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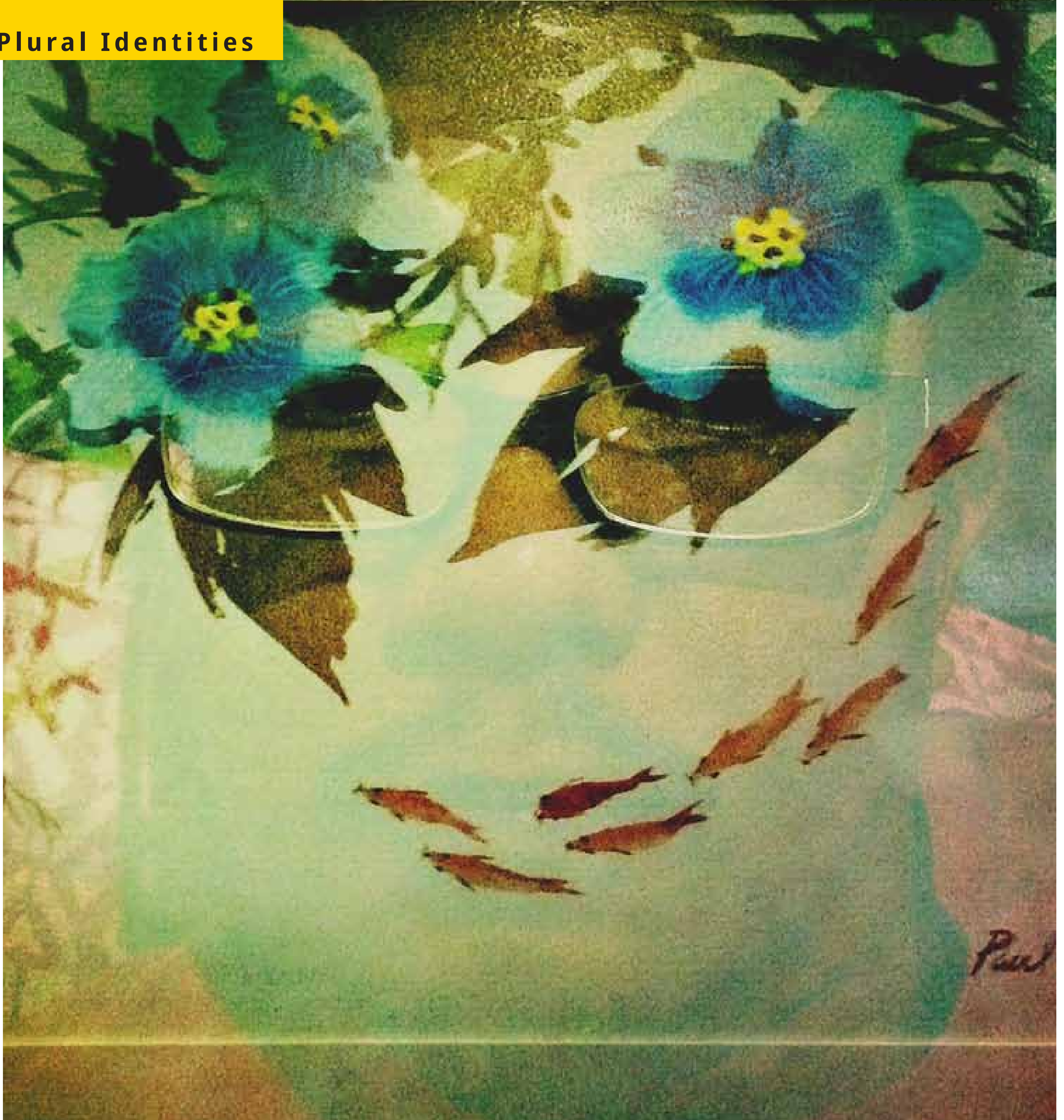
Plural Identities



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Produced within and for the region by the SEASREP Foundation, *RJSEAS* seeks to foster discourse and promote interest for scholarship centered on Southeast Asia. We welcome critical and scholarly work from Southeast Asian researchers in the humanities and social sciences.

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INTRODUCING *RJSEAS*:
Message from the Editor

MARIA SERENA DIOKNO
RJSEAS Editor

When Taufik Abdullah, Charnvit Kasetsiri, Shaharil Talib, and I founded SEASREP twenty years ago, our purpose was to promote Southeast Asian studies in the region by Southeast Asians in the region. The time had come, we felt, for scholars in the region to learn about ourselves from among ourselves. Our goal was (and remains) ambitious: to study another country in the region in addition to our own, or compare ours with another in the region, or examine a theme or problem that cuts across Southeast Asia. We aimed to produce scholars who, aside from being specialists of their respective countries, would also cross boundaries and consider the region as also their own. Our name, SEASREP, represents the means to our goal: Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program.

From an ambitious ten-point blueprint we formulated in 1994, we narrowed down our programs to the study of Southeast Asian languages, postgraduate studies in Southeast Asian universities, and collaborative research by scholars from different disciplines across the region. We ran these programs for close to 20 years with generous funding from the Toyota Foundation, spearheaded by Ms. Yumiko Himemoto-Hiraishi, and the Japan Foundation.

Twenty years later, we find ourselves with a fairly sizable network of SEASREP 'alumni' who took part not only in our grants programs but in a range of other activities we carried out through the years, such as seminars, traveling classrooms for undergraduate students, and research-oriented workshops on specific regional themes. We were fortunate to benefit from the wise counsel of two forward-looking Southeast Asianists with vast experience in the region: Prof. Yoneo Ishii and Prof. Ruth McVey. Year after year for more than a decade, our two distinguished advisers and colleagues joined our Board meetings (Prof. Ishii until his untimely passing in 2010) and helped us craft our direction. They belong to SEASREP as much as SEASREP also belongs to them.

Over the decades, we expanded our network to include Southeast Asianists from other parts of the world. The Korean Institute of Southeast Asian Studies has been our partner since 2005 in organizing annual intensive seminars about Southeast Asia that rotate from country to country. For five years, we ran an alternative research methodology seminar with Sephis, a South-South exchange program then based in The Netherlands. We have also collaborated with other foundations such as Rockefeller and Ford on a project basis.

It is with pride that we launch our latest endeavor, the inaugural issue of the *Regional Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, an online, open access, peer-reviewed journal that aims to feature the work of scholars in the region. By offering this journal, SEASREP hopes to make a more tangible contribution to the body of work on Southeast Asia aside from the many Southeast Asian specialists it has helped produce and worked with. One might say that the journal has an obvious bias toward young Southeast Asian researchers and faculty we aim to encourage by publishing the results of their painstaking labor. In so doing, we nonetheless adhere to the scholarly standards of publishing.

The journal represents a new direction for SEASREP and, in a sense, a new intellectual adventure. We invite scholars in the region from the humanities and social sciences to become part of this exciting activity.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Identity, Agency and Community in Southeast Asia

MAITRII AUNG-THWIN
Issue Editor

This inaugural issue of the *Regional Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (RJSEAS)* appears at an important conjuncture in the political and intellectual history of the region. It coincides with the launching of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the collection of nations, networks, institutions, and policies that will bridge the economies, peoples, and societies of this region into a single, integrated zone. The launch of *RJSEAS* also marks an important moment in the region's intellectual history, the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Southeast Asian Studies Regional Exchange Program (SEASREP).

SEASREP was formed to develop and promote a regional network of scholars and students committed to producing knowledge about Southeast Asia from the perspective of the region. At the same time, the founding members of SEASREP sought to cultivate collaborative projects that could traverse the boundaries of national education systems and the more domestic orientation of their scholarship. Although the AEC and SEASREP are not formally linked, these two expressions of community reflect a broader commitment to regional integration that has been developing for the past several decades.

The *RJSEAS* emerges during an important shift in the intellectual history of Asian Studies as well. Three decades ago, we might have accepted that the most important scholarship on Southeast Asia was being developed in universities based in North America, Australia, and Europe. Today, Asian universities throughout the broader region are now featuring leading scholars of the field among their permanent faculty, new PhD graduates are being trained, original research is being produced, and international conferences are redefining our paradigms. Decades of inter-Asian collaboration, especially between East and Southeast Asian partners, has cultivated the growth and development of a regional infrastructure—professional associations, journals, library consortia, archives, conferences, student exchanges, and universities—that now complements the global production of knowledge on Southeast Asia. The strength of the region's integration has placed Southeast Asians in a position to take a leading role in that scholarly endeavor. *RJSEAS* will contribute to this dynamism by promoting the research produced by regionally based scholars and graduate students for both a regional and global readership.

There is a strong temptation to orient the *RJSEAS* along the lines of existing journals that have made the study of Southeast Asia their focus and mission. Many of these publications, even those already produced in the region, have adopted a more global character in order to achieve intellectual parity and recognition by choosing to publish research that often reflects the priorities, discussions, and approaches of scholars who are situated beyond the region. In this current moment in the epistemology of Southeast Asia, much of the scholarly agenda has emphasized research that explores transnational, border-crossing, and inter-Asian connectivities in order to highlight the complex relationships and experiences that occur over and beyond the boundaries of the nation-state.

While *RJSEAS* will certainly engage these conversations, this journal will also encourage the types of analyses, perspectives, and subject matter that living, studying, and teaching in this region empowers. The editorial team envisions *RJSEAS* serving as a platform that will feature research that is representative

of the experiences, proximities, and perspectives in which many of the region's scholars conduct their work. As the articles in this issue demonstrate, domestic struggles over the nation are still a relevant topic to explore—not because transnational topics are not appreciated by regional scholars—but because the tensions regarding the integration of the nation are embedded in the everyday conversations, online fora, and political debates of Southeast Asians today. Our content will therefore cater to research conducted in and for the region, often originally written in a Southeast Asian language, and representing the different institutional, political, and cultural contexts that shape our local intellectual discussions.

The theme and content of this inaugural issue—Plural Identities in Southeast Asia—originated from a SEASREP workshop that brought a dozen regionally based scholars to Manila in 2014. From the onset, it became clear that one of the main dynamics found in all of the articles was the ongoing tension between the nation state and local communities. Matters concerning power, patronage, inclusion, and access to resources were all regarded as affecting notions of identity—defined here as concepts of belonging, affinity, affiliation, or self-identification. Yet all of the studies also problematize conventional binaries that are associated with identity (center-periphery, majority-minority, national-local), demonstrating the densely layered, complicated relationships that our regionally embedded scholars were able to discern through their research.

The contributions that follow relate how minority groups differentiate themselves from majorities and other minority groups by using symbols of language, culture, location, history, and gender as emblems of belonging and inclusion. As in the case of ancestor worship in Vietnam or public campaigns promoting a vision of Tai ethnicity, the articles also recognize that the state attempts to employ a cultural vocabulary of its own in an attempt to unify the range of communities it views as belonging to the nation. The collection of articles highlight how local groups in the region struggle amongst themselves, the state, international activists, and the media to define the terms and nature of their identity.

Another common thread that can be found in this issue concerns the depth and complexity of the societies, categories, or debates under examination. The struggle of particular groups to assert or subvert a particular identity was a common pattern, but the studies in this issue also reveal the multiple layers of religious, linguistic, cultural, and gendered affiliations that members of a community might claim. Being *Tai*, *Peranakan*, *Cordillera*, *Kinh*, or a transgendered person is shown in the following articles to be influenced by a myriad of inter-related factors: location, economics, media, boundaries, government incentives, competition, international advocacy campaigns, and even scholarship. Collectively, the studies demonstrate how local factors and priorities continue to shape the way Southeast Asians define themselves in relation to their environments and external influences. Individually, the articles highlight the varying experiences, complexities, and divergent worldviews of the region's communities.

Aranya Siriphon's contribution traces the rich tradition of scholarship on Tai communities in order to demonstrate the ways being and becoming Tai can be experienced in borderland areas. By focusing on the Dehong Tai along the Thai-Chinese border, Siriphon demonstrates how a conventional binary approach to identity formation insufficiently explains the layered interaction of Tai communities along the multi-centered, Thai-China-Myanmar border. Her article argues that identity is shaped and negotiated by relations and categories that are adopted from both the state and minority group sources.

Maria Nela Florendo's article also takes into account the importance of geography and the complicated nature of borderland regions in her study of the Cordillera, a community associated with the mountainous region of Northern Luzon in the Philippines. Florendo traces how Spanish, American, and Filipino territorial policies produced particular images of the Cordillera that compelled these minority groups in contemporary times to assert their identity through ethno-historical cultural advocacy campaigns. Most importantly, Florendo demonstrates that these efforts were highly contested amongst the different

factions and political groups within the Cordillera community, challenging, as Siriphon does, the simplicities of a state-local perspective.

Just as factions within the Cordillera community had different ideas about their group's identity, Pue Giok Hun's study of the *Peranakan* in a broader Malay context demonstrates that important differences within a community—based on race, kinship, custom, and language—are sometimes obfuscated by state-centered categories that promote a singular notion of identity. Pue's study demonstrates how the notion of *Peranakan* and the phenomenon of mixed-bloods create a conflict for the state and its system for designating majority and minority groups. Not only are the identities of variant groups within the "official" Peranakan community conflated with the state's racial typologies, but also members of the various Peranakan communities are subject to cultural and ethnic categories that they do not recognize.

The challenges associated with state-derived metrics of ethnic designation are a topic that is also raised in Nguyễn Công Thảo's article. As raised in Pue's study, there are incentives and disincentives for particular groups to recognize or resist the state's classification system for a variety of locally derived factors. In the case of Vietnam, Nguyễn Công Thảo demonstrates how the pressure to modernize and participate in the nation-state's economic development initiatives affects how minority groups articulate their affiliation to the nation-state. For some groups, local conditions and competition with other minority groups for economic benefits compel compliance with the state's system of classifying ethnic identity. Yet the state's emphasis on language as a metric of identity and the lure of development incentives does not recognize the complexity of factors that frame other strategies of ethnic self-identification in the Vietnamese highlands.

Economic dimensions of identity are also a theme raised in Wening Udasmoro's article on transgendered communities. Charting the treatment and social position of gendered communities in postcolonial Indonesia, Udasmoro highlights the important role of the media and specifically the business of television

programming in the social construction of transgendered actors. By exploring the political and economic contexts surrounding the Suharto and *Reformasi* years, Udasmoro illustrates how the image of transgendered individuals was commoditized to serve both the state and media campaigns but for different outcomes.

Our inaugural issue of *RJSEAS* closes fittingly with an important article from Nguyễn Văn Chính that examines Vietnamese scholarship and its role in the historical construction of ancestor worship. Through an ethno-historical examination of both the category of ancestor worship and the Vietnamese academe, Nguyễn Văn Chính traces the way in which the Vietnamese state adopted ancestor worship as a symbol of national identity and how different groups of scholars contributed to this mission. A central debate that occurred within this project was whether ancestor worship was domestic, family ritual, or whether it was actually a national "religion".

Taken together, the contributions point to the possibility of adopting "community" as a category in Southeast Asian Studies. The application of community as a broad framework for studying the region enables scholars to engage the different and often competing ways in which Southeast Asians articulate belonging. Employing the notion of community as an analytical framework also provides a space for engaging different types of sources as cultural references. Whether scholars focus on language, clothing, music, or monuments to demonstrate a claim of identity, the category of community enables us to regard and include different cultural criteria as articulations of that worldview, alongside other expressions of belonging and affiliation that characterize this region. On a final note, the concept of community enables scholars to be more inclusive in their research, providing a space not only for studying marginalized groups, but also for the nation-state, a community that is itself being marginalized by international scholarship, despite its prevailing importance in Southeast Asia today.

ARTICLES

Tai Nuea tribe from a Burmese handpainted color manuscript circa 1900.

(*Tribes of Burma* from Southeast Asian Digital Library)

REIMAGINING PLURAL IDENTITIES IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES: A Case Study of the Borderland Tai in Mainland Southeast Asia

ARANYA SIRIPHON

ABSTRACT

This article explores processes of cultural and ethnic revitalization among mainland Southeast Asian *Tai* borderlands people. Using the lens of cultural politics, the article argues against optimistic views that transnational flows weaken the nation-state by positioning Tai identities as sites of "cultural difference". This case study demonstrates, rather, that the meaning of Tai-ness is contested during the process of cultural and ethnic construction and that transnational flows actually strengthen nationalist projects by reinforcing an elite notion of Thai nationalism. The paper then situates the presence of plural identities within broader questions of "cultural difference". By linking plural identities with theories of multiculturalism, it seeks to foreground awareness of "cosmopolitan multicultural concepts". It argues for the importance of the public's understanding of significant terms with reference to diverse cultures, values, and traditions within society. The paper concludes by elaborating on the principle of "equality over difference", manifested in the call for poly-ethnic rights, group self-determination, and the strengthening of hybrid and multiple identities compatible with notions of global justice.

KEYWORDS:
Tai culture, nationalism, Thailand, Tai borderland, identity, muliculturalism

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, the world faces various forms of uncertainty. These range from the effects of intensive economic development (e.g. the opening up of new markets, the continued rise of mass consumption, the speeding up of production cycles, and the reduction of the turnover time of capital) to the flows of high technologies in the fields of communication (e.g. smartphone, Internet, etc.) and transportation (e.g. travelling by hi-speed trains, jets, and so on). Situated within broader globalizing processes, these flows have changed and altered the world, and have been described by scholars in such terms as "time-space compression" (Harvey, 1990) or "cultural flow of various 'five-scapes'" (Appadurai, 1996).

The intensive flows, mobilities, and connectivity accelerated by globalization processes are generally discussed in conceptual debates associated with culture, power, and identity. Two perspectives have dominated this discussion. First, influenced by postmodern ideals, the positive view of globalization understands these processes as leading to a decline in power of modern nation-states and their control over their populations. According to this perspective, globalization processes and their consequences not only illustrate the increasing interconnectedness of people across the world, but also produce cultural-specific ways in which these interconnections are mediated. These interconnections, in turn, facilitate global flows of capital, commodities, media, and ideologies, thus remapping the possibilities of geography and reshaping boundaries in the production of a multi-dimensional global space. One result of this global-spatial transformation encompassed by late capitalism and globalization processes has been a challenge to the nation states' sense of national integrity and territorial sovereignty.

The view has also been linked to the revival of marginal peoples' cultures and identities, now no longer subordinated within negative power relations with the diminishing nation-state. From this perspective, culture and identity have been depicted in several recent writings as constructed *in resistance* to the

state and to the effects of capitalist exploitation (Gilroy, 1991, 1993; Appadurai, 1996; Clifford, 1997). There is also a politically-oriented agenda in this view, as it promotes civil rights movements for ethnic equality, especially in terms of legal rights for oppressed groups. The result of this challenging analysis is the possibility that particular groups that have been marginalized (in terms of nation, race, ethnicity, or gender) can now redefine and practice their self-identity. Revivals in practices related to race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, culture, and history emerged in the contexts of diminished nation-states' power and increasing global flow. This conceptual framework, however, has led to certain analytical constraints because it tends to posit power relations in terms of a dichotomy defined by the dominant and the subordinated. The focus on "subject positioning" of the subordinated groups tends towards overwhelming understandings of ordinary culture and everyday life as practices of resistance giving the marginal subjects' power away from structural power, like the nation-states.

The second dominant perspective is a neo-Marxist one that holds that globalizing processes do not diminish the power and sovereignty of nation-states. Rather, modern nation-states develop authoritarian strategies to govern and regulate citizens, whether residing inside or outside the national territory. For instance, "mobile sovereignty" and "extraterritorial economic rights" (Appadurai, 2003) are strategies that reflect the way in which the Indian government regulates citizenship beyond its borders. Similarly, Aihwa Ong's notions of "graduated sovereignty" (2000), "zoning technologies", and "variegated sovereignty" (2004) illustrate the development of strategies that mingle state sovereignty with broader currents of neoliberalism.

This paper uses both perspectives, focusing on power relations situating the subordinated groups and their power negotiated under the nation states' hegemony and its development of sovereign strategies. By exploring the case of Tai people living along Southeast Asian borderlands, the question is how new formations of (ethnic) plural identities have emerged within the context of the

nation's states' (re)centralization programs and within the continuing shift of global power relations. I argue that the formation of (ethnic) plural identities should not be seen as an end product in itself, but must be sensitively located within broader fields of power relations that include the nation state and its strategies of development and power control.

I have thus elected to view plural identity formation from a "cultural politics" perspective that suggests that culture and identity should be seen as political inventions reflecting the divisions, conflicts, and ongoing negotiations among cultures and identities within a society. Exemplifying this approach, Stuart Hall (1990, p. 225) proposes that identity formation be seen as "becoming" instead of "being", and as politics instead of inheritance (Ong, 1997, p. 327). In a related vein, Ong and Nonini (1997) assert that identity is neither fixed nor singular. They also suggest, following Benedict Anderson, that ethnicity is something of an "imagined community". A cultural politics lens thus enlarges the question of identity, moving beyond conventional claims of identity (along racial, ethnic, cultural, spatial, and gender lines) to consider the more complex situation of the twenty-first century that identification and cultures are utilized actively in the process of inclusion by several groups of power (i.e. nation-state, or ethnic people themselves), and are reflected thereby as the political in negotiation in daily lives. This enables a study that takes into account how ethnic groups/actors use and select ethnicity—identity markers from a shared cultural vocabulary that is itself shaped by history, institutions, and the interplay of the local, national, and global.

When applying a cultural politics approach to the study of Tai ethnic groups living amongst mainland Southeast Asia's borderlands zone, three arguments emerge. First, the cultural and ethnic revitalization of Tai people in the age of globalization is an actively contested process, with the invention of the Tai people's cultural identity and meaning located within ongoing power forces and its influences of either nation-states in strategies development or global change. Second, the transnational flows that have enabled the revitalization of Tai cultural assertions have also created a space for the nation-state to contest Tai

identity politics claiming the Tai outside Thai national territory as *Pii Nong Tai* (Tai siblings). Moreover, this includes the potential to strengthen conservative nationalist projects that reinforce a nostalgic type of Thai nationalism, by using cultural categories to serve the formation of the modern Thai nation-state. This nostalgic Thai nationalism appears within the context of colonization in Southeast Asia and later communism ideals, and circulates amongst Thai elites. The Tai cases, therefore, highlight the complex and multiple dimensions not only of the Thai nation-state, Thai ruling elites, and later, the Thai people's sentiment, but also of the Tai in southern China themselves within the process of identity construction and utilization.

Finally, this paper connects plural identities with concepts of multiculturalism, and proposes a greater role for public awareness of the "cosmopolitan multicultural concept". This means that not only is it necessary to recognize "cultural difference", but also to realize that "equality over difference" gives marginalized groups an opportunity to reclaim their cultural identities and cultivate a sense of belonging and of having voices heard. In this sense, establishing poly-ethnic rights, group self-determination, and hybrid identities compatible with global justice challenge the public's social imaginary, and thus, requires a reduction in cultural marginalization and the development of multi-cultural societies.

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE: CULTURAL POLITICS AND TAI CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

Tai-speaking groups of people have long resided in southern China and Southeast Asia. In China, the Chinese government officially refers to them as *Dai*, a category that includes the Tai Lue, subgroups that live primarily in Xishuangbanna and those that reside in parts of Yunnan and the Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture (Dehong prefecture) in southwestern China. In Myanmar, the Tai are similarly known as *Shan* people while in Vietnam they are designated *Tay*. "Tai speaker" is the term generally found in English literature. Figure 1 is a map that specifies where various Tai groups can be found.

FIGURE 1 — This map locates Tai-speaking and Tai-related territories along the borders of China and mainland Southeast Asia. Courtesy of EB, Inc (1998).

In academic portraits, the Tai who spread throughout Southeast Asia are considered as having long-shared ethnic, linguistic, and cultural traits. Common ethnic and cultural traits include religion, language, and social organization. Theravada Buddhism is practiced among the Tai throughout Southeast Asia. Linguistically, their speech is related to Lao, Shan, Thai, and other languages belonging to the Tai language family. In terms of social organization, they tend to identify with places where they live called *muang* (townships). Condominas (1990) refers to the Tai polities in terms of "emboxment[s]" of a domain of state, principality, village, or household with which the Tai socially or politically connect. For example, the Tai Lue living in the state of Xishuangbanna call themselves Lue Xishuangbanna. But in other contexts, Tai groups may identify with a smaller locality, as in Lue Muang Phong, Lue Muang La, Lue Muang Sing, and so on. These designate and indicate the *muang* from which the particular Tai Lue person/group comes or at least the political circle with which they identify (Cohen, 1998, p. 50).

Over the past few decades, the Tai and their cultural revitalization have become an increasing source of interest in the academe. Studies have shown that Tai cultural revivalism has appeared, in part, due to the relaxed political environment and deregulation of borders by regional nation states. Most of the literature describes the process of Tai cultural and ethnic revivalism as intersecting with power relations of either nation-states or forces of globalization; i.e. Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) regionalization and capital flow over the border.

Choowonglert (2012), for example, has examined Tai Kao (White Tai)[1] livelihood patterns in Vietnam during a period of increased state-promoted ethnic commodification, particularly with reference to tourism. The author contends that the Tai Kao, one of the 53 ethnic groups listed in official ethnic classifications, was long dominated within the multi-ethnic, semi-independent polity by the Nguyễn Dynasty, and more recently, by the modern Vietnamese nation-state.

1 The Tai identify themselves by using the marker of the places where they live or *muang* (townships). Outsiders name the Tai in Vietnam*Tai Kao* (White Tai) and *Tai Dam* (Black Tai) following their clothing colors.

Under the state's growing promotion of ethnic/cultural tourism, however, the Tai Kao have been able to renegotiate their position and livelihood options within the state. This can be seen in their transformation from peasant livelihoods to a variety of business-based entities connected to the growing tourism industry. As a result, a new form of relations has enabled the Tai Kao to balance power with the Vietnamese state and, at the same time, reduce social/ethnic exclusion between the Kinh (Vietnamese) and the Tai.

Mukdawijitra (2007) has examined literacy among the Tai Dam (Black Tai) of northwestern Vietnam from the pre-colonial period to the present. With a focus on points of intersection with the power of the Vietnamese State, Mukdawijitra argues that the Tai Dam have re-coined language scripts to create a more inclusive sense of local pasts. Specifically, Mukdawijitra highlights the renaming of the Kwam script as Muang script which enabled local muang Tai to identify with past historical chronicles and the distant ancestors narrated therein. The transition from Kwam to Muang has thus served as a way for the Tai Dam to inclusively re-imagine "their community" (Anderson 1991) disclosing the ethnic (re)definition far away from the definition created by the modern Vietnamese nation-state.

While the Tai Dam in Vietnam use the *Kwam To Muang* of historical texts to re-imagine the multiple voices latent within their ethnic communal history, the Tai-Ahom of Assam draw on history to recall a glorious past stretching back to the thirteenth century (Saikia, 2004). Saikia describes the way in which the Tai-Ahom recast themselves in light of their long-shared history with the Tai-speaking people of Southeast Asia. It is a highly politicized construction of ethnic identity, deliberately drawing on historical accounts in order to represent contemporary Tai-Ahom aspirations. The Tai-Ahom demonstrate processes of communal marginalization at the hands of British colonial and independent Indian rulers, and counter these with historical tellings of their migration from northern Thailand and subsequent rule over Assam in the thirteenth century. In this way, the historical archive is used to generate multiple narratives, intentionally selected for their current utility by the Tai-Ahom.

In Myanmar, Jirattikorn (2008) focuses on media consumption among the Tai of Shan state. Jirattikorn illuminates the ways in which Shan people assert, maintain, and comment upon their identity in relation to both the Burman (Burmese) and the Thai. By using elements from Thai television soaps dubbed in the Shan language, the Shan people create new meanings that help redefine their own ethnic identity under the processes of ethnic conflict and marginalization created by the Burmese military government.

In the religious sphere, Tadayoshi (2012) examines the role of Shan Theravada Buddhism in the border areas of northern Thailand. Despite the fact that the Thai state has attempted to institutionalize a fundamental Thai Buddhist religion through the "State *Sangha*" since the early twentieth century, the Shan Tai in the area have resisted total assimilation into this sanctioned religious sphere and have continued to develop a specific form of Shan Buddhism. This has been aided by the mobility of the Tai in the borderlands and the diverse affiliations generated along the porous borderlines.

Like Tadayoshi, Cohen (2001) has also explored forms of religious revivalism amongst the Tai. Focusing on the Yuan Buddhism practiced by the Tai-speaking people of the upper Mekong region, he identifies a belief in the modern "holy man" tradition initiated by the forest monk Khruba Siwichai, whose charismatic attributes and construction of religious monuments enhance his reputation. For Cohen, this tradition is a form of religious revivalism that combines the *bodhisattva* ideal with that of sacral kingship held among the Tai in the region. Cohen notes that this revivalism condemns the modern state for its failure to uphold Buddhist morality and leads to resistance against the state simultaneously with a fostering of utopian Buddhist visions. He also contends that the holy man tradition of the contemporary Tai carries political connotations, given the prolific monument building of Khruba Siwichai, Khruba Khao Pi, and Khruba Bunchum that map out, as it were, the sacred geography of a new Buddhist kingdom. Within this new space, some holy men such as Khruba Bunchum assert a local sovereignty by insisting on their rights to travel and meditate wherever they choose, unfettered

by state boundaries and regulations. To date, Khruba Bunchum has managed to elude the police and has continued in his revivalist mission.

In an earlier work, Cohen (1998) traces and compares the multiple effects of Tai revivalism in northern Laos (Muang Sing) and northern Thailand (Nan province), and focuses on the relationship between Lue ethnic identification and territorial cults. Cohen argues that this relationship explains the transformation of Lue relations to the nation-state, with particular reference to the Lue's position vis-à-vis discourses of national culture and development. Cohen points to a far stronger revival of Lue identity in Nan province, accompanying the revitalization of Lue textiles, the reinvention of cult rituals, the reconstruction of the statue of Chao Luang Muang La, and the emphasis placed on guardian spirits in Lue villages. In contrast, the Tai Lue of Muang Sing have seen little change in identity formation, likely due to the lack of national cultural encroachment on local space.

In Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province, Davis (2005) reveals patterns of Tai Lue revivalism as they reinvent cultural elements contesting official state versions. This takes the shape of resurgence in the Tai language, particularly in a renewed interest in epic storytelling and traditional songs. Tai pop music and computer-publishing projects are additional components of this cultural renaissance. The content of these cultural media contest the official Chinese discourse on the Tai that represent them as a model minority group, promoted as part of the Chinese state's cultural policy platform. Panyagaew (2007, 2013) echoes the findings of Davis in his account of cross-border movements of Tai Lue in the Xishuanbanna borderlands; Panyagaew highlights the role of returned exiles (2007) and a charismatic Buddhist monk (2013). Facilitated by border deregulation policies and economic connectivity in the region, the author notes that exiled Tai Lue returning to their motherland in southwest China set about restoring a sense of place through practices of "re-emplacement". This involved rendering their locality visible and sensible through the utilization of transnational mobility and old and new connectivity networks. In so doing, they were able to recast their homeland despite their histories of dislocation and the changes wrought by modernization and regionalization.

In the case of the charismatic Buddhist monk Phra Khru Weruwanpithak, Panyagaew (2013) outlines the significance of his journeys in contributing to the revival of *Theravada* in the localities he visited along the way: his hometown in northern Thailand, Lue communities in the eastern Shan state, and Xishuangbanna. The practical, religious, and architectural activities this border-crossing monk undertook restored Theravada Buddhist sites in the region and created a new sense of place and belonging among the Tai Lue who, for a long time, lived across national borders in the upper Mekong region.

All the literature above demonstrates my first argument with respect to how Tai ethnic groups living amongst mainland Southeast Asia's borderlands zone and their cultural and ethnic revitalization have engaged with an actively contested process interplaying with diminished power forces of nation-states and the influences of global changes. However, the revitalization of Tai cultural assertions along with the improved relationship between Thai and Chinese governments since the 1980s have produced a space for Thai nation-state, Thai ruling elites, and later, Thai people in general, to continually reinforce a "nostalgic nationalist project" that claims the Tai outside Thai national territory as Tai siblings. The next section will depict how the Thai nation-state and its representatives have performed cultural practices with regard to a "nostalgic nationalist project".

CATEGORIZING ETHNIC IDENTITY: NOSTALGIC CULTURAL POLITICS AND THE NATION-STATE

This section emphasizes the second argument, where we can see how nation states develop authoritarian strategies to govern and regulate citizens residing inside and outside sovereign territorial markers. To understand the role of nation-states in relation to cultural politics, it is useful to conceptualize ethnic identity as a continuing process of construction, enabling us to analyze the process of identity-building in relation to other social units. The Tai case highlights the complex and multiple dimensions not only of the nation-state and its ruling elites, but also of the Tai in southern China themselves within the process of identity construction and utilization.

Keyes (2002), for example, has written about how "scientific classification" has been employed by modern Southeast Asian nation-states (e.g. Vietnam, China, and Thailand) as a "technology of power" through which the state exercises control over ethnic populations. The nation-states' development of bodies of disciplinary knowledge that issue pronouncements on ethnic-cultural categories becomes a powerful mechanism for classifying ethnic people as either civilized/ developed or uncivilized/underdeveloped. Similarly, Schein (2000) has reflected on the Chinese state's production of unitary discursive practices through which the Miao and other ethnic groups are framed and categorized by the classification theories and policies of the post-1949 Chinese government.

Gladney (1994) has demonstrated that "ethnic classifications" that the Chinese State generated have constructed "exoticized" images of ethnic groups by categorizing culture, cultural materials, and nationality through a process of drawing on narrowly defined traditions. For Gladney, this amounts to the state's co-opting of ethnic groups for economic growth purposes. Specifically, he notes the rise in ethnic theme parks, cultural performances, and general ethnic tourism consumed by Chinese and foreign tourists. Gladney argues that these ventures depend upon particular knowledge of ethnic cultures. This state-prescribed knowledge privileges select cultural essences, thus transforming "cultural values" into "economic profits".

Litzinger (2000) has also explored concepts of "knowledge construction" and the "technology of the gaze" to explain the post-Maoist Chinese state in relation to Yao intellectual elites involved in the complex institutional structures and discourses of power and knowledge. In this sense, Yao intellectual elites, intentionally or unintentionally, become one disciplinary mechanism in the web of the technology of the gaze that the post-Maoist Chinese state created. Thus, the elites help the Chinese nation-state in its surveillance of the Yao ethnic group in China. Also in China, Harrell (1995) has drawn on the concept of hegemony to demonstrate the dialectical process between a dominant power and the subsequent reaction of subordinated groups.

The previous works show the ways in which modern nation-states have long legitimized their power and deployed various strategies to control their ethnic minorities. As Harrell (1995, p. 8) puts it, it is “the ideology of a civilizing center and the civilizing project occurring through the creation of hegemony, and a relationship of superiority and inferiority that maintains the hierarchy.”

While the socialist states of China, Vietnam, and Laos have used reductive ethnic classifications as a “technology of power” in their exercise of control over ethnic populations, the Thai nation-state has attempted to exercise power by drawing on claims of cultural nationalism and ethnic nostalgia, proposing an “imagined community” of Thai-ness lying beyond national territory through the fraternal images of *Pii Nong Tai*[2] (Tai siblings). The *Pii Nong Tai* construct reveals how the Thai nation-state has associated itself with extra-territorial Tai in its attempt to strengthen the nation’s power since the formation of the modern Thai nation-state in the 1930s. Turton (2000) has described how, after 1910 up to the watershed period of the 1970s, a greater awareness and appreciation existed amongst the Thai intelligentsia of a variety of Thai/Tai traditions both within and beyond the national frontier. He goes on to suggest that this interest in Tai cultures beyond Thai borders was “a continuing element of Thai cultural nationalism”, partly based on knowledge uncovered by modern scholars of the time (Turton 2000, p. 5). Tapp (2000, p. 352) elaborates on this point, noting that, within the Thai academic world in general, Thai cultural studies was explicitly associated with the notion of Thai nationalism.

The groundwork for the construction of *Pii Nong Tai* images, including the search for the ancient origins of the Thai race, began with the rise of Thai

2 The concept of *Pii Nong*, or sibling, is a special unit of social organization, generally within the same generation, in which aid can be exchanged within Tai communities. As asserted by Moerman (1966), Hanks (1962, 1975), and Keyes (1975), the *Pii Nong*’s association of kinsmen is the key concept of social organization and of the hierarchies of the Tai communities, regardless of whether the people in question are northern Thai villagers, northeastern Thai villagers, Tai in Shan State, Lao in Laos, etc.

nationalistic sentiments in the 1930s. This was fueled by Thai Premier Phibun Songkhram's efforts to promote the commonalities inherent in "Pan-Thai" ideas. It was not until the 1960s, however, that the story of Tai migration from a remote "homeland"—somewhere in southern China—gained currency and became part of the textbook history of Thailand. Western scholars[3] contributed to the idea by identifying *Nanchao* as the original Tai homeland, a place to which some had migrated from the east and others from the west, as far away as Assam in India.

The intractably politicized search for the origins of the Thai race has been the subject of Thai scholars including Srisakara Vallibhotama (1981), Sujit Wongthes (1985), and Thida Saraya (1994). Such narratives have fed into themes of pan-Tai commonalities supported by Thai leaders and various Thai scholars over the past few decades. These narratives have played a significant role in galvanizing visions of those Thai seeking a closer relationship between the Thai and their Tai "siblings" living in southern China and elsewhere for over a hundred years.[4] Knowledge about Tai people inside and outside Thailand has become

3 George Coedes, for instance, in his article published in the *Journal of the Siam Society* entitled, "The Origins of the *Sukhodaya* Dynasty", made a case that the ancestors of the "Thai" people were dispersed from the *Nanchao* Empire (1912).

4 Apart from the studies listed above, research on the topic has been extensive. Chronologically, the academic movement concerning "Tai studies outside the border of Thailand" can be categorized into four periods. First, in the late 1980s, several projects/studies were conducted on Tai linguistics and culture. Results were presented in a seminar entitled, "Tai Outside Thailand: A State of Knowledge". Several notable papers were published, including those of Pranee Khunlawanit (1986), Pornpan Jantaronanan (1989), and Thongtam Nadjamnoung (1989). The second period, in the 1990s, saw Srisakara Vallibhotama, Sujit Wongthes, and Pranee Wongthes—all from Silpakorn University—join an exchange program with Chinese and other ethnic scholars from the Ethnic Minorities Institute in Guangxi, China. These scholars studied the Zhuang and Tai people in south and southwest China, with an emphasis on the Thai/Tai theme of "the close relationship and relatives-ness" of the Thai and Tai people (Vallibhotama & S. Wongthes, 1991; Vallibhotama & P. Wongthes, 1993). Third, during the mid-1990s, Chatthip Nartsupha of the Political Economy Center, Chulalongkorn University, proposed a project on "the cultural history of Tai ethnicity and community" to study Tai communities outside Thailand (1994). Fourth, Rajabhat Institute, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Mai University collaborated on a research project on Tai studies throughout the North, focusing on Tai rituals and cultural materials of the Tai from northern Thailand to southern China and Assam, India.

consolidated as a set of narratives beginning with the search for the origins of the Thai race and the migration from southern China, and moving toward the highlighting of Thai/Tai siblings sharing common cultural and linguistic roots. The narratives have had an impact on the imagination and stimulated the nostalgia of Thai people (especially in Bangkok) searching for their lost land, lost culture, and siblings who remain outside Thailand. The ethnic Tai of southern China have been a particular focus within these nostalgic Thai stirrings.

In addition to the increase of modern scholarship on Tai "siblings", the Thai royal family has contributed to Thailand's Tai imaginings through several visits to Tai territories outside of Thailand. These have included trips to Dehong prefecture, Xishuangbanna, and to Shan State in Myanmar during the 1990s. The Royal Princess Galyani Vadhana—elder sister of King Bhumibol—and Thai scholars visited the Dehong Tai in Yunnan and subsequently published materials about them (Vadhana, 1996). Although the social and religious activities (mainly the rituals of the *Kathina*[5] and *Poi Kanthin* ceremonies) of the royal family during their visits were part of "diplomatic activities" to improve international relations and support regional border deregulation initiatives, the royal family's activities have been seen as actively participating in the creation of *Pii Nong Tai* imaginings. These include the annual ceremonial performances of Thai consuls in Kunming, Myanmar, and Laos. The consuls functioned as representatives of the Bureau of the Royal Household. First, it is not surprising that the Buddhist ceremonies undertaken by the royal family and representatives of the Thai Royal Household emphasized the commonalities between Thai and Tai Buddhism, which both belong to the Theravada Buddhist Order. Second, they displayed Thai nationalism, searching for and embracing Thailand's ethnic siblings outside her national territory. Third, royally offered *Kathina* implies that the great *Sao Pha (Khun Hokham*)—or the King (of

5 The *Kathina* is a religious ceremony where yellow robes are presented to Buddhist priests/monks. It is held annually for one month following the Outdoor Lent ceremony (usually in November–December, after the rainy season). *Kathina* is called *Kathin* in Thailand and *Kanthin* in Tai-speaking communities outside Thailand.

Thailand)—is still present in a way similar to the Tai *Sao Pha* of historical Tai state configurations.

The point is not the nation-state's hegemonic power as playing a key role in governing ethnic Tai people. Rather, it is to note the ways in which Tai people play with and negotiate the kinds of ethnic/cultural essentialist constructions generated by the state. That is, Tai communities do not simply or passively adopt state-generated ethnic categories. Instead, they define new meanings that take account of their shifting situation and historical conditions.

FIGURES 2 AND 3 — Kathina ceremony performed by the Thai Royal Household at Dehong Tai Temple in Luxi, China (2005).

FIGURES 4 AND 5 — Two notice boards posted at temples in Dehong. The photo on the left declares that King Bhumibol of Thailand offered *Kathina* robes to the monks at *Jong Sang* or Puti Temple, in Luxi, China, on 14 November 1999. The second sign reads that it was posted at the *Jong Kam* or Wuyun Temple, in Luxi, China, on 12 November 2005.

In my own case study (2006), the Dehong Tai illustrate two dimensions of power relations regnant within a history of political and cultural hegemony. First, they suffered through long periods of political-cultural repression from the Chinese state, which employed various authoritarian strategies (barbarians rule barbarians, sinicization, ethnic assimilation, and recent ethnic classification) to govern territorial ethnic groups. Second, the Dehong Tai have been subjected to an elite Thai discourse of fraternal *Pii Nong Tai*, aimed at producing images of pan-Thai culture and garnering support for the Thai nation among Tai living outside of Thailand.

Within the context of this combination of forces impinging upon them, the Dehong-Tai actively appropriate *Pii Nong Tai* images and utilize them as cultural materials.

DRESS CONSUMPTION: HIERARCHICAL REPRODUCTION AMONG THE TAI

The period following the 1980s witnessed a revival in social activities and cultural consumption practices amongst the borderland Tai, in turn strengthening ethnic-based connections among them. Revitalized social and cultural activities include participation in the *Poi* ceremony, the reading of Buddhist scripts, the practice of local Theravada Buddhism beliefs, the ordaining of an increasing number

of novices and monks, the consumption of Thai and Shan Tai cultural material (songs, soap operas, and so on), and the consumption of ethnically-relevant products such as Tai-style clothes. Collectively, these practices illustrate a sense of "translocality" (Appadurai, 2003) among the Tai living along the border.

A number of macro-level factors have been particularly salient in the revival of Tai cultural production and consumption and the associated emergence of Tai translocality. For one thing, policy changes wrought by the Chinese government reflect a new political agenda that aims to create a unitary multi-ethnic nation. For another, there are broader economic policy changes, including the opening up of border areas for international trade, the transfer of new agricultural technology to Tai farmers, and the expansion of land made available to the Tai for cash cropping. These changes have enabled Thai products to be brought across the border and sold legally for consumption amongst the Dehong Tai inside China. They have also presented the Dehong Tai with new economic opportunities that have improved the livelihoods of people in the border areas.

It is important to note that the new practices of consuming Thai dress products, now available due to the de-regulation of border-trade and the increasing consumer power of the Tai, have produced multiple political effects. The most obvious is that Tai consumers prefer purchasing Thai rather than Chinese dress items to assert an alternate identity and break away from years of Chinese domination. For the Dehong Tai, the cultural consumption of Thai and various Tai styles of dress are not merely about the transfer of cultural products which they enjoy wearing, but are also part of a cultural strategy through which they begin to build a "community of sentiment" and "to imagine and feel things together" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 8). The display of Thai/Tai dress becomes part of the symbolic battle over identity, speaking to and engaging with several layers of power, i.e., Pan-Thai creation of Thai nation-state and Chinese hegemonic power. Through the wearing of higher quality Thai products, the Dehong Tai have deployed dress as a means of signifying a new set of power relations—they have moved beyond China's historical repression and have asserted a

new set of identity markers and allegiances. This has enabled segments of the Tai community to transcend long-held feelings of inferiority in relation to the Chinese. At the same time, dress practices serve to affirm a sense of Tai identity and a feeling of "ethnic and cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld, 1997), forged through the consumer choice of Thai over Chinese products.

The cultural politics in play between the Dehong Tai and Chinese nation-states' power should not, however, be seen as an "end product" weakening the nation state and celebrating the creation of (ethnic) plural identities of the Tai. This burden cannot be born by cultural politics alone.. Rather, we should view the emergent practices as part of the process of negotiating power relations through the Tai's "cultural response". This response takes the form of their search for alternative ways to reimagine and reconstruct their cultural life as part of the larger Tai family, even while remaining territorially tied to China.

These displays of cultural politics have, moreover, also produced unintended consequences, with the rearrangement and symbolic meaning invested in new dress preferences creating internal social differentiation within Dehong Tai society. Those displaying new Thai clothes at public events such as communal festivals are seen as having a higher social status than those not adopting these consumer habits, and this has created rifts within Dehong Tai society. In this way, the cultural politics of the Dehong Tai have unwittingly created new sets of class divisions, reproducing class imbalances and power differences within Dehong Tai society.

IMAGINING "PLURAL IDENTITIES" IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

Drawing on the cultural politics of the Tai ethnic groups outlined both in the literature review and case study of the Dehong Tai, I propose to extend our thinking about the concept of plural identities in multicultural societies. In the current social moment in both the Thai and Tai contexts during which this article has been written, the question of plural identities is a vital one, and

one for which we are in need of further guidelines to help shape our "social imaginaries". The hope is that such thinking will create a society where all people receive recognition from others.

The concept of social imaginaries is an attempt to link "plural identities" with "multiculturalism". Generally, the concept refers to the existence of diverse cultures, values, and traditions within a society. According to Heywood (2004), it is not merely a passive recognition of cultural diversity and difference characterized by a belief in "diversity within unity" in a bounded political society. Rather, it has more positive implications, suggestive of an approach that seeks the advancement of marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

It is my proposal that concepts of plural identities and multicultural societies should privilege "equality over difference". This will allow marginalized groups to assert themselves by reclaiming their cultural identity and then being seen as such by the general public. In this way, the concepts of plural identities and multicultural societies may manifest themselves in polyethnic rights and group self-determination by allowing the voiceless and their previously silenced reactionary movement to be heard.

By applying these notions, we enable our social imaginaries with cultural politics where plural identities and multicultural society may be imagined as the process of inclusion; we infer the inclusion of previously excluded groups now empowered to foster their own sphere of identity and belonging. Similar to this idea, Rosaldo (2003) proposes the concept of "cultural citizenship", which he explains in terms of claiming agency of ethnic communities and other marginalized groups that he considers to be viable and worthy outcomes reversing previous instances of social injustice and alienation. Delanty (2000) too has proposed something akin to this in her notion of "cosmopolitan citizenship", referring to a dimension of culture other than that of political theory; namely, the wider cognitive dimension of culture that moves beyond the accommodation of minorities and problems of cultural diversity within national societies. These various proposed ideas enable

a shift of focus: the conceptualization of plural identities is brought to the fore and the multicultural is concerned with cultivating a sense of belonging and of having voices heard. In this way, expressions of desire and aspirations for equality, respect, and dignity will no longer remain silenced.

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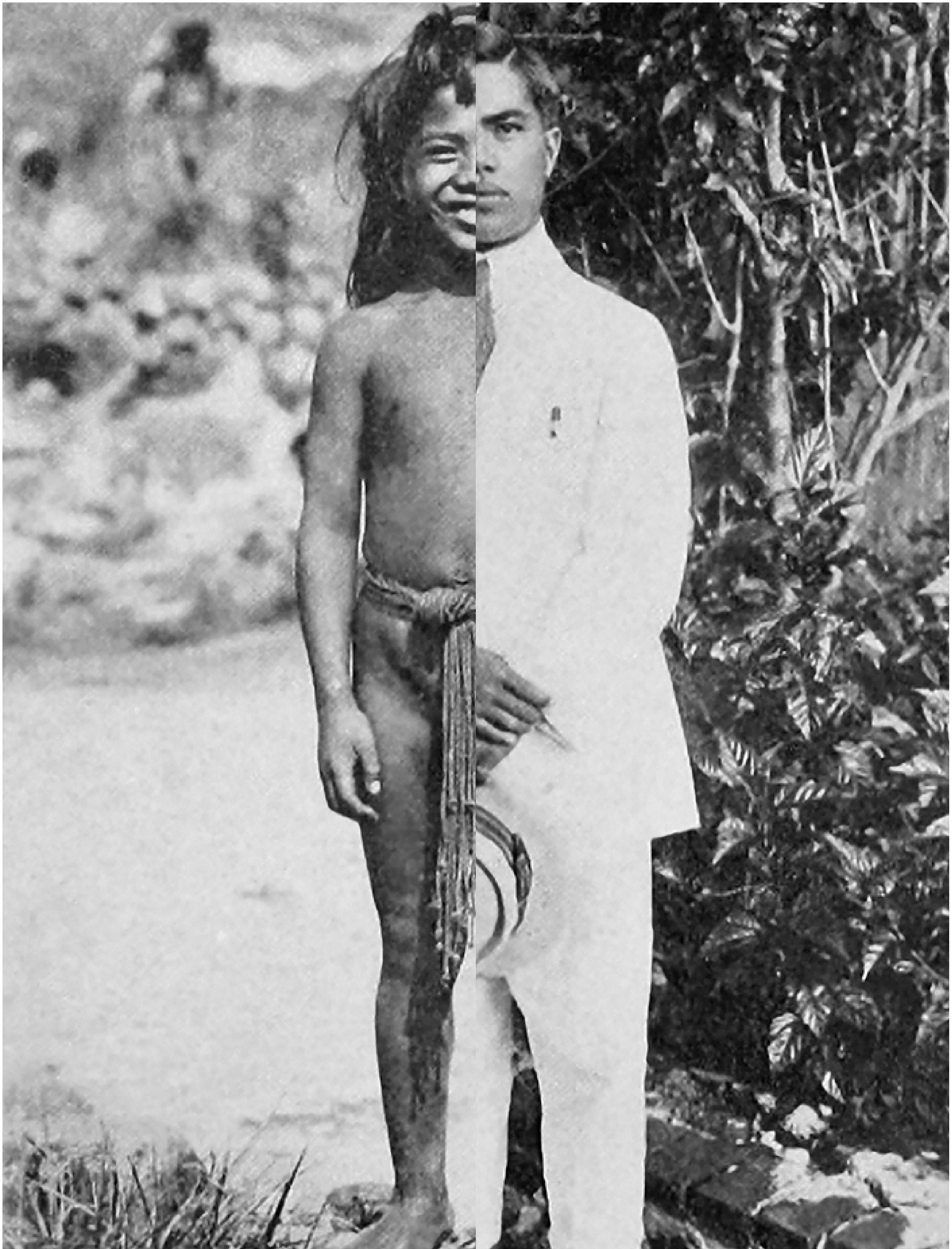


The Metamorphosis of a Bontoc Igorot. Two photographs of a Pít-a-pit, a Bontoc Igorot boy. The second was taken nine years after the first (*The Philippines, Past and Present* by Dean C. Worcester. Published 1914 by Mills in London).

SPACE, AGENCY AND NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY: The Indigenous Peoples of the Cordillera, Northern Luzon, Philippines

MARIA NELA B. FLORENDO

ABSTRACT

Indigenous peoples have been marginalized in national narratives. As they evolve through new spatio-temporal contexts, they generate narratives of self-identification. This study focuses on the Igorots of Northern Luzon, Philippines. The collective Igorot identity has evolved through contexts mediated by colonialism, the project of nation-building, and globalized space. The Igorot has produced a plurality of narratives to assert identity as well as to contest the narrative of nation. This study surveys the breadth of narratives across spatio-temporal contexts.

KEYWORDS:
indigenous people, Cordillera, ethnicity, space, Igorot

By virtue of its diverse histories, landscapes, languages, beliefs, and forms of governance, Southeast Asia is one of the most heterogeneous regions in the world. The nature of this pluralism has often been obscured by the integrative tendencies of the nation-state, a political form that has promoted a common experience in an effort to bridge such differences. This single trajectory has been legitimated by a unitary and generalizing narrative of the nation.

For many people living in the borderlands or in the margins of Filipino society, identity continues to be an important issue. This is partly due to the complex process of ethnic reconstruction that has occurred within the context of nation-building initiatives. Four factors that influence identity construction in the Philippines are worth exploring further. These include the spatio-temporal contexts of ethnic construction, power relations amongst ethnic groups, contested notions of citizenship, and the role of transnational stakeholders in the mediation of indigenous identity.

Each of the above considerations are interrelated. Landscapes, for instance, may be interpreted for what they reveal politically. An example is the discernible pattern among Southeast Asian indigenous populations with settlements in the highlands. Based on this reality, James C. Scott developed the idea of "friction of terrain", which refers to the translation of the highlands from a geographic unit to political space (J.C. Scott, 2009, p. xi). What eventually developed was an upland-lowland dichotomy anchored on power relations. The uplands became the margins or the borderlands and the lowlands became the mainstream.

The homogenizing state, both colonial and postcolonial, has played a role in identity construction by privileging particular ethnicities (and their spaces) over indigenous peoples. As nation building became a project of the postcolonial state, citizenship became an important signifier of political consolidation. Within the citizenship framework, indigenous peoples have negotiated their

ethnicities in the context of the state-prescribed policy of inclusion. Renato Rosaldo defines the official meaning of citizenship as a range of "formal rights of citizens with respect to the state, such as voting, to more colloquial or vernacular matters that revolve, for example, around the distinction between first- and second-class citizens or the desire for recognition as a full member of a group" (Rosaldo, 2003, p. 3-5). Within this framework, inclusion and exclusion signify whether a social group is considered a state or non-state entity. When marginalized groups make claims against the state's official citizenship, there is often an assertion of identity made on the basis of cultural citizenship. Rosaldo summarizes that this form of citizenship takes place "within a process where power and inequality are at play in relation to mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion" (2003, p. 3).

In an era of globalization characterized by border crossings, the process of self-definition of indigenous peoples has moved out of the nation-state. Transnational spaces constitute the third context of identity reconstruction. Indigenous peoples become part of a diaspora and, as they cross borders, they encounter the possibility of nationality and ethnicity. While adjusting to a new set of rights in an alien territory, they authenticate themselves in the process of creating their homeland in their host countries.

Given the aforementioned contexts, this paper examines the narratives of indigenous peoples as "identity narratives", which are in themselves considered "political action" (Horstmann & Wadley, 2006, p. 20). Generated by indigenous peoples in different spaces, these narratives reflect engagements in self-definition.

While previously the objects of colonial historiography were invisible in the generalizing narrative of the nation-state, indigenous peoples are now playing an active role in the production of narratives of identity and have been drawn into contests for power. By writing their histories, indigenous peoples have emerged as subjects actively engaged in defining their own ethnicity.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: DEFINING ETHNICITY AND THE INDIGENOUS

Every member of a population traces their origin to an ethnic group. Ethnicity is hardly neutral; it marks differentiation. As defined by Colin MacKerras, the term *ethnic group* refers to

> …a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity, (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality and phenotypical features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of a kind among members of a group. (MacKerras, 2003, p. 11)

It is not as if ethnic formation were a western colonial legacy; notions of belonging based on language were evident in earlier periods. Wang Gung Wu (2005) notes that prior to European colonialism in Southeast Asia, there were ethnic groups that historically had an established identity; these were the Vietnamese, Khmers, Thais of Siam, Malays, Burmans, and Javanese. J.C. Scott in *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009, p. 2) provocatively identified geography as an initial determinant of cleavages between upland/upstream peoples and lowland/ downstream peoples. Within the logic of colonialism, the mountains were viewed as a refuge for non-state entities and were symbolic of autonomy.

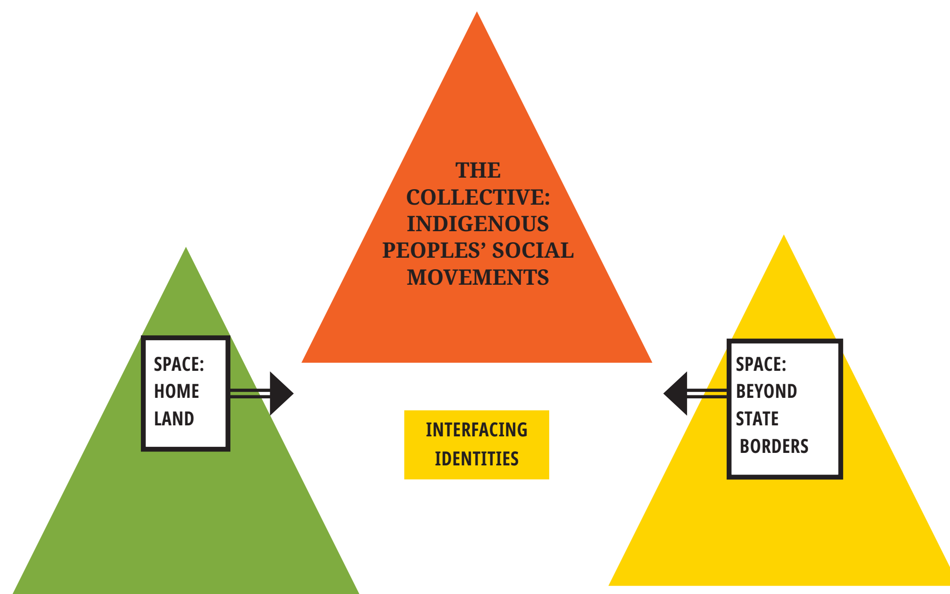
Another term requiring closer examination is *indigenous*, a word that may be located within the rubric of ethnicity. Being indigenous is an articulation of ethnicity. To date, "indigenous peoples" is an acceptable term in the international community and has also been appropriated by groups wishing to assert their identity. A survey of the meaning of indigenous peoples from the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, various committees of the United Nations, the International Labor Organization, and the World Bank reveals a common denominator. There is an

attempt to associate the indigenous with historical continuity, which is traced to such characteristics as attachment to ancestral lands, association with precolonial/ pre-invasion societies, and non-dominance (Kingsbury, 1995, pp. 13-34).

Lawrence Reid (2009, pp. 5-6), in a keynote address at the 1st International Conference on Cordillera Studies, cites the transformation of the aforementioned definition of indigenous populations. In 1983, the Working Group for Indigenous Peoples (WGIP) included descendants of indigenous populations who "even if only formally, were placed under state structures which incorporate national, social, and cultural characteristics alien to their own". The discourses on the indigenous emphasize differentiation rather than commonalities.

The diagram in Figure 1 summarizes what this paper addresses—the contexts of the self-definition of indigenous peoples and the production of narratives of identities.

THE SPATIAL-TEMPORAL CONTEXTS OF ETHNIC RECONSTRUCTION AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE CORDILLERA



TRACING ETYMOLOGIES

Cordillera comes from the Spanish term for cord. Geographically, *cordillera* is a generic term that refers to a mountain range that straddles an island, thus serving as its terrestrial backbone. The rugged terrain that is the Gran Cordillera Central cuts through the Philippines' Northern Luzon region, and serves as a dividing wall between the western (the Ilocos region) and the eastern (the Cagayan Valley) sections of Northern Luzon. Based on a survey of Spanish chronicles, the Spanish conquistadores referred to this mountain range as either Cordillera or Montaňosa and considered it a territory difficult to penetrate due to the harshness of the environment and a hostile population.[1]

The association of geography with ethnicity seems to predate the knowledge production projects of the colonial period. William Henry Scott (1969) concludes that the word *Igorot* (the collective name of the various ethnic groups in the Cordillera) is derived from the prefix "*Y-*" which means "from", and the word *golot* which means mountains. Thus *Igorot*, which existed as an identity in pre-colonial Philippines, simply referred to a mountain dweller.

During the colonial period *Igorot* and *Cordillera* grew intertwined and became the basis for ethnic identity. The various groups that lived in the mountain region remained at the borders of the colonial polity and often resisted attempts by the colonial administration to incorporate them into the state. Although these groups were fragmented, colonial and postcolonial observers tended to view them as coherently organized. Julian Malumbres (1919), for instance, referred to the whole culture of the Cordillera as *Igorotismo*. Similarly, a survey of Spanish-era sources (see Table 1 below) demonstrates that the colonial regime, during the Spaniards' campaigns to integrate the Cordillera people into the colonial polity, generated collective ethnicities rather than differentiated ethnicities of these people.

1 See, for instance, Julian Malumbres' *Historia de Nueva Vizcaya y Montaňosa* (1919).

TABLE 1 — COLLECTIVE AND DIFFERENTIATED ETHNICITIES IN SPANISH COLONIAL SOURCES

HISTORIOGRAPHIC WORK	COLLECTIVE ETHNICITY	DIFFERENTIATED ETHNICITY
Julian Malumbres (1919)	Igorotismo	
Francisco Antolin (1789)	Infieles Igorrotes Nacion Igolot	Tingguianes, Apayaos
Angel Perez (1902)	Igorrotes Igorrotes de Benguet	Tingguianes
Antonio de Morga (1609)	Ygolottes	
Sinibaldo de Mas (1843)	Igorots (composed of the Buriks, Ibusaos, Itetepanes, Gaddanes, Ifugao)	Tingguianes
Paul de la Gironiere (1854)	Igorots	
Jean Mallat (1846)	Igorrotes	
Alfred Marche (1887)	Igorots	
German Travelers (1860-1890): Carl Semper, Richard Von Drasche, Hans Meyer, Alexander Schadenberg	Igorrotes	Kiangans, Silipanes, Bontoks, Igorots
Ferdinand Blumentritt (1882)		Igorots, Ifugaos, Mayoyaos, Calingas, Tingguians

Even policies aimed at the integration of the Cordillera peoples into the colonial polity were concerned with collectively dealing with them. An example of a political unit that was created to demarcate unconquered areas was the *Pais de Igorrotes*. This was later subdivided into *comandancias*.

The Americans, in contrast to the Spanish, pursued more systematic studies of the frontier areas of their new Philippine empire. The production of colonial ethnographies promoted ethnic distinction among the Igorots. The Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes generated colonial cartography that separated and delineated new culture zones within the Cordillera. This project authenticated and standardized the ethnolinguistic groups of the region, thus creating a different type of framework for understanding the Cordillera peoples.[2]

THE PROJECT OF NATION-BUILDING AND ETHNICITIES: THE CORDILLERA FROM 1946 TO 1986

The priorities of Philippine postwar economic rehabilitation and political consolidation resonated in the Cordillera after 1946. In June 1957, the Commission on National Integration (CNI) was created through legislation by both the Philippine Senate and Congress. The CNI was mandated to effect in a "more rapid and complete manner the economic, social, moral and political advancement of the non-Christian Filipinos or national cultural communities and to render real, complete and permanent the integration of all said national cultural communities into the body politic" (Philippines, R.A. 1888, 1957).

Pursuing the assimilationist stance of colonial administrations, the postcolonial regime established in 1964 the Mountain Province Development Authority (MPDA) as a regional economic development agency patterned after the Tennessee Valley Authority. The purpose of the MPDA was to provide a coordinated development program to address the implementation of the government's economic policies

2 Scholars such as Roy Franklin Barton studied the Kalinga (1949), Albert Jenks studied the Bontoc Igorot (1904), Fay Cooper Cole began northern Philippine ethnography (1909), and Dean C. Worcester (1914) formulated the wild-Non-Christian and the civilized-Christian dichotomy.

in the Cordillera (Fry, 1983, pp. 228-229). Initiatives to promote assimilation, such as grants and scholarships for indigenous peoples, were aimed at bringing the "backward" highland peoples and the Moros of Mindanao into the mainstream.

Yet it was state-sponsored resettlement programs that would be at the core of the integration framework. Lowland populations were encouraged to move to indigenous peoples' territories to pave the way for interactions between the assimilated lowland populations with the "backward" highlanders. These programs provided opportunities for other ethnic groups to occupy ancestral lands of indigenous peoples. In the post war era, the peoples of the Cordillera started organizing according to ethnic affiliation. This gave rise to the BIBAK (Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao and Kalinga), the provinces that comprised the American-created Mountain Province. This has become the BIMAK with Mountain Province replacing Bontoc. This is noteworthy because with the integration of the Igorot into the Filipino diaspora, the BIBAK has evolved to become the backbone of the Igorot Global Organization (IGO).

Radical ethno-nationalism evolved as Igorot students gained access to educational opportunities in the urban centers of Manila and Baguio. The Igorot intelligentsia began to write new narratives that would shape their perspective of the Cordillera as a region, their identity as a people, and their place within the nation. In 1969, Baguio-based Igorot students set up the Highland Activists (Hi-Act), a nationalist organization. It convened a National Minority Congress attended by Igorots and Muslims. The following year, the Manila-based Igorot students founded the Kilusang Kabataan ng Kabundukan (Kilusan). The Hi-Act and the Kilusan[3] coalesced to form the Katipunan ng Kabataan sa Kordilyera in 1971. The mass actions spread as far as Bontoc, Mountain Province.

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3 Data on the Highland Activists and the related student social movements are taken from "The Character and Process of Revolutionary Struggle in the Cordillera", a paper issued during the First Political Congress of the Cordillera Peoples Democratic Front in January 1987, and J. Nettleton (n.d., p. 71), as cited in Florendo (1992).

But the damming of the Chico River was a conjunction in the history of Cordillera resistances. The period would become a watershed of social movements in the Cordillera. The Marcos administration, with its penchant for mega-infrastructure projects through the National Power Corporation, had revived a 1960s plan to bury Igorot villages along the banks of the Chico River to generate power for lowland communities. It is noteworthy that the Chico River and its tributaries traverse a vast area of the Cordillera, as seen in Figure 2.

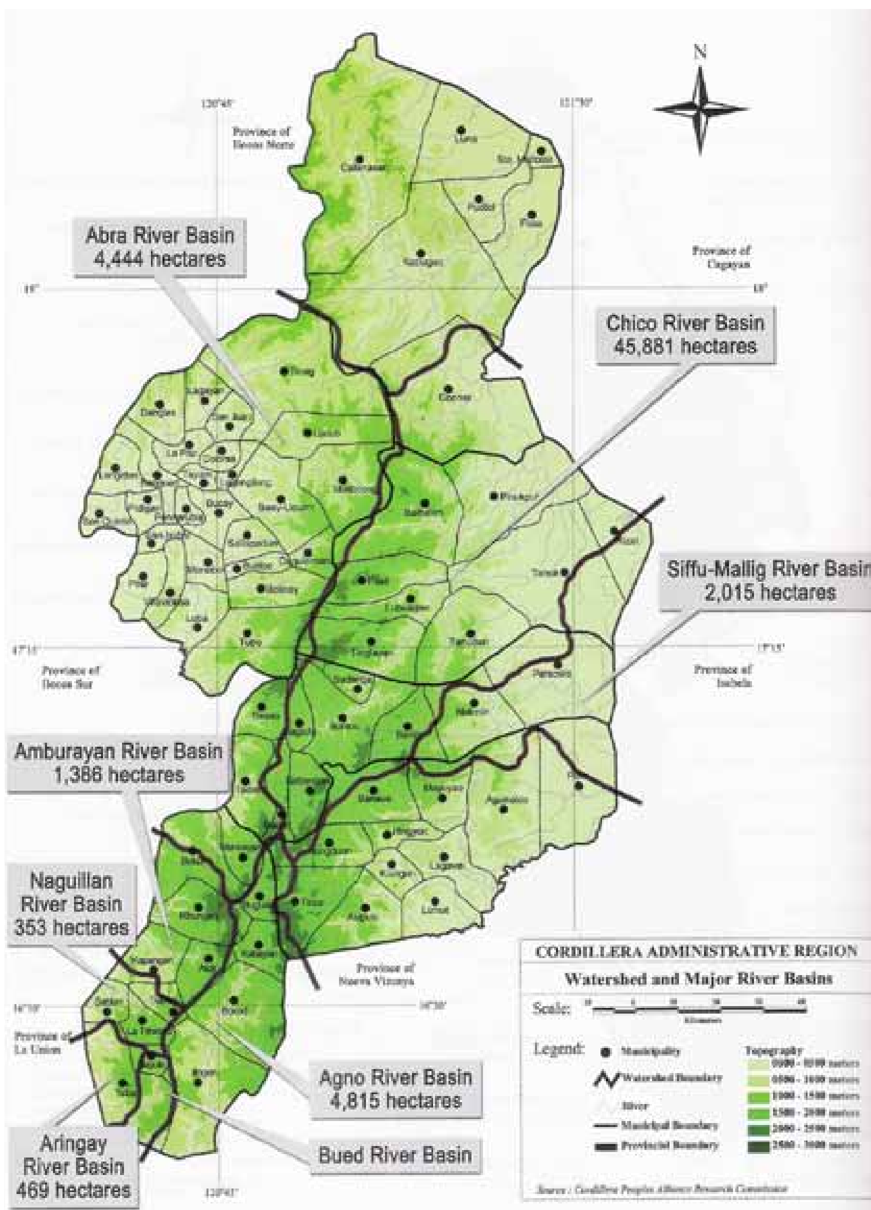

FIGURE 2 — Map of the watershed and major river basins in the Cordillera Administrative Region courtesy of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (2009), from *Ti daga ket biag (Land is life): Selected papers from three Cordillera multisectoral land congresses.*

A new level of consciousness approximating a pan-Cordillera awareness evolved as a result of this dispute. The threat caused by the Chico Dam Project was an issue that affected not just one province nor one Cordillera ethnic group. The consequences of the project meant the cultural and economic dislocation of the Cordillera villages, thereby resulting in a displacing of their sense of rootedness. The damming of the Chico River resulted in various levels of organizing. Directly affected Cordillera villages and sympathetic groups turned to the local practice of *bodong* (peace pact) to forge a multilateral agreement in defense of their lands by evoking an "indigenous" response. (Nettleton, n.d., p. 73)

The historic moment provided a venue for the region to define itself not only as a distinct entity, but as an integral part of the Filipino nation. It became a watershed for Cordillera social movements that defined shared conditions among indigenous peoples and the rest of the nation. Two developments worth noting during this period are the escalating anti-Marcos protests and the re-established Communist Party of the Philippines. National development and local conditions blended to enflame social movements that had to confront both local and national issues. In the end, the Chico River Project was shelved. Cordillera resistance triumphed, putting an end to the damming of the river and providing a model for other communities. This includes the communities affected by the Pantabangan and San Roque Dams. The triumph of the people was likened to the "Tet debacle in Vietnam", a result of the Tet Offensive, one of the largest military campaigns of the Vietnam War. (Bello, Kinley, & Elinson, 1982, p. 57)

NEW POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES, NEW STRATEGIES: FROM 1986 TO THE FAILED DISCOURSE ON AUTONOMY

The installation of Corazon Aquino to the presidency in 1986 resulted in a period of democratization. A new constitution, ratified in 1987, included a provision that allowed the drafting of an organic act that would create an autonomous region for the Cordillera and for Mindanao. The democratic

space set the arena for discourse on the substance of Cordillera autonomy. Both the radical as well as the conservative social movements participated. As scholars of social movements would later observe, the period provided new political opportunities that required strategies in organizing and adjustments in framework. (Guidry, Kennedy, & Zald, 2000; McAdam, McCarthy, & Mayer, 2004; Tarrow, 1998)

While the nation awaited the draft organic act for a Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR), President Corazon Aquino issued Executive Order 220. This created the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) with a Cordillera Regional Assembly. What ensued was a scramble for positions under the auspices of administrative regionalization. By the 1980s, the more neutral "Cordilleran" became more acceptable than "Igorot". The draft organic act—the Proposed Cordillera Autonomous Region Law (RA 6766)—was submitted to the Cordillerans in a plebiscite in 1990. With the exception of the province of Ifugao, the other provinces, or close to 80% of those who participated in the plebiscite, rejected the proposal. There were several reasons attributed to the rejection of the proposed organic act, among them the association of the grant of autonomy with the empowering of the Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army (CPLA), which at this time had forged ties with the Cory Aquino administration. Another reason was the reluctance on the part of more affluent constituent units to bear the burden of funding the requirements of a Cordillera Autonomous Region. Baguio and Benguet were among those who rejected the proposed organic act for the said reason. In more general terms, the peoples of the Cordillera were not unified on the substance of autonomy.

A second attempt to draft an organic act came in 1998, when the Philippine Congress enacted Republic Act 8438. During this period, the major social movements disengaged. In a statement issued on 12 March 1998, the Cordillera Peoples Democratic Front (CPDF) declared: "Once is bad enough, twice is too much." The radical social movements had participated as critics rather than

as active framers of the organic act. In a series of papers, political scientist Athena Lydia Casambre (2010) analyzed the discourse of Cordillera autonomy. She would summarize two major reasons for the "frustrated autonomy" of the region. First, autonomy could not be anchored on pan-Cordillera consciousness as this was more imagined than real. Casambre argued that the Igorot peoples are not monolithic/homogeneous despite the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) promotiing *Kaigorotan* or pan-Cordillera consciousness. Among the social movements, there is use of the term "peoples" rather than "people's", in recognition of diverse ethnicities. Given the plurality of voices in defining the substance of autonomy, the second point provided by Casambre was the absence of "coalition politics". For as long as the social movements were defined by hardline positions, there would be no space for consensus.[4]

By the mid-1990s, there was an attempt to revive the issue of Cordillera autonomy. This time the initiative came from Igorot politicians. There were new state-sponsored policies that would shape the discourse of autonomy, namely: the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), the Mining Act of 1995, and the Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) requiring that all programs on indigenous peoples be subject to consultation. Social movements like the CPA have reacted against the IPRA and the Mining Act inasmuch as these state-sponsored policies do not guarantee the indigenous peoples' control of their resources.

NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY

Given the spatial and temporal contexts, Table 2 below summarizes the different discourses of identity of the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera. The narratives, which are hardly monolithic, reflect a multiplicity of voices requiring close attention to a breadth of units of analysis and corresponding articulations.

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4 It is important to note that Casambre (2010) discusses language as another important element. By language, she means the ability to communicate about what autonomy is.

TABLE 2 — CORDILLERA PEOPLES DISCOURSES OF IDENTITY

UNIT OF ANALYSIS	INFLUENCES AND SOURCES	FORMS/ARTICULATIONS
Indigenous Communities in the Philippines	• Indigenous ways of knowing • Indigenous subjects • Orality • Local histories as public histories	• Mythical beginnings, genealogies, rituals, folklore, chants • Material culture as historical markers (houses, settlements) • Mapping resources (rivers, water regimes, forests) • Local histories as proof of ancestral lands • Clan reunions/family or generational histories; oral histories • Emphasis is ethnic differentiation among Cordillera peoples • Authenticating culture within the Nation
The Collective: Social Movements of Indigenous Peoples/ Ethnic Communities	• Ideological frameworks for structuring indigenous history and society • Discourses on the integration of indigenous elements in nationalist ideology	• Indigenous society within the national framework • Discourse of self-determination • Historical roots and the substance of autonomy • Emphasis on relation of the Cordillera peoples to the nation • Emphasis on collective identity rather than sub-ethnic identities • Pan-Cordillera consciousness founded on shared experience
The Indigenous in Global Society	• The global draws authenticity from practice of selected indigenous elements • Recreating the homeland	• Writings on diaspora and exile • Blogs and social media groups • Performances • Translocal studies • Remembering the St. Louis Fair of 1904 • Emphasis on collective identity within the Filipino diaspora • Authenticating culture outside the homeland (i.e., away from both Cordillera and the Philippines)

AUTHENTICATING ETHNICITY THROUGH LOCAL HISTORIES, ETHNO-HISTORIES, AND ETHNOGRAPHIES

In more recent years, from 2000 onwards, efforts to write Cordillera history have shifted from the confines of the academe to the public sphere. There has been a remarkable increase in interest among the indigenous peoples to write their own history/histories. There are four discernible genres of these reconstructions of the past. The first genre includes histories intended to strengthen the social memory of sub-ethnic groups with the ultimate goal of bringing about ethnic cohesion. The second genre is composed of histories that reinterpret the Igorot upland-lowlander divide in order to rectify the marginalized position of the peoples of the Cordillera. The third is found in histories that reinterpret ethnicity and Cordillera history in relation to the narrative of nation. The fourth are histories of the Igorots in the context of diaspora.

The first genre of historical writing is ethnographic in form. These histories highlight the creation of a social memory for an ethnolinguistic group. The emphasis is on ethnogenesis, indigenous institutions, and practices. In *Ibaloy Conversations on Identity, Community and Well-being,* histories of old settlements[5] in Baguio are presented by members of the Ibaloy sub-ethnic group. Jill Cariño, drawing from oral histories, defines the purpose:

> It seems that the cause of bringing the Ibalois[6] of Baguio forward, back from the margins and into the center, and making them visible in the city life of Baguio is a common one. Just as is the struggle for the recognition of Ibaloi ancestral land rights a common one. And just as is the search for unity among the remaining Ibalois of Baguio, in order to find their rightful place at the center of their ancestral domain. (Anton et al., 2010).

5 The five settlements are: Loakan, Camp 7, Bakakeng, Guisad Valley, and Irisan. As urbanization took place, the indigenous families eventually lost their lands.

6 The Ibaloi are one of several ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera. They are concentrated in the Benguet province.

Taking the form of memoirs, five settlement histories are reconstructed through family histories and a recollection of indigenous practices.

This genre of articulating ethnicity has been popular since the beginning in the last decade of the twentieth century. The works usually start with a brief history in the form of a genealogy that includes mythical beginnings; this is followed by an ethnographic profile.[7] These narratives are generated from oral history, the collation of oral traditions, and a description of material culture.

The Cordillera Schools Group, an organization of Episcopal Church schools located all over the Cordillera region, undertook a three-volume work of research covering ethnography, history, and development issues in the 1980s. In 2003, the group revised the earlier publication by reducing the three volumes to just one, which constitutes a compendium of ethnographies of the major ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera. "Designed for students and researchers", the volume provides ethnographies claiming to accurately present the peoples of the Cordillera. The ethnographies contain data from colonial period histories by William Henry Scott, missionary documentations from Morice Vanoverbergh and Francis Lambrecht, and writings of Filipino anthropologists such as Fay Dumagat and June Prill-Brett.[8]

The re-issued publication is worthy of attention for two reasons. First, there is an attempt on the part of the Cordillera Schools Group to reinterpret and produce

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7 Other works include: *Treasury of Beliefs and Home Rituals of Benguet* by Wasing Sacla (Baguio: BCF Printing, 1987); *Practices and Traditions of the Tingguians of Abra* by Abraeniana Institute and Research Center (Bangued, Abra: Divine Word College, 2003); and *Ethnography of the Major Ethnolinguistic Groups in the Cordillera* by Cordillera Schools Group (QC: New Day, 2003). The last book used to be a three-volume work entitled *Igorot: A People Who Daily Touch the Earth and Sky* (Baguio: Cordillera Schools Group, 1986-1987).

8 Corollary to this observation, four publications are the most commonly cited sources when local or provincial histories are written. These are William Henry Scott's *Discovery of the Igorots* (1974), Howard T. Fry's *A History of the Mountain Province* (1983), Felix Keesing's *The Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon* (1962), and Frank Jenista's *The White Apos* (1987).

another narrative. Second, while indigenous peoples allege the marginalization as well as misinterpretation of their histories in the colonial writings and narratives by outsiders, there is a problematic dependence on these historiographic works as well. It might be suggested that the act of integrating data from existing regional histories, especially by non-indigenous peoples, is a strategy of making sense of indigenous peoples' past for the purpose of constructing both alternative and complementary regional and national histories. This pattern is discernible in many of the local histories undertaken by many local government units. In 1980, the Province of Benguet undertook the Benguet History Project. In 2010, the Mountain Province published the *The New Mountain Province*. The Province of Apayao also sponsored Ramos D. Bongui's *Ba'ba'nan Daya Iapayao [History of Apayao], 1572-1995* (1999).

Other narratives were apparently written to address the social cleavage resulting from the marginalization of indigenous peoples. Lourdes Dulawan (2001) clarifies her purpose and the purpose of her local history:

> By writing about Ifugao culture and the history of its people, it is hoped that it will correct the biased notion of lowland Filipinos that the Igorots (generic name for all Cordillerans) are still uncivilized. In magazines, newspapers and even television, the Igorots are made fun of and often are made subjects of ridicule and derogatory remarks. These so-called sophisticated lowland Filipinos think that they are different people from Igorots who are always portrayed as uncivilized g-stringed stereotypes. There is that idea that the g-strings were and are still worn by the Igorots. They do not know what [sic] when the Spaniards arrived in the sixteenth century all Filipinos proudly wore the bahag or g-string from Sarangani to Aparri, slaves and datus alike.

Dulawan goes beyond establishing an identity for her sub-ethnic group, the Ifugao. Her intention is to rectify lowland and state-sponsored historical interpretations of Cordillera society.

In his article, "Conduits of Igorot Pacificaton: The Ilokano Migrants in Colonial Administration in Bontoc, Mountain Province", Stanley Anongos (2009, p. 17-26) interrogates American colonial policies and the ethnic biases that emerged from them. Anongos reviewed records of civil servants who were appointed to positions in the Mountain Province and observes that Ilokanos were the preferred recruits for government positions that were vital in the pacification of highland peoples. He concludes: "It is not difficult to attribute to their (Americans) Ilokano allies the colonial success of American rule in Mountain Province. Contrary to some logical presumptions that these settlers had probably been acculturated to Igorot ways of life, the Ilokanos were bearers of change".[9]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE PRODUCTION OF NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY

Three major social movements, namely, the CPA, the CPDF, and the CPLA have been selected for this discussion for the following reasons. These social movements have a long record and will allow a plotting of their development. The three are related historically and their ideologies reflect discourses on indigenous identity and society.

The CPA is perhaps the broadest federation of mass-based and people's organizations. The organization's website (2004) traces its history to the period of opposition to the Chico Dam Project:

> This was during the Marcos dictatorship period, when the government and its corporate partners pursued destructive projects in the Cordillera region, coupled with worsening

9 The Ilokanos surround the western coastal area of the Cordillera. During the Spanish period, the Ilocos region was host to numerous missions that became instruments for the Christianization of the population. The Ilokanos were eventually conscripted by Spanish administrators to join military forces to pacifiy the peoples of the Cordillera. The American regime, likewise, gave the Ilokanos an important role to play in the uplands. Many of the early teachers in the uplands were Ilokanos who were expected to teach the non-Christian groups the values and activities associated with civil life.

> militarization and political repression. There was then a need to strengthen the mass movement of indigenous peoples in the Cordillera to work for the promotion, recognition and defense of indigenous peoples (IP) rights and human rights. The newly-formed CPA answered this need.

The CPA has been at the forefront of capacity-building. It "has expanded to include 120 community organizations; three provincial chapters in Mountain Province, Kalinga, and Abra; an urban multi-sectoral chapter in Baguio city; a Municipal Chapter in Itogon, Benguet; and sectoral federations of youth, women, elders, peasant and cultural workers" (CPA, 2004). Its organizing along sectoral lines has established its mass base.

An analysis of the more recent papers and statements of the CPA shows historical continuities in the perspective of the character of Cordillera society. For the CPA, the bases of organizing work have not changed. The elite leadership is intact. The Philippines continues to pursue a "foreign-oriented economic development", paving the way for mining operations. There is the problem of employment and livelihood, and corollary to this, "the export of labor".[10] Even the issue of globalization has not radically restructured Cordillera society. Cordillera control over its resources, particularly land, remains at the core of the problem. The case of the CPA displays that militant organizing perseveres.

In 2010, the CPA supported the Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KATRIBU) in its entry to mainstream politics through the party list system. This initiative indicates the social movement's openness to joining parliamentary forms of promoting issues related to indigenous peoples. However, the KATRIBU failed to muster enough support to gain a seat in Congress during the 2010 elections. While the KATRIBU gained more adherents in the

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10 Florendo, M. N. B. (2012, April). *Perspective on Cordillera Development and Regional Autonomy: A Century of Societal Change from Subsistence to Globalization.* Paper presented at the Igorot Global Organization (IGO), Baguio City, Philippines.

2013 elections, it found a strong rival in the conservative Ang National Coalition of Indigenous Peoples Action Na, Inc. (ANAC-IP), which espouses federalism.[11]

The Communist Party of the Philippines-New Peoples Army (CPP-NPA) presence in the Cordillera traces its beginnings to the period of re-establishment of the CPP-NPA in 1969. Sources reveal that Ifugao was a base for cadreship trainings for Northern Luzon in the 1970s.[12] The expansion program of the revolutionary movement came at a time when the Cordillera was threatened by the damming of the Chico River, which as previously mentioned, was also aggravated by the militarization of the region. After years in the Cordillera, the CPP-NPA established the CPDF in recognition of the distinct character of indigenous society. Unlike the essentialized Cordillera of the CPLA, the CPDF's interpretation of the region is in consonance with a general Marxist framework.

Through the years, the Marxist-inspired movements in the Cordillera have undertaken research projects to gain a clearer grasp of the character of indigenous society. Among the questions addressed were class analysis and the nature of contradictions in Cordillera indigenous society. Research conducted by the Regional Social Investigation of the Ilocos-Montañosa-Pangasinan Region (RSI) was released in 1981. From 1987 to 1989, the revolutionary movement produced the Cordillera People's History (CPH) and the General Characteristics of the Cordillera Region (Genchar), followed by a paper on the CPDF. In 1999, a Conference on the Cordillera Peasant Movement was convened and eventually produced papers that addressed the gaps in the aforementioned research projects; the compendium of papers are now known as the Rakem Papers. One of the papers, "Basic Conditions of the Peasantry in the Cordillera", "provided more

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11 Based on unofficial partial returns from the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) Commission on Elections (COMELEC), 24 May 2013, the KATRIBU had 103,440 votes while ANAC-IP had 161,762 votes. The municipal returns showed that ANAC-IP garnered more votes than KATRIBU except in Baguio City and Sablan, Benguet, where the KATRIBU had more votes.

12 The film, "Ramut", a documentary on the revolutionary movement in the Cordillera, provides interviews of party members and cadres.

detailed and sharper descriptions of social classes, strata and forms of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation in the rural areas." (Verzola, 2009, pp. 135-160) All this research strengthened the Marxist framework of these social movements.

The factions and the eventual splits in the national democratic movement may have created a major rift in the revolutionary movement. But in the Cordillera, there has been concurrence as to the framework of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism. The history of Cordillera resistance against the colonial orders has formed part of the common discourse of social movements concerning Cordillera indigenous society. Resistance has been treated in a historical continuum beginning with the non-pacification and non-integration of the Cordillera in the colonial polity, and continuing in the postcolonial period when administrations promoted an assimilationist stance to integration under nation-building.

For instance, the CPLA founded in the 1980s[13] anchored its framework of Cordillera Society on collective anti-colonial resistances. According to the CPLA, the early resistances resulted in the preservation of indigenous institutions that could further be adopted as organizational bases for the CAR. Other contemporary social movements regardless of ideological influence invoke this record of resistances as the root of the continuing struggles in the region. This historical interpretation and perspective of Cordillera Society is apparently a case of memory-as-history. It was the historiography of the late William Henry Scott that rectified the memory of Cordillera resistances. W. H. Scott asserted that there was an absence of a pan-Cordillera consciousness in the history of Cordillera resistances during the colonial period. He explained that the resistances were reactions of *tribus independientes*—the first articulations of ethno-nationalism among the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera (W. H. Scott, 1969). Demystification of the basis of resistance has been a challenge to the re-defining of these social movements' historical reconstruction of Cordillera history and their analysis of Cordillera society.

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13 There is no specific date for the establishment of the CPLA apart from the CPP-NPA. The CPDF claims the rift became apparent as early as 1983. It was in 1986 that the rift was openly acknowledged.

The democratic space under Corazon Aquino resulted in other strategies of social movements. The CPLA[14] led by Conrado Balweg immediately wrote Aquino on 19 May 1986, to articulate the CPLA's willingness to negotiate peace. A month following the said letter, the Philippine government, through its emissary, Butz Aquino who travelled all the way to Sadanga, Mountain Province, began consultations with the CPLA and Maria Yag-ao, the former Chairperson of the Cordillera Bodong Association (CBA). In August, Balweg justified in an interview the action the CPLA had taken:

> Clearly, the moral imperative has changed. The moral basis is very important to the armed struggle. The Marcos regime…was a fascist regime dedicated to the use of force and oppression to exploit the masses. But now there is a liberal democratic government in place, more or less stable. It is founded on non-violence. Thus, how can we, in all conscience, automatically continue to take up arms without trying first to make peace and come to an agreement? It is like fighting a child who is defenseless.[15]

In September 1986, the historic meeting between Aquino and Balweg took place at Mount Data Lodge, Bauko, Mountain Province where the ritual of *sipat* was performed to mark the cessation of hostilities between the Philippine government and the CPLA. Following this historic meeting, Aquino cancelled the Cellophil Resources Corporation Logging concession and indefinitely suspended the Chico Dam Project. Balweg then presented his group's demands.

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14 It must be noted that the CPLA was newly established at this time. This movement was a breakaway group of the CPP-NPA. It was founded by former SVD priest-turned-activist Conrado Balweg after what he alleged as ideological differences between his group and the Marxist social movement. The CPP-NPA claimed the Party ousted Balweg.

15 *Mr. and Ms.* (1986, August 8-14, p. 17) as cited in Florendo.

What ensued was a period of division and competition amongst social movements. The CPDF accused the CPLA of surrendering the interests of the Cordillera peoples and of counter-revolutionary activities as manifested by the close alliance between the CPLA and the Philippine military. The CPLA, on the other hand, accused the CPP-NPA of bringing their revolution to the Cordillera. Balweg stressed that the Cordillera had had a long history of Igorot struggle even before the CPP-NPA brought its revolution.

While espousing the concept of a Cordillera Socialist Nation, the succeeding actions of the CPLA show that its analysis was devoid of Marxist principles. That the Cordillera is a nation brings in an element of separatism from the rest of Filipino society. Following Balweg's death in 1999, the CPLA split into at least two factions, but there was one element that was common among them: all factions participated in mainstream politics. Post-Aquino regimes decided to pursue negotiations with the CPLA. Closure was achieved when the Philippine government and the CPLA (Arsenio Humiding Faction), along with the CBA, signed the closure agreement, "Towards the CPLA's Final Disposition of Arms and Forces and Its Transformation into a Potent Socio-Economic Unarmed Force", dated 4 July 2011.[16]

NEW CONDITIONS, NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF INDIGENOUS SOCIETY AND ETHNICITY

Beginning in the 1990s, the major challenge to social movements is globalization. The developments in the global order provide new political opportunities and therefore, require "mobilizing structures and cultural framing as important analytical perspectives that help us understand how movements emerge, develop and accomplish—or fail to accomplish—their goals" (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996 in Guidry, Kennedy, & Zald, 2003).

In the genealogy of social movements, the context of globalized space has allowed adjustments as well as new organizations to evolve. One case in the Cordillera is the Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research

16 The closure agreement was put together under the auspices of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).

and Education or Tebtebba[17] which was founded in 1996, and was "…born out of the need for heightened advocacy to have the rights of indigenous peoples respected, protected and fulfilled worldwide. It also advocates and works on the elaboration and operationalization of indigenous peoples' sustainable, self-determined development" (Tebtebba, 2000).

The Tebtebba's website reveals that among its foci are issues on "human rights, sustainable development, climate change, biodiversity, traditional knowledge, customary laws and governance, conflict transformation, gender." The group also gives details of its "Vision of a New World":

> …where indigenous peoples' rights, embedded in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and other Human Rights Conventions and instruments, are respected, protected and fulfilled; where there are unified yet diverse and vibrant indigenous peoples' movements, formations and communities at various levels, which persist in asserting indigenous peoples' human rights and achieving sustainable, self-determined development; where respect for diversity, human rights, solidarity and reciprocity with nature and all creation is the basis of coexistence between peoples and between human beings and the natural world. (2000)

Tebtebba notes that its major accomplishment is its participation in working towards the "adoption of international human rights law and other international instruments, policies and agreements". These include "the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the establishment of spaces within the United Nations, such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, among others".[18] (Tebtebba, 2000)

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17 The word *Tebtebba* is a Kankanaey term which means, "to collectively discuss an issue towards agreement".

18 To date, the rapporteur of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is Tebtebba's executive director.

Other social movements have also worked more aggressively on their international linkages. The CPA, for instance, has expanded its alliance-building to the international level by associating itself with the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP); the International Alliance of Indigenous/Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forest (International Alliance); the Rivers Watch, East and Southeast Asia (RWESA); and the Mining and Communities Network (MAC). These transnational connections have contributed to the emergence of a diasporic-derived Igorot identity.

IGOROT IDENTITY IN THE FILIPINO DIASPORA

The most notorious case of Igorot transnational migration was the "hauling" of 70 Bontoc Igorots, 20 Lepanto Igorots, 18 Tingguians along with 80 Moros, 79 Visayan Filipinos, and 30 Negritoes and Mangyans to the 1904 St. Louis Exposition, held in Missouri, United States of America. The event was in celebration of the centennial of the acquisition of the Louisiana purchase (Afable, 1997, pp. 19-22; 2000a, pp. 18-33). Apparently, smaller fairs followed and Igorots were always part of the human zoos on display.

During the American colonial period, a number of Igorots were sent to the United States to study and to experience *la vida civil* (a civilized life). But after much debate, the American sponsors brought their Igorot scholars back to their homeland. A well-known case is that of Pitapit, who was sponsored by the Episcopal Church to study medicine. He eventually returned to practice in the Cordillera. The transformation of Pitapit to Hilary Clapp showcases the changes the Americans desired for the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera. The next wave of transnational migration involved Igorot professionals and their families who had joined the exodus to look for greener pastures.[19]

19 Igorot writings on transnational migration distinguishes the Igorot from the lowlanders. Both have different histories. The exodus of the lowlanders was due to the pull provided by the need for labor in sugar plantations, particularly in Hawaii.

DISCONNECTED CONNECTEDNESS: WHEN IGOROT TRANSNATIONALS JOIN THE DISCOURSE OF IDENTITY[20]

In the postwar era, the peoples of the Cordillera started organizing according to ethnic affiliation. The non-militant BIBAK is the core of Igorot Transnationals through the IGO. Members convened the International Igorot Consultation Cordillera society in 1995, a meeting which has become the venue for discussing Igorot identity and experience in the context of the Filipino diaspora.

Since 1995, when the 1st International Igorot Consultation (IIC) was held in West Covina, California, Igorot expatriates have found a venue "to celebrate their unique culture and heritage and to move forward their cause in the international stage" (Teckney-Callagan 2011). It has convened every two years with the 9th IIC held in 2012 in Baguio City, Northern Luzon, Philippines. It was on this occasion that *Igorot by Heart*, a compendium of IIC keynote speeches was launched. John Dyte, one of the editors of the publication, describes the papers in the compilation:

> …They address the many discussions surrounding the Igorot identity. It is important for the reader to understand that these are essays spanning several years and must be read with a time perspective… the rapid cross-migration of peoples to and from the Cordilleras and other countries as well as the proliferation of the internet and new communication technologies is markedly changing the development of identity. (Dyte, 2011, p. 1)

Since the 1st IIC, the use of Igorot as identity has been an issue. During the first consultation in 1995, participants were divided as to whether they wanted to be called Igorots. Those who favored the use of the term eventually won the day. During the 2nd IIC, there was an attempt to replace Igorot with Cordillera so that the suggestion was to call the IIC Cordillera International Consultation. This

20 Most data for this section were derived from Florendo's "Cordillera Social History: Struggles in Changing Contexts" (2000, January to June), which was updated in 2004 in connection with the Centennial of the St. Louis Exposition of 1904.

suggestion did not muster enough support. In 2000, the third consultation was conducted in their home ground—the Cordillera.[21]

The first day saw the participants address a recurring issue: should they be called Igorots or Cordillerans? They debated on what they should do to ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera that abhor being called Igorots; they were alluding to the Kalinga and Ifugao of the eastern regions of the Cordillera. The Igorot expatriates voted in favor of the label "Igorot" because of the overwhelming belief that the label aptly denotes their roots, thus strengthening their connection to their indigenous past. The discourse was interesting, but participants determining their ethnicity by vote was even more amazing.

Why is it important if not essential to establish a collective Igorot identity? Is the necessity dependent on space? Is a collective Igorot identity a matter of importance to the local Igorots as it is with the transnational? Albert Bacdayan[22] of IGO explains:

> … we need a banner to rally and organize around to establish our living and united presence, not only to our detractors, but also to the larger global community in which we live and participate. I believe this rallying torch should be the concept of the "Igorot"… The name Igorot binds BIBAKs together in several fundamental ways. It means people of or from the mountains. It tells the world where we came from and what we are… "Igorot" also binds us historically. (Bacdayan, 2011, pp. 40)

On the second day of the 3rd IIC, the participants defined the directions they wanted to pursue in relation to fleshing out an Igorot identity. How did expatriates consider

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21 I joined the consultation to observe the discourse of identity.

22 Albert Bacdayan is from Sagada, Mountain Province. He attended the University of the Philippines Diliman, and earned a PhD in Anthropology from Cornell University.

issues of ancestral lands, cultural dislocations, environmental degradation, dam construction, and other forms of marginalization? Seemingly, there was impatience on the part of the participants when a local Igorot raised the aforementioned problems. Uprooted from their homeland, the whole consultation failed to make the participants realize that the battlefront of the Cordillera peoples is located in the Philippines. While authenticating one's ethnicity and identity is significant to the expatriate, his/her local counterpart's more immediate concern is survival. Survival is what sustains ethnicity and the continuity of roots. And to this whole process of authenticating one's Igorotness was this interesting response:

> This discussion is not about choosing between "Igorot" or "Cordilleran" or between exclusiveness and inclusiveness. In a decade or two, when we explain the "Igorot Global Organization" to our children, let us however, not forget that it was mainly conceived in exile, with particular kinds of aspirations, expectations and idealizations of people who live away from home… People back home don't think about it too much… people tell me it seems to be a peculiar "American problem" and go on to something else much more pressing. (Afable, 2000b, p. 26)

In the same conference, the CPA (2000) presented a position paper, "The Igorot Diaspora and the Present Cordillera Situation". In the paper, the issue of identity was obscured by the primary and immediate issue of survival. Where survival is threatened, identity is likewise threatened. Addressing the expatriate Igorots, resident Igorots who, after all, kept the fire burning at the forefront, remarked:

> The realities may not be pleasant. But these are the day to day life [sic] that we, Igorots or Cordillerans, cope with living right here in the Cordillera. And it is different when one is …with economic means or political power. They may not see problems in the present situation except matters that inconvenience or affect their relatively comfortable situations.

> To affected communities, these are survival issues. It affects their livelihood, ancestral lands, existence as communities and way of life… To the great majority of peoples in the Cordillera who eke out their livelihood from the land and the bounty of its resources, any threat to the land, indigenous systems and culture are life and death issues. To our overseas compatriots and those who have the means or choice not to have to live in the Cordillera, these are just matters of culture and identity that they discuss during consultations or practice in song or dance during occasions.[23]

For indigenous peoples wanting to survive, their past defines their control of the present. This process of historical reconstruction, if it is to be empowering, can only be achieved through a collective memory that discriminates between what is sustainable from the past and what should be discarded to confront the present.

The expatriate needs roots that his/her place of destination has not offered. Tracing a new history based on the expatriate's new context is one option; but the expatriate chooses to return to his indigenous past. In contrast to personal memory that is deeply rooted in the indigenous past, expatriate memory is alienated from the very past that it seeks. As a result of this alienation, the expatriate feels the need to authenticate his/her indigenous identity. The expatriate determines what is acceptable in the present. Having been physically and culturally uprooted, his/her new context provides new exposure as the basis for judging the present. There is almost an absence of a link between the past that is sought and the present that awaits meaningful connection to historical roots. Further, the expatriate can choose to accommodate part of collective memory in areas where there is a need to adopt new mechanisms to make the impact of globalization appear less threatening; the expatriate is open to transformations in the area of legislation and education.

23 Cordillera Peoples Alliance. (2000, April). *The Igorot Diaspora and the Present Cordillera Situation*. Paper presented at the Third Igorot International Conference, Baguio City, Philippines.

CONCLUSION

The production of narratives of identity by the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera is a political action that is indicative of agency. The narratives, which embody the substance of self-definition, interrogate the state's narrative of exclusion.

Among indigenous peoples, discourses are important if not essential because they form part of identity. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), the "leading theorist on decolonization of Maori in New Zealand", explains:

> For indigenous peoples, the critique of history is not unfamiliar, although it has been now been claimed by postmodern theories. The idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary indigenous life. It is very much a fabric of communities that value oral ways of knowing. These contested accounts are stored within genealogies, within the landscape, within weavings and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried. The means by which these histories were stored was through their systems of knowledge. Many of these systems have since been reclassified as oral traditions rather than histories. (p. 33)

Tuhiwai-Smith stresses that the discourses of indigenous peoples make sense of the present. David Lowenthal (1985) in *The Past is a Foreign Country* supports Tuhiwai-Smith; he concludes that "the past renders the present familiar". History and its corresponding discourses make up an important resource for ethnic/indigenous communities as these become venues for reclaiming and reconstructing identity.

Ethnic communities/indigenous communities are hardly homogeneous. This is evident in the presentation in Table 2 of several units of analysis and the diverse political spaces where narratives are produced. In many instances,

there is an interfacing of identities. Most basic is the ethnic identity. Hardly self-contained, indigenous peoples have to negotiate their identity within the parameters of the State, and this results in cultural citizenship. As indigenous peoples move beyond the borders of the nation-state, authenticating identity will have to consider several layers—ethnicity as indigenous peoples, citizens of a nation-state, identity in the Filipino diaspora. Apparently, there are tensions. The narratives of identity show these. Below is a CPA statement addressing the translocal Igorot:

> The Igorot diaspora is understandably concerned mainly with identity and culture—like our indigenous attire (tapis and g-string) as well as other symbols of our Igorot identity, dance and song and other cultural practices, and some support for local needs like scholarships and medical missions. Whereas, locally, the indigenous peoples movement addresses comprehensive concerns of which the more pressing are: ancestral and collective rights, livelihood and employment, free prior and informed consent on development projects and benefits from such, militarization and human rights, as well as the political issue of regional autonomy. (CPA, 2012, pp. 1-2)

But as the CPA reminds the Igorot global citizen:

> Inspired by the past, we nourish the present, and build a more prosperous future. Wherever you are as global citizens, the Cordillera homeland will always be here; which we defend and nourish, for the spring to keep flowing. And of course changing, but with our values in place, and the hearth warm with the fire always burning. (CPA, 2012, p. 5).

As the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera produce their narratives of identity, Bourdieu’s analysis (1991) becomes relevant:

But the cognition effect brought about by the fact of objectification in discourse does not depend only on the recognition granted to the person who utters the discourse: it also depends on the degree to which the discourse which announces to the group its identity is grounded in the objectivity of the group to which it is addressed, that is the recognition and the belief granted to it by the members of this group, as well as in the economic or cultural properties they share in common. (as cited in Blanchetti-Revelli, 2003, p. 44)

The narratives of identity of the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera have several publics. These articulations of self-identification are addressed to their fellow indigenous peoples, other ethnic groups, the state, and indigenous peoples' communities beyond the borders of the nation-state.

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Anonymous photograph of a "Straits" (Malayan) Peranakan bride and groom dated 30 May 1939, on display at The Intan, a private Peranakan museum in Singapore.

PERANAKAN AS PLURAL IDENTITY:

Cases from Peninsular Malaysia

PUE GIOK HUN

ABSTRACT

With respect to the issue of organizing social differences according to ethnicity, the plural identity of minority ethnic groups stemming from social amalgamation has been historically seen as an anomaly that negatively affects the stability of a homogenous society. As many societies in this globalized era increasingly become more pluralized ethnically, the need to find the glue that holds society together towards unity is imperative. This is where Southeast Asia's ethnic diversity since antiquity may offer a new paradigm in the discourse of social amalgams. The notion of plural identity in today's contemporary society is explored in this article by examining selected Peranakan communities in Peninsular Malaysia. It is found that while Peranakan identity conveys the spirit of "diversity in unity", the polemic of plural identity becomes an issue when the society, especially at the State level, does not recognize or is ill-prepared to manage and negotiate their (dis)position in the present-day legislation system.

KEYWORDS:
Peranakan, plural identity, Malaysia, social amalgam, ethnicity

INTRODUCTION

Although the term was only introduced in the 1970s, ethnicity has become a substantial component of identity. General consensus among social thinkers is that ethnicity denotes “sameness” or “differences” of ethnic characters in order to differentiate between “us” and “others”. Its root word, “ethnic”, comes from the classical Greek word *ethnos* which refers to a band of people living together—be it a tribe, a nation, or even a part of a diaspora. By the nineteenth century, “ethnic” in modern English, came to be understood as revolving around “descent and culture”. This can be further elaborated on for our specific context. An ethnic group can be described as a community with a “putatively shared history and distinct way of life” (Lie, 2004, p. 1) in the form of sharing a common descent (genealogical and geographical) and cultural elements such as language, religion, norms, values, and customs. Although an ethnic group’s ethnicity may share similarities or even the same origin with other groups, an ethnic identity is a set of definitive characteristics that sets the group apart from others. These characteristics may include labels, overt physical features, language, customs and beliefs, symbols, and histories that create and perpetuate a sense of belonging and affinity among its members.

As a result of the interplay between opposing elements, whether primordial-situational or external-internal, ethnic identity is multifaceted, fluid, and subjective. Although dynamic and pluralistic by nature, ethnic identity is “by *definition* singular and unique” (Devereux as cited in Meintel, 2000, p. 21). In this context, characteristics that denote differences from, rather than similarities to, other ethnic groups are essential in constructing an “ethnic boundary” that “defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth, 1969, p. 15). Similarly, from a macro perspective, J. S. Furnivall popularizes the theory of “plural society” as a heterogeneous community that consists of many ethnic groups that do not blend in with one another, despite living side by side in the same political unit (as cited in Rex & Singh, 2003, p. 107).

Interestingly, the general idea of singularity in ethnic identity is underdeveloped in the discourse of ethnic groups with formation stemming from social amalgamation, commonly known as "interethnic marriage". This is reflected in the mainstream corpus of knowledge on such groups that has been constructed from empirical research on two categories of western societies. The first consists of developed nation-states that exhibited clear racial color lines but became rapidly pluralized at the turn of twenty-first century such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and even France (Meintel, 2000). The second includes western societies that were part of former Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Caribbean archipelago and Latin America (Burns, 1999; Cohen & Toninato, 2010).

Discourses on the identity of ethnic groups initially formed as the progeny of social amalgamation differ in at least two ways: (1) origin of formation and (2) terms used as label. With respect to the first category, social amalgams formed as a result of the influx of migration and abolition of anti-miscegenation laws. They are seen to simultaneously have double or multiple ethnic identities. General consensus on social amalgams, however, are similar to research findings on second generation immigrants: they struggle to know who they really are, often "torn" between cultures, plural origins, and ethnic affiliations; they often feel conflicted or ill at ease about identifying with a particular race or ethnic category. The state of being in limbo is most clear in the use of what Meintel (2000) calls "oxymoronic" and "schizophrenic" terms that describe or label social amalgams. On the one hand, this includes terms that are ethnically unidentifiable such as "biracial", "mixed-race", "multiracial", or "multicultural". On the other hand, terms in hyphenated form such as "Japanese-Brazilian", for example, are used to depict the ethnic origins of the social amalgam's parentage. In a bid to advocate multiculturalism as part of diverse societies and to give more weight to individual agency as a response to a growing number of social amalgams in the population, the U.S., U.K., and Canada included mixed-race identities in their national censuses in 2000 (Masuoka, 2011; Thompson, 2012). Even so, this move has yet to resolve the terminological problems in referring to social amalgams and to account for the data found in other life-defining surveys

or forms such as the Educational Testing Service as practiced in the United States (Herman, 2004).

As for the second category, empirical research revolves around established communities of social amalgams that emerged during the colonial era. Members of these communities are the descendants of social amalgamation between the colonizer (European Caucasian) and the colonized (native ethnic groups). They are referred to using Spanish or Portuguese terms, such as the creoles in the Caribbean and mestizo in Latin America. Currently in Brazil or Mexico, social amalgamation is perceived to be a significant part of the nation's history. The identities of creoles or mestizos have become widely accepted to the point that they have been promoted as a national identity.

For both categories, social amalgams are seen as a kind of "anomaly" that may negatively affect the stability of society (Pue & Shamsul, 2012). For social amalgams in developed nation-states, the anomaly comes in the form of an inability to identify with and locate their standing in society, hence, they are "unsortable". This, in turn, has increased their tendency to suffer from social pathology and psychological problems such as negative ethnic identity, lower self-esteem (Herman, 2004), poor educational achievement or limited social mobility, and an overall lower quality of life. This is particularly apparent among social amalgams who are second generation immigrants and who are in their adolescent years, "…when awareness of identities and belonging increases" (Herman, 2004, p. 731). As for social amalgams in former colonies, the formation of creole or mestizo identity in society is inadvertently influenced by a racial hierarchical system as practiced during colonial times (Pue & Shamsul, 2012).

Undeniably, there are exceptions in the case of Brazil or Mexico where social amalgams have become the majority ethnic group and represent mainstream society. However, the use of the terms creole or mestizo results in the category being continuously associated with inferiority vis-à-vis European whites. As such, social amalgams are often seen as opportunists who utilize their ethnic ambiguity

to "pass themselves off as" or "switch to" more advantageous forms of identity according to the social context. Choudhry (2010) suggests that social amalgams have a "chameleon" identity that implies ethnicity as situational with little significance attributed to a sense of belonging to any particular ethnic group. Similarly, in the United States, Masuoka (2011) finds that multiracial respondents with at least one parent from a minority group tend to identify themselves as multiracial compared to respondents with white parentage. Such practice is not new. History has documented numerous attempts made by locals to pass themselves off as mestizos who are perceived to have more social and economic advantages, yet continue to be considered lower in status than pure Caucasians or white Europeans. In this sense, the discourse of plural identity among social amalgams in European societies is seen as "by definition problematic" (Meintel, 2000, p. 21).

In comparison to Europe, Southeast Asia in general and Peninsular Malaysia in particular, have been relatively ethnically diverse and plural since antiquity: "If Southeast Asia is a meeting place of the world's civilizations, cultures, and religions, then one of the points of most intense contact must surely be the peninsula that bounds the eastern side of the Straits of Malacca" (Montesano & Jory, 2008, p. 1).

In Southeast Asia, specifically, in the Malay archipelago, a particular social amalgam formed as a result of non-native and native ethnic group interaction during precolonial times. Known as Peranakan by the host society, these groups' ethnic identities are distinctly different from those of mainstream groups. Unlike in other societies[1] in the Malay archipelago such as Indonesia, southern Thailand, and to some extent, the Philippines, the formation of Peranakan communities in Peninsular Malaysia occurred not only between native ethnic groups and Chinese but also amongst other non-native ethnic groups such as Arab, Muslim Indian, Hindu Indian, and even Portuguese. Some of these Peranakan communities continue to exist and retain their Peranakan identity to this day.

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1 Singapore shared its history with Peninsular Malaysia as part of British straits settlement and formation of Malaysia until 1965.

Against this background, this article seeks to explore plural identity[2] amongst Peranakans in Peninsular Malaysia. Using selected Peranakan communities as case studies, key aspects of the discussion on the Peranakans' plural identity will be examined: what is Peranakan and how did Peranakan communities form? How do contemporary society and the state respond to the plurality of Peranakan identity? It is hoped that this article will contribute to a broader understanding of social amalgams in the Southeast Asian context.

PLURALISTIC SOCIETY IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA THEN: FORMATION OF PERANAKAN COMMUNITIES

Historically, what was collectively referred to as the Malay peninsula[3] was part of globalization even before the period of colonization in the sixteenth century (Reid, 2008). Southeast Asian society was always characteristically heterogeneous with various genealogical and geographical origins due to frequent and free movement within the Malay archipelago. The majority of the local people became collectively known as Malay, an ethnonym based on the term first introduced in scientific discourse by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach as one of five, now defunct, generic human varieties (as cited in Bhopal, 2007, p. 1308).

Its strategic geographical location and abundant natural resources and calm straits made the region an important and, arguably, one of the most vibrant maritime routes. Local people, especially those who resided in port areas, interacted with sojourners from a range of groups of non-native ethnic origins that had been travelling to the Malay peninsula. The non-native ethnic groups included the Chinese, Hindu Indians, Muslim Indians, and Arabs. Their arrivals were motivated mainly by socio-economic purposes, including

2 The notion of 'plural identity' in the context of 'ethnocultural mixedness' exists in different forms. These include (1) second or subsequent generation of immigrants who reside outside of their place of origin due to immigration; (2) international adoptions, and; (3) interethnic marriages. Plural identity in this article solely focuses on that as a result of interethnic marriage.

3 Reid (2008) believes that the Malay peninsula traditionally includes present-day Indonesia, Peninsular Malaysia, southern Thailand, and Singapore.

trade, employment, or shelter from natural disasters and social unrest in their places of origin. Some others merely used ports along the Malay peninsula to replenish resources and wait for the right time during the monsoon season to continue to their next destination. Nonetheless, some intermarried with locals and decided to stay in the region. As a result, local settlements of non-native ethnic groups became a permanent feature of the Malay peninsula.

Prior to the sixteenth century, members of non-native ethnic groups that visited the Malay peninsula consisted only of men. This was closely linked with the harsh conditions of travel and sociocultural taboos that prohibited females from partaking in the journey. Due to their small number, their settlements within the vicinity of local society and their cultural needs were relatively well-accommodated by local people. Simultaneously, non-native ethnic groups learned the cultures of local ethnic groups. Some scholars, such as James Collins, have suggested that foreigners might have even studied local ethnic groups before these foreigners embarked on their journey. The foreigners were particularly interested in learning the Malay language since it was the region's lingua franca during the period under consideration (Collins, 2011; Ding, 2013).

Although they initially planned a temporary stay in the Malay peninsula, some members of the non-native ethnic groups decided to settle permanently in the area. Among their reasons were social or environmental instabilities in their places of origin, absence of family members, detachment from family or place of origin, and the inability to pay for the return trip. Another reason for not leaving consisted of incentives from the host society itself and these included financial success, a rise in status, and the accommodating features of the host society (Hassan, 2005; Ravichandran, 2009).

Whether due to push or pull factors, in general, individuals from the non-native ethnic groups settled down by marrying local women. This sparked the mass practice of social amalgamation—in this case interethnic marriage—in society. The progeny of social amalgamation and their descendants were identified as

members of non-native ethnic groups in accordance with the existing patrilineal system. Yet, the role of local women as mothers and maternal kin were apparent in the socialization of younger generations. As a result, the new generation of social amalgamation existed as new communities in their own right.

The progeny of social amalgamation in the Malay archipelago were subsequently referred to as *peranakan* by local society. Originating from the root word "anak", which means child, *peranakan* is a Malay word. By the eighteenth century, the term referred to the womb in the female reproductive system (Tan, 1988, p. 64). It then had two subsequent meanings, referring to the place of birth (e.g., *peranakan* Johor means a person who was born in the state of Johore) and to local-born people (Tan, 1988, p. 44). The meaning and usage of the term continued to change gradually, reflecting the changes in society. By mid-nineteenth century, the term *peranakan* became the first specific label used by the Malays to refer to "mixed-blood" descent, particularly in reference to Chinese borne by native mothers (Tan 1988, p. 44). Gradually the term *peranakan* acquired a semantic aspect; in other words, it became the reference for highly localized non-native culture by social amalgams (Teo, 2003, p. 5).

Although the term *peranakan* is a Malay word found throughout the region, it may have different meanings in different societies. In comparison to the above-described use of the term *peranakan* in the Malay peninsula, the term *peranakan* is also derived from the same etymology of "anak" in Indonesia. According to Jacqueline Knörr (2014), whilst *peranakan* also means "child of the land", the term refers mostly to Indonesians of Chinese descent:

> Peranakan…denotes people with historically exogeneous (Chinese) origins who have become indigenized—i.e., Indonesianized—via [the] process of mixing with one another and with the native population. …[I]n the case of *Peranakan*, the Chinese dimension of identification was transformed and Indonenesianized, but…not replaced. (p. 135)

In this context, the term "Peranakan" refers to local-born Chinese who had "mixed" with the Indonesians. Yet, this "mixture" may not necessarily be in the form of intermarriage with native Indonesians. The process of "Indonesianization" or indigenization might also occur in the form of converting to Islam. In fact, it was a practice conducted in Indonesia well into the nineteenth century where all Chinese who had converted to Islam were referred to as Peranakan (Lohanda in Knörr, 2014, p. 135). Presently, the term Peranakan may also be used to refer to other types of social amalgam provided that the term is used with specificity, such as "Peranakan Arab" who are the indigenized descendants of Arab-Indonesian unions (Knörr, 2014, p. 112).

Social amalgamation continued to be practiced to a significant degree until the communities had enough women for them to practice endogamy. By then, Peranakan communities had been established by the progeny of social amalgamation; such progeny were both physically and culturally different from either side of the family. As we shall see in the next section, there are a variety of Peranakan communities found in Malaysia and they are not necessarily of Chinese descent as in the Indonesian context.

PERANAKAN COMMUNITIES IN MALAYSIA

The term Peranakan (with capital "P") is used within the Malay archipelago as a label for local-born non-native ethnic groups that demonstrate traits associated with being Malay, such as in terms of phenotypes, values, norms, customs, language, and religion. In Peninsular Malaysia, the formation of Peranakan communities emerged from social amalgamation between locals and migrants who came and settled down centuries earlier than the arrival of British colonial forces. There are at least nine mentioned or documented communities in Peninsular Malaysia that fit the Peranakan profile of being locally-born of mixed foreign-local parentage, who, in turn, practice localized non-native culture (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: SOCIAL AMALGAMATION PROCESS OF SELECTED PERANAKAN COMMUNITIES IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

Community	Location	Social amalgamation
Samsam Peranakan	Perlis, Kedah	Siamese + Malay
Jawi Peranakan	Penang, Kedah, Melaka, Perak	Muslim Indian + Malay
Straits Chinese (Penang)	Penang	Chinese + Malay
Arab descendants	Penang, Kedah, Johore	Muslim Arab + Malay
Peranakan Chinese (Baba Nyonya)	Melaka	Chinese + Malay
Peranakan Hindu (Chitty)	Melaka	Hindu Indian + Malay, Chinese, Baba Nyonya
Portuguese-Eurasian (Kristang)	Melaka	Portuguese, European + Malay, Chinese, Indian
Peranakan Chinese of Kelantan	Kelantan (along the stretch of Kelantan river and northern region)	Chinese + Malay, Siamese
Peranakan Chinese of Terengganu	Terengganu (limited to area of Tirok only)	Chinese + Malay

There are some exceptions to this label, however, particularly in the case of Samsam Peranakan. The formation of Samsam Peranakan originated from the mixing of two native ethnic groups in the Malay peninsula, namely Siamese and Malay. Samsam Peranakan themselves can be further differentiated into two subgroups according to their religions, namely Muslim Samsam (*Samsam Islam*) and Buddhist Samsam (*Samsam Buddha*) (Aziz & Yusoff, 2010, p. 84).

Although nine Peranakan communities are listed in Table 2, each community may express their own ethnic identity due to influences from their social landscape. For example, there are two types of Samsam Peranakan communities that base their identity on their religion. Within the Chinese diaspora, the Straits Chinese in Penang may be different from Baba Nyonya in Melaka, although they share

kinship relations to a certain extent. Thus, the discussion hereafter is limited to six selected Peranakan communities: the Jawi Peranakan in Penang, Arab descendants in Kedah, Peranakan Hindu (Chitty) in Melaka, Peranakan Chinese in Kelantan and Melaka, as well as Portuguese-Eurasian (Kristang) in Melaka.

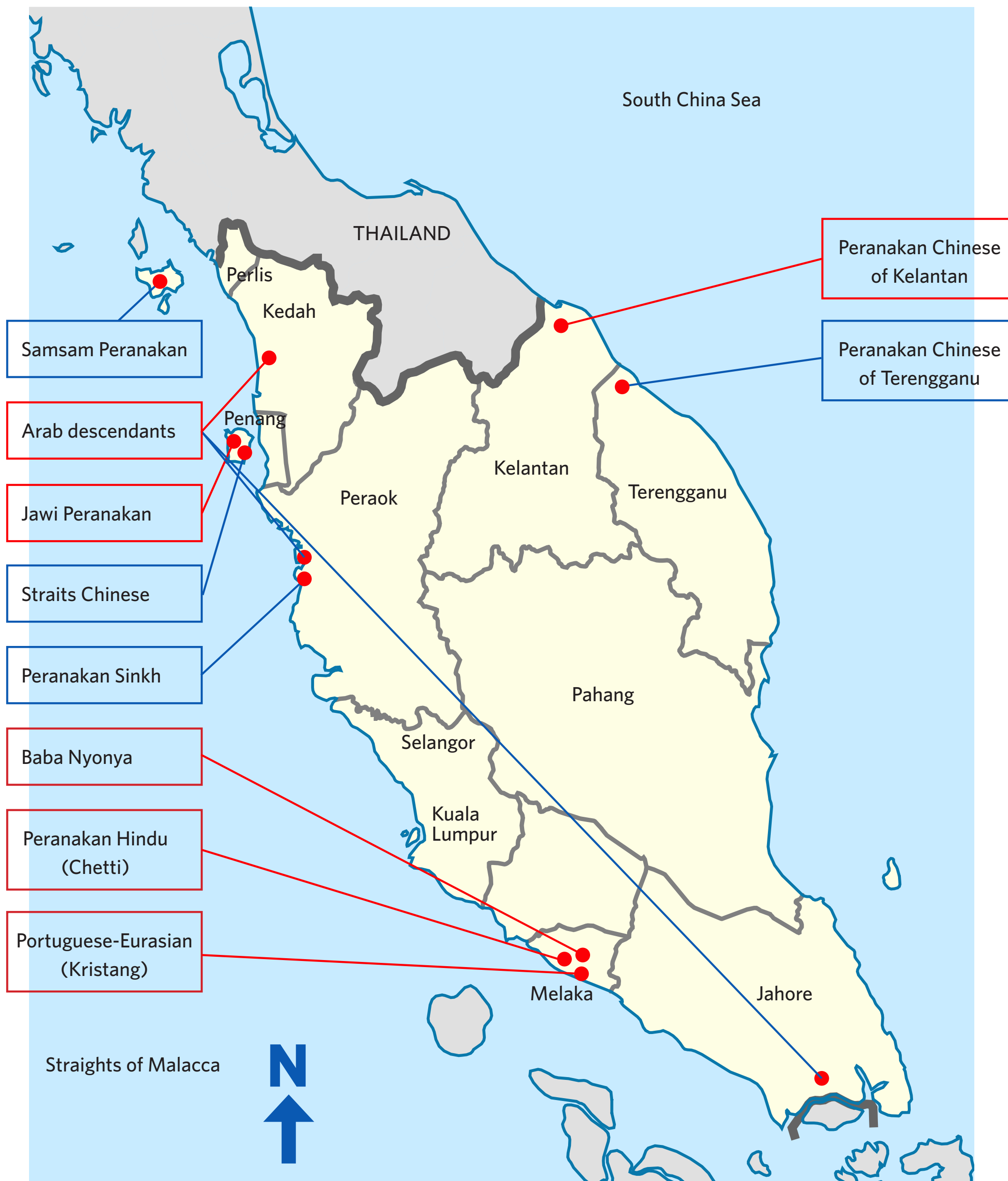

FIGURE 1 — Peranakan communities in Peninsular Malaysia

JAWI PERANAKAN (PENANG)

"Jawi" is an etymologically problematic concept which has created confusion in identifying the scope and character of their settlements. Jawi Peranakan refers to a community believed to have originated from social amalgamation between Muslims from India and local Malay women. In the early stage of formation, the community was also known as Keling or Kling Peranakan in reference to a region in southern India (Mohamed, 2010, p. 38). The term may also have originated from the word "Kalinga", which was the name of an ancient kingdom (Teo, 2003, p. 5). In the Malay peninsula, the term "Keling" was first used to refer to migrants from the Indian continent regardless of their religion. The word "Keling Peranakan" in this context was used in Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir's *Hikayat Abdullah*, a major literary work that was first published in 1849, where it was used to refer to the origins of Abdullah who was labeled as "Keling Peranakkan" [sic] (Teo, 2003, p. 5). After an increasing number of Muslim Indian traders arrived and subsequently became significant players in trading, the term "Keling" was replaced by the term "Jawi". Previously, the former term stressed lineage, until it was used to literally mean Islam. The changing terminology suggests that more priority was given to Islam as the shared bond among its members. Other than in Penang, Jawi Peranakan communities were also found in Kedah, Melaka, and Perak (Yusoff, 2010, p. 4).

Apart from being followers of Islamic teaching, Muslim Indians were affluent merchants and tradesmen. A shared religious belief system most likely enabled these groups to gain access to, and acceptance by, their local host, and this resulted in intermarriage. Furthermore, their involvement in lucrative commercial enterprises and their relatively higher social status made them the preferred choice of husbands for daughters of local aristocrats and royalty (Sandhu as cited in Yusoff, 2010, p. 4). Social amalgamation expanded among commoners when Muslim Indians from various backgrounds came to Penang in large numbers due to the island's strategic location as a trading and administration center of British colonial power.

ARAB PERANAKAN (KEDAH)

The ambiguity surrounding affiliation with the Jawi Peranakan has led some to include progeny of Muslim Arabs and local Malay women as part of that community. This is, in part, a result of the use of the term *Jawi* which refers to the religion of Islam, and is often associated with the phrase *"masuk Melayu"*, which means "becoming Malay" (Mohamed, 2010, p. 40). Thus, the ethnonym of Jawi Peranakan was thought to be applicable to "…any other ethnic group who are Islamic and married with local Malay women…" (Mohamed, 2010, p. 41). The community associated itself more closely with Arab roots and community members who preferred to distinguish themselves from Jawi Peranakan. But the long history of interaction between Arab and Indian communities might have conflated these origins in a Southeast Asian context. (Fujimoto, 1988, p. 3-4). Simultaneously, the term *"jawi"* was used by the Arabs in the thirteenth century to refer to Southeast Asian regions (Laffan, 2009, p. 139), hence it was considered an inappropriate term for them. Instead, the community preferred to refer to themselves as "Malay of Arab descent" (*Melayu peranakan Arab*) (Yusoff & Aziz, 2010, p. ix).

The Arabs came to the Malay archipelago directly from Mecca, Hadramaut, Iraq, and Yemen; or indirectly from places in Southeast Asia with thriving Arab communities such as Acheh, Singapore, India (in particular Gujerat), Sumatra in Indonesia, and Satun and Pattalung in Thailand (Mohamed, 2010, p. 51; Hassan 2005, p. 47-48). In addition to trading in the region, the spread of Islam was another motivating factor that brought Arabs to Southeast Asia. This movement of Islamic culture to the region was apparent since the eighth century (Halimi, 2011). Compared to other non-native ethnic groups who were also Muslim, the Arabs received better treatment and respect from local hosts. They were seen as relatively superior in terms of their mastery of Islamic teachings and commanded prestige due to their connections to Islam's holy lands. This occurred to the extent that some Arabs were believed to have been directly descended from Prophet Muhammad himself (Tang, 2005, p. 97).

With such a sociocultural background, the community of Arabs and their descendants enjoyed a higher social status and were seen by local society as "orang baik-baik" which can be translated as "…people of good birth who were well connected and trustworthy…" (Hassan, 2005, p. 48). Consequently, this caused the elites among the local Malays to demonstrate a preference for the Arab when arranging marriage partnerships (Hassan, 2005). Other than Kedah, communities of Peranakan Arabs also exist in other regions in Peninsular Malaysia, particularly in Penang and Johore.

PERANAKAN CHINESE

Peranakan Chinese as a sub-ethnic category is one of the more widely-known and studied among Peranakan communities in Malaysia. The Malay peninsula was a preferred destination for short- or long-term migration even before the massive influx of Chinese migrants who were imported for labor by British colonial authorities in the nineteenth century. The migration was prompted by a range of socio-economic factors including the pull of jobs or the push of famine, war, despotic rulers, and drought or other natural disasters in China. The Chinese arrived in the Malay peninsula via the many maritime ports along its coasts; some also arrived via transit from overland travel as was the case of the Peranakan Chinese in Kelantan. They settled permanently by choosing their spouses among women of local ethnic groups that resided in the particular locality. For Peranakan Chinese in Kelantan, social amalgamation occurred between Hokkien-speaking Chinese who were predominantly involved in agriculture activities, and local women from Thai ethnic groups whose settlements were found in the northern area of the Malay peninsula. Peranakan Chinese in Melaka, more commonly known as the Baba Nyonya community, were the progeny of interethnic marriages between Hokkien-speaking Chinese merchants and local Malay women.

Since the movement of Chinese migrants in the Malay peninsula was based on clan or dialect group, they lived in isolation from other migrant groups and depended heavily on the local community. As such, despite sharing the label

"Peranakan Chinese", Peranakan Chinese communities in different localities emerged and subsequently evolved differently from one another. While Peranakan Chinese communities in Penang and Singapore arguably no longer exist distinctly from non-Peranakan Chinese in the mainstream, there are at least three other Peranakan Chinese communities elsewhere: Peranakan Chinese in Kelantan, Peranakan Chinese Tirok in Terengganu, and Baba Nyonya in Melaka. Peranakan Chinese in Kelantan, and to some extent Peranakan Chinese Tirok in Terengganu, still practice their Peranakan Chinese culture in everyday life (Pue, 2013; Tan & Ngah, 2013), whereas Baba Nyonya culture has been "repackaged" for tourism and commercials (Lee, 2008).

PERANAKAN HINDU (MELAKA CHITTY)

Forefathers of the community of Peranakan Hindu, better known as Melaka Chitty, also came from various places in the Indian continent but adhered to Hinduism rather than Islam. The Chitty community in Melaka can be traced back to Tamil merchants who originated from southern India and came to Melaka to trade spices even before the area was initiated by Parameswara, the last king of Singapore (1389-1398) (Ravichandran, 2009, p. 5).

On the one hand, social amalgamation that formed the Chitty community involved merchants from Kalingga and local women from Java, Batak, or Malay ethnic groups. On the other hand, some of the merchants selected their spouses from among the women of the Baba Nyonya community, another Peranakan community in Melaka (Dhoraisingam, 2006, p. 4). Due to their marriage to non-Hindu women, the couples would have faced challenges of the caste system if they were to return to India. As such, they chose to settle down in Melaka. With kinship ties to India subsequently dissolving over time, the community of Chitty emerged.

PORTUGUESE-EURASIAN (KRISTANG)

Unlike other Peranakan communities that emerged from social amalgamation between ethnic groups originating from Asia, the Portuguese-Eurasian

community stemmed from an amalgamation between Europeans from Portugal, Holland, France, and Great Britain and Asians such as Malay, Chinese, and Indians. The term Eurasian was used to replace the term Anglo-Indians in reference to mixed-blood progeny of European and Indian descent (Koop, 1960). The Portuguese-Eurasian people in Melaka arguably constitute the largest and most significant Eurasian community in Malaysia. The community members are mainly descendants of Portuguese, thus they were labeled as Portuguese-Eurasian or Eurasian of Portuguese descent (Daus, 1989, p. 19). The community members, however, prefer to refer to themselves as Kristang.

The Kristang community was founded by Portuguese who were members of the navy fleet commanded by Alfonso de Albuquerque who arrived in Melaka in 1511. In the sixteenth century, interethnic marriage between navy officers and local women was a Portuguese strategy to lessen the gap between themselves and their local hosts, as well as to fulfill the need for human and food resources (Khoo as cited in Low, 2003, p. 1). Although the colonial authorities initially encouraged intermarriage, the Portuguese grew attached to Melaka and subsequently decided to make it their permanent settlement. An example of their newfound sense of attachment and belonging was exhibited when the Portuguese who married local women refused to escape to other parts of the Portuguese colony when the Dutch defeated the colonial power in 1641 (Fernandis, 2000, p. 266).

The Portuguese and their local-born offspring formed a Peranakan community referred to by the local Malay community as Serani. The name was derived from the term “Nasrani” or Nazarean in reference to Christianity (Fernandis, 2000, p. 262). The community members identified themselves as Kristang or Christao (De Witt, 2012). The autonym was derived from Christão, which is the name of their language. Nevertheless, both autonym and ethnonym reflected the community’s devotion to the religion of Catholic Christianity (Daus, 1989). Presently, Kristang communal life and activities are centered on the Portuguese Settlement (*Kampung Portugis*) in Melaka.

PERANAKAN AS PLURAL IDENTITY

Because of the social amalgamation between ethnic groups of different gene pools, Peranakans' phenotypical characteristics are different from their parentage. They are identified as members of a non-native ethnic group reflecting the influence of a patrilineal system. Thus, they are expected to engage in cultural practices that are considered significant to their ethnicity. However, their socialization process was heavily influenced by the pivotal role of local women. This ensured that social amalgams were in constant interaction with local society. As a result, Peranakans are associated with localized non-native cultures that are pluralistic in nature as illustrated in Figure 2.

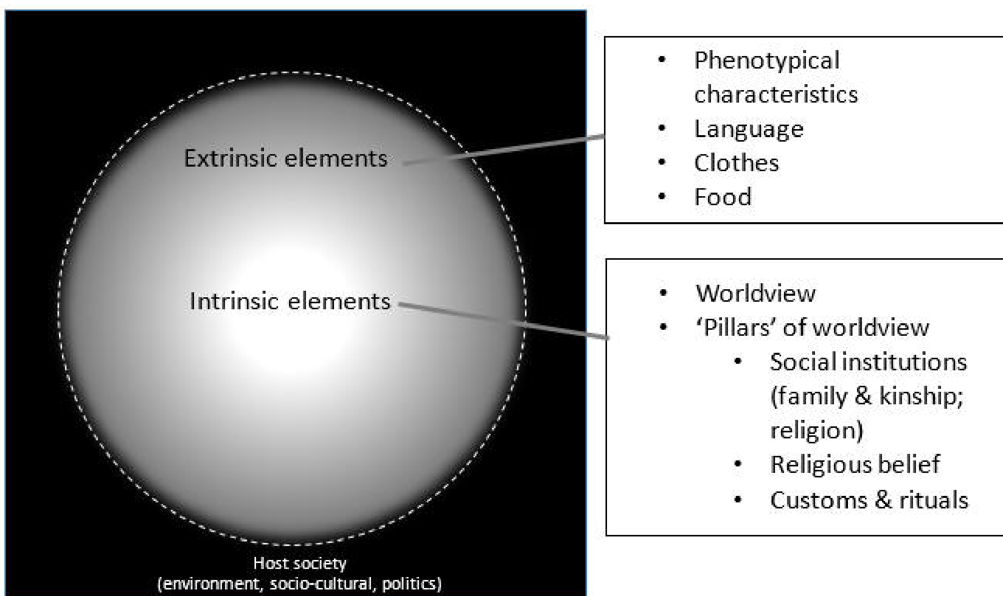

FIGURE 2 — Manifestation of plurality in Peranakan ethnicity

The diagram in Figure 2 shows how plurality within Peranakan ethnicity might be illustrated. The diagram was built based on Gordon's idea of how assimilation processes in a majority-minority interethnic relation shape the ethnicity of minority groups (Gordon, 1964). In general, Peranakan ethnicity can be divided into extrinsic and intrinsic elements. Located in the outer part of ethnicity, extrinsic elements are more susceptible to change in their physical and social landscape. In the context of non-native ethnic groups, these are the elements that are often

closely associated with their survivability in a new host society. However in the context of the Peranakan, elements of local ethnic cultures were acculturated in greater intensity due to the socialization process by maternal kin. It is in this outer layer that the trademark Peranakan ethnic identity differentiated the community from non-Peranakan. Examples of extrinsic elements in Peranakan ethnicity include, but are not limited to, customs, clothes, leisure activities, and the use of local ingredients and cooking methods in food preparation.

Arguably, the most important extrinsic element is the mastery of the Malay language. Some Peranakan communities are bilingual. While fluent in the Malay language, their non-native languages also adopted some elements of the Malay language, such as in the case of the Chinese Hokkien dialect and Euro-Portuguese Christao for the Peranakan Chinese community in Kelantan and Kristang community in Melaka, respectively. For some other Peranakan communities such as Jawi Peranakan in Kedah, Baba Nyonya, and Chitty in Melaka, instead of becoming bilingual, non-native ethnic languages have been replaced by their respective version of Peranakan Malay. One feature of Peranakan Malay is the use of non-native ethnic words within Malay language style and grammar.

Within the inner layer of Peranakan ethnicity are intrinsic elements that consist of abstract and more complex cultural elements that are at the core of the ethnic group's existence. Intrinsic elements often demonstrate little influence from the host society. These include their worldview and pillars of the worldview such as social institutions and religious beliefs, which are upheld and manifested through the practice of their respective customs and rituals.

PLURALISTIC SOCIETY IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA NOW: (DIS)POSITION OF PERANAKANS

Due to cultural similarities and acknowledged kinship ties, Malays regard Peranakan communities as part of local society. For example, Malays in Kelantan refer to Peranakan Chinese as *"Cina kita"* (our Chinese) and *"Cina sini"* (Chinese [from] here) as opposed to *"Cina luar"* (foreign Chinese). The latter labels are

often used to evoke a colder and more suspicious attitude that is usually reserved for non-Peranakan Chinese and strangers (Teo, 2003). Positive reactions from Malays towards the Peranakan include treatment of the latter with higher levels of trust and acceptance. Indeed, the use of the term "Peranakan" as a positive label for the offspring of interethnic marriage is itself unique and different from other terms that originated from the false notion of ethnic or racial purity, which are commonly used elsewhere.

Prior to Malaysia's independence in 1957, the Malay peninsula region was colonized by the Portuguese (1511–1641) and the Dutch (1641–1824). However, it was colonization by the British (1824–1957) that had long-lasting effects on Malay society. One of many significant "legacies" left by the British was their role in the historical construction of ethnicity. Similar to the practice in other colonies by colonial powers, society in the Malay peninsula was made up of various small city-kingdoms that were eventually restructured. The colonial authorities' practice of reconfiguring society evolved according to how the British understood and needed Malay society organized. Such changes were reflected best by studying the categorization system in the census (Hirschman, 1987). The practice showed that colonial authorities had placed themselves first in the census, followed by the natives (Malays), and non-natives (Chinese and Indians). Lastly, miscellaneous native ethnic groups were placed under the category of Others. Peranakans were sorted accordingly as well, with Peranakan Chinese and non-Peranakan Chinese dialect groups were represented by a single "Chinese" category, while Jawi Peranakan were combined with the Malay category. Colonial society was divided spatially and socially in order to discourage any unity that might work to the disadvantage of the colonial power.

The foundation of colonial ethnicity as reflected in the census was ultimately inherited as part of the administrative structure of the postcolonial state. The only thing that differed in the census before and after independence was the arrangement of racial categories whereby Malays were placed first in the census and Europeans were merged into Others.

Fifty-eight years later, such categorization is still being practiced in contemporary Malaysian society. As a result of this long practice, the categorization of a pluralistic society in Malaysia is taken for granted. This is especially apparent at the State level where the same ethnic categorization system was employed to represent society and simplify its administration. The practice of generalizing each ethnic category as homogenous with its own uniform ethnic identity, while overlooking the differences between and among ethnic categories, has inadvertently caused the practice of social amalgamation to go unnoticed in society. Their marginalized existence has rendered them unrecognizable by the mainstream population.

Change in the social landscape from the traditional/precolonial setting to the modern/postcolonial setting has affected interethnic relations between Peranakans and non-Peranakans who constitute the mainstream in Malaysian society. Similar to the colonial state's simplification of Malay society, cultural similarities and differences amongst Peranakan communities are not acknowledged by the State. Instead, both groups are placed into the same British classification system of Malay, Chinese, Indian, or Others.

TABLE 2: SELECTED PERANAKAN COMMUNITIES WITHIN FOUR ETHNIC CATEGORIZATION SYSTEM IN MALAYSIA

Ethnic groups	Ethnic categories
Jawi Peranakan of Penang Arab descendants of Kedah	Malay
Peranakan Chinese of Kelantan Baba Nyonya of Melaka	Chinese
Peranakan Hindu of Melaka (Chitty Melaka)	Indian
Eurasian-Portuguese of Melaka (Kristang)	Others

This categorization has effectively placed Peranakans in a position where they find themselves in a "minority within minority" situation. Examples of "minority within minority" situations include incidents where Peranakan Chinese in Kelantan and Melaka were looked down upon by non-Peranakan Chinese who perceive the lack of "Chineseness" in their identity as a result of impure Chinese blood due to social amalgamation. The situation is more challenging for those who appear to look different from those who are typically associated with "Chinese phenotypes", such as lighter skin tones, straight hair, and the single eyelid (Tong, 2006). A similar dilemma surrounds the Peranakan Hindu in Melaka whose main language is Malay though they are devout believers of Hinduism (Yap, 1989; Ravichandran, 2009).

On the other side of the coin, Peranakans feel uncomfortable about identifying themselves with an ethnic category that does not reflect their own plural identity. Concomitantly, the Peranakan's plural identity often becomes a cause for mistaken identity among members of mainstream society who are often ignorant of the Peranakan's existence and uniqueness. For instance, it is an open secret in the Peranakan Chinese community in Kelantan that religious officers often question and even arrest members for patronizing eateries during the Islamic fasting month of Ramadhan because these members are mistaken for Malay Muslim (Pue, 2009; Teo, 2003).

Grouping Peranakan communities into four ethnic categories has rendered some Peranakan communities such as the Jawi Peranakan in Penang and the Arab Peranakan in Kedah to be categorized as Malay. Although both communities still retain their non-Malay cultural practices to some extent, they do not see themselves as Malay. Both communities have become part of the majority ethnic group and have enjoyed the privileged status of *Bumiputera* which, literally translated, means "sons of the soil" (Hassan, 2005). In comparison, other non-Malay Peranakan communities that have been local-born for many generations, were perceived and received in a similar manner as non-Peranakan who make up the mainstream of respective non-native ethnic categories.

CONCLUSION

With many societies in today's globalized era increasingly becoming more pluralized ethnically, the need to find the "glue" that can hold a society together is a priority. In this context, as shown in this article, the notion of social amalgams as problematic or as constituting a negative social issue does not apply in terms of plurality of Peranakan ethnicity. Instead, Peranakan-ness as plural identity conveys the spirit of "diversity in unity" whereby elements of multiple ethnicities blend into a single ethnic mold, effectively increasing similarities and bridging the gap with other ethnic groups in society. Peranakan identity may be seen as an emblem of social cohesion in practice, and may also be viewed as an example of Southeast Asia's regional dynamism in the "mixed-race" phenomenon.

In reality, however, Malaysia as a state has been unable to depart from colonialism's influence on the Malay "epistemological space" (Shamsul, 2012, p. 111-112). The complexity of the Peranakan as an example of plural identity is a reflection of a broader struggle between contending social realms of what Shamsul (2006) refers to as the "authority-defined" and the "everyday-defined". Both social realms exist in parallel, and at times, overlapping dimensions (Shamsul, 2006). In the everyday-defined social realm, Peranakan identity enables the community to connect with other ethnic groups through their shared histories, lineages, and cultures. Yet this process is treated as problematic, or is even maligned in contemporary society by the mainstream population and the State due to its inability to delineate these groups neatly into default ethnic categories. This discourse has shed light on the shortcomings of the four ethnic category system that has been practiced virtually unchanged since it was inherited from the British colonial power more than half a century ago. Although it may be a convenient way to organize and administer a pluralistic society, the State must not neglect the realities of everyday experiences of its people.

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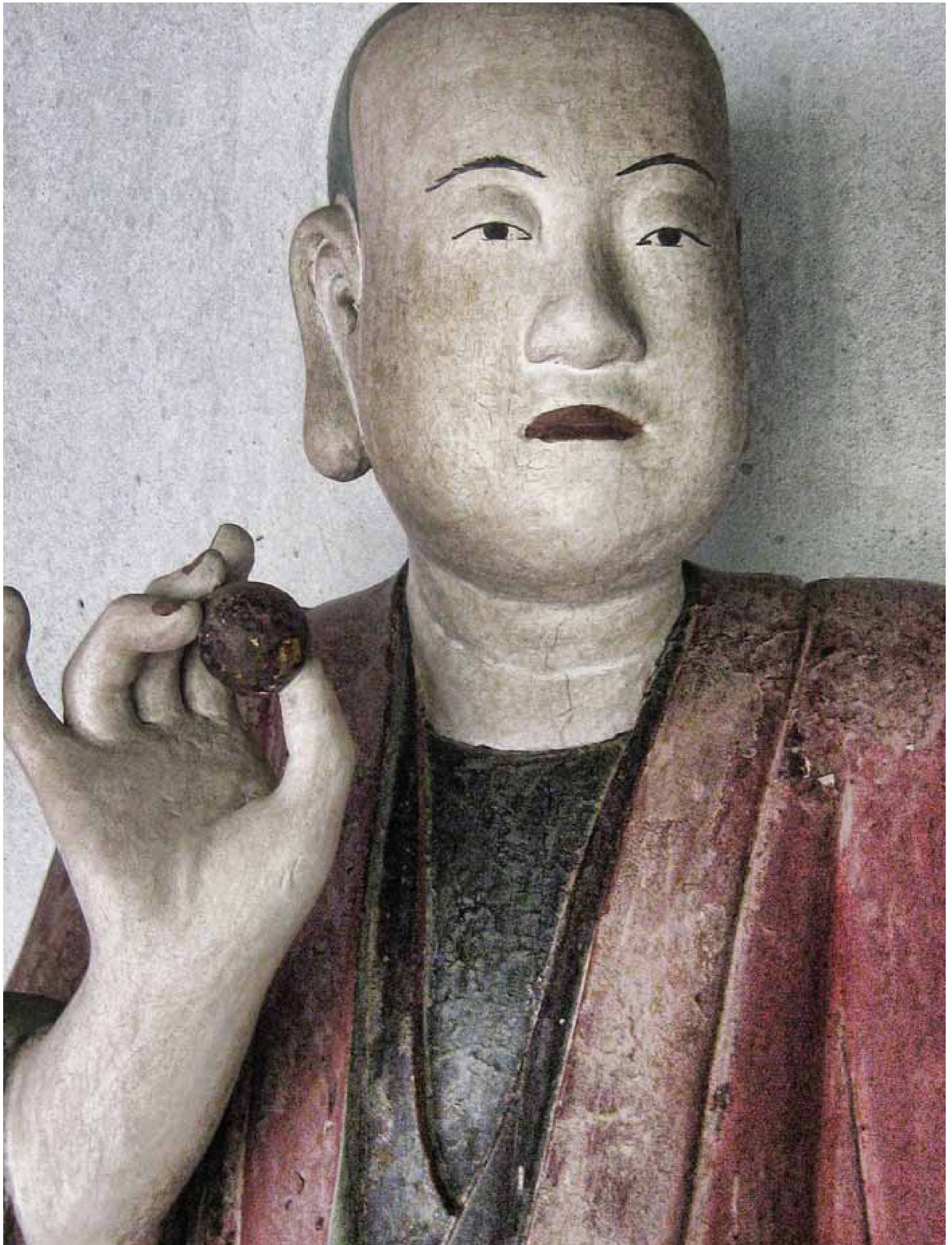

Detail of statue of Buddha in Mia Pagoda, Duong Lam village, May 2010

MAINTAINING ETHNIC IDENTITY AND MARCHING TOWARDS MODERNITY:

Ethnic Minorities and the Dilemma of Development in Vietnam

NGUYỄN CÔNG THẢO

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the challenges that ethnic minority groups in Vietnam have faced in their attempt to conserve their identities, promote national development, and engage in modernization. It concludes that these challenges are primarily rooted in definitions of ethnic identity and modernity that take Kinh culture as the standard for other groups to follow. This has marginalized different ethnic minority groups in terms of developmental processes as the groups do not have the necessary resources to pursue these goals.

KEYWORDS:
ethnicity, national modernity, cultural identity, plurality, Vietnam ethnography

INTRODUCTION

In early 2013, the residents of the ancient quarter of Dong Van and the ancient village of Duong Lam petitioned to revoke their national heritage status and surprised both the mass media and general public. Duong Lam is an ancient Vietnamese village in the city of Hanoi, while the ancient quarter of Dong Van is located in a small town in the province of Ha Giang, where many Hmong and Chinese Vietnamese reside. The question is: What made these two culturally and geographically distant communities take this course of action?[1] This is especially surprising in the context of Vietnam, where national heritage status is an honor that many local governments want to secure.[2]

The mass media has pointed to some shortcomings in conservation policy at these two locations. People are banned from fixing their old houses despite their run-down condition and this makes daily existence not only increasingly difficult but also leads to life-threatening risks for the people living in these houses. Although visitors to Duong Lam ancient village have to buy entrance tickets, the Deputy Chairperson of Duong Lam Commune People's Committee notes that, ten years after their official recognition, the residents of the villages have hardly received any concrete benefits.[3]

These two facts suggest the need to discuss the challenges for the government and their people with respect to how to promote development, preserve cultural identity, and adhere to the official principle of "building an advanced

1 One group is the Kinh people, which is the majority ethnic group in Vietnam, while the other is made up of Hmong and Chinese, two of the 53 ethnic minorities in Vietnam. One is located in the capital city while the other is located in a remote mountainous region.

2 For details, see news article at http://laodong.com.vn/phong-su/cuoc-dua-bi-hai-va-dau-hoi-ve-mot-duong-day-chay-di-tich/135665.bld

3 For details, see news article at http://vtc.vn/13-376725/giai-tri/dan-duong-lam-xin-tra-lai-danh-hieu-di-tich-quoc-gia.htm

culture imbued with national identity".[4] Based on an examination of findings from previous studies and fieldwork, this article analyzes the dilemma each ethnic minority group has to overcome to achieve these goals. Such a dilemma is rooted in an outdated definition of ethnicity that has been employed in Vietnam since 1979.

ETHNIC IDENTITIES

In Vietnam, the General Statistics Office (GSO) officially announced the list of 54 ethnic groups in 1979.[5] The government released and approved the list after a massive survey carried out by Vietnamese ethnologists who applied the following criteria to classify how many ethnic groups there were in the country: a common language, evidence of common cultural characteristics, and general self-ethnic identification.

Based on these criteria, each ethnic group must have a distinctive language that its members speak. People in the same group must share general cultural characteristics often indicated through livelihood systems, clothing, houses, food, and ritual beliefs. They must also identify themselves as being members of the same ethnic group. These criteria were proposed by Vietnamese ethnologists at the National Institute of Ethnology[6] who were influenced in certain ways by previous Soviet-trained ethnologists (Be Viet Dang, 1975). The proposed characteristics were designed to distinguish one group from another and to establish the identity of an ethnic community. Based on this approach, ethnic identity depended on descriptions and, more importantly, on the possibility of proving that language use and cultural characteristics of a particular group were distinctive from others.

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4 Please see the Resolution of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, presented at the 5th conference (Term VIII), held in July 1996.

5 The list of Vietnamese ethnic minorities may be seen in Decision No 421 by the Director General of the General Statistics Office, dated 02 March 1979.

6 The National Institute of Ethnology was renamed the Institute of Anthropology in 2002.

MODERNITY

Given that it is a complex concept, modernity is not easy to define comprehensively. It is considered to be "modes of social life which emerged in Europe from the nineteenth century onward" (Giddens, 1990, p.1) or such modes situated within European cultural history and geography (Foucault, 1990). More specifically, modernity refers to an extension of scientific and institutional networks that defines them as rational and true (Latour, 1993). These three key theories define modernity as an invention of the West. This implies the advance of capitalism and the rise of the nation-state model over non-European governance systems, and associates the beginning and end of modernity with European metrics. These views are criticized most forcefully by Prett, Watts, Ogborn, and Nash—all of whom suggest that modernity is contextual and is differently interpreted from place to place (Prett & Watts, 1992; Ogborn, 1998; Nash, 2000). In recent years, there are moves to study non-Western modernity, and in this area, Southeast Asia has yielded important insights (Ong, 1996; Bunnell, 2004).

In Vietnam, there are different definitions of modern history. Some take 1858, the year of the French invasion, as signaling the dawn of the last feudal regime. Some consider 1945, the year of the August Revolution, where national independence was gained from the French, as the beginning of modernity. Others see 1975, the year of national unification, as ending the Vietnam War. It was not until Doi Moi (Renovation)[7] in 1986 that modernity became a popular expression in daily life. After Doi Moi, modernity became more and more popular in daily discourse, and it often followed the term "industrialization" to create a political slogan: "*cong nghiep hoa, hien dai hoa*" [industrialization and modernization]. Modernity as interpreted in the Communist Party's legal papers during this period indicated a shift from an agricultural-based and central-planned economy to a more industrial commercial-based and multi-sector economy.[8]

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7 Massive economic reforms were initiated in 1986 with the goal of creating a "socialist-oriented market economy".

8 This is explicitly and officially expressed in the 8th Party General Meeting in 1996.

There is no doubt that this way of seeing was strongly influenced by that of the former Soviet Union. Modernity, when introduced into Vietnam, had more political implications than it did in the West, which is why the country's modern landmarks are often associated with historical war victories or political transformation. At the same time, this perception reflects the shadow of unilinear evolutionary theory that generalizes human development into fixed steps of which the latest is always better than the former. This explains why modernity is often used to represent Kinh culture and to compare this with traditions or identities of other different ethnic minority groups. The Kinh is the country's majority group, comprising more than 85 percent of the total population. Not surprisingly, the Kinh always take leading roles in national development. Meanwhile, regardless of the fact that there is great cultural diversity among these groups, there is a trend towards generalizing their identities using the features discussed below (Dang Nghiem Van, 1993; Pham, Hoang, Le, Nguyen & Mai, 2013).

IDENTITY AND MODERNITY

Ethnic minority people's identities	**Modernity**
Stilt house	Brick houses
Nomadic lifestyle and cultivation	Fixed settlement and cultivation
Upland rice	Paddy rice
Self-sufficient and agricultural based economy	Market and industrial based economy
Emotionalist	Rationalist
Handmade costumes	Kinh costumes
Sticky rice	Plain rice

The division implies a level of development where the Kinh are more civilized than most other ethnic groups, and at the same time, the division has had significant influence on policy makers. In many development projects, slogans include: "to assist upland region to catch up with the lowland"; "to abandon nomadic life and shifting farming system" as a way to get rid of backwardness;

and "to cultivate wet rice, to practice sedentarization" as a way to achieve modernity (Nguyen Van Chinh, 2008; Pham, Hoang, Le, Nguyen & Mai, 2013).

LANGUAGE

As indicated previously, language has been proposed as the foremost criteria to identify ethnicity. This means if people are Tai, they must be fluent in the Tai language. Speaking Tai is thus an important marker of identity of Tai people. Meanwhile, as Vietnamese is the most popular language and takes the role of official language, all ethnic minority groups also need to be fluent in Vietnamese in order to be integrated into national development. Speaking Vietnamese represents modernity for some of these groups.

Under these circumstances, a contradiction has arisen as a result of Vietnamese language assimilation policies. Some groups forget or even lose their mother tongue while many other groups lag behind in attaining Vietnamese fluency. Many ethnic minority groups including Xinh Mun, Kho Mu, Co Tu, Co, and Xo Dang have become more fluent in Vietnamese or other languages rather than in their own language. Xinh Mun and Kho Mu peoples in the northern upland region speak Tai in daily communication, but have retained their ability to fluently speak their mother tongues (Tran Binh, 1999). Similarly, O Du people in Nghe An province speak Tai and Vietnamese, while their own language has almost been lost (Phan Huu Dat, 2002). A recent study also finds that some groups "rarely use the language of their people" (Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012, p. 166). Field investigation in early 2014 in the Central Highland found that many E-de people in the Buon Don District of Dak Lak province speak Mnong instead of their own language and many other groups such as La Ha, Chu-ru, and Cho-ro have also forgotten their mother tongue (Ngo Duc Thinh, 2012).

On the other hand, many ethnic minority peoples, including their youth, are not sufficiently fluent in Vietnamese; this is among the reasons that explain high school dropout rates in many groups (World Bank, 2009). By the end of 2008, less than 50% of ethnic minority students graduated from elementary and junior

high school, with a significant percentage of children not attending school in the mountainous areas: Ha Giang province (Northern mountainous region) 26%, Quang Tri (Central) 3%, and Dak Lak (Central Highlands) 25%. This leads to relatively high illiteracy rates in about 10% of the population of these three provinces (World Bank, 2009).

Because they speak poor Vietnamese, and sometimes lose the language of their birth, many ethnic groups are left in confusion. They do not speak Vietnamese well enough to be eligible for higher education or to be employed in big firms. Limited education and career options tie them to farming work with narrow social boundaries within their villages or communes. At the same time, young people speak their mother tongue in a "strange" manner that sometimes prevents adult members in their community from understanding them. The young do not know how to sing traditional songs or dance in traditional festivals so "they just drink but take no role in ceremony arrangements". This is a common complaint from many old Gia-rai and E-de people whom I interviewed in the Central Highland region in 2013 and 2014. Many reasons account for this development.

The first reason is the absence of the written form of many ethnic minority languages.[9] It is estimated that only half of the 53 ethnic minority groups have a writing system (Tran Tri Doi, 1999), thus constituting a big challenge for conserving traditional culture in general and language in particular. This especially happens when there have been increasing influences of the dominant Kinh culture due to an increase in migration and changes in ethnic demography. During the 1940s, the Kinh accounted for only about five percent of the total population of the Central Highlands, but the rate increased to 50% in 1976, and continued to increase to 75% in 1997 (Bui Minh Dao, 2000). Meanwhile, before the 1980s, there were only 12 ethnic groups residing in the Central Highlands region; that number increased to 46 by mid-2000 (Bui Minh Dao, 2003).

9 For details, please see http://dangcongsan.vn/cpv/Modules/News/NewsDetail.aspx?co_id=28340707&cn_id=541977

Second, with the exception of the Chinese Vietnamese (Hoa) and some others living in the lowland areas, most of the upland ethnic minority groups heavily depend on farming production. Non-farm income is limited and off-farm jobs are not popular (World Bank, 2009). This leads to the fact that most local people spend time in their villages or communes. Their social network is still mainly within their own group and communication with Kinh people is infrequent. The analysis is supported by fieldwork undertaken in the Central Highland and North Upland regions where it was observed that many local people could barely speak and understand Vietnamese.

Third, although the Vietnamese government has implemented some local language teaching programs for several ethnic minority groups, a shortage of qualified local teachers has prevented these initiatives from gaining any traction. Meanwhile, ethnic minority students face big challenges learning Vietnamese in primary school where around 70% to 80% of first grade students perform so poorly that they are hardly able to read or understand Vietnamese (Tran Tri Doi, 1999).

Under these circumstances, more and more scholars have begun to question the rationale of using language as a criterion for ethnic classification. In an article posted on the website of the Department of Anthropology, National University of Ho Chi Minh City, Phan Ngoc Chien (2015) said that "At the moment probably there are no researchers who associate language community with ethnic community".[10] This is reinforced by the fact that there are many cases where two different ethnic groups speak the same language, as in the case of the Ma and Co Ho people in Lam Dong province (Ta Van Thong, 2002). Therefore, if language is used as one of the criteria to identify ethnic groups, then there must be mixed groups where members interact and speak each other's language, as in the case of Xtieng and Mnong or E-de and Gia-rai (Maitre, 1912). As such, there is the view that language is an important criterion, but it is not clear as to how to

10 For details, please see http://anthdep.edu.vn/?frame=newsview&id=111

apply this definitively in cases of cultural mixing (Nguyen Van Loi, 2002; Nguyen Khac Tung, 2002).

GENERAL CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

In discussing cultural characteristics, Vietnamese scholars often make distinctions between material and mental cultures: *Van hoa vat chat, van hoa tinh than*. The separation between material and mental cultures is evident in many anthropology doctoral dissertation titles and ethnography books where the most popular elements of material culture include houses, farming systems, clothing, and cuisine. Mental culture refers to customs, ceremonies, religion, beliefs, and literature (Cam Trong, 1979; Tran Binh, 1999; Bui Minh Dao, 2000). The general observation is that all ethnic minority groups in Vietnam face a marginalizing of their "material" culture in the wake of influence from Kinh culture (Winkels, 2011).

The presence of the Kinh culture is reported in all aspects of ethnic minority life, including housing, clothing, meals, and even conversation (Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012). Findings from this study also indicate that many ethnic minority people have "forgotten their traditional costumes" (p. 165) and "most of the households (Tay) at Po Cai are living in the houses which were built in Kin people's style" (p. 199). Another study confirms that Kinh culture and lifestyle are becoming more and more evident in ethnic minority villages in terms of housing, clothing, and cuisine (Mai & Chu, 2001). Changes to the home include not only new architectural styles or materials, but also indoor facilities, the arrangement of rooms, and house-related ceremonies (Hoang Tuan Pho, 2004).

Cultural characteristics, like language, are also imprecise indicators of identity because of the difficulty of determining the core cultural characteristics of an ethnic group (Hoang Luong, 2002). In many cases, the culture of smaller ethnic groups can fade as a result of development, as in the case of O-du people (Phan Huu Dat, 2002). For example, "the housing style of rural Kinh is affecting all parts of the country" (Ngo Duc Thinh, 2006, p. 123) and very few ethnic groups

can maintain full traditional costume. Ethnic groups including O-du, La ha, Chu-ru, and Cho-ro are being assimilated by Kinh culture in terms of costumes (Ngo Duc Thinh, 2006). Like language assimilation, the process of absorbing and being absorbed by Kinh culture is shaped by different factors.

First, Kinh culture has become increasingly influential over other groups given the Kinh's position as the dominant ethnic community in the country. This is especially the case when Kinh people live closer to ethnic minorities due to rapid migration into the latter's regions. From 1961 to 1975, approximately one million Kinh from the Red River Delta migrated to mountainous provinces. After the Doi Moi about one million Kinh migrated to the Central Highland provinces (Hardy, 2005). As previously noted, in the 1940s, the Kinh accounted for only about five percent of the total population of the Central Highlands, but this rate increased to 50% in 1976 and continued to increase until it reached 75% in 1997 (Bui Minh Dao, 2000). The co-existence of Kinh and ethnic minority people is also prevalent in the northern mountains region, where one seldom finds only ethnic minority people living in a commune (Khong Dien, 1997).

Second, a high poverty rate has influenced changes in housing, clothes, and other cultural practices by ethnic minorities. Over the past few decades, various state economic development programs have had a positive impact on the lives of ethnic minorities. However, the poverty rate in ethnic minority groups is still much higher compared to the country average of 63% in 2012 (World Bank, 2012). Meanwhile, the cost of building a traditional house is much more expensive than a Kinh-style house, especially now that most of the forests are managed and owned by the private sector. Poverty compels local peoples to sell their traditional houses and move to Kinh-style houses. There is even a website for this kind of transaction.[11]

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11 For details, please see http://nhasandantoc.com/nha-san-chay-ve-xuoi.stm

Decreasing land ownership pressures local people to plant food crops instead of cotton and this increases the availability of cheap Kinh costumes as opposed to ethnic wear (Bui Minh Dao, 2000; Ngo Duc Thinh, 2002). Poverty also affects the practice of other cultural activities, and the poor ethnic minority peoples such as the Dzao cannot continue to maintain certain ceremonies because they have become too expensive. Drawing from a study covering eight different villages with five ethnic groups in total, findings from this study indicate that only 14.1% of people overall actually preserve traditional costumes, and traditional architecture has completely disappeared in five villages (Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012).

Third, land ownership and forestry supplies also contribute to the process of cultural erosion. The livelihood of the vast majority of ethnic minorities in Vietnam depends on agriculture (World Bank, 2012). Therefore, farm land and forests are two resources that play an important role. A recent study reports that 34% of ethnic minority people do not have paddy land; 24% have less than 1,000 square meters; 17% have between 1,000 to 2,000 square meters; nine percent have between 2,000 to 3,000 square meters, and 15% have 3,000 square meters or more (World Bank, 2009).

Given the average demographic scale of six to seven persons per household, food security is not guaranteed, especially when the majority of the land is infertile and subject to regular droughts; this food insecurity leads to disease (World Bank, 2012). The lack of paddy rice land forces many ethnic minorities to mainly rely on uphill farming to ensure food security. A World Bank study shows that 81% of surveyed households consider uphill farming as their main livelihood activity. This situation is a challenge for poverty reduction because the path to exit poverty must combine industrial crops with diverse agricultural production, trade, and services (World Bank, 2009).

The lack of paddy rice land forced many local groups to turn to uphill farming, a strategy that has led to deforestation in many areas, especially the northern

mountainous region and the Central Highlands. The coverage in 1943 was 43.7%, but by 1995, it was reduced to 28.5%. Significant efforts helped increase forest coverage to 33.2% in 2000 (Le Trong Cuc, 2002). However, forest quality has increasingly deteriorated by up to 55% (Vu Van Dung, 2011), while watershed protection forests on river basins have been reduced to fewer than 20% (Vo Quy, 2002).

In many localities, income from uphill farming plays the most important role for some ethnic groups (Nguyen Quang Tan, 2003). Until the mid-1990s, an estimated nine million ethnic minorities were living on uphill farming (Do Dinh Sam as cited in Vo Quy, 2002).

Apart from its significance as a source of the necessities of life, forests supply timber to make houses and herbal medicine; other forest products are considered property of the whole community (Hoang Cam, 2011; Nguyen & Sikor, 2012). Forests create an ethnic living space by defining boundaries, which both members of the community and outsiders respect. The space helps build ties among community members through a system of rights and obligations to which members must adhere (Hoang Cam, 2011). For many ethnic groups, forests also play an important role in their daily activities, organization of production, and spiritual life (Nguyen Thi Hien, 2008).

The decline in the quality of forests also makes it more difficult to collect pharmaceutical resources for traditional medicine. Fieldwork in some Red Dao villages in Lao Cai in 2011 showed that there were fewer practicing physicians due to the scarcity of pharmaceutical materials and the importing of medicine from China. The disappearance of community forests in some areas has also led to increased conflicts among neighboring ethnic minorities due to disputes over logging and land reclamation for uphill farming. Meanwhile, beliefs related to forests have been fading and deforestation has been on the rise in many areas (Nguyen Cong Thao, 2009).

If we look strictly at popular cultural characteristics such as housing, clothes, adornment, farming, or belief systems, it is quite obvious that during the last few decades, most of these have been replaced by those of the Kinh people. This situation challenges not only Vietnamese ethnologists, but also policy makers who might question the use of "general cultural characteristics" as important criteria for ethnic identification.

ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Within the last 10 years, there has been an exchange of opinions about the need to re-evaluate the role of language and cultural characteristics in determining ethnic identify. As language and cultural traits of many ethnic minority groups have been strongly influenced by the Kinh, ethnic self-identification has been recently emphasized as an important criterion. This is probably the only convincing criterion, given the reality of language and cultural changes.

In two national workshops in Hanoi in 1973, ethnic self-identification was ranked higher than general cultural characteristics (Be Viet Dang, 1975). In the later 2002 conference, scholars reaffirmed that self-identification was "extremely important, ultimately it is the decisive factor to determine ethnic composition" (Khong Dien, 1997, p. 4) or it is considered the "most reliable" (Hoang Luong, 2002, p. 71).

However, in practice, the process of applying this benchmark has encountered many challenges. The investigation conducted by the Institute of Ethnology in 1973 initially identified 59 ethnic groups but the list submitted to the government for approval was reduced to 54 because several groups had been combined. Unfortunately, it was not clear whether the affected communities themselves initiated this change.

In recent years, there have been cases where some ethnic communities wanted to split into separate ethnic groups and there were situations where Kinh people claimed to belong to an ethnic minority group in order to qualify for entitlements and preferential state policies (Nguyen Khac Tung, 2002; Nguyen Van Thang,

2002; Bui Minh Dao, 2003). This was partly due to the observation that there were some intermediate groups that "could be classified into any group" (Dang Nghiem Van, 1993, p. 160-161).

The aggregation of many communities in Quang Binh province (including the Van Kieu, Tri, Mang, Coong, Khua, May, Ruc, Sach, Arem, and Ma Lieng) into two ethnic groups called Bru-Van Kieu and Chut were not consistent with the actual situation in Quang Binh (Nguyen Van Manh, 2003). During a field study in 2013, a number of people in Dak Nong commune, Ngoc Hoi district, were interviewed. According to the current classification, Gie-Trieng is defined on the basis of self-identification as the two different groups felt that they should be known as two separate ethnic groups. The reasons they provided are fundamental differences in language and customs. In this context, all statistics of the commune governments have now placed the Gie-Trieng into two groups. In terms of daily discourse, people also see these communities as two different groups.

On the other hand, many ethnic groups in Vietnam do not know why they are classified as certain ethnic groups rather than others (World Bank, 2012). This has resulted in situations where some groups do not agree with their classification and association with a particular ethnic group. For example, Pa Co wants to be split from Ta Oi groups (Vo Xuan Trang, 1998). Given this situation, on 5 August 2010, the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, a ministerial-level agency, sent an official request to all provinces in the country to ask local authorities to report the number of ethnic groups that wished to change their ethnicities. Results showed that all 21 ethnic groups have a re-identification requirement, with 11 wishing to be renamed for better accuracy. The renaming requests came from all areas where ethnic minority people resided including the Northwest, Northeast, Central and Central Highlands, and Southwest regions (Lo Giang Pao, 2013).

While language and cultural traits of various ethnic groups have been rapidly assimilated, the "self-identification" criterion is significant as it shows respect for local voices. However, this acknowledgement on paper is not yet fully

and seriously practiced. Since 1979, the official list has remained fixed at 53 recognized ethnic minority groups, though local peoples have petitioned to change their designations. Local communities and local governments have used names different from those on the list. Meanwhile, some Kinh people who have lived in upland areas for years identify themselves as "ethnic minority people" in order to receive benefits from the government. All of these scenarios have contributed to the complicated social landscape of ethnic minority identity in Vietnam.

A NEW APPROACH TO ETHNICITY

The previous sections have identified difficulties that ethnic minority peoples in Vietnam have had to face in order to maintain their cultural identities, on the one hand, and to integrate into national development, on the other. These challenges posed by different forces are not easy to cope with. This section proposes some alternatives that may be able to improve the situation.

Taylor (2011) introduced a new approach to minority ethnicity in Vietnam where the people's voice is decisive and central and where others may not appropriate their identities. This view is an important platform, and interestingly enough, it conveys some commonalities with that of the government of Vietnam. The 2013 Constitution clearly states that every ethnic group is equal to the other including the Kinh. The Vietnam Communist Party also acknowledges traditional values of ethnic minority people's culture. Such an awareness has been reinforced via the goal of building an advanced culture imbued with national identity and traditional culture—a goal which has been set up as one of the development strategies in the Party's resolutions.

However, ethnicity and ethnic identities are still vague in practice, and this is indicated by the fact that many local groups do not agree with the currently imposed classification system mentioned earlier. The appropriateness of using three existing criterion for ethnic classification has been questioned because it does not work well in many cases, and it is unclear whether this application was

made with agreement from local peoples, or through the imagination of some scientists, or because of influence from political ideologies (Ito, 2013; Keyes, 2014).

Apart from many ethnic groups increasingly disagreeing with it, the imposed ethnicity has also influenced newspapers to communicate a wrong understanding about ethnic minority peoples in Vietnam. This is observable in three general trends in the writing found in 500 published articles in the four most popular newspapers: "adding mythical flavour," "adding romantic flavour," and "adding tragedic flavour" to cultures of ethnic minority peoples in the country (Isee, 2011). Meanwhile, ethnic minorities also experience a stigma from the Kinh (Pham, Hoang, Le, Nguyen & Mai, 2011).

Given the situation, a new way of defining ethnic identities that must truly reflect the will of the local people is imperative. People cannot maintain "imagined identities" that are defined by outsiders and that are not representative of their voice and decisions. Like modernity, ethnic identities must be understood as manifestations of social life. Different groups have distinct ways of seeing and viewing. Such identities should not be compared with others; any attempt to do this will lead to a dead end.

CONCLUSION

Ethnic minority peoples in Vietnam have experienced many challenges during the last few decades. They have had to overcome obstacles in the process of maintaining or asserting their identities while trying to modernize and contribute to national development. This paper has identified some of the problems that minorities have experienced as a result of official attempts to establish their identities. These problems are created partly because of the externally defined notions of identity and modernity that were adopted. At the same time, most ethnic minority groups do not have the necessary resources to conserve their culture or to actively take part in national development because of poor educational backgrounds, high poverty rates, and the Kinh's overall domination of resources.

Moreover, identities of ethnic minority peoples in Vietnam are often associated with perspectives that are usually generalizations and do not necessarily provide accurate images of the different groups. The Kinh culture is often taken for granted as a model that every other group has to copy and follow (Nguyen Van Chinh, 2008). This is another obstacle facing many ethnic groups in the country. Ethnic minority peoples should, therefore, be given the authority to decide what their identities are and what needs to be conserved. They should take active and not passive roles in maintaining, performing, and conserving their own cultures (Nguyen Van Huy, 2012).

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Renaldy Rachman, or Dena Rachman, as a transwoman

TRANSGENDER IN INDONESIAN MEDIA:

Negotiating the Self Project of Identity

WENING UDASMORO

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to explain the dynamics of transgender identity in Indonesian media. With the democratization process where political regimes have changed from authoritative to more democratic ones, and also regimes with different perspectives about gender identity in social practice, the identity of the transgender is socially transformed in many different directions. This article explores the concept and practice of transgenderism in Indonesia. It describes and provides examples of transgenderism in local literature and media in the context of gender theories. It also shows the contradictions and symbiosis between the politics of nationalism and transgenderism in two different political eras. The continuity and discontinuity of the practice of transgenderism is demarcated by the Suharto and *Reformasi* political eras. Ultimately, the article concludes that, in their programs, the media exploits transgender persons to serve business interests, but at the same time enables transgender persons to express and expose their self-identity in the public domain.

KEYWORDS:
transgender, identity, dynamic, media, democracy

INTRODUCTION

Transgendered persons are placed under the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/transexual (LGBT) category and these labels are frequently regarded as referencing abnormal sexual practice rather than gender orientation. In many societies, transgenderism is a practice condemned and banned by authorities. Duthiers and Karimi (2014) quote the Pew Institute's 2013 survey results that reveal that Muslim and African countries are the least tolerant of homosexuality and transgenderism. Nigeria, where 98% of respondents agree with the criminalization of homosexual practice, was found the most intolerant of homosexuality and transgenderism. For instance, in January 2014, Nigerian police arrested a number of individuals for maintaining gay relationships (Duthiers & Karimi, 2014).

From these Pew Institute survey results, it may be easy to generalize about intolerance for LGBT people in Muslim countries. It must be noted, however, that despite the low tolerance for homosexuality and transgenderism in Muslim countries, there are still spaces for such practices. In Indonesia, the most populous and ethnically diverse Islamic country in the world, transgenderism is actively practiced. Transgenderism is not a new phenomenon and has existed in Indonesia for centuries. It is frequently associated with the practice of homosexuality, evidence of which can be found as early as the first century AD, when Hindu traditions first reached the Indonesian archipelago.

The *Mahabharata*, an ancient Indian epic localized into Javanese culture, contains references to transgenderism, among many other themes. One of the story's scenes depicts a male hero, Arjuna, transforming himself into a female after he reaches the Kingdom of Wirata; he does this to conceal his identity. In the Javanese version of *Arjunawiwaha* (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2008), Arjuna was also transformed into a transgendered individual after being cursed by an angel named Tilottama. Not only can a man be transformed into a woman, but female heroes—such as the character Srikandi—can choose to transform themselves into transgendered men (Thowok, 2005). Besides

depictions of transgenderism, the practice of homosexuality can also be found in a nineteenth century Javanese literary series entitled *Serat Centhini.*[1] From these two examples, it is clear that transgenderism can be located in historical texts considered masterpieces of ancient Indonesian literature.

Transgendered individuals are also the main actors in traditional performances such as *Ludruk* in East Java. Hélène Bouvier (2002) argues that the representation of transgenderism in this traditional performance can be traced back to the eighteenth century, when it was entitled *Ludruk Lerok*. This traditional theater form continues until recent years, especially in East Java. *Ludruk* tells stories about people's daily activities and involves a combination of dancing, singing, comedy, and narration. The play begins with a transgendered person who appears first on the stage, and then sings and dances using a Javanese philosophical lyric to introduce the performance. Transgendered individuals play a very significant role in the story. The presence of a transgendered actor was required to play the part of a woman because not many women were involved in public performances. However, in recent years, their presence is now expected and they have become among the characters of the show. Figure 1 is a photograph of a *ludruk* performance, presenting dancers who are also transgendered individuals.

1 *Serat Centhini*, with the full title *Suluk Tambangraras*, was written in 1742 (according to the Javanese calendar) or in 1814 AD. It was written during the reign of Sunan Pakubuwana IV.

FIGURE 1 — Qassim, M. (Photographer). (2012, March 13). Waria Jadi icon Dunia Hiburan Tradisional indonesia [digital image]. Retrieved from http://www.pedomannusantara.com/berita-waria-jadi-icon-dunia-huburan-tradisional-Indonesia.html

In the social sphere, transgendered individuals have always been a part of Indonesian society. Although their presence is accepted, they still experience discrimination. They are often marginalized in their professions and in politics. The transgender community argues that they have been discriminated against in many different aspects of life and even targeted for assassination (Aisha, 2013). The presence of transgendered persons is sometimes recognized, but at other times, they are absent from public view because they do not comply with gender norms. In the 1970s, Indonesians called them *wadam*, a term emphasizing the otherness of transgendered individuals. *Wadam* is an abbreviation of the words *Hawa* (Eve) and *Adam* (in Islam, as in other Abrahamic religions, Eve and Adam are believed to be the first humans). The pejorative term *wadam* is used to create a sense of otherness for those considered outside gender norms. At the same time, the term serves as a gray zone, providing a social space for transgendered persons.

At present, the word *wadam* is rarely used in Indonesia after it was banned by the Ministry of Religion. The minister, Alamsyah Ratu Prawiranegara, said that usage of the words Hawa and Adam insulted the Muslim communities. The

minister instead suggested the word *waria*, which today continues to be used to identify transgendered individuals. *Waria* is a combination of *wanita* (woman) and *pria* (man). Moreover, there are other words, such as *bencong* and *banci*, used to identify transgendered individuals in a more pejorative way (Boellstorff, 2007). These alternative names position transgendered individuals as outsiders, separating them from gender norms.

The presence and the sub-alteration of transgendered individuals can be examined by studying the dynamic changes in how their experiences are depicted and how they create narratives about themselves socially. The media is one major area that succinctly captures the dynamics of transgendered narration in Indonesia.

Decades after acquiring independence in 1945, Indonesia experienced political change from an authoritarian regime to a more democratic one. During the Suharto era, from 1968 to 1998, Indonesians were oppressed, particularly in the political and cultural spheres (O'Rourke, 2002). The state's role was critical in defining the direction of people's lives and identities. The state, in fact, coopted individual narratives and experiences. At the time, one of the most important arenas where people expressed their narratives was the media. The government controlled the media in many ways, including banning media and having journalists jailed for broadcasting or publishing reports contrary to government interests.

The identities of people were also suppressed. The government made it mandatory for persons of Indonesian Chinese descent to change their Chinese names into Indonesian ones, which is clearly a violation of individual rights. The idea that citizens of a different race or ethnic identity should use Indonesian names was promoted to achieve the state's objective of political stability, a coherent culture, and nation-building. Apart from ethnic identity, religious identity was also regulated. The government asked the only religious party at the time, *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), to change their logo from the image of the

Ka'bah (a holy structure in Islam) to that of a star. This regulation of identities by Suharto's government posed interesting questions that link to transgenderism. How did the authoritative regime of Suharto view transgendered individuals? How did transgendered individuals survive during this regime?

After the *Reformasi* movement began in 1998, the state was considered by many experts (O'Rourke, 2002) to have lost much of its dominance. Calls for democracy and the right to self-narration were openly expressed. Other stakeholders and industries including the media contested the power of the state. As a result, it was becoming more difficult for the government to control the media (Udasmoro, 2013).

Due to freedom of expression, the media became one of the ways to exercise power and to become the vehicle for many different social actors to promote their interests. Philanthropists and the wealthy elite began to use the media for their businesses but also for their personal interests, such as their political campaigns. Some of the wealthiest people in Indonesian society became owners of the national television channels and also headed the political parties they had created.

To narrate their identity, different actors used the ideology of *reformasi*, which was a challenge to authoritarianism. This created multiple notions of what *reformasi* might mean in Indonesian society. People from different ideologies, and with different experiences, used this era of democratization to promote their own ideas of what it meant to be Indonesian. The owners of television networks, for instance, used their media outlets to influence people and promote their ideologies of what Indonesian people should be. A nationalist media owner used resources to construct narratives related to nationalist ideals. A media tycoon from a certain religious background likely infused broadcast programming with religious content. For some, being Indonesian meant promoting or fighting for gay and lesbian rights. Religious groups also began to agitate for official recognition during this period. Some groups from the most radical to the most conservative attempted to use the rhetoric of democratization and *reformasi* to assert their identities. These groups continue to do so today. The question that

arises is whether such groups that use gender as a marker of belonging can express their identity within the context of *reformasi*.

Reformation, democratization, and the rise of capitalist Indonesian media—especially television—provided a space where different people with different ideologies declared their identities (Sen, 2002). Democratization has become a discourse through which individuals have been able to create narratives for themselves within an Indonesian context. For instance, the media broadcasts their products through different programs, which also includes different perspectives of gender orientation. The objective is aimed primarily at gaining larger audiences in order to profit through advertising revenue. Developed by television companies, one effective strategy to attract large audiences is to create unusual programs that are not the same as those in other television channels. Transgendered individuals are often used as crucial actors in this content strategy.

With complexities arising from democratization, changes in the media, and public exposure to gendered groups, how have transgendered individuals been portrayed in the Indonesian media, from Suharto's time to the *Reformasi* era? If the media has changed from being more authoritative to democratic, what is the place of transgendered individuals? If transgendered individuals historically situate themselves within Indonesian society, how have the media positioned them? This article explores the dynamics surrounding transgendered individuals as portrayed in the media. It critically assesses whether the new political regime in the *reformasi* era, which claims to be democratic, has changed the media's perspective of, and attitude towards, transgenderism.

IDENTIFYING THE TRANSGENDER

The concept of identity has been moving from a fixed definition of belonging to a postmodern perspective where it is more fluid (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). There are at least two arguments about the first definition. Proponents of the earlier theory believed that identity is determined in connection with the context in which one is born. Gender, where males are categorized as men

and females as women, was an important element of identity. For instance, a girl must follow her feminine character because her identity is determined biologically. A second argument agreed with this concept of embodiment, but argued that society contributes to the construction of identity. From this perspective, a girl might develop what society may perceive to be a feminine attitude because she learns this from her environment and social experiences (Bandura, 1977). Her social environment influences her to demonstrate specific manners and mannerisms associated with society's ideas of what it is to be a girl. From these two theories, identity can be seen as a product of an invented social reality. Reality is imagined by society, which plays a crucial role in defining the identity of a person.

The later definition of identity, introduced by Anthony Giddens (1991), disagreed with the previous definition. According to Giddens, in his book *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, identity is a self-projection rather than a social projection. People construct their own identities through their self-projections. Identity is not an embedded entity that is attached to people. It moves and changes in accordance with how people project their notions of belonging or affiliation. Giddens also argues that in societies where modernity is well-developed, self-identity becomes an inescapable issue. In the post-traditional order, self-identity is a reflexive project that we continuously work on according to our own experiences. Self-identity has continuity, where continuity is an enduring product of a person's reflexive beliefs about his or her own biography (Giddens, 1991, p. 53).

In contrast to Giddens, Judith Butler (1990) suggests that there is more complexity to notions of self-identity. Butler agrees that people do have the agency to reflect their own projection of self. However, this agency is always connected to societal constructions. The social always contributes to the mindset of an individual. Identity is thus a process, rather than a result of social construction. It is fluid because it is an on-going construction, where the act of self-projection mixes with social constructions of the individual in the process of forming an identity.

People might have agency and self-projection, but they are not autonomous, not separate from the social constructions that shape their identity.

Other related concepts proposed by Butler (1990; Jagger, 2008) are the concepts of performance and performativity. Performance is defined as the way one learns to be feminine or masculine, as imposed by normative heterosexuality. In this sense, she argues that people become more like objects than subjects. She also proposes the term *performativity* where people become subjects by performing gender roles according to who they are. The subjects usually repeat these roles as acts of performativity.

The concept of gender identity is also fluid. In the struggle for women's position in social life, the first and second waves of feminism looked at the relationship between men and women in society as two opposite categories where both had unequal positions. Masculinities and femininities were then seen as embedded in the bodies of men and women (Millet, 1968) because the sexes (male and female) were considered as directing the masculinities and femininities of people. In contrast, subsequent waves of feminism—especially postmodern feminism—view masculinities and femininities in a different way. R. W. Connell's book *Masculinities* (2005) considers masculinities as values and not as entities. Men can exemplify or contest different forms of masculinity. Men might adopt values associated with femininity in their everyday activities. Gender relations are not only about power relations between men and women, but between different gender-orientations. Gender relations are also about how masculinities and femininities can be claimed by both men and women.

The transgender phenomenon is among the examples of how gender identity can be scrutinized, based on the above theories. If transgendered persons are constantly being pushed and pulled between themselves and society, then it is crucial to observe and systematically explore their living environment. This is not only a matter of observing whether transgendered people are accepted or not

in society, but also a matter of how (i.e., the process) transgendered individuals follow, negotiate, and resist social constructions. The prevailing political and cultural regimes become crucial elements of analysis and must be understood holistically and in context to determine why transgendered individuals are accepted or not in a particular society.

TRANSGENDERISM AND THE AMBIGUITY OF NARRATION

The Suharto government (or the New Order era) was an authoritative political regime that strictly controlled and regulated the media. Although the government restricted the media, there were no constraints in the representation of the transgendered in media products. One iconic representation of transgenderism can be seen in a character from the popular television comedy *Srimulat*, which featured traditional Javanese elements and was aired in the 1980s (Janarto & Atmowiloto, 1990). Its female character, Tessy, was portrayed by a man named Kabul Basuki. The transgendered character attracted a lot of audiences across Indonesia.

Srimulat was televised weekly in the state-owned television channel, Television Republic Indonesia (TVRI). TVRI was the only national television station at the time and was under government control. TVRI's shows were tailored towards broadcasting the government's development programs and providing the public with entertainment. Despite featuring the transgendered character Tessy, the government allowed *Srimulat* to air because it promoted Javanese culture—something which was part of the Suharto government's political ideology.

Javanese philosophy was enacted in this traditional theater of *Srimulat*. Some parts of the comedy displayed Javanese language, jargon, and symbols. The sartorial styles that Tessy and the other actors used were predominantly Javanese. The show's characters also reflected Javanese orientation. In *Srimulat,* Tessy was a humorous female, but other actors bullied and teased her for being a transgendered person and she subordinated herself to them. The Tessy character placed herself in the periphery and portrayed the transgendered as Other. Tessy

was an "outsider", but audiences were drawn to watch her act. This was because the character Tessy was not considered "normal". Tessy was neither male nor female, which was intriguing for the audience. Without Tessy's transgendered character, this traditional comedy would have had less value for the audience and society in terms of spreading the Javanese way of life across Indonesia. The more people across Indonesia watched *Srimulat*, the more Javanese culture was spread. The program became crucial to the ideological interests of the state. For that reason, neither *Srimulat* nor Tessy's character were banned. The presence of Tessy became a symbol of cultural infiltration in its use of media, which demonstrates the proposition by Sen and Hill (2000) that media creates space for cultural and political contestation. Figure 2 shows the popular transgendered image of Tessy, who remains vivid in the minds of many Indonesian people.

FIGURE 2 — KPI/aca/dar (Photographer). (2014, October 29). ***Inilah Kronologi Penangkapan Tessy Srimulat*** **[digital image]. Retrieved from http://www.kapanlagi.com**

Film became one of the most important platforms for representing transgendered groups during the Suharto era. Many genres of film from the serious to the comic were produced. Films were made in order to make money and therefore had priorities different from government-sponsored television programs. Most of the comedies, therefore, used transgendered characters to attract audiences. While some transgendered actors appeared in many films during this period, heterosexual men played most of the transgendered characters.

The first film that explicitly used the word *bencong* (a local term for a transgendered person) was *Betty Bencong Slebor* in 1978. This film was produced by one of Indonesia's most prominent film makers, Benyamin Suaeb. The film's main character as reflected by the title is transgendered Betty, seen in Figure 3. The word *bencong*, a pejorative term for a transgendered individual, was used as part of the title to emphasize the lower class position of the main character. The word *slebor* is also a pejorative word that means "careless". In the film, the transgendered character Betty is a maid discriminated against by husband and employers. The husband figure represents the hegemony and power associated with conventional Indonesian masculinity.

FIGURE 3 — Suaeb, B. (Executive Producer). (1978). *Betty Bencong Slebor* [Motion picture]. Jakarta, Indonesia: PT. Yanuar Film.

The film accentuates one ambiguity where the transgendered individual is both victim and hero. Betty is elevated in status by presenting her as the film's hero, but she is also categorized as the subaltern. Despite this subordinate position, she is a hero who challenges hegemonic masculinities as represented by other male characters. As a transgendered individual, Betty is both subordinated to and dominated by other characters in the story. This ambiguity reflects how transgendered individuals are viewed in social life. On the one hand, characters like Betty are presented in these films as humorous but, on the other hand, they are always positioned by society as different.

During the 1980s, most comedies—especially those by the comedy actors Dono, Kasino, and Indro—also used transgendered persons and acts to ensure the shows' success. Unlike other films under review, their films present transgendered people as victims. These three comedians regularly became box office successes in the 1980s. The first- and second-bestselling films in Jakarta in 1987 were by the trio. The first, *Makin Lama Makin Asyik* (*The More and More Enjoyable*), sold 504,220 tickets; the second, *Depan Bisa Belakang Bisa* (*Could be Front or Back Side*), sold 327,039 tickets. The third was *Catatan Si Boy* (*The Diary of Boy*) which sold 313,516 tickets.[2] All three films use transgendered characters in their stories. Figure 4 is a picture of Emon, the transgendered individual in *Catatan Si Boy*.

FIGURE 4 — Cheppy, N. (Director). (1989). *Catatan Si Boy 3* [Motion picture]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Tim Indonesia.

2 Based on 1987 data released by Perfin (Peredaran Film Indonesia, or Indonesian Film Distribution).

Transgendered people were used in different ways during Suharto's political era. Transgendered persons were present in the media, but they had different roles. They entertained people who had to live under an authoritative and oppressive regime. They made money for owners of capital. The capitalization of media, which began at the end of the 1980s with the onset of private television, has considered transgenders as products of industry for some time now (Riyanto, 2002).

During this period, transgendered characters were always portrayed by male actors; transgendered individuals did not represent themselves because they were not widely accepted in the media. Their presence in public discourse was still seen as unusual. Apart from that, the aim of the programs was to poke fun at these transgendered individuals, making them objects of humor. It was impossible for them to act as transgendered when the narratives centered on teasing them about their identity. Unlike in traditional performances such as *Ludruk* where they are protagonists, in television or films, they are more objects than subjects. Their function was to make "normal" people laugh, and they were represented by heterosexual men (considered by society as normal). No person who declared himself transgendered represented transgendered characters in these broadcasted narratives. In this way, the media shaped transgenderism as a type of role that could be played by a representative of the male-oriented actors' industry. This representation could be seen in how people were made to laugh: the male actors dressed up and put on more facial makeup than women usually did. These male actors also imitated the gestures of the transgendered. No one contested these representations in television or film because the portrayals of the transgendered were only characters played by men and not by the transgendered themselves.

Yet, society recognized transgendered individuals as real. They were accepted in the media because they were part of social reality. However, their depiction in the media through films and television programs was not realistic in the sense that male actors performed the roles of transgendered characters. It was only in the early

1980s that Dorce Gamalama, an actor and singer who underwent surgery, publicly declared her identity as transgendered. Originally born a man, she changed her physical identity to that of a woman. Various discourses arose over this identity change. In the media, she has been accepted as a transgendered person and many audiences have acknowledged her talent as a singer (Davies, 2006).

THE TRANSGENDER AND THE ARENA OF CONTESTATION

The *Reformasi* era opened up possibilities for changes (Sen, 2002). Different people tried to express their identities, and there was more freedom to express one's self-identity in this era. If during the previous era social construction was strongly oriented towards a hegemonised version of the self, during the *Reformasi* era more spaces were made available for people to construct their self-identity. These spaces also allowed LGBT individuals to appear in public through engagement with different communities and organizations. One of the oldest LGBT organizations founded in 1987 by Dede Oetomo is Gaya Nusantara, which is still the largest such organization in the country today. The organization has advocated and continues to advocate for the rights and recognition of gay and lesbian identity through the media and various activities. During the *Reformasi* era, more organizations such as Arus Pelangi and Yayasan Srikandi Sejati appeared with an increased number of activities and campaigns. There are now around 30 LGBT organizations in Indonesia. In 2006, the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, even hosted an international LGBT summit where human rights law experts drafted the Yogyakarta Principles, which aimed to produce a standard for international law protecting the rights of the LGBT persons.

The change in political power meant more freedom for the media (Sen & Hill, 2000). Different media outlets altered their orientation in presenting transgenderism in their programs. With the change in power relations in society, the media became influential because of its capital, and this affected the different types of programs being developed. This resulted in differences with respect to how the media understands and represents the transgendered. Today, films and television programs still use transgender characters to attract

audiences. In most national TV channels, television programs such as talk shows, reality shows, and interactive comedy shows use the transgender aspect. The difference today, however, is that these transgendered individuals are not only entertainers as in during the Suharto era, but are now also storytellers.

Gender identity is now moving in different directions. Political and cultural situations have become different, but the situation of transgendered persons in the media remains the same. Transgendered communities continue to be marginalized and are still objectified by the media. However, some innovations have appeared. The difference between Suharto's New Order period and the *Reformasi* era is that transgendered individuals now have more space to narrate who they really are. Examples of such diverse programming illustrate the continuity and discontinuity of transgender presence in the media.

Opera Van Java, a comedy show broadcasted by national TV channel Trans 7, uses elements from traditional *wayang* theatre, but situates the narratives in a modern setting. The stories' thematic content is not important; audiences are drawn to the show as a result of the comedic content and the use of transgendered individuals. Another comedy program, *Pesbuker*, aimed at entertaining the audience, employs mostly male actors to portray transgendered characters. From these examples, seen in Figure 5, the position of the transgendered actors as objects of humor in the media industry continues to be perpetuated.

FIGURE 5 — Kurniawan, N. (Photographer). (2012, May 16). *Sule Kocok Mahasiswa FKIP Unlam* [digital image]. Retrieved from www. banjarmasin.tribunews.com

The discontinuities of transgender representation began during the *Reformasi* era when actual transgendered individuals started to portray transgender roles in these television programs. Due to the *Reformasi* movement, Indonesian television stations began to provide possibilities for the individual actor to declare his or her identity. Although some people revealed their identity through jokes and comedy, others on television explicitly declared this to the viewing audience. For example, the former child singer and television presenter Renaldy Rachman publicly declared his being a transgendered person. He changed his name to Dena Rachman and transitioned to female. He argued that even when he was young, being male did not represent his true self. In this case, there is a mutually beneficial symbiosis between the transgendered individual and the media industry. Transgendered individuals need space for their self-identification to be recognized and the media needs such stories to attract viewers. Figure 6 is an image of Renaldy Rachman, or Dena Rachman, as a transwoman.

FIGURE 6 — Ananda, F. (Photographer). (2015, November 21). *Dena Rachman Operasi Kelamin ke Waktu Kecil* [digital image]. Retrieved from www.cumaberita.com/

Self-narration as a transgendered person shows how individual and social structures provide a space that enables this declaration of identity (Leary & Tangney, 2012). The social structure in Indonesia, which is experiencing

sociopolitical changes articulated as democratization, stimulates the agency of people who in turn influence society.

Some presenters openly declared their transgender identity, including a famous actor, designer, and television program host named Ivan Gunawan who has expressed his multiple identities through fashion. He sometimes wears masculine fashion but more often openly wears feminine fashion and accessories for most of his programs. Figures 7 and 8 are images of Gunawan in feminine clothes worn during performances.

FIGURE 7 — Nasution, G. (Photographer). (2011, October 18). *Si Lajang jalang* [digital image]. Retrieved from http://www.melajangmenjalang.blogspot.co.id/2011/10/

FIGURE 8 — Anggundini, S. (Photographer). (2016, February 24). KPI Larang Ivan Gunawan Dipanggil Emak. Retrieved from http://www.liputan6.com

The reason that transgendered persons are considered interesting for audiences of contemporary television is related to the fact that their representation is still seen as critically important to the market value of programming. Transgendered persons in the industry use the media to express their identity through a genre considered more acceptable to society.

Other transgendered individuals are willing to declare their identity through television presentations because it is no longer taboo to admit their gender orientation. One of the popular television programs on Global TV in 2008 was *Be a Man*. In this program, seen in Figures 9 and 10, eighteen transgendered people were trained to be soldiers. They were trained in order to change their orientation from transgender to man through physical training (Oktavriani & Panji, 2010). After the show ended, some participants adopted men's names, though people still see them as transgendered persons.

FIGURES 9 & 10 — Hunt, V.J., & Lebang, E. (Presenter). (2008, April). Be A Man Indonesia [Television series episode]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Global TV.

Although some conservative Muslim groups refuse to recognize transgenderism and have sought to ban their representation on television, the agency of transgendered persons has become increasingly stronger. Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia (KPI) or the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission warned television stations not to present transgender themes in their programs. Formal letters were sent to television channels. These letters insisted that the channels stop transgendered depictions on television, but this did not prevent transgendered

persons from publicly declaring their identity. The KPI, which is supported by certain religious leaders and organizations, asserted that transgendered acts were illegal. They claimed that such programming violates the Guideline for Broadcasting Behavior (Pedoman Perilaku Penyiaran), specifically in Articles 9, 15 (1) and 37 (4a) (Hasits, 2013).[3]

The KPI has sent two letters about these violations to television channels. The first letter was sent on 18 October 2013 (no. 667/K/KPI/13). Despite receiving the first letter, transgendered persons and acts continued to be featured in television programs. On 30 December 2013, the KPI sent a second letter to television stations. The broadcasting commission argued that these two letters were sent based on protests from certain organizations, such as the FPI (*Front Pembela Islam*, or Islamic Defenders' Front). The KPI also mentioned that they are afraid that these broadcasts will influence "normal" children and teenagers to become transgendered. Neither of these letters have stopped the broadcasting of transgendered acts on television.

There are two different discourses in this case. The first is that the transgender image is used to create new meanings, indicating the existence of transgendered people in society and the need for the transgendered to be present in public space. The second is from official institutions and religious organizations that try to ban the media from using transgendered content and claim to be protecting the interests and sensibilities of "normal people". On the one hand, the media continues to exploit transgendered people for financial reasons; but on the other hand, the KPI sees the transgendered as a "disease" that must be banned from the public eye.

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3 Article 9 reads: Broadcast programs must consider the norms of decency and morality upheld by diverse audiences regarding religion, ethnicity, culture, age, and/or economic background. Article 15 (1) reads: Broadcast programs must consider and protect the interest of the children and/or teenagers. Article 37 (4a) reads: Broadcast programs under the R classification (13–17 years) must not show material or content that encourages teenagers to learn about innapropriate behaviors and/or validates innapropriate behaviors as normal and common.

The image of the transgendered has increased dramatically through television programs in Indonesia, though the transgendered are still positioned as "victims" and as "abnormal". This is because they are effective entertainers despite some audiences believing that such transgressive content may be detrimental to society.

CONCLUSION

To meet their financial goals, the media has taken a different approach in using transgendered persons on Indonesian television. The portrait of the transgendered person has evolved dynamically because of changes in the political regime and the media industry. However, the democratic era does not mean full and independent representation for transgendered persons. During the Suharto era, social practices seemed to accept transgendered persons, but in reality, they were not allowed to exercise their rights. They were part of society, but they did not have a space to create their own narratives. Their stories were instead represented by the state and this was done in relation to hegemonic masculinities that the state espoused. They were present in society, but they were absent from media spaces that allowed for self-expression.

During the *Reformasi* era, more diverse representations of transgendered people have emerged. The heteronormative approach of positioning transgendered individuals at the margins by attempting to prohibit their presence in the media is still strong. However, the media industry continues to use transgendered individuals, despite religious people and groups protesting their presence in television programs and films. Transgendered persons today have a larger space to narrate their own experiences and assert their place in Indonesian society. Despite society's influence and limits on transgendered persons, these individuals are able to reciprocate and, to a certain degree, influence society as well. In a way, both contestations enable transgendered persons to exercise their agency and identity.

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A Vietnamese altar for ancestors

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND RECONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN VIETNAM'S POST-SOCIALISM ERA

NGUYỄN VĂN CHÍNH

ABSTRACT

This paper examines recent discussions about cultural identity and nationalism that have been raised in Vietnam's political discourse and scholarship. It suggests that the veneration of ancestor worship, which is a popular belief in Vietnam, is problematic when associated with national identity. On the one hand, this reflects a crisis of belief in Vietnam after the world communist system collapsed. On the other hand, it suggests that there is a widespread interest in nationalism and in finding a theoretical foundation for development in an age of reintegration into the world economy. Promoting the moral values of ancestor worship and referring to this as a cultural model "full of national identity" seems to be a safe solution for the Communist Party. However, such an approach no longer seems valid because it ignores the diversity and differences among ethnicities, religions, languages, and customs prevalent in contemporary Vietnam.

KEYWORDS:
Vietnam, ancestor worship, cultural identity, nationalism, post socialism

INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL IDENTITY AND VIETNAMESE NATIONALISM

Vietnam is on its way to further integration into the global economy. In facing globalization, one important question has recently sparked intense discussions in the academe and media. Such discussions involve questions of what constitutes Vietnamese cultural identity and how its role and significance are perceived in the age of globalization.

The question of national identity, which is actually not new for Vietnamese people, is perpetually raised and quickly becomes the focus of debates whenever the nation's sovereignty is threatened by outside forces. Over the past few decades, foreign scholars generally see Vietnamese cultural identity as a replica of the Chinese model (Woodside, 1988). Historically, Confucian values have always accompanied the political institutions of Vietnam. Even when the nation was entirely ruled by Western colonizers, Vietnamese intellectuals and the upper strata of society wished to return to the values and models of the Chinese to establish a foundation for their political support and to strengthen nationalist spirit. This is why Confucian values are often referred to when defining Vietnam.

However, arguments against the views that consider Vietnamese cultural identity a replica of the Chinese model were raised when the relationship between Vietnam and China grew negative in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Encouraged by nationalism, Vietnamese scholars began to search for indigenous foundations that would help identify distinctions between the two cultures. Setting aside superstructures such as government institutions, ideology, and education—all of which were more or less influenced by Chinese models—a new approach promoted a focus on popular culture and viewed folk life as "the soul of nation" (Trần Quốc Vượng, 2000). This approach was developed by both scholars and policy makers and was based on the national spirit that heated debates between Vietnamese scholars and their Chinese counterparts over Đông Sơn culture and the origin of ancient bronze drums. The debates lasted for decades, only to abate temporarily when the border conflict between the two countries calmed down (Han, 1998).

The question of national identity is once again raised as Vietnam seeks deeper integration into the global economy. As is evident, however, arguments over Confucianism, village society, or Đông Sơn bronze culture are no longer central concerns. Policy makers in the Communist Party sense that they need to find a new symbol for Vietnamese cultural identity that will help consolidate the entire nation in order to successfully compete in the global economy (CPV, 1998). In this context, the practice of ancestor worship is represented as a "national religion" and can be seen as the new symbol for Vietnamese cultural identity. From a family-based religious practice, the concept of ancestor worship has been viewed as a common religion of all people throughout the country. To support this effort, the government has designated the anniversary celebrations of the King Hùng (*Hùng Vương*)—a legendary character of the ethnic Vietnamese (*Kinh*) people—as an important national holiday (Vietnam, 2007 & 2013; National Assembly, 2007). It seems that Vietnamese nationalism has been infused with a new cultural identity as a result of the country's encounter with global economic integration.

To some extent, globalization and national integration have created a cultural dilemma for Vietnam. After the collapse of the world communist system and despite a concerted effort to become more internationally connected, Vietnam is likely to make national interests and worldviews its top priority. Indigenous cultural and religious values, once seen as backward and superstitious, are now regarded as particularly important in the era of globalization. Honoring traditional values and consolidating the nation have been defined as a culture strategy of Vietnam while integrating with the world economy (Nguyễn Khoa Điềm, 2001). In the next section, I will examine the recent discussions over cultural identity and nationalism that have been raised by Vietnam's media and by academics. I focus on discussions about the practice of ancestor worship in order to understand how nationalism has affected the interpretation of culture in contemporary Vietnam.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND VIETNAMESE CULTURAL IDENTITY

When I was studying at the University of Amsterdam, one of my professors there asked me what religion I followed. I replied without hesitation that I did not follow any religion. He then asked whether or not my family worshipped our ancestors. I was a bit surprised but immediately understood that for others, ancestor worship is a religion as we believe in the ancestors' blessing; but for many Vietnamese, this practice may not be recognized as a religious belief. Indeed, my family and most Vietnamese families I knew at the time practiced and continue to practice ancestor worship. We also maintain the practice that all male members of the clan were required to contribute a sum of money to the worshipping fund, and we always gathered together on the anniversary dates of our clan's ancestry to commemorate our common ancestors. In the following section, I will review the debates in scholarship regarding ancestor worship and why this practice is important to the Vietnamese.

Almost all ethnic Vietnamese (*Kinh*) families practice ancestor worship. Sociological surveys recently conducted in five provinces and cities throughout the country, including Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, showed that almost 100% of ethnic Kinh families in both rural and urban areas practice ancestor worship. Vietnamese Buddhists and followers of Christianity also practice ancestor worship.[1] In addition to the official annual death anniversary,[2] more than one third of respondents said that they burn incense on their ancestral altars daily; the rest do so regularly on the 15th day or the first day of each lunar month (Phạm Quỳnh Phương, 2001, p. 83). Recording the death days of deceased family members in order to worship them, taking care of their tombs, keeping the

1 According to Đặng Nghiêm Vạn (2001, p. 267), in 1939, the Catholic Church officially allowed Chinese Catholics to worship their ancestors pursuant to what was taught in "Plane Compertum Est", approved in 08 December 1939 by Pope Pius XIII. This teaching was extended to Vietnamese Catholics from 1964. Furthermore, according to Dang, 64% of Hanoi Christians had ancestral altars in their home, while in Hue and Ho Chi Minh City, the rate was 98%.

2 The death anniversary (*ngày giỗ*), or death day, is held annually on the date of a person's death because the Vietnamese believe that, on that day, the soul of the person enters eternity.

family annals, and increasing the practice of gathering to worship common clan ancestors have become popular in localities. This happened especially after the war ended and the religious policy of the communist state became more relaxed. Leopold Cadiere (1869-1955), a French priest who spent almost his whole life studying Vietnamese religions, observed that ancestor worship had become integrated into the daily behavior and thoughts of all family members to the extent that they believed their lives were deeply affected by supernatural powers. According to Cadiere (1958), in the Vietnamese way of thinking, family included not only the living members but also the dead ones. The dead existed in another form, influencing the behavior of the living in certain ways. The value of his observation has been confirmed by Vietnamese scholars and has retained its validity today.

Đào Duy Anh, a well-known scholar of Vietnamese culture, attributed Vietnamese ancestor worship practice to the profound concepts of human soul (*hồn*) and vital spirit (*vía*).[3] The soul is the consciousness and is invisible, while the vital spirit is the conformation and home for the consciousness. When a person dies, his soul disembodies and flies into the mid-air while his body goes down into the mid-earth. Therefore, the body or the conformation of a person may be dissolved while his soul continues to invisibly exist somewhere. The soul is believed to be immortal. In soul form, the deceased family member continues to participate in family life, care for his children, and relate to the living. Such engagement takes the form of protection, blessings, and warnings in dreams. Thus, the nature of ancestor worship is based on the belief that the dead and living are interrelated and assist one another. The death anniversary feast is a way for people to conduct exchanges between the living and the dead (Đào Duy Anh, 2002, pp. 243-47).

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3 The soul, as defined by various sources, is the self-aware essence unique to a particular living being. It is thought to incorporate the inner essence of each living being. It is believed the soul is the unification of one's sense of identity, is immortal, and exists prior to incarnation. The concept of the soul has strong links with notions of an afterlife although opinions may vary wildly, mainly with regard to what may happen to the soul after the death of the body.

While worshipping the dead originated mainly from a belief in the immortality of the soul, it can also be seen as having arisen due to several other causes, such as the fear of being punished by souls, and pity and veneration for the patriarchal power in the family (Tokarev, 1994; Phạm Quỳnh Phương, 2001). Unfortunately, scholars have not intensively studied these possibilities.

Although there may be other opinions as to the causes of ancestor worship, it is obvious that this practice largely originated from the belief in the continuous connection amongst a family's and clan's dead and living members. This is a religious belief that began long ago in human history and still exists in many cultures and religions in the world. However, rituals of honoring dead members of families differ from culture to culture and from society to society. In Vietnam, along with the process of social development, the forms and rituals of ancestor worship have been widely recognized and imbued with many new meanings, especially since the ideology of the Three Religions (Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism) penetrated the country. The influence of the above-mentioned Chinese-originated cultural model can be seen in rituals and in the importance placed upon maintaining ancestor worship.

First of all, rituals of ancestor worship and the arrangement of ancestral altars of the ethnic Vietnamese (*Kinh)* people basically follow the instructions recorded in the books *Gia Lễ* [*Family Rites*] and *Thọ Mai Gia Lễ* [*Book of Family Rites*] that were compiled by Chinese Confucian scholars (Đào Duy Anh, 2002, p. 247). The ancestral tablet,[4] a form commonly seen in Chinese altars, is also found in the most solemn place on the ancestral altars of the Vietnamese. In particular, like the Chinese, the Vietnamese often keep family records and place these on altars

4 The ancestral tablet is made of special wood or paper on which to inscribe the name and position of the worshipped ancestor, and is placed at the most solemn position on the altar. In a family, the ancestral tablet should inscribe the names of ancestors from four generations down, including great-great grandfather, great grandfather, grandfather, and father. The other ancestors are worshipped in the common worshipping house of the clan, and on the ancestral tablet in the common worshipping house only the name of the clan forebear is inscribed (Đào Duy Anh, 1994; Toan Ánh, 1992).

as a way to commemorate the dead.[5] The Confucian way of thinking that "People should respect the dead as they do the living" has comprehensively informed the preparation of votive offerings for the dead such as food, drinks, clothes, and necessities for daily life.

However, the most important influence of Confucianism is the meaning of ancestor worship. The Vietnamese believe that this is a way for children to do their filial duty toward, and show their respect for, their forebears. We all know that at the core of Confucianism is the "Way of Filial Duty" [*Đạo Hiếu*] which lays the obligations of children to respect and care for their parents. Filial Duty has helped raise the significance of ancestor worship from just religious belief to moral and ethical religious practice. Parallel sentences, big words, epitaphs, family annals, prayer for ancestors, and advice for children which have been documented and read out loud during ancestor worship occasions, are built on the ground of Confucianism with emphasis placed on thanking the forbears, honoring ancestors, and maintaining the race.

The moral meaning of thanking ancestors according to Filial Duty has not only been seen largely in the lifestyle and behavior of the ethnic Vietnamese (*Kinh*) —from ordinary people to the upper strata—but has also been supported by the political and legal systems of Vietnam for many centuries.[6] The laws of Vietnam under feudal regimes contained provisions for punishing those who refused to care for their children and those who ignored the practice of ancestor worship. They believed that the uncared for soul of the dead would become lonely, suffer from cold and hunger, and harm other people. Furthermore, men who failed to

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5 Many other ethnic groups in Southeast Asia do not keep family annals recording their ancestors. For them, ancestors are a memory-based abstract concept.

6 That Confucianism promotes the practice of ancestor worship and children's piety has a more profound implication, that is the loyalty to and the serving spirit of commoners for the King. Teachings of Saints such as "Loyalty to the King and piety to parents originates from one source" and "Piety is to serve the King" are mentioned in Confucian books such as *Book of Rites* and *Book of Great Learning*.

have sons were to be considered greatly undutiful to their ancestors for failing to preserve the race.[7] Due to the influence of Confucian norms in the rituals of ancestor worship, Đào Duy Anh remarked that the Vietnamese “breathe Confucius’ air, drink Confucius’ water, eat Confucius’ rice, and live within the restrictions of Confucian rituals until death” (1994, p. 23). The male-oriented structure of the family and the value associated with having sons to continue the family name and care for ancestors have been main motivations behind the reproductive habits of Vietnamese (Nguyễn Văn Chính, 2002, pp. 231-254).

The discussion above suggests that ancestor worship in Vietnam has been localized and institutionalized through Confucian thinking. These Chinese-originated elements have been integrated into the traditional practices of the Vietnamese and have become critical parts of their religious, moral, and cultural life. It is these facts that make the ancestor worship practice of the Vietnamese far different from that of other ethnic groups unaffected by Confucianism.

For various Vietnamese ethnic minorities, worship practices for the souls of the dead are different. Their altars are often located in a space not visible to strangers. They cannot clearly explain who their ancestors are. There is no clear death anniversary for a dead person because no one remembers it. There is also no moral concept of thanking the forebears and of being punished scornfully for failing to do so. The concept of ancestors is ambiguous. For example, the Thai only worship the souls of their dead fathers, called *phi huon*. Among the ethnic groups of the Vietnamese Central Highlands, the souls of the dead will enjoy permanent salvation after the ceremony of leaving the tomb, and will no longer be taken care of by living family members. Some sophisticated forms, such as praying for the salvation of dead souls to travel to pagodas so that they

7 In the view of Buddhists, unworshipped and uncared for souls will be imprisoned in hell and released once every year on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month. This day is called “General Amnesty Day of the Dead” *(xá tội vong nhân)*. This is why, on this day, people prepare offerings of rice soup and paper clothes for these souls (Đào Duy Anh, 2002, p. 244).

are worshipped all year round, are not practiced by other Viet-Muong ethnic groups (Lê Minh, 1994).

These findings reveal that there is no basis for the idea that ancestor worship is the common denominator for, or even the symbol of, a unified cultural identity of Vietnam. During feudal times, the moral concepts related to this religious belief were actually reconstructed on the basis of Confucianism with a view to engendering loyalty to the King. Dutifulness to ancestors is an important value of humanity in cultures influenced by Confucianism. The practice of rituals to show children's respect for and duty to ancestors used to be generalized as a show of respect and gratitude for the King, and was profoundly employed and supported by feudal governments.

VENERATION OF ANCESTORS AS A FEATURE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

The available literature on the veneration of ancestors tends to concentrate on three central matters: (1) whether ancestor worship is religion or belief, (2) who ancestors are, and (2) what implications can be used for nation building. I will try to review the discussion to elaborate on these questions.

One of the first Vietnamese scholars to comment on the custom of ancestor worship was Phan Kế Bính. In his work on Vietnamese Customs, first published in 1915, he observes: "We often practice the worshipping of our ancestors in a respectful way. It represents our determination not to forget our origins and duties of each person" (Phan Kế Bính, 1990, pp. 25-26). Phan implies that ancestor worship is a practice that shows the attitude of children towards their ancestors, which are respect, gratefulness, and a duty that a man should have. Phan therefore did not regard it as a religion.

The well-known scholar Đào Duy Anh, in a work first published in 1938, further developed Phan Kế Bính's assumption. He believed that "the reverence" of ancestors was an important religion of the Vietnamese and a "solemn duty" of

posterity that should not be ignored. His analysis was that the profound meaning of the practice of ancestor worship was a way to show gratitude to ancestors and its aim was to preserve the race forever. (2002, p. 245) Like Phan Kế Bính, he emphasized the moral aspects of the practice.

In another study originally published in 1966, Toan Ánh (1992, p. 21) was the first to offer the opinion that "the practice of ancestor worship cannot be a religion, because it has no prelate and dogma at all". According to him, "it rather is an act of showing gratitude and piety of posterity", so that many people worship their ancestors even while they already follow or practice a certain religion.

Toan Ánh's observation seems to be accepted by a number of scholars involved in the field of cultural studies. In a recent work, Nguyễn Đăng Duy (2001, p. 33) emphasized that "ancestor worship is not a religion" and that it should not be regarded as one for Vietnam. To develop his argument, Nguyễn Đăng Duy took pains to make distinctions between the two concepts of belief and religion. He pointed out that the core of belief was faith, but it was just the necessary condition for a religion to begin and exist. In a belief, there can be certain forms of worship, but a belief cannot be a religion by itself. Like Toan Ánh (1992), Nguyễn Đăng Duy (2001, pp. 19-20) reckoned that a religion must have four elements: prelate, dogma, congregation, and church. In the same approach, Ngô Đức Thịnh outlined six characteristics that help distinguish religion from belief (2001, p. 18). Phan Ngọc (2007) agrees, arguing that ancestor worship is not a religion because it does not contain the necessary elements.

While deeply immersed in differentiating religion from belief and emphasizing the criteria that constitute a religion, the above-quoted researchers likely forgot that societies without scripture would have been classified as "non-religious" if such criteria were applied to them. Against the above-mentioned points of view, Đặng Nghiêm Vạn developed a series of studies to determine that ancestor worship was not only a religion but the essence of the Vietnamese worldview

and culture. These studies would make it intellectually appropriate for ancestor worship to be considered a national religion.

Đặng Nghiêm Vạn (2001) believed there was no ground for separating the two concepts of religion and belief, because "religion" is in fact a term that refers to religious belief. This is the reason why in the Vietnamese language the two terms often go together (*tôn giáo tín ngưỡng)*. He reckoned that the nature of Oriental religions is so diverse and complicated that the term "religion" in the Western language cannot encompass all of its dimensions. He also disagreed with the theoretical framework that identified belief and religion as two different stages of development. He quoted Claude Levi-Strauss (1973) to support the opinion that there is no ground for dividing cultures into high or low levels of development. Đặng Nghiêm Vạn argued that at the core of all religions was the belief in sacredness, which was fundamentally different from a worldly mundane belief. This argument is used as a foundation for his theory on a national religion that he called the "Vietnamese Way of Ancestor worship" (*Đạo thờ Tổ tiên*).

Actually, Đặng Nghiêm Vạn has sufficiently studied the idea of considering ancestor worship as a national religion. In 1991, he wrote that practices such as ancestor worship should be viewed as religions because they were community-based and strictly institutionalized despite the fact that their content, rituals, and organization might be simple (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, 1991). In 1996, he went further by proposing a new concept, which he called "national religion". According to him, each nation-state has a religion or a system of religions called a national religion, which was followed by most people in the country who considered it their imprescriptible belief. This notion of religion is deeply rooted in the heart of the people, helping to strengthen the solidarity of community and bonding people to their nation.

According to Đặng, Vietnam's Buddhism and Confucianism cannot be considered national religions because they originated from foreign sources and were only used by feudal governments as tools to administer the country. Vietnam's national

religion should be ancestor worship because "it is practiced by all Vietnamese regardless of having followed any other religions", and "is [the] foundation for other religions" such as HoaHaoism, Caodaism, Confucianism, and Buddhism (2001, p. 266). Ancestor worship, in his view, not only included worshipping the dead members of families and clans, but also those associated with village communities and the nation (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, 1996, p. 315; 2001, p. 262).[8] In other words, Đặng's concept of ancestors included village guardian spirits and King Hùng. The "Way of Ancestor Worship" that Đặng proposed is a system of worship rituals at three different levels: national level rituals for worshipping King Hùng as the nation's ancestor; local level rituals for guardian spirits; and family-clan level rituals for the deceased of a blood line. This attitude toward the extended concept of ancestors was strongly supported by Lê Minh (1994, p. 300). As such, by proposing a wider concept of ancestors, Đặng has motivated discussions on who ancestors are and whether ancestor worship is a national religion.

To review, we see that various Vietnamese researchers—including Phan Kế Bính (1990), Đào Duy Anh (2002), Toan Ánh (1992), Nguyễn Đổng Chi (1978) to Ngô Đức Thịnh (2001), Nguyễn Đăng Duy (2001), and Phan Ngọc (2007)—all advocated that ancestor worship was a family matter and classified it in the category of "clan rituals". Nguyễn Đăng Duy (2001, p. 34) quoted the opinion of Tokarev (1994) to define "ancestor worship as worshipping the dead members of the same blood or clan" and "that it is practiced only by the family's and clan's living members". He then concluded: "There is no such thing as a village's ancestor in the meaning that he is the person who gave birth to the dwellers of the entire village. Each of Vietnam's villages often contains several different

8 King Hùng is a legendary Vietnamese character. He is considered the founder of the nation and lived around 2,300 years ago. He located his capital in LâmThao which today is PhúThọ Province in northern Vietnam. In this area, around 1,200 villages worship him (Phan Khanh, 1992). The worship of King Hùng as a national ceremony may be a result of Confucian domination in Vietnam from the thirteenth century. Feudal states paid great attention to the worshipping ceremony because it was connected to the promotion of Loyalty to the King in Confucianism. After the government of Vietnam officially recognized the worshipping of King Hùng as a national ceremony in 2007, many localities built temples to worship him.

clans co-existing", so "worshiping village guardians is different from ancestor worship of each clan in nature" (2001, p. 34).

On that perspective, Nguyễn Đăng Duy disagreed with Đặng Nghiêm Vạn in identifying ancestor worship of clans as equal to the worshiping of village guardians. He did not accept the opinion that ancestor worship was a national religion because it was no more than a belief. However, he easily accepted the idea that there is a common ancestor of the nation, who is King Hùng. He suggested King Hùng's memorial ceremony and "the worshipping at King Hùng's temple was characterized as worshipping of the nation's ancestor" because it was rooted profoundly in the awareness of origin and the belief of ancestor worship in villages, families, and clans (Nguyễn Đăng Duy, 2001, p. 40 & 82).

To some extent, it seemed that Đăng Duy contradicted himself because he must have known that a nation is composed of many clans with different origins, languages, race awareness, and cultural characteristics. Therefore, there cannot be a common ancestor of the entire nation from the perspective that he was the common father of all residents in the country. However, Nguyễn Đăng Duy's contradiction can be understood because, like other researchers, he is immersed in looking for a common identity and a cultural symbol for the entire nation. It seems that up to this point, Vietnam's cultural anthropologists were in agreement because they shared an interest in appreciating the meaning of the practice of ancestor worship and its implications for nationhood. For them, establishing a common religion was more important than searching for the religious nature of the practice of ancestor worship.

While Vietnam's scholars in the early twentieth century stressed the moral meaning of ancestor worship as a traditional value and the highest manifestation of posterity's respect for predecessors, some decades later, Vietnam's postcolonial anthropologists raised this point of view to a new height. They almost agreed with the argument that the grateful attitude towards those with contributions (including ancestors and village and national guardians) was part of the moral

foundations of the nation—the highest manifestation of humanity in the Vietnamese mind. If the debates are viewed from this angle, it is easy to recognize that the researchers were united in their conclusions as to the meaning of ancestor and ancestor worship, although they differed on some issues.

In fact, the idea of heightening the human value of ancestor worship to a kind of "national religion" typical of Vietnam's cultural identity was initiated by Nguyễn Đổng Chi (1978, p. 193) before the *Đổi Mới* policy was effected.[9] He wrote: "the Vietnamese with their respect for their ancestor have placed all other religious belief down to secondary importance". His point was accepted cautiously, because it took two decades later for Đặng Nghiêm Vạn to develop this argument and officially honor ancestor worship as a national religion. However, Đặng Nghiêm Vạn's viewpoint did face some objections from researchers. His suggestion, on the one hand, caused controversy among academics but, on the other hand, it reflected worry over the concept of national religion. In Vietnam's political culture, the use of the term religion is regarded as a politically sensitive matter because of the perception that religions tend to engage in politics. In the meantime, the term "belief" appears easy to accept because it reconciles other religions and seems "more common" in the eyes of the administrative circle. Moreover, considering ancestor worship as the national religion may be an imposition on other ethnic groups and religions in Vietnam's territory.

Looking into the debates over ancestor worship in Vietnam's anthropology from the mid-1970s up to now enables us to see three notable issues. First, the researchers seemed to pay little attention to analyzing the religious nature of ancestor worship practice. Besides the descriptions of the state of ancestor worship in society and the difference between the concept of religion and belief, the debates almost failed to achieve any advance from what had previously been established.

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9 *Đổi Mới* is a Vietnamese term that literally means "Renovation" in English. This term is used to refer to a process of renovation in the economic system initiated by the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1986. The process aimed to create a "socialist-oriented market economy."

Second, the debates mainly focused on clarifying and developing the moral, ethical, and human values of ancestor worship. Particularly, regardless of whether ancestor worship is viewed as a religion or belief, the researchers all tended to emphasize its "sacredness" and "faith". The emphasis on the sacredness and faith of ancestor worship and gratitude toward ancestors seemed to have obviously pragmatic implications. On the one hand, it reflected the need to return to nationalism after the system of world communism disintegrated. On the other hand, it suggested that there was also a need to strengthen the trust in the Party and the State by guarding against those who might exhibit an "ungrateful attitude" and those elements in society who were prone to "forgetting forebears".

Finally, the discussions on the practice of ancestor worship all aimed to find a common cultural identity for Vietnam as a nation. By developing a system of scholarly arguments in order to link the practice of ancestor worship in families and clans with the worshipping of King Hùng, the researchers hoped that they could create a new religious belief associated with national identity. The Way of Ancestor Worship initiated by Đặng Nghiêm Vạn is not a unified religion, but rather a system of beliefs linked and restructured with a definite purpose. This purpose is emphasized in most of his studies on this matter. Đặng noted: "the Way of Ancestor Worship remains a necessary reflection of Vietnamese spirit", because as a "national religion", it "helps consolidate community, teach people to be more responsible to their ancestors [and] their nation" (1996, p. 346). As a result, he wrote: "It is necessary to conduct profound studies on the Way of Ancestor Worship, develop it into a national philosophy, morality and identity, and this is the responsibility of philosophers and social scientists in general" (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn, 1996, p. 348).

CONCLUSION

The Communist Party of Vietnam's Cultural Resolution No. 5 was an effort to create a strategic platform for building a new unified cultural entity for the era of international integration and development. This featured "an advanced

Vietnamese culture with fully national identity" (CPV, 1998). In the assessment of 15 years of implementation of this resolution, researchers voiced that "basically, Vietnamese culture lost its diversity—an essential nature of culture" (Trần Đình Sử, 2013). The veneration of King Hùng as a national ancestor, the building of temples to worship him, and the establishment of a national holiday to celebrate him represents an effort to promote a unified identity and coherent national culture at the expense of diversity.

During and after the Vietnam War, the analysis and decoding of Vietnamese cultural identity was encouraged by the American government in order to serve their global policy. While searching for a Vietnamese identity, American researchers tended to view Vietnam as a unified entity with common symbols that they designated as "rural Vietnam" and "Confucian Vietnam" (Taylor, 2000, p. 81). This approach to Vietnam as a unified entity with a common cultural identity is no longer viable today when one factor is the existence of groups with varying ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds that also make up the nation-state. The discovery of a broad Vietnamese cultural identity that was established on the basis of this overarching approach is clearly an artificial construction. However, for nations that were once ruled by colonialists and that are now implementing policies of national integration, the search for a common cultural identity is still a priority. In Vietnam's case, cultural anthropologists have been preoccupied with searching for an applicable cultural identity; the elevation of ancestor worship to the status of a national religion is one of the examples reflecting this process. Aspects raised in these discussions demonstrated that nationalism always accompanies the concept of national cultural identity because they together form a politically imagined community (Anderson, 1991).

Looking back at the discussions on ancestor worship in Vietnam, we can see that scholars have mainly focused on the following three issues: (1) the moral values of ancestor worship and national cultural identity; (2) the universality and sacredness in the rituals of ancestor worship; and (3) the connection between

religious practices in families with community worship rituals in villages and nation. Although there are differences in their approaches to the practice of ancestor worship, the researchers seem to agree on one point concerning the need to promote human values, the morality of remembering forebears, and the need to bond families with the nation.

The debate over ancestor worship and the reconstruction of its meaning reveal important dynamics in Vietnam. It reflects the belief crisis in Vietnamese society that stemmed from the early years of economic reform and international integration. The collapse of the world communist system and the transition to a market-oriented economy have caused uncertainty among many Vietnamese. However, it also proves that there is a widespread interest in returning to nationalism and finding within it a theoretical foundation for social development and cohesiveness. A vague worry about "cultural aggression" (*Tap chi Cộng sản,* 2007) in the era of globalization seems to be an obsession among Vietnamese cultural politicians. Promoting the moral values of ancestor worship and referring to ancestor worship as a cultural model in order to transform society and create a national identity seem to be seen as the preferable solution over "being dissolved" in a changing world filled with cultural challenge.

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ABSTRACTS

INTIMATE CITIZENSHIP OF NON-HETERONORMATIVE MALAY MEN IN MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE AND INDONESIA: A Comparative Study

CHUA HANG KUEN

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the interplay of gender, sexual, ethnic, religious, and national identities of Malay non-heteronormative men by comparing cases in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The Malays are singled out not only because of their largely shared ethnic, cultural, and historical heritages even as they are physically and politically separated by postcolonial national boundaries, but also because these similarities allow for comparisons. By adopting the comparative study strategy and Ken Plummer's (2003) conceptual model of intimate citizenship, the paper aims to answer these questions: What are the similarities and differences in the lived experiences of Malay non-heteronormative men in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore? What are the similarities and differences in the ways these men express their non-heteronormativities within specific and local gender, sexual, ethnic, religious, and nationalist discourses? How do they negotiate and navigate zones of intimacy?

By adopting the comparative study approach and conceptual model of intimate citizenship, this project hopes to shed light on how Malay non-heteronormative men negotiate their masculinity, sexuality, ethnicity, religious, and national identities within the realms of nationalism, citizenship, and the international discourse of sexual citizenship.

KEYWORDS:
male, gender, sexuality, ethnic, religious and national identities, non-heteronormative/tivity, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia

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ETHNIC RELATIONS IN MULTICULTURAL MEDAN IN POST-SUHARTO INDONESIA

CHONTIDA AUIKOOL

ABSTRACT

The relations between Chinese Indonesians and Indonesians are unequivocally complicated, and vary according to space and time. For decades, these relations have been very fragile. It may be argued that ethnic tension reached its peak in 1998, and shortly after, when many anti-Chinese riots took place in several cities, including Medan, the capital of North Sumatra, Indonesia. These incidents, without question, have created an indelible memory of trauma and instability among Chinese Indonesians. In the post-Suharto period, the new regime paved the way for some degree of democratization and multiculturalism. These have given rise to ethnic freedom and ethnic reconciliation. Such conditions also allow Chinese Indonesians to celebrate their culture and participate in politics through their transnational Chinese networks and Chinese organizations. Drawing from fieldwork in Medan, this research finds that although the riots have ceased, conflicts between Chinese Indonesians and Indonesians remain in the city, even as ethnic relations among differing groups have slowly improved. The research critically examines the changes in the inter-ethnic relations between the Chinese Indonesians and the Indonesians after 1998, and aims to describe and analyze the considerable challenges in their relations, namely the history of Chinese exclusion and plural monoculturalism in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS:
inter-ethnic relations, Chinese-Indonesian, plural monoculturalism, multiculturalism, Post-Suharto, ethnic conflict

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MAKING A LIVING FAR FROM HOME:
Vietnamese Migrant Workers in Thailand

NGUYEN THI TU ANH

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the characteristics, patterns, and motivations of Vietnamese migrants who are illegally working in Thailand, particularly in Bangkok and Khon Kaen. It also examines the various aspects of individual experiences of migrants with different educational backgrounds, gender, and age groups through participant observation and open/in-depth interviews with migrants and concerned stakeholders. The paper does not aim to present a comprehensive picture of Vietnamese migrant workers in Thailand. Instead, it focuses on case studies on the basis of "tête-à-tête" between researcher and respondents, aimed at obtaining confidential information shared by the very migrants themselves. The selection of these two research sites is based on the hypothesis that Bangkok is the metropolitan city and the primary destination of migrants because it offers higher wages and better employment opportunities while Khon Kaen has a low cost of living.

KEYWORDS:
Vietnamese, illegal migrants, employment opportunities, cross-border migration, Thailand

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ISLAMIC FEMINISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
Indonesia and Malaysia in Comparative Perspective

NUR HIDAYAH

ABSTRACT

This research addresses the central questions of how Islamic feminists have contributed to the reformation of Islamic teachings on gender—and have promoted women's rights in contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia—considering how Islam has played a significant role in the politics of both countries. The assumption that Islam prescribes different roles between men and women poses a challenge on how to promote Muslim women's rights without undermining religion. Such a challenge has further been complicated by the emergence of Islamist groups that have introduced retrogressive discourses and policies on gender in both countries. Using case studies of Rahima (Indonesia) and Sisters in Islam (Malaysia), this study will highlight strategies to transform the patriarchal nature of the religion into a more liberative one. This projects asks whether Islamic feminism can provide a platform for women's liberation and empowerment in the Muslim world, while operating within plural socio-political contexts. Furthermore, it also examines the Islamic feminist struggle for social and gender justice in both countries within the power contestation with other political forces, and how Muslim women activists participate to influence Muslim gender politics in the region. Unlike most of the literature on Islamic feminism, which often limits the focus to either its intellectual discourse or activism, this research draws on the anthropological research on Islam and gender. It explores both Islamic feminist scholarship and activism in modern Southeast Asia using a case study of progressive Muslim women's organizations in both countries. In doing so, the research demonstrates how this progressive Islamic scholarship has developed within the context of a wider debate on the nature of Islam in modern Southeast Asia and the context of women's movements in Southeast Asia.

KEYWORDS:
Islam, gender, progressive Muslims, Islamic feminism, Indonesia, Malaysia

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MIGRATION FROM THE MIDDLE IN GMS:
Vietnamese Students at Rajabhat University in the Northeast of Thailand

TANASAK PHOSRIKUN

ABSTRACT

Since 1992, the term "Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS)" has become part of development discourse, and has been employed to integrate the economy in the Mekong Riparian countries including China, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In the discourse about GMS, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Mekong countries viewed regional poverty as a regional problem which has to be solved with a regional development plan. The ADB's GMS Development Plan underscored the necessity of infrastructure development in the region. In this context, the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) project aimed to promote the region's economic development through the construction of the Road Number 9 (R-9) from Danang in Vietnam to Savanakhet in Laos. Upon the project's completion in 2007, there have been increasing flows of people and goods across the border. Along with the increasing flows of goods and people, there has been a steady increase in the number of students from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam coming to study in Thai universities, especially in northeastern Thailand. This article investigates the movement of overseas Vietnamese students seeking further higher education credentials in the northeast of Thailand. The study is positioned both in the broad context of educational migration in the GMS, and within the particularities of Vietnamese students coming to the northeast of Thailand to improve their skills. This article attempts to understand what skills, values, and social and cultural capital education in the northeast borders of Thailand have given to these overseas Vietnamese students and how these are useful for their future in the regional context.

KEYWORDS:
educational migration, Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC), Rajabhat University, Vietnamese students, capital accumulation

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TRADE DIASPORA, REFUGEES, IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND INTERACTION IN THE ROHINGYA COMMUNITY IN MAE SOT, THAILAND-BURMA BORDERS

KUNNAWUT BONREAK

ABSTRACT

The Rohingya is a minority group living in the Arakan state in the northwest region of Myanmar. The approximate population of Rohingya is 800,000 or about 25% of the population in Arakan. The origin of this group of people who recently call themselves "Rohingya" is indeed controversial. Some argue that they are indigenous to the state of Arakan while others contend that they are Muslim migrants who originated in Bengal, which later became Bangladesh, and migrated to Burma during the period of British rule. Burma's 1982 Citizenship Law, implemented during the time of General Ne Win, denies Burmese citizenship to the Rohingya population. Differences in religion has become a contributing factor for conflict and sectarian violence between Rohingya and Rakhine Buddhists. As a result of the tensions between Buddhists and Muslims, a large number of Rohingyas have left Arakan to take refuge in neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, and Australia. In Mae Sot, a Thai town bordered with Burma, this study discovered another group of "Rohingyas" who have been living there for over a decade, engaging in cross-border trade. The newly arrived Rohingyas come to Mae Sot because it hosts a vibrant Muslim community. This research aims to understand how different groups of Rohingyas in Mae Sot adopt different identities and social capital in order to survive in this borderland. It explores how different experiences of displacement can shape the social construction of identity and how different socioeconomic and political conditions create different meanings of what it means to be "Rohingya".

KEYWORDS: *Rohingya, Thai-Burma Borderland, ethnicity, ethnic identity, migrant, refugee*

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THE FLOW OF AMERICAN SILVER VIA MANILA TO CHINA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CHINESE SOCIO-ECONOMY, LATE SIXTEENTH TO EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

NGUYEN THI MINH NGUYET

ABSTRACT

The flow of silver from the Americas played a significant role in early modern Southeast Asia's economic boom. In East Asia, silver was a desirable item due to the collapse of the Ming Dynasty's paper money system during the fifteenth century. This demand largely contributed to the formation of the silver-for-goods trade in East Asia, in which silver from Japan and the Americas were exchanged for such marketable merchandise as silk and ceramics. Understanding the relationship between America and Asia through silver's trade activities provides important insights into the first direct connection of the two regions via the Pacific Ocean. The arrival of Western powers and the establishment of the silver-for-goods exchange transformed traditional East Asian maritime commerce and fueled the expansion of global trade in the sixteenth century. Manila was the connection point for a series of commercial activities in the region that includes exchange of silver. This study explores the relationship between Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Spanish communities inside Manila from 1571. Based on the regional context in the sixteenth century, this project examines then compares the flow of American silver into the region with silver flows from Japan, India, and Europe to China. Additionally, this research will include other regionally important commodities that became a significant part of the Manila-China-Mexico trading exchange. Using underwater archeological and historical participant observation, this project explores a range of sources to establish a fuller picture of the silver trade exchange.

KEYWORDS: *silver, trade, early modern Southeast Asia, Manila, China*

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RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY, ACTIVISM AND LEADERSHIP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
Case Study of Salafi Leaders in Indonesia

FERRY MUHAMMADSYAH SIREGAR

ABSTRACT

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, Indonesia has witnessed the emergence of the Salafi movement. Supported by the same global movement, this movement within Indonesia has produced Salafi leaders, known as ustādhs. Their religious gatherings have attracted a wide following, and thus they have become new religious leaders, or the religious elite, who challenge existing religious authorities: kyais, ‘ulama, and religious leaders of mass organizations. The challenge posed by this group is recognized by the leaders of mass Muslim organizations because of the conversion of some of their activists. Community responses to the Salafi movement differ, ranging from verbal to violent action. This research examines the roles of the Salafi leaders in Indonesia, Brunei, and Malaysia in the Southeast Asian context. It addresses several questions, namely: (1) What are their religious views and roles?; (2) How does the religious authority of religious leaders function?; and (3) How do they develop their leadership? This research aims to have a deep understanding of the cultural movements by examining religious authority, activism, and leadership, and their reasons for developing their own religious views in the Southeast Asian context. This research will establish an academic, comprehensive, and reliable understanding of religious leaders and their activism and leadership, in order to produce a scientific contribution for religious and cultural studies.

KEYWORDS:
Salafi, Indonesia, Islam, activism, leadership, religious authority

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SKINNING DEER, GEARING TRADE: Dutch Export of Siamese Deerskin in the Seventeenth Century

NGUYEN VAN VINH

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the socio-economic influences on Siamese society of the Dutch deerskins trade with Japan, whose demand for deerskins as luxury items to demonstrate status had invested it with value-added qualities that held deeper meanings for both merchants and consumers in early modern Japan. This demand, in turn, fuelled Siam's socio-economic transformation for most of the seventeenth century. Relying primarily on archival materials, relations among the various trading entities involved are explored: the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the English East India Companies, Siam and Taiwan (the two largest suppliers of deerskins during the period under consideration), and Japan. The paper aims to present a quantitative study of the Dutch export of Siamese deerskins to Japan in the seventeenth century by examining the production and trade of Siamese deerskins within the period. The author argues that with the arrival of the Dutch, deer hunting in Siam shifted from a limited harvest to a full-scale industry in order to meet the demand for deerskins for their Japan trade.

KEYWORDS: *Dutch East India Company (VOC), English East India Company, Southeast Asia, seventeenth century, Siam, Japan, trade, deerskins*

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INTIMATIONS OF THAI NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY AMONG HILL TRIBE MUSEUMS IN NORTHERN THAILAND

RYAN FRANCIS REYES

ABSTRACT

In Thailand, the term "hill tribes" generally refers to several non-Thai ethnic minorities inhabiting the higher altitudes of the mountainous frontier regions. Their estimated population of around one million is mainly concentrated in the north, but the hill tribes can also be found along Thailand's western border, parts of the central region, and in the highlands of southern Thailand. Some of the ethnic groups belonging to the hill tribe category are the Karen, Hmong, Mien, Akha, Lahu, Lisu, H'tin, Lawa, Kha Mu, and Mlabri. This article examines the role of museums in accommodating the hill tribes into the bigger picture of the Thai nation. Across northern Thailand, particularly in the northernmost provinces of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, there are museums specifically dedicated to the hill tribes. Through an array of exhibitionary media and strategies such as objects, images, videos, and texts, these museums attempt to present the hill tribe culture and lifestyle to both Thai and foreign visitors. This article investigates how museums, through their various functions and capacities, participate in embedding the country's hill tribe minorities into the broader discourse and ideology of Thai nationalism and identity. It seeks to understand the role of museums in the accommodation of the hill tribe peoples in mainstream Thai society, and ultimately its implications the notions of Thai nationalism and identity.

KEYWORDS:
Dutch East India Company (VOC), English East India Company, Southeast Asia, seventeenth century, Siam, Japan, trade, deerskins

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