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*Myriades d'Asies*

# Historians of Asia on Political Violence



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# Historians of Asia on Political Violence

La violence politique vue par les historiens de l'Asie

Anne Cheng and Sanchit Kumar (dir.)

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In the general opinion, Asia as a whole tends to be represented (and more often than not, to represent itself) as devoid of violence: look at Indian “non-violence”, Chinese Taoist “non-action”, Confucian “harmony”, Buddhist “love for peace” or Japanese “Zen philosophy”... This may fill the shelves of “Oriental wisdom” sections in our bookshops, but most historians do not buy into this kind of “feel good” projections and are acutely aware that any society whatsoever, wherever it is located, teems with violence, and that violence is part and parcel of any kind of polity. Furthermore, the political violence which is the topic of this volume is not just about war, it can take on very diverse forms, including, as will be shown by some of the articles presented here, iconic vandalism, distorted modes of interpretation, warped forms of ideological discourse, collective amnesia and negationism.

The present volume is the second of the “Myriades d’Asies” series inaugurated with *India-China: Intersecting Universalities*. Just as the preceding one, it is a collection of articles resulting from an international conference organised by the Chair of Chinese Intellectual History in June 2019. As a reflection of the Collège de France spirit of public service intent on making knowledge available to all for free, all the volumes of the series are published online and in open access. Our hope is that these articles, written by eminent historians of Asia and from very different viewpoints which cut across vast expanses of time and space, will lead readers and researchers alike to reflect further on the multiple faces of political violence, as well as their infinite complexities, so as to avoid giving in to ideological and judgmental binaries that are the common junk food for non-thought. This seems to be increasingly essential today since the 21st century is supposed to be the century of Asia.

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Anne Cheng holds the Chair of Chinese Intellectual History at the Collège de France in Paris. Born to Chinese parents, she was educated in France, studying classics and European philosophy before focusing on Chinese studies. For over forty years she has been involved in teaching and research on the intellectual history of China. She has translated the *Analects* of Confucius into French, and has written a study of Han Confucianism, as well as a *History of Chinese Thought* which has been translated into numerous European and Asian languages. She has also edited several joint publications and is the chief editor of a bilingual series of works written in classical Chinese at Belles Lettres.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Cover illustration: group of headless statues at the Qianling Mausoleum dedicated to Emperor Gaozong (d. 683) of the Tang Dynasty and located about 80 kilometers east of Xi'an.

Illustration de couverture : groupe de statues sans tête au mausolée de Qianling dédié à l'Empereur Gaozong (mort en 683) de la dynastie Tang et situé à environ 80 kilomètres à l'est de Xi'an.

# Foreword

Historians of Asia on political violence

Anne Cheng and Sanchit Kumar

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- 1 In the general opinion, Asia as a whole tends to be represented (and more often than not, to represent itself) as devoid of violence: look at Indian “non-violence”, Chinese Taoist “non-action”, Confucian “harmony”, Buddhist “love for peace” or Japanese “Zen philosophy”. This may fill the shelves of “Oriental wisdom” sections in our bookshops, but most historians do not buy into this kind of “chicken broth for the soul” (the expression has been used to describe Yu Dan’s politically correct and best-selling interpretation of Confucius’ *Analects*), and are acutely aware that any society whatsoever, wherever it is located, teems with violence, and that violence is part and parcel of any kind of polity. Furthermore, the political violence which is the topic of this volume is not just about war, it can take on very diverse forms, including, as will be shown by some articles presented here, iconic vandalism, distorted modes of interpretation, warped forms of ideological discourse, collective amnesia and negationism.
- 2 The illustration chosen for the cover speaks for itself: the rows of over sixty statues still standing while nearly all of them are headless tell of some act of violence perpetrated against them. They can be seen in central China, at the Qianling Mausoleum dedicated to Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty and located about 80 kilometers east of Xi’an, the former imperial capital in modern day Shaanxi Province, which has been made famous by the terracotta army excavated from the tumulus of the First Emperor. Although, strangely enough, the time when and the reason why these statues actually lost their heads are still very much of a mystery, they have been identified as representing foreign envoys and officers originating from the Western regions and Central Asia. But one thing is certain, the picture was chosen precisely to be reminded that there is no easy and simplistic explanation to political violence.
- 3 The present volume is the second of the “Myriades d’Asies” collection inaugurated in April 2020, during the initial phase of the Covid 19 pandemic, with *India-China: Intersecting Universalities*. Just as the preceding one, it is a collection of articles resulting from an international conference organised by the Chair of Chinese Intellectual History at the Collège de France in June 2019, which has once more benefited from the

technical contribution of Jean-Michel Roynard, and the financial support of the Fondation Hugot. As a reflection of the Collège de France spirit of “public service” intent on making knowledge available to all for free, we decided to publish all the volumes of the collection online and in open access.

- 4 Another founding principle of the Collège de France is to teach and disseminate scientific knowledge or research “in the making”. Let us recall that “enseigner la science en train de se faire” is the motto of this unique institution dating back to 1530. Our volumes are therefore part of this effort to make broadly accessible working papers in a formalised (but not necessarily formal in the usual academic definition) state of advancement. Consequently, while some articles are presented in the form of considerably detailed developments, with a highly elaborate and sophisticated apparatus of bibliographical references, some others have chosen to remain closer to their oral delivery, with few references or even none at all. It must be pointed out that the authors in the volume, who are all eminent scholars in their respective fields, have been allowed total freedom as to the form and format of their contributions which therefore offer a great variety in terms of aspect and length.
- 5 Although the 2019 conference, unlike the 2017 one on “India-China”, was focused on the topic of political violence, it too gathered a number of historians working on India and China, with the addition of some others working on Japan. It should be noted in particular that the three scholars writing on ancient India are among the best known in their field and we are proud to have assembled their contributions in one single volume, and that the fourth Indian scholar is actually a specialist of Japan, thus creating an interesting intersection of viewpoints on Asia.
- 6 The concept of the conference was initially inspired by Upinder Singh’s book, *Political violence in ancient India*, published by Harvard University Press in 2017. Such a title cannot fail to attract attention, if not to raise an eyebrow, since there is a persistent commonplace idea that India is the country of non-violence *par excellence*. As the author makes a point of specifying, “what is distinctive about ancient India is not that Indians were especially nonviolent people but that ancient Indian political thought displays a unique, intense and prolonged engagement with the tension between violence and nonviolence”. As an authoritative historian of ancient India, Upinder Singh is in the best possible position to tackle the subject with the necessary depth of historical knowledge and expound what the wielding of political power might involve.
- 7 In her 2017 book, Upinder Singh pointed out the necessity of looking beyond India and embracing a comparative perspective, remarking that “the history of ideas requires crossing not only spatial boundaries but also temporal ones [...] The fact that ancient ideas and symbols continue to be invoked in modern India makes an understanding of those ideas and symbols extremely relevant, indeed essential. Another reason for connecting the seemingly remote past with the more immediate present is the hope that a critical engagement with ancient Indian political thought can perhaps help us reflect on the problem of escalating violence in our own time, whichever part of the world we may live in.” In such a perspective, the tension between the non-violence asserted by the explicit references to Buddhism in the modern Indian national emblems of the Sarnath Ashokan pillar on the one hand, and the extreme violence found in ancient textual sources of the Indian tradition like the *Mahabharata* or the *Arthashastra* on the other, appears to be central in Upinder Singh’s historical reflection in her book



as well as in her contribution to the present volume. Both come to the conclusion that “Violence lies at the heart of the state”.

- 8 While referring to some of the same sources from ancient Indian literature and inherited tradition, as an art historian and museum curator, Naman Ahuja offers a somewhat different viewpoint. As he himself describes, his focus “is to reveal the many types of political violence communicated by ancient and medieval Indian sculptures”. Moving beyond the purely aesthetic sensation and emotion usually produced by these sculptures and/or the reductive ideological or religious explanations adduced whenever they have undergone defacement or mutilation, Naman Ahuja delves deep into the anthropology and sociology of the various and often unexpected uses made of these sculptures in their local context. As he aptly remarks: “Objects in Indian museum collections raise questions and the museum has a role and a responsibility to play in articulating the many narratives that these questions provoke. For all the intentions that exist on paper on the interpretative role museum displays can play in fulfilling their mandate of contributing to the development of a responsible, even enlightened public, few Indian museum curators have demonstrated their capacity to exhibit this in the permanent displays of Indian history, except to use them, largely, as tools for telling a history of religion or metaphysical ideas. There are several reasons for taking the museum from being storehouses of objects to communicators of ideas and diverse, or even divergent, histories.”
- 9 Naman Ahuja consequently offers to “study some examples that were either made in order to normalise political violence in society, or have ended up having that effect. Deliberately mutilated sculptures, similar to those so amply seen at archaeological sites and in museums across India, reveal the requirement to make public statements about conflict and victory of course, but they reveal many other things too which we are not told about: how the conflict was not only one between the usually imagined upholders of iconoclastic Islam on the one side and myriad others on the other side, but sometimes between different Hindus or in contexts where there were no Muslims involved, driven at times not by conflict at all, but by the re-use of old stones on account of economic necessity.”
- 10 Naman Ahuja thus lets us partake of his experience as a curator of major exhibitions such as “The Body in Indian Art and Thought” (2013) and “India and the World: A History in Nine Stories” (2017), observing that “the problem that seems to afflict the presentation of Indian art in galleries across the world is its stereotyping on the grounds of its religious identification. The division and presentation of museum galleries of Hindu art, Buddhist art and Islamic art, has a long colonial legacy, when history used to be taught in that manner.” His in-depth argument and richly documented collection of case studies, culled all over India and throughout different periods of its history, comes at the right time when debates in this vast and diversified country tend to narrow down on so-called “religious” issues which usually find themselves reduced to a nefarious frontal opposition between Hindus and Muslims.
- 11 In a vigorous essay which deliberately chooses to privilege argumentation over erudition, Romila Thapar brings up one central issue in this volume, namely the interface between past and present, and more precisely how the past is used to legitimise the present, thus addressing a common issue also formulated by Upinder Singh and Naman Ahuja, but from a different viewpoint: “The right to dissent has come to be recognised in modern times, but its practice goes back many centuries. To deny

its earlier existence comes from the preference to project Indian society as having been a seamless harmonious unity where dissent was hardly to be found". As a renowned historian, Romila Thapar never loses sight of the specifically social context in which conceptions of culture are developed: "In the last two centuries, Indian religions have been reconstructed largely along the lines suggested by colonial scholarship. This was seldom challenged and therefore came to be accepted. The focus has been on belief, ritual and religious texts with little space being given to analysing the social concerns of these religions." In an effort to counter the predominantly theological –and ultimately Christian– approach to religion and the colonial tendency to reduce all religions into homogeneous and monolithic “-isms” (such as Hinduism, with the result that “in colonial times almost all non-Muslim sects were labeled as Hindu, even those that were not”), the historian endeavours to investigate religious practices and interactions which are often contradictory and certainly open to argument and dissent. She thus traces the genealogy of the Gandhian principle of *ahimsa*/non-violence not to some religious dogma, but to a practice of dissent which takes the paradoxical form of renunciation or breaking free from the ties and constraints of social norms.

- 12 Moving from India to Japan, while keeping India very much in mind, Brij Tankha presents a nuanced and diversified view of the oft discussed concept of Asianism, “a set of ideas defining Japan’s relations with Asia [which] has been used as a concept to organise the narrative of modern Japanese history. This set of ideas was deployed both to explain Japan’s exceptional past and chart its future as the liberator of Asian countries from Western domination, set to help them develop into modern states. [...] Japan would remake Asia on an Asian universalism inspired by Japan’s past. The basis of an Asian community, sometimes seen as united by ancient philosophies and traditions, at other times justified because of Japan’s advanced level of development, was variously conceived and debated in Japan, but Asianism as a concept provided legitimacy and became the organising principle for Japan’s colonial control in Asia.”
- 13 Brij Tankha traces the emergence of Asianism through Japan’s growing consciousness of being endowed with a destiny distinct from that of China, and of the necessity of moving away from the Chinese centuries-old influence, thus opening up to Asia and the world. This emerging awareness, eminently represented in the writings of Okakura Tenshin which have been hastily reduced to the famous opening sentence of *The Ideals of the East*, “Asia is one”, is largely based on the common ground provided by Buddhism, but with a new emphasis on the direct link between India as the source and Japan as the acme of development, therefore implicitly bypassing China. In this respect, the trip to India taken in 1883 by the Japanese monk Kitabatake Dōryū is quite symbolic, and finds an architectural expression in constructions like the Nirakuso Villa near Kobe. A more resolute political subversiveness is to be found in the works of the poet Kaneko Mitsuharu whose deliberate cosmopolitanism leads him to be overtly critical of Japan’s militaristic version of “Pan-Asianism”, as he engaged with the increasingly aggressive nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s through his observations of life of the colonised in the colonies, whether in China or in Southeast Asia.
- 14 To carry on with the task of debunking myths about the Japanese identity, Eddy Dufourmont chooses to tackle the question through the violence wrought on historical facts and the forceful distortion applied on them to make them fit into a political and ideological agenda or a national identity narrative. It seems that the Japanese obsession of a continuous line of imperial succession going back to at least the 7th century B.C. is

in fact a modern construction, and that the smooth idea of the Meiji “restoration” is a contrived view with regard to the civil war which started it and the actual revolution that some historians analyse it to be.

- 15 During the imperial regime, historians played a central role in the formation of national identity by defining Japan as a land of harmony, in contrast to China and Europe characterised as lands of revolutions marked by political violence. Since such a representation is replete with contradictions, the question is to show how Japanese historians faced the reality of political violence in their own country and how they dealt in general with the phenomenon of revolution (*kakumei*) in world history, in particular with respect to the French and the Chinese revolutionary traditions. In many ways, the Japanese two-fold obsession with continuity and harmony is strangely reminiscent of the similar obsession which is to be observed in today’s China. Could it be that there is a recurrent mechanism at work whenever a sociopolitical entity is submitted to great pressure by the imposition of “modernity”, which involves an acceleration of time and a fast-changing environment, creating a need to take refuge in an idealised past, as was diagnosed by Eric Hobsbawm in *The invention of tradition*?
- 16 As an investigation into an even more radical expression of political violence than the Pan-Asian ideology or the idea of revolution, Arnaud Nanta’s meticulously researched article has the courage of tackling one of the most controversial events in the whole Second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945), namely the so-called Nanking Massacre, which many Japanese historians still refer to by an understatement as the “Nanking Incident”, just as they refer to the Japanese occupation of China as “the China Incident” (this is somewhat reminiscent of the then French National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen’s 1987 description of the Holocaust gas chambers as a “point of detail in the history of the Second World War”). In fact, Arnaud Nanta at this point draws an interesting parallel with the French colonial occupation of Algeria: “like France during the so-called ‘Algerian events’– Japan did not consider itself to be at war and thus did not feel bound by any treaties during what it termed the ‘China incident’.” One initial observation is that the violence lies not only in the facts themselves, but also and even more so in the words used to describe them, in the way they are chosen to minimise, if not to negate the facts. One can sense that even the most genuine goodwill may find it difficult to name reality, as is witnessed by the title of the 1967 article written by Hora Tomio, one of the foremost historians of the Nanking massacre, which for lack of an appropriate word in Japanese had to resort to the transliteration of an English word: “Nankin atoroshiti” 南京アトロシテイイ (The Nanking Atrocity).
- 17 Arnaud Nanta’s article also shows interestingly how collective amnesia manages to erase a major traumatic event, and how long it takes for such an event to surface again in public consciousness. Significantly enough, the Nanking Massacre perpetrated in 1937 was still a non-event to Japanese historians of the early 1970s who simply ignored it in their narrative of the Sino-Japanese war. It was actually the analogy with the Vietnam war brought to light by a Japanese journalist which triggered off a surge of retrospective interest in the atrocities committed in Nanking over three decades earlier, together with a simultaneous salvo of reactions ranging from revisionism to downright negationism.
- 18 Finally, our volume closes with a text by Michel Bonnin which has been voluntarily kept short and devoid of bibliography in order to keep to the format of an essay, or more precisely, a pamphlet directed at one of the most striking periods of the 20th

century in terms of political violence, although it has not always been perceived as such by everyone, and even quite to the contrary. Michel Bonnin deals with the Maoist period which lasted three decades –from the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 (or even before that, as early as the Long March and the Yan’an years in the 1940s) to the end of the so-called Cultural Revolution with the death of Mao in 1976. He recalls and reviews the paroxysmic violence wielded and unleashed by the Maoist regime through successive and relentless campaigns and “movements” of destruction of human and material resources: the anti-rightist campaign as early as the 1950s, the Great Leap forward which was the direct cause of the Great Famine of the 1960s, immediately followed by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the 1970s which finished destroying whatever there remained to be destroyed of the cultural heritage, leaving behind a heap of ruins on which Deng Xiaoping started building the new economical order of a capitalistic, while ever more dictatorial China. Meanwhile, the question of the responsibility of the political leaders has remained mired in an ocean of eternal amnesia.

- 19 Our hope is that this collection of articles, written by various historians of Asia and from very different viewpoints, which cut across vast expanses of time and space, will lead readers and researchers alike to reflect further on the multiple faces of political violence, as well as their infinite complexities, so as to avoid giving in to ideological and judgmental binaries that are the common junk food for non-thought. This seems to be increasingly essential today since the 21st century is supposed to be the century of Asia, and as many would have it, even more specifically of China.

## AUTHORS

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### SANCHIT KUMAR

Sanchit Kumar was educated at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He also attended Sciences Po Paris, National University of Singapore and E.H.E.S.S. (School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences) in Paris. He has collaborated with researchers at Harvard University, University of Tokyo and Collège de France. His recent interests are in intercultural, and more specifically, inter-Asian studies.

# The state and violence: perspectives from ancient India

Upinder Singh

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- 1 The instant we recognise violence as an important and intimate part of human experience, the way we look at history, the questions we ask, the answers we seek, all change dramatically. In my recent book on the subject, I examined political violence in ancient India between c. 600 BCE and 600 CE, with special reference to the state's punitive role, war, and interactions with the forest. I pointed out that all traditions, including the religions of nonviolence, Jainism and Buddhism, accepted that a certain amount of violence was necessary for kings. I argued for a connection between the growth and systemisation of state violence and the increasingly sophisticated attempts to mask, invisibilise, justify and aestheticise this violence in various ways. At the same time, I pointed out that ancient Indian political discourse consistently distinguished legitimate force from illegitimate force and kept open a window for interrogating the state's violence. I also argued that what is distinctive about ancient India is not that Indians were especially nonviolent people but that ancient Indian political thought displays a unique, intense and prolonged engagement with the tension between violence and nonviolence. In this paper, I would like to take some of the arguments further.
- 2 It is difficult to draw a dividing line between the threat or use of coercive power or force that is necessary, and that which is illegitimate or disproportionate –that is, violence. Assessments will differ, depending on perspective. So the words “force” and “violence” are fluid categories, difficult to define in absolute terms.
- 3 Over the centuries, political theorists have justified the state's coercive, punitive and military powers, and have argued that it is these powers that stand between order and anarchy. In terms of their perspective, almost all the sources available for the history of political ideas and practice in ancient India are statist and centrist. The theories of the origins of kingship emphasise the king's responsibilities towards his people and describe taxes as his wages for the protection of his subjects, preservation of the social order, and prevention of crime and violence. The king's just punishment prevents a descent into “the law of the fish” (*matsya-nyaya*), an anarchy where the mighty devour

the weak. My paper has three parts: the justification of the use of force in ancient Indian theories of the origins of kingship; the assertion of the state's right to punish, torture and kill; the anxieties of political theorists about the problematic nature of kingship and violence against the state.<sup>1</sup> In my conclusion I raise some general issues, including the relationship between political theory and practice and the possibility of a global comparative history of political violence.

## I. Theories of the birth of kingship

- 4 Let us look first at the implications of three accounts of the origins of kingship –two from the *Mahabharata*, one from the Buddhist *Tipitaka*.
- 5 The *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata* (the great Sanskrit epic composed between c. 400 BCE and 400 CE) offers two accounts of the origins of kingship. The first account takes us back to an age of perfection when kingship and punishment did not exist because they were not required.<sup>2</sup> However, men fell prey to error, confusion and greed and they approached the gods Brahma and Vishnu to intervene. Vishnu produced a mind-born son Virajas, who was followed by his son and grandson Kirtiman and Kardama. But these three chosen men did not want to rule; they were inclined towards renunciation. Ananga was next in line and he ruled well, protecting his subjects and meting out justice. He was followed by his son Atibala who learnt the art of governance but did not have control over his senses. The next ruler was Vena, who was dominated by passion and hate, and was unlawful in his behaviour towards his subjects. The sages decided to get rid of this evil king and stabbed him to death with blades of sacred *kusha* grass. They churned his right thigh, and out of it emerged an ugly man named Nishada (a forest tribal), who was told to go away because he was not fit to be king. Then they churned Vena's right hand and therefrom emerged Prithu, a man with a refined mind and an acute understanding of the Vedas, the auxiliary texts, *dharma*, *artha*, the military arts and politics. Prithu was consecrated king by the gods and sages and he proved to be a good, exemplary king.
- 6 The second account of the origin of kingship in the *Shanti Parva* describes kingship as the result of both divine intervention and a social contract.<sup>3</sup> Oppressed by anarchy, violence and insecurity, people came together and made agreements among themselves to get rid of the violent, aggressive men who stole, violated women and performed other such evil acts. However, this arrangement did not work. So they went to the god Brahma and begged him to appoint a king who could protect them and whom they would honour in return. Brahma chose Manu, but Manu refused. He was afraid of cruel acts, because kingship was a very difficult task, especially among men, who are perpetually prone to improper behaviour. The people urged Manu not to be afraid and reassured him that the sin incurred by his cruel deeds would go away. They also promised to give him 1/50<sup>th</sup> of their cattle and gold, and 1/10<sup>th</sup> of their grain; soldiers skilled in war would follow him everywhere; and one-fourth of the merit earned by the people would go to him. Manu accepted this pact and went around the earth, suppressing the wicked and making them perform their duties.
- 7 Let us now turn to a Buddhist account of the origins of kingship –the *Aggañña Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya*, a Pali text which is part of the *Tipitaka*.<sup>4</sup> This begins in a primordial age of perfection when beings were undifferentiated, luminous, made of mind, feeding on rapture. At some point of time, a process of decline set in, primarily due to greed.

Theft, accusation, lying and punishment appeared, and the last straw was when one violated the private property of another by stealing rice from his field. The beings assembled and lamented this situation; they approached the one among them who was the best-looking, charismatic and authoritative and asked him to protect property and punish those who deserved punishment; in return they would give him a portion of their rice.<sup>5</sup> This ruler was given the designation “Mahasammata,” which means “the Great Elect” or “one who has been elected or appointed by the people.”

- 8 In all three accounts I have discussed, kingship originates in violence and disorder. It emerges as a critical institution, the only option, essential to bring violence and disorder to an end. All three emphasise the king’s duties towards his people, the maintenance of social order, protection of private property, and preventing and dealing with crime through the imposition of punishment. It is not just the origins of kingship, but the continued existence of this institution, that is considered essential to maintain order and prevent anarchy. But there are some interesting differences between the accounts. The Buddhist text talks about a straight social contract between the people and the king. In the first *Shanti Parva* account, the gods and sages play key roles and in the second account, it is the gods and the people. In contrast to the *Aggañña Sutta*, the beginnings of kingship in the *Mahabharata* are less smooth; the institution has a bad start and there are various problems before it receives a firm foundation. There is an acknowledgement of the possibility that kings may have serious flaws, that there is something inherently problematic or negative about the institution of kingship; that those who inherit it may turn their back on it and may not want to rule. In the first *Shanti Parva* account, kingship is born in the midst of regicide, renunciation and evil; in the second, it requires the king overcoming his own fears of the cruelty and sin that are inherent in the discharge of his duties.

## II. The king’s right to torture, punish and kill

- 9 Theories of the origins of kingship describe punishment as a primary duty of the king but also assume that this punishment must be just. In the *Mahabharata*, Bhishma tells Yudhishtira that the royal rod of force was created by Brahma for the protection of the world so that people performed their duties; everything depends on it. Describing *danḍa* as a terrifying monster with many arms, legs, tusks and eyes, Bhishma states that it inspires fear in people and it is this fear that prevents them from killing one other.
- 10 The nature of transgressions in which the king is obliged to intervene are of two types: a more general transgression of the prevailing status quo; more specific crimes of a civil or criminal nature. The most direct and poignant example from ancient texts of a ruler killing a subject in the first kind of transgression comes from the *Uttarakanda* of the Sanskrit epic the *Ramayana* (c. 400 BCE-400 CE), where the otherwise compassionate Rama kills the *Shudra* Shambuka<sup>6</sup>. The epic gives a moral justification for Rama’s action: an innocent Brahmana child in Rama’s kingdom had died and the reason for this unfortunate event was traced to Shambuka who had violated the norms of the social order by performing austerities. Such a violation could not be tolerated, and Rama had no hesitation in killing Shambuka for the sake of the greater good.
- 11 The text that discusses the role of the state in intervening in specific types of civil and criminal offences and the state’s right to impose retribution, pain and torture on subjects in the administration of justice is Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* (composed between c.

50-300 CE), which contains the first detailed prescriptive law code in India. Here too, the idea of the four-fold *varṇa* order is extremely important –punishments vary, depending on the *varṇa* status of the individuals involved. The types of punishment mentioned by Kautilya include fines, confiscation of property, exile, corporeal punishment, mutilation, branding, torture, forced labour and death. Kautilya accepts torture as a means of acquiring information during interrogation as well as a part of punishment, and the types of torture include those that involve striking, whipping, caning, suspension from a rope and inserting needles under the nails.

- 12 The *Arthashastra* also asserts the state’s right to take life on the grounds of justice. It distinguishes between simple death and death by torture.<sup>7</sup> The latter refers to especially painful deaths, which may also have involved public spectacle. The varieties of death by torture are the following: burning on a pyre, drowning in water, cooking in a big jar, impaling on a stake, setting fire to different parts of the body, and tearing apart by bullocks.
- 13 However, all texts emphasise that the king’s punishment must be measured, in accordance with proper judicial principles, proportionate to the crime and utterly impartial. Bhishma tells Yudhishtira that like the spring sun, the king should be both gentle (*mṛidu*) and harsh (*tikshna*), especially in matters related to punishment and taxation.<sup>8</sup> The *Mahabharata* connects the king’s proper administration of justice with his afterlife –a just king goes to heaven; an unjust one goes to hell.

### III. Resistance and rebellion against the state

- 14 The *Mahabharata* is a text that ultimately upholds the institution of kingship and the use of necessary force. At the same time, it warns that excessive cruelty and violence of the king and his neglect of his duties can lead to justified violence *against* him. We have already seen that regicide is built into one of the *Mahabharata* accounts of the early history of the institution of kingship –remember the evil king Vena who was stabbed to death with *kusha* grass by the sages. Further, the epic tells us that a cruel king, who does not protect his people, who robs them in the name of levying taxes, is evil incarnate and should be killed by his subjects. A king who, after promising to protect his subjects does not do so, should be killed by them, as though he were a mad dog.<sup>9</sup> So if the king does not perform his duties and is cruel to his people, the *Mahabharata* sanctions regicide.
- 15 There are several references in ancient Indian texts to evil kings –most of them mythical or of uncertain historicity– who were justifiably killed.<sup>10</sup> The reasons for their being killed include their moral failings such as greed, injustice, lust and evil deeds.<sup>11</sup> Should such stories be read as a warning to kings against transgressions, or were they endorsements of rebellion? Notwithstanding the references to the killing of kings, the overall political discourse of the *Mahabharata* upholds the king’s position and punitive powers. However, there are several other indications that the upper class male composers of our texts recognised the possibility of critique, resistance or rebellion against the state. The fears and anxieties of the upper classes are writ large in the idea of Kali age, a world turned horribly upside down, where people violate their class duties and farmers do not pay taxes.
- 16 The *Arthashastra* is unsentimental and sanctions all the killing, mutilation, torture and capital punishment necessary for the administration of justice and for the protection,



maintenance and enhancement of the king's power. It is also acutely aware of the potential sources of violence against the king. The text is obsessed with the danger of assassination, especially through poison, and advises elaborate arrangements for the king's personal protection. Queens and princes head the list of sources of violence against the king. Queens are singled out for special attention, and Kautilya lists several specific instances of kings who were killed by their consorts. Kautilya identifies many other potential sources of violence against the king –for instance, enemy kings; neighbouring kings; disaffected, angry subjects; forest tribes; robbers; *mlechchhas* (foreigners and tribals); and mutinous troops. He talks about the dangers posed by conspiracies, traitors and enemies. He discusses revolts in the interior and exterior, and describes the former as more dangerous. He discusses how internal and external enemies can be killed, many of the strategies involving secret agents in disguise. He also advocates secret killing –silent punishment in the case of those who cannot be killed openly– for instance, treasonous high-ranking officers. Silent punishment can also be used against hostile subjects.<sup>12</sup>

- 17 The *Arthashastra* prescribes violent punishments for violent crimes against the king. The punishment for one who reviles the king, reveals secret counsel, or who spreads evil news about the king is that his tongue should be rooted out.<sup>13</sup> More serious crimes against the king invite more severe punishments. Death by setting fire to the hands and head is the punishment for one who covets the kingdom, who attacks the king's palace, who incites forest people or enemies or who causes rebellion in the fortified city, the countryside, or the army.<sup>14</sup> In many instances, punishments can be commuted to a fine. But unless there is some crucial mitigating circumstance, no commutation is possible where the crime merits the death penalty, especially in cases of treason or loss to the state. Although *varṇa* is central to Kautilya's understanding of society and law, capital crimes against king or state, for instance treason, are often discussed *without* reference to the *varṇa* of the parties involved, except for the occasional concessions being made to Brahmanas, who stood at the apex of the *varṇa* hierarchy.
- 18 Kautilya's emphasis on subjecting officials to stringent and frequent tests of loyalty indicates an awareness that loyalty cannot be taken for granted. This can be connected with the king's constant fear of assassination; his need to use "silent punishment"; for constant surveillance to keep track of non-compliance, rebellion and treason; references to those who are enraged and frightened; the fear of deceit and betrayal; the worry about dangers posed by *mlechchhas* and forest people; and the importance attached to conciliation and outwitting. The references to the "anger of the people" (*prakṛiti-kopa*) are especially interesting. In ancient Indian texts, there are few references to kings being killed by their people and these occur mainly in the Buddhist Jatakas.<sup>15</sup> But the *Arthashastra*'s references to the anger of the people, indicates that although there is no record of rampant mass rebellion of the people in ancient Indian history, the political theorists were able to visualise such an event.
- 19 In fact, Kautilya understood the importance of hidden transcripts –trying to find out what people were saying about the king behind his back.<sup>16</sup> He recommends that spies in disguise should fan out to all parts of the kingdom, engage in provocative talk and ferret out people who were saying negative things about the king, so that the king could kill them, crushing disaffection before it became revolt.
- 20 Although the *Arthashastra* is usually seen as a text upholding the idea of totalitarian state, its discussion is premised on a recognition of the fragility of the king's power and

the constant threats to his life and position from many quarters. It is a graphic acknowledgement that the ruler was constantly the potential target of the violence of others. Kautilya advocates the ruthless, carefully calculated and effective use of pre-emptive and post-facto violence by the state in order to prevent and counter violence against the state. Ethical issues are subordinated, in fact are irrelevant, in the face of pragmatic political calculation. So a text which describes the dizzying heights of power to which a ruler could aspire also presents him as an insecure, vulnerable figure who lives in constant danger of being undermined or killed. In this respect, the discussions of general issues in normative texts may actually give us better insights into political realities and processes than the enumeration of “factual details”, which in any case reach us after they have been censored and sanitised of violence and resistance, and only after the panegyrists had converted the tumult and violence that must have marked many a king’s reign into a smooth, aestheticised narrative that was in tune with the discourse of normative dharmic kingship, in a language which sought to normalise and justify the violence inherent in kingship.

- 21 When the cracks in the normative views become visible, a more fractured and contested picture of ancient Indian politics emerges, one where the onward march of the state and empire-building is accompanied by a recognition of their fragility.

#### IV. Theory and practice and a long-term comparative history of violence

- 22 I would like to end my paper by raising a few general questions related to the study of political violence. The first question is: what impact did the political ideas discussed in normative texts, including theories about the origins, nature and functions of kingship have on political practice? How effectively did these theories bolster political and social hierarchies? What was their political and social impact in a context where multiple theories existed, and where the issue of dharma itself was fraught with complexity and confusion?
- 23 Royal inscriptions allude to the textual theories of kingship. The idea of the king as protector of the people and of the social order consisting of the *varṇas* (the four hereditary social classes) and *ashramas* (the four stages of life)<sup>17</sup> is frequently mentioned in rulers’ epigraphic eulogies. There are also a few interesting references to the people intervening in matters related to succession. Rather than taking them literally, these sorts of references can be seen as echoes of the contractual theories of kingship that the texts elaborate.
- 24 There is no direct evidence that the latent sanction of regicide in the *Mahabharata* was ever invoked to sanction rebellion against the state. In fact, recorded instances of violent rebellion against the state involving players beyond the circle of political contenders or subordinate rulers are practically non-existent in ancient India. This could be because of the effective concealment of such incidents by our statist/centrist sources; the effectiveness of the state’s coercive machinery, the effectiveness of the legitimising, hegemonic discourse; and/or the lack of a collective consciousness and organisation that would enable the individual victims of state violence or oppression to make common cause and effectively raise the banner of revolt.

- 25 We should note that royal inscriptions deliberately try to conceal the violence that must have marked dynastic succession, in fact, this masking was one of their functions. While inter-dynastic violence in the form of war was advertised and celebrated in ancient Indian inscriptions, intra-dynastic violence was masked in the royal genealogies that usually presented a smooth story of succession, occasionally referring obliquely to more troubled circumstances.
- 26 The second general issue concerns the factors that define violence and the normalising processes that make some kinds of harming or killing by the state or *against* the state seem justified. These are deeply embedded in social and political structures, institutions and ideologies, as well as in moral and religious values. Debates on violence in ideologies or movements associated with nonviolence deserve especially close attention. My investigation of early Buddhist and Jaina texts indicates that the religions of non-violence recognised the necessity of the use of a certain amount of force in the political domain. But the existence, embeddedness and strength of these renunciatory traditions did provide an important philosophical and ethical resource that political practitioners had to acknowledge and could not completely ignore; they made violence and nonviolence issues that had to be addressed, even if there was a general consensus that absolute nonviolence was impossible in the political sphere.
- 27 The third issue arises due to our heightened sensitivity towards political violence in our own times: this lends a great urgency to investigations of violence, but it also presents us with a problem: should the past be examined on its own terms or should it be used as a resource to deal with our troubled and violent times? This is an old sort of question, but an exploration of violence in history undertaken in our violent world urges us to engage with it yet again.
- 28 Finally, without essentialising cultures and without falling into the traps of cultural bias or chauvinism, there is the interesting possibility of having a comparative history of the ideas and practice of violence and nonviolence, one which identifies qualitative differences in forms, structures, intensity, ideologies and attitudes related to political violence across cultures and across time.

## NOTES

1. Of course, when it is justified, it is justified force, and not unjustified violence.
2. *Mahabharata*. 12.59.1-140 (Fitzgerald, pp. 305-312).
3. *Mahabharata*. 12.67.17-31.
4. See Steven Collins *Aggañña Sutta: The Discourse on What is Primary (An Annotated Translation from Pali)*, Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2001.
5. *Ibid.*, 46.
6. Ancient Brahmanical texts have the idea of a hierarchy of four hereditary social classes – *Brahmanas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. *Brahmanas* were associated with studying and teaching the Veda and performing sacrifices; *Kshatriyas* with war and governance; *Vaishyas* with farming, rearing animals and trade; and *Shudras* with serving the upper three *varṇas*.

7. *Arthashastra* 4. 11.
  8. See especially *Mahabharata*. 12.70; 12.121.
  9. *Mahabharata*. 13.60.19-20.
  10. There are other references to the killing of kings in ancient Indian texts. See Walter Ruben, "Fighting against despots in old Indian literature," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol. 48/48, Golden Jubilee Volume, 1917-1961 (1968): 111-118.
  11. Ruben, "Fighting against despots in old Indian literature."
  12. *Arthashastra* 7.15.27.
  13. *Arthashastra* 4.11.21.
  14. *Arthashastra* 4.11.11.
  15. Cited by Ruben, "Fighting against despots in old Indian literature."
  16. On public and hidden transcripts, see Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1990), especially pp. 2, 4, 183, 191.
  17. The classical model of the four *ashramas*, which was supposed to be applicable to the upper three *varṇas*, comprised the stage of celibate studenthood (*brahmacharya*), the householder stage (*grihastha*), partial renunciation (*vanaprastha*) and complete renunciation (*sannyasa*). Like *varṇa*, the *ashrama* scheme should be understood as part of the normative Brahmanical view of society, not as a description of actual practice.
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## INDEX

**Keywords:** state, violence, ancient India, kingship, non-violence, Mahabharata, Arthashastra

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# Discourse on a label: exposing narratives of violence

Naman P. Ahuja

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- 1 Provenance studies have emerged as one of the most important disciplinary aspects of art history which is directly concerned with politics and seek to redress histories of political violence. Contained in the narratives that emerge when we study the provenance of objects are a variety of significant contexts; for instance, in our world of migrations, a pertinent one worth examining is the circumstances under which the owner of an object fled with the object now displayed in a museum. Was it an object of faith, a memento or a much-needed financial asset? And then of course there are the many complex debates linked to questions around repatriation as a means to redress the political violence of the past. Each context makes us judge its current ownership differently. Other questions also emerge: in repatriation claims does war booty belong to the usurper or the vanquished? How far back in time can we go with provenance and what is the right thing to do once we know the history: bringing cases of historical wrongs of four or five generations back is one matter, but can things that were done twenty or more generations ago still be brought to a court today? After all, at some point, the deracinated or uprooted also becomes naturalised; it lives on in a new context. The responsibility for the maintenance of the site and material artefact has often been undertaken by a community different from the one who lost it, and that maintenance may be taking place now in a manner that is perhaps differently from how it was originally conceived. Can we be so impervious to change that that new home and context can be disregarded? What does depriving current owners of an object achieve –does it actually bring a museum visiting, conservation and museum maintaining habit to the country to which the object has been repatriated? None of these questions can be answered without acknowledging the role propaganda and perception play. In this essay, we examine one field of disinformation (or at least misinformation) that remains unaddressed when viewing antique sculptures in public museums in India.
- 2 In the past few years, demands for restitution or repatriation have started intensifying because of the delay in admitting a narrative of decolonisation in western museums. In

2020, the Black Lives Matter movement brought long-standing histories of racial and colonial violence into sharper focus with the destruction of public statuary in some places, and even the creation of new statues to replace those where colonisers once stood. If provenance histories of many objects and the biographies of the collectors had been openly exposed for a few decades, perhaps the honest rationale for the western museum to continue to act as custodians of objects that told complex histories may have been justified. Now, however, in an age of hyper-nationalism a parallel question arises about what is driving the desire for repatriation in countries like India: whose benefit is the narrative or propaganda of restitution serving now? The narrative accompanying Indian sculptures is one of the restitution of a sacred object to the country to which it once belonged, even if that object is now no longer capable of being brought back into worship. In times when religion is being used to bolster nationalism, the return of historical artefacts serves a very different propaganda rather than communicate the many other, diverse histories.

- 3 Repatriation can bolster India's national pride today, as a reaction to how the possession of objects from diverse parts of the world once encouraged colonial pride and empire building in Europe and Britain. Some have argued that in the UK, public institutions and school curricula could have done more to stem the rising national chauvinism in the past two decades, much of which has been associated with a nostalgia for the empire. Large proportions of the citizens of the West have roots in countries that were formerly colonised, whose histories of how they came to be uprooted, or why the objects of their previous countries are now in European countries are seldom told in public institutions. The delay in a decolonising narrative has cost western institutions by alienating their public. The decolonisation narrative is thus not just for India's benefit anymore, but one that the US, Britain and European countries need for maintaining *their* own cosmopolitanism.
- 4 In India, decolonisation may have been an issue that was important from the 1930s until the 1970s for righting colonial wrongs, but there are now many other, more pressing matters that affect Indian art in terms of what markets and museums need by understanding better what museums can enable, and how they need to be protected. Colonial wrongs and inequities may remain, but issues around violence perpetrated on the basis of caste, religion or gender, climate and biodiversity, individual rights and the right to knowledge and the freedom to speak are pressing concerns in India that cannot be addressed only through a narrative of decolonisation or repatriation.
- 5 My focus is to reveal the many types of political violence communicated by ancient and medieval Indian sculptures. Objects in Indian museum collections raise questions and the museum has a role and a responsibility to play in articulating the many narratives that these questions provoke. For all the intentions that exist on paper on the interpretative role museum displays can play in fulfilling their mandate of contributing to the development of a responsible, even enlightened public,<sup>1</sup> few Indian museum curators have demonstrated their capacity to exhibit this in the permanent displays of Indian history, except to use them, largely, as tools for telling a history of religion or metaphysical ideas. There are several reasons for taking the museum from being storehouses of objects to communicators of ideas and diverse, or even divergent, histories.<sup>2</sup>
- 6 The first part of this essay examines how telling stories of political violence in the public sphere has a long history in Indian culture; so much so that it was debated as to

how artfully it should be done and what aesthetic effect it should lead to. Having established that this spirit of communication is part of a long-standing Indian tradition, the second part of the paper looks at some case studies of how museums, which are the aesthetic communicators of history and cultural identity nowadays, can perform this role in the Indian public sphere. In the last part of this paper, it is necessary, then, to conclude with a few observations on what cautions need to be employed to safeguard such a space and, equally, what limits may be advisable on our expectations of what museums can achieve.

## I. Toward an aesthetic rationale

- 7 Will the telling of a historical narrative of many sides of a conflict be seen as moving away from the aesthetic function of a museum space? That aesthetic pleasure is only possible in avoiding any exposure of conflict was certainly not the view of ancient Indian aestheticians, and nor is it the view of those who work on the aesthetics of theatre and performance art today. Besides, even with collections of contemporary art and anthropology, “transitional justice” and “memorialisation” are the new terms by which the public role of contemporary museums is enhanced nowadays<sup>3</sup> which rely on making the history of political conflict explicit. A history of conflicts of old, which have gone to shape identity politics in India, will inevitably also have to be told.
- 8 It is well known that Aristotle’s interpretation of the aesthetic effect of rousing tragedy and violence in art/theatre allows for a therapeutic purging of these emotions from the audience; a question has equally been asked if Indian aesthetics gives a similar role of catharsis to Indian art. The short answer to that is yes.<sup>4</sup> It has been thought about at some length by the 9th century scholar of aesthetics, Ānandavardhana, when he considered the public use of narrating the gory tales of bloodshed in the *Mahābhārata*. As we shall see, he argued that these violent tales ultimately lead the audience to experience *śānta-rasa*, a feeling of peace and equanimity.
- 9 From an early period in its history, India’s philosophers honed their skill in argumentation and participated in court-sanctioned public debates. Entire schools of thought were created and developed by vigorous clashes of opinion. The tradition of publicly voicing dissent in philosophical debate has a long history, and the first codification of the rules of debate is in the Nyāya sutras. Debate was so important that manuals were written by many schools of philosophy to codify the rules of argument. The 5th century *Vādaividhi* (*A Method for Argumentation*) of Vasubandhu, and the 7th century manual of Dharmakīrti, the *Vādanyāya* (*Reasoning for Debate*), attest to the importance of public debate or *vāda*. The expression of divergent opinions was considered a necessary step in the determination of truth.<sup>5</sup>
- 10 Returning to Ānandavardhana, the great aesthician of the 9th century: he elaborates in the *Dhvanyāloka* on the constituents required for communicating *śānta-rasa*. Surprisingly, he took the *Mahābhārata* as his example. At first glance one would imagine that given the focus on heroism and even gratuitous nature of the violence in that text, hearing the story would render the audience violent and heroic, or as a consequence, perhaps compassionate at the sight of so much pain, but to claim that they are left *śānta*, or peaceful, is rather curious. Gary Tubb explains how Ānandavardhana built his argument on the *Mahābhārata*, noting that the repeated performances and re-telling of blood-soaked battle after battle caused by lust, ego, greed and avarice all, eventually,

helped lead the audience to *śānta-rasa*.<sup>6</sup> Exposing the vanity of struggle, Ānandavardhana argued, leads to the removal of craving of ego and lust for power, and renders the heroism of battle (*vīra-rasa*) into a reminder of the hollowness of victory before the eventuality of death. “The more the insubstantial workings of this world are seen to turn out badly, the more a feeling of dispassion is produced.” [*Mahābhārata* 12.168.4]

- 11 This reading of the *Mahābhārata* finds a parallel in the writings of the historian Kalhana, the author of the 12th century *Rājataranginī*, the history of Kashmir. Kalhana makes a similar claim for his work, saying his selection of episodes to put down in his history also imparts *śānta-rasa* to his readers.<sup>7</sup> Since generations of writers have agreed that *itihāsa* (history), the category to which both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rājataranginī* belong as a genre, can claim to be producers of experiences that are aesthetic, this role of the history museum is not one that would be antithetical to the Indian tradition.
- 12 Applying the lessons of Ānandavardhana and Kalhana to museums today, it is clear that telling history in a museum need not detract from aesthetic experience. A museum of historical artefacts, with its encyclopaedic range of objects made for and used by different people, and used for different purposes, in different epochs, enables the telling of rich narratives. As another scholar of the *Mahābhārata*, James Hegarty has suggested, “Within public imagination, narrative is [...] the chief means of evoking counter-factual situations –be they of past, present or future (or even wholly fictive).”<sup>8</sup>
- 13 One is making a case to bring not opinions, but research-based tellings of history [back] into museum spaces. Hiding from this responsibility has left the field open to hijack the civic discourse, construed by propagandists in service of an ideology, justifying pogroms. Misinformation runs rife, and the effort to polarise society succeeds, creating new collective memories, without sufficient opportunity for the presentation of a corrective. However, in countries where history textbooks can be meddled with frequently,<sup>9</sup> what then will offer safeguards and correctives? I do not profess to come up with a mechanism to stem “fake-news”, but certainly, institutions that have the opportunity to tell those histories can no longer abrogate their role to do so.
- 14 Ideology and perceived historical identity shape contemporary politics, and as museums are preservers of the evidence of history, how they perform their public function of communicating histories that go into shaping identity and ideology is increasingly important. The museums of modern and contemporary art have shown beyond doubt that the consumption of politically relevant discourses is aesthetically done, and done quite commonly, in fact.<sup>10</sup> This seldom extends to museums of antiquities. Antiquities hold a more potent aura: hallowed images of gods are more visible, even more stable markers of peoples’ identities. Is there a way to use these very artefacts to provoke difficult questions on how war and violence were condoned in society, reveal the terms dictated by those in power to forge social compliance or equally, the means achieved by those at the margins to protect their culture? Can we not interpret the evidence for the suppression of women, which often enough also demonstrates a conflict over the affiliation of religious shrines? When these narratives are observed in gallery after gallery, some interesting patterns begin to emerge about how the language of visual culture was used to perpetuate violence and fear. The patterns reveal that there were established ways of making that violence visible, and the same methods were used to create new public enemies in each age. This visual



lexicon of violence is as much a part of the aesthetics of communication as other emotive powers of art.

- 15 In the next part of this essay we will study some examples that were either made in order to normalise political violence in society, or have ended up having that effect. Deliberately mutilated sculptures, similar to those so amply seen at archaeological sites and in museums across India, reveal the requirement to make public statements about conflict and victory of course, but they reveal many other things too which we are not told about: how the conflict was not only one between the usually imagined upholders of iconoclastic Islam on the one side and myriad others on the other side, but sometimes between different Hindus or in contexts where there were no Muslims involved, driven at times not by conflict at all, but by the re-use of old stones on account of economic necessity.

## II. Art historical evidence complicates the public imagination on conflict

- 16 Art history can look upon its facts to construct many rich narratives of history. And although the facts that accompany broken statuary may be few, and although broken statues themselves may not be as many as pristine ones –they still do require explanation. For hundreds of years these statues have, after all, communicated both things to us: who or what they once were, and what fate they met. The decapitations, fractures and injuries suffered by public statues also brand themselves onto our memories and when shown broken, unmended for centuries, the breakage becomes a statement that is either normalised –which is a very frightening case in most violent societies, or –a wound that serves to caution public memory. These are powerful breakages capable of being aesthetically communicated, performing their role that is vivid and yet also practical.
- 17 The vitriolic tone against historians who sought to write more reasoned arguments explaining why a richer context is needed to explain the desecration of temples comes from the lack of upholding a space for scholarly debate. It is fuelled by an urgency in acknowledging in public spaces the history of “Islamic iconoclasm” in the first place, before a revision of it can be offered. The revisions are, needless to say, far better argued and researched and they have, as a result, only riled their opposition to greater emotive outbursts. A more reasoned manner of presenting the material would be to start, first, by allowing those so keen to prove that indeed, historic buildings and images do bear testimony to a strong history of violence perpetrated in India in the name of Islam. This then can be contextualised against other acts of violence perpetrated by other kingdoms. It can also be shown against other narratives of political violence which may have less to do with religious conflict than they do with matters of caste, gender, sexuality, immigration, language, and so on.

### II.a. Disturb the peace

- 18 Several Jain sculptures in the Bhubaneswar Museum (Orissa) including a Mahāvīra [Fig. 1], Ajītnātha [Fig. 2] and Śāntinātha [Fig. 3] are often mistaken by the public as images of starving Buddhas. Close inspection reveals that what have emerged as rib-like protrusions on their torsos are in fact irregular grooves created subsequent to the

carving of the statues. Ironically, where Jain images exemplify *ahimsā*, non-violence, the torsos of these Jain seers appear to have been used to grind tools and probably even sharpen knives. Violence against Jains in the region is known to have been perpetrated by Hindus,<sup>11</sup> and there is equally a history of the occupation of the region by a Muslim population. Figuring out the causes of violence apart, there are questions to be asked about who abandoned these images and who appropriated them?

Fig. 1. Mahavira



c. 9th–10th century. Bhadrak, Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar (Acc. No. 22)

Naman P. Ahuja

Fig. 2. Ajitnatha, 2nd Tirthankara



c. 9th–10th century AD. Charampa, Bhadrak, Odisha. Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar (Acc. No. 21)

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Fig. 2 detail



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Fig. 3. Shantinatha, 16th Tirthankara



c. 9th-10th century AD. Charampa, Bhadrak, Odisha. Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar (Acc. No. 19)

Naman P. Ahuja

Fig. 3 detail



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- 19 The labels in the museum are anodyne. They do not inform the public about anything, except their iconography, find-spot and date. The strange grinding on the sculptures in the museum, is also to be found at others still lying in the Charampa and Barala Pokhari villages of Bhadrak district as well as within Bhadrak town. [Figs. 4 – 6] Some of these sculptures were retrieved from the river and turned into the focus of either temporary shrines or new concrete temples. The priests who belong to the region still pray at one of two temples by the river which are functional and modern spaces. The really active of the two temples does not contain such mutilated old (or previously abandoned) idols. Elsewhere in the village however, comparable sculptures that were once abandoned have been brought back into worship in new shrines and it turned out that the most significant of the abandoned old idols was stolen from the site three years ago. One family in the village complained rather movingly about their loss. They turned out to be a relatively recent family in the region that had migrated from Bengal, who had fashioned themselves as priests in Orissa and had taken in their care a forgotten sculpture and turned their premises into a living temple. Their emotional testimony of its loss was ripe for a journalistic investigation of the loss of a community's god at the hands of an unscrupulous group of antique hunters. Behind that, however, lay a more complicated story about the claim of their ownership if the sculptures were ever to be retrieved. What was emerging here was a narrative of how spolia long abandoned at a site were being gathered by some people who appeared to be recent immigrants seeking a cultural foothold by their claim to be the upholders of tradition and culture that the residents themselves had forsaken. As one investigated further, it transpired that this very spolia had been appropriated previously as well.

Fig. 4. Chamunda



Stone. Bhadrak, Orissa. Probably 8th-9th century  
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Fig. 5. Surya



Stone. Bhadrak, Orissa. Probably 9th-10th century  
Naman P. Ahuja



Fig. 6



The river Salandi that flows through Bhadrak, from where several of the damaged statues have been retrieved and collected either for the museum or placed in new shrines.

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- 20 It is clear that a variety of Jain and Śākta (goddess) statues dateable, approximately, to the 8th to 10th centuries were once removed from worship in this region. They were not high quality exceptional carvings to begin with, but of course that is not an indicator of their sacrality. No causative agent for the despoliation is known to us today, but as is often the case, when sculptures are relieved of their ritual function, they are either ritually buried, or immersed in water. Temples let go of old sculptures if they are desecrated, broken or if they become polluted if a lower-caste person comes near them, or if the temple receives a new one at a festival or from an important donor – a new political head, for instance.<sup>12</sup> The material fits with the idea of loss of sacred status and the use of the stone for another purpose.<sup>13</sup> The question that arises with an examination of the sculptures at Bhadrak, however, is what happened to them after they were abandoned, why do so many of them bear marks of grinding over their finished surfaces? A statue of Chamunda [Fig. 4] and another of Surya [Fig. 5] that have recently been brought back into worship at the site also bear the same type of grinding on their surfaces and it became clear that the grinding is not just of Jain statues but “Hindu” ones too. A question also arises when the ritual discarding into the river would have taken place, and how long after its deposition in the river would such valuable stones have been reutilised for grinding? [Fig. 6] The curving nature of the grooves indicates that something circular has been used to make those impressions. It would not have been sickles as they are sharp on their inner curvature, but it could have been chopping axes, arrows or swords perhaps. It is ironic that the bodies of sculptures were used in this way, but this is far from the only instance when sacred material has been used for such purposes.<sup>14</sup> Were they driven by economic necessity,

reusing the stones to grind tools? Were no other stones available? The point here is that by raising several possible narratives: of economic necessity, of ritual discarding, of iconoclasm and the opportunistic reappropriation of the sculptures, the labels in the museum would raise significant and necessary questions for the public, rather than leave the field open to a singular, unsaid assumption of Islamic iconoclasm.

## II.b. Narratives of assimilation, renovation and destruction

- 21 James Fergusson and Ananda Coomaraswamy both laid the foundations for studies on how the imagery of pre-existing cults of *yakshas*, tree and serpent worshippers were demonised and either rejected, and when that was not possible, incorporated into Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> The terms of incorporation were stipulated by stories of the cult figure being blessed by the greater force of the Buddha. Then, for decades, histories referenced the process of Sanskritisation, by which autochthonous cultures of India were brought into a Brahmanical fold.<sup>16</sup> Chastisement of some turned them into demons (Mahiśāsura, the *nāgas* and others at the hands of Krishna; Rāvana) while others were co-opted as spouses, avatars and emanations of a Brahmanical divine figure (Minākṣī, Jagannātha, or the tendency to give many epithets or names that derive from diverse communities or regions to the same figure, for instance).
- 22 Iconoclasm as a phenomenon extends well beyond the shores of India, and research in South Asia has amply shown how Muslim iconoclasm in the region needs to be contextualised within the long narratives of political conflict in which temples, Mauryan pillars, and sacred sculptures have been repeatedly targeted.<sup>17</sup> There are too many examples that reveal the theft of temple icons by one Hindu king from the lands of another between the 7th and 11th century in a bid to show how the power of one kingdom was usurped by another. However, Richard M. Eaton<sup>18</sup> provides a series of examples of internecine warfare amongst various Hindu kings that also saw the desecration of Hindu temples, apart from the looting of each other's images; two paragraphs of Eaton alone provide an all too important and succinct list that is worth quoting:

In 642 AD, according to local tradition, the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I looted the image of Ganesha from the Chalukyan capital of Vatapi. Fifty years later armies of those same Chalukyas invaded north India and brought back to the Deccan what appear to be images of Ganga and Yamuna, looted from defeated powers there. In the eighth century Bengali troops sought revenge on king Lalitaditya by destroying what they thought was the image of Vishnu Vaikuntha, the state-deity of Lalitaditya's kingdom in Kashmir.

In the early ninth century, Rashtrakuta king Govinda III invaded and occupied Kanchipuram, which so intimidated the king of Sri Lanka that he sent Govinda several (probably Buddhist) images that represented the Sinhala state, and which the Rashtrakuta king then installed in a Saiva temple in his capital. About the same time, the Pandyan king Srimara Srivallabha also invaded Sri Lanka and took back to his capital a golden Buddha image that had been installed in the kingdom's Jewel Palace. In the early tenth century, the Pratihara king Herambapala seized a solid gold image of Vishnu Vaikuntha when he defeated the Sahi king of Kangra. By the mid-tenth century, the same image was seized from the Pratiharas by the Candella king Yasovarman and installed in the Lakshmana temple of Khajuraho.

- 23 He continues,

Although the dominant pattern here was one of looting royal temples and carrying off images of state-deities, we also hear of Hindu kings engaging in the destruction

of the royal temples of their political adversaries. In the early tenth century, the Rashtrakuta monarch Indra III not only destroyed the temple of Kalapriya (at Kalpa near the Yamuna river), patronised by the Rashtrakutas' deadly enemies, the Pratiharas, but also took special delight in recording the fact.<sup>19</sup>

- 24 The narrative that Hindu kings stole each other's idols has not been told enough in the public arena. Returning to Kashmir, Kalhana wrote the *Rājataranginī* in AD 1148-49 in which he details how Hindu kings of Kashmir, like Harshadeva, destroyed the temples of other Hindu and Buddhist kings. Harshadeva even created a post of a *devotpātana nāyaka* for the job. Another well-known example is of the conflicts in South India between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas. The disparaging attitude by Hindu kings in South India towards Jains, and even the destruction of Buddhist sites by Hindus are also documented aplenty.<sup>20</sup> And the exaggeration and even falsehood of the usual claim that broken idols in India are largely a result of Islamic invasions has been exposed by several scholars.<sup>21</sup> Further, time and again, it has been shown that the practice was not limited to Muslim or Hindu kings alone.
- 25 Mauryan pillars make for a valuable case-study. [Fig. 7] Several scholars have remarked that the Buddhist Ashoka may have perpetrated extreme political violence himself and, centuries later, Ashokan pillars were later broken and reshaped at different places by different people. For instance, we do not know when the one now at the fort in Allahabad was originally brought there, although it is generally thought that it must have been brought from Kaushambi. It was inscribed on by many over the millennia: first by the Mauryas, then by the Guptas, followed by the Mughal Jahangir who even gave it a new capital. Portions of the column found in Varanasi could have been destroyed by many different people, at different times, for different reasons. What function did it serve in Varanasi in the first place, when the major Buddhist site is nearby at Sarnath? Was the pillar brought to Varanasi from elsewhere, just as other Mauryan pillars were shifted about in medieval times? Judging the fate of the other pillars gives no clear answers: the one in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, became a Śiva-linga, the one in Sugh in Haryana became a victory pillar in Delhi's Firoz Shah Kotla, the one at Hisar was commandeered by the Tughlaqs and reinscribed in Fārsi, while the capital of the one at Bodh Gaya was never found. The temple at Bodh Gaya was, after all, burnt down, demolished and rebuilt several times.<sup>22</sup> The pillar could have been razed to the ground by a rival group of Buddhists or Hindus and if any remnants were there over a millennium later, perhaps they were subject to further changes by armies that were Muslim. Sometimes the pillars were repaired or copied, in a way to be able to invoke their political or religious symbolism in subsequent ages. Both renovation and copying are important approaches to history as they help us understand how ancient and medieval Indians themselves valued historical artefacts, what they thought of *jīṃoddhāra* or repair/conservation.<sup>23</sup> The site museums and interpretation centres at these places can therefore very justifiably start telling a richer discourse, a more layered history, but this has much wider implications for the very construction of the historiography of Indian attitudes towards what we today call "museumisation".

Fig. 7



The Mauryan pillar relocated to the Allahabad Fort was originally inscribed during the reign of Ashoka, appropriated and re-inscribed in the time of the Guptas, and then again, reappropriated and re-inscribed in the time of the Mughal emperor, Jahangir.

Naman P. Ahuja

Fig. 7 detail



Naman P. Ahuja

### II.c. Giving iconoclasm a context

- 26 By contrast let us look at examples of how a history of conflict has been declared at one of the most contentious sites in India, the Qutub Minar. Visits from tourists, Indian and international, keep the numbers at the site at amongst the highest in the world.<sup>24</sup> The presence of pillars from older Hindu temples is often spoken about at the site; the presence of spolia from Jain and/or Hindu temples is evident to the public and the discourse on the site has kept alive the narrative of destruction. However, the tone of the writing adopted by the state's own publications is incendiary,<sup>25</sup> and opportunities to tell a more informed history, long available through reliable publications, remain staved off. Unavailable also to the visitor is a translation of the richness of the inscriptions at the site which are a clear statement of imperial power that can be read alongside fascinating insights that can be gleaned from the inscriptions of the Hindu craftsmen who worked at the site. Further, two sculptures,<sup>26</sup> retrieved from the vicinity of the Qutub Minar itself, are kept at the much less-visited National Museum in Delhi and are not presently talked about in the general public discourse at all. One is a red-sandstone vertical strut of a *vedika* [Fig. 8] which is exactly of the type found around the ancient stupas of pre-Kushan Mathura, broadly, and generally dated to the 1st century BC. These *vedika* pillars came mostly from Buddhist sites, very rarely from Jain ones and it has been argued on the basis of depictions on some sculptural reliefs that they may have also surrounded *lingas* at the base of tree-shrines. Given that prominent Jain temples still survive in this region (such as the one at Dadabari), it can be argued

that the beautiful *yakshi* on this *vedika* pillar once surrounded an ancient Jain shrine. Nothing else is yet reported to have survived from that ancient *stupa* in Delhi.

Fig. 8. Fragment of a railing pillar showing a shalabhanjika



Buff sandstone. C. 2nd-1st century BC. Qutub Minar, Mehrauli, Delhi. 77.5 x 25.5 cm. National Museum, Delhi (59.539)  
National Museum, Delhi

- 27 The second sculpture [Fig. 9] found southeast of the Qutub Minar is of Viṣṇu and is dated by its inscription to 1147, of Chauhan (Cāhamāna)/Gāhadvāla rule, i.e. four decades before the creation of the Minar and the despoliation of Hindu temples to build the mosque.<sup>27</sup> For all the rhetoric on destruction and defacement at the site, it stands perfectly intact, extraordinarily well-preserved. It helps understand that what was broken was not actually to reflect a destruction of someone else's faith but an appropriation. It confirms what scholars have been saying about the very selective defacement that was undertaken at the site so that only what was inside the mosque did not carry anthropomorphic imagery, but what was outside its boundary, was probably left alone. Just as Dadabari is an ancient Jain site of Mehrauli, the Yogmāyā temple in Mehrauli continues to serve a Hindu public, and is an example that reveals the continuing patronage of Hindus in the area immediately after the construction of the Minar.<sup>28</sup> This fits so much better within our researches on the opportunistic politics behind the vandalism of temples and the use of their wealth for political expediency rather than being guided by religious zeal. In fact, they all become examples of showing how religion became instrumentalised for the sake of political gain. What can be more necessary than the display or vocalisation of that corrective in the narrative these days?<sup>29</sup>

Fig. 9. Vishnu



Found southeast of the Qutub Minar. Dated 1147, during the period of Chauhan/Gahadavala rule. H: 105 cm. National Museum, New Delhi (L39)

AIIS

Fig. 9 detail



AIIS

- 28 The examples that can be cited are many, and if done consistently, the art-historical interpretations of despoliation and reuse can be greatly enriched. Then, a *longue durée* narrative emerges, revealing patterns of economic necessity and the propagandist use to which visual culture is put through the vicissitudes of history. After the 2017 refurbishment of the Hotung Gallery at the British Museum, a changed label accompanies a double-sided stone artefact in its South Asia galleries. [Fig. 10a & 10b] Their label now reads: “The Buddha and the Mihrāb: one side of the panel shows the Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas. The figures have been damaged. The other shows an Islamic *mihrāb* surrounded by floral scrolls, indicating the direction of Mecca and therefore the direction for prayer. The sculpture of the Buddha was made in the AD 900s. The back of the stone slab was carved as a *mihrāb* in the 1400s, when the Bengal Sultanate was in power. The re-use in mosques of architectural elements of Hindu and Buddhist sites is politically charged, and also shows creative adaptation. Traditional Indian motifs, such as lotuses and vegetal scrolls have been used to decorate the *mihrāb* indicating that these designs still had a desirable sacred function.”



Fig. 10a. A panel with a carved Buddha and a mihrab on the reverse



Black basalt. Obverse: Eastern India, Pala period, c. 10th century. Reverse: Gaur, West Bengal, c. 15th century. H: 84.1 cm. British Museum (1880.145)

The British Museum

Fig. 10b. A panel with a carved Buddha and a mihrab on the reverse



Black basalt. Obverse: Eastern India, Pala period, c. 10th century. Reverse: Gaur, West Bengal, c. 15th century. H: 84.1 cm. British Museum (1880.145)

The British Museum

- 29 Such a frank display of facts is rarely encountered in an Indian museum. This is despite the fact that many an example can be used to tell such a history in Indian collections to great effect. A rare example of a rich context, with a label and audio guide to explain such reuse and violence, is on show at the ASI's museum in the compound of the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, a case-study to which we now turn.

#### II.d. Iconography that normalises violence

- 30 At the ASI museum linked to Bom Jesus in Goa lies a dramatic statue of Vetāl, an attendant to Śiva, which was a well-known village deity in the Konkan region around Goa. [Fig. 11] (The type harks back to the many images of Bhairava and ferocious *dvārapālas*, which are found at Śiva temples across India.) The ASI's label text informs us that trucks and buses plying the roads in Goa are inscribed:

*Shri Sateri Vetāl Prassanna, Shri Paikdev Prassanna...* These reflect a tradition of worship of the ghost deity, popularly known as Vetāl or Betāl, which is very popular in the coastal districts of the western coast or the Malabar coast. It is a folk deity and enjoys the position of a village deity (*gramdevata*) in the coastal region. The well-known historian of Goa, Dr. D.D. Kosambi, described Vetāl as the prince of ghosts and also a God... It remained a deity of the common people throughout the ages, hence it is not mentioned in any royal inscriptions of the kings.<sup>30</sup>

Fig. 11. Vetal



Basalt stone. Betalbatim, South Goa. Probably 7th-12th centuries. ASI Museum, Basilica of Bom Jesus, Goa

Naman P. Ahuja

Fig. 11 detail



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31 The text continues to explain...

In order to appease the deity, fowl, goats, and even buffaloes were offered as sacrifice in addition to liquor. The food of Vetala is considered as mostly meat and liquor. This practice of offering animals as sacrifice is now out of vogue due to rationalisation. ...According to Dr. V.R. Mitragotri, a Goan historian, the rise of the Kapalikas and Pashupatas, who believed in Tantric practices, provided favourable conditions for the evolution of Vetala worship. The inscriptions of the Chalukya dynasty of Badami in Karnataka point to the presence of the Kapalikas in the Deccan plateau. The inscriptions of the Silahara dynasty indicate the presence of Pashupatas in the south Konkan region. Both these sects believed in Tantric practices which were meant for the acquisition of *siddhis* (supernatural powers) by which one would possess the power to get whatever one desired. So it can be inferred that such practices were in vogue at the Vetala shrines around 6th century CE.

32 And a paragraph later, lest the visitor is left imagining that the Hindu practices were all blood curdlingly occult, we are told that Vetala is also a guardian deity:

Vetala is considered as the king of spirits, a village deity and not an evil spirit. He bestows blessings. It enters into the body and drives away evil spirits. Vetala always leads a procession of other ghosts and spirits. According to Hindu mythology, Vetals were in the army of the goddess Chamunda when she annihilated Chanda and Munda, the demons. Since Vetala is the guardian deity of the village, it is believed that he goes around in the surrounding villages throughout the night on foot (Paikadev). Hence people offer pairs of sandals to the deity. It is said that when some devotees, mostly peasants and fishermen, have dreams in which Vetala appears... a sacrifice is made and rituals are performed to escape any misfortune that may befall them.

33 A richer context is provided with references to Bhoota Aradhana:

The practice of “Bhuta Aradhana”, the worship of the *Bhutas* (ghosts) in the coastal districts of South Karnataka could be similar to the worship of Vetāl in the Goa region. Finely carved wooden images of these *bhutas* from the South Canara district of Karnataka, are displayed in the National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum (Crafts Museum), Delhi.

34 And finally, the ASI museum comes to the specific context of this particular statue:

The displayed basalt stone image of Vetāl is collected from the Betalbatim South Goa. ...Rope marks can be seen on his left side as until it was discovered, this particular stone was being used as a platform to draw water from the well.

35 Here comes the final and most visibly shocking act of violence perpetrated on a sculpture, of a deity who was himself known to be a violent ghoul. It has been used as a slab over a well, the ropes of the buckets of water that have rubbed against his body for centuries have cut deep into the sculpture. The image was taken from a Hindu temple during the Portuguese Inquisition in Goa. However, rather than just mention the violent conflict during the Portuguese Inquisition, the museum also finds it necessary to spend more words to explain the violent nature of the Hindu iconography. After all, without an understanding of the gods of India, they were widely regarded as being monstrous, their worship deemed worthy of punishment by death.<sup>31</sup> The Basilica of Bom Jesus is designated as a World Heritage site by UNESCO, and again, like the Qutub Minar, remains one of the most highly visited sites of India. What has not regrettably been addressed in the otherwise excellent (if lengthy) label text is why we are being told what we are told. How staging the problem of not knowing the cultural significance of a horrifying deity like Vetāl/Bhairava leads to its “demonization”, justifying its vandalism. Further questions need addressing here. This is not the only Vetāl sculpture that has been treated in this way. There are others in the collection of the State Museum in Goa [Fig 12]. Were the wells where these sculptures were re-used, located in churches where temples once stood? Did the pre-existing practice of placing talismans and gargoyles around fountains/springs and wells in Baroque and Gothic churches allow for adaptive re-use of these objects? When were the villages these images were located in turned Christian during the long history of the Inquisition in Goa? None of this is to over-emphasise or decry the history of the political violence at Goa manifested by the image, but equally, it is necessary to be able to tell its history better: informing us about the object’s patronage, and the context of its new identity, which are as much a part of its history as its iconography and moment of spoliation.

Fig. 12. Sculptures of Vetala



Stone. Goa. C. 700 AD and later. Left: 6 feet x 2 feet. Centre and right: 8 feet x 3 feet. Goa State Museum

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## II.e. The long history of violence against Buddhists in India

- <sup>36</sup> My own first use of the technique was in the displays, films and catalogues that accompanied the exhibition, *The Body in Indian Art*, at the National Museum in Delhi in 2013. A prominent example, from Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh, was a sculpture of a Buddhist goddess Tārā that was turned around and the slab was used to carve an Ardhanārīśvara, the androgynous form of Śiva, on its reverse. [Fig. 13a & 13b] The famed capital city of Kannauj was subject in the 8th and 9th centuries to repeated attacks to control it by the Pala kings who were known to support Buddhism and the more Brahmanical Gurjara Pratiharas. There is a substantial bibliography on Hindu-Buddhist image rivalries from this period that discusses how iconographies were developed of deities of one faith trampling over those of another, and on the takeover of Buddhist shrines by Śaivite groups on the one hand, and the politics behind the incorporation of the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu on the other.<sup>32</sup> It was important to situate this sculpture within this wider history.

Fig. 13a. Tara and Ardhanarishvara



Double-sided carved relief (front and back). Sandstone. 8th century. Kannauj Museum (79/251)  
The Body in Indian Art

Fig. 13b. Tara and Ardhanarishvara



Double-sided carved relief (front and back). Sandstone. 8th century. Kannauj Museum (79/251)  
The Body in Indian Art

- 37 Metaphors of double meanings seem to be writ all over this image in many ways. Not only is it a double-sided image, the interesting thing about it was that on the better preserved side where it is beautifully sculpted, the Ardhanārīśvara, also combines two gods in one: a metaphor for the cessation of duality shown by combining the masculine and feminine form. The side which shows Tārā is also complex: for merely a goddess shown with a lotus could also be the Vaiṣṇava Lakṣmī. This prompted questions about whether a Vaiṣṇava shrine was turned into a Śaivite one? It is only on close inspection that we can discern that receiving the goddess's benefaction below her right hand is a kneeling *preta*, the hungry ghoulish spirit of the dead receiving the goddess's mercy, which is a known feature of the medieval sculptures of the Buddhist Tārā. The style of the sculptures on both sides is identical, perhaps made by the same workshop. This brought to focus problems of chronology, for it seems that the shift in the shrine's allegiance happened within a generation of the commissioning of the Tārā. The modern museum audience was left questioning if the patron changed her or his mind? Or did s/he not turn up at the artist's workshop to claim the sculpture, leaving the artist the opportunity to reuse the slab for a different patron? The questions the label raised informed the viewers of the history of the sculpture, but also made them participate, dynamically, in the difficulties in positing simplistic understandings of iconoclasm and vandalism by squarely taking the entire discussion away from Islam, and revealing how others too have desecrated "gods".



## II.f. Public celebrations of political violence

38 Conflict is not, of course, only religious, and iconoclasm is not the only type of violence that images can tell a history of. Living in the age of the so-called “Islamic terror”, we are often alerted to how political conflict is given a religious guise. Many a religion has made much of their martyrs although mentions of those who commit *jihad* are given more attention internationally. Martyrology is an established subject in Christianity, Sikhism and other religions. Centuries old monuments to the deified dead can be seen as stone stelae, posts or wooden pillars all over India as well.<sup>33</sup> Certain kinds of death, premature, violent and undeserved, can make a person a worthy object of worship. Significantly, the process that transforms humans into deities does not depend on moral considerations here, but on violence. We opened the exhibition at the National Museum with a display of two graphic sculptures, a *Vīrakkal* and *Vīrasatī* from the 13th century Kākatiya period of Telangana [Fig. 14a & 14b]. Hero stones dedicated to men are called Viragal or Virakkal, while those dedicated to women are called Virasati. Both sculptures, on public display for more than 700 years, have served to commemorate and even exonerate the violence they communicate. These sculpted stones are not uncommon, such memorials to warriors and *sati*-stones to women who were cremated on their husband’s pyres are to be found across the length and breadth of South Asia; both serve a public purpose, to normalise violent martyrdom in society.<sup>34</sup>

Fig. 14a. Viragal (memorial to a soldier)



Black basalt. Andhra Pradesh. Kakatiya, 13th century. 114 x 61 x 10 cm. State Archaeology Museum, Hyderabad (P 5499)

The Body in Indian Art

Fig. 14b. Virasati (memorial to a female warrior)



Black basalt. Andhra Pradesh. Kakatiya, 13th century. 112 x 71 x 13 cm. State Archaeology Museum, Hyderabad (HM 88-51)

The Body in Indian Art

- 39 In this example, the male soldier is shown disembowelling himself, his innards spilling out of his halved body. In return for offering their lives for the greater cause of war for their king, the promise of heaven was held out to soldiers –a heaven where they would be received by celestial damsels or *apsaras* who are visible in the upper corners of the sculpture. This gift was not the preserve of men alone: women are also commemorated for their valour and fidelity. Commemoration of women was more commonly done for those who committed *sati*, widows who burned themselves alive on their husband's funeral pyres. It is rare to find examples of women warriors commemorated, such as the one shown here. However, lest the public be mistaken that women soldiers were being used to convey female empowerment, we highlighted that on the sculpture they too were shown attended to by heavenly female *apsaras*.<sup>35</sup> Was that because this was formulaic and sculptors were oblivious to the requirement that women may not, necessarily, want female *apsaras* waiting on them in heaven? The objects then proffer another narrative: of a male gaze unable to grasp female desire. Or perhaps, there is another implication, and that is that the woman warrior becomes a man in heaven. She gets two rewards –male gender and heaven. Short labels and provocative questions in the accompanying documentary films made the public see how patriarchy was entrenched in society. Again, the opportunity was used not merely to highlight the long history of institutionalisation of violence and martyrdom in Indian contexts, but also examine whom such institutionalisation served.
- 40 The narrative was stretched further to a modern political environment in the same exhibition by placing calendar prints of martyrdom and violence as condoned in the

Indian freedom movement. A clear example of this was a print that shows Subhas Chandra Bose, a prominent figure of the Indian freedom movement standing with his head severed: [Fig. 15] and called *Subhāścandra bos ki apūrv bheṅ* or “Subhas Chandra Bose’s Remarkable Offering”. He holds his own severed head in his hand while his dripping blood forms the map of India. This allowed us to build a narrative through another strategy: not by using text, or words, but instead by showing how visual narratives exist in civilisation and how these too are manipulated just as textual language of propaganda and mythology are. Iconography, once established, is capable of being adapted and used time after time. This is, after all, what a museum can do – expose the artistic vocabulary of visual communication, and reveals, in this case, the continuity of the visual language of conflict.

Fig. 15. “Subhas Chandra Bose’s Remarkable Offering”



Offset Print “Published by Shyam Sunder Lal, Picture Merchant, Chowk, Cawnpore” c. 1940s. 16.5 x 13.5 inches. From the collection of Priya Paul  
Priya Paul

## II.g. Further gendered violence

- 41 We examined above how *sati* stones and memorials to warriors may have normalised violence, and move here to a ruthlessly decapitated 8th to 10th century image of a female Jain seer from Unnao in Uttar Pradesh, which still lies in the Lucknow Museum without any explanatory text despite two major international exhibitions that have discussed its decapitation. [Fig. 16a & 16b] It can be interpreted in ways that suggest the beheading may have been done by those opposed to the idea of the canonisation of a woman saint rather than something perpetrated by an invading Muslim army.<sup>36</sup> However, to reach such an interpretation required the involvement of the public in the

many stages of its research. The first hurdle was the identification of who this sculpture represents.

Fig. 16a. Mallinatha



Stone. Unnao, Uttar Pradesh. 12th century. 53 x 43 x 15.2 cm. Lucknow State Museum (J885)  
The Body in Indian Art

Fig. 16b. Mallinatha



Stone. Unnao, Uttar Pradesh. 12th century. 53 x 43 x 15.2 cm. Lucknow State Museum (J885)  
The Body in Indian Art

- 42 With her absolutely straight back, with one plait falling down its middle, breath drawn into her inflated chest, she sits meditating in *padmāsana* with just a simple flower held in her hands. Complete nudity in Indian art is usually linked with the figure of Jain *tirthankaras*. This sculpture is also completely nude, which is exceptional. Even when shown without clothes, Hindu goddesses are adorned, covered with jewellery and ornaments. In the Shvetambara tradition of Jainism, some believe that Mallinātha (the 19th Jain *tirthankara*) was a female and it has thus been suggested that this may be a sculpture of her. Supporting this view is also the dark colour of the stone, and the carving of a damaged water pot in the square niche on the pedestal, which are iconographic attributes of Malli.<sup>37</sup>
- 43 The Jains are broadly divided into two sects –the Digambaras and the Shvetambaras. The Digambaras do not believe that women can achieve *mokṣa*, a stance that received its most hardened polemical explication by the seer Prabhāchandra in the 11th century. For them, the *tirthankara* Mallinātha is a male, and they also believe that the best women can aspire to is to be reborn as men, which will enable them, if they lead an exemplary virtuous life, to achieve *mokṣa*. In myths, while the Shvetambaras maintain that Malli was born a dark blue female who became a renunciate, the Digambaras insist upon him being born a male.
- 44 Shvetambara *tirthankaras* and nuns are clothed, which makes the identification of this image complicated. Questions were also raised if the Shvetambara image was once clad and ornamented as many images in worship now are, not allowing us to see it in the way that the sculptor had fashioned the body. The capacity for females to achieve liberation was never doubted in ancient texts, yet after the 5th century, a myth was

created that Mallinātha's gender was changed to a man, for only a man can achieve *keval jñāna* or *mokṣa*.<sup>38</sup> This sculpture comes from a period when there was a resurgence of female figures as foci of worship across the *bhakti* and Tantric traditions. Nudity was regarded as an essential requirement for Digambara Jain ascetics, which would have caused social discomfiture when it came to women and several medieval women-saints spoke out against this. A question was thus posed about whether this female Mallinatha could have been beheaded by patriarchal Jain forces as much as by anyone else?

## II.h. The violence of rhetoric and “fake news”

45 Time and again, we have seen that violence perpetrated on bodies needs explanation. At times, the violence is itself iconographic and used to send out a different type of message –one that normalises the violence, or makes the horrific into a protective talisman, or a celebration, like a trophy of a victory. Objects have been used to make these statements in the above examples. Unlike sculptures, drawings or paintings, however, in modern times we have photographs, and these are not meant to be idealised or contrived artworks. Instead, they have an aura of authenticity about them, where they are meant to be documentary in nature, a snapshot of a moment. In the exhibition on “India & the World: A History in Nine Stories”, we used the opportunity to show that right from the earliest photographs, we can see, in fact, that they were carefully constructed to create not just a desired artistic effect, but a dangerous “documentary fact”.

46 Felice Beato (1832–1909) was a commercial photographer, Venetian by birth but raised as a British imperial subject in Corfu, a British protectorate at the time. A five-decade long career took him from Ukraine during the Crimean War (1853–56) to India, China, Japan, Korea, and Burma, providing some of the earliest photographic images of colonial heroism and the exotic lives of these countries. He arrived in India in February 1858 to record the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857. He worked at Delhi, Kanpur and Lucknow under the guidance and help of military officers, where he re-staged the conflicts in order to photograph them. [Fig. 17] In the catalogue that accompanied the display of one his most (in)famous photographs, I wrote,

Conveying brutality was his intention, and this involved the exhumation and restaging of corpses of natives artfully scattered before the shelled building. The display of the wrecked building reveals to the British press where the image would have been seen, the extent of Indian outrage, while the corpses, and hangings of Indians in another picture, their retribution. This served the intention of justifying of the wresting of control from the East India Company to the crown, in 1858, making India a British colony, and Queen Victoria, as empress of India...

Images have always had a fantastic power of enhancing and manipulating truth, and this has certainly been one of the strongest mediums of communication since the nineteenth century revealing a history of what is now called the construction of “news”.<sup>39</sup>

Fig. 17. Aftermath of the Mutiny in Secundrabagh, Lucknow



Photograph by Felice Beato. Albumen Print. AD 1858. H: 25.6 cm; W. 29.1 cm. The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts, New Delhi (ACP: 94.139.0001a)

The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts

- 47 Staging this in the museum in 2017-18 struck a chord with the public. In an environment when no one knows what to believe in the media and multiple versions of history are peddled as truths, when quickly edited images on mobile phones are gathered from one scenario but accompanied by persuasive rhetoric on a completely different matter, the public noted how longstanding the industry of visual propaganda has been. It brought home the point about how public opinion is swayed by the presentation of evidence, and how dangerously evidence has been created for the past 150 years. If the colonial government used it, so too has the Indian national movement employed the iconography of martyrdom to its purposes. The examples can easily be amplified, but that would turn this essay into a book. I have limited myself only to a few examples of how images in museum settings hold potential for communicating histories of political violence of many kinds. How seeing an image closely reveals perspectives apart from just their iconographic name, or artistic technique which is all that labels in museums normally concern themselves with.
- 48 The exclusion of rich histories is symptomatic of something far more insidious. If the historiography of Indian art has shown something, it is that the ever-deepening engagement with iconography lures visitors (and scholars, most certainly) into the richness of psychological meaning inherent in Indian images, who remain blinded to the overt surface violence that images have been subjected to. Artworks in museum contexts appeal to both, our religiosity and the sense we make of our world through history: a history, that is based as much on reason as it draws on imagination. All images can be used for propaganda, but sacred images, we have seen, are particularly

powerful communicators of difference. Further, they communicate even in a destroyed state, rather than just in a living temple context. While exploring the variety of political violence communicated in museums in India that house such images, we have also seen that before Islam took on the propaganda of making spectacles of destroying images, different communities in India used the same strategy. This knowledge compels us to revisit and nuance the generally assumed, singular narrative of Muslim iconoclasm. This can be done by museums to show the several reasons for the breakage of sculptures, and how the reappropriation of sacred sculptures in India has a long history, which precedes the advent of Islam; that Hindus did it to Jain and Buddhist images; that Hindus snatched images from rival kingdoms. Other images reveal inter-religious conflicts with Christian destructions of Hindu shrines, or Hindu anxieties about the popularity of Jains and Buddhists. Other factors too emerge: the apathy toward and collusion of upper castes in the removal or reappropriations of lower caste or “tribal” shrines, as well as the requirements of patriarchal keepers of religions to remove feminist threats. In addition to the rich histories of the Muslim destruction of Buddhist, Hindu or Sikh spaces, we also need to speak of Sanskritisation, the absorption of *yakshas*, inter-sectarian rivalries and caste exclusion. Where many speak of the brutality suffered by images, we must also remind Hindus (and others) that it was only in the 20th century that lower caste Hindus won the legal right to enter Hindu temples to see many of those images at all. Opening the museum’s space up to tell narratives will allow it to cause offence to all, rather than some, fulfilling the intention of no longer apportioning blame to one causative agent for the vandalism of sculptures in India, but focus on the larger narrative of the instruments of violence instead.

- 49 Recycling images is not merely a sign of conflict or violence. The passage of time allowed Vishnu sculptures to be read as Buddhas in South East Asia, while many *stupas* have been reinvented as *lingas* in India. The provenance-history and biography of an object takes it, it is well known, through diverse contexts. Tracing several of those contexts helps stage the ones on violence and conflict along with others; our attention thus comes on the history of an object rather than only on the history of the political context –and this is key for the museum if it wishes to stay located in the disciplines of art history and aesthetics rather than be located in a department of politics.
- 50 Each case must be read against the backdrop of the varied kinds of interests that would have seen to their restaging in new contexts or outright removal from public view in some other contexts. These case studies point at more complex historical circumstances under which the theft of images and iconoclasm are perpetrated. In each case, they reveal how these acts are performed for the sake of a certain public propaganda that seeks demonstration of the usurping of someone else’s source of power. Staging this in a museum and openly talking about a long history of how violence is communicated, may seek to unmask the strategies of violence.

### III. Communicating subjectivities: will the loudest heckle the others into silence?

- 51 “I don’t know what to believe anymore” is a common enough plea heard in the wake of fake news by the public, a public which certainly needs to mature. For too long have eloquent services of pre-modern art history writing in India served a singular cause, making the public follow their didactic command like sheep without raising their



pupils to try and question or think critically. Tabling varied “facts” together may, put rather poetically, mirror the fissures of the sculptures themselves: teaching the public, eventually, to see the same artwork from many perspectives. Certainly, the perspective on the history of propaganda and political violence cannot be kept hidden. Unlike ever before, the rise of internet-based new media has made it a given that everyone now has an opportunity to articulate their position. This rise (and manipulation) of social media has allowed an articulation of divergent narratives that, when fuelled, create a more polarised society. As much as it has enabled opinions to emerge, its protections of anonymity and virtual identities leave speakers without responsibility for their comments, and with trolls paid to command the volume of opinions voiced, it has also become not merely an instrument of heckling, but equally, now, an instrument of violence. Fake news comes along with fake identities and fake sources, algorithmically programmed to communicate to its own echo-chambers, strengthening their conviction in their falsehoods. In the past two decades we have encountered interference in history textbooks of India which is more pernicious.

- 52 Equally, silencing histories and people is also a violence. Vast swathes of the histories of South Asians, for instance, are relegated to ethnographic and crafts museums simply because they did not come from temple-worshipping cities, castes or communities. Often, objects that do not conform to the standard distinguishable stylistic markers of a period or iconography confuse museum staff to such degree that they are relegated to reserve collections –as the only format or narrative within which they can be brought on display is as a specimen of a period or religion at the exclusion of admitting them as evidence of other ways of telling different types of histories. It is better to say no known sources are available to tell us, rather than leave the field open to misrepresentation, and in the case of a damaged sculpture state what caused the damage to it when known, and again, when not known, to say that too.
- 53 The grouping of objects is normally done because they are “specimens” of a particular taxonomical framework, and galleries of Indian art have been particularly moribund in their capacities to show things outside the religiously defined frameworks set up over a century ago. A wider pool of curatorial narratives allows for greater inclusion, and this will involve broken and damaged sculptures as well as other forms of material culture – utensils, scientific instruments, textiles, talismans and expressions of “folk” culture, along with the growing reserves of oral histories. There has been a move in the past few decades to revive the pedagogical function of the museums with the attendant anxieties of globalisation. In a world characterised by mass-migrations of populations living in diaspora, the major museums of historical objects of the world have found a new purpose as universal museums.
- 54 This revised mandate seeks to explain one culture to visitors from another and thereby perform a social function. Worthy as that is, implicit in the exercise is a presentation of that culture in the language of, or terms set by the culture in which it is being staged. Often, this has resulted in an oversimplification and driven by a requirement to tell children “the facts”, we prevent them from learning to live with differences of opinion. Sometimes, the mere act of using someone else’s language can create terms of assimilating the different culture even if that was not what was intended. At times, through translation, the terms of the cultural difference are lost or forgotten. Where 20th century advances in Chaos Theory in “arts” like mathematics has proved beyond

doubt that other orders and harmonies also exist, the social “sciences” still find difference disconsonant.<sup>40</sup>

- 55 At the same time, not comparing objects can also be problematic. Patterns of how we allow difference to be recorded today need not be how people dealt with difference in times past. Cultures clashed and that sometimes led to efforts to accommodate the other, or assimilate them in a dominant culture.<sup>41</sup> The same inscriptions or public texts can be understood differently depending on the worldview the reader comes from. That history also needs to be staged and told. In order to create a dialogue between contrasting positions, opposing views have to be brought to the same space for us to simply apprehend their difference, not achieve concord, but only to allow their differences to coexist on the same ground.
- 56 This means it must be achieved both through the act of translation as well as by displaying different objects/positions together in a museum in order to show their divergence. This shared ground, therefore, need not provide a space of harmony; in fact, it must remain a space that can showcase the disharmony and provide a space for rebellion and divergence rather than be a propagandist (and even false) display of universal harmony, or brush conflict under a carpet.
- 57 Admitting a problem is of course always the first step to recovery. Prejudice only remains powerful if it is kept secret –for it allows for secretive solidarities and those become narratives of victimhood that needs a protector, or to be righted by a saviour. Describing the causes of violence, its anatomy and pathology, will expose the propaganda machinery’s tools. The museum’s principal roles, then, are the protection of that evidence which it keeps so that it can be used again and again for each carefully constructed interpretation. And, evidence ought not to be kept as poorly as the neglect museums in India often find themselves in.
- 58 Why has the institution of the museum in India been so suppressed? This is a long subject which one has written on elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> If museums are an important space to start displaying the evidence they house with greater care, then they need greater protection. In order to more openly tell the history of conflict, or to check the sources of [dis]information and the algorithms and propaganda that perpetuate each community’s inherited anxieties, museums will need to preserve their own status as places of knowledge production, foster research and debate, and above all, be open to changing their narratives. This certainly expands the definition of the job-profile of museum professionals. It also poses another question, whether the goal of the museum is then something evangelical? An aesthetic ennoblement? Social harmony?
- 59 That may have been the opinion of several 18th and 19th century European pioneers of the discourse on museology. The terms of education, aesthetic communication and understanding diverse histories have changed today. In this essay, I have tried to reveal some of the ways in which we are able to stage the discourse in the public sphere. What was examined in each case study was not a one-off, but an image that was given a close reading (or “thick description” if you will) for it to be contextualised within various types of research to be able to show how violence is culturally constructed. In the exhibitions I have curated, as well as in the few other examples I have cited in this essay, an effort was made to reveal to the public *how* those conclusions were reached. Repeated contextualisation reveals the instruments by which society has normalised political violence through history. In the end, what begins to emerge is that the chief instrument of violence was not the perpetration of physical damage inflicted on the

images, but the social structures which encouraged it, the propaganda that accompanied it, mobilised and justified the violence. The denial of the long history of the propaganda itself, and ignorance of how it has been mobilised, allows the public to remain susceptible to it. Perhaps then, the only solution is to stage and display the propaganda so that the public can see it for what it is.

- 60 Apart from people, heritage sites and museums remain visible sites for political violence, precisely because of the kind of media attention they get. It is well known that this is because destroyed sites have a long lasting impact. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan in 2001 emboldened extremists to further destroy more art and heritage. And entire political campaigns in India have fed off the act of the destruction of a mosque and promised building of a temple in its place in Ayodhya. Iconoclasm was revived at Nimrud and Hatra –the great historical sites of ancient Mesopotamia; Palmyra bears testimony to its devastating effects. Brushing such violence under the carpet is no solution, but the task then becomes one of how we achieve the necessary balance in narrating it.
- 61 Museums of Indian art, and Asian art on the whole, continue to present Indian art in galleries divided by religions. Many a scholar has noted that the problem that seems to afflict the presentation of Indian art in galleries across the world is its stereotyping on the grounds of its religious identification. The division and presentation of museum galleries of Hindu art, Buddhist art and Islamic art, has a long colonial legacy, when history used to be taught in that manner. While history books changed so as to deal with more neutral, chronological nomenclature, museums did not. By identifying sculpture only by their iconography, museums remain resistant to moving away from telling anything but a history of religions through their displays of Indian artefacts.<sup>43</sup> Thus, while it is possible to pick up a history book on the diverse Hindu cultures patronised by Deccani and Mughal kings, galleries of Hindu art tend to conclude their presentation of Hindu art in the 14th century leaving the public with the misunderstanding that there was no patronage of Hindu culture under the Sultanates and Muslim rulers.
- 62 Within the separated galleries of Hindu and Islamic art too, there are pernicious stereotypes. Instead of presenting these as historically changing religions, conditioned by the geographic, economic and political exigencies of each moment in time, Hinduism ends up being presented as some eternal religion while Islam is invariably essentialised as a culture that revelled in floral and geometric decorative ornamentation and calligraphy because making images was prohibited. Countless Indian Muslims who have a diverse range of ritual practices remain excluded from this narrow, singular definition. Culture and the diversity of narratives which a museum is capable of illuminating remain only marginal to the dominant presentation of iconography: who is Shiva or Krishna, identifying a few goddesses, and identifying some styles and periods of Indian art. What political, social and economic changes came in that period, what advances in science and technology permitted concomitant shifts in the perception of culture, how patronage shifted, who controlled the narrative and how it was adapted to suit that age... These many questions remain unanswered.
- 63 Inasmuch as a museum romanticises religion such that the aura of spiritual images can inspire audiences, even give solace and open windows to the profound nature of ancient thought, it must equally be noted how such noble emotion is taken advantage of, how this precious but subtle feeling becomes a commodity so easily stolen and used

for political profiteering by creating sectarian fault lines. Making some space for an acknowledgement of human fallibility and national shame may bring temperance and some room to listen rather than use the museum only as a space to instil pride and allow the public to marvel and boast.

64 Museums of Indian art are, as I stated earlier, spaces that remain neglected, and the state of neglect itself is criminal, not merely because people have a claim on their history, but because the museum is a preserver of evidence. Does that mean it is a law court? Not exactly. Contrary to the emerging narrative of the museum as a place of transitional justice, I do not believe the history- or art-museum is a place for conflict resolution or even catharsis, for that matter. This cannot be its intention. (Rather like Bharata or even Ānandavardhana) I feel that the simulacra of art can bring us close to an aesthetic experience of something that is almost indistinguishable from the thing itself; yet it retains that remove –barrier or enabler– of “almost”. Ānandavardhana and the aestheticians of yore claimed that it was possible to instil *śānta-rasa* by retelling the stories of that violence as for example did the *Mahābhārata*. Such retellings were a means for people to learn to abhor hate and conflict, for them to recognise how prejudices (when left secret) are manipulated and instrumentalised. The onus of interpreting the evidence shifts onto the public, making them complicit in the problematic nature of history. That it happens to achieve a catharsis or rouse empathy is a bonus we must aim for. And in order to be able to do this, the museum needs to be relevant to each generation, or constituency that views it.

65 What will protect the historian to be able to tell such narratives? The historian curator can be perceived as someone who foments violence rather than peace, and this leads, again, to a suppression of the narrative. The only way forward appears to be able to use the museum to tell multiple sides of the story, to have fuller narratives, and to understand that the museum label is itself an integral part of the discourse. For the public, by seeing for themselves how evidence can be approached from different perspectives, it becomes part of the experience of the artwork. The instability of interpretations in each case will be accompanied by an understanding of the process by which we know what we do. The museum then encourages people to enter that space of building a narrative and leaves room for the staff to interpret and teach the audiences the skills and processes involved in the process of interpretation. To engage with the material itself, what more can the museum ask for?

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Tubb, Gary A., “Śāntarasa in the *Mahābhārata*”, *Journal of South Asian Literature* Vol. 20, No. 1, Part 1: *Essays on the Mahābhārata*, Winter-Spring 1985, pp. 141-168.

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Wagoner, Phillip B., “Retrieving the Chalukyan Past: The Politics of Architectural Reuse in the Sixteenth-Century Deccan”, *South Asian Studies*, 23, 1, 2007, pp. 1-29.

Weil, Stephen E., *Rethinking the Museum and other Meditations*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990.

Williams, Joanna, “Recut Ashokan Capital and the Gupta Attitude toward the Past”, *Artibus Asiae*, XXXV, 1973, pp. 225-240.

*World Heritage Series: Qutb Minar and Adjoining Monuments*, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002.

## NOTES

1. Weil, Stephen E., *Rethinking the Museum and other Meditations*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990, remains one of the most eloquent pieces on the shifts in the profession of Museum administration in the 20th century. He says: “To focus museum rhetoric on the socially beneficial aspects of a museum would ultimately be to invite discussion on a wide range of political and moral issues that could well pit trustees against staff members and staff members against one another. By contrast, to focus on function –on the good, seemingly value-free work of collecting, preserving and displaying– projects a sense of ideological neutrality (albeit, I suspect, a grossly deceptive sense) in which people of diverse social views are able to work more amiably together.” He continues: “Allied with this is a notion of the museum as a sort of neutral and transparent medium –a clear, clean, and undistorting lens– through which the public ought to be able to come face-to-face with an object, pure and fresh... At best, this seems a wilful naïveté... we must never forget that ideas –and not just things alone– also lie at the heart of the museum enterprise. Reality is neither objects alone nor simply ideas about objects but, rather, the two taken together.” *Op. Cit.* pp. 43-56.

2. A synoptic version of this article was published as Ahuja, Naman P. “Conflict: Can Museums Tell Us Why?” in Lowry, Glenn D., ed., *Art and Conflict, Marg*, Vol. 71, No. 4, June 2020, pp. 26-37.

3. In India, two relatively recent museums have been created on these lines: the Partition Museum in Amritsar and the Conflictorium in Ahmedabad. On the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, because of the “unearthing” of pasts, and the recording of the memory of traumatic experience which allowed the museum space to be used as a site of forgiveness and the “healing of memories”, see Rassool, Ciraj, “Community Museums, Memory Politics, and Social Transformation in South Africa: Histories, Possibilities and Limits”, in Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, eds., *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006. Transitional justice is becoming a stated claim of museums of contemporary conflict in many parts of the world. It can be seen across museums in Cambodia, Germany (on the Jewish holocaust). And even in the United States, which is known to be pro-Israel, in 2019, a new museum of oral history called the Museum of the Palestinian People opened in Washington DC.

4. Choudhury, Pravas Jivan, "Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol 15, No. 2, Dec. 1956, pp. 215-226.
5. Tripathi, Radhavallabh, *Vāda in Theory and Practice: Studies in Debates, Dialogues and Discussions in Indian Intellectual Discourses*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 2016, pp. 34-35 and pp. 256-259.
6. Tubb, Gary A. "Śāntarasa in the Mahābhārata", *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Part 1: "Essays on the Mahābhārata", Winter-Spring 1985, pp. 141-168, discusses what is the final, lasting effect of art/literature which takes an audience through a mélange of transitory emotions. He quotes Ānandavardhana: In the Mahābhārata, Vyāsa has demonstrated that the creation of detachment is the principal purport of his work.
7. McCrea, Lawrence, "Śāntarasa in the Rājatarangiṇī: History, epic, and moral decay", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, No. 50, 2, 2013, pp. 179-199.
8. Hegarty, James, *Religion, Narrative and Public Imagination in South Asia: Past and Place in the Sanskrit Mahabharata*, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 14 and further, pp. 73-79. This examination of the Mahābhārata explores how it justifies its own public intention. The Mahābhārata's aesthetic concern is not merely academic as it was used for the education of princes and is a text quoted in a wide range of historical inscriptions which reveal how it was very much part of public culture. Similar studies on the affective history of the Ramayana have been built by several scholars. See Pollock, Sheldon, "Ramayana and Political Imagination in India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 1993, pp. 261-297.
9. On the controversy around Indian history textbooks, see *Communalisation of Education: The History Textbooks Controversy*, Delhi: Delhi Historians' Group, 2001. The matter was taken up extensively in Indian and international media, see for example Ramesh, Randeep, "Another rewrite for India's history books" in *The Guardian* on 26 June 2004: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jun/26/india.schoolsworldwide>, accessed 5 December 2019. Further, Habib, Irfan, Suvira Jaiswal and Aditya Mukherjee, *History in the New NCERT Textbooks*, Kolkata: Indian History Congress, 2003.
10. In 2019, media attention was being given to the creation of a museum of oral histories on both sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict in Washington DC called the Museum of the Palestinian People. Surely, there can be no greater evidence for the move in museum curation/narratives towards the requirement to voice the diversity of opinion that make a nation's public. See footnote 1 above. There is a rising parallel scholarship in the field of performance studies that takes a similar approach, see Hughes, Jenny, *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011, and Cole, Catherine, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission: Stages of Transition*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
11. References to the attacks against Jains may be found across the 13th century Lingayat Vīraśaiva Telugu epic poem, the *Basava Purāṇa*. See Narayana Rao, Velcheru, ed., *Siva's Warriors: The Basava-Purana of Palkuriki-Somanatha*, Princeton University Press, 1990. On the *Periya Purāṇa* see Monius, Anne, "Love, Violence and the Aesthetics of Disgust: Śaivas and Jains in Medieval South India", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol 32, 2004, pp.113-172. The desecration of Jain sites along with Buddhist ones is amplified further in the recent book by Verardi, Giovanni and Federica Barba: *The Gods and the Heretics: Crisis and Ruin of Indian Buddhism*, New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan and Fundación Bodhiyāna, 2018. I am grateful to Prof. Phyllis Granoff and Prof. S. Settar for rich readings on this matter. On medieval stories of Jains who split the sacred *linga* of Śiva with their ascetical power and the Śaivite rebuttal through stories of their own: Granoff, Phyllis, "Telling Tales: Jains and Śaivites and their Stories in Medieval South India", lecture delivered at Harvard University, April 8, 2009, and University of Wisconsin, Madison, April 30, 2009, (unpublished). She explores the significance of the many Jain stories of the splitting of a Siva *linga* such as the conversion of Kumarapala by Hemacandra and Samantabhadra's destruction of the *linga* in the

creation of a public rhetoric. For Jain Samantabhadra's story of splitting the *linga*, see Granoff, Phyllis, "The Biographies of Siddhasena: A Study in the Texture of Allusion and the Weaving of a Group Image", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 17, 1989, pp. 329-384. The severe Saiva-Srivasnava conflict at Srirangam in the 13th-14th century is testified by both inscriptions and the temple chronicle, *Koil Olugu*. Prof. Settar supplied me the following list of inscriptional references for Karnataka/the Deccan: "The Arjunawada inscription dated 1184 lists the Jaina *basadis* destroyed by the Saivas. For details, see *South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. XV, Bijapur 5. Also see another inscription, Navalgund 59. Fleet has edited the inscriptions located at Ablur which narrate the destruction of a Jaina temple by a Siva devotee. The interesting point is the sculptural narration of beheading of images of Tirthankaras on this temple. For the text, see *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. V, pp. 213-256; also see *Epigraphia Indica* Vol. XXIX. pp.140-141. The famous Jaina-Śrīvaiṣṇava conflict is recorded in a Sravana Belgola inscription. See *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol II, no. 427 dated 1368. For a forced conversion of a Jaina village named Gommatahalli into Śrīvaiṣṇava *agrahara* and naming it Raghavapura, see *Epigraphia Carnatica* Vol. III, Gudlupet inscription 40 dated 1320." On an interesting reversal of the Jain use of a Hindu shrine, see Hegewald, Julia, "From Shiva to Parshvanatha: The Appropriation of a Hindu Temple for Jaina Worship" in Catherine Jarrige and Vincent Lefèvre, eds. *South Asian Archaeology*, Vol 2, Paris: Editions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 2001, pp. 517-523. Interestingly, Hegewald traces the many appropriations this site went through. Before it was dedicated to Parshvanatha in colonial times, it was dedicated to Adinatha. Tamara Sears has taken a similar approach to reconstruct the many iterations that Shaiva monasteries in Central India went through, not just under the Sultanates but also in the hands of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which after all is also an intervention at the site. See Sears, Tamara I. "Fortified Mathas and Fortress Mosques: The Transformation and Reuse of Hindu Monastic Sites in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries", *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 59, 2009, pp. 7-31.

12. Indian rules of deconsecration and what to do with spolia vary depending on which Śaivāgama or Vaikhanasa Āgama one reads. Goudriaan, Teun, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom (Kāśyapa-Jñānakāṇḍah): A Ritual Handbook of the Vaikhānasas*, The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965, pp. 304-306, states that the discarded images are to be immersed in water, or fragmentary images may also be buried. A more broad-based study is collated in Triplett, Katja, "The Making and Unmaking of Religious Objects: Sacred Waste Management in Comparative Perspective", in Morishita, Saburo Shawn, ed., *Materiality in Religion and Culture*, Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2017, pp. 143-154.

13. Discarding in water is as per ritual injunction, see *ibid*.

14. It is well-known that graves in churchyards and even the walls of several churches in the British Isles, for instance, have been used centuries after their construction for the sharpening of arrows. Photographed aplenty, a sampling can be seen online: <http://www.derbyshireheritage.co.uk/Menu/Curiosities/thorpe-arrow-grooves.php>; and <https://photorelect.blogspot.com/2010/07/sharpening-marks-and-old-churches.html>; <https://ahistoryofbirminghamchurches.jimdo.com/yardley-st-edburgha/>;

I was reminded also of Zen and Chinese Buddhist stories of monks who used sacred images for their intrinsic value, for profane purposes. Koichi Shinohara has written about a Chinese story in "The 'Iconic' and 'Aniconic' Buddha Visualisation in Medieval Chinese Buddhism", in Assmann, Jan and Albert I. Baumgarten, eds., *Representation in Religion: Studies in Honor of Moshe Barasche*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp. 146-147. The Japanese Zen story is attributed to Ikkyū Sōjun (1394-1481), see <https://www.elephantjournal.com/2014/06/ikkyu-the-bones-of-the-buddha-statue/>. In the story, we are told that Ikkyū was staying in a temple on a cold winter night where he burned a Buddha statue to warm himself. The priest in charge was roused and saw the Buddha statue burning while Ikkyū was sitting there, warming his hands over the fire. The priest exclaimed, "What are you doing?! Are you a madman?! — I thought you to be a Buddhist monk. This is profane!" Ikkyū said, "But the Buddha within me was feeling very cold. So it was a question

whether to sacrifice the living Buddha to the wooden one, or to sacrifice the wooden one to the living one. And I decided for life.” The priest was so angry that he couldn’t listen. He said, “You are a madman! Get out of here! You have burned Buddha!” So Ikkyu started to search through the ashes with a stick, and, further infuriated, the priest asked, “What are you doing now?!” Ikkyu said, “I am trying to find the bones of the Buddha.” So the priest laughed and said, “You are absolutely mad! You cannot find bones there, because it is just a wooden Buddha.” The priest recognised that he had not burned the Buddha, but a wooden statue. The story ends when Ikkyu laughed and said, “Then bring the other two Buddha statues. The night is still very cold.”

15. Fergusson, James. *Tree and Serpent Worship*, London: India Museum, 1868; Coomaraswamy, A.K., *Yakṣas*, Washington: The Smithsonian Institution, 1928; also see Misra, R.N., *Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981; more interpretative works like: Sutherland, G.H., *The Disguises of the Demon: the Development of the Yakṣa in Hinduism and Buddhism*, Albany (N.Y.): State University of New York Press, 1991.

16. Eschmann, A., H. Kulke and G.C. Tripathi, *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005.

17. Freedberg, David, “The Structure of Byzantine and European Iconoclasm”, in Bryer, Anthony and Judith Herrin, eds., *Iconoclasm: Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, University of Birmingham, 1977, pp. 165-177; Gamboni, Dario, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997; Spencer, George W. “The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh-Century Ceylon”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1976, pp. 405-419; Flood, Finbarr Barry, “Pillars, Palimpsests and Princely Practices: Translating the Past in Sultanate Delhi”, *Res* 43, 2003, pp. 95-116; Flood, F.B., “Reconfiguring Iconoclasm in the early Indian Mosque”, in Maclanen, Ann and Jeffrey Johnson, eds., *Negating the Image: Case Studies in Iconoclasm*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, pp. 15-40; Flood, F. B., *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009; Davis, Richard, *Lives of Indian Images*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999; Thapar, Romila, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, London, New York: Verso, 2005 (particularly pp. 214-17 and pp. 224-26), and Singh, Upinder, *Political Violence in Ancient India*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2017.

18. Eaton, Richard M. has a widely reproduced study on this issue: “Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States,” in Gilmartin, David and Bruce B. Lawrence, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000, pp. 246-81; and also in Flood, F.B., ed., *Piety and Politics in the Early Indian Mosque*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 64-96; as well as in Kumar, Sunil, ed., *Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples? Readings on History and Temple Desecration in Medieval India*, New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2008, pp. 93-139; and finally in Vanina, Eugenia and D. N. Jha, eds., *Medieval Mentality*, Delhi: Tulika Books, 2008, pp. 293-324; “Temple Desecration in pre-modern India”, *Frontline*, December 22, 2000.

19. Eaton, 2000, pp. 65-66. See the previous study: Davis, Richard, “Indian Art Objects as Loot”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 52, 1993, pp. 22-48.

20. Spencer, George W., “The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh-Century Ceylon”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1976, pp. 405-419; Verardi, Giovanni and Federica Barba, *Hardships and Downfall of Buddhism in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2011.

21. Flood, F.B., studies Islamic proscriptions on idol worship and reassesses the question of Islam’s “image problem”, the relationship between “proscription, prescription and artistic praxis”, and the significance of *Bilderverbot* (prohibition against images) as a concept in shaping perceived characteristics of Islamic cultures in particular and Islam in general; see Flood, 2009; also see Patel, Alka, “The Historiography of Reuse in South Asia”, *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol 59, 2009, pp. 1- 8, in addition to the citations given in the previous notes 17 to 20.

22. On the contested history of Bodh Gaya, see Asher, Frederick, *Bodh Gaya*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008: pp. 8-23; Amar, Abhishek Singh, "Bodhgaya and Gaya: Buddhist Responses to the Hindu Challenges in Early India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 22, 1, March 2012, pp. 155-185; Kinnard, Jacob N., "When is the Buddha not the Buddha: The Hindu Buddhist Battle over Bodhgayā and its Buddha Image", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol 66, No. 4, Winter 1998, pp. 817-839.

23. *Jirṇoddhāra*, reviving or rescuing what exists in a state of ruin, remains an under-researched term that recurs widely in inscriptions at a variety of sites: at Indian temples as well as at "Islamic" monuments where guilds of Hindu craftsmen worked and continued to use their existing vocabulary. See Prasad, Pushpa, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of the Delhi Sultanate 1191-1526*, Delhi and New York: Centre for Advanced Study in History, AMU and Oxford University Press 1990, pp. 33-35. For the copying and re-use of Ashokan pillars as spolia, see Williams, Joanna, "Recut Ashokan Capital and the Gupta Attitude toward the Past", *Artibus Asiae*, XXXV, 1973, pp. 225-240. In her lecture titled "Encapsulating the World: Ashoka's pillar at Allahabad" at the CSMVS, Mumbai, Romila Thapar discussed Ashoka's pillar inscription at Allahabad and how it has been subsequently re-used. The text for this can be found at <https://guftugu.in/2018/06/pillar-of-ashokamaurya-romila-thapar/>. Cultural memory and oral history come to the fore in John Irwin's study of the reappropriations of the motif of the pillar as a solar symbol: Irwin, John, "Islam and the Cosmic Pillar", in Frifelt, Karen and Per Sorensen, eds., *South Asian Archaeology 1985*, Scandanavian Institute of Asian Studies, Occasional Papers 4, Curzon Press, 1989, pp. 397-406. Upinder Singh also discusses the reuse of Ashokan pillars in her two essays: "A Tale of Two Pillars", pp. 119-122, and "The Later Histories of the Ashokan and Mehrauli Pillars", pp. 207-211, in her edited volume, *Delhi: Ancient History*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2006. For a readable account of the life of Ashoka and his violence and conversion, see Lahiri, Nayanjot, *Ashoka in Ancient India*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2015.1.

24. The figures reported by the Ministry of Culture to the Parliament on the number of visitors to the Qutub Minar in 2016-17 was 3.4 million, reported by Sharma, Aman, "Tourists Up at Taj Mahal and Red Fort, but Qutub Minar Loses its No. 2 Spot", *The Economic Times*, 10 July, 2019.

25. The publication about the Qutub complex which is sold at the official ASI shop at the site is incendiary in its tone. *World Heritage Series: Qutb Minar and Adjoining Monuments*, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2002, claims that it is "based" on the text of J.A. Page and Y.D. Sharma. A line from it, for instance, reads: "Fired by religious zeal, the soldiers of Islam set about destroying and despoiling the symbols and structures of others." Spolia and iconoclasm at the Qutub Minar are all pervasive and evident to anyone who visits the site, making it a key site to present an argument about Islamic iconoclasm. However, this needs to be done responsibly. The booklet is filled with many such provocative examples, without providing a counter-narrative. What they fail to point out is that the language of religious iconoclasm which has in fact been used stems from the propaganda of the time. At the time, such iconoclasm was not only celebrated but credit was given to those who perpetrated it.

Much reprinted and sold by the ASI at the Qutub Minar, their booklet presents particularly outdated research on the history of Sultanate architecture and style, not to speak of a complete disregard of current research and interpretation on spolia, and iconoclasm. One may even argue that it is deliberately inflammatory.

26. Images of the sculptures retrieved online on 20 December 2019 at: [http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/nat\\_del-59-539-26388](http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/nat_del-59-539-26388)  
[http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/nat\\_del-L-39-35110](http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/nat_del-L-39-35110)  
[http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/nat\\_del-L-39-5308](http://museumsofindia.gov.in/repository/record/nat_del-L-39-5308)

27. The discovery was reported by the Archaeological Survey of India, see Ghosh, Amalananda, ed., *Indian Archaeology - A Review 1958-59*, Delhi, 1959, p. 71, and Pl. LXXIV A. The inscription has been interpreted in two ways: either as a record that it was donated by a merchant from Rohtak,

or that it was donated by a person who is of the Rohatgi or Rastogi sub-caste of Vaiśyas. Further discussion on the iconography and inscription of the image is available in Sharma, B.N., “An inscribed Image of Viṣṇu-Saṅkarṣaṇa from Mehrauli, Delhi”, *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art (JISOA)*, Vol. VI, 1986, pp. 67-71.

28. Asher, Catherine, *Delhi's Qutb Complex: The Minar, Mosque and Mehrauli*, Mumbai: The Marg Foundation, 2017.

29. Eaton, Richard M., “Temple desecration and Indo-Muslim States”, in Gilmartin, D. and B.B. Lawrence, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, pp. 246-281, and Kumar, Sunil, “Qutb and Modern Memory”, in Kaul, Suvir, ed., *Partitions of Memory*, pp. 140-181, reprinted in *The Present in Delhi's Pasts* (Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002). Eaton, Richard M. and Phillip B. Wagoner: *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014. And Flood, F.B., “Refiguring Islamic Iconoclasm: Image Mutilation and Aesthetic Innovation in the Early Indian Mosque” in Kumar, Sunil, ed., *Demolishing Myths or Mosques and Temples? Readings on History and Temple Desecration in Medieval India*, Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2008.

On Hindu and Jain attitudes in contemporaneous texts towards Muslim destruction of their holy sites in North India in the late medieval period, see Granoff, Phyllis: “Tales of Broken Limbs and Bleeding Wounds: Responses to Muslim Iconoclasm in Medieval India”, *East and West*, Vol. 41, No. 1/4, December 1991, pp. 189-203. Phil Wagoner's rich study on reappropriation of older monuments focuses on how Chalukya and Kakatiya monuments in the Deccan were appropriated by the Sultanates very selectively: Wagoner, Phillip B., “Retrieving the Chalukyan Past: The Politics of Architectural Reuse in the Sixteenth-Century Deccan”, *South Asian Studies*, 23, 1, 2007, pp. 1-29. The criteria for selection reveals that this was done as part of a broader cultural process with a clear understanding of the role played by history in the public imagination. This forms an informative paradigm for understanding the phenomenon of reuse in Sultanate times which takes us beyond the very simplistic presentation of religious conflict.

30. The museum's text amplifies this with literary references: “We find references to the Vetala in the Mahanubhava literature, in the Shree Vetala Sahasranama, and in the Dhyaneshwari by Sant Dhyaneswar. This worship is also mentioned by the saint poet Eknath from Maharashtra. The contents of Shree Vetala Sahasranama (Thousand Names of God Vetala) identify the Arjuna tree (*Terminalia Arjuna*) as the abode of Vetala and hence Vetala images are carved out of the wood of this tree.”

31. On the Portuguese Inquisition in Goa, its colonisation and the development of the narrative of martyrdom to do so, see Lourenço, Miguel Rodrigues, *A Articulação da Periferia: Macau e a Inquisição de Goa (c. 1582- c. 1650)*, Lisbon, Macau: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, I.P., Ministério de Educação e Ciência, 2016; Axelrod, Paul and Michelle A. Fuerch, “Flight of the Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese Goa”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, May 1996, pp. 387-421, has precise references on p. 411. On the cultural reception of Hindu images by Europeans at this time, see Mitter, Partha, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, which contends with the misperception and demonisation of Indian deities at this time.

32. Verardi and Barba, *Op. cit.*, 2011. For a more nuanced view of the rivalry, see Linrothe, Rob, “Beyond Sectarianism: towards reinterpreting the iconography of esoteric Buddhist deities trampling Hindu gods”, *Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 2, 1990, pp. 16-25.

33. For a discussion on death, and monuments and memorials to the dead, see “Death: The Body is But Temporary”, in Ahuja, Naman P., *The Body in Indian Art and Thought*, Antwerp: Ludion, 2013, pp. 14-49, and the detailed citations therein.

34. For a more complete review of the variety of hero stones and concomitant attitudes to the heroic dead, see Settar, S. and G.D. Sontheimer, eds., *Memorial Stones: a Study of their Origin, Significance and Variety*, Heidelberg, New Delhi, University of Heidelberg and South Asia Institute,

1982; and Blackburn, Stuart H., “Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism”, *History of Religions*, vol. 24, No. 3, February 1985, pp. 255–274.

35. *Mahābhārata*, ed. V.S. Sukthankar, Poona 1933, *Śānti Parva*, chapters 98–99 have several references. For example, chapter 98, *śloka* 30: one who encounters death in battle attains high merit, fame, respect of the world and a place in Indra’s heaven.

36. Previously published: Ahuja, Naman P., *The Body in Indian Art and Thought*, Antwerp: Ludion, 2013, pp. 275 and 302, and Pal, Pratapaditya, *The Peaceful Liberators: Jain Art from India*, exhibition catalogue. Los Angeles: LA County Museum of Art, 1995, p. 139; Tiwari, Maruti Nandan Prasad and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, *Jaina Art and Aesthetics*, New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2011, pp. 71–72.

37. For a summary on Mallinatha, see Pal, Pratapaditya, *Op. cit.*, p. 139; Dundas, Paul, *The Jains*, London, New York: Routledge, 2002 (2nd edition), pp. 55–59.

38. Older Śvetāmbara texts, like the *Nayadhammakahao* (4th century AD), refer to Mallikumari as a beautiful princess.

39. Ahuja, Naman P. and J. D. Hill, *India and the World: A History in Nine Stories*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2017.

40. François Jullien’s contention that divergence and profusion make for better ground to start dialogue than a facile yearning for finding common ground in issues of identity and difference, is apposite. Jullien, François, Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski, transl., *On the Universal, the uniform, the common and dialogue between cultures*, Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014.

41. How an older Indian worldview referred to the many Muslims in their language at times to assimilate them, but at others, simply to comprehend them, or even to make their public work fit within the acceptable methods of comprehension long-established in India has been explored by Chattopadhyaya, Brajdulal, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims, Eighth to Fourteenth Century*, Primus Books, 2017, pp. 42–45, 50–59.

42. Ahuja, Naman P., “The Body Redux”, in Almqvist, Kurt and Louise Belfrage, eds. *Museums of the World: Towards a New Understanding of a Historical Institution*, Stockholm: Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, pp. 81–108, and see the Op. ed. titled “Who Appoints the Keeper of Memories”, *The Hindu*, All India Edition, 22 May 2015. See also: Singh, Kavita and Saloni Mathur, eds., *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia (Visual and Media Histories)*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2015.

43. A much repeated argument by Thapar, Romila, “The Tyranny of Labels”, in *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 990–1014: “Thus James Mill differentiated the Hindu civilisation from the Muslim, which gave rise to periodisation of Indian history as that of the Hindu, Muslim and British periods. It crystallised the concept of a uniform, monolithic Hindu community dominating early Indian history as did the Muslim equivalent in the subsequent period, with relations between the two becoming conflictual.” She continues: “The dialogue between Indians, central Asian Turks, Persians and Arabs was a continuing one, irrespective of changes of dynasties and religions or of trade fluctuations. This dialogue is reflected, for example, in Sanskrit, Greek and Arabic texts relating to astronomy, medicine and philosophy, and in what is said of Indian scholars resident at the court of Harun al Rashid. (p. 993–4)... The assumptions have been that the Hindus and the Muslims each constituted a unified, monolithic community, and were therefore separate nations from the start, and that religious differences provide a complete, even though mono-causal explanation for historical events and activities in the second millennium AD.” p. 995).

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## INDEX

**Keywords:** museums, labels, iconography, Islamic iconoclasm, Jain, Buddhist, Hindu, gender

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Naman P. Ahuja is a curator and Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His studies on Indian art have explored the aesthetics of Indian visual culture, iconography and transculturalism in antiquity, as well as the legacy of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the modern period. Apart from various research papers, he has authored: *Divine Presence: The Art of India and the Himalayas* (Casa Asia and Five Continents Editions: Barcelona and Milan, 2003), *The Making of the Modern Indian Artist-Craftsman: Devi Prasad* (Routledge, 2011), *The Body in Indian Art and Thought* (Ludion, Antwerp, 2013), *The Arts and Interiors of Rashtrapati Bhavan: Lutyens and Beyond* (Publications Division, Delhi, 2016), *India and the World: a history in nine stories* (Delhi: Penguin, 2017) and more recently: *The Art & Archaeology of Ancient India*, Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, November 2018.



# Renunciation, dissent, and *satyagraha*

Romila Thapar

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- 1 I shall be dealing with a subject that was of general interest in the past but although the interest may have declined, the theme is of crucial importance to the present. I am referring to the right of the citizen to dissent as part of the right to free speech. The right to dissent has come to be recognised in modern times, but its practice goes back many centuries. To deny its earlier existence comes from the preference to project Indian society as having been a seamless harmonious unity where dissent was hardly to be found. Its presence is conceded for philosophical discourse as there would not be any philosophy without dissenting opinions. I would like to argue that it was a much wider articulation more prevalent in the past than in the immediate present.
- 2 Varied forms of dissent and protest have always existed. Violent forms featured in warfare and in punishments are only too evident. Non-violent forms require conscious recognition. That may be one reason why we have failed to recognise that the forms adopted by Gandhi had some links with the past. As with all civilisation and multiple cultures, we have had our share of intolerance and violence. That may be one of many explanations for our continuous need to debate *ahimsa*/non-violence, frequently treated as dissent.

## I. The question

- 3 Let me briefly clarify what I mean by dissent. It is in essence the disagreement that a person or persons may have with either others or more publicly with the way the institutions of society are organised and function. Kautilya and Manu constructed their version of ideal institutions and these were challenged by a range of opinions. Institutions are not modern but what is, is the right to question them. This right is not confined to the elite as it was in the past but extends today to all citizens. In earlier times it was embedded, argued over but did not become an issue of rights since such rights were not universal.

- 4 We now recognise a relationship between citizen and state partly because of the historical change we have experienced through nationalism. Coinciding with the emergence of industrialisation and capitalism, and through the evolving of the middle-class controlling the new technology, we have now entered the modern era.
- 5 This phase therefore also marks an alteration of governance where monarchical systems are generally replaced by secular democracies. These involve representatives from all sections of society who now have equal status. The maintenance of the secular, the democratic, and the national are inter-dependent. For democracy, the right to dissent and the demand for social justice are core concepts. The freedom to express dissent fosters democratic citizenship, registers complaints against injustice and improves social conditions. Since it includes all citizens, its inclusiveness demands that it be secular.
- 6 Citizens assert their freedom through claiming their rights and accepting their duties. The state will only be respected if it honours these rights and its obligations towards all citizens as recorded in the constitution. Many countries today do not grasp the implications of this historical change. To convert nationalism into a method of control fails to recognise that it is linked to democracy and therefore resists this control. In India, the overwhelming form of nationalism was anti-colonial nationalism, common to most colonies. This implied the assertion of the new identity of the free citizen emerging from the challenging of orthodoxies of various kinds. The construction of this identity seeks legitimacy from the patterns of life in the past. So history becomes crucial. As was common to most colonies, the colonial reading of the colony's earlier history that formulated its identity was from the perspective of the coloniser. This in India was the two-nation theory. James Mill argued in 1818 that the history of India was that of two nations –the Hindu and the Muslim– and that the two had been permanently hostile to each other. Colonial scholarship founded itself on this idea, loyally followed by both religious nationalisms –Hindu and Muslim. The concept of the Islamic state and of the Hindu Rashtra, the latter based on the Hindutva version of history, are each rooted in the colonial perspective. Each excludes the other and each opposed anti-colonial nationalism.

## II. Anti-colonial nationalism

- 7 Anti-colonial nationalism projected a nation of Indian citizens, all of equal status irrespective of origins and identities, all coming together in the demand for independence. The nation too was to be a nation for all with no primary or exclusive citizens as in the two so-called religious nationalisms. This term that we all use so frequently, is something of an oxymoron. Nationalism strictly speaking cannot be defined by a single identity. It is all-inclusive and secular in its demand for a nation-state. It is quite distinct from majoritarianism in which a pre-determined majority identified by a single criterion, negates democracy and justice. The rule of that particular majority is asserted. The important factor of dissent on issues affecting the nation is not permitted. But dissent has a historical continuity even if its forms have changed and has to be acknowledged.
- 8 I now propose to turn to anti-colonial nationalism as a major expression of dissent and suggest that some of its forms seem to have a few echoes from the past. In our times,

the most striking example of dissent is of course the *satyagraha* of Gandhi and from the historical past I shall be looking at the ideas of the *Shramanas* and later the *Bhakti sants*.

- 9 I would like to begin on a personal note by speaking about how it all began for me. There was one occasion a lifetime ago, when I very briefly met Gandhi and exchanged half a sentence on a simple matter. In a curious way, it came to symbolise for me the need to go beyond the obvious, to go to what for me is the context of thought and action.
- 10 I was in school in Pune in the early 1940s. Gandhi, when not in jail would hold prayer meetings that we as budding nationalists made a point to attend. One evening I took my autograph album to the meeting and with much trepidation requested Gandhi to sign in it. (There were no mobile phones in those days or else I might have asked for a selfie). He signed in the book and when handing it back to me asked me why I was wearing a silk *salvar-kameez*, adding that I should only wear *khadi*. I readily agreed and assured him that I would do so. But what did *khadi* mean other than its being a kind of textile, and in some way symbolic of Gandhi's ideas? This question remained unanswered until many years later when, searching for the context, I began to comprehend the meaning of *satyagraha* –and not just the concept but how it became relevant to anti-colonial nationalism, and even more important for me, as to how and why it did resonate with the many who participated in the national movement. Without this resonance, it would have remained just a slogan. The events of the 1940s had their own message. The Quit India call resounded in every corner and was the subject of much debate. The mutiny of the naval ratings of the Royal Indian Navy was about to happen. Independence was imminent and the form of the future was enveloped in discussion. One obvious question was related to the kind of society we aspired to –how would a colony be transformed into a secular democracy? Another significant question was the assertion of our identity as Indians –no longer subjects of the colonial power but free citizens. There was talk that as free citizens we would now have a new relationship with the state –a state of our making. The constitution was in a sense the covenant between the citizen and the state. It documented the rights and obligations of each towards the other. Hovering over all these questions were those concerning the methods that we had used to attain independence and whether they would continue. We kept hearing that what marked our movement as distinctive was the concept of *satyagraha*.
- 11 Over the years, I have asked myself why this concept became such a bed-rock specifically in Indian anti-colonial nationalism. As was to be expected, it failed to find a place in the two religious nationalisms –the Hindu and the Muslim. These religious nationalisms converted the two religions into political agencies –the Muslim League supporting an Islamic state and the *Hindutva* version of Hinduism becoming the base for a Hindu *Rashtra*. In this, the chickens of the colonial interpretation of Indian history and culture have come home to roost.

### III. Religion

- 12 To try and understand the context, let me go back a little in time and briefly trace the flow of some ideas that I would regard as foundational to Indian civilisation. These had a noticeable presence in Indian society for two millennia. This might suggest some

worthwhile connections with more recent ideas. It stems in part from the way in which we in modern times have projected the role of religion in India.

- 13 In the last two centuries, Indian religions have been reconstructed largely along the lines suggested by colonial scholarship. This was seldom challenged and therefore came to be accepted. The focus has been on belief, ritual and religious texts with little space being given to analysing the social concerns of these religions. What form does it take and how might this have differed from the cultural articulation of other major religions: the discussion of Indian religions demands this space.
- 14 When a religious teaching acquires a following, it establishes institutions that are initially places of worship –*chaityas, viharas, mandirs, mathas, masjids, madrassas, gurdwaras*, churches. Gradually as its control over society increases, the institutions that it establishes take up social functions and these become agencies of its propagation. Educational institutions are probably the most obvious. At this point, ideological support or opposition becomes a matter of asserting domination. This can be met by acceptance from some and dissent and disagreement from others. The latter can take the form of protest. We do not know enough about the reaction of sections of society to religious ideas, and especially if the ideas become influential.
- 15 Religions in India have generally not been monolithic, and especially not so in their practice. Religion is articulated more often in the form of a range of juxtaposed sects, some marginally linked with others and some distant. In pre-modern times, the religion of a person was identified more often by sect or caste and less frequently by an over-arching label.
- 16 The 19th century reading of Indian religion bonded together a large number of sects and included them under a few labels. Thus Hinduism included Buddhists, Jainas, Charvakas, Sikhs and others, some of which were born out of opposition to Hindu belief and worship. The middle-class interest in religion was confined to its own social boundaries, virtually unconcerned with the religions of what we call Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Interest in the religion of these *avarnas*, those outside castes, was casual and of little importance. Hinduism emerged as the religion of the largest number, of the majority, in the sub-continent. Minority religions had smaller numbers. Included under the label of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, etc. was a range of beliefs and rituals, not all of which were uniformly observed within the same label.
- 17 Religion was not understood in terms of sects and their inter-connections but as conglomerations of sects, treated as monolithic religions. The search was for uniformities. Nor was it recognised that religions everywhere have their adherents but also those who question the belief and practice. In some religions, a serious contradiction in belief and practice has been resolved by a change in its code and creed. However, a characteristic difference in Indian religions is that opposed or divergent opinions are not violently suppressed in each case. Buddhism when it could not be suppressed was exiled. Dissenting opinions to this day can evolve into marginal sects that can find an almost unnoticed place in the spectrum of religious sects. One of the consequences of this is that the contrary opinion is neither assimilated nor rejected but remains an articulation of dissent.
- 18 Sects shape the nature of Indian religions. Each incorporates a range of sects, some of which are proximate to the orthodoxy and some are far removed from it. Belief can be accommodative, going beyond those forms of religion where identity demands a strict

adherence to code and creed. I am not suggesting that such an identity is absent, but rather that it has not been the dominant form of religion for the larger number of people. This may now be changing. Hence the easy mixing of religious observances until recently, when all religious festivals were open to everyone, barring of course the Dalits. This militates against a unified, monolithic religious structure. Why this happened in India may have many explanations but the most obvious could have resulted from the interface of religion with caste and with region. Such a structure of religion assumes the shading off from orthodoxy at the core and dissenting sects at the periphery. Some degree of dissent is characteristic of Indian religion.

## IV. Dissent

- 19 Dissent took various forms. It is described in the early pattern of philosophical argument. Dissenting opinions are necessary if theories are to be tested and advanced. The presence of the dissenter was acknowledged, and in more sophisticated discussions, it has a definitive place in the argument. Indian philosophy recommends a procedure. The argument has first to state as fully and correctly as possible the views of the opponent –the *purvapaksha*. Then follow the views of the proponent –the *pratipaksha*. After this comes the debate and a possible resolution or *siddhanta*. This would have been the pattern in the many debates between the Buddhists and the *Brahmanas* referred to in texts.
- 20 Since early times historical references to *dharma* in India mention two parallel and distinctively different *dharmas*, that of the *Brahmanas* and that of the *Shramanas*. Scholars have given the collective name of Shramanism to the many heterodox sects such as the Buddhists, *Jainas*, *Ajivikas*, and some include the *Charvakas*. These were the dissident sects that were in disagreement with the fundamentals of Vedic Brahmanism and later Hinduism. They denied the Vedic deities, the divine revelation of the texts, and the ritual of sacrifice. Brahman texts refer to the *Shramanas* as the *nastikas*, the non-believers.
- 21 The Shramana *dharmas* focused on social ethics. This was expressed in their absolute commitment to *ahimsa*/non-violence, to compassion, and to working towards the social good. Social ethics were not absent in Brahmanism but became increasingly ambivalent with the control of caste laws. As the *Gita* states, violence is legitimate for the *kshatriya* since he is the ruler and can use it to protect society.
- 22 For the first few centuries up to the Christian era, Buddhist and Jaina sects had a well-respected social presence and received royal and elite patronage. This however changed when in the post-Gupta period Brahmanism came to dominate the political scene. By medieval times, Buddhism had been exiled from India and became a powerful religion in Asia. Jainism was limited to western India and parts of the peninsula. In colonial times almost all non-Muslim sects were labeled as Hindu, even those that were not.
- 23 The dissenting ideas of the *Shramanas* were expressed in part by their opting out of society. They created or joined Shramana sects, and lived in monasteries setting up a lifestyle that was alternate to established society. As monks, they conformed to various identities according to their sect. The monasteries as institutions flourished on handsome royal donations, on grants from merchant donors and support from lay

followers. These lay followers were those for whom renunciation may have been unattainable but nevertheless was the ultimate ideal.

## V. Renunciation

- 24 Renunciation should not be confused with asceticism. The true *samnyasi* undergoes his funeral rituals declaring himself dead to family and social connections and goes away to live in solitude seeking wisdom through meditation and searching for a release from rebirth. It is a moot point whether Gandhi can properly be called an ascetic. To suggest that he was influenced by the philosophy of the renouncers would seem to be more accurate, and that is what I would like to argue.
- 25 Let me try and explain what I mean by the renouncers. There were two streams of religious ideas and forms on the Indian landscape in the period from the 4th century BC, a period of major debates. The two are repeatedly referred to as *Brahmana* and *Shramana* in various sources, and said to be distinctly different in thought and activity. The Greek visitor to Mauryan India at that time, Megasthenes, in his observations of India refers to two groups –the *Brachmanes* and the *Sarmanes*. The edicts of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka have many references to *bahmanam-samanam*, a compound term for the sects. The grammarian of Sanskrit, Patanjali, when referring to *dharma* mentions only the two, the *Brahmanas* and the *Shramanas*, and compares their relationship to that between the snake and the mongoose.
- 26 The early *Puranas* demonstrate this antagonism in their hostile remarks on the *Shramanas*. In the 11th century AD, Al-Biruni speaks at length about the Brahmana religion and also mentions those that oppose it as the *Sammaniyas*. Then came a series of sects –the Bhakti *sants* of a range of Vaishnava and Shaiva persuasions, the Sufis, the Sikhs, among many others of diverse opinions, whose views on the interface of religion and society were not supportive of orthodoxy. They did however eventually evolve their own orthodoxies.
- 27 Few founded renunciatory orders but their dissent was directed to what they found confining both in religious belief and its interface with social norms. The dissent of the renouncers, although it took a different form, was in diverse ways continued by the Bhakti *sants*, especially in their concern about social ethics. The views of Kabir, Dadu and Ravidas underlined the need for social justice. We tend to set this aside in the single-minded focus on religious worship. Historically therefore, it is evident that there was a duality in religious beliefs in pre-modern India, with some sects clearly dissenting from established views.
- 28 As part of the religious experience, renunciation became a parallel stream to the orthodox, ritual-based patterns of religious expression –until a time when it developed its own. Religious institutions mushroomed through the patronage of the elite, as is evident from the *agraharas*, *mathas* and rich temples of the late first millennium AD. But where religion had a more accessible form, often through the teaching of a variety of renouncers and Bhakti teachers, it was these sects that were closer to the larger population. This becomes apparent from folk literature and the mythology of local deities. The familiar figures are still present among us as *sadhus*, *yogis*, *faqirs* and more. Renunciation of various kinds seems to represent something of a continuing counter-culture from earlier times.

- 29 Since renunciation questioned the *dharmashastra* rules central to Brahmanism, it was open to all. The alternate society did not arise out of a violent social revolution but envisaged the social change that it advocated as coming from a process of osmosis. It was essentially a way of stating and legitimising dissent by persuading people to its ways of thinking, with an emphasis on social ethics and freedom in religious belief. This was out of choice and not from the enforcing of a variant code. The act of opting out of society and taking on the hardship of renunciation in order to search for release from rebirth, and to ensure the social good, imbued renouncers with a degree of moral authority in the eyes of people at large. Social equality and justice were demands that dissented from established religion. Dissent is not a necessary component of renunciation, but in the act of renouncing it is present either more or less.

## VI. Non-violent protest

- 30 Foremost in the ethical code of such sects was abjuring violence of any kind. The concept of *ahimsa* as physical violence is variously discussed and continues to be discussed. Is non-violence tied to bodily needs that might discourage violence? What was consumed as food therefore was important to some, for whom the diet had to be vegetarian. Fasting was a form of bodily purification and control. This could sometimes be taken to the point of its programming the moment of death, as in the Jaina notion of *sallekhana* –the graduated fast that ends with death. But undertaking a fast even to death for personal reasons was not the same as a fast in support of social protest.
- 31 The articulation of protest took diverse forms in different societies. Unlike China, where peasant revolts of a violent kind were known, in India, peasant protest in earlier times resorted to migrating away from the kingdom to a neighbouring kingdom where land and facilities were available. We are told that rulers of the original kingdom feared such migrations resulting in a loss of revenue. This was effective in rural areas where migration meant cultivating new lands.
- 32 Urban protests took different forms, one that was included in the repertoire of Gandhi. It was known by various names, one among which was *dharna*. Its success lay in its being undertaken by a particular body of people –the *charan*, *bhat*, or *bharot*. These were bards, regarded as repositories of knowledge crucial to legitimising the power of the ruler. This is another instance of people investing authority not in an officially designated person but someone viewed as respected and integral to society. Today with social change, they no longer perform their earlier functions, but recognising their role gives a glimpse of how societies functioned not so long ago.
- 33 These bards had some functions that were essential to power. They maintained the descent lists –the genealogies– of the rulers and occasionally of the important functionaries, through which they became the keepers of the history of the dynasty. They legitimised the dynasty through a claim to genealogical history. The bard had to insist that the descent lists were accurate else he would lose face, as also would the ruler. The status of those in authority was asserted by the *charan* through alluding to the believed historical evidence of clan and caste. The *charans* had a low social status, but since early times were inviolate, and were called upon to arbitrate in disputes.
- 34 Authority is of various kinds. In some situations, moral authority takes precedence over the political. It goes with the belief that a particular kind of person being what he

is and does, has moral authority. The *charan* would take up the protest of the subjects of a *raja*, once he was convinced of its legitimacy. To support the protest, he would position himself at the threshold of the royal residence, refusing to go away, and go on a hunger strike until there was a resolution of the conflict or alternatively the nearness of his death by voluntary starvation. It was effective only if the person fasting commanded moral authority and was respected by both rulers and subjects. His power was intangible, but based on this respect. His protest was legitimate if it focused on a demand for justice. If the *charan* lost his life owing to the fast, the ruler was doomed. That the fast carried a severe threat was feared. To use the fast both as an expression of dissent and as a moral threat was not unknown in earlier forms of registering protest. The fast subsumed the protest and diverted it from becoming violent.

- 35 Can one see here parallels to the use of the fast by Gandhi? The British Raj may not have admitted it publicly but each of his fasts was a matter of anxiety to their political control, he being the leading nationalist. The title of *mahatma* in turn recognised his moral authority with the people. The fast was a protest against injustice but also carried a grave threat should it have taken its toll. This was understood by all.

## VII. *Satyagraha*

- 36 But let me turn to that which is of greater interest. Dissent to various degrees was at the core of the renunciatory tradition. Can we then ask whether Gandhi's *satyagraha* drew from this tradition, either consciously or subconsciously? And more central to my argument is that this feature may have encouraged the massive public response to *satyagraha*. Is this a link between the essence of Shramana renunciation and the central focus of Gandhi's *satyagraha*?
- 37 This concept drew from the ideas of the authors he read and wrote about and these have been much discussed: Tolstoy, Thoreau, and Ruskin in particular. There has been an interest in his conversations with Raichandbhai, with whom he discussed the Jaina religion, as he would also have done with his mother who was a Jaina, not to mention many others in Gujarat. My concern is with trying to understand what it was that struck a public chord in this seemingly unusual form of protest.
- 38 I would like to suggest that apart from his obvious sources, he also drew instinctively from the presence of dissenters that have shaped Indian thought and action almost invisibly but most creatively, and throughout history. Much has been said about his reading of the *Gita* and his ascetic ways. Perhaps the influence from the alternative cultural patterns of the past may have had a deeper although less apparent imprint than we have realised. The *Gita* after all was countering other points of view. Did the form of and justification for *satyagraha* delve deeper into the past tradition of expressing dissent?
- 39 The parallels are noticeable. To be an effective *satyagrahi* a period of training was preferred, although there were exceptions. There is mention of some taking vows and consenting to observe certain rules. Once accepted, the discipline of living in the *ashrama* was reasonably strict. *Satyagraha* was not a monastic order, nevertheless it had its own rules, relationships and identity. Gandhi himself was demanding and firm even about rules relating to routine living.



- 40 To assert a greater moral force, it was preferable that the *satyagrahi* be celibate, although this was not insisted upon. Protest included the non-violent *swadeshi* movement –the boycott of foreign goods, especially cloth. This was a part of the civil disobedience movement that had much broader concerns. Objections to mill-made cloth and the wearing of *khadi*, was not intended as a Luddite movement, but as registering another form of dissent and explaining why it was necessary.
- 41 Some symbols of renunciation also surface. Underlying *satyagraha* is the force of moral authority –soul force, as it came to be known, of the person calling for civil disobedience– in a sense echoing what also gave authority to renouncers of various kinds, and in diverse ways. That Gandhi was named a *mahatma*, an honour that interestingly he did not reject, can be viewed as, in part, his recognition of his moral authority. Equally important, a crucial requirement of *satyagraha* was to refrain completely from using brute force or violence. Non-violence faced two kinds of opposition: the colonial power that continued its violence against nationalist protestors; and those Indians in authority who were not convinced of its effectiveness in directing protest.
- 42 The commitment to non-violence and truth drew in the idea of tolerance. All religions were to be equally respected. This came from *satyagraha* not having a singular religious identity, although one religion was perhaps more equal than others. However, there was a moral right to break the law if it caused wide-spread suffering. But who had the right to judge? Was Gandhi assuming the right strengthened by being called a *mahatma*? The dilemma becomes more acute if one accepts what I call contingent *ahimsa* of the *Gita*, that where evil prevails it can be fought with violence. Yet the *satyagrahi* tried to persuade the other to his view in non-violent ways and through a system where the means and the ends are not contradictory. Persuasion is a reminder of the original semi-dialectical philosophical argument as is the non-violent resolution of conflict.
- 43 A more complicated issue was present not only in the practice of *satyagraha* but also in the functioning of different groups. This was the question of the equality of all castes including the outcastes. Did the equal status of all castes as frequently maintained among dissenting sects apply to both the *varna* and *avarna* members of society or only to the former? How was the hierarchy to be countered in practice? Gandhi tried but to little effect. The actions of one’s previous life *karma* determine one’s birth in this life, as many sects maintained. But if these activities are prescribed in the *dharma-shastra* codes, then the codes would have to be discarded if the hierarchy is to be annulled.
- 44 The Shramana sects claimed that the monasteries did not observe caste. On a wider social scale, it was some of the Bhakti *sants* who opposed caste as is evident in the teachings of Ravidas. Gandhi tried to obviate the distinction by maintaining that the demeaning jobs of the *avarnas* should be done by the *varnas* as well. But this was not effective in challenging caste that by now had many other ramifications needing attention. Unlike the renouncer, the *satyagrahi* was not required to set aside his caste identity.
- 45 That *satyagraha* had an appeal is evident from the large numbers that responded when the call was given for civil disobedience. We have to ask what went into the making of this form of defiance. Could there have been an echo of the persistence of dissent that still surfaced when injustice was experienced? It galvanised national sentiment, but it also diverted this sentiment away from violent revolution, when it came to channelling

it into protest. This was true to type as such movements even in the past steered away from violent revolution. In the colonial situation, *satyagraha* forced both the protestors and the authority against whom they were protesting – be it over salt, or cloth, or the freedom of a people – to give the protest visibility. It underlined a claim to status by the colonised by fore-fronting moral authority against colonial power. This was outside the experience of the coloniser.

## VIII. Gandhi and the *Bhagvad-Gita*

- 46 Curiously Gandhi, in his readings, lists little that goes back to the texts of the *Shramanas*. His formal interest in such sources seems marginal, especially compared to his intensive study of the *Bhagvad-Gita*. However, that *satyagraha* could envelop dissent rather than violent protest suggests that these ideas did have a presence, and could continue. Given the complexities of thought, society and politics, in the first half of the 20th century in India, to suggest that a major player on the scene may have held on to the truth of some forms of dissent from the Indian past, and used them almost instinctively to recreate a new form of dissent, may not be pure speculation.
- 47 It would seem that Gandhi's endorsement of the *Gita* was a seeming contradiction of the insistence on non-violence in *satyagraha*. The translation he chose to read frequently – apart from the Gujarati – was curiously the English translation by Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial*, published in 1885. Its potential as being the single sacred book of Hinduism, the equivalent of the Bible and the Quran was being discussed. If treated as such, it would have to be viewed as the location of the teachings of many sects.
- 48 The *Gita* and the additions to it are thought to date to around the turn of the Christian era. It surfaced in a big way in the 19th century and rode the European Orientalist wave that was searching for the wisdom of the East. The Theosophists adopted it as their central text and gave it wide diffusion. Inevitably many Indians wrote on it as a representative text. Many saw it as an allegory, and this excluded questions of historicity. W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot and Christopher Isherwood, all flirted with its ideas. It could be argued that it was attractive to Gandhi because it emphasised *nishkama-karma*/non-attachment, a necessary component of *satyagraha*. Its appropriation by many nationalists was possible because it could be used to endorse even violent political action as the duty of those fighting for rightful demands and justice. If colonial rule was evil, then violence against it was justified. This justification could be drawn from such action in past centuries, except of course that it would seem to cast something of a shadow on the validity of *satyagraha*.
- 49 What is perhaps curious is that the focus in relation to the question of violence and political action should have been so centred on interpreting the *Gita*. It seems to me that there is a far more challenging text in the twelfth book of the *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata* that focuses precisely on this subject and with less ambiguity. Subsequent to the battle at Kurushetra, Yudhisthira was expected to take up the kingship, but he refused initially to do so, rejecting this demand and in protest preferring to go to the forest. His objection to ruling was because kingship involves many levels of violence and he was averse to these.
- 50 He asked how any war can be called *dharmic* when it is the duty of the *kshatriya* to kill others where need be? War is evil because it kills so many and this killing cannot be justified. His grandfather Bhishma still lying on a bed of arrows from the battle,

justified killing in a war and by the ruler defending the realm. This is a fine example of dissent explored through debate. Yudhisthira eventually agreed and I like to think he did so with a very heavy heart.

- 51 The *Gita's* position is one of contingent *ahimsa*, that is, that violence is resorted to when conditions demand it. This was opposed by the *Shraman* for whom *ahimsa* was absolute. Yudhisthira has a moral and ethical objection to violence. The debate reflected the discussions on violence at this time as suggested by the sources I have quoted, and was probably enhanced by the views of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka in support of *ahimsa*. This has been argued by a number of scholars of the *Mahabharata*. Was the centrality of *ahimsa* in this conversation a concession to Shramanic thought?
- 52 Buddhism had been exiled from India some centuries prior to the 20<sup>th</sup>. But other Shramana sects such as those of the Jainas were preaching *ahimsa*. Unlike Nehru, Gandhi had a perfunctory interest in Buddhism. Nor was he particularly interested in a sequential study of the past. History, it would seem, was not a subject of great intellectual interest for Gandhi.
- 53 That there were violent protests and intolerant actions as part of our past is undeniable. That there were also legitimate traditions of non-violent dissent has to be conceded. The forms of the latter changed in conformity with a changing society and we have to recognise the forms and how they were used and when. Gandhi created new forms of dissent. Yudhisthira's implications of political violence argued that when religious ideas and implications become agencies of political mobilisation, their fundamental purpose changes and the political and social determine thoughts and actions. The right to dissent has continued. In fact, it has been highlighted precisely by the coming of the nation-state in our history. It remains open to the citizen immersed in the ideology of secular democratic nationalism to articulate the new relationship of citizen to state, by reiterating the rights of the citizen, by asserting the right to dissent.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** nationalism, Gandhi, satyagraha, renunciation, dissent, non-violence, Bhagvad-Gita

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# Japan in Asia: questioning state-sponsored Asianism

Brij Tankha

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## Introduction

- 1 Asianism (*Ajiashugi* アジア主義), a set of ideas defining Japan's relations with Asia, has been used as a concept to organise the narrative of modern Japanese history. This set of ideas was deployed both to explain Japan's exceptional past and chart its future as the liberator of Asian countries from Western domination, set to help them develop into modern states. Asianism is often invoked in contrast to the idea of "expelling Asia" but, in fact, Japan was emphasizing both its equivalence with the West while marking its difference with Asia. It was only by "expelling Asia" that it was possible to define Asianism. Japan would remake Asia on an Asian universalism inspired by Japan's past. The basis of an Asian community, sometimes seen as united by ancient philosophies and traditions, at other times justified because of Japan's advanced level of development, was variously conceived and debated in Japan, but Asianism as a concept provided legitimacy and became the organising principle for Japan's colonial control in Asia. It served the purpose of providing bonds of unity to hold a disparate and growing colonial empire, underlining Japan's uniqueness and providing a conceptual basis for knowledge production to write a different past and declare a new future.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 There is a vast, and growing, body of literature on Asianism that has reshaped our understanding of Japanese history, but does Asianism as a way of understanding the motivations of intellectuals, political activists, or government bureaucrats obscure more than it illuminates? Asianism as a concept forces us into framing questions which lead to a binary position based on imaginary geographies muting and distorting ideological positions so that they fit into its template. In this paper, I take two very different cases of Japanese interactions with Asia but situate them in the context of their larger objectives. The first case alludes to the period before Asianism had cohered - the experience of Buddhists in India -, and the second relates to the period when Asianism was the official ideology. I look at the travel writings of the poet Kaneko

Mitsuharu 金子光晴 (1895-1975) in Southeast Asia and China to show the meaning of his experience and the way it shaped his thinking. I use these two very different periods to think about Japanese interactions within Asia and illustrate how these encounters shaped ideas about countries in Asia and its people. I argue that it is not productive to conceive of these ideas and interactions within the framework of Asianism. These interactions show affinities as well as differences with the concept of Asianism, and go beyond it to question and resist Asianism as an ideology. The tendency to use Japan and Asia as two well-defined poles for analysing the Japanese past obscures the ways in which these were evolving and changing sets of ideas. Asianism, as it became a concept, was deployed to read back and create a history where the foundational text became a newspaper article written by Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835-1901), and he in turn the iconic moderniser. The article, “An Argument to Expel Asia” (*Datsu-A-ron* 脱亜論) called for Japan to abandon its Asian links and embrace a Western future.<sup>2</sup>

- 3 The writings of the 19th century exhibit a melange of ideas and reactions, sometimes contradictory as they describe places and encounters with people and ideas. They do not begin to exhibit the uniformity that would come later. These writings provide a way of thinking about the ways in which Japanese conceptions of self and nation were being framed not in cultural binaries of “Japanese” and the “other”, but shaped by a desire to learn, assimilate and understand the new world they were encountering, both outside and within. These views evolved and developed taking different trajectories but were always located within the global geo-political power structure and the knowledge that it produced.

## I. The emergence of Asianism

- 4 The word Asianism (*Ajiashugi* アジア主義) was first used in 1916-17 by Koderu Kenkichi 小寺謙吉 (1877-1949) in *The Argument for a Great Asia* (*Dai ajia ron*). The basic premise of Koderu’s Asianism was that similarities of culture, race, and geographical proximity bound East Asia together. Asianism, as it emerges, is a geographical unity but of East Asia as a cultural and racial unit that can be politically unified under Japan’s leadership.<sup>3</sup>
- 5 The political project of confronting the Western dominated international order was intellectually supported in different ways. The idea of a shared culture and a writing system led many to publish their work in Chinese so that it could be read across East Asia, but there were other ways to define this unity. Scholars such as Shinmei Masamichi 新明正道 (1898-1984) and Kada Tetsuji 加田哲二 (1895-1964) based their support for an East Asian Community (*Tōa kyodōtai* 東亜共同体) on theories of society and social progress. They argued that a new intellectual order must be based on the spirit of science (*kagaku seishin* 科学精神) and it was the responsibility of larger ethnic groupings that had a historically progressive character to assist the progress of smaller and more backward ethnic groups, leaving place for expanding the imagined community.<sup>4</sup>
- 6 The discourse of Asianism gained traction precisely in this period when the colonised were questioning their subordination and the Japanese ideas of Asianism carried an appeal. Central to the definition of Japanese Asianism was the issue of modernity and culture and how to overcome Western dominance. It provided a way to frame Japan’s

position as a leading nation of the region and legitimise its control and domination. Asianism provided a framework that allowed the incorporation of different territories and people without claiming homogeneity but also allowed for commonalities unlike the basis of Western colonial power. Japan's colonies became "outer lands (*gaichi* 外地)", the outer territories only distinguished by the space they occupied. Yet even as bonds of unity were declaimed, the Japanese language and names were imposed and Japanese culture and political control overrode the rhetoric of sameness.

- 7 Economic interests were also integral to the areas that Japan focused on when talking of Asianism. In the 1910s, Japan's economic and business interests increased in Southeast Asia, and the Association of the Southern Sea (*Nanyō kyōkai* 南洋協会) was established. In 1919, the first use of Southeast Asia (*Tōnan ajia* 東南アジア) appeared in a textbook.
- 8 The government was still trying to allay Western fears of the "yellow peril", but once Japan had revised the unequal treaties and was recognised as an equal by the Western powers, it proclaimed an Asian Monroe Doctrine. Economic interests and political power strengthened the organisational and ideological consolidation of Asianism. Kodera supported the ideas of Okawa Shumei who formed the All Asia Society (*Zen ajia kai* 全アジア会) in 1917. Now the government played a greater role hosting many conferences bringing together leaders from Japan's Asian world, the first in Nagasaki (1926), followed by Shanghai (1927), Dairen (Dalian in Chinese, 1934), and the Greater East Asia Conference (1943) in Tokyo which was called to counter the Atlantic Charter (1941, U.S and Britain).
- 9 These developments led to the New Greater East Asian Order (*Tōa shinchitsujo* 東亜新秩序, 1938) which was expanded to include Southeast Asia in 1940. This idea of Greater East Asia (*Daitōa* 大東亜) underlined Japan's belief in its role as leader of Asia but with the defeat in WWII this idea was marginalised for a while.

## II. Japan's discovery of Asia

- 10 In the mid-19th century before Asianism had emerged, the intellectual environment was very different from the early 20th century when Japan had ended the unequal treaties and become an equal to the Western powers. Japanese thinking about the region was a product of two strands of influence. One, the ideas and views of the world that were learnt from Europe over a long period as knowledge of the outside world filtered in through Dutch translations. These revealed a new knowledge, notably in introducing Western military and medical ideas that played a powerful role in shaping ideas about science and superiority of Western thought. But it was through the Dutch and Western literature that Japan imbibed ideas about the East, the areas beyond China and Korea.

Image 1



Ryūkyū Islanders <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/761120>. Nishikawa Joken 西川如見, "People from forty-two countries" (*Yonjyuni koku jinbutsu zusetu* 四十二国人物図説)

Image 2



<http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/761120>. Nishikawa Joken 西川如見, "People from forty-two countries" (*Yonjyuni koku jinbutsu zusetu* 四十二国人物図説)



- 11 Here we can see how Nishikawa Joken 西川如見 (1648-1724), astronomer and geographer, describes the countries of the world and their inhabitants using images from Western literature. Writing about countries in Southeast Asia, he differentiated between those who were part of the Chinese ecumene (who, for instance, ate rice and used chopsticks), and those who were not.<sup>5</sup> He could find affinity with those who were part of the larger Chinese cultural sphere, but the wider world was now being viewed through a Western lens.
- 12 The Japanese also learnt about the fast changing world from the Chinese. Chinese writings, and their reaction to the pressures of Western colonial expansion, brought alive the immediacy of the dangers Japan faced. The colonisation of India, the Opium wars and the Taiping rebellion in China were seen as warnings of what could happen to Japan. The news of these battles spurred ideas of self-defence, changes in military and social organisation and led to the end of the Tokugawa and the establishment of the Meiji government to meet the challenge of preserving Japan. The fear of becoming a “failed state” (*bōkoku* 亡国) exercised a powerful influence on both the political leaders as well as the people at large, forcing a re-examination of what it meant to be Japanese in relation to China and India (*Tenjiku* 天竺) within a world dominated by Western powers.

### III. Okakura Tenshin: a plural Asia

- 13 Okakura Kazukō 岡倉覺三 or Tenshin 天心 (1862-1913) was a cultural bureaucrat who played a key role in shaping intellectual debates about the idea of Asia in Japan, and about how Japan was perceived in the Western world. He linked Japan to its neighbours in myriad ways and argued that building on these historical connections was a way to create a modern, and culturally and politically strong nation. Later, Asianism would extract the slogan, “Asia is One” from his more complex and contradictory writings. His ideas were also used in ways that he may not have intended.<sup>6</sup> Here, I just want to indicate the main thrust of his approach to provide a context for the ways Buddhist monks engaged with India.
- 14 Okakura Tenshin’s writings were an early attempt at defining Asia in relation to Japan’s past; Japan’s relationship with Asia became the key to understanding Japan’s history and its present.<sup>7</sup> Asia, for Okakura, was both the colonial order and the possibilities of resistance to that order. Just as Japan’s past was linked to its relationship with Asia, Japan’s successful transition to modernity pointed the way for the liberation of Asia.
- 15 Okakura is famous for his declaration that Asia is one, but he conceived it as composed of three major components defined by religion: Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. The unity of Asia was however broken by the Mongol conquest in the 13th century when, according to Okakura, Buddhism was exterminated and Hinduism persecuted.<sup>8</sup> This, he argues, was a terrible blow as Islam created a barrier between China and India, a barrier greater than the Himalayas that severed the wonderful world of communication.<sup>9</sup> In China there was “no complete fusion of the Manchu and Chinese”<sup>10</sup> and India was divided, so that “movements against the Mohammedan tyrants, for example the Mahrattas and Sikhs, cannot crystallise into ‘a universal expression of patriotism’”.<sup>11</sup>

- 16 How did he explain Japan's strength and the reasons why it alone could represent Asia? For him, Japan was historically in a unique position as Japan's "Indo-Tartaric blood was itself a heritage which qualified it to imbibe from two sources, and so mirrors the whole of Asian consciousness."<sup>12</sup> Japan was Asia distilled.
- 17 Okakura also argued that Japan's unique position derived from the Imperial house and the unbroken lineage from the first emperor, grandson of the Sun Goddess. Two elements, the Imperial house and a protected insularity, allowed Japan to preserve the traditions of Asia, and made Japan into a "museum of Asiatic civilisation".<sup>13</sup> While in other Asian countries traditions had been destroyed, Japan was able to preserve these because of the "spirit of living Advaitism which welcomes the new without losing the old".<sup>14</sup>
- 18 "The task of Asia today", he writes, "then becomes that of protecting and restoring Asiatic modes. But to do this she must successfully recognise and develop consciousness of these modes."<sup>15</sup> Okakura defines these modes in the following manner: for India, the religious life is the essence of nationality, China is a moral civilisation, and Japan has the spiritual purity of the sword soul. He writes, "in our history lies the secret of our future".<sup>16</sup> Here Okakura is essentialising the countries much like the Western colonial view. He sees Buddhism as uniting Asia but curiously does not engage with what Buddhist monks were doing at that time.

#### IV. Buddhist networks and the rediscovery of Tenjiku

- 19 Shaku Sōen 尺初演 (1860-1919), a Zen priest, travelled to Ceylon in 1887, where he spent three years learning Theravada Buddhism. Unusually, he sought to bring back Southern Buddhism which was largely ignored by the mainstream of Japanese Buddhists. He served as a priest with the army during the Russo-Japanese war 1904-05, and was an active supporter of the war. The war, while admired in Asia as showing that the Western powers could be defeated, was criticized widely by Japanese intellectuals as serving the interests of the elites.<sup>17</sup> These Buddhist priests were part of a network that included both Sri Lankans and Europeans, such as Col. Henry Olcott (1832-1907) and Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), both of whom made several trips to Japan. These interactions, as well as those between European scholars of Asia and of Buddhism, were creating new links and shaping Buddhism.<sup>18</sup>
- 20 Okakura does not refer to this literature and makes no mention of the debates within the religious groups that were socially and politically important. This, despite the fact that Okakura does not see Buddhism as just an import from China, but rather a religious-cultural system that links Japan to India, and other parts of Asia. It was transmitted, he writes, through "a loving world of communication, travellers, pilgrims, and traders [who] carried the common culture back and forth."<sup>19</sup>
- 21 Okakura was both a key figure in shaping ideas about Asia in Japan as well an interpreter of Japan to the West. The contradictions, or the way his ideas about Japan and Asia were used after his death, do not detract from the powerful impact they had during his lifetime, and continue to have today. His ideas about art, culture and imaginings of a new Asia are different from the concept of Asianism as it emerged in the post-WWI world.

- 22 The opening line of “The Ideals of the East” is “Asia is one”, but he goes on to argue that Asia was two. Namely, the Asia that was subjugated by the West and the Asia that had not been subjugated and preserved its culture and autonomy. It is the challenge that new Asia faces, as he writes in the concluding sentence of the book: “If the victory does not come from within, then there is only death from the power of the outside”.
- 23 It is in this international and intellectual environment that the motivations of the Buddhists who travelled to India to visit the sacred sites associated with the Buddha can be understood. They were not tourists or travellers searching for the new and exotic, but pilgrims. Yet they, and their Buddhism, were being shaped by modern nationalism and so they saw themselves on the frontlines of the battle against Western imperial domination. As members of a colonial empire they saw India, as a “dying nation”, materially weak, and because of that, spiritually emasculated. This thinking re-enforced their belief in the superiority of their Eastern Buddhism, which had provided the spiritual foundations to resist colonisation.
- 24 It may be thought that Buddhists had an interest in India due to Buddhism but in fact only a few were interested in India and other parts of the Buddhist world, and usually only to underline their difference. The earliest monk to visit India is a good example of the nature of this interest. Kitabatake Dōryū 北畠道流 (1820-1907), a monk of the Nishi-Honganji (西本願寺), the Jōdō Shinshū (浄土真宗) sect of Buddhism, visited India in 1883 and wrote a number of books about his trip.<sup>20</sup> His trip is at a time when the idea of Asianism, as a concept, is still in its formative stage. Asia as the world of the colonised is a widely held idea and so countries in this region as defeated countries serve as a cautionary example.

Image 3. Kitabatake as Pilgrim

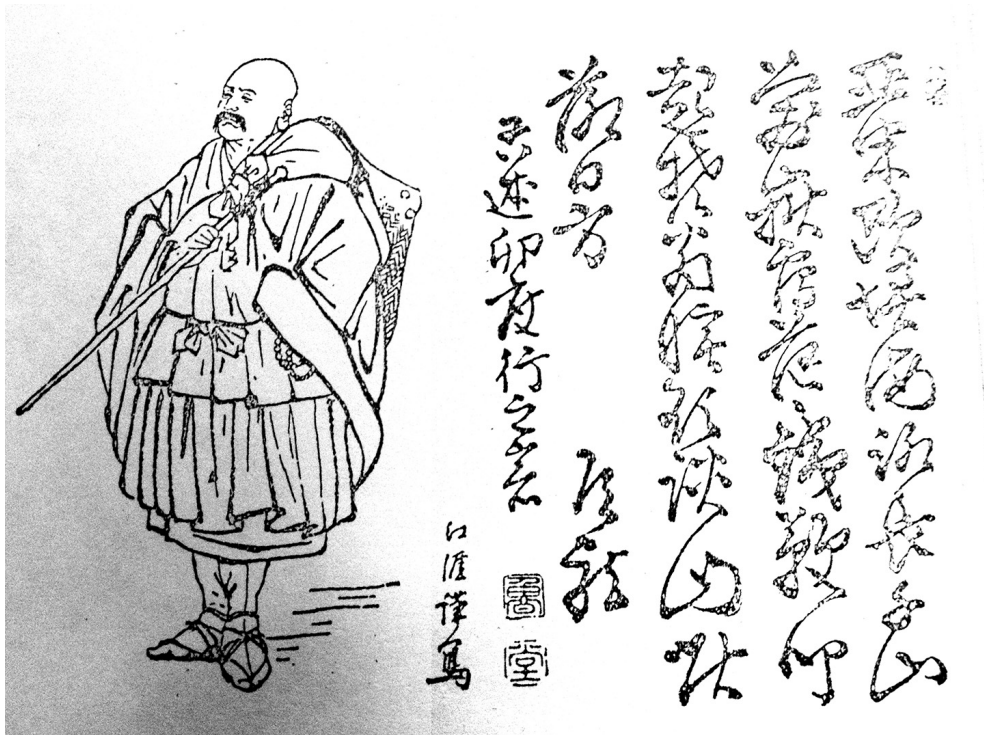


Illustration on Table of contents page in *Gōzō Kitabatake Dōryū Kenshōkai* 豪僧北畠道竜顕彰会 (Society to Honour the Great Monk Kitabatake Dōryū), ed., *Gōzō Kitabatake Dōryū: denki* 豪僧北畠道龍: 伝記 [Biography of the great monk Kitabatake Dōryū], *Denki sōsho* 伝記叢書 [Biographical series] 148 (Tōkyō: Ozorasha, 1956, 1994).

- 25 Kitabatake came to India after a long and distinguished career in the Nishi-Honganji sect, where he was an influential reformer, establishing a militia of monks and peasants in his domain. He then went on to learn German and study German legal texts in Kyoto. He was an important member of the group of reformers who modernised the sect's institutions and practices. He established the Kitabatake Law Centre, which later became the Meiji University.<sup>21</sup> It was at this stage that temple authorities decided it was best to send Kitabatake out of the country. They lavishly funded his European and Indian tour as a means to get him out of the way.
- 26 Kitabatake travelled between 1881 and 1884 through Europe and the USA, dressed in robes of his own design that resembled a priest's cassock. On his way back, he spent a month in India and landed back in Japan in January 1884. He quickly published a number of accounts of his pilgrimage to India testifying to the public interest in the almost imaginary land of India and to his popularity as a writer.<sup>22</sup> His books and pamphlets on India show him in the garb of a pilgrim, quite different from the image he projected while in Europe and while travelling in India.
- 27 Even though he spent most of his time in Europe, his book was about India which he describes as “the most dangerous place in the world” where wild animals and bandits abound. The people are black, naked and uncivilised. But India had become popular in the Japanese imagination, and Kitabatake focused his books on India. He presents himself as excavating the Buddha's tomb and the image of him praying along with a Japanese, with black natives in the background, visually establishes his superior position as a Japanese Buddhist.

Image 4. Kitabatake pays obeisance at the tomb of the Buddha



Image shows Kitabatake, linked to the Buddha by the radiance from the Buddha's eyes, in Japanese robes that have the same pattern as the Buddha's attire, and his Japanese companion in European clothes both standing, while behind them the very black natives, in loin cloths and turbans, on their knees bow reverentially. See Akiyama Tomisaburo, ed. *Sekai shuyū tabinikki: ichimei Shakamuni-butsu funbo no yurai* 世界周遊旅日記:一名釈迦牟尼仏墳墓の由来 [A travel diary of a world tour: the history of Shakyamuni's tomb], 1884. <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/816789>

- 28 There was some interest in certain aspects of India, particularly in the Indian ruler Ashoka who famously renounced war after seeing its horrors in the battle of Kalinga, and became a Buddhist. The novelist Mori Ōgai 森鷗外 (1862-1922) wrote a biography of Ashoka in 1909, and the Buddhists established Ashoka hospital in Tokyo.<sup>23</sup>
- 29 Kitabatake, a trained and scholarly monk, had spent his time in Europe meeting scholars and learning about the places. He had studied German and may have learnt English, but he knew no Indian languages and does not mention any meetings with people or discussions with them. He projects himself as an intrepid explorer in a dangerous land excavating Buddhist sites. There is no sense of a common and shared bond. The late Tokugawa and early Meiji view of India was focused on understanding the colonisation of India by the British. The writings of the Chinese scholar Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794-1857), who became concerned with the threat posed by the Western powers and is known for the compilation, the *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*, where he argued for ways of defending China from the Western powers, found a ready audience in Japan. His chapter on India was translated into Japanese multiple times. Wei Yuan saw India as a defeated country, and this became a powerful example, a warning of what Japan had to protect itself from, and not a model to emulate. The idea of India as the “heavenly land” (*tenjiku* 天竺) was probably overturned by the end of the 16th century when the Portuguese came to Japan. Hideyoshi imagined that he would

subjugate Korea, China and then conquer India but by the mid-19th century India had been relegated in the dominant discourse to a negative example.

## V. Building a New Japan and Asia

- 30 Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞 (1876-1948), with whom Kitabatake had been working to reform the temple sect, had also been to India and he worked with the architect Itō Chūta 伊東忠太 (1867-1954), who had travelled across India, to build a new base in Kobe for the sect, away from the established headquarters in Kyoto, so as to get away from the orthodoxy fighting against changes.<sup>24</sup>

Image 5. Nirakuso Villa



Image 6. Nirakuso Garden

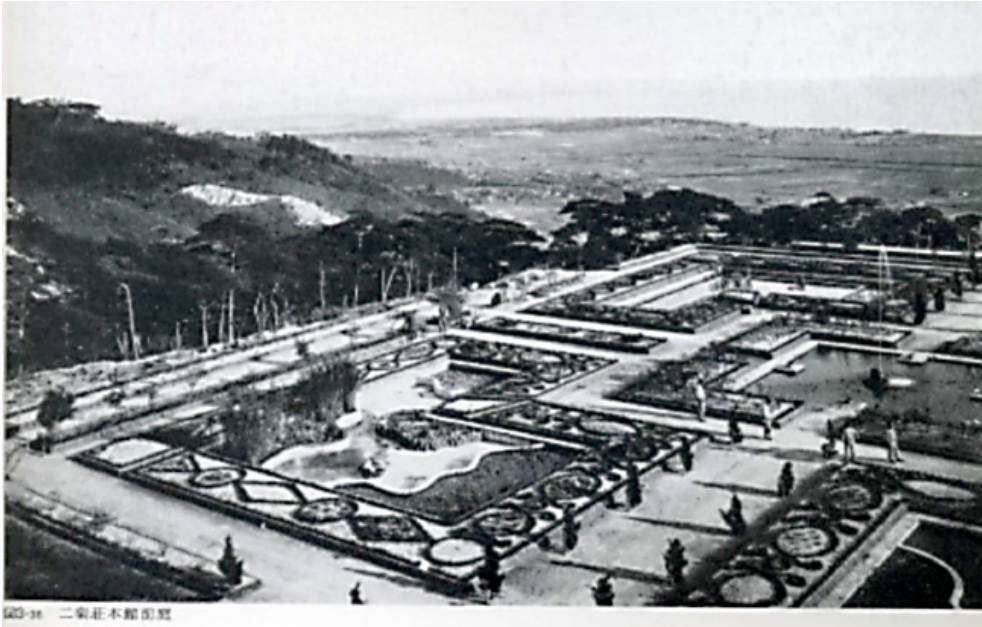


Image 7. Nirakuso Arabian Room

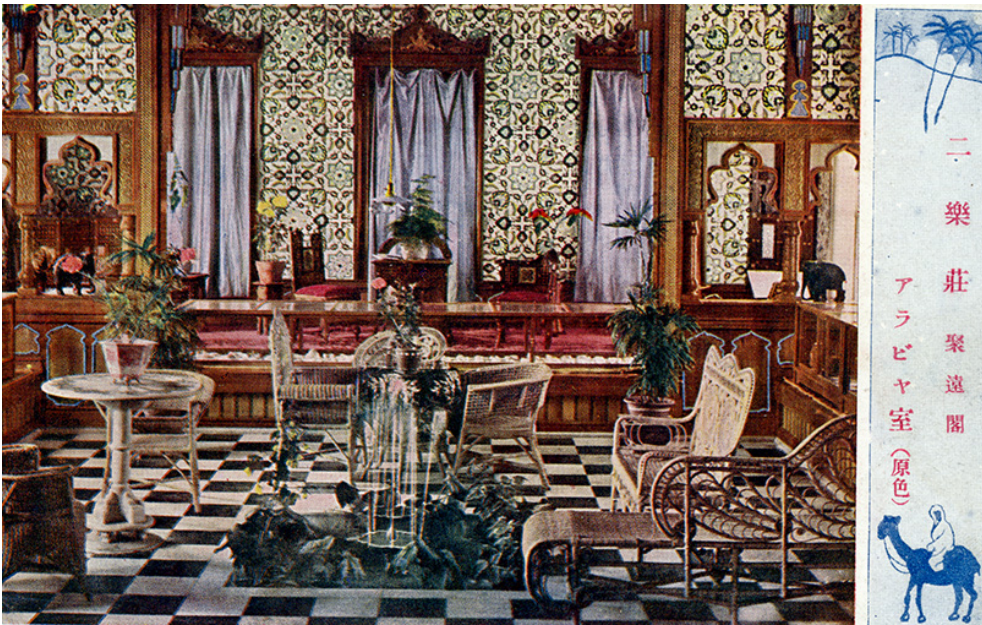


Image 8. Nirakuso Chinese Room

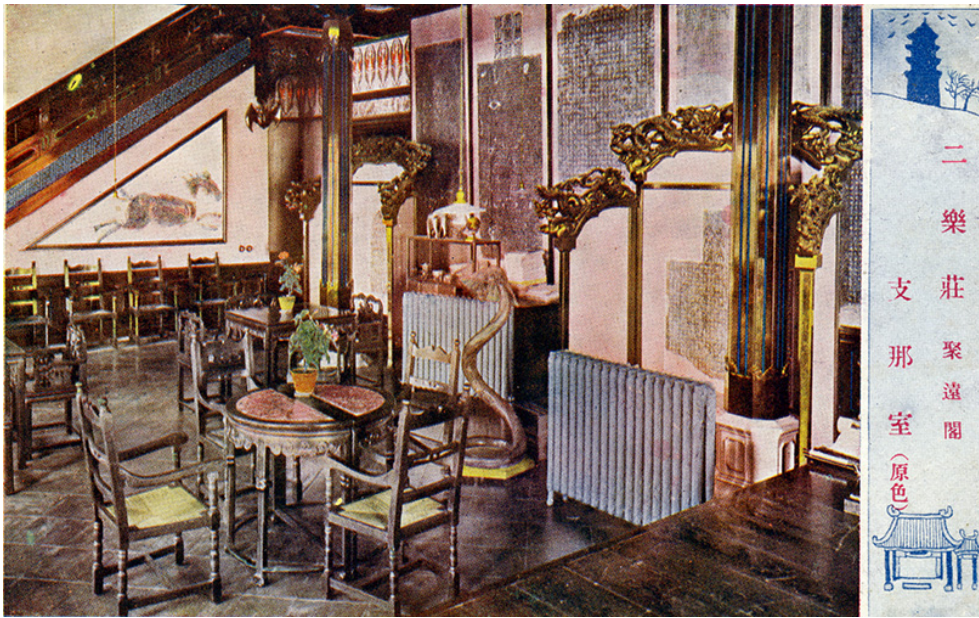
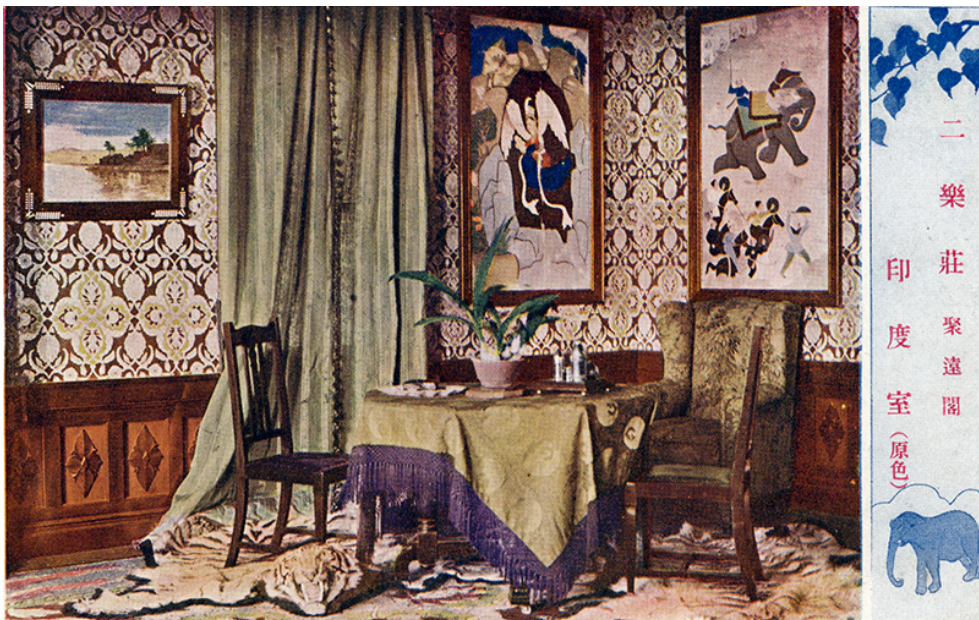


Image 9. Nirakuso Indian Room



Images 5-9: Villa Nirakusō and the Ōtani Explorer's Re-Thinking of Modernism (*Nirakuso to Ōtanishinken tai Modernisumu saikō* 二楽荘と大谷探検隊モダニズム再考), (Ashiya: Ashiyashiritsu Bijutsu hakubutsukan, 1999). We are most grateful to Mr. Wada Hidetoshi, of the Ryūkyoku Museum in Kyoto, for kindly providing access to a good quality definition of images 7 to 9.

- 31 Itō's architectural style at this time was influenced by his Asian travels. He used the so-called Indo-Sarcenic style to design the Kobe headquarters. Ōtani, like Itō, favoured the Mughal style of architecture then being used by the British in India. The Kobe headquarters was established to train a new modern priesthood and the building was a fine example of a very British colonial building which represented the main elements of Asia. The Indo-Sarcenic style of building was to add Mughal embellishments to a Victorian building. Itō further added Chinese and Japanese elements as well. The



building had rooms labelled as Indian, Chinese, and Arab, but each was barely distinguishable from the other. They were part of a common British colonial design. Here the attempt was to create a Japanese architecture using Asian architectural embellishments. However, it should be noted that Itō Chūta studied Indian architecture, both the contemporary and historical, unlike Western scholars who looked only at the past.

- 32 In these Indian experiences, there are different positions even within the overarching Buddhist viewpoint. Shaku Sōen shows that there are priests who seek to learn what they see as earlier Buddhist practices, directly from the Sinhalese, and not via the West. Kitabatake, on the other hand uses India to project himself both as a pilgrim who is the first Japanese Buddhist to visit the sites associated with the Buddha, but also as one who opens the tomb and leads the “natives” in worship.<sup>25</sup> Ōtani’s explorations were an attempt to show Western Orientalists who had begun the Central Asian explorations that Japan had the intellectual and financial resource, and as Buddhists, the obligation and right to trace the routes that took Buddhism to Japan. Itō Chūta’s diaries are replete with architectural drawings, sketches of places and people, even playful caricatures showing how close his study and how detailed his records were. He was impressed with the sculpture and architecture he saw, and unlike contemporary Europeans he was not offended by the “moral depravity” of Khajuraho. He also compared what he saw to Greek sculpture showing that he did not place it in a primitive category, but recognised it as equivalent to the best in the world. These travels and examples served to influence his early architectural style when he returned to Japan.
- 33 However, the Kobe mansion for Ōtani and the Tsukiji Honganji remain isolated examples. His later buildings retain some playful elements from this time, such as the imaginary animals that he uses, but he does not go on to evolve a distinctly Asian style of architecture. Itō’s travels in India and Asia shaped his early architectural philosophy and practice but he gradually moved to become the architect of Heian Jingu in Kyoto and the Shinto shrines in the Japanese colonies. There is no connection between what he sees in Asia and Japan.

## VI. A poet looks at the Japanese empire

- 34 The poet Kaneko Mitsuharu 金子光晴 (1895-1975) came to maturity as the Japanese empire was expanding but he was at odds with the prevailing trends. His intellectual and poetic journey reflects his critical look at power and his opposition to war and exploitation. Kaneko writes that it is not possible to understand his emotional life without taking into account that he grew up between the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese wars, a period of rising nationalism, and that he turned against what he perceived as mindless obedience. His writings about China, Southeast Asia and Europe provide a complex view of how his ideas developed over time, and his questioning of the reigning shibboleths led him to intellectually elaborate a politically critical position against Japanese colonialism. Even as Asianism as a concept had become the lens through which Asia was being seen in Japan, he articulated a different way of thinking about Japan’s colonial empire and the effect it had on the people of the colonised countries.

- 35 A precocious child, Kaneko developed an interest in Greek and Roman history and classical Japan at a very early age. In school he studied science, French, and became a much awarded painter. He was drawn to all things Western. The West appeared to be a bright, unconstrained and quite separate world.<sup>26</sup> However, he soon tired of the Marxist educational approach of his school. He found the emphasis on cramming dispiriting, and within a year he was even displeased with the French language. He then began to turn to the “old world”, reading the Chinese Classics, particularly of the pre-Qin period, even giving himself a Chinese name.<sup>27</sup> He seriously thought of becoming a Confucian scholar. His reading of Laozi and Zhuangzi, as well as Edo fiction, opened another world.
- 36 On top of this serious engagement with classical and popular literature, Kaneko found another exciting world in the writings of Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and Edward Carpenter (1844-1929). In the growing nationalist atmosphere, their writings, in particular Whitman’s poem, *To a Common Prostitute*, was a revelation and Carpenter’s *Towards Democracy* introduced him to socialism. He was perhaps most moved by the emphasis on equality that he found in these writers. He also began to read William Blake (1757-1827), the English visionary poet, painter, and printmaker. The British studio potter Bernard Leach (1887-1979) had introduced Blake’s writings to Yanagi Soetsu (1889-1961) who wrote a book on him, bringing his work to the notice of the Japanese world.<sup>28</sup>
- 37 Kaneko’s first trip to Europe was immediately after the end of WWI. He spent time in England and then Belgium. There he began to read poets like Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), from whom he learnt about structure and sustained rhythm, the French Symbolists, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and other European writers. When he finally arrived in Paris he was not very impressed, finding it a little dilapidated compared with what he called the glass capital of Brussels.<sup>29</sup> He returned to Japan in 1921 at a time when anti-Chinese feelings were rife.
- 38 The Great Kantō earthquake of 1923 was a turning point for Kaneko who saw it not just as a simple disaster, but one that showed him that “the new order which the Meiji had erected in a makeshift fashion was gradually stripped of its finish and the incompetence of the groundwork was revealed”. Opposition movements seemed to increase in strength, but according to Kaneko even the Socialists, who were quick to be enraged or indignant, did not think things through. He felt that he had an understanding of the past, so he was better placed to recognise the current evils.<sup>30</sup>
- 39 In December 1928, he went on his second trip to Europe. He took a boat to Shanghai and Singapore, and then travelled across Malaya and then back to Singapore from where he went to Marseilles and Paris. During this period no one in Japan knew where he was: rumours were that he was playing drums in a jazz band in India. He arrived in Paris quite destitute and so took up whatever earned him some money: writing a doctoral thesis, picture framing, packing cases for tourists, peddling, translating, and painting. However, he stayed away from politics and notes that he was quite ignorant of the rising tide of fascism either in Europe or Japan.
- 40 Kaneko returned to Japan in 1932, but since he only had the fare to Singapore he stopped there and went into the hinterland of Malaya. He writes that he was enchanted with his surroundings and even thought of settling down, that listening to the “sounds of the swishing of the nipa palms, the cries of the large-billed birds, the wails of wild

monkeys... were more dear to me than my native land”, but he received news of his son’s illness and returned to a Japan where a virulent nationalism was taking hold.<sup>31</sup>

## VII. The political education of Kaneko Mitsuharu

- 41 Kaneko went to China between August 1937 and January 1938 where he came into contact with a large number of writers and activists, vagabonds and intellectuals, such as Nishida Mitsugu 西田税 (1901-1937), Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936), Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1895-1945). Lu Xun seemed to have left a deep mark on Kaneko who writes that Lu Xun showed him the importance of Taoism. China, Lu Xun said, was Daoist before it became Confucian. Lu Xun, Kaneko writes, “skilfully whittled down China stroke by stroke and held it out for me to see”.<sup>32</sup>
- 42 In September 1935, Kaneko published a powerful critique of war, the poem *Sharks* (Same 鯊, 1937) in the magazine *Bungei* (文芸). A structurally complex poem that narrates the history of East-West conflicts as viewed through the experience of his travels in Southeast Asia: the sharks can be war-headed torpedoes or Japanese colonialists. He ends the poem with the recognition of his powerlessness:
- The seal that doesn’t like seals.  
But he is still the seal that he is  
except  
“a seal  
looking the other way”.<sup>33</sup>
- 43 In China, he saw the familiar problems of the practice of Japanese colonialism. This experience confirmed his opposition to the war and to the idea of the “righteousness” of the Japanese cause. He argued that it was the trade of militarists to go to war and that is why it was natural for them to lead Japan down this path, but equally he recognised that the ambitions of the militarists and policy makers were supported by the Japanese public.
- 44 Yu Dafu was in Japan at that time. He had come to take Guo Moruo (1892-1978) back to China. Yu drew the cover for the book *Shark*. Kaneko’s other works “Foam” (*Awa* 泡) was an exposure of Japanese army atrocities, “Angels” (*Tenshi* 天使), a rejection of conscription, and pacifist in its ideas, “Family Crests” (*Mon* 紋), May 1937, was an analysis of the feudal nature of Japan.
- 45 During his trip to North China, Kaneko took the critical view that Japan’s aggression could not be justified as a response to Western imperialism. He argued that war was a trade for soldiers but there was popular support. Only when the people began to suffer privation did they start claiming they had always opposed these policies. However, while the war was going well, “the great majority had pretty positive and frenzied opinions and smothered their opponents”.<sup>34</sup> Kaneko argued that the responsibility for the war belonged to everyone, but even today, over seventy years after the end of WWII, it is an idea still hard to accept.
- 46 Kaneko writes that he was surprised to find how submissive the people had become. The Meiji people, he thought, were quite hot-headed : people would burn police boxes to oppose a one *sen* rise in fares, but now, that is in the 1930s-40s, they succumbed so tamely. Kaneko was impressed by the underlying strength of Meiji national education which had inculcated patriotism in primary school. To understand the intellectual origins of this nationalism, he turned to explore the writings that produced these ideas.

Thinkers such as Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801), the influential National School of Learning (*kokugaku* 国学) scholar who laid the basis for thinking about the uniqueness of Japan because of its divinely descended emperor, Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843) and key figure in the same tradition, and Satō Nobuhiro 佐藤信淵 (1769-1850), an early proponent of adopting Western science to Japanese philosophical ideas.<sup>35</sup>

- 47 This reading, far from turning him into a nationalist, reinforced his anti-authoritarian ideas. In 1940, he published *A Travelogue of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies* (*Marei Ran'in kikō* マレー蘭印紀行) which documented Southeast Asia not as a tropical paradise but an area of abandoned rubber plantations, Japanese clubhouses and native labourers: coolies, prostitutes and those subsisting at the lowest levels of society. Kaneko makes quite clear his opposition to the Japanese behaviour in these colonies and their treatment of the local population, and to war in general.
- 48 Writing about his experiences in the countryside of Malaya, which was commonly viewed as a tropical paradise of palm trees, he notes, “My eyes saw not the strange scenes of the south but the wretchedness of the native population in their blood-stained rags”. He writes he lived much like a native: “I had descended to the level of the native population –I lived gorging curry with my fingers and eating *sate* by the roadside”, and this experience on the margins of colonial life made him appreciate their problems all the more. His experience and his readings further sharpened his social critique. Returning to Singapore, he read Lenin on imperialism and the writings of Max Stirner, and wrote that the conditions that these writers discuss are those he could see around him, that there were “no better samples of men worn out by exploitation and forced labour than those before my eyes”.<sup>36</sup>
- 49 In the period after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour, the Literary Patriotic Society was planning a meeting of writers from the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in preparation for a Great East Asian Conference to be held in Tokyo in 1943 that would bring leaders from the Japanese territories to affirm their support for Japan and its leadership. Kaneko found himself at odds with the Literary Patriotic Society and opposed the proposal that writers from the Co-Prosperity Sphere, when they came to Japan, should bow to the imperial palace and read pamphlets about the world under one roof (*hakkō ichiu* 八紘一宇), a key slogan of the Japanese militarists.<sup>37</sup> Kaneko had many differences because of his critical stance as his travels in China and Southeast Asia had brought him into contact with the everyday violence of Japanese colonialism and inspired his passionate critique. He withdrew from the organising committee in December 1942. Unlike many of his compatriots who were shocked when the war ended, he writes that he “put on St Louis Blues on the gramophone and danced about in the excess of our delight”.

## Conclusion

- 50 The discourse of Asianism grew out of arguments developed by diverse groups of people, but this diversity was reduced as it was appropriated by the Japanese state to first assert its primacy in the region, and then justify its drive to build a colonial empire and frame this objective as undertaken for the development of Asia. Ideas propounded earlier were incorporated into this vision. The Buddhist monks’ discovery of India was part of their enterprise to remake Japanese Buddhism for the modern world, to assert

the importance of their doctrinal position even as a World Buddhism was beginning to take shape. Kitabatake's interlude in India was a moment when India as the land of the Buddha had become important, but in his trajectory it was but one aspect of his intellectual and religious project.

- 51 Kitabatake's thinking was shaped in the late Tokugawa environment where reform of the state to meet the dangers of the West was an overriding concern. One major thrust was to unify the domain cutting across status and class differences. Kitabatake was an important player in the dominial reforms undertaken in Kii (modern Wakayama prefecture). Kitabatake worked within the political framework of the Bakufu Court alliance (*kōbu gattai* 公武合体) in the 1860s, during the last years of the Tokugawa *bakufu*. In the early Meiji period, he was side-lined by the temple orthodoxy and struck an independent path, first in setting up a law university and then, becoming a preacher of gender equality and education as the basis for strengthening the state. His political and intellectual trajectory does not fit into an incipient Asianism, but rather has to be understood as developing within the global structures of power where Western knowledge was dominant. Kitabatake learns from Western military practices, studies German law, and together with his understanding of Buddhist doctrine crafts a message directed beyond the followers of the sect to a national audience, combining a moral vision with national goals.
- 52 Okakura Tenshin identified the contours of Japan's history, art and culture as a product of diverse Asian influences and this rich amalgam provided the basis for its future. He saw Japan as an inextricable part of developments on the Asian continent, yet also different. The difference can sometimes be read as superiority, but his ideas were not always framed as an assertion of Japan's leadership. The main thrust of his arguments was an attempt to explore the past to extract a way of thinking about Japan and Asia's future that was not expressed through Western modes of consciousness. This marked the appeal and originality of his writing. Aware of the domination of the West both through military power but also its control over knowledge, he understood the necessity of the nation-state as the basis for creating an alternative to the Western state. This was also his limitation and, after his death, his ideas were used to justify Japan's Greater Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere, a distortion of the fundamental direction of his thinking.
- 53 Kaneko Mitsuharu's thinking, as I have argued, was formed in confrontation with events as he engaged with the increasingly aggressive nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s through his reading supported by his observations of life of the colonised in the colonies. As he read and travelled, he discovered new worlds, and questioned established ideas and government policies. His complete dismissal of Japanese success as a mark of failure, of frustration (*zetsubō* 絶望), grows out of a total rejection of the basis for Japan's "success" -based as it was on the exploitative nature of Japanese colonialism.
- 54 It is always difficult to define an idea that has a history, as Nietzsche pointed out, it should be seen as a process. Asianism as state doctrine became a way to legitimise and sanction practices of domination and control. The social norms so created were widely accepted, but there were questioning voices. I locate these voices within the larger tradition of resistance and argue that placing them outside the idea of Asianism shows a more complex picture of the ways state violence, physical as well as epistemic, was resisted in Japan.

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Villa Niraku and Ōtani Expeditions Catalogue, (*Nirakusō to Ōtani tanken tai modanizumu saikō* 二楽荘と大谷探検隊モダニズム再考), Ashiya City Museum of Art 芦屋市立美術博物館, 1999.

## NOTES

1. All Japanese publications are from Tokyo unless otherwise stated.

2. See “An Argument to Expel Asia” (*Datsu-A-ron*), *Jiji shinpō* 時事新報, March 16, 1885 <https://khasegawa.wordpress.com/syllabi/modern-japanese-history/japanese-empire-and-colonial-expansion/datsu-a-ron-脱亜論/>

The essay was written anonymously but is usually attributed to Fukuzawa Yukichi. His views of Asia were more complex than the often quoted article suggests. In two of his books, *Pocket Almanac of the World* (*Bankoku ichiran* 掌中万国一覽) and *Countries of the World* (*Sekai kunizukushi* 世

界國盡), he divides the world geographically, racially, culturally and politically. Racially his classification, while it reflects European reading, does not follow the usual divisions. The white race lives in Europe, Western Asia, North Africa and America; the yellow people in China, Finland, and Lapland and the red people are found in North and South America. The blacks who have yet to understand the meaning of “civilisation and progress” (*kaika shinpo* 開化進歩) are to be found in Africa, south of the Sahara, and as slaves in the United States. The Pacific Islands, the African coast and the East Indies are, he writes, populated by brown people. Western views were shaping a racial division of the world but here they are being incorporated within existing Japanese ideas. See for instance, Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Countries of the World (Sekai kunizukushi)*, (Tokyo: Nihon Kindai Bungakkan, 1968).

3. See Saaler, Sven and Christopher W.A. Szpilman, eds., *Pan Asianism A Documentary History, Vol.1. 1850-1920 and Vol.2 1920-Present*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2011).

4. Government patronage provided resources to create the basis for the institutional structure to support this new knowledge production: 1877 New Asia Society (*Shin'asha* 新亜社), 1880 Revive Asia Society (*Kōakai* 興亜会), established by Ōkubo Toshimichi and others, 1883 Asia Association (*Ajia kyōkai* 亜細亜協会), 1881 Black Ocean Society (*Gen'yōsha* 玄洋社), 1898 East Asia Culture Association (*Higashi Ajia dōbunkai* 東亜同文会), which merged in 1898 with the East Asia Society (*Tōakai* 東亜会) and Konoe Fumimaro 近衛文麿 as its head, and 1901 Black Dragon Society (*Kokuryūkai* 黒龍会) under the leadership of Uchida Ryōhei (内田良平, 1874-1937).

See also for the idea of race Tessa Morris Suzuki, *Re-inventing Japan Time, Space, and Nation*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p.100.

5. See Nishikawa Joken, *Yonjyuni koku jinbutsu enzetsu* (Tokyo iinsei kabushigaisha, 1898). Tonkin, for instance uses Chinese characters. India has a hot climate and the people live in extreme poverty, look poorly fed and minimally clothed: <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/761120>.

6. See my Okakura Tenshin: “Asia is One”, in Saaler, *Pan-Asianism*, vol. 1, pp. 93-100.

7. Okakura's major writings were *The Awakening of the East* (written in 1901 in English but first published in 1938 in a Japanese translation as *Risō no saiken* (理想の再建), Kawade Shobō, 1938, and in the original English by Seibunkaku in 1940), *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Arts of Japan* (written 1901, published 1903), *The Awakening of Japan* (1905) and *The Book of Tea* (1906). The notes for the *Awakening of the East* were written while Okakura was in India, (December 1901- October 1902). See, *Okakura Tenshin zenshu* in 8 vols. and a supplement (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979-1981), vol.1 p. 480.

8. *The Awakening of Japan* (New York: Century, 1904), p.7.

9. *Awakening*, p.12.

10. *Awakening*, pp.15 and 17.

11. *Awakening*, p.18.

12. *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Arts of Japan* (London: J. Murray, 1903), p.14.

13. *Ideals*, p.16.

14. *Ideals*, p.16.

15. *Ideals*, pp.131 and 235 where Okakura defines *advaita* as the state of not being two, meaning that all reality though it appears manifold is one so that “all truth must be discoverable in any single differentiation, the whole universe involved in every detail. All thus becomes equally precious.”

16. *Ideals*, p.131.

17. See my unpublished paper, “Colonial Pilgrims: Japanese Buddhists and the Dilemma of a United Asia”, 20<sup>th</sup> International Association of Historians of Asia, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, November 14-17, 2008.

18. For Kitabatake Dōryū's journey to India, see Nishikawa Hensho and Nagaoka Senshin, *Tenjiku korōji shoken*, (Tokyo: Aranami Heijiro, 1886).

19. *Ideals*, p.89.



20. See my “Monks in Modern Dress: The Dilemma of Being Japanese and Asian”, in Kyunghee Pyun and Aida Yuen Wong, eds., *Fashion, Identity, and Power in Modern Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 309-337.
21. The Meiji University website says that it was founded in January 1881 by a group of young lawyers, Tatsuo Kishimoto, Kozo Miyagi and Misao Yashiro. It does say, however, that they had lectured in Dōryū’s academy, but when students who were dissatisfied with his policies turned to them, they established a new school. <http://www.meiji.ac.jp/cip/english/about/history.html>
22. *Master Kitabatake Dōryū’s India Travels (Kitabatake Dōryū shi Indo kikō)*, a one page account that publicised his pilgrimage to the Buddha’s tomb to a wide audience, and *A Travel diary of a world tour: The History of Shakyamuni’s Tomb (Sekai shūyū tabinikki: Ichimei Shakamuni-butsu funbo no yurai 世界周遊旅日記: 一名釈迦牟尼仏墳墓の由来* (Tokyo: Kyuyunsha, 1884), p. 23. <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/816789>, and this was followed by a more comprehensive account, 北畠道竜 著 *Things Seen en route to India (Tenjiku kōroji shoken 天竺行路次所見)*, Aranami Hirajiro (荒浪平治郎, 1886). <https://ndlonline.ndl.go.jp/-/detail/R300000001-I000000461624-00>.
23. See also Jaffe, Richard M., “Seeking Śākyamuni: Travel and the Reconstruction of Japanese Buddhism”, in Karen Derris and Natalie Gummer, eds., *Defining Buddhism(s): A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008).  
See Shirase, pp.85-86, and “*Ōgai zenshu*”, vol 4, Iwanami shoten (鷗外全集、第四巻、岩波書店), 1972.
24. I have discussed Itō Chūta in more detail in “Exploring Asia, Reforming Japan: Ōtani Kōzui and Ito Chūta”, Selcuk Essenbel, ed., *Japan on the Silk Road: Encounters and Perspectives of Politics and Culture in Eurasia*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
25. See Jaffe, Richard M., “Seeking Śākyamuni: Travel and the Reconstruction of Japanese Buddhism” (note 21).
26. James R. Morita, *Kaneko Mitsuharu* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, G.K. Hall and Co., 1980), p.74.
27. Morita, pp.70-76.
28. Morita, pp.103-107.
29. Morita, p.117.
30. Morita, pp.104-148.
31. Morita, p.171.
32. Morita, p. 162.
33. <https://www.poetryinternational.org/pi/poem/12103/auto/0/0/Mitsuharu-Kaneko/Seals/en/tile> accessed 2018.
34. Morita, p.185.
35. Morita, p.187.
36. Morita, p. 167.
37. Morita, p. 188.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Asianism, Asia, Japan, China, India, Buddhism

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# Japan, a country without revolution? Uses of *kakumei* and historical debates in the Meiji era (1868-1912)

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## Introduction: political violence in the land of the emperors

- 1 As any country in the world, Japan in the course of its history experienced many phenomena of internal wars, on different scales and of different natures. The construction of fortified villages in the Yayoi period, the political struggles of the Yamato kingdom, the revolts against the imperial regime in the Heian period, the battles between warrior clans in the 12th century or political anarchy in the 15th and 16th centuries are some examples<sup>1</sup>. Modern Japan experienced a major political change with the *coup* initiated in 1868 by the Satsuma and Chōshū clans of southwest Japan against the Tokugawa shogunate. The victory of Satsuma and Chōshū and the establishment of the imperial regime in 1889 meant the creation of an ideology, a discourse legitimising the imperial regime based on a false historical fact –the supposedly unbroken line of divine emperors starting with the fictitious Jinmu<sup>2</sup>. The creation of the imperial regime meant also a general revision of the Japanese past, starting with the *coup* of 1868 itself. During all its existence, the management of Japanese history was a central problem for the regime. As was shown by Mitani Hiroshi, in 1940 the imperial regime published a large compilation of sources entitled “History of the restoration” (*Ishinshi*). This work established a vision of the birth of modern Japan that became the classical narrative to describe it, even outside Japan. In this narrative, the opening up of 1853 led to the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate by a restorationist movement (the “reverence for the emperor and expulsion of the barbarians” (*sonnō jōi*) movement). The victorious restorationist movement started

radical reforms in the name of “opening to civilisation” (*bunmei kaika*) and “enrich the country, strengthen the army” (*fukoku kyōhei*)<sup>3</sup>. This narrative gave a central and positive role to the oligarchs of Satsuma and Chōshū, and simultaneously helped draw a linear discourse leading to the establishment of the imperial regime in 1889. In the year the historian Tsuda Sōkichi published the *History of the restoration*, the regime put him on trial for having criticised the myths establishing the imperial ideology. Tsuda was expelled from the university, four of his books were banned, and two years later he was sentenced to jail for three months<sup>4</sup>.

- 2 Ironically, modern historical studies were born at the same time as the imperial regime: in 1887, Ludwig Reiss (1861-1928), a disciple of Leopold von Ranke, was invited to Japan to introduce the new historiographical methods, and the year 1889 saw the establishing of a National history department in the Tokyo Imperial University, the creation of the Society for historical studies (*Shigakkai*) and of a related academic review (*Shigaku zasshi*). From this beginning until the fascist period, Japanese historians had to confront the imperial ideology: before Tsuda, Kume Kunitake was forced to resign in 1892 for asserting that Shinto myths were not historical facts. Of course, this does not mean that historical studies were entirely under control<sup>5</sup>, but a red line did exist.
- 3 The goal of the present article will be to complete previous researches by focusing on the phenomenon of revolution in the use of history during the Meiji era (1868-1912). By establishing an unbroken line of divine sovereigns, the imperial ideology proposed a vision of Japanese history allowing no place to revolution. That is why the 1868 *coup* was considered as a “restoration” (*ishin*). We shall discuss here the use of the word “revolution” (*kakumei*)<sup>6</sup> to show that revolution was the central problem in the writing of history because the interest for revolution itself was often linked with a political agenda, or at least a will to challenge the official ideology. That is why the discourse on historians often came from non-professional historians who used the free space left by the belated creation of professional historical studies. The political agenda was on one side state-sponsored history promoting the imperial regime, and on the other side pro-revolution democratic views coming from the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement (*Jiyū minken ndo*) between 1874 and 1890, and after 1890 from the modern nationalists of the Min’yūsha (“Society of the People’s Friends”). The latter challenged the former on every single issue that had to do with the importance of revolution.
- 4 This article will explore three aspects of Japanese and European histories where *kakumei* have been discussed vis-à-vis the imperial ideology. The first part will outline the definition of Meiji restoration in the context of the creation of the new regime. The two other parts will discuss the aspects challenging the official view of history. The second part details the historical events which put into question the legitimacy of the actual imperial family, that is to say, the *coup* led by the (real) first emperor Tenmu against his nephew Ōtomo in 672, and the war between the two imperial courts from 1334 to 1392. The third and last part will discuss the role of revolution in European history, especially the French revolution, to show that a counter narrative existed in Meiji Japan, highlighting revolution as a model to establish democracy against the empire centered project of the government.

## I. The controversy on the civil war of 1868

### I.a. The ideological use of the 1868 civil war and history

- 5 The first event to appear as revolution in the debate on history in the Meiji era was the event that directly gave birth to modern Japan, the civil war of 1868-1869 (Boshin war). It is remarkable that the authors of this military seizure of power gave a central role to history. One of the reasons of such importance given to history was that the gigantic work (397 volumes) sponsored by the Mito clan, the *History of Great Japan* (*Dai Nihonshi*, started in the mid-17th century and still unfinished in 1868) which emerged in the wave of the *kokugaku* (“Studies of the country”), contributed to the anti-Tokugawa discourse. Even before the radical transformations for which the new Meiji government, the Dajōkan, became famous, the very first initiative was to provide an official interpretation of the recent events and to describe the *coup* not as a revolution but as a restoration (the so-called “Meiji restoration”, *Meiji ishin*), more precisely a “restoration of imperial power” (*ōsei fukko*). On May 3rd 1869, the emperor made a declaration calling for the establishment of an official history in continuity with the six historical chronicles (*Rikkokushi*)<sup>7</sup> written on imperial order, namely, the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki* and the four other chronicles compiled until 901<sup>8</sup>. The government established the Compilation of History Bureau (*Shūshikyoku*) just after the imperial declaration of 1869, reemploying the scholars specialised in the tradition of Chinese historiography as well as the *kokugaku*. This Bureau was one of the *seiin* which was the highest organ of the Dajōkan, the Meiji government<sup>9</sup>. As for the civil war, in June 1872, the new government ordered the compilation of all sources related to the recent events, under its direct control. Due to many troubles, this work went on for 17 years resulting in two books entitled “Chronicle of the restoration” (*Fukkoki*) and “External Chronicle of the restoration” (*Fukkoki gaiki*, dedicated specifically to the battles)<sup>10</sup>. A shorter version was published under the title *Meiji shiyō* from 1876 to 1885. The *Fukkoki* and *Fukko gaiki* were published by the Compilation of History Bureau whose scholars were also put to task to establish an official history giving priority to the sources related to the ancient emperors. The *Rikkokushi* were republished in the 1870s and the compilation of the *Dai Nihonshi* was completed in 1906. A *Chronological History of Great Japan* (*Dai Nihon hennenshi*) was also planned as an official history to complement the *Rikkokushi* and *Dai Nihonshi*. A selective compilation of sources gave birth to the first histories by professional historians prefiguring the vision of 1940. In the work of Shigeno Yasutsugu, the word *kakumei* (revolution) was completely absent<sup>11</sup>.
- 6 This active promotion of an official version of the civil war came along with the establishment of symbols that became later important institutions of the new imperial regime: in 1869, a Shintō sanctuary, the Shōkonsha, was created in Tōkyō in memory of the warriors killed during the Boshin war, and was later to be renamed the Yasukuni shrine.

### I.b. Challenging the state-sponsored history: the earliest professional historians and the democrats

- 7 The elaboration of this Satsuma-Chōshū centered view of the civil war was challenged very soon, first by the vanquished and later by the democrats. *Fukkoki* and *Fukko gaiki*

were enormous compilations, yet they did not include documents related to characters on the defeated side. This is why warrior families close to the Tokugawa shogun, such as the Echizen clan, started to compile their own history of the events, long before the Boshin war<sup>12</sup>. During the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, some men close to this democratic movement tried to challenge the official interpretation of the Boshin war. In 1888, the politician and journalist Shimada Saburō published *Background to the opening of the country* (*Kaikoku shimatsu*), in which he presented a positive biography of Ii Naosuke, a shogunate official who had repressed the pro-restoration warriors. The year before, the journalist Noguchi Katsuichi had launched the publication of *Unofficial Sources of the Restoration* (*Yashidai ishin shiryō*, 1887-1896). In the 1890s some journalists, partly from the Min'yūsha circle, published their own histories of the civil war: Takekoshi Yosaburō's *History of the New Japan* (*Shin Nihon shi* 1890-91), Fukuchi Gen.ichirō's *On the Decline of the Shogunate* (*Bakumatsu suibōron*, 1892) and *Politicians of the End of the Shogunate* (*Bakumatsu seijika*, 1898), and Tokutomi Sohō's *Yoshida Shōin* (1893). The common point of these writings was to strive towards a more objective history of the civil war by moving away from the Chōshū-Satsuma centered vision of the official history<sup>13</sup>. Thus, Tokutomi had no qualms about presenting Yoshida Shōin, the master of the Meiji government leaders, as a revolutionary (*kakumeika*)<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, Takekoshi Yosaburō also described the civil war as a revolution. In fact, Takekoshi based his work on a distinction between three types of revolution: the restorationist revolution (*fukko teki kakumei*), the idealistic revolution (*risō tankyū teki kakumei*), and the anarchist revolution (*ransei/anarkikaru<sup>15</sup>teki kakumei*). Takekoshi defined the restorationist revolution as a revolution claiming freedom which existed in the past, like the English revolution which took the Magna Carta as a model. His definition had therefore nothing to do with the prevailing interpretation of "restoration". According to him, the French and American Revolutions were the models of the idealistic revolutions in the sense that they sought freedom for the future. In his mind, the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868 was clearly an anarchist revolution because there was neither a retrospect as a restorationist revolution would imply, nor a quest for an ideal as claimed in the idealistic revolution<sup>16</sup>. Such a position was clearly a declaration of war against the government-sponsored history. A similar point of view can be found in the writings of Okada Rei'un (1870-1912), a journalist and thinker who was close to Kōtoku Shūsui and, like Kōtoku, had close contacts with the Chinese Republicans. Okada wanted to start a second revolution to overthrow the Meiji oligarchs. In 1909, he wrote one of the first histories of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement which he depicted as a revolution. To him, the Meiji restoration was a revolution like the Taika reform of 645. In both cases, revolution occurred by contact with foreign cultures. In 645, Japan adopted the Chinese and Indian cultures and became part of Asia. In 1868, Japan adopted Western culture based on liberty and equality, and became part of the world. Consequently Okada considered the Meiji restoration as a movement of the people/nation, not different from the case of Italy and Germany. He saw no contradiction in the fact that Meiji was an imperial restoration since for him the Japanese emperor was not separate from his people, being the chief of the Japanese family. Okada thus shared a similar view with the official ideology. The main problem lay with the real governors of Japan, the Tokugawa shogunate and the subsequent Meiji government against whom the people stood up in revolution, as did the Westerners against their sovereigns<sup>17</sup>. For Okada, the real Meiji restoration was not the civil war of

1868 led by the leaders of the government, but the Freedom and People's Rights Movement.

- 8 With the death of the last shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu in 1913 and the new wave of liberalism, fresh publications by non academic historians challenged the official view of Meiji restoration by paying attention to the historical sources from the Tokugawa side<sup>18</sup>.

## II. Revolution in imperial history: the murder of King Ōtomo (672) by the first emperor Tenmu and the two courts war (1337-1392).

### II.a. The troubled creation of the imperial regime in 672

- 9 It is often said that the Japanese imperial dynasty is the longest living dynasty in the world, starting with emperor Jinmu in 660 BC. This is not true since Jinmu and the subsequent emperors never existed. It is an invention of the Meiji government, based on the ideology of the first emperors themselves. Tenmu established the imperial regime in 672 AD by killing his nephew Ōtomo and annihilating the kingdom of Yamato. Tenmu, together with his wife and successor Jitō, created a new regime inspired by the Chinese model, chose *Nihon* as the name of the country and ordered the compilation of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* following the pattern of the Chinese chronicles, so as to redefine the past for the benefit of the regime. Before Tenmu, the kings of Yamato seem to have reigned according to the principle of *primus inter pares*, surrounded by powerful families. In order to get a strong position in the young centralised state, the emperors altered the old myths so that they could be the only humans of divine ancestry hailing from the Sun goddess Amaterasu. What connected them to Jinmu<sup>19</sup> now brought them and all the kings of Yamato under a single dynasty, regardless whether the kingdom of Yamato had been ruled by one or several dynasties<sup>20</sup>. This was also done to conceal the fact that the first emperor Tenmu (672-686) came to power by rebelling and murdering his nephew Ōtomo. The reign of Ōtomo seems to have been short (only nine months) and Tenmu challenged the decision of his brother king Tenchi who chose his son instead of him. Both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* make no mention of Ōtomo, transforming what is now called the "turmoil of the year *jinshin*" (*jinshin no ran*)<sup>21</sup> into a taboo from the very start. The taboo turned out to be short-lived as well as the imperial power itself, since alternative histories in the Nara and Heian periods claimed that prince Ōtomo did reign. In the Edo period, the Mito school, which was the first to write a history of the country (*Dai Nihonshi*), chose to incorporate Ōtomo in the list of the emperors starting with Jinmu. It is interesting to note that just after starting the process to create a history of the 1868 civil war, the Meiji government in 1870 ordered to officialise the history as devised by the Mito school and to make Ōtomo emperor under the name of Kōbun. Such a decision was supposed to end the taboo surrounding the story of Ōtomo.
- 10 But historians and democrats did not necessarily comply with this decision, at least during the Meiji period. Following the new methods of historical studies established in universities, Hirade Kōjirō of the Tokyo Imperial University conducted research on Ōtomo in 1897 with an article in the review *Shigaku zasshi* where he questioned the legitimacy of Ōtomo as emperor. More exactly, he analysed the historical process

through which the Mito school decided to present Ōtomo as emperor, taking into account historical sources after the *Nihon shoki*, which also presented Ōtomo as an emperor<sup>22</sup>. Kita Sadakichi, later known for the controversy on the two imperial courts, also produced a study on king Ōtomo. He suggested in 1904 that there did exist an emperor, but it was a girl<sup>23</sup>. These studies directly challenged the official decision of 1870, but none of the historians have been sanctioned like Kume Kunitake for having said that Shintō legends are fictions.

- 11 A year earlier, the journalist and liberal activist Takekoshi Yosaburō wrote a general book of national history. He started with Jinmu but described the *jinshin* war as a ‘conservative reaction’. To him, ethically speaking, it was the war of an uncle against his nephew; politically speaking, it was a conservative reaction but with progressive results<sup>24</sup>. Takekoshi and Hirade were among the very few historians to pay attention to the *jinshin* war during the Meiji era. Perhaps this was because the debate soon shifted to the war between the two imperial courts in the 14th century.

## II.b. The taboo of the two courts war in modern Japan

- 12 The medieval history of Japan has been particularly traumatic for the emperors: with the establishment of *bakufu* (warrior government) from 1185 to 1192, they lost all power and gradually fell into great poverty. The attempt of Emperor Godaigo to restore imperial regime in 1333 was completely unrealistic and the warrior Ashikaga Takauji manipulated the emperor to seize power from the Hōjō family. Takauji even supported another branch of the imperial family to secure legitimacy and from 1336 till 1392 two imperial courts coexisted in Japan. The victory of the Northern Dynasty, supported by Ashikaga, meant the victory of the illegitimate lineage. The emperors of present Japan come from the same line of ancestors. This is why the *Dai Nihonshi* as early as the Edo period claimed the legitimacy of the Southern lineage.
- 13 After the 1869 imperial declaration, the Meiji government also included this event quite early in its commemoration strategy. In the same year, the government created new Shintō shrines in honour of the warriors who fought for the Southern court such as Kamakuragū in the city of Kamakura (the ancient capital of the first warrior family who came in power). In 1877, the official line of emperors saw the Southern emperors replace the Northern emperors, as in the *Dai Nihon shi*. In *Taisei kiyō*, published by some leaders of the Meiji government in 1883, the Northern emperors received the rank of *tei* (the very same word used for the Chinese emperor) and were no longer *tennō* (the Japanese word for “emperor”, reserved only for the Japanese sovereign). In 1900, a statue of Kusunoki Masashige, the most famous warrior who fought for the Southern court, was erected in front of the imperial palace<sup>25</sup>.
- 14 This attempt by the state to establish an official view of Japanese history was soon to be challenged, both within and without. The outside attack came as early as 1909 from the journalist and politician Yamaji Aizan. Yamaji defended the criticism of Yoshino and Kume<sup>26</sup>, and took an opposite position to the negative portrait of Ashikaga Takauji inherited from the Mito school. He presented Ashikaga as a hero of warriors, more precisely as the leader of a conservative faction (*hoshutō*) who opposed the revolution led by emperor Godaigo<sup>27</sup>. As to the inside attacks, they came from the first professional historians. The Compilation of History Bureau was soon divided into scholars still loyal to Chinese historiography and those more interested in source criticism. Among the



latter was Shigeno Yasutsugu (1827-1910)<sup>28</sup>. He was educated in Confucian orthodoxy and was responsible for the historical chronicles of the Shimazu clan, namely, Satsuma. When his clan won the civil war in 1868 against the Tokugawa shogun, Shigeno worked for the Compilation of History Bureau and became the most prominent modern historian. Before the arrival of Ludwig Reiss, it was probably with Shigeno's support that the Compilation of History Bureau invited in 1879 an exiled Hungarian diplomat, a self-made historian at the University of London, George Zerffi (1820-1892), to write a history of European historiography. His book, *The Science of History* (771 pages), despite not being translated into Japanese, contributed largely to transform the method of Shigeno and his counterparts<sup>29</sup>. Shigeno with Kume Kunitake and Hoshino Hisashi were transferred from the Shūshikyoku and made the first professors of history at the Tokyo Imperial University in 1888. They thus became colleagues of Reiss. Shigeno worked closely with him to create modern historical studies and was the first president of Shigakkai.

- 15 Despite his support for the Satsuma-Chōshū centered view of the Meiji restoration, Shigeno Yasutsugu challenged the government over the two courts period. In 1890, he claimed that there was no historical evidence for the existence of Kojima Takanori who was celebrated as an imperial hero by the government (on the basis of the medieval *Taiheiki*, "Chronicle of Grand Pacification") and even upgraded as a deity. In the same year, Kume Kunitake even questioned the historical veracity of *Taiheiki* as a whole<sup>30</sup>.
- 16 In 1911 the historian Kita Sadakichi (1871-1939) provoked a larger debate on the events. Unlike Yamaji Aizan, Kita was not specifically opposed to the government. After graduating in history in 1909 at the Tokyo Imperial University, he contributed to legitimise the annexation of Korea and supported the theory of common ancestries between Koreans and Japanese (*Nissen dōsorōn*)<sup>31</sup>. In 1910, he was appointed as editor of history textbooks by the government. He gave lectures on the Two courts period to teachers and claimed that it was impossible to decide which line was legitimate. On January 19th 1911, Prime Minister Katsura Tarō attacked historians on this matter in the newspaper *Yomiuri shinbun*. A great debate in the Parliament ensued (*Nanbokuchō seijun mondai*) which resulted in Kita's discharge from office. The same government also planned the repression of the first Japanese socialists and anarchists. Kōtoku Shūsui and others were accused of plotting the murder of the emperor and were executed on January 24th the same year<sup>32</sup>.
- 17 The impact of this debate and the trial of the Japanese anarchists lasted until the end of the imperial regime. Inoue Tetsujirō, the principal ideologue of the imperial regime, writes in his *Outlines of National Morals* (1912) that history should focus only on morals in order to maintain national unity. He saw the controversy of Ashikaga as a plot of "anarchists"<sup>33</sup>. A historian such as Tanaka Yoshinari cautiously claimed that the question of legitimacy between the two courts was to be avoided in academic research, but Ashikaga Takauji was depicted positively in *Nanbokuchō jidaishi* (History of the Northern and Southern courts period)<sup>34</sup>. With the rise of fascism, Ashikaga Takauji again became a subject of debate. In 1934, the Minister of Commerce and Industry Nakajima Kumakichi was forced to resign under the pressure of fascist organisations who made use of his 1921 writings about Ashikaga Takauji arguing that Takauji's case should be re-examined<sup>35</sup>. This episode turned out to be one of the causes of the call for a "clarification of the national essence" (*kokutai meichō undō*) in 1935, which

contributed to the rise of the wartime system dominated by the military and by fascism.

### III. Revolution and harmony as matters of Japanese national identity

#### III.a. Revolution as model? Civilian historiography and the French revolution

- 18 Since the Meiji era was a period of discovery of the past and recent history of the world, revolution as a historical phenomenon was obviously not limited to Japanese history. The Freedom and People's Rights Movement, which began in 1874 with the demand for a constitution and a parliament and saw the birth of political parties, also meant the discovery of European political philosophy and history, including the revolutions. The French revolution was especially attractive. Among the writings published by the partisans of the Movement, there is an astonishing wealth of translations and presentations of revolutions, primarily the French revolution<sup>36</sup>. These documents can be divided into two groups: (i) the publications by Nakae Chōmin (1847-1901), one of the main intellectual figures of the Movement who translated Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *On social contract* and many French republican texts (ii) other publications.
- 19 The translations published by Nakae Chōmin and his disciples clearly show a will to promote not only Rousseau but more generally the French revolution:
- Official texts:
- The 1776 American Declaration of independence.
  - The declaration of 22 May 1790 (Declaration of peace to the world).
  - The Montagnard Constitution of 1793.
- Political and literary texts:
- Harny De Guerville, *La liberté conquise, ou le despotisme renversé*<sup>37</sup>.
  - La Marseillaise.
  - Mirabeau, *Essay on despotism*.
- Philosophical and law texts:
- Cesare Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments*.
  - Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Spirit* (last chapter: "On the future progress of the Human Spirit").
- Historical chronicles:
- Philippe Buchez, *A Parliamentary History of the French Revolution*.
  - Victor Duruy, *History of France*. Chōmin referred to it to write *History of the two centuries before the French Revolution*.
  - Madame Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, *Popular History of the Revolution*. Chōmin used it to introduce the 1789 Cahiers de doléances.
  - Amédée Le Faure, *Socialism during the French Revolution*. Chōmin consulted it to translate the *Manifesto of the Equals*.
- 20 The list shows how the Japanese saw a model in the French (as well as the American) revolutions and how their own Movement could be a new revolution. It goes without saying that *kakumei* had a positive meaning during the period among the followers of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement.

- 21 Chōmin and his disciples were among the few Japanese able to translate from the French. Nevertheless, other *minkenka* people translated French works from English. This proves to what degree the Freedom and People's Rights Movement gave importance to the French Revolution and wanted to associate their own movement with *kakumei*. Most of the translations, such as those of Chōmin, were published around the year 1882, the climax of the Movement and of the revolts against the government:
- a) Translations:
- François Mignet, Kawatsu Sukeyuki trans., *Futsukoku kakumeishi* (History of the French Revolution, 1824, 1878 and 1889).
- Adolphe Thiers, Kusama Jifuku trans., *Futsukoku kakumei zenshi* (Histoire des années précédant la Révolution française [*Histoire de la Révolution française, 1823-27*]), 1884.
- Unknown author, Watanabe Sōhō trans., *Bankoku kakumei shi* (History of the revolutions throughout the world), 1890.
- b) Single works (often based on European books):
- Suzuki Gorō ed., *Futsukoku kakumei genrinron* (On the causes of the French revolution), 1882. Nariai Hisao, *Ōbei minken shiryaku* (Short history of the rights of the people in Europe and the United States), 1882.
- Ida Saneyuki, *Seiyō ensetsu kihan: minken to jiyū* (Models of discourse in the West: the rights of the people and freedom), 1882.
- Hisamatsu Yoshinori, *Taisai kakumei shikan. Furansu kakumei no bu* (General History of the Revolutions in the West. The French Revolution), 1882.
- Takagi Shūho ed., *Tsūzoku Futsukoku kakumeishi* (Popular history of the French revolution), 1887.
- 22 These texts often introduced the English and French revolutions as revolutions for the “rights of the people” (*minken*), suggesting similarity with their own movement<sup>38</sup>.
- 23 This appeal of the French Revolution was so strong that the Meiji government, seeking inspiration from Germany to establish an authoritarian constitution, felt obliged to publish translations against Rousseau and propounded a negative view of the French revolution based mainly on German works<sup>39</sup>.

### III.b. Japanese harmony versus Chinese revolution

- 24 The repression of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement and the establishment of the imperial regime had as corollary the negation of revolution: the proof of the divine status of the imperial regime was found in history itself, in the absence of revolution, which made possible a single and unbroken lineage. Revolution was therefore eluded in Japanese history and in its stead the main value proclaimed was harmony (*wa*).
- 25 Some intellectuals were precursors in integrating the idea of harmony as the core of Japanese, or more largely, Asian identity. The art critic Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin) wrote in 1903 *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (later translated into Japanese). Okakura presented a history of Asia in which he included India, China and Japan. He characterised the Asiatic nature by gentleness, moral ethics, harmony, beauty and communalism. Harmony was of primary importance in Okakura's way of thinking because in it lay the reason why Japan was in possession of the best of Asia, since the Japanese spirit had the ability of assimilating from abroad what was harmonious with its own nature.

- 26 Okakura's discourse contributed to the rise of harmony as a key concept of Japanese and Chinese national identities. Two other factors played an important role in this change. First, studies on Chinese history developed in the academic world with the establishment of "Oriental history studies" (*Tōyō shigaku*). In 1904, the first department of Chinese history studies was created in the Faculty of letters at the Tokyo Imperial University. This department was reformed in 1910 as the Oriental history studies department while the Historical studies department was divided the same year into National history and Western history.
- 27 The second factor happened a year later: the 1911 Revolution in China provoked a huge shock in Japan because it destroyed a multi-secular regime and the elites also feared that the same could happen in Japan since Marxism and anarchism attracted more and more Japanese. In fact, in the same year, Kōtoku Shūsui, the disciple of Nakae Chōmin and founder of the first Socialist party, was executed by the government.
- 28 Such characterisation, however, was far from commonly shared. Naitō Konan for example, in his book *On China* (*Shinaron*, 1914), refused to see any possibility of China as a potential democracy and republic<sup>40</sup>. Far from seeing revolution as the national essence of China, Naitō considered that the 1911 Revolution was the product of contacts with the West through the Chinese students sent there. On the other hand, Naitō admitted a strong egalitarianism in Chinese society, an element that gave rise to the Taiping rebellion<sup>41</sup>. As was shown by Matsumoto Sannosuke, Shiratori Kurakichi or Yano Jin'ichi also considered republicanism as a novelty for China<sup>42</sup>.

## Epilogue: after Meiji, the growing tension between revolution and harmony

- 29 Between the 1920s and 1940s the characterisation of China and Europe by revolution and of Japan by harmony became such a *topos* that it is impossible to synthesise here all the texts involved during this period. The earliest examples of the characterisation of China as revolutionary can be found in the 1910s, just after the 1911 Revolution, regardless of the political camps. The liberal Kayahara Kazan interpreted the 1911 Revolution as a new form of the Chinese republicanism (*kyōwashugi*) which can be found in the Chinese classics<sup>43</sup>. Kayahara referred on this point explicitly to Shiratori Kurakichi<sup>44</sup>.
- 30 The success of the Soviet revolution added fear for the future of the imperial regime. The tendency to characterise China as a land of revolution increased alongside the characterisation of Japan as a land of harmony. For example, Yasuoka Masahiro (1898-1983) used his own interpretation of the word *kakumei* to characterise China and the West as lands of revolution, contrasting them with Japan as a land of political stability<sup>45</sup>. Hiraizumi Kiyoshi (1895-1984), professor of history at the Tokyo Imperial University, provides another interesting example. After a trip he made in the early 1930s to England, France and Germany conducting research on the French Revolution, he published a book in which he compared European and Chinese revolutions with the Japanese Meiji restoration<sup>46</sup>. Hiraizumi made a distinction between revolution and restoration, defining the former as the destruction of a state aimed at the creation of a new one<sup>47</sup>. To him, the best illustration according to this definition was China. Hiraizumi even considered that the English revolution of 1688 did not fit with his

criteria because it was not a radical change of state<sup>48</sup>. On the contrary, the French revolution could be compared to the Chinese *ekisei kakumei* because it “completely destroyed the organisation of the state, ignoring its history and traditions” to create a new state<sup>49</sup>. Such an interpretation was negative because Hiraizumi interpreted revolution in general as a “fit of madness” (*hakkyō*). He explicitly quoted Paul Bourget, a French conservative historian and member of the Académie française, and his negative view of the French revolution: it had destroyed the feudal organisation that was foundational of France to replace it with a centralised government which cut off the French from their past<sup>50</sup>. Hiraizumi also quoted Edmund Burke, writing pages after pages to persuade the reader that the Meiji restoration was not a revolution, despite all appearances: it was a great change, or a reform, but not a revolution because it did not cut off people from their past. Quite to the contrary, the Meiji restoration had reestablished the “correct form of Japan, its natural form” (*Nihonkoku no tadashii sugata, honnen no sugata*)<sup>51</sup>.

- 31 Needless to say, such discourse on China and revolution was not homogeneous. Pan-Asianists and Marxists were willingly prepared to see revolution in Japan because they wanted to accomplish a new revolution each for their own reasons. On the right, Ōkawa Shūmei described the Meiji restoration as a revolution and saw it as a model for the Shōwa restoration<sup>52</sup>. The same can be said about Kita Ikki, who even went to China to witness the Chinese revolution with his own eyes<sup>53</sup>. On the left, Marxist historians such as Hattori Shisō or Wani Gorō analysed the Meiji restoration as a *bourgeois* revolution<sup>54</sup>.
- 32 Due to the political crisis in the 1930s, the efforts of the government to define Japanese identity as harmony, loyalty and cohesiveness culminated. Starting with the propaganda of the “Harmony of the five races” (*gozoku kyōwa*) to justify the creation of the Manchurian State, the government published in 1937 the *True Meaning of the National Essence* (*Kokutai no hongī*) in which harmony (*wa*) was for the first time highlighted as part of national identity<sup>55</sup>. Right-wing commentators of the text relayed the message<sup>56</sup>. The post-war conservative emphasis on harmony cannot be understood without this tension and debate in the Meiji era about history and revolution.

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## NOTES

1. See for instance the work of Katsumata Shizuo about medieval uprisings, *Ikki*, Iwanami shisho, 1982.
2. This historical fallacy was derived from the *Kojiki* (708) and the *Nihon shoki* (712), two historical chronicles which the first emperors ordered to compile so as to justify the new regime through revised history and myths –an emperor appearing as a deity was beyond criticism. See Francine Hérail, “Les révisions de l’Histoire nationale par les Japonais” in Gilbert Gadoffre *et al.*, eds., *Certitudes et incertitudes de l’histoire*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1987, pp. 105-114.
3. See Mitani Hiroshi, “Meiji ishin. Tsūsetsu no shūsei kara kakumei no sekai hikaku he”, in Miura Nobutaka & Fukui Norihiko, eds., *Furansu kakumei to Meiji ishin*, Hakusuisha, 2019, p. 63.

4. In English see John Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600-1945: The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jinmu*, 1997.
5. See Hiroki Takashi, “1890 nendai no akademizumu shigaku. Jiritsuka he no mosaku”, in Matsuzawa Yūsaku, *Kindai Nihon no hisutoriogurafī*, Yamakawa shuppansha, 2015, pp. 85-120.
6. The word *kakumei* comes from the Chinese (*geming*) and means “change of mandate”, that is to say the change of dynasty through the loss of “Heaven’s mandate” (Japanese: *tenmei*; Chinese: *tianming*). The word appears in the *Book of changes (Yijing)*, which states that kings Tang and Wu overthrew the preceding dynasties of Xia and Shang respectively according to the will of Heaven. Mencius interpreted this passage of the *Book of changes* as the possibility given to the people to kill the malevolent ruler. See Viren Murthy, “Chinese revolutionary thought” in Mark Bevir, ed., *Encyclopedia of Political Theory*, Sage, 2010, p. 167.
7. For an English translation, see Sakamoto Tarō, ed., John Brownlee trans., *The Six National Histories of Japan*, Columbia University Press, 1991.
8. See Matsuzawa Yūsaku, “Shūshikyoku ni okeru seishi hensan kōsō no keisei katei” in Matsuzawa Yūsaku, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-27.
9. Due to financial problems the Shūshikyoku had to be dissolved in 1877 but was immediately reestablished as Shūshikan under the direct control of the Dajōkan, that is to say the Meiji government.
10. See Miyachi Masato, “Fukkoki” genshiryō no kisoteki kenkyū”, *Tōkyō daigaku shiryō hensanjo kenkyū kiyō*, 1, 1990, pp. 66-139.
11. See Yoshida Yasutsugu, *Dai Nihon ishinshi*, Zenrinyaku shokan, 1899.
12. Mitani Hiroshi, “Meiji ishin no shigakushi. Shakai kagaki izen”, *Yorōppa kenkyū*, 9 January 2010, pp. 179-186.
13. See Mitani, *op.cit.*, p. 182.
14. See Tokutomi Sohō, *Yoshida Shōin*, Min’yūsha, 1893, p. 3.
15. Following a common usage of the time, Takekoshi adds above the ideograms *ransei* in *katakana* transcription *anarukikaru* to specify the meaning he wishes to convey here.
16. See Takekoshi Yosaburō, *Shin Nihon shi*, Min’yūsha, vol.2., 1892, pp. 3-9.
17. See Okada Rei.un, *Meiji hanshin den*, Hidakaya yūrin-dō, 1909, pp. 14-5, 17.
18. See Shibusawa Eiichi, *Tokugawa Yoshinobu kōden*, 1918; Osatake Takeki, *Ishin zengo ni okeru rikken shisō*, 1925; *Id.*, *Nihon kenseishi taikō*, Nihon hyōronsha, 1938-9; *Id.*, *Meiji ishin*, Hakuyōsha, 1942.
19. The life and reign of Jinmu was placed in the year -660 (according to the Western calendar), a past that was remote enough to compare with Chinese dynasties and Korean kingdoms.
20. Tenmu and Jitō were the descendants of a dynasty most probably established at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and their predecessors certainly belong to another dynasty which ruled mainly in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Japan itself was divided into several kingdoms and the kingdom of Yamato emerged by conquering them before the 5<sup>th</sup> century.
21. *Jinshin* is a word coming from the Chinese calendrical practice of naming the years.
22. See Hirade Kōjirō, “Ōtomo tennō kō”, *Shigaku zasshi*, 1897, vol.8., 8, pp. 61-71, vol.8, 10, pp. 44-56.
23. See Kita Sadakichi, “Jotei no kōi keishō ni kansuru senrei wo ronjite”, *Rekishi chiri*, vol.6, n.10 and 11, 1904.
24. See Takekoshi Yosaburō, *Nisen gohyakunenshi*, Kaitakusha, [1896] 1909, pp. 130-138.
25. See Obinata Sunao, “Nanbokuchō seijun mondai no jidai haikai”, *Rekishi hyōron*, 740, 2011, p. 4-17.
26. See Itō Yushi, *Yamaji Aizan and His Time: Nationalism and Debating Japanese History*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, p. 47.
27. See Yamaji Aizan, *Ashikaga Takauji*, Genkōsha, 1909, pp. 202-6.

28. For a recent work in English, see Michael Facius, “Transcultural Philology in 19th-century Japan: The Case of Shigeno Yasutsugu (1827-1910)”, *Philological Encounters*, 2018, vol.3, 1-2, pp. 3-33.
29. See Georg Iggers, Edward Wang, Supriya Mukherjee, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, Routledge, 2016, p. 115.
30. See Brownlee, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-8.
31. On this theory see Noriko Berlinguez-Kōno, “Naissance de la thèse de l’unicité nippon-coréenne (*nissen dōsorōn*)” in Jean-Jacques Tschudin & Claude Hamon, eds., *La nation en marche : études sur le Japon impérial de Meiji*, Philippe Picquier, 1999, pp. 209-225.
32. See Christine Lévy, “Kōtoku Shūsui et l’anarchisme”, *Ebisu*, 28, 2002, pp. 61-86.
33. See Inoue Tetsujirō, « Furoku “Kokumin dōtoku to nanbokuchō mondai” », *Kokumin dōtoku gairon*, Sanseidō shoten, 1912, p. 1.
34. See Tanaka Yoshinari, *Nanbokuchō jidaishi*, Meiji shoin, 1922, pp. 140, 195.
35. See Brownlee, *op.cit.*, p. 158.
36. See Eddy Dufourmont, *Rousseau au Japon. Nakae Chōmin et le républicanisme français (1874-1890)*, Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018, pp. 121 ff.
37. Performed at the Théâtre de la Nation on January 4th, 1791. This play, the first of its kind, was soon to be forgotten and was never published.
38. See Dufourmont, *op.cit.* pp. 43-4.
39. See Edmund Burke, Kaneko Kentarō trans., *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (*Seiji ronryaku*), Genrō.in, 1881; Samuel Griswold Goodrich (translator unknown), *Futsukokushi* [A Pictorial History of France, 1844]; Hermann Roesler, Doitsugaku kyōkai trans., *Futsukoku kakumeiron*, 1885; Marcius Wilson (in part), Suzuki Kurajirō trans., *Rekishu tetsugaku* [Outlines of history, 1854], 1887; Johann Ignaz von Döllinger, “Sennanahyaku hachijūkyūnen Futsukoku kakumeiron” in Yamamoto Nagatarō ed., *Shin Nihon seiji shakai genron*, 1887; John Wilson Crocker, Tomitatsu Kuba trans., *Futsukoku kakumei shiron* [Essays on the early period of the French Revolution, 1857], 1888; Gilbert du Motier, marquis de La Fayette, Mizutani Yoshiaki trans., *Futsukoku kakumei yoha kokkai no kakin: ichimei. Lui 16 se shikei tenmatsu* [original work unknown], 1888.
40. See Tazawa Haruko, « Naitō Konan ni okeru futatsu no « kindai » to « seiji » », in Yamada Satoshi, Kurokawa Midori eds., *Naitō Konan to Ajia ninshiki. Nihon kindai shisōshi kara miru*, Bensei shuppan, 2013, p. 65.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
42. See Matsumoto Sannosuke, *Kindai Nihon no Chūgoku ninshiki*, Ibunsha, 2011, p. 172.
43. See Kayahara Kazan, *Shin dōchū seikan*, Tōadō shobō, 1913, p. 136.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
45. See Eddy Dufourmont, *Confucianisme et conservatisme. La trajectoire intellectuelle de Yasuoka Masahiro (1898-1983)*, Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2014.
46. See Hiraishi Kiyoshi, *Bushidō no fukkatsu*, Kinseisha [1933] 2011.
47. See Hiraishi, *op.cit.*, p. 349.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 352.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
52. See Ōkawa Shūmei, *Nihon bunmeishi*, Daitōkaku, 1921, pp. 336-364.
53. See Kita Ikki, *Shina kakumei gaishi*, Daitōkyaku, 1921.
54. See Nagahara Keiji, *20 seiki Nihon no rekishigaku*, Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2003, pp. 97-101.
55. See Monbushō, *Kokutai no hongī*, 1937, pp. 50-63.
56. See Ōuchi Chizan, *Kokutai no hongī kaisetsu*, Kyōbunsha, 1937, pp. 48-50; Miura Tōsaku, *Kokutai no hongī kaisetsu*, Tōyō tosho, 1937, pp. 155-187; Kojima Tokuya, *Kaisetsu kokutai no hongī*, Sōzōsha, 1940, pp. 145-174; Tsukamoto Tetsuzō, *Kokutai no hongī kaisetsu*, 1940, pp. 131-137.

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## INDEX

**Keywords:** revolution, Meiji, 1868 Boshin War, Ōtomo, Two Courts War, French revolution, Chinese revolution, Japanese harmony

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# Historiography of the Nanking Massacre (1937–1938) in Japan and the People’s Republic of China: evolution and characteristics

Arnaud Nanta

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Given what had happened in and around Shanghai, as the battle to seize Nanking approached, I once again stressed the need to all our troops for them to scrupulously respect military codes of conduct and customs, as previously noted. Despite this, our Army committed acts of violence and pillaging during the occupation of the city, many tarnishing the prestige of the Imperial Japanese Army. In order to explain these acts, we must first consider the terrible exhaustion occasioned by the difficult battles fought since disembarking in Shanghai, which generated deep animosity among our soldiers. Added to this were the logistical failures and supply shortages suffered by our Army while facing lightning attacks from a constantly moving enemy. These, in my opinion, were the causes. Be that as it may, neither I nor my officers can escape our responsibility for having failed to correctly supervise [our troops].

General Matsui Iwane, commander-in-chief in Nanking, *China Incident Diary* (*Shina jihen nisshi* 支那事变日誌, written in prison in 1946).<sup>1</sup>

- 1 The Nanking (Nanjing) Massacre, in what was then the capital of the Republic of China while this regime was still located on the mainland (1912–1949), took place at the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), itself both a part of and prelude to World War II. It followed on from the Battle of Shanghai, which saw forces from the Chinese National Revolutionary Army clash with troops from the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy, between 13 August and late October 1937. The final withdrawal of the Chinese came about on 13 November. The Battle of Shanghai was one of the bloodiest confrontations in the East Asian theatre of World War II, ranking alongside the Battle of Okinawa in the spring of 1945. As well as being a crushing defeat for the nationalist forces led by Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 (Jiang Jieshi, 1887–1975), which lost some 250,000 men, it was a decisive element in their later defeat by Communist

forces in 1949.<sup>2</sup> They put up fierce resistance to Japan's Central China Area Army (Naka-Shina hōmen-gun 中支那方面軍), composed of the Shanghai Expeditionary Army (Shanghai haken-gun 上海派遣軍) and the 10th Army (Daijū gun 第十軍), commanded throughout by General Matsui Iwane 松井石根 (1878–1948).<sup>3</sup> This resistance, in addition to the war crimes committed by both sides, pushed the Japanese troops to pursue the nationalist forces as they retreated towards the capital. What ensued was the Battle of Nanking (4 to 13 December), known in Chinese as the Battle to Defend Nanking, followed by the fall of the city and the massacre of soldiers and civilians from early December 1937 to February 1938. In Japan this massacre is commonly referred to as the “Nanking Incident”, as it was during the post-war trials. Similarly, the Second Sino-Japanese War was known as the “China Incident”.<sup>4</sup>

- 2 The aim of this paper is not to trace the history and chronology of what took place, nor to produce a definitive account of the events or a conclusive death toll. The Nanking Massacre was both exceptional and one of a long list of war atrocities committed during the twentieth century. In this sense, it can be compared to situations elsewhere, like the *Einsatzgruppen*, the Nazi killing units in Eastern Europe. Nanking is another example of “a war that did not follow the rules of classic conflict, against an enemy without uniforms, hidden in the midst of a civilian population indistinguishable from the partisans.”<sup>5</sup> It is this dual configuration –the association of the “mopping up” of a city of enemy troops and the terror unleashed against an unarmed population– that enabled the sacking of the city and uncontrolled military violence against civilians. The situation was further exacerbated by factors relating to structural logistical failures within the Japanese army, notably a lack of supervision.
- 3 The objective here is to trace the genesis of historical research on the Nanking Massacre in Japan and China, in connection with the historiography of the Second Sino-Japanese War in both countries and with echoes from Taiwan. Several periods and landmark works can be distinguished within this body of research. And yet widespread misconceptions in Europe and the United States mean that the collective imagination tends to picture a revisionist Japan with China as victim. In reality, differing assessments of China now exist due to its political regime. The aim of this paper is to show that the Japanese historiography of Nanking is not only the most advanced in the world, it is also extremely high quality and has made significant contributions to international scholarship. The world of politics and academia are two very different things. Furthermore, since the 1970s and 1980s Japanese historical research on Nanking has developed in parallel with the military historiography of Taiwan, which was directly concerned, since it was the nationalist troops of the Kuomintang who fought and were massacred by Imperial Japan in Shanghai and Nanking. They then retreated to Taiwan after their defeat by the Communists in 1949. Finally, since the mid-1990s Japanese research has progressed thanks to increased engagement with scholarship from the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Nanking Massacre and Second Sino-Japanese War are not only historiographical issues; they are also political and memorial issues involving not two but three countries: Japan, the PRC and the Republic of China (Taiwan). Just as Japan has Yasukuni Shrine (1879) to commemorate its war dead and China has the Memorial Hall for Compatriots Killed in the Nanking Massacre (1985), Taipei has erected a National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine (Zhonglie ci 忠烈祠, 1969), in reality dedicated more to the Second Sino-Japanese War than the Revolution of 1911.

- 4 In the West, researchers have not seriously investigated Nanking and lack awareness of the results of international research. The best English-language work available on the subject consists primarily of contributions from Japanese researchers.<sup>6</sup> Yet Japanese research, drawing on Chinese scholarship, has continued apace since the late 1990s, despite the exact details of the events remaining elusive. Finally, just as with European scholarship on the Shoah since the late 1970s, negationist publications have continually played an important role in Japan by stimulating historical research there. These publications will be a key focus of this paper.
- 5 I will begin with a general overview of the types of sources and documents available for this historiography. As well as being a crucial element in itself, such a review will help us understand how research on Nanking has taken shape since the end of the 1960s. Section two presents Japanese “militant” research conducted between the end of the 1960s and the late 1970s. Section three describes the links between the historiography of the Nanking Massacre and the military historiography, from the late 1970s until shortly after the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre in 1987. Finally, section four analyses the increase in scholarship from the PRC since 1992 and the tensions between memory and Japanese conservative reaction that accompanied the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war in 1995.

## I. Corpora of sources

- 6 In the autumn of 2015, as Taiwan was holding a major exhibition at the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the ROC’s victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan, featuring a heavy focus on the Nanking Massacre, the UNESCO headquarters in Paris saw a clash between the organisation and the Japanese Minister of Education, Hase Hiroshi 馳浩 (1961–). The cause was the inclusion in UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register of documents relating to the Nanking Massacre. The debate served to remind Europe and the rest of the world that the Asia-Pacific War was still a contentious issue in the Far East. By the end of the year, Japan threatened to withdraw its funding of UNESCO, to which it was *de facto* the largest contributor (since the United States had suspended its payment of membership contributions before withdrawing completely from the organisation in October 2017). This attempt to force UNESCO’s hand is reminiscent of the tactics employed by Japan with the League of Nations in 1932 following its invasion of Manchuria. Yet the documents listed on the UNESCO register are not new and all are recognised by historians. The majority of the records, documents and witness accounts listed by UNESCO had already been presented at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) held in Tokyo between 1946 and 1948.
- 7 Analysis in the broadest sense of the Nanking Massacre developed along two parallel lines corresponding to two separate periods. The first (in the 1940s and 1950s) consists of what can be described as official research focusing on state documents and court records. Primary sources and secondary documents from immediately after the event tend to blend together to form, along with military sources, the main corpora on the Nanking Massacre. The second body of work (from the 1970s to 1990s) is more scholarly in nature and corresponds to a true historiography of the Nanking Massacre, which is the subject of this paper. Research on Nanking has been accompanied in the background by intense journalistic activity, helping to bring the issue back into the

spotlight, forcing the state apparatus and judicial system to address the problem and then motivating historical research after the 1970s. The following list is merely for classification purposes and is not intended to be an exhaustive presentation of the documents available.

8 Primary sources contemporaneous with the Nanking Massacre consist chronologically of the following four elements:

1. Documentary records of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. This collection of texts includes letter exchanges between the committee and Japanese officers, compiled in 1939 by Hsü Shuhsi (Xu Shuxi) 徐淑希 (1892–1982) for the government of the Republic of China.<sup>7</sup> This “slim volume [...] is still the best source on what happened to the people of Nanking between December 1937 and February 1938”.<sup>8</sup> It also clearly shows that Chiang Kai-shek did concern himself with the Nanking Massacre at the time of the events. This corpus includes notes and records written by members of the committee, such as the *Diaries of John Rabe* (1882–1950), published in Germany in 1997.<sup>9</sup>
2. Statistics compiled by the Republic of China’s Red Swastika Society (Hong wanzi hui 紅卍字會) and the Chongshantang 崇善堂, which disposed of the vast majority of corpses. Their combined figures (155,337 bodies) can be taken as a minimum death toll. These statistics were submitted to the IMTFE but not presented.<sup>10</sup>
3. International press coverage of the event by foreign correspondents in Nanking, notably Frank Durdin (1907–1998) for the *New York Times* and Archibald Steele (1903–1992) for the *Chicago Daily News*, in addition to a book by Harold J. Timperley (1898–1954), a *Manchester Guardian* journalist stationed in Shanghai: *What War Means: The Japanese Terror in China*, published in 1938.
4. Japanese military sources, specifically the archives of the Central China Area Army, and military documents from the Chinese National Revolutionary Army –which since 1949 correspond *de facto* to the Taiwanese archives. Contrary to popular belief, a precise administrative description of the events in Nanking was made to Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo. It is known that the Japanese authorities (army and military police) destroyed military documents between 14 and 20 August 1945. However, Japanese historians estimate that around one third of the field reports written by the seventy or so units that made up the Shanghai Expeditionary Army and the 10th Army survived.<sup>11</sup> They are kept at the Japanese Ministry of Defence, in the archives of the Bōei kenkyūjo 防衛研究所 (National Institute for Defence Studies), the equivalent of France’s IRSEM (Institute for Strategic Research at the Military School).

In addition to these first four sets of sources, a corpus of visual documents exists in the form of photographs and films. The most famous example is a video shot by American missionary John Magee (1884–1953), who revealed documentary footage of the massacre in 1938. Nevertheless, these documents provide a visual illustration of the massacre rather than enabling analysis of the event.

The Nanking Massacre first became a state and judicial matter during the IMTFE, which focused essentially on crimes against peace, in other words, on Japan’s responsibility for starting and waging war (Class A war crimes). Class B war crimes were, in fact, also tried in the case of Matsui, although he was judged for his actions in starting the war, since he extended the fighting from Shanghai to Nanking. The IMTFE made abundant use of sources and documents from corpora 1 to 3. Class B war crimes in general were tried by the Republic of China (Nationalist China) and then, after 1949, by the People’s Republic of China. Accordingly, three further sets of sources and documents can be distinguished:

5. The sections of the IMTFE transcript of proceedings relating to Nanking.
6. The proceedings of the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal or Nanking Trials (1946–48, including the famous case of Okamura Yasuji 岡村寧次 who was acquitted).

7. A corpus of testimonies by Chinese survivors, compiled by PRC authorities during the 1950s and listed by UNESCO in 2015.
  8. These various corpora were compiled by Japan between the 1970s and 1990s and by the PRC in the 1980s. The four most important compilations –created by historians and described in parts 2 and 3 of this paper– are as follows (see part 4 for those established by the PRC):
  9. Volumes 8 and 9 of the series *Nicchū sensō shishiryō* 日中戦争史資料 (Historical Materials from the Sino-Japanese War): *Nankin jiken* 南京事件 (The Nanking Incident), parts I and II, edited by Hora Tomio 洞富雄 and published in 1973 by Kawade shobō. These two volumes were republished independently in 1985.<sup>12</sup> Volume 1 contains all portions of the *Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East* (original Japanese version) relating to the Nanking Massacre; volume 2 is a compilation of Japanese translations of contemporary press articles from the *Manchester Guardian* and *New York Times*, as well as documents issued by the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone, taken from the previously mentioned compilation by Hsü Shuhsi.
  10. The Chinese publication *Qin Hua Rijun Nanjing datusha dang'an* 侵华日军南京大屠杀档案 (Documents on the Nanking Massacre Committed by the Japanese Army of Invasion), published in Nanking in 1987 and edited by the Second Historical Archives of China. This work presents documents from the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal.<sup>13</sup>
  11. The two-volume Japanese-language compilation *Nankin jiken shiryōshū* 南京事件資料集 (Collection of Documents on the Nanking Incident), edited by the *Nankin jiken chōsa kenkyūkai* 南京事件調査研究会 (Nanking Incident Research Group) and published by Aoki shoten in 1992.<sup>14</sup>
  12. The three-volume *Nankin senshi* 南京戦史 (History of the Battle of Nanking) and *Nankin senshi shiryōshū* 南京戦史資料集 (Collection of Documents on the History of the Battle of Nanking), published between 1989 and 1993 by the *Nankin senshi henshū iinkai* 南京戦史編集委員会 (Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee), which is overseen by the Japanese military organisation *Kaikōsha* 偕行社. This corpus consists of military sources of the utmost importance.<sup>15</sup>
- 9 Ultimately, despite its limitations, the literature available on the Nanking Massacre is quite considerable. Other sources and documents, in particular the testimonies by individuals and military units, are covered in part 4. The documentation available on the massacre is extremely varied in nature. These materials must be compared and cross-referenced in order to obtain as accurate a picture as possible of the events.
- 10 The following section looks at the genesis of historical research on the Nanking Massacre.

## II. Early historical research and its negation: the Vietnam War era

- 11 Before we begin looking at the genealogy of the historiography of Nanking, it is important to make a general comment about the political configuration of East Asia. While democracy was restored to Japan by the Constitution of 1946, in 1949 China became the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the authoritarian Republic of China relocated to Taiwan. The nature of these three political regimes determines to a certain degree the historiography produced in each country. This does not mean that the historiography of the PRC should be rejected; quite the opposite in fact when conducting a historiographical analysis. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Japanese historiographic research dominated the first period beginning in the late 1960s and

running until the creation of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1977. This is somewhat surprising, given, as we shall see, that the historiography produced during this period was based solely on documentation known to exist since the war or produced during the IMTFE, and thus available. The progress of Japanese research compared to that of the PRC in the 1970s can only be explained by the chaos of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Finally, many high-quality Chinese studies have been published overseas, in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

- 12 Historical research on the Asia-Pacific War began immediately after the conflict ended. Initially it was conducted by a short-lived war investigation committee established at the behest of Prime Minister Shidehara Kijūrō 幣原喜重郎 (1872–1951) in 1945 to 1946. <sup>16</sup> Then in 1953, the Rekishigaku kenkyūkai 歴史学研究会 (Historical Science Society of Japan) published a collective work on world history featuring a chapter by Inoue Kiyoshi 井上清 (1913–2001) on “Japanese Imperialism and Asia”.<sup>17</sup> Last but not least, in 1955, historians Tōyama Shigeki 遠山茂樹 (1922–2001), Fujiwara Akira 藤原彰 (1922–2003) and Imai Seiichi 今井清一 (1924–) collectively published their *Shōwa-shi* 昭和史 (History of the Shōwa Era).<sup>18</sup> Inoue and Tōyama, both Marxist historians and progressive academics, were renowned scholars of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japan. This seminal work from 1955 was the first to attempt a critical review of Japanese policies during the 1930s and 1940s. Its publication came just one year after *La France de Vichy* by Robert Aron (1898–1975). Another notable event from 1955 was the Japanese government’s creation of a War History Office within the National Institute for Defence Studies (Bōei kenshūjo senshi-shitsu 防衛研修所戦史室, known today as Bōei kenkyūjo senshi kenkyū sentā 防衛研究所戦史研究センター), itself part of the Japanese Defence Agency (elevated to the Ministry of Defence in 2007). Its mission was to assemble the documents and archives of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy in order to write a history –in other words a state narrative– of the Asia-Pacific War. The same thing occurred in the Republic of China in Taiwan, as we shall see later. The role of this “official” research institute regarding the documentation is problematic. In a context where most of Japan’s military archives were burned in August 1945, the documents that did survive were either seized or concealed. Access to the collection has been considered an issue.
- 13 The studies of the Nanking Massacre which began to appear in the late 1960s were incorporated into the wider historiography of the Second Sino-Japanese War, indicating a growing receptiveness to the subject within the field of history. After the previously mentioned publications from the 1950s, the 25-volume *Japanese History*, published by Iwanami in 1963, focused heavily on the question of militarism and the Asia-Pacific War in its four volumes devoted to modern history. A lengthy chapter by historian Imai Seiichi on the “Supremacy of the Military and the Sino-Japanese War” mentions the Battle of Shanghai and the Nanking Massacre.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, another important series, also entitled *Japanese History*, published in ten volumes by the University of Tokyo in 1970 and also featuring the participation of eminent historians, makes no mention of the massacre.<sup>20</sup> The issue was not yet given equal weight by all. Could it be that it seemed premature to the academic establishment to mention Nanking in 1970?
- 14 The Nanking Massacre came to wider attention thanks to a series of articles written by an investigative journalist, Honda Katsuichi 本多勝一 (1932–). Two factors helped the subject gain prominence: the Vietnam War and the establishment of diplomatic ties

between Japan and the PRC in 1972, when the two nations signed a joint communiqué in which Japan recognised its war crimes. As a war correspondent in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967, Honda had documented the atrocities committed by American troops, devoting a book to the subject in 1968. The violence of the Vietnam War moved him to describe the Second Sino-Japanese War from the victims' perspective. The investigations he conducted in China in 1971 formed the basis of a series of articles published in the newspaper *The Asahi*. These were then presented in book form in 1972 as *Chūgoku no tabi* 中国の旅 (Travels in China) and subsequently appeared in English translation.<sup>21</sup> Given that Honda limited himself to presenting first-person testimonies, his book cannot be considered a work of historical analysis. Furthermore, only one chapter, comprised of four personal accounts, is devoted to Nanking. Nevertheless, *Chūgoku no tabi* sparked controversy in Japan and stimulated historical research on the events.

- 15 The first effect of Honda's articles in *The Asahi* was an outpouring of Japanese personal testimonies on the Nanking Massacre in newspapers and magazines between 1971 and 1975. The second was the appearance of a counter-discourse questioning the veracity of these testimonies or even denying the massacre itself. The first rebuttal of the Nanking Massacre famously appeared in April 1972 in a series of articles by Suzuki Akira 鈴木明 on the "Illusion of the 'Nanking Massacre'" ("Nankin daigyakusatsu" no maboroshi 「南京大虐殺」の幻), published in the conservative magazine *Shokun!* 諸君!.<sup>22</sup> These articles, published in a book of the same name in 1973, specifically criticised Honda's recording of testimonies relating to Nanking, and one incident in particular: the killing "contest" conducted by two Japanese army officers, which was reported in the Japanese press in December 1937 and has come to be seen as emblematic of the Nanking Massacre.<sup>23</sup> Suzuki's criticism centred on his assertion that the witnesses had fabricated their memories based on unsubstantiated journalistic accounts. He acknowledged that the massacre had taken place but considered it impossible to establish the truth of what had actually occurred, describing it as "unknowable" (*maboroshi* 幻). The term would prove to be long-lasting. The controversy over Honda's book raged on in the pages of *Shokun!*, with the same arguments being espoused this time by Yamamoto Shichihei 山本七平, a former soldier who asserted that the infamous 100-man killing contest was a fabrication by journalists.
- 16 Amid this controversy over Honda's book, historians were also helping to bring the issue of Nanking to public consciousness. In 1967, for example, Hora Tomio 洞富雄 (1906–2000) published a chapter entitled the "Nanking Atrocity" (Nankin atoroshiti 南京アトロシテイイ) in a book he wrote on modern war.<sup>24</sup> He followed this up in 1972 by producing the world's first academic treatment of the massacre: *Nankin jiken* 南京事件 (The Nanking Incident).<sup>25</sup> Hora was a professor at Waseda University specialising in modern and contemporary Japanese history. The following year, an extensive compilation of original documents relating to the war appeared in the form of the nine-volume *Nicchū sensō shishiryō* 日中戦争史資料 series (Historical Materials from the Sino-Japanese War), published between 1973 and 1991.<sup>26</sup> The two volumes edited by Hora, entitled *The Nanking Incident*, presented the sources he had used for his 1972 book: namely, the letters compiled by Hsü in 1939, contemporary press articles and all sections of the IMTFE proceedings relating to Matsui and Nanking.
- 17 Hora's *Nankin jiken* was an extensive reworking of his 1967 chapter on the massacre. Approximately one half focuses on the beginning of the "north China events", in other

words, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and on the Battle of Shanghai. The second half attempts to make a systematic analysis of the available documentation and propose a death toll for the Nanking Massacre.<sup>27</sup> The categories proposed by Hora were subsequently adopted by other researchers, namely: the “mopping up” operations to clear the city of concealed enemy troops, the search for plain-clothed soldiers, rape, arson, and the Japanese army’s penetration into the Nanking Safety Zone. When calculating the number of Chinese Nationalist soldiers defending the city (100,000),<sup>28</sup> Hora based his estimate on Japanese military records, while for the death toll he used as a minimum the figures provided by the Chinese burial organisations (155,337 bodies), as well as estimates by members of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone and a report prepared by the Nanking state prosecutor which was submitted to the IMTFE (200,000 deaths).<sup>29</sup> Hora also discussed the figures proposed by the Kuomintang at the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal for B-class criminals,<sup>30</sup> where estimates such as 295,525<sup>31</sup> and then 340,000 deaths<sup>32</sup> were suggested. In short, Hora’s study examined documents known to exist since the IMTFE and did not attempt, at this stage, a detailed reconstruction of the events on the ground. Nevertheless, Hora’s book set out the main challenges that would face later historians: determining both the size of the population in the area subjected to Japanese brutality (Nanking and its suburbs) and the number of Chinese Nationalist troops garrisoned in the city; and estimating the number of civilian and military deaths based on the sources and documents mentioned in the first part of this paper and on projections of the civilian population and size of the Chinese garrison.

- 18 The advances made in research during the 1970s and 1980s were driven by controversies featuring an initially minimalist school which gradually became negationist. This paper will merely present some of the main publications and protagonists. In 1972, Yamamoto continued his writings by publishing a series of articles in *Shokun!* entitled “Watashi no naka no nihon-gun 私のの中の日本軍” (“My Japanese Army”), released in book format in 1975.<sup>33</sup> The title brings to mind *La vraie bataille d’Alger* (The Real Battle of Algiers), published in 1971 by French army general Jacques Massu (1908–2002), which, like Yamamoto’s book, aimed to assert the primacy of one individual’s testimony over the work of historians. In reality, this rejection of scholarly discourse primarily led to competition between witnesses.<sup>34</sup> In “My Japanese Army”, Yamamoto denied that the Nanking Massacre had taken place, arguing that it was impossible. Hora retaliated in 1975 with *Nankin daigyakusatsu: “maboroshi” ka kōsaku hihan* 南京大虐殺：「まぼろし」化工作批判 (A Criticism of Efforts to Portray the Nanking Massacre as an “Illusion”). Henceforth, the controversy pitting historians against authors from the minimalist and negationist camps took on an ultra-factualist dimension. In other words, the dispute came to focalise on criticising evidence, whereby the invalidation of specific elements was seen as disproving the entire massacre. Faced with this situation, historians chose to respond point by point, thereby unwittingly fanning the flames of controversy indefinitely while also giving it the false appearance of a “debate”. This rhetorical trap was criticised shortly after by Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1930–2006) with regard to Holocaust deniers.<sup>35</sup>
- 19 Alongside this controversy, the Nanking debate was gaining particular prominence in Japan due to the junior high school history textbook trials, in which court proceedings were instituted against the Ministry of Education in 1965 by Ienaga Saburō 家永三郎 (1913–2002), a professor at Tokyo University of Education. Having notably written a history of the Pacific War, Ienaga wanted textbooks to include the war waged against



the Republic of China. The Sugimoto Decision of 1970, named after the judge who awarded it, ruled in favour of Ienaga and enabled the Nanking Massacre to appear in senior high school textbooks in 1974 and junior high school textbooks in 1975.<sup>36</sup> Pressure from the Ministry of Education mounted in around 1980, while Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro 中曾根康弘 (1918–2019), in office from 1982 to 1987, would soon evoke a need for a “general review of the war”. The draft textbook Ienaga submitted for approval in 1980 contained a clear mention of the Nanking Massacre, albeit without figures. He was made to tone down his account of the events. The ministry ordered him to make further alterations between 1983 and 1984. In the meantime, in the summer of 1982, the history textbook issue had become an international diplomatic affair involving China and South Korea after the Ministry of Education ordered the removal of the term “war of aggression”.<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, Nakasone was forced to broker dialogue and conciliation.

### III. Research on military history and the new historiography

- 20 A second period of research began in the latter half of the 1970s, running until the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre in 1987. This period saw the appearance of a historiography of Nanking based on military archives. Quite logically, the centrality of Japanese military records and archives within the corpora of documents on Nanking consolidated the dominance of the Japanese historiography. Research began at an official level as the Japanese and Taiwanese governments progressed with their narrations of the military history of the Second Sino-Japanese War by publishing extensive historical series and documentary compilations.
- 21 Between 1966 and 1980, Japan’s National Institute for Defence Studies published *Senshi sōsho* 戦史叢書 (War History Series), a collection of 102 thematic volumes on Japan’s pre-war military system and the Asia-Pacific War. Although this is yet another example of a history written from the state’s perspective, it lacks the militarist narratives that characterised official histories before 1945. Ultimately, it offers a non-critical narrative, simply describing the events and compiling the primary materials available. It is a purely military historiography based on the archives of the various army corps and former ministries. The *Senshi sōsho* collection includes the ten-volume series *Daihon’ei Rikugunbu* 大本榮陸軍部 (Imperial General Headquarters, Army Department). The first volume, published in 1967, examines Japanese command from the late nineteenth century onwards as well as the decisions made from 1937 to 1940 regarding the war in China. Another notable series within the *Senshi sōsho* collection is the three-volume *Shina jihen Rikugun sakusen* 支那事変陸軍作戦 (Army Strategy in the China Incident), published in 1975 and 1976.<sup>38</sup> Volume one examines the fall of Nanking in the context of the Second Sino-Japanese War and attempts to set out the reasons behind the attack on the Chinese capital using archived documents. Despite this, it makes no mention of the massacre.
- 22 At around the same time, between 1981 and 1988, the Commission for the History of the Party, Central Committee of the Nationalist Party, Republic of China (Dangshi weiyuanhui Zhonghua mingguodang zhongyang weiyuanhui 黨史委員會中華民國黨中央委員會), in Taiwan, published a seven-part series edited by the historian Qin Xiaoyi 秦孝儀 (1921–2007) entitled *Zhonghua minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian* 中華民國重要史

料初編 (Important Historical Materials of the Republic of China). Its focus was the War of Resistance Against Japan.<sup>39</sup> Just like *Senshi sōsho*, this official Taiwanese publication, overseen by a historian close to Chiang Kai-shek, was a purely military history blending documentary compilation and critical analysis. Although it describes the fall of Nanking, the massacre is not mentioned in the section covering autumn 1937. Finally, in the People's Republic of China, the works published on the eve of 1970 by the History Department of Renmin University (founded by the Communist Party of China) illustrate that research there was not as advanced as Taiwanese and Japanese publications from the same period.<sup>40</sup>

- 23 In parallel with these official publications, Japanese academics in the field of military history began to turn their attention to the Nanking Massacre. At the dawn of the 1980s, books from the minimalist and negationist camps had carved a broader space for themselves in Japan, creating a context in which negationist publications were able to take centre stage. One notable example is Tanaka Masaaki 田中正明 (1911–2006), who branded the Nanking Massacre a “fiction” (*kyokō* 虚構) invented by the Allies between 1946 and 1948. Back in 1963, Tanaka had published a text lauding Indian judge Radhabinod Pal (1886–1967), who defended Japan and the “Great East Asia War” at the IMTFE. During the war, Tanaka served as personal secretary to General Matsui, commander of operations in Nanking. His numerous publications include three key works published in 1984, 1985 and 1987: an analysis of the *Field Diary of General Matsui Iwane* (*Matsui Iwane taishō jinchū nissshi* 松井石根大将陣中日記), a republication of that diary the following year, and *Nankin jiken no sōkatsu - gyakusatsu hitei jūgo no ronkyō* 南京事件の総括：虐殺否定十五の論拠 (Summary of the Nanking Incident: 15 Arguments that Refute the Massacre),<sup>41</sup> partially translated into English as *What Really Happened in Nanking: The Refutation of a Common Myth* in 2000.<sup>42</sup> The growth of Nanking denial in Japan between 1975 and 1987 was thus more or less synchronous with the controversies that erupted in France in 1978, leading to the introduction of the anti-negationist Gayssot Act in 1990. Tanaka's republication of Matsui's field diary sparked controversy when historians and several newspapers, including *The Asahi*, dissected the text and proved that Tanaka had tampered with the original. Matsui's field diary was reproduced once again in 1989 in a compilation by the military organisation Kaikōsha (see below in this paper). At the same time, in 1985, the city of Nanking opened its Memorial Hall for Compatriots Killed in the Nanking Massacre.<sup>43</sup>
- 24 This flood of publications sparked a reaction from Japanese scholars. Among historians of the war or of the military system, Yoshida Yutaka 吉田裕 (1954–), a professor at Hitotsubashi University and former pupil of Fujiwara Akira, turned his attention to the Nanking Massacre. As previously noted, Fujiwara was a specialist in Japanese political and military history and co-wrote *Shōwa-shi* in 1955. He also published a book on the Nanking Massacre in 1985. The following year, in 1986, Yoshida took up the mantle by publishing the first detailed account of the Japanese army's operations during the Nanking Massacre: *Tennō no guntai to Nankin jiken* 天皇の軍隊と南京事件 (The Emperor's Army and the Nanking Incident).<sup>44</sup> In terms of its method and choice of documents analysed, this book differs significantly from Hora's work, which focused on sources dating from after the events and on witness accounts. In contrast, Yoshida drew on primary sources emanating from troops on the ground as well as on monographs published by former soldiers.

- 25 Yoshida highlighted the treatment of soldiers captured in Nanking. Essentially, the Japanese army had a policy of not taking prisoners and –like France during the so-called “Algerian events”– Japan did not consider itself to be at war and thus did not feel bound by any international treaties during what it termed the “China incident”. The monographs published by soldiers did not deny that small-scale killings had taken place, but justified them as legitimate defence in response to prisoner “uprisings”. Field documents show that military command at division level ordered troops to “dispose” of prisoners. The term *shobun* 処分, meaning “to dispose of”, was used to order their elimination.<sup>45</sup> Finally, Yoshida analysed the structural causes leading to the slaughtering of civilians, in particular the absence of a genuine military police force in the Central China Area Army, which was accompanied by just 102 members of the Kenpeitai 憲兵隊 (Gendarmerie/Japanese military police). No member of the Kenpeitai –in the capacity of military police– was present during the fall of Nanking, and just seventeen police officers accompanied General Matsui when he entered the city on 17 December.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the army was unsupervised, entrusted to the command of each unit leader. This approach to historical inquiry, which involved analysing the structural causes rather than focusing solely on the massacre itself, subsequently came to be widely adopted by historians.
- 26 Another book on military history was published in 1986, this time hailing from a different school of thought within the field: *Nankin jiken - gyakusatsu no kōzō* 南京事件「虐殺」の構造 (The Nanking Incident – Structure of a “Massacre”), by Hata Ikuhiko 秦郁彦 (1932–), a former researcher at the National Institute for Defence Studies who also worked on the aforementioned *Senshi sōsho* collection.<sup>47</sup> Hata specialises in the history of the Japanese army and has published numerous works since 1961 on the Second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>48</sup> He is well regarded in the English-speaking world and served as a visiting professor at Princeton University in 1978. He also wrote the chapter on Japan’s continental expansion from 1905 to 1941 in volume 6 of *The Cambridge History of Japan*, which focuses on the twentieth century (1988). *Nankin jiken - gyakusatsu no kōzō* was epoch-making. Like Yoshida, Hata analysed the structural causes of the massacre and highlighted the logistical failings of the Imperial Japanese Army, which was unable to control large numbers of POWs and so did not. However, while Hata, like Yoshida, stressed the need for a structural approach to investigating the massacre, he ignored the question of Japanese anti-Chinese sentiments. Aside from this omission, Hata’s book was also criticised for its estimated death toll, since Hata simply reworked the figure calculated in the immediate aftermath of the event by sociologist Lewis S. C. Smythe (1901–1978), from the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. In his report, which in reality concerned only civilians, Smythe put the number of deaths at 40,000, from which Hata subtracted a third then added in soldiers.<sup>49</sup> Hata never adjusted his initial estimate, even in the revised and expanded version of his book in 2007, despite the appearance of new sources used by historians on the POWs killed by various units. Given Hata’s attempts to limit the scope of the massacre and provide an “intermediate” thesis on the events, his work on Nanking has subsequently come to be seen as the Trojan horse of the revisionist camp.<sup>50</sup>
- 27 Fujiwara Akira resumed the work of Yoshida and Hata the following year, in 1987, when he published *Nihon gunji-shi* 日本軍事史 (A Military History of Japan), divided into two volumes on pre- and post-1945.<sup>51</sup> At the time, Fujiwara was a professor at Hitotsubashi University alongside Yoshida, and a member of the Science Council of Japan (*Nihon*

gakujuitsu kaigi 日本学会議). He had already studied Japanese military history in the 1960s before concentrating on the links between the modern emperor system (*tennō-sei* 天皇制) and Japanese imperialism in Asia, leading him to co-write a book on the subject with Yoshida in 1984. *Nihon gunji-shi* does not focus solely on the military machine or military techniques but instead attempts to meticulously reconstruct the history of Japan's military from the 1870s onwards, replacing it in the context of the wars it fought in Asia and the Pacific. In other words, it provides a history of the military machine analysed in the context of contemporary imperialism.

- 28 *Nihon gunji-shi* contains a chapter on the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945. It concludes that there was a loss of military discipline and a loosening of moral standards among the troops after the Battle of Shanghai and in general as the war in China escalated.<sup>52</sup> Fujiwara offers a detailed description of the Nanking Massacre.<sup>53</sup> This description –which he expanded on in a 1988 publication– places the massacre in the context of the wider history of the modern Japanese army.<sup>54</sup> The massacre is no longer treated as an isolated event but as the result of a specific set of conditions, which the historian is duty bound to explain. Fujiwara's conclusion, as a leading scholar on the military and political history of modern Japan, illustrates the general framework of thought applied to Nanking by Japanese historical scholarship on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre in 1987.

The Japanese army unlawfully executed a large number of prisoners and repeatedly committed acts of great cruelty against civilians, who were the victims of rape and murder as the army advanced and during the operations conducted from Shanghai and Hangzhou to Nanking, then during the taking of Nanking and the weeks that followed. These acts were reported all over the world as the Nanking atrocities and were one of the main charges against Japan during the Tokyo Trial. This affair is an established historical fact in China, where the city of Nanking has a memorial. In Japan, however, some claim that a massacre did not take place, arguing, in an attempt to evade our responsibility for the war and influence the Ministry of Education's history textbook authorisation process, that the figures put forward by China are exaggerated. Yet the reality of this massacre cannot be doubted. It has been proven by numerous studies [...] There were no less than 200,000 victims – Chinese civilians and soldiers– in Nanking.<sup>55</sup>

- 29 Finally, the late 1970s and 1980s saw the appearance of research conducted by two scholarly societies: the Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee (Nankin senshi henshū iinkai 南京戦史編集委員会), part of the military organisation Kaikōsha 偕行社, and the Nanking Incident Research Group (Nankin jiken chōsa kenkyūkai 南京事件調査研究会), founded in 1984 and linked to researchers from Hitotsubashi University (a group that included Fujiwara, Yoshida and Hora). At the same time, research was also growing into issues such as war crimes in general, biological and chemical weapons testing and the history of the IMTFE –the main sticking point for conservative critics. One notable scholar in this development was Awaya Kentarō 粟屋憲太郎 (1944–), another former pupil of Fujiwara's and a specialist in the history of the IMTFE.<sup>56</sup> Awaya also edited the volumes on gas weapons in the archive series *Jūgo nen sensō gokuhi shiryōshū* 十五年戦争極秘史料集 (Top Secret Documents on the Fifteen-Year War), published between 1989 and 2002.

## IV. From the fiftieth anniversary of the Nanking Massacre in 1987 to the fiftieth anniversary of Japan's defeat in 1995: Sino-Japanese research and conservative reaction

- 30 The years surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of Nanking in 1987 saw research into the massacre accelerate. This momentum continued until a few years after the fiftieth anniversary of Japan's defeat in 1995. The response to this second anniversary was particularly contentious in Japan due to a coalition being in power, led by the Socialist Party and Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi 村山富市 (1924–). In 1995, Murayama issued a landmark statement regarding the war in China and Japanese colonial rule. After the studies published in the run-up to the fiftieth anniversary of Nanking in 1987, the period from 1987 to the 1995 and 1997 anniversaries was characterised by the appearance of compilations of sources and documents.
- 31 Following the republication in 1985 of the corpus originally edited by Hora in 1973, the PRC's national archives launched a drive to compile historical sources in preparation for commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan. Consequently, in 1987 the Second Historical Archives of China (Di er lishi danganguan 第二历史档案馆) published the series *Qin Hua Rijun Nanjing datusha dang'an* 侵华日军南京大屠杀档案 (Documents on the Nanking Massacre Committed by the Japanese Army of Invasion).<sup>57</sup> This corpus is the result of official research comparable to the military history collections published by the Japanese and Taiwanese governments in the 1970s. The Second Historical Archives of China oversaw several other documentary compilations on the war.<sup>58</sup>
- 32 The baton was then passed back to Japan, which published two collections between 1989 and 1993, one compiled by the Nanking Incident Research Group (which included researchers from Hitotsubashi University) and the other by the Kaikōsha-led Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee, both mentioned earlier in this paper.<sup>59</sup> This second corpus –focusing on military sources– also features Chinese documents translated into Japanese, including a report by Tang Shengzhi 唐生智 (1889–1970) on “The Defence of Nanking”.<sup>60</sup> Tang led the Chinese troops during the battle to defend Nanking but eventually fled the city, abandoning his men and the general population. The collection also contains translations of telegram exchanges between Tang and Chiang Kai-shek. These documents are either from corpora compiled while the Republic of China was still located on the mainland (1912–1949) or from corpora compiled in 1987 by the national archives of the PRC.<sup>61</sup> The collection also includes a summary volume entitled *The History of the Battle of Nanking*. Kaikōsha is not a scholarly group but a military organisation created before WWII. Membership is open to retired personnel from the army and air force, with a counterpart –Suikōkai 水交会– existing for navy veterans. This explains how Kaikōsha was able to bring together such valuable military sources. The group was revived in 1952 and returned to its original pre-war name –its current name– in 1957. Kaikōsha had traditionally denied the Nanking Massacre, adopting a stance similar to those who defended the “illusion” or “unknowable” (*maboroshi*) thesis, in other words, a negationist stance. Nevertheless, *The History of the Battle of Nanking*, which was the culmination of Kaikōsha's work, now acknowledged the reality of the massacre, albeit with a death toll limited to 16,000 people. In some ways, this

“intermediate” stance marked an important step forward for an organisation formally affiliated with the Imperial Japanese Army.

- 33 No less vital are the numerous memoirs and war diaries published during this same period, written by former servicemen present in Nanking. Several different categories can be distinguished. One of the most important is certainly the diary of Nakajima Kesago 中島今朝吾 (1881–1945), who commanded the 16th Division, an infantry unit originally from Kyoto. The 16th Division played a central role in the attack on Nanking and the fall of the city, as well as in the execution of POWs.<sup>62</sup> In his war diary published in 1984, Nakajima admitted having ordered the systematic killing of tens of thousands of Chinese prisoners. This text was later included in the *Kaikōsha* compilation.<sup>63</sup> Nakajima described the events of 13 December 1937 in a passage heavily debated by historians. It mentions the “cleaning up” (*seisō* 清掃) of the city and “mopping up” (*sōtō* 掃蕩/掃討) of remaining troops, plus the capturing of soldiers as they tried to flee to the suburbs.

Most of the defeated enemy fled into the wooded and rural areas within the operational sector of the 16th Division, while others fled from Zhenjiang Fortress [east of Nanking]. The prisoners were everywhere, making it difficult to dispose of them.

Given the general policy of not taking captives, we had to deal with them one by one. When large masses of 1,000, 5,000 or even 10,000 people arrive, it is impossible to disarm them. And while the situation seemed safe because they had lost the will to fight and followed us in tight groups, if there had been a disturbance, it would have been very difficult to deal with them. We therefore obtained more troops by truck, dispatched to supervise and transport the prisoners. The evening of the 13th saw the movement of a large number of trucks [...].

According to information obtained later, Sasaki Unit disposed of [*shori* 処理] 15,000 captives; the commander of the company defending Taiping Gate disposed of 1,300; and some 7,000 to 8,000 captives were gathered near Xianhe Gate, with more continuing to come there to surrender.

To dispose of these 7,000 to 8,000, a large ditch would have been necessary. Since this was impossible to find, the prisoners were divided into groups of 100 or 200 and then transported to appropriate locations so they could be disposed of.<sup>64</sup>

- 34 Other accounts were violently criticised by *Kaikōsha*, for example during a controversy surrounding the former soldier Sone Kazuo 曾根一夫 in December 1988, once again in the pages of *Shokun!*<sup>65</sup> Itakura Yoshiaki 板倉由明 (1932–1999) proved that the account published by Sone –who served in an artillery unit during the fall of Nanking and so was not on the frontline– was in reality a reconstruction of other accounts told to his veterans association, so disgusted was Sone by the stories of his fellow soldiers. The controversy generated much media coverage for Sone’s book. Itakura was a member of the Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee (led by *Kaikōsha*) and had studied the massacre since 1981. The committee was working at the time on the compilation of Nakajima’s war diary. Itakura was also one of the men responsible for highlighting Tanaka Masaaki’s falsification of the war diary of General Matsui. Other memoirs by conscripts who fought at the Battle of Nanking made a deep impact. These included the accounts by soldiers from the 16th and 20th Divisions, both infantry units from Kyoto. The publisher Aoki shoten, which was closely linked to the Hitotsubashi Group led by Fujiwara, Yoshida and Hora, published three testimonials by former soldiers in 1987, 1988 and 1989, followed in 1989 by a collection of documents from the 16th Division.<sup>66</sup> These documents provided the perspective of conscripts rather than superior officers,

in contrast to the corpus compiled by Kaikōsha. The death of the Shōwa Emperor (Hirohito) that same year, in 1989, seemed truly to mark a change of era.

- 35 Despite this, major differences appeared between these two research groups. Members of the Kaikōsha-led Battle of Nanking Editorial Committee, such as Itakura, considered the massacre to have been on a smaller scale than that suggested by Yoshida and Fujiwara.<sup>67</sup> One of the main arguments for this reduction in the scale of the event was the estimated total population of Nanking, which certain critics believed to be exaggerated. The variations in the conclusions of Japanese historians stem in large part from the figures adopted for the civilian population and the National Revolutionary Army, as noted previously regarding Hora's work. These estimations are also frequently harnessed by negationists.<sup>68</sup>
- 36 In addition to the aforementioned compilations of documents and archives, in 1992 the Hitotsubashi Group published an important reference work entitled *Nankin daigyakusatsu no kenkyū* 南京大虐殺の研究 (Studies on the Nanking Massacre), edited by Fujiwara, Hora and the journalist Honda.<sup>69</sup> This publication provides an overview of the evolution of Japanese research over a twenty-year period from 1972 to 1992, encompassing all the relevant themes and topics: the Japanese advance from Shanghai to Nanking, the Battle of Nanking, international law, the organisation of the National Revolutionary Army within Nanking, the execution of Chinese prisoners, negationism, and finally, the mass rapes. The chapter on the Nationalist army, written by Kasahara Tokushi (see below in this paper), was one of the first systematic Japanese studies of the issue and drew heavily on Chinese sources and studies, unlike previous works.<sup>70</sup>
- 37 The People's Republic of China experienced a similar acceleration of research in the run-up to the fiftieth anniversary of victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan, with some 400 books published on the subject in 1995. Notable examples include an examination of Japanese war crimes overseen by the History Research Office of the Chinese Communist Party; a chronological catalogue of Japanese war crimes published by the Modern History Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Zhongguo shehuikexueyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo 中国社会科学院近代史研究所); and a compilation of documents on Japanese war crimes by province, published by the same institute.<sup>71</sup> In 1995, historian Bu Ping 步平, then vice president of the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences and future director of the Modern History Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, published in Japan a Japanese-language study on the use of chemical warfare by Japan.<sup>72</sup> Bu is one of the PRC's most active scholars on the use of biological and chemical weapons by the Imperial Japanese Army and the traces they left in China.
- 38 In Japan, preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end in 1995 as well as Prime Minister Murayama's statement led to a systemisation of negationist discourse.<sup>73</sup> The Liberal Democratic Party, the opposition party at the time, set up the History Examination Committee (Rekishu kentō iinkai 歴史検討委員会) with a view to producing a conservative history of the Asia-Pacific War. Supporters of the commission included future prime minister Abe Shinzō 安倍晋三 (1954-). The final report was published in 1995 under the title *Daitōa sensō no sōkatsu* 大東亜戦争の総括 (Summary of the Greater East Asian War). It called for a "national movement" to produce new history textbooks. The person in charge of the section on the Nanking Massacre was none other than Tanaka Masaaki, General Matsui's former secretary. Tanaka labelled the massacre a "fiction" (*kyokō* 虚構) in a chapter that can only be described as

negationist.<sup>74</sup> Once again, the views of an eyewitness “who saw nothing” was used to counter the work of historians. The result of the History Examination Committee’s meetings was the creation in 1997 of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform and, that same year, Nippon kaigi 日本会議 (Japan Conference), an organisation that aims to unite “real conservatives” behind the scenes of the Japanese government and restore Japan’s pre-1945 order.<sup>75</sup> The early 2000s subsequently saw renewed interest in Yasukuni Shrine commemorating the war dead.<sup>76</sup>

- 39 Neither these political setbacks nor the history textbook revisions after 2010 hampered scholarship on Nanking. Indeed, several particularly important studies were published in China and Japan during this period. The situation in the People’s Republic of China had changed significantly since the early 1980s thanks to the general change of context owing to the end of the Cultural Revolution. In 1977, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences had been established and this was followed by the era of Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904–1997), who as China’s *de facto* leader from 1978 to 1992 orchestrated the country’s radical transformation. Despite these changes, research in China remained politicised and, most importantly, dependent on the official military history compilations produced by the Japanese and Taiwanese governments. One notable Chinese study was produced by Sun Zhaiwei 孫宅巍 (1940–), a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who in 1990 published an estimated population size for Nanking on the eve of the fall of the city, based on the archives available in China.<sup>77</sup> The question of how many people were living in Nanking at the time of the massacre had been an essential element since Hora’s work in the 1970s, but Hora himself had been unable to provide a detailed estimate. Sun then co-edited a book on the Nanking Massacre in 1997, providing an overview of Chinese research during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>78</sup>
- 40 The year 1997 saw a wealth of publications from various sources. Sun published his influential *Nanjing baowei zhanshi* 南京保衛戰史 (History of the Battle to Defend Nanking), this time in Taiwan.<sup>79</sup> As in the case of Bu Ping, the most important and most neutral Chinese studies were published overseas.<sup>80</sup> Sun’s *Nanjing baowei zhanshi* analyses the fall of the Chinese capital from the perspective of the Nationalist troops, with Sun following up his 1990 estimate of the population of Nanking with a study of the composition of Chiang Kai-shek’s army at the time of the battle to defend the city, as the imperial army closed in.<sup>81</sup> As we have seen, this question of the size of the Chinese garrison force is as important as that of the population. On both these points, the publications by Chinese scholars supplemented the detailed calculations of Japanese historians, who subsequently used them in their work. This can be seen in the writings of historian Kasahara Tokushi 笠原十九司 (1944–), who in 1997 published *Nankin jiken* 南京事件 (The Nanking Incident).<sup>82</sup> A specialist in modern Chinese history, Kasahara combined all of the approaches adopted by researchers to date –personal accounts, IMTFE documents, military histories and sources, population estimates by Chinese scholars– to produce a summary of research from the previous three decades. His *Nankin jiken* is the best-known study of the massacre in Japan, alongside Hata’s *Nankin jiken - gyakusatsu no kōzō*, published in 1986. However, the conclusions of these two historians differ significantly. Kasahara suggested a death toll of 130,000 –mostly soldiers– basing his estimate on the figures produced by Sun Zhaiwei, while Hata in his 2007 revised edition continued to rely on Smythe’s original estimate of 40,000. Finally, an important new source, the *Diaries of John Rabe*, was published in Germany in 1997 after being rediscovered by Chinese-American journalist Iris Chang (1968–2004).<sup>83</sup>



Chang helped bring the Nanking Massacre to public attention outside East Asia with her 1997 book *The Rape of Nanking*.

- 41 All of these studies and publications came under fire from the two aforementioned conservative organisations founded in 1997 (Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform and Nippon kaigi). Since then, an outright denialist school has been led by Higashinakano Shūdō 東中野修道 (1947–), a jurist specialising in East German law and with close links to the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, with whom he co-published two books. In 1998, Higashinakano published “*Nankin gyakutsatsu*” no tettei kenshō (published in English as *The Nanking Massacre: Fact Versus Fiction: A Historian’s Quest for the Truth*), which specifically attacked Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking*.<sup>84</sup> The English translation was widely disseminated free of charge to research institutes overseas during the second half of the 2000s.<sup>85</sup> In 1998, Kobayashi Yoshinori 小林よしのり (1953–), a far-right activist who had defected from the left, published a manga entitled *Sensō-ron* 戦争論 (On War), in which he adopted the same stance on the Second Sino-Japanese War in general and on Nanking in particular, namely that it was a “fabrication” by the Allies.<sup>86</sup> The rhetoric of these two authors was characteristic of the negationist school; it aimed to reject the validity of all the evidence accumulated to date, despite its growth in volume since the 1990s.

## Epilogue: the internationalisation of research

- 42 Research on the Nanking Massacre, stimulated by increased awareness among scholars and with the aid of journalists, has undergone several phases since its beginnings in the latter half of the 1960s. The result is some fifty years of accumulated research and studies of which I have presented just some of the key works. The research conducted by Hora Tomio in the early 1970s initially focused on documents and evidence collected for the IMTFE, in which survivor accounts and the records of Chinese burial organisations were key. In contrast, from the second half of the 1970s through to 1992, military historiography came to dominate, harnessing military sources of a different nature to the evidence presented at the IMTFE between 1946 and 1948. Finally, a period situated between the fiftieth (1987) and sixtieth (1997) anniversaries of the massacre, with the fiftieth anniversary of the end of WWII (1995) in between, saw an increase in testimonies and a proliferation of sources and documentary compilations –notably military– as well as advances in Chinese research made in collaboration with Japanese academics.
- 43 On the eve of the new millennium, historical research had reached a state of completion following thirty years –since Hora’s 1967 publication– of scholarship and exchanges between historians from Japan, China and also Taiwan (in the field of military history). As previously noted, the period from 1986 to 1997 had seen an explosion of studies, discoveries and publications of source materials. All of the most important studies, based on key sources, date from this period. Yoshida, Hata and Kasahara subsequently refined their work by publishing studies on specific points, or by revising their original publications, as Hata did in 2007 with an expanded version of his 1986 opus. Despite this, it seemed reasonable to suppose that no major new advances would come out of the field after 2000. Scholarship has continued to grow in other directions instead.

- 44 Firstly, although the main corpora of sources were published in around 1990, new materials have continued to come to light. This is attested by the provision of access in 2005 to certain documents for research purposes, like the diaries of Chiang Kai-shek, held at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, access to documents has been partially improved thanks to institutions making certain resources and studies available online, as the National Institute for Defence Studies has attempted to do in Japan. Another example is the creation in 2001 of the Japan Centre for Asian Historical Records, reflecting Prime Minister Murayama's 1995 pledge to provide internet access to archives.<sup>88</sup>
- 45 Secondly, there has been a growth in collaborative research since 1997, either in the form of individual projects or governmental ones. While Japanese research outputs were stabilising somewhere between Hata and Kasahara, Chinese scholarship, in the wake of Sun Zhaiwei and Bu Ping, began to assert itself in the East Asian historical debate. In 2006, Yang Tianshi 楊天石 (1936–), a historian from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, co-published with Hatano Sumio 波多野澄雄 (1947–), a historian of international relations, a study on the military history of the Kuomintang specifically focused on the Battle to Defend Nanking.<sup>89</sup> Two years later, Yang then published a study in Hong Kong on Chiang Kai-shek and the beginnings of the Second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>90</sup> Such publications have helped improve global knowledge of the conflict. Academic exchange has also occurred in the form of a series of international symposia held in nine countries across Asia, Europe and North America in 2007 and 2008.<sup>91</sup> The internationalisation of scholarship on Nanking can also be seen at the linguistic level. While Japanese researchers initially worked almost exclusively on Japanese-language documents and sources between 1967 and 1992, this has not been the case since the 1990s, when the Japanese historiography of the Second Sino-Japanese War came to be dominated by scholars fluent in Chinese. This is evident in a special edition of the journal *Gunji shigaku* 軍事史学 (Journal of Military History), published in 2017 to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>92</sup> The same is true of Chinese historians studying the imperial army using Japanese documentation.<sup>93</sup> This internationalisation has also seen the United States gradually enter the debate and conduct research on Nanking, in parallel with a spike in interest in the subject of “comfort women”. Following on from Iris Chang's famous book in 1997, scholars like Bob Wakabayashi have turned their attention to the Nanking Massacre, initially from the angle of negationism, then widening their focus through projects combining American and Japanese historians.<sup>94</sup> Around the same time, in 2006, Yoshida Takashi, a historian specialising in nationalism at Western Michigan University, published a book examining how perceptions of the Nanking Massacre have evolved in public memory in Japan, China and the United States.<sup>95</sup>
- 46 Finally, closer international ties have been established at the political level. Abe Shinzō, during his first term as prime minister in 2006 to 2007, requested that a Japan-China Joint History Research Committee be established in order to resolve the issue of their shared past. The committee was led on the Chinese side by historian Bu Ping, and on the Japanese side by Kitaoka Shin'ichi 北岡伸一 (1948–), a historian of Manchukuo with more conservative leanings. The many and frequently difficult meetings gave rise to a report published in 2014 in both languages, with the section on the beginnings of the Second Sino-Japanese War written by Hatano Sumio and, on the Chinese side, Rong Weimu 荣维木 (1952–) from the Institute of Modern History at the Chinese Academy of

Social Sciences.<sup>96</sup> This report is a model of its kind and gives a detailed presentation of the various stances and respective arguments over five decades of research, without attempting to find a consensus. It was published at a time when Abe had been back into power since 2012 and it is not known what he or the Liberal Democratic Party thought of it. The results of the work by the Japan-China Joint History Research Committee illustrate the disparities between the political and academic worlds, which are the only explanation for the persistence of the debate on Nanking at the political level.

- 47 The question of the Nanking Massacre continues to grow today. Initially driven by the victims' families or by small groups of researchers, it subsequently became the main hobbyhorse of Japanese neo-conservatives before finally becoming a source of intergovernmental friction after 1997 with the rise of the PRC. This notwithstanding, from a European perspective, the subject raises questions regarding knowledge of the history of the Second Sino-Japanese War. As such, it is vital we promote awareness of the results of historical scholarship in East Asia.

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## NOTES

1. Nankin senshi henshū iinkai (ed.) 1989, documentation vol. 1, p. 48–49.
2. Family names precede given names, as is customary in East Asia.
3. Matsui commanded the Central China Area Army continuously from 30 October to its disbanding on 14 February 1938. He had his headquarters in Suzhou from 5 to 15 December 1937, in other words during the Battle of Nanking, when the massacres in the suburbs, the killing of military POWs and “mopping-up” operations took place (see elsewhere in this paper). After holding a victory parade to celebrate the capturing of the city on 17 December, Matsui left for Shanghai on 22 December. He was also commander of the Shanghai Expeditionary Army until 2 December, in other words during the entire Battle of Shanghai, at which point the position passed over to Prince Asakanomiya Yasuhiko 朝香宮鳩彦(1887–1981). The 10th Army was formed on 20 October 1937 and sent as reinforcement to Shanghai, where it arrived late. It played an important role in the Japanese decision taken in the field to extend their operations to Nanking.
4. This paper will not go back to the 1950s and 1960s to include an inventory of the huge number of Japanese and Chinese publications on the beginnings of the Second Sino-Japanese War, from the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (July 1937) to the Battle of Nanking.
5. Ingraio 2009, p. 123. Translation by Phoebe Green (2011).
6. Wakabayashi 2007. On the memory debate, see Mitter 2007 and more particularly Yoshida 2006. On the Japanese advance on Nanking and siege of the city, see for example the work of Danish journalist Peter Harmsen (2017).
7. Hsü 1939, Hora 1985, Brook 1999. Hsü later served as vice-representative of the Republic of China at the League of Nations beginning in 1940.
8. Brook 1999, p. 4.
9. Rabe 1998 (English translation).
10. Document published in Hora 1985, vol. 1, p. 374–380.
11. Yoshida 1997.
12. Hora ed. 1985.
13. Di er Zhonghua lishi dang’anguan ed. 1987. See also note 61.
14. Nankin jiken chōsa kenkyūkai ed. 1992.
15. Nankin senshi henshū iinkai 1989–1993.
16. Inoue 2017, Nanta 2019.
17. Inoue 1953.
18. Tōyama *et al.* 1955, Brunet 2010.
19. Imai 1963, p. 308–313.
20. Rekishigaku kenkyūkai 1970, vol. 1 and vol. 9.
21. Honda 1972.



22. Kasahara 2007, p. 109–110; Wakabayashi 2007, p. 115–148.
23. The two officers in question, Mukai Toshiaki 向井敏明(1912–1948) and Noda Tsuyoshi 野田毅(1912–1948), were tried at the Nanking War Crimes Tribunal in December 1947 and executed in January 1948.
24. Hora 1967.
25. Hora 1972.
26. Hora ed. 1985 (reprint).
27. Hora 1972, p. 173–193.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
29. Document no. 1706, Hora 1972, p. 176.
30. For more on this subject see: Hayashi 2005, p. 101–110, Kushner 2015, p. 137–284.
31. Figure put forward by the prosecution. Brook 1999, p. 2.
32. Negationists claim that the figure of 300,000 was invented either by the Allies or by the Communist Party of China after the 1980s, but Hora’s discussion shows that a higher figure had already been suggested by the Republic of China (now Taiwan) in the 1940s. See for example: Kobayashi 1998, p. 44–45. See the discussion about Tanaka Masaaki later in this paper.
33. Kasahara 2007, p. 118–120.
34. See part 4 of this paper for a more detailed discussion of the competition between Japanese witnesses. Jacques Massu’s book was itself criticised by another war survivor, Marcel Bigeard (1916–2010), who asserted that Massu’s views amounted to nothing more than personal opinion. He pointed out that “his book [...] should have been called *My Battle of Algiers* and not *The Real Battle of Algiers*, because every colonel or even captain could have written their own account.” The argument that first-hand testimony is better able to establish historical truth than reconstructions by historians is thus highly tenuous. Bigeard 1975, p. 276.
35. Vidal-Naquet 1987, p. 37–41 and p. 134–155.
36. Ienaga 1998: 365–372; Nanta 2001.
37. Nanta 2001; Nanta 2010.
38. Bōei kenkyūjo senshi-shitsu 1975.
39. Qin Xiaoyi *et al.* 1981–1988.
40. See for example, for the previous decade: *Zhongguo renmin daxue* 1962: 347–471
41. Tanaka 1987.
42. See the analysis by Wakabayashi (2001).
43. Kreissler 2007. Chinese name: Qinhua Rijun Nanjing datusha yunan tongbao jinianguan 侵华日军南京大屠杀遇难同胞纪念馆.
44. Yoshida 1986.
45. Yoshida 1986, p. 113–115; Hayashi 2005, p. 131–133.
46. Yoshida 1986, p. 165.
47. Hata 1986, expanded edition 2007.
48. Hata 1961.
49. Hata 1986, p. 214.
50. Hata posits that there are three “factions” within Nanking scholarship, validating revisionism as a historical “school of thought” and categorising other Japanese scholars as “maximalists”. Hata 1986, p. 184–187.
51. Fujiwara 1987, two vols.
52. Fujiwara 1987, vol. 1, p. 235–240.
53. Fujiwara 1987, vol. 1, p. 225–227.
54. Fujiwara 1988.
55. Fujiwara, 1987, vol. 1, p. 225–227.
56. Awaya 1989; Awaya 1995.
57. *Di er lishi dang’anguan* ed. 1987.

58. See note 61.
59. Nankin jiken chōsa kenkyūkai 1992; Nankin senshi henshū iinkai 1989–1993.
60. Nankin senshi henshū iinkai 1989, vol. 1, p. 728–732.
61. The documents presented by Kaikōsha in the section on Chinese materials are from three main corpora: *Zhonghua minguo shi baocun wenxian ziliao congkan* 中華民國史保存資料叢刊, 1912–1949 (Corpus of Documents Conserved for the History of the Republic of China), compiled before the ROC moved to Taiwan; *Kangri zhanzheng zhengmian zhanchang* 抗日战争正面战场 (Frontline Battles in the War of Resistance Against Japan) compiled in 1987 by the Second Historical Archives of China (PRC); and *Nanjing baoweizhan* 南京保卫战 (The Battle to Defend Nanking), compiled in 1987 by the publisher Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe 中国文史出版社.
62. Kasahara 1997. The term POW is used here but clearly this may appear inappropriate. It is used in the sources themselves to refer to captured soldiers.
63. Nankin senshi henshū iinkai (ed.) 1989, documentation vol. 1, p. 303–367.
64. Nankin senshi henshū iinkai (ed.) 1989, documentation vol. 1, *ibid.*, p. 326.
65. Kasahara 2007, p. 160–161.
66. Kizaka ed. 1989.
67. Hata 1986, p. 214.
68. For more information on the minimalist estimations of Nanking’s population at the time of the massacre, see the overview by David Askew (2001), who draws on these figures, and his chapter in Wakabayashi 2007, p. 86–114.
69. Hora, Fujiwara & Honda eds. 1992.
70. Kasahara 1992, p. 321–328.
71. See the discussion of these publications in Kobayashi 1996, in particular p. 91.
72. Bu 1995.
73. Nanta 2001; Yoshida 2009: 141–148. Members of the Liberal Democratic Party launched a petition denouncing the prime minister’s statement.
74. Rekishi kentō iinkai 1995, p. 252–271.
75. Aoki 2016; Nanta 2017, p. 65–68; Leroy 2018.
76. Takahashi 2012, p. 77–81.
77. Sun 1990.
78. Sun & Wu 1997.
79. Sun 1997.
80. For example, Wang 2011, in a “revised international edition” published in Hong Kong by another historian from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
81. Sun 1997: 106–112.
82. Kasahara 1997.
83. Rabe 1998 for the English-language translation.
84. Higashinakano 1998.
85. For example, it was sent by the Sasakawa Foundation to the Centre d’Études sur la Chine Moderne et Contemporaine at EHESS (Paris), “with a view to raising awareness of research outputs”. In his book, Higashinakano refutes the validity of all evidence, from the oldest to the most recent. He was sued for libel in Nanking by a Chinese woman who witnessed the atrocities. Having lost the case on 23 August 2006, he then initiated proceedings in Tokyo to establish his non-responsibility but once again lost. At around the same time, between 2003 and 2006, the families of Mukai and Noda, the officers involved in the 100-head killing contest, filed a defamation suit against Honda Katsuichi and a group of newspapers.
86. Kobayashi 1998.
87. Gunji shigaku 2017, general introduction.
88. <https://www.jacar.go.jp/>
89. Hatano 2006, chap. 4.

90. Yang 2008.  
91. Kirokushū henshū iinkai ed. 2009.  
92. Gunji shigaku 2017; Iwatani 2017. See also the Dictionary of the Asia-Pacific War (Yoshida *et al.* 2015).  
93. See for example the Chinese contributions in Kitaoka & Bu 2014.  
94. Wakabayashi 2001; Wakabayashi 2007.  
95. Yoshida 2006.  
96. Kitaoka & Bu 2014, vol. 2, p. 319–396.
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## INDEX

**Keywords:** Nanking massacre, historiography, military history, Japan, China, negationism

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# Mao's specific brand of political violence

Michel Bonnin

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- 1 I thank Anne Cheng for giving me the opportunity to exchange with distinguished Asian scholars on a topic which I often broached with my students, especially during those last years of my teaching on the Cultural Revolution at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, but on which I have never written a specific paper.
- 2 When Anne asked me if I would like to speak about political violence, I immediately thought that Mao Zedong was a perfect choice to illustrate the topic, since political violence was central to Maoism, both theoretically and practically. Not only was he convinced of its absolute necessity, but he had an exceptional talent for creating situations in which all forms of violence could emerge, proliferate and develop to the full. In this paper, I can only give an overview of the topic. I shall first briefly present the different types and the main examples of Maoist violence as they appeared all along the political life of this eternal revolutionary. I shall give more details about the Cultural Revolution and will then try to determine the specificity of Maoist violence, reflect on its role in Mao's political system and finally ask whether this specificity makes him more or less criminal than other dictators of the 20th century.

## I. "Revolution is not a dinner party"

- 3 As a communist revolutionary, Mao considered violence as necessary for the toppling of what he called the half-capitalist, half-feudal system in his country. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) founded in 1921 tried to imitate the Soviet Party, but it had to fight 28 years before gaining power in 1949. During that time, it was not able to foment a revolution among workers in the cities, but had to retreat in rural mountainous regions to create rural Red zones and fight against the attacks of the Kuomintang (KMT) army led by Chiang Kai-shek. Finally, thanks to the Japanese invasion, the KMT had to make an alliance with the CCP, which survived and prospered during the war

and, after it was over, was able, with the help of the Soviet Union, to defeat the KMT and take power.

- 4 Mao became the leader of the Party during the difficult period of the Long March. He was able to stabilise his position in the Red zone of Yan'an by using a mix of political violence against potential rivals (denounced as traitors) and political indoctrination to convince the rank and file that he was a saviour and that they had to obey him, lest they become "counter-revolutionaries". Mao at that time was very much inspired by Stalin, but the methods he used were not entirely those of Stalin. They were influenced by the examples of mass violence that Mao had observed in February 1927 during the Peasant Movement in his native province of Hunan. In the Report he later presented to the Central Committee of the Party, you can find a highly positive description of the collective humiliation, beatings and killings of landlords and other "class enemies" that he had observed and a passionate plea for supporting this kind of "revolutionary" actions. The most famous sentence in this report, which became a Maoist maxim and was chanted frenetically by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution was: "Revolution is not a dinner party".

## II. After 1949: government through movements

- 5 After the revolution of 1949, Mao copied the Soviet system and inherited all the Stalinist organs of repression: secret police, Party controlled judiciary, labour camps, etc. He also had a Propaganda Department which transmitted to the cadres and the population his latest directives and a bureaucracy in charge of their implementation. But, in the "socialist transformation" of the country, he relied mainly on "mass movements". Those so-called "mass movements" are not to be confused with spontaneous social movements. All of them were organised and manipulated by the Party, which sent special "work groups" to the grassroots, when the local Party committee was considered as an insufficient force to lead the movements. Those movements were all directed at "enemies of the people", which were to be denounced first by the local or sent down authorities, but also by the rest of the population. The participation of the masses was important to justify the movement, to isolate those targeted and to give the false impression that it was spontaneous. In each case, it was considered essential that the "enemies" reflect on themselves and present an apology before receiving their punishment. These self-confessions were generally obtained under duress, ranging from endless harassment and detention to downright physical torture.
- 6 The first mass movement after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was the Land Reform. One of the rationales of the Revolution was to liberate the peasants from the landlords and rich peasants, so that ordinary peasants should have enough land to sustain themselves. In the history of China, peasant rebellions had rarely been directed against other peasants, including the landlords. They were directed against the state (whatever its form), because it imposed taxes. So, the land reform had to be set up and manipulated by scores of Party members, who were sent to the countryside. Very often, they had to force the peasants to take part, organising rehearsals and promising advantages to the most zealous activists. But after some time, existing resentment against the formerly rich and powerful, as well as the hope of obtaining part of their land were enough to guarantee participation and even zeal. In

fact, the methods used during the land reform were largely based on the methods lauded by Mao in his Report of 1927. The result was violent, with probably two million dead or more, and the creation of a new pariah class in the countryside which would be systematically discriminated against until Mao's death. It included not only those members of the "four black categories" who had survived, but also their children. Featuring in this group were quite a number of people who should not have been included but were victims of misunderstandings or personal revenge by some activists. Through the land reform, the Party had sealed a blood pact with the peasantry. In exchange of their participation, the activists became local leaders of the Party and most peasants obtained more land to cultivate. Unfortunately for them, the land was taken back by the authorities after a few years and became the property of collective entities controlled by the Party, the cooperatives and later people's communes.

- 7 Other mass movements of the 1950s and 1960s were more or less organised on the same model, but after the consolidation of the Party structure, the Party committees were more active and the participation of the masses, although important, was less violent, the worst violence being the privilege of the official organs of repression. A special attention, however, should be given to the most lethal "mass movement" orchestrated by Mao, and probably by anyone ever in world history: the Great Leap Forward launched in 1958. Paradoxically this movement was not, at the start, targeting physical enemies, but was a huge mobilisation of the whole population, especially in the countryside, to make agriculture and industry leap forward. The problem is that the whole rural society was reorganised along Mao's fanciful ideas in order to extract from the peasants an amount of labour never witnessed before. The extremely optimistic economic targets fixed by Mao as well as the ways to attain them were totally unscientific, and the result was an incredible waste of resources and human labour, which triggered the biggest famine in the history of humanity (at least 35 million dead). Mao had pressured all provincial cadres to accept those ridiculous targets. The problem could have been much less severe if Mao had accepted at the Lushan Plenum in 1959 to change his policy. But, confronted to the reality of the famine by a private letter from the Minister of Defense, Peng Dehuai, he denied it and accused those who pleaded for a change of orientation of being rightists. For the peasants dying of hunger, there was no way out, since they were prohibited to leave their villages, contrary to what had always been the surviving practice in history. And, since Mao needed to find scapegoats for the catastrophe that he had brought to his country, he declared that "class enemies" had infiltrated the local rural cadres, and had sabotaged the Great Leap. This is why among the 35 million dead or so, about two million did not die of hunger and exhaustion like the others but were local cadres executed as "counter-revolutionaries", generally because they had alerted the higher authorities about the terrible plight of their fellow peasants. The Great Leap, then, shows that Utopia, when it is imposed by a dictator through violent means, can be even more dangerous than political violence launched against specific enemies.

### III. The Cultural Revolution: the richest period for political violence

- 8 Although the Cultural Revolution (officially the period from 1966 to 1976) was not quantitatively as lethal as the Great Leap Forward, it is qualitatively the richest period

as regards political violence, especially during the years 1966-1971. This revolution was a kind of unidentified political object, which was planned and launched by Mao Zedong. It was a purge, but not only a purge. It was also an attempt at transforming the system established after 1949 and also the minds of the young people through a staged “revolution”, with the assumed risk of civil war. Altogether, it was an attempt at securing the revolutionary character of the regime in order to guarantee Mao’s role in history even after his death.

- 9 It began with a spectacular form of political violence, that of the Red Guards, high school and university students encouraged by Mao to fight his “enemies”, starting with the old culture represented by their teachers, school principals and all established intellectuals, professors, writers and artists. The model proposed to them was that of the Hunan Peasant Movement as described in Mao’s Report already mentioned. At that time (May to October 1966), only students of “good” class backgrounds were allowed to take part, and among them the children of leaders or cadres of the Party and the Army were considered as natural leaders. The violence and the cruelty that they exhibited in the way they treated people as well as all kinds of monuments and works of art is incredible. The first teacher who was killed by her students on August 5, 1966 was beaten and tortured for long hours by girls aged about 13 to 15 years. Some of the Red Guards in this school were daughters of high leaders. The collective fanaticism of these young people was encouraged by Mao who “reviewed” twelve million of them in eight mass meetings organised on Tiananmen Square during the first few months. Quite a number of famous writers and artists were killed or committed suicide to evade unbearable humiliations and tortures, and many other less known teachers and people of bad “class origin” (whose names and addresses were provided by the police to the Red Guards) met the same fate. The cruelty of those urban and educated young people of the higher strata has been a topic of discussion for Chinese intellectuals and foreign scholars. It shows without doubt that human morality is quite dependent upon a civilised environment and formal social and legal restrictions. When those are absent, collective violence can become uncontrollable, especially when those who would refuse to participate could very well become themselves victims of it.
- 10 But, for Mao, terrorising intellectuals and people of bad class origins was but an appetiser. There were more important targets, namely most of the Party leaders, especially those linked with Liu Shaoqi, Number 2 of the Party, as well as the whole bureaucracy accused of being revisionist. To attack them, Mao could not rely on the first Red Guards who happened to be the children of the new targets. He then encouraged the emergence of a new breed of Red Guards called the Rebels who specialised in attacking political leaders. At the end of the year, celebrating his 73rd birthday with the group of close affiliates whom he had suddenly promoted to the higher positions, he proposed a toast to the coming “nationwide all-round civil war”. And indeed, this is what happened the next year.
- 11 I cannot describe here all the forms of political violence that erupted in 1967 and 1968. But briefly, the scenario was that of young rebels attacking all official institutions and trying to “seize power” as ordered by Mao, and entering into bloody fighting because different groups claimed the same powers. Generally, it ended by a fight to death between two rival groups, hating each other and embroiled in endless revenge actions. Since all of them claimed to represent Mao’s revolutionary line, Mao decided to let the Army intervene to support the Left against the Right. But who was left and who was

right? The army leaders made a choice and repressed all those who did not obey them. But Mao did not want the revolution to be transformed into a simple military dictatorship. It happened also that different army units supported rival groups. The danger was then that the army itself would be embroiled in violent infighting. Mao then prohibited the army from using their weapons. As a result, the enemies of the military local leaders attacked the army, stole their weapons and used them against their enemies among the rebels and even against the army itself. Armed fighting between rival rebel groups cost many lives of young people, all of them, on both sides, convinced that they were giving their lives for Chairman Mao. Some army leaders had to go into hiding to save their lives. In Wuhan, there was a rebellion of the army against a leader sent by the Central Group of the Cultural Revolution representing Mao himself. Although this was repressed, the situation became so chaotic that Mao decided to authorise the army to use their weapons and restore order. This was done very violently by the army leaders and by the Party leaders who had been able to retain their posts.

- 12 A new mass movement, the Cleansing of the class ranks, was launched to get rid of the Rebels who had thought that they were fighting Mao's enemies and were now killed by them with Mao's benediction. The number of rebels killed by the army and the local militias was higher than the number of the victims of the Red Guards and Rebels.
- 13 It is in this last period that the Cultural Revolution reached the countryside on a large scale. In some southern provinces, the new movement gave rise to horrible collective massacres and in some places even to a resurgence of cannibalism motivated by hatred and a desire to "absorb" the strength of the enemy through his or her body parts like the heart, the liver and the sexual organs. The victims were all children of the bad classes, who were the natural targets to obey Mao's order to "cleanse the class ranks". They were killed in broad daylight and generally under the leadership of the local militia, by people who had been their neighbours and had lived peacefully with them for about eighteen years after the violence of the Land Reform. In the cases of cannibalism, the meat was often shared collectively in a festive way. One cannibal later interviewed by a Chinese journalist said that Chairman Mao had said that if we do not kill the class enemies, they will kill us. He expressed absolutely no regret, felt justified and discussed his preference for roasted human meat compared to boiled meat.
- 14 It is interesting to note that this last period of the most extreme violence corresponded with the period when Mao's cult reached the level of quasi-religion. It seemed that China had gone back to a primitive stage of human civilisation when rationality was absent and replaced by blind worship of a pitiless god giving protection only to those who practiced human sacrifices for him.

#### **IV. The necessity of the enemy**

- 15 After this very limited overview of political violence under Mao, I would like to stress two points. First, political violence was central to Maoism. It was necessary not only militarily to topple the existing power, but also symbolically to destroy radically the image of the dominant people of the old regime. Hence Mao's insistence on the necessary humiliation of the class enemies and the necessity to force them to acknowledge their crimes. It was also necessary to maintain the revolutionary purity of the regime, to prevent its decay, to "cleanse" it. What is striking in Mao's brand of



communism is the fact that he refused to turn the page of the revolution and to concentrate on economic development and state-building. He felt that his own personal power and his place in history were insolubly linked to the transformation of his country and of his people according to his will. He could not accept to become a manager, a position for which he had no talent, especially compared to other leaders like Liu Shaoqi or Deng Xiaoping. And to remain a revolutionary, he needed enemies and political violence. Hence the notion of “continuous revolution” which he defended during the Cultural Revolution. To continue revolution, he needed of course “class enemies” and that is why he promoted the idea of the existence of capitalists at the top of the Party as well as in the rest of society, even though there was no possible economic or social basis for the supposed “bourgeoisie”. So, if continuous political violence was a necessity for Mao, this violence was also quite specific. Mao’s special brand of leadership among the communist leaders of the world was his outstanding technique of manipulation of the masses for which he had developed a special know-how during the twenty years of fighting in remote mountainous regions.

- 16 It is significant that Carl Schmitt, the once pro-Nazi political thinker, whose main idea was that the primary question of politics was to define the enemy, was ecstatic about Mao. In his “Theory of the Partisan”, written in 1963, he presents Mao as the model of the partisan, for whom hostility is absolute to a point that even Clausewitz would not have been able to imagine. Schmitt’s knowledge of Chinese history was, however, very limited (for example, he did not know that the civil war had nothing to do with guerilla warfare, but was a war between two regular armies), and his vision of Mao was very much influenced by the French general Raoul Salan, who had tried to account for the French defeat of Dien Bien Phu by highlighting the use of Mao’s guerilla warfare tactics by the Vietnamese revolutionary army. Still, it is true that Mao had spent his life reflecting on the way to defeat enemies through all sorts of means.

## V. The question of responsibility

- 17 Finally, I would like to raise an often overlooked question: What is the personal responsibility of Mao Zedong in the appalling violence of post-1949 and especially post-1966 China? Sometimes, there is a tendency to exonerate him under the pretext that he did not order directly all the evil actions perpetrated at that time. The responsibility, then, was that of the people who perpetrated them. This, in my view, is an erroneous conception, and I would argue that, in fact, Mao can be considered as more criminal than his fellow tyrants of the 20th century: Stalin and Hitler. There are two reasons to justify my argument. Both are closely linked:

1. Instead of entrusting specialised institutions with the task of implementing his repressive orders against all kinds of enemies, Mao enrolled the population at large in this task through so-called mass movements in which ordinary people were to denounce verbally, and in some cases, attack physically the enemies designated rather vaguely by himself. The consequence was that many more people became perpetrators than in the institutional model, and victims were also more numerous than if they had been clearly chosen by Mao and by repressive organs, because the people entrusted with the repressive tasks (ordinary people, activists, or local cadres) were eager to show their zeal, either to advance their career or simply to avoid being themselves considered as suspect. They had then an inevitable tendency to be over-zealous.

2. As a result, not only more people perpetrated evil, and even criminal actions, but the social traumas were more difficult, in fact impossible, to cure. In the Maoist model, in which former perpetrators often became victims in the next round, hatred and hopes for revenge became predominant in the society. Grievances of almost everyone against everyone in neighbourhoods, work units and even families were too complicated to allow for acknowledgement of past wrong doings and reconciliation.
- 18 If we take the example of the Cultural Revolution, we can see that, as a result of Mao's fake revolution, most of the population was engulfed in a maelstrom of violence where many had to play the part that was written down for them by Mao, either as perpetrators, victims or, very often, both alternately. Many urban young people were first transformed into fascist thugs beating and killing the intellectual elite of the country, and later into guerrilla fighters killing each other in senseless factional armed struggles, before being imprisoned and/or massacred by army people and militias. In many villages and small towns, rural people were engulfed in collective massacres that were a form of genocide of the "bad class" survivors. The traumas left by this period have never been healed, and this is not only because the leaders were afraid of damaging the legitimacy of the Party, but also because many people could not face their own past or were afraid of opening the Pandora's box of pent-up hatred.
- 19 As for the question of the sharing of responsibility between Mao and the other participants of the Cultural Revolution, Mao's responsibility is largely predominant, even if no one can be exonerated of his or her individual evil actions. Since some time already, a few former Red Guards have expressed remorse and asked for the forgiveness of their victims. This was first done privately, but later publicly. And there were open discussions about the topic. Those who were against confessing wrongdoings and expressing remorse argued that it was meaningless to express remorse when the leaders of the time and the present leaders never expressed any. Indeed, some victims were privately rehabilitated at the beginning of the 1980s, but that was all. There was no apology from the Party, which tried very hard to prevent study and discussion of this period.
- 20 The responsibility of young people who had been raised from childhood in a blind worship of Mao and in the hatred of "class enemies" cannot be compared to that of the half-god dictator who organised all the violence. But, of course, Red Guards who have unjustly harmed people should express remorse. In its process of civilisation, humanity can only rely on individual responsibility and absolute moral principles. But, many historical events show that human moral progress is fragile and can be reverted if a civilised environment is not protected. Recently, two researchers have argued that the Red Guard movement was a Stanford Prison Experiment in real-life size. In this psychology experiment, Professor Zimbardo divided ordinary students into prisoners and prison officers. The experiment had to be called off after a few days because it could have ended badly as a result of an excessive identification of the students with the role they were attributed. It showed that in specific circumstances, ordinary people could behave badly as a result of the power given to them. This reinforces the argument against Mao, because it shows the importance of the context on human behaviour. During the Cultural Revolution, the responsibility of the totalitarian system (and then of its Great Helmsman and of those who supported him) was clearly essential. That is why the Gao brothers' statue of Mao kneeling and begging for forgiveness from the Chinese people is extremely symbolic. Even if it is shocking for the immense

majority of the Chinese, from a historical point of view it seems much more reasonable than Mao's portrait hanging at the top of the Tian'anmen rostrum or his statues still erected on Chinese soil showing for eternity the way to the future.

#### Mao's Guilt



Gao Brothers 高氏兄弟

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