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INTENTIONAL INVISIBILIZATION IN MODERN ASIAN HISTORY: CONCEALING AND SELF-CONCEALED AGENTS

Edited by Mònica Ginés-Blasi

DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES

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Intentional Invisibilization in Modern Asian History: Concealing and Self-Concealed Agents

Dependency and Slavery Studies

Edited by
Jeannine Bischoff and Stephan Conermann

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The production of this book developed out of my early participation in the project 'Taphonomies of Cross-cultural Knowledge' (TACK) of the research group 'ALTER: Crisis, Otherness and Representation' at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Barcelona).[1] Coming from a previous focus on the history of Sino-Spanish relations, the group's Principal Investigators, David Martínez-Robles and Carles Prado-Fonts, brought together a number of researchers interested in Asian studies – yet with varied interdisciplinary expertise – to create this collective project. TACK analyzed the hidden agencies which intervened in cross-cultural interactions between Spain and China.[2] Their project borrowed the term 'taphonomy' from palaeontology and archaeology as a metaphoric standpoint to address 'absence' in history-making. Taphonomy is a science dedicated to studying how things enter the grave and, by extension, how things do or not enter the fossil record.[3] In their project, Prado-Fonts and Martínez-Robles use the term 'taphonomy' as an analogy – originally suggested by the historian Tom S. Mullaney – of generating new historical understandings about what is absent in history by looking at what is left from its void.[4] As my contribution came from the study of labour migration and human trafficking, I became increasingly interested in the way both human traffickers

1 'Taphonomies of Cross-Cultural Knowledge: Interactions between Europe and East Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries (TACK),' Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (PID2019-108637GB-I00), 2020–2023.

2 The previous project of the group, entitled 'Interacciones entre España y China en la Época Contemporánea' produced, among others, the digital archive "Archivo China-España (ACE)," 2013, http://ace.uoc.edu [accessed 14.08.2024]; and the collective volume Xavier Ortells-Nicolau, ed., *En el País de los Chinos. Relaciones Sino-Españolas y Cosmopolitismo Periférico. 1850–1950* (Granada: Comares, 2023).

3 Richard Lee Lyman, "What Taphonomy Is, What it Isn't, and Why Taphonomists Should Care about the Difference," *Journal of Taphonomy* 8, no. 1 (2010): 1–16; Ronald E. Martin, *Taphonomy: A Process Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Sixto Rafael Fernández-López, "La Evolución Tafonómica (Un Planteamiento Neodarwinista)," *Boletín de La Real Sociedad Española de Historia Natural (Sección Geológica)* 79 (1981): 243–54; Sixto Rafael Fernández-López, "Temas de Tafonomía," Departamento de Paleontología, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2000.

4 Even though neither Prado-Fonts nor Martínez-Robles have directly published about the concept of disappearance or absence in history, their work is deeply informed by theories which relate knowledge production, cross-cultural representation, circulation of people and ideas, colonialism and imperialism, as well as taxonomy. See, for example, Carles Prado-Fonts, "Inventing Reality: Obstinate Orientalism in Victor Segalen's René Leys," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 59, no. 2 (2023): 1–14; *Secondhand China: Spain, the East, and the Politics of Translation* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2022); *Regresar a China* (Madrid: Trotta Madrid, 2019); "Writing China from the Rest of the West: Travels and Transculturation in 1920s Spain," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (2018): 175–89; David Martinez-Robles, "Language as Imperial Battlefield: The Case of El Intérprete Chino," *Language & History* (2022): 1–19; Carles Brasó-Broggi and David Martínez-Robles, "Beyond Colonial Dichotomies: The Deficits of Spain and the Peripheral Powers in Treaty-Port China," *Modern Asian Studies* (2018): 1–26; David Martínez-Robles, "Constructing Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century China: The Negotiation of Reciprocity in the Sino-Spanish Treaty of 1864," *The International History Review* 5332

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and the victims of human trafficking often conceal their activities, themselves, or others – for instance to avoid regulations, taxes, the law, or any other form of control. While drifting away from TACK's original terminology, this volume is based on this understanding of disappearance to tackle what I call 'concealing' and 'self-concealing agents': the actors responsible for the disappearance of information about themselves or about others.

This volume thus focuses on invisibilization, disappearance, concealment and silencing in history and historiography through multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary analysis ranging from history, sociology, translation studies and archival sciences to digital humanities. To do so, I gathered a group of scholars who are each specialized in their own fields, yet share the common background and interest in Asian studies, coercion and dependency, and who, as a group, would rethink their research in terms of concealment and invisibilization. To take our inquiry further, we met at the international conference, *Concealing Agents: Intentional Processes of Invisibilization in Modern Asian History*, held at the Institut d'Asie Orientale (IAO) of the École Normale Supérieur de Lyon (ENS) in Lyon on 27 and 28 April 2023. This event and the production of this volume have received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme as well as from the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (University of Bonn).[5]

Rooted in the belief that serious research into and theorization of invisibilization and concealment must be tackled from a broad and diverse range of disciplines and fields of study, the scholars invited to present and discuss the papers at the conference came from wider multidisciplinary backgrounds in the humanities and the social sciences, such as anthropology (Jérémy Jammes, IAO); sociology (Kanako Takeda, IAO); economy (Sylvie Demurger, IAO), Asian, legal and global history (Lisa Hellman, Lund University; Claude Chevaleyre, IAO, Pierre-Emmanuel Bachelet, IAO; Béatrice Jaluzot, IAO), migration history (Philippe Rygiel, ENS), and slavery and dependency studies (Stephan Connerman, BCDSS) – I am truly grateful for their rich insights. Just as importantly, Camille Fayet's and Zhang Yu's hard work concerning the logistics and organization of the conference was absolutely phenomenal and is equally appreciated.

Finally, I am grateful to the editors of this series and to the various scholars who have provided feedback and comments on the texts of this book: Christian G. de Vito, Christian Haffenden, Manuel Pereda, David Martínez-Robles and Carles Prado-Fonts.

Mònica Ginés-Blasi

(2016): 719–40; *Entre Dos Imperios: Sinibaldo de Mas y La Empresa Colonial En China (1844–1868)* (Madrid : Marcial Pons Historia, 2018).

5 Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 101065464.

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Afterword

Mònica Ginés-Blasi

Introduction: Concealment in Labour Coercion and Dependency in Asia

> The widespread notion of history as
> reminiscence of important past
> experiences is misleading.
>
> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*: 14.

This edited volume addresses invisibilization in both history and historiography as an object of study.[1] The essays in this book focus on the concealment, silencing, absence and disappearance of people, information, and ideas in conventional historiographies, both by present-day actors – such as scholars, archivists and institutions – and by the historical actors themselves. Scholars from the humanities and social sciences have time and again faced the challenge of writing history beyond the constraints and frameworks set through grand narratives and established historiographies.[2] In the past three decades much scholarship has been developed in analogous fields of inquiry. The present collective work adds the novel contribution of focusing on 'concealment' and 'invisibility' to analyze the asymmetrical agency involved in the act of hiding someone or something from being 'inscribed' in the record, and the social marginalization involved in this process.[3] This book approaches the topic from a new angle: it deals with *intentional* concealment in the history of labour coercion and dependency studies. The asymmetry in relations of coercion and bondage renders an ideal model from which to analyze the ways in which narratives, metanarratives, tax-

1 For a theory on invisibility as a critical sociological concept in relation to suffering and marginalization see Benno Herzog, *Invisibilization of Suffering: The Moral Grammar of Disrespect* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

2 Authors who have worked with silencing, invisibilization, disappearance and erasure in grand narratives – regardless of whether they use this terminology explicitly – are Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Silvia Federici, *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women* (Oakland: PM Press, 2018); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004); Johan Fredrikzon and Chris Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies: Excavating the Material Conditions of Memory and Forgetting," *Memory, Mind and Media* 2 (2023): 1–24; Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019).

3 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Fredrikzon and Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies"; Azoulay, *Potential History*; Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For a critical analysis of "invisibilization" see Herzog, *Invisibilization of Suffering*.

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onomies and knowledge structures are created and become established. In these processes, information is also lost or remains concealed.

Whereas most approaches to invisibilization and silencing in history have tended to focus on either the targets of invisibility – that is, the subjects and objects being concealed – or the reasons and consequences related to the silencing of groups of people, the chapters in this book focus instead on those actors who actively conceal, and on the processes of loss, both in history and historiography.[4] They particularly address intentional processes of concealment and *self*-concealment – that is, voluntary and semi-voluntary processes, and the porosity between intentional forms of disappearance and accidental losses.[5] By studying what I call 'concealing', 'self-concealed', and 'invisibilized' agents, this book aims at furthering our understanding of how grand narratives are forged, while, simultaneously, bringing to light the potential to challenge these narratives. In a nutshell, the chapters in this book address social practices in the process of invisibilization through the lens of coercion, bondage, and dependency in Asian history.[6] But this is not just an endeavour to unearth the invisible, or what remains in the shadows – the authors in this book do not only aim at making history from below, decolonizing the narrative, or writing subaltern history; instead, they aim at reflecting on what is left from the process of disappearance. They target the process of knowledge production and knowledge erasure by looking at remains from the void and by reading against the grain.

These essays analyze processes of invisibilization that are the result of intentional human agency. Intentional concealment might target the invisibility of particular people or knowledge. However, invisibility can also be a byproduct of another intentional action not directly targeting concealment. For instance, a non-intentional process of disappearance might be the destruction of a city by an earthquake.[7] Instead, this collaborative work aims at critically analyzing the processes that create knowledge and

4 On the study of silence and disappearance in history, see Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; James Miles, "Historical Silences and the Enduring Power of Counter Storytelling," *Curriculum Inquiry* 49, no. 3 (2019): 253–59; Thomas S. Mullaney, ed., *The Chinese Deathscape: Grave Reform in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

5 These might correlate with the concept of 'calamitous and neglectful erasure' put forward by Fredrikson and Haffendel, see Fredrikzon and Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies: Excavating the Material Conditions of Memory and Forgetting": 15.

6 Cf. Fredrikzon and Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies: Excavating the Material Conditions of Memory and Forgetting."

7 Even though important work has been done to extend the concept of agency to nature and other non-human entities, and thus scholars in this field have argued against the classic understanding of 'agency' as based on human intentionality, natural agency falls out of the scope of this book. See for instance Vinciane Despret, "From Secret Agents to Interagency," *History and Theory* 52, no. 4 (2013): 29–44; Linda Nash, "The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?" *Environmental History* 10, no. 1 (2005): 67–69; Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

knowledge categories, and which might intentionally remove people, information, ideas, and categories from history. These are not isolated processes – they may happen in overlapping layers: from the original concealer (for instance, a human trafficker hiding illicit activities from the law), to the bureaucrat who recorded details and information on circulating labour migrants, to archivists who organized that information, to the researcher and professional historian, and even the institutions that might fund certain research projects rather than others. All of these processes of inscribing and processing information have a previous agenda. The authors in this book look at the backstories of disappearance, at the structures and the processes which make it possible. This volume, thus, addresses the cumulative reasons why concealment happens – particularly when invisibility is created on purpose.

Both historical and historiographical agents explain why certain groups of people, materials and knowledge remain in the shadows of historiography. The contributions in this edited book use in-depth analysis to bring to light intentional processes of invisibilization that allow a comparative analysis across time and space. Together, these essays underscore invisibilization, concealment, silencing and disappearance as intertwined and multi-layered processes that are produced due to the actions of either historical or historiographical agents – and often through the aggregate intervention of both.[8] Thus, disappearance is usually produced by a layering of concealments due to an extremely varied juxtaposition of phenomena, both at a micro-historical level and in relation to large historical processes, as well as at narrative and metanarrative levels.

Inspired by Tom S. Mullaney's work, scholars Carles Prado-Fonts and David Martínez-Robles have previously used the paleontological and archaeological concept of 'taphonomy' – the study of how organisms decay, become fossilized, and enter the fossil record – as a metaphor for how to study historical invisibility and the creation of taxonomies.[9] Just as taphonomy in palaeontology helps to study fossils, taphonomy in historiography tries to understand what led to the disappearance of the material no longer there, by focusing on the blank that is left from its absence. For example, new knowledge can be generated from a corpse lost by decomposition by looking at what is left from its decay; in this case, the grave which the corpse originally occupied. One of the conclusive understandings derived from contributions in this book is that concealment is the result of layer upon layer of loss, hiding and shaping information, which in turn affects the creation of taxonomies and structures of knowledge. Thus, borrowing from the archaeological concept of 'taphonomy', we might think of disappearance as a stratigraphy of concealment.[10] Indeed, the study of absence in history-making has been developed within various fields in the humanities, such as ar-

8 Cf. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*: 27.

9 See Acknowledgements.

10 Richard Lee Lyman, "What Taphonomy Is, What it Isn't, and Why Taphonomists Should Care about the Difference," *Journal of Taphonomy* 8, no. 1 (2010): 1–16; Ronald E. Martin, *Taphonomy: A Process Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

chaeology and memory studies. Both fields mediate the relationship between the material and the immaterial.

In view of this interpretation, this volume's main objective is to integrate previous fields of research into a wider conceptual framework which comprises a more diverse range of forms in which invisibilization in history takes place. These have previously only been developed as – mostly – distinct and separate lines of analysis. Therefore, this book also aims at putting forward a constitutive conceptual framework which comprises these forms of invisibilization, underpinning the connections between these different lines of research. To do so, this collaborative work stands at the intersection between historical theory, the history of labour coercion and dependency studies, Asian studies, sociology, linguistics and translation studies, archival sciences, and digital humanities.

1 Silencing and Disappearance

The study of invisibilized, marginalized and silenced people in historical narratives is certainly not new. In the past three decades, scholars have made an enormous effort to critically analyze the preponderance of Western views, Eurocentrism, the enduring effects of colonialism in the establishment of taxonomies, and decolonizing the archive, the museum, as well as school curricula.[11] Furthermore, invisibility, absence, and disappearance have been addressed by material culture historians, archaeologists and sociologists who use material absence and social invisibility to investigate the consequences of disappearance and erasure in the construction of knowledge structures, taxonomies, and social orders.[12] These authors use material presence and visibility to understand the broader implications of absence. The present collective work stands on their work to build a conceptual frame on intentional invisibilization that can be used as a tool to study absence in history and historiography beyond material erasure and social marginalization.

In the past two decades, scholars in the humanities and social sciences have made important contributions to further our understanding of three concepts closely entwined with invisibility: a) the historical silencing of people as a result of the imposition of power by some groups over others; b) the historization and conceptualization of disappearance and erasure, and c) the effect of colonialism on memory and forgetting, tax-

11 Robert S. Nelson, "The Map of Art History," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 1 (1997): 28–40; Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *Decolonising the University* (London: Pluto Press, 2018); Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

12 Julie de Vos, "The Absence That Will Not Go Away," *Journal of Material Culture* 28, no. 3 (2022): 1–19; Anna Storm and Krister Olsson, "The Pit: Landscape Scars as Potential Cultural Tools," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 19, no. 7 (2013): 692–708; Herzog, *Invisibilization of Suffering*.

onomy and the creation of knowledge infrastructures. The latter particularly affects the way that archives and museums are created, in the way they reproduce the silencing of people and further affect the academic production of history. Good examples are works by Julia Laite, Paul Connerton, Aleida Assmann, Ann M. Blair, while there has been a boom of attention regarding the colonial archive and museum in the last decade.[13] These three areas of study present important grounds for cross-fertilization.

These different takes on absence are highly dependent on and entwined with the terminology which these authors use as a point of departure, and on whether they aim their attention to either concealing agents in history or in historiography. The author whose work is most closely related to this volume's approach is the Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Through a multi-historical focus – yet mostly based on the Haitian Revolution – Trouillot highlights the agency of those who hold 'power' in the production of 'historical truths'. However, he acknowledges that silencing is inherent to the production of history, as the very recording of an event implies leaving behind some of its constitutive parts. Authors working on the intersection between the production of history and power, such as Trouillot, point to the agency of those who have access to power in order to decide also how things are recorded and preserved.[14]

Although he does not mention it explicitly, Trouillot assumes that only those who operate the production of history ultimately correspond to those who asymmetrically hold more power than others in competing groups. Although I acknowledge the relationship between power and the creation of established narratives, I do not fully agree with either the perception that all – intentional – silencing is produced by those in power or that those in power, or, as Trouillot puts it, 'those who won', systematically influence the production of history.[15]

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13 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Mullaney, *The Chinese Deathscape*; Fredrikzon and Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies"; Julia Laite, "The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 4 (2020): 963–89; Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets*; Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 59–71; Aleida Assmann, "Forms of Forgetting," Public Lecture at the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences, 2014, https://h401.org/2014/10/forms-of-forgetting/ [accessed 25.03.2024]; Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Rhiannon Mason and Joanne Sayner, "Bringing Museal Silence into Focus: Eight Ways of Thinking about Silence in Museums," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 1 (2019): 5–20. Regarding decolonization of the archive and the museum, for instance in reference to the recent controversy around the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, see Irene Hilden, *Absent Presences in the Colonial Archive: Dealing with the Berlin Sound Archive's Acoustic Legacies* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022); Dortje Fink, Susanne Müller-Wolff and Amel Ouaissa, eds., *(Post)Colonialism and Cultural Heritage: International Debates at the Humboldt Forum* (Munich: Hanser, 2021).

14 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*: 1–49; Franklin W. Knight, "Review of *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, by M.-R. Trouillot," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (1997): 483–84. A good example is how politics and ideology influence teaching curricula. See Wojciech Józef Burszta, "Silencing the Past, Retrotopia, and Teaching History," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 50 (2018): 1–13.

15 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*: 19.

Indeed, power is omnipresent in all the chapters in this volume. In essence, concealing is exercising power. However, all the following essays show that power manifests in a wide range of forms and can be the result of power dynamics between diverse actors. Thus, departing from Trouillot, I contend firstly that the act of concealing can be independent from social hierarchy. Therefore, those individuals or institutions that are socially more powerful than others are not necessarily responsible for *all* the processes of silencing. My interpretation of power and of 'the state' includes many apparatuses and individuals' agencies, rather than homogeneous and abstract entities.[16] For instance, power is featured in the establishment of regulations, in the creation and handling of records, in colonialism, but also in the use of language to exercise control and in the avoidance of regulations – all of which encompass a wide range of actors and social practices.

Secondly, intentional concealment is not necessarily repressive. For instance, a self-concealed agent might wish to be kept in the shadows if that allows her or him to avoid coercion. Bastiaan Nugteren provides a good example in this volume by showcasing how Chinese circular migrants avoided being inscribed in migration records to gain freedom of mobility. Correspondingly, the other essays in this book show that the range of factors and agents which intervene in the disappearance, concealment and silencing of people and ideas is cumulating and complex. Whereas this book focuses on intentional process of concealment, it also pays attention to accidental or unintentional processes, as they are often entwined. Looking into the reasons why the actors did the silencing from an emic perspective might give us clues about processes of repression at a macro level.

In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Trouillot breaks down the process of silencing in history-making into four steps: firstly, silencing enters the historical process in the production of sources, which corresponds with the moment of fact creation; secondly, the moment of organizing these sources in the creation of the archive; thirdly, the retrieving of the information from the archive, which coincides with the creation of the narrative, and finally, the moment of interpreting and providing significance, which leads to the 'making of *history*'.[17] However, while Trouillot provides a fundamental study of the process of 'silencing' in history, his seminal ideas can be taken further to analyze the different forms of silencing, the diverse agents involved, and the multilayered process of covering and keeping uncovered. Perhaps what remains to be developed from Trouillot's work is a reflection on how

16 Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1978); Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in Its Place* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990). This is not to say that this understanding of the 'state' does not correspond to Trouillot's interpretation. Cf. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind," *Current Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2001): 125–38.

17 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*: 26 (italics in original).

silencing and taxonomies have a mutually invisibilizing effect: silencing creates taxonomies and these simultaneously also invisibilize.

Beyond Trouillot, questions about what enters into, is removed from or stays out of main narratives and knowledge structures have been mainly approached from memory studies – with particular attention to the disappearance of intangible information – as well as material culture and archaeology – which focus on materiality. Memory and forgetting are tightly linked to the notion of collective memory, or *mémoire collective*, which as a term is attributed to Maurice Halbwachs and appeared only in 1925.[18] Studies on the materiality of disappearance highlight the dichotomy between *absence* and *presence*, and have recently particularly called attention to the often-neglected role of the former as a tool for narrative construction as well as repression.[19] The notion of absence as a tool for repression is connected to the concept of *disappearance* – particularly developed in relation to the history of warfare – which evolved in the 1970s into the legal concept of *desaparecido*, that is 'the disappeared' and the forensic category of *desapariciones forzadas* or 'forced disappearances' as a tool for repression during the Argentinian Dirty War under Jorge Videla's dictatorship, as well as in the actions of the states of Cyprus and Chile.[20]

The concept of 'the disappeared' has been used in other contexts, such as in the activist campaigns fighting for the rights of the victims of the Spanish Civil War, during which people were either executed and thrown into ditches by the roadsides as a form of public exhibition, or were picked up at home and executed, to be later thrown into mass graves or buried at unmarked sites.[21] Carles Brasó-Broggi's chapter on 'missing soldiers' due to malnourishment in central China during the Chinese war against Japan provides an interesting counterpart to the concepts of absence and disappearance. Here, what was intentional about the 'disappearance' of young soldiers was not so much the reasons behind their actual deaths or their being reported 'missing', but the act of concealing information about the reasons for their death or disappearance. In this case, disclosing such information transparently or keeping it censored would have had wider political implications in the midst of an international armed conflict. Therefore, concealing and manipulating information on the physical disappearance of people was used with strategic tactical objectives.[22] As a result, his-

18 Nicolas Russell, "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs," *French Review* 79, no. 4 (2006): 792–804; Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

19 De Vos, "The Absence That Will Not Go Away."

20 Johnah S. Rubin, "Aproximación al Concepto de Desaparecido: Reflexiones sobre El Salvador y España," *Alteridades* 25, no. 49 (2015): 9–24.

21 This section follows de Vos, "The Absence That Will Not Go Away": 3.

22 For an example of the use of absence as an analytical tool in another context – in this case the reshaping of European narratives around the great losses produced as a result of the Holocaust – see Julie Kalman and Daniella Doron, "Absence in the Aftermath," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 2 (2017): 197–210.

torians' use of incomplete source material has led to partial, misleading and even biased interpretations and portrayals of a major historical process.

Perhaps because they were developed in relation to relatively recent events in contemporary history, the concepts of disappearance and of *desaparecidos* leads to the question of whether this conceptualization of absence implies knowledge of the previous existence of the disappeared person or object. Something has ceased to 'appear' in the eye of the observer, yet its absence is a 'non-absence', because the observer knows of its earlier 'presence'. This conceptualization implies a continuous temporal trace of visibility or presence in invisibility or absence – a person or body which has been made to disappear is missed in the present. Thus, as Ewa Domanska puts it in the context of the disappeared person in Argentina, 'the disappeared body is a paradigm of the past itself, which is both continuous with the present and discontinuous from it'.[23] In this case, Domanska departs from the oppositional structure of 'present vs absent'. By contrast, the terms suggested in this book, 'concealment' and 'invisibilization', underscore instead the action of hiding – people, objects, animals or immaterial beings and information – which, although present in the past, remain absent in the narrative, and therefore do not enter the taxonomical category, the structure of knowledge and the archival infrastructure. Thus, their concealment has produced partial and incomplete perceptions of micro-historical events and also of major historical processes. Indeed, the fact that we know that something is missing – or 'invisible' – implies that we know of its existence. Yet, this does not mean that knowing of or intuiting its past presence affects the process of history-making. In this sense, the present book offers a methodology and a theoretical framework on which further work can be built.

2 Memory and Erasure Studies

Scholarly attention on remembrance and forgetting has experienced a significant growth in the past two decades as a consequence of contemporary sensitivity on cultural memory and heritage which has accompanied political and academic debates regarding the remnants of Europe and North America's postcolonial responsibilities.[24] Scholars in mem-

23 Ewa Domanska, "The Material Presence of the Past," *History and Theory* 45, no. 3 (2006): 337.

24 For the most up-to-date perspectives on the legacies of enslavement in cultural heritage in Europe, see Stephan Conermann et al., eds., *Cultural Heritage and Slavery: Perspectives from Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024). Other examples include the recent apologies of the Dutch government with regards to its past involvement in slavery, which are well portrayed in Mrinalini Luthra and Charles Jeurgens' chapter 'Humanising Digital Archival Practice'. Further instances include Cambridge University's acknowledgement of its historical connections with enslavement, see "University of Cambridge Advisory Group on Legacies of Enslavement Final Report" (Cambridge, 2022), https://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/advisory-group-on-legacies-of-enslavement-final-report [accessed 25.03.2024]. See also the initiatives to study

ory studies tend to identify remembering and forgetting as neither inherently positive nor negative. They tend to consider them, in fact, tightly entwined and not completely inseparable. The moral significance that humans attach to these two notions – whether they are considered good or bad – depends on the context in which they are produced, and the use to which they are put.[25] Likewise, making something visible is not necessarily positive, just as making something invisible is not always negative. The present collective work also builds on the idea that invisibilizing and concealing are not necessarily negative, and that not everything and everyone need be recorded and remembered.[26] Thus, in general terms, uncovering information and visibilizing people are not inherently good. Similarly, the act of unearthing information regarding a self-concealed historical actor might even go against her or his own will. Indeed, in his analysis of contemporary social invisibilization, Benno Herzog argues that invisibility in social marginalization is not necessarily negative or equivalent to suffering, and it can be precisely a source of empowerment and equality.[27] Yet, concealing has also been a tool for repression, particularly in the history of coercion and bondage. Therefore, rather than attaching an ethical significance to concealment, this book underscores its analytical value for creating narratives and shaping metanarratives.

More recently, in the intersection between the lines of research which deal with intangible remembrance and forgetting, as well as with material culture, Chris Haffenden and Johan Fredrikzon initiated an analogous field of study: 'erasure studies'. This field is closely related to the previous area of inquiry on cultural memory and forgetting – such as Connerton's work – while also considering the physicality of erasure.[28] Fredrikzon and Haffenden's aim is to address the act of erasure as an object of study in itself and treating it 'as a productive phenomenon'. This has also motivated Haffenden's research project 'Self-erasure and practices of motivated forgetting in

Switzerland's' involvement with colonialism in what has been termed 'colonialism without colonies', in Marcel Brengard, Frank Schubert and Lukas Zürcher, "Die Beteiligung der Stadt Zürich sowie der Zürcherinnen und Zürcher an Sklaverei und Sklavenhandel vom 17. bis ins 19. Jahrhundert," Zurich, 2020; Patricia Purtschert, Francesca Falk and Barbara Lüthi, "Switzerland and 'Colonialism without Colonies': Reflections on the Status of Colonial Outsiders," *Interventions* 18, no. 2 (2016): 286–302. Associations merging academic research and activism such as *Zurich Kolonial* and the *European Observatory on Memories* (EUROM) have undertaken interesting dissemination initiatives in the past few years, see Charlotte Hoes et al., "Zurich Kolonial. A City Tour through Zurich's Colonial Past," https://www.zh-kolonial.ch [accessed 08.08.2023]; "European Observatory on Memories (EUROM)," https://europeanmemories.net/ [accessed 08.08.2023]. I am grateful to Monique Ligtenberg for providing a wealth of information on Swiss postcolonial thought.

25 Assmann, "Forms of Forgetting."

26 The autors of *The Craft of Oblivion*, precisely defend the importance of forgetting. See Albert Galvany, ed., *The Craft of Oblivion: Forgetting and Memory in Ancient China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2023).

27 Herzog, *Invisibilization of Suffering*: chapter "Invisibilization."

28 Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting."

nineteenth-century Britain', which is concerned with the erasure of one's own personal traces as an act of self-concealment.

Concealing and invisibility, although not applied with the same aims, are aligned with the conceptualization of the different types of erasure and forgetting which Connerton, Fredrikson and Haffenden have labelled 'repressive erasure'. This type of erasure is characteristic, although not restricted to, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes – and thus is related to the imposition of power upon groups and individuals, as well as in the creation of taxonomical structures and the shaping of memory. While these authors look into the removal of material already existing in the record, the present volume is also concerned with the intentional or semi-intentional act of abstaining from inscribing information into the record – and thus in the intentionalities which may lie behind the formation of the historiographical account.[29]

Researchers from archival sciences have approached the role of archivists and archives in enhancing and perpetuating the position of the powerful in society. Because of its taxonomical nature, this field has dedicated more attention in the past few years to the marginalization and invisibilization produced as a result of archivists' role in designing record-keeping systems. Certainly, archivists and archival institutions inherently hold enormous agency in the modelling of memory and knowledge, as they shape, interpret and reinvent the archive.[30] Although not everything needs to be recorded, invisibilization in archival sciences and digital humanities is not only produced in the choice of 'leaving out' of the record, but also in the organizational infrastructure of archival catalogues and finding aids, which also perpetuate derogatory terminology about marginalized groups to the present, as Mrinalini Luthra and Charles Jeurgens' show in their chapter.[31] As Luthra and Jeurgens argue, these are responsible for maintaining past colonial views, layer upon layer. In their chapter, they analyze how the mechanisms of access to information about the past by archival institutions have presented a lack of sensitivity not only to marginalized people in history, but also to the traumatic experience of their modern descendants. They suggest that by putting the spotlight on the mechanisms of access to information which generate silences, it is possible to create a more sensitive and socially just accessibility to the past in archival institutions. Therefore, their approach entangles academic, scientific, professional and ethical praxis.

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29 Encompassing these two perspectives brings to mind Tom S. Mullaney's work on taxonomy and disappearance, which lies at the centre of his *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* and the edited volume *The Chinese Deathscape: Grave Reform in Modern China*. In both works, Mullaney shows how ethnotaxonomic classification of *minzu* or ethnonational groups as well as grave relocation in modern and contemporary China – which he terms an 'undocumented migration of the dead' – are the result of China's evolving political worldviews, aspirations, and aggressive capitalist developmentalism. Thomas S. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Mullaney, *The Chinese Deathscape*.

30 Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1–19.

31 A form of erasure is precisely to 'increase bureaucratic efficiency', in what Fredrikson and Haffenden call 'operative erasure'. See Fredrikzon and Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies": 9.

3 Historical and Historiographical Agents

Invisibilization and concealment imply the existence of a basic asymmetry. Three differentiated agencies stand out in the chapters of this volume, which I refer to as 'concealing', 'self-concealed' and 'invisibilized' agents respectively.[32]

Firstly, 'concealing agents' are historical and present-day actors who handle information by recording or dealing with sources and the study of history, such as historians and archivists. By doing so, they might – willingly or unwillingly – manipulate such information. Historical actors and historiographical actors both have agency in the creation of a historical narrative.[33] Whereas Trouillot argues that narratives are always produced in history and acknowledges the power of all actors in the production of history – not only professional historians –, in this introduction I particularly accentuate the agency of the wide range of historiographical actors involved – historian, archivist, librarian, etc. – in shaping not only the historical narrative but also in the establishment of taxonomies and of knowledge structures.[34]

Secondly, 'self-concealed agents' are essentially actors who choose to remain silent. They might be, for instance, government officials aiding obscure businesses by hiding them from the law, or victims of exploitation remaining silent for fear of public shame, stigma or blame. Self-concealed and concealing agents are crucial to unearthing the history of the third category, 'invisibilized agents'[35] – mainly, the victims of bondage who are silenced by others. Although their hidden nature makes them difficult to trace and unearth, they come to light in the sources through their interaction with other actors. The historian also plays an important part in relation to self-concealed and invisibilized agents, as in some cases she/he can become aware of an absence by realizing that the narrative in official sources cannot explain how that social process emerges. By observing the missing piece, the historian can start re-reading the sources against the grain to throw light upon the concealing, the invisibilized or the self-concealed agents.[36]

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32 By referring to 'agencies', I wish to highlight the 'agency' of the social actors and institutions under scrutiny. Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann. "The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency," *Journal of Global Slavery* 8 (2023): 1–60.

33 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*: 22–30.

34 Ibid.: 23–25.

35 Regardless of whether the actors in this category might be considered victims of coercion, I am using the term 'agent' as it is generally agreed among scholars that, as Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen have pointed out, even people in the worst forms of asymmetrical dependency still have agency. See Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen, *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, Bonn University Press, 2020): 19.

36 With regards to cultural heritage, Anna Storm and Krister Olsson use the 'human imposed "landscape scar"' of a pit in the mining town of Malmberget in Sweden, as a footprint from which to study cultural processes. See Storm and Olsson, "The Pit: Landscape Scars as Potential Cultural Tools."

4 Invisibility in the *jeux d'échelles*

This volume puts at the centre of analysis the impact which the processing and handling of information and data about the past has in the creation of narratives, and of how historians, archivists, and researchers in the social sciences might use this understanding as a productive methodological perspective. The contributions aim to create global and cross-temporal interchangeable understandings of how master narratives are shaped from a standpoint of power/marginalization dynamics by treating history and historization as interlinked taxonomical and epistemic processes.

Intentional concealment is a global historical and historiographical phenomenon. Becoming caught in the *jeux d'échelles*[37], or scale games, of the academic production of *history* – for instance, downplaying the two-way impact between microhistorical invisibilization and large historical processes – is inherently a concealing tool and can lead to biased perceptions, as Subin Nam and Carles Brasó's chapters clearly demonstrate. Thus, sticking to essentializing scalar approaches contingent on the local/global divide shapes master narratives in a way that strengthens and perpetuates one-sided officializing worldviews.[38] Conversely, a methodology that merges micro-history with global history, such as a micro-spatial approach, can become not only an uncovering tool but also aid in the creation of new understandings of the ways in which these master narratives are formed in relation to power dynamics.[39] A similar effect can be obtained from studies which break away from contextual-based analysis to instead create history with no reliance on established narratives, such as the recently suggested methodology put into practice by Johan Heinsen and Juliane Schiel in 'Coercion at Work: Situating Labour History after the Global Turn'.[40]

37 In discussions on global and microhistory the term '*jeux d'echelles*' refers to an understanding of history based on the interdependence of spatial and temporal scales. See Christian G. De Vito, "History Without Scale: The Micro-Spatial Perspective," *Past & Present* 242, no. 14 (2019); Richard Drayton and David Motadel, "Discussion: The Futures of Global History," *Journal of Global History*, 13, no. 1 (2018): 1–21.

38 Cf. De Vito, "History Without Scale": 356.

39 Ibid.; Christian G. De Vito and Anne Gerritsen, eds., *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). For practical examples based on this approach, see Johan Heinsen, "Runaway Heuristics: A Micro-Spatial Study of Immobilizing Chains c. 1790," *Annals of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 56 (2022): 37–60; Xu Guanmian, "The 'Perfect Map' of Widow Hiamtse: A Micro-Spatial History of Sugar Plantations in Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1685–1710," *International Review of Social History* 67, no. 1 (2021): 97–126.

40 Juliane Schiel and Johan Heinsen, "Coercion at Work. Doing Social History after the Global Turn" (forthcoming).

5 Bondage and Asian Foci

The editorial choice in this book to study invisibilization through the lens of bondage and dependency in Asia is due to four core historiographical arguments. These are related to the intrinsic nature of invisibility in history; to the challenges of writing Asian history; to the academic and spatial positioning from which this book is written; to the challenges of writing a global history of labour coercion and bondage, and even to the inner mechanisms of the scholarly world in Europe which affect academic production.

Firstly, the study of labour coercion and dependency renders an interesting and fertile entry point into invisibility. Coercion and invisibility have in common that they can either be the result of power asymmetries, or generate and extend them. Indeed, they are often entwined, and invisibility can be used as a tool for repression, although one is not necessarily causative of the other. Furthermore, focusing on the history of bondage and coercion often implies unearthing and giving voice to self-concealed and invisibilized actors, objects, views and ideas, and thus they might share the same aims and subjects of analysis.

Secondly, the Asian perspective is also especially productive from the viewpoint of where this book has been written. Addressing Asian history from Europe – where the Eurocentric standpoint is still predominant and providing an Asian angle is proving an enduring test – implies confronting grand narratives and knowledge structures which often force scholars to think out of the box. Therefore, this book explores the question of invisibilization from an Asian perspective primarily because it provides a good example which might serve as a model approach for specialists to work with disappearance in a wide range of research fields.

Thirdly, despite the recent calls to bring Asia into discussions on labour coercion and slavery, in which Euro-American conceptualizations of slavery and bondage and studies on labour history are still dominant, there is still a long way to go to create new understandings on coercion from global and wide-ranging perspectives.[41] On the one hand, re-centring the narrative to Asian bondage and coercion is productive because it supports this ongoing endeavour, already set out by previous projects, such as the volumes by Damian A. Pargas and Juliane Schiel on global slavery through the Asian experience, by Kate Ekama, Lisa Hellman and Matthias van Rossum on the history of slavery and bondage in Asia, and by Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro Stanziani on bondage and human rights in Africa and Asia.[42] On the other hand, the history of

41 Kate Ekama, Lisa Hellman and Matthias van Rossum, "Slavery and Bondage in Asia – Towards a Global History of Coerced Labour," in *Slavery and Bondage in Asia: Towards a Global History of Coerced Labour*, ed. Kate Ekama, Lisa Hellman and Matthias van Rossum (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022); Richard B. Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015).

42 Damian A. Pargas and Juliane Schiel, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023); Ekama, Hellman and van Rossum, "Slavery and Bondage in Asia – Towards a Global History of Coerced Labour"; Gwyn Campbell and Alessandro

coercion in Asia provides enriching grounds to stimulate productive discussions and understandings on invisibilization, in historiography and by the historical actors themselves: from issues with language barriers and translation, access to sources, dominant Eurocentric perspectives, self-concealing intermediaries being difficult to trace, cultural and historical clashes, the predominant use of European sources, converging international legal frameworks, ideological tendencies and biases, and so forth.

In addition to this, fully integrating Asia with the history of slavery globally remains a challenge, as research on coercion in Asia has been driven as much by researchers in area studies as in history.[43] The field of Asian studies rarely puts the focus on the subject of coercion, slavery, and labour studies. Likewise, nationally-oriented history research has obstructed the assimilation of Asian views and conceptualizations into comparative debates of coercion. Moreover, integrating Asia into the global history of labour coercion also includes engaging scholarship produced in Asia. However, whether Asian researchers engage in these debates is highly dependent on the ongoing interests, discussions and dynamics of Asian scholarship, which might or might not be coeval to other geographically distant academic trends. Taking China as an example, the survey on Chinese scholarship on slavery which Claude Chevaleyre conducted in 2021 shows that Chinese scholarship does not pay much attention to slavery studies, and studies on labour tend to focus on European modern and contemporary history.[44] Thus, the unique nature of integrating Asian views into the global history of labour, coercion, and slavery presents an illustrative case of how clashing structures of academic production can be counterproductive in the facilitation and stimulation of fruitful and truly global discussions. This constitutes a fourth historiographical basis for this book's spotlight on modern and contemporary history of Asian bondage, coercion, and dependency.

Stanziani, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Bondage and Human Rights in Africa and Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). For a more complete recapitulation of the publications, networks, and projects which have emerged from the 1980s, see Claude Chevaleyre, "Beyond Maritime Asia. Ideology, Historiography, and Prospects for a Global History of Slaving in Early-Modern Asia," in *Slavery and Bondage in Asia: Towards a Global History of Coerced Labour*, ed. Kate Ekama, Lisa Hellman and Matthias van Rossum (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022): 31–32.

43 Ekama, Hellman and van Rossum, "Slavery and Bondage in Asia – Towards a Global History of Coerced Labour": 4.

44 Chevaleyre, "Beyond Maritime Asia": 39.

6 The Chapters

Three entangled forms of exercising power stand out when examining all the essays collectively: concealing as a tool for the strategic legitimization of dominance; restricting and enabling the circulation of information through the use of language and translation; and exercising power by inscribing in the record – or by avoiding inscription in it. All chapters relate to these three categories in varying degrees.

The approaches in the first section target power directly in their inquiries by showcasing the strategic use of disappearance to legitimize dominance. Carles Brasó's chapter is concerned with how the reports of the Medical Relief Corps in China in the 1940s informed about the spread of malnutrition, sickness and the high death rate of soldiers in Central China, and how this information was concealed, not only incidentally, but also utilized intentionally with military strategic objectives. As a result, since the number of deaths was underreported, what happened in China's most isolated regions has until now been misrepresented in the study of China's war against Japan. Marina Torres' chapter on the trafficking of Chinese girls by Spanish missionaries to Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century demonstrates how charity became a tool not only for missionaries in China to suit their own agenda, but also as a means of legitimizing the expansion of European empires. Power in relation to religion takes on two forms in Torres' case study. Firstly, the different levels of power of religious orders within the Christian church led to some orders being studied more intensively by historians than others. Secondly, the use of *caritas* – or charity – to justify the Western enterprise in Asia, and the strategy of adaptation to Chinese culture by the missionaries, caused a misrepresentation of European missions. These add up to the reasons why the taking of Chinese girls by missionaries has remained understudied. Subin Nam's chapter portrays the different layers of international politics and regulations which might have contributed to making 'comfort women' stateless, and the international factors which kept the 'comfort women' issue unchecked and unaddressed for decades. Conversely, Martin Dusinberre's afterword offers an illustrative first-hand account of how the protagonists of a historian's study enact their own agency in the shaping of historical research. They intervene – intentionally or unintentionally – in the historian's journey of fieldwork and material collection. Dusinberre reminds us that memory, historical research, and writing are, thus, unstable and nonlinear processes in which historians' understandings are more often than not at the mercy of historical actors.

Interestingly, none of these approaches underscores Western colonialism in Asia as the fundamental instrument in wider narratives related to international power dynamics in Asia – perhaps with the exception of Torres' particular take on Sino-Spanish encounters, although it is not the only factor in her analysis. This disengagement with European colonialism is also a feature in Emma Kalb's and Manuel Pavón-Belizón's contributions. As Eurocentrism, colonial and postcolonial processes tend to be at the centre of global studies on coercion, slavery, and dependency, as well as

memory and forgetting, it is certainly surprising that six out of nine contributions in this volume move away from it.[45] This more widely varied perspective indicates that micro-spatial approaches which consider wide temporal ranges and which move beyond the theoretical framework on memory – often related to postcolonial theory – might broaden the spectrum to more plural and comprehensive perspectives.[46]

As a form of enacting power, language arises as an important instrument in five of the texts: Subin Nam's, Emma Kalb's, Pavón-Belinzón's, Luthra and Jeurgen's, as well as in Imogen Herrad's reflection on academic language. Invisibilizing through language in the five cases can be divided into two: through translation and editing in the transnational circulation of knowledge, and in the use of certain morphological forms when recording information within one particular language, which leads to creating taxonomical categories.

The two texts which target language more directly are Pavón-Belizón's and Herrad's, which address language dominance, editing and translation. Pavón-Belizón underscores translation as a tool not only for the transnational circulation of knowledge – or the lack thereof – but also for the international recognition of authors. As translation of an author's work signals their recognition in the national context, the scarcity of translations of Chinese women intellectuals becomes a measure of their (lack of) national consideration. This is indicative of their marginal position in China's academic and intellectual field due to the alarming circumstances of gender inequality in China, where pursuing an academic career at the expense of forming a family is negatively perceived by Chinese society – amongst other discriminations. Despite this, a very small number of works by Chinese women intellectuals have been translated into English. Through the analysis of the exceptional case of Dai Jinhua, Pavón-Belizón argues that the reason why some women have been picked for translation – and thus gained transnational visibility – are related to, firstly, personal social networks, and secondly, to their alignment with the publishers' interests. Thus, translation enhances transnational visibility – regardless of the author's national in/visibility; and the international circulation of knowledge and ideas is enabled through personal social connections and political and ideological affinities. Furthermore, in Western academia, where the study of Asia becomes specialized and conscribed into area studies, the translation and circulation of Asian authors stays within the confines of Asian studies, and does not penetrate the intellectual production of other fields – thus reproducing national-oriented research in the humanities and social sciences. The same might be said of other fields in area studies.

45 Cf. Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Conermann et al., *Cultural Heritage and Slavery*; Azoulay, *Potential History*.

46 Cf. Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Imogen Herrad's central piece relates to Pavón-Belizón's chapter by highlighting the significance of language editing and translation as powerful tools to allow or restrict the circulation of knowledge and the visibility of certain authors at the expense of others.[47] Her text portrays the exercise of power through the dominance of English as a *lingua franca* in academic production. Herrad's contribution not only stresses the invisibilized work of academic language editors and translators: it also addresses how the ever-present loose ends of colonialism still infuse the academic world with inequality. On the one hand, this power is expressed through the dominance of Global North variants of English, and on the other, by the way historians reproduce terminology and linguistic forms derived from the colonial world. However, regardless of this agency of language, edition and translation, both Herrad's and Pavón-Belizón's texts point to the invisibility and lack of recognition of editors and translators in academia.

With regard to taxonomy, Subin Nam's chapter on the in/visibility of Korean 'comfort women' in Japan links the renaming of Korean people and their changing categorization as colonial subjects in Japan to their mobilization as forced labourers and as 'comfort women', as well as to the ongoing perpetuation of discrimination after liberation. Kalb draws on the partial or unfinished process of recording in the only available sources of the Mughal Empire – for the elite – to find moments of visibility of the enslaved. The underrepresentation of slaves is related to the overrepresentation of the elite. In this sense, her paper can be related to Luthra and Jeurgens' exposition of how archival classification and cataloguing has perpetuated colonial terminology – and thus, the invisibilization, mis- and underrepresentation of victims of colonialism – which affects the way users today access the archive.

Thus, recording information stands out as an important form of enacting power both during the historical process and in the shaping of its remembrance, as the information recorded is organized in archives, recovered in historiography, and used to historicize the past. Inscribing people and information has a double effect in creating visibility and enhancing invisibility, either by creating taxonomies which include some and leave others out of the record, or by simply stimulating self-concealment of those historical actors who wished to remain unrecorded or invisible. This is well portrayed in Bastiaan Nugteren's and Marina Torres' chapters.

Nugteren's chapter on the self-concealment of Chinese migrants to escape bureaucratic registration is a clear example of how the visibility produced by inscribing migrants into the record can induce self-concealment. In Nugteren's case study, the fear of being detectible by the authorities restricted freedom of mobility, as avoiding registration could imply avoiding taxes and fees, which affected personal economic freedom.[48] Nugteren's chapter can be added to the literature on the documenting or

47 For another take on translation in entanglement with power diplomacy, see Lisa Hellman and Birgit Tremml-Werner, "Translation in Action: Global Intellectual History and Early Modern Diplomacy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 82, no. 3 (2021): 453–67.

48 Cf. Herzog, *Invisibilization of Suffering*.

undocumenting of migrants in the colonial context, such as John-Michael Rivera's *Undocuments*.[49] These Chinese migrants wished to go unnoticed to avoid regulations – the same way that traffickers conceal their actions, such as Marina Torres' missionaries. Nugteren's, Torres', Kalb's, Mrinalini and Jeurgens', and Brasó's texts show the tremendous effects which record keeping and the design of record-keeping systems have in shaping historiography, and in creating biased understandings of the past.[50] An integrative look at all these texts underscores concealment as power and information as its capital.

Finally, interdisciplinarity to enhance cross-fertilization between history, anthropology, sociology, digital humanities, numerical history, and archival science seems to be the most effective way of attempting to make history more equal. Luthra and Jeurgen's chapter instils hope because it shows that digital archival science can work towards reversing concealment, when concealment is synonymous with the continued invisibility of marginalized people and of power structures established by force and at the expense of human suffering. Paired with other texts, such as Brasó's and Kalb's, it is clear that concealment is not the same as invisibility – as neither of the cases portrayed in this book are fully 'invisible' (if they were, we would not know about them). However, by first being aware of how narratives are constructed, how they induce concealment or visibility, of the different ways narrative has been used as an in/visibilizing tool, and of what remains from the processes of inscribing, non-inscribing, circulating, and erasure, researchers in humanities and the social sciences can find ways to think outside the box and historicize regardless of master narratives, as recent projects are already doing.[51]

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49 John-Michael Rivera, *Undocuments* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2021).

50 On the relationship between archives and power, see Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power"; Anna Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87–109; Alessandro Stanziani, *Tensions of Social History: Sources, Data, Actors and Models in Global Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022); Mrinalini Luthra et al., "Unsilencing Colonial Archives via Automated Entity Recognition," *Journal of Documentation* (ahead-of-print, 31.01.2023), https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-02-2022-0038.

51 Schiel and Heinsen, "Coercion at Work: Situating Labour History after the Global Turn" (forthcoming).

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Legitimization of Dominance

Carles Brasó-Broggi

Malnutrition, Sickness and Missing Soldiers in Central China. The Reports of the Medical Relief Corps, 1942–43

1 Introduction

In the summer of 1943, 3,000 Chinese conscripts were travelling from Sichuan to Yunnan. They expected to join the 50th Nationalist division, a part of the allied Y-Force which was being mobilized by the allied powers on the Sino-Burmese border.[1] However, only 900 conscripts arrived at destination. A doctor from the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps examined the young men who had reached the medical post at destination: they were, on average, 22 years old and weighed between 35 and 40 kg, showing evident symptoms of malnutrition and weakness. The doctor also noticed widespread infectious diseases, including typhus, relapsing fever and dysentery. As a result, he immediately sent one third of the young men to the hospital: the majority died in the first days of hospitalization. The doctor complained that this was not an isolated case: he had seen thousands of young men declining in similar ways, disappearing on the road or just dying on arrival.[2]

This chapter examines the reports by the doctors who worked for the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps (中國紅十字會救護總隊部, hereafter MRC) during the critical period of 1942–43: these were the years of the Henan famine, when malnutrition and hunger killed millions of people, especially in the province of Henan.[3] Other regions of Central China were also affected by the resource depletion after years of war,

1 Hans van de Ven, *China at War. Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of New China, 1937–1952* (London: Profile Books, 2017): 167.

2 Ianto Kaneti, "Doklad na bŭlgarskiya lekar Kaneti Ianto davidov ot Zbta smesena Internatsionalna brigada v Ispaniya za rabotata mu v Kitaĭ ot 1939 do 1945 godina" [Report by the Bulgarian doctor Kaneti Ianto Davidov, from the 86th mixed International Brigade in Spain, on his work in China from 1939 to 1945], hereafter Kaneti Report, in Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoy istorii [Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History], hereafter, RGASPI, 495/195/1931: 25.

3 On the Henan famine see Micah Muscolino, *The Ecology of War. Henan Province, the Yellow River and Beyond, 1938–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Anthony Garnaut, "A Quantitative Description of the Henan Famine," *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 6 (2013): 2007–45; Mark Baker,

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the blockade of interregional and maritime transport and the subsequent hyperinflation and shortage of basic goods. However, in a case of intentional concealment, the malnutrition and disappearance of young soldiers were rarely commented on or registered in the medical reports of the MRC. This chapter aims to analyse the dilemmas and consequences between informing and concealing in such extreme conditions, arguing that just as 'the concepts of absence and presence are not absolute and unilateral';[4] the same applies to informing and concealing. First, the doctors themselves suffered from a severe shortage of basic goods and focused on practical demands, and referred indirectly to a general situation of need. Secondly, the deterioration of living conditions in Central China was intentionally concealed by the Kuomintang government. In 1942–43, when the network of small medical units of the MRC located in Central China was in a position to expose this situation, the institution was accused of being left-leaning and was downsized. Taking Johan Fredrikzon and Chris Haffenden's erasure categories as a point of departure, this article describes a double intentional concealment, one protective and the other repressive.[5]

Most of the around 20 million Chinese who died during the war period (1937–1945) were buried without identification, hindering future investigations.[6] According to the calculations by Lloyd E. Eastman, eight million soldiers of China's Nationalist Army, around a half of all conscripts, disappeared from the statistics between 1937 and 1945.[7] According to US General Stilwell, the loss of Chinese conscripts in 1943 amounted to 750,000 victims, or 43 percent of the total (this figure includes deaths, desertions and disappearances).[8] Of course, most would fall into the category of missing or disappeared (失踪), so their relatives would never know what had happened to them, whether they had died on the road or were, perhaps, still alive.[9] This critical

"The Slow, the Quick and the Dead: Environment, Politics and Temporality in the Henan Famine, 1942–43," *International Review of Environmental History* 4, no. 2 (2018): 93–109.

4 Julie de Vos, "The Absence That Will Not Go Away," *Journal of Material Culture* 28, no. 3 (2023): 371–89, 380.

5 Johan Fredrikzon and Chris Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies: Excavating the Material Conditions of Memory and Forgetting," *Memory, Mind & Media* 2 (2023): 1–24.

6 Rebeca Nedostup, "Burying, Repatriating, and Leaving the Dead in Maritime and Postwar Taiwan, 1937–1955," *Journal of Chinese History* 1 (2017): 111–39; Christian Henriot, "Invisible Deaths, Silent Deaths: 'Bodies without Masters' in Republican Shanghai," *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 2 (2009): 407–37.

7 Lloyd E. Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction. Nationalist China in War and Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984): 156, see also 260–61, n. 106; Zhuang Hehao 庄和灏, "Yiliao, xunlian yu yingzheng: kangzhan shiqi guo jun zhan li shouzhi yuanyin tanxi" 医疗, 训练与应征: 抗战时期国军战力受制原因探析 [An analysis of medical practice during China's war with Japan and the reasons of Chinese army weakness]," *Lishi jiaoxue wenti* 1 (2020): 55.

8 Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–1945* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970): 363.

9 Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War. Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 113.

humanitarian situation, which is related to the concept of absence that has been applied to other historical situations such as the Spanish Civil War, has been investigated only in passing for the war in China, starting from the official Nationalist historiography, which acknowledged the disappearance of one million people between 1937 and 1945.[10] Historians have recognized the importance of malnutrition, hunger and the supply (or scarcity) of basic goods as one of the main determinants of the war.[11] The aim of this chapter is not to discuss this exceptional phenomenon of disappearance in quantitative terms, but to shed light on it locally and to understand it qualitatively through medical reports on the ground which mixed local statistics with insights and impressions.

This chapter studies the reports produced during this period of acute crisis (1942–43) in the regions of Central China, especially in Hubei and Hunan. By analysing thirty medical reports that were compiled by doctors and nurses in the rural areas of Central China, this chapter aims to bring an original contribution to the analysis of malnutrition, sickness and missing soldiers in that period. MRC reports generally consisted of several parts: a general statement about the state of the war, a description of the medical groups, and their attached teams, and an overview of the work done, sometimes with statistics. They were drawn from various sources: first, the municipal archives of Guiyang and the provincial archives of Guizhou, where the bulk of the MRC primary sources are kept.[12] Second, the oral reports compiled in two publications by Ho Bang-lee and the Lim papers held at the archive of the Academia Sinica in Taiwan.[13] And, third, the reports of the international doctors who worked at the MRC and collaborated with the international organizations of the allied powers that supported China's war

10 Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction*: 156. About the concept of absence, see Jule Kalman and Daniella Doron, "Absence in the Aftermath," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 2 (2017): 197–210; Julie de Vos, "The Absence That Will Not Go Away," *Journal of Material Culture* 28, no. 3 (2023): 371–89.

11 See Katarzyna Cwiertka, "Introduction," in *Food and War in Mid-Twentieth Century East Asia*, ed. Katarzyna Cwiertka (Farnham: Ashgate 2013); Li Bingkui 李秉奎, "Ping Shi Dao jizhi zhe 'kangri zhanzheng shiqi de zhongguo minzhong, ji'e, shehui gaige he minzuzhuyi' 石岛纪之著 '抗日战争时期的中国民众, 饥饿, 社会改革和民族主义' [Discussing Ishijima Noriyukis's 'The Chinese People during the Anti-Japanese War. Hunger, social reform and nationalism']," *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu* 1 (2017): 140–47.

12 The reports in the Guiyang Municipal Archives have been extracted from the compilation of the archives; see Guiyangshi Dang'an guan贵阳市档案馆, *Zhandi hongshizi. Zhongguo hongshizihui jiuhu zongdui kangzhan shilu* 战地红十字. 中国红十字会救护总队抗战事录 [Field records of China's Red Cross Medical Relief Corps during the Anti-Japanese War] (Guiyang: Guizhou Renmin Chubanshe, 2009). The reports held in the Guizhou Provincial Archives were manually copied in 2018 from the collection in Guizhou Provincial Archive (Guizhousheng Dang'an guan 贵州省档案馆, hereafter GDG).

13 Ho Bang-Lee 何邦立, *Lin Kesheng minguo yixue shishang diyiren / A Collection of Essays in Memory of Dr. Robert Kho-Seng Lim (1897–1969)* 林可胜民国医学史上第一人 (Taipei: Zhonghua kejishi xuehui, 2017); Ho Bang-Lee 何邦立, *Lin Kesheng, Zhuisi lunwenlu (1891–1969) / Lin Kesheng, the Founder of Chinese Physiology & Military Medicine* 林可胜追思论文录 (Taipei: Guojia Tushuguan chubanshe, 2020).

effort: the Comintern and the Soviet Union, the British associations that sent medical aid to China, and the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China (ABMAC).[14]

This introduction will be followed by three sections: an introduction to the MRC and its crisis during the period of famine (2); an examination of the microhistories of the reports, analysing when and how they were written and the situations they depicted (3), and an analysis of the intentional process of informing/concealing from a global perspective, especially considering the sensitive information contained in the reports and its impact upon the war effort (4), followed by a conclusion about the findings and possible future venues of research.

2 China's War with Japan and the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps

China was the country most affected by famine in the Second World War, due to Japan's trade blockade and the fact that countries with traditional agricultural systems faced more difficulties in organizing logistical supply systems to sustain its armies and population in a long war.[15] Several authors have stated that the year 1943 was a turning point in China's history.[16] In that year, non-occupied China was on the verge of collapse, due to the weakness of the Nationalist army and the scarcity of basic goods. However, China also reasserted its role as an ally: Chiang Kai-shek met Churchill and Roosevelt at the Cairo Conference in November, and US aid increased through air links between Chongqing and British India. Furthermore, recent scholarship emphasized the efforts in Central China to improve the health of the population as one of the pillars of China's resistance.[17]

Further biographic and academic literature dealing with the MRC and its war effort has tended to focus on the role of doctors and nurses and their medical and politi-

14 For all reports by international doctors see the respective source; the ABMAC archives are held at the Columbia University Archival Collections; some reports of the CMAC are held at the National Archives in Kew Gardens, London.

15 See Lizzie Collingham, "The Human Fuel. Food as Global Commodity and Local Scarcity," in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, vol. 3, *Total War. Economy, Society and Culture*, ed. Michael Geyer and Adam Tooze (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 149–73.

16 See Joseph W. Esherick and Matthew Combs, eds., *1943: China at the Crossroads* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2015).

17 Cui Jiatian 崔家田, "Quanmiam kangzhan shiqi zhongyuan diqu hongshizi zuzhi de yiwei shijian. Yi honghui huikan wei zhongxin 全面抗战时期中原地区红十字组织的医卫实践: 以红会会刊为中心 [The medical and health practices of China's Red Cross in Central China during the Anti-Japanese War. Perspectives on the Red Cross' journal]," *Ningbo shehui kexue* 4, no. 191 (2015): 152–57; Mary Augusta Brazelton, "Engineering Health. Technologies of Immunization in China's Wartime Hinterland, 1937–1945," *Technology and Culture* 60, no. 2 (2019): 409–37.

cal actions, such as the conflicts between the MRC and the military and bureaucratic leadership, or the political struggles between the Communists and the Nationalists.[18] Questions of historical agency thus focused on the medical staff as subordinate workers and their relations with the higher levels of command.[19] This also applies to studies on the evolution of medicine in China during the war.[20] This chapter, however, aims to look downwards from the doctors and nurses to the conscripts, who were also workers, and at the same time wounded and sick patients who received treatment. Furthermore, both doctors and their patients often shared the same problems, like the fall of the purchasing power of their salaries and the subsequent impact on their health.[21]

The MRC was created in July 1937 by Robert Kho-Seng Lim (林可勝, 1897–1969), a Singaporean doctor of Chinese extraction, hereafter referred to as Dr Lim.[22] At first, it adopted an internationalist approach to China's war with Japan, following calls for joint efforts by Communist and Nationalist China to confront the Japanese invasion. Between 1939 and 1940, dozens of international doctors as well as hundreds of Chinese physicians from the diaspora joined the organization. The MRC was incorporated

18 On the history of the MRC, see John R. Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime China: How Medical Reformers Built Modern Healthcare Systems Amid War and Epidemics, 1928–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Dai Binwu 戴斌武 *Kangzhan shiqi zhongguo hongshizihui zongdui yanjiu* 抗战时期中国红十字会总队研究 [Research on the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps during the Anti-Japanese War] (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2012); Lin Han 林哈, *Zai xue yu huozhong chuanxing. Zhongguo hongshizihui jiuhu zongduibu, kangzhan jiuhu jishi, 1939–1945*, 在血与火中穿行.中国红十字会救护总队部, 抗战救护纪实, 1939–1945 [Walking through blood and fire. War records of China's Red Cross Medical Relief Corps in China's war with Japan, 1939–1945] (Guizhou: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2015).

19 On the agency of nurses see also Nicole Elisabeth Barnes, *Intimate Communities. Wartime Healthcare and the Birth of Modern China, 1937–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018).

20 Nicole Elisabeth Barnes and John H. Watt, "The Influence of War on China's Modern Health Systems," in *Medical Transitions in Twentieth Century China*, ed. Bridie Andrews and Mary Bullock Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014): 227–43; Michael Shiyung Liu, "Eating Well for Survival. Chinese Nutrition Experiments During World War Two," in *Moral Foods: The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia*, ed. Angela Ki Che Leung and Melissa L. Caldwell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019): 89–108.

21 On conscripts as workers, see Eric-Jan Zürcher, "Introduction," in *Fighting for a Living. A Comparative History of Military Labor*, ed. Eric-Jan Zürcher (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014): 11–41.

22 On Robert Lim, see Horace Davenport, *Robert Kho-Seng Lim, 1897–1969. A Biographical Memoir* (Washington: National Academy of Sciences, 1980); Ho, *Lin Kesheng minguo yixueshi shang diyiren*; Ho, *Lin Kesheng, Zhuisi lunwenlu*; Shi Yan 施彦, *Lin Kesheng yu minguo xiandai yixue de fazhan* 林可胜与民国现代医学的发展 [Lin Kesheng and the development of modern Chinese medicine] (Taipei: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2018). On the history of the CRC, see Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime China*; Dai, *Kangzhan shiqi Zhongguo*; Lin, *Zai xue yu huozhong chuanxing*; on Lim and internationalism, see Isaac C.K. Tan, "Globalized Memories. Creating a Historical Space for Medical Pioneers in Modern China," in *Alternative Representations of the Past. The Politics of History in Modern China*, ed. Ying-kit Chan and Fei Chen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021): 83–139.

into Chinas' Red Cross and played a leading role in the modernization of medicine in China. It was not big, totalling around 2,000 men and women, but it was intensively engaged in educating both the military and the civilian population in medical practice.[23] At its peak, in November 1941, it had a staff of around 3,000. In contrast to other medical institutions which were based in Sichuan or Yunnan, the MRC had direct contact with the front, sometimes in the most isolated areas which had been intentionally cut off from the rest of the territory in order to block the Japanese advance.[24] The lack of roads and supply chains and the difficulties of evacuation made these regions especially prone to shortages, malnutrition and disease. The lack of communications between the front and the rear also led to the abandonment of wounded and sick soldiers, and made it difficult to register them.

In addition, from 1940 on, the conservative board of the Chinese Red Cross became suspicious about left-leaning and Communist infiltration of the MRC. Power struggles between the military, the Red Cross and the Nationalist government endangered Dr Lim's leadership.[25] As a result, Robert Kho-Seng Lim endured a long period of political prosecution until he was dismissed in January 1943 and went to Burma, where he assisted the Chinese army under the command of US General Joseph Stilwell. US aid improved the situation of the Chinese troops, especially in the India/Burma theatre of operations and in the provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan, in detriment of Central China, e.g. in Hunan or Hubei, which were central to China's strategy to block Japan.[26] At the departure of Dr Lim, the MRC was drained of personnel and the working conditions of those who remained in Central China became critical, affected by official neglect, hyperinflation and the scarcity of basic goods. MRC reports from Central China in 1942–43 are desperate, describing the spread of malnutrition and sickness and the deteriorating conditions of their own working and living conditions. Some of the medical staff also left or disappeared: as a result, the staff of the MRC fell to a meagre 678 in July 1943.[27]

This drain explains a process of marginalization and invisibilization of the institution and its social role. The MRC doctors, who were not a part of the military hierarchy, took on a complex intermediary role, and their reports contain sensitive information from the most remote fighting areas, which were out of the reach of journalists or even generals from Chongqing. Their relationship with the field commanders was essential

23 On the role of the Chinese diaspora in the MRC and the modernization of medicine see Wayne Soon, *Global Medicine in China. A Diasporic History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

24 Seventh Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, July–December 1940, in GDG, Zhongguo hongshizihui zonghui jiuhu zongduibu: 1355.

25 Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime China*: 137–39.

26 Liu, "Eating Well for Survival"; Zhang Baijia, "China's Quest for Foreign Military Aid," trans. Shuxi Yin, in *The Battle for China. Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945*, ed. Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea and Hans van de Ven (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011): 283–307.

27 Watt, *Saving Lives in Wartime* China: 165.

to the success both of medical relief and intelligence gathering. While the Chinese physicians had to negotiate with military commanders and strike a balance between informing and concealing, the situation was different for foreign doctors who reported to international organizations: around twenty international physicians hired by Dr Lim described the critical conditions of the Nationalist troops in Central China more explicitly.[28] After Pearl Harbour and the spread of the war to the Pacific and Southeast Asia, the allies of China – the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union – shared an interest in obtaining first-hand information about the strength of the Chinese troops which, despite the exhaustion after many years of fighting, still managed to hold back the bulk of the Japanese army in Central China. While these medical teams were being silenced by the MRC, they became, at the same time, important informers for China's allies.

3 Reports of the Invisible

Malnutrition did not feature very prominently in the reports of the MRC of 1938 and 1939, which were written by its director, Dr Lim.[29] However, numbers were on the rise: while only fifty-eight cases of oedematous malnutrition were detected by the MRC in 1938, this number rose to 1,509 in the next year. Dr Lim feared that the prolongation of war would create food shortages and subsequent price rises for basic goods. He also complained that the diet of the soldiers was too poor, as it consisted only of rice and some pickled vegetables, without fat or proteins.[30] Since 1939, the stalemate of the war in Central China had led to a transformation of the main causes of illness from war injuries to a less heroic but more widespread and deadly enemy: scabies. The scabies mite became the number two cause of illness in 1940, second only to malaria; it was especially dreadful as a transmitter of other diseases.[31] According to Dr Lim, around 60 per cent of all Chinese soldiers suffered from scabies but, despite its striking appearance on the skin and the pain suffered by the soldiers, he com-

28 On the biography of these international doctors, see Robert Mamlok, *The International Medical Relief Corps in Wartime China, 1937–1945* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2018); Carles Brasó-Broggi, *Los médicos errantes. De las Brigadas Internacionales y la revolución china a la guerra fría* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2022).

29 There are seven reports, each covering six months. They are long and detailed (more than 100 pages each), and are held at Guizhousheng Dang'an guan (GDG), Zhongguo hongshizihui zonghui jiuhu zongduibu and at Academia Sinica, Lim Papers, 64/01/10. It was not possible to make full transcripts of the reports and photocopying is restricted; so this text is based on a small number of photocopies and hand-written notes. I would like to thank the archivists and Alberto Poza Poyatos for his help in the archive in Taiwan.

30 "Nutritional Deficiency diseases," Fifth Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, July–December 1939, in Academia Sinica, Lim Papers, 64/01/10/005.

31 Shi, *Lin Kesheng yu minguo*: 143.

plained that scabies was mostly neglected as a disease by the military leadership, as it was not considered important.[32]

Malnutrition was the fifth most common cause of illness, but it affected everything else, as a poor diet was the direct cause of medical complications and the worsening of all the diseases, and so raised mortality rates. In 1940, Lim travelled for seventy days through the 'roadless areas' (无路区), sometimes also referred to as guerrilla areas (游击区), accompanied by other doctors, to inspect the situation of conscripts.[33] He invited Dr Shen Tong (沈同) from Tsinghua University to a joint committee to investigate dietary and nutritional improvements in the army. However, while all this hectic activity was taking place, Dr Lim was summoned by Chiang Kai-shek to Chongqing in September 7, where he was told that the organization would be put under political control. He was accused of being a leftist, and his requests that the MRC be incorporated into the military organization were heavily criticized by the Chinese Red Cross.[34] It could be argued that he was, in effect, being silenced.

From then on, funds for the Chinese Red Cross were allocated to hospitals in Chongqing and other rear areas, so that the MRC's work at the front and its pressing problem of personnel were neglected: while the number of medical cases rose (not caused by wounds, but by disease), MRC staff numbers decreased. As an example, the organization lost 30 per cent of its nurses in early 1940 (most left without notice), due to the rising cost of living and low pay.[35] The nursing team of the MRC, led by Dr Zhou Meiyu (周美玉), pioneered addressing the special dietary requirements of the wounded and sick in hospital, aided by the 'Friends of the wounded soldiers' (伤兵之友) association.[36] The MRC carried out medical services at the front, providing innovative medical practices such as special diets according to the patient's condition. The provision of 'special dietary requirements' (特别营养) is one of the few indicators of the nutrition (or malnutrition) problem: in 1942, almost 100,000 special diets (98,089) were provided for a total of 297,157 hospitalizations.[37]

Conditions worsened, especially in Henan, Hunan and Hubei, which were at the centre of the struggle with Japan. After the destruction of the retreating Nationalist

32 Sixth Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, July–December 1939, in Academia Sinica, Lim Papers, 64/01/10/006.

33 Liu Yongqiao 刘永桥, "Kangzhan ba nian zhuisui Lin Kesheng xiansheng de huiyi 抗战八年追随林可胜先生的回忆 [Memories of Dr Lin Kesheng during the eight years of war]," 1970, compiled in Ho, *Lin Kesheng*: 104–7.

34 Shi, *Lin Kesheng*: 191–98.

35 Seventh Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, July–December 1939, in Academia Sinica, Lim Papers, 64/01/10/007.

36 Xu Huang 徐璜, "Xu Weilian kangri jiuguo de wangshi 徐维廉抗日救国的往事 [The past events of Xu Weilian in the war against Japan to save the country]," compiled in Ho, *Lin Kesheng*: 287–98.

37 "Zhongguo hongshizihui zonghui jiuhu zongduibu yiliaodui gongzuo tongjibiao 中国红十字会总会救护总队部医疗队工作统计表 [Statistics on the work of the MRC of China's Red Cross in 1942]," Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 149.

army, the city of Changsha, the capital of Hunan, was attacked four times by the Japanese army between 1939 and 1944. The third battle of Changsha took place between late December 1941 and January 1942, coinciding with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, which brought the United States and other allied powers to join China in fighting Japan. After fierce fighting in and around the city centre, the Japanese troops were driven out of the city and retreated to the 'roadless area'. There were 28,000 casualties on the Chinese side (of whom only 16,323 received medical treatment, the others reportedly disappeared) and 59,000 on the Japanese side.[38] The MRC took charge of around 8,000, mostly wounded soldiers, who were evacuated. Since the first battle in 1939, Dr C.C. Lin (Lin Jingcheng, 林竟成) had been in charge of the medical corps attached to several divisions and brigades of the Ninth Army that defended Hunan and Changsha.[39] While historians who wrote about the health service in that battle focused on the months of fighting (also in statistical terms), Dr C.C. Lin's reports described the conditions of the Fourth Medical Group of the MRC (*4 zhongdui*).[40] In March, April and May 1942, while the Nationalist army was recovering and replacing the wounded soldiers with new recruits, C.C. Lin reported an incalculable spread of 'sick soldiers' (病兵) following the arrival of new conscripts in a devastated Hunan:

> 前方各战院伤兵均已往后转,各军师均补充大批新兵,病者颇多,故各战院所住病兵颇多。兵站区之伤病官兵院所, 亦伤兵少, 病兵多。
>
> Now that the soldiers wounded in the battle have been evacuated to the rear, every military division is recruiting large quantities of new soldiers. Sick people are very numerous and all front hospitals are filled with sick soldiers. Fewer wounded soldiers are registered by the military office and at the battlefront, but there are plenty of sick men.[41]

In April 1942, Dr Huang Xinghan (黄兴汉), who worked under C.C. Lee in Hunan, reported the types of injuries in the 26th division. Wounds had caused only 15 per cent of the casualties, while infectious disease was the major cause of illness (45 per cent, especially malaria), followed by skin (20 per cent) and respiratory disease (10 per cent). The report also complained that the divisionary hospital could not take more patients and

38 Zeng Guilin 增桂林, *Hongshizihui yu rendao jiuzhu. Yi jindai Hunan wei zhongxin* 红十字会与人道救助. 一近代湖南为中心 [The Red Cross and Humanitarian Aid in modern Hunan] (Taiyuan: Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2017): 195–96.

39 Lin Jingcheng 林竟成, "Di jiu dadui yu sici Xiangbei huizhan 第九大队与四次湘北会展 [The Ninth division and the Fourth battle of Changsha]," unknown date, Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 37.

40 These historians (to my knowledge) are Zeng, *Hongshizihui*: 195–97; Lin, *Zaixue yu huozhong*: 186–90; and Dai, *Kangzhan shiqi*: 326–28. Medical groups managed several medical units (with around 15 people each) which were attached to the medical armies or divisions.

41 Lin Jingcheng 林竟成, "4 zhongdui suoshu ge yiwudui 3 yuefen gongzuo baogao 4 中队所属各医务队3月份工作报告 [Report on the work of the Fourth Medical Group and its medical teams in March]," 1942, Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 200.

that they were running out of medical supplies.[42] In May, the situation slowly improved and the stress on the hospitals near Changsha decreased. Furthermore, thanks to the reconstruction of the delousing stations, the percentage of men suffering from scabies fell to 10 per cent.[43] However, as the military action moved outside of their region, there were delays to payments of MRC staff salaries, a situation that was aggravated by hyperinflation and the shortage of basic goods.[44]

The medical groups also experienced other problems that reflected the gradual deterioration of their working conditions, in parallel with those of the soldiers. In spring 1942, Dr Wu Hongyu (吴宏宇) was appointed to Liuyang (Hunan province) as head of the Fifth Medical Group (5 *zhongdui*) with eight medical teams under its command, most of which were in the 'roadless area'. Evacuation by ambulance was not possible there, so that the sick and injured had to be transported on foot on journeys that could take up to twenty days. Cases of sickness and malnutrition were more severe in these regions, but also more difficult to register. In the summer of 1942, the disease rate in the armies stood at 37.8 per cent, with most suffering from malaria, gastroenteritis and scabies.[45] After some weeks of supervision, Dr Wu reported a 'complicated' (*fuza*) situation: the organization of the medical teams collapsed, due to the exodus of doctors and nurses, which also impacted the treatment of the wounded and sick. The most pressing problem was that of personnel: the atmosphere in the medical teams had gone sour due to the shortage of goods, the non-payment of salaries and the subsequent crisis of leadership. Most of the physicians and nurses had been at the front for two or more years, mainly in the 'roadless area'. Dr Wu suggested a rotating shift system, so that doctors and nurses would be able to leave and rest. He also recommended improving some basic material incentives, such as shoes, socks, uniforms, and supplemental pay for physicians at the front to enable them to buy more food.[46] In July and August, a medical team was sent to the remote towns of Tongcheng and Chongyang on the border between Hunan, Hubei and Jiangxi:

42 "Di 311 dui duizhang Huang Xinghan guanyu yaopin cailiao buji de qingkuang baogao 第 311 队队长黄兴汉关于药品材料不济的情况报告 [Report by Huang Xinghan, captain of the Medical Team No 311, on the scarcity of medical supplies]," 25.04.1942, in Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 195.

43 Lin Jingcheng 林竟成, "4 zhongdui suoshu gedui 4, 5 yuefen gongzuo baogao 第 4 中队所属各队, 4, 5 月份工作报告 [Report on the work of the Fourth Medical Group and its medical teams in April and May]," 1942, Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 207.

44 Lin Jingcheng 林竟成, "4 zhongdui": 201–2.

45 "Di wu zhongdui dai zhongduizhang Wu Hongyu 8 yuefen gongzuo qingxing baogao 第五中队代中队长吴宏宇 8 月份工作情形报告 [Report on the situation of the medical work in August, by the leader of the Fifth Medical Group, Wu Hongyu]," 09.09.1942, in Guiyangshi Dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 235–37.

46 Wu Hongyu 吴宏宇, "Daidi 5 zhongduizhang Wu Hongyu baogao suoshu gedui xianzhuang ji gaishan yijian 代第 5 中队长吴宏宇报告所属各队现状及改善意见 [Report by the leader of the Fifth Medical Group on the conditions of the teams and ideas for improvement]," 29.06.1942, in Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 226–29.

> 长官部以通城崇阳发现伤寒, 由职部派 592 队前往防治至为成功, 该队冒酷暑深入游击区分至各游击队及民间调查. [. . .] 且患行人死于路旁者甚多, 情形严重, 后赴通城经数日之详细调查并无鼠疫发现.
>
> The Ministry found typhoid fever in Tongcheng Chongyang and sent Medical Team No 592 to prevent and treat it. The team went deep into the guerrilla area in the scorching heat to examine both soldiers and civilians. [. . .] Once there, they saw a lot of people on the street dying by the side of the road. The situation was serious. However, after several days of detailed investigation in Tongcheng, no plague was found.[47]

The report stated that most of the illnesses appeared to be related to complications of malaria, but that they had no tests, nor any drugs for treatment. They had travelled for a month on foot through the 'roadless area' and estimated that the presence of malaria affected 37 per cent of all recruits, while a quarter were (also) suffering from dysentery. Malaria was endemic in the area, but the report does not give an explanation for the increased mortality which is visible in the reference to the anonymous people and which can be inferred from previous reports about the material conditions of the medical staff themselves. Furthermore, the report tried to explain the situation without directly mentioning malnutrition or hunger.

Meanwhile the Henan famine reached its peak between summer 1942 and spring 1943.[48] However, after the departure of Dr Lim, the annual general reports of the MRC, in contrast to the local ones mentioned above, were written far away from the front, in Chongqing, and emphasized the work being done in other regions of China, especially Sichuan and Yunnan, where the situation was better and Nationalist control was more solid.[49] Increased US aid for the Burma campaign and the Sino-Burmese border helped to create more hospitals and infrastructure in these regions. Meanwhile, the physicians who remained in Central China felt abandoned and silenced.

Dr P.C. Hsueh (Xue Peiji, 薛培基), head of the First Medical Group and provisional head of the Tenth Medical Group (after the departure of its previous leader), described a situation of mental and physical breakdown after four years of service at the front. While the First Medical Group had got as far as the northern areas of Shaanxi, near Yan'an and Gansu, the Tenth Medical Group reached the borders of Shanxi and northern Henan. He merely announced his resignation from the post, hoping that some talented and energetic person would replace him. Dr. Hsueh noted that hyperinflation in that region was the highest in the whole country, making it almost impossible to meet daily needs. He wrote from a rear hospital in Xi'an, even though he was in charge of the border region of Henan and Shaanxi, where there were mil-

47 "Di 5 zhongdui": 235–36.

48 Muscolino, *The Ecology of War in China*: 87–96.

49 "Zhonguha minguo hongshizihui zonghui jiuhu zongduibu sanshier niandu zhongxin gongzuo baogaobiao 中华民国红十字会总会救护总队部三十二年度中心工作报告表 [Report on the general work of the MRC of China's Red Cross, 1943]," Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 150–51.

lions of refugees fleeing from Henan.[50] Between two and three million refugees walked from Henan to the Shaanxi border as they attempted to reach Xi'an, whose medical relief posts were overcrowded.[51] While the situation he was describing was dramatic, he was also explicit in his criticisms of the upper levels of command (specifically the Chinese Red Cross): "The situation of every medical team is thus chaotic. The teams can no longer work effectively. Comparing the earlier report with later ones, it is apparent that the brilliant achievements of the glorious days of the Chinese Red Cross have all been lost.[52]"

4 The Global Implications of Exposing the Invisible

Reports about the tragedy of the Henan famine in 1942 and 1943 were censored in China and in the newspapers of the allied countries.[53] However, Chiang Kai-shek and the military leadership were aware of the situation. As the Henan famine progressed, information gradually filtered out among the Chinese population and to allied personnel. The presence of foreigners in the MRC, its dependency on foreign funding, and the international allied effort in fighting Japan gave a global dimension to the reports and the facts they exposed. The relationship between foreign doctors and the military varied: some Chinese generals and commanders such as Feng Yuxiang were interested in the MRC, its relief work and internationalist approach; others were suspicious. For instance, in the city of Changde, Hunan, the presence of the Austrian doctor Heinrich Kent lent credence to the Chinese accusation that Japan conducted biological warfare. In the spring of 1942, he and some Chinese doctors described the spread of bubonic plague carried by *Yersinia pestis* in the city. As they had no records of the previous presence of the pathogen, they concluded that it had been intentionally introduced by the Japanese occupiers.[54] In a letter to his sister in November 1941, Kent wrote:

50 Xue Peiji 薛培基, "Di 1 zhongdui duizhang jiandai di 10 zhongdui zhongduizhang Xue Peiji baogao Xibei gedui muqian zhuangkuang 第一中队中队长兼代第 10 中队中队长薛培基报告西北各队目前状况 [The leader of the First Medical Group and provisional leader of Tenth Medical Group, Xue Peiji reports about the conditions of every Medical team in the Northwest regions]," in Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 153.

51 Muscolino, *The Ecology of War*: 142–61

52 Original in Chinese: "各队情形因此益为紊乱, 工作效能几不可信, 过去我红会灿烂辉煌之成绩尽皆丧失无余," in Xue Peiji, "Di 1 zhongdui": 153.

53 Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937–1945. The Struggle for Survival* (London: Allen Lane, 2013): 271–74.

54 Ken De (Kent), "Shuyi hengxing zai Changde 鼠疫横行在常德 [Changde is suffering from a widespread plague!]," 22.04.1942, in Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 166–67; Ken De (Kent), "Zhongguo hongshizihui zai Changde fangzhi shuyi zhi huoyue jianshi 肯德, 中国红十字会在常德防治鼠疫之活跃简史 [A report on the history of plague prevention by the Chinese Red Cross in Changde],"

> I visited a new sector of the front which is now also under my supervision. I was asked to assist the Red Cross Unit under Chinese physicians there in their work by giving advice and influencing the senior officers, who are more likely to listen to the words of a foreigner than a Chinese.[55]

However, military commanders could also silence foreign doctors. In June 1940, the city of Yichang, in Hubei province, fell into Japanese hands. This was a strategic city on the Yangtze from which Japanese airplanes could easily bomb Chongqing. The medical teams and the civilian population suffered severe air raids, while thousands of people were trying to seek refuge. Under the leadership of Dr Z.U. Zee (Xu Chong'en, 徐崇恩) the Third Medical Group of the MRC was evacuated by boat and on foot to the western towns along the Yangtze River, some twenty to fifty kilometres from Yichang.[56] When the front stabilized, the management of this team, which was located in the mountainous county of Zigui (Hubei province) fell to Dr I. Kaneti, the Hungarian physician Gyorgy Schön and the Lithuanian Leon Kamieniecki.[57] The fall of Yichang led to a massive mobilization of Chinese soldiers in the region, while the shortage of medical staff was aggravated by a climate of political suspicion. Drs Schön and Kamieniecki, however, stayed on in the region for two years, until they were laid off in January 1943. During this period of intense work in the isolated towns, they wrote a report about the sanitary conditions of the troops. According to Kaneti, because of the lack of trust with the military commanders and the MRC staff, this report was personally delivered to the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, T.V. Soong (宋子文).[58]

The situation they described was highly sensitive as they claimed that, overall, the troops were in no condition to fight due to malnutrition and disease. Except for some divisions, such as the 18th, the majority of young soldiers at the Yichang front were not receiving the 24 ounces of rice that was considered the minimum daily ration per person. The report emphasized that the diet was inadequate in both quantitative and qualitative terms (the rice was usually accompanied only by some pickled vegetables, without any fish or meat at all) and therefore responsible for more than half of the cases of sickness they treated. Even officers and MRC medical could not buy sufficient food from their salaries. Dr Kamieniecki, who was in charge of looking after the special dietary requirements of the wounded and sick, developed starvation

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24.08.1942, in Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 168–69; see also Guiyang Municipal Government, *Int'l Medical team in Guiyang* (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2015): 56.

55 Letter from Heinrich Kent to his sister, Edith Kent, 02.11.1941, in New York University Tamiment Library & Wagner Labor Archives, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Fredericka Martin Papers, 3, 5 Germany: Cohn, Ernst (a.k.a. Heinrich Kent) and Edith Kent Marcuse.

56 Sixth Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, January–June 1940, in Academia Sinica, Lim Papers, 64/01/10/006.

57 Seventh Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, July–December 1940, in Academia Sinica, Lim Papers, 64/01/10/007; see also Lin, *Zaixue yu huozhong*: 115–18.

58 Kaneti Report: 48.

oedema after the first years at the Yichang front.[59] This situation created high mortality rates, especially amongst the new recruits who had to travel long distances, sometimes on foot. Dr Schön reported a 'typical experience' in which 1,000 new recruits arrived, all carrying lice. He requested that they might stay for two days for rest and delousing, but his request was denied by military command. As a result, the men were sent to the front, where they infected the rest of the division. Shortly afterwards, five hundred cases of serious infection, aggravated by their previous weakened state, overcrowded his facility. Despite his efforts, he could not avoid a high mortality rate.[60] An explicit description of malnutrition, sickness and missing soldiers is as follows:

> The loss of life due to malnutrition and disease is exceedingly great. For example: the 11th Division, which was once regarded as one of the Generalissimo's best divisions, and the 119th Division, each required 3,000 new recruits within twelve months in order to replace these who had died or been evacuated to the rear due to serious disease.[61]

The medical teams complained that unusually high mortality rates due to malnutrition and sickness were common, but were mostly silenced. In his report to the Soviet embassy, covering Hubei the late 1941, Kaneti noted that about half the conscripts of a division of 10,000 had died or disappeared, mainly due to sickness. As a result, the division commander could only operate with 4,000 or 5,000 soldiers, who were barely able to fight.[62] Ianto Kaneti and other communist doctors who had been with him in the International Brigades in Spain, such as Stanisław Flato from Poland and the Romanian David Iancu, held meetings with Soviet embassy staff in Chongqing, where these reports were delivered.[63]

Some of these reports also reached the governments of the United States and Great Britain, which were allies of China and also interested in receiving direct information about the strength of the Chinese army in its fight against the Japanese as the war moved into the Pacific and South-East Asia. Their interest, however, contrasted with the Nationalist government's efforts to silence this information. After more than two years serving on the Yichang front, physicians Schön and Kamieniecki were sent back to MRC headquarters in Guiyang, where they survived as unemployed refugees. Other foreign doctors, such as Kaneti or Kent, were also recalled and dismissed from

59 "Di 571 dui shouzhi baogaobiao, danju ji renyuan mingdan 第 571 队收支报告表, 单据及人员名单 [Members and revenue, expenditure sheets of Medical Team No 571]," GDG, Zhongguo hongshizihui zonghui jiuhu zongdui, No. 2033.

60 "Report on the living and health conditions in the two armies at the Ichang front," Chungking, 08.01.1944, Alfred Kohlberg File, Columbia University Archival Collections, ABMAC archives, 4, 38.

61 "Report on the living and health conditions."

62 Kaneti Report: 37.

63 On the meetings of Kaneti with Zhou Enlai, see David Iancu, *9 ani medic pe front. Spania – China, 1937–1945* (Bucarest: Editorial Vitruviu, 2008): 102–5.

the MRC and the 'roadless areas', until they were recruited by the US-led Y-Force and sent to India and Burma. The director of ABMAC was Alfred Kohlberg, a staunch anti-communist who would become famous in the Cold War with Senator McCarthy. When he read the report written by the communist doctors Schön and Kamieniecki, he declared them to be 'intelligent men whose views seem objective and reliable'.[64] In August 1943, he decided to travel to the 9th War Area in Hunan to verify conditions at the front for himself. He went to the 'roadless area', where he met a 'typical doctor' of the MRC. According to him, the MRC used to have 35 medical teams at its peak in early 1942, but after Dr Lim's dismissal it had dwindled to only thirteen units.[65]

When Kohlberg reached Changsha, there was an epidemic of dysentery that caused high mortality among the new recruits, 'partly due to the poor nutritional conditions of these conscripts'. The military importance of Changsha, the city where perhaps most battles had taken place, can be assessed in terms of the numbers of troops stationed there: six Japanese divisions (each, at full strength, comprising 25,000 soldiers) and twelve Chinese armies, each of which could command, at full strength, 40,000 men (i.e. three divisions of 10,000, plus headquarters staff, transport and medical personnel etc.). Between July 1942 and June 1943, a period that saw no major battles, Kohlberg was informed that out of this total of approximately 400,000 Chinese conscripts, 9,000 had died from injuries they had sustained, while 40,000 had succumbed to various diseases.[66] This ratio of one to four (with a mortality rate of twelve per cent) may have been higher, as Kohlberg did not discuss the missing recruits who had not been included in the statistics. In Kaneti's report (who may have exaggerated) the ratio of death due to injury v. death from disease was one to thirty. In any case, Kohlberg's report about Hunan was criticized by Major W.S. Flowers, from the British Red Cross, as not representing the actual situation, as he had only been in Changsha for one week (in contrast to the two years spent there by Schön and Kamieniecki), and had always been accompanied by officials. In his criticism, the major pointed to a clear case of intentional concealment:

> I wished you to know that the picture he [Kohlberg] was likely to give of the Hunan front was based on evidence he was allowed to see, and not on the evidence which is acquired by experience and day to day contact with conditions. In effect, I wished to lend you any support I could in getting the facts revealed. There is wide-spread semi-starvation and malnutrition amongst both civilians and military.[67]

64 "Report on the Living and Health conditions."

65 "Di 4 zhongdui suoshu gedui 6, 7, yuefen gongzuo baogao 第 4 中队所属各队, 6, 7 月份工作报告 Report on the Months of June and July of the Fourth Medical Group]," August 1942, in Guiyangshi dang'an guan, *Zhandi*: 209–11.

66 "Travelogue of trip taken by Alfred Kohlberg to the 9th War Area in China, August 8 to 16th, 1943," Alfred Kohlberg File, Columbia University Archival Collections, ABMAC archives, 4, 38.

67 W.S. Flowers to Kohlberg, 18.10.1943, Alfred Kohlberg File, Columbia University Archival Collections, ABMAC archives, 4, 38.

Flowers noted that Kohlberg had addressed only a small part of the problem; his main concern (which coincided with most of the reports of the MRC) were 'the conscripts who come up as replacements at Changsha for the first time', and who were largely left out of the official statistics. This was 'a subject of vital importance'.[68] As a result, the British sinologist Joseph Needham was asked to write a report on the medical services of the Chinese army for the Medical Committee of the British Council. The report was based on direct observations in Gansu and Sichuan, and on the report by the Austrian physician Fritz Jensen, who had served as director of the Eleventh Medical Group of the MRC in Southern Henan, on the border with Shaanxi and Hubei, in 1939–40. There, the situation had already been serious before the famine years, when 'almost all cases of sickness suffered from malnutrition'.[69] Needham argued that this situation was due to the system of conscription, where 'almost all' young conscripts (sometimes even at the early age of eleven or twelve) suffered from malnutrition, scabies, malaria, dysentery, typhoid or a combination of several of these diseases. In 1944, after the Henan famine was made public, he concluded that 'the abundance of food (for those who can pay for it) in the rear areas, compared with malnutrition at the front, is universally recognized as the worst problem of all'.[70] The facts were thus revealed.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has exposed the different layers of concealment that can emerge in critical situations such as in wartime China and the years of the Henan famine. The MRC reports show how malnutrition, sickness and the nonviolent deaths of young conscripts were depicted in direct and indirect ways, as if the medical staff was struggling between informing and concealing. Quantitative data was used to highlight specific illnesses and injuries, while underestimating malnutrition and missing soldiers who were not recorded in the statistics. However, malnutrition affected all other illnesses, worsening the health status of all patients, while the issue of unrecorded missing soldiers meant that health indicators were actually worse. The exact extent of malnutrition and the numbers of casualties it caused may never be known.

Further research could match the MRC reports with the military records of the affected divisions, to check how this problem was communicated to the higher levels of

68 Comments by Mr. Kohlberg on Major Flower's letter, 18.10.1943, Alfred Kohlberg File, Columbia University Archival Collections, ABMAC archives, 4, 38.

69 Seventh Report of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, July–December 1939, in Academia Sinica, Lim Papers, 64/01/10/007.

70 Joseph Needham, "Memorandum," 1944, British Council Mission to China, The National Archives, FD 1/6663.

command.[71] It would also be interesting to know to what extent the anti-communist purges that started with Dr Lim and extended to other doctors were directly related to this issue, such as foreign doctors who had been more straightforward in their reports being expelled from these regions. As the news of the Henan famine spread, however, these intentional concealing attempts did not succeed in hiding the weak state of the Chinese Nationalist army. The MRC reports reached the allies, as this chapter has shown, and became a relevant source of information.

The dilemmas of the physicians varied depending on their positions (some were more exposed than others) and the recipients of the reports: while the institutions of China's allies were eager to receive information about the real conditions in Central China, Chinese government institutions were unwilling to disclose this information. There was a deliberate and intentional military strategy to isolate regions by destroying roads in order to halt Japan's military advance. This had the unintended consequence of blocking supplies and the evacuation of the wounded and sick to the rear. MRC maps show grey and blurry zones between the enemy and Free China, often referred to as 'roadless' or 'guerrilla areas'. In 1942–43, malnutrition and disease spread in these areas and soldiers disappeared as they could not be evacuated. Furthermore, in his fight against Japan, Chiang Kai-shek was trying to hide China's weakness, not only from the enemy, but also from his allies. Thus, a qualitative approach to the MRC reports brings interesting insights about the situations faced by the doctors and nurses and they ways they reported them. Despite all the information that they might have concealed, these reports offer hints of what happened in China's most isolated regions, about events that would have otherwise have remained unknown and invisible.

The dilemma between informing and silencing should also be understood in the context of the extreme conditions suffered both by the soldiers and the civilian population in the 'roadless areas'. The doctors and nurses only registered those patients they actually saw, and their numbers were falling as the medical staff was also shrinking. Some reports take a matter-of-fact approach and barely mention malnutrition explicitly, even though it is overwhelmingly present. The deteriorating conditions in Central China were both observed and experienced by the medical staff. It is therefore worth reconsidering the positionality and capacity of the doctors and nurses:[72] they were active participants to a limited extent, and passive observers of the overall situation, as they could not possibly intervene. Shortages of food and basic goods could also lead to a gradual loss of their agency, as in the description of the role of medical assistants in the labour camps of Soviet Russia by the author Varlam Shala-

71 Aaron William Moore, "Chinese Documentary Source Materials Relating to World War Two," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 29 (2022): 167–91.

72 Martin Dusinberre, "Japan, Global History, and the Great Silence," *History Worskhop Journal* 83, no. 1 (2019): 130–50.

mov.[73] This could also produce an incidental, rather than an intentional concealment, and shows how the medical staff was affected in similar ways to the conscripts and other sufferers of malnutrition and sickness. Thus, their reports, no matter how imperfect and incomplete, spoke for the thousands of young conscripts who disappeared in silence.

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73 Sarah J. Young, "Recalling the Dead: Repetition, Identity, and the Witness in Varlam Shalamov's Kolymskie rasskazy," *Slavic Review* 70, no. 2 (2011): 362. I would like to thank Stephan Conermann for this reference.

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Marina Torres

Understanding Why History Forgets: The 'Rescuing' of Abandoned Chinese Girls in the South China Sea in the Eighteenth Century

Mendicant missionaries – Dominicans and Franciscans – who worked in Canton and Macau during the first half of the eighteenth century concentrated part of their efforts on taking in abandoned Chinese children, especially girls.[1] These religious men regularly attended slave markets in Canton and Macau to buy these little girls. They then placed them in informal foundling homes or sent them to Macao or the Philippines with the help of merchants and ship captains.[2] Girls were sent abroad to be raised by elite families but also to work for them. This chapter focuses on understanding why the missionaries' efforts to 'rescue' abandoned Chinese children and the complex ramifications of these efforts during the early modern period were neglected not only by historians, but also by their contemporaries.

In this contribution I argue that the absence of this phenomenon is due to two main factors: firstly, the nature of the taking of girls. For missionaries, this labour was directly connected with the virtue of Christian *caritas*. In their writings, missionaries report that they were primarily interested in converting the children to Christianity through baptism and rescuing them from death. However, although one of the most distinctive features of early modern Christian missionary work abroad was charitable work, this topic and its link to slavery networks has barely been studied by scholars.[3] The scarcity of the sources regarding charity, the predilection of both missionaries and historians for intellectual issues, the predominance of urban over rural

1 This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme from the project "Trafficking of girls and Catholic missionary networks in the South China Sea (18th–19th centuries): a transnational approach", under the Marie Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 101026462.

2 This work is based on previous studies including Marina Torres, *Con un catecismo salvaré un reino: la empresa franciscana en China en la Edad Moderna* (Granada: Editorial Comares, 2022): 145–210 and Marina Torres, "Franciscans, Baptisms and Rescues of Abandoned Children in Eighteenth Century China: A Point of Charity?" *Cauriensia. Revista Annual de Ciencias Eclesiásticas* 13 (2018): 503–28.

3 Some exceptions include Lucio Souza, *The Portuguese Slave Trade in Early Modern Japan: Merchants, Jesuits and Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Slaves* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Liam M. Brockey, "Jesuits and Unfree Labor in Early Modern East Asia," in *Jesuits and Race: A Global History of Continuity and Change, 1530–2020*, ed. Nathaniel Millett and Charles H. Parker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2022): 75–96; and Rômulo da Silva Ehalt, "Jesuits and the Problem of Slavery in Early Modern Japan" (PhD diss., Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2017). See also Mònica Ginés-Blasi, "The International Trafficking of Chinese Children and its Conflicting Legalities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Treaty-Port China," *Slavery & Abolition* 44, no. 1 (2023): 157–80.

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studies, and the leading role of the Chinese instead of the Europeans in charity works, are some of the reasons behind the neglect of this phenomenon. In addition, its relationship with contexts of social segregation and dependency in the South China Sea has also had an impact in its disappearance.[4]

The 'rescue' of children by missionaries was associated to their prior abandonment by their families. This practice took place in secret, as it was condemned in Chinese law by scholar-officials and by emperors. This also explains its absence from the historical narrative.[5]

Finally, a further factor that explains the invisibility of this phenomenon from scholarly investigations lies in the distinctive characteristics of its protagonists: missionaries and abandoned girls. The lives and actions of both groups have been underrepresented in history and historiography. The reasons behind this include a scarcity of sources, the strong dependency of both missionaries and girls on existing power structures, and their self-concealment manifest in the refusal of missionaries to write about it publicly.

This chapter – divided into five sections – is structured as follows: the first section analyses the connection of this phenomenon with Christian charity, which helps to explain its disappearance from historical accounts. The second section focuses on the connection of abandoned Chinese children with slavery networks. The third and fourth sections reflect on the role played by the influence of mendicant religious orders and the history of young girls, respectively, on the neglect of this topic. Finally, the conclusion highlights the characteristics of the process by which this phenomenon disappeared from both history and historiography, reflecting on the factors which had a deeper impact on 'silencing', and suggests new ways of overcoming these hindrances.

4 The term 'dependency' here refers to "all forms that human bondage and coercion have taken over time." This concept, which was developed at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, is being used here – mindful of its comprehensiveness – in recognition of the new efforts in the field of labour coercion to overcome traditional approaches to slavery and servitude. See Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler, Stephan Conermann, "The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency," *Journal of Global Slavery* 8 (2023): 4.

5 Condemnation of neglect, abandonment and infanticide was common. Imperial authorities issued several edicts condemning infanticide, and Chinese, elite-authored texts followed the same line. See chapters 1 and 2 in Michelle King, *Between Birth and Death. Female Infanticide in Nineteenth Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014): 15–76.

1 The Disappearance of Christian Charity in the Eighteenth Century and the Burden of the Nineteenth-Century Model

For missionaries, the 'rescue' of abandoned Chinese children had a deep theological significance. As such, one of their most important duties had to do with the works of mercy. As part of the Seven Virtues – the Four Cardinal Virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, and the Three Theological Virtues of faith, hope, and charity – the latter referred to the love of God above all things, and to loving one's neighbour. Practicing charity during the early modern period could take varied forms: from feeding or clothing the poor to visiting the imprisoned and donating money.[6] Specifically, the Catholic corporal works of mercy included instructions to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty and clothe the naked. These mandates also encompassed the taking in of abandoned and neglected babies and children.

Given the central importance of this Christian principle, it would not be surprising to find plenty of references to this type of activity both in the writings of missionaries in China and in later scholarly accounts, but it is not the case. We can find information about charity mainly in two very specific contexts and sources of missionary literature. Firstly, as part of the missionaries' explanation of this Catholic notion to the Chinese. And secondly, in their practice of charity. However, as we shall see in the coming pages, neither contemporaries nor later historians gave any priority to the topic. There are different explanations for its disappearance.

In the process of evangelization, Europeans introduced Catholic ethics and moral concepts to the future Christians. Given the importance of self-cultivation and morality in Confucianism, charity was presented to the Chinese as a tool to complement their existing beliefs which would guide them in their daily actions. As in the case of the Ten Commandments, the Eight Beatitudes or other Catholic rules, the introduction of the Seven Virtues and the Fourteen Works of Mercy allowed missionaries to highlight the ethical dimension of the Christian doctrine. These ideas not only connected

6 Historians have produced a large corpus of literature on charity, poor relief, and philanthropy in the Counter-Reformation from different perspectives. Among many others see: George R. Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750–1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La société et les pauvres en Europe (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1974); Olwen H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750–1789* (Paris: Clarendon Press, 1974); Cissie C. Fairchilds, *Poverty and Charity in Aix-en-Provence 1640–1789* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Ole P. Grell and Andrew Cunningham, "Health Care and Poor Relief in 18th and 19th Century Northern Europe," in *Health Care and Poor Relief in 18th and 19th Century Northern Europe*, ed. Ole P. Grell, Andrew Cunningham (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002): 10–33; Stuart Woolf, *The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Methuen, 1986).

Christianity with the Confucian worldview of educated officials, but also with popular beliefs and Taoist and Buddhist ethics.[7]

One way of locating this information today is by consulting the preserved Chinese Catholic books that missionaries published in collaboration with educated converts. As Johannes Bettray described in 1955, preaching was not the only method used in China to spread the Catholic faith: writing and editing books were also important strategies.[8] Nevertheless, compared to other missionary subjects such as philosophy, linguistics or science, there are very few works devoted to charity. Diego de Pantoja's and Yang Tingyun's treaty entitled《七克》*Qike* 'The Seven Victories', written in the early 1610's, and Giacomo Rho, Cheng Tingrui and Wang Yuantai's book《哀矜行詮》*Aijin Xingquan* 'Preface of De operibus Misericordiae', are rare and exceptional examples that have only recently come to the attention of scholars.[9] The first text explains how to conquer the seven deadly sins – pride, envy, greed, anger, gluttony, lust, and sloth – while the authors of the second work present a general discussion of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy with illustrative examples. References to the fourteen works of mercy are also commonly found in the genre of catechetical literature, including the *Doctrinas cristianas* and the Catechisms. This type of small booklet was very common in the missions and served to present the most important mysteries of the faith to the converts. However, the works of mercy were presented in the form of a list which only sometimes included short explanations. Accordingly, the scarcity of sources and the absence of information about its reception by the Chinese had an impact on the disappearance of *caritas* in the mission field.

There are two other reasons why this topic was underrepresented in Catholic publications in China. The first has to do with the missionaries' own biases, which prevented them from writing about it. Chinese elites were interested in new information about western philosophy and science. Hence, missionaries introduced them to the western scientific tradition rather than focusing on writings about moral instructions.

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7 See, among others, Cynthia K. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit. Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Kai Sheng, *A History of Chinese Buddhist Faith and Life* (Leiden: Brill, 2020); and Livia Kohn, *Cosmos and Community: The Ethical Dimension of Daoism* (Cambridge: Three Pines Press, 2004).

8 This kind of evangelization was called "Apostolat der Presse" by Johannes Bettray in his book *Die Akkommodationsmethode des P. Matteo Ricci S.J. in China* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1955).

9 Xiao Qinghe 肖清和, "Aijin xing quan yu ming mo tianzhujiao de jishan sixiang《哀矜行詮》與明末天主教的積善思想 [Aijin Xinquan (De operibus Misericordiae) and the Catholic Doctrine of Merit-Making during Late Ming Period]," *Logos & Pneuma. Chinese Journal of Theology* 42 (2015): 147–78; Tuo Chen 陳拓, "從《七克》看漢文西書在十七至十八世紀的出版與傳播 [The Publication and Circulation of Chinese Christian Texts in the 17th and 18th Centuries: A case Study of Qike (Seven Victories)]," *Logos & Pneuma Chinese Journal of Theology* 49A (2018): 207–38; Zhang Xiping张西平, ed., *Diego de Pantoja y China: reflexiones sobre las relaciones históricas entre China y el mundo hispánico* (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2021).

The Society of Jesus – which enjoyed the monopoly of evangelization in China until 1633 – opted for the tried-and-tested policy of accommodation: the principle of adapting the Christian message to Chinese culture to find common ground with its future converts.[10] As part of this strategy, missionaries decided to reach out to the Confucian elites and to adopt a top-down approach. It is worth noting that evangelization in China represented an enormous challenge for Europeans, since China's vastness, ancient culture and strong and varied systems of beliefs made it hard to penetrate this society. Most importantly, China had not been colonized by Iberian monarchies – to which missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were legally attached. The printing of books allowed them to introduce Christian ideas into scholarly debates. As a result, the missionaries made great efforts to focus on the interests of the literati, including discussions about astronomy, geography, mathematics, or hydraulics in their writings. They also made efforts to transmit the Confucian canon and morality to Europe by translating Chinese classics and knowledge. However, even if moral issues were at the heart of the debates with Chinese literati, there was a special emphasis on an ontological perspective in their narratives that was very distant from everyday charity works and their practice.

The second reason that explains the invisibility of charity within this literary genre is a lack of interest by historians. In the 1960s and 1970s, the main question raised by scholars on Christianity in China revolved around the extent of the influence of western science in China, with the objective of measuring the missionaries' success in their contact with this empire. This approach was highly influenced by the dominance of the Jesuit perspective in historiography and the perception of these historical agents as a paradigmatic example of positive cultural exchange in which 'science' was a cornerstone. In the following decades – and up until the twenty-first century – the Confucian and Christian dialogue kept the same discussions alive thanks to the interest of social sciences scholars in intercultural encounters and the impacts of globalization.

Apart from specific treaties and books about charity, there is some information on the practicing of charity, but the number of sources and of subsequent studies is also low.

Firstly, it is important to bear in mind that the performance of charitable works left no trace in the written sources due to its practical dimension. Its value was associ-

10 Based on José de Acosta's work in Peru, the approach of other missionaries in Paraguay and Chile, and Matteo Ricci's experience in China, Alessandro Valignano designed this strategy which was to be used in China. See, among others, Josef Franz Schütte, *Valignano's Mission Principles for Japan, I, 12, From his appointment as visitor until his first departure from Japan (1573–1582), pt.1. The problem* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980–1985); and Josef Franz Schütte, *Il Cerimoniale per i missionari del Giappone. Nuova edizione anastática con saggio introduttivo di Michela Catto* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011).

ated with its imitation. Moreover, there was a legal ban on the neglect of children.[11] Therefore those who abandoned or killed infants did not write detailed descriptions of their acts. That is why the available sources usually included second-hand evidence written by foreign or Chinese men, and the consequence has been an overwhelming interest in their perceptions – how they viewed and interpreted this Chinese reality – rather than in the practices.[12]

Secondly, although charity could take the form of individual actions, its most relevant manifestation reflected in the written sources was the organisation of societies established by European missionaries or Chinese converts. These lay associations were devoted to a wide variety of religious activities, including works of mercy. Very few records on these Catholic institutions exist, and only a small number of scholarly works have investigated them. This is in large part due to the fact that the leading role in them was not taken by missionaries exclusively, but also by Chinese Christians.[13] Since the history of Christian missions was traditionally written by members of the religious orders, the narrative was similarly dominated by a western perspective for a long time. This only began to change in the 1980s, when the Eurocentric perspective was replaced by a new approach which included the Chinese perspective. Jacques Gernet's classic 1982 work, *Chine et christianisme*, marked the beginning of this paradigm shift. Consequently, new Chinese sources were examined, and the field also included both Chinese and non-religious scholars that had been underrepresented in academic institutions before.[14] This change also influenced the objects of research, with attention now also being given to local churches and communities.[15]

Another reason to explain the invisibilization of charity is the predominant interest of scholars in urban areas at the expense of rural missions, where charitable actions were very common. Even today the conversion of courtly elites and the work of

11 Emperor Shunzhi forbade female infanticide in 1659, Emperor Kangxi declared child abandonment illegal, and Emperor Yongzheng allocated new funds for foundling homes. Liang Qizi, "L'accueil des enfants abandonnés dans la Chine du Bas-Yangzi aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," *Etudes chinoises* 4, no. 1 (1985): 25–27. For a brief analysis on the traditional legal sanctions see Julie Jimmerson, "Female Infanticide in China: An Examination of Cultural and Legal Norms," *UCLA Pacific Basin Law Journal* 8, no. 1 (1990): 57–62.

12 See Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke, "Cradle to Grave: Baby Towers and the Politics of Infant Burial in Qing China," in *The Chinese Deathscape: Grave Reform in Modern China*, ed. Thomas S. Mullaney (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

13 There are some examples such as the case of Yang Tingyun 杨廷筠 (1557–1627) and Wang Zheng 王徵 (1571–1644). They created the so-called "Charitable Society" 仁會 based on the Fourteen Works of Mercy. See Alexander Chow and Adrian Dudink, "The Zikawei Manuscript Copy (1885) of Wang Zheng's Renhui yue (1634)," *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 36 (2014): 14–24.

14 Jacques Gernet, *Chine et christianisme. Action et réaction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982). See Nicolas Standaert, "New Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in China," *Catholic Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (1997): 573–613.

15 Jean Charbonnier, *Historie des chrétiens de Chine* (Paris: Desclée, 1992); Qinghua Liu, *Une paroisse à la Cité impériale: Le Beitang de Pékin, 1688–1827* (Paris: Hémisphères, 2021).

missionaries at the court are the subject of a great number of publications, in contrast to the rural areas[16]. Given that the practice of charity around Canton was widely conducted by Chinese converts in the countryside, it is not surprising that these charitable practices have remained understudied. Illiteracy in rural areas explains the lack of sources too.

The 'rescue' of Chinese children in Canton in the eighteenth century has also been understudied because of the specific attention historians paid to the nineteenth century to the detriment of earlier centuries. Historiography portrayed the seventeenth century as the high period of the missions, in contrast to a decline in the eighteenth century due to the persecutions to which Catholicism was subjected. This prevented more studies focusing on the latter period. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, charity became the axis of a new impetus for Christian evangelization in China.[17] The dominant narrative prevalent in accounts by contemporary modern scholarship was to regard it as a political tool used by European imperialists. This political perspective encompassed a dual aspect of charity during the Opium Wars (1839–1860): that of China and that of the European imperial powers.

Growing Chinese nationalism led to a very negative perception of charitable works by Chinese society. As exemplified by the famous Tianjin Massacre of 1870, in which twenty French Catholic priests and nuns were killed by a mob that accused them of the kidnap and mistreatment of children, these philanthropic initiatives came to represent the dominance and influence of foreign powers.[18] Meanwhile, European powers justified their actions by emphasizing the association between child abandonment – and more specifically female infanticide – and Chinese culture. As such, China came to be situated in an inferior position within the civilization-barbarism framework designed by the European elites to understand their own societies. The notion of an exceptional connection between China and infanticide – which would not have arisen in the same way in connection to other countries – eventually served to justify European military intervention in China.[19] In Chinese historiographic accounts, infanticide was portrayed as a population problem due to a critical imbalance in the sex

16 See for instance, Eugenio Menegon, "An Invisible City: Urban Life and Networks of European Missionaries and Christian Converts in Qing Beijing," in *From Rome to Beijing: Sacred Spaces in Dialogue*, ed. Daniel M. Greenberg and Mari Yoko Hara (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2024), or Claudia von Collani, "Jesuits as diplomats in the service of Chinese emperors in early modern times" *Comillas Journal of International Relations* 29 (2024): 41–56.

17 This explains why most bibliographical references of Catholic charitable activities in China begin in the 1850s. See, for instance, King, *Between Birth and Death*. Andrea Janku, "Sowing Happiness: Spiritual Competition in Famine Relief Activities in Late Nineteenth-Century China," *Minsu quyi* 民俗曲藝 143 (2004): 89–118. Henrietta Harrison, "'A Penny for the Little Chinese': The French Holy Childhood Association in China, 1843–1951," *American Historical Review* 113, no. 1 (2008): 72–92.

18 See Paul A. Cohen, *China, and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

19 See Chapter 5 in King, *Between Birth and Death*: 149–78.

ratio of births, while European accounts emphasized its relationship with the Confucian orthodoxy that gave precedence to male children, and with the anti-female attitudes in China that reflected a structural problem.[20] Furthermore, this view was reinforced by the type of sources consulted by scholars. The use of propaganda and media reports aimed in most cases at western audiences served to strengthen the idea of abandonment and infanticide as a Chinese cultural characteristic. This 'model', in which child abandonment in China was understood as a Chinese peculiarity, and European philanthropic efforts as a remedy to that problem, dominated the understanding of charity work in historiography. It was only challenged in recent decades.[21]

Moreover, studies on charitable work during the eighteenth century were influenced – again – by the selection of sources and by the historians' own interests. Moral treatises, such as the *Qike* and the *Aijin Xingquan* mentioned earlier, and the teaching of the Fourteen Works of Mercy by Europeans, were especially well received by elite officials during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many Chinese literati participated in charitable associations based on Confucian principles, so Christian charitable associations were not a strange phenomenon for the Chinese. China had a long tradition of approved and legal benevolent societies, including the 同善會 *tong shanhui* during the Ming dynasty and the 善堂 *shantang* in the Qing dynasty. Apart from these private organizations, which were supported by the local elites, lineage organisations, religious institutions, and the state also promoted the common good. Orphanages existed in China as far back as the Southern and Northern dynasties (南北朝 *Nanbeichao*, 420–589), when there were institutional attempts to help the sick and orphaned.[22] Throughout the seventh century, the initiatives of the Buddhist monasteries stood out. Their main initiative was the so-called 'compassionate fields home' (悲田坊 *beitian fang*) that helped the sick, the elderly, orphans, and outcasts.[23] In the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), new beneficial institutions were created, which multiplied

20 The demographic approach to female infanticide has been extensively explored by historiography and directly connects with current population policies of the People's Republic of China. See, among others, James Z. Lee and Wang Feng, *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities, 1700–2000* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Philip C.C. Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350–1988* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); James Z Lee, Wang Feng and Cameron Campbell, *Fate, and Fortune in Rural China: Social Organization and Population Behaviour in Liaoning 1774–1873* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Chang Jinhua, *Qingdai niying wenti xintan* 场景画情带你影问题新探 [A New Inquiry into the Problem of Infanticide during the Qing Dynasty] in *Huyin jiating yu renkou xingwei* 婚姻家庭与人口行为 [Marriage, Family and Population Behaviour] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000): 197–219.

21 See King, *Between Birth and Death*.

22 Tsu Yuyue, *The Spirit of Chinese Philanthropy: A Study in Mutual Aid* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912): 25.

23 Hugh Scogin, "Poor Relief in Northern Sung China," *Oriens Extremus* 25, no. 1 (1978): 30–32

rapidly.[24] These private initiatives were accompanied by other measures at the central level. The Yongzheng Emperor created eleven new orphanages in the lower Yangzi between 1724 and 1734. Starting in the 1750s, local elites began to develop 'foundling homes' (育嬰堂 *Yuying tang*).[25] Buddhist monasteries and patronage societies also played an important role. Individual initiatives also came about because of the desire to earn merit or perform good deeds to achieve immortality, in accordance with Buddhist and Taoist ideas.[26]

In addition to these initiatives, the educated wrote morality books (*shanshu* 善書) that circulated widely and had the aim of teaching how to do good deeds and avoid doing evil. This new impetus to look for moral guidance and pursue self-transformation was also reflected in the spirit-writings or the ledgers of merit and demerit (*gongguoge* 功過格).[27] Subsequent historiography highlighted the compatibility of Chinese virtues with the Christian values presented in missionary literature. Nevertheless, new studies have shown a more contentious and complex reality. This apparent consonance between European and Chinese ethics described by early modern historians is now being questioned through the study of local charity practices too.[28]

24 Liang, "L'accueil": 16–19. See also, Norman Apter, "Saving the Young: A History of the Child Relief Movement in Modern China" (PhD diss., University of California, 2013): 5.

25 David E. Mungello, *Drowning Girls in China. Female Infanticide since 1650* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008): 47.

26 Joanna Handlin, *The Art of Doing Good. Charity in Late Ming China* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2009).

27 The popularity of moral treatises during the Ming and Qing dynasties has been explained by the late Ming context and the predominating sense of living in a period of moral decline. Pang Feng-chuang pointed out that applied Christian morality would also have been well-received because of the weakening of Ming authority. In line with the practice of *gongguoge*, Christians even produced texts combining it with the Western method of self-examination and the Christian belief in the Lord of Heaven. See, for instance, the works of Yang Tingyun and Li Jiugong (?-1681). For a list of their works, consult the Chinese Christian Texts Database. Ad Dudink and Nicolas Standaert (CCT-Database): https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/chinese-studies/english/cct [accessed 01.10.2023]. Some works of reference are Tadao Sakai, *Chugoku zensho no kenkyu* (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1960); You Zi'an, *Golden Admonitions for Instilling Goodness: A Study of Morality Books in Qing Dynasty* (Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, 1999); and Pang Feng-chuan, "Moral Ideas and Practices," in *Handbook of Christianity in China*, vol. 1, *635–1800*, ed. Nicolas Standaert (Leiden: Brill, 2001): 658–59.

28 Due to the predominant interest in the colonial enterprise, historiography about the nineteenth century, by contrast, devoted much effort to describing the conflicts missionaries faced when taking and baptizing children, and the connection with the practices of abandonment, infanticide and abduction in China at that time. The *muitsai* controversy in the 1920s and 1930s is a good example. See, among others: Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers, eds., *Women and Chinese Patriarchy: Submission, Servitude, and Escape* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994). Susan Pedersen, "The Maternalist Moment in British Colonial Policy: The Controversy over 'Child Slavery' in Hong Kong 1917–1941," *Past & Present* 171 (2001): 161–202. Maria Jaschok and Shui Jingjun, *Women, Religion, and Space in China: Islamic Mosques & Daoist Temples, Catholic Convents & Chinese Virgins* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

2 Unfree Labour in the China Mission

The 'rescue' of children by the mendicant orders has remained hidden due to another relevant factor: its connection with slavery and dependency networks. Missionaries would buy these young girls in the slave markets of Canton. In their writings, they describe the different offers parents received for their offspring. Fray Miguel Roca, *comisario* of the Franciscan order in China, wrote in 1741:

> Somewhere else they offered her [the mother selling her child] five *reales*, but the mother did not want to let [the child] go; and she offered her to this woman [who worked for the Franciscans] for three [*reales*], because it is evident that [the woman who worked for the Franciscans and who had several children in her care] treats and raises them well.[29]

The missionaries also reported that children were being taken to Manila and other places in the South China Sea, and about their destiny as servants in elite homes far away from their native land. Manila, Macau and Canton formed a key hub for the global trade networks of the eighteenth century.[30] The description of Macau in 1702 by the Franciscan friar Juan Martí shows his emphasis on the large numbers of enslaved people:

> Macau is a small place, there are only some 150 Portuguese, the rest will be riffraff. Everywhere people of various castes are intermingled; and what abounds most are *chinos* and *chinas* bought when they were children; when they grow up, they are freed and marry and procreate.[31]

After members of mendicant orders had bought these children in the markets of Canton or Macau, they usually sent them to the Philippines to work there in elite homes.[32] In China, a father had the right to sell his wife or children when the situation was difficult, and the survival of the family was at stake. As Hsieh Hua explains, 'regular and informal markets in human trafficking flourished where commoners acquired their commodities under justified causes'.[33] After the Ming-Qing transition in the seventeenth century, wars, natural disasters, and socioeconomic problems led to an in-

29 Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the Spanish, Latin or Portuguese are my own. Miguel Roca, "Epístola ad P. Melchiorem a S. Antonio Macao, 3 maii 1741," in *Sinica Franciscana. Relationes et epístolas Fratum Minorum hispanorum in Sinis qui 1696–98 missionem ingress sunt*, vol. 10, ed. Antonio Sisto Rosso (Madrid: Sinica franciscana, 1997): 943.

30 See Alessandro Valignano, *Sumario de las Cosas de Japon (1583). Adiciones del Sumario de Japon* (1592), ed. José Luis Alvarez-Taladriz (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1954).

31 Juan Martí Climent, "Magna relatio seraphicae missionis in Sinis, Lumbang 10 aprilis 1702," in *Sinica Franciscana. Relationes et epístolas Fratum Minorum Hispanorum in Sinis qui a 1672–81 missionem ingressi sunt*, vol. 7, ed. Georgius Mensaert (Rome: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1965): 796.

32 Torres, *Con un catecismo*: 145–209.

33 Hua, Hsieh Bao, *Concubinage and Servitude in Late Imperial China* (London: Lexington Books, 2014): 3. See also Claude Chevaleyre, "Human Trafficking in Late Imperial China," in *Slavery and Bonded Labor in Asia*, 1250–1900 (Leiden: Brill, 2021): 150–77. Angela Schottenhammer, "Slaves and

crease in the enslaved population, and there were market days dedicated to specific goods ranging from clothing to human beings. The location of Canton and Macao at the crossroads of the Pacific and Indian Ocean undoubtedly favoured the participation of missionaries in these activities.

Nevertheless, the connection of members of religious orders with slavery and dependency networks is a sensitive topic, which explains the lack of studies on this issue. For the early modern period, little has been written about the involvement of religious orders in human trafficking, except for the Jesuit plantations in America that have received more scholarly attention.[34] Very few works deal with this question in Asia, and even fewer in the case of China.[35] Given the large population of enslaved people in cities like Macau and Canton in the eighteenth century, and the strong connections of missionaries with merchants and elites, it is surprising how few mentions of enslaved and dependent people there are in missionary writings and later studies.[36] In a recent article published in 2022, Liam M. Brockey hypothesized that this lacuna might be explained by 'the routine presence of slaves in considerable number throughout the Portuguese empire; perhaps the unquestioned assumption that owning slaves or indentured servants was permissible, even for members of religious communities'.[37] In addition to these appropriate observations, another three factors may have contributed to the absence of enslaved people in missionary sources.

Firstly, as in the case of slavery in Asia, there is a problem with how servitude is categorized in the sources. Regarding the mendicant orders, the three most-used terms referring to servitude or dependency were *mozo* (boy), *doméstico/a* (servant) and *criado/a* (servant). Other designations included the terms *esclavo/a* (slave), *fámulo* (servant in a convent) and *cautivo/a* (captive).[38] The girls who are the subject of this

Forms of Slavery in Late Imperial China (17th to Early 20th Century)," in *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean, Africa and Asia*, ed. Gwyn Campell (London: Frank Cass, 2004): 143–54.

34 Jean Pierre Tardieu, *Los Esclavos de los Jesuitas del Río de la Plata (Paraguay)* **(**Saarbrücken: Ed. Académica Española, 2012). Carlos Alberto de Moura Ribeiro, *Ligne de foi: La Compagnie de Jésus et l'esclavage dans le processus de formation de la société coloniale en Amérique portugaise (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2009). See also Sue Peabody, "A Nation Born to Slavery: Missionaries and Racial Discourse in Seventeenth-Century French Antilles," *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 (2004): 113–26.

35 Souza, *The Portuguese*; Brockey, "Jesuits and Unfree Labor": 75–96. Silva, "Jesuits and the Problem of Slavery."

36 'Dependents' here refers to historical actors susceptible to coercion, including children, slaves, women, and other oppressed groups. Their dependency could be physical, social, or emotional. See Barbara Beatty, "The Complex Historiography of Childhood: Categorizing Different, Dependent, and Ideal Children," *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2000): 201–19.

37 Brockey, "Jesuits and Unfree Labor": 76.

38 These terms are constantly used in the sources. See, for instance, the report written by the Franciscan Juan Martí Climent in 1702 with those examples. Juan Martí Climent, *Magna relatio*: 825–27; 869–70.

article are mostly referred to as *criadas* (servants).[39] But, as Brockey noted for the Jesuit sources, this term could also refer to slaves, indentured servants or hired servants, making it difficult to identify the girls' status.

Secondly, the nature of these children's servitude is also a problem for detecting and analysing this activity. The sources consulted are unclear about the legal status of the little boys and girls once they were in the hands of the missionaries. The children may have been bought or taken in Macao, Canton, or other inland missions. Sometimes missionaries put infants up for adoption to Chinese, Macanese, or Manilan families. Children might be raised together in informal foundling homes, where they were cared for by hired women and wetnurses. Another option mentioned in the sources was for the parents themselves to raise them for a time after having received payment from the Franciscans and Dominicans.[40] This last option is significant, since it indicates that the missionaries had certain rights of possession of these children, even though we have not yet located any written evidence. New difficulties appear when we wish to follow the trajectories of these girls and boys. As already mentioned, some were sent abroad to perform domestic service. Child labour has only very recently attracted academic attention. Contemporary studies in China now recognize that labour was a part of children's routine in pre-modern times, representing a more significant activity than previously thought.[41] But more research is needed.

The third challenge in studying this activity is its illicit nature. The illegality did not derive from the fact that religious men were buying children, but from their being taken out of China and to the Philippines. In 1613, a decree on Chinese slavery specifically included a ban on the export of 妹仔 *muitsai* – Chinese girls sold at a young age under the condition that they would be freed when older – to Manila.[42] The prohibition did not only come from the Chinese authorities: the bishop of Macao also banned the importation of girls under pain of excommunication. In 1758, the King of Portugal issued a decree condemning the enslavement of Chinese people.[43] The missionaries took the girls to the Philippines at night to avoid detection and were fully aware of the illegality. This secrecy is a major factor that clearly explains the absence of this phenomenon in their writings and, subsequently, in historiography.

In addition, the wide acceptance in traditional historiography of the near non-existence of Chinese slavery in the Philippines during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also explains why the life trajectories of these girls are not mentioned in stan-

39 Once they had been sent to the Philippines. Before, they are referred to as *niñas* or *muchachas* (girls).

40 Torres, *Con un catecismo*: 184–86.

41 Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage. Children and Childhood in Late imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005): 3.

42 The definition of *muitsai* is taken from Charles R. Boxer, *A mulher na expansão ultramarina ibérica, 1415–1815: alguns factos, ideias e personalidades* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1977): 84.

43 Charles R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East 1550–1770* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1948): 239–40.

dard narratives.[44] Many scholars assumed that the Laws of the Indies and the royal decrees in which the Spanish kings repeatedly banned Spaniards from enslaving, buying, selling, or holding Indians as slaves under any circumstances, meant the absence of slavery in the archipelago. However, this did not mean that the Spanish crown was opposed to the institution of slavery. It was possible to own slaves who were the subjects of other rulers, and the archives attest to the existence of commercial transactions that involved the buying and selling of human beings during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[45] Even where recent scholarship tried to go beyond that legal framework, it focused on slavery in the Muslim territories in the south of the Philippines.[46] To these reasons, Jean-Noël Sánchez added ideological biases. He explains that the influence of postcolonial thought on Philippine scholars prevented further investigation of indigenous Philippine practices of slavery and dependency.[47] However, in the last decade, a small number of historians brought to light the existence of enslaved people in the Philippines who were originally from Asia, including China, Japan and the Indian subcontinent. However, further efforts to explore the different types of dependencies are necessary, which also need to take into account local forms of bondage and the history of labour in this context.[48]

44 See, for instance, the recent publication by Damian A. Pargas and Juliane Schiel, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). This critique of historiography also applies to the American period. See Michal Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001).

45 William H. Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines* (Manila: De la Salle University Press, 1991): 4–26.

46 See, among others: James Francis Warren, "The Structure of Slavery in the Sulu Zone in the Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Slavery & Abolition* 24, no. 2 (2003): 111–28. Laura Lee, *Raiding, Trading, and Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chiefdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

47 Jean-Noël Sánchez, "De l'esclavage aux Philippines, XVIe–XVIIe siècles. Introduction," *Source(s). Arts, civilisation et histoire de l'Europe* 7 (2015): 105.

48 See Tatiana Seijas, "The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish Manila: 1580–1640," *Itinerario* 32, no. 1 (2008): 19–38. Stephanie Mawson, "Slavery, Conflict, and Empire in the Seventeenth-Century Philippines," in *Slavery and Bonded Labor in Asia, 1250–1900*, ed. Richard B. Allen (Leiden: Brill, 2021): 256–83. Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico. From Chinos to Indians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

3 Mendicant Missionaries: Concealed Agents and their Writings

The mobility of girls across the South China Sea to Manila was brought to light through the examination of Mendicant writings, even though these orders are among the least studied in early modern Christianity.[49]

From 1633 onwards, Jesuits shared the mission field in China with Spanish mendicants – Dominicans of the Province of the Holy Rosary, Augustinians of the Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Franciscans of the Province of Saint Gregory the Great –, all of who were based in the Philippines. This situation changed profoundly in the eighteenth century with the inclusion of other orders, such as the Italian Franciscans, sent directly from Rome, or the members of the *Missions Etrangères de Paris* (M.E.P.). This transformed the whole political context of Europeans in East Asia.

As far as China is concerned, most works on Christianity focus on the activities of Jesuits. In quantitative terms, Jesuits were historically more numerous in China than members of the mendicant orders. This reflected the order's priorizing of the Chinese mission as part of their global enterprise, while the mendicant orders focused on other parts of the globe such as New Spain. Furthermore, the structure and organization of the Jesuits, and the political power they reached in early modern Europe, favoured their primacy. Even though Franciscans had been the first to set foot in China in the thirteenth century, Jesuits were the first to establish a continuous mission in China throughout the entire early modern period. As a result, studies devoted to the Society of Jesus have been more numerous and systematic up to the present day.[50]

Scholarship about the history of the Dominicans and Franciscans in China until very recently was carried out almost exclusively by members of the religious orders themselves.[51] Over the course of centuries, their members tried to preserve the memory of what their predecessors did in the Chinese Empire. Their earliest works took the form of chronicles and had the objective of defending the honour of the order and give an account of the achievements of their brethren in Asia. Not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and especially in the 1950s, do we find the first non-religious academic works on their history in China.[52]

49 Torres, *Con un catecismo*: 145–209.

50 The CCT Database comprises primary and secondary sources concerning the cultural contacts between China and Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its consultation can provide an up-to-date overview on the number of publications devoted to each religious order.

51 For instance, see the dossier by Vítor Teixeira, ed., *Franciscanos en Oriente* [=*Archivo Iberoamericano. Revista franciscana de Estudios Históricos* 82, no. 295 (2023)].

52 For the Dominicans see Jose María González, *Historia de las misiones dominicanas de China*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Imprenta Juan Bravo, 1952–1958); for the Franciscans see Marcellino da Civezza, *Storia universale delle missioni francescane*, 11 vols. (Rome: Tipografia Tiberina, 1857–1895).

From the twentieth century onwards, the analysis of mendicant activities in China revolved around three main questions. Firstly, their role in the well-known Chinese Rites Controversy. This conflict, in which Catholic missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries disagreed over the Cult of Heaven, ancestor worship, and ritualism in Chinese culture, has been historically understood as a clash of two antagonistic models of apostolate: those in favour of Christianity adapting to Chinese culture, and those against. The former stance is associated mostly with the Jesuits, the latter mostly with the Dominicans and Franciscans, as well as some Jesuits.[53] The attention of historians focused secondly on writing biographies of the most prominent figures of the orders, such as Domingo Fernández de Navarrete OP or Antonio de Santa María Caballero OFM.[54] Thirdly, mendicant orders have been largely studied in terms of their activities in the Philippines. Their descriptions and letters, which were written due to the early modern fascination with travel literature, helped historians to study the image of China in this period. This new trend responded to a development of the field of sinology in Spain that occurred later than in other European countries or the United States. In the 2000s, sources written in Spanish and Portuguese became part of international academic debates in the field of Christianity in premodern China.[55]

Apart from the difficulties inherent in studying lesser-known mendicant missionaries in China due to historiographical trends, the nature of the sources also explains the lack of studies on their activities in China. The writings of missionaries underwent a complex editorial process. A very interesting example is provided by the Jesuits' an-

53 Three classic works that represent these two models are George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy from its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985). David Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West (1500–1800)* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) or James Cummins, "Two Missionary Methods in China: Mendicants and Jesuits," *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 38 (1978): 33–108. However, this view still persists despite recent historiographical advancements. See, for instance, Ma Chicheng, "Knowledge Diffusion and Intellectual Change: When Chinese Literati Met European Jesuits," *Journal of Economic History* 81, no. 4 (2021): 1052–97.

54 Otto Maas, "Pater Antonius Caballero, der Begründer der neuzeitlichen Franziskanermission in China," in *Aus allen Zonen: Bilder aus den Missionen der Franziskaner in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* 3 (Werl: Kommissionsverlag der Franziskus-Druckerei, 1934). The reading of the controversy has been based mainly on the role played by the Dominican Domingo Fernández de Navarrete. See James S. Cummins, *A Question of Rites: Friar Domingo de Navarrete and the Jesuits in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Press, 1993). Anna Busquets, "Los tratados históricos, políticos, éticos y religiosos de la monarquía de China (1676) de Domingo Fernández de Navarrete: el texto y sus fuentes" (PhD diss., Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2008).

55 See, among others, Jose Antonio Cervera, "Los intentos de los franciscanos para establecerse en China, siglos XIII–XVII," *Sémata Ciencias Sociais e Humanidades* 26 (2014): 425–46. Diego Sola, *El cronista de China. Juan González de Mendoza, entre la misión, el imperio y la historia* (Barcelona: Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 2018). Manuel Ollé, *La invención de China. Percepciones y estrategias filipinas respecto a China durante el siglo XVI* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000).

nual letters[56]. Scholars have studied the creation of these documents and the different changes made until the writers' superiors decided on publication.[57] Missionaries devoted much time selecting and censoring what should be sent from the missions. In 1729, the Franciscan Antonio Almadén wrote:

> [. . .] in this simple account, I only write about the general aspects of the mission. I will omit other more intimate things, for being painful and secret; because it is not convenient to make everything public [. . .].[58]

All orders were aware of the value of information, and had their own procedure for dealing with it. Jesuits, for example, wrote to Rome in code. Italian Franciscans sent sensitive information in secret appendices to ordinary letters, as David Mungello explains.[59] That was also the case with information about how girls were taken from China to Manila. I consulted two different types of documentation about this phenomenon. Firstly, the account books in which missionaries recorded the cost of buying and raising those children to provide an account for their use of money to donors; and secondly, the letters and reports they sent to Manila to give brief information about the children or to ask about practical matters, such as problems with their transport or economic aspects. Under no circumstances did missionaries intend to describe these activities to a public audience.

4 'Rescued' Girls: Invisibilized Agents

The girls were moved at the initiative of the missionaries, but they were the main protagonists. However, we only have indirect references to their lives and destinies.[60] As in the case of other marginal subjects in subaltern history – such as women, peasants, or conquered populations – the scarcity of records that reflect the voices of the girls themselves remains an obstacle to historians' interpretation. Another important fac-

56 The annual letters were a prescribed mean of communication in the Jesuit order. Each provincial sent an official letter to Rome every year with the state of each province, college or mission. Thomas Worcester, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the Jesuits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 461.

57 Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'espirit philosophique en France (1640–1740*) (Paris: Pierre Palpant, 1932), and Li Jin-Jun, "Lettres édifiantes et curieuses de Chine: de l'édification à la propaganda" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1990): 15–25.

58 Antonio Almadén, "Primera parte de la Relación de los sucesos que me han acontecido en el viaje a la Misión 19 noviembre 1729," in *Sinica franciscana: Misioneros franciscanos españoles en China. Siglos XVIII–XIX (1722–1813)*, vol. 11, ed. Antolín Abad et al. (Grottaferrata: Ed. Collegii S. Bonaventurae 2006): 397.

59 David Mungello, *The Spirit and the Flesh in Shandong, 1650–1705* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001): 125.

60 Torres, *Con un catecismo*: 184–96.

tor is the high rate of mortality.[61] Many of the babies died, and so very few sources have remained which could help us to explain this phenomenon.

The history of children and childhood has been the subject of scholarly investigation since the late 1970s and the early 1980s. It subsequently became a part of standard western family history and was finally accepted as a fundamental aspect of social and institutional history, with important contributions since then.[62] However, as Hsiung Ping-chen, one of the most important experts on gender, children, and family history in China, pointed out in 2005,

> interest in children and childhood thus far claims even less attention among historians of China than among those elsewhere. The history of mentality, the field that first spurred the history of childhood, has yet to attract significant attention from historians of China [. . .] the main forces in modern Chinese historiography have thus far been preoccupied with quite different sets of problems.[63]

Compared to scholarship on Euro-American childhoods, historical studies of children in missionary contexts in China are an extremely underrepresented historical subject, with very few exceptions. Records and publications on childhood and missionaries mainly looked at the missionaries' general curiosity about China. Their chronicles and narratives usually included reflections on Chinese society and its cultural values. For example, the missionaries paid great attention to the Chinese educational system. Observing how Chinese understood childhood from an institutional point of view served European thinkers of the eighteenth century such as Leibniz, Voltaire, or Goethe, among others, to discuss European political systems. Another example are the descriptions related to the essential value of filial piety, a cardinal concept in Chinese society, which helped the missionaries to demonstrate the similar importance given to the family by both Chinese and Catholics. They understood the importance of the children's experience in Chinese society. Nevertheless, these types of descriptions responded to the missionaries' strategy during the seventeenth and eighteenth century to attract new converts by building on the common narrative of China as a highly civilized society.

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61 Ibid.

62 Following the publication of Philippe Ariès' study, *L'enfant et la vie familial sous l'Ancien Régime*, numerous studies appeared from different perspectives, times, and geographies. See Beatty, "The Complex Historiography of Childhood."

63 Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage. Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005): 5. The volume edited by Anne Behnke Kinney is a seminal work in this regard: *Chinese Views of Childhood* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1955). See also, Hsiung, Ping-chen 熊秉真, *Tongnian yi wang: Zhongguo haizi de lishi* 童年憶往: 中國孩子 的歷史 [Childhood in the Past: A History of Chinese Children] (Taipei: Rye Field Co., 2000). Even though the last decade saw a significant increase in works devoted to childhood, some scholars consider that the focus is still predominantly on recent periods (the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage*: 183.

A different type of information in missionary sources that mention children concerned the abandonment and neglect of children in China. From the beginning of the missionaries' activities, and again during the subsequent centuries, brief accounts of this reality were sent to Europe. They usually describe the abandonment of children by their parents, and how they were placed at the gates of cities, in squares, near Christian churches or simply left in the middle of the street. It was also common for missionaries to show their condemnation of this reality and to refer to the parents as 'monsters', 'wolves', and 'tigers'. However, it is important to contextualize these descriptions, which were originally intended to attract donors to finance the mission enterprise, including charitable works. Moreover, describing the great quantity of children at risk was always part of the narrative both to call other missionaries to the mission and to show to European readers the abundance of potential new Christians that justified the missionaries' presence in China. In this case, the attention of the audience was attracted by the exoticism of the description, but the underlying aim was to mobilise Christian devotion.[64]

The best way to approach the 'rescue' of abandoned Chinese children in a different manner is to consult less visited archives. Religious authorities, such as Propaganda Fide, sent instructions to the missions: they asked their subordinates to act with respect and caution, always to baptize the children, and to take them only with their parents' consent.[65] By the eighteenth century, the authorities in Rome were fully aware of the complexity of Chinese culture, and they insisted on a careful strategy as the only way to penetrate Chinese society, based on persuasion instead of force. In their dialogue with their superiors, the categories applied by earlier missionaries to the Chinese – 'barbarians', 'wolves' or 'villains' – were discarded in favour of more understanding for child abandonment that was directly caused by poverty. Contextualizing the sources helps us to trace the intentional process of invisibilization by the historical actors.

From a practical point of view, the relationship of the missionaries with the children depended initially on their rapport with the adults. When a new mission was set up, most of the baptisms were of adults. Only over time would the new generation of children be added to the Christian community. In the letters of the missionaries we can detect the special significance children had for these religious men as beings in whom the infinite goodness of God was manifested.[66] In the mendicant writings, the image of the child is associated with a specific rhetoric according to the meaning that the missionaries gave to this stage of human life. We can distinguish two types of descriptions: the first portrays boys and girls as miraculous beings; in the second, mis-

64 Torres, *Con un catecismo*: 177–78.

65 Ibid.: 177–78.

66 Diego de Aduarte OP, *Tomo primero de la Historia de la provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas, Iapon y China, de la sagrada orden de predicadores* (Zaragoza: Domingo Gascon Impresor del Santo Hospital real y General de Nuestra Señora Gracia, 1693): 284.

sionaries described the conversions of children who possessed special intellectual abilities. Interestingly, this emphasis on the theme of precocious children and child prodigies enjoyed a long tradition in Chinese culture. Competitive parenting and the early training of intelligence was characteristic of late imperial society. Hsiung explains this trend in connection with the social anxiety of parents from all backgrounds to send their children to the civil-service examination, and their desire to have their offspring work there at a time of increasing commercialization in agriculture and industry.[67] As usual, the missionaries acknowledged the social value of education and emphasized how Christianity helped in this regard. Children were objects of evangelization, but connecting Christianity with literary education also facilitated the conversion of other people, thus becoming the gateway to new baptisms.

Yet these descriptions inform us about the narratives rather than the practices in the mission field. Only in recent years did sinologists and historians uncover new information about the literary training of children in Chinese Christian communities during the early modern period.[68] Locating works dealing specifically with girls is even more difficult. Gender studies scholars who study Christianity in China only very recently began to study girls. The lack of records has usually been connected to the well-known Confucian segregation of male and female and the division of internal and external spaces, whereby women were associated with internal spaces and men with external ones.[69] The fact that missionaries could have no regular contact with women due to the requirement of celibacy might explain the scarcity of information about women in missionary sources.

In recent years, gender studies about the missions increased significantly in view of new archival materials and the reassessment of the sources. The crucial role of women as catechists or donors, and the special devotion of some women reflected, for example, in their vow of chastity, has already been recognized in the last two deca-

67 Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage*: 12. See also Hsiung Ping-chen 熊秉真, "Hao de kaishi-zhongguo jinshi shi ren zidi de younian jiaoyu 好的開始 – 中國近世士人子弟的幼年教育 [Getting off to a Good Start: Early Childhood Education of Elite Families in Late Imperial China]," in *Jinshi jiazu yu zhengzhi bijiao lishi lunwen ji* 近世家族與政治比較歷史論文集 [Family Process and Political Process in Modern Chinese History] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1992): 203–38 and Anne Behnke Kinney, "The Theme of the Precocious Child in Early Chinese Literature," *T'oung Pao* 通報 81, no. 1–3 (1995): 1–24.

68 Thierry Meynard and Tan jie 譚杰, *Tong you jiaoyu jin zhu* 童幼教育今注 [The Education of Children Today] (Beijing: Beijing Commercial Press, 2017). See also Giulia Falato, "Parents, Children, Mutual Duties and Relations: The European Way of Governing the Family in a Late Ming Sociocultural Context," *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 43, no. 4 (2020): 47–60.

69 For a deeper understanding of the separation of sexes and its evolution throughout Chinese history see Bret Hinsch, "The Origins of Separation of the Sexes in China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, no. 3 (2003): 695–16. See also Dorothy Ko, *Teacher of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

des.[70] However, girls from poor backgrounds who were most at risk of abuse, neglect, and abandonment are a subject of study that deserves further attention.

5 Epilogue: Networks, Spaces, and Historical Restoration

The history of girls being bought in slave markets in Canton by Catholic missionaries, raised as Christians and then sent to other locations including the Philippines to work as domestic servants in elite homes during the eighteenth century, is doubtless a history full of absences that remain understudied. This aim of this essay was to analyse why this activity was left out of historical sources and historiography, unravelling the different reasons behind this neglect.

It was argued, firstly, that the process of disappearance can be explained by a dependence on religious sources. Counterintuitively, its links with charity and Catholic philanthropy did not result in the visibilization of this activity. The missionaries' own interests in following a policy of adaptation to Chinese culture – added to their concern to attract donors and justify their presence in Asia – explains this gap. The traditional interest of historians in highlighting early modern missions in China as paradigmatic examples of cultural encounters, a predominantly Eurocentric approach, and the understanding of charity as a political tool connected to the European imperial enterprise in Asia, also limited research into eighteenth-century charity practices.

Moreover, the link with slavery and dependency networks is another key factor which explains the invisibilization of the taking of Chinese girls by Christian missionaries in the accounts of contemporaries and historians. The secret, illicit and controversial movement of Chinese girls from Canton and Macao to the Philippines prevented the men involved in it from writing about it, not only because of the moral impediments, but also because of religious disputes between the different religious orders in China, and the political and economic implications of the European power structures in which they were embedded. The assumption that Philippine slavery had disappeared by the seventeenth

70 See, among others, Li Yiyuchi, "A Struggle for Legitimacy: Christian Virgins in China from the Late Ming Dynasty to 1860," *Journal of Chinese Theology* 8, no. 1 (2022): 63–88. Zhou Pinping, "Communities of Catholic Virgins in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties," in *Beyond Indigenization: Christianity and Chinese History in a Global Context*, ed. Tao Feiya (Leiden: Brill, 2022): 247–66. Nadine Amsler, "Holy Households: Jesuits, Women and Domestic Catholicism in China," in *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization*, ed. Nadine Amsler, Adreea Badea, Bernar Heyberger and Christian Windler (London: Routledge, 2020): 157–73. Piotr Adamek and Mei Ting Sonja Huang, eds., *The Contribution of Chinese Women to the Church: Proceedings of the Conference "I have Called you by Name," September 25–26, 2024, Sankt Augustin (Germany)* (Siegburg: Franz Schmitt, 2019), or Eugenio Menegon, "Child Bodies, Blessed Bodies: The Contest between Christian Virginity and Confucian Chastity," *Nan Nü: Men, Women, and Gender in Early and Late Imperial China* 6, no. 2 (2004): 177–240.

century and that the missionaries had only charitable intentions to 'save' the girls from certain death, are two additional factors that prevented further investigation.

The characteristics of the main protagonists are also fundamental to understanding the invisibilization of this phenomenon. In writing the history of the missions in China, the mendicant orders have been overlooked due to the predominance of the Jesuit perspective, apart from their self-concealment, as already mentioned. The voices of the girls themselves have been also hard to locate in the archives, because they were unable to leave written sources due to of their high rates of mortality, and the lack of interest in the lives of those who survived.

New elements for understanding the process of disappearance of this phenomenon include the overlapping of legal frameworks, the international mobility of all the people involved, and the complexity of the study of intercultural encounters. In addition, the possible perception of this activity as unethical today, because of the buying of children by missionaries who subsequently sent them into the domestic labour system in the Philippines, may also explain its dismissal. These issues are part of today's historical construction, both in the case of the history of the church and the history of decolonization of European nations in Asia.

Acknowledging all these factors is a precondition for understanding the process of disappearance, in which the limitations of historical subjects seem to have had less of an impact than the oversight of historians. Scholars need to make fresh efforts not only to shed light on this activity, but to evaluate its impact on premodern societies.

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Subin Nam

The Forgotten Agent: Focusing on the 'Comfort Woman' Bae Bong-gi and her Faded History

1 Introduction

In Korean society, the issue of the 'comfort women'[1] serves as an indelible reminder not only of the horrors of colonialism, but also a testament to the unimaginable violence and human rights violations endured by women during times of war. To prevent the recurrence of such harrowing atrocities, diligent efforts were undertaken to document the testimonies of these women and enable them to share the agonizing experiences they endured.[2] However, recording the experiences of 'comfort women' is a complex endeavor, influenced by a multitude of factors. These include voluntary or semi-voluntary participation and the diverse array of situations, both within Korea and on the global stage. This article centers on the case of a specific 'comfort woman,' Bae Bong-gi, who stepped into the light by revealing her status as a 'comfort woman' in 1975, having concealed her past until then. By focusing on her story, I aim to understand how the narrative of 'comfort women' was shaped by international conflicts and the struggles of postcolonial Korean society, with a particular focus on the period from the 1950s to the 1970s.

1 In the international community, the term "military sexual slavery" has gained widespread usage, originating from the 1996 UNESCO report on 'comfort women' in both South and North Korea. However, within Korean society, the term 'comfort women' continues to be employed officially. This term was originally coined by the Japanese army to euphemistically describe their role in "comforting and caring." The rationale for this continued use lies not only in its historical prevalence but also in its reflection of Japan's perspective on this system at the time. Consequently, it is officially appropriate to place the term 'comfort women' in single quotation marks, a practice consistent with the approach taken in this work. See more details in: Jin-Sung Jeong 정진성, *Ilbongun seongnoyeje* 일본군 성노예제 [Military Sexual Slavery of Imperial Japan] (Seoul: Publication Culture Center of Seoul University, 2016); Jeong-suk Kang 강정숙, "'Wianbu', jeongsindae, gongchang, seongnoye '위안부', 정신대, 공창, 성노예 ['Comfort Women', Korean Women's Volunteer Labour Corps, State-Regulated System, Sexual Slavery]," *Critical Review of History* 74 (2006): 315–20.

2 For instance, there are notable published collections of testimonies from 'comfort women.' The Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family initiated two key reports: The 2016 Report of Historical Research and Databasing Project on Japanese Military 'Comfort Women', and the 2018 Report. Additionally, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan has published an extensive four-part series titled Gangjero kkeullyeogan joseonin gunwianbu 강제로 끌려간 조선인 군위안부 [Korean Comfort Women who were forcibly mobilized], spanning the years 2011, 2012, 2014, and 2016. These collections serve as valuable resources for understanding the experiences and stories of 'comfort women' during that era.

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In this chapter I will use the term "self-concealment" to describe her silence until 1975, and "invisibilization" to denote her subsequent neglect by society after her self-disclosure. In section 2, I will explore the process of Bae's silence, focusing on the complex entanglements between Japan, which had lost World War II, the United States, which sought to utilize Japan in the Cold War, and South Korea, which had to grapple with the issue of colonization. In section 3, I aim to illuminate how Bae's invisibilization was a multi-layered process, intertwined with ideologies and the tumultuous landscape of postcolonial Korea. I will do so by examining South Korea's response to Bae's testimony in 1975 within the context of Cold War ideology and the perception of 'comfort women' in popular media such as literature and film at the time. I will also provide a comprehensive view of the various factors and perspectives related to the issue of 'comfort women' during that time. Therefore, this article relies primarily on secondary literature, published testimonies of Bae Bong-gi, and a number of newspapers from the 1970s.[3]

Bae Bong-gi was born in 1914 in a town in South Chungcheong Province, which was part of colonial Korea, into a poor family. From the age of seven she had to earn her own living. In 1943, she met a man who told her he could get her a good place to work and so she boarded a Japanese ship, only to discover upon her arrival in Okinawa in 1944 that this "job" was that of a 'comfort woman.' Many of these women originated from territories occupied by the Japanese, and they were exploited by the Imperial Japanese Army before and during World War II. Forced into sexual slavery, they endured both physical and emotional abuse.[4] Some of the victims, including Bae, directly experienced the war itself. Upon arrival, Bae found the island of Okinawa already devastated, as Japan had heavily fortified it during the final stages of the Pacific War. Simultaneously, the US military sought to secure Okinawa as a strategic foothold for their impending invasion of the Japanese mainland, leading to intense and brutal battles. Some 240,000 Okinawan soldiers and civilians, including an estimated 10,000 Korean soldiers and 'comfort women,' were killed or went missing from March 1945

3 Numerous published collections contain testimonies regarding Bae Bong-gi. The testimonies referenced in this article include Fumiko Kawada 川田文子, *Ppalgan giwajip: ilbongun wianbuga doen hanguk yeoseong iyagi* 빨간 기와집: 일본군 위안부가 된 한국 여성 이야기, trans. Geon-yeong Oh (Paju: Ggoom-kyo, 2014). Jin-Sung Jeong 정진성 외, ed., "Bae Bong-Gi," in *Kkeullyeogada, beoryeojida, uriape seoda* 끌려가다, 버려지다, 우리 앞에 서다 (Seoul: PureonYugsa, 2018): 144–75, and *Okinawa geoju ilbongun wianbu pihaeja baebonggi jeungeon* 오키나와 거주 일본군 위안부 피해자 배봉기 증언 (Seoul: Korea Chongshindae's Institute, 2006).

4 For more information about 'comfort women,' see Yoshiaki Yoshimi, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Myeong sook Yun 윤명숙, *Joseonin gun'wianbu'wa ilbongun wianso jedo* 조선인 군'위안부'와 일본군 위안소 제도 [Korean 'Comfort Women' and the System of Comfort Stations for Japanese Soldiers] (Seoul: Ihaksa, 2015); Jeong, *Ilbongun seongnoyeje*.

onwards.[5] Miraculously, Bae survived this tumultuous period by hiding in a mountain for months. After Japan's surrender, she was interned in an American POW camp. Following her release, she found herself in a stateless limbo, spending the rest of her life in Okinawa, a place marked by war's indelible scars and her own journey of resilience.

2 Concealed and Self-Concealed

> I was betrayed by my allies and abandoned in a foreign land.[6]

When Bae's story was first made public in 1975, the Japanese newspaper *RyūkyūShimpō* described her as "an elderly woman who was brought to Okinawa as a comfort woman from Chosŏn in October of Showa 19 (1944), near the end of the Pacific War, and who [has been] living in secrecy as an undocumented resident to this day."[7] In this section, I will examine the social context that led to Bae concealing her identity, the circumstances that rendered her stateless, and the influence of the US-led Cold War on both defeated Japan and liberated Korea. The invisibilization of Bae is not a consequence of a disruption of earlier Japanese colonization, but rather a continuation of it. In this section, I will illustrate how she ultimately became an invisible agent/subject – the result of concealment influenced by citizenship laws, international politics, and occasionally "intentional omissions," all intricately intertwined with self-concealment driven by the shame linked to her past as a 'comfort woman.'

2.1 In Mainland Japan

At the time of Japan's defeat in World War II, approximately 2.4 million Koreans were living in Japan. The significant increase in the numbers of Koreans in Japan, which rose from 960,000 in 1937 to 1,469,000 in 1941, and further to 1.62 million a year later when the Pacific War began,[8] suggests a close relationship between the increase and

5 Jeong, "Bae Bong-Gi": 156–57. More details in: Caroline Norma, *The Japanese Comfort Women and Sexual Slavery during the China and Pacific Wars* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017): chapter 6.

6 Kawada, *A House with Red Roof Tiles*: 125.

7 "30年ぶりに自由の身に—戦時中 '連行'の韓国婦人那覇入管事務所特別に在留許可, 琉球新報," 1975.10.22 (as cited in: Kyoung-Hwa Lim 임경화, "Okinawaui arirang—migunjeonggi okinawaui jan-ryu-joseonindeulgwa nambukhan 오키나와의 아리랑—미군정기 오키나와의 잔류 조선인들과 남북한 [Okinawa's Arirang – 'Leftover Koreans' on Okinawa and the Two Koreas]," *Journal of Eastern Studies* 89 [2015]: 533).

8 Youngeon Yim and Iltae Kim 임영근&김이태, "Jaeildongpojeongchaegui hoegowa jeonmang gochal 재일동포정책의 회고와 전망 고찰 [A Study on the Retrospect and Prospect of Japanese-Korean Policy in Japan]," *Minjok Yeonku* 72 (2018): 32.

the war. As the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, colonial Korea became a logistical base and played an important role in providing material and personnel for the war. Japan sought to justify and facilitate mobilization by categorizing Koreans as 'subjects of the emperor' (황국신민, 皇國臣民), forcing them to visit Japanese shrines and to change their names to Japanese. Under this system, colonial Koreans were mobilized as soldiers or forced laborers, for instance working in coal mining or as 'comfort women.' After liberation, around 1.4 million survivors returned to the Korean peninsula, their homeland, while an estimated 600,000 Koreans remained in Japan.[9]

Immediately after the defeat, Japan altered the status of its former colonial subjects who remained within its borders. In 1945 their right to vote was revoked, and in May 1947, the Alien Registration Order was enacted, officially classifying them as foreigners.[10] This order underscored the provisional classification of Koreans as foreigners.[11] Koreans technically retained Japanese nationality but were not recognized as Japanese citizens, which resulted in a paradoxical situation. This ambiguous order, rooted in the legacy of colonization, laid the foundation for persistent discrimination even after liberation. The Family Registration Law, called *Hojeok*, (호적법, 戶籍法) had distinguished between Koreans and Japanese during the Japanese colonial period by acknowledging Koreans as Japanese nationals but categorizing them as originating from the outer regions (외지, 外地), in contrast to the Japanese who originated from the inner regions (내지, 內地), which perpetuated this divisive distinction. As a result, Koreans in Japan were required to register and carry their documents at all times, with violation incurring penalties such as imprisonment, fines, and even deportation.[12]

The significant change in the situation for Koreans living in Japan occurred after the Treaty of San Francisco took effect in 1952. This treaty marked the point at which

9 Haeng-Hwa Yi and Gyeong-Gyu Lee 이행화&이경규, "Migunjeonggiui oegugindeungrokryeonge gwanhan sinmungisa-jaeiljoseonin balhaeng sinmungisareul jungsimeuro 미군정기의 외국인등록령에 관한 신문기사-재일조선인 발행신문기사를 중심으로 [Newspaper Articles on the Alien Registration Act Published during the US Occupation of Japan]," *Journal of Korean Association of Modern Japanology* 68 (2020): 201.

10 Kyeong-hee Cho 조경희, "Hanilhyeopjeong chejeha jaeiljoseoninui gukjeokgwa bundanjeongchi 한일협정 체제하 재일조선인의 국적과 분단 정치 [The Nationality of Koreans in Japan and the Politics of Separation under the Korea-Japan Agreement]," in *Nareul jeungmyeonghagi* 나를 증명하기 [Identifying Myself] (Paju: Hanul, 2017): 124.

11 竹前栄治·中村隆英修/松本邦彦訳, *GHQ* 日本占領史*16* 外国人の取り扱い, (東京:日本図書センター, 1996): 82 (as cited in: Ibid.: 124).

12 The origin of the Hojeok system dates back to the Joseon Dynasty in Korea (1392–1897), where it served as a census method for labor and taxes. Initially, the concept of family was centered on the people actually living in the household. However, in 1909, the Japanese changed it into a civil law, transforming the meaning of family registration into an abstract concept of family, meaning that all family members are recorded, regardless of their existence in the house. See more details in: Seung-Il Lee 이승일, "Joseonhojeokryeong jejeonge gwanhan yeongu 조선호적령 제정에 관한 연구 [Study of the Chosun Family Registration Laws during the Colonial Chosun Government General]," *Journal of Society of Legal History* 32 (2005): 37–68.

Japan regained its sovereignty and began classifying Koreans as foreigners under the Law on the Registration of Foreigners.[13] It is crucial to acknowledge that, in the process of being treated as a distinct country, Korea was excluded from the treaty negotiations and did not sign the treaty. This exclusion can be attributed to the treaty's primary focus on addressing Japan's responsibility for the outbreak of the Pacific War with the Allied Powers, especially the United States. Despite Korea's expressed intent to participate, opposition from various countries, including Japan, hindered its involvement.[14] As a result, Koreans were not only denied the opportunity to hold Japan accountable for its colonial rule and seek reparations, but were also unwillingly categorized as foreigners.

In contrast to mainland Japan, Okinawa remained under strict US control due to its pivotal strategic location as a front-line base during the Cold War.[15] Surprisingly, even during this era of heightened surveillance, Koreans, including Bae, who had resided in Okinawa since the Pacific War, were not classified as foreigners, but as residents. However, this designation underwent a dramatic change a year later when Decree No. 93 was replaced by Decree No. 125, in which they were reclassified as foreigners. Decree No. 93 had defined Ryukyu residents very broadly, including individuals who had long been part of the Ryukyu Islands community and those who had registered after Japan's defeat, regardless of their nationality. In contrast, Decree No. 125 made a significant change by narrowing the definition of Ryukyu residents to "only those whose family register, Hojeok, is within the Ryukyu Islands and who currently reside there." Consequently, individuals who did not meet this criterion were deemed aliens, with the exception of US soldiers.[16] This meant that, as in mainland Japan, the distinction between Ryukyu and non-Ryukyu citizens hinged on whether a person's family register was held within the Ryukyu Islands. Under these circumstan-

13 Cho, "The Nationality of Koreans living in Japan": 125.

14 Japan's stance emphasized Korea's non-participation in the war, fearing that its inclusion would lead to substantial reparations. Countries like Britain were keen to avoid getting involved in colonial reparations issues. Nevertheless, scholars argue that the change in the United States' stance was even more critical. This shift was due to the complexity of US. Far Eastern policy and the difficulties in integrating Korea-specific provisions into the treaty text. Bak-jin Jang 장박진, *Sikminji gwangye cheongsaneun wae irwojil su eopseossneunga* 식민지 관계 청산은 왜 이뤄질 수 없었는가 [Why Ending Colonial Relations Was Impossible] (Seoul: Nonhyeong, 2009): 211–14; Byeong-joon Jeong 정병준, "Hangugui saenpeuransiseukopyeonghwahoedam chamgamunjewa baejegwajeong 한국의 샌프란시스코평화회담 참가문제와 배제 과정 [Participation Issue of Korea to the San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan]," *Korea and World Politics* 36, no. 3 (2020): 1–42.

15 Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016): 60.

16 土井智義, 米国統治期の在沖奄美住民の法的処遇について: 琉球政府出入管理庁文書を中心として: 33–34 (as cited in: Mi-hye Kim 김미혜, "Okinawauijoseonin: baebonggissiui 'jagijeungmyeong'uiijungjeok-uimireuljungsimeuro 오키나와의 조선인: 배봉기씨의 '자기증명'의 이중적 의미를 중심으로 [A Korean in Okinawa: Focusing on Bae Bong-Gi's 'Double Meaning' of Self-Proof]," in *Identifying Myself*: 172–73).

ces, non-Ryukyu citizens were obligated to carry residence permits with fingerprints at all times and were denied the right to vote. Furthermore, as the right to travel was granted only to those with a passport and visa, individuals who became stateless were unable to obtain a passport, denying Bae and others in her circumstances any options for international mobility. Bae initially arrived in Okinawa as a subject of the emperor, then transitioned to the status of a Ryukyu resident, but ultimately regressed to the designation of a foreigner, rendering her effectively stateless.

2.2 In Liberated Yet Occupied Okinawa

During World War II, around 3,500 Koreans were mobilized to Okinawa as part of the navy, army, or other military units.[18] Most of those who survived the war returned home on repatriation ships, but a few, like Bae, chose to stay. Bae remained in Okinawa despite having no residence permit, which meant that she had to live there as an undocumented person. The reason was simply that she was not informed about the chance to return home through repatriation.[19] There may also have been other reasons, such as that she had not enough money to go home, or that she was ashamed of having been a 'comfort woman.'[20] Nevertheless, there is compelling evidence suggesting an alternative possibility: Intentional omission. Korean researcher Bang Seon-joo discovered the names of women believed to be 'comfort women' in a US document titled "List of Japanese Prisoners of War: Records Transferred to the Japanese Government" and dated 17 December 1954. He conducted a thorough comparison of this list with a separate roster containing 147 names of 'comfort women' specifically "designated" for repatriation from Okinawa to South Korea. Significantly, he noted the conspicuous absence of these names in the "List of Japanese Prisoners of War," suggesting that these women were not sent to Korea. This omission raises intriguing questions about their fate.[21]

18 Kim, "A Korean in Okinawa": 157.

19 Bae explained that she remained in Okinawa because she was not informed about the repatriation, as she was isolated from other Koreans. Kawada, *A House with Red Roof Tiles*: 130.

20 These two aspects must be interconnected, as Kawada suggested to Bae that she should visit her hometown to determine if her family members were still residing there. Bae refused to go, so Kawada embarked on the journey alone. During this journey, she discovered the reasons behind Bae's reluctance to reunite with her family. When other family members of Bae heard that she was still alive and living in Japan, they believed that Bae had achieved success and accumulated substantial wealth, thus assuming she could assist her relatives. Consequently, Kawada decided that she could not reveal the truth to them. This implies that Bae was not only reluctant to disclose her past as a 'comfort woman,' but also to return home out of fear of disappointing her family (Kawada, *A House with Red Roof Tiles*: 297–305).

21 Seon-joo Bang 방선주, 美國資料韓人<從軍慰安婦>考察: 223 (as cited in: Kim, "A Korean in Okinawa": 162–63).

Moreover, Kim Mi-hye raised a pertinent question regarding why, after the Japanese defeat, Bae was transferred from POW camps to civilian camps whose inmates were not eligible for repatriation.[22] Even though the exact background or process of Bae's transfer to the civilian camp is not known, her transfer indicates that she was never given the opportunity to return home. Additionally, the report of the "Joint Korean-Japanese Investigation Commission for Fact-finding on the Forcible Recruitment of Koreans during the Battle of Okinawa" (hereinafter referred to as "Okinawa Investigation Commission") in 1972, found that "the US military was initially unwilling to send the Korean women back to their homeland."[23] Testimonies from Okinawans at the time indicated that women recruited as 'comfort women' were dispersed in units of up to about 20 individuals to various US military bases in Japan. They sometimes worked in orphanages run by the US, but were more frequently compelled to work in bars exclusively for US military personal, and even forced into prostitution for the US soldiers, who referred to them as "pangpang girls."[24] In Bae's initial testimony, she also indicated that she had worked for the US military, but she did not offer specific details, which made it difficult to gauge the extent of her ordeal.[25] However, a glimpse of the severity of her experience can be gleaned from her response to a reporter's question about returning to her hometown: "There are American soldiers there, too."[26] During the period when Okinawa was under US control, it earned a grim reputation as the "island of prostitution."[27] Even today, 74.48% of US military bases in Japan are still situated in Okinawa, and only 25.52% on the Japanese mainland, in terms of surface area. It is essential to understand the historical context, and its close connection to the military

22 Ibid.: 167.

23 第二次大戦時沖縄朝鮮人強制連行虐殺真相調査団, 『第二次大戦時沖縄朝鮮人強制連行虐殺真相調査団報告書』, 東京: 第二次大戦時沖縄朝鮮人強制連行虐殺真相調査団, 1972: 13 (as cited in: Kyoung-Hwa Lim 임경화, "Examining the Significance of the Movements to Document Minority Histories and 'Comfort Women' for the Japanese Military in Okinawa," *Seoul Journal of Japanese Studies* 7, no. 1 [2021]: 181).

24 Kim, "A Korean in Okinawa": 167; and see also the documentary film *Grandmothers of Okinawa* (1979) by Tetsuo Yamatani (cited in: Lim, Examining the Significance of the Movements": 181).

25 According to the Japanese newspaper *RyūkyūShimpō*, she said that "she used to work in US military camp and was forced to have sex with U.S. soldiers." ("30年ぶりに自由の身に—戦時中'連行'の韓国婦人那覇入管事務所特別に在留許可, 琉球新報," 22.10.1975 (as cited in: Lim, "Okinawa's Arirang": 553).

26 Woo-gi Park-Kim 박김우기, "배봉기 할머니를 기억하다-조선반도의 분단을 넘어서 [Remembering Grandmother Bae Bong-gi – Beyond the division of the Korean Peninsula]," trans. Kyeong-hwa Lim, 결 KYEOL, https://kyeol.kr/ko/node/133 [accessed 09.04.2023].

27 Nazno Kikuchi 菊地夏野, "Naesyeoneollijeumeseo sikminjuuiro: okinawa Asain jedowa ilbongun 'wianbu'munje 내셔널리즘에서 식민주의로: 오키나와 A사인제도와 일본군 '위안부'문제 [From Nationalism to Colonialism: The Okinawa A-Sign System and the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' Issue]," in *Sikminjuui, jeonjaeng, gun 'wianbu'* 식민주의, 전쟁, 군'위안부' [Colonialism, War, Military 'Comfort Women'], auth. Yeon-ok Song and Gi-ok Kim (Seoul: Sun-in, 2017): 152.

presence on the island at that time.[28] Despite the official stance of the US military, which issued proclamations on Okinawa in 1947, including Special Proclamation No. 14, "Prostitution Prohibited with Members of the Occupation Forces," Special Proclamation No. 15, "Venereal Disease Control," and Special Proclamation No. 16 which declared "Female Sex Slavery Prohibited," prostitution continued to thrive. This led to the establishment of the so-called "A-sign system" in Okinawa, where the US military issued licenses to certain bars and recognized them as brothels, monitoring them through regular sanitation inspections to protect soldiers from venereal disease.[29] In these "A-sign" bars, prostitution technically did not occur under its official name, but transactions were carried out under the guise of personal dates, effectively bypassing the US military's ban on prostitution. In war-torn Okinawa, where the main economy revolved around the US military, this system allowed for the exploitation of women from poor backgrounds who were forced into this business through loans. In other words, the United States exhibited a disregard for the welfare of these financially disadvantaged women, concurrently engaging in their exploitation.

2.3 South Korea's "Ignorance"

Apart from the missed opportunity to address the issue of colonial rule with Japan, the San Francisco Treaty had another significant impact on South Korea. In accordance with Article 4 of the Treaty, the "Korea-Japan Talks" (한일회담) were organized, which took place a total of seven times over a span of fourteen years (1951–1965).[30] However, these talks had limitations for Korea. It could not demand full reparations from Japan for its colonial rule, as the San Francisco Treaty did not provide

28 US Forces in Japan clarified that there are 52 US military facilities on the Japanese mainland and 33 facilities in Okinawa. The spokeperson went on to elaborate, stating, "In fact, 39% of the US military's exclusive facilities and 49% of the members covered by the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) are situated in Okinawa." (Se-won Lee 이세원, "주일미군사령부'불난 오키나와에 부채질'. . . 페이스북 논란 [US-Forces in Japan sparks Controversy on Okinawa Issue in a Fiery Facebook Post]," Yonhap News, 29.06.2016).

29 Kikuchi, "From Nationalism to Colonialism": 154–55.

30 Euysang Yoo 유의상, "Hanil cheonggugwonhyeopjeonggwa gwageosahyeonanui haegyeore daehan gochal 한일 청구권협정과 과거사현안의 해결에 대한 고찰 [Claims Agreement of 1965 and Study on the Resolution of the Past History Issues between the Republic of Korea and Japan]," *Journal of Korean Political and Diplomatic History* 37, no. 2 (2016): 209. For more details about Korea-Japan Talks, see Jang, *Why Ending Colonial Relations Was Impossible*; Jong-won Lee 이종원, "Hanilhoedamui gukjejeongchijeok baegyeong 한일회담의 국제정치적 배경 [The International Political Background of the Korea-Japan Talks]," in *Hanilhyeopjeongeul dasi bonda: 30junyeoneul majihayeo* 한일협정을 다시 본다: 30주년을 맞이하여 (Sungnam: Asea Moonhwasa, 1995), and Won-deok Lee 이원덕, *Hanil gwageosacheoriuiwonjeom: ilbonuijeonhucheorioegyowahanilhoedam* 한일 과거사 처리의 원점: 일본의 전후처리외교와 한일회담 [The Origin of dealing with the past between Korea and Japan: Japan's Postwar Reparations Diplomacy and the Korea-Japan Talks] (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1996).

for reparations. Therefore South Korea sought compensation from Japan only for the return of property that had originally legally belonged to Korea, not for thirty-six years of colonial rule.[31]

South Korea presented a total of eight claims to the Japanese side, including money taken from the Bank of *Chosŏn*, restitution claims to Japan from companies that had their headquarters or branches in *Chosŏn*, and compensation for Korean forced laborers, among others.[32] While Japan rejected most of these claims, it proposed that the items listed in Article 5, which dealt with the repayment of Japanese government bonds and debt, forced labor and other claims, be addressed on an individual basis in accordance with Japanese law, after the normalization of diplomatic relations. In contrast, South Korea demanded that these matters be addressed at the national level before normalizing diplomatic relations, rather than being subject to Japanese law.

South Korea and Japan grappled with unresolvable differences until 1961, and were unable to reach an agreement. South Korea wanted to include a clause allowing for future actions, but Japan objected, fearing unresolved issues post-negotiation.[33] In 1965, the two nations signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between Korea and Japan (hereinafter referred to as the "1965 Treaty").[34] South Korea, guided by President Park Chung-hee (1963–1979), desperately sought Japanese capital for economic growth through the "Five-Year Plans for South Korea" (경제개발 5개년 계획).[35] During his tenure, he focused on rapid industrialization and economic growth as part of the country's reconstruction after the Korean War (1950–1953). At the same time it sought a deeper relationship with Japan, fearing a greater enemy: Communism, more specifically North Korea. At that time, North Korea's military pacts with the Soviet Union and China added urgency. South Korea's swift agreement eliminated ties between Japan and North Korea in advance, securing essential economic aid and aligning with Cold War strategies.[36]

The 1965 Treaty was therefore designed to recognize the sole legitimate government in the Korean Peninsula and confirm the nationality of Koreans living in Japan

31 Yoo, "Claims Agreement of 1965": 210.

32 More information about the delegation can be found in "한일회담 – 재산청구권 교섭 [Korea-Japan Talks – Property Claims Negotiations], National Archives of Korea, https://www.archives.go.kr/next/newsearch/listSubjectDescription.do?id=002808&sitePage= [accessed 17.01.2023].

33 "일반청구권 소위원회 제 11차 회의 회의록 [Meeting Transcript of the 11th Meeting of the General Claims Subcommittee] (1962, 3,6)," 한국외교문서철 [Korean Foreign Affairs Documents], 750 (as cited in: Yoo, "Claims Agreement of 1965": 212).

34 According to this Treaty, Japan provided Korea with $300 million free of charge and $200 million as a loan, using a lump-sum method. Ibid.

35 The "Five-Year Plans for South Korea" were economic development plans that were implemented seven times between 1962 and 1996. More information could be found in: Jang, *Why Ending Colonial Relations Was Impossible*: 389.

36 Ibid.: 256, 393–96.

as citizens of the Republic of Korea. However, this process was complex, with a limited registration period of five years.[37] Unfortunately, this meant the agreement applied only to Koreans on the Japanese mainland, as it expired in 1971, one year before Okinawa's return to the mainland. Remarkably, the South Korean government was aware of stateless Koreans in Okinawa in 1966 but chose to overlook their situation. South Korea's disregard not only exacerbated Bae's invisibility, but also the 'comfort women' issue as a whole. While the 1965 Treaty settled all matters related to Japan's past colonization, it did not specifically address the issue of 'comfort women' as well. When the 'comfort women' issue intensified, particularly after the Konoe Statement in 1993, which was issued by Yohei Konoe, a member of the Japanese government, and acknowledged the forced mobilization of 'comfort women,' Japan argued that this matter was settled by the 1965 Treaty, and that it was no longer accountable. South Korea, on the other hand, maintains its position that the 'comfort women' issue should be treated separately from the 1965 Treaty, as it was not initially covered by the Treaty's provisions.[38] These different interpretations of the 1965 Treaty have been a major obstacle to South Korean society resolving the issue of the 'comfort women,' while the Japanese government has avoided all responsibility – thus leaving the issue unresolved to this day.

3 Invisibilization

When Okinawa was returned to Japanese control in 1972, the Japanese government had to adjust its territorial regulations and grant Koreans in Okinawa a legal status equivalent to that of Koreans living in mainland Japan. As a result, it was decided to give Special Permanent Residency to Koreans who were stateless and illegally residing in Okinawa at that time. But in order to obtain this Special Residency, Koreans had to prove that they had arrived in Japan before Japan's defeat in World War II. Bae, who did not wish to return to Korea, faced the risk of forced repatriation due to these new regulations. To secure her legal status, she sought assistance from Mr. Shinjo, the son-in-law of a restaurant owner she had previously worked for. He acted as a guarantor,

37 Cho, "The Nationality of Koreans in Japan": 129–30.

38 Cf. Chang-rok Kim 김창록, "Hanil gwageocheongsanui beopjeok gujo 한일 과거청산의 법적 구조 [Legal Structure of Righting the Wrongs of the Past between Korea and Japan]," *Journal of Legal History* 47 (2013): 85–113). Subsequently, in 2015, Presidents Park Geun-hye and Prime Minister Abe agreed to resolve the matter during a new round of Korean-Japanese negotiations regarding 'comfort women.' Abe emphasized that the fundamental position, including legal issues, remained unchanged and were already settled by the 1965 Treaty (Jun-hyeong Jo 조준형, "아베 '위안부 강제연행 증거없다' 입장 불변 [Abe: No Change in Position: 'No Evidence of Forced Comfort Women']," Yonhap News, 18.01.2016).

affirming that she had been residing in Okinawa prior to the end of World War II.[39] In October 1975, with Shinjo's help, she reported to immigration and obtained Special Residency status. Nevertheless, she had to recount her past as a 'comfort woman,' an experience she described as an "unwanted self-exposure."[40] While Japan's press and media showed great interest in her story, the response from the Korean media was relatively apathetic.[41] In this section, I analyze the reasons behind the lack of attention given to Bae's story in Korea, thus shedding light on the processes shaping the narrative of 'comfort women' in Korean society.

3.1 The Fight against Communism

It is difficult to pinpoint a single reason for the lack of recognition of Bae's story in Korea. However, many scholars suggest that her connection with *Chongryon* (재일본조선인총련합회, The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), may have been a contributing factor.[42] Bae, who "kept her house secluded even on hot summer days," rarely opened it to anyone except two members of *Chongryon*, Kim Su-seop and Kim Hyeon-ok, whose support she received until her death.[43] In 1977, she granted an interview to *Chosun Shinbo*, the official newspaper of *Chongryon*, in which she gave a detailed account of her experiences and injuries.

Chongryon, founded in 1955, historically supported communism and opposed the Cold War system and the United States, which were seen as the cause for the post-war tragedies endured by Koreans.[44] This stance was not favored by the South Korean government at the time, as anti-communism was one of President Park's central national principles, alongside economic growth. Additionally, there was a growing fear of a potential North Korean invasion, exemplified by the failed attempt in 1968 by

39 "Okinawa geojuilbongun wianbu pihaeja baebonggi jeungeon 오키나와 거주 일본군 위안부 피해자 배봉기 증언 [Testimony of Bae Bong-Gi, a Japanese Comfort Woman in Okinawa]": 95.

40 Kim, "A Korean in Okinawa": 145.

41 Local publications such as *Ryūkyū Shimpō* and the *Okinawa Times* as well as national newspapers such as the *Kochi Shimbun* reported about Bae's story. In 1979, documentary filmmaker Tetsuo Yamatani made the movie *Okinawa's Grandmother* based on his 1978 interviews with her. In 1977, Kawada began interviewing Bae, which formed the basis for the book, *A House with Red Roof Tiles* (1989).

42 Hyun Gyung Kim 김현경, "Naengjeongwa ilbongun 'wianbu': baebonggiui ijhyeojin salm geurigo jugeomeul dulleossan gyeonghap 냉전과 일본군 '위안부': 배봉기의 잊혀진 삶 그리고 주검을 둘러싼 경합 [Cold War and 'Comfort Women': Bae Bong-Ki's Forgotten Life and Contested Death]," *Journal of Korean Women's Studies* 37, no. 2 (2021): 220. When Yoon visited Bae again in 1988, Bae did not open her door to her even though she was at home ("이화여대 윤정옥 교수 '정신대' 원혼서린 발자취 취재기 2- 오키나와 [Professor Yoon Jeong-Ok, Ewha Womans University, a Report Followed in the Footsteps of 'Volunteer Corps' – 2 Okinawa]," Hankyorhe Shinmoon, 12.01.1990: 15).

43 Kawada, *A House with Red Roof Tiles*: 20.

44 See, Yi and Lee, "Newspaper Articles on the Alien Registration Act": 210–12.

thirty-one North Korean Special Forces soldiers to remove President Park on North Korean orders. President Nixon's announcement in 1971 to withdraw US troops from Korea within five years further heightened concerns and led to Park's autocratic system being justified as a "defense against communist invaders."[45]

This context fueled hostility towards Koreans in Japan, so-called *Chae'ilkyopo* (재일교포), particularly those associated with *Chongryon*. Even earlier, in 1959, when approximately 1,000 Koreans living in Japan chose to return to North Korea, they were considered traitors in South Korea.[46] Moreover, those who did not opt for Korean citizenship under the 1965 Treaty were seen as *Chongryon* members or supporters of North Korea, and often regarded as spies. President Park attempted to reduce the growing influence of *Chongryon* among Koreans in Japanese society by encouraging university students of Korean descent to study in South Korea and using them for propaganda in support of his regime. However, as anti-government demonstrations and the distribution of flyers by these students increased, with cases such as the "literary spy ring" in 1974 and the "manipulation of a Korean spy group living in Japan" in 1975, they became increasingly marginalized in Korean society.[47] Given these circumstances, Bae Bong-gi's connections to *Chongryon* could explain why South Korean society did not pay much attention to her story.

In fact, Korean society was more concerned about the return to Japan of Okinawa, which was seen as a stronghold of anti-communism during US occupation.[48] When the 1969 US-Japan Summit decided to return Okinawa to Japan, Korean newspapers published over 800 articles related to this event. Many of these articles expressed concerns about the safety of the Korean Peninsula.[49] As a result, the Korean government emphasized the urgent need for countermeasures to prevent an "inva-

45 While focusing on the rapid economic growth, his tenure was marked by human rights violations, political repression and suppression of the press. "No. 1003 – Armed Forces Day on the 26th anniversary of the ROK Army," Daehan News, 05.10.1974, Media History Museum (e영상역사관), Korean Broadcasting System, https://www.ehistory.go.kr/view/movie?mediasrcgbn=KV&mediagbn=DH&mediaid=911&mediadtl=6777 [accessed 04.01.2024].

46 Beom-soo Kim 김범수, "Bakjeonghuijeonggwonsigi "gukmin" uigyeonggyewajaeilgyopo5 • 16 kudetaihu 10wol yusin ijeonkkaji sinmungisabunseogeul jungsimeuro 박정희 정권시기 "국민"의 경계와 재일교포5 · 16 쿠데타 이후 10 월 유신 이전까지 신문기사분석을 중심으로 [Is a Chae'ilkyopo 'Korean'?: An Analysis of Newspaper Articles from the 5 · 16 Coup to the October Yushin (Restoration)]," *Korean Journal of International Relations* 56, no. 2 (2016): 197–200.

47 Young-ho Lee 이영호, "Wianbu munjeui deungjanggwa jaeiljoseonin gimilmyeon—japji [gyegan madang (季刊まだん)] ui gisareul jungsimeuro 위안부 문제의 등장과 재일조선인 김일면—잡지 [계간마당 (季刊まだん)]의 기사를 중심으로— [The Issue of the Appearance of Japanese Comfort Women and Kim Il-Myun by Korean Residents in Japan: Focusing on Articles of the Quarterly Magazine Madang]," *The Korean Journal of Japanology* 113 (2017): 156–58.

48 Lim, "Okinawa's Arirang": 575.

49 "오끼나와反還問題 [Decision to return Okinawa to Japan]," Dong-A Ilbo, 03.06.1969; "오끼나와交涉과極東의關心 [Negotiations over Okinawa and interest in the Far East]," Dong-A Ilbo, 13.06.1969.

sion" of *Chongryon* into Okinawa and became more interested in gaining influence over the region.[50]

These fears of "invasion" were fueled by the Okinawa Investigation Commission in 1972. This private investigative team consisted of four members of *Chongryon* and four Japanese and had lasted about 20 days. Its purpose was to examine the forced mobilization and massacre of Koreans during World War II. The commission uncovered war crimes committed against Korean victims by the Japanese military, including the ongoing violence inflicted on Korean 'comfort women' during the US occupation of Okinawa.[51] The Commission's activities were welcomed by the local government of Okinawa and various human rights organizations. The subsequent year, the South Korean government, which had hitherto demonstrated limited interest in the Koreans residing in Okinawa, responded by sending their own investigator to the island. This investigation was aligned with the goals of the Okinawa Investigation Commission but placed a greater emphasis on Korean citizens. However, this investigation was largely only a formality, and its true purpose – as stated in a Foreign Ministry document – was "to uncover what happened and to set up a memorial."[52] Thus, on August 14, 1975, the war memorial to the Koreans was placed in a peace park in Itoman, Okinawa, which was built in 1972. The South Korean government attached particular importance to speeding up the construction of the memorial in order to prevent North Korea from erecting such a memorial.[53] It remains the only memorial specifically for Koreans until today.

During this period, Korean society showed indifference toward the news of Bae that emerged in the same year.[54] The focus was more on the geopolitical significance of Okinawa than on the marginalized victims of the Japanese colonial period who could not return from Okinawa. The complex dynamics of politics and anti-communist sentiment contributed to her absence from the Korean media.

3.2 In/visibilizing 'Comfort Women'

The conflict with Communism was one of the reasons Bae's story was overlooked in Korean society, but it was not the sole factor. When Yamatani's documentary, *Okinawa's Grandmother* (1979), started its film tour in Japan in May, it also garnered atten-

50 Lim, "Okinawa's Arirang": 562.

51 Ibid.: 567.

52 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Okkinawa hangugin wiryeongtap geonrip, 1974–1975 (1) 오끼나와 한국인 위령탑 건립, 1974–1975 (1) [Erection of Monument for Koreans in Okinawa, 1974–1975 (1)]," Accession No. DA0093946, 1974 (as cited in: Lim, "Examining the Significance of the Movements": 189.).

53 Jang-seon Kim 김장선, "일본 오키나와 한국인 위령탑 국내 이전 갈등 [Conflict over Relocation of Korean Memorial Monuments in Okinawa, Japan]," 15.12.2013.

54 Kim, "Cold War and 'Comfort Women'": 205.

tion in Korean media and was brought to the notice of Korean society.[55] However, a significant number of Korean media outlets expressed the opinion that Bae's story should not have been disclosed, deeming it a shameful and embarrassing matter concerning Korean women.[56] This does not imply that the issue of 'comfort women' was entirely taboo in Korean society.

During this period, the memories of 'comfort women' were depicted in films and literature in the mass media. Several novels focusing on 'comfort women' were serialized in newspapers, such as Kim Jeong-han's *Sura-do* (The realm of devils) in 1969, Ha Geun-chan's *Wollye-sojeon* (The Story of Wollye) published in 1973, Kim Seong-jong's *Yeomyeonguinundongja* (Eyes of the Dawn) in 1977, and Kim Jeong-han's *Okinawaeseo on pyeonji* (Letter from Okinawa), also published in 1977. *Letter from Okinawa* is set in Okinawa and tells the story of Bok-jin, a seasonal worker from Korea, through a series of letters. One day, she encounters a woman named Sanghe-dek (Mrs. Shanghai), who runs a restaurant in Okinawa. Much to Bok-jin's astonishment, she uncovers that Sanghe-dek is a former 'comfort woman,' who shares many similarities with Bae, raising the question of whether this is merely a coincidence. The novel provides a limited account of Sanghe-dek's story, as the narrative is structured as a series of letters from Bok-jin to her mother. This narrative approach reflects the limited understanding within Korean society at the time, when the existence of 'comfort women' was just being acknowledged. There was uncertainty about how to define and address their experiences.

Like Bok-jin, approximately one thousand Korean women were sent by the government to Okinawa every year as seasonal workers in agriculture during the 1970s, when Korea experienced important economic development.[57] This means that the Korean government chose to overlook the past and focus on moving forward, instead of addressing the issue of the past 'comfort women' and confronting the past with Japan.[58] In other words, the author of *Letter from Okinawa* aimed to illustrate the continuation of colonial practices in the postcolonial reality, highlighting the interconnected experiences of 'comfort women' and neglected seasonal laborers.

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55 "日社會에「挺身隊」충격 [Shocks of「 Volunteer corps 」in Japanese Society]," Dong-A Ilbo, 21.09.1979; "아끼꼬로 變身한 주인공 "나는 大東亞전쟁희생자" "보아서는 안될영화" 在日僑胞 얼굴 붉히며 떠나 [The main character who transformed into Akiko 'I am a war victim in Greater East Asian War' 'A movie that should not be seen' A Korean in Japan blushed and left]," Kyung-hyang Shinmoon, 28.09.1979.

56 "An incident that we don't want to bring up on purpose [. . .] because they are the shame and disgrace of our women." (*Dong-A Ilbo*, 21.09.1979) or "I can't forget the Koreans in Japan who blushed and said they had seen a movie they shouldn't have." (*Kyung-hyang Shinmoon*, 28.09.1979).

57 Sang-yeop Lee 이상엽, "[생각의 숲] '오키나와' 농장에 간 한국 여성들 [Korean women working on an 'Okinawan' farm]," Nongmin Shinmoon.

58 A former 'comfort woman,' Hwang Kum-ju, met the wife of president Park in 1972, who told her to forget the past so that Korea could move forward (Maki Kimura, *Unfolding the 'Comfort Women' Debates: Modernity, Violence, Women's Voices* [New York: Springer, 2016]: 193).

Novels from this period tended to focus on the issue of 'comfort women' as part of Korea's national tragic history, rather than paying homage to their individual suffering.[59] Particularly, these depictions highlighted anti-Japanese sentiment due to the atrocities of Japanese imperialism and the perpetration of sexual violence by the Japanese. There is a contradiction here in that these depictions were "consumed" and "reproduced" as male-centered memories or entertainment after the war.[60] For example, the 1974 film *Yeojajeongsindae* (Women's Volunteer Corps) depicted the tragic love story between the main character Chun-ja, who was mobilized as a 'comfort woman' with false promises, and Seong-cheol, a Korean conscript. It ended with their deaths.[61] The newspaper advertisement for this movie, which uses provocative language and pornographic design, reveals how 'comfort women' were portrayed in the film.[62] The novel *Eyes of the Dawn* describes the main character Yeo-Ok's journey to the 'comfort station' and her experiences there in a highly sexualized manner.[63] The relationship with Japanese soldiers is depicted as forced or sadistic, while the relationship with Koreans is portrayed as beautiful, emphasizing the purity of Korean women and the innocence of Korean men who tried to protect them.

The narratives in these novels and films frequently conclude with the death or disappearance of the characters. This could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt by colonial patriarchs to erase these women from the narrative, a manifestation of their inability to protect them.

59 Chung-Kang Kim 김청강, "'Wianbu'neun eotteohge ijhyeojyeossna? 1990nyeondae ijeon daejungyeonghwa sok 'wianbu' jaehyeon '위안부'는 어떻게 잊혀졌나? 1990년대 이전 대중영화 속 '위안부' 재현 [How Have the 'Comfort Women' Been Forgotten?: The Representations of 'Comfort Women' in Pre-1990s South Korean Popular Cinema and the Politics of Memory]," *Journal of East Asian Cultures* 71 (2017): 164; Su-hee Jang 장수희, "Danjeolgwa goribui naengjeonseosaroseoui ilbongun 'wianbu'-seosa yeongu: 1960~1970nyeondae ilbongun 'wianbu'seosareul jungsimeuro 단절과 고립의 냉전서사로서의 일본군 '위안부' 서사 연구: 1960~1970년대 일본군 '위안부' 서사를 중심으로 [A Study on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery as a Cold War Narrative – Focused on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery Narrative in the 1960s and 1970s]," *Emotion Studies* 22 (2021): 113–14; Ji-eun Lee 이지은, "Joseonin 'wianbu' yudonghaneun pyosang – 91nyeon ijeon gimilmyeon, imjonggugui 'wianbu' tekseuteureul jungsimeuro 조선인 '위안부' 유동하는 표상 – 91 년 이전 김일면, 임종국의 '위안부' 텍스트를 중심으로 [Korean 'Comfort Women', Fluid Representation]," *Journal of Manchurian Studies* 25 (2018): 202–3.

60 Kim, "The Representations of 'Comfort Women'": 172.

61 "여자정신대 [The Comfort Women, Yeojajeongsindae]," KMDb 한국영화데이터베이스 (Korean Movie Database), https://www.kmdb.or.kr/db/kor/detail/movie/K/02808 [accessed 09.04.2023].

62 Kim, "The Representations of 'Comfort Women'": 171–72.

63 Seong-jong Kim 김성종, 여명의 눈동자 [Eyes of the Dawn] (Seoul: Namdo, 1977).

4 Conclusion

This paper sheds light on the marginalized story of Bae Bong-gi, a Korean woman who endured the hardships of being a 'comfort woman' during Japanese colonial rule and her subsequent life in Okinawa. It explored the complexities of the historical and political context that influenced the invisibilization of Bae's story after the postwar period. The story of Bae Bong-gi is a poignant reminder of the complexities involved in acknowledging and understanding historical injustices.

Section 2, on Bae's concealment, discussed the interplay between geopolitical factors, such as the Cold War and the US-Japan relationship, and their impact on the treatment and recognition of 'comfort women.' The influence of the US military presence in Okinawa, the prioritization of anti-communism, and the manipulation of narratives by both the Japanese and South Korean governments played significant roles in shaping the reception of Bae's story.

This chapter also looked at the complexities within Korean society. Section 3, on her in/visibilization, discussed how Bae's relationship with *Chongryon* and the political climate surrounding the division of the Korean Peninsula influenced the reception of her story in South Korea. Additionally, it could be shown that the portrayal of 'comfort women' in literature and media, although aiming to shed light on their suffering, often reflected societal biases and limited understanding.

Bae's narrative reveals that the marginalization and disclosure of her story were not solely within her control. Beyond her personal journey, the course of her life was significantly influenced by both international conflicts and postwar Korean society. Furthermore, the way her story and life experiences were shaped serves as an example of how narratives of many other 'comfort women' might have been constructed or omitted similarly. The story of Bae serves as a reminder of the enduring legacies of colonialism and the challenges in confronting and reconciling with the past. It highlights the importance of continued efforts to acknowledge the experiences of 'comfort women,' provide support and reparations, and promote awareness to prevent the recurrence of such atrocities.

It emphasizes the significance of amplifying the voices of marginalized individuals, and fostering inclusive spaces for dialogue and healing. Bae's experience is just one example of marginalization in this narrative, highlighting the need to address the overlooked aspects in the study of 'comfort women.' To overcome these limitations, it is essential to strive for a comprehensive understanding of the silence they endured, and the multifaceted factors which have kept them excluded from politics of memory and reparation.

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Yoshimi, Yoshiaki. *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Yun, Myeong sook 윤명숙. *Joseonin gun 'wianbu' wa ilbongun wianso jedo* 조선인 군'위안부'와 일본 군 안소제도 [Korean 'Comfort Women' and the System of Comfort Stations for Japanese Soldiers] (Seoul: Ihaksa, 2015).

"Okinawa geoju ilbongun wianbu pihaeja baebonggi jeungeon 오키나와 거주 일본군 위안부 피해자 배봉기 증언 [Testimony of Bae Bong-Gi, a Japanese Comfort Woman in Okinawa]," Korea Chongshindae's Institute, 2006.

Language and In/Visibility

Manuel Pavón-Belizón

Chinese Women Intellectuals, In/Visibility, and Translation

1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the comparative invisibility of contemporary Chinese women intellectuals in translation flows, focusing on the fields of the humanities and social sciences (HSS). It begins by characterizing the position of Chinese women intellectuals in their own original context and in the translation and circulation of Chinese HSS. I will show that Chinese women intellectuals have occupied a marginal position in the intellectual and academic field of mainland China in comparison to their male counterparts, which is reflected in their lesser visibility in translation. Despite this situation, we find some exceptional cases of women intellectuals whose work has been translated and circulated in other languages. I will address what factors and in what conditions the work of contemporary Chinese women intellectuals have been translated into English in recent decades. For that, I will focus on a specific case study: The translation of the works of Dai Jinhua, a contemporary female cultural studies scholar and public intellectual based at Peking University whose works have been regularly translated and published in English. Her case will allow me to identify the conditions and mechanisms that allow or obstruct processes of translation and circulation. More precisely, I will show the value of social networks in enabling processes of translation. In that sense, this chapter does not only address the issue of invisibility but also intends to point to the social and intellectual practices that counter and challenge those same conditions of invisibility.

I take my perspective from the discipline of translation studies and, more precisely, sociological approaches to translation. I will combine, on the one hand, a quantitative analysis of book translations by focusing on the authors' gender and, on the other hand, a qualitative analysis that addresses the conditions and mechanisms that enable translation and circulation.

If the translation and circulation of non-Euro-American works in the fields of humanities and social sciences (HSS) into European languages have been marginal (at least until very recently), this marginality doubles when we include the perspective of gender. This is particularly visible in the case of Chinese women intellectuals, as I will show in my analysis later on. Despite the increasing number of works being translated from Chinese into English following China's increasing geopolitical weight on the global scene, the number of translated works authored by women remains proportionally low. This can be observed from a database I compiled for an earlier research project, which includes translations of humanities and social sciences books

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from Chinese into English between 1989 and 2018.[1] This database contains a total of 195 translations. 142 are single-authored books, of which only eleven – that is, a meager 7.75 percent – are by women.[2] As an additional indicator, it is interesting to look at the different anthologies and collections of translated essays of contemporary Chinese thinkers. Translated anthologies and collections, as a particular cultural product, are often intended to convey an image or an interpretation of the situation in a given (source) context.[3] The five translated anthology initiatives that I identified between 1998 and 2020 feature forty-seven different Chinese intellectuals and scholars (including participants in transcribed roundtables), and only 11 of them (23.4 percent) are women.[4]

Of course, the underrepresentation of women in translation is not specific to Chinese authors; it has been also observed in other contexts.[5] In addition to quantitative differences, gender-informed biases can also be noted in qualitative terms. For instance, works by women authors may be more visible in certain topics and subjects, such as the recent waves of translation of fiction written by female Chinese writers – although publishers tend to present these publications in voyeuristic and othering ways.[6] With regard to intellectual and academic works by women authors, translations tend to be circumscribed to specific topics or fields of knowledge. For example,

1 Manuel Pavón-Belizón, "The Translation and Circulation of Contemporary Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences in European and North American Contexts (1989–2018)" (PhD diss., Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, 2023). See pp. 15–21 in this reference for compilation criteria.

2 I focus specifically on single-authored publications because, I argue, they reveal a higher level of recognition for the author than being featured in multi-authored publications, given the higher investment in terms of time, editorship, and financing required for a publishing initiative that takes the form of a monograph. With regard to the enduring relevance of the "author" (be it as an individual or as a social function), see Marco Santoro and Gisèle Sapiro, "On the Social Life of Ideas and the Persistence of the Author in the Social and Human Sciences. A Presentation of the Symposium," *Sociologica. Italian Journal of Sociology on Line* 1 (2017): 1–17.

3 Teresa Seruya, Lieven d'Hulst, Alexandra Rosa and Maria L. Moniz, eds., *Translation in Anthologies and Collections (19th and 20th Centuries)* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013): vii.

4 The anthologies are, by year of publication: Gloria Davies, ed., *Voicing Concerns: Contemporary Chinese Critical Inquiry* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Xudong Zhang, ed., *Whither China? Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Lau Kin Chi and Huang Ping, eds., "China Reflected," special issue of *Asian Exchange* 18, no. 2 (2003); Chaohua Wang, ed., *One China, Many Paths* (London: Verso, 2003); Timothy Cheek, David Ownby and Joshua A. Fogel, eds., *Voices from the Chinese Century: Public Intellectual Debate from Contemporary China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

5 Gisèle Sapiro, "What Factors Determine the International Circulation of Scholarly Books? The Example of the Translations Between English and French in the Era of Globalization," in *The Social and Human Sciences in Global Power Relations. Socio-Historical Studies of the Social and Human Sciences*, ed. Johan Heilbron, Gustavo Sorá and Thibaud Boncourt (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 59–93.

6 Mengying Jiang, "Female Voices in Translation: An Interrogation of a Dynamic Translation Decade for Contemporary Chinese Women Writers, 1980–1991," *The Translator* 25, no. 1 (2019): 1–12.

literature studies or gender studies are cases where contributions by women scholars and intellectuals can feature more prominently.

The absence of women intellectuals in general has been noted in the intellectual and academic canons of different disciplines. As an example, Hutchings and Owens analyzed the marked gender and racial bias of the intellectual canon in the discipline of international relations.[7] While recent decades have seen an increasing interest in the "diversification" and "decolonization" of intellectual canons in a range of disciplines, this endeavor appears to have mostly focused on geographic or cultural diversity, while failing to pay further attention to diversity in terms of gender, at least in the case of certain disciplines. A good example is the rising field of Chinese international relations theory that recently came to prominence precisely to counter the Anglo-American hegemony in international relations. This field is an especially relevant example because international interest in China's intellectual production revolved around fields such as international relations and world politics, which are closer to the trope of China's rising profile on the global scene. In their survey of Chinese international relations theory, Blanchard and Lin conducted a survey of the field's intellectual references and found that, despite its anti-hegemonic impetus, its mainstream approach is mostly based on Chinese traditional (Confucian) ideas, while it fails to engage significantly with the work of female theoreticians and approaches such as feminist theories of international relations.[8]

Translation is one of the main ways to make ideas circulate and to introduce new references that diversify and enrich intellectual canons. It is also a bearer of symbolic capital and an indicator of recognition in a cultural or disciplinary field.[9] Since the recognition of an author and her or his work in its source domestic context is usually a facilitator for the translation of the work into other languages, the marginal position of Chinese women intellectuals in translation must also lead us to ask about the position of Chinese women intellectuals within China's intellectual field.[10] In 2021, the website *Reading the China Dream* – which selects and translates into English texts by contemporary Chinese intellectuals – surveyed the contents of the key Chinese online outlet *Aisixiang* (爱思想), which showcases essays by leading Chinese intellectuals.[11] At the time the survey was conducted, in March 2021, the website included a total of 642 intellec-

7 Kimberly Hutchings and Patricia Owens, "Women Thinkers and the Canon of International Thought: Recovery, Rejection, and Reconstitution," *American Political Science Review* 115, no. 2 (2021): 347–59.

8 Eric M. Blanchard and Shuang Lin, "Gender and Non-Western 'Global' IR: Where Are the Women in Chinese International Relations Theory?" *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 48–61.

9 Gisèle Sapiro and Mauricio Bustamante, "Translation as a Measure of International Consecration: Mapping the World Distribution of Bourdieu's Books in Translation," *Sociologica* 2–3 (2009): 1–45.

10 Gisèle Sapiro, "How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)?" *Journal of World Literature* 1, no. 1 (2016): 81–96.

11 David Ownby, "Reading the China Dream," https://www.readingthechinadream.com/ [accessed 24.03.2024]. Aisixiang 爱思想 [Love for Thought], https://www.aisixiang.com/ [accessed 24.03.2024].

tuals, of whom only 24 (3.7 percent) were female.[12] This quantitative bias raises questions on the conditions in China's intellectual field and the status of women intellectuals and scholars in it, which may explain such an imbalance in representation.

Section one of this chapter provides a brief theoretical framework on the circulation and translation of knowledge. As I will discuss, circulation and translation are forms of knowledge construction. Both are socially embedded activities and, as such, can be beset by the same biases that exist in any social context – such as gender imbalances, which help explain the absence of women intellectuals in the circulation of translations. At the same time, however, circulation and translation can also be tools to counter those very imbalances, as I will show later.

Section two analyzes the situation of Chinese women intellectuals in their own original context of mainland China. In it, I briefly delve into the emergence of women intellectuals in modern China, their transformation through different historical periods, and their current predicaments to show that, compared to their male counterparts, women intellectuals occupy a comparatively marginal position in the cultural, intellectual and academic fields of mainland China. I point to three forms in which the presence of women intellectuals is marginalized in China. First, the disregard of women as subjects of knowledge, that is, as knowledge producers. Since the beginning of the reform era, mainstream discourse has increasingly featured traditional ideas about women's role in society as preferably ascribed to the "private sphere" of domestic life; so that they are often the target of prejudices that denigrate their capacity for intellectual and scholarly endeavors. Second, the disregard of women and women's issues as objects of knowledge, i.e., the fact that Chinese (male) mainstream intellectuals and intellectual forums tend to neglect gender issues as a constitutive part of social problems. And third, the co-optation of female voices by male interests, whereby textual production by women, even when intended as a way of self-expression and liberation, can end up being appropriated by commercial interests and a sexualized gaze.

Section three deals with the translation and circulation of the works of Chinese women intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences by focusing, as previously mentioned, on the translation into English of the works of Dai Jinhua. To date, four English-language volumes of her scholarly production have appeared. The exceptionality of Dai's case offers compelling insights into the conditions under which the work of a contemporary Chinese woman intellectual can be translated and circulated internationally. I take the perspective of the sociology of translation through the close reading of paratextual materials of her translations, as well as interviews and other sources related to the author and other agents who participated in the publication of her books in English. I pay special attention to the socio-intellectual conditions of circulation, i.e., the

12 David Ownby and Selena Orly, "Women's Voices: Where are the Women's Voices among Chinese Establishment Intellectuals?" Reading the China Dream, https://www.readingthechinadream.com/womens-voices.html [accessed 24.03.2024].

interpersonal, political and intellectual affinities between the different agencies implicated in the translations to understand the value of these factors for enabling processes of translation and, ultimately, for the opening up of intellectual canons. Finally, I will briefly address how translation, while giving visibility to hitherto marginal voices, can also give way to new problems related to forms of representation and reception.

2 Circulation and Translation as Construction of Knowledge

The circulation of different forms of knowledge, including academic knowledge in humanities and social sciences disciplines, and the factors and mechanisms that explain those processes of circulation, have become the focus of attention of a growing number of researchers.

One of the central tenets of these discussions is the idea that knowledge and ideas are not immutable. Knowledge is socially produced and reproduced, and it is transformed in the very processes of circulation and interaction with people and institutions. Being socially embedded, knowledge is also implicated in all sorts of social dynamics, including those that reveal imbalances and inequalities. Sarasin, one of the earliest proponents of analyzing circulation in the field of history, also emphasizes that circulation does not proceed without obstacles, and that opportunities for knowledge production are not evenly distributed. This leads to questions about distribution: Whose work gets to circulate? And why and under what conditions?[13]

The political underpinnings of any society and the historical legacies of power have much to do with shaping the circulation of knowledge. Scholars acknowledge the existence of centers and peripheries in the production and circulation of knowledge, which reflect a certain division of intellectual labor among different social formations.[14] The legacies of colonial rule had a significant impact on this division, and have been a focus of postcolonial scholarship in recent decades. In addition to imbalances between different socio-political formations, gender gaps have also been determinant in the history of knowledge. For Burke, gender is a key aspect in the history of knowledge.[15] Conditions such as the exclusion of women from European learned societies until the late nineteenth century, or the disregarding of knowledge traditionally accumulated and transmitted by women, speak to the gendered character of knowl-

13 Philipp Sarasin, "Was ist Wissensgeschichte?" *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 36, no. 1 (2011): 159–72.

14 Leandro Rodríguez Medina, *Centers and Peripheries in Knowledge Production* (London: Routledge, 2014).

15 Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016): 119–22.

edge, and the invisibilization of women in most conventional historical accounts. Women sometimes negotiated their own in/visibility as producers or transmitters of knowledge, but often that negotiation was less a question of personal desire and rather a strategy to avoid derision and social stigmatization.[16]

Knowledge is often condensed into written text, and for such texts to circulate between different cultural contexts, translation and translators are indispensable. Translation is omnipresent in history and its key role in the history of knowledge and ideas in many different historical and cultural contexts cannot be overestimated.[17] Throughout history and in the present, translation appears as a form of socially embedded knowledge production. As such, again, translation also does not happen on a level field, but is subject to the unavoidable judgment and the biases of the social agents (translators, publishers, funding institutions) that promote them. As Schögler observes, translation entails, first, a selection of texts to be translated and then a process in which texts and their authors can be rewritten and repositioned in the intellectual field of the reception context.[18] Such rewriting and repositioning of texts via translation often implies that the translated text or author may be introduced into the target context under very specific labels that may or may not be applicable with the same prominence in the source context. Besides, the ideas and propositions contained in texts can go through new interpretations and acquire new potential usages to make them relevant for the target context.

Translation is also one of the most prevalent tools for the formation of canons – but also for their disruption – as it has the capacity to give visibility to new voices among the corpus of knowledge that exists in a specific context. Therefore, what is at stake with the translation of the works of Chinese women intellectuals – as well as women intellectuals from any location – is the opportunity of circulating their ideas and allowing them to be transformed into new knowledge that can be meaningful for the receiving contexts. It is also a way of challenging the existing distribution of intellectual labor by diversifying the flows and the nature of knowledge and ideas that circulate transnationally.

16 Paola Bertucci, "The In/Visible Woman: Mariangela Ardinghelli and the Circulation of Knowledge between Paris and Naples in the Eighteenth Century," *Isis* 104, no. 2 (2013): 244.

17 For different cases, see Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia, eds., *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Rachel Lung, "The Jiangnan Arsenal: A Microcosm of Translation and Ideological Transformation in 19th-Century China," *Meta* 61 (2016): 37–52; Rebekah Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

18 Rafael Y. Schögler, "Translation in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Circulating and Canonizing Knowledge," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 38 (2018): 62–90.

3 Women Intellectuals and Women Questions in the Intellectual Field of China

3.1 Conditions for Intellectual Activity

The connection between gender and intellectual politics in China has been clear since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This period was marked by a transfer of social and symbolic capital from the scholar-official class of the imperial era to the figure of the modern intellectual. The abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905, the arrival of new forms of technical knowledge and social thought, and the establishment of universities and new educational institutions modeled on European counterparts were central in this transition. In the case of Chinese women, this transition followed a specific path.[19] The traditional confinement of urban or gentry-class women to the private quarters of their homes was put to an end, and they were now prepared to engage in the public life that until then had been an almost exclusively male space. Universities for women were established, and women began to gain access to educational institutions, to write and publish, to be targeted as readers by journals and newspapers, and to travel abroad. Along with these unprecedented transformations, feminism made its first entry into intellectual discourse, and the question of the social position of women became a central element in the discussions about China's modernization in the early twentieth century. Leading male intellectuals of the time devoted part of their writings to discussing this question, most often addressing the issue of women's equal participation in society (especially through access to education) as conducive to the greater goal of China's construction as a modern nation.[20] It was in this period and among these discussions that some of the first modern women intellectuals made their voices heard, such as Qiu Jin (秋瑾), Lü Bicheng (吕碧城), and He-Yin Zhen (何殷振). Notwithstanding all this, He-Yin, an anarcho-feminist thinker, was one of the earliest feminists to note that mainstream arguments on women's rights, especially those expressed by male intellectuals, tended to frame the "woman question" as a subsidiary issue to the more central concern of national construction. Instead, she vindicated women's liberation as a goal in itself.[21]

19 Jiang Lijing 姜丽静, *Lishi de beiying: yi dai nüzhishifenzi de jiaoyu jiyi* 历史的背影: 一代女知识分子的教育记忆 [The Back of History: Memories of One Generation of Women Intellectuals] (Beijing: Jiaoyu Kexue Chubanshe 教育科学出版社, 2012).

20 Zhang Suling 张素玲, "Wan Qing zhi Wusi shiqi zhishifenzi de xingbie huayu ji qi shehui wenhua yiyun 晚清至五四时期知识分子的性别话语及其社会文化意蕴 [The Discourse on Gender by Late Qing and May Fourth Intellectuals and its Social Implications]," *Funü Yanju Conglun* 妇女研究丛论 80, no. 3 (2007): 26–32.

21 Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Y. Ko, eds., *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 1–26.

The articulation of gender-related issues within the intellectual politics of early twentieth-century China would eventually conflict with the concerns of some male intellectuals. Lei underscored how Chinese literati from that period found themselves in the midst of a "twofold crisis of national identity and Chinese manhood," as their centuries-old ideals of "literary accomplishments, cultural refinement, and genteel mannerisms" were confronted by the aggressive militarism of western powers. In the face of this crisis, Chinese male intellectuals sought to redefine their masculinity by distancing themselves from traditional ideals that were redefined as effeminate and weak under the refraction of modern western discourses of manhood.[22] Therefore, disregard began to form among these intellectuals vis-à-vis their perception of women's participation in the urgent intellectual task of reinforcing China's position in a world dominated by those manly values.

As China's social, political and cultural crises aggravated, and with the emergence of the May Fourth and New Culture Movements, progressive intellectuals engaged in unprecedented criticism of the Confucian tradition. Within that criticism, gendered traditional social customs such as arranged marriages and the patrilineal system came under further attack. The Communist Party of China (CPC) was founded in this period, and its growing organizational structure came up with new ideas about the liberation of women as an integral part of the revolution.[23]

After the victory of the CPC and the introduction of socialist-oriented policies, the new officialdom prided itself on the advances of women's rights and even the attainment of women's full incorporation into social life on a par with their male counterparts, including equal access to education and equal pay as workers.[24] On the other hand, paradoxically, the recognition of women's equality as a state policy meant that it was subsumed into broader questions of class equality and class struggle. Even the ways to conceptualize it were changed, opting for the term "women's work" instead of the term "feminism," as the latter was deemed too bourgeois.[25]

The end of Maoism, the start of the Reform and Opening Up and its subsequent market orientation shifted trends in gender politics. Improvements in income, employment diversification and educational opportunities offered advantages also for women. Some researchers have pointed to the positive effects that certain new policies of the reform period had on gender equality: The one-child policy, for instance, is regarded as a cause for families to invest more in their daughters' education, as well

22 Jun Lei, *Mastery of Words and Swords: Negotiating Intellectual Masculinities in Modern China, 1890s–1930s* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2022): 7.

23 Harriet Evans, "The Impossibility of Gender in Narratives of China's Modernity," *Radical Philosophy* 146 (2007): 29.

24 Wang Zheng, "Feminist Struggles in a Changing China," in *Feminisms with Chinese Characteristics*, ed. Ping Zhu and Hui Faye Xiao (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2021): 128.

25 Wang Zheng, *Feminist Struggles*: 121.

as increasing and diversifying their career opportunities.[26] Despite this, many scholars and critics also pointed out that economic reforms, marketization and consumerist culture have led to setbacks in gender equality and women's status in society. Among the most common criticisms is the fact that, despite increased opportunities, women now have disadvantageous access to certain positions in the labor market and the wage gap has widened.[27] These setbacks have sometimes been deterministically justified on the grounds of natural physical capabilities or, at best, regarded as a necessary intermediate step toward greater equality that has been postponed into the future.[28] Wang Zheng notes that

> The CCP's turn to privatization and marketization was accompanied by a dismantling of socialist institutional mechanisms that safeguarded gender and class equalities for those working in the public sector, such as equal education, equal employment, equal pay, and state-funded health care and childcare. The state's departure from a socialist egalitarian distribution system was also crucially legitimized by the propagation of a neoliberal ideology that harped on social Darwinism, a discursive maneuver that many male intellectuals eagerly adopted.[29]

In addition to the effect on incomes and labor conditions, there is a widespread concern that economic reforms have also led to a resurgence of traditional ideologies about gendered "separate spheres" in society, which seek to relegate women back into the private sphere of domestic household affairs.[30] Besides, negative depictions of women who choose non-family-oriented career paths have also become common currency in mainstream media and even in state rhetoric.[31] Judging from recent developments, this tendency seems to be set to increase: in a meeting with the top members of the All-China Women's Federation in October 2023, Chinese president Xi Jinping spoke of the need to "actively foster a new type of marriage and childbearing culture" and the push for "supportive birth policies."[32] This conservative comeback is

26 Vanessa L. Fong, "China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 4 (2002): 1098–109; Ye Liu, "Women Rising as Half of the Sky? An Empirical Study on Women from the One-Child Generation and their Higher Education Participation in Contemporary China," *Higher Education* 74 (2017): 963–78.

27 Haoming Liu, "Economic Reforms and Gender Inequality in Urban China," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 59, no. 4 (2011): 839–76.

28 Xinyan Jiang, "The Dilemma Faced by Chinese Feminists," *Hypatia* 15, no. 3 (2000): 140–60.

29 Wang Zheng, "Feminist Struggles": 130–31.

30 Shengwei Sun and Feinian Chen, "Reprivatized Womanhood: Changes in Mainstream Media's Framing of Urban Women's Issues in China, 1995–2012," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 77, no. 5 (2015): 1091–107.

31 Arianne M. Gaetano, "The Chinese State, 'Reform and Opening,' and The Regulation of Women in Urbanizing China," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 47, no. 3–4 (2018): 301–29.

32 Xinhua She 新华社, "Xi Jinping zai tong Quanguo Fu Lian xin yi jie lingdao banzi chengyuan jiti tanhua shi qiangdiao: jianding bu yizou Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi funü fazhan daolu, zuzhi dongyuan guangda funü wei Zhongguoshi xiandaihua jianshe gongxian jinguo liliang 习近平在同全国妇

closely related to the reappraisal of tradition as a new source of political legitimacy, and to the emergence of New Confucianism as a legitimate intellectual trend with a certain degree of official support.

The situation of intellectuals and academics in the post-Mao period was also deeply affected by the economic reforms and their accompanying ideologies. The reinscription of the Maoist period exclusively under the labels of radicalism and feudalism led to the erasure of all gendered expression during those years. In the introduction to her anthology of Chinese women's writing between 1936 and 1976, Dooling observed that

> it is commonly suggested that the tumultuous mid-century decades all but stifled the nascent gendered expression nurtured by the previous generations and that only with the sweeping political reforms beginning in the late 1970s was such a tradition revived in women's literature. In other words, between the extraordinary bursts of female literary activity in the May Fourth and post-Mao eras is said to lie a long stretch of revolutionary history representing a protracted interlude in the project of writing women in modern China.[33]

The drive toward marketization also reached cultural institutions and organs that had heretofore benefitted from state patronage, especially after 1989, and so also affected the material conditions of intellectuals. The withdrawal of state funding confronted many intellectuals with market competition, and they were forced to adapt to market-oriented culture or to turn to entrepreneurship within or outside the intellectual sphere.[34] As far as I am aware, there has been no research so far on the effect that the withdrawal of state financial support had specifically upon women intellectuals; nevertheless, considering the previously mentioned conditions of disadvantage for women in the labor market, it is likely that women intellectuals were especially vulnerable to the economic liberalization of cultural and intellectual organizations.

In this situation of disaggregation, an occasion for women intellectuals to develop a collective sense and purpose arose when China for the first time hosted the World Conference on Women, the fourth edition of which took place in September 1995 in Beijing. The conference, organized under the auspices of the United Nations, brought together women intellectuals, scholars and activists from around the world, providing

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联新一届领导班子成员集体谈话时强调: 坚定不移走中国特色社会主义妇女发展道路 组织动员广大妇女为中国式现代化建设贡献巾帼力量 [Xi Jinping, in a group talk with members of the new leadership of the All-China Women's Federation, emphasized: unswervingly follow the path of socialist women's development with Chinese characteristics, organizing and mobilizing vast numbers of women to contribute to the construction of Chinese-style modernization with women's strength]," Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Zhongyang Renmin Zhengfu 中华人民共和国中央人民政府 (Website), 30.10.2023, https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202310/content_6912723.htm [accessed 18.12.2023].

33 Amy D. Dooling, *Writing Women in Modern China: The Revolutionary Years, 1936–1976* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): 1.

34 The standard work on the transformation of the intellectual sphere under market conditions is Merle Goldman and Edward Gu, eds., *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market* (London: Routledge, 2003).

a space for international exchanges of theoretical tools, practices and experiences. Among Chinese women intellectuals, the conference served as a catalyst to shape and develop a new awareness of their potential, and imbued them with a new kind of internationalism. The participation of world-wide non-governmental organizations had a special impact, as it uncovered forms of grassroots organization beyond officialdom and left an enduring mark on the first generation of post-Mao Chinese feminists.[35]

Education, especially tertiary education, is the main way to acquire the intellectual and social capital necessary for participating in the intellectual field. Imbalances are especially visible if we look at the numbers for teaching positions and research publications. For instance, an analysis of the number of women appointed as Changjiang scholars (the highest academic award conferred by the Chinese Ministry of Education within a program aimed at promoting domestic world-class scholars at Chinese higher education institutions) in the period 1998–2015 showed that of the total of 1957 award winners during those years, 1835 were men (94 percent), in comparison to only 122 women (6 percent).[36] More recently, a 2023 article offered a quantitative analysis of the gender structure of the humanities and social sciences in China. It found that male scholars represent 64.19 percent of all scholars in these academic disciplines, compared to 35.81 percent of female scholars. The same article also showed that female scholars obtain lower numbers in terms of articles published in key journals in the humanities and social sciences, with 30.92 percent of the articles authored by female scholars compared to 69.08 percent authored by male peers.[37]

However, the numbers of women enrolled in tertiary education in China in more recent years provide a positive outlook, with a parity index of 1.15 in 2022 (the number of female university students having surpassed that of male students since 2008).[38] Also, the proportion of Chinese women pursuing a postgraduate career in 2022 was higher than that of men.[39] Thus the situation of Chinese women in the academic field could be

35 Tong Xin 佟新, "Xiandangdai zhishi nüxing gongtongti de fazhan 现当代知识女性共同体的发展 [The Development of Modern and Contemporary Intellectual Women Collectives]," *Beijing Daxue Xuebao, zhexue shehui kexue ban* 北京大学学报, 哲学社会科学版 52, no. 5 (2015): 136–42.

36 Zheng Jianhong 郑剑虹, Liang Shuting 梁舒婷 and He Wuming 何吴明, "Changjiang xuezhe tepin jiaoshou qunti chengchang tedian ji yingxiang yinsu yanjiu 长江学者特聘教授群体成长特点及影响因素研究 [Study on the Growth Features and Influencing Factors of the Collective of Changjiang Scholars Distinguished Professors]," *Lingnan Shifan Daxue Xuebao* 岭南师范学院学报 42, no. 2 (2021): 28–36.

37 Lu Wanhui 逯万辉 and Tian Feng 田丰, "Wo guo renwenshehuikexue lingyu xuezhe xingbie jiegou yanjiu 我国人文社会科学领域学者性别结构研究 [Research on the Gender Structure of Scholars in Humanities and Social Sciences in China]," *Jiangsu Daxue Xuebao (Shehuikexue ban)* 江苏大学学报(社会科学版) 5 (2023): 113–24.

38 World Bank, "School Enrollment, Gender Parity Index," World Bank, 2022, https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/se-enr?education=Tertiary&year=2022 [accessed 20.07.2024].

39 According to official statistics, in 2022 the proportion of female postgraduate students in regular higher education institutions was 54.78 percent. Source: Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China, "2022 nian jiaoyu tongji shuju 2022 年教育统计数据 [2022 Statistics on Education]," Zhonghua

increasingly moving away from the pyramidal shape identified by Huang Yuanxi and Zhao Linjia in previous years, when women were gradually scarcer further up the academic career ladder, even in the passage from graduate to postgraduate.[40]

It is important to note here the social prejudices that women face in academia. For instance, women PhD holders tend to be seen as too "self-centered" and attentive to their own career paths in detriment of their prospects of marrying or staring a family, and they usually fall under the derogatory term *shengnü* (剩女), "leftover women."[41] Besides, the social pressure to conform to such expectations is at the same time incompatible with an academic career that increasingly follows the Euro-American, productivist "publish or perish" model, and the lack of policies that help to balance work and life forces women academics to choose between their family plans or their career.[42] In this regard, Chinese academia may appear in line with tendencies in other places of the globalized academic world, where the meritocratic academic system is presented as gender-neutral, and so does not take into consideration women's specific conditions, and reinforces their precarity in academia. Thus, despite seemingly equal access to education in contemporary China, women appear likely to pay a relatively higher price for access to higher education.[43] In sum, the combination of disadvantageous structural conditions and the pressure of social expectations and prejudices may act as inhibitors for women considering a career path as scholars.

3.2 Disregard and Co-Optation

The situation of women within the intellectual field of mainland China can be defined not only by their socio-economic predicaments, but also by their relative absence in comparison to men. I have specifically identified three mechanisms: the claims that women lack the capacity to fully engage in intellectual activities; the erasure of wom-

Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu 中华人民共和国教育部 (Website), http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/moe_560/2022/gedi/202401/t20240110_1099505.html [accessed 20.07.2024].

40 Huang Yuanxi 黄园淅 and Zhao Linjia 赵吝加, "Wo guo nüxing keyan renyuan fazhan xianzhuang, tiaozhan ji zhengci yanbian 我国女性科研人员发展现状、挑战及政策演变 [Development Status, Challenges and Policy Evolution of Female Researchers in China]," *Zhongguo Kexue Jijin* 中国科学基金 6 (2018): 622–28.

41 Leta H. Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China* (London: Zed Press, 2014).

42 Bingqin Li and Yang Shen, "Publication or Pregnancy? Employment Contracts and Childbearing of Women Academics in China," *Studies in Higher Education* 47 (2022): 875–87.

43 Mariya Ivancheva, Kathleen Lynch and Kathryn Keating, "Precarity, Gender and Care in the Neoliberal Academy," *Gender, Work, and Organization* 26, no. 4 (2019): 448–62; Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik and Aleksandra Boron, "Chinese Women in Society: Confucian Past, Ambiguous Emancipation and Access to Higher Education," *International Journal of Chinese Education* 12, no. 2 (2023): 6.

en's issues as legitimate and important questions for intellectual inquiry; and the co-optation of women's spaces of cultural expression and transgression by male agents.

Disregard for women as producers of knowledge can be found in very different geographical and historical contexts, up to and beyond modernity.[44] The capabilities of Chinese women intellectuals as knowledge producers are often called into question. Some prominent male intellectuals have gone so far as to consider them ontologically incapable of working in fields such as philosophy. Pang-White recounts an example of this attitude: in a public speech, the renowned male philosopher Zhou Guoping pointed to women's supposed incapacity for logical and rational thought. As is clearly visible in Zhou Guoping's case, these sexist claims are presented in paternalistic terms that allegedly seek to protect women's supposed nature, character and even physical beauty from the roughness of intellectual activity.[45]

A recent study by Horta and Tang on gender equality in Chinese academia interviewed forty tenure-track scholars at different career levels, and uncovered the prevalence of biases and prejudices among academics. For instance, the researchers found that some male academics, while recognizing the existence of gender imbalances, explained such imbalances in terms of social or biological factors. The researchers also mention the case of a female deputy dean who acknowledged her intuitive belief that men were more capable than women.[46]

Women intellectuals also have to face the trope of female "delicacy" and emotional sensitivity, which is seen as inimical to intellectual activity, even when they have already achieved a position as intellectuals, as in the case of Dai Jinhua (on whom I will focus below). In a recent interview, Dai explained that

> There are two sorts of criticisms that have accompanied me throughout my life: one which says that I am too feminized (*nüxinghua* 女性化); for instance, they consider my writing too emotional, too sentimental, for instance, they think my rhetoric is too strong and is not academic or rigorous enough. Another sort of criticism says the opposite, that my writing is not feminine enough because it is too rigorous, too logical and theoretical, and even that it lacks femininity.[47]

It is clear from Dai's words that academic and intellectual work is often regarded as a demanding activity that runs counter to the 'feminine' sensitivity with which women allegedly approach scholarly inquiries.

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44 For European contexts see Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000): chapter 1.

45 Ann A. Pang-White, "Introduction: Asian Traditions, Global Contexts: Philosophy, Women, and Gender in the 21st Century," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 49, no. 1 (2022): 5–8.

46 Hugo Horta and Li Tang, "Gender Inequality and Bias in Chinese Universities: Perceptions of Male and Female Academics," *Higher Education Research & Development* 42, no. 8 (2023): 1954–69.

47 Xin Jing Bao Shuping Zhoukan 新京报书评周刊, *Kaichang: Nüxing xuezhe fangtan* 开场: 女性学者访谈 [Opening: Interviews with Female Scholars] (Beijing: Xinxing Chubanshe 新星出版社, 2022): 107–8. My translation.

In the post-Mao period, the disregard for women as intellectual actors has also been accompanied by the erasure of women's issues as a legitimate object of intellectual inquiry in reform-era and early twenty-first century China. As previously mentioned, the question of women's position and their plight in society was a central issue in discourses on China's modernization from the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries. Among the issues of concern for key thinkers of the Late Qing and Republican periods, such as Liang Qichao, was the need for women to become a full part of the new Chinese nation-state that was being reconfigured at that time. This preoccupation with the fate of women was kept alive well into China's tumultuous twentieth century. As Hershatter wrote, "liberating women from oppression was an integral part of liberating the nation from weakness and therefore an important way in which revolutionaries justified their claim to power."[48]

However, after the end of the Maoist period, in the new era of economic reforms and opening up, the question of women was gradually sidelined and disappeared from the forefront of intellectual discourse. Wesoky offers a detailed account of how women's issues lost their visibility in the intellectual politics of the reform era. She described how prominent Chinese intellectuals dropped those questions from their considerations on modernity in China, and how these thinkers "envision the future(s) of Chinese modernity in markedly androcentric terms," while gender issues and gender equality seem to be secondary or trivial questions for many Chinese thinkers, derivative of western political concerns.[49] Citing as examples two of the most internationally prominent Chinese scholars, Wang Hui (汪晖) and Zhao Tingyang (赵汀阳), she points to the fact that their focus is on macroscopic questions of national construction. Gender imbalances or the quest for gender justice are absent from both Wang's quest for a Chinese modernity as an alternative to western capitalist modernity, and from Zhao's alternative foundation for world politics. This neglect of gender as a social factor has become prevalent precisely in a context where, as I mentioned above, economic reforms had a negative impact on women's status, leading to unequal access to employment and unequal income distribution between men and women. This erasure is even more intriguing as it is being inflicted by thinkers who claim to reassess policies of the socialist period (when the question of women was prominent), even as some women thinkers attempt to recuperate Marxism as a critical tool for the present. Indeed, the sidelining of women's problems during the reform period has not prevented women scholars and intellectuals from developing a range of feminist critiques grounded in their own reality.[50]

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48 Gail Hershatter, "State of the Field: Women in China's Long Twentieth Century," *Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 4 (2004): 1029.

49 Sharon R. Wesoky, "Bringing the Jia Back into Guojia: Engendering Chinese Intellectual Politics," *Signs* 40, no. 3 (2015): 655.

50 See, for instance, Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). For a wide-ranging account, see Hershatter, "State of the Field."

Finally, it is interesting to note another way in which the absence of Chinese women intellectuals is articulated: The co-optation of spaces of female expression by men. Dai Jinhua explains that the (re)construction of a patriarchal culture in mainland China since the 1980s implied that women were "transcribed as objects of male desires, actions, and values" rather than subjects.[51] It was in the 1990s that Chinese women began to carve out a cultural space of their own by subverting the patriarchal order and expressing their desires, bodies and selves in their writings. This expression of female subjectivity has been especially abundant in the writing of fiction. However, as Dai notes, the increasing commercialization of culture during the same period led male publishers and critics to try to take over and co-opt these female spaces for male voyeuristic consumption.[52] Perhaps the most obvious example of this was the phenomenon of "body writing" (*shenti xiezuo* 身体写作) or "beauty writers" (*meinü zuojia* 美女作家), a form of semi-autobiographical fiction by young Chinese women that erupted in the late 1990s. Praised by some feminist scholars for their gendered exploration of privacy, these writers and their work, however, became a commercial phenomenon in which male publishers and the reactions of male readers were far from these feminist concerns.[53] It is also interesting to note that literature seems to have played a more important role in gender consciousness than other forms of cultural production in 1990s and 2000s China, which may raise questions about women's access to and visibility in other forms of intellectual production.

In the final section below, I will look at the case of Dai Jinhua, a scholar and public intellectual whose work has been the object of comparatively sustained attention in Anglophone contexts. As I explained in the introduction, her exceptional case is useful for observing why and how the absence of women intellectuals can be countered, and for imagining ways to make their work visible in circulation.

4 Translation as a Mode of Visibilization

The absence of Chinese women intellectuals as producers of knowledge, of women's issues as an object of knowledge, and the co-optation of women's cultural productions is also reflected in the conditions of the circulation of their work beyond China, visible in the comparative scarcity of works by Chinese women intellectuals translated into English, as I observed in the introduction.

51 Dai Jinhua, "Rewriting Women: Writing Gender and Cultural Space in the 1980s and 1990s," in *On China's Cultural Transformation*, ed. Yu Keping (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 242.

52 Dai Jinhua, "Rewriting Women": 248–49.

53 Hui Wu, "Post-Mao Chinese Literary Women's Rhetoric Revisited: A Case for an Enlightened Feminist Rhetorical Theory," *College English* 72, no. 4 (2010): 415–16.

However, we find a rather exceptional case in the fields of the humanities and social sciences in Dai Jinhua (戴锦华), born in Shandong in 1959, a female scholar based at Peking University's School of Comparative Literature and Culture who specializes in cultural studies. Her main focus is cinema studies, to which she applies a feminist perspective. In all these areas – cultural studies, cinema studies, and feminist theory – she is considered a pioneering scholar in mainland China who has published many academic books and articles in China and other Chinese-speaking regions, and who has also translated works of film theory into Chinese. She is an eminent cultural critic and public intellectual in her country, famous for her candid and often playful takes on all kinds of social issues both domestic and international. Videos of her public interventions are frequently published and circulated on Chinese social platforms, where they reach large audiences, especially among young viewers. In 2016, she received the "Charming Chinese" award of *Nanfang Renwu Zhoukan* (南方人物周刊), one of China's most important weekly magazines.[54] Her works have been translated into English, French, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Catalan, Arabic, Italian, and other languages. English translations of her essays have appeared in a number of academic publications related to cultural and area studies, such as *Boundary 2*, *Positions* or *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*. As a reflection of her standing in the international academic field, she boasts three single-authored English volumes and one volume co-authored with Meng Yue (孟悦), all of them dealing with film critique and feminist and social theory applied to Chinese cultural production.[55]

In this section, I will look at the socio-intellectual dynamics and agencies that drove the translation and circulation of Dai Jinhua's first book in English. It should be noted that translation into English has a special status, as translations into this language tend to act as catalysts for translations into other languages. This was indeed the case with the first translations of Dai's essays into French and Spanish, which were based on earlier English translations published by the journal *Asian Exchange* in 2003.[56] This case is also indicative of the dominant position of English as a lingua franca in international intellectual and academic circulations, as analyzed in detail by Herrad in her reflection in this volume.

The comparative visibility of Dai Jinhua's work in English translation in contrast to the usual absence of Chinese women scholars and intellectuals raises the question of why her academic production has been the object of such sustained attention for the

54 It should be noted that in the case of Dai Jinhua, recognition outside the academic field came many years after her work began to be translated into English.

55 Dai Jinhua, *Cinema and Desire: Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Work of Dai Jinhua*, ed. Jin Wang and Tani E. Barlow (London: Verso, 2002). Dai Jinhua, *After the Post-Cold War: The Future of Chinese History*, ed. Lisa Rofel (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018). Dai Jinhua, *Chinese Cinema Culture: A Scene in the Fog* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019). Meng Yue and Dai Jinhua, *Emerging from the Horizon of History: Modern Chinese Women's Literature, 1917–1949* (Singapore: Springer, 2023).

56 Lau and Huang, "China Reflected."

Anglophone context since at least the late 1990s. A closer look at the background and intellectual trajectory of Dai Jinhua, as well as of other participants in the translation of her work, may help illuminate this issue. It will also highlight how social factors such as interpersonal, intellectual and ideological affinities play a key role in the transnational visibility and the circulation of the works of intellectuals even when they are originally from a non-hegemonic context or work in the peripheries of the intellectual field.

Dai Jinhua belongs to the first generation that was able to resume higher education at Chinese universities in 1978, after the Cultural Revolution. She graduated at Peking University, and was a professor in film theory at the Beijing Film Academy during the "cultural fever" that swept Beijing and other Chinese cities throughout the 1980s, a period of intellectual and literary ferment that bloomed in reaction to the limitations of the previous decade. That period ended tragically with the June 1989 protests. These events led her to give up an opportunity to pursue a doctorate at a US university, and stay in China instead.[57] In 1993, she moved back to Peking University as a faculty member of the School of Comparative Literature and Culture, where she is still teaching today.

One of the main vectors of Dai Jinhua's scholarly work is feminism. She was one of the pioneers in introducing feminism to Chinese academia in the post-Mao era, and one of the first to apply feminist theory to cultural analysis. Dai Jinhua has been especially vocal about the marginalization of women's issues – and of women intellectuals like herself – in China, reclaiming their voices in the face of male intellectuals who went so far in their self-assurance as to question the legitimacy of female intellectuals to speak on women's issues. In an interview published in 2018, in which she spoke about the introduction of feminist theories in China during the 1980s, Dai Jinhua recalled that "[a]ll the way until the 1995 UN Women's Conference [held in Beijing], men said women were not strong enough to do this introduction of theory."[58]

Another important vector in her work is her strong interest in issues related to socio-economic imbalances. Throughout her career, Dai Jinhua has been interested in and committed to the realities of China's rural areas and the Global South. She has been invited to scholarly institutions on all continents and is an active member of transnational networks of South-South intellectual exchange.

Dai Jinhua's attention to women's rights and her public stance on social and economic asymmetries in the global context and within China have earned her the label of an intellectual of the New Left. She expressed open criticism of mainstream liberal intellectuals for contributing to and supporting the depoliticization of society and culture, and the drive for consumerism. This political positioning made her an object of interest for US scholars in similar political and intellectual coordinates, as I shall explain.

Dai Jinhua's CV includes a considerable number of residences as an invited or visiting scholar at international universities and institutions in recent decades. When

57 Dai Jinhua, *Cinema and Desire*: 264–65.

58 Dai Jinhua, *After the Post-Cold War*: 161–62.

Dai began working as a scholar and university professor in the 1980s, international academic exchange was very rare and difficult for mainland Chinese scholars of that generation. It was in 1993 that she participated in a first academic meeting about cultural studies in Hong Kong, which at that time was still under British rule and acted as a hub for intellectual and academic exchanges between mainland China and Euro-American scholars. In that meeting, she encountered Lau Kin Chi from Lingnan University who, like Dai, was also a professor of cultural studies and an active member of activist South-South initiatives, such as the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA). Lau suggested that Dai Jinhua's work should be translated into English and set out to contact Anglophone academic publishers.[59]

In 1995, Dai Jinhua went to the US for the first time as a visiting scholar, where she came into contact with academics working in the field of Chinese studies. One of them was Jing Wang (1950–2021), professor of cultural studies at Duke University (and, after 2001, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), deeply involved in activism and social justice initiatives, who was the driving force behind the idea of translating and publishing Dai's essays. The project proposal was presented to the publisher Verso, which agreed to publish it, although it took several years for the book finally to appear: The result was *Cinema and Desire: Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Work of Dai Jinhua*, jointly edited by Jing Wang and Tani E. Barlow and published in 2002. Barlow, a historian and a key figure in the intersection of modern Chinese history and women's studies, who was working at the University of Washington at the time, was brought into the project by Wang. Barlow was also the senior editor of *Positions,* a journal of Asian studies founded in 1993 which advanced ideas that many area studies scholars of the post-Cold War era wanted to promote. They included moving away from regarding Asian contexts as mere objects of study, and instead engaging Asian authors as contemporary interlocutors and highlighting the theoretical implications of their writings, as the journal's Statement of Purpose declared: "In seeking to explore how theoretical practices are linked across national and ethnic divides, we hope to construct other positions from which to imagine political affinities across the many dimensions of our differences."[60] The members of the editorial board felt that Asia should be shown as a place that produced its own theories and political practices:

> East Asia scholarship faced a crisis because collapse of the old Cold War dualism meant it became difficult to ground progressive politics in actually existing state policies or institutions. And this fact needs to be underlined because it helps to explain the mission that the initial *positions* group took so seriously.[61]

59 Personal interview with Dai Jinhua, Beijing, 23.08.2016.

60 Positions Editorial Collective, "Statement of Purpose," *Positions* 1, no. 1 (1993): back cover.

61 Rebecca Karl, Tom Lamarre, Claudia Pozzana, Alessandro Russo, Naoki Sakai, Jesook Song and Angela Zito, "A Relentlessly Productive Venue: Interview with Senior Editor, Tani Barlow," *Positions* 20, no. 1 (2012): 350.

There was a widespread view among left-leaning area studies scholars that the time had come to seek collaborations with scholars, critics and activists from different places. It was this particular intellectual and political environment that enabled the works of several Asian intellectuals to be translated and published in English in the 1990s. Dai Jinhua was one of the first of this new wave of Asian intellectual voices.

The political and intellectual affinities between Dai and her editors were clear in that first initiative. That ideological underpinning was also visible in the fact that the book was published by Verso, the imprint of *The New Left Review*, one of the leading publications of left-wing intellectual politics in the Anglophone world. When *The New Left Review* was relaunched in the early 2000s and Perry Anderson returned as editor of the journal and its imprint, the project was decicively taken forward. Anderson's arrival meant an increased editorial interest in what non-western intellectuals had to say about the discontents of globalization. *The New Left Review* and Verso seemed especially interested in finding leftist voices in mainland China that were not echoes of Chinese officialdom and that could offer critical views on the economic and social reforms. Again, the subject matter of Dai Jinhua's texts, with her overt critique of consumerism, nationalism, the erasure of social class as an analytical category, and gender disparities offered precisely what the publisher was looking for from China.

As mentioned earlier, translation as a socially embedded practice of knowledge production and circulation entails a set of mechanisms that seek to reposition the translated author or work vis-à-vis the socio-intellectual conditions of the target context, so that the translated work and the ideas it contains can be meaningfully incorporated into it. The first of these mechanisms is the selection of the essays to be included. *Cinema and Desire* has no counterpart in the original Chinese, and the essays were collected specifically for the English edition, including papers that relate cinema to postcolonialism, nationalism, gender, and consumerism.

The subtitle of the book, *Feminist Marxism and Cultural Politics in the Work of Dai Jinhua*, also implies a clear positioning of the text and the author within the intellectual politics of the target context, intended to appeal to the publisher's intended readership. The labels "Marxist" and "feminist" as applied to the author and her work are also prominent in paratextual materials of the book, such as the introduction:

> This brief introduction locates Dai Jinhua's unique, radical position in Marxism, feminism, and cultural studies. Dai aligns herself with the New Left, which, in 1990s China, consists of a small handful of cultural elites who insist on recalling Mao's Cultural Revolution as an abortive utopia produced by a collective vision and not as simply an episode of arbitrary violence attributable to the whims of one dictator. In its search for this lost ideal, the New Left is critical of both the Chinese state and the new mainstream liberal intellectuals, arguing that they collude to intensify the privatization of the Chinese economy and to depoliticize culture.[62]

62 Jing Wang and Tani E. Barlow, "Introduction," in Dai Jinhua, *Cinema and Desire*: 1.

The use of these kinds of labels often signals the divergences between the intellectual politics of the source and the target contexts, and they can be used to classify and display certain connotations for the target audience.[63] When the translated author is alive, labels can be the product of a discussion between the author and the editors or publishers. In the case of this book, the title was the subject of a debate with the editors, as Dai Jinhua recalls:

> I remember we had some discussion at the time about the title of the book. Tani Barlow was prone to think that I was a Marxist feminist, but I didn't want to use that term because in China it's very much like official feminism. But she insisted on it, so it ended up being "feminist Marxist." So, it's like there was some discussion about this.[64]

The use of the term "New Left" was also problematic for the author, as its connotations corresponded to very different intellectual politics in each context. Dai Jinhua explains that

> [. . .] if I had a choice, I probably wouldn't choose it. For two reasons: one reason is that leftism was a dirty word in China until the beginning of the twenty-first century, a *dirty word* [in English] really, because it was linked to the whole history of contemporary China, so I really didn't like being what the so-called leftists are. Because actually in the 1980s we preferred to be right-wing, but our whole understanding of right-wing at that time was as anti-establishment, anti-official criticism, because at that time we were in a completely closed Chinese context. The other reason why I would not have chosen "New Left" if I had been allowed to do so was because I thought that "New Left" was a European reality of the 1950s. I said, "I want to know, after half a century, what does 'New Left' mean? It's new for whom?"[65]

Finally, the repositioning of Dai Jinhua's work by the editors is also visible in the connections and comparisons they draw between Dai Jinhua and well-known intellectual references of the Anglophone context, such as when they point out that "Dai Jinhua's profile as a public intellectual is similar to that of Susan Sontag, while her commitment to cinema studies corresponds to that of Laura Mulvey and the Marxist feminists who coalesced around the British journal *Cinema*."[66] Importantly, the editors take care not to present Dai Jinhua's work as merely derivative of Euro-American references, as when they explain that "Dai pays homage to Raymond Williams's pioneering intervention in cultural criticism, and, in our view, displaces the increasingly reified meaning of cultural studies – a marketing category for university presses – current in Western academic life today."[67] There is, therefore, a willingness to highlight the value of her work as a disruptive intervention on certain well-established

63 Louis Pinto, "(Re)traductions. Phénoménologie et 'philosophie allemande' dans les années 1930," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 5, no. 145 (2002): 21.

64 Personal interview with Dai Jinhua.

65 Personal interview with Dai Jinhua.

66 Wang and Barlow, "Introduction": 4.

67 Wang and Barlow, "Introduction": 5.

modes of thinking in the Anglophone context. The potential of translation as a socially embedded practice to act upon well-established corpora of knowledge (with all the weight of their historical legacies) is perhaps most visible in this kind of intervention in which the translated knowledge is explicitly connected to concrete sets of problematics recognizable for the target readership.

5 Concluding Remarks: Translation and Other Forms of In/Visibilization

Chinese women intellectuals and Chinese works written by women in the humanities and social sciences have comparatively low visibility in translation. I have delved into the conditions of women in China's academic and intellectual field and pointed to three aspects that may bear upon their invisibility: The disregard for Chinese women intellectuals as knowledge producers and for women's issues as objects of knowledge, as well as the co-optation of women's writing by (mostly male) commercial interests, as in the case of personal memoirs.

I offered an analysis of a case in which the works of a Chinese female intellectual, Dai Jinhua, acquired effective visibility beyond China despite those conditions. Dai's case illustrates how translation can act as a tool to break away from the conditions of invisibility, and to make previously absent and unavailable knowledge and ideas circulate beyond their contexts of origin. It also illuminates the social nature of knowledge production and circulation, and the importance of social networks of interpersonal, ideological and intellectual affinities in explaining why and how knowledge and ideas circulate. It also offers insights into the strategies that may lead from invisibility to visibility of women intellectuals, and how translation acts as a tool for visibilization and the opening of intellectual canons.

Nevertheless, circulation opens up new layers and, *even after translation*, an author and her or his work can still be subject to other forms of invisibilization or concealment. In the case of non-Euro-American authors, their work may remain circumscribed to a specialist readership, most often within the field of area studies. Considering that translation is usually partial and that translation initiatives entail first and foremost an act of selection, another possibility is that editors or publishers choose to translate a particular section of a work or only a specific part of an author's production. For instance, in the case of women intellectuals, it would be worth noting whether their texts chosen for translation tend to focus on issues of feminism. These subtle forms of what I call "disciplinary and thematic concealment" can unwillingly lead to the reinforcement of the historical divisions of intellectual labor and the perception of these authors as producers of forms of knowledge that are mostly derivative of Euro-American theories

and analyses.[68] In that regard, the history of knowledge circulation must also be attentive to the new dynamics generated by translation, rather than seeing them as a final destination.[69]

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Emma Kalb

In and Out of Sight: Textual Traces of Slavery and the Enslaved in Mughal South Asia

This chapter will consider the many layers of erasure of slavery and enslaved people in Mughal South Asia, with a focus on Persian-language narrative sources produced between 1556 and 1707. Recent scholarship has commented upon the historical tendency of Mughal historiography to overwhelmingly concentrate on either ruling elites and their activities or else imperial institutions.[1] While this bias is in part a function of the forms and subjects of history-writing that have been most popular, it is also rooted in the archives and other forms of evidence available to and employed by researchers, which were generally produced by and for elites. This article considers the presence as well as the absence of enslaved people in these elite texts, making use of the incomplete nature of this process – unfolding differently with respect to different forms and spaces of enslavement – to closely examine the various mechanisms for invisibilization. The modern researcher is only able to track processes of invisibilization because such processes are always unfinished or partial – and as a result enslaved figures are sometimes made visible (albeit at times faintly or inconsistently) in the available materials. This paper will draw on such extant traces of enslaved individuals in Mughal narrative sources to probe what they do not record, what they leave silent, or only hint at. Thinking with such moments of visibility, I will consider how other information is obscured and invisibilized.

Slavery of course has a much longer history in South Asia prior to the early modern period, as has been discussed elsewhere.[2] During the Mughal period, evidence points to widespread female domestic slavery and eunuch slavery. There are references to non-

1 See for instance Anna Kollatz, "Where is 'the audience'? Who is 'the audience'? Approaching Mughal spaces of social interaction," in *The Ceremonial of Audience*, ed. Eva Orthmann and Anna Kollatz (Göttingen: V&R Uni Press, 2019): 113–11; Abhishek Kaicker, *The King and the People: Sovereignty and Popular Politics in Mughal Delhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 1–2; and Pratyay Nath, "War and the Non-Elite: Towards a People's History of the Mughal Empire," *The Medieval History Journal* 25, no. 1 (2022): 129–36. Flatt has made this argument for medieval and early modern South Asian history as a whole: Emma Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates: Living Well in the Persian Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019): 10–12. This tendency is now being countered by a burgeoning body of scholarship on non-elite figures, some of which will be cited in the following pages.

2 For an overview of slavery in South Asia, from ancient to modern times, see Indrani Chatterjee and Richard Eaton, eds., *Slavery and South Asian History* (Bloomington: Bloomington University Press, 2006). For more recent work on the medieval period, see Leslie Orr, "Slavery and Dependency in Southern India," *Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 2, *AD 500–1420* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni-

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castrated enslaved men and military slaves as well, evidencing the existence of these practices albeit not in the systematic way seen elsewhere.[3] In addition to the larger numbers of enslaved servants (including both enslaved women and eunuchs) within the most elite households, they were also present in more modest households.[4] Enslaved children would have been included among these.[5] Unfortunately, very little data is available in terms of the gross numbers of enslaved individuals present in the imperial or in any other household.[6] While such numbers are lacking, South Asia was in this period both a source of slaves for export and domestic markets, as well as the recipient of enslaved individuals trafficked in from other regions.[7] Thus sources of the period contain references to enslaved individuals identified as being of Indian (*hindū*) origin,

versity Press, 2021): 313–34; Donald R. Davis Jr., "Slaves and Slavery in the *Smṛticandrikā*," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 57, no. 3 (2020): 299–326.

3 Unlike contemporary Islamicate polities such as the Ottomans, Safavids, and Deccani Sultanates, as well as their predecessors in North India, the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals did not practice large-scale military slavery. However, the example of Tahmās Khān 'Miskīn' (discussed below) suggests that enslaved men may have been present in armies of the period, albeit in a more informal manner. For a broad overview, see Jane Hathaway, "Mamlūk," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 3, ed. Kate Fleet et. al (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

4 Shireen Moosvi, "The World of Labour in Mughal India," *International Review of Social History* 56 (2011): 251. This is echoed in the prior period, where we see more modest individuals possessing slaves. Irfan Habib, "Northern India Under the Sultanate," in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 1, *1200–1750*, ed. Dharma Kumar and Tapan Raychaudhuri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 90.

5 For articles on eighteenth century enslaved childhoods in a Mughal successor state, which may provide insight into possibilities for the earlier period, see the discussion of the *Tahmāsnāma* (below) as well as Jessica Hinchy, "Enslaved Childhoods in Eighteenth-Century Awadh," *South Asian History and Culture* 6, no. 3 (2015): 380–400.

6 European sources suggest anywhere between thirty and four hundred slaves attached to the harems of elite households alone. Tapan Raychaudhuri, "Non-Agricultural Production: Mughal India," *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 1, *1200–1750*, ed. Dharma Kumar and Tapan Raychaudhuri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 267. Evidence is more sparse from the Persian sources. The one exception is perhaps accounts of a Mughal noble named Sa'īd Khān Chaghtā possessing 1,200 eunuchs in this period. This is recounted as a curiosity, so certainly does not represent the norm; it is also likely that this number is an exaggeration. Samsām al-Daula Shāhnawāz Khān, *Ma'āsir al Umarā*' (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1888–1891): 403–8; Shaikh Farīd Bhakkarī, *Zakhīrat al-Khawānīn* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961–1974): 190 onwards. See also accounts from the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) of tens of thousands of slaves present in the household of the Sultan. Habib, "Northern India under the Sultanate": 90.

7 Gavin Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 1 (1974): 125–30; Shadab Bano, "Slave Markets in Medieval India," *Proceedings of the Indian History Conference* 61 (2000): 365–73; Shadab Bano, "Slave Acquisition in the Mughal Empire," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 62 (2001): 317–24; Scott Levi, "Hindus Beyond the Hindu Kush: Indians in the Central Asian Slave Trade," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12, no. 3 (2002): 277–88.

as well as ethnicities including northeast African (*habashī*), Turkish (*turkī*), eastern Mongol (*qalmāq*), Circassian (*charkas*), Georgian (*gurjī*) and Russian (*urūs*).[8]

From the moment the researcher comes into contact with the Mughal archive, they are confronted with materials that tend to obscure lower-ranking figures in general, and enslaved individuals in particular. This is especially true of the court chronicles that form the backbone of Mughal historiography, which despite great variation across this period are united in their centering around the figure of the emperor and his closest associates.[9] The logic of these narrative sources themselves – serving to commemorate "great men," and occasionally their rivals – as well as the particular trajectory of conversations about the social practice of slavery in this period work together in a way that invisibilizes enslaved people and other low-status dependents. Katherine Schofield has discussed this problem with respect to what she dubs the "courtesan tale," referring to the form in which information about courtesans most often appears in Mughal chronicles. In examining these textual traces, Schofield argues that narrative conventions make it impossible to assess their truth value, and that these stories in fact tell us more about the cultural values of the elite male protagonists of such cautionary tales, which the courtesan enters as part of the construction of a particular, tragic narrative arc. In this way, Schofield underlines the caution and skepticism with which the historian has to approach sources that would seem to provide us with detailed information about real women.[10] Chatterjee sounds a similar note of caution in her description of the challenges of writing histories of premodern slavery and particularly of the deep imprint primary sources bear of "the ideologies of non-slaves [. . .] and their expectations of their own slaves." In doing so she under-

8 See for instance Abū al-Fazl, *Akbarnāma* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1876–1887): 3.646; Mu'tamad Khān, *Iqbālnāma-yi Jahāngīrī* (Calcutta: College Press, 1865): 8, 193, 266, 284 and 297; 'Abd al-Hamīd Lāhorī, *Pādshāhnāma* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867–1868): 1.473 and 2.193; Nūr al-Dīn Muhammad Jahāngīr, *Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī* (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore, 1863): 1.81; Bakhtāwar Khān, *Mir'āt al-'Ālam* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1979): 227. Also see reference to 1,500 *qalmāq*, *habashī*, and *turkī* slaves being posted to defend a fort during the war of succession between Shāh Jahān's sons (1657–1659), Ishwardās Nāgar, *Futūhāt-i 'Ālamgīrī* (British Library, Add. 23884): f. 28. Despite the clear ethnic diversity of enslaved people in Mughal South Asia, this subject still awaits substantial investigation.

9 As Alam and Subrahmanyam put it, "The Mughals have truly cast a long shadow on Indian historiography, from the time they themselves began to patronize major works of history, largely in Persian, in the sixteenth century [. . .]. These texts have long formed the central basis for an understanding of the Mughals." Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction: The Old and the New in Mughal Historiography," *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012): 1.

10 Katherine Butler Schofield, "The Courtesan Tale: Female Musicians and Dancers in Mughal Historical Chronicles, c. 1556–1748," *Gender and History* 24, no. 1 (2012): 152.

lines how sources may tell modern readers more about the viewpoints and values of the authors than the thoughts and lived experiences of enslaved people.[11]

In other words, elite texts do not simply exclude enslaved figures because they do not matter – the various forms of inclusion and exclusion we see are shaped by the logic of the texts and their broader social and cultural contexts. The sparseness and unevenness of reference to enslaved individuals in this period, despite their pervasive presence in elite households, can be considered in relation to a range of different causes. The following pages will highlight two approaches to tracking processes of invisibilization in narrative historical sources. First, the chapter will discuss the many ways in which it is often difficult to identify the enslaved in the Mughal archive in the first place, due to the ambiguous language around slavery as well as the tendency to exclude direct reference to slavery altogether. This phenomenon may have been intensified by attempts to ban or at least limit slavery during this period. Second, it will explore how invisibilization works differently with respect to lower-status versus "elite" slaves, as lower-status enslaved individuals appear in a limited capacity, generally as a part of larger narratives around imperial power and dynastic stability, while elite slaves appear as seemingly fully-fleshed-out individuals. The chapter will conclude by considering how the process of invisibilization is nevertheless present in representations of enslaved members of the elite. Accounts of and by elite slaves on the one hand tend in and of themselves to minimize the importance or entirely exclude the enslaved status of their subjects. But they also cumulatively leave behind a distorted perception of the norm, through over-representing the elite and under-representing the most typical examples and experiences.

1 The Problem of Language

We should begin with the challenges posed by language and terminology, which shape how enslaved people are referred to in Mughal textual materials. Here a distinction needs to be made between the technical, extremely clear language used in extant Mughal legal documents and formularies for sales deeds and manumission letters to define enslaved status, and the much more ambiguous language used in the narrative sources that are the focus of this contribution.[12] While both are written in

11 Indrani Chatterjee, "Renewed and Connected Histories: Slavery and the Historiography of South Asia," in *Slavery and South Asian History*: 28.

12 There has been a relative neglect of documents in Mughal historiography, even as they exist in large numbers in institutional repositories such as the Telengana State Archives and the National Archives in Delhi. Recent work has begun to remedy this lack. See for instance Subah Dayal, "Making the 'Mughal' Soldier," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62, no. 5–6 (2019): 866–67. Model documents for the above-mentioned sales deeds and manumission letters can also be found in legal formularies such as *Munshāt-i Namakīn* (1598) and *Inshā'-yi Harkaran* (c. 1645).

the Persian language, they operate in markedly different registers. Model documents recording financial transactions or changes in ownership by definition need to be precise and explicit, sharply delineating in Arabic-derived technical vocabulary who is owner (*mālik*) and who is owned (*mamlūk*), who is manumitter (*mu'tiq*) and who is manumittee (*mu'taq*), as well as the rights (*haqūq*) derived from slavery (*bandagī*) in distinction from those from clientage (*walā'*).[13] These texts, composed in a codified legal register, evoke a world where positions, rights, and obligations are clear-cut, and where any disputes can be settled formally.[14]

In contrast, this is not generally the case when it comes to the narrative sources which are the foundation of Mughal history and the focus of this chapter. In these texts, even when contextual clues inform the reader that the individual being discussed may be enslaved, it can be hard to discern whether this is really the case. This ambiguity is not unique to the Mughal context: a similar phenomenon has been widely remarked upon in the broader scholarship on slavery in medieval and early modern South Asia, which has repeatedly underlined a tendency towards elliptical and evasive language with regards to enslaved people, where terms utilized to label relations of asymmetrical dependency and slavery intersect with broader terminology of service, discipleship, and kinship.[15] The Mughal emperor Akbar dubbing slaves *chela* (disciple) fits into a much broader phenomenon of teacher-student (*guru-chela*) relations overlapping (at least in their terminology) with master-slave relations.[16] As Rizvi has emphasized, this blurriness has also posed a problem with respect to attempts to analyze non-enslaved domestic service during this period as well.[17]

Working alongside this rhetorical avoidance of acknowledging the presence of the enslaved is a parallel phenomenon: the pervasive use of the metaphorical language of slavery to describe the loyalty and service of elite men. Thus terms that unambiguously mean slave, such as *ghulām* or *banda*, came to be used by men who are

13 *Munshāt-i Namakīn*, ed. Ishtiyaq Ahmad Zilli, *The Mughal State and Culture 1556–1598* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007): 336–37.

14 The *Munshāt* includes two documents relating to disputes over enslaved status: one which is settled by reconciliation (*sulh*) and the other which provide guidelines for how such a matter should be investigated and resolved by means of calling on witness testimony. *Munshāt:* 366.

15 For the Mughal case, see for instance Shivangini Tandon, "Elite Households and Domestic Servants: Early Modern Through Biographical Narratives," in *Servants' Pasts*, vol. 1, ed. Nitin Sinha, Nitin Varma and Pankaj Jha (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2019): 157–58. For comparative contexts in South Asia, see for example Daud Ali, "War, Servitude and the Imperial Household: A Study of Palace Women in the Chola Empire," in *Slavery and South Asian History:* 46; Sumit Guha, "Slavery, Society, and the State in Western India, 1700–1800," in *Slavery and South Asian History*: 164.

16 Jessica Hinchy, "Between Slave and Disciple in South Asia," in *Slavery and Bonded Labor in Asia, 1250–1900,* ed. Richard B. Allen (Leiden: Brill, 2022): 49–76; Vijay Pinch, "Gosain Tawaif: Slaves, Sex, and Ascetics in Rasdhan, c. 1800–1857," *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 3 (2004): 567–68.

17 M. Sajjad Alam Rizvi, "Domestic Service in Mughal South Asia: An Intertextual Study," in *Servants' Pasts*, vol. 1: 106–11.

very clearly not slaves to express their devotion to the emperor. As a result, it is the norm in Mughal texts to refer to free nobles as *bandagān-i dargāh* ("slaves of the court").[18] Occasionally this linguistic overlap was invoked by enslaved individuals themselves, to claim their own respectability or assert their devotion to the emperor.[19]

The combination of the elastic usage of the language of slavery, and its sometimes-positive metaphorical valence, seems quite different from the legal documents discussed above. Combined with the possibilities for negotiation and even significant social mobility for at least the most elite among the enslaved (on which more below), does this indicate that in practice enslaved status was not materially significant, in and of itself? The material from the Mughal case suggests the answer to this question is negative, for at least two reasons. First, one should not over-estimate the fluidity of categories. As Sunil Kumar has noted, while the utilization of terms such as slave or servant in many premodern sources may seem flexible to modern eyes, this would not have been the case to contemporaries. In their historical contexts, the meaning of such terms would have been "crystal clear" and "inferred contextually," since "as a part of a lived experience of service, participants were well aware of their precise location in a range of stratified interpersonal relationships."[20] This is a point similarly underlined by Rizvi, who argues for being attentive to moments in the sources where the very real (if sometimes rhetorically blurred) distinctions between categories such as slave and servant come into focus.[21] The limits to thinking in terms of flexibility or fluidity, and the real distinctions between metaphorical language and juridical status, are of course underlined by moments where the enslaved are specifically identified. While in slave sale and manumission documents, enslaved or freed status is explicitly stated, in narrative sources this is rarely the case.

This brings us to the second point: that not only is enslaved status a significant thing, but that furthermore it also carries negative connotations. For the rare yet extant explicit references to enslaved status, through the use of expressions such as *ghulām-i zar-kharīda* (lit.: "gold-bought slave") or *banda-yi bai'-zada* ("sold slave"), only occur in situations where this is framed as a flaw or mark of inferiority. We encounter such references in moments when an elite slave is being "put in their place," reminded of their purchased status and thus their lesser stature regardless of wealth

18 John Richards, "Norms of Comportment Among Imperial Mughal Officers," in *Moral Conduct and Authority*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 264.

19 For instance, in the eighteenth century one history reports that when the noble 'Umdat al-Mulk came into conflict with the eunuch Roz Afzūn Khān and asked how slaves can dare to have such temerity (*jasārat*) in court, Roz Afzūn Khān responded by saying, "Yes we are slaves, slaves of the emperor, not of anyone else." Ghulām Husain Khān Tabātabā'ī, *Sīyar al-Muta'akhkhirīn* (British Library, Add. 6577): 134b.

20 Sunil Kumar, "Theorising Service with Honour: Medieval and Early Modern (1300–1700) Responses to Servile Labour," in *Servants' Pasts*, vol. 1: 227.

21 Rizvi, "Domestic Service in Mughal South Asia": 111.

and connections.[22] We also see this kind of phrasing appear when an enslaved African is recorded as referring to his own lower status in conversation with a holy man, noting, "I have three faults: I am a sold slave, I am of the *habashī* race, the most ugly humans in both appearance and speech, and I am the chief magistrate (*kotwāl*), and it is thus my job to be severe (*bī-rū*)."[23] This can be read as an intentional expression of humility by the speaker, rather than reflecting an "authentic" sense of himself; this reported speech may also be fictional, reflecting instead the writer's idea of what an enslaved African might say. Either way, his purported words draw on a clear understanding of enslaved status as a personal fault or flaw – such that while one might need to explain the negative implications of being a *habashī* and a *kotwāl*, the significance of being a sold slave is self-explanatory.[24]

Such examples underline the significant difference in kind between the noble "slave of the court," the loyal servitor utterly devoted to the ruler, and the ignoble "purchased slave," whose personal history is understood as shameful and perhaps stigmatized. This fundamental distinction between and indeed decoupling of the practical legal status of the slave and the metaphorical language of slavery is, as Sunil Kumar has discussed, a historical development over the course of the late medieval era into the early modern period.[25] Anooshahr's work on efforts during the early Mughal period to consolidate a ruling elite and overcome kin-based loyalties suggests the possible utility of such metaphors of service and loyalty, detached from their more concrete origins, to assist this process.[26] In this context, the metaphorical usage of this language can be seen as autonomous from the lived reality of enslaved status, the latter still remaining encumbered with negative associations. Thus the avoidance of explicitly identifying enslaved people should not be assumed to communicate indifference to or the irrelevance of enslaved status.

Some prior scholarship has argued that such terminological difficulties were even more pervasive in the Mughal period, due to attempts from the reign of Akbar (r. 1556–1605) to limit slavery. In fact, several Mughal rulers sought – at least theoretically – to curtail or ban some practices related to slavery. Early during his reign, it is recorded that Akbar ordered an end to enslaving female relatives and children of enemy combatants, and subsequent sources suggest he attempted to suppress the sale of slaves. These actions were accompanied with a re-designation of imperial slaves (*ghulām*s, *banda*s)

22 'Abd al-Sattār ibn Qāsim Lāhorī, *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī* (Tihran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2006): 215.

23 Khāfī Khān, *Muntakhab al-Lubāb* (Calcutta: College Press, 1869–1925): 552.

24 Despite the explanation of the relevance of northeast African (*habashī*) origin seen here, recent work has shown the existence of racialized categories in this period. See Supriya Gandhi, "Locating Race in Mughal India," *Renaissance Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2022): 1180–220.

25 Kumar, "Theorising Service": 237.

26 Ali Anooshahr, "Writing and Emotional Communities in Early Mughal India: A Note on the *Badāyi' al-Inshā*," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2021): 2.

as *chela* (disciple).[27] Akbar's successor Jahāngīr (r. 1605–1627) similarly took actions to limit enslavement within imperial territories, issuing an order to forbid the castration of slaves.[28] We also see for instance Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–1658) taking action to restore enslaved children to their parents in the aftermath of famine in the Punjab, paying the price for return out of imperial coffers.[29]

While these actions are striking, they did not in practice mean an end to enslavement and trafficking, although they may be the reason for the seeming absence of large-scale slave markets in the Mughal period, in contrast to the prior Delhi Sultanate, for instance.[30] The continued possession and sale of slaves is made especially vivid in an account from a Central Asian visitor named Mutribī to the imperial court, who records that the emperor Jahāngīr on at least one occasion himself sold a number of enslaved male children in the court, to anyone present willing to pay the price. The sale itself is carried out by way of an intermediary who was also present: an unnamed slave-seller (*nakhkhās*).[31] While anomalous, this anecdote supports the argument that most sales of slaves in this period were transacted privately between individuals, rather than in centralized slave markets like we see elsewhere.

This unusual account aside, extant sources testify to slaves being exchanged within court as gifts, especially presented to the emperor. This is the case throughout this period, as emperors occasionally received enslaved individuals as tribute, both identified as originating in foreign lands as well as from the Mughal province of Bengal.[32] In sub-imperial contexts, enslaved people would have been circulated in a similar manner, as is demonstrated by the gifting of Tahmās Khān in the mid-eighteenth century to Muʿīn al-Mulk, governor of the Punjab.[33] Direct sale was also practiced, and likely the most common form of transferring slave ownership. The only formal documentation of sale discussed to date in the secondary literature does not relate to the imperial household; these deeds record the purchase of mostly female individuals, often children, in the late

27 Irfan Habib, "Akbar and Social Inequities," *Proceedings of the Indian History Conference* (1992): 300–302.

28 Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal": 125–30.

29 ʿInāyat Khān, *Mulakhkhas-i Shāhjahānnāma* (New Delhi: Centre for Persian Research, 2009): 337.

30 Bano, "Slave Markets in Medieval India": 368–69; Richard Eaton, "Introduction," in *Slavery and South Asian History*: 11; Scott Levi, "Hindus Beyond the Hindu Kush": 283–84.

31 Mutribī al-Asamm Samarqandī, *Khātirāt-i Mutribī* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1977): 53–55.

32 ʿAbd al-Qādir Badāʾūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1864–1869): 275; ʿAbd al-Hamīd Lāhorī, *Pādshāhnāma* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867–1868): 1:473 and 2:193; ʿInāyat Khān, *Mulakhkhas-i Shāhjahānnāma*: 268; *Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī*: 1.81; Bakhtāwar Khān, *Mirʾāt-i ʿĀlam*: 227; Mustaʿidd Khān, *Maʾāsir-i ʿĀlamgīrī* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1871): 36; Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal": 129.

33 Indrani Chatterjee, "A Slave's Quest for Selfhood in Eighteenth-Century Hindustan," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 37.1: 79.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[34] These moments of visibility, in terms of the trafficking of enslaved individuals, can only account for a fraction of the number of total slaves given and sold but nevertheless provide a sense of the general nature of such trafficking in the absence of concrete data.

In sum, the slave trade continued despite whatever limits were placed upon it in theory, even if it seems to have been carried out less publicly, as well as recorded less directly in contemporary sources. The Sultanate era sources in contrast appear to be much more direct and open about this trade, generally speaking.[35] Thus the consequences of this contradiction, that is the tension between political pronouncements and elite discourses on the one hand and what is known of actual practice on the other, seem to have been a tendency towards avoiding mentioning the enslaved status of slaves in most cases as well as perhaps the end to public slave markets (if not private trafficking). In this way, while there is an abundance of references in this period to metaphorical slavery, as a language of talking about imperial service and dedication, easily identifying enslaved people or reconstructing the means by which they arrived in elite households is much more difficult.

2 Semi-Invisible Lower-Status Slaves versus Visible "Elite" Slaves?

Beyond these broad causes for the invisibilization of enslaved people generally speaking, one can identify a particular tendency to invisibilize lower-status slaves. This is on one level not that surprising, as regardless of enslaved or free status, a Mughal noble is more likely to be represented in historical narratives than anyone of lower social position. In contrast to lower-status slaves, who do not usually form the center of such narratives, enslaved male members of the elite often enter these texts as actors and agents, taking on important roles, receiving honors, and acting as patrons in their own right. Yet, as will be discussed below, the visibility of such elite men is accompanied by an inclination towards avoiding or suppressing mention of their enslaved statuses and other aspects of their life experiences, even in cases where the

34 A collection of sales documents in the Persian language are held in the National Archives in Delhi, and described in R.K. Perti and Sukumar Sarkar, *Descriptive List of Acquired Documents*, vol. 3–4 (New Delhi: National Archives of India, n.d.). These documents are also mentioned in Shadab Bano, "Women Performers and Prostitutes in Medieval India," *Studies in History* 27, no. 1 (2011): 52; and Shivangini Tandon, "The Liminals in the Mughal Households," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 78 (2017): 382. For documents from a similar period written in Bengali, see Shamita Sarkar, "Slavery in Late Mughal Bengal," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 55 (1994): 600–605. The *Inshā'-yi Harkaran* also includes two model forms for the sale of enslaved women and girls: 164 and 166.

35 Habib, "Northern India under the Sultanate": 91.

enslaved or manumitted individual is himself the author. In other words, rare cases of life writing by enslaved individuals point to a tendency towards self-concealment, at least of this aspect of their life stories and social identities.

But lower-status enslaved individuals are not entirely absent from narrative histories. In fact, such figures at times form a part of the larger articulation of imperial sovereignty. As has been argued elsewhere, the imperial household and particularly the secluded female space of the harem came from Akbar's period onward to function as a symbol of imperial stability and order. Thus although we have records of the political activities, architectural patronage, and economic involvements of elite Mughal women – suggesting active presence far beyond the walls of the harem – the internal space in which they lived is rarely testified to in contemporary sources, except in moments emphasizing its seclusion, good administration, and impenetrability.[36] While the portions of elite inner households occupied by men – for instance, the emperor's sleeping quarters – have been less studied, recent work points to a similar emphasis on boundaries and managed access to the high-ranking male denizens of these spaces by means of eunuch slaves.[37]

Within this context, lower-status slaves occasionally came to play a part in constructions of the imperial household, and in the process become more visible in Mughal writings. Here the oft-cited account of the security perimeter operative around the harem in Abū al-Fazl's *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* is a key text, in its enunciation of an impeccably-administered space, with gradated levels of security from the innermost female guards, to the eunuch guards at the gateway, to (at an appropriate distance) Rajput guards and finally porters. It similarly describes the oversight of entrance into the harem as a strict administrative process, as well as activities within the harem as occurring under the careful supervision and watch (*dāroghagī o dīdbānī*) of pious servants (*parastārān-i pārsā-gauhar*).[38]

When these domestic servants are mentioned, they are rarely known by name – rather being referred to simply as enslaved woman (*kanīz*) or female servant (*parastār*), sometimes with an ethnic modifier.[39] Their numbers seem only to be emphasized in moments where an elite man is being criticized for over-indulgence in

36 Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 214–15. For an overview of the literature on the Mughal harem, see Emma Kalb, "Framing Gender in Mughal South Asia" *History Compass* 19, no. 11 (2021): 2–4.

37 Emma Kalb, "A Eunuch at the Threshhold: Mediating Access and Intimacy in the Mughal World," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33 (2023): 747–68.

38 Abū al-Fazl. *Ā'īn-i Akbarī* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872–1877): 1.39–41.

39 Here too, the nomenclature is fuzzy and it is difficult to conclusively identify which domestic servants are enslaved and which are not. See for instance Hambly's discussion of armed female retainers in Islamicate South Asia: Gavin Hambly, "Armed Women Retainers in the Zenanas of Indo-Muslim Rulers: The Case of Bībī Fātima," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin Hambly (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998): 429–43.

sensual pleasures or excessive interest in beautiful slaves.[40] Very occasionally we see groups of enslaved women elsewhere as well, as for instance in an incident which occurred during Akbar's reign: a madman entered the harem one evening when the guards had become careless (*ghaflat*). A Mughal prince, Dānyāl, followed the man into the harem to apprehend him. But the female domestic servants (*darūnī parastārān*), who did not recognize the prince, descended upon him and attacked him with sticks and bricks. These women are identified in the text as being of diverse origins, as Circassian, eastern Mongol, Russian and northeast African (*charkas o qalmāq o urūs o habashī*), a fact which not only effectively identifies them as enslaved but also speaks to the large number of such women in the harem.[41]

On the one hand, this rare anecdote is a striking counter to the image of perfect order described in the *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, as discussed above. Such rare moments allow the possibility for imagining a more messy, contingent practice of spatial management, that does not always succeed at living up to the ideals. But it also maintains its primary interest in the security cordon around the inner household, and the visibility of unnamed, enslaved female guards only emerges as a corollary to this broader concern. It is only in rare cases that these histories allow for visibility beyond this.[42] We see a similar case of eunuch slaves marking boundaries with respect to the inner areas of the palace, both in normative representations as well as in moments of conflict such as the 1626 coup of Mahābat Khān. Here too the visibility of these enslaved individuals can be read as part of a broader set of narratives around restricted access to the emperor.[43]

While the above examples focus on enslaved women and eunuchs, there are occasional examples that point to the presence of enslaved non-castrated boys and men. In this regard we can consider rare examples such as Mutribī's above-discussed account of the selling of enslaved boys in court as well as reference to a group of enslaved male children in a former slave's eighteenth-century memoirs (on which more

40 See for instance a deeply critical account of an earlier ruler, Ghiyās al-Dīn Khaljī (r. 1469–1500), who is described as neglecting governance and instead focusing solely on pleasure (*'aish o 'ishrat*), building up a massive harem filled with beautiful slave girls, and so obsessed that whenever he heard of a beautiful slave girl (*kanīz-ī sāhib-i jamāl*), until he acquired that girl he would not rest. *Tūzuk*, 182. A less critical account suggests that this harem contained 16,000 enslaved women – presumably an exaggeration, but nevertheless suggesting high numbers of enslaved women in this period. Nizām al-Dīn Ahmad, *Tabaqāt-i Akbarī* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927–1935): 3.351.

41 *Akbarnāma*: 3.646.

42 Here again, in contrast to such idealizing narratives and their rare moments of rupture, documents such as marriage contracts, sales deeds and legal petitions provide a different perspective. Such texts suggest the commonality of owning (especially female) slaves during this period, as well as the mundane concerns such as inheritance and marital rights that their ownership could intersect with. See Shireen Moosvi, *People, Taxation and Trade in Mughal India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008): 278–80; Tandon, "The Liminals in the Mughal Households": 382.

43 Kalb, "A Eunuch at the Threshhold": 754–64.

below). These all suggest that enslaved men and male children were similarly pervasively present – even if rarely mentioned.[44] It is even possible that lower-status enslaved men are less visible in our sources precisely because they do not fit into the kinds of enunciations of a carefully-guarded imperial household described above. In this interpretation, the symbolic importance of the inaccessibility of the inner palace – which itself invisibilizes much of the activities ongoing within – paradoxically makes the means of enforcing or marking that inaccessibility visible, thus allowing modern researchers to catch glimpses of enslaved female and eunuch guards, while leaving behind less information about enslaved non-eunuch men who would have been present in more "public" spaces. Either way, however, much like Schofield's courtesan tale, these forms of visibility are biased towards telling a certain story about high-status free people and their households, leaving behind little information beyond the story the elite might tell itself.

The limited nature of evidence around lower-status enslaved individuals contrasts with the detailed information available for some high-ranking enslaved men, especially eunuchs. Superficially, the fact that Mughal sources are willing to give a significant level of detail about such figures would seem to undermine the idea that they are engaging in an invisibilization process with regards to the enslaved. The high visibility of this particular and relatively rare form of slavery can easily distort our sense of "normal," leaving the impression that slavery is frankly and fully described in such sources and that elite slaves are representative. Based on these extraordinary and atypical examples, for instance, eunuch slavery might seem like simply an alternative recruiting technique and route into the Mughal elite.[45] This more rosy picture is further supported by the tendency of texts (even by the enslaved themselves, as will be discussed below) to describe such relations in terms of devotion and even affection.[46] In many ways, one can read the invisibilization of enslaved status (or enslaved origins) as indicative of the possibility of such figures moving beyond those origins and successfully integrating into the Mughal elite, or at least into the larger society. But available evidence, although scant, underlines that the majority of palace eunuchs would have been low-ranked guards and servants, living lives presumably quite different from those of elite eunuchs immortalized in monumental tomb complexes and fine portraits.[47]

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44 On Miskīn's fellow enslaved children, see Anna Kollatz, "People, Spaces, Emotions: India Through the Eyes of a Manumitted Slave," *Narrative Strategies for India in Transition*, ed. Anna Kollatz and Tilmann Kulke (Berlin: EBVerlag, 2023): 92–98; and Chatterjee, "A Slave's Quest": 67–71.

45 Here, see Eaton's discussion of elite slavery as "self-terminating" rather than an "enduring condition." Richard Eaton, "The Rise and Fall of Military Slavery in the Deccan, 1450–1650," in *Slavery and South Asian History*: 129–30.

46 Tandon, "Elite Households and Domestic Servants": 153.

47 This bias in the sources towards elite slaves, as compared to lower-status figures, has been commented upon by Irfan Habib, "Northern India under the Sultanate": 92; and Sunil Kumar, "Theorising Service": 228. For more on this, see Kalb, "Threshold": 753.

Even when enslaved individuals reached the level of the Mughal elite, such high-ranking slaves tend to be – with some crucial exceptions – discussed and represented in terms of (free) elite norms. Here one can point to the writings in praise of their employers written by Mughal *munshī*s (scribes) such as Harkaran, who served the eunuch I'tibār Khān, as well as Musta'idd Khān, who was in the service of the eunuch and historian Bakhtāwar Khān. Both describe their employers and patrons in exalted terms. Harkaran, for instance, describes I'tibār Khān as "the excellent deputy (*navvāb-i mustatāb*), elevated in title (*mu'allā alqāb*), the shelter of forgiveness (*ghufrānpanāh*), the maker of contentment (*rizwān dastgāh*), the Hātim of the time (*hātim-i zamān*), the Nūshīrvān of the age (*nūshīrvān-i 'asr*)."[48] Here Nūshīrvān is a reference to a Sasanid emperor renowned for his justice,[49] while Hātim is a reference to a pre-Islamic Arabic-language poet considered to be an exemplar of generosity.[50] This passage thus poses I'tibār Khān as an honored member of the elite, the trusted representative of the emperor, on whom high titles had been bestowed, with the idealized qualities of benevolence, generosity, and justice. Nothing within this characterization of an elite slave is at odds with how any other member of the elite would have been described in this period.

In the example of Bakhtāwar Khān, we furthermore see an enslaved individual himself excluding reference to his origins and personal history from his own written works, even as he is deeply engaged in representing himself and his life in other ways, in accordance with the norms of refined personhood, just like any other member of the Mughal elite.[51] In his case, despite the great extent of his writings, we discover that he does not self-identify as enslaved or a eunuch, rather emphasizing his devoted and continual service to the emperor, his broad network of intellectual con-

48 Harkaran, *Inshā-yi Harkaran* (London: S. Rousseau, 1804): 4–5. For an example of Musta'idd Khān writing about Bakhtāwar Khān, see his death notice appended to Bakhtāwar Khān, *Mir'āt al-'Ālam*: 2.693.

49 See Shapur Shahbazi, "Sasanian Dynasty," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2005, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sasanian-dynasty [accessed 24.03.2024].

50 See Mahmoud Omidsalar, "Hātem Tā'ī," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2003, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hatem-tai [accessed 24.03.2024].

51 The recent work of scholars such as Mana Kia, Rajeev Kinra, and Taymiya Zaman point to how writers in this period negotiated questions of identity and community, crafting socially embedded and connected selves within the wider Mughal world. See Taymiya Zaman, "Instructive Memory: An Analysis of Auto/Biographical Writing in Early Mughal India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54, no. 5 (2011): 679; Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Making of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015): 51–52; Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020): 102–3.

nections, and his significant literary and architectural patronage.[52] It is only in other sources that he is identified as a eunuch.[53]

On the one hand, reference to slavery may be absent here simply because it was irrelevant, due to the very success of the individual in question. But that mention of enslaved status, present or past, is perhaps sometimes intentionally excluded – as something that would not reflect positively on the individual concerned – is suggested by the fact that the subject seems to only be brought up in narrative histories at times of conflict and critique. The researcher is left with a few scant but highly suggestive references to enslaved status in relation to such figures, often explicitly surfacing at moments when elite slaves are being demeaned and degraded, as was discussed in the prior section with reference to the "purchased" or "gold-bought" slave. In this way, in addition to the erasure of low-ranking enslaved individuals, there is also a tendency in narrative sources to conceal reference to the enslaved status of elite slaves as well.

An unusual source such as the memoirs of Tahmās Khān 'Miskīn' dramatically underlines the kind of information that is absent elsewhere. Miskīn was an enslaved child who, having been trafficked from modern-day Turkey to North India in the mid-eighteenth century, eventually rose to high social status, and decided to commemorate his life by composing his memoirs, known as the *Tahmāsnāma*. The basic facts of Miskīn's biography point to the ongoing trafficking in enslaved children in this period, and the likelihood of many such children being present in elite households, as is the case in his narration of his childhood in the household of Muʿīn al-Mulk, governor of the Punjab. On the one hand, the text is open about the events around Miskīn's enslavement, his trafficking to South Asia, and some of the abuse he faced as an enslaved individual, including threats of personal violence, forced marriage, and imprisonment. Yet at the same time it asserts his success in many ways, in terms of navigating his circumstances and attaining high position. In the process, the memoir uses similar strategies for asserting the author's respectability to what we see in a work such as Bakhtāwar Khān's *Mirʿāt al-ʿĀlam*, by means such as piety, education, and intimate social connections with members of the elite – with the addition of Miskīn's development of both adoptive and biological bonds of kinship.[54]

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52 More on this will be included in a forthcoming article: Emma Kalb, "The Eunuch and the Emperor: Social Ties and Selfhood in the Writings of Bakhtawar Khan."

53 His eunuch status is known from other sources including Kewal Rām's *Tazkīrat al Umarā'* (British Library, Add. 16703): 22a and *Ma'āsir al-Umarā'*: 3.597. Indrani Chatterjee discusses a similar phenomenon, wherein enslaved status or descent is erased, in her discussion of Ahom historiography. Chatterjee, "Renewed and Connected Histories": 28.

54 In part due to the unique value of this text as the only known "slave narrative" from the Mughal context, it has received sustained attention, in particular with regards to how Miskīn articulates a complex, deeply interconnected social identity. In addition to Chatterjee (2000), this paragraph draws on Neelam Khoja, "Historical Mistranslations: Identity, Slavery, and Genre in Eighteenth-Century India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 2 (2021); and Kollatz, "People, Spaces, Emotions."

On the face of it, the directness with which Miskīn acknowledges and discusses his enslavement and manumission would suggest his fully visibility. But as Indrani Chatterjee has argued, even as this text provides unparalleled access to information about the life of one enslaved individual, it also has to be read for silences and exclusions. This is most apparent when it comes to questions of possible sexual violence. At one point in his account, Miskīn seems to describe his female mistress Mughlānī Begam's attempt to force him into a physical relationship with her. This information is only related in veiled terms, and perceivable by reading between the lines.[55] But while enough is present in the memoir to extract this information, Chatterjee elsewhere notes the complete lack of mention of possible sexual violence at the hands of his prior, male master, Muʿīn al-Mulk, also known as Mīr Mannu. This is especially brought to the forefront by, as Chatterjee notes, the explicit mention in a contemporary work called the *Muraqqaʿ-yi Dihlī* of Muʿīn al-Mulk's particular interest in handsome young boys. It is possible of course that Miskīn did not mention any experiences of this kind in relation to Muʿīn al-Mulk because they did not happen. But Chatterjee argues that it is Mughlānī Begam's status as a woman, and her questionable hold on political authority, that allows Miskīn to suggest she has acted wrongly; reference to any such relation with a male master would have sat uncomfortably with the "pre-existing discourse of shame and degradation around the sexual passivity (*ibna*) of a male."[56] In contrast, this kind of critique, and even an elliptical mention of such an experience in relation to a high-status male owner, may have been more difficult. This point underlines the necessity of considering the possibility of enslaved or manumitted individuals engaging in self-concealment, both entire or partial.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined two vectors for thinking through the invisibilization of slavery and enslaved individuals in narrative sources during the Mughal period. First, the problem of language has been outlined, in particular the sometimes-unclear boundaries (at least to modern readers) between terminology related to slavery on the one hand and terminologies related to other forms of servitude, religious devotion and discipleship, kinship, and imperial service on the other. Here, the negative associations of enslaved status underline that this lack of clarity is not due to the fact that

55 Chatterjee, "A Slave's Quest": 69–71.

56 Indrani Chatterjee, "Alienation, Intimacy, and Gender: Problems for a History of Love in South Asia," in *Queering India: Same-Sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and Society*, ed. Ruth Vanita (New York: Routledge, 2002): 64–65.

this distinction was considered unimportant. Following the increased limitations on enslavement introduced and (at least occasionally) enforced by Akbar and his successors, while no slave markets are attested to in the manner of the Mughals' predecessors, occasional evidence in narrative accounts demonstrates the continuation of trafficking in enslaved individuals. The kind of invisibilization seen here impacts all forms of slavery.

The second part of the chapter shifts to look at how invisibilization functions in relation to different categories of slavery, considering the differential between lower- and higher-status slaves, as the latter category is often dramatically visible in narrative sources. In doing so, this section emphasizes that lower-status enslaved people are not entirely absent but rather appear in particular ways, generally unnamed, as a part of larger narratives of proper governance and moral virtue. In this regard, such information is alternately invoked to emphasize the security perimeter and inviolability of the imperial inner household in particular, or else wielded as a tool to critique other sovereigns or members of the nobility and their sexual excesses. In contrast, elite slaves are much more substantively and individually present in narrative histories.

How do we assess the visibility of such enslaved men? On the one hand, the case of a figure such as Tahmās Khān 'Miskīn' allows for a reading in which his successful integration into the elite suggests that for some enslaved or formerly enslaved men, assimilation was an achievable outcome. This raises the question of whether the relative invisibilization of at least elite male slaves can also be seen in part as a function of the particular form slavery could take in this context, as currently or formerly enslaved individuals might "blend into the scenery," through processes such as promotion, marriage, and manumission. Yet the presence of notable silences and omissions in memoirs and other writings produced by enslaved or manumitted elite men themselves suggests that elite slavery is both highly visible and subject to invisibilization, including intentional or unintentional acts of self-concealment, as reflected in the tendency to bypass direct acknowledgment of enslaved status and experience.

This chapter only presents some of the factors which work to invisibilize the histories of enslaved people in the Mughal context. Legal formularies such as the *Munshāt-i Namakīn* suggest the potential of documents to better balance the picture offered by narrative sources. Future scholarship could further counter the biases introduced by factors such as easier access both to published sources as well as the larger and more-thoroughly catalogued archives (such as the British Library), over smaller, less-accessible, less-known, or even private archives.[57] Hopefully future work will continue the process of addressing these gaps, to help modern scholars better understand – and thus grapple with – the mechanisms and processes by which both en-

57 For an example of recent work focusing on family archives – and indeed rethinking assumptions about the "Mughal archive," see Nandini Chatterjee, *Land and Law in Mughal India: A Family of Landlords across Three Indian Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

slaved people and slavery itself have been both inscribed as well as obscured in Mughal texts, archives, and historiography.

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Central Piece

Imogen Herrad

Language, Power and (In)Visibility. Reflections on Decolonizing Academic English

In this reflective chapter, I propose to scrutinize elements of injustice and power in western academia from my professional point of view as academic translator and language editor at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS). Language editors such as myself revise the grammar, syntax and vocabulary of texts written by non-native and/or multilingual speakers of English to render them more idiomatic. In other words, I make what is considered to be non-standard English more standard; I chop up sentences, 'improve' unidiomatic language and 'correct' passages deemed to be incorrect. The translator's invisibility has been famously explored by Lawrence Venuti, but language editors such as myself are more invisible still.[1] I do my work behind the scenes, in the unseen lag between writing and publication. Often my name is not mentioned in the published text, even though my work involves the shaping and nuancing of knowledge production.

I will begin this chapter by discussing the problematic issue of linguistic injustice in academic publishing. Its cause is the dominance of Global North variants of English; i.e. the fact that scholars who either use English as an acquired language (EAL), or who are native speakers of a variant other than British or American (such as Australian or Indian or Nigerian) English, face at best additional work and at worst discrimination.[2] I

1 Venuti described the mechanism whereby 'the more "successful" the translation, the more invisible the translator, and the more visible the author or meaning of the original text.' Lawrence Venuti, "The Translator's Invisibility," *Criticism* 28, no. 2 (1986): 179–212, 179. For processes of and around translation, see also Manuel Pavón-Belizón's fascinating paper in this volume, which explores the factors by which a Chinese woman intellectual was made visible and readable to western audiences by her works being translated into English and discusses 'translation as a socially embedded practice of knowledge production and circulation [which] entails a set of mechanisms that seek to reposition the translated author or work [. . .] [in] the target context' (Pavón-Belizón, in this volume, 113).

2 Studies by linguists and social scientists have shown that non-first-language scholars 'perceived English science writing as 24% more difficult, generating 21% more anxiety and 11% less satisfaction than science writing using their L1 [first language].' David Hanauer, Cheryl Sheridan and Karen Englander, "Linguistic Injustice in the Writing of Research Articles in English as a Second Language: Data from Taiwanese and Mexican Researchers," *Written Communication* 36, no. 1 (2019): 136–54, 138 (with references). A survey of forty-nine doctoral researchers from Colombia found that participants had to invest considerably more time on writing papers in English than they did in their first language: Valeria Ramírez-Castañeda, "Disadvantages in Preparing and Publishing Scientific Papers Caused by the Dominance of the English Language in Science: The Case of Colombian Researchers in Biological Sciences," *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 9: e0238372, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0238372: 4/15. See also a very recent study in which a survey of nine hundred international scientists found 'profound disadvantages for non-native English speakers in conducting all scientific activities surveyed.' Tatsuya Amano et al., "The Manifold Costs of Being a Non-Native English Speaker in Science," *PLoS Biology* 21, no. 7

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will then reflect on questions of terminology and wording; i.e. the ways in which scholars who study situations of asymmetrical dependencies write about the situations and the people involved in them. Unthinking replication of terms coined by conquerors or enslavers can invisibilize the humans behind the dehumanizing language. Both of these problematic issues are remnants of colonialism, and I argue that both should be made visible and tackled. I will give a brief overview and some theoretical background to linguistic injustice caused by the dominance of Global North variants of English, and introduce the new language policy we implemented at the BCDSS.

This will be followed by a discussion of examples of language use in on this volume, supplemented sometimes with cases from my work as language editor more generally: formulations which arguably reproduce colonial thought patterns, dependencies and forced invisibilities, but also good-practice examples of how to do it better. My hope is that in writing this, I will raise some awareness of why language matters. I will reflect on how we might decolonize academic English, and in the process improve scholarly practice.

(2023): e3002184, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3002184. Interestingly, those EAL scholars who reported positive rather than negative effects from being required to write in English all worked in industrialised, Global North countries: Josep Soler, "Linguistic Injustice in Academic Publishing in English," *Journal of English for Research Publication Purposes* 2, no. 2 (2021): 161–62 in 160–71, with references. For the impact on EAL scholars outside the Global North, see for example the recent case studies by Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini and Zahra Shafiee, "Writing Louder? Coping with the Push to Publish in English at an Iranian University," in *Pedagogies and Policies for Publishing Research in English: Local Initiatives Supporting International Scholars*, ed. James Corcoran, Karen Englander and Laura-Mihaela Muresan (London: Routledge, 2019): 252–65; and by Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale, Olayinka Akanle and Charles Akinsete, "Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria: The Enduring Effects of Colonization," in *Pedagogies and Policies for Publishing Research in English: Local Initiatives Supporting International Scholars*, ed. James Corcoran, Karen Englander and Laura-Mihaela Muresan (London: Routledge, 2019): 226–27 in 215–31. See also Stephen Politzer-Ahlesa, Teresa Girolamob and Samantha Ghali, "Preliminary Evidence of Linguistic Bias in Academic Reviewing," *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 47 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2020.100895.

1 Linguistic Injustice

That English is a remnant of colonialism is indisputable.[3] As such, it has become the modern lingua franca of academia.[4] But which English? Linguists have long been aware that the language is not a monolith: the concept of a plurality of co-existing Englishes has been explored since the 1980s. In a number of dedicated journals,[5] linguists study the evolution and the specific characteristics of localized or indigenized autonomous varieties of English: Singlish, South African, Jamaican, or Cypriot, to name only a few. But the awareness of their existence has not changed the dominant position of American (AE) and British English (BE) in international publishing as standard, to the exclusion of all other Englishes which continue to be regarded as divergent or non-standard, of interest merely to linguists.

The reason for this normativity of Euro-American-centred language use is not linguistic, but economic; and as such a legacy of the last two centuries during which European and North American countries colonized and exploited large parts of the rest of the world. The vast majority of academic publishers and journals – and *all* of the

3 Raymond Hickey distinguishes between 'English which arose from the large-scale settlement [. . .] by native speakers and forms of English which arose from the functional need for a means of communication in [colonized] societies with many different background languages' (Hickey, "Introduction": 1). The scholarship on the historical and continuing impact of the English language on the societies colonized by Great Britain and the United States in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the resulting loss of cultural autonomy (a concept developed by the Africanist Jan Vansina) is vast. For India, see for example the analysis of the impact of 'law and language [as] the two most important instruments [. . .] [of] the British colonisers [. . .] imposed on native Indians' by Debalina Das, Soumyadeep Patranabis and Prabhashis Bose, "English Language: Acceptance as World Language, its History and Importance in Modern World and Science," unublished paper, http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3598918: 17. For Anglophone African societies and countries, see Bert van Pinxteren, *Language, Education and Identity in Africa*.

4 A 2003 study found that out of 40,770 academic and scholarly journals listed with Ulrich's Periodical Directory, 74% were published in English: Curry and Lillis, "Multilingual Scholars": 663. For the 'internationalization' of global research through publishing in English, see Fran M. Collyer, "Global Patterns in the Publishing of Academic Knowledge: Global North, Global South", *Current Sociology* 66 no. 1 (2018), 63–64 in 56–73. and see also the recent findings by Lynne Bowker, Philips Ayeni and Emanuel Kulczycki, "Linguistic Privilege and Marginalization in Scholarly Communication: Understanding the Role of New Language Technologies for Shifting Language Dynamics," final report, 17.12.2023, https://doi.org/10.20381/858s-q632.

5 There are a number of academic journals dedicated to the study of World Englishes, including *World Englishes* https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/1467971x/homepage/productinformation.html, *Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices (JWEEP)* https://al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/jweep, *English Today* https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/english-today, and *Asian Englishes* https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/reng20 [all accessed 12.08.2024]; as well as a number of *Handbooks of World Englishes*.

most influential and prestigious ones – are based in the Global North.[6] Their editors, who make decisions which directly impact both knowledge production and scholars' careers, are crucial gatekeepers in international research.[7] As a direct but little-discussed consequence of this geo-economic dominance, publishers' style sheets require scholars wishing to be published internationally to adapt their spelling and grammar usage to just the two dominant variants of English.

The most commonly used (and, as such, the most dominant or indeed hegemonic) academic style guides are The Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago style, 1906[8]), The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA style, 1929[9]), and The Modern Language Association Handbook (MLA style, 1931[10]).[11] All three have been continually updated (and considerably enlarged) over the decades, but change has been reactive, and at times very slow.

The insistence on 'standard' variants of English puts an unequal burden on scholars whose first language is not English, or not AE/BE. It can be not only harder, but also more time-consuming to write in an acquired language.[12] In addition, unless a

6 In 2015, forty of the global top fifty-seven publishing companies were headquartered in the Global North (US/Canada, EU and the UK): Collyer, "Global Patterns in the Publishing of Academic Knowledge": 61. In humanities and social sciences publishing, half the market is dominated by just five academic publishers: Elsevier (The Netherlands), Black & Wiley (US), Taylor & Francis (UK), Springer Nature (Germany) and SAGE (US); Martin Hagve, "The Money Behind Academic Publishing," *Tidsskr Nor Legeforen* 140, no. 11 (2020): 1–5, http://doi.org/10.4045/tidsskr.20.0118.

7 The enormous asymmetricity of the publishing industry extends to editors. An analysis of the editors of the top five African Studies journals in English, for example, found that from a total of 255 editorial board members, only sixty-one editors (23.9%) are based in sub-Saharan Africa while 190 editors are based in Europe or the US. Only 27% are women, and only seventeen editorial board members (6.6%) are women based in sub-Saharan Africa. Sandro Mendonça, João Pereira and Manuel Ennes Ferreira, "Gatekeeping African Studies: What Does 'Editormetrics' Indicate About Journal Governance?," *Scientometrics* 117 (2018): 1520–21 in 1513–34.

8 https://press.uchicago.edu/press/presshistory.html [accessed 12.08.2024].

9 https://apastyle.apa.org/about-apa-style [accessed 12.08.2024].

10 https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1GF0_59wNDhlGv3LBkPzm2TbFp-FN9P5R_p2VQp_ieBc& [accessed 12.08.2024].

11 In her discussion of the politics of imposing stylistic and linguistic conventions in the sciences, Audrey Thompson pointed out that all three dominant style guides were developed in the United States at a time when the vast majority of academics were white, male, and upper-middle-class; Audrey Thompson, "Gentlemanly Orthodoxy: Critical Race Feminism, Whiteness Theory, and the APA Manual," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 1 (2004): 27–57, 28, and see also 33–34. For a more general ideological critique of the Chicago and APA manuals see Dustin Wilson, "Institutionalization, Technology, and Power: The Ideological Context of Style Organizations" (Master's thesis, Clemson University, 2010): 22–48, https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/863 [accessed 14.08.2024].

12 Hanauer et al., "Linguistic Injustice": 138 and Soler, "Linguistic Injustice in Academic Publishing in English": 161–62, both with references; Mirhosseini and Shafiee, "Writing Louder? Coping with the Push to Publish in English at an Iranian University."

scholar whose English is non-standard employs (and pays[13]) a language editor to 'improve' their text, they face an increased risk of rejection by editors: a 2020 study found that abstracts written in non-standard English 'were much more likely than "standard English" abstracts to be labelled "Poor" and much less likely to be labelled "Fair."'[14] This means not only that individual scholars face more and higher obstacles in their career paths, but that western viewpoints are given more visibility, while important voices that could enrich scholarship by bringing other and more diverse approaches and methods to the table are marginalized, overshadowed or excluded altogether.[15] While some scholars have argued that 'Indigenized Englishes would remain largely understandable only to the local audience,' and consequently encourage the use more standard forms of English,[16] there is arguably a significant difference between what is non-standard and what is unintelligible.

A number of interested and invested scholars at the BCDSS discussed these and similar considerations over the course of 2022, and as a result a new language policy was drawn up, which now applies to all BCDSS publications:

> With its mission to explore phenomena of asymmetrical dependency, the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS) works against forms of gatekeeping which may put obstacles in the way of scholarly work in English felt by some to be non-standard. The Center understands language to be intimately connected to power structures and strives to foster an awareness of epistemic dependencies resulting from linguistic dependencies. Given that language is multiply situated and constantly evolving, the BCDSS does not insist on conformity to the traditional binary standard Englishes (British and American). Our focus is on clarity and the communicative value of English as an international lingua franca. Authors are encouraged to write in their national or regional variety of English.[17]

A recent survey about this approach was conducted among all members of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies in May and June 2024. It found that 60%

13 Olumuyiwa Omobowale et al., "Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria": 226–27; Ramírez-Castañeda found that 'the cost [for language editing] per article is between one-quarter and one-half of a doctoral monthly salary in Colombia.' "Disadvantages in Preparing and Publishing Scientific Papers Caused by the Dominance of the English Language in Science": 5/15 with fig 2, https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0238372&type=printable#Rpone.0238372.g002 [accessed 14.08.2024]; Tatsuya Amano et al., "The Manifold Costs of Being a Non-Native English Speaker in Science," fig 1E and 1F, (https://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.3002184#pbio-3002184-g001 [accessed 14.08.2024]).

14 Politzer-Ahlesa et al., "Preliminary Evidence of Linguistic Bias in Academic Reviewing": unpaginated. Another study similarly found that 43.5% of respondents reported 'at least one rejection or revision of their articles because of the English grammar.' Ramírez-Castañeda, "Disadvantages in Preparing and Publishing Scientific Papers Caused by the Dominance of the English Language in Science": 4/15.

15 Bowker, Ayeni and Kulczycki, "Linguistic Privilege and Marginalization in Scholarly Communication": 1.

16 Olumuyiwa Omobowale et al., "Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria": 216.

17 https://www.degruyter.com/serial/dss-b/html?lang=en [accessed 14.08.2024].

of respondents felt that the language policy was relevant to them, and half thought that it was necessary while only 17% saw no need for it. (The remaining 33% were neutral.) 47% declared themselves happy or very happy with the BCDSS Language Policy and only 5% unhappy, while the rest were, again, neutral. While a sample of 157 academics at one research centre at one university is clearly not in any way representative, I believe that this result shows an appreciation of the variety of Englishes and, as one respondent wrote, the importance of recognizing 'the diverse needs and practices of colleagues around the world'.[18]

2 Reflections on Language Use, Terminology and Wording

The vast majority of textual sources used by modern scholars were written by the masters, the colonizers, or the slavers. It was in their interests to represent the people they exploited not as human beings, but as things. So the archives of dependency are full of terms that dehumanize their subjects and express essentialist ideas about race, physicality, gender, character and culture; or, as Saidiya Hartman put it infinitely better in her seminal 2008 essay 'Venus in Two Acts': 'the stories that exist are not about [the enslaved], but rather about the violence, excess, mendacity, and reason that seized hold of their lives, transformed them into commodities and corpses, and identified them with names tossed-off as insults and crass jokes.'[19]

When scholars spend long stretches of time working with such archives, they risk growing accustomed to dehumanizing terms. It requires a repeated, conscious effort to reflect on language use: without it, we may end up employing commodifying or essentializing terms, and so reinscribe in our own writings the violence that has been done. That we should take care not to do so matters: in part out of respect for the enslaved, the violated, the exploited, the invisibilized. There is an additional urgency to this effort in some geographies where 'the afterlife of slavery'[20] or colonialization has not yet ended, such as the United States, Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand, where individual and institutional violence and discrimination continue; and where the colonized and enslaved matter in a very real way to those who are alive today, because they are ancestors, they are family. In this volume, Mrinalini Luthra and

18 For a more detailed discussion of the survey result see Dima Al Munajed and Imogen Herrad, "Why Words Matter in Academia: Challenges and Obstacles, Policies and Solutions. A Workshop Led by Dima Al-Munajed and Imogen Herrad at the University of Bonn's Diversity Days 2024," *Dependent. The Magazine of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies* 2024-1: 41–43.

19 Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," in *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14, 3.

20 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts": 13.

Charles Jeurgens draw attention to just this issue in their investigation into enduring colonial practices in archival science, in which they underline the importance of decolonizing texts and collections that deal with colonial and imperial pasts. A failure to do so means that

> descendants of marginalised communities [. . .] who wish to explore the archives through text-searchable technology not only encounter painful and racist language while reading the documents, but are now also compelled to input offensive search terms themselves in order to trace any mentions of their ancestors.[21]

In such an environment, words resonate much more strongly, and it is not merely a matter of semantics when, for example, scholars are asked to replace the essentializing 'slave' with formulations such as 'enslaved person', which stress the process and the humanity of those affected. Teju Cole forcefully expressed the difference between the two: '[T]he word "slave" [. . .] still strikes the ear like a lash. There are those who enslave others and there are those who are enslaved by others. But there's no one whose essence or true description is "slave".'[22]

I am somewhat uneasily aware that this is a moral and emotional argument, and that scholarship and emotion or morality do not, perhaps, always mix very well. I am also, unhappily, aware of the risk of getting carried away by emotion and morality alone, without the scholarly rigour that forces us to stop and think, to reflect and clarify and, sometimes, reject an argument that is all hot blood and emotion but lacks the sinews and bones to stand upright.

So here is a scholarly argument: if we replicate the language of colonial and slavery archives without reflection, we risk blurring distinctions of historical categories or situations. If a scholar employs essentializing terms without prior careful scrutiny, they risk blunting their analysis and coming up with imprecise results.[23]

There may, of course, be good reasons for employing even obsolete terminology. One such case occurs in this volume, in the chapter by Subin Nam about the life of Bae Bong-gi, a Korean survivor of sexual slavery during the Pacific War. The chapter analyzes Bae's decision at different times to reveal or to invisibilize herself during different political situations in Japan and Korea in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Nam makes transparent the reasons behind her choice to use a specific label for Bae: in her introduction, she explains that while the term 'survivor of military sexual slavery' is widely used internationally, in both Korea and Japan the expression 'comfort woman', a Japanese euphemism, continues to be the official term. Bae Bong-gi, a Korean living in the Japanese island of Okinawa, herself employed the

21 Luthra and Jeurgens, in this volume, 176–77.

22 Teju Cole, *Tremor* (London: Faber, 2023): 94

23 A point forcefully made by Raffaella Sarti, "Can Historians Speak? A Few Thoughts and Proposals on a Possible Global History of Domestic Service/Work," in Servants' Pasts, ed. Nitin Sinha, Nitin Varma and Pankaj Jha (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2019): 345–70, 351.

term, which reflects the geographic and historical context of her life. This is the rationale for Nam's choice to use the term 'comfort woman', but place it quotation marks throughout to distance herself from it.

In these reflections on language use, I will draw largely on the individual chapters in this volume, but to illustrate my point I will also employ some other, anonymized examples from texts I encountered in the course of my work. Let me be clear that I do not intend to shame, prescribe or dictate, or to create outrage. I also don't only want to discuss problematic cases, so I will also discuss how we might approach difficult sources and go beyond 'replicating the grammar of violence.'[24] I hope that these suggestions will also add rigour to scholarly analysis.

2.1 Active and Passive Voice

Using passive rather than active constructions has long been held to be desirable in academic writing. This is no longer universally the case, but does persist in some national academic cultures, such as much of continental Europe and Latin America, both in the national languages and when scholars write in English. By contrast, many humanities and social sciences scholars in the Anglophone world prefer to use the active voice. There are historical reasons for both preferences, and it is helpful to be aware of them. Behind the passive voice stands the desire to visibilize in language the ideal of scholarly objectivity. When scholars assess a situation, they express the outcome of their weighing up of facts and plausibilities. The constraint of having to use an impersonal style reminds the writer not to rush in with hasty personal opinions, but to reflect and carefully formulate their considered judgement.[25] In doing so, they take their personal selves out of the picture as much as possible in what we might describe as a conscious act of invisibilization. The same goes for including or excluding emotional responses. An eastern European historian told me that in his country, scholars are taught to think of themselves as physicians: you don't flinch when you see the wound, you don't stop to comfort the patient, you just go in and do the job with professional detachment.

By contrast, it has become the desired norm in much of Anglophone academia to use the first person singular, and thereby to visibilize the author as a situated person with a personal history and a set of experiences that shaped who they are and how they think, i.e. to articulate their positionality. It was, amongst others, activists in the U.S. American Civil Rights and Feminist Movements of the 1960s and '70s who first questioned and critiqued the definitions of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality', pointing out

24 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts": 4.

25 I thank Christian de Vito for pointing this out to me in a personal communication, which made me rethink and rewrite (and, I hope, improve) this section.

that they had been drawn up by a small circle of privileged white men who adhered to ancient ideals of self-mastery and unemotionality as masculine virtues.[26] This sort of gender stereotyping is clearly not confined to the west, or indeed the past, as Manuel Pavón-Belizón's chapter in this volume shows. In his exploration of (the obstacles to) the dissemination of works by Chinese women intellectuals, he points to some prominent male Chinese intellectuals who 'consider [women] ontologically incapable of working in fields such as philosophy'.[27] In their contribution, Mrinalini Luthra and Charles Jeurgens discuss positionality in the context of Sandra Harding's standpoint theory, explaining that,

> [i]nstead of attempting to erase subjectivities as biases, feminist epistemologists advocate for acknowledging and considering these subjectivities in the research process. This approach promotes a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the world by honestly acknowledging the partiality of our knowledge.[28]

Neither approach – passive or active voice, neutrality of positionality – is inherently 'better' or 'superior'. One drawback of passive constructions can be to invisibilize intentional actions: *The inhabitants of the village were enslaved*. Who enslaved them? One drawback of writing in the active voice can be that one puts oneself too much in the foreground, operating with opinions rather than analysis. The best scholarly practice is always to reflect on stylistic choices – including on the shortcomings of whichever tradition we prefer; and as historians to be aware of the history behind those traditions.

2.2 Compassion or Objectivity?

The difficulty of striking the right balance between human emotion and scholarly analysis – or perhaps better: of achieving the right mix of the two – was on my mind more than once as I read the papers in this collection; perhaps most notably Subin Nam's chapter about Bae Bong-gi. As a young woman, Bae went to Japan in search of employment. She was forced to work in a military brothel, fled through an active war zone during the Battle of Okinawa, and witnessed numerous atrocities. As I read Nam's chapter, I suffered with Bae Bong-gi, who spent the rest of her long life after the end of the war in self-imposed exile in Okinawa, where she made herself as invisible as possible because she felt that she could not go home due to the perceived shame of her sex work and her poverty. Nam, too, clearly felt both compassion and respect for this survivor, whom she shows to have been not only a victim, but also an

26 See for example Jane Tompkins' 1987 essay, "Me and my Shadow," *New Literary History* 19, no. 1 (1987): 169–78.

27 Pavón-Belizón, in this volume, 107.

28 Luthra and Jeurgens, in this volume, 181–82.

active force in the shaping of her own life. In some passages, emotion surged high, expressed in terms such as *horrors*, *tragic, agonizing*, or *harrowing*. As I language-edited the text, I found myself struggling with the conflicting impulses of professionalism and visceral response: I repeatedly wrote and deleted comments that suggested Nam employ more scholarly distance. They felt crass and tone-deaf. How do you strike the right balance between human emotion and scholarly analysis in writing about human suffering? One feels compassion, from the Latin: *con-passio*: *con*, 'with' and *passio*, 'suffering': one suffers with a fellow human. But when one is not only a fellow human but also a scholar, expressing our shared humanity is not enough.

As scholars, our contribution is to contemplate and think, to research and analyze. Scholarly writing is better (in terms of language and expression, but also in terms of the quality of analysis) when it is clear and lucid, when it names objects, situation or experiences as precisely as possible, rather than employing expressions of horror or sympathy.

2.3 Dehumanizing, Essentializing or Uncaring Language

Some authors borrow terms from the study of economics, which can have the effect of obscuring violent actions. Here are some phrases I encountered in texts that I revised for grammar and language use. See if you can work out what they are talking about:

- entry into the system by means of purchase and transportation
- patterns of acquisition
- sourcing the city's workforce by procuring and transporting enslaved laborers

I had to read all of them more than once before I realized that the authors were referring, obliquely, to slaving and the slave trade. Such euphemisms erase both the people who were enslaved, and the people who perpetrated enslavement upon them. Crucial information is missing. Who were the enslaved? Men, presumably; women, probably; children, perhaps – we do not know because the scholar does not tell us. Who were the enslavers? Men, presumably; women, possibly;[29] patrons of the arts, perhaps, or great philanthropists like the seventeenth-century British slave trader Edward Colston;[30] but we cannot tell because the scholar does not say.

29 For women slaveholders in the US South see Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). At the BCDSS, PhD researcher Giulia Cappucci investigates the female owners of enslaved women in ancient Rome.

30 Saima Nasar, "Remembering Edward Colston: Histories of Slavery, Memory, and Black Globality," *Women's History Review* 29, no. 7 (2020): 2–3 in 1–8.

Sometimes, scholars take archive documents literally in what they say about enslaved people. One text that crossed my desk contained sentences such as this: *One individual for example was forty years old and had skin of a chestnut color, which would suggest that he was a descendant of slaves from Peru.* The author made the problematic assumption that they could equate the perception of an enslaved person's skin colour as described in a pre-modern document, with that person's ethnicity, and so their geographic origin. This reduction of the enslaved person to one physical characteristic as described by an enslaver risks perpetuating assumptions of scientific racism.

By contrast, linguistic reflection about the terms employed in our archives is a way of generating additional information. The archives will never give us all the information we seek, but scrutiny and deliberation can tease out additional findings. Does the word 'girl' (*niña, fille, Mädchen* etc.) always mean a female child, or does it perhaps refer to a woman in a subaltern position? Does a slave's bill of sale refer to the same person described in a letter as a trusted servant? If we want to compare data in transnational or diachronic perspective, is it enough to assume that local categories will match across cultures, linguistic boundaries, and/or centuries?[31]

The importance of careful scrutiny of the sources is commented on by several authors in this volume. While the legalistic definition of slavery assumes clear boundaries between who is enslaved and who is not, many scholars have drawn attention to the exceedingly blurry nature of this boundary, and the great variety of conditions of strong asymmetrical dependency which defy the assumption of a clear binary. Historically situated and context-specific terminology add further fuzziness.

In her paper on the 'rescue' of abandoned girls by European missionaries in eighteenth-century China, Marina Torres describes the slippage between different terms for servitude in her sources: in the records of eighteenth-century Spanish and Portuguese missionaries, servants were most often referred as *mozo* (boy), *doméstico/a* (servant) and *criado/a* (servant), which existed alongside the labels of *esclavo/a* (slave), *fámulo* (servant in a convent) and *cautivo/a* (captive). The 'rescued' girls who are the subject of her chapter are mostly just called *criadas* (female servants), a term that could also denote an enslaved person or an indentured or a hired servant. As Torres points out, this fact makes it 'difficult to identify the girls' status'.[32]

Emma Kalb, who explores the traces left by enslaved individuals in Mughal narrative sources, points to 'a tendency towards elliptical and evasive language with regards to enslaved people, where terms utilized to label relations of asymmetrical dependency and slavery intersect with broader terminology of service, discipleship, and kinship.'[33] She discusses a paradoxical phenomenon by which the actual enslave-

31 As Sarti pointed out, in some contexts, for example, there can be 'an overlap in the conditions of wife, concubine, slave/servant and even prostitute.' Sarti, "Can Historians Speak?": 350.

32 Torres, in this volume, 56.

33 Kalb, in this volume, 125.

ment of individuals is very rarely addressed in narrative sources (as opposed to legal documents such as contracts or bills of sale), while at the same time there is a 'pervasive use of the metaphorical language of slavery to describe the loyalty and service of elite men. Thus terms that unambiguously mean slave, such as *ghulām* or *banda*, come to be used by men who are very clearly not slaves to express their devotion to the emperor.'[34]

In their investigation into enduring colonial practices in archival science, Mrinalini Luthra and Charles Jeurgens draw attention to the need to consider context-specific language use in colonial archives:

> The term *njai* is a Balinese word that signifies "sister", but during the colonial period it also referred to the concubine of a non-Indonesian. Despite its significance, a search for contemporary Dutch terms like *minnares* [mistress] or *bijvrouw* [concubine] does not yield any results for *njai*. Thus, the *Zoekintranscripties* tool inadvertently perpetuates silencing [. . .][35]

You may object that all this is nothing more than basic scholarly good practice, but attention to linguistic (and/or cultural) detail is not always a given.

By taking care not to replicate the uncaring, violent or colonializing language of the archives of dependency, we can avoid reinscribing the violence and the uncaringness, and re-humanize – at least in writing – the persons on whom names and/or categories were imposed, or who were reduced to nameless figures on a balance sheet. By reflecting on our choices and definitions of terms, and of categories of analysis, and by discussing and explaining them in our writing, we can generate more clarity – not only for our readers, but also for ourselves in our scholarly endeavour to see, to understand and to explain.

2.4 The Stumbling-Block of Translation

There was one instance in working on the papers in this volume where I felt as though I had to re-colonize academic English. In her chapter, Marina Torres investigates the (purportedly charitable) illicit activities of eighteenth-century missionaries in China, who baptised abandoned girls and raised them as Christians. In her original text, Torres described this activity with the word 'to collect'. However, the activity of 'collecting girls' sounds rather like a sinister hobby. You can collect stamps, but not living people. In my search for an alternative term I found, somewhat to my dismay, that the usual English term for the taking-in of orphans by missionaries is 'to rescue' – which carries an obvious and positive moral bias. The missionaries were probably convinced that what they did was rescuing the children, but they also took them out

34 Ibid. 125–26.

35 Luthra and Jeurgens, in this volume, 176.

of their surroundings and culture and shipped them off to the Philippines to work as servants. Many died, as Torres explains.[36] I had to choose between awkward phrasing and idiomatic but un-decolonized English. In the end, after consulting the author, I decided to use forms of the word 'rescue' in inverted commas, in order to clearly indicate a distancing from and a problematizing of this term.

3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at related issues of injustice and power in academic publishing from a perspective that is usually concealed: that of a language editor. I discussed the problem of linguistic injustice that arises through the exclusion of localized or indigenized autonomous varieties of English that are regarded as non-standard. This gives higher visibility to western viewpoints while silencing other and more diverse approaches and methods, and as a result impoverishes scholarly work. I introduced a step towards tackling this problem, i.e. a Language Policy which deprivileges the two Global North variants of English. This move has been welcomed by the majority of BCDSS researchers.

The second part of this chapter was devoted to reflections on language use, terminology and wording in the contributions in this volume. I argued that what Saidiya Hartman termed the 'afterlife' of historic injustice and violence has not yet ended in many places such as the United States, Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand, where the descendants of the enslaved or colonialized continue to face institutional violence and discrimination, and that it is therefore important to carefully reflect on language use, especially for scholars who work with archives that contain dehumanizing or essentialist terms about race, physicality, gender or culture.

I discussed the difficult balance between human compassion and scholarly objectivity in academic writing, and visibilized my own dilemmas when language-editing a text that may overexpress the writer's emotions; and reviewed the debate over the relative merits – and the academic traditions – of active and passive voice and of positionality or neutrality in academic writing. I reviewed several chapters in this volume whose authors draw attention to imprecise, context-specific, euphemistic or evasive language in their sources that can easily be misinterpreted unless closely scrutinized.

I hope that these reflections from both a practical and a theoretical perspective, and one that is not usually visible, may contribute to the process of decolonizing academic English and enhancing scholarly practice.

36 Torres, in this volume, 61.

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Records and Narratives

Mrinalini Luthra and Charles Jeurgens

Humanising Digital Archival Practice. Access to Archives Guided by Social Justice

1 Introduction

The recent apologies offered by the Dutch government regarding its involvement in slavery shed some light on the mechanisms of concealment of contested pasts. The apologies were made to the 'enslaved people in the past, everywhere in the world, who suffered as a consequence of those actions, as well as to their daughters and sons, and to all their descendants, up to the present day.'[1] The regrets were expressed at the Dutch National Archives where, as the then Prime Minister Rutte emphasised, history speaks through the millions of documents housed within this national repository, making it an ideal place to examine historical conscience. He explained that this unfortunate past has long been regarded by many Dutch people, including himself, as a closed chapter that should play no role in contemporary issues. He confessed that he had gradually come to understand that this was a flawed assumption. By dismissing a painful past as something confined to history, critical factors contributing to present-day institutional racism, exclusion and inequality were being overlooked. This hushing up and explaining away of uncomfortable and embarrassing histories is a common form of concealment. Consequently, the past never comes to rest, as its ghosts may come to the surface at any moment and continue to haunt the present.[2] Even in the discourse on slavery within the discipline of history, attention has been unevenly distributed.[3] It is only recently that awareness has grown regarding the extent of the European slavery system beyond the Atlantic world, and its pervasiveness in Asia as well.[4] Although the role of the Dutch East India Company was briefly mentioned in Rutte's apologies, the spotlight predominantly focused on the legacy of the

1 Mark Rutte, "Speech by Prime Minister Mark Rutte about the Role of the Netherlands in the History of Slavery," toespraak, Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 19.12.2022, https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2022/12/19/speech-by-prime-minister-mark-rutte-about-the-role-of-the-netherlands-in-the-history-of-slavery [accessed 12.10.2023].

2 Verne Harris, *Ghosts of Archive: Deconstructive Intersectionality and Praxis* (London: Routledge, 2020); Eelco Runia, "Burying the Dead, Creating the Past," *History and Theory* 46, no. 3 (2007): 313–25, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2007.00412.x.

3 See for instance Michael Zeuske and David Fernbach, "Historiography and Research Problems of Slavery and the Slave Trade in a Global-Historical Perspective," *International Review of Social History* 57, no. 1 (2012): 87–111, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859011000770.

4 Pepijn Brandon et al., *De Slavernij in Oost En West: Het Amsterdam-Onderzoek* (Amsterdam: Spectrum, 2020).

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https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111381831-008

transatlantic slave trade. Regrettably, contemporary countries in Asia and Africa that were affected by Dutch slavery were not directly addressed.

In this chapter, we explore the mechanisms of concealment of and access to the past. More specifically, we emphasise the role of archival institutions in providing access to their collections while considering the traumatic histories contained within them and that are carried by certain societal groups. While archival institutions claim to offer accessibility to everyone, there are ample reasons to be critical of such claims. We question the casual use of the term 'everyone' in relation to access and accessibility. What does accessibility mean? And what does accessibility truly mean, especially for individuals belonging to groups marginalised by history? We argue that when contemplating accessibility, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of victims of history, particularly when that history continues to impact people's lives in the present. Hence, we argue that it is essential to develop an accessibility framework based on the principles of social justice that unveils the various mechanisms that generate silences and brings them into the spotlight.

We consider archival institutions as interfaces between the past and the present, analysing how they structure access to colonial archives, and the interaction between the documents they hold and those seeking to engage with their content.[5] When we refer to archival interfaces, we are talking about the tools and spaces created to connect present needs with the traces of the past contained within the archive. Without wanting to be exhaustive, archival interfaces encompass the archive building, the reading room, the archivists, the inventories, the indexes, the descriptions, online spaces, retrieval methods, selection of material, etc. As such, archival interfaces thereby actively construct knowledge about the past. They serve the purpose of exposing recorded data, information, and knowledge from the past, but also function as instruments of concealment. Interfaces therefore play a significant role in determining the light shed on the documented past and how it can be traced and retrieved in the present. Understanding the power dynamics and operations of these interfaces allow us to recognize that the searchlights archivists project onto the documentary past also cast dark spots and shadows, obscuring parts of the present and the past.

Access is however not just a matter of technically and instrumentally navigating the resources of the past. It also encompasses important socio-political dimensions. Recent studies have highlighted the problematic nature of archival interfaces and tools that archival institutions employ to provide access to their collections.[6] These

5 Johanna Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Interface Theory," *Culture Machine* 12 (2011): 1–20.

6 Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Bergis Jules, "Confronting Our Failure of Care Around the Legacies of Marginalized People in the Archives," *Medium* (blog), 2016, https://medium.com/on-archivy/confronting-our-failure-of-care-around-the-legacies-of-marginalized-people-in-the-archives-dc4180397280 [accessed 11.11.2023]; Lynette Russell, "Affect in the Archive: Trauma, Grief, Delight and Texts. Some Personal Reflections," *Archives and Manuscripts* 46, no. 2 (2018): 200–207, https://doi.org/

interfaces and instruments are usually rooted in a tradition of western, white heteropatriarchal forms of knowledge production that was until recently unquestioned and taken for granted. This tradition was based on a systemic overvaluation of truth claims attributed to documentary traces. New perspectives are now being offered against this Eurocentric knowledge model.[7] Traditional archival institutions are beginning to consider how they can become more inclusive, but there is a danger that the discussion is limited to combating some of the visible symptoms that evoke disgust, without transforming the underlying structures. For instance, descendants of colonised and enslaved people who are looking for traces of their ancestors are confronted with racist and derogatory terms in search catalogues which they are forced to use if they want to find meaningful information in these archives.[8] Simply replacing the problematic terms without transforming the underlying structures does not create a decolonial, inclusive interface. Critical archival theorists denounce the power dynamics and oppressive nature of archival praxis, criticising traditional provenance-based archival professionalism for valorizing the privileged and powerful, while leaving the stories of those on the margins unheard and unacknowledged.[9] Some note with bitterness that the profession still only pursues the goal of curating the past rather than confronting it, entrenching inequality rather than eradicating it, erasing marginalised perspectives rather than ennobling them.[10] This professional attitude stems from the – erroneous – conviction that curating is primarily a technical and neutral activity. Historian Howard Zinn vehemently criticised this delusion more

10.1080/01576895.2018.1458324; J.J. Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell, "'To Go Beyond': Towards a Decolonial Archival Praxis," *Archival Science* 19, no. 2 (2019): 71–85, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-019-09311-1; Temi Odumosu, "The Crying Child: On Colonial Archives, Digitization, and Ethics of Care in the Cultural Commons," *Current Anthropology* 61, no. S22 (2020): 289–302, https://doi.org/10.1086/710062; Suze Zijlstra, *De Voormoeders. Een Verborgen Nederlands-Indische Familiegeschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Ambo Anthos, 2021); Wendy M. Duff and Verne Harris, "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings," *Archival Science* 2, no. 3 (2002): 263–85, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435625; Charles Jeurgens, "Decolonising Archives and the Need for Emotional Accessibility as Part of a Safe(r) Space," in *The Critical Visitor: Changing Heritage Practices*, vol. 3, ed. Eliza Steinbock and Hester Dibbits (Amsterdam: Printing Matters, 2023).

7 Karen S.M. Macfarlane, "How Do UK Archivists Perceive 'White Supremacy' in the UK Archives Sector?" *Archives and Records* 42, no. 3 (2021): 266–83, https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2021.1995708; Alexis Lothian and Amanda Phillips, "Can Digital Humanities Mean Transformative Critique?" *Journal of E-Media Studies* 3, no. 1 (2013), https://doi.org/10.1349/PS1.1938-6060.A.425.

8 The argument often used by archival institutions that the catalogues date from earlier times does not make the experience less painful for users.

9 Stacy Wood et al., "Mobilizing Records: Re-Framing Archival Description to Support Human Rights," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3 (2014): 397–419, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9233-1; Jessica M. Lapp, "'The Only Way We Knew How:' Provenancial Fabulation in Archives of Feminist Materials," *Archival Science* 23, no. 1 (2023): 117–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-021-09376-x.

10 Jarrett M. Drake, "I'm Leaving the Archival Profession: It's Better This Way," *Medium* (blog), 2017, https://medium.com/on-archivy/im-leaving-the-archival-profession-it-s-better-this-way-ed631c6d72fe [accessed 10.08.2023].

than forty-five years ago, arguing that abandoning this notion would not lead to the politicising of a neutral craft as many feared, but rather the 'humanising of an inevitably political craft.'[11] Critical Archival Studies situates archival work within the context of social justice, adopting a people-centred approach grounded in values such as empathy and care. It is within this framework that we present this chapter, centred on those who have been ignored, concealed, and violated within archives and archival work. This perspective informs our reflection on the mechanisms of access and concealment in a digital space.

Archives are technologies of domination that create social reality rather than simply describing it: they not only record the past but also shape our understanding of it. Recognizing this highlights the urgency of adopting a social justice-oriented approach which is based on a thorough understanding of how the records which are now in custody of the archives were produced.[12] To transform such archives into spaces of opportunity that are meaningful for the descendants of those victimised by performative administrative technologies, we require new lenses, new forms of access, and new interfaces and infrastructures based on the needs of the people involved. Through these endeavours, archives can shift from being sites of anxiety and colonial violence to spaces that contribute to community empowerment, inclusive history, and identity formation, so that they no longer exclusively serve the privileged aligned with the former archivists.

The structure of this chapter unfolds as follows: we begin by discussing the concepts of silencing and concealment, examining how scholars have reflected upon them in the context of archives and archiving. Audibility, the antithesis of silence, stands as the cornerstone of archival institutions, striving to render archives accessible. But what does true access and accessibility encompass in the face of haunting colonial legacies marked by silence and concealment? In the following section, we problematize the concept of accessibility through a concise literature review. This is followed by an analysis of three digitization projects of the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC) archives, each offering a unique form of access while raising new

11 Howard Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest," *The Midwestern Archivist* 2 (1977): 14–26.

12 Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever in South Africa," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002): 38–80; Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (2002): 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435628; Lorraine Dong et al., "Examinations of Injustice: Methods for Studying Archives in a Human Rights Context," in *Research in the Archival Multiverse*, ed. Anne J. Gilliland, Sue McKemmish and Andrew J. Lau (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2016); We also refer to the groundbreaking work of James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020) in which he shows how governments, i.e. those in power, have always tried to make a society readable by means of their schemes and categorisations, thus creating the reality with which to work. The records thus merely mirror the created reality.

questions. In this section we appraise our own project, which utilised entity recognition to identify marginalised individuals within the VOC archives. Throughout these sections, we identify opacity of the technical and methodological mediations of the archives' curators as the common thread underlying various forms of silencing. In response, we present a framework for archival practice in the final section of the chapter, which integrates technical and socio-political facets of accessibility. This framework aims to confront opacity, question existing norms, amplify silenced perspectives, and cultivate an inclusive and responsible archival practice.

2 Silencing and Concealment

The mechanism of silencing is not a one-off action that can be traced back to a single moment in time by one specific actor. Any intervention within the archive has the potential to cast new shadows or reinforce existing ones. The Records Continuum Theory in archival studies emphasises that records are never fixed, but always in a state of becoming.[13] By utilising documents in new contexts or employing new technologies that allow for diverse interpretations, the meaning of records undergoes transformation. An interesting example provided by archival scholar Eric Ketelaar is the reactivation of records created by German and Dutch authorities during World War II, initially used to document the looted property of deported Jews. After the war, these records were repurposed for processes of restitution and reparation. Subsequently, when Holocaust survivors began consulting these records, their new reading transformed them into records of traumatic experiences. This reinterpretation forever altered the archive.[14] Similarly, as societal attention shifts towards colonial legacies, the same transformative process is occurring with colonial and slavery archives. Due to the growing demand for justice from descendants of people affected by slavery and colonialism, these archives can no longer be viewed solely as historical sources devoid of political significance. Delving deeper into the structure of colonial records exposes their problematic nature, reflecting their one-sided colonial perspective, transferring their racial and power-based worldviews, along with their fallacies, into the future.[15] The impact of this cannot be underestimated, especially considering the lack of counter-voices from the marginalised population represented in the archives, as their perspectives were rarely documented or recognized by Eurocentric memory institu-

13 Frank Upward, "The Records Continuum and the Concept of an End Product," *Archives & Manuscripts* 32 (2004): 40–62.

14 Eric Ketelaar, "Recordkeeping and Societal Power," *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society* 10 (2005): 1–19.

15 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985): 247–72, https://doi.org/10.2307/2505169; Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720–1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Hyderabad, Telangana: Orient Blackswan, 2006).

tions. Philosopher Nelson Maldonado-Torres coined the term 'decolonial turn' to refer to 'an epistemic, practical, aesthetic, emotional and oftentimes spiritual repositioning of the modern/colonial subject', and so to create a world 'with symbols, relations of power, forms of being, and ways of knowing beyond modernity/coloniality.'[16] Initiatives that fit in this concept of the decolonial turn in the data and archival domains challenge the structural neglect of Indigenous and marginalised peoples' interests. For example, the acronym of the FAIR data principles, which have now been embraced worldwide, provokes resistance because of the suggestion that these principles are fair although they do not take sufficient account of Indigenous people's rights and interests. This resulted in a set of 'CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance.'[17] Recently, the Indigenous Archives Collective has published a manifesto demanding Indigenous peoples' right to reply regarding the 'inherent biases associated with record making and collecting paradigms that silence and subjugate Indigenous peoples' voices and knowledges.'[18]

A prerequisite for a decolonial attitude is 'to be able to listen to what has been silenced.'[19] Mechanisms of silencing play an important role in maintaining hegemonic, colonial forms of knowledge production. Listening to what has been silenced requires understanding of the many subtle mechanisms of silencing. In his seminal work, 'Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History', Michel-Rolph Trouillot examined the effects of selective and subjective mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of worldviews on the production of history.[20] He revealed that these selection mechanisms are deeply entrenched in power dynamics. The authority to determine what gets recorded and preserved inevitably results in the creation of silences, shaping the

16 Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Robert Cavooris, "The Decolonial Turn," in *New Approaches to Latin American Studies. Culture and Power*, ed. Juan Poblete, Culture and Power (New York: Routledge, 2017): 111–27.

17 Stephanie Russo Carroll et al., "The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance," *Data Science Journal* 19, no. 43 (2020): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.5334/dsj-2020-043.

18 "Indigenous Archives Collective Position Statement on the Right of Reply to Indigenous Knowledges and Information Held in Archives," *Indigenous Archives Collective* (blog), 09.08.2021, https://indigenousarchives.net/indigenous-archives-collective-position-statement-on-the-right-of-reply-to-indigenous-knowledges-and-information-held-in-archives/; "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD)," https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples; "ATSILIRN – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network," https://atsilirn.aiatsis.gov.au/protocols.php; "The Tandanya Declaration | Naa.Gov.Au," https://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/partnerships/international-council-archives-ica/tandanya-declaration [all accessed 02.03.2024]; Terri Janke, "True Tracks: Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Principles for Putting Self-Determination into Practice" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2019).

19 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822388999.

20 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

experiences of those subject to the prevailing power structures. Trouillot identifies four pivotal moments when selections are made and thus silences are created. The first is the moment of *fact creation* (what is (not) recorded), the second is the moment of *fact assembly* (what does (not) end up in an archive), the moment of *retrieval* (how easy (or difficult) it is to retrieve specific information from the archive), and the moment of what he called *retrospective significance*, or *the making of history* (interpretation by historians or makers of exhibitions). These are also important points at which silences are created. Trouillot emphasised the importance of investigating the mechanisms of silencing because each moment of silencing works cumulatively into the next moment of silencing, producing very skewed and one-sided histories. In that sense, mechanisms of silencing and access to the past are intrinsically intertwined.

Silencing has emerged as an important mechanism of power in shaping historical narratives, warranting comprehensive examination. Influenced by the work of Foucault and Derrida, archival scholars in recent decades have turned their focus towards the role played by archivists and archival institutions in selecting which stories receive prominence and which narratives are marginalised or overlooked.[21] Engaging with the nuances of silence and its effects, critical scholars in the humanities and arts, informed by postcolonial and feminist theories and subaltern studies, actively confront the silences within archives.[22] Prominent among their methods are reading along and reading against the grain, involving critical re-evaluation of records, deciphering their purpose, discerning omissions, and recovering marginalised voices.[23]

A very different approach is taken by Carine Zaayman in her work 'Seeing What Is Not There. Figuring The Anarchive.' She seeks to reveal the absence, rather than attempting to fill it, by shedding light on the archive's limited capacity to comprehend the past.[24] On the other hand, Saidiya Hartman advocates for 'critical fabulation', blending critical analysis of archival concealments with imaginative storytelling to envision the unverifiable void rather than giving voice to the enslaved.[25] A more radical position is taken by Ariella Azoulay, who distinguishes between the archival regime and the archive as an institution.[26] Azoulay argues that the archival regime, founded on the pro-

21 Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2001); Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (University of Chicago Press, 1996).

22 Hamilton, *Refiguring the Archive*; Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power."

23 A.L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Nathan Sowry, 'Silence, Accessibility, and Reading Against the Grain: Examining Voices of the Marginalized in the India Office Records', *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 8, no. 2 (2012).

24 Carine Zaayman, "Seeing What Is Not There: Figuring the Anarchive" (PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 2019). She uses the term 'anarchive' to refer to the 'presence' of a past which is excluded by the conventional archive.

25 Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

26 Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019).

duction of documents as weapons, categorises individuals and objects under politically crafted labels – such as 'slave', 'refugee', 'infiltrator', 'undocumented', 'work of art' or 'citizen' –, thus perpetuating the imperial condition. The archival regime made the archival institution 'thinkable'. The archive as an institution lures people by the imaginary of the archive as a historical treasury where one can read the documents, 'believing that there is such a thing as the past to which they bear witness.' Unsilencing the concealed past, according to Azoulay, necessitates unlearning the archive's ontology and recognizing its role in perpetuating imperial power.[27]

The multifaceted nature of silencing calls for a number of different perspectives that influence the strategies employed in examining and accessing the archive. By studying the mechanisms of silencing and concealment within the archive, two crucial questions arise: what does access to colonial archives truly entail, and what role do archival institutions and archivists play in relation to these mechanisms when making archives accessible?

3 Access and Accessibility

The concept of accessibility in archives is a complex and contentious one that has sparked extensive discourse. Typically approached from technical, instrumental, and legal standpoints, the discussion has only recently started considering socio-political dimensions of access and accessibility.[28] Often equated with the ability to locate information, accessibility revolves around the efforts of archivists, custodians, and librarians to organise and structure their collections. They develop tools such as inventories, indexes,

27 Stanley Wolukau-Wananbwa and Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, "On the Archive in Depth. Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism," *FOAM, International Photography Magazine*, 2021.

28 Gabrielle Blais, *Access to Archival Records: A Review of Current Issues: A RAMP Study* (Paris: UNESCO, 1995); Angelika Menne-Haritz, "Access – The Reformulation of an Archival Paradigm," *Archival Science* 1, no. 1 (2001): 57–82, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435639; Helen Tibbo and Lokman Meho, "Finding Finding Aids on the World Wide Web," *The American Archivist* 64, no. 1 (2001): 61–77, https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.64.1.r655355304263464; Eric Ketelaar, "Access, the Democratic Imperative," *Archives and Manuscripts* 34, no. 2 (2020): 62–81, https://doi.org/10.3316/ielapa.200700761; Lise Jaillant et al., "Introduction: Challenges and Prospects of Born-Digital and Digitized Archives in the Digital Humanities," *Archival Science* 22, no. 3 (2022): 285–91, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-022-09396-1; Lise Jaillant, "How Can We Make Born-Digital and Digitised Archives More Accessible? Identifying Obstacles and Solutions," *Archival Science* 22, no. 3 (2022): 417–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-022-09390-7; Ashleigh Hawkins, "Archives, Linked Data and the Digital Humanities: Increasing Access to Digitised and Born-Digital Archives via the Semantic Web," *Archival Science* 22, no. 3 (2022): 319–44, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-021-09381-0; Barbara Reed, "Reinventing Access," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 2 (2014): 123–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.926823; Wendy Duff, Barbara Craig, and Joan Cherry, "Historians' Use of Archival Sources: Promises and Pitfalls of the Digital Age," *The Public Historian* 26, no. 2 (2004): 7–22, https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2004.26.2.7.

and catalogues, aimed at guiding users through the labyrinthine shelves teeming with files and books filled with valuable data. However, it is important to recognise that these techniques of organisation and access inherently prioritise what is deemed important. It is at this point that the efforts to create access and the mechanisms of silencing converge. This is, in Olson's words, the power of archivists, librarians, and other information specialists 'to name'.[29] Naming, cataloguing, labelling and classifying are not only normative but also exclusionary activities that often lead to the marginalisation, ignoring, and silencing of individuals who (and subjects that) do not conform to established cataloguing models.[30] Marginalised communities have thus become 'captives of the archives', while the keys to those very archives remain in the hands of archivists and historians who often are themselves not members of these marginalised groups.[31] They dictate and determine what constitutes meaningful access to these sources, often under the illusion that it benefits everyone. Given this reality, it comes as no surprise that the invisibility of certain groups within mainstream archives has spurred grassroots initiatives. These community-driven endeavours seek to create and structure archives in a way that holds personal significance and meaning for those involved.[32]

Even when examined from a technical and instrumental standpoint, the accessibility of archives is a concept that is inherently relative. What may be accessible to one individual could be completely out of reach for another. Therefore, accessibility cannot be defined and dictated unilaterally by archivists or archival institutions. As Theo Thomassen emphasises, accessibility is a dynamic interplay between the interventions of archivists and the competencies of users.[33] Regrettably, the socio-cultural and psychological contexts in which accessibility is designed often go unnoticed. While archivists may believe in the impartiality of their work and the universal suitability of their archival interfaces, critical archival science increasingly challenges this professional conviction.

In the milieu of strongly asymmetrical power relations, the accessibility of archives extends beyond mere technical and instrumental aspects of searching and retrieving information. As we previously highlighted, the problematic and overtly racist language

29 Hope A. Olson, "Naming Is Power," in *The Power to Name: Locating the Limits of Subject Representation in Libraries*, ed. Hope A. Olson (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2002): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-3435-6_1.

30 Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal, *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014).

31 William T. Hagan, "Archival Captive – The American Indian," *The American Archivist* 41, no. 2 (1978): 135–42.

32 The international linked data vocabulary of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) terms can serve as an example. See "Homosaurus Vocabulary Site," https://homosaurus.org/v3 [accessed 25.03.2024].

33 Theo Thomassen, "De Veelvormigheid van de Archiefontsluiting En de Illusie van de Toegankelijkheid," *Toegang. Ontwikkelingen in de Ontsluiting van Archieven. Jaarboek* (2001): 13–43.

enforced by retrieval tools further exacerbates the issue. Under the guise of inclusiveness and diversity, archival institutions may take reparative actions, such as annotating or replacing racist terminology with more accepted terms in their retrieval tools such as inventories and catalogues.[34] However, these actions, though important, do not necessarily foster a research environment that truly engages with the perspectives of marginalised groups. Unless we question the framework underlying the collection, description, and contextualization of archives, and recognize that diverse cultural histories lead to different interpretative lenses, the archive remains a site entrenched within the centre, allowing for the persistence of aggressions.[35] Accessible archives, when viewed from a people-centred perspective, necessitate the inclusion of counter-narratives, avenues for challenging oppressive archives, and a distinction between the historical meaning of records and the ethical imperative to reevaluate interpretative frameworks in the present. Additionally, shedding light on the silences and absences within the archive – something Carine Zaayman refers to as 'figuring the anarchive' – represents a form of accessibility that remains largely unexplored but holds great potential for generating new insights.[36]

Such a perspective expands the scope of accessibility beyond the mere tools and instruments offered by archival institutions for information retrieval. It encompasses the inclusion of diverse perspectives and alternative angles that challenge dominant narratives. Disregarding the need to facilitate equitable conditions of interaction perpetuates concealment and sustains existing power imbalances. Archival institutions can no longer be mere mediators of the colonial archive; they must radically redefine their roles. Activist archival scholars like Marika Cifor, Michelle Caswell, and Jamila Ghaddar, who can be seen as representatives of the decolonial turn, argue for an archival approach rooted in 'radical empathy' and an 'ethics of care', which prioritizes those who have suffered the most from history.[37] Lauren Haberstock underscores that access encompasses intellectual, emotional, and spiritual engagement through re-

34 Kirsten Wright, "Archival Interventions and the Language We Use," in *Archives in a Changing Climate – Part I & Part II*, ed. Viviane Frings-Hessami and Fiorella Foscarini (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2022): 123–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19289-0_8; Alicia Chilcott, "Towards Protocols for Describing Racially Offensive Language in UK Public Archives," in *Archives in a Changing Climate – Part I & Part II*, ed. Viviane Frings-Hessami and Fiorella Foscarini (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2022): 151–68, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19289-0_10.

35 Robin Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited," *Museum Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (2011): 56–70, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1379.2010.01107.x; Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Negotiating Academic Literacies*, ed. Vivian Zamel and Ruth Spack (Oxford: Routledge, 1998); Anthony W. Dunbar, "Introducing Critical Race Theory to Archival Discourse: Getting the Conversation Started," *Archival Science* 6, no. 1 (2006): 109–29, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-006-9022-6.

36 Zaayman, "Seeing What Is Not There."

37 Ghaddar and Caswell, "'To Go Beyond;'" Marika Cifor, "Affecting Relations: Introducing Affect Theory to Archival Discourse," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 7–31, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-015-9261-5.

flective, meaningful, and representative content that resonates with the unique ontologies and epistemologies of diverse communities.[38] It is essential to explore the alignment between the technical and conceptual dimensions of access, envisioning their realisation within digital spaces. This imperative drives the core focus of our chapter, which we will further explore in the subsequent sections.

4 Digitization, Access, and Techno-Centrism

The world is currently caught in a whirlwind of rapid digitisation and digitalization, accompanied by the pervasive creed of techno-solutionism. This belief, which champions technology as the panacea for all societal ills, overlooks the inherent inequalities that arise from every technological advancement. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation, revolutionising remote work, digital access, and paperless organisations.[39] Dubbed the first 'data-driven pandemic', it thrust the issue of data absences and their digital representation into the public and political consciousness.[40] While the visual tools used to track the disease were praised for raising awareness, they were also criticised for hiding and continuing to perpetuate the inequality in what or who is being monitored.[41]

In this context, the rise of OpenAI's chatbot ChatGPT has garnered significant attention, as it is deployed for an array of tasks, from essay writing and paraphrasing to programming. However, like most technologies, ChatGPT suffers from limited accessibility, exacerbated by the digital divide. OpenAI employed Kenyan workers earning meagre wages to label toxic content, which was then used to enhance ChatGPT's ethical standards.[42] Furthermore, GPT-3.5 and GPT-4, the underlying language models that power ChatGPT – like other large language models (LLMs) – inherit biases from their vast and opaque training data, devoid of guaranteed diversity, effectively encoding

38 Lauren Haberstock, "Participatory Description: Decolonizing Descriptive Methodologies in Archives," *Archival Science* 20, no. 2 (2020): 125–38, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-019-09328-6.

39 Joseph Amankwah-Amoah et al., "COVID-19 and Digitalization: The Great Acceleration," *Journal of Business Research* 136 (2021): 602–11, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.08.011.

40 Alexandra Ortolja-Baird and Julianne Nyhan, "Encoding the Haunting of an Object Catalogue: On the Potential of Digital Technologies to Perpetuate or Subvert the Silence and Bias of the Early-Modern Archive1," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 37, no. 3 (2022): 844–67, https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqab065.

41 Elisabeth Beaunoyer, Sophie Dupéré, and Matthieu J. Guitton, "COVID-19 and Digital Inequalities: Reciprocal Impacts and Mitigation Strategies," *Computers in Human Behavior* 111 (2020): 106424, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106424.

42 Billy Perrigo, "OpenAI Used Kenyan Workers on Less Than $2 Per Hour to Make ChatGPT Less Toxic," *TIME*, 18.01.2023, https://time.com/6247678/openai-chatgpt-kenya-workers/ [accessed 29.04.2023].

hegemonic views and risking the entrenchment of static social perspectives.[43] These technological frameworks of information thus encode social structures, including race, gender, and labour politics, reflecting and embodying power dynamics that shape the possibilities for social change.[44]

Decolonial approaches to digital technologies challenge the prevailing techno-solutionist narrative, emphasising the need to address and rectify the imbalances and biases ingrained in these systems. Such approaches advocate for the critical examination and restructuring of training datasets of LLMs to ensure they are diverse, representative, and devoid of biases, thereby challenging hegemonic narratives. By prioritising technological pluralism, such approaches emphasise the development of AI systems that are accessible and adaptable across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, thereby bridging the digital divide. Engaging with low-resourced models becomes a pivotal strategy for promoting epistemic justice, ensuring that marginalised languages and communities are represented and empowered within the digital ecosystem.[45] Furthermore, this perspective underscores the importance of actionable and explainable AI, which not only facilitates informed decision-making and positive social change but also ensures transparency and accountability.

The cultural heritage sector is eagerly embracing technological solutions to digitise and digitalise its collections, aiming to safeguard fragile documents, reach broader audiences, and enhance accessibility. While these technical advancements are often touted as vehicles for democratising digital heritage, making it accessible to more individuals, we contend that this narrative often fails to consider how accessibility is constructed and shaped.[46] Claims of universal accessibility, exclusive focus on technical approaches such as the FAIR principles and the uncritical adoption of technologies only serve to perpetuate existing power imbalances within the digital archive.[47] In light of this, we argue that while knowledge infrastructures may seem revolutionary in organising in-

43 Emily M. Bender et al., "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big? 🦜," in *FAccT '21: Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2021): 610–23, https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445922.

44 Daniela Agostinho, Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Karen Louise Grova Søilen, "Archives That Matter: Infrastructures for Sharing Unshared Histories. An Introduction," *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Informationsvidenskab Og Kulturformidling* 8, no. 2 (2019): 1–18.

45 See for instance: "Masakhane: A Grassroots NLP Community for Africa, by Africans," 2007, https://www.masakhane.io/ [accessed 12.01.2024].

46 Joel Taylor and Laura Kate Gibson, "Digitisation, Digital Interaction and Social Media: Embedded Barriers to Democratic Heritage," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23, no. 5 (2017): 408–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2016.1171245.

47 Mark D. Wilkinson et al., "The FAIR Guiding Principles for Scientific Data Management and Stewardship," *Scientific Data* 3, no. 1 (2016): 160018, https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18; Martin Boeckhout, Gerhard A. Zielhuis and Annelien L. Bredenoord, "The FAIR Guiding Principles for Data Stewardship: Fair Enough?" *European Journal of Human Genetics* 26, no. 7 (2018): 931–36, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41431-018-0160-0.

formation and rendering traditional archival systems obsolete, they often replicate, albeit with some variations, the ideologies, knowledge frameworks, inequities, and concerns inherent in earlier archival structures.[48]

In our investigation, we focus on three digitalisation and digitisation projects centred on the testaments of the Dutch East India Company employees. Among these projects, the third one, our own endeavour, has served as a catalyst for contemplating the multitude of issues surrounding archival access and prompted the reflections we present in this chapter. Through our exploration, we shed light on the potential dangers inherent in data-driven approaches to studying archival documents. These include the reinforcement of Eurocentric, racist and gender-based biases, as well as the perpetuation of historical gaps and omissions within the digital archive.[49] Moreover, we delve into how digital methods offer opportunities to address these biases and fill the voids in the archives by incorporating materials and narratives that prioritise the experiences of the communities documented within them.[50]

To unravel the obscured histories and viewpoints embedded within various digital infrastructure projects related to the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC), we must first provide an overview of this archive and its specific sub-collection: the VOC testaments. Comprising over forty million preserved pages, the VOC archives not only bear witness to the vast colonial activities of the company, but are also one of the most comprehensive and extensive sources on early modern global history, providing a unique vantage point on the histories and cultures of Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. In our analysis, we narrow our focus to a minute fraction of these extensive archives: the surviving copies of the VOC testaments. This collection consists of around 10,000 wills (amounting to 53,370 pages) which were drafted in the VOC's Asian settlements and subsequently dispatched to the VOC headquarters in the Republic following the death of an employee.[51] These documents, which have been preserved since 1856 in the Dutch National Archives, provide a window into the lives of those connected with the VOC, revealing personal histories and connections that are otherwise obscured in the larger narrative of colonial trade and administration.

48 Agostinho, Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Søilen, "Archives That Matter"; David De Roure and Pip Willcox, "Scholarly Social Machines: A Web Science Perspective on Our Knowledge Infrastructure," in *WebSci '20: Proceedings of the 12th ACM Conference on Web Science* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2020): 250–56, https://doi.org/10.1145/3394231.3397915.

49 Nanna Thylstrup, Daniela Agostinho, Katrine Remmen Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Kristin Veel, "Infrapolitics, Archival Infrastructures and Digital Reparative Practices" in *Feminist Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman and Lisa Rhody (Champagne, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2024).

50 Roopika Risam, *New Digital Worlds: Postcolonial Digital Humanities in Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018); Jane Winters and Andrew Prescott, "Negotiating the Born-Digital: A Problem of Search," *Archives and Manuscripts* 47, no. 3 (2019): 391–403, https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2019.1640753.

51 Brandon et al., *De Slavernij in Oost En West*; Hendrik E. Niemeijer, *Batavia. De Samenleving Van Batavia In De 17De Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2016).

4.1 Digitized VOC Testaments Inventory

Until recently, the records of the VOC held by the Dutch National Archives in The Hague were exclusively available in analogue form. These documents were sorted and catalogued by various archivists and historians over different periods of time. In an effort to enhance accessibility, the inventories were digitised in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and the archival documents themselves were scanned and made accessible as online images in 2017.[52] Figure 1 provides a glimpse of the interface for accessing the VOC testaments.

However, this digitalised index, compiled by archivists in the nineteenth century, is marred by a glaring omission. While it includes the names of approximately 10,000 European male testators, it fails to include the names of female co-testators, as well as references to male and female individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds and enslaved individuals who played crucial roles as beneficiaries, partners, or witnesses in these wills. This arrangement of information reflects the enduring influence of colonialism and patriarchal dominance, illustrating how archivists develop tools that inadvertently silence the voices of marginalised individuals.[53] Fig. 2 provides further insights into these silences.

For researchers seeking to uncover the voices of the disenfranchised within the wills, they must first decipher this biased structure within the digitalised index and then engage in the arduous and time-consuming task of manually sifting through the archive's pages. It is important to note that the testaments are presented as images, which are unsearchable and require readers to possess advanced palaeography skills. As a result, the use of colonial logics in facilitating modern access to the VOC archives reinforces the colonial paradigm, limiting access to information in the records only to those who can be easily researched within the digital realm.

4.2 The Zoekintranscripties project

As archival documents undergo the process of digitization and digitalization, they are first transformed into machine-readable formats using handwritten text recognition software such as Transkribus.[54] As part of the *Zoekintranscripties* (Search in Transcriptions) project, the Dutch National Archives utilised automatic transcriptions to

52 "1.04.02 Inventaris van Het Archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602–1795 (1811) | Nationaal Archief," https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/1.04.02 [accessed. 25.03.2024].

53 Charles Jeurgens and Michael Karabinos, "Paradoxes of Curating Colonial Memory," *Archival Science* 20, no. 3 (2020): 199–220, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-020-09334-z.

54 Philip Kahle et al., "Transkribus – A Service Platform for Transcription, Recognition and Retrieval of Historical Documents," 2017, 14th IAPR International Conference on Document Analysis and Recognition (ICDAR): 19–24, https://doi.org/10.1109/ICDAR.2017.307.

digitise sections of the VOC archives.[55] With the power of free text search at their fingertips, rid of the requirement of palaeographic expertise, users can now more easily navigate the archives and uncover new insights.

Fig. 1: Example showing both the digitised index entry and corresponding scan of the original document (NA, VOC, 6847 folio number 40, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/1.04.02/invnr/6847/file/NL-HaNA_1.04.02_6847_0119).

However, it is important to recognize that a search tool alone lacks the contextual information necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the archive. Consequently, it benefits users who possess a precise understanding of the historical and contextual language used during the creation of these archives. For example, the term 'njai' is a Balinese word that signifies 'sister', but during the colonial period it also referred to the concubine of a non-Indonesian.[56] Despite its significance, a search for contemporary Dutch terms like 'minnares' [mistress] or 'bijvrouw' [concubine] does not yield any results for 'njai'. Thus, the *Zoekintranscripties* tool inadvertently perpet-

55 See "Zoeken in transcripties," Nationaal Archief, https://zoekintranscripties.nl/ [accessed 25.03.2024]. This platform is a is a vital component of the National Archoves' broader digitization initiative, "De ijsberg zichtbaar maken," Noord-Hollands Archief, https://noord-hollandsarchief.nl/ontdekken/nhalab/ijsberg-zichtbaar-maken [accessed 25.03.2024].

56 "Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia," in *Indonesian Dictionary* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2011).

uates silencing and primarily facilitates research on topics that are already known, favouring users who possess pre-existing knowledge of the archives.[57]

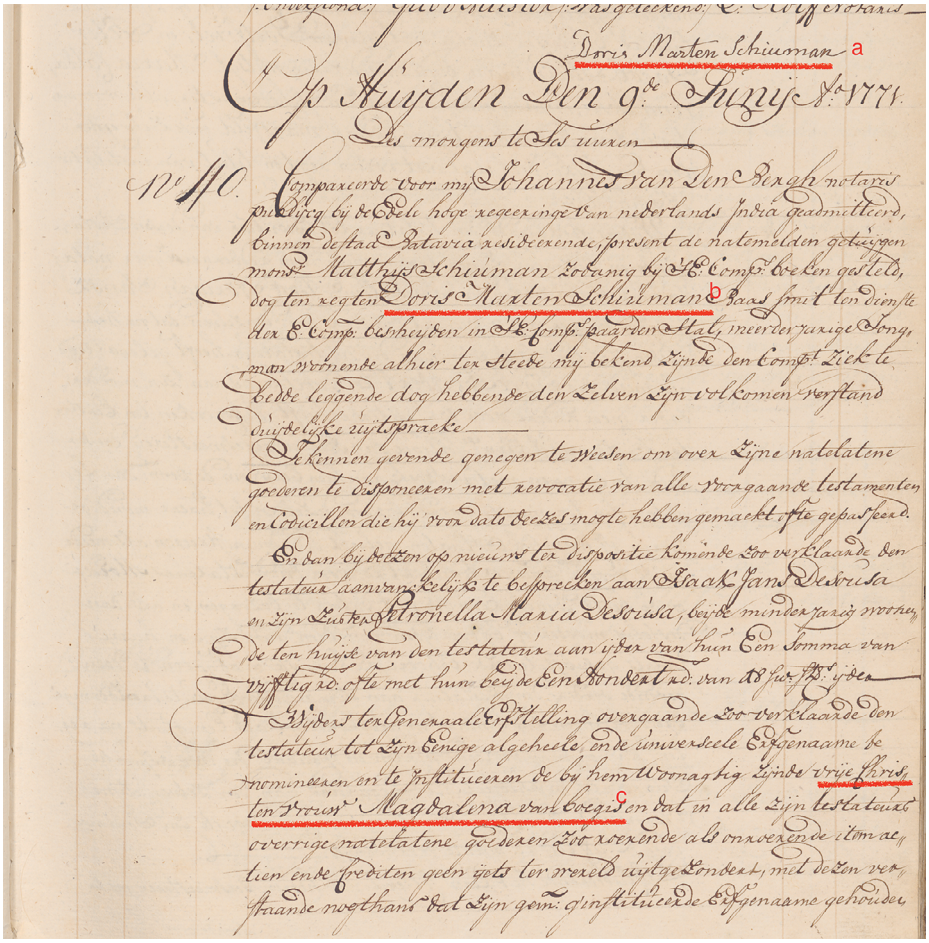

Fig. 2: Silences in the historic index; a: 19th century index; b: Testator: only his name is indexed; c: "Free Christian woman Magdalena van Boegis" is present in the document but not findable via the digitised index (NA, VOC, 6847 folio number 40, https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/1.04.02/invnr/6847/file/NL-HaNA_1.04.02_6847_0119).

57 It is also important here to note the imposition of binary gender identities by colonisers on local populations. See for instance Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–75, https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376; Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis?" *Diogenes* 57, no. 1 (2010): 7–14, https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192110369316; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Petsy Jessy Ismoyo, "Decolonising Gender Identities in Indonesia: A Study of Bissue 'the Trans-Religious

While the availability of searchable documents online has significant advantages for interested individuals who have the means to access these colonial archives, it is crucial to acknowledge that colonial archives are painful and contested legacies, particularly for descendants of marginalised communities. The use of these search techniques creates new forms of injustice. People who wish to explore the archives through text-searchable technology not only encounter painful and racist language while reading the documents but are now also compelled to input offensive search terms themselves in order to trace any mentions of their ancestors.

4.3 Unsilencing Colonial Archives

Digitalisation encompasses more than the conversion of physical objects into digital format.[58] It also involves the inclusion of metadata, which provides context and enables effective searchability within the digital archive. This metadata can take various forms, such as connecting archival pages with historic inventories and highlighting important information like document length, authorship, problematic language, and specific subjects addressed in the document.

In our previous project *Unsilencing Colonial Archives*, we attempted to extend accessibility to the VOC testaments through content-based indexing, enabling visitors of the archive to navigate the collection across individual records and groups within the archive while allowing for the allure of full-text search.[59] Our primary objective was to create a framework for a search tool that would enable visitors of the archives to locate historically marginalised persons in the VOC testaments. Informed by careful close reading of the archive, we discovered that historically marginalised persons were often referenced without name, rendering a name index insufficient to uncover their presence. Instead, we developed a content-based indexing approach that enables the archival visitor to search for persons or groups through categories such as gender, notarial role, and legal status. To create this content-based indexing, we designed fit-for-purpose annotation typology and adapted existing natural language processing models for automatically recognising and classifying parts of texts, enabling them to 'unsilence' absences in the archival finding aid.

Leader' in Bugis People," *Paradigma: Jurnal Kajian Budaya* 10, no. 3 (2020): 277, https://doi.org/10.17510/paradigma.v10i3.404.

58 K. Rijswijk et al., "Digital Transformation: Ongoing Digitisation and Digitalisation Processes," September 2020, https://research.wur.nl/en/publications/digital-transformation-ongoing-digitisation-and-digitalisation-pr [accessed 24.03.2024]; Marisa Enhuber, "Art, Space and Technology: How the Digitisation and Digitalisation of Art Space Affect the Consumption of Art – a Critical Approach," *Digital Creativity* 26, no. 2 (2015): 121–37, https://doi.org/10.1080/14626268.2015.1035448; Abby Smith Rumsey, *Why Digitize?* (Washington, D.C: Council on Library and Information Resources, 1999).

59 Mrinalini Luthra et al., "Unsilencing Colonial Archives via Automated Entity Recognition," *Journal of Documentation* (ahead-of-print, 31.01.2023), https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-02-2022-0038.

However, the proposed method of 'unsilencing' archival records may also be viewed as problematic, potentially leading to new and questionable categorizations. Achieving a respectful expansion of access to colonial records will require ongoing dialogue among archivists, scholars, governments, the public, source communities, and descendants of historically marginalised groups. Furthermore, the deployment of opaque algorithms in such endeavours carries inherent biases, shaped by datasets that might not equitably represent all communities. Despite our concerted efforts to mitigate these biases within our project, the establishment of access frameworks utilising such methodologies necessitates a detailed scrutiny of the outcomes produced by these machine learning models, ensuring they align with principles of fairness and inclusivity.[60]

5 Ethics of Practice for Digital Archives

In our exploration thus far, we have uncovered the silences and absences within archives, search tools, ontologies, policies, and digital technologies, all stemming from a common denominator: opacity.[61] Archivists, in their pursuit of access, have fixated on technical remedies, inadvertently perpetuating layers of silencing and concealment. The weight of these absences determines which narratives are inscribed and which remain shrouded, ultimately shaping the boundaries of social action and transformative potential.[62]

To address the issues of concealment and opacity within archival infrastructures, we advocate for the development of an ethics-based accessibility framework firmly grounded in the enduring principles of social justice. This framework seeks to illuminate and dissect the intricate mechanisms responsible for generating silences within archives and moulding the narratives that shape our understanding of history. While our approach encompasses both the socio and technical facets of archival infrastructures and knowledge systems, we emphatically contend that the phenomenon of silencing is

60 Eun Seo Jo and Timnit Gebru, "Lessons from Archives: Strategies for Collecting Sociocultural Data in Machine Learning," in *FAT* '20. Proceedings of the 2020 Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2020): 306–16, https://doi.org/10.1145/3351095.3372829.

61 Nanna Bonde Thylstrup, *The Politics of Mass Digitization* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019); Risam, *New Digital Worlds*; Marlene Manoff, "Mapping Archival Silence: Technology and the Historical Record," 2016, https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/mla:1023/ [accessed 14.08.2024]; Mar Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2017).

62 Paul Fyfe, "An Archaeology of Victorian Newspapers," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 49, no. 4 (2016): 546–77; Bonnie Mak, "Archaeology of a Digitization," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 65, no. 8 (2014): 1515–26; Sandra Gabriele, "Transfiguring the Newspaper: From Paper to Microfilm to Database," Amodern 2: Network Archaeology, 2013; Thylstrup et al., "Infrapolitics, Archival Infrastructures and Digital Reparative Practices."

predominantly a social construct – a reflection of historical imbalances of power, privilege, and marginalisation.[63]

This framework is further enriched by incorporating the CARE principles for Indigenous data governance – Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics – ensuring that archival practices do not merely serve as repositories of information but as active participants in social justice and community empowerment.[64] This framework encompasses i) the *Mission Statement* to commit archival practice to supporting social justice and collective benefit, honouring the authority of communities over their narratives, and upholding ethical responsibility to those represented in the archives; ii) disclosure of *Positionality*, in an effort to acknowledge the inherent subjectivity of archival practitioners, foster greater diversity within archival institutions, and respect the authority of indigenous and marginalised communities over their historical narratives; iii) the *Participatory Archive* to get more diverse and critical perspectives into the archive, empower communities through co-creation of the historical narrative, while dismantling centralised power; iv) reflexivity about *Power and Governance*, cultivating self-awareness, responsibility, and accountability in order to challenge entrenched hierarchies; and v) efforts towards creating *Transparency*, with a focus on ethics and responsibility, that acts as a prism that refracts rays of light onto the archival landscape, revealing its inner workings and intentions. By weaving together these ethical strands, we may unravel the intricacies of power dynamics, fostering a more inclusive and responsible archival practice.

5.1 Mission Statements

While mission statements are common practice in the archival discipline, most have uncritical and non-obligatory statements such as 'archives for everyone', 'institutions of collective memory', 'the inclusive archive', or 'the disruptive archive'.[65] We must, however, strive to go beyond mere rhetoric and actively interrogate the power dynamics, biases, and exclusions present within these statements to create mission statements that truly

63 Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2010).

64 Carroll et al., "The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance"; "Working with the CARE Principles: Operationalising Indigenous Data Governance," https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/blog/care-principles-operationalising-indigenous-data-governance/ [accessed 24.02.2024].

65 In a series of round-table discussions on the theme of 'decolonising archives', the Dutch National Archives were advised to reformulate their mission statement to avoid statements such as 'we are there for everyone' and acknowledge their function as a governmental archive, as opposed to a body of collective memory. For the report of these round-table discussions see Dutch National Archives, "Round-Table Discussions: Decolonisation of Archives," 2020.

embody our commitment to social justice.[66] A well-crafted mission statement ensures that archives actively collect and organise materials related to specific concepts, topics, or demographic groups. It guides decision-making processes, including acquisition, processing, and access, allowing archivists to prioritise their work and remain accountable to the communities they serve.[67]

The temptation to prioritise technological innovation and expansive datasets can dominate digital archival projects, potentially sidelining critical engagement with historical biases. For instance, the GLOBALISE project, which seeks to enhance access to VOC archives through semantic and historic contextualisation, illustrates the risks of relying solely on existing technologies and data.[68] This approach might inadvertently maintain the focus on traditional Dutch historiography, emphasising trade and European perspectives while neglecting the broader, more complex narratives of colonial impact and non-European involvement. GLOBALISE addresses these challenges by adopting a mission statement that mandates a broader historical view, aiming to correct historiographical biases and ensure the inclusion of varied perspectives, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive and representative understanding of the VOC's legacy.

Advocating for social justice within archival mission statements necessitates a focus on the narratives and experiences of marginalised and oppressed groups within archival practices. This approach draws on Susan Leigh Star's concept of 'infrastructural inversion', which reveals the infrastructure's workings and failures only upon breakdown, offering insights into how diverse communities interact with and are served by these systems.[69] Postcolonial critiques extend this, showing that for those beyond hegemonic realms, these breakdowns and vulnerabilities are not merely inci-

66 Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

67 In 1972, at a pivotal conference in Santiago de Chile titled 'The Importance and Development of Museums in the Contemporary World', a groundbreaking concept emerged, leading to what is known as the Declaration of the Round Table of Santiago (UNESCO, 1973). This declaration introduced the concept of the *Museo Integral* or *Integrado* ('integral' or 'integrated museum'), a notion that revolutionised both how museums are perceived and their role in society. Defined as institutions inextricably linked to the fabric of society, these museums aim to foster community awareness and engagement. They serve as bridges between the past and the present, encouraging reflection on historical trajectories that shape current realities. By engaging with societal changes and inspiring action, these museums embody a dynamic social function. The enduring debate on the social role of museums which was sparked by this declaration remains a critical discussion in museum studies. See Cristóbal Bize Vivanco, "Sobre la Mesa de Santiago de 1972 y la función social del museo en la actualidad," *ICOFOM Study Series* 50–51 (2022): 51–66, https://doi.org/10.4000/iss.4114.

68 Lodewijk Petram and Matthias van Rossum, "Transforming Historical Research Practices – a Digital Infrastructure for the VOC Archives (GLOBALISE)," *International Journal of Maritime History* 34, no. 3 (2022): 494–502, https://doi.org/10.1177/08438714221112873.

69 Susan Leigh Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure," *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 3 (1999): 377–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/00027649921955326; Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2000).

dental, but central to understanding how infrastructures perpetuate exclusion.[70] Similarly, Sandra Harding's standpoint theory argues that insights from marginalised and oppressed perspectives can yield more accurate and comprehensive understandings of the world, challenging dominant narratives and revealing overlooked nuances.[71] Additionally, the expertise surrounding subaltern groups and decolonisation narratives increasingly resides outside the Global North, challenging the conventional knowledge infrastructure that often hinders technological development.[72] The Global North's tendency to overlook a wide range of indigenous technologies, which rarely penetrate Anglo-Western academic spaces, emphasises the importance of recognizing and integrating diverse knowledge systems and technologies in archival practices, moving beyond western-centric paradigms.

Therefore, embedding a commitment to these perspectives in mission statements is not just an ethical imperative but a methodological one, ensuring archives serve as tools for social justice by illuminating and addressing the biases and assumptions that have historically shaped their collections and practices. This reinforces the critical role of mission statements in guiding archival institutions towards more inclusive, representative, and socially responsive approaches.

5.2 Positionality

Positionality, rooted in Sandra Harding's standpoint theory, emphasises how an individual's social circumstances influence their knowledge and actions.[73] This includes factors such as gender, race, class, culture, education, and status, all of which contribute to a person's unique standpoint within society. Furthermore, an intersectional perspective highlights the intricate interplay of these factors which together influence the distribution of social privilege and disadvantage.[74]

In this context, positionality challenges the conventional belief in objective and absolute truths in scientific research. It recognizes that scientific knowledge is constructed within the 'webs of differential positioning' and shaped by an individual's subjective and embodied experiences.[75] Instead of attempting to erase subjectivities

70 Nikhil Anand, "Accretion," Society for Cultural Anthropology, The Infrastructure Toolbox, 24.09.2015, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/accretion [accessed 14.08.2024].

71 Sandra Harding, "How Standpoint Methodology Informs Philosophy of Social Science," in *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, 2003): 291–310.

72 Jennifer O'Neal, "'The Right to Know': Decolonizing Native American Archives," *Journal of Western Archives* 6, no. 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.26077/fc99-b022.

73 Harding, "How Standpoint Methodology Informs Philosophy of Social Science."

74 Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *The Public Nature of Private Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

75 Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in *Feminist Theory Reader*, 5th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020).

as biases, feminist epistemologists advocate for acknowledging and considering these subjectivities in the research process. This approach promotes a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the world by honestly acknowledging the partiality of our knowledge.[76] Embracing positionality, as Donna Haraway puts it, makes us 'answerable for what we learn how to see.'[77]

When applied to archival practices, positionality compels archivists to critically examine their own perspectives and assumptions based on personal experiences. It encourages them to explore the potential and limitations of their expertise, fostering a more inclusive and accountable approach to their work. Additionally, archivists must remain mindful of the identities of data subjects, partners, and stakeholders, understanding how these identities intersect with issues of privilege and disadvantage.

The connection between mission statements and positionality lies in their shared commitment to enhancing archival practices. Mission statements guide archivists in framing their overarching goals, emphasising the importance of social justice, representation, and accountability within their institutions. Positionality informs the practical and ethical considerations necessary to achieve these objectives. By recognizing the influence of positionality and integrating it into the archival process, archivists can ensure that their practices align with the mission of promoting a more just, representative, and accountable archival system.

5.3 The Participatory Archive

The shift towards recognizing and embracing positionality within archival practices is closely tied to the concept of participatory archives, often referred to as 'Archives 2.0'.[78] This shift has been influenced by the capabilities of Web 2.0 technology, which enables greater accessibility, interactivity, and collaboration within archival con-

76 Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity'?" in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, 1993): 49–81; Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*.

77 Haraway, "Situated Knowledges": 583.

78 Andrew Flinn, "'A Frontal Attack on Professionalism, Standards and Scholarship'? Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge," NCRM, Manchester, 2009, https://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/id/eprint/4731 [accessed 14.08.2024]; Joy Palmer, "Archives 2.0: If We Build It, Will They Come?" NCRM, Manchester, 2009, https://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/id/eprint/4740/ [accessed 14.08.2024].; Elizabeth Yakel, "Who Represents the Past? Archives, Records, and the Social Web," in *Controling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011): 257–78; Livia Iacovino, "Shaping and Reshaping Cultural Identity and Memory: Maximising Human Rights through a Participatory Archive," *Archives and Manuscripts* 43, no. 1 (2015): 29–41, https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.

texts.[79] However, in many digital archives users are restricted to a passive, read-only experience, adhering to the rules set by the archival institution.

One prevalent form of participation in archives, increasingly common in the digital era, is citizen science approaches such as crowdsourcing for annotations and transcriptions. However, it is essential to acknowledge that such user participation often takes place after foundational assumptions and frameworks have already been established, potentially limiting the participants' agency within existing structures.[80] To authentically involve diverse perspectives in the archival process, it is imperative to engage them in the research design phase. Participants should not be limited to contributing content but should also have the agency to shape the tools and data used.[81] Such an approach promotes distributed curation and empowers participants and communities to actively shape interpretations and cultural meanings, thereby addressing issues related to marginalisation, representation, and power dynamics within archives.[82] Moreover, it promotes representational belonging and aligns with the overarching mission of social justice within archival practices.[83]

An exemplary illustration of a participatory archive that embodies principles of genuine engagement is the Reciprocal Research Network (RRN).[84] Established in 2010, the RRN is an online research community which facilitates collaboration among users across geographies to study cultural objects from the Northwest Coast of British Columbia that are held by multiple institutions around the world. Developed as part of the Museum of Anthropology's 'A Partnership of Peoples' project, the RRN was co-created with three First Nations organisations: the Musqueam Indian Band, the Stó:lō

961491; Kate Theimer, "What Is the Meaning of Archives 2.0?" *The American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 58–68, https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.74.1.h7tn4m4027407666.

79 Darcy DiNucci, "Design & New Media: Fragmented Future-Web Development Faces a Process of Mitosis, Mutation, and Natural Selection," *PRINT-NEW YORK* 53 (1999): 32–35; Daniel Lewis, 'What Is Web 2.0?', *XRDS: Crossroads, The ACM Magazine for Students* 13, no. 1 (2006): 3; Graham Cormode and Balachander Krishnamurthy, "Key Differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0," *First Monday* 13, no. 6 (2008).

80 Luigina Ciolfi, "Social Traces: Participation and the Creation of Shared Heritage," in *Heritage and Social Media*, ed. Elisa Siaccari (Oxford, New York: Routledge, 2012); Ortolja-Baird and Nyhan, "Encoding the Haunting of an Object Catalogue."

81 Alexandra Eveleigh and Mia Ridge, "Crowding Out the Archivist? Locating Crowdsourcing within the Broader Landscape of Participatory Archives," in *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2014); Isto Huvila, "Participatory Archive: Towards Decentralised Curation, Radical User Orientation, and Broader Contextualisation of Records Management," *Archival Science* 8, no. 1 (2008): 15–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-008-9071-0.

82 Eveleigh and Ridge, "Crowding Out the Archivist?"; Yakel, "Who Represents the Past?"

83 Ricardo L. Punzalan and Michelle Caswell, "Critical Directions for Archival Approaches to Social Justice," *The Library Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2016): 25–42, https://doi.org/10.1086/684145.

84 "RRN," https://www.rrncommunity.org/ [accessed 24.03.2024].

Nation, and the U'mista Cultural Society.[85] Through the RRN, users are empowered to contribute their own descriptions, tags, and links, and even initiate their unique 'Projects'. These Projects grant users the freedom to select items based on their criteria and control access levels. The RRN's flexibility allows for additional information about objects, open discussions, and annotations on cultural heritage items. This exemplifies the spirit of participatory archives, enabling inclusive research, diverse perspectives, and collaborative knowledge building.

In conclusion, the integration of participatory archives into the archival mission statement, guided by an awareness of positionality, represents a vital step toward realising inclusive and accountable archival practices. However, the concept of true 'participation' raises questions about power and governance within these collaborative endeavours. How can we ensure that participation is not a form of extraction but a genuinely inclusive and empowering process for all stakeholders? This challenge leads us to the discussion of power dynamics and governance within archival institutions.

5.4 Power and Governance

Building upon our discussion of participatory archives, it is essential to remain vigilant about potential pitfalls in the pursuit of true participation.[86] The concept of diversity in the archive without genuine inclusion can lead to what has been termed 'participatory washing'.[87] As Sherry Arnstein remarked in her landmark article 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation':

> [P]articipation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but it makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo.[88]

85 Susan Rowley, "The Reciprocal Research Network: The Development Process," *Museum Anthropology Review* 7, no. 1–2 (2013): 22–43; Susan Rowley, Nicholas Jakobsen, and Ryan Wallace, "The Reciprocal Research Network," Provenienzforschung zu ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit Positionen in der aktuellen Debatte, Elektronische Publikation zur Tagung 'Provenienzforschung in ethnologischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit', Museum Fünf Kontinente, München, 7./8.04.2017, ed. Larissa Förster, Iris Edenheiser, Sarah Fründt and Heike Hartmann (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2018).

86 Participatory methods were employed in the colonial context, often as a means of legitimising colonial rule, gathering information, or co-opting local elites into collaborating with colonial powers. See for instance: "The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa – 1st Edition – Lord Frede," https://www.routledge.com/The-Dual-Mandate-in-British-Tropical-Africa/Lugard/p/book/9780415760706 [accessed 21.07.2023].

87 Toyin Falola, "Writing and Teaching National History in Africa in an Era of Global History," *Africa Spectrum* 40, no. 3 (2005): 499–519.

88 Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969): 216–24, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225.

The journey towards genuine inclusivity within archives necessitates more than mere participation; it requires a radical redistribution of power. Drawing from insights across various fields, 'Data Feminism' presents a compelling argument for distinguishing between equality and equity.[89] Equity involves recognizing disparities and allocating resources to actively address and aim to eliminate them, tailoring our engagement strategies to empower communities effectively. This means creating spaces where marginalised voices are not only heard but are also given precedence, ensuring that their narratives and perspectives shape the archival narrative.[90] Furthermore it necessitates power and resource redistribution such as allocation of funds and decision-making authority to marginalised communities.

The CARE principles for Indigenous data governance emphasise the right of Indigenous communities to control and manage their cultural data, moving beyond superficial participation to ensure genuine influence on how their data is curated, preserved, and shared.[91] This approach necessitates a shift from traditional methodologies to practices that prioritise Indigenous sovereignty over cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the concept of the Colonial Matrix of Power compels us to identify and challenge the ways in which colonial legacies continue to shape who controls knowledge and whose histories are prioritised.[92] In the context of decolonizing archival practices, this means actively working to dismantle the structures and norms that perpetuate the dominance of western narratives and methodologies.[93]

In conclusion, the pillars of mission statement, positionality, participatory archive, and power and governance lay the groundwork for ethical archival practices, emphasising inclusivity, equity, and responsiveness. Yet, to ensure the integrity of these principles, we must turn our attention to the vital fifth pillar: transparency. Transparency serves as the bridge that connects our ethical aspirations with actionable accountability and oversight.

5.5 Transparency

The policies, practices, and politics underlying (digital) archival infrastructure are often concealed from view, creating the misconception that digital archives are neu-

89 Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein, *Data Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2020).

90 Mimi Onuoha, "The Point of Collection," Data & Society: Points (blog), 2016.

91 Carroll et al., "The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance."

92 Walter Mignolo, "The Colonial Matrix of Power," in *Talking About Global Inequality: Personal Experiences and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Christian Olaf Christiansen et al. (Cham: Springer International, 2023): 39–46, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-08042-5_5.

93 Margarita Boenig-Liptsin, Anissa Tanweer and Ari Edmundson, "Data Science Ethos Lifecycle: Interplay of Ethical Thinking and Data Science Practice," *Journal of Statistics and Data Science Education* 30, no. 3 (2022): 228–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/26939169.2022.2089411.

tral.[94] However, to responsibly and effectively use an archive, one must understand its origins, development, purpose, and ethical considerations.[95] Digital archives have evolved into hubs of knowledge creation, policy formation, and social advocacy. Consequently, the choices regarding what to include or exclude and who can access these archives carry profound significance.[96] Cultivating transparency frameworks for scholarly inquiry into digital cultural heritage materials becomes essential to ensure rigorous and ethical use of these collections in the pursuit of knowledge and social justice.[97]

DTransparency documentation plays a key role in addressing the 'social or relational aspects of infrastructure.'[98] It provides structured summaries of both observable and unobservable aspects of an archive gathered over its lifecycle, along with explanations, rationales, and instructions about its creation, curation, representation, and use. By offering context and information not directly inferable from the archive itself, transparency documentation promotes accountability and audibility. It enables non-traditional stakeholders from various fields to understand archival access and make informed decisions, as well as serving as a roadmap for designing digital archival infrastructures.

In this pursuit of transparency, the Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System (OAIS) serves as a useful framework.[99] OAIS provides a structured approach to digitalisation, emphasising the importance of clear mission statements, provenance, authenticity, and access policies. Its principles resonate deeply with our endeavour to demystify digital archives and foster accountability within archival practices. From a sociotechnical perspective and drawing upon the OAIS framework, the following components are pivotal to comprehensive transparency in archival practices:

1. **Ethical Guidelines and Mission Statement:** Developing and adhering to ethical guidelines and clear mission statements, respecting the interests of inclusivity and social justice, and taking into account potential impacts on marginalised communities and privacy concerns. These principles are in line with the preservation aspect of OAIS, ensuring that the digital archive's content and access policies adhere to ethical standards.
2. **Curation Rationale:** Detailing the selection criteria and explaining the lenses, datasets, and ontologies used in curating the digital archive, offering insights into

94 Gabriele, "Transfiguring the Newspaper."

95 Fyfe, "An Archaeology of Victorian Newspapers"; Mak, "Archaeology of a Digitization."

96 Nanna Bonde Thylstrup et al., "Infrapolitics, Archival Infrastructures and Digital Reparative Practices," 2024.

97 Tessa Hauswedell et al., "Of Global Reach yet of Situated Contexts: An Examination of the Implicit and Explicit Selection Criteria That Shape Digital Archives of Historical Newspapers," *Archival Science* 20, no. 2 (2020): 139–65, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-020-09332-1.

98 Deb Verhoeven, "As Luck Would Have It. Serendipity and Solace in Digital Research Infrastructure," *Feminist Media Histories* 2, no. 1 (2016): 7–28, https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2016.2.1.7.

99 Christopher A. Lee, "Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model," in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, ed. Marcia J. Bates and Mary Niles Maack, 3 (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2009): 4020–30, https://doi.org/10.1081/E-ELIS3-120044377.

the decision-making process. This aligns with the ingest aspect of OAIS, which involves the process of collecting and organising digital content.

3. **Technical Documentation and Evaluation:** Making technical processes, algorithms, and limitations transparent, including documentation of ground truth creation, annotator information, datasets, model creation, and potential biases.[100] Conducting critical assessments to ensure the integrity of the archival data. These aspects correspond to the data management and administration aspects of OAIS, focusing on managing and validating the archive's content and technical aspects.
4. **Positionality, Stakeholder Involvement, and User Interactivity:** Communicating the composition and positionality of infrastructure creators, acknowledging funding bodies, internal and advisory boards, and involving users in shaping the development and governance of the digital infrastructure. Informing users about data tracking and moderation policies in participatory archives to promote transparency. These aspects align with the administration and access aspects of OAIS, emphasising stakeholder involvement and user guidance for transparent interactions.

This comprehensive transparency approach, aligned with ethical principles, ensures that digital archives are more accessible, accountable, and responsive to the needs of diverse communities, ultimately advancing the ethical framework for archival practitioners. It bridges the gap between the concealed policies and practices of archival infrastructure and the ethical responsibility of archivists to create inclusive and just repositories of cultural heritage.

6 Conclusion and Future Work

In this work, we have proposed an ethics-based accessibility framework to address the issues of concealment and opacity within (digital) archival infrastructures. This framework is firmly rooted in the principles of social justice and aims to address mechanisms responsible for silencing within archives. While our approach encompasses both the

100 Emily M. Bender and Batya Friedman, "Data Statements for Natural Language Processing: Toward Mitigating System Bias and Enabling Better Science," *Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics* 6 (2018): 587–604, https://doi.org/10.1162/tacl_a_00041; Timnit Gebru et al., "Datasheets for Datasets," *Communications of the ACM* 64, no. 12 (2021): 86–92, https://doi.org/10.1145/3458723; Mahima Pushkarna, Andrew Zaldivar and Oddur Kjartansson, "Data Cards: Purposeful and Transparent Dataset Documentation for Responsible AI," in *FAccT '22: Proceedings of the 2022 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2022): 1776–826, https://doi.org/10.1145/3531146.3533231; Mihir Parmar et al., "Don't Blame the Annotator: Bias Already Starts in the Annotation Instructions," arXiv, 06.02.2023, https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2205.00415; Roberto Navigli, Simone Conia and Björn Ross, "Biases in Large Language Models: Origins, Inventory, and Discussion," *Journal of Data and Information Quality* 15, no. 2 (2023): 10:1–10:21, https://doi.org/10.1145/3597307.

socio and technical facets of archival infrastructures and knowledge systems, we have argued that the phenomenon of silencing is predominantly a social construct – a reflection of historical imbalances of power, privilege, and marginalisation.

Our framework consists of five pillars: mission statements, positionality, participatory archives, power and governance, and transparency. Together, these pillars promote inclusivity, recognition of diverse perspectives, challenge power imbalances, amplify marginalised voices, and enhance the visibility of the workings of archives. This framework thus provides a structured approach to reorganise the practices and politics of archivists, enabling them to address the mechanisms that create silences and concealments in the archives.

However, we recognize that our proposed framework is not a panacea and is only a partial intervention. As archival institutions, many of which are situated in the Global North, continue to grapple with structural inequalities, questions about the possibility of radically overturning colonial infrastructures and logics persist. The ongoing tension between decolonising existing archives and building new ones challenges our efforts to create more equitable systems within the confines of historically oppressive infrastructures.[101]

Looking beyond digital archives, the implications of our framework extend to other disciplines, particularly data science and AI.[102] As enthusiasm grows for learning from the archival discipline, particularly in issues such as provenance, it is crucial to approach these efforts with caution, recognizing the colonial perspectives and praxis that continue to haunt its practices.[103] In sharing our work, we hope that it may serve as a word of caution, reminding researchers and practitioners of the historical entanglements and biases that shape archival practice.

Moving forward, our proposed framework opens avenues for future research. We see immense potential in exploring participatory archives, developing ethics codes and guidelines for digital colonial archival infrastructures, and addressing offensive terminology within archives. Furthermore, we are committed to making transparency an actionable feature rather than a mere assertion. With this in mind, we aim to formulate design principles that foster transparent and contextual archival infrastructures.

In closing, as we reflect on the path ahead, we are reminded of the profound quote: ‘While some of us debate what history is or was, others take it into their own

101 Françoise Vergès, “Memories of Struggles and Visual/Sonic Archives,” paper held at the symposium ‘Archival Encounters. Colonial Archives, Care and Social Justice’, University of Copenhagen, 14.05.2019.

102 Amy L. Hawn Nelson and Sharon Zanti, “A Framework for Centering Racial Equity throughout the Administrative Data Life Cycle,” *International Journal of Population Data Science* 5, no. 3 (2020): 1367, https://doi.org/10.23889/ijpds.v5i3.1367; Ruha Benjamin, *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (Cambridge: John Wiley & Sons, 2019); D’ignazio and Klein, *Data Feminism*.

103 Jo and Gebru, “Lessons from Archives.”

hands.'[104] This serves as a powerful call to action, urging us to embrace our responsibility as custodians of history and wield our archival practices with empathy, responsibility, and dedication to the pursuit of truth and justice.

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Bastiaan Nugteren

Outside the Colonial Microscopic Lens: Invisibilized Chinese Labor Migrants in Dutch and British Colonial Southeast Asia, 1870–1914

Fig. 1: Yip Yew Chong's Thiang Hock Keng Mural (2017) on Amoy Street, Singapore. Picture by author.[1]

When one walks today through Amoy Street in the Chinatown neighborhood of Singapore and is not too distracted by the imposing skyline of modern high-rise buildings of banks and financial firms arching the Boat Quay, one will find – often hidden behind parked cars or trucks – an impressive mural painted by the Singaporean street artist Yip Yew Chong in 2017 (see Fig. 1). Spread along the back wall of the Thiang

1 For more information on this mural, or his other works that express the daily life and history of Singapore from the perspective of Chinese and other Asian citizens, see Yip Yew Chong's website: https://yipyc.com/ [accessed 12.02.2023].

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Hock Keng temple, this mural tells the history of Singapore through the eyes of its Chinese settlers. From right to left, it shows their departure from the southern ports of China and takes the viewer along in a chronological narrative depicting various historical scenes, such as the Chinese celebrating intercultural contacts with Malays and Indian settlers, the building of a new Singaporean nation-state in the 1960s and 1970s, and finally, the creation of a wealthy port city scattered with skyscrapers, the very same skyline the viewer sees when looking up from the mural.

Throughout the historical narrative displayed in this artwork, the Chinese contribution to the history of Singapore is a central feature. This artwork is therefore an obvious attempt to criticize the often dominant British colonial narratives of the founding and development of Singapore by Stamford Raffles and succeeding British governors. In doing so, the mural emphasizes the contribution of Chinese settlers to the economic success of this Southeast Asian port city. It can therefore hardly be called a coincidence that this mural was created just two years before Singapore's bicentennial anniversary in 2019, a contested date as it follows the classical British origin stories of Singapore. But neither is it a coincidence that the artist Yip Yew Chong made an extensive effort to portray the hardships that Chinese settlers faced in Singapore. In various scenes, he guides the viewer past thin-looking Chinese workers transporting heavy goods from ships, carrying buckets of water on shoulder yokes, or resting in dark and cramped cubicles in the worker residences of Chinatown. The harsh realities of British colonialism are therefore not skewed in this public artwork. One Chinese rickshaw puller transports a reclining and smoking European-looking man, while the shirt or towel thrown around the bare torso of the rickshaw puller symbolizes the exploitation many Chinese laborers faced (see Fig. 2).

By illustrating these hardships of working class Chinese, the mural responds to a central problem in both history-writing and historical memory on the Chinese in Southeast Asia in general and in Singapore in particular: the often persistent view of them being exclusively an intermediary and relatively wealthy merchant class operating between the indigenous population and the European colonizer.[2] In many instances, his-

2 This was already argued by Mary Somers Heidhues in 1996, but this historiographical observation still rings true today and has been remarked on in different national-imperial historiographies. In general historical works on the Netherlands East Indies, this intermediary position of Chinese as pragmatic and relatively successful merchants and traders is continuously repeated by various authors, who tend to focus on successful Chinese merchant families while only briefly mentioning the existence of less well-to-do Chinese laborers. See for example: Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2005): 66–68. On the relatively few writings on laboring Chinese compared to Chinese merchant elites in the Spanish Philippines, see Mònica Ginés-Blasi, "A Philippine 'Coolie Trade': Trade and Exploitation of Chinese Labour in Spanish Colonial Philippines, 1850–98," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 51, no. 3 (2020): 458, 460–62. For Somers Heidhues' observation of this historiographical gap in Southeast Asian history, see Mary Somers Heidhues, "Chinese Settlements in Rural Southeast Asia: Unwritten Histories," in *Sojourners and Settlers. Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996, 2001): 164–65.

tory-writing on the Chinese in colonial Singapore focused on wealthy individuals who either because or despite of British colonialism grew into influential entrepreneurs with economic entanglements stretching deeply into the Singaporean or Malay economy, into the wider Southeast Asian regional trade, or reaching as far as the Qing Empire and/or Chinese Republic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[3] Biographical histories of such wealthy individuals are therefore plentiful.[4] In many "rags-to-riches" narratives – not dissimilar to those written in the context of the American dream – Singaporean history-writing and historical memory has a strong tendency to make these wealthy individuals *hypervisible*, mainly through emphasizing their hard work and economic successes.[5]

Although these narratives are in a way a move to write the British out of Singaporean history, they also brush over the fact that many Chinese were not economically successful, and in fact struggled to make ends meet throughout both the colonial and postcolonial periods. There are many histories of business families, merchant networks, or on Chinese companies,[6] but the histories of Chinese workers who provided their labor

3 See the excellent study on these merchant connections by Mark Ravinder Frost, "*Emporium in Imperio*: Nanyang Networks and the Straits Chinese in Singapore, 1819–1914," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005): 29–66.

4 This argument is based on a reflection on various biographical articles published in the *Journal of Chinese Overseas* on Chinese elites from Singapore and other port cities. Two examples are: Huang Jianli, "Entanglement of Business and Politics in the Chinese Diaspora: Interrogating the Wartime Patriotism of Aw Boon Haw," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 2, no. 1 (2006): 79–110; and Jason Lim, "The Education Concerns and Political Outlook of Lim Keng Lian (1893–1968)," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 3, no. 2 (2007): 194–219.

5 This historical narrative cannot be seen separated from the process of Singaporean nation-building in the historical contexts of the Cold War and the rise of the Four Asian Tiger Economies in the final decades of the twentieth century. They functioned to underline "Asian values" of hard work, business skills, and philanthropy, which not only positioned such values against communism, but also positioned Singapore against the West. For a discussion on the formation of such historical narratives, predominantly by the Singaporean state, see Lysa Hong and Huang Jianli, *The Scripting of a National History: Singapore and its Pasts* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008): 7–9.

6 See for example the relatively comparable works of Wu Xiao An and Wong Yee Tuan on Chinese merchant elite families and networks in and around Penang: Wu Xiao An, *Chinese Business in the Making of the Malay State, 1882–1941: Kedah and Penang* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2003, 2010); and Wong Yee Tuan, *Penang Chinese Commerce in the 19th Century. The Rise and Fall of the Big Five* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2015). For Chinese companies in the Dutch colonial context, see for example Peter Post, "Profitable Partnerships: The Chinese Business Elite and Dutch Lawyers in the Making of Semarang," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 52, no. 2 (2021): 214–45. Alexander Claver, *Dutch Commerce and Chinese Merchants in Java. Colonial Relationships in Trade and Finance, 1800–1942* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). Studies on networks are omnipresent in the wider historiography on the Chinese in Southeast Asia. One interesting edited volume focusing on these networks through the lens of the social lives of goods traded by the Chinese is Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang, eds., *Chinese Circulations. Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

Fig. 2: Scene of a Chinese workers' residence on Yip Yew Chong's Thiang Hock Keng Mural (2017). Picture by author.

for making these merchant elites succeed is still a largely unexplored topic. In other words: their widespread presence and extensive mobility in the history of Singapore and the Malay Peninsula has remained largely invisible. This is not only the case in the history of the Chinese in colonial Singapore, but also applies more generally for histories of the Chinese in other European colonies in Southeast Asia.[7] In contrast to many histories on

7 There are, of course, notable exceptions. See for example the seminal social histories by Warren and Trocki from the 1980s and 1990s: James Francis Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki-san: Prostitution in Singapore 1870–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, repr. Singapore: NUS Press, 2019). James Francis Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie. A People's History of Singapore 1880–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, repr. Singapore: NUS Press, 2018). Carl A. Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). A very recent contribution is Gregor Benton, *Chinese Indentured Labour in the Dutch East Indies 1880–1942. Tin, Tobacco, Timber, and the Penal Sanction* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022). See also Mònica Ginés-Blasi's discussion of

regional and transimperial Chinese trade and merchant networks, the equally crucial contribution of Chinese *labor migrants* to the historical development of Southeast Asia is therefore often overlooked and possibly misunderstood, which is exactly the issue that Yip Yew Chong addressed by making these hardships of the common Chinese *visible* in his mural.

This chapter addresses the absence of Chinese labor migrants from the wider historiography on the Southeast Asian Chinese. However, it aims to go further than only formulating a critique of the dominance of Chinese merchant elites within this historiography. Rather it intends to give one possible explanation on *why* it has been so difficult for historians of this region to integrate Chinese labor migration into their studies. In line with the general argument of the present volume, this chapter focuses on the processes of concealing, concealment, and invisibilization that took place within the historical context of Chinese labor migration to colonial Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I will argue that one important reason for the historiographical dominance of Chinese merchant elites within the wider historiography on the Southeast Asian Chinese is that many Chinese labor migrants managed to escape the bureaucratic control of the colonial state and therefore often remained invisible to many colonial bureaucrats *at the time*. In effect, the disappearance of Chinese labor migrants from the eyes of the colonial bureaucracy has complicated the attempts of later historians to integrate them into their narratives on the Southeast Asian Chinese, mainly because their movements and migration networks remained obscured from colonial bureaucrats and have therefore not been as extensively documented, archived, and – by extension – studied. Building on this argument, this chapter aims to develop the theoretical arguments made in the introduction and other chapters of this volume, mainly by pointing to the importance of *agency* in processes of invisibilization and concealment, as well as highlighting the roles of intermediaries in these processes.

Based on the findings of my wider doctoral research project on Chinese immigration in Southeast Asia, this chapter will discuss these processes of concealment and invisibilization of Chinese migrants along the long-stretched border region between the Netherlands East Indies and the British Straits Settlements (plus the semi-colonized Malay states on the Peninsula) within the period 1870 to 1914. The chosen time period starts with major immigration legislation reforms that took place in both colonies during the 1870s, and closes with the changing nature of Chinese migration issues after the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911 and the sudden halt in migration during the First World

this historiographical trend in Spanish and Filipino scholarship for the case of the "coolie trade" to the Spanish Philippines: Ginés-Blasi, "A Philippine 'Coolie Trade'": 457–60.

War.[8] This period also coincides largely with what historian Sunil S. Amrith has termed "Asia's Mobility Revolution," a moment in global history when Asian migration increased significantly both in scale and reach.[9] Indeed, as the late migration historian Adam McKeown pointed out for the period 1850 to 1940, this was a moment of unprecedented migration by an estimated twenty million Chinese worldwide, of whom close to six or seven million migrated to the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsula, while an estimated four or five million travelled to the Netherlands East Indies.[10] It should be noted, however, that these numbers can only be estimates, as they mainly encompass one-way migration. Most Chinese migration to Southeast Asia was both temporary and circular, while other Chinese migrants often re-migrated from one colony to another, sometimes using the same networks that have been so extensively studied in the histories of Chinese merchants in the wider historiography on Southeast Asia. This phenomenon of re-migration then brings another layer of complexity – and in effect another layer of concealment – to making sense of Chinese migrations and mobilities within this region and during this period. For obvious reasons, this is particularly true for labor migrants, as opposed to the more visible merchants with their wide trade networks that spanned the region.

Many Chinese labor migrants actively sought ways to avoid colonial state intervention in defining their migration and mobility. Escaping these controls was often a conscious act of "self-concealment". Among other reasons, Chinese labor migrants avoided border controls in order to escape registration costs for entry or residence permits, to avoid debts connected to indentured labor contracts, to hide from the colonial police, or to return from banishment. Seen from a wider historical angle, Chinese migrants were actively avoiding an increasingly suspicious colonial state and colonial society wherein anti-Chinese sentiments were growing stronger by the year. Such new – and often global – forms of Sinophobia increasingly targeted working-class Chinese immigrants, prompting colonial bureaucrats to seek ways to regulate or restrict such immigration to their colonies. Many of the bureaucratic logics of border and im-

8 The problem of managing Chinese immigration in Dutch and British colonial Southeast Asia became more political and ideological from the 1910s onwards, as both colonial states increasingly became worried about the transnational movements of Chinese political activists, see, respectively, Oiyan Liu, "Countering 'Chinese Imperialism': Sinophobia and Border Protection in the Dutch East Indies," *Indonesia* 97 (2014): 87–110, and Nobuto Yamamoto, "Shaping the 'China Problem' of Colonial Southeast Asia," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 2, no. 1 (2014): 131–53.

9 Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 4–6.

10 Adam McKeown based his estimates on harbormaster reports from the main emigration ports in southern China, supplemented by British and Dutch colonial reports. But where British migration statistics seem more trustworthy, the figures for the Netherlands East Indies are more scattered and therefore incomplete. See Adam McKeown, "Chinese Emigration in Global Context, 1850–1940," *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010): 98. See also the appendix on sources and estimates in the same article, on pages 120–24.

migration control of Asian migrants in Southeast Asia followed global developments in anti-Asian migration exclusionary politics.[11]

Border controls and immigration policies, however, only gradually and incoherently expanded across Southeast Asia throughout this period, although it has also been argued that some of Southeast Asia's borders were in fact developed very locally as well; particularly through the efforts of Chinese revenue farmers policing the borders of their revenue farming districts. But nonetheless, as Eric Tagliacozzo has convincingly shown in his study on smuggling between the Dutch and British colonies in Southeast Asia, borders were still a novelty in this period and they only slowly and gradually developed into something more than a fictive line on the map.[12] It is therefore unsurprising that many Chinese labor migrants succeeded in escaping such controls, thereby also avoiding registration by the state, documentation as inhabitants of the colony, and, consequently, visibility in the colonial archives. The first important focus of this chapter will therefore be on the strategies that these Chinese labor migrants employed to avoid such state control, and how these strategies functioned in the self-concealment of these migrants.

For migration scholars – or for anyone critical of current migration issues – it probably comes as no surprise that migrants who are deemed "unwanted" or "illegal" by a particular state actively search for ways to avoid border controls, or are forced to find clever ways to manipulate immigration policies in order to still gain entry. The fact that Chinese labor migrants used various strategies for self-concealment is therefore not unexpected per se. What is perhaps more surprising is that in this colonial context, those who had the job to make migrants more visible, namely the colonial bureaucrats charged with border controls and migrant documentation, were in fact themselves active contributors to the processes of concealing and invisibilizing Chinese labor migrants. Overwhelmed by what they perceived as limitless flows of immigrants entering their territories, colonial bureaucrats often consciously let some migrants slip through the nets of the bureaucratic colonial state, while focusing their gaze on others whom they deemed to be in more urgent need of government regulation. These were deliberate decisions to prioritize the state's regulatory powers over particular groups, exactly because there was a widespread realization of the limits of state control within a colonial context where a minority of Europeans governed a significantly larger – and growing – Chinese migrant population. As I will argue later on in this chapter, the classification and hierarchization of particular types of Chinese labor migrants by the colonial state led in many cases to an incoherent registration

11 For the formation and globalization of borders in response to Chinese and Indian migration respectively, see Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); and Radhika Mongia, *Indian Migration and Empire. A Colonial Genealogy of the Modern State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

12 Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders. Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

and documentation of Chinese newcomers, in the process contributing to the formation of large groups of concealed or perhaps even invisibilized Chinese labor migrants. As a result, the colonial state remained largely oblivious to the nature of its growing Chinese population, which in effect has led to persistent challenges for later historians in distinguishing and analyzing these flows of Chinese labor migrants into and throughout Southeast Asia.

The colonial taxonomy of migrants combined with the prioritization of certain groups for closer regulation thereby contributed to the invisibilization of other groups of Chinese migrants. Put differently, those placed under the microscopic lens of the colonial state were scrutinized and regulated in more detail, while those groups of Chinese migrants outside the lens of the colonial state's bureaucratic microscope became less clear, more blurred, and therefore hardly recognizable. Furthermore, this also points to colonial bureaucrats being crucial intermediary concealing agents, who actively contributed to making some migrants more visible than others. But despite strong anti-Chinese sentiments becoming increasingly class-based around the turn from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, Chinese labor migration has – particularly in its unindentured forms – hardly received any scholarly attention in wider historical scholarship on Southeast Asia.

1 The "Invisible" Chinese Labor Migrants of Southeast Asia

As stated earlier, conventional histories on the Southeast Asian Chinese have traditionally focused on the merchant elites in the major port cities of Southeast Asia. This has been particularly true for the historiographies on the Chinese in the Dutch and British colonies.[13] These histories often trace the presence of Chinese merchant elites back to the seventeenth century, when large groups of Ming loyalist Hokkien Chinese settled in Southeast Asia and further consolidated their already extensive trade networks in the wider region.[14] As a result, scholars studying Southeast Asian history have often written about Chinese elites close to the centers of colonial power, or have focused on the regional trade and finance networks they created, often through family ties.[15] Partly inspired by a surge in studies on Chinese economic networks during

13 See footnotes in the introduction.

14 On Hokkien merchants, see specifically Wang Gungwu, "Merchants without Empires: The Hokkien Sojourning Communities," *China and the Chinese Overseas*, ed. Wang Gungwu (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991, 1992).

15 For Malaysia, see Wu Xiao An, *Chinese Business in the Making of the Malay State*; and Wong Yee Tuan, *Penang Chinese Commerce*. For the Indonesian case, see Mona Lohanda, *Growing Pains. The Chinese and the Dutch in Colonial Java, 1890–1942* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2002).

the rise of the Asian tiger economies (and their sudden downturn during the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997),[16] the often impressive success of Chinese merchants who became wealthy during the intensification of colonial rule has received much scholarly attention.[17] Indeed, many Chinese merchants were in fact well-connected in the wider region throughout the early modern period; in many cases they even predated the colonial presence and flourished in precolonial indigenous port cities.[18] More often than not, the early European empires heavily depended on Chinese trade networks, while many of these networks managed to expand further through active collaboration with European imperial powers. Without the trade networks of Chinese merchants, the historical outcomes of European colonialism in Southeast Asia may have looked very different.

Although Chinese merchant networks were important in facilitating Chinese migration to many Southeast Asia's port cities,[19] the problem with the historiographical focus on Chinese merchants in urban environments is that they often ignore the numerous migrations of Chinese *laborers* who settled down in *rural* areas.[20] Only few historians have explored the presence of Chinese labor settlements along the coastal areas of Southeast Asia. Yet these settlements rapidly expanded both in size and number throughout the eighteenth century.[21] They spread around the South China Sea and followed the annual monsoon winds southwards, expanding into the Straits of Malacca, the Java Sea, and the Bay of Bangkok. Along this Chinese "water frontier" of rural settlements, a vast *junk* boat trade network continuously brought new laborers to Southeast Asia, on their way to cultivate farmlands, cut wood, or mine natural resources from the

16 This has for example been observed by Kwee Hui Kian, "Chinese Economic Dominance in Southeast Asia: A *Longue Durée* Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 1 (2013): 6.

17 See for example the following studies on Chinese merchant or political elites on Java: Monique Erkelens, "The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia: The Loss of Prestige and Authority of the Traditional Elite Amongst the Chinese Community from the End of the Nineteenth Century until 1942" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2013). See also Claver, *Dutch Commerce and Chinese Merchants*.

18 This has been very well described for the case of Surabaya by Claudine Lombard-Salmon, "La communauté chinoise de Surabaya. Essai d'histoire, des origines à la crise de 1930," *Archipel* 53 (1997): 121–206.

19 Frost emphatically pointed out their importance: Frost, "*Emporium in Imperio*: Nanyang Networks": 29–66. On how *hui* native-place organizations helped facilitate migration for specific (dialect) groups of Chinese, see Chang-hui Chi, "Networks and Emplacement: Jinmen Migrants in Singapore, 1850s–1942," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 6 (2010): 22–42.

20 Somers Heidhues, "Chinese Settlements in Rural Southeast Asia": 164–65.

21 For gold-mining Chinese on West-Kalimantan, see Mary F. Somers Heidhues, *Golddiggers, Farmers, and Traders in the "Chinese Districts" of West Kalimantan, Indonesia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications Cornell University, 2003); and Yuan Bingling, *Chinese Democracies. A Study of the Kongsis of West Borneo (1776–1884)* (Leiden: Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, Leiden University, 2000). For the Chinese in the Bangka tin mines, see Mary F. Somers Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper: Chinese Settlement on an Indonesian Island* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992).

inland hills.[22] Because of this widespread settlement of Chinese around maritime Southeast Asia, the Dutch historian Leonard Blussé even concluded that the eighteenth century in Southeast Asia should be called the "Chinese century."[23]

What is striking about these rural Chinese communities is that they often operated autonomously. This autonomy was facilitated through the relatively democratic principles of the *kongsi* social organization, which in such rural contexts – being far away from the imposed hierarchies of colonial states – maintained a certain degree of solidarity-based arrangements that not only helped facilitate labor migration, but also redistributed profits relatively equally among workers and merchants.[24] There were therefore good reasons for many Chinese laborers to steer clear of European colonial port cities, as they could equally make a living and even enjoy some form of participation in the governance of the community in the rural *kongsi* environments.

The *kongsi* settlements were also crucial catalysts for regional trade, not only for colonial port cities, but also for the harbors of indigenous kingdoms or sultanates. Often located at the mouths of rivers, these settlements were crucial in connecting hinterland and maritime Southeast Asia, often in collaboration with kings or sultans. The Sultan of Johore in the early nineteenth century, for example, handed out *surat sungai* (river letters), which allowed Chinese to settle and cultivate gambier or pepper on the banks of the many rivers of Johor's southern coast. This arrangement not only enriched the sultan, but also eventually lured more Chinese settlers to the neighboring Singapore island during its crucial early phases of economic development in the early nineteenth century.[25] But the economic impact of Chinese rural settlements extended beyond Singapore and Johor. Throughout Southeast Asia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century many Chinese labor migrants settled in the "blank spaces" between port cities, which before their arrival were generally undeveloped swamplands or vast jungles.[26] Through their economic activities within these settlements they contributed to state building and border formation in Southeast Asia.[27]

The economic success of these *kongsi* settlements also contributed to their own demise. Through opium revenue farming – of which European colonial governments sold the rights to Chinese merchants in a yearly and highly competitive tender – the Chinese *kongsi* organizations gradually lost their solidarity-based principles, as the increasingly wealthy merchants who were associated to the *kongsi* started to be ab-

22 The term "water frontier" was coined by Nola Cooke and Li Tana, eds., *Water Frontier. Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield; Singapore University Press, 2004).

23 Leonard Blussé, "Chinese Century. The Eighteenth Century in the China Sea Region," *Archipel* 58 (1999): 107–29.

24 Trocki, *Opium and Empire*: 12–15.

25 Ibid.: 89.

26 Carl A. Trocki, "Chinese Revenue Farms and Borders in Southeast Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): 344–46.

27 Ibid.: 351–59.

sorbed into European economic networks. Opium also deepened socio-economic inequality within the Chinese labor settlements. Chinese merchants connected to the *kongsis* consolidated their economic standing and worsened the socio-economic position of laboring Chinese by "recycling" labor costs through the sale of opium to the Chinese laborers they hired.[28] By the mid-nineteenth century, the solidarity-based principles of the *kongsi* had thereby been so deeply undermined that it inevitably lead to conflict. Particularly in British sources we can observe a growing fear of the many Chinese riots taking place in the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsula during the middle of the century, with some of them even escalating into civil-war like scenarios.[29] The Larut Wars of 1861–1874 on the Malay Peninsula are a good example of these escalating tensions within the rural Chinese communities, while they also contributed to a growing awareness of the British colonial government that stricter colonial rule needed to be imposed on the Chinese population in and around their colonies.

Attributing these "disturbances" to the assumed presence of Chinese "secret societies," the British colonial government in the Straits Settlements set up stricter immigration regulations in the 1870s through the creation of a Protectorate of the Chinese. Headed by the Protector of the Chinese, the main goals of this office were to combat Chinese secret societies and gather intelligence on Chinese affairs, but one of its main instruments – in addition to imposing mandatory government registration of Chinese societies and organizations – was to inspect and register Chinese immigrants at the borders of the Straits Settlements. These new immigration legislatures were a combination of colonial security policies and labor regulations. Feeling that indebted migrants arriving on "immigrant ships" directly from China were too vulnerable for the supposedly malicious influence of secret societies, the British hoped to gain more control over the Chinese communities in the colony by inspecting degrees of indebtedness to migration brokers at the border (or rather: the port). If the poorest of the new arrivals could not prove that they had arrangements for paying shipping companies for their transport to Singapore or Penang, they were temporarily confined in "coolie depots" to await a new employer – often of European origin – who could pay their travel costs and sign the Chinese labor migrant up to a labor contract that would bind them for several years to this employer.[30]

In other words, the British installed an indentured labor system in order to have greater control over the Chinese population in the British Southeast Asian colonies. But the introduction of border checks for indebted Chinese migrants also introduced

28 Trocki, *Opium and Empire*: 67–69.

29 Ibid.: 86–94, 107–16. See also Wu, *Chinese Business*: 57–64, 76–79, 122–25.

30 I described this process in more detail in Bastiaan Nugteren, "Politics of Protection and the Southeast Asian 'Coolie Trade': Chinese Labor Migration and Transimperial Connections in the British Straits Settlements and the Netherlands East Indies, 1870–1914," *Global Labor Migration: New Directions*, ed. Eileen Boris et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022): 25–41.

economic motives for maintaining a border. By extracting indebted migrants from the masses of migrants entering the colony, the British government in the Straits Settlements had now effectively opened up a new pool for labor recruitment to benefit especially European employers, as it cut out the Chinese middlemen in previous labor migration flows. The introduction of an indentured labor system for Chinese migrants also meant a certain need for government regulation. British plantation and mine owners invested heavily in recruiting indebted Chinese laborers from the Protectorate and needed to see a return on their investment in the work performed by the recruited migrant. The Protector of the Chinese openly cooperated in meeting this goal. Indentured Chinese were isolated and transported to their places of work under government supervision. The Protector's inspections at the border therefore not only functioned to keep the secret societies at bay, they also clearly served the economic interests of British planters and other capitalists. Government control over the Chinese inhabitants in the colony and the maintenance of a reliable labor supply were two sides of the same coin.

The need for labor control therefore pushed the regulation of Chinese labor migration on the political agenda of the colonial state. The masses of Chinese labor migrants who had previously entered the colony unhindered now had to face inspection. This helped to make the dynamics of Chinese labor migration to Southeast Asia more visible for the British. Where previously Chinese were often employed collectively in labor gangs whose organizational principles resembled those of the *kongsi*, Chinese laborers were now individualized by inspections on arrival and the use of personalized indentured labor contracts. Making *individual* Chinese laborers more visible for the colonial state therefore also meant disconnecting them from their social networks, preferably when they first arrived in Singapore or Penang. Chinese migrants' identities therefore became inherently connected with notions of class, labor, and degrees of indebtedness.[31] In the process, the British gained greater control over Chinese migration and movement, although this form of control was mainly focused on people with debts and without plans of how to pay them off. Put differently, only a segment of the Chinese labor migration flows – those who were to be indentured – was now placed under the colonial microscope of strict government regulation of indebted migrants. The rest of the Chinese migrants, i.e. those with debt arrangements or paid tickets, were free to continue their journey. It is the latter group that we know less about in current historiography.

The creation of an indentured labor system in the British colonies for incoming Chinese labor migrants should therefore not be seen as a total system of migration control. It was mainly aimed at the most precarious migrants. But neither was full

31 The individualization of migrant identities which led to migrants being "torn out of informal social networks" has been earlier observed by Adam McKeown in the context of the exclusion of Chinese from white settler colonies such as the US and Australia, see McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, esp. the introduction, "The Globalization of Identities," and p. 11 in particular.

control the objective of the British. Singapore and Penang were celebrated within the British Empire as being cities of free trade – which, as we have seen, was predominantly successful because of its absorption of Chinese trade networks – and they prized their positions as hubs of free migration as well.[32] But outside the British Empire these liberal policies of free movement could lead to some chagrin. The neighboring colony of the Netherlands East Indies, where many "free migrants" continued their travels, had significantly less liberal attitudes vis-à-vis the Chinese. Although the main destination from the harbors of Singapore or Penang was probably the Malay Peninsula, many Chinese labor migrants crossed the colonial border into the Netherlands East Indies. In response, the Dutch colonial government also started implementing stricter immigration controls around the 1860s-1870s, although these followed different logics and had diverging degrees of success.

2 Dutch Colonial Border Formation and Chinese Acts of Self-Concealment

Mobility restrictions were already anchored in a long tradition of Dutch colonial rule over the Chinese. Mobility, settlement, and immigration restrictions for Chinese date back to the early modern period of Dutch East India Company (VOC) rule, when the VOC feared Chinese agricultural settlement outside the walls of Batavia and therefore designated certain quarters in the city for Chinese settlements. Although we should be careful in stating that this was full segregation – many Chinese still moved about freely and met face to face with indigenous Indonesians – imposing mobility and settlement restrictions on the Chinese inhabitants in the colony remained an administrative goal in Dutch colonial rule throughout the nineteenth century.[33] Although these restrictions were gradually absorbed into the legal frameworks of the Dutch colonial state over time, they were in fact only more or less successfully installed on the island of Java.[34] On paper, the "pass and quarter system" forced Chinese to settle in specifically designated Chinese quarters and imposed an application process for travel passes. This policy was mainly designed to restrict Chinese access from the country-

32 Although Penang was perhaps more focused on Indian – specifically Tamil – migration from the nearby Bay of Bengal. For perhaps the most concise history of this stream of migration into Southeast Asia, see Sunil S. Amrith, "Indians Overseas? Governing Tamil Migration to Malaya 1870–1941," *Past & Present* 208 (2010): 231–61.

33 This has recently been argued by Remco Raben in a critical revision of his own earlier work: Remco Raben, "Colonial Shorthand and Historical Knowledge: Segregation and Localization in a Dutch Colonial Society," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 18, no. 2 (2020): 177–93.

34 Patricia Tjiook-Liem, "De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlandsch-Indië" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2009): 308–11, 302–6.

side of Java, where the Dutch feared that they would compete economically with the local indigenous population.[35] This policy, however, was heavily undermined by the opium revenue farming system that the Dutch sold to Chinese merchants throughout the nineteenth century. Being connected to opium revenue farming exempted Chinese from travel restrictions, even in the countryside, so that many Chinese traders or retailers were still able to travel freely.[36] While the Dutch had a long tradition of attempting to place mobility and settlement restrictions on the Chinese population, the widespread evasion of these restrictions by Chinese inhabitants of the colony also had a long historical continuity.[37]

Similar problems with government inspection of Chinese mobility can be seen in the issue of Chinese immigrants entering Java in the late nineteenth century. A liberal turn in Dutch politics in the imperial metropole in The Hague forced the reluctant colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies to gradually open the border for Chinese immigrants in the 1860s and 1870s. This formally ended a long period of inconsistent immigration legislation that throughout the early and mid-nineteenth century had at times completely banned Chinese immigration, but at moments also opened the border again in the face of labor shortages.[38] But what was new in the two sets of laws passed in 1866 and 1872 respectively (the latter becoming the main legal framework for Dutch immigration policies, henceforth referred to as the *Staatsblad 1872 No. 40*), was that the Dutch were attempting a more strict *bureaucratization* of border controls and immigration policies for Chinese migrants. This law required so-called "Foreign Orientals" (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*) – which was the legal classification of non-indigenous Asians or Arabs in the colony – to report to the authorities within three days of their arrival and officially request an entrance permit for the initial six months of their stay on Java. Successful applications depended on two ill-defined criteria: 1) that the migrant would prove to be a quiet resident of the colony and have no criminal record, and 2) that the migrant would declare that they had sufficient means for their own subsistence. Although it also applied to other Asian or Arab immigrants, the main target of this law were the Chinese, specifically those of the laboring classes. Through bureaucratization, the Dutch colonial state hoped to gain greater control of

35 Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen*: 299–300.

36 James R. Rush, *Opium to Java. Revenue Farming and Chinese Enterprise in Colonial Indonesia 1860–1910* (Jakarta: Equinox, 1990; 2007): 102–6, 98.

37 Similar historical continuities can be found in roughly the same period in the Spanish Philippines, where Chinese mobility was in essence restricted, which could however be circumvented by applying for licenses for temporary travel. See Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life 1850–1898* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000): 156–57.

38 As summarized by the Dutch colonial bureaucrat Fokkens, who was charged to with evaluating and revising the Dutch immigration policies, in an official government report written between 1892 and 1897: F. Fokkens, *Rapport. Onderzoek economischen toestand Vreemde Oosterlingen 1ste Gedeelte. Tegenwoordige Toestand*: 83–97, in Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI) – K99a Alg. Sec. Seri Grote Bundel Besluit, Jilid. 1 No. 626.

Chinese immigration, although this set of laws was also a relaxation of earlier immigration controls.

The application procedure for entry and/or residence permits was in most cases handled by Chinese intermediaries, namely by the neighborhood officers (*wijkmeesters*) who were part of the Chinese officer system. Chinese officers were often recruited from the localized *peranakan* Chinese who had been in the colony for generations and who acted as headmen for the Chinese community. They formed an important intermediary collaborating class of Chinese operating between the Dutch colonial state and the broader Chinese community. Because of their visibility in the archives, they have also attracted most scholarly attention. Like the pass and quarter system, the Chinese officer system was another remnant of the early modern period, and even predated European colonialism. The Dutch learned it indirectly from the widespread *syahbandar* (harbormaster) system in indigenous Southeast Asian port cities, through adopting it from former Portuguese colonies the Dutch had conquered. It was the Portuguese who gave these Chinese headmen their military-sounding names (*capitão)*, which the Dutch in turn translated first into Malay (*kapitan*) and later into Dutch (*kapitein*).[39] The Dutch effectively used them as a form of indirect rule and charged the *kapitan Cina* with tax collection and the day-to-day governance of the Chinese communities in the colonial port cities.

Besides daily rule and tax collection, the Dutch also used the Chinese officers to outsource the inspection of immigrants, registering them for the colonial state, and carrying out background checks for permit applications. In this way, they played crucial intermediary roles. Unsurprisingly, this was often met with some skepticism by Dutch colonial bureaucrats, as can be found in the colonial archives. When he noticed that Chinese officers started using generalized templates for the reference letters for permit applications, the Director of Justice sent a circular to the local administrators of the colony in 1887, stating that the Chinese headmen needed to give more extensive arguments about their advice for accepting or refusing an entry or residence permit. A similar suspicion of Chinese officers in the application procedure was echoed two years later in a circular sent by the Government Secretary of the Dutch colonial state, which reminded local administrators that in the implementation of these immigration policies they were not to accept the "unmotivated statements of an unknown person of the same race (*rasgenoot*)."[40] As in the Straits Settlements, there was a deep suspicion of Chinese intermediaries brokering labor and migration.

But the dependency on Chinese intermediaries in regulating migration was not the only problem the Dutch faced in enforcing the colonial border that was gradually forming around Java. Chinese migrants actively showed agency in attempting to

39 Erkelens, *The Decline of the Chinese Council*: 52–53.

40 "Bijlage J: Circulaire Gouvernements-Secretaris, 22 July 1889, No. 1705 (Bijblad No. 4700)," in *Bijlagen. Toelating en Vestiging*, found in: ANRI – K99a Alg. Sec. Seri Grote Bundel Besluit, Jilid. 1 No. 626.

avoid this process of registration by misusing the same system. Whether this was to avoid taxation on economic activities, to avoid the stamp duty required for the permit, or to prevent denial of entry or deportation when having a criminal record in the Netherlands East Indies – it seems that there were many migrants who actively avoided traveling to the Dutch colonies under the official rules, as is indicated by the constant complaints of Dutch colonial bureaucrats in Batavia about identity fraud and document forgery. Chinese migrants often switched identities by giving different names, thereby cleverly making use of the racial prejudice of colonial bureaucrats about Chinese being indistinguishable from one another. They also counterfeited and/or smuggled entry or residence permits. When they no longer needed them, many Chinese sold their permits upon departure from the colony to other Chinese on their way in. Both counterfeited and real permits were often smuggled from the Dutch-controlled Riau islands into Singapore, where a black market developed for the sale of these documents, fake or real. The counterfeit permits even seemed to be relatively easy to make, as the price of these documents on the Singaporean black market was surprisingly low. Finally, some Chinese were bold enough to "trick" the Dutch consul-general in Singapore and request a residence permit for only a few dollars.[41] It seems that there were many ways to avoid inspection by the Dutch colonial state, and the lengthy discussions between colonial bureaucrats suggest that these strategies were used frequently and widely in the Southeast Asian border regions.[42] Chinese agency in staying hidden from the colonial bureaucratic state was therefore significantly present.

From the frequent and clever use made of these loopholes by Chinese migrants heading for Java, we can observe that it was the very bureaucratization of immigration restrictions, as well as the creation of new migrant identities, which generated new possibilities for Chinese to avoid these border controls. Faced with these shortcomings of the system, the Dutch responded by further expanding and streamlining their immigration policies and border controls. Illicit border crossing led to more bureaucratization and justified further intervention by the colonial state. The same process was also the driving factor behind the United States hardening its borders in an attempt to exclude the Chinese from its empire around the turn of the nineteenth century.[43] Individualized migrant identities had now become the main focus of immigra-

41 We may assume that these were attempts of bribery, although the sources do not make this clear. Another likely possibility is that the Dutch consul was unaware of Dutch immigration policy and simply handed out government documents that acted as permits for a small price. See F. Fokkens, *Rapport. Onderzoek economischen toestand Vreemde Oosterlingen 1ste Gedeelte. Tegenwoordige Toestand*: 139–41, in: ANRI – K99a Alg. Sec. Seri Grote Bundel Besluit, Jilid. 1 No. 626.

42 Similar distrust of the colonial bureaucratic state vis-à-vis the Chinese can be found in the Spanish Philippines, where local colonial bureaucrats were often bribed by Chinese seeking ways to avoid taxation and other limits to trade and mobility. This has for example been noted by Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life*: 165–67.

43 See McKeown, *Melancholy Order*: chapter 10 "Files and Fraud."

tion control. The active avoidance of these new logics of migration control through identity fraud was therefore another way in which Chinese migrants actively concealed themselves, namely by quite literally becoming someone else. Nevertheless, these application forms and permits were carefully stored and archived by the Dutch colonial state; they are still kept today in the National Archives of Indonesia. But whether these documents are actually connected to real people and real names remains unknown, just as those who misused them to remain invisible intended.

3 Colonial Classifications and the Limits of the Colonial State

The fact that many Chinese immigrants managed to evade inspection and registration by the Dutch colonial state might make us wonder about the actual extent of colonial rule over mobile populations in Southeast Asia. The bureaucrats of the Dutch colonial state were wondering the same thing. The extensive discussions which took place within Dutch government circles betray a painful realization that the reach of the state was, in fact, extremely limited. This is not to say that Dutch colonialism was not at all impactful. Of course, the Dutch colonial state often followed in the wake of violent military expansion, particularly during the nineteenth century.[44] But the chronic lack of personnel in actually managing the colony forced the Dutch to use intermediaries – either Chinese or indigenous Indonesian – to extend the influence of the colonial state in society and on its borders. Although the specter of colonial violence secured the use of intermediaries as a sustainable system of indirect rule in the short term, many colonial bureaucrats were far from content with this situation and preferred to further the influence of the colonial state on its colonized subjects through direct control by the colonial state and its bureaucracy. This is also reflected in the expansion and rationalization of immigration policies, which could only be implemented – and imperfectly at that – in areas under full colonial control. The limited means of the colonial state and its bureaucracy to achieve this control, however, were always a central point of discussion.

The British also struggled to regulate Chinese migration, despite the creation of the Protectorate of the Chinese in 1877, which established a state-managed system of indentured labor for the poorest Chinese labor migrants arriving in the Straits Settlements. This system certainly had its flaws. Already in 1878 the first Protector of the

44 The violence of the Dutch colonial past is currently being actively discussed in Dutch society; however, these discussions seem to focus mainly on the horrors of the slave trade in the West Indies or the extremely violent decolonization war in Indonesia fought between 1945 and 1949. The violent expansion of the Dutch colonial state throughout the nineteenth century in the Indonesian archipelago is often left out of this debate, leading to the invisibilization of a whole century of violent colonialism in wider Dutch historical memory.

Chinese in Singapore – William Pickering – requested that the government hire a boarding officer for immigrant ships. He felt heavily overburdened with his daily duties of governing the Chinese community that was already in the colony, and simply could not also inspect the thousands of immigrants who arrived there each year.[45] As has been shown by Michelle T. King, the Protectorate of the Chinese was severely understaffed, and in particular lacked British colonial bureaucrats who could actually speak the required Chinese dialects in which Chinese migrants communicated.[46] This raises questions about how long the interviews and inspections by the Protectorate's office actually took. With hundreds of Chinese migrants arriving on the same ship, the process of determining whether transport costs had been covered may have been rudimentary at best. Furthermore, as James F. Warren has shown in the case of Chinese sex workers arriving in the colony, who were also interviewed by the Protector, many Chinese women who were trafficked into the Straits Settlements for forced sex work were carefully instructed by the traffickers on how to answer the interview questions, or threatened into giving false answers.[47] We can also assume that many Chinese migrants entering Singapore – either male or female – traveled under false identities, as we saw in the case of the Netherlands East Indies. This case of sex trafficking also points to the continuing influence of intermediaries such as Chinese migration brokers, who could now make even greater profits by offering new "services" to Chinese migrants in avoiding ever-tightening and expanding border controls. With more borders in place, more profits were to be gained by human traffickers or forgers of government documents. And with tighter border regulations, more Chinese migrants disappeared from the view of the state, or entered it under false names.

Another problem with the inspection of Chinese immigrants in the Straits Settlements, which may be identified as a somewhat conscious act of Chinese migrants being "concealed" by colonial bureaucratic practices, was in the legal definition of the immigrant ships that the Protector of the Chinese was allowed to board as an inspector of immigrants. Article 9 of the 1877 ordinance stated, "[T]he expression 'Chinese Immigrant Ship' shall be held to mean a ship bringing Chinese Immigrants exceeding twenty in number."[48] Who was considered a "Chinese Immigrant" was based on class, both in terms of social status and the actual class divisions of the ships themselves: "[Chinese Immigrant] as used in this Ordinance, shall be held to mean Chinese brought to the Col-

45 "Proposed increase of salary to Mr Pickering as Protector of Chinese + Examiner of Ships arriving with Coolies," National Archives of the United Kingdom (NA) Colonial Office (CO) 273/93, 1878, No. 3: 3–16.

46 Michelle T. King, "Replicating the Colonial Expert: The Problem of Translation in the Late Nineteenth-Century Straits Settlements," *Social History* 34, no. 4 (2009): 429–46.

47 Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki-san*: 91–93.

48 "Ordinance No. II of 1877. An Ordinance to make provision by law for the protection of Chinese Immigrants," in NA CO 274/3, 1877–1884, Straits Settlements Acts: 6–7.

ony from China in any Chinese Immigrant Ship, not being first or second-class cabin passengers."[49] Two aspects are of interest here: The ordinance did not target first or second-class travelers – although it is unlikely that Chinese labor migrants could afford these tickets in the first place; even more interesting is the distinction made between immigrant ships and other vessels. By excluding ships carrying *fewer* than twenty migrants, official government records did not count smaller Chinese *junk* boats which visited Singapore on a daily basis, and may have carried many small groups of Chinese labor migrants, particularly those who were already in the region. However, these migrants were neither inspected nor documented by the Protectorate of the Chinese. Colonial legislation concentrated mainly on the larger groups of Chinese immigrants who arrived directly from Chinese ports – usually Hong Kong – aboard European steamships. The focus was therefore not on controlling *all* Chinese labor migrants, but rather on those who traveled on the larger ships that brought Chinese newcomers to the region, who were more likely to be indebted for their long journey aboard the ship, and who could therefore be more easily "recruited" for the indentured labor market in Singapore. The spotlight on potentially recruitable impoverished labor migrants thus obscured the more everyday forms of labor migration of less unfortunate Chinese migrants.

This focus on the potential of labor that Chinese migrants could provide is also reflected in the way they were counted in the annual reports. As can be seen in the "Blue Books" of the Straits Settlements, British administrators kept a careful record of the number of Chinese migrants who had been inspected, but then generally focused on the those who had signed contracts with the Protectorate of the Chinese.[50] The rest of the Chinese labor migrants remained largely outside the colonial spotlight. In these annual reports we see a certain categorization of migrants, with indebted labor migrants referred to as "unpaid passengers," and those with other debt arrangements being classified as "free migrants." While "unpaid passengers" were placed in government depots after their inspection and started a government-regulated journey to their place of indentured employment, the "free migrants" were no longer tracked by the colonial state after this initial inspection and registration. These untracked "free migrants" included those who travelled between the various ports of the Straits Settlements or ventured into the Malay Peninsula, but also Chinese who traveled beyond the borders of the British colonies, often to the neighboring Dutch islands, but mostly to Sumatra.[51] Only contracted "unpaid passengers" were traced beyond their interaction with the Protectorate's office and therefore remained in sight of the British colo-

49 Ibid.

50 This development can be traced in the various annual reports of the Straits Settlements, republished in Robert L. Jarman, ed., *Annual Reports of the Straits Settlements 1855–1941*, vol. 1–6 (Oxford: Archive Editions Limited, 1998).

51 This is for example explained by Governor Weld in his annual report of 1885: "Governor F.A. Weld to Edward Stanhope, 1 September 1886, Straits Settlements Blue Book for the Year 1885," in Jarman, *Annual Reports of the Straits Settlements*: 93–94.

nial state. In other words: particular classifications of Chinese migrants directed the colonial microscopic lens primarily to those who provided indentured labor, while those who were deemed "free of debt" were also deemed free from the need for government intervention, and were therefore less closely monitored. The fixation of British colonial bureaucrats on one group of Chinese migrants – those whose labor was heavily regulated by the colonial state – thereby helped contribute to the concealment of others, as we also do not see the intraregional mobilities in the migration statistics compiled by the colonial state.

As a result of such classifications of Chinese migrants, it is hard for historians to trace these "free migrants," as they tended to disappear from the colonial archives after their first – and often only – inspection at the ports of the Straits Settlements. It was only when they decided to sign an indentured labor contract later on, committed a crime and were caught, decided to return to China, or were found dead in the streets of the Straits Settlements' port cities – the last point is emphasized by James Warren's impressive work using Singapore's coroner's records[52] – that these migrants once more caught the attention of the state. But their lives between these moments remain difficult to study, which certainly had an impact on the development of the wider historiography on Chinese labor migration in Southeast Asia in general, and within the British colonial spheres of influence in particular. Like the colonial administrators at the time, we simply do not know how frequently or in which numbers these "free" Chinese labor migrants traveled between or stayed in the numerous islands, seas, and straits in Southeast Asia.

We can observe a similar bureaucratic focus on *indentured* Chinese labor migrants on the opposite side of the Straits of Malacca, on the island of Sumatra in the Netherlands East Indies. There, in the Sultanate of Deli – which the Dutch would eventually turn into the administrative region of "East Coast of Sumatra" – Dutch tobacco planters from the 1870s onwards were rapidly developing an enormous plantation cluster, with a mainly Chinese indentured workforce that was recruited from the Straits Settlements, and later directly from China.[53] Being far away from the Dutch colonial state on Java, the planters in Deli operated quite autonomously, resulting in a brutally oppressive labor regime that cost the lives of many laborers, first Chinese and in later decades Javanese.[54] As in the Straits Settlements, the Deli planters set up

52 James Francis Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie*, and: James Francis Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki-San.*

53 I explained this transition from labor recruited from the Straits to a direct emigration from China elsewhere. In fact, this new route for recruitment led to unexpected transimperial connections and alliances with the German Empire, in order to avoid the British Protectorate of the Chinese altogether, see Nugteren, "Politics of Protection": 48–51.

54 The suffering of labor migrants on these plantations is well-documented in the early works of Breman and Stoler: Jan Breman, *Koelies, Planters en Koloniale Politiek* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1987); Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870–1979* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985, 1995).

an administrative system that prioritized the restriction of movement by Chinese labor migrants. But they did so in a much more severe form and with much stricter instruments. After extensive lobbying of the Dutch government, the "Coolie Ordinances" of 1880 legalized corporal punishment with the notorious so-called "penal sanction" (*poenale sanctie*). Although it was also too often used as a form of physical punishment for "laziness," the penal sanction was mainly introduced to make sure that Chinese indentured laborers were immobilized on the plantations where they worked.[55] The regulation of Chinese mobility and migration was therefore inherently connected with issues of labor and was specifically designed to ensure that indentured laborers would provide the labor they were contractually required to do, or be beaten, whipped, or worse, when they resisted.

4 Outside the Colonial Lens

The penal sanctions on Sumatra are well known among Dutch and Indonesian historians, mainly due to the notoriety of the system for extremely harsh labor conditions wherein they were used. Although the experiences and sufferings of the Chinese indentured laborers have been somewhat overshadowed by the continuation of the indentured labor system for Javanese migrants from the 1900s onwards, multiple historians have observed and analyzed the use of Chinese indentured labor on the Deli plantations. Indeed, placed under the lens of the colonial microscope *because* of their labor identity as indentured laborers, these particular Chinese labor migrants are much more present in the colonial archives, mostly due to the enormous efforts the Deli planters made to recruit them. But what is less known by historians is that in the vicinity of the plantations, there were in fact many Chinese fishing and lumbering settlements along the swampy coastlines of Sumatra. In these small villages, Chinese communities survived quite autonomously by fishing, cutting and trading lumber, or burning and exporting charcoal. Indeed, these were Chinese settlements from the final remnants of the "water frontier" mentioned above. In the late nineteenth century, many small Chinese villages lay scattered along the long coastlines of the Straits of Malacca on both sides of the Dutch-Anglo border, and they were inhabited by many autonomous groups of Chinese labor migrants. As Tagliacozzo has convincingly argued in his extensive study of this border region, smuggling was a major source of income for these coastal villages, although we of course should ask who in this context defines what smuggling is.[56] The little we know about these Chinese villages poses fascinating historiographical questions, but within the framework of this chapter (and the wider volume) the indifferent stance of the Dutch colonial state towards these villages, as it emerges from the colonial

55 Breman, *Koelies, Planters, en Koloniale Politiek*: 31–33.

56 Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders.*

archives, is perhaps even more interesting. It shows how the limits of the colonial state's bureaucratic capacities led to bureaucratic indifference, and therefore contributed to the invisibilization of these settlements from the general histories of the region.

When the Dutch colonial state proposed extending the *Staatsblad 1872* immigration ordinance to the East Coast of Sumatra in 1889–1890, the proposal was met with quite some resistance from the Dutch planters and local colonial administrators in Deli. Their main concern was that overregulation could be harmful to the local economy. In their response to the government, they placed Chinese migrants into three separate categories. For the first category of indentured Chinese labor migrants, the local Dutch planters and administrators argued that no immigration ordinance was necessary. They believed that immigration policies as they functioned on Java were unnecessary due to the already existing mobility restrictions imposed on the indentured Chinese by the "Coolie Ordinances" (i.e. the penal sanction). With regard to a second category of Chinese migrants – the Chinese traders and merchants who frequented Deli from the port cities of the British colonies –, the Dutch settlers in Deli feared that imposing immigration restrictions could potentially be harmful to the local economy, as it would discourage Chinese traders from traveling back and forth between the Straits Settlements and Deli. Unlike the first category of indentured labor migrants, the "Straits-Chinese" merchants and traders were free to enter and leave Deli as they pleased, as long as they stimulated the local economy. The assumed need for immigration control was therefore mainly formulated along class-based lines.

But when it came to the third category of Chinese migrants, namely the fishermen and lumberjacks living in the fishing villages along the coast, the Dutch planters and administrators in Deli showed a surprising indifference to the realization that they had no colonial control over these settlements. Pointing out that thousands of Chinese traveled through these villages annually and that there was no direct contact at all between the Dutch government and the leaders of these villages, the local administrator of the province argued that it was better to leave these villages alone, for "a Chinese is a great enemy of all formalities that bring him in touch with the authorities."[57] Nor was it deemed possible to use the intermediary class of Chinese officers to enforce the *Staatsblad 1872* regulations. There were simply too few Chinese officers who could enforce this law.[58] The Dutch government would also not have to worry about collecting the stamp duty for Chinese people entering or settling there, as the real profit the Dutch state made from these villages was earned indirectly, through the profits made from the opium – and other – revenue farming rights sold to the highest bidders of the Chinese merchant elites. The encroaching legal framework of the colonial state was better advised to take a halt, as it could potentially harm Dutch eco-

57 "Resident Oostkust van Sumatra aan de Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië, Medan, 13 November 1890": 4–5, in ANRI – K99a Alg. Sec. Seri Grote Bundel Besluit, Jilid. 1 No. 89.
58 Ibid.: 11.

nomic interests in revenue farming sales. Put differently, deliberately looking away and accepting the limits of Dutch colonial control was deemed more profitable, although only for this particular category of Chinese labor migrants who operated outside the bureaucratic borders of the colonial state. In the process, the Dutch also kept these "free" labor migrants out of the colonial archives, as no regulations were imposed and nor were such regulations deemed beneficial. This again lead to the invisibilization of *non-indentured* Chinese labor migrants, who were considered to be harmless and did not need government intervention.

Colonial classifications and taxonomies of "types" of migrants were therefore important arguments for colonial bureaucrats in defining their policies vis-à-vis Chinese labor migrants outside the direct jurisdiction of the colonial state. This has historiographical ramifications. The indifferent stance of Dutch colonial bureaucrats towards these rural and non-indentured Chinese labor migrants may be an important reason why historians today still seem to find it difficult to understand the true history of Chinese labor mobilities and migrations within this Sumatran province, or in the wider region of Southeast Asia. "Out of sight" of the colonial state equated being "out of mind" of the colonial actors involved in migration control. Our dependency on colonial archives further underlines this bureaucratic *invisibilization*.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter I aimed to show how the expansion of border controls and immigration policies in the Netherlands East Indies and the British Straits Settlements actively contributed to the further invisibilization and (self)-concealment of Chinese migrants who traveled back and forth between these two colonies, but who were neither traders nor indentured labor migrants. I have done so by zooming in on how both the Dutch and British colonial states attempted to inspect, register, and document the high numbers of Chinese labor migrants who throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries migrated to Southeast Asia.

A first conclusion is that we must be very cautious in approaching the migration documents of individual migrants as we find them in the colonial archives. Within the historical context of the late nineteenth century, when many immigration policies and instruments for migration control were still in an early and far-from-perfect stage, many Chinese migrants used various methods to actively avoid these new border controls. They did so through forgeries, identity fraud, or document smuggling, and were helped by various intermediaries such as migration brokers, Chinese officers, or human traffickers. Faced with these problems of formalizing border controls, colonial bureaucrats struggled with these acts of self-concealment by Chinese labor migrants, which led to further migration controls, and, in response, more avoidance. This reminds us that the mobilities of Chinese migrants were there first, and the bor-

ders only came later; a crucial reality of the Southeast Asian historical context during this time.

A second conclusion drawn from this chapter has been that colonial bureaucrats played active roles in invisibilizing Chinese labor migrants, thereby also obscuring them in the archives, and, as a result, in later historiography. Neither the Dutch nor the British colonial states were powerful enough to fully control Chinese labor migration. Colonial bureaucrats were aware of this and instead chose only to regulate those who they deemed to be the most important (or most dangerous). Effectively this meant that at least for the British and Dutch outside the colonial center of Java, the regulation of Chinese labor migration focused on carefully registering and supervising Chinese *indentured* labor migrants, while not bothering with the regulation of Chinese mobilities outside this particular category. This suggests that with the initial inspection on arrival from China, the colonial state started a categorization and taxonomy of types of migrants, whom it divided according to the perceived urgency and necessity for colonial government inspection, documentation, and intervention. The first inspection therefore also functioned as a moment of fixing particular labor identities, separating "free" labor migrants from "unpaid passengers," with the latter group quickly re-categorized as *indentured* Chinese labor migrants. After this inspection, the lens of the colonial microscope focused and narrowed down on this last group, thereby obscuring and blurring the mobilities and migrations of other, non-indentured labor migrants beyond this bureaucratic fixation.

Although this chapter aims to contribute to re-shifting our perspectives to the inclusion of Chinese *labor* migration into wider historiographies on the Southeast Asian Chinese, this historiographical critique has not necessarily been my main purpose here. Rather, this chapter seeks to explain *how* these migrants became absent from the colonial sources that historians of Southeast Asia study, which in extension helps us understand why histories of Chinese labor migration have been difficult to write. Because of the colonial categorizations created by colonial officials – often deliberately when faced with limited means of state control – there is a gap between the historical images of Chinese merchant elites on the one hand, and the (often too) stereotypical image of the indentured *coolie* laborers toiling in mines or on plantations on the other. In this gap we find a significant group of *free* Chinese labor migrants who either entered Southeast Asia on non-indentured labor arrangements or – also a sizable group – Chinese who had already served their time as indentured laborers. This is also the group that had its longer historical continuity with the "water frontier" and the *kongsi* settlements of earlier decades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and it was defined by the mobility and migration of laboring Chinese traveling on smaller Chinese *junk* boats. Moreover, these laboring Chinese were also predominantly – but not exclusively – rurally based, adding another layer of complexity for historians who study the colonial archives, in which these migrants are difficult to detect and analyze. It is exactly in these archives that we can trace the process of them becoming invisible.

Another important conclusion that connects with the overarching argument of this edited volume is that various sets of actors had high degrees of *agency* in either self-concealing, concealing, or invisibilizing, in this case Chinese labor migrants. For the Chinese, the acts of self-concealing and concealing respectively seem to have been performed by the Chinese labor migrants themselves, or by Chinese intermediaries who helped them to acquire forged documents or who shared knowledge about avoiding immigration restrictions. But despite what colonial officials often believed in their fears of "malicious coolie brokers" abducting labor migrants, I would rather argue that the majority of such acts of self-concealment seemed to have happened *among* different labor migrants within their migrant communities, rather than migrants being subjected to powerful human traffickers, perhaps with the exception of female migrants trafficked into the colonies for sex work. In opposition to Chinese migrants self-concealing or helping others to self-conceal from the colonial authorities stand the actors who were more closely connected to the colonial state: The colonial bureaucrats and the Chinese officers. These colonial intermediaries were tasked with the registration and regulation of Chinese immigration, but they themselves also played active roles in either *hypervisibilizing* or *invisibilizing* particular categories of migrants. They, too, made crucial choices in deciding where to focus the colonial lens, mainly due to the realities of limited personnel and bureaucratic power the colonial state could muster. Furthermore, the fact that the Dutch mostly relied on Chinese intermediaries through the Chinese officer system also impacted the degrees of visibility of Chinese labor migrants within Dutch colonial territory.

In order to understand how such processes of invisibilization and concealment operate, we therefore need to focus on the specific historical agents and their interests in keeping or making people visible or invisible. As echoed in the introduction and in other chapters in this book, we need to carefully think through the motivations behind (in)visibilization, and identify those historical actors who – in their interplay with others – contributed to making people more visible or less visible. As also echoed in the other chapters in this book, there can be quite significant historiographical ramifications when such questions remain unaddressed. In the case of this chapter, the persistent image of Chinese in Southeast Asia simply being wealthy merchants and old colonial collaborators may undermine the actual reality of Chinese labor migrants being crucial historical actors in the historical development of a whole region. Therefore, only by understanding how these processes of invisibilization and concealment work, can we join the artist Yip Yew Chong – whose mural we encountered in the opening pages of this chapter – in his attempt to integrate Chinese labor migration into the historical scholarship *and* historical memories of Southeast Asia and its independent postcolonial states.

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Afterword

Martin Dusinberre

The Name and the Game Revisited: Mr Mita and Unseen Japanese Pasts

Caught in the right mood of an evening, most historians will indulge you in a story or three about the moments when their research turned in a wholly new direction, unexpected and of uncertain import, but with the eventual consequence that the past would never quite look the same again. For me, the first of two such moments in the last twenty years concerned the vessel by which historical actors are so often rendered visible or invisible to the historian: the name.

The setting was the unprepossessing forward cabin of a small ship crisscrossing Japan's Seto Inland Sea between the various ports of Kaminoseki town. Back in February 2004, your regular passengers on the thrice-daily ferry from the Murotsu district to Iwaishima island would be a dozen or so elders returning to the island after a hospital appointment or a visit to relatives somewhere on the mainland; day jobbers such as the public sanitation crew, or officials from the municipal office, or travelling sales representatives; a tourist fisherman or woman, immediately identifiable by their fancy nets and portable cool-boxes; and Kaminoseki's resident oddball (or at least one of them), namely a PhD student from Britain engaged in that dubious historical activity, "fieldwork".

Thus, the elderly, bespectacled gentleman sitting in the bow seats in his fine woollen overcoat and his grey Homburg hat constituted an anomaly on that winter morning, all the more so when he approached said oddball with a hesitant smile and enquired as to my business in flawless English which, despite the wispiness of his voice, carried a faint American accent. He was visiting from Tokyo, a trip he took approximately once a decade, to carry out *o-haka mairi* – the correct translation, he paused, must be, ah, *praying at the ancestral grave*? – on the island of his mother's birth. He had travelled widely in his life but there was something about Iwaishima which tugged at his heart.

He extended his hand in a manner most un-Japanese: "My name is Mita, Tsutomu Mita".

We went our separate ways at Iwaishima's weathered pier. But I saw him again the following morning at his inn. I had dropped by to greet the inn's manager, a woman I knew from my own stays there in the late-1990s, when I came to Iwaishima once a month to teach English at the island's junior high school (then four pupils) and elementary school (six pupils). Mr Mita was preparing to depart on the 12.30 ferry

Note: I would like to thank Mònica Ginés, Debjani Bhattacharyya, Yi-Tang Lin and Jordan Sand, and the participants of the "What is New in Social History" workshop at the University of Cambridge in September 2023, for commenting on earlier drafts of this chapter.

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back to the mainland and we swapped postal addresses. “Come and visit”, he said with a smile, donning his hat.

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Names impart historical visibility. The name is the “thread of Ariadne that leads the researcher through the archival labyrinth”, claimed Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni in their oft-cited essay, “The Name and the Game”.[1] Names render vivid an actor’s social networks; they allow the piecing together of fragmentary evidence; and they facilitate what Ginzburg and Poni call a “prosopography from below” – an approach which is rooted in “real life”, and thus central to the practice of microhistory.[2] In turn, microhistory offers historians the opportunity “to reanalyze the rules of the game”: that is, to rethink the historiographical approaches which hitherto shaped a scholar’s view of the past.[3]

In this imagination of the scholarly “game”, our playing field is the archive or the library. Names may jump out at us unexpectedly from the page, a thread demanding to be followed; but the institutional site of this initial encounter brings an assumed stability to the historian’s relationship with their historical actor(s), for though we may have to rethink the rules, the game is still *ours*. By contrast, the very coincidence of my first encounter with Mr Mita – the ship, his trip, my fieldwork, our common languages – destabilized these basic assumptions about the name and the game. As I have engaged with the contributions to *Intentional Invisibilization* I have begun to ask, what if the game is not ours to play but that of our actors? Who conceals a name and who makes it visible? And how does a historian write if *we* are the ones being gamed?

One response to the question of writing is reflected in this Afterword’s circuitous style. My publications on Kaminoseki to date have engaged in a certain structural pretence – namely, that I controlled the material at my disposal and knew how to handle it. That game-performance flies in the face of the fact that ever since I encountered Mr Mita, the “real life” of research has been much less certain. Through an agency I could not always identify, truths in the shape of names became visible, even if they had never been invisible in the first place; those truths turned out to be partial, for my protagonists themselves engaged in invisibilization; and so did I, both consciously and unconsciously, in a process which goes on to this day. To recall these encounters is to reflect on the instability of memory and historical research, and to write in a way which is accordingly nonlinear.

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1 Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, “The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace,” in *Microhistory and the Lost People of Europe*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 1–10, here 5.

2 Ibid.: 7–8.

3 Ibid.: 4.

Until I met Mr Mita in 2004, my fieldwork on Iwaishima island and in the ports of Murotsu and Kaminoseki – all of which today comprise Kaminoseki municipality, at 2,300 people the smallest by population in Japan – had been focused on two ostensibly political questions. First, why had town councillors voted by an overwhelming majority in the early 1980s to *request* the construction of a new nuclear power station in the municipality (despite everything written about Not In My Back Yard mobilization)? Second, why had islanders in Iwaishima district alone rebelled against this act of "betrayal" from their elected representatives and activated an anti-nuclear campaign which had become, by the early 2000s, one of the longest and most successful in Japanese postwar history? To answer these questions I first spent several months on Iwaishima in 2004, seeking to understand the socioeconomic and ritual embeddedness of political decision-making on the island.

During one fieldwork interview, the island's former postmaster, a spritely man in his eighties who lit up a cigarette every twenty minutes with a tender and steady hand, gave me a Xeroxed copy of a photograph from the mid-1930s that depicted some forty of the island's leaders, seated and standing in a commemorative pose like a class photo from school. He identified various protagonists and their concomitant functions in village society: the district head, the shrine priest, the temple priests, his predecessor as postmaster, the farming union head, the elementary school principal, representatives of the women's association, and so on. Neither he nor any of the elderly islanders to whom I showed the photo could identify the two men seated in the middle of the front row. But I was already beginning to sense that visual absence, for example that of the fishing industry's representatives, told me as much about social hierarchies as photographic presence. I began to hypothesize that exclusion from the posed ranks of the great and good implied a political disenfranchisement from island life; and that the resentments accompanying such invisibility might possibly explain something of the ferocity of the anti-nuclear rebellion half a century later. Thus, to identify photographic presence *and* absence was a way for me to reveal deeply entrenched sociopolitical dynamics – dynamics that came to be as important for understanding late-twentieth century island life as those analytical labels (in particular, "anti-nuclear") by which I had hitherto been attempting to frame Iwaishima's history.

Mr Mita accelerated this process of rethinking my analytical labels. The first time we met in Tokyo, he shared stories of his childhood in Manchuria, his trips down the Korean peninsula to visit his uncle in Busan, his father's work for the South Manchuria Railway Company, his own engineering career in the US and Europe and in China during the Cultural Revolution, his father's learning Arabic after the war and translating the Qur'ān.[4] His quiet voice and understated manner only reinforced both the

4 For a brief overview of the career of Mr Mita's father, Mita Ryōichi (1892–1983), see Hans Martin Krämer, "Pan-Asianism's Religious Undercurrents: The Reception of Islam and Translation of the Qur'ān in Twentieth-Century Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 3 (2014): 619–40, here 632–34.

exceptionality and the normality of the twentieth century arc of Japanese history he was drawing.[5] Mr Mita also shared his own collection of sepia photographs. Two from Iwaishima immediately caught my eye. They depicted, circa 1939, the unveiling of a bronze statue of the medieval warrior Kusunoki Masashige by Mr Mita's maternal uncle, Matsuoka Jinta, and his elder son (Mr Mita's cousin, see Figure 1). They came from the same series as the Xeroxed group pose I had been given by the island's retired postmaster; indeed, the two seated men on the front row, previously unidentifiable, were now revealed to be the Matsuokas.

Fig. 1: The unveiling of the Kusunoki Masashige statue on Iwaishima, c. 1939, by Matsuoka Jinta (left) and his son, Yoshitetsu. By kind permission of Mita Tsutomu.

5 The term, "the normal exception" was coined by Edoardo Grendi: see Ginzburg and Poni, "The Name and the Game": 7.

Taking this chance discovery in Tokyo some 900 kilometres back to my astonished Iwaishima interviewees prompted a renewed dredging of memories, as if the names were mnemonic devices.[6] On the island, one interlocutor told me a story concerning Matsuoka Jinta's father, Toyozō (that is, Mr Mita's maternal grandfather), an Iwaishima man born sometime in the mid nineteenth century. By late century, Matsuoka Toyozō was a shipper on the Inland Sea routes between the salt fields of Yamaguchi prefecture, across the water to Iwaishima's west, and Osaka, far to the east. Toyozō is sailing eastwards one day, the story goes, when he is caught in a sudden storm. With his vessel shipping water and rolling perilously, with death approaching on the crashing waves, Toyozō becomes aware of a figure beyond his bow. Perhaps the figure is on a turtle or floating on air: my notes are unclear and my normal interview Japanese, with its core social history vocabulary, is suddenly in uncharted waters. But the figure is signalling that Toyozō must change course – and when he does, the port of Akaishi appears on the horizon. Landing safely and astonished by his survival, Toyozō quizzes local people about what he has seen. That's Gyōja-sama, they say, referring to En no Gyōja: "En the ascetic", a seventh century mystic renowned for his supernatural powers.[7] He navigated you to safety; he saved you from the storm.

From Mita to Matsuoka to Gyōja-sama, names may well be one guiding thread through the labyrinth of the past; but back in 2004 I was sceptical as to whether my research really needed to encompass wondrous wizards. More interesting – though still a distraction from nuclear politics, truth be told – was the question of how to account for what would have undoubtedly remained an absence in the island's collective memory had it not been for Mr Mita happening to ride on the same ferry as me on the one occasion in ten years that he returned to Iwaishima, and of his happening to judge me a kindred spirit worthy of conversation.

In her opening words to this volume, Mònica Ginés uses a language of historians "unearthing" processes of invisibilization as we come to understand a "stratigraphy of concealment". Her metaphor parallels those of Ginzburg and Poni, who write of "mining" new archives so to expose "precious deposits of primary materials". Once again, the assumption is that the scholar controls the excavation.[8] But our initial impetus for understanding both visibility and invisibility can equally begin on less certain terrain, or indeed no terrain at all. It may take the form of a chance encounter on the water: the appearance of an agent as if on the winter wind, as if beyond the bow.

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6 Noelani Arista, "Listening to Leoiki: Engaging Sources in Hawaiian History," *Biography* 32, no. 1 (2009): 66–73, here 69.

7 For one version of his life, see "The Wizard of the Mountains," in *Japanese Tales*, ed. and trans. Royall Tyler (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987): 127–30.

8 Ginzburg and Poni, "The Name and the Game": 2. For a similar metaphorical vocabulary, see Johan Fredrikzon and Chris Haffenden, "Towards Erasure Studies: Excavating the Material Conditions of Memory and Forgetting," *Memory, Mind and Media* 2 (2023): 1–24.

Over subsequent months, I came to think that Matsuoka Toyozō's encounter with Gyōja-sama, as recounted indirectly through the agency of his grandson Mr Mita, was in fact significant for something more than what it suggested about cults of ancient asceticism. Instead of its temporal dimensions, the story alerted me to space – to a more expansive understanding of the geographical sites that might fall under the rubric of "Japanese" history.

One particular realization was that, in focusing on the foreground composition of the group photograph, I had overlooked the background statue whose unveiling in the grounds of the Iwaishima elementary school had been the catalyst for the island's elites to gather. By the time I came to teach in the school sixty years later, both the bronze Kusunoki Masashige and its plinth were long gone (the former melted down during the Second World War emergency). But the statue's survival in photographic form, and the survival of other prewar relics throughout the municipality, suggested a new documentary genre by which I might study the past, namely stone vestiges of donations from eminent expatriate islanders to their home community. This material archive of the town itself revealed an unexpected spatial expansiveness of concepts of "island" or "village" beyond the obvious boundaries of pier and port.

For as it turned out, in the year 1900, sometime after being saved by Gyōja-sama, Matsuoka Toyozō had emigrated from Iwaishima to Busan, on the Korean peninsula, joining the tide of Japanese incomers who caused the city's population to treble between 1898 and 1907.[9] Establishing a sake factory and employing Iwaishima brewmasters, who had an excellent regional reputation from their off-season work on the mainland, Toyozō became such a success story that in February 1904, the same month Japan declared war on Russia, he paid for the construction of a new shrine high on the mountain above the Iwaishima port – a shrine dedicated to En no Gyōja. Thus, his son Jinta's financing of the Kusunoki Masashige statue three decades later was but the latest in a long line of Matsuoka benefactions from Korea, including contributing to the island's Russo-Japanese war memorial when it was raised in 1917.

The Matsuokas were by no means alone in these financial endeavours. That 1917 war memorial, and an adjacent (and contemporaneous) "Monument in Honour of our Ancestors" (*sūso-hi* 崇祖碑, see Figure 2), had been co-financed by Matsubara Daikichi, an Iwaishima emigrant to San Francisco, where he ran a tailoring business and by the 1920s was on the executive board of the Bōchō Overseas Association. (Bōchō was one pre-twentieth century name for Yamaguchi prefecture, to which Iwaishima, Kaminoseki and Murotsu belonged.) In the early 1930s, Matsubara was also one of seven principal benefactors to the construction of the new Iwaishima elementary school – the very site in whose playground the Kusunoki statue would subsequently be built. The other expatriate donors included a dentist in Hawai'i, two further resi-

9 Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 293.

Fig. 2: Iwaishima's Russo-Japanese war memorial (foreground) and Monument in Honour of our Ancestors, both erected in 1917. Photograph by the author, May 2004.

dents in San Francisco, and a husband-and-wife owner of a major sake factory in the Japanese colony of Karafuto.

I began to get distracted from nuclear politics by these historical protagonists. I wondered what they might tell historians not just about the fluid borders of the prewar hometown – and by extension Japan itself – but also about the relationship between overseas migration and Japanese state-building, or between migrant and colonist communities across the Pacific world. I was interested, too, in the ways that social climbing in the diaspora communities was inscribed on hometown stone: that is, in migration as a means of making a name for oneself.

But had it not been for Mr Mita's approaching me on the Iwaishima ferry exactly one hundred years to the month after his grandfather Toyozō had paid his dues to

Gyōja-sama (are we still happy to call this "coincidence"?), I would never have known about the Korean roots of the mountain shrine or the Kusunoki statue. Perhaps I would eventually have come to be interested in the overseas financing of the Iwaishima elementary school in the 1930s – or perhaps not. For years, in fact, I had walked in ignorance past the documents that recorded this financing: seven rectangular stones on which are inscribed the benefactors' names and the value of their donations to the school's construction.

Here were yet more names that I had come to see thanks to Mr Mita. Far from being confined to the shadows (another metaphor used by Ginés and several contributors), these inscriptions were fully exposed come rain or shine. The oversight was rather mine: to my hitherto incurious eye, this was a history visible but unseen, legible but unread. With my preconceived notions of what constituted an archive, or where it might be found, I myself was engaged in invisibilizing the past.

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In the first academic article I wrote on Kaminoseki, published not long after I'd completed my doctorate in 2008, I introduced a few such "unread relics" of Japan's transpacific past.[10] Beginning with an example not from Iwaishima but from Kaminoseki, of a donation stone marking the contributions of 31 Honolulu-based Kaminoseki villagers towards the purchase of a new, state-of-the art radio for the elementary school in 1926, I explored the lives and historical significance of municipal prewar donors such as Matsuoka Toyozō and Matsubara Daikichi. I ended the essay by fretting about the possibility that the wind and rain might soon render Kaminoseki's stone inscriptions entirely illegible to future historians.

I was convinced then, and still am, that this material archive – of stones, statues, schools and even individual houses – speaks to a largely overlooked and unwritten social history of pre-war Japanese expansionism, one that complements but stands in contrast to new research on elite actors or on genealogies of expansionist ideology.[11] On reflection, however, I see that the way I framed this archive back in 2008, including my concerns about its potential disappearance, were problematic for three reasons.

For a start, my commencing with the story of a radio set revealed an unconscious mixing of the metaphors by which I approached the past. The radio survived only as a photograph in the relevant school files. Though (indirectly) visible, the radio was

10 I called it "transnational" then: Martin Dusinberre, "Unread Relics of a Transnational 'Hometown' in Rural Western Japan," *Japan Forum* 20, no. 3 (2008): 305–35. For later thoughts on the inadequacies of the transnational framework, see Martin Dusinberre and Mariko Iijima, "Transplantation: Sugar and Imperial Practice in Japan's Pacific," *Historische Anthropologie* 27, no. 3 (2019): 325–35.

11 In particular: Eiichiro Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier: Japanese America and Settler Colonialism in the Construction of Japan's Borderless Empire* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Sidney Xu Lu, *The Making of Japanese Settler Colonialism: Malthusianism and Trans-Pacific Migration, 1868–1961* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Jun Uchida, *Provincializing Empire: Ōmi Merchants in the Japanese Transpacific Diaspora* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2023).

silent; and yet at some fundamental level I articulated my work of tracing its donors through metaphors of orality and aurality. That is, I would engage in what Ginzburg and Poni call a "nominative methodology" by following the names inscribed on the radio stone or on others around the town, and through this effort I would magically be able to *hear* new stories. By this logic, to write these protagonists "back into history" assumed an ontological equivalence between biographical text and the recovery of actorly voice – as if the radio could once again transmit speech.[12]

These days, however, I'm unsure that this elision of visibility, legibility and aurality makes good sense. For to erect a material record can be to *exclude* particular voices from a narrative of the past: to make visible is also to make absent, and thus to silence.[13] For example, the path up to Kaminoseki's main Hachiman shrine, running alongside the old elementary school playground where the radio stone was erected, is lined by a low, stone-pillared fence. Each pillar records the name of a villager who made a donation in the 1930s towards the installation of electric lights leading up to the shrine. Even today, I know some of these names by heart: Awaya Torajirō, who owned a forty-plus hectare farm in central Korea; Ueda Sakujirō, who ran the Kilauea Bakery in Hilo, Hawai'i. Like Matsubara Daikichi or Matsuoka Toyozō, these men were the local agents of Japan's post-1868 expansionist zeal. Yet my prosopographic approach, recounting hometown history through the surviving archival fragments of their lives, unwittingly echoed the genre of the prewar directories and newsletters published by organizations such as the aforementioned Bōchō Overseas Association, which offered similar potted histories of "success stories" (*seikōsha* 成功者) in the diaspora.[14] My unintentional parroting of this genre back in 2008 suggests that the stones were lining my own path towards a particularly elitist and gendered imagination of the past, one that foregrounded mini-biographies of male protagonists – Matsuoka, Matsubara, Awaya, Ueda – and their exploits. Indeed, the only overseas donation stone I could find that came from a female expatriate was that of Fujinaga Chiyo, wife of Fujinaga Yosaku, who himself was the biggest donor to the rebuilding of Iwaishima elementary school and the owner of a successful sake brewing factory in the Japanese colony of Karafuto (southern Sakhalin). Here, as in the lists of transpacific migrants in the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, women were only identified in relation to their husbands. Chiyo's donation, at a whopping 1,000 yen, was smaller than Yosaku's, at 1,500 yen, for which her name was inscribed on a proportionally smaller stone.

Yet historians know that single women also emigrated in their thousands from Japan in the decades between the 1868 Meiji revolution and the Second World War,

12 Arista, "Listening to Leoiki": 66.

13 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015 [1995]): 31–69.

14 Iwaishima's Matsubara Daikichi was described as such in the Yamaguchi Overseas Association's 1922 newsletter: *Bōchō Kaigai Kyōkai Kaihō*, number 4: Sakuraya-ke monjo (ref. 49–50), Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives.

often to work in the sex industries of Southeast Asia, Australia or North America. Officials working in Japanese consulates knew this as well and lamented the shame allegedly brought upon Japan's international reputation by such migration (see below); and some of the home communities from which these women hailed also knew about their exploits – and benefitted from their remittances.[15] For many years I suspected women from Kaminoseki were among those who emigrated overseas to engage in sex work. I assumed they would have left for exactly the same reasons as their late-nineteenth century male counterparts who crossed to toil on the Hawaiian sugar plantations: namely, to escape hometown poverty, to make money and send remittances, even to see the world beyond Japan. And so I was delighted, if that is the right word, to find in 2019 the resting place of a woman from the Tenjin district of Kaminoseki in the Singapore Japanese Cemetery Park, a grave dating from 1892. She was buried in the section populated by the so-called Karayuki-san, the Japanese sex labourers who were to be found in their hundreds in late-nineteenth century Singapore, and her headstone had been donated by "Futaki Tagaji[rō]", a well-known brothel owner in the city. But the grave itself was nameless.

If the name confers visibility, then to be unnamed is at some level to be invisible, or only partly visible. Like the Karayuki-san who posed for popular postcards in turn-of-the-century Singapore as generic "Japanese Ladies" and the like, and were thereby objectified in the viewer's colonial gaze,[16] the woman's unnamed grave – other than its address and its male benefactor – denied her the possibility of individual subjectivity. Herein lies one difference, if not *the* key difference, between Kaminoseki's male and female overseas migrants. The former might hope eventually to make a public name for themselves at home: to leave an inscribed trace of their prosperity on stones commemorating schools, war memorials, a radio or electric illuminations. The latter could not hope to do so.[17] Thus, to the extent that the male donors and their support networks in Kaminoseki would have been aware of female sex labourers from among their own ranks, this material memorialization of one overseas narrative at the expense of another can be considered a form of concealment, or intentional silencing, with the aim of diverting future generations of townspeople or scholars towards the "success sto-

15 For one overview of this history, see Bill Mihalopoulos, *Sex in Japan's Globalization, 1870–1930: Prostitutes, Emigration and Nation-Building* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011).

16 Regina Hong, Ling Xi Min and Naoko Shimazu, *Postcard Impressions of Early 20th-Century Singapore: Perspectives from the Japanese Community. From the Lim Shao Bin Collection, National Library Singapore* (Singapore: National Library Board, 2020): 129–38.

17 Intriguingly, the licensed prostitutes who worked near the Kaminoseki port in the late-Edo period and who made donations to the port's small Sumiyoshi shrine *were* accredited in stone. It may be that the societal – and thus reputational – difference between (earlier) licensed domestic sex labourers and (later) unlicensed overseas sex labourers was reflected in the surviving material traces of the former. For the Meiji government's defence of licenced sex labour in the 1870s, see Daniel V. Botsman, "Freedom Without Slavery? 'Coolies,' Prostitutes, and Outcastes in Meiji Japan's 'Emancipation Moment'," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (2011): 1323–47.

ries". Only after I had discovered the grave in Singapore did I appreciate the extent to which my older work had fallen into what might be described as an archival trap.[18]

That visibilization can conversely be an act of silencing is also borne out by the archival strategies at play in the aforementioned Diplomatic Archives in Tokyo, to which you must go if you have any interest in further exploring the topic of overseas sex labour.[19] As Bill Mihalopoulos pointed out more than a decade ago, Japanese female sex labourers were rendered newly visible in the 1880s and 1890s by an "ocular regime" co-constructed by (male) Japanese traders, (male) Japanese consular officials, and (male) Foreign Ministry bureaucrats in Tokyo.[20] Greatly simplified, a visiting businessman in northern Australia might write to the Honorary Consul for Japan in Melbourne to complain about the reputational damage being done to Japan by the presence of "immoral" women in, say, the town of Darwin. The Consul might forward the complaint to Tokyo, where concerned bureaucrats and politicians then ordered consular staff all across the Pacific world to collect more data on such women. The data similarly made their way back to Tokyo, causing much hand-wringing, and more instructions, and the generation of a crisis mentality throughout the consular network.

In short, Japanese female migrants suddenly became a visible problem – and were filed as such, in "miscellaneous" or "policing" subsections of the archive – in ways that their male counterparts, filed simply under "migration", did not. A neologism was coined, *shūgyōfu* 醜業婦, or "women engaged in unsightly work", to describe sex labourers. The files in Tokyo concerning such women bulge with letters, reports, investigations, number-crunching. On rare occasions, nominal first-person accounts do survive – until you realise that the speech is reported, or layered with linguistic and legal interpretation, or that multiple first-person voices have been neatly transcribed by a single (male) hand.[21] The archival visibility of unsightliness has created a distance from and at times a complete absence of female voices.

Perhaps, then, this book's interest in processes of concealment is in the first place a call for better understandings of who was seen, by whom, and with what archival consequences. Names were instruments of *in*visibilization as well as visibilization. Names did not convey voices, nor alone break historical silence.

But equally, to be nameless was not necessarily to be overlooked. For we can also acknowledge that nameless subjects, be they a Japanese woman or an African-American girl or an unknown soldier, have their own historical power – as placeholders for the collective experience, as the "minor figure [who] yields to the chorus".[22] Thus, for a scholar reconstructing Kaminoseki's social history, the unnamed grave in Singapore is

18 On archival traps, see Martin Dusinberre, *Mooring the Global Archive: A Japanese Ship and its Migrant Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023): chapter 1.

19 These particular files have not been digitized: ibid.: 217–20.

20 Mihalopoulos, *Sex in Japan's Globalization*: chapter 2.

21 See Dusinberre, *Mooring the Global Archive*: 188–98.

22 Saidiya Hartman, "An Unnamed Girl, A Speculative History," *The New Yorker*, 09.02.2019.

as eloquent a source as the radio stone in the metropole: it, too, stands for a player in the game.

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If mixed metaphors of sight and sound, and their analytical consequences in terms of understanding (in)visibility, constituted the first set of problems which arose from my reading of names in Kaminoseki, then the second problem concerned what this book's contributors call *self-concealment*. In other words, concealment can also be an actorly choice – and invisibility a scholarly strategy. In one of the nominal first-person testimonies I read of a female sex labourer who had ended up in Queensland's Thursday Island, for example, I was struck by the empirical accuracy of her information when it came to naming her procurer and the men who had trafficked her via Shanghai and Hong Kong, but how deliberately vague she remained when it came to naming her female companions on the journey. *I will not play your name game*, she seems to be saying to her interviewers and, through them, to future historians.[23]

Back in Kaminoseki municipality, I was faced with two contrasting performances of silence-by-choice. In March 1910, the village of Murotsu launched a fundraising campaign to raise money for the construction of a new assembly hall at the local elementary school.[24] "We appeal for the assistance of all volunteers who harbour a deep sense of hometown love [*aikyō* 愛郷]," the "Statement of Aims" read, and "we shall rely upon the cooperation of Murotsu villagers resident in Korea and Manchuria for the most sacrosanct and important building" – that is, an assembly hall fit to house the venerated imperial portrait and thus acknowledge "His Imperial Majesty's munificent favour". As a quid pro quo, donors were promised that their names and contributions would be recorded "eternally" and that their photographs would be kept in an album in the completed hall. By the end of the year, officials had contacted 184 Murotsu settlers in Korea – meaning that a third of the village's households then boasted a family member residing on the peninsula. For the most part, the campaign was successful, with 94 Murotsu expatriates eventually raising the vast sum of 3,203 yen, and the 210-square metre Korean Hall opened with great fanfare in 1913. But in correspondence surviving in the Kaminoseki municipal archives, I found an apologetic letter from a man who enclosed a postal order for 10 yen – the median donation – but expressed his "great sense of shame" (*hanahada sekimen no itari* 甚ダ赤面ノ至リ) with the amount. "This is truly a very small amount of money", he continued, "so I absolutely do not need to receive a letter of thanks from the [Yamaguchi] governor. Please do not make my donation public: I have no objection to your using my money under some other name".

23 Dusinberre, *Mooring the Global Archive*: 202–5.

24 The following paragraph is based on Martin Dusinberre: "Of World History and Great Men: A Japanese Village and Its Worlds," in *The Decade of the Great War: Japan and the Wider World in the 1910s*, ed. Tosh Minohara, Tze-ki Hon and Evan Dawley (Leiden: Brill, 2014): 372–93.

In making this request, the man – a sake merchant in Mokpo – chose a different approach to posterity from that represented by the sake-brewing dynasty of Matsuoka Toyozō and his son Jinta in Busan. Where the latter imprinted their names into the Iwaishima landscape, the former desired to remain unseen in Murotsu. Or alternatively, he desired to *perform* a sense of shame in the present, the more to embellish his future virtue. For the fact that his May 1913 letter survived meant he was not overlooked by a future historian: thus, publicly invisible did not equate privately unread. If I had had greater sensitivity to the possibility that *he* was playing a game with posterity, then I would have acknowledged these calculations when I named him in a piece I published in 2014. Today, I remain unsure whether "shame" was a claim or not – and so I have concealed his name.

By contrast, there was another man whose name appeared often enough in the archives – particularly as a major donor to the Murotsu elementary school's "America-Hawai'i Hall", 380 square metres and a rival to the neighbouring Korean Hall – that I decided to investigate further. I traced his household tax records to the extent I could find them; his initial emigration to Hawai'i in 1889; and his eight-year stint working in the fields of the Hanā sugar plantation in eastern Maui. With the help of an interlocutor in Murotsu I exchanged letters with his elderly granddaughter in Osaka, fleshing out the story of a transpacific career and family life which I had also traced through ancestry.com. A volunteer at the Kaua'i Historical Society assisted in identifying his employment by the McBryde Sugar Company through the 1910s. This was the decade in which, in addition to several donations, he purchased three properties in Murotsu – whose records I checked in the local land directories of the time. I also noted his son's donation to the construction of Murotsu's new junior high school in the 1950s, a rare example of postwar benefactions to the hometown. I worked out that a surviving grandson was the president of a small company in Honolulu. In 2012, I wrote a letter to introduce myself. On a trip to Hawai'i in 2013 I called the company and spoke to an employee, who sounded enthusiastic about the prospect that I might secure an interview. I wrote a follow-up letter, which also remained unanswered. And then I gave up.

In my first book I had insisted that real names, with all the associations of profession, class and household which accrued over generations before "commoners" chose or were assigned their surnames in the 1870s, were central to the practice of social history. (For example, the common root of Iwaishima's Matsuoka and Matsubara households revealed ritual and economic bonds across generations.)[25] But after my failed attempts to interview the surviving grandson in Honolulu, I ended up changing this particular emigrant's name: he appears in all my work under the pseudonym Fuyuki. I engaged in this strategy of concealment because I could find no evidence that his promised 400 yen donation to the "America-Hawai'i Hall" in January 1914

25 Martin Dusinberre, *Hard Times in the Hometown: A History of Community Survival in Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012): 13, 72–79.

ever materialized, suggesting he was more bluster than buck. If the Honolulu grandson, who bore the same surname, chose to remain silent, I would not sully the family name with a claim I could not conclusively prove – a claim which, in the wider scheme of things, was in any case unimportant to the stories I wanted to tell of transpacific migrants and their historical legacies.

For these protagonists, then, the name was at once a reputation to be protected; an identifier to be concealed from zealous interrogators; a potential source of shame; or a claim for greater recognition. A historian's pursuit of the name thereby becomes something more than a microhistorical methodology. To ask ourselves whose name is fair game raises ethical considerations in which both self-concealment and scholarly agency need to be weighed.[26] Uncovering processes of invisibilization should not necessarily be a project of re-visibilizing – especially when, as has been pointed out in colonial history, to do so risks re-traumatization.[27] And so I have come to question whether my interest in prosopography from below meant that I failed adequately to interrogate both the gains derived from historical visibilization, and also Ginzburg and Poni's silence when it comes to asking who is actually playing the game.

⁂

On my first trip back to Kaminoseki in April 2023 after a pandemic-enforced absence of four years, I walked on a couple of mornings up the path to the main Hachiman shrine, past the low, stone-pillared fence and the old elementary school playground. The radio donation stone is still there and legible – if overlooked in a dusty, weedy wasteland and now standing in the shade of a fig tree. What survives of the fence has weathered less well: fifteen years on, the wind and the rain have rendered the name Awaya Torajirō completely illegible. If it were not for some surviving inscriptions and my fieldwork notes, I would wonder if I had dreamed about his Korean farm and the electric lights.

In the old days, you would look down from the shrine path to the heart of the historical Kaminoseki port. Among the labyrinth of back alleys, there was a side street I especially enjoyed walking. On its corner was the Awaya branch household, known to locals simply as "the pharmacy" – an older, nineteenth century building purchased by a prosperous returnee from Hawai'i in approximately 1930. (A distant relation of Awaya Torajirō, this man was a key fundraiser for the radio donation campaign.) Then came a couple of beautiful wooden houses dating from the mid-1930s. Two stories high, they were taller and more brazenly frontward-facing onto the street than their older neighbours. These were new edifices erected by similarly prosperous Hawaiian returnees and I loved their zelkova pillars and latticed windows. They were also an inscription, a marking of the townscape with the imprimatur of success. But the last time I was in

26 I thank Megan Foster for raising these issues at a conference in June 2023.

27 See Temi Odumosu, "The Crying Child: On Colonial Archives, Digitization, and Ethics of Care in the Cultural Commons," *Current Anthropology* 61, no. 22 (2020): 289–302.

Kaminoseki, in spring 2019, an aunt told me that one of the houses, built in 1934 and now abandoned, was due to be demolished. She urged me to step inside and take photos. On the second floor remained the detritus of a life left almost as if in a hurried exile. A large leather trunk with an address in Seattle. A Carpenters LP. A pennant from the 1970 Osaka Expo. A formal wedding photo, strewn on the floor among old clothes and coins. A box of spermicide bearing the brand name Harp.

The townspeople of Kaminoseki have long had a troubled relationship with their prewar diaspora history. As if to protect themselves from the contentious memory politics of the twentieth century, local history enthusiasts were long happy to claim that the historical port was located on the "silk road of the sea" prior to 1868, as symbolized by the famous Korean Embassies docking here on eleven of the twelve occasions they visited Japan to perform diplomatic relations with the Tokugawa shoguns in Edo; but those enthusiasts rarely initiated a conversation about town's rich post-1868 history of overseas emigration. This was not a problem of forgetting per se. Individual interviewees would happily tell me about their grandparents' emigration in the mid-Meiji years, or of their own childhood in Hawai'i or apprenticeship in Karafuto; they shared photos and letters and put me in touch with others who had stories to share. Rather, until the early 2000s, silences occurred at the level of municipal discourse: in newspaper columns on *furusato* ふるさと("hometown") history which discussed everything but emigration; in what schoolchildren did not learn on local history excursions; in what was not displayed in the town history museum. I came to think that the museum itself, hosted in a beautifully restored merchant household in Murotsu, partly explained this silence: its very location underlined a public (and publicly funded) narrative of history which privileged Meiji and pre-Meiji local elites over those imperial-era "upstarts" (*narikin* 成金) making good in Asia or the Pacific world. The museum's 1870s materiality also bypassed the need for local people to disentangle later hometown histories which traversed the longstanding epistemological divide in Japanese history between Asian-bound "colonists" and Pacific-bound "emigrants" – as epitomised by a war memorial funded by Matsuoka in Busan and Matsubara in San Francisco. Such colonist/emigrant entanglements made memory politics particularly fraught when it came to expressing pride and yet shame in the inscription of local histories into (post)colonial reckonings.[28] And thus, looking back, my fears about the elemental erasure of names from stone records seem at one level to have expressed my frustration at the slow disappearance of diaspora history from the collective memory.

In Kaminoseki, however, the record is not merely *disappearing*; it is indeed being *made invisible*. Invisibilization occurs in the decision that a Hawaiian returnee's

28 Martin Dusinberre, "Searching for *furusato* in Kaminoseki," in *Japan since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble*, ed. Christopher Gerteis, and Timothy S. George (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013): 47–65. See also Eiichiro Azuma, "'Pioneers of Overseas Japanese Development': Japanese American History and the Making of Expansionist Orthodoxy in Imperial Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 4 (2008): 1187–226.

house is less important to preserve for the common historical good than a Meiji merchant's house. It is found in the fact that the condemned home I visited in 2019 has now been razed, like its neighbours, to be replaced by a three-story, state-of-the-art municipal office (see Figure 3). That office, like so many other public works projects around the town (including the new elementary and junior high schools, a cultural centre and a hot spring resort), has been funded by central government subsidies granted to nuclear power plant host communities. In the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima disaster, when the nascent construction of the Kaminoseki plant seemed to have been permanently halted, these subsidies waned. But as I have been writing this essay in the summer of 2023, Kaminoseki has been announced as the proposed host of an interim storage site for spent nuclear fuel.[29] The arguments echo those from the early 1980s: the town is in a depopulation crisis; without new investment, it will die. And so the townscape will acquire new inscriptions marking external financial benef-

Fig. 3: The new Kaminoseki Municipal Office, here on the site of a demolished house built by a Hawaiian returnee. Photograph by the author, April 2023.

29 For the breaking story in English, see the online *Asahi Shinbun*, "Utility eyes Yamaguchi as site to store spent nuclear fuel," 02.08.2023 [accessed 28.08.2023].

icence – a record preserved on painted metal plaques, not stone, and acknowledging central government subsidies, not named individuals.

I suspect there will be no contemporary equivalent to Mr Mita appearing on the ferry to complicate this new nuclear narrative for a young historian in training. In the jaded Kaminoseki worldview which I have acquired from more than twenty years of dealing with local politics, the town will somewhere down the line become a repository primarily for fuel not history. As the names of individual actors fade or are erased from this walked archive, the shame will be all ours – and there will be no game left to play.

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