or fūten-zoku. Akata and Sekine’s work helps us understand this landscape of different tribes, which shared familiar meeting places, tastes, and outlooks by the late sixties. Among these “tribes” were also the so-called hippies and fūten (Japanese young people who adopted hippie fashion and a semi-homeless lifestyle). As Akata and Sekine point out the Japanese media tended to refer to them indistinctly as hippies of fūten. Even so, Bum Academy members had their own characteristic ideals and visions, or what Yamaguchi called their ideology.

There are many reasons why Bum Academy members decided to transform and split the group into tribes and attempt a new way of life different from the countercultural scene in Tokyo. Some of these reasons are:

1. The desire to engage in full-time communal living led to the necessity to find a place to settle down collectively.
2. The changes taking place in the burgeoning Tokyo due to gentrification: The Fugetsudō staff became less permissive with the Bum members’ non-consuming practices.
3. Gary Snyder’s text “Why Tribe” of 1966, translated by Nāga, plus letters and diaries received with news on the West Coast scene (especially San Francisco Oracle underground newspaper) that inspired the Bum members to go into a new stage.
4. The Bum members’ connection with the spiritual and ancient practices (Zen meditation, Advaita, Milarepa, native American, Ainu, and Australian aboriginal spiritual visions)

⁷ 「焼酎もってこい、山羊もってこい！ ゴールデンバットもってこい！ 素晴らしい Kiss もってこい！ タンポポとレンゲの花もってこい、フラストレーションも！ *Psyche Journal* facsimile reproduction in (Akata 赤田 & Sekine 関根, 2019, p. 51)

⁸ This Hall operated until May 31st, 2017 when it was finally closed. <http://meijiyasuda-life-hall.com/>

was perceived as trivialized by the ongoing popularization of the hippie fashion and the “junkie” counterculture (two aspects that became characteristic of fūten).

The first and second reasons are closely related to the urban space. According to Pon, one of the members of the Tribe cited by Akita and Sekine, despite Shinjuku in 1967 still being the spot for the fūten, gay and anarchist scene, the zone was rearranged as part of an urbanization plan before 1970 (when the Us-Japan Security Treaty was going to be extended). Open meeting points as the famous green area called The Greenhouse (グリーンハウス) were prohibited or suppressed. Namo, one of the new Buzoku members, also explains that many of the bums (including him) wanted to settle permanently in a place wide enough to accommodate many people, and thus began to search for ideal spaces in Tokyo’s outskirts.

Regarding drug consumption, Bum Academy members’ irritation in front of the hippie movement’s ongoing popularization of drugs is more subtle and even complicated. According to Miyauchi, between the “process that goes from beatniks to commune living” was the “drug issue” (Miyauchi 154). Miyauchi says that he sympathized with a particular vision of consuming mushrooms, marijuana, and peyote (LDS, which was prohibited in Japan in 1970) as spiritual jumpers, while unable to empathize with the “junkie” vision of drug consuming as represented in that time by heroin and Burroughs approach to drug consuming. Even so, the junkie vision soon became particularly popular in Tokyo, during the summer of 1967, and many youngsters who escaped their house in 1967, embraced the hippie fashion, a homeless life, and popularized thinner inhalation in plastic bags. They were the so-called fūten, portrayed by the Japanese media as the Japanese hippies.⁹

Unlike the Bum Academy members, these youngsters were mainly boys and girls who had escaped their houses without any apparent intention of contesting the materialist civilization, connecting with spiritual practices, or building a new culture. Conversely, the Bum members had a special synchronicity with the beatnik generation members Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder and their participation in the hippie movement was moved by the communitarian, global, anti-war, and psychoactive vision on a new culture. Also, the Bums felt connected with the Japanese “primitives” of the Jōmon period, with the saints of India and other peoples of the world left apart by the “materialist civilization”. These features persisted and deepened when they turned into Buzoku in 1967. The photography essay of Fukushima Kikujirō who visited the Fujimi commune or “Bum Ashram” in 1967 exemplify his perplexity before to what

⁹ Fūten (フーテン), coming from the existing word fūten 瘋癲 was the name adopted by groups of young people that escaped from their houses and began to gather in the so-called “greenhouse” (グリーン・ハウス) a wide lawn area and Shinjuku station area. According to Akata and Sekine (2018) these young people adopted the style and fashion of the American hippies, started a semi-homeless life around Shinjuku, and used to sniff inhalants such a thinner consume sleeping drugs such as haiminaaru, (ハイミナル) called by them as Rariru (p. 64) Most of fūten were under twenty years, liked modern jazz music and adopted this lifestyle without any manifesting any political stance or criticism toward the social status quo. Following Bīto Takeshi, Akata and Sekine distinguish fūten from hippie since the first can be described as Japanese young people that just copied the hippie fashion and lifestyle, without adopting their anti-war attitudes, utopian community dreams or critical messages. According to Akata and Sekine, Japanese newspapers, reporters and magazines tended to call these young people the Japanese version of American hippie, using indistinctly fūten zoku and hippī zoku (Akata and Sekine 68). The people of the tribes were classified as fūten or hippies by the media (and later too by other artists from the countercultural scene); however, many of them were openly against being called by these names. When questioned by reporters and people curious about their identity, they called themselves just “bums” (ノム), “vagabonds” (放浪者), “harijans” (ハリジャン) or “primitives” (原始人) who gathered into tribes that shared the common dream of forming a new culture and civilization.

seemed a generational phenomenon of primitive-peasant young people in the plenty of the economically buoyant sixties in Japan (figures 2 and 3):

Figure 2

Nanda, One of the Founding Members of Buzoku in the Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe Commune (Fukushima 福島, 1981)

Figure 3

Unidentified. Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe Commune (Fukushima 福島, 1981)



Before displaying the fourteen pictures of this section, Fukushima Kikujirō writes an introductory testimony on his visit to the commune founded by the Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe, one of the tribes of Buzoku. In this paragraph, one member of the commune manifests his unconformity with being called *fūten* and explains his own vision:

Unfortunately, the chief, Sansei Yamao, was digging potatoes in the hatake, so one of the young members, who was urban looking, offered himself to guide me. “It’s annoying that we’re called *fūten* ...” he said first. The ideal of the Red Crows was to predict the end of material civilization, to restore the original form of human beings by creating an ancient society in this mountain, and to expand a “new human class society.” ... They called themselves *harijans* (children of the gods, classless); by the same token, they called each other, regardless of their class or scholarship: “Sansei”, “Nanda”, “Captain”, “Boy A”, and so on. These

primitive men used to be a devout worshiper, an artist, and a top-mode stylist.
(Fukushima 福島, 1981, pp. 106–107)¹⁰

The Original 5 Tribes

During the summer of 1967, the members of the Bum Academy (except for Nanao, who had departed to a new journey) held a meeting in a Coffee shop called Seiga (青蛾). During that meeting, Bum Academy members changed the group’s name to Buzoku 部族 (The Tribes) and proposed a newspaper’s edition be called with the same name. For Nāga (Nagasawa Tetsuo), who had translated an article sent to the group by Gary Snyder titled “Why Tribe” (1966), the occasion was an opportunity for the group to jump into a new stage of building community (Akata and Sekine 59). In “Why Tribe,” the term tribe is proposed by Snyder as a term to refer to a type of community in the “new society emerging within the industrial nations” and “a group without nation or territory which maintains its own values, its language and religion, no matter what country it may be in” (Snyder, *Earth House Hold* 113). 1967 was a decisive year for the transition from the “Bum Academy” to “Buzoku”. According to Akata and Sekine’s recounting of events, in the months from April to September of 1967, five tribes were established. These tribes were:

1. The Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe. (Kaminari akagarasu zoku カミナリ赤鴉族).

This tribe moved to the valley of Fujimi in Nagano Prefecture at the foot of Mt. Nyūkasa (Nyūkasayama 入笠山). The Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe was the first to settle a “base camp” in a 2000 square meter terrain that Yamao Sansei and three friends bought in Fujimi valley (around April of 1967). Nagasawa Tetsuo and Akiba Kenji were the first ones that moved to the terrain to begin with the camp base’s construction, logging, and farming. The name was inspired by a local myth about a three-legged Crow that symbolized the Mountain and the frequent lightings.¹¹ Fukushima Kikujirō’s photographic essay: The Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe’s thoughts and expressions (Kaminari akagarasu zoku no shikō to hyōgen かみなり赤鳥族の思考と表現) displays his visit to the commune and meditation center. As described by Fukushima, at the commune’s entrance stood a plate with the legend “Bum Ashrama” written on it.

2. The Banyan’s Dream Tribe. (Gajumaru no yume zoku がじゅまるの夢族).

This Tribe moved to the island of Suwanose in Kagoshima Prefecture and established a meditation center that was later renamed as the **Banyan Ashram** (バンヤン・アシュラム). The center and its commune lasted until 1980 when it was finally dissolved (Maebara 96). The idea of turning the meditation center into an ashram seems to have emerged from the spiritual connection that many members of these tribes felt toward Hinduism. Nanao’s original vision for this ashram was to build in the island a “meditation center” in which they could retire to cultivate their body and spirit and practice a sustainable life by farming and fishing. For Nanao, this was a necessary step for Buzoku members to overcome what he called the “disbelief of the modern civilization” (gendaibunka no fushin 現代文化の不信) (“Nihon Hippōzoku Minami

¹⁰ 折悪しく酋長の山尾三省氏は畠に芋を掘りにでていたので、割に都会じみた青年の一人が案内役をしてくれた。「われわれがフーテンよばわりされているのは迷惑だ……」と彼はまず言った。赤鳥族の理想は、物質文明の終末を予測し、この山中に、古代社会を創造することによって人間の原形を回復させ、”新人類部属社会。を全国に拡げてゆくことだった。……彼らは自らをハリジャン(神々の子、無階級者)と称していた。従って階級、学識を問わずお互いをサンセイ、ナンダ キャプテン、少年A、という具合に呼びあっていた。この原始人たちは、敬虔な宗教者、アーティスト、トップモードのスタイリストだった。

¹¹ Akata and Sekine vividly illustrate in their manga on The tribe “one ordinary day” in the Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe Commune.

No Shima Ni Tatekomoru” 15). More than envisioning a commune, Nanao envisioned a still and quiet place for meditation and spiritual practicing. Near to the place where Buzoku settled stands a banyan tree in which they used to meditate. Apart from Nanao, among the first ones who moved to Suwanose in 1967 were Nanda and Kyappu (Shinkai Kenji), later in July arrived Nāga, Gary Snyder, and Masa Uehara.

3. The Emerald Breeze Tribe. (Emerarudo soyokaze zoku エメラルドそよ風族 or sometimes Emerarudo burīzu エメラルド・ブリーズ).

This Tribe moved to the district of Kokubunji in Tokyo and founded a commune-house in a two-floor building that became a long-term residence for around 20 Tribe’s members. The rental of the entire building was arranged by Yamao Sansei when the commune was set up in 1968. In the commune, the Tribe’s members shared their food and ran three commune’s business: a food cart of Kagoshima style ramen (鹿児島ラーメンの屋台) and a rock music cafeteria named Horakai (ほら貝). The commune lasted for two years, until 1970, when the building was sold and the commune dissolved. (Maebara マエバラ, 2019, p. 95)

4. The Seven-Colored Rainbow Mantle Tribe. (Nanairo no niiji no manto zoku 七色の虹のマント族).

This tribe supposedly gathered around Gary Snyder and his peers in Kyoto. Nevertheless, some months later, Gary and Masa moved to Suwanose island, and the tribe merged with the Banyan’s Dream Tribe.

5. The Dreaming Hermit Crab Tribe. (Yume miru yadokari zoku 夢みるやどかり族)

This tribe moved to Miyazaki city by invitation of a local abstract painter named Itō Asahi (伊東旭), who was a sympathizer of Nanao and his peers. On August 20 and 21, they carried the third “Bum Festival” in the Miyazaki Jingu sanctuary and the surrounding areas. According to a special feature published by a weekly magazine, this festival included yoga and meditation sessions and held a musical-poetic parade. (“Nihon Hippiizoku Minami No Shima Ni Tatekomoru,” 1967, p. 13). Later, near the coast, in what is today part of the city’s port, some members founded a commune that lasted until 1971 or 72. (Ono 小野, 2015)

The Publication of The Tribe Diary and the Founding of Communes

On December 20th of 1967 was published the first diary of Buzoku’s tribes, just called “The Tribe Diary” (Buzoku Shinbun 部族新聞). In this first number appeared Nāga’s manifesto titled “Declaration of The Tribes” (Buzoku sengen 部族宣言), which would become later one of Buzoku’ most representative manifestos. The first volume had a print-run of ten thousand copies in full color. It had a cost of one hundred yen and became a major hit among the countercultural scene in Japan, especially among the fūten and other young people who used to hang out in the Shinjuku area. The second number of “The Tribe Diary” appeared on June 20th of 1968, pressed by The Emerald Breeze Tribe. As can be perceived from fig.1 and fig.2, there are some similarities between the San Francisco Oracle diary and The Tribe Diary: the two-color print designs, the themes portraying an Indian ascetic, the psychedelic motifs, and the use of the cover page as a pamphlet for a collective event to be held.

Figure 4

The San Francisco Oracle, Cover of No. 5. January, 1967 (Cohen, 1967)

Figure 5

The Tribes Diary, Cover of No.1. December, 1967 (in Yamada 山田, 2009)



The San Francisco Oracle (Figure 4, left) was an underground newspaper published in San Francisco by the poet Allen Cohen. Its 12 issues were published from 1966 until 1968. The newspaper published many poems and texts of beatnik generation writers such as Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder. The vol.1 no.5 (January 1967) displayed on its cover a poster for the “Gathering of the Tribes in the Human Be”, a performance held on January 14th, 1967. Similarly, The Tribe Diary cover (Figure 5, right) displays a poster for participating in the recently established Meditation Center by the Thunderbolt Red Crow Tribe.

Newspaper publishing and meditation center-commune’s foundation were also ways in which the Buzoku members synchronized with the ongoing movement of forming communes that emerged across the United States of America. As intentional communities, many of these communes initially took inspiration for their alternative lifestyle from European and American socialist cooperatives, Native American people’s villages, and religious communities such as Indian Ashrams. For example, just in New Mexico, around 30 ashrams-communes were established in the sixties, although almost all of them closed before 1973 (Lama Foundation, n.d.). Although through many transformations, one of the communes that remain until today is the Lama Foundation, founded in 1967. In the same way, Buzoku’s communes were raised, taking elements from Hindu, Buddhist, and Native American spiritual paths, and combining them in a juxtaposed collage of communitarian lifestyle that was going to be proved by difficulties and challenges. Similarly, to many American countercultural communes, Buzoku’s

communes were dissolved as members moved or quit, while some proved to be the seed for new communities still remaining.

Conclusion

First of all, creating a picture of the origins of The Tribe underlines the fact that it emerged among a local scene in Japan (Shinjuku) in which many countercultural collectives (called tribes) were coexisting. As the consciousness of a global countercultural scene spread after 1965, many groups were labeled (because of their fashion and attitudes) by the Japanese media under the hippie's etiquette or *fūten* (equivalent to the Japanese hippie). Moreover, when Buzoku members moved beyond Tokyo, their performances, meditation centers, and communes were perceived as part of the hippie movement and the *fūten* phenomenon. Nevertheless, The Tribe's ideology has its origins years before the hippie movement's appearance in Japan and America in an active period between 1965 and 1967 as the Bum Academy. As a result, both Japanese hippies and *fūten* tended to see Buzoku as their predecessor and often mention them as an inspiration. This research suggests that these factors contributed to perceive Buzoku as the first hippies or *fūten*. Nonetheless, the tribe's wanderer poets, artists, and people that moved to the communes did not identify themselves with any of these generational flags, neither with the beatnik one.

Secondly, the research on impressions and episodes from The Bum Academy members reveals that the group ethos was highly influenced by Nanao Sakaki's way of practicing wandering (*horōsha no michi* 放浪者の道) and Gary Snyder's perspectives of the beatnik and other countercultural movements. This significant double influence at the group formation shows a continuous collaborative effort to synchronize the Japanese wandering ethos with the Western countercultural ethos (bums). This transpacific countercultural synchronization was adjusted with the beatnik ethos through Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and majorly through Gary Snyder's figure. Gary Snyder was the direct interlocutor for Buzoku members due to his Japanese language proficiency and because he was living in Japan. Consequently, his vision and interpretation of the West's countercultural scene became predominant in the groups' way of synchronizing with the global countercultural scenario.

Thirdly, The Tribe's synchronization process with the global countercultural scene must not be seen as a crude or pale imitation. According to this research, the countercultural synchronization of Buzoku was also a complex exercise of translations and appropriations. A representative example is a visually evident juxtaposition in the term ^{バム・アカデミー} 乞食学会 (a neologism replacing the phonetic reading *kojigakakai* こじきがっかい that corresponds with the kanji traditional reading with the anglicism *bamu academi* バム・アカデミー) and the appropriation of the term "bum" (バム), both used in the Bums Academy names in Japanese. Also, it is worth noting that these translations and appropriations were not only directed toward the American counterculture. Yamao Sansei's appropriation of the term "harijan" shows that they were also synchronizing their identities, not only as wanderers but also as marginal Asian peoples. These multiple directions suggest an early separation between Nanao's wandering and Yamao's way. As revealed by this Bum Academy formation history, this complex synchronization could only be done by a translation process and openness previously facilitated by the Fugetsudō coffee shop, which was something like the incubator that granted a space for dialogue and establishing alliances with foreign artists and hitchhikers, prior to the gentrification of Shinjuku area. This reminds us that urban spaces can hold and boost translation practices, focused on spiritual practice, and artistic demonstrations.

Fourthly, the Buzoku project that was envisioned as a “tribe of tribes” posed a challenge for their founders regarding gathering a diversity of backgrounds under a flag and vision. Tribe members’ ideology continuously synchronized itself with the global and arranged their identity as a collage. This collage had as one of its prominent motifs the spiritual path. The Tribe’s identity was mainly forged by juxtaposing many spiritual and cultural traditions, especially “Worlds Primitives,” Hinduism, and Buddhism. Nonetheless, juxtaposition, appropriation, and synchronization skills were not only aesthetical, but they were previously incubated in their spiritual formation during the Bum period under the guidance of Nanao Sakaki.

Finally, Buzoku history offers us two pictures of the assimilation of counterculture in Japan; one can be described as a “pale imitation” of American hippies’ fashion and style. The other one, the Buzoku’s one, can be described as complex synchronization done by collaborative processes of translation, appropriation, and juxtaposition. Among these translations, the spiritual was not exclusive, but it was likely prioritized over the other ones and forged a new spiritual profundity. The artistic appropriation also seemed relevant for their identity flag and a perceived necessity for defining their dream. The poetic parades and The Tribe Diary that were surprisingly in tone with the San Francisco Oracle Diary, exemplify the countercultural appropriation of poetry readings and printed media.

In conclusion, although Buzoku’s existence was limited to thirteen years, their ideology, their practices, and their experience proved to be fertile in synchronizing their dreams with the dreams of other peoples and cultures. In this way, they nurtured the Japanese counterculture’s soil by creating various communes, businesses, and media under the theme of building a new global civilization. Compared to the fūten phenomenon, their legacy proved to be relevant for other groups that later identified themselves as hippie, alternative and ecological-spiritual movements. This research shows that at least one countercultural collective in Japan’s sixties scene was involved in complex linguistic, artistic, and spiritual synchronizations with the global scene and simultaneously practiced the art of embodying the dream of building a new civilization.

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The Three Epochs of Hong Kong Lolita Subculture: Cultural Hybridization and Identity Construction

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Abstract

Lolita is identified as a female oriented subculture phenomenon which came about in the 1990s in Harajuku, Japan. Youths in Hong Kong, because culturally and geographically in close proximity to Japan, will usually adapt their neighboring city Tokyo's cultural movements. This paper explores the development, meaning, significance of Lolita phenomena in Hong Kong from the postmodern historical and socio-cultural points of view. By assembling and examining the ethnographic data from face-to-face interviewees and materials from online resources between 2014 and 2017, we reviewed and proposed that there are three major epochs of Lolita subculture development in Hong Kong. The study concludes that the changes in online practices over the past two decades lead to the transformation of Lolita identity within the group. It also indicates that the development of Hong Kong Lolita subculture shows a positive impact of cultural hybridization. Moreover, through the active practice on virtual platforms, the group creates an imagined community for the participants to share their beliefs and dreams freely.

Keywords: cultural hybridization, gender performance, Hong Kong Lolita, personal identity, subculture, subcultural history

Introduction

Lolita, with the doll-like and Western classical costumes, was a Japanese born youth subculture around the 1990s. It is one of the extraordinary examples of global pop-culture, which has been studied and evaluated by media and scholars inside and outside of Japan in recent years. Japan and Hong Kong are geographically close to one another and since the 1970s, Tokyo, the capital city of Japan, initiates popular cultural movements which Hong Kong has followed. For example, Japanese pop music, animations, cosplay, manga, cutie stationary items as well as fashion magazines, are the essential substances for many Hong Kong people, especially children, teenagers and young adults, in their everyday cultural life experiences. As Bridges truly writes “the Hong Kong people’s “eagerness” to embrace Japanese-style popular culture and consumer culture which emerged so strongly during the 1990s” (2003, p.1055). Although, the flow of popular culture and commercial culture reached its peak during the 1990s, it is continually growing steadily. Therefore, it is not surprising that Lolita subculture has emanated and developed in Hong Kong for over twenty years since it was first introduced from Japan at the beginning of 2000.

By adopting Western clothing styles from Rococo (1750s-1880s)¹ and the Victorian period (1830s-1900s)², this group of young women present themselves as “Urban Princesses” in various subgenres of clothing style (Gagné, 2008). They usually communicate with each other through on-line platforms or organizing activities in private locations /settings, such as tea parties, private photo shooting in clubhouses or parks. In Hong Kong, some of the senior participants have turned from mid-teens to youth and from youth to more mature adults or mothers, however, for some reason, they are still playing active roles in relation to newly joining members.

Given the brief background of Lolita subculture from above, our research aims are: First, to review concepts and meanings of Lolita subculture which are commonly perceived by intellectuals within the field of youth subculture. Second, to explore the development of Lolita subculture in Hong Kong in the past two decades. Third, to analyze the impacts and significance of Hong Kong Lolita phenomenon from historical, social and cultural perspectives.

Methodologically, ethnographic data which was taken from semi-structured face-to-face interviews with six Lolitas in 2017 are used. Group interviews with the core administrative members from a very popular online virtual community “HK Lolita” were also conducted. We collected data that essentially focused on the historical development of Hong Kong Lolita (phenomenon) from the time it first appeared in Hong Kong. Other data were mainly assembled by voice-message interviews via Facebook Messenger as well as reviewing key blogs that were written by the Lolita fandoms. We also use data from a pilot study which was conducted and collected during 2014 and 2015, because it helped to provide a general background of population, nature and characteristic of Hong Kong Lolita. To protect the personal identity of the informants, all personal names of Lolitas that appear in this paper are pseudonyms.

By collecting and analyzing the ethnographic data from field observations, interviews and materials from online resources, we came to a conclusion that there are three major epochs of

¹ Rococo fashion style refers to the designs tended to be lavishly ornate, with complex patterns and the finest of materials (Muscato C, 2018).

² Victorian fashion comprises various fashions and trends in British culture. Women usually wore dress with a long, tight, pointed bodice and full skirt supported on many petticoats.

Lolita subculture development in Hong Kong: The Justice Epoch, L.O. Epoch and HK Lolita Epoch. We examine these resources and believe that the development of Hong Kong Lolita has a strong connection with the transformation of media culture nexus. However, there have been very limited studies regarding the development of Hong Kong Lolita from perspectives of cultural and historical investigation. Scholars such as Vera Mackie and Issac Gagné have done extensive work on the study of Lolita subculture. The former contributes by investigating the formation of feminine identities and behaviors of Lolita in recent years (Gagné, 2008; 2010; 2013) whilst the latter focuses on the study of gender and feminism of Japanese women (Mackie, 2009; 2012; 2015). Their perspectives are from a western point of view and their focus were mainly on Japanese Lolita subculture development. As regards the development of Lolita subculture in Hong Kong, Helena Kwong has written an article on the identities and meanings of being a Lolita through interviewing ten Hong Kong Lolitas from secondary schools (Kwong, 2006). There is also a related study which focuses on the construction of a personal and social identity of Lolita through symbolic consumption (Rahman, Liu, Lam and Chan, 2011). However, their discussions about Hong Kong Lolita have not focused much on the macro-aspects of historical and cultural points of view. Therefore, we hope this paper can contribute to knowledge about Lolita subculture in Hong Kong in these aspects, as well as the significances and impacts of its development.

Background

Lolita Subculture and Its Meaning

Generally speaking, “Lolita is a predominantly female subcultural aesthetics whose participants strive to embody a “princess” theme through fashion and mannerisms” (Gagné, 2013, p.1). According to the media theorist and sociologist, Hebdige, subculture is a style that is constructed through a combination of numerous issues predominantly concerned by the youth who have distinct styles, behaviors, and interests. For instance, fashion, animation, dance, music and video games etc. (Hebdige, 1979). Therefore, Lolita is identified as a subculture phenomenon. It was born in Harajuku, Japan and was first introduced by Japanese youth visual rock musicians in performances known as “Visual Kei” in the 1980s.³

In the 1990s, the name of the Japanese Lolita subculture has created a new meaning that matches its original idea - “reflecting a modest, innocent, graceful, polite, and Kawaii image of a Japanese Lolita” (Winge, 2008, p. 50). Lolita group (male and female) continue to expand in major global cities, such as Seoul, Shanghai, Los Angeles, London, Paris and even in Scandinavia, e.g. Finland and Sweden. They usually communicate with each other through on-line platforms or organizing activities in private locations /settings, such as tea parties, private photo shooting various places. Nevertheless, in the very beginning Lolita subculture was disregarded by most Western countries. Although, younger age groups might learnt about this subculture through online platforms or magazines, such as *Gothic & Lolita Bible*⁴, it only drew many people’s attention and became internationally visible after the film *Shimotsuma Monogatari (aka Kamikaze Girls)* was broadcast in 2004. By adopting the best-selling novel of Japanese “maiden” subculture written by Takemoto Novala, the film became a box-office hit in Japan and a cult film in the West. The story showcases the friendship of two young girls

³ Visual Kei refers to “visual system” in Japanese, and the Visual Kei musical artists usually associate theatrical costumes and concert performances with an eclectic music on stage (Gagné, 2008).

⁴ This Japanese fashion magazine and book was founded in 2001. It focuses on the Gothic and Lolita fashions news and information. However, the first English-language volume was published seven years later. See (*Gothic & Lolita Bible*, 2020, August 3, in Wikipedia) for more information.

who come from entirely different backgrounds. One of them is a Yankī biker,⁵ whereas the other is a Lolita.

As for Lolita, it is known as a fashion from Japan that attempts to capture the innocence of youth, and nostalgia for the 19th century (Ann, 2005). The participants perform themselves as the noble women, by wearing European clothing styles, in the 17th to 18th centuries. Usually, the dresses were decorated with lace and ribbons along with bell-shaped sleeves (Breward, 1995). Accessories such as hats which were trimmed with feathers, flowers, and ribbons were always worn. Therefore, the design of Lolita fashion has strong associations with the fashion styles. With the Japanese emphasis on cuteness and modesty, a cultural hybrid was created, such as Sweet Lolita, Punk Lolita, Gothic Lolita, Classic Lolita, etc. Furthermore, Lolita fashion has been elevated to the status of art when nine outfits of Lolita fashion, the “Kitty and the Bulldog” exhibition, were displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London during 2012 and 2013. These outfits, including Gothic Lolita and Sweet Lolita were bought in 2011 from Tokyo, which emphasized the connections between British traditional fashion design and Japanese street style.⁶ As posted by the V&A (2012) on their official webpage for the exhibition:

A striking feature of Lolita fashion is the extent to which it is influenced by British culture: Alice in Wonderland, Glam Rock, the New Romantics, Gothic, Punk and Vivienne Westwood....

However, Lolita also refers to a nickname for Delores in Nabokov’s book *Lolita* featuring a preadolescent girl who is attractive and sexually responsive (Bishop, 2004). A further explanation concerning the connotations of Lolita will be presented in the following.

A Review on Lolita Subculture Studies

Lolita, fundamentally a girl’s name in English, is perceived quite differently in the West. The name is habitually associated with the title character in Nabokov’s novel by the same name. The novel depicts Humbert Humbert (aged 37) as an émigré academic scholar and admitted pedophile (Nabokov, 1997). He is obsessed with a 12-year-old girl, Dolores Haze, whom he recognizes as a “nymphet”. He becomes sexually involved with Dolores after he becomes her stepfather, and Humbert bestows upon Dolores a private name, “Lolita”. Therefore, the term “Lolita” implies a man’s sexual attraction to adolescent girls in Western countries.

McVeigh, who analyzed the cute and fancy Lolita look, from psychological perspectives, characterized the doll-like and innocent features, to be considered sexy from “a Western perspective – a particular type of euro-kawaii” (2014, p.176). This is because people associate certain type of fixed female dress with images, such as skirts with lace, rose flora pattern garments (McVeigh, 2000). With this view, Lolita and their dress may be associated as sexy and glamour from the male gaze in Western societies. However, as for the Lolita participant, her subjective intention may be different when girls read about other girls. It attains her self-identity from her relationship with other members of the Lolita subculture, that is, “Not-Yanki”. It discards anything excessively masculine and sexual implications (Mackie, 2012). Our informants also deny that there is any intended sexual connotation in the Lolita subculture. As our informants responded:

⁵ A Yanki is a subculture that was popular in Japan in the 1980’s and 1990’s. It is ordinarily used as a nickname referring to Northern soldiers during the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865.

⁶ See more information from the V&A (2012) “Lolita Fashion: Japanese Street Style”.

Outsiders should not regard “Lolita” as synonymous with a sexualized view of young girls. This is a really big misunderstanding. (Selo)

I don’t like people who links us with assisted dating, and we are not, of course! (Chacha)

According to Winge, Lolitas are usually young women “who dress in cute and modest fashion style without the overly sexualized appearance typically associated with Nabokov’s Lolita” (Winge, 2008, p. 47-48). Gagné (2008) also states that Lolitas have attempted to avoid the conflation of rorikon “Lolita Complex” by adopting nonstandard way of writing the word (rorita) for an alternate phonetic to enunciate the “kon” sound in the word.⁷ The generation of Lolita, therefore, is regarded as a “*movement represents a similarly powerful rebellion against the conventions of contemporary society*” (V&A, 2012). For instance, it might be partly produced to fight for the growing exposure of the female body in contemporary society. In many Western societies, the contemporary ideal feminine beauty is slim, fresh, sexy and young looking as it is represented (Abramson, 1995; Fitts & O’Brien, 2009). By creating themselves as a sweet and cute feminine image, which might carry furtive meanings, Lolita subculture expresses its resistance to the social order that defines their subordination. From this point, the construction of Lolita identity appears to be breaking down social rules and norms by challenging hegemony with its unique style – a practice that is very much against the grain of the majority (Cohen, 1997).

Unquestionably, discussions around Lolita become more prominent among researchers in the field of fashion and socio-cultural studies in recent years (Gagné, 2010, 2013; Winge, 2008; Bergstrom, 2011; Porzio, 2012). Theresa Winge (2008, p.62), for instance, judges that the performance of the Japanese Lolita subculture “creates a visual form of resistance against culture and provides both the subculture and its members with agency and identity”. Mackie (2009) interoperates that Lolita is a response against becoming a grown-up woman. Gagné (2013), also perceives the hyperfeminine aesthetics and shōjo-like⁸ behaviours of Lolita, actually reflecting young girls’ reactive fears against growing up and becoming adult women. Lolita has usually been perceived as mirroring the participant’s negation of maturity and social conformity to the normative mode of femininity (Matsuura, 2007; Monden, 2013). As shown in field observations, Lolita participants are not necessarily slim and or have tiny waists. They do not aim to attract the male gaze, but just want to create a cute childlike look as an expression of being a free person for choosing her/ his self-identity. Therefore, Lolita is not purely a choice of clothing, it also expresses their identity and lifestyle (Godoy, 2007). Nonetheless, there are no significant investigations on the historical and the impacts of its development in Hong Kong yet.

Lolita in Hong Kong

Lolita subculture has developed in Hong Kong for almost twenty years. It is estimated to be around three hundred active participants and two hundred passive participates,⁹ and the age range is from 15 to 40. In a population of about five hundred Hong Kong Lolitas, around 10%

⁷ Rori-kon (also abbreviated to Loli-con), which refers to middle aged men who have an interest in younger women (Kinsella, 2006).

⁸ In Japanese, shōjo refers specifically to a young woman approximately 7–18 years old. See Daijisen (大辞泉) for more information.

⁹ Active participates refers to Lolitas who dress in Lolita clothes and join activities physically (such as tea parties or fashion shows), while passive participates are refers to those who are active in online platforms.

of them are Brolitas.¹⁰ The data was revealed by four Lolita participants from the previous pilot study between 2014 and 2015, which helped to make available an inclusive background of population, nature and characteristics of Hong Kong Lolita. In recent years, not many of Lolita participants have physically presented themselves in the streets or their appearance being reported by the media. Rather, they choose on-line platforms and private locations for communication and gatherings.

Methods & Data Collection

Procedure

Based on the data collected in the pilot study mentioned above, specific interview questions for this research were set and sent via email or Facebook to the respondents before the interview. The purpose of the interview is to answer the research questions of the study and the main selected interview questions include:

1. What motivates you to adopt the Lolita style over many years?
2. From your own understanding and experience, what are the changes of Hong Kong Lolita over the past two decades?
3. What kinds of virtual/ visual resources that you have been using for the references in creating your Lolita style?

Face-to-face group interviews were conducted in cafés in July 2017 (Figure 1) and August 2017 (Figure 2). The researcher (this first author) then, made further individual interviews via phone, WhatsApp and Facebook in the following few months to follow up and confirm the accuracy with respondents. A summary of the selected data from all interviews with six Lolita participants from June to December 2017 shows in Table 1.

Figure 1

Group Interview with HK Lolita Administrative Members



¹⁰ “Brolita” is a name given to the male Lolita in the Lolita community; he dresses like a female Lolita.

Figure 2
Group Interview with Male and Female Lolitas



Table 1
A Summary of the Selected Data of the Six Lolita Respondents

Participant	Vini	Selo	Cat	SanSan	Angel	Kun
Age	29	29	33	32	34	34
Gender	F	F	F	F	M	M
Joining Lolita group at age	19	19	20	24	26	25
Education	Diploma	Master Degree	Degree	Master Degree	Degree	Diploma
Career	Design	Engineering	Design	Engineering	Engineering	Train Captain
Marriage /Child	Single	Married	Single	Married	Married	Single

As indicated from the data collected, the Lolita group acquire particular techniques for putting on makeup; learn what specific behaviours they should follow; study the history of Rocco and Victorian clothing style; design fancy Lolita accessories; search and purchase the limited design Lolita items from famous fashion bands within the group; attend tea parties and fashion shows etc. These activities usually mean large expenses of money and time that allow them to attain an “ideal-self”, which could not be reached in real life. For example, when they responded to the interview question: “What motivates you to adopt the Lolita style over many years”? One of the responds said:

It makes you look more beautiful, just like a princess that is the main reason for wearing Lolita dress. (Cat)

Creating their own unique dress or accessories also helps to express their personality and individuality (Rahman, Liu, Lam, & Chan 2011). As my respondents, Selo and Kele, who expressed that they would like to design their own outfits and accessories for matching the style of their dresses when they joined group activities. These items can be seen on their online social platforms for voting and selling. Such DIY practices of designing and creating their outfits are not common in other subcultures, and as seen from the photos posted on their social webpages, various activities such as market-fairs, café gatherings for dress swapping or inviting models or designers from Japan for special events have been organized. Our respondents expressed during interviews:

I always search posts from my favourite brands online or webpages for the updated styles and accessories, where I can also buy or sell second-hand dresses as well. (Vini)

You could hardly organize any events for our group activities without using online platforms...it has been always significant regardless the changes of the names or the structures of those platforms over the time. (Selo)

These online activities suggest that the Lolita group not just make good use of visual resources, but also virtual resources to create platforms for communication and business opportunities. From the data collected, we observed that the use of internet resources marks substantial changes of Lolita ecology in the past decades.

Data Analysis and Discussion

After providing the background information of Lolita subculture and its significations within scholarly discourses from above, together with the data collected from the interviews we can conclude and advocate that there are three significant epochs of Lolita subcultural development in Hong Kong. The three major periods are: The Justice Epoch, LO Epoch and HK Lolita Epoch. Detailed elaboration and analysis are discussed in the following.

Stage One: The Justice Epoch (2000-2005)

The Justice Epoch, as the respondents described, was the period starting around 2000 when the Lolita participants were scattered with a small population of around 20-50 and did not become a fully-fledged Lolita community yet. The term Justice was borrowed from an online virtual community platform called “Justice Forum 正義論壇” which was founded in 2004.¹¹ This was the most popular time of the forum engaging 2,497 online viewers and a total of 20,000 online page visitors. At that time the age range of the Lolita group was not as extensive as today, which was mainly from 15 to 20 years old, and rarely to see a Lolita who is over the age of 20.

Justice Forum provided an online platform for people who were interested in Lolita, Pullip doll and video game entertainment.¹² Lolita fans were attracted to join the community because it provided a lot of information about the latest Lolita fashion style, news and shops, and so on. In this first stage, Lolita was almost unnoticed by the Hong Kong public. Most of the participants were originally interested in frolicking Super Dollfies (SD) or members who were

¹¹ Justice Forum was online social platform found in 2004, which mainly provided information about animations, video games, leisure, for the members.

¹² Pullip a fashion doll created by Cheonsang Cheonha of South Korea in 2003. It was first marketed by Jun Planning out of Japan. Visit <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pullip> for more information.

active Cosplayers¹³. This can explain why the SD was typically considered as the right accessory for a Lolita doll (Staite, 2013).

At that time, it was very difficult to find Lolita clothing shops in the market. Because of the limited choice of Lolita fashion shops available in Hong Kong, and the cost of ordering the Lolita outfits from Japan was extremely expensive, many Hong Kong Lolitas preferred to make their own clothes, or accessories to attain the Lolita look. To some extent, such practices of homemade clothing also create a higher self-esteem and sense of satisfaction for the participants. As Simon Jones (1996) rightly perceives,

There are a significant minority of young people who sew and knit their own clothes for reasons (...) There is a symbolic as well as practical pleasure and sense of fulfillment for young people in being able to use their own manual skills and resources to make their own clothes (p.15).

Therefore, by reading magazines concerning Lolita clothes-making, in particular, Gothic & Lolita Bible, and surfing other online resources, participants in the Justice Epoch achieved their ideal look. Magazines were not physically available for purchase in the local market scene; they were bought only via online sources. Later on, some Lolita clothes appeared in shops in Tsim Sha Tsui,¹⁴ that is, Emily Temple and Shirley Temple¹⁵, which is actually mainly selling more affluent children's clothes.

At this stage, the participants were very cautious about how to perform themselves as a proper Lolita. For example, as explained by one of the senior participants (who have haven joined Lolita group over 10 years), in order to be a proper Lolita, they would follow all steps and suggestions that were recorded in those Japanese magazines. For unknown reasons, however, this virtual group faded away at the end of 2007. Then, many of the Lolita participants began to join the Lolita Online (LO) virtual community to continue being informed and updated with events or activities within the group.¹⁶

Stage Two: LO Epoch (2005-2010)

Lolita Online (LO) was founded 24 December 2005. It was a Hong Kong based international virtual community for Lolitas and attracted around 1,500 online visitors who were essentially interested in searching information relating to Lolita issues. Therefore, it attracts not only Hong Kong Lolitas, but also Lolitas outside Hong Kong. During this period, participants generally cared much about what “proper Lolita” is and what is not. “Proper” means original and spiritual, which emphasized the embracement of value and quality for being a proper Lolita. For example, in one of the blogs (posted on the 7th August 2005), which discusses the differences between a proper Lolita, cosplayer and MK Lolita in detail. This was because many Lolita participants wanted to maintain the elegant and noble image of a Lolita.

MK Lolita is a term specifically used for describing a negative comment for the image of Lolita in Hong Kong. MK is a local terminology which refers to Mong Kok Culture. Mong Kok is a

¹³ Super Dollfie, often abbreviated SD, is a brand of ball-jointed doll, or BJD, made by the Japanese company Volks.

¹⁴ Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) is an urban commercial area in southern Kowloon, Hong Kong.

¹⁵ Originally, Shirley Temple (named after the child film star) began as a kid's brand in the 1970s. It has a sister line to Emily Temple Cute. It is believed that the original customers grew up but wanted to keep wearing the little girlish styles (Carmina, 2008).

¹⁶ Lolita Online (LO), the forum had its original name called Headdress Online.

dynamic and complex place where old and new multi-story buildings filled with commercial offices buildings, shops and restaurants co-exist. It is also a popular place for young people to socialize and it has a history of the underground gang world called the Triads. Mong Kok has been depicted in triad films, as an area that the triads are highly active, and the clothing style of the triads has been denoted as MK style. Young people who try to imitate this style is called MK guys or MK girls. Here, MK Lolita implies a kind of lower class, uneducated, bad mannered Lolita.

As described by some of the blog writers of the community, the original Lolita look is a full set of Lolita clothing items from head to toe, including every detail, that is, wigs, make-up, and the patterns on the dresses and shoe style. Ideally, the dress, accessories or clothes should be imported from Japan's famous brands, such as Baby¹⁷ and Jane Marple, or at least clothes with fine qualities. Besides, the Lolita outfit should be worn in a proper manner, which means the air of "princess" or a girl from a "noble" class is an essential "spirit" of a true Lolita. This view is also verified by Gagné, as his informants repeatedly told him that, "Lolita is about having a Lolita spirit, which includes being "princess-like" regardless of the actual situations they are in"¹⁸ (Gagné, 2003).

In mid-2005, the film *Kamikaze Girls*, which was sponsored by "Baby", was broadcasted in Hong Kong. Same as in Japan, Lolita culture reached its peak in popularity and it was repeatedly reported by local media: magazines (e.g. Tong Touch and Next Digital), newspapers (e.g. SCMP and Oriental Daily), and television programmes (e.g. Sunday Report and Hong Kong Connection by TVB Jade).¹⁹ Since then, more and more fashion shops began selling the Lolita dress; accessories etc, in Mong Kok and other popular areas, such as Causeway Bay. Among the shops, there are two representative local Lolita shops: Spider and Lolita in Touch (LIT). Spider mainly features a black colour tone as their theme for designing elegant and luxury Lolita clothes. Conversely, LIT mainly focuses on Kawaii and girly elements.²⁰ These two shops are very popular within the Lolita group in Hong Kong. Take an example from one of the participants Kiri. She was interviewed by the local HK broadcast channels TVB on July 2015 and appeared on one of its many programmes "the Sunday Report", when she shared her 5-year Lolita life experience. She noticed that both Spider and LIT were very popular shops for Hong Kong Lolitas (including herself), because the quality was much better than those dresses that were made by themselves; however, the price is relatively cheaper than those famous brands imported from Japan.

Because there were some arguments over the post messages among the administrative members within the group, and because many visitors used Facebook for communications more often, some of the previous members of LO came to create a new group on Facebook, which led to the third stage of development.²¹

¹⁷ The original name of "Baby" is "Baby, the Stars Shine Bright", which has been shortened by the insiders.

¹⁸ "Princess-like" means a Lolita should behave well, speak well, and dress in a decent way.

¹⁹ "Sunday Report" is the TVB News Cantonese programs which aired since 1987. It is mainly investigating current social and cultural issues in a thematic way.

²⁰ Kawaii is translated as "cuteness", it is one of the most frequently used Japanese words.

²¹ Some of informants expressed that, it was actually due to arguments (e.g. the selection of posted images and online business issues) between the members and the administrators of the forum. Therefore, many members from LO shifted to the other online platforms.

Stage Three: HK Lolita Epoch (2010-Present)

The third stage can be understood as the current stage, and the name is drawn from the HK Lolita 公開專頁 (Figure 3),²² is a non-profit making group which was founded in September, 2011. Their goal of creating this virtual community is first to: “Provide Lolita Information, eliminate misunderstanding from Lolita Culture” and second is to “Regularly update the Lolita events and parties based in HK”. One of our informants, who is also an administrative staff of the community group, expressed that: because Facebook is more popular and being used by many Lolitas, they invited the previous members from the LO group, and transferred most of the members into the HK Lolita virtual community (over 3,000 visitors). They also strategically divided the visitors into three sub-groups under HK Lolita, and they are: (1) Lolita (insider only), (2) Overseas Lolita (founded in May 2016) and (3) HK Lolita second-hand platform (over 3,000 members), it attempts to provide a platform for selling and buying secondhand Lolita clothes.

Figure 3

HK Lolita Facebook Profile



Various gatherings (e.g. tea parties and workshops) are organized each month, which is referred to as: “call-monthly-gathering-invite as a way to unite group members and a chance to invite other Lolitas to join the group. Around 2013, HK Lolita Facebook page opened the page to the public. This was to provide more information for people who are interested in Lolita and invite others to organize market fairs, public activities such as models to visit Hong Kong and showcase the Lolita clothes, demonstrate how to use and wear makeup and/or accessories and to experiment being a Lolita. “When I was around 20 years old, many of my Lolita friends, including myself are “transforming”,” expressed by our informant Ali. She goes on to describe:

“Before we were wearing very girly accessories with pink rose and lacy dresses such as a sweet Lolita look – this is the most popular for us. However, we are in our thirties now and some of us are married and have our own children. I prefer to dress in a style that is more elegant and classical”.

Currently, the Lolita clothing style has become less restricted as the previous two stages. We believe that it is a strategy to attract new members which gave them flexibility to try Lolita

²² See (HK Lolita Facebook) for more information.

clothes in a more relaxed manner. Therefore, at this stage of Lolita fashion, many participants mix the Lolita style with their daily clothing.

Apart from the fashion shops, some of the upper floor cafés, such as Sugar Factory Café, founded in May 2014 and Papillon, founded in January 2015, also emerged and aimed to attract customers who were Lolitas or interested in the Lolita subculture. These cafés are usually run by young Hong Kong entrepreneurs.

Limitations & Reflections

As it is an empirical qualitative research, the research conclusions drawn was based on hard evidence, that is, gathering from Lolitas' real-life experiences from field-observations and individual interviews. In order to collect accurate and reliable information, several interviews had been conducted and ethical issues had been taken into account. Below are the limitations and reflections when conducting interviews and handling data in this study.

Trust

As the term “Lolita” can be perceived in many different ways when referring to western culture, Lolita participants expressed that they had a certain concern. They were worried that we (the researchers) might be spies from local magazines and might abuse their photos and data for other purposes that might harm their image. Alternatively, we have to judge whether the information they provided is true or not. Thus, mutual trust between the interviewees and the interviewer needs to be handled carefully, and indeed, it had taken a long time to build up and maintain the trust with the respondents.

Accurate Transcriptions and Interpretations

It is difficult to guarantee correct transcriptions or interpretations from the data because the understanding might vary between the insider (participants) and the outsider (researcher). Minh-Ha in her article “Outside In Inside Out” (1988) suggests, a good ethnographical anthropologist research is to represent others (insiders), and to be their loyal interpreters. In order to get the native points of view from the participants be their trustworthy interpreters, the techniques of coding need to be carefully reviewed and checked for achieving a better interpretation and accurate data analysis (McManus, 2003). This is because many of the specific terms, which were used within the Lolita subcultural group, especially some of the terms based on very local Hong Kong cultural context, could work in a very different way from our common understanding.

Ethical Concerns

Sometimes, it is hard to decide whether it is ethical to use certain data or not. For example, there are personal views on specific issues and photos posted by our informants that we found on public webpages. Although data from public websites and the information is supposed to be open to the community, for example, the HK Lolita, there is still an ethical concern as to how such information can be used. Hence, permission is still needed to use the information as the participant's wish should be fully respected. This is especially vital to male Lolita (Brolita) informants as they are relatively more sensitive about the disclosure of personal information.

For instance, one of the Brolitas interviewees told us his real-life story and his reason for being a Lolita. Although his life experience story was very inspiring and worth studying for LGBTQ inquiries within in Lolita subculture, the interviewee finally did not approve that we could use the data in this study. This challenge is taking into account in this study because Brolita could

possibly be identified as vulnerable populations as LGBTQ²³ within Lolita subcultural population. It is emphasized that, “research with minority groups is “necessarily an ethical and political intervention with participants” (Walsh-Bowers and Parlour, 1992, p.109) and as such the researcher should take specific steps to prevent harm to research participants and their environments” (Price, p.17). Therefore, specific following work might have to be done to seek the trust and permission for the particular data collection and analysis in the future.

Significance and Conclusion

McRobbie (1998) wrote that youth subcultures are symbolically engaged in their output of cultural forms, they naturally come to represent a particular historical moment and its generation. Based on the above discussion about the three stages of development of Hong Kong Lolita subculture, we can come to a conclusion about this subculture as below.

Changes of Online Practices Led to the Changes of Creative Activities

One of the significances of the Hong Kong Lolita development is the modifications of online platform practices leading to changes of creative activities within the group. In stage one, that is, the Justice Epoch (2000-2005), Lolita participants were relatively playing a passive role in terms of using online resources. Justice Forum was the dominate online virtual community platform providing information for the online users who were interested in Pullip doll and video game entertainment, but not just limited to Lolita subculture. They mainly collected and learnt about the latest Lolita fashion style, news and shops from these specific webpages and also relied on online magazine information. They were more enthusiastic to create their own DIY Lolita dresses and accessories. It was more common for the group to exchange information, such as where to get materials for dress making and which magazines revealed the most updated design through virtual space.

In the stage of LO Epoch (2005-2010), Hong Kong Lolita group drew much attention in the media, and it led the group to reach its golden era. This was because a number of media from local magazines, TV companies and online platforms made interviews with different Lolita participants. At this stage, because of the frequent exposure to the public through media interviews, participants normally pay much attention to formal Lolita style. By actively searching information about Japanese famous brands and Lolita activities via online platforms, participants would have debates on what are the proper style and the proper manners to be a Lolita. Local Lolita shops such as, Spider and LIT started their online business too. They promoted their Lolita products by using online platforms and selling advertising in local youth magazines for reaching their potential customers effectively.

In stage three, that is, the HK Lolita Epoch (2010-present), the group expands and transforms into new groups because the change of the virtual spaces and communities. Some of sub-groups have been formed under the online leading group: HK Lolita. Lolita participants are no longer just making clothes or accessories for themselves, but they are playing a very active role in using online platforms for selling and promoting Lolita theme activities. Some Lolitas would re-make or re-design other dresses to form a unique Lolita dress which suites their ideal style. These “art pieces” usually got lots of positive feedbacks (i.e. many “likes” and “hearts”) from other Facebook users. For example, our informant Kele (Figure 4), who has posted photos of

²³ LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning. See (Petro, 2014; Price, 2011, p.7) for more information.

her own well-designed corsets, earrings and hair pins on the HK Lolita (Facebook) for sharing and selling. She gains much satisfaction in her creative amateur designer identity, as Kele states:

“Lolita online platforms really enables me to retain my own interest and earn some pocket money and most importantly, make me feel greatly fulfilled. It was very rewarding when I received positive comments and request for purchasing my self-designed accessories from my Lolita friends”.

Figure 4

Accessories Made by our Informant, Kele, for Qi Lolita



A Form of Cultural Hybridization

Lolita culture in Hong Kong can correspondingly be understood as a culturally hybridized form for it consists of interactions between a Western classical clothing style and the Japanese aesthetical concept of cuteness (Kawaii). Because of the great success of the Meiji Restoration around 1860s to 1890s,²⁴ Japan become much stronger in economics, political and cultural developments when compared with other Asian countries in the 19th and 20th centuries. Its cultural soft power was influential on other countries and places, including Hong Kong. Historically, the involvement in and influence of Japan on Hong Kong has been strong and remains ever so since post-war period after the end of the Japanese occupation. Lolita fashion style which is well accepted by a group of teenagers (especially girls) or young adults has established a unique position in Hong Kong youth subcultural history. Hong Kong Lolita also enhances the original Lolita style by combining traditional Chinese Qipao style into the new design called Qi Lolita,²⁵ or even the negative localized style, which is mentioned above, MK Lolita.

An Imagined Virtual Community

Since the 2010's the members of Lolita subcultural groups found a web of imagined spatial connections via Facebook and other online platforms. This spatial connection allows the participants to share similar interests, values and views on Lolita fashion style no matter where

²⁴ During the Meiji Restoration, the leaders acted in the name of restoring imperial rule to strengthen Japan against the threat represented by the colonial powers. See (Kissinger, 2011) for more information.

²⁵ Qipao is also called Cheongsam or mandarin gown. It is a popular traditional female body-hugging dress in China during 1920s-1960s.

their physical locations are. Therefore, the existence of online virtual communication platforms is nursing the development of the Hong Kong Lolita community ecologically. As Gagné states, “gathering at such spaces on online virtual community sites reflected an inherently social desire and purpose where they could reaffirm that there were others who had similar aesthetics” (2013, p.6).

Undeniably, the virtual platform accelerates not only the growth of Lolita subculture, but also enables the group to express personal interests, ideas towards life and people, and most importantly it also helps the participants to construct their specific identities. For example, Kun, who is a Brolita as well as a train captain, usually posts updated news about his job duty, details about services disruption of lines and expresses his view towards customers and the train company in rather humorous ways (sometimes also comprises vulgar words). This forms an interesting identity of a train Brolita within the group.

In short, the virtual platform has a very solid connection with Hong Kong Lolita identity formation and development since the birth of Justice Forum in 2000. The three stages of Hong Kong Lolita development show that the virtual space is very “real” to this subcultural community. Real-life Lollitas rely on the e-platform to exchange formation about activities and exchange ideas, and most importantly, to swap Lolita fashion products and express their views on different aspects in life. We believe Lolita subculture will continue to exist and nourished by the virtual postmodern space.

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Illustrations

Figure 1	Group Interview with the administrative members of HK Lolita at Papillon Café, Mong Kok 帕比安紅茶書室	Photo by Lolita Participant (30 July 2017)
Figure 2	Group interview with male Lolita and female Lolita at Sugar Factory Café (a maid cafe in Mong Kok)	Photo by Lolita Participant (18 August 2017)
Figure 3	HK Lolita (Facebook Profile Photo)	https://www.facebook.com/hklolita/ online accessed 12/10/2019
Figure 4	Accessories, made by our informant, Kele for Qi Lolita sold in a Lolita Market Garden in October 2016, at the plaza D2 place, The space, Lai Chi Kok, Kowloon	Photo by S.F.Wong (2 nd October 2016)

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