



# Asian Studies Student Journal

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## Note from the Editors

This is the first edition of the journal under its new name: *Asian Studies Student Journal*. Previously, it was known as *The Rice Papers* and is consequently the 8th volume of this undergraduate academic journal.

*Asian Studies Student Journal's* purpose is to bring attention to current events and historical ideas in the Asian province of the world. Each paper's main topic is associated with Asia in some form. Along with the authors of these articles, the editorial team hopes the readers of the journal will come away with more knowledge about Asian topics extending from history, politics, and international affairs. As children of God, we are extremely grateful to live in an international world that allows connection through an academic route such as this one.

We extend our gratitude to our authors and the extensive amount of time and research they have put into their works. We appreciate their willingness to share their work with the Brigham Young University community. Also, we give our deepest thanks to the Kennedy Center Communications staff, Emily Nelson and Lenae Rubey, for their invaluable contribution and helping get this volume to its current state. Our sincerest gratitude also to Marc Yamada, our faculty advisor who created the Asian Symposium that allowed all our authors to present their works before being selected for this year's edition. An additional thank you goes to our editorial staff who worked on this volume of the journal. Thank you to all who have made this paper what it is today.

Mencius, an ancient Chinese philosopher, is quoted to have said, "Make your learning abundant and speak of it with precision, then you will speak of essentials." May we all learn abundantly from each other and speak of what we have learned with precision; that is the hope of this journal.

- *Asian Studies Student Journal* Editorial Staff





# The Function of Sound Symbolism in the Japanese Language

*Madison Buckles*

## **Abstract**

This paper examines sound symbolism in the Japanese language, primarily its role in linguistic qualities of onomatopoeia, and why it occurs in relation to language theory. Several reasons for the occurrence of sound symbolism are discussed, namely vowel and consonant associations; context of a speaker's language; and the development, significance, and necessity of these words. The paper concludes by arguing that the lack of research in the field of sound symbolism, despite its prominent role against the prevailing theory of language (which states that words are arbitrary in conjunction with their meaning), is another example of the Western world's tendency to focus on subjects that are Western-centric, and this demonstrates that the Western world has not cleared its biases toward Asian cultures completely.

## **Introduction**

The origins of words and language have been the topic of study and debate since ancient times. The well-known Greek philosopher Plato is credited with one of the first conversations about the origins and correctness of names and words in his dialogue *Cratylus* (about 380 BCE). Since then, word and meaning association and relation have become an increasingly popular topic of study by linguists and anthropologists. The most prevailing and widely agreed upon theory to emerge from such scholarship is that of the arbitrariness of language. Made popular in modern linguistics

by Swiss linguist, semiotician, and philosopher, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) noted two primary characteristics of words and language in general: first, that words are arbitrary, meaning there is no reason for an object to be called what it is and that its association is cemented in historical context and development, and second, he noted that words gain meaning in relation to other words, essentially stating that a word can be defined by what it is not (Hutton 1989, 75). Saussure was not the first to conceptualize such a theory, yet he is considered the foremost contributor to its modern-day significance within the field of linguistics.

Within the past few centuries—relatively modern given the range of the field—some scholars, including Saussure, have found what appears to be an exception to the theory of arbitrariness. There is a category of words, ideophones, that rely on what is known as sound symbolism. Sound symbolism generally refers to a word or words that, in some physical or aural way, represent the object they are being used to define or name. In English, some common examples of these are *slam*, *knock*, or *boom*. The study of sound symbolism, however, has been somewhat of a controversial topic since its conception as many scholars remain unable to convey why sound symbolism occurs or what the origins of these words are since they appear to have some sort of “inherent meaning” (Nuckolls 1999, 226).

The Japanese language is an excellent demonstration of sound symbolic words, as its lexicon contains over 4,000 ideophones. Although many scholars find the arbitrariness of language to be the prevailing theory, the case for iconicity within ideophones in the Japanese lexicon remains contested, but not disproved. Research on the subject of sound symbolism point to several prevailing reasons as to why Japanese mimetic words and onomatopoeia have developed and have intrinsic meaning; the need for expansion within an ancient language, combined with certain associations of vowel and consonant sounds, and context and articulation, provide the unique makeup of the Japanese language and may explain why ideophones convey meaning. The frequent debate between arbitrariness and iconicity, however, leaves some holes in crucial information that could benefit from more in-depth scholarly inquiry. I propose that the lack of studies on sound symbolism and the crucial role it plays in other languages represents the Western world’s tendency to only focus on topics, events, or issues that concern it directly, and that is why language theory largely remains in accordance with Western research; moreover, this prevailing ignorance by the West, and by the rest of the scholarly world, is evidence that the Western world has not banished its ignorance of the value of Asian culture completely, and serves as testimony that the West has room to grow in terms of cultural appreciation and understanding of those cultures and languages outside of its borders.

## Problem

The issue of sound symbolism is well articulated by Mutsumi Imai and Sotaro Kita in their study of sound symbolism: “Many languages of the world have a large grammatically defined class of sound symbolic words . . . in which the iconic relation between sounds and meaning is apparently felt by native speakers of the language and sometimes even by people who do not speak that language” (Imai 2014, 2). This iconic relation between sounds and meaning is a direct contrast to the theory of arbitrariness which states that there is no relation between a word and its meaning. Janis B. Nuckolls also questions that if sounds have meaning, “how . . . can the relatively small number of contrastive sounds in a language’s phonemic inventory participate in the creation of infinite varieties of meaning if those sounds themselves are meaningful?” (Nuckolls 1999, 226). Several scholars have attempted to debunk the apparent intrinsic meaning of these sound symbolic words.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, I will define the terms “ideophone,” “mimetic word,” “onomatopoeia,” “iconicity,” and “arbitrariness.” I will adopt Noriko Katsuki-Pestemer’s definition of ideophone as “a vivid representation of an idea or sound’ or ‘a word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, color, sound, smell, action, state, or intensity” (Katsuki-Pestemer 2014, 1). I will also utilize Katsuki-Pestemer’s definitions of mimetic words and onomatopoeia as she accurately and concisely dictates the difference between the two: “onomatopoeia . . . are imitations of sounds and mimetics . . . convey precise information about the manner in which things occur, how actions are carried out, what situations things are in, what things feel/smell/taste like, and how human beings feel” (Katsuki-Pestemer 2014, 1). For iconicity, Shoko Hamano characterizes it as “the property of symbols replicating physical features of objects that they represent, [or] the degree of physical resemblance between a symbol and what it stands for” (Hamano 2000, 4&7). I will follow Yoko Hasegawa in defining arbitrariness as having “no logical or natural relationship between [a] word and its meaning” (Hasegawa 2014, 71). Because of the interrelation of ideophone, mimesis, and onomatopoeia, scholars tend to use these words interchangeably, therefore I will see no trouble in also doing so. Arbitrariness and iconicity will somewhat serve as opposites. Lastly, any mention of the “West” or the “Western world” will refer primarily to Europe and the United States, while the “East” or “Eastern world” is in reference to Asia.

### **Purpose of Japanese Ideophones and the Need for Linguistic Expansion**

First, it is crucial to understand the purpose of ideophones in Japanese, as it explains why so many of them developed, as well as why scholars find them worth researching within the scope of arbitrariness and iconicity. As previously stated, the Japanese lexicon has about 4,000 to 4,500 different ideophones which are commonly dubbed onomatopoeia. In her monograph titled *Japanese: A Linguistic Introduction*, Yoko Hasegawa describes one of the most distinct features of Japanese in relation to other languages: “English has a large number of verbs, many of which express both the action and manner in which the action is performed. Japanese, by contrast, has fewer such verbs; the manner is instead typically expressed by an ideophone” (Hasegawa 2014, 72). Due to the fact that many other languages, like English, have an expansive vocabulary in which the words are laced with connotations, Japanese is sometimes considered less expressive. But as suggested by Hasegawa, Kristen Dexter explains that “in Japanese, a language that many people have so inaccurately called ‘vague in the past, onomatopoeia are there to fill that void . . . and not just in the ways we hear and see them in English as well as most Western European languages” (Dexter 2015) in her online learner’s guide “Japanese Onomatopoeia: The Definitive Guide.” Both authors go on to explain that many onomatopoeia and mimetic words used in Japanese take the place of adverbs and adjectives. Since most Western languages consider onomatopoeia words to be colloquial, they often misinterpret the purpose and significance of mimetic words in languages like Japanese that rely on them heavily as an expressive database. In addition, Nuckolls insists through her extensive research titled “The Case for Sound Symbolism” that because “linguistic sounds do more than communicate an unlimited number of messages,” they are entirely important in “express[ing] . . . emotional states, aesthetic apperceptions, and the alignments and interrelations . . . with other members of our social world” (Nuckolls 1999, 226). Not only do ideophones fill the void of descriptive language in Japanese, but they are essential to general expression and relations among speakers.

W. G. Aston discusses in his studies titled “Japanese Onomatopes and the Origin of Language” (one of the first modern published pieces on Japanese ideophones) that the addition of so many mimetic words to the language “is an instance of onomatopoeia providing a corrective to the general tendency of phonetic decay” (Aston 1894, 333). He notes that because the language is so ancient, there was a need for new vocabulary to develop over time in order to stay current with modern times. Overall, these scholars each explain that one primary reason for the expansive list of Japanese ideophones is because of the lack of certain descriptive parts of speech, namely

adverbs and adjectives, as well as the natural development of vocabulary to account for phonetic decay within a language with ancient origins.

### **Types of Ideophones and the Association of Sounds to Form Meaning**

It is important to establish the different types of Japanese ideophones in order to more accurately portray their usage and how they convey meaning. According to Dexter, there are five main categories of Japanese ideophones: *giseigo* (擬声語), *giongo* (擬音語), *gitaigo* (擬態語), *giyogo* (擬容語), and *gijougo* (擬情語). She states that the first two categories, *giseigo* and *giongo*, “are just like onomatopoeia we have in English. The cow goes moo. The machine is whirring. They represent real sounds you can hear” (Dexter 2015). These categories represent animal and human sounds, and actual sounds made by inanimate objects and nature. Dexter continues, “The last three describe what’s called mimetic words. . . . They describe or represent something that has no sound” (Dexter 2015). *Gitaigo* describe conditions and states, while *giyogo* describe movements and motions. Finally, *gijougo* describe feelings. She adds that because “these mimetic words don’t really exist in English . . . it makes mastering them difficult when learning Japanese” (Dexter 2015).

As previously stated, these five categories of words usually function as adverbs or adjectives, but the question as to why they seem to have intrinsic meaning remains. Hasegawa explains one reason ideophones contain certain intrinsic meanings is due to the different sounds of vowels and consonants making up the words, and that specific combinations of sounds can give particular nuances to words. She notes how “voiceless consonants in expressive vocabulary are often associated with smallness and low intensity, whereas voiced consonants are associated with largeness and high intensity” (Hasegawa 2014, 71). For example, in the word *kirakira* (キラキラ), the voiceless consonant *k* is used to describe the twinkling of a star, which has a low intensity in terms of light. The word *giragira* (ギラギラ) utilizes the voiced consonant *g*, which in this case means the sizzling of the sun and is objectively more intense than the light of a star. Dexter sums up this point by saying “the voiced version [of a consonant] is always louder, heavier, and more intense than its unvoiced friend” (Dexter 2015). Another phenomenon that takes place with voiced consonant sounds is signifying negative meanings: “*betobeto* (べとべと) can indicate something very sticky such as melted chocolate, or a state of being soaked in perspiration” (Katsuki-Pestemer 2014, 14). This is just one way the slight differences in consonant sounds provide contrasting connotations in words.

Dexter later points out that consonants are useful again in “[telling] if [a word describes] something loud or strong based on what kind of consonant it has. Something using ‘loud’ voiced consonants might be banging, rolling thunder, or strong feelings. Something ‘half’ voiced will be noisy, but not loud, like the pitter patter of rain bouncing off of a window” (Dexter 2015). She explains that because some *hiragana* characters can be modified to transform from a voiceless to a voiced consonant (such as *ta* to *da*, or *ha* to *pa*), this also affects the intensity or volume of the word. If a voiced consonant was never modified, it will be the most intense, while a modified consonant that became a voiced consonant will become what she describes as “half voiced” and will not be as intense as the former.

In addition to consonant sounds, the vowel sounds are equally as important, as pointed out by Hasegawa and Dexter. Hasegawa illustrates that “high front vowels like /i/ [い] are associated with smallness, lightness, brightness, sharpness etc.” (Hasegawa 2014, 71). This can be highlighted by the word *pichipichi* (ピチピチ), which means “tight.” In contrast, “low vowels like /a/ [あ] are associated with largeness, heaviness, dullness, vigor, etc.,” and a good demonstration of this is the word *dabudabu* (だぶだぶ), meaning “loose” (Hasegawa 2014, 71). Dexter breaks vowels into three categories. She maintains that the Japanese vowels a, u, and o (あ, う, お) all represent long, slow sounds. Vowel sounds featuring i (い) are small and quick, and e (え) sounds typically hint at something negative (Dexter 2015). Both scholars assert that by using these guidelines combined with the consonant sounds, meaning can be derived from onomatopoeia and mimetic words.

Two more important factors that several scholars point out are the glottal stop (signified as っ in Japanese) and the contrast between long and short sounds. Katsuki-Pestemer states that “the glottal stop indicates a sudden movement,” just as the stop itself is a sudden sound for the speaker to announce in their words (Katsuki-Pestemer 2014, 11). “Long sounds are associated with sustained activities” explains Hasegawa, and “repetitions of short sounds are associated with repetitive actions” (Hasegawa 2014, 71–72). Examples of these would be *boubou* (ぼうぼう), meaning “burning” and *pachipachi* (パチパチ), meaning “clapping.” Moreover, Mutsumi Imai and Sotaro Kita further enhance these characteristics of sound by stating that “some types of sound symbolism show clear resemblance between properties of speech sounds and properties of their referents. For example, reduplication in Japanese mimetic words indicates repetition in the referent events” (Imai 1). In this case, they assert that the idea that properties of the words themselves, like the repetition in *pachipachi*, can be an important indication of meaning and context within the word that further assists in explaining how these ideophones acquire and relay their meaning. Overall, the association of certain consonant and vowel

sounds, as well as the properties of the words themselves, provide scholars with several viable reasons why ideophones have intrinsic meanings and qualities. Because certain sound combinations inspire particular nuances, meaning may be derived from ideophonic words.

### **Contextualization, Fluency, and Intonation**

Other more definitive reasons scholars have found for sound symbolism within Japanese include levels of context of the word, fluency of the speaker, and intonation of the speaker. In her monograph *The Sound-Symbolic System of Japanese*, Shoko Hamano discusses that “for native speakers of Japanese . . . [ideophone] expressive meanings are immediately understood, and most of the mimetic expressions are readily identifiable as such” (Hamano 2000, 1). While this may seem obvious because native speakers are familiarized with vocabulary throughout their lives, Imai and Kita emphasize that Japanese sound symbolism is more complicated than that because “iconic relation between sounds and meaning is apparently felt by native speakers of the language and . . . even by people who do not speak that language” (Imai 1651, 2). They further explain that this could be due to the context provided by the words themselves. A native speaker, as displayed by Hamano, will be able to pick up on context immediately, but a non-speaker may be able to gauge some sort of meaning by utilizing the context of consonant and vowel sounds as previously mentioned. In a study done which tested Chinese, Chinese-learning-Japanese, and native Japanese speakers, Etsuko Haryu and Lihua Zhao recorded that “Chinese without knowledge of Japanese performed only at chance level, whereas Japanese and Japanese-learning Chinese successfully matched a voiced/unvoiced consonant with a big/small object respectively” (Haryu 2007, 424). They suggest that some sort of context of the Japanese language is a large determining factor in the amount of meaning that can be deduced from unknown words. Haryu and Zhou conclude that “the results suggest that the key to understanding the symbolic values of voicing contrasts in Japanese onomatopoeia is some basic knowledge that is intrinsic to the Japanese language” which, in this case, may be the series of vowel and consonant sounds that create nuance in words (Haryu 2007, 424).

Although Haryu and Zhou’s study results explain why some non-Japanese speakers cannot understand the so-called “intrinsic meaning,” they do not explain the phenomenon in which non-Japanese speakers do pick up on meaning. Imai and Kita introduce the possibility of articulation similarities between Japanese and other languages. They highlight that English speaker’s ability to absorb meaning from words may be due to the commonalities in experiences with articulation (Imai 1651, 3). They also



mention that English speakers generally find similar meanings in voiced and unvoiced consonants and certain vowels as Japanese speakers, which also contributes to a sort of shared connotation of words. Furthermore, Dexter recognizes that English speakers were not able to construct an entire definition of a word without context; non-Japanese speakers are typically read the Japanese ideophone in question and then provided several options for what it could mean. When asked to choose from these options, they could generally pinpoint the correct definition (Dexter 2015). With the context of other contrasting words, combined with the shared values of consonant and vowel nuances, these factors offer an explanation of the “intrinsic meanings” of various ideophones.

Concurrent to these theories, Aston suggests another reason non-Japanese speakers pick up on meanings: “The first differentiation of the shout was by means of variations of tone, which are still essential in this class of words. It matters little whether you say oh! ah! or aw if you only give the right intonation” (Aston 1894, 336). Similarly to what Hamano and Dexter signify, he justifies this intrinsic value as being a property of intonation or the manner that the word is spoken or presented. He pointedly remarks that language will always have natural connotations and that it is important to remember them when portraying Japanese words to non-speakers, as the way a word is said can reflect part of the meaning.

### **Additional Research**

Scholarship on linguistic tendencies of sound symbolism in Japanese generally agrees on the fact that sound symbolism is undeniable in Japanese and that Japanese ideophones tend to have a sort of intrinsic meaning. While not all scholars agree on the exact reason for these meanings, the majority conclude that the need for modernization within the language itself, coupled with consonant and vowel associations and context from spoken words and other languages, are the main factors that led to the development of ideophones in Japanese and explain at least some of the reasoning behind these apparent universal meanings.

Many of these scholars also point to the glaring absence of research on the topic of ideophones in Japanese. Hamano remarks that “in spite of its systematic nature and significance, the Japanese mimetic system is one aspect of Japanese that is little understood. Very little systematic research has been done on it, and textbooks for non-native speakers include only the least sound-symbolic, most idiomatic items in the system which could be readily found in conventional dictionaries” (Hamano 2000, 2–3). Sound symbolism has begun to regain the interest of scholars since its battle with controversy within modern linguistics, but the broad topic is very sparsely researched, especially in terms of language-specific studies like Japanese

ideophones. Given the prominence and importance of ideophones in Japanese and other sound-symbolic languages, the field could benefit tremendously from more research done on not only ideophonic development, but on the reasons why these words truly have meanings that resonate with speakers of other languages.

### Language in Accordance With the West

While the lack of research is in part due to the fact that sound symbolism gained a controversial reputation in the field of modern linguistics, Hamano also points out that the field of modern linguistics was developed in Europe, and sound symbolism plays a negligible role in most European languages (Hamano 2000, 4). Given that there is not a significant amount of sound-symbolic words in virtually any Western languages, and the fact that linguistics has remained a field of study that is still largely Western-centric, there was never any historical emphasis on studies about sound symbolism or its relation to language theory. Language has remained, to this effect, a field that stays within the Western perceptions of what is worthy of being studied and what is not.

This profound lack of attention to sound symbolism and the crucial role it plays in other languages represents the Western world's tendency to only focus on topics, events, or issues that concern it directly, and the field of sound symbolism in particular stands as evidence that the West has not banished its prejudices against the value of Eastern languages and cultures.

Throughout much of history, but specifically during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Japan and the West had a tense relationship in which these prejudices against Japan and the East surfaced and truly engrossed the West. In his "New Theses" *Shinron* 1825, Aizawa Seishisai, while discussing the dangers of the imposing West and the consequences this could have on Japan, notes that "everywhere they [soldiers incoming from the West] go, they set fire to shrines and temples, deceive and delude the people, and then invade and seize the country" (De Bary 2008, 347). Aizawa continues explaining the ill effects of Western influence in Asia, and, as he mentions above, knows that the entrance of the Western world, under any guise, is always for the same ultimate goal of colonization. As Aizawa states, culturally significant sites like shrines and temples were always the first things to be destroyed, and full-on colonization was the end product. Such sentiments within Japan later influenced Sakamoto Ryōma's "Eight-Point Proposal" in 1867 that preceded the installation of the Meiji government. In this proposal, points four and six directly coincide with the growing Western presence in Japan: "In dealing with foreign countries, appropriate regulations should be newly established" and "the navy should

be properly expanded” (De Bary 2008, 369). Hoping to avoid outright colonization from Europe or the United States, Japan warily opened its borders after over two hundred years of isolation during Tokugawa shogunate rule, and just a year after Sakamoto’s proposal. In his proposal, Sakamoto cautions his nation to properly set up defenses, both militarily and diplomatically, in order to maintain sovereignty, a task that many of Japan’s neighboring nations had not been able to do.

Sources from early Meiji Era Japan demonstrate that relations with the West were not only advised against, but based on the West’s treatment of other Asian nations, diplomatic and economic relationships were almost entirely unwelcome and only initiated to ensure the survival of Japan. Due to the West’s mistreatment of the East, these sentiments carry even further in history and culminate in the World Wars. In 1933, journalist Tokutomi Sohō detailed Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations and cited that it was “to protest the tyranny of the League . . . [and] give the wayward gentleman of Europe and America an object lesson . . . to awaken them to existence in Asia also of a strong-willed people” (De Bary 2008, 546). It was the severe hypocrisy and racism of the West that led to Japan needing to “teach” the West a lesson; Tokutomi writes on, “The world is not a place to monopolize, and [withdrawing] shows Asians they can be free from domination by Europeans and Americans” (De Bary 2008, 546). Again, this not only serves as evidence of the mistreatment of Japan and other Asian nations from the West: it also stands as a testament that Japan was vehemently against such behavior from the West and aimed for “self-government [and] autonomy for Asia” (De Bary 2008, 546).

The relationship between Japan and the West is articulated in these documents and portrays that this strained and unequal relationship was prevailing throughout multiple periods of history and not just one specific instance. These sources illustrate, from a distinctly Japanese perspective, that the West was entirely dismissive of the East as well as their national and cultural identities. While Western sources from these time periods may touch on Asia or the relationship of the West with Asia, it is almost always a gross understatement of the truth, and these Japanese sources offer insights that would not be possible with the use of American or European documents. These sources demonstrate that Japan sought to advocate for the equality of Asia to Europe and America, and even left the League of Nations in order to demonstrate their point entirely. Furthermore, the Japanese aim was always to help secure other Asian nations in the international sphere because Japan knew of the trials that came with doing so. Of course, there were instances in which Japan did more harm than good to some nations because of different ideology, methodology, and their own

colonization of nations of Korea and Taiwan, but this paper is solely in reference to Western ignorance of the Asian world.

Japan was forced to become a major world player before it was recognized by the Western world as worthy of pursuing in terms of forming allies and trade relationships; this much is conveyed through these sources as well as analyzing the current relations the Western world has with Japan. The nation is now an international powerhouse and demonstrates soft power throughout the world through popular media like anime and manga. The lack of scholarship on Japanese ideophones, which is such an important feature of the language and media that the international sphere so enjoys, is yet another example of the Western world's tendency to only focus on things that are centered on the West. While ignoring a subsection of language may not have the same effects as outright colonization, the message is the same: Japanese language and culture is unimportant to the West. Because scholars of linguistics working in the West cannot gain any value from pursuing research in the field of sound symbolism, it is insignificant to their world and therefore insignificant in general. This profound lack of research, and by extension, lack of effort to bring forth any research, proves that Western biases of the value of Eastern cultures have not completely dissipated.

In the case of Japan, a nation which fought vehemently not only for the equal treatment of nations like itself in the global sphere, but also made efforts by any means necessary to modernize and become on par with the West, it is still unclear why these biases would persist today. If the West put value of Asian cultures simply based on how equivalent economically, democratically, and influentially to European nations or America, then logically, these racist disparities would cease to exist with a nation like Japan because of how well it performs in all sectors. Therefore, it must be that there are still the underlying racial biases that continue to drive up divisions with the pretext of being trivial enough to not matter in some grander scheme, but in actuality are the root of the prejudices still held by the West today.

## Conclusion

The lack of studies on sound symbolism, despite the crucial role it plays in other languages, represents the Western world's greater tendency to only focus on topics, events, or issues that concern it directly. In turn, this prevailing ignorance by the West, and the rest of the scholarly world, is evidence that the Western world has not banished its biases of the value of Asian culture completely. Although several reasons for the development and occurrence for sound symbolism have been discovered like vowel and consonant associations, context, and phonetic decay, these are still surface-level findings, and more information is needed on this anomaly to language theory.

Ideophones are essential in many languages, not just Japanese, but because modern linguistics remains dominated by Western scholars, no scholarship is emerging to benefit this crucial element of language. Just because modern linguistics began as a European field does not mean it must continue to be one; many Asian languages have structures similar to Japanese and would benefit tremendously from advanced research in ideophones in order to more effectively teach and communicate to speakers of other languages. Connecting with and understanding people different from oneself is essential to promoting an international sphere of peace, and better understanding one part of one language, specifically the Japanese language, could be a first step towards a more connected, less prejudiced future.

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# When Big Brother Blinks

## “December 8th,” The Makioka Sisters, and the Failures of Literary Censorship in WWII Japan

Josh Eyre

### Intro

When discussing modern Japanese literature, works of the late 1930s and early 1940s are largely left out of the discussion. Stories written during this time are ignored by scholars, forgotten by readers, and at times even excluded from an author’s “complete works” by publishers (Keene 1987, 906–907). These works are often thought to be devoid of literary merit or not worth studying due to the high levels of scrutiny and censorship that Japanese authors were subjected to by the far right and intensely nationalistic Japanese government of the time. I would argue, however, that the near total dismissal of Japanese WWII literature is a mistake, and that censorship at the time may not have been as total or effective at suppressing ideas as is often thought.

To support this argument, I will focus on two works from this time period, “December 8th” by Dazai Osamu and *The Makioka Sisters* by Tanizaki Jun’ichirō. “December 8th,” despite some content which seems to reflect negatively on the war effort, was permitted publication with no problems raised by censors. *The Makioka Sisters*, despite a complete lack of any content that could be considered controversial or negative toward the war effort, had its publication halted early into its serialization. It is clear that the censors were influenced by factors other than just the content of these stories alone. My argument, therefore, is that Dazai Osamu’s short story, “December 8th,” and Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s novel, *The Makioka Sisters*, were treated differently by the censors not because of the actual content of the stories but rather due to other factors around their publication, and



thus literary censorship was not as effective at suppressing thought as is often believed. To support this argument, I will examine the general state of Japanese Literature during WWII, as well as these two stories and the details around their publication.

### **Historical Background**

Literary censorship was not a new concept to Japan at the start of WWII. Rather, censorship had been an ongoing national project since early in the Meiji period, though it reached its climax in the late 1930s or early 40s (Rubin 1984, 4, 10–11; Abel 2005, 53–55). Once Japan had entered into military conflict with its neighbors, authors felt great pressure to support the military effort with their writings which caused the field of literature during WWII to be dominated by intensely nationalistic stories with little literary merit (Keene 1964, 209). Due to this perception, critics and literary scholars often dismiss works of this time period fully out of hand.

However, critics may not be totally justified in the belief that government censorship in WWII Japan was so complete and effective as to render all literary works of the time devoid of literary merit. For example, although some literary scholars allude to a sharp increase in censorship that began in December 1941—immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor—there seems to be little evidence of this. In fact, the number of works censored each year actually decreased once the war had been declared (Abel 2005, 53–55). Likely, these scholars are referencing instances such as the one that occurred in December 1941, in which a number of prominent left-leaning authors were rounded up and imprisoned (Keene 1964, 209). Most of these authors were released within just a few days, upon promising “that they had changed their political views” (Keene 1964, 209). Though it seems strange that these authors were believed and released on their word alone, evidently this decision was effective as “most of [these] released men” went on to cooperate “with the government during the war in the manner required of all writers,” largely falling in line to support the government and the war effort (Keene 1964, 209).

One factor that likely had an even greater impact on publishing in post-1941 Japan than censorship itself was a major paper shortage that began in early 1941 and only continued to grow in severity as the war stretched on (Rubin 1984, 270–271). While this paper shortage affected all publications, regardless of ideology, the censors capitalized on the situation. More paper was allotted to nationalistic publications that unambiguously supported the war effort and less paper went to liberal publications, which were not quite as enthusiastic in their support of the war. This weaponization of the paper shortage forced many liberal-leaning publications to shrink their magazines and business efforts, change their political stances, and even caused

some to completely shut down (Rubin 1984, 270–271). While utilizing the paper shortage as an instrument of censorship was effective, by the war's end, the censors would resort to more direct efforts when necessary.

## Dazai Osamu

Dazai Osamu stands as a singularly interesting author among Japanese WWII era authors. He entered the literary scene in the mid 1930s, immediately attracting interest due to his nomination in the first and third Akutagawa Ryūnosuke literary prizes and the ensuing scandal as Dazai publicly responded to the perceived slight he had received upon being rejected by renowned author and judge Kawabata Yasunari (Lyons 1985, 37–38). Dazai's popularity wouldn't peak, however, until after the publication of his two great postwar novels, *The Setting Sun* and *No Longer Human*, the latter of which was published posthumously after Dazai's suicide in 1948 (O'Brien 1975, 121–122). Though Dazai's post-war output was the shortest section of his career, it is also the part that attracts the most attention, both from scholars and casual readers, with his works written during the war attracting the least.

This relative lack of scholarly attention comes despite critics' claims that, during WWII, Dazai's work stood alone as “works of indisputable literary merit . . . amidst the general paralysis of literature during the war” (O'Brien 1975, 89). Dazai himself may have explained the difference between his wartime works and those of his contemporaries in his short postwar essay, “The 15 Year Era.” In this essay, Dazai claims he saw many other authors writing stories they hoped would help the nation during the war by stoking the flames of nationalism in the citizenry. In contrast, Dazai claims to have wanted to write stories that would help his fellow civilians not in supporting the war effort, but in having the morale to get through the war effort (Lyons 1985, 153–157). Through most of the war, his stories largely ignored the war itself and focused on maintaining some of the satiric humor that he was known for. Just as many of his peers were writing more serious stories, Dazai's work became funnier and lighter.

Dazai's argument is also corroborated by scholarship which claims that Dazai was largely “politically innocent” during the war (O'Brien 1975, 88). Though he had some ties to communism before the war, by the end of the war, Dazai was one of relatively few authors commissioned by the government to write a nationalistic story (Keene 1964, 219). This would seem to indicate that Dazai remained on relatively good terms with the government and the censors.

### “December 8th”

Dazai Osamu’s “December 8th” is presented as the diary of a woman as she goes through her daily life on the day of December 8, 1941, including her thoughts on first hearing about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and Japan and the US going to war. The narrator of this story is married to an idiotic, good-for-nothing drunk. She often remarks on his foolishness and lack of knowledge or understanding of the world around him as she goes about her daily chores, including dealing with increasingly rationed food: a detail that shows the difficult domestic side of the war (Dazai 1942a, 373–380).

Donald Keene, a noted Japanese Literature scholar, has called “December 8th” “the only humorous story I know about the outbreak of war” (Keene 1964, 218). Keene claims that in “December 8th,” Dazai is “caricaturing often expressed [wartime] sentiments” through the drunken husband’s statements of unshakable faith in Japan’s ability to win the war (Keene 1964, 218). Dazai not only satirizes common sayings of the day, but seems to directly reference Hideki Tōjō’s speech given on December 8, 1941.

“December 8th” seems to satirize one section of Tōjō’s speech in particular. Early in the speech Tōjō declares “[t]he key to victory lies in a ‘faith in victory.’ For 2,600 years since it was founded, our Empire has never known a defeat. This record alone is enough to produce a conviction in our ability to crush any enemy no matter how strong. Let us pledge ourselves that we will never stain our glorious history” (Tōjō 1941a, 70). Much like Tōjō references Japan’s 2,600 year history, “December 8th” begins with the narrator’s musings on how the people of Japan, 100 years in the future, on the 2,700th anniversary of founding day, will look back at her time (Dazai 1942a, 373). While Tōjō looks to the past to justify the present attitude and actions of Japan, Dazai seems to be looking to the future, as if suggesting that there are more important considerations to take into account.

A short time later Dazai writes a short scene in which, after the narrator’s husband’s complete ignorance of anything having to do with the United States is made clear, she asks her husband if he thought “Japan really will be, OK?” to which he replied “We’re all right—don’t you think that’s why they did it? We’re sure to win” (Dazai 1942a, 376). Here, the narrator’s husband seems to be the perfect picture of the “conviction in [Japan’s] ability to crush any enemy no matter how strong” that Tōjō spoke of (Tōjō 1941a, 70). The husband believes, just as Tōjō would have wished, that Japan is incapable of failure. This sentiment is immediately undercut and mocked by the very next line, where the narrator reflects that “the things my husband says are always lies,” showing that, contrary to Tōjō’s words, as much conviction as he or anyone may have, it may make no real difference on the outcome (1942a, 376).

In this way, Dazai's satire seems to be established early in the story but does not hit its climax until the final lines of the story. In this scene, the narrator finds her buffoonish husband drunkenly walking home along a dark alleyway. When she attempts to lightly reprimand him, he replies with a final speech, remarkably similar to Tōjō's own. He says, "[t]he trouble with you all is that you don't have faith. That's why you have trouble on a night road like this. Now I have faith, and so the night road is just like full daylight to me. Follow me" (Dazai 1942a, 380). The scene itself seems satirical, as Dazai's "night road" stands in stark contrast to the "glorious history" that Tōjō proclaims the current age is continuing, especially in the original Japanese (The phrase used by Tōjō is 「光輝ある祖国の歴史」 which describes not only a history of glory, but also filled with brightness.) (Tōjō 1941b, Dazai 1942b). Indeed, the drunken husband's proclaimed ability to see the night road as if it is bathed in daytime seems no different than Tōjō's apparent ability to see this dark chapter in the history of Japan and the lives of its citizens as a continuation of Japan's "glorious history" (Tōjō 1941a, 380). The most clear aspect of Dazai's satire, however, is the husband's use of the word "faith," echoing Tōjō's declaration that all needed to have "faith in victory" (Dazai 1942a, 380; Tōjō 1941a, 70). While the parallelism is not nearly as perfect in the Japanese original, where Tōjō and Dazai both use different words for "faith," the image created is still the same (Tōjō 1941b; Dazai 1942b). After hearing her husband's drunken declaration, his wife, the narrator of Dazai's story, was left to wonder, "Is he even sane?" (Dazai 1942a), potentially referring to both her husband and Tōjō.

While calling "December 8th" resistance literature may be a stretch, aspects of the story clearly reflect negatively on the war efforts and the men Japan had leading those efforts. Nevertheless, the censors permitted "December 8th" to be published.

### Tanizaki Jun'ichirō

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō had a very different career trajectory than Dazai Osamu during these same years. Unlike Dazai, Tanizaki was already an established and extremely well-known author by the outbreak of the war and had had numerous problems with the censors over the preceding two decades. A number of short stories written by Tanizaki in the 1910s had been heavily censored or recalled after publication. His popular novel *Naomi*, serialized from 1924–1925 and now a mainstay in modern Japanese literary canon, was canceled in one publication after receiving threats from censors. This forced Tanizaki to finish publishing *Naomi* in another magazine, which, oddly, he seemed to face no additional opposition in so doing (Rubin 1984, 236–237). Shortly after, Tanizaki turned to writing for

the theater—a field which had been left relatively untouched by censors through the Meiji period. This shift in focus provided him little reprieve however as theater censorship was growing at the time and his ongoing problems with censorship continued (Rubin 1984, 239-242).

Tanizaki, as an established author not fond of the war effort, was able to engage in the one form of true resistance left to authors during the war: to “refrain . . . from publishing” (Keene 1964, 209). After his attempt at publishing *The Makioka Sisters* failed due to censorship, he largely refrained from further wartime publishing. Instead, he chose to continue writing *The Makioka Sisters* himself while waiting for the time it could be published (Rubin 1984, 265).

### ***The Makioka Sisters***

*The Makioka Sisters* tells the story of three sisters from a wealthy aristocratic family as they try to navigate marriage, suitors, and modernity in 1930s Japan. The only potential act of resistance comes from how the story firmly refuses to acknowledge the present conflict of the war, at least partially due to its setting in the 1930s (Chambers 1998, 133).

This aversion to the war and focus on the lives of women, presumably rather than those of fighting men, is important to note, as it was this aspect of the story that was cited as the reason why *The Makioka Sisters* was canceled by the censors shortly into its publication run (Chambers 1998, 134). This seems extremely unlikely to truly be the reason why *The Makioka Sisters* was canceled, however, as “December 8th” has that same focus on the domestic lives of women, albeit set against a war background, which *The Makioka Sisters* lacks.

### **Publication and Censorship**

Rather than the content of the stories themselves, the factors which seem most likely to have contributed to the respective treatment by censors of “December 8th” and *The Makioka Sisters* would be the specific time in which each story was published as well as the relationship each author and publisher had with censorship at that time.

“December 8th” was published shortly after the outbreak of war with the US. Nationalism and public fervor were riding high, and the publication industry had yet to suffer from the worst of the wartime shortages. Tanizaki’s *The Makioka Sisters*, on the other hand, had the misfortune of beginning its publication run later in the war when paper shortages and increased feelings of desperation caused publication to be more restricted. Tanizaki’s notoriety with the censors likely also drew more scrutiny when

he attempted to publish, unlike a relatively unknown author like Dazai would have drawn at the start of the war.

Additionally, *Chūō Kōron*, the publication that was serializing Tanizaki's story, seems to have specifically been targeted by the government since at least the late 1930s (Rubin 1984, 257-258). By the time *The Makioka Sisters* began serialization *Fujin Kōron*, a women's literature subsidiary of *Chūō Kōron* and the magazine that had first published Dazai's December 8th," had already been forced to shut down due to targeted paper shortages affecting both it and its parent company (Rubin 1984, 271). A short time after *The Makioka Sisters* was canceled, the Japanese government took direct action against *Chūō Kōron*, destroying their offices and arresting the few remaining staff members (Hatanaka 1992b, 222).

An editor of *Chūō Kōron*, who has spoken a number of times on the illegal imprisonment and torture he faced after the magazine was forcibly shut down, has also spoken on *The Makioka Sisters* situation. He claims that it was essentially a completely innocent story that found itself caught in the crossfires between the Japanese censors and *Chūō Kōron*, and that the reasons given for its censorship were entirely farcical. According to him, the censors were trying to prevent a magazine that they had almost succeeded in destroying from gaining a financial second wind by publishing a new and excellent story from a popular and somewhat controversial author (Hatanaka 1992a, 67).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the likely reasons why "December 8th" and *The Makioka Sisters* were treated differently are varied and complex. Wartime censorship was not the effective machine it is sometimes seen to be. It seems the decision to allow "December 8th" publication and deny *The Makioka Sisters* could not have been reached purely by evaluating their content. Rather, wartime censorship varied depending on when a work was published, the author's previous relationship with censorship, the publisher itself, and potentially other factors.

This would indicate that Japanese wartime literary censorship was not and could not have been the completely effective thought-suppressing machine it is often thought to be. Therefore, treating Japanese WWII literature as a monolith devoid of any literary value, as it has largely been treated by scholarship thus far, is a mistake. Though censors may have tried to force Japanese literature into becoming exactly that, some stories clearly slipped through the cracks, and, in some instances at least, the censors failed.

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# Yingying's Vow

## The Evolution of Female Chastity in the Stories of Feng Menglong

Jackson Keys

Romantic fiction of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) often contains a scene that reads as such: Two lovers, usually a young scholar and a beautiful young woman, cast their fate towards heaven as they decide to make vows of devotion, promising each other that they will marry none but the other. This couple will then go through challenges and setbacks, and although it seems there is no possible way for them to be together, their devotion to one another allows them to ultimately overcome all obstacles and live happily together. This structure, with roots dating back to the Tang (618–907) *chuanqi* 傳奇 (classical language tales), is found in countless vernacular fiction stories written by the prominent late Ming writer Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646). Despite Feng's own assertion that vernacular short stories can be more educationally and morally powerful than even the *Analects* (Yang and Yang 2005, xiv), many of these romance stories include positive depictions of female characters who have sex before they are married—which should therefore make them void of the virtue of female chastity so prominent during the Ming.

Feng Menglong's stories often contain seemingly contradictory messages about the role of women in society. Some of Feng's stories include editor's comments where he praises a female character on account of her devotion to chastity, but other stories either allow characters to fornicate without punishment or will criticize a female character for being too strict about her chastity observance (Yang 1998, 73). In trying to understand the role of female chastity within Feng's work, one of his stories, titled "Zhang Hao Meets Li Yingying at Lingering Fragrance Pavilion" 宿香亭張浩遇鶯鶯,



is helpful—particularly because it is a retelling of the Tang classical story, *The Story of Yingying* 鶯鶯傳 and Western Chamber dramas. *The Story of Yingying* mentions a vow made between lovers but does so to depict the negative results of excessive desire. Retellings of *The Story of Yingying*, particularly the dramas of the Western Chamber tradition, generally depict Yingying positively and find ways to condone her romantic relationship—a trend that has been studied extensively by scholars, such as Lorainne Dong. Feng’s “Lingering Fragrance Pavilion” builds off these centuries of tradition but deviates from any other Yingying story in significant ways.

Perhaps due to the fact that Feng’s retelling is vernacular fiction rather than drama, it has received little scholarly attention besides mention of its scholar-beauty story structure as well as vernacular stories’ connection to earlier *chuanqi*. I argue that a closer examination of this retelling is useful for two reasons. Firstly, it builds upon the development of Yingying as a cross-genre character, primarily by relying on internal justification methods to permit Yingying’s sexual encounter with Zhang as opposed to more common external justifications. Secondly, Feng’s Yingying makes a promise to her lover that she will marry no one else but him—an act that I have termed a ‘vow of fidelity.’ This vow, which is included within many of Feng’s vernacular stories, exemplifies how late Ming writers displayed the moral qualities of *qing* 情 (passion) through narratives of chaste women. But by doing so, fiction writers like Feng did more than depict chastity as a means of promoting *qing*; they created a new type of chastity that allowed female characters greater sexual freedom and emphasized devotion to a chosen lover as opposed to the often-violent acts of chastity protection that were prevalent in Ming society.

### Cui Yingying’s Vow of Desire

Feng Menglong’s “Lingering Fragrance Pavilion” builds upon centuries of literary tradition that began with Yuan Zhen’s 元稹 (779–831) *The Story of Yingying*. While in Feng’s story, the vow of fidelity made between lovers (which will be discussed in greater detail below) is depicted as a positive display of virtue, its origins as a narrative device can be traced to the original Yingying text itself. But Yuan Zhen’s depiction of such vows contrasts with Feng’s: the vow in *The Story of Yingying* is used to frame Yingying as a *youwu* 尤物 (creatures of extraordinary beauty) and describe a perceived threat that *qing*, or more specifically *yu* 欲 (desire), has on individuals and society at large.

Yuan Zhen’s story centers around a young scholar named Zhang who falls in love with his cousin, Cui Yingying, the moment he sees her. She rejects his initial advances, conveyed in suggestive poetry, but after a few nights presents herself at his door. The two begin an illicit sexual

relationship, one that must ultimately come to an end when Zhang leaves to take the civil service examinations. At this point, Yingying is deeply invested in their relationship. She takes the news that he is to depart to Chang'an with grace, but before long she is unable to control her emotions and leaves for her mother's house with tears streaming down her face (Yuan 2000, 178).

Yingying's last spoken words to Zhang before he leaves for the examinations reveal that, at least to her, their relationship went beyond simple lust. She justifies Zhang's need to depart by saying, "It is inevitable that having seduced me, you would end it—all this by your grace," but her inner-most desires are revealed when she continues, "and with this, our lifelong vows are indeed ended" (Yuan 2000, 177). While the author never describes the two characters making a "lifelong vow," Yingying mentions this vow again in a letter she sends Zhang a year later. In it, Yingying continues to claim that she understands why Zhang decided to leave, but this time she displays greater sorrow and resentment towards his decision. She writes, "But, perchance, the successful scholar holds love to be but of little account and sets it aside as a lesser thing in order to pursue things of greater importance, his having taken enforced vows as something one may well betray" (Yuan 2000, 179). What another translation refers to as a "solemn vow" (Mair 2000, 513) certainly meant a lot to Yingying, who mentions it multiple times, but perhaps significantly less to Zhang.

Zhang's decision to leave Yingying is praised by his fellow scholars after he shows them the letter. Peter Bol suggests that this is due to the didactic nature of the text. He writes that "what the story explores is the fact that when 'things' gain the ability to stir us, they rouse passions (*qing*). Passions create conflicts of perspective, because two agencies have come into play and there is no longer a self-centered hierarchy of authority" (Bol 2000, 200). This "lifetime" or "solemn" vow made between Zhang and Yingying was certainly made in response to passion. This negative view of passion, or *qing*, was by no means uncommon during the Tang. This particular usage and understanding of *qing* is closely related to the concept of *yu*, often relating to desires that are sexual in nature. Martin Huang explains that within classical texts, *yu* is a concept contained within the broader definition of *qing* (Huang 1998, 157). As *qing* became separated from the more consistent negative use of *yu* among Ming writers, it is helpful to separate the concepts when reading Yuan Zhen while recognizing that the author likely saw little difference between the two words.

As such, I categorize this vow made between Zhang and Yingying as a "vow of desire." The concept of desire is accurate in describing at least part of the reason the vow was made; Manling Luo suggests that Zhang's motivation for making this enforced or solemn vow was likely to continue

receiving Yingying's sexual favors, rather than his genuine intention of keeping it (Luo 2005, 55). Viewing this vow in terms of desire helps draw attention to the vow's place within the narrative, especially the negative connotation that surrounds it. Desire is juxtaposed with social duty; were Zhang to keep his end of the vow in response to his sexual desire, he could have never taken the civil service examinations and achieved an official post to serve the state. Yingying, on the other hand, appears to have more genuine reasons for making the vow that extended beyond simple desire. She expresses in her last letter to Zhang a fleeting hope that they can be reunited, and she asserts that her "glowing faith (in her love for Zhang) will not perish" (Yuan 2000, 179). Other such language suggests a much deeper level of sincerity in Yingying's love for Zhang. But within the narrative, her pure motivation is not recognized, at least not by the narrator who depicts her as a *youwu*. Whether or not her "glowing faith" perished or not, she marries another a year later.

After both characters have married others, Zhang attempts to visit Yingying while passing through the area she lives. She refuses to see him but secretly composes a poem that sheds light to the reader on her tragic state. She writes how "the glow of [her] face has gone," and that she has "grown haggard on [Zhang's] account" (Yuan 2000, 182). At some point between her last letter to Zhang and composing this poem, she chose to fulfill her duty as a daughter and marry into what we can assume to be a prosperous home. She comes to terms with this fate, and while clearly not pleased with it, encourages Zhang in one final poem to "take what [he] felt in times gone by and love the person before [his] eyes (his wife)" (Yuan 2000, 182). He takes her advice, leading him to become known as one "who knew how to amend his errors" (Yuan 2000, 182). The vow they made was clearly an error, at least according to the narrator, and Zhang's happy ending—becoming a prominent official—comes as direct consequence of his choice to break it.

Interestingly, *The Story of Yingying* is not the only Tang *chuanqi* to include a broken vow between lovers. *The Story of Hou Xiaoyu* 霍小玉傳, written by Jiang Fang 蔣防 (792–835), tells the story of a scholar named Li Yi who, after sleeping with the courtesan Hou Xiaoyu, is persuaded to make a vow to never leave her. To the courtesan, he says, "I pledge not to leave you even though my bones be ground to powder and my body be smashed to pieces," and then writes his oath in the form of a poem on a piece of white silk (Jiang 2010, 244). After two years, however, Li Yi passes the civil service examinations and is then arranged to be betrothed to another woman by his mother. While the text implies that he did not desire to break his vow, he followed his mother's wishes anyway and avoided Xiaoyu. This betrayal sends Xiaoyu into a terrible state of illness, and

when she encounters Li Yi shortly before his marriage, she proclaims that she will haunt Li Yi as a ghost and make sure he is never able to maintain a happy marriage. She dies immediately after, and true to her word, Li Yi becomes a jealous and controlling wretch who divorces wife after wife (Jiang 2010, 259).

Unlike Yingying, Xiaoyu never accepts the irreconcilability of her passion and her society's social norms. She was too naïve to realize that she was “merely a plaything of men” and that her desire to remain with Li Yi had no way to be fulfilled (Nienhauser, 266). This places the narrator's sympathy more heavily on Xiaoyu and depicts her unfaithful man in a more negative light. But as both characters were genuinely determined to fulfill their lifelong vow at one point, the vow does not fit entirely into the same category as *The Story of Yingying's* vow of desire. The impossibility of fulfilling the vow, though, essentially conveys the same social truth of Yingying's unfulfilled vow: social duty and passion are mutually exclusive paths.

Whether or not the authors of works such as *The Story of Yingying* or *The Story of Hou Xiaoyu* support the societal institutions that render long-term passionate relationships achievable, they both present a world that has no room for such relationships. Instead of staying with a woman who loves him, a man's ideal role is to fulfill his social duty of serving as a government official. The woman's ideal role, then, is completely passive. Active women, like Yingying or Hou Xiaoyu, who respond to their *qing* by making vows with men, are never given enough agency to fulfill the vow. Interestingly, both women are presented sympathetically in their stories and are by far the characters with the most emotional depth. The goals of the authors can be, and has been, discussed in depth by other scholars. But as historical sources, they reveal the dominant gender paradigm of their time of composition. Even during the early Tang—an era known for relatively open gender norms—women playing a passive role in relationships that allowed men to fulfill their social duties was, if not a predominant ideal among literati, then an unchangeable fact of life.

### Justifying Yingying's Passion

Yuan Zhen's *The Story of Yingying* gave life to Yingying and her general narrative arc. Feng Menglong's retelling is not necessarily based on the original Tang text. Separating the two works are centuries of dramas that greatly expanded Zhang and Yingying's story beyond the small scope of the original. A detailed summary of this development is not the purpose of this research, but a brief overview of other scholars' work, particularly Dong's, will help fill in major gaps between the original Yingying and Feng's version. Dong points to the drama *Dong's West Chamber* 西廂記諸

宮調, composed during the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234), as beginning a major shift in Yingying's portrayal (Dong 1978, 84). This drama altered the theme of the original story; instead of a cautionary tale warning against excessive *yu*, *Dong's Western Chamber* celebrates the romance of Zhang and Yingying and gives them a happy ending where the two are married. With this precedent set, every Western Chamber drama created in the following centuries follows suit and grants Yingying her happy ending.

In allowing Zhang and Yingying to marry, *Dong's West Chamber* is faced with a conundrum it must solve. How can the two obtain their happy ending after Yingying loses her chastity before they are married? Simply changing Yuan Zhen's original ending would in essence promote immorality. To solve this problem, *Dong's West Chamber* places great emphasis on the fact that Zhang (named Zhang Gong in this version) saved Yingying and her family from bandits, a detail mentioned only briefly in the original. As Yingying's savior, she owes Zhang a debt of gratitude and is morally bound to him. After Yingying rejects Zhang's invitation to sleep with him, the scholar's grief causes him to become gravely ill for ten days and he even attempts to hang himself. Upon hearing this, Yingying chooses to go have sex with him, thus fulfilling her debt of gratitude and saving her savior. Thus, Yingying's fornication is presented as the lesser of two evils, a necessary choice if she is to save Zhang (Dong 1978, 85).

Many other Western Chamber narratives would contain this justification. Other writers and editors, such as Jing Shengtan 金聖歎 (1610?–1661), would further emphasize that Yingying was shy and silent while making love to Zhang in order to maintain her status as a virtuous woman (Dong 1978, 90–91). Interestingly, in order to give Yingying a happy ending where she remains with Zhang, these writers took the *qing* out of Yingying. Rather than a woman who followed her heart and chose to enter a relationship she knew was taboo, these Yingyings chose to begin sexual relationships out of duty devoid of passion. Only later does she come to love him as an outcome of her virtuous decision.

Despite the prevalence of this version of Yingying, other Western Chamber narratives—namely the Yuan-Ming drama *Northern West Chamber* 北西箱, also known as *Romance of the Western Chamber* 西箱記—present an alternate Yingying, one that Dong calls the “passionate Yingying” (Dong 1978, 87). This Yingying begins as a woman who is impatiently waiting for love, and when Zhang comes to rescue her and her family, her target is set and her mind is determined. In *Romance of the Western Chamber*, Yingying suggests to her mother that whoever is able to defeat the bandits be allowed to marry her (Dong 1978, 87). This suggestion, made with the hope that Zhang will indeed be the one to save them, is just one example of how the passionate Yingying plays an active role in her romantic relationship

with Zhang. Important to note, though, is how Yingying's mother did not keep her promise to let Zhang and Yingying marry and instead betrothed her to another man. This acts as justification to permit the couple's sexual encounter. While Yingying's character is more active in her initial quest for love, the narrative relies on her mother breaking the promise to allow Yingying the sexual freedom to sleep with Zhang (Dong 1978, 87).

Whether or not Yingying desires to have sex with Zhang or not, by relying on circumstances outside of Yingying's control to justify her decision, even the Western Chamber stories that depict a more passionate and independent Yingying confine that independence. Dong argues that due to these restrictions, "all . . . West Chamber stories reveal a male-oriented society that might be able to understand a person's desire for independence and freedom to love, but still is unable to cope with a woman's sexuality on its own grounds" (Dong 1978, 98). Dong, or any other scholar who has traced Yingying's development as a character for that matter, does not include Feng Menglong's retelling, possibly due to the fact that Feng's is vernacular fiction while most Yingying stories are dramas. Feng's Yingying is an interesting case in the development of her character, as she does not rely on external justification like previous Yingyings, but rather her personal sentiment and devotion justifies her sexual relationship with Zhang. As such, a closer look at Feng's Yingying will help display Yingying's breadth as a cross-genre character.

### Feng Menglong and Female Chastity

Like many fiction writers of the late Ming, Feng Menglong was a *shengyuan* 生员: a scholar who passed the civil service examination on the lowest level but never passed the imperial examination. Despite his many attempts pass the examinations and gain government employment, he never held an official position until his fifties. These personal setbacks gave him plenty time to write. His vernacular fiction heavily influenced the emerging fiction market and paved ways for new genres to emerge. He is known for his dedication to the concept of *qing*, which is famously made manifest in the introduction to his *History of Love* 情史, where he writes:

Ever since I was a young man, I have prided myself on being a *qing* fanatic. Among my friends I always bare my soul, sharing with them in times both good and bad... Whenever I meet a person rich in emotion [*youqing ren*], I always want to show my respects to him and whenever I see a person who lacks emotion [*wuqing ren*] and whose views do not agree with mine, I always try to patiently guide him with *qing*. (Feng, 7.1-2; Mowry 1983, 12-14)

While *qing* is an important concept in Feng Menglong's writing, it must be remembered that he is by no means proposing an overhaul of Confucian morality. Patrick Hana articulates that while he certainly did challenge aspects of Confucian social relations, he still wrote within the Confucian mainstream (Hana 1981, 80). Hana also argues that while morals are important to Feng's stories, he was not a philosopher. His proposed morality was not consistent from work to work and changed as he wrote in different genres. Rather than getting caught up in philosophical debates on morality, he more readily engaged in ethical issues of his time (Hana 1981, 78).

Feng's writing exists within a world of literature published during the late-Ming that heavily emphasized the importance of *qing*. These late-Ming writers commonly utilized stories about female chastity to demonstrate *qing*'s effectiveness as a moral motivator. The playwright Meng Chengshun 孟稱舜 (1600–1655), wrote that “to praise and promote an act of female virtue and improve social morals are the feelings [*qing*] shared by many people. This is not something that could be accomplished by one person like me. This is all due to [many people's] moral nature [*xing*], which is absolutely good” (Huang 1998, 172). As female chastity was one of the most valued and practiced aspects of feminine virtue during the Ming, it was understandably used by many writers within the cult of *qing* to help solidify their moral position.

A trend of scholarship of late-imperial literature, including works by Martin Huang and Shuhui Yang, has argued that besides using chaste women as a case-in-point for *qing*'s moral effectiveness, *qing* writers engaged in a form of “self-representation” or “ventriloquism through women characters,” to use Huang's and Yang's terms respectively (Huang 1998 and Yang 1998). This scholarship elaborates on the idea that women within Ming fiction are representative of the marginalized literati, such as Feng, who wrote them. In describing this phenomenon, Yang relates feminist theory to the concept of *yin/yang*—*yin* being the passive, female form that extends far beyond a traditional Chinese understanding of the world and can represent the subordinate side of any social relationship. In Feng's stories, the *yin* character, often a woman, is often depicted as intellectually and morally superior to the oppressive *yang* characters. Yang explains that “by making his [Feng Menglong's] characters morally and/or intellectually superior, the author vicariously assumes a superior position himself. In effect, this is not a male identifying with a female so much as one *yin* identifying with another, or a sympathy between underdogs” (Yang 1998, 134). Considering Feng's *shengyuan* status and frustration with the examination system that all but barred him from a prominent government career, his positive and sympathetic views towards women are less surprising.



Building upon this scholarship, Hsu Pi-Ching argues that chaste courtesans—a high-level prostitute who devoted herself to one man and remained chaste to him—are one of Feng’s most utilized ways to create “mirror images of [his] idealized self” (Hsu 2000, 44). Courtesans are clear *yin* characters who are disenfranchised due to their low social standing, but as they embody chastity, they are able to rise above their disenfranchised station. It should be noted, though, that the chaste courtesan is a female type that extends beyond late-Ming fiction. In a history of social justice’s role within the cult of chastity, Fei Siyen connects the new prominence of *qing* to the rise in accounts of chaste courtesans. She shows multiple examples of chaste courtesans whose stories were collected in local gazetteers, although notes that their inclusion was controversial as they did not fit in standard definitions of chastity (Hsu 2000, 44).

In describing these chaste courtesans’ place within fiction, Bret Hinsch writes, “Although she [the courtesan] cannot possibly marry [her lover], she remains steadfastly faithful to her beloved. In fact, that couple’s inability to marry elevates their relationship. Whereas the classical rites bind spouses together, love unites the courtesan and her lover. This sort of story demonstrated how emotion could even give rise to fidelity” (Hinsch 2021, 96–97). Feng’s narratives of chaste courtesans certainly give examples of how *qing* can give rise to chastity, but they also reveal Feng’s unconventional views towards chastity. Many of Feng’s narratives about chaste courtesans can be found in the first chapter of his *History of Love*, which is entirely focused on chaste women. To argue that these chaste courtesans’ self-sacrifice for chastity’s sake is equal to that of an espoused wife, Feng writes in this chapter’s commentary:

The ancients consider a woman espoused by betrothal a wife, and a woman espoused without betrothal a concubine. Those who marry without betrothal are doing so for the sake of *qing*. Now, are we to say that to marry without betrothal is for the sake of *qing*, and to die defending chastity is not for the sake of *qing*? Are we to say that women of lowly status are like roadside peach and willow trees, and therefore we could not expect them also to bear up under the cold of winter [like the cypress]? (Hsu 2000, 73)

By emphasizing that *qing* is the primary factor behind these courtesans’ decision to remain chaste, which he argues allows them to be virtuous despite their low status, Feng also downplays the value of female chastity devoid of *qing*. In this way, Feng’s views towards chastity differ from many mainstream thinkers. Yang Shuhui suggests that Feng’s marginal comment in the story “Li Xiuqing Marries With Honor the Virgin Huang” 李秀卿義結黃貞女, in which Feng sarcastically mocks a woman who refuses



to marry due to her close—though non-sexual—association with a male friend, is but one demonstration of how Feng refutes some strict chastity practices, especially in cases where the women are acting out of a sense of morality devoid of any *qing* (Yang 1998, 73). Chastity, then, becomes more than just an example of *qing*'s moral effectiveness. Feng effectively argues that chastity without *qing* is meaningless, or even counterproductive.

By depicting female chastity produced directly by genuine *qing*, Feng's courtesan characters are allowed greater sexual freedom than most Ming women. These women who “marry without betrothal” do so out of their own free will as a response to their *qing* and are given the choice of whom they will devote themselves to and how to proceed in the relationship. This amount of agency far exceeds the passive agency of the female martyr who has no choice in who they are betrothed to. It should be noted, though, that these martyrs were not puppets controlled by the patriarchy; scholars such as Grace Fong have argued that while chaste martyr's acts of self-sacrifice arise out of ideology that subordinated women, “we should recognize and make visible the agency of these women in constructing a sense of self and identity” (Fong 2001, 141). These women were using the agency they had to influence the legacy they would be remembered by, but a chaste courtesan is afforded a great deal more agency by being allowed to choose whom they wish to devote themselves to, and, if needs be, sacrifice themselves for.

Feng Menglong's Yingying, as depicted in “Lingering Fragrance Pavilion,” is not a courtesan, but her portrayal mirrors that of Feng's chaste courtesans in a few ways. As Yingying is an elite woman, and in particular an elite woman who in her original story was ultimately not faithful to her lover, Feng's new depiction of her as a faithful lover reveals the scope that his relationship ethics extend. As will be seen, the expanded sexual freedom awarded to courtesans is also extended to Yingying. An analysis of “Lingering Fragrance Pavilion” will also be useful because as the story is based on older, extant texts, the places where his narrative differs from those texts are textual ‘fingerprints’ that display Feng's deliberate choices to make the story more his own. The ways that Feng's Yingying differs from previous versions will display Feng's own ideals of what makes an ideal woman.

One prominent fingerprint of Feng's is the inclusion of a vow made between Yingying and Zhang, but unlike the vow of desire discussed in *The Story of Yingying*, Feng's vow is one essential marker of his modified, *qing*-influenced chastity. To reflect the difference between a standard vow of chastity—ones that have no connection to *qing*, I will use the term “vow of fidelity” to describe the commitment a female character makes to be faithful to a man of her choice. This vow of fidelity is different than the vow made by Yingying in Yuan Zhen's *chuanqi*, as while there is no evidence to suggest that Yingying made the vow for any reason besides *qing*, Zhang

abused the vow in order to satisfy his desires, and Yingying ultimately broke it. But while Zhang's actions seem selfish to most modern-day readers, they are celebrated by the narrator as it was his breaking of the vow that led to him fulfilling his social duty. Whereas the term 'desire' reflects the negative view of the feelings that led both Zhang and Yingying to supposedly make a lifelong vow, the term 'fidelity' reflects a positive view of similar feelings. Feng's Zhang and Yingying are able to achieve their happy ending and justify their sexual encounter precisely because they act upon and stay firm to their mutual feelings or *qing*.

### Li Yingying's Vow of Fidelity

"Lingering Fragrance Pavilion," is the 29th story in Feng Menglong's 1624 vernacular fiction collection, *Stories to Caution the World* 警世通言. To mark his retelling as different from *The Story of Yingying* or any of the Western Chamber dramas, he gives the two lead characters slightly different names—Zhang is given the personal name Hao 浩, and Yingying is given the surname Li 李. The story begins with Zhang Hao, a good-looking and brilliant scholar who just turned twenty. From the moment he is described, Feng makes it clear that his story is operating within a significantly different moral framework than earlier versions; when asked why he is not married yet, Zhang Hao replies, "A lifelong marriage must be a flawless one . . . I may not be a talented scholar, but I am an admirer of beauty. If I can't have a wife of ravishing beauty, I'd rather be a bachelor all my life" (Feng 2005, 506). Feng gives no scathing rebuke to Zhang's priorities like Yuan Zhen certainly would have; instead, in an editorial comment he agrees, writing "valid point" (Feng 2005, 506). Feng's narrative world is a *qing*-centered one, and he is content without jumping through the philosophical loops required to pitch this to the Neo-Confucians.

When Zhang Hao spots Li Yingying wandering in his garden, he immediately falls in love with her and decides that he must marry her. When he begins talking with her, it quickly appears that she has similar feelings; in fact, it is revealed that the two were childhood playmates and Li Yingying came to the garden with the intent of seeing him. She quickly takes over the conversation and reveals that she has admired his "fine qualities" since childhood and suggests that they should be married (Feng 2005, 509). When Zhang Hao replies that he would love nothing more, Li Yingying says, "If both hearts are set firmly on the other, that means a predestined bond does exist" (Feng 2005, 509). On one hand, this statement may be a justification of their relationship (which will soon become more intimate) despite the fact that they are not married by rite yet. On the other hand, it may be an outgrowth of what Hsu Pi-Ching calls a "heightened interest in

the exploration of ‘companionate’ sexual relationships, which emphasized the two parties’ spiritual . . . compatibility” (Feng 2005, 70). Hsu uses this to describe the desexualization of courtesans in many of Feng’s stories, but the same principle applies to “Lingering Fragrance” as Li Yingying is presented as having this predestined spiritual connection to Zhang Hao.

Wanting to receive a token of Zhang Hao’s commitment, Li Yingying asks him to write a poem on her scarf. After Zhang Hao writes her a poem comparing her to a prized flower, Li Yingying takes her leave (Feng 2005, 509). At this point, a conceptual vow of fidelity has been made, although not yet clearly articulated in words. The clear articulation comes over a year later after the couple has been unable to see each other. Li Yingying sends Zhang Hao a letter with the help of the nun Huiji 惠寂 in which she writes, “My only wish is that you will not forget me. As for me, I shall never fail you! If I can’t marry you, I vow never to marry” (Feng 2005, 511). Li Yingying’s commitment to never marry if she cannot marry Zhang Hao builds upon and substantially changes the implied vow in *The Story of Yingying*. While Zhang and Yingying vowed to stay with each other, and it appears that Yingying hoped to maintain that vow for a time, it does not take long until both are married to one another. In Li Yingying’s letter, though, she adds a layer of chastity to her commitment. In her mind, she already belongs to Zhang Hao: the two are essentially betrothed. Even though this betrothal is not yet official, Li Yingying, like other chaste women who swear to never marry again after their betrothed husband dies, is committed to maintaining her chastity despite the worst-case scenario.

Her situation may be quite different from general stories of women who don’t remarry after their betrothed husband dies, and many of those stories make no mention of any romantic connection between the betrothed parties. This is the case in another of Feng Menglong’s stories, “Censor Chen Ingeniously Solves the Case of the Gold Hairpins and Brooches” 陳御史巧勘金釵鈿 in *Stories Old and New* 古今小说. A young woman named Axiu 阿秀 was betrothed to a commissioner’s son, but when that commissioner died and left the son penniless, Axiu’s father began to consider ending the betrothal and finding a new husband for her. In response, Axiu contends, “A virtuous woman serves only one man until her death. To be only concerned over money in a marriage is nothing less than barbarous” (Feng 2000, 52). In this instance, her dedication to her betrothed is almost completely void of *qing*—she has never even seen her husband at the time she makes the statement. (Yang 1998, 69). Li Yingying, on the other hand, makes a vow not just of chastity, but of emotional and spiritual fidelity to Zhang Hao. The vow elevates her commitment to chastity as well as to Zhang Hao, but essentially derives from her *qing*, rather than a dedication to chaste propriety, as in Axiu’s case.

The letter in which Li Yingying articulates her vow to Zhang Hao also includes an explanation of how her parents are not yet comfortable with the idea of her being married to Zhang Hao as they feel she is still too young. This does not stop the couple from finding a chance to see each other, and soon Li Yingying writes to Zhang Hao again and informs him of a time when her family will be out of the house, allowing them to meet in person again. On the designated day, Zhang Hao arrives at the wall by her house and waits for her. While Western Chamber dramas usually depicted Zhang climbing over the wall to find her at this point, Feng reverses the readers' expectations by having Li Yingying climb the wall herself (Feng 2005, 514). This reversal of roles not only puts a twist on an old story retold countless times, but it also follows a consistent theme of making Li Yingying, the *yin* or underdog character, more active than any other character in the story, even more than Zhang Hao.

By the story's climax, Zhang Hao becomes a powerless (or perhaps spineless) victim that Li Yingying is required to save. A while after the couple consummates their relationship under the Lingering Fragrance Pavilion, Zhang Hao receives news from Huiji that Yingying's father has been transferred to another city. Two "miserable years" went by for Zhang Hao, when his uncle tells him that he wants to make a match for him and have him marry a daughter of the Sun family. Zhang Hao does not desire to marry anyone besides Li Yingying, but he fears his uncle's temper and goes along with the betrothal (Feng 2005, 515).

Not long before the wedding, Li Yingying's family returns and Zhang Hao sends a message to her telling her how the betrothal was against his wishes. Yingying replies that she will think of something to fix things. She immediately goes to her parents and says, "Your daughter has committed a sin and brought disgrace to the family name. . . . Having already lost my chastity, I cannot marry another man. Since this wish of mine is to be denied, I have to take my own life, and do it gladly too." Whether or not she would have this out, she uses this statement as more a means of making an ultimatum to her parents. She asks them to betroth her to Zhang Hao, and after they do, she assures them that she will think of a way to make everything work out (Feng 2005, 516).

She rushes to the local judge and submits an appeal in which she recognizes that while it is important to be married by the proper match-making procedures, there are exceptions to the rule. She uses the story of Zhou Wenjun and Sima Xiangru's elopement to justify her own unofficial betrothal to Zhang Hao (Feng 2005, 516). Then, to prove to the judge that she made a "secret agreement" with Zhang Hao, she produces the scarf that Zhang Hao wrote his first poem to her, as well as another poem he wrote after their first time having sex: two symbols of her vow of fidelity.

The judge then summons Zhang Hao and lashes out at him for planning on marrying another when he was already betrothed. He then proclaims that he is “not going to tear apart a talented young scholar and a beautiful maiden who are meant for each other by heaven’s will” (Feng 2005, 517). Finding their vows of fidelity (though not kept by Zhang Hao) and their spiritual connection as strong enough evidence, the judge allows them to marry. The couple lives happily ever after.

### **The Evolution of Female Chastity**

The fulfillment of Li Yingying’s vow of fidelity makes Feng Menglong’s Yingying a substantially different character from previous versions. Primarily, the vow allows Yingying an unprecedented amount of agency. In *The Story of Yingying*, Yuan Zheng’s Yingying is an agent only as far as deciding whether or not to offer her body to Zhang. Outside this initial choice she makes to begin the relationship, she has no control over its course or outcome. Whatever vow she made with Zhang can be seen as an attempt on her part to control the outcome of the relationship, but the narrator implies that the vow was made on account of desire rather than any substantial virtue that could earn Yingying the happy ending she wants, let alone justify her premarital sex. The “passionate Yingying,” as depicted in *Romance of the Western Chamber* acts upon her *qing* to bring about her happy ending, but she can only do so within the confines of her role as a daughter. She attempts to create a scenario where her mother will betroth her to Zhang, but the choice of whether or not they should be married ultimately falls under her mother. Feng’s Yingying, on the other hand, sets off the entire chain of events when she purposefully enters Zhang’s garden with the intent of devoting herself to him. This devotion, while outside the context of traditional rites, still allows her to choose the man she will be betrothed to and is finally legally validated by a judge.

What can account for this unprecedented agency? If Li Yingying is read as a “mirror [image] of [Feng’s] idealized self” (Hsu 2000, 44) then it makes sense for her character to be more independent and active as opposed to other retellings where the writers can connect more with the scholar, Zhang. This choice to push the reader to connect with Yingying more deeply than Zhang is hardly surprising considering the number of Feng’s stories that focus on *yin* characters. While Li Yingying’s agency may be unprecedented compared to previous Yingyings, she is simply one independent woman among many in Feng’s works. But along with Li Yingying’s independence comes the more liberal boundaries of chastity seen in Feng’s stories of chaste courtesans. Like a courtesan, Li Yingying has sex before she is betrothed and is allowed to do so because of her vow of fidelity.

Feng Menglong is not attempting to incite a 'love revolution' in which *qing* topples the importance of chastity and traditional betrothal rites. To reinstate Hana's previously mentioned claim, Feng stays far away from the philosophic debates that would be required for this. Instead, Yingying's vow of fidelity is used as an example of how a greater emphasis on *qing* can bring about moral action; in this case Yingying's commitment to chastity. Within Feng's narrative, *qing* essentially replaces traditional betrothal rites as a means of enforcing female chastity. This reimagining of betrothal highlights *qing*'s effectiveness in promoting morality rather than proposing a rehaul of traditional marriage practices. But, as Yang argued by evidence from Feng's story "Li Xiuqing Marries with Honor," Feng does not support the practice of female chastity when it comes in conflict with the promotion of an ideal male-female relationships. Allowing Li Yingying to justify her own sexual decisions becomes one example of Feng attempting to portray female chastity in a way that encourages and exemplifies genuine *qing*, rather than serving chastity for the sake of itself.

Examining Li Yingying's vow of fidelity as a result of Feng's unconventional views on female chastity may also be a way for the writer, consciously or not, to tie female chastity more firmly to its intended social function. The widespread publication of chastity narratives, both among fiction writers as well as gazetteers seeking social justice, turned female chastity into a largely performative virtue removed from the goal of ensuring that a man's child is his own. In Feng's "Gold Hairpins and Brooches," arguably a chastity satire, Axiu's determination to marry no one if she cannot marry her betrothed is an extreme case of commitment to chastity despite it providing no increase in wealth or posterity upon either family. Assuming that the origin of female chastity lies in the need to ensure that a woman's child belongs to her husband, then Axiu's, or any chaste martyr's decision to take her life rather than marry, does nothing to accomplish chastity's original purpose. Li Yingying, on the other hand, is committed to chastity in so far as its connection to her love for Zhang. Her vow of fidelity, more than extreme examples of chastity preservation, will presumably spare Zhang the trouble infidelity would bring to his family tree.

The result of this evolved—or refocused—chastity, though, is an acceptance of Yingying and Zhang's premarital sexual encounters, which even Li Yingying admits is not proper as the formal match-making process. This was certainly not a hard pill for Feng to swallow; his famous romantic involvements with multiple prominent courtesans may reveal that he had no problem with his own lovers having past sexual encounters (Yang and Yang 2005, xiv). By taking the focus off the idea of female chastity as a thing one can retain or lose and shifting it to relationship devotion, the vow of fidelity not only displays the moral effectiveness of *qing*, but simultaneously

provides a new definition of chastity that allows fictional women, such as Li Yingying, the freedom to initiate, develop, and secure romantic relationships of their choice.

### Conclusion

The different vows made by Yingying, from her vow of desire in *The Story of Yingying* to her vow of fidelity in “Lingering Fragrance Pavilion,” display an evolution of thought relating to female chastity, *qing*, and social duty among the literati that wrote them. When Cui Yingying promised Zhang that she would never leave him and seemingly expected him to do the same, the narrator was displaying the fangs of a *youwu* and the danger her vow presented Zhang. But as Yingying’s letters that display her innermost feelings left many readers more emotionally connected to Yingying than Zhang, it is unsurprising that subsequent retellings would drop the idea of the *youwu* and present a more satisfying story where the two are able to remain together. But in doing so, each author had to find a way to justify Yingying’s choice to have sex with Zhang. Some, such as *Dong’s Western Chamber*, chose to present her with a moral conundrum in which losing her virginity was the only way for her to repay her savior. But in doing so, Yingying’s affection for Zhang only comes after the couple’s sexual encounter, rather than internal sentiment. Others, such as *Romance of the Western Chamber*, gave Yingying internal passion that led her to actively seek out a marriage with Zhang early on. But this retelling still relied on Madame Cui’s betrayal of her promise to betroth the two lovers as an external means to justify Yingying and Zhang’s sexual encounter.

Coming from a literati movement that championed *qing* to give voice to marginalized scholars, Feng Menglong’s retelling justifies Yingying and Zhang’s relationship through purely internal means. Li Yingying gets to first sleep with Zhang Hao and then get married to him because she made a vow of fidelity with him. Her promise to never marry anyone but Zhang Hao, represented by the poem he inscribed on her silk scarf, becomes a chastity practice that stems directly from her passionate feelings for Zhang. This vow becomes a case-in-point of how *qing* can lead to virtuous action, evidence supporting Mencius’ statement that “if you allow people to follow their feelings (*qing* 情), they will be able to do good” (Huang 1998, 154). Although Mencius’ archaic use of *qing* in this context more closely resembles usage of the word *xing* 性 (original nature), Feng’s narrative gives a clear example of how Ming literati interwove this reinterpretation of Mencius’ quote into their fiction.

More than simply advocating for *qing*, Feng’s depiction of female chastity in “Lingering Fragrance Pavilion” displays the author’s unconventional view of chastity that stems from his devotion to *qing*. This view, character-



ized by a disdain for chastity adherence that does not serve to strengthen a male/female romantic relationship, is highlighted by Li Yingying's vow of fidelity—her promise to marry no one besides Zhang Hao. As Yingying keeps her vow, she can be viewed as an emblem of female chastity despite her sexual encounter with Zhang, much in the same way that sexual freedom among Feng's chaste courtesans can be overlooked on account of their devotion to a single man.

There is still room for more research to be done on the usage of vows within retellings of *The Story of Yingying* and Ming fiction in general. Many late-Ming stories written by Feng and others included vows of fidelity; a closer examination of a wide array of these romance narratives would help reveal how influential this narrative trope was. While it can be assumed that many of Feng's other stories similarly implement vows of fidelity to display his unconventional chastity views, the same may not be true of other more conservative authors. In further tracing the development of this vow, an in-depth reading of Dong's *Western Chamber* and *Romance of the Western Chamber*, among other dramas—of which there is a daunting amount—could possibly reveal other developments that influenced Feng and his depiction of Yingying's vow of fidelity. A closer look at the classical and vernacular characters in these stories that have been translated as “vow” would also be insightful in tracing its origin.

Feng's Yingying, and by extension other female characters of Feng's stories who made vows of fidelity, is given much greater agency than most women of Feng's lifetime ever had. That being said, her agency ultimately revolved around her dedication to a man and her chastity. In the world of female representation in Chinese literature, though, Feng's Yingying can be seen as a step forward that would build towards later works such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* (c. 18th century). Feng's stories are helpful reminders to the modern-day Ming historian that despite the patriarchal values present in the growing cult of female chastity, elite views of women and their role in society were varied, complex, and constantly evolving.



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# The Complications of People in Diplomacy

Individuals' Effect on Complicating the  
Amherst Mission 1816–1817

*Kiner Kwok*

In the late 18th century and early 19th century, European embassies leagerly interacted with Qing China (1644–1912). In 1792, Lord George Macartney (1737–1806) led the first British mission to Qing China. During this mission, even though Lord Macartney met with the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735–1796), his goal of establishing free trade and diplomatic relations with the Qing court was rejected. A few years later, in 1795, a mission, sent out by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), arrived at the Qing court to congratulate the Qianlong emperor's 60th anniversary of his governance. Then again, in 1805, a Russian mission, led by Count Yury Golovkin (1762–1846), was sent to Qing China to establish more significant commercial trade. Unlike the previous two, Golovkin's mission was cut short on its way to Beijing because he refused to perform the kowtow ritual in front of a representation of the Jiaqing emperor (r. 1796–1820) (Stevenson 2021, 100). Finally, Lord William Pitt Amherst (1773–1857) led the second British mission to China in 1816. The Amherst mission shared similar goals as the Macartney mission: to establish free trade and diplomatic relations with China. Similar to its predecessor, the Amherst mission did not achieve its goals, and to make matters even worse, the emperor never granted an audience with the Amherst mission. While all four of these missions received different outcomes, the uniting feature was the kowtow ritual. Three of the four missions refused to perform the kowtow ritual, and one complied with it. The kowtow ritual was an essential but delicate matter in Chinese diplomatic transactions.

While the kowtow ritual within Chinese diplomatic history is a fascinating topic, and one can easily write a book on the matter, this essay will only investigate the kowtow ritual within the Amherst mission and how it became a matter that complicated the mission. Within the context of the kowtow ritual, this essay will also seek to answer how the men in the Amherst embassy and the Qing Chinese mandarins complicated the interactions of the two parties. This essay will argue that personal interests and individual beliefs drove the prideful East India Company (EIC) employees and the deceitful Chinese officials to complicate the potential for the Amherst embassy to interact with the Qing imperial court.

Very few English-language historical works have examined the Amherst mission compared to the Macartney mission. The subject of the Amherst mission only appears briefly while talking about the formal British interactions with China during the pre-Opium War eras. The Amherst mission received little scholarly attention because the Amherst embassy not only failed to establish trade and diplomatic relations with China, but the emperor dismissed the embassy without even an audience at the Old Summer Palace, Yuan Ming Yuan. In early scholarship, such as James Eames's 1909 publication, he argued that the "ignorance of the Chinese" was the sole cause of the mission's failure (Eames 1909, 151). Recent scholars challenged Eames's one-sided examination. A.E. Grantham's 1976 publication of *A Manchu Monarch: An Interpretation of Chia Ch'ing* portrayed the Amherst mission more neutrally within the context of the Jiaqing emperor. Grantham's book referenced British sources, but without a bibliography, notes, or works cited section, it is unclear whether she used any Chinese sources. In most recent scholarships, scholars have been highlighting and becoming more critical of the British involvement in the mission's failure.

In Gao Hao's 2016 research, he argued that instead of pointing out their contribution to the mission's failure, the British blamed the failure of the mission on the Jiaqing emperor's personality characteristics. Gao's extensive research on the Amherst mission also contributed to a better understanding of the cause of the First Opium War (1839–1842). In his 2020 publication, *Creating the Opium War*, Gao argued that the Amherst mission indirectly contributed to the genesis of the First Opium War because the information collected by the Amherst embassy regarding Qing China's decay helped the British government recognize that China was no longer as powerful as it once was (Gao 2020, 85). Like Gao, Peter Kitson used the Amherst mission to better understand the cause of the first Opium War. Kitson argued that negative writings of Henry Ellis's (1788–1855) travel journal about China along with his journal, being published by a well-respected publishing house and finally, his journal receiving a positive review by John Barrow (1764–1848), caused a "reversal of China's image in

Britain” (Kitson 2020, 162). Beyond using the Amherst mission to explain the start of the First Opium War, Caroline Stevenson’s monograph, *Britain’s Second Embassy to China*, examines the Amherst mission in detail. Stevenson’s work incorporated published travel journals from the embassy men, government memos, and archival letters Lord Amherst wrote to his family and the British government (Stevenson 2021, 317). Since the travel journal of Lord Amherst was lost in a shipwreck while leaving China, many of the narratives of the Amherst mission were primarily derived from travel journals by other members of the embassy that did not fully reflect Lord Amherst’s voice in the mission. Stevenson’s work restored some of Lord Amherst’s voice and role in the mission. Even though Stevenson’s monograph examines the Amherst embassy, her work largely seeks to restore the voice and characteristics of Lord Amherst. She argued against the traditional narrative that Amherst was a weak leader. Instead, she calls him a strong and honest leader of integrity (Stevenson 2021, 299–300). This essay will not attempt to explain why or how the Amherst mission failed. Instead, it will explore how individuals’ interests and actions complicated the interactions between the British embassy and the Chinese imperial court within the context of the kowtow debate.

Examining how individuals complicated the Amherst mission instead of how they have caused the mission’s failure provides a concise examination of the mission that works within the means of the available sources. First, to define the Amherst embassy as a failed mission is ambiguous. What would have constituted a successful mission in the first place? Maybe a successful mission was achieving the goals of free trade and diplomatic relations with China. Maybe a successful mission was improving the Canton trade. Maybe a successful mission was gaining an audience with the Qing emperor. Apart from George Thomas Staunton, the second commissioner of the embassy, many people considered the mission a failure. These mission evaluations were based on the government’s goals and did not represent the goals of the East India Company (EIC), which funded the mission. Staunton, an employee of the EIC, considered the mission a great success because he attributed the improvement of the Canton trade to the embassy’s refusal to kowtow (Staunton 1856, 67–68). Whether one can even call the mission a failure complicates the very examination of the Amherst embassy as a failed mission. This essay acknowledges the various opinions regarding the result of the Amherst mission, and does not examine the Amherst mission as a failed mission.

Second, even if the mission was to be evaluated as a “failed” mission, the sources available do not allow for a comprehensive evaluation. With few Chinese sources available, a complete evaluation of the embassy is complex when based solely on English sources. Just to list some examples,

English sources do not provide internal political problems that might have caused the emperor to dismiss the mission, nor do they provide clues of personal issues that the emperor might have experienced to cause him to dismiss the mission. Restricting the research within the framework of complicating factors on the individual level allows for detailed telling and examination of how people's actions, beliefs, and personal interests affected the interactions between the British embassy and the Qing imperial court. At large, this essay seeks to examine the complicated human factors within the Amherst mission's diplomatic interactions with the Qing court.

This essay will predominantly rely on primary sources written by members of the Amherst embassy, accompanied by parliamentary papers, poems, and other primary sources contained within secondary sources. Some primary sources are in the form of travel journals, and some are in the form of memoirs. While most of these journals were written by men with no Chinese language training, some of the journals were produced by people with Chinese language training, including EIC employees and one Protestant missionary. The Canton EIC employees in the embassy had become well-versed in the Chinese language and cultural understanding. While the sources were unclear about precisely what form of Chinese they were proficient in, one can safely assume it was Mandarin because they communicated more easily with the Qing officials than the local peasants they encountered (Hall 1851, 7). The primary sources used for this paper were produced by Canton EIC employees, George Thomas Staunton and John Davis. Staunton's translation of the Qing legal code, published in Britain, demonstrated his understanding of the Chinese language (Stevenson 2021, 35). Staunton also endorsed Davis's understanding of language and culture in China (Staunton 1824, 102). The main translator of the embassy was Dr. Rev. Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary in China (Grantham 1976, 163). His understanding of the language guided the rest of the embassy members to understand the situation well and record it accordingly in their journals. To better construct a cohesive narrative of the mission, this essay will also draw on letters, government documents, and unpublished private documents quoted in Caroline Stevenson's book that the author of this essay could not obtain. Stevenson provides good context for most of the letters and government documents used in her book. Sources from the British side do not provide a complete picture of an event between the two governments of vastly different cultures and languages. To better balance the narrative, this essay will also use some translated Chinese imperial edicts to provide a complete depiction of the mission.

## Qing China's Social Conditions

The China that Lord Amherst set sail for differed from the one that Lord Macartney approached 24 years prior. Instead of the Qianlong emperor, the Amherst embassy interacted with the Qing court of the Jiaqing emperor. The Jiaqing emperor was enthroned on February 9th, 1796, while his father was still living. Due to his father, the Jiaqing emperor had little power and was not taken seriously during the first year of his reign. The Jiaqing emperor did not gain any real power until February 7th, 1799, after his father's death (Hummel 2010, 965). Disorder and corruption infested the Qing empire that the Jiaqing emperor inherited. From 1795–1796 the Qing empire experienced rebellion from the Miao tribe members in Guizhou and Hunan. Later the empire then experienced revolt from farmers in Hubei and Sichuan. In 1813 the imperial palace was stormed by corrupt Bannermen, eunuchs, and the Tian Li Jiao rebels (Hummel 2010, 966). These rebellions were expensive; just the rebellions from 1796–1801 drained the treasury of 100 million taels (Hummel 2010, 966). Unfortunately, the chaos continued with pirates infesting the South China coast and environmental challenges. Following the 1815 Mount Tambora volcanic explosion in Indonesia, the Yunnan province experienced erratic weather that led to crop failure, which then caused mass famine (Markley 2016, 83).

The Jiaqing emperor's Qing China rendered him no ease in governance. Regarding external military conquests, unlike his father, the Jiaqing emperor did not care for military glory; he regarded the military as a police force. The Jiaqing emperor even sought to reduce the military and disband the number of soldiers to save money (Grantham 1976, 139–140). Nevertheless, the Jiaqing emperor was diligent in his role as emperor (Hummel 2010, 976). The Jiaqing emperor was oddly obsessed with ritual ceremonies. As Grantham puts it, the emperor cared extensively about whether ceremonial officials knelt on the left or the right step of the throne. The emperor even once fined a chamberlain's salary for half a year because he failed to wear the small pouch obligatory on a particular occasion (Grantham 1976, 138). Jiaqing emperor's obsession with rituals suggests a lack of confidence in his rule. With his state infested with rebellions that he struggled to put down and to maintain prosperity, the means of ritual ceremony reinforced his status as the emperor of Qing China. The role of ritual ceremonies was a comforting alternative that gave the Jiaqing emperor the sense of authority he needed to live up to his father's rule. While the Qianlong emperor sought military glory as a sign of competent and robust governance, the Jiaqing emperor sought ritual ceremonies as a sign of competent and robust governance. The Jiaqing emperor's obsession with



ritual ceremonies became a roadblock to many diplomatic encounters with the West, including the Amherst embassy.

### Overview of the Amherst Embassy's Travel to China

The Amherst embassy set sail from England on the 9th of February, 1816. The embassy sailed southwards in the Atlantic Ocean. The ships *Lyra* and *Hewitt* sailed straight ahead to the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, and arrived there on March 16th. The ship *Alceste* with Lord Amherst stopped at Rio Janeiro, Brazil, on March 21st, 1816 (McLeod 1818, 5–6). The three ships reunited at Java by early June (McLeod 1818, 16–17). Soon after the reunion, the ships parted ways again, with *Lyra* sailing to Macao to pick up George Staunton, Robert Morrison, and three other EIC employees (McLeod 1818, 19). The *Lyra* picked up Staunton and those with him on July 8th, 1816 (Staunton 1824, 3). Carrying the EIC employees and Morrison, the *Lyra* met up with the *Alceste* with Lord Amherst on July 10th, 1816, at Lamma Island outside Hong Kong (Ellis 1817, 54). On the 13th of July, the embassy sailed northward along the coast by Guangdong and Fujian provinces while passing through the strait of Formosa, modernly known as the Taiwan Strait (McLeod 1818, 21). On the 25th of July, the embassy arrived at the mouth of Beihe, modern-day Bohai, outside the Bei Zhili province, modernly known as the Hebei province (Staunton 1824, 16).

On the 31st of July, the Amherst embassy received its first representatives from the Qing government: Guang Hui 广惠 Daren 大人 (honorific title), the *qinchai* 钦差 imperial commissioner from Beijing; Chang Daren, a civil officer; and Yin Daren, a military officer (Ellis 1817, 64). Upon these early encounters, the atmosphere was light and friendly between the English and the Qing Chinese officials. Even though the matter of the kowtow ritual was brought up, mentioning that “the Ambassador should exercise himself in the practice of the Chinese ceremony some time beforehand,” no demand of the embassy to perform the ritual then occurred (Staunton 1856, 24). The embassy even entertained the Qing officials with cherry brandy on its ships (Hall 1851, 8).

On August 10th, the embassy boarded Chinese river boats with the assistance of Chang and Yin to travel from the mouth of Beihe towards Tianjin on the river modernly known as Haihe (Staunton 1824, 38). After most of the mission left, the ships also left the mouth of Beihe to explore the surroundings, including Korea. The British fleet was to meet Lord Amherst and the embassy in Canton for their return departure to Britain (Hall 1851, 10).

The embassy's arrival at Tianjin marked the start of the greater kowtow debates between the embassy and the Qing officials. The embassy arrived at Tianjin on August 12th, 1816. The imperial commissioner Guang and

Su Lenge 苏楞额 Daren, a former Hoppo of Canton, and now the *Gongbu Shangshu* 工部尚书, Minister of Works, welcomed the embassy (Ellis 1817, 83). On the 14th of August 1816, the embassy left Tianjin for Tongzhou, a suburb of Beijing, where the mission encountered their next set of Qing officials, Duke He Shitai 和世泰 and Mu Ketenge Daren. On August 20th, 1816, the embassy reached Tongzhou, where Duke He and Mu Daren received them and entertained the embassy for a few days before escorting the embassy towards its final destination, the Old Summer palace, the Yuan Ming Yuan (Ellis 1817, 105, 135). The embassy left Tongzhou on the 28th of August and traveled through the night to make it to the Yuan Ming Yuan palace on the morning of the 29th. The Qing officials demanded that the embassy meet with the emperor immediately the morning of their arrival but the embassy refused, which resulted in the embassy's dismissal later that day (Staunton 1824, 109, 116). Prior to the point of the embassy's dismissal, the Qing officials tried all sorts of ways to convince the embassy to kowtow.

### The Imposing of the Kowtow Ritual

Guang and Su welcomed the embassy with a banquet the day after their arrival in Tianjin (Ellis 1817, 86, 91). Before the banquet, Guang and Su held a meeting with the embassy regarding the nature of the banquet. The Qing officials indicated that the entertainment the embassy was about to partake in was an imperial repast, and “it was an indispensable preliminary” that the embassy “should return thanks, by the performance of the ceremony of the Ko-tou” (Staunton 1824, 46). The officials announced that a table covered in yellow silk would be presented at the banquet representing the emperor. The embassy was expected to demonstrate gratitude for the entertainment by performing the kowtow ritual (Davis 1841, 67–68). The embassy responded that they wished to show their respect for the emperor by the same ceremony they would perform to their sovereign: a low bow (Staunton 1824, 46). The Qing officials were displeased, and to strengthen their case, Su claimed that he saw Lord Macartney of the former mission perform the kowtow ritual in Canton when he welcomed Macartney as a former Hoppo of Canton. Su then added that he also saw Macartney perform the ritual in the presence of the Qianlong emperor. Su even asked Staunton to testify of his claim knowing that Staunton was present at the previous mission (Ellis 1817, 92). Staunton avoided the discussion of his presence in the previous mission due to his young age and inability to recall much. Instead, Staunton used the reports of Lord Macartney to support their decision to refuse the kowtow ritual (Staunton 1824, 47). Staunton's claim of not recalling his experience could have been Staunton not wanting to witness Su's claims. However, it was most likely

that he could not remember much from his experience. In Staunton's later memoir, he did not have extensive personal accounts of his participation in the Macartney mission. When he did reference his participation, he quoted extensively from Lord Macartney, John Barrow, and his father's published journals (Staunton 1856, 11–15). The few firsthand recordings of Staunton's experience in his memoir showcased the lack of remembrance of his experience in the Macartney embassy, which supported his claim and act of avoiding the subject with Su. Su's claim of Macartney performing the kowtow ritual was not true according to British records according to Staunton and it did not move the embassy to comply with his wishes for the embassy to kowtow. However, the mission proposed to make as many bows at the waist as the Qing officials prostrated in front of the yellow silk-covered table. As a result, during the banquet, the Qing officials performed the kowtow ritual as prescribed, and the British embassy bowed nine times (Davis 1841, 69). To further show sincerity in wishing the success of the mission, Lord Amherst proposed to modify Lord Macartney's previous ceremony performed in front of the Qianlong emperor, where he knelt on one knee and bowed at the waist (Staunton 1824, 50). Lord Amherst proposed that upon meeting the emperor, he would kneel on one knee and bow nine times at the waist (Staunton 1824, 51). Ellis commented on Amherst's proposal saying, "The mode in which he proposed to manifest his respect to the Emperor of China was one which he would not adopt towards any Sovereign in Europe" (Ellis 1817, 100). Even though the British embassy tried its best to accommodate the Qing officials, the Qing officials were still unsatisfied. While Su's attempt to deceive the embassy failed at the banquet, Su continued to seek ways to deceive the mission into complying with the Qing officials' wish for the embassy to perform the kowtow ritual in the presence of the emperor.

Before reaching Tongzhou, having seen Su's lies carried no weight in making the embassy kowtow, the Qing officials admitted that Lord Macartney did not perform the kowtow ritual (Staunton 1824, 54). Nonetheless, Su desperately found new ways to make the embassy comply with the kowtow ritual before reaching the reception of Duke He and Mu Daren. To further push the mission to comply with the wishes of the Qing officials, Su hinted at the embassy that if it continued to decline the kowtow ritual, the embassy would be thrown out like the failed Russian mission of 1805. As a result, their commerce would be interrupted like Russian commerce (Morrison 1820, 38). The embassy again questioned Su's claim about the Russian mission because Staunton wrote that while the Russian mission did fail, it did not interrupt the commercial trade (Staunton 1824, 100–101). Despite Su's lies not being accepted by the embassy, he continued to find new ways to attempt to deceive the embassy.

On the voyage to Tongzhou, Su explained to the embassy that the kowtow ritual was merely a formality of greetings, and it did not mean the British were inferior subjects (Davis 1841, 104). Morrison pushed back on this argument. Morrison called the kowtow ritual an “expression of homage” (Morrison 1820, 9). Su’s claim was later proven to be false by Su’s unwillingness to submit a proposal to the emperor that indicated equal status between Britain and the Qing.

Without any progress in convincing the Qing officials that the embassy would not kowtow, the embassy proposed an agreement to kowtow but only under two conditions. First, a Qing official of equal rank as Lord Amherst would perform the kowtow ritual before a portrait of the British monarch. Second, the Qing emperor would issue a solemn edict that if there were a Qing embassy to Great Britain, they would perform the kowtow ritual in front of the British monarch (Staunton 1824, 62). Along with this proposal, the mission requested the Qing officials to send a letter to the Jiaqing emperor indicating the mission’s proposal of the modified Macartney mission ceremony described in previous paragraphs. According to Guang recorded by Morrison, they (Su and Guang) “did not dare to make any such proposal to Court; such a question could not be discussed as between equal states” (Morrison 1820, 39). Morrison explained, “The fact is that all such propositions, as they imply a perfect equality, are more offensive to the Chinese and Tartars than declining to perform their ceremony” (Morrison 1820, 39). Instead of sending a letter including both British proposals, the Qing officials only included Amherst’s proposal of the modified Macartney mission ceremony of respect (Morrison 1820, 41). The embassy’s proposal indicated its approach to diplomacy: a Western-style diplomacy that regarded an equal status when two or more nations interacted. The British proposal undermined Qing China’s superior status. This unacceptance of Britain’s proposal of equal status with Qing China proved Su’s false claim of the kowtow ceremony being merely a formality of greetings. The kowtow ritual indeed represented the Qing’s assertion of power. State representatives who performed the kowtow ritual indicated their homage to Qing China and their submission to Qing China as an inferior state. Su was not the only Qing official that was deceitful; Duke He, whom the mission encountered from Tongzhou to the Yuan Ming Yuan palace, proved himself as deceitful as Su.

Due to the embassy’s continual refusal to perform the kowtow ritual, they did not receive the warmest welcome upon their arrival in Tongzhou as Duke He and Mu Daren received them (Ellis 1817, 105, 135). Duke He and Mu were high Qing officials of great importance. Duke He was the emperor’s brother-in-law, and Mu was the *Libu Shangshu* 礼部尚书, Minister of the Board of Rites (Morrison 1820, 44). The burden of enticing

the embassy to kowtow now fell to the responsibility of Duke He and Mu. Duke He did not provide seats for the embassy men during the first official meeting. Duke He and his entourage of Manchu officials and princes took all the seats in the living room as he instructed the embassy while they stood (Staunton 1824, 79). Mu spoke little in these encounters with the embassy, and Duke He was the primary negotiator in these meetings with the embassy. In the first meeting, Duke He made his position clear; he declared, "As in heaven there are not two Suns, so on earth there are not two Sovereigns [*tian wu liang ri; di wu er wang* 天无两日; 地无二王]" (Morrison 1820, 48). Duke He called the emperor "the universal master of all nations" and stated, "None therefore could hold themselves exempt from the obligation of performing the homage required" (Staunton 1824, 79). Duke He's statement again confirmed the Qing's self-superior identity in regarding Britain as a subordinate nation. Duke He's statement invoked the sentiment of the Qing emperor as the universal monarch under heaven to which all needed to pay homage. Duke He's assertive tactics did not stop in Tongzhou. He continued to push the mission to conform to the kowtow ritual.

After arriving at the Yuan Ming Yuan palace on the morning of the 29th of August, the Qing officials demanded that the embassy meet with the emperor immediately (Staunton 1824, 109,116). After traveling all night, the embassy was fatigued. Lord Amherst himself was not only fatigued, but he fell ill on the way. Amherst asked to stay in his quarters to rest and wished to meet the emperor as soon as he felt better (Abel 1818, 104). At the same time, the embassy arrived at the palace before their belongings, which included their ceremonial clothing, their insignia of the official character, and the king's letter (Staunton 1824, 118). With illness, fatigue, lack of proper attire, and proper documents, the embassy requested an extension before meeting the emperor. The embassy's desires were transmitted to Duke He, but he soon returned, saying that the emperor desired to meet Lord Amherst immediately (Abel 1818, 105). Lord Amherst contested Duke He's request. In response, as Ellis put it, "[the Duke] used every argument to induce him to obey the Emperor's commands"; the Duke even said the embassy could perform their ceremony instead of the kowtow ritual (Ellis 1817, 179). With little success from his verbal convincing, the Duke grabbed Lord Amherst's arm and tried to force him into obeying his will of meeting the emperor immediately (Abel 1818, 105). Lord Amherst protested with profuse dissatisfaction (Abel 1818, 105). The Duke became very anxious, and "perspiration stood on his face" (Morrison 1820, 57). Seeing little result from his verbal and physical assertion of his will, Duke He finally agreed to allow the embassy to stay in their resting quarters while he left to report the embassy's will to the emperor (Ellis 1817, 180). Soon after, a message came from the emperor that he was

unhappy with the continued refusal of the embassy to meet with him, so he commanded the embassy to depart immediately (Abel 1818, 108). The embassy was utterly confused and could not understand why the emperor would do so under the given circumstances. However, it was made clear to them later by Su and Guang (Staunton 1824, 133).

After the embassy left Yuan Ming Yuan, Su and Guang came to send their condolences to the embassy with presents from the emperor. They explained that the emperor was “kept in ignorance of the circumstance” (Abel 1818, 112). The emperor was unaware that the embassy traveled all night without rest; he did not know that they did not have appropriate ceremonial clothes, insignia of their official character, or even the king’s letter. Lord Amherst’s illness was the only reason for the embassy’s refusal to meet with the emperor that was transmitted to the Jiaqing emperor (Ellis 1817, 179–180). It still did not make much sense why the emperor would dismiss the embassy based on only Lord Amherst’s illness. The issues were made clear by an internal imperial edict issued a day after the embassy was dismissed. The edict condemned and pointed out Duke He’s inconsistent claims (21:7:8, 406).

The internal imperial edict to the grand secretariat pointed out all the inconstancy of Duke He’s reports to the imperial court. The edict first stated that Duke He and Mu Daren transmitted information to the court “in a confusing manner” (21:7:8, 406). The edict stated that up until the day before the embassy, Duke He had not convinced the embassy to kowtow. However, Duke He promised the imperial court that the embassy would kowtow on the day of the imperial audience. On the day of the imperial audience, to delay the proceeding and buy time for himself, Duke He first informed the imperial court that the embassy was “unable to walk fast enough to reach the gate of the palace in time.” Then Duke He reported that “the ambassador was sick with diarrhea and must wait a little while.” Finally, Duke He reported that “the ambassador had collapsed and could not return to the hotel” (21:7:8, 406). Subsequently, the imperial court issued an edict to send the embassy back to the hotel with a doctor. All these statements by Duke He were false.

First, according to English sources, the embassy never left their hotel room within the palace upon arrival, so the first and third statements could have never happened. Second, while Lord Amherst was indeed sick, the English sources did not mention anything regarding diarrhea, perhaps out of discretion. Duke He’s second claim was, at the very least, partially valid, but no evidence to support the whole truth. After not being able to have Lord Amherst appear, the imperial court proceeded to invite the second commissioner, George Staunton, and the third commissioner, Henry Ellis, for an audience. However, Duke He told the imperial court that they were

all sick and could not attend (21:7:8, 406). The imperial court thought the whole embassy was pretending to be sick to avoid the imperial audience, so the mission was dismissed.

The emperor's decision to dismiss the embassy without an audience seems strange, but in James Hevia's *Cherishing Men From Afar*, he sheds some light on the matter. Hevia drew a parallel between Lord Macartney using the excuse of illness to avoid meetings with prominent Qing officials and Lord Amherst being ill to suggest that the imperial court saw Amherst's illness as a way to avoid an audience like his predecessor (Hevia 1995, 215). Regardless of what moved the Jiaqing emperor to dismiss the embassy, Duke He was responsible for complicating the mission's interactions with the Qing imperial court through his inconsistent reports to the emperor that differed from the embassy's own recording. As this essay has shown, Lord Amherst was the only one ill in the embassy, according to English sources. Duke He's report of Amherst, Ellis, and Staunton all being ill did not withstand scrutiny when a doctor from the imperial court was sent to investigate the matter. Duke He's claims served as lies to buy himself time because his promise hung on a thread. He promised the imperial court that he would be able to convince the embassy to kowtow, but the embassy had no intention to do so even up till the point of the 29th of August.

Another potential reading of Duke He's behavior was that he wanted the mission dismissed because he could not convince the embassy to kowtow. If the mission were to proceed to an audience with the emperor, Duke He would have not only embarrassed himself, but he would have also humiliated the emperor. The emperor seems to have believed the embassy would kowtow the whole time. This was later evident in a conversation between the emperor and one of his governors-general.

The Chinese primary source clearly expressed its expectation of the embassy to kowtow. However, it did not indicate whether the emperor was aware of the embassy's proposal for their bowing ceremony and the modified Macartney ceremony. In a later audience of the emperor with the governor-general of Hunan and Hubei provinces, Sun Yuting, 孙玉庭 explained to the emperor the British bowing ritual. Sun had a brief interaction with Staunton a few years prior to the embassy in Canton in 1804 when he was delivering gifts from the emperor to the king of Britain. Sun explained to the emperor that Staunton took off his hat, bowed deeply when listening to the imperial edict to receive the gifts, and then bowed again before Sun left. Sun asserted that the British bowing was the equivalent of the kowtow and that the British's refusal to kowtow did not mean any disrespect. Sun's explanation pleased the emperor very much (Hummel 2010, 684). Sun and the emperor's short discussion of the embassy shed light on how much the emperor was kept in the dark. The emperor was first unaware of



the meaning of the British ritual ceremony. Second, the significance of the bowing ceremony had equal status to the kowtow ritual in terms of it being an equivalent ceremony performed in the presence of monarchs. If the emperor was unaware that the English bowing at the waist was an equivalent ceremonial ritual to the kowtow, he was most likely oblivious of the British proposals of their modified Macartney ceremony that expressed elevated respect beyond what would have been performed to any other European monarchs. For the entirety of the journey from Tianjin to the Yuan Ming Yuan Palace, the Qing officials acted in a manner that suggested the imperial court's strong desire for the embassy to kowtow. Initially, the emperor's desire for the embassy to kowtow was most likely genuine. However, the emperor's will of the embassy kowtowing in his presence could have continued if he were made known first the meaning of the British bowing ceremony and, second, the modified Macartney ceremony.

As described in previous paragraphs, even though the Jiaqing emperor valued ceremonial rituals, he became more concerned with using ceremonial rituals to legitimize his authority. The Jiaqing emperor's pleasant reactions to Sun's response indicated again his recognition that the British's refusal to kowtow did not undermine his authority. Instead, it honored his authority differently. The Qing officials failed to recognize the function of ceremonial rituals for the emperor and only saw the form of ceremonial rituals for the emperor. The Qing officials' undying effort to convince the embassy to kowtow signified their fear of angering the emperor and appearing incompetent.

While the Qing officials kept the emperor in the dark, they worked to convince the embassy to kowtow, showcasing their self-interest of appearing competent and not embarrassing themselves in front of the emperor. The Qing officials likely were aware of the emperor's obsession with ceremonial rituals, and they made it their mission to entice the embassy to comply for their own interests that hung on the line. The Qing officials blindly followed the instruction of enticing the embassy to kowtow without considering the possibility of the emperor accepting the embassy's proposal, which suggested a sense of fear of angering the emperor. To suggest that the mission's unwillingness to kowtow or any alternatives to the kowtow ritual would have rendered them incompetent at their job. So, the most efficient way to keep both ends in check, as the Qing officials actively pursued the agenda of trying to convince the embassy to kowtow, they kept the emperor happy by having him think the embassy was willing to kowtow.

After traveling from Britain to Qing China and spending months on the road and at sea, the unexpected immediate expulsion of the embassy shocked Lord Amherst and the embassy members. The British, including men of the embassy, argued that the Chinese caused the mission's failure, especially the Jiaqing emperor. After learning about the mission's failure



through popular reports, the English satirist John Wolcot (1738–1819), who was known as Peter Pindar, published a poem in the *Monthly Review* in 1817 where he wrote, “fancying thyself all-mighty, Hast treated us with pompous scorn” (Pindar 1817, 223). Pindar evaluated the Jiaqing emperor as an entitled pompous ruler that demanded the embassy to follow his “pompous scorn,” referring to the demand of the kowtow ritual. This blaming of the Chinese for the failure of the mission was also expressed by the embassy men.

In Gao’s article, while using a letter from Lord Amherst to his friend George Canning, future foreign secretary and prime minister, Gao showed that Lord Amherst argued that the failure of the mission was due to the personal character of the emperor (Gao 2016, 606). Clark Abel also describes the Jiaqing emperor as weak by comparing his ability to govern to his father, the Qianlong emperor. Abel praises the Qianlong emperor for having an “active mind,” and one who did not simply accept what was reported to him. Instead, he traveled to see the country for himself and often “[scrutinized] the reports and actions of his ministers.” On the other hand, Abel depicted the Jiaqing emperor as one who relied on his officials and “through the representation of his favorites, whose falsehood or truth he is from all accounts too weak to estimate” (Able 1818, 118–119). While there might be some truth to the British reasoning of their evaluation of the result of the mission, these claims were overly simplified and irresponsible. The British narrative blamed the Chinese entirely. Their claims took away the responsibilities of themselves and even the responsibilities of individuals in the embassy that have contributed to the uncompromising stance towards the kowtow ritual.

### **The Divided Objectives Regarding the Purpose of the Mission**

The EIC’s discontent with its treatment at Canton led to the genesis of the Amherst embassy. An 1813 report from the Committee of Correspondence to the Court of Directors of the EIC to the British parliament described the Chinese trade in Canton as restrictive. It called the conduct of the people and government abhorrent (Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, 1813, 11). Henry Ellis, the mission secretary and third commissioner, confirmed this sentiment concerning the Canton trade. Ellis’s writings regarding the genesis of the mission wrote, by 1815, with increasing difficulty in the trade in Canton with the oppressive local officials suppressing the EIC trade, the company submitted a report to the British government (Ellis 1817, 41). As a result of the rising opposition from the local officials towards the EIC’s Canton trade, a second mission to China was assembled and led by the British government but funded mainly by the EIC.

The tension between the government's interest and the EIC's interest became a dividing line from the very genesis of the mission. On one hand, due to its trade being stunted by Canton officials, the EIC called for the mission's assembly wishing to improve the Canton trade. On the other hand, the British government saw it as an opportunity to push for a European diplomatic system and greater trade relations with China beyond the Canton trade. The British approach to diplomacy in the 19th century was a Westphalian style that began at the end of the Thirty Years War in Europe with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The Westphalian style of diplomacy operated under the idea that "all sovereign nation states, regardless of size or power, being treated equally under international law and the ambassador's main task was to uphold his sovereign's honor at a foreign court" (Stevenson 2021, 22). Lord Amherst's preparation for the mission reflected the Westphalian diplomacy idea. In Stevenson's book, where she quoted from Lord Amherst's "Notes on policy to be pursued by the British Embassy to China," Lord Amherst desired to first, "renew the amicable relations" between Britain and China; second, to "solicit the emperor's protection to the subjects and commerce of England"; and third, to "bring forward propositions for the future regulation of trade." To achieve the three, Lord Amherst proposed first establishing a permanent British representative in Beijing and second, facilitating "open communication in the Chinese language between the Factory and a Tribunal at Peking or a Chinese minister in England" (Stevenson 2021, 120). These notes were based on instructions given by the Foreign Office. Lord Amherst, representing the government, saw more than the need to better the trade in Canton; his approach was much broader. Beyond trade, he wanted to install a permanent representative of the British government in Beijing, the capital. The EIC did not share Amherst's broad approach to establishing open trade and diplomatic relations with China. George Thomas Staunton, the second commissioner of the embassy who was also an EIC employee wrote in his memoir regarding the purpose of the mission: "It was sent out for the single purpose of settling the Canton disputes and re-establishing the trade" (Staunton 1856, 66). John Davis, another EIC employee who was also part of the embassy, expressed a similar sentiment regarding the embassy's purpose. Davis said, "Have most regard to the effect that the embassy is to produce at Canton; complain of the conduct of the local authorities to our trade" (Davis 1841, 56).

Staunton and Davis' view represented the EIC and due to the very different objectives of the EIC, Staunton did not consider the mission a failure. Staunton wrote in his memoir, "Although this mission has often been stigmatized as a failure, it was practically, perhaps, the most successful of any that had ever been sent to Peking by any European power; for it was

followed by a longer interval of commercial tranquility, and of freedom from annoyance, than had ever been experienced before" (Staunton 1856, 67–68). Staunton believed the embassy's refusal to kowtow showcased Britain as a strong sovereign nation that gained the Qing government's respect, improving the EIC's Canton trade. The ideological divide between the EIC and the British government was not simply institutional; individuals of the EIC reinforced the ideological divide between the EIC and the British government.

### **The Divided Embassy**

Lord Amherst had no experience regarding China, but he became aware of the sensitive nature of the kowtow ritual while studying previous European missions to China. In the Foreign Office instructions given to Amherst, he was instructed:

In the pursuit of these objects, you will regulate your conduct, by such information as you may receive from the Company Supercargoes, on the habits and customs of the Chinese government and people; and I am persuaded that in the knowledge and experience of the Supercargoes you will find the means, under the exercise of your own judgment and discretion, of adapting a course, the best calculated to affect the essential purposes of your Embassy. (Stevenson, 118)

The instructions given to Amherst advised him to listen to the Company supercargoes, the "China experts" from the EIC including Staunton and Davis. However, at the same time, the government gave him the freedom to make decisions that he believed would best suit the result of the embassy even regarding the kowtow ritual. While this government instruction was quite broad and did not necessarily mention the kowtow ritual precisely, Davis confirmed this government sentiment. Davis wrote regarding the kowtow ritual, "It seemed . . . that the ambassador had received it in his instructions from our government, to consider the matter entirely as a question of expediency, with full authority to comply, should compliance be calculated to attain the substantial objects of the mission" (Davis 1841, 54). With the government's permission to kowtow if needed, Amherst considered complying. Staunton wrote in his journal, "It was the opinion of Lord Amherst, that it would be expedient to comply with the ceremony" (Staunton 1824, 99). Amherst did not stand alone regarding the compliance with the kowtow ritual possibly bringing success to the embassy. Staunton continued, "his lordship was strongly supported by Mr. Ellis" (Staunton 1824, 99). Henry Ellis, the mission secretary and third commissioner of the mission, also believed in complying with the kowtow ritual.

Henry Ellis did not like the kowtow ritual, but he also regarded achieving the mission's goals as most important. Ellis wrote:

Ceremonial observances required, as in the case of the Dutch embassy, for the obvious purpose of reducing us to a level with missions from Corea and the Lew-chew islands, should be refused, not only as degrading but inexpedient; however, should the reception or rejection of the embassy depend upon an adherence, on the present occasion... I should have no hesitation in giving up the maintenance of the single exception. (Ellis 1817, 53)

Ellis considered the ritual humiliating, undignified, and degrading to the status of Britain, but he saw the success of the mission as more pressing than one's national pride. However, his sentiment was not shared by Staunton. Staunton, on the other hand, believed the mission's success depended on the British holding fast to its values and national dignity.

George Staunton as the second commissioner of the embassy was the second most senior member in the embassy following Lord Amherst, and his opinions were well respected as a "China expert." The abundance of "China experts" was a defining aspect of the Amherst mission compared to its predecessor, the Macartney mission. Unlike the Macartney mission, the Amherst mission included six "China experts" including Thomas Manning, Dr. Alexander Pearson, John David, F. Hasting Toone, Rev. Dr. Robert Morrison, and Sir George Thomas Staunton. Except for Morrison, they all gained their expertise concerning China during their time as EIC employees in Canton (Ellis 1817, 61–62). Staunton was the most famous among the "China experts." As a thirteen-year-old boy, Staunton accompanied his father as part of the Macartney embassy to China. Staunton learned Chinese during the voyage to China, and then demonstrated his Chinese skill in front of the Qianlong emperor where he was complimented for his Chinese skills (Staunton 1856, 12–13). He became known as the boy who spoke to the emperor of China. After Staunton finished university, he returned to China in the early 1800s as an employee of the EIC. During his time in China, he perfected his Chinese and eventually even translated the Qing legal code (Staunton 1856, 44). Staunton's China experience, including his knowledge of the language and culture, made him one of the most credible individuals in the eyes of Lord Amherst. Nevertheless, his experience also complicated the progression of the mission to interact with the Qing imperial court.

Staunton was determined to convince Amherst that refusing the kowtow ritual would gain more respect for the mission and British sovereignty. On August 8th, 1816, to avoid direct conflict, Staunton gave Lord Amherst a letter that stated, "I feel strongly impressed with the idea that

a compliance therewith will be unadvisable” (Staunton 1824, 32). While his letter did not explain why he believed complying with the kowtow ritual would not help the mission, his journal explained that his reasoning was first based on his “general knowledge and experience of the Chinese character” and second it was based on the failure of the Dutch embassy of 1795 (Staunton 1824, 31–32).

In 1795 the Dutch East India Company (VOC) sent a mission to congratulate the Qianlong emperor on his 60th year of reigning on the Qing imperial throne. According to Stevenson, the Dutch embassy performed 30 to 50 kowtows during the entirety of the embassy. On one occasion, Andreas van Braam even humiliated himself with his hat falling off while kowtowing; the Qianlong emperor got a great laugh out of it (Stevenson 2021, 100). Despite all the kowtows and humiliating events, the Dutch embassy left with no reward (Stevenson 2021, 102). The mentioning of the Dutch mission was simply a one-line sentence with little detail of what it was, but this was enough for Staunton to make his point because Lord Amherst and other embassy men were all familiar with the Dutch mission. Staunton saw the Dutch mission as the pinnacle of European humiliation. While Staunton continued to defend his belief, he knew of the possibility of the dismissal of the mission.

When the mission arrived at Tongzhou, Amherst and Ellis were “determined to act accordingly” to the Qing officials’ demand of the kowtow ritual (Staunton 1824, 101). Staunton believed that “such compliance would not be detrimental to the interests of the East-India Company at Canton” (Staunton 1824, 101). Staunton based his reasoning on previous missions, his China experience, and the mission’s EIC employees’ China experience. In 1805, the Russian Golovkin embassy was sent to the Qing imperial court to establish greater commercial trade. While on the way to Beijing, 140 miles from the capital to be precise, Qing officials asked the embassy to perform the kowtow ritual in front of a table covered in yellow silk representing the Jiaqing emperor. After the Russian embassy refused, they were invited to leave and they proceeded no further (Stevenson 2021, 101–102). Even though the Russian embassy failed to proceed to Beijing, Staunton did not shy away from using it to make his point. He pointed out that even though the Qing officials rejected the Russian mission to proceed to Beijing for an audience with the emperor, their expulsion “did not occasion any interruption of the commercial intercourse between the two nations” (Staunton 1824, 100–101). Staunton’s statement concerning the Russian mission was indeed true. After the failure of the Russian mission, the Sino-Russian trade maintained the status quo with little changes other than an increase of illegal trading on the Sino-Russian borders (Fletcher 1978, 323). Staunton’s statement again illustrated that his objective for the

mission was to better trade in Canton and not necessarily to establish a Westphalian diplomatic system. The failure of the Russian mission did not discredit Staunton's argument for not complying with the kowtow ritual. It reinforced his argument by showing that, on the one hand, the Dutch mission complied with the kowtow ritual and achieved nothing. On the other hand, the Russian mission refused to kowtow but maintained trade relations despite it not being improved. To further fortify his argument, he drew on the credibility of EIC members' China experience.

Staunton's fellow EIC employees very much supported his argument. He contacted his five EIC colleagues regarding the mission's stance on the kowtow ritual to better credit his claim. Staunton wrote, "Messrs, Toone, Davis, and Pearson, were strongly and decidedly against a compliance with the ceremony" (Staunton 1824, 102). Staunton's EIC colleagues not only supported his advice regarding the kowtow ritual, but they also believed their China experience made them most fitting in advising Lord Amherst in dealing with Qing China and its officials. Davis wrote, "it was fair to conclude that the Company was the party most likely to give the best advice, their reasonings being founded on their past knowledge and experience" (Davis 1841, 56). The experience that Davis spoke of included "nine or ten years in China," which helped them to possess "acknowledged talents, judgment, and local experience," so much so as to "entitle their opinions to considerable weight" (Staunton 1824, 102). The EIC employees considered their China experience the greatest asset to the embassy. With the EIC employees being the only people with real experience in China, Amherst and Ellis became minorities in the kowtow debate in the embassy. As a result, Lord Amherst was firm in his response regarding the kowtow ritual. Even though Amherst was the ambassador, he did not receive the praises for the embassy's firmness in refusing the kowtow ritual; instead, Staunton received the praises. In a review of Ellis, and McLeod's published travel journals, the 1818 publication of the *Monthly Review* called George Staunton's advice to the Lord Amherst concerning the kowtow ritual as "statesmanlike" (*The Monthly Review* 1818, 9). While Stevenson would argue that the embassy "never split into factions, nor was the leadership group marked by jealousy or rivalry," this essay argues otherwise (Stevenson 2021, 300).

In Staunton's memoir, he wrote of a potential embassy proposed to him by John Barrow with Staunton as the king's ambassador to Beijing in 1809 to explain the recent British occupation of the Portuguese settlement of Macao. Later, Staunton, in his own words, wrote that he was "coolly informed" that even though the embassy was approved, but it was thought "most advisable not to include in it any person who was actually in the service of the East India Company" (Staunton 1856, 43–44). Needless to

say, Staunton was not pleased. He wrote, "It is impossible to express the mortification and irritation of mind which I felt"; he also added, "I still think I was extremely ill-used, and the victim of some unworthy intrigue" (Staunton 1856, 44). Staunton wanted the ambassadorship to make a mark for himself was evident in this early proposal of an embassy. His disappointment of being skipped over due to his EIC employment showcased his distrust and discontent with the government. However, Staunton's opportunity to make his mark came again during the Amherst embassy. Staunton's memoir highlighted his accomplishment of convincing the embassy to refuse the kowtow ritual. Staunton included quotes from Henry Ellis's publication praising him for his local experience to make his case regarding his accomplishment. Regarding Ellis's statements, Staunton called it "too flattering and gratifying" (Staunton 1856, 69). He also included a letter "accompanied by a splendid silver-gilt salver, valued at six hundred guineas" from John Davis, who became the Governor of Hong Kong, praising and thanking Staunton for his strength during the Amherst embassy regarding the kowtow ritual (Staunton 1856, 70–71). To finish it off, Staunton included newspaper and period articles' quotes that praised him for his advice on refusing the kowtow ritual. Staunton included excerpts from the *Monthly Review*, *British Critic*, *British Review*, and *Eclectic Review* (Staunton 1856, 72–73). Staunton's memoir showed great pride in his role in the mission. More importantly, he saw himself and his advice on the kowtow ritual as the most striking achievement of his role in the mission. Staunton greatly respected Lord Amherst, but he did not shy away from gaining certain status from within the mission. Staunton did not shy away from using the Amherst mission to make his mark and, in some way, made it the "Staunton mission." Staunton's pride in wanting to use his position and the mission to gain recognition complicated the possibility for the embassy to interact with the Qing imperial court as he imposed his personal views on the mission's decision due to his personal ambition of using the embassy as a career marker.

### Conclusion

This essay took a middle ground in evaluating the Amherst mission. Unlike the early 20th-century scholarship, this essay does not solely attribute the mission's failure to the Chinese. Nor does this essay overly criticize the British like recent scholarship. This essay does not even evaluate the mission as a failure, considering the different interpretations of the results of the embassy, with some considering it a failure and some considering it a success. Nonetheless, this essay works within the different opinions regarding the result of the mission to examine how different personal beliefs, individual actions, and personal interests from both the Qing and British

sides complicated the potential for the Amherst mission to interact with the Qing imperial court.

The Jiaqing emperor's obsession with ritual ceremonies clouded Qing officials Su Lenge Daren's and Duke He Shitai's ability to engage reasonably with the embassy. Nevertheless, their deceitful actions directly complicated the potential for the Amherst mission to interact with the Qing imperial court. Motivated by the self-interest to appear capable and competent at their jobs, Su and Duke He omitted information regarding the significance of the Western bowing ceremony and the embassy's willingness to express their respect towards the emperor in a modified Macartney kneeling ceremony. Continuing to complicate the mission, Su and Duke He discredited themselves through their lies in convincing the embassy to kowtow. Duke He's lie to the emperor regarding the physical well-being of the embassy directly resulted in the mission's dismissal. While the deceitful Qing officials indeed complicated the possibility of the mission to interact with the Qing imperial court, they were not the sole cause.

George Staunton's prideful ambition of using the embassy as a personal career marker used his and his EIC colleagues' China expertise to will the embassy to reject the kowtow ritual, which complicated the interactions between the Qing imperial court and the embassy. Staunton's motive for recognition guided his participation in the mission to institute his belief that the kowtow ritual should be avoided at all costs. To support his position, Staunton solicited the support of his EIC colleagues, used previous missions as references, and employed the credibility of his own China experience. At last, following Staunton's advice, the mission refused the kowtow ritual, which frustrated the Qing officials and complicated the possibility of the mission interacting with the Qing imperial court.

To fully argue whether the British embassy's actions propelled the Qing officials to act the way they did or the Qing officials' actions propelled the British embassy to act the way it did is like arguing whether the egg came first or the chicken came first. It is hard to fully grasp who caused the Amherst embassy to not progress to the point of interacting directly with the imperial court. However, the involvement of individuals from the Chinese and the British complicated the advancement of the embassy.



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# Christianity on Home Brew

Alessandro Valignano, Indigenization,  
and Japan's Hidden Christians

*Brayden Lane*

## Introduction

In 1659, after enduring three years of torture and refusing to renounce his teachings, a Christian priest was executed in Nagasaki by decapitation under order by local officials. This man, who had taken the name of Bastian at his baptism, had spent the previous several years leading and teaching his fellow Christians in the villages near Nagasaki. He did this in secrecy, for in those days, professing belief as a Christian had been declared illegal by the Japanese government under penalty of death. In the course of his ministry, he saw many of his brethren meet their deaths for their beliefs, yet he continued to lead until his time too had come to be killed. Shortly before his execution, he gave to those Christians under his guidance four prophecies, preaching that of a future day when “confessors would come in great black ships . . . [and] they would be able to walk about openly and sing Christian hymns.” He also declared that “after seven generations . . . [their children] would have their souls saved from distress” for their beliefs. Bastian had been an important leader to these communities of secret Christians, and his last prophecies and teachings would become firmly entrenched in the hearts of many of those he had taught, even until Western missionaries again came to Japan “after seven generations” in the nineteenth century (Turnbull 1998, 117, 120).

In the times after Westerners had been forced out of Japan in the seventeenth century, Bastian and other preachers had become important anchors for the local communities of Christian believers. As some of the last men to receive instruction from Western brethren, the fragile life and

future of Christianity in Japan laid with them and their leadership. These *dōjuku*, men like Bastian (Turnbull 1998, 117) who had received instruction and authority from Western missionaries and other laymen had long contributed to the spread of Christianity in Japan (Elison 1973, 16). Now, they had become the ones who would create the foundation upon which Christianity would survive communally after their imminent deaths.

The instruction they had received from their Western brethren played an important role in their administrations in the absence of European influence, instruction which had been purposefully designed to empower and strengthen worship at a local and communal level. This instruction and other changes, which proved vital to the lifeblood of Japanese Christianity, had been implemented long before Bastian by an Italian missionary named Alessandro Valignano. During his lifetime, Valignano had taken a keen interest in Japan and implemented several policy changes aimed at bolstering the strength of local priests and leaders like Bastian. Valignano's support of the indigenization of Christianity through native clergy contributed to the local strength of Christianity. This localization of faith and worship allowed Christianity to survive locally through men like Bastian when government suppression had erased the Western ecclesiastical structure. The legacy of Valignano's reforms greatly altered the course of the "Christian Century" and, as this paper will argue, beyond as well.

Much of the prevailing literature involved with the so-called "Christian Century" in Japan (1549–ca. 1650) describes Christianity's rise, fall, and subsequent expulsion from Japan as a failure, as seen through titles like George Elison's *Deus Destroyed* and Andrew Ross's *A Vision Betrayed*. It is commonly agreed that missionaries and Christianity left little lasting impact on early modern Japan as a whole, and any progress to establish a permanent, influential Christian (and therefore Western) presence in the archipelago officially ended with the Shimabara rebellion in 1638 (Elison 1973, 248). The conversion and subsequent execution or apostasy of more than 300,000 Christians without a doubt was seen as a failure to the Society of Jesus and many Christians of the time (Ross 1994, 87). What many in the West did not realize was that small communities of believers continued to practice Christianity in secret from the end of the Shimabara rebellion to the days of the Meiji Restoration, the so-called *kakure kirishitan* or "hidden Christians" (Turnbull 1998, ix). While the Christianity that survived in these communities came to focus almost exclusively on ritual, Christianity continued to exist within Japan, though much differently from its parent churches in the West (Turnbull 1998, 8–9).

The literature concerning Alessandro Valignano has been heavily based in Valignano's rivalry with fellow Jesuits, his efforts to accommodate Christianity to Japan, and expansion of Japanese clergy. Foremost among the

literature on Valignano and the Christian century is C.R. Boxer's *The Christian Century in Japan* (1951), a dense text chronicling the introduction, growth, and fall of Christianity in Japan, with some information concerning the *kakure kirishitan*. While Boxer's work is an invaluable text in the field, it does display its age in relation to more modern works. *The Christian Century in Japan* tended to focus on telling a complete narrative history of the West in Japan during this time rather than taking a stance or argument about the West in Japan. Engaging with both Western and Japanese sources, Boxer was one of the first major writers about Japanese Christianity in early modernity for a Western audience (Boxer 1951, vii–viii). Upon the framework of Boxer, others would come to write and make critiques about the “Christian century,” like George Elison's *Deus Destroyed* (1973). Written a generation of historians separated from Boxer, Elison took a more critical approach to the West and Christianity in Japan, writing to critique on previous scholarship's “tendency . . . to attribute a positive value and a superior rationality to the European input of this interchange” between Europe and Japan (Elison 1973, 248–249). Further, he argued that little remained of Christianity and the West's influence in Japan “after the ‘Christian century’ had run its course,” describing the *kakure kirishitan* as holding to a faith that gradually faded into local tradition (Elison 1973, 253).

Though Boxer and Elison had written much about Valignano's impact on the Christian century, the foremost writings on Valignano's role in Japanese Christian history were fleshed out by Josef Franz Schütte, a Jesuit scholar who wrote an extensive commentary on Valignano's letters and reports back to Europe. His commentary, *Alessandro Valignano's Mission Principles for Japan* (1985), laid out Valignano's administration first through the perspective of the problems that Valignano saw in the mission, then through the solutions he implemented. Providing a detailed commentary and including several translations of Valignano's writings, later historians would build off Schütte's work. J. F. Moran wrote a monograph dedicated to Valignano exclusively and the many changes that he made to the mission and accommodation efforts of Europeans (Moran 1993). Similarly, Andrew Ross wrote *A Vision Betrayed*, an analysis of the successes and failures of Christianity in Japan in comparison to China, with a heavy emphasis on Valignano's administration (Ross 1994). Contrary to Elison, both argued favorably on Valignano and the Christian century as a whole. Despite the title, *A Vision Betrayed* argued that “the Jesuit mission was not a failure, and the Japanese people did not reject Christianity.” To Ross, the Shimabara Rebellion was the culmination and reaffirmation of the Jesuit success in bringing Christianity to Japan, not the final act of desperation before the full-fledged rejection by the Japanese (Ross 1994, 115–116). The leading literature of Valignano and the Christian century together give a

mostly complete picture of Valignano's aspirations and administration of Japan. These arguments, however, mostly end with his death or Western expulsion from Japan in 1639.

The continuation of this narrative to Japan's *kakure kirishitan* was hampered by the availability of direct sources on the isolated communities as few relics were preserved, little was recorded in the shadow of persecution in the Edo period, and the number of practicing *kakure* diminished over time. This combination of factors led historians to have to make inferences about the development of the *kakure* faith between Western expulsion in 1639 and reintroduction in the late nineteenth-century. Western literature on the hidden Christians was well-encompassed by Stephen Turnbull's *The Kakure kirishitan of Japan* (1998). Though well-known as a Japanese and military historian, Turnbull has a significant amount of literature and research on the hidden Christians, one culmination of which was this monograph which focused heavily on the beliefs and rituals of the communities on the isolated island of Ikitsuki. Turnbull took a neutral approach to his investigation and writing on the hidden Christians, being careful not to attribute labels or religious bias to these communities. Most notably, Turnbull argued that the *kakure kirishitan* did not consciously reject Christianity or attempt to become a syncretic faith. Instead, he simply argued that they represented "the inherent worth of human religious expression and the utter evil, folly and ultimate futility of religious persecution" (Turnbull 1998, 227). Ann Harrington's *Japan's Hidden Christians*, written slightly earlier than Turnbull's work, was a digestible monograph on the history, ritual, and practices of the *kakure kirishitan*, which drew heavily from both Western and Japanese secondary and primary sources (Harrington 1993). Together, both of their writings presented an accessible exploration of the *kakure kirishitan* for Western audiences. Harrington and Turnbull's monographs included some discussion of Valignano and his administration; however, there was little exploration of a possible connection between him and the *kakure*. Here was where the idea for this paper was developed.

By way of introduction, Alessandro Valignano, an Italian noble with a background in law, joined the Society of Jesus, the major evangelizing arm of the Catholic Church, in 1566; Valignano quickly rose through the ranks of the brotherhood over the next seven years (Üçerler 2003, 337–338). Valignano "had written to the General Superior [of the order] manifesting a desire to be sent to the 'Indies' as a missionary." Instead, "the new General Superior of the order, Everard Mercurian, would take one of the most important decisions of his time in office and appoint [Valignano] *Visitador* (personal delegate)" in 1573 (Üçerler 2003, 339), giving him "authority over all Jesuit missions and all Jesuits from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan" (Moran 1993, 3). In an office of great responsibility and authority

spanning such a large area east of Africa, Valignano was put into a unique position to oversee great changes to the eastern missions and took a particular interest in the work in Japan, which had started three decades earlier.

The Japanese mission and Christian century started the day that Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit appointed to travel and preach in Asia, arrived in Japan in 1549. Xavier noticed early on the humility, receptiveness, and religious attitudes of the Japanese, believing that the Jesuits would be hard-pressed to find such fertile ground to sow the seed of the gospel elsewhere in Asia (Boxer 1951, 37–38). Though he only had a short stay of two years in Japan, when he departed in 1551, Xavier believed in a bright future for Christianity in Japan. His optimism would be continued by his successors, and Christianity flourished in Kyūshū and southern Japan, with the number of converts growing to 130,000 in the 1570s (Ross 1994, 53). A significant portion of this growth would occur under a later leader of the Jesuits, Francisco Cabral, through a focus on converting noblemen (many of whose peoples would convert alongside their lord). The mission itself, however, began to struggle because Cabral's administration was influenced by his skepticism of the Japanese. As such, when Valignano arrived in Japan in 1579, he discovered an incredibly successful mission struggling with negative relations between the missionaries and their laymen converts.

Among the greatest challenges Valignano faced during his time in Japan was the fight over the accommodation of the missionaries to Japanese culture and the involvement of native Japanese in the mission efforts. Because of the success of Cabral's focus on mass conversion through noblemen, the number of converts had outgrown the clergy available to administer to them. As such, "in many new Christian communities, 'eight or ten months would pass without their seeing a single father'" (Hoey 2010, 31). Valignano saw this issue and sought to increase the number of missionaries and clergymen to meet the new demands, primarily through the expansion of the native clergy.

Valignano's vision and policies were seen as unorthodox, a return to old and ineffective ways, and came under great criticism from within the Society. Nevertheless, Valignano persisted. This paper will demonstrate that Valignano's respect for the Japanese and vision for the future of Japan drove the development of the indigenous clergy and missionaries despite criticism from fellow Europeans. This paper will also demonstrate that Valignano's efforts and reforms reinforced a rising trend towards local and communal worship of Christianity, which was the groundwork for the persistence of the hidden Christians following the expulsion of Westerners from Japan.

The scope and effectiveness of this endeavor, however, is heavily influenced by access to primary and secondary resources. Many of the valuable



primary sources relating to Valignano are preserved in Jesuit archives, with publicly available materials limited to what is contained in Jesuit scholarship. Similarly, many primary sources would have been written in pre-modern Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and possibly Latin, limiting appropriate engagement with primary sources. As such, this paper will rely heavily on secondary scholarship and translations, serving, in part, as a form of historiographical analysis. Particularly, scholarship on Valignano draws heavily from J. F. Moran and Andrew Ross' monographs because of their accessibility and translation of related documents. Though Valignano's *Summario* was collected and given commentary by Sophia University, their accessibility to this paper was limited by the work's publication in Spanish (Valignano 1954). Similarly, information on the *kakure kirishitan* heavily references both Turnbull and Harrington and faces similar roadblocks of access to primary sources. Despite these shortcomings, this paper will attempt to connect the historiography of Valignano and the *kakure kirishitan*, an endeavor that hopefully may be able to be expanded upon in the future with greater access to primary resources.

### Valignano and Cabral

When Valignano arrived in Japan in 1579, he was somewhat surprised with the state of the mission despite positive reports he had received prior to his coming. Previously, the many years of political fragmentation during the Warring States period (1467–1600) had allowed Christianity to take root early on due to the freedom that *daimyō* (warlords and domain lords) granted the brethren to do as they wished. Around the time of Valignano's arrival, the great Oda Nobunaga had risen to power and started to unify Japan under one banner through military conflict (Boxer 1951, 56). Though the Jesuits enjoyed protections from their *daimyō* allies, unification presented a new possible issue for the future of Christianity in Japan because a unifier hostile towards Western influence could easily hinder Jesuit actions in the archipelago. Nevertheless, "the letters which [Valignano] read in Macao from [several high-ranking missionaries] all expressed optimism. Recent converts included the lords of Arima and of Bungo [in Kyūshū, with] high hopes of further conversions" (Moran 1993, 34).

Valignano, however, found a much grimmer scene than he had been led to expect. Though unification was still occurring under Nobunaga, Valignano discovered that key allies in Kyūshū were losing their ability to protect the Jesuits. For example, Ōtomo Yoshishige of Bungo, along with his people, had been among those *daimyō* to convert to Christianity and had provided resources and protection to the brethren through the 1570s. In 1579, Ōtomo lost a decisive battle to a rival *daimyō*, who was not friendly towards Christians. Ōtomo lost a great deal of land and power

following this battle, and many areas that had been friendly to Christians were now ruled over by the Satsuma clan, which led many Christians and brethren to flee to other areas (Boxer 1951, 143–144). Valignano found that the power of similar allies was dwindling, “the people were devious and difficult to deal with, and the Japanese mission field [was] by no means as ‘white for the harvest’” as he had been led to expect. Commenting on the ordeal, Valignano stated that “the difference between what [he had] found through experience in Japan and [what he was told] . . . [was] like the difference between black and white” (Moran 1993, 34–35). While it was true that there had been considerable success in the thirty years before he arrived, “in the late 1570s, the mission [had] began to falter . . . [because of] the lack of Jesuit workers and leadership from Francisco Cabral as Superior of the mission” (Hoey 2010, 23).

Prior to his visit, the mission in Japan had been administered under the direction of Francisco Cabral for about nine years, following the departure of Francis Xavier from Japan and the death of his successor. As described by Ross, Cabral, “a Portuguese fidalgo who had come to the Indies as a soldier and only then joined the society . . . was devout, disciplined, and full of life” and had “brought a new rigour and vigour to the Society and his years as Superior saw a massive growth in the Church in Japan” (Ross 1994, 50–51). In Kyūshū and throughout southern Japan, Cabral had encouraged missionaries to prioritize conversion of the *daimyō*, who would also have many of their subjects convert upon the *daimyō*’s decision to become Christian (Ross 1994, 53).

Early on in his administration, Cabral wanted to align the mission with his preference for more traditional and orthodox approaches to missionary work (Hoey 2010, 23). As such, he sought to redefine the attitudes and aims of the mission that he took issue with. Cabral openly criticized lax attitudes of missionaries towards dress and methodology that had developed under Xavier’s direction, essentially rejecting “any forms of cultural accommodation whatsoever and [ignoring] those Jesuits who urged him to do otherwise” (Hoey 2010, 24). In all, Cabral had run a mission that had seen great success but had begun to flatline prior to Valignano’s arrival.

Valignano had a great deal of criticism towards Cabral and his management of the mission—something rooted in their different attitudes towards the Japanese. Cabral seemed to hold skepticism towards the Japanese, writing that he had “never seen a people so haughty, avaricious, unreliable, and insincere as the Japanese” (Moran 1993, 101). Although Cabral had been given little direction during the time of his administration, Valignano felt that Cabral directed the mission according to his own discretion instead of following principles set forth in the Society of Jesus’ constitution (Ross 1994, 57). Valignano likely took issue with Cabral’s strict understand-

ing of the Constitutions of the Society's statement that all kinds of people were welcome into the society and that people may be admitted if they have natural gifts given by God and know how to use them (Ignatius 1970, 127–128, 131). While Valignano interpreted this statement as any capable individual was eligible for entry, Cabral's skeptical view of the Japanese may have meant that capable Japanese converts were being overlooked. Division between the Europeans and Japanese had crept in, and while it was not clear if this division was Cabral's intention, "it is quite clear that he held such a poor opinion himself and did nothing to hide it" (Ross 1994, 57). This mismanagement put Valignano in a precarious position with regard to Cabral and how he was going to reform the mission. Ross notes:

In his letters to the General in 1579 and in 1580 we can see Valignano struggling to recognize the fact that while Cabral had been Mission Superior the Christian Church in Japan had grown, and to give credit for this, and yet to explain why he believed that under Cabral's leadership the future of the Society and of the Church was gloomy indeed because of the style of Cabral's government. (Ross 1994, 57)

Cabral was too useful an asset to be dismissed because of his administrative experience and would remain an important part of Valignano's administration of the Indies mission. Valignano, though, had Cabral transferred to serve as the Superior of India on account of his antagonism towards Valignano's vision for Japan. With how prevalent Cabral's attitudes had become within the mission, Valignano understood that changes to the missionaries' attitudes were necessary.

Compared with Cabral's skepticism, Valignano held respect for the Japanese and optimism for the future of the mission. Valignano wrote that the Japanese were "a people all of whom are very subject to reason. . . . And when they become Christians and begin to go to confession they live very well, taking great care of their souls, and to keep our holy law, and with the great desire for salvation, correcting their vices which they had when they were pagans" (Moran 1993, 192). Valignano appeared to hold a positive view of the Japanese and saw potential in their role to help move the mission's work forward. It is from Valignano's differences with Cabral, the lessons learned from Cabral's administration, and his opinions of the Japanese that Valignano found ways to alter the mission's attitudes and trajectory going forward.

### **Valignano and the Japanese Clergy**

One of the most influential changes that Valignano worked to implement was to expand the introduction of native clergy to the missionary work. Even from the time of Xavier, native Japanese converts had served

in a supporting role to the missionaries, assisting the missionaries to teach doctrine and translate religious material (Costa 2007, 71). Converts had even started to be introduced into the Society of Jesus in 1557 without official permission due to constrictions with the Constitutions of the Society that said that the superior general alone held the authority to choose who was able to admit people into the Society (Costa 2007, 71). With no one officially appointed by the general superior of the Society to do so after Francis Xavier's departure, converts were admitted without formal recognition, though this presented little issue (Ignatius 1970, 125). Moran notes that Valignano thought that the Japanese had been shouldering the greatest burden of the missionary work. Despite this burden, they had been given no official training or recognition within the Society of Jesus, had been given no tracts to use in teaching, and had been left to their own devices with little support. To Moran, this was a measure used to maintain European superiority within the Society's hierarchy (Moran 1993, 161). It was clear to Valignano that "under Cabral's leadership . . . deep divisions had developed between the Jesuits and the *dōjuku*" on account of his policies (Hoeoy 2010, 31–32). The *Constitutions* warned against such divisions, saying that charity was a necessary component of unity in the society, as the individual was strengthened "by their getting information and news from one another and by having much intercommunication" (Ignatius 1970, 336–337). Valignano had recognized the inherent differences of the temperaments of the Japanese and European missionaries (the Japanese were slow and calculating in conversation while the Europeans were fast and driven). Alongside emphasizing equal treatment and charity in the Society and the adaptation of the Europeans to Japanese etiquette, he sought to remedy the differences between the two groups by implementing a number of changes to establish the Japanese Jesuits as equals to their European counterparts (Schütte 1985, 290–291).

One of Valignano's main points of contention was his insistence on the quality of the missionaries that were coming to Japan from Europe. "Valignano believed strongly that only the most dedicated, bright and gifted Jesuits should come to" Japan and wanted to avoid the financial and logistical strain of bringing a large number of priests all at once. As such, Valignano started a push for more Japanese converts to be trained as clergymen and be inducted into the Society (Schütte 1985, 292). Valignano pushed for the Japanese to be given the same level of training that Europeans would receive because their ability to speak the language was valuable to the mission. According to Valignano, "God had not . . . given the missionaries the gift of tongues or miracles, and their best linguists were virtually tongue-tied and halting in comparison to their Japanese lay brothers" (Schütte 1985, 87). Valignano's argument was based primarily on the

need for a literate clergy and missionary force. Valignano firmly believed in the efficacy of an indigenous clergy and worked to convince his fellow Jesuits on a logistic and financial level (Hoey 2010, 31). Though it is logical to assume that, with this change, he had also hoped to rectify the damages done under Cabral's administration. Alessandro "understood that Japanese society itself approved of the gradual improvement of one's status, and he wanted to make sure that the *dōjuku* received the same opportunities as part of the Society" (Hoey 2010, 31).

Valignano faced opposition in his arguments, but he planned and pushed for the creation of "three seminaries with about a hundred students each" (Moran 1993, 12) and for the "unqualified admission of Japanese to the Society" (Boxer 1951, 88). Valignano pushed ahead and established a school in Arima in 1580 to train *dōjuku*, with twenty-two students attending during the first year (Hoey 2010, 32). More schools followed, and more Japanese clergy were available to help teach and maintain congregations throughout Japan. With great success "between 1580 and 1603 (Valignano's last year in Japan) the *dōjuku* grew from 100 to 284" (Hoey 2010, 32). Valignano also sought to arm the new brethren with their own texts. With the help of a convert and personal friend named Yohoken Paulo, Valignano managed to produce and print the first religious texts and catechisms made especially for Japanese Christians. This was a champion feat that helped to spur on the proselytizing efforts of the Japanese missionaries.

Behind many of these changes, Valignano seemingly had his own vision for the future of Christianity in Japan. He wanted these new Japanese clergy in training to become preachers to their own brethren and to become the mainstay of the future clergy of Japan (Moran 1993, 13). This future that Valignano saw was one that would one day see the Japanese church operate independent of aid from Europe, with "Christian churches run by the Japanese for the Japanese in a Japanese style—literally a Japanese Catholic Church" (Hoey 2010, 31). Valignano appeared to have been focusing beyond the present state of the mission, something that many missionaries may or may not have thought about day-to-day. As such, Valignano believed his efforts were necessary for the future he wanted to create.

### Criticism of the Valignano's Actions

Valignano's intentions for the indigenization of the clergy faced a considerable amount of opposition within the Jesuit order. Chief among his opponents were two men, Francisco Cabral and João Rodrigues (often referred to as "the Interpreter") that had and would continue to work extensively with him throughout his time in the Indies. These two were high-profile members of the Society in Asia, with Cabral as the former superior of the mission in Japan and Rodrigues as one of the brightest lin-

guistic minds in the mission. Rodrigues served as a personal interpreter for the shoguns Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu (Ross 1994, 112), enabling him to later help Valignano protect converts and missionaries in Japan from the persecution of the Christians (Boxer 1951, 180). Cabral was an opponent towards Valignano's movement to make the Japanese more equal with the Europeans in the Society of Jesus in Japan. Cabral's opposition has somewhat confused historians as Cabral "believed that Japanese preachers were central to the work of conversion, repeatedly asked to be allowed to accept more Japanese as Jesuits, and had high praise for some of the Japanese lay brothers" yet "was opposed to the idea of having Japanese study for the priesthood" (Moran 1993, 161). In Cabral's view, at that time, the Japanese were not necessarily ready for full priesthood and should be accepted into the Society only if necessary; those that were, to him, should be below the Europeans in the hierarchy of the Society (Ross 1994, 55).

Rodrigues had similar reservations and believed that the mission was losing its strength by admitting too many members; in doing so, he believed they were forgetting the points of quality for admittees that St. Ignatius had laid down in the Constitutions for the Society (Ross 1994, 112). The detractors in the Society had attempted to write letters to the Vatican that claimed that Valignano was weakening the missions in the Indies and taking too many of the best European Jesuits to Japan (Üçerler 2003, 339). These efforts failed, and Valignano continued to supervise the mission for many years to come. Valignano recognized the value and experience that men like Cabral and Rodrigues held and, though they opposed his policies, he opted to keep them close to him and in positions of authority.

Valignano's insistence to only bring the best and brightest Jesuits to Japan was also controversial as it not only took away experienced missionaries from other areas (as seen with the detraction letters sent to the Vatican), but also because of his insistence of refusing help from and keeping other monastic orders like the Franciscans out of Japan. Ross notes that Valignano was drawing on the past experience of missionaries in dealing with the many different Buddhist sects and the confusion that was brought to people through different doctrines, attitudes, and proselyting styles. Fearing a potential parallel schism within the Japanese Church, Valignano sought to keep other orders out, since their methodologies could have conflicted with his plan for the church in Japan (Ross 1994, 65). Valignano did not want to risk or contaminate the purity of his vision for the future. Other orders would eventually come of their own accord, but by that point, Valignano had already been able to help rectify many issues he saw within the Society and had laid the course of the mission for the rest of its time in Japan. Modern scholars criticize Valignano's conviction to keep other orders out as politically driven, serving to alone fit his vision of a Catholic

Japan, not just simply Christian (Moran 1993, 190). Ultimately, Valignano believed that it was possible only through his own methods.

The criticisms levied against Valignano both then and in modern times were both fair and important. His contemporary critics, though in part an element of politics within the Society, were all trying to achieve the same goal of bring Christianity to Japan that Valignano had. The differences of means, however, was not what Valignano desired; in moves indicative of some level of hubris, Valignano removed those who contradicted him from the future of Japan's Christianity. In a modern sense, it may be fair to label Valignano an ideologue as he refused to compromise on his vision and removed those that opposed him. Valignano seemingly blamed everything that was wrong with the mission on Cabral and used him as a scapegoat to push Valignano's own reforms onto the mission. With power essentially unchecked, Valignano had the power to do what he wanted and removed detractors to maintain cohesion. Valignano even broke traditional conduct and elected to rely on tax and trade income from Nagasaki to fund the mission despite wishes from the Vatican (Moran 1993, 127). Modern scholarship equally has a responsibility to push back against the tendencies to write idealistically about Valignano and point out where he attempts to reform the mission to his ideals weakened the mission as a whole. To summarize criticism of Valignano, he was focused on his own objectives and employed means he approved of to meet them, at the expense of debate and objections from equally qualified and experienced people.

### **Role of the Local Clergy**

Though largely an indirect impact of his administration, one of Valignano's lasting legacies was the strengthening of Christianity at a local level, especially the local clergy. Through the training of his seminaries, reports stated that the number of *dōjuku* grew to more than five hundred by 1592 (Harrington 1993, 11). From the beginning, the laymen played an invaluable role in the spreading of Christianity and the strengthening of faith at the local level. Even with his preference to European missionaries, Ross notes that under Cabral "the cutting edge of the work, the effective preaching and teaching that led to conversions, was being done by the Japanese *irmaos* (young scholastics) and *dojuku*" (Ross 1994, 51). Valignano remarked that the *dōjuku*, the local preachers, played an invaluable role in the daily running of the Church:

In Japan we call these men *dojuku* who, whether young or old, shave their head, renounce the world and promise to devote themselves to the service of the Church. Some are studying to become religious priests, some others in order to render various household services, which



cannot be performed in Japan save by men who have shaved their heads, such as the office of sacristan, door-keeper, server of chanoyu, messenger, helper at Mass, funerals, Baptisms, and other services of the Church, and in travelling with the Padres. Those among them who are qualified, also help by catechizing, with preaching and with instructing the Christians. These *dojuku* were respected in Japan and are considered clerics. (Ross 1994, 49)

As is evident in Valignano's writings, the laymen had great responsibilities placed on them, so the previously mentioned lack of support and respect they garnered from most of the Europeans is somewhat surprising.

The *dōjuku* themselves were men that garnered respect from locals on account of their birth and training. Many of the early generations of *dōjuku* were sons of local nobility, including many of those that attended Valignano's first seminary (Hoey 2010, 32; Moran 1993, 12–13). The decision to recruit from the nobility likely served two purposes: 1) as an act of friendly diplomacy between the Jesuits and the convert aristocracy and 2) on account of their education and literacy. As friendly connections with converted nobles was a necessary component of continuing missionary efforts, Valignano looked to the sons of nobleman as the ideal candidates for training to become Japan's future priests and ecclesiastical leaders. Because of their status as noblemen, it was these from *dōjuku* that Valignano chose to bring with him on his return trip to Europe in 1582, having them serve as ambassadors for their fathers and countrymen (Moran 1993, 12). In a way, these noblemen *dōjuku* were utilized as political pawns by Valignano to inspire friendly relations with the Japanese and garner support from the Vatican. While more outside of the nobleman may have started to be trained in later times (like Bastian), the decision to train future priests from among the nobility was a practical choice.

Valignano was optimistic for how these *dōjuku* would serve as the future priests of Japan, but he overestimated the time and effort needed to train such a clergy. Though he had left Japan in the early 1580s with optimism about the seminaries' output, in a 1593 letter, he remarked that the *dōjuku* had struggled with their studies and that it would be some time before a native ecclesiastical structure would be able to be organized (Moran 1993, 162–163, 168–169). Even though many of these *dōjuku* lived and studied with Jesuit brethren, it was clear why many—later including Valignano—believed that they weren't ready for full admittance as priests into the Society (Schütte 1985, 39). Valignano had been too optimistic in his vision for these laymen, a defeat that hailed back to warnings from Cabral's administration. Despite the slow progress many of these *dōjuku*



had, the seminaries ultimately trained many laymen who were relied upon to keep the church structure afloat.

Consider the reality that the church in Japan had quickly outgrown the number of missionaries able to administer important sacraments. According to Professor João Paulo Oliveira e Costa of the New University of Lisbon, the Westerners ordinarily had control over how ecclesiastical hierarchy was organized. This trend, however, originated from the influence that the West had in the area (militarily, economically, etc.). In Japan, where Europeans had little effective influence outside of trade, the rapid conversion rate and low influx of trained missionaries necessitated the incorporation of laymen into church duties (Costa 2007, 70–71). Harrington remarked that “in 1579 the ratio of priests to Christians was approximately 1:5,652; in 1588, 1:5,128; and in 1614, 1:3,061,” a disparity that clearly demonstrated how much the Jesuits needed the support of local laymen (Harrington 1993, 20). Costa, similar to Valignano, attributed Christianity’s success to this “native face” of the Church (Costa 2007, 71).

Foremost and most important of the responsibilities placed on these laymen was the administration of baptism. Because baptism marked the beginning of one’s journey in the gospel, the Jesuits placed great emphasis on this sacrament in their teachings and saw to the availability of baptism to meet the demands of Christianity’s incredible growth. Though baptism was the one sacrament that *dōjuku* were allowed to administer, the Jesuits in Japan granted this authority without consultation or permission from Rome (Costa 2007, 73). The rules under which these laymen baptized were laid out very early on in the mission, and the reliance on them to conduct these affairs persisted long into the twilight hours of the Christian century.

Laymen also played an important role as the religious leaders of the local units of the church, the confrarias or brotherhoods. Because traditional congregations and organizational structures like parishes and dioceses could not be immediately organized due to the lack of properly ordained clergy and rising numbers of converts, brotherhoods were organized by local laymen in order to unite and teach the believers (Costa 2007, 75). In the absence of the priests, *dōjuku* lead these local congregations in regular prayer, hymn, and reinforcement of catechism teachings, assisted by lower-rank laymen. Meeting together often in private homes, these local organizations cemented Christianity as a local unifying tradition (Turnbull 1998, 143; Harrington 1993, 20). Costa argued that these confrarias and the strength of local tradition were able to resist the encroachment of the Tokugawa government when persecution began to climax in 1614 (Costa 2007, 77).

Overall, the laymen of the Church played an invaluable role facilitating the growth of Christianity in Japan. Without them, conversions likely

would not have seen the rapid growth in numbers because of the familiarity of native converts leading the local congregations. The growth of the number of *dōjuku* facilitated by Valignano's seminaries was one of the great steps towards his mission of a self-sufficient Japanese church. Though they were relegated to leading local congregations and were barred from administering sacraments other than baptism, this system reinforced the strength of communal Christianity that was able to resist and persist through terrible persecution by the Tokugawa government.

### Laymen and the Hidden Christians

Through the expansion and solidification of local native Christianity, Valignano unknowingly laid the foundation upon which small communities of Christianity would persist through the persecution which vehemently worsened after his death. As greatly detailed by Turnbull in his monograph on the hidden Christians of Ikitsuki, the local organizational structure of the confrarias (brotherhoods) under the oversight of *dōjuku* and other laymen would evolve into the communal Christian tradition of the *kakure kirishitan* led by community leaders (Turnbull 1998, 70–71). The traditions of communal prayer and worship reinforced over multiple generations of Christians from the beginning of the mission continued largely unchanged long after Westerners were forced out, only now being conducted in secret. Prayers were passed orally from generation to generation of community leaders, surprisingly with little corruption over the course of nearly three centuries. Turnbull carefully noted, however, that the meaning of the words of these prayers had been lost over time and simply became part of local ritual (Turnbull 1998, 143).

Similarly, the focus of Valignano's catechism teachings were evident in the continued and forgotten traditions of worship. Turnbull states that "the sacrament of the Eucharist was one of the first casualties at the persecution of Christians in Japan," and, "with no priests available to say mass, its performance would almost certainly have ceased" (Turnbull 1998, 167). Baptism continued to be practiced in waters deemed sacred and capable of miraculous healing (Harrington 1994, 49). Community worship and festivals were regularly celebrated that hailed back to several Catholic holidays (Harrington 1994, 57–68). In the perpetuation of these practices, "the continuation of a personal expression of faith performed within a mutually supportive lay organization compensated for the [long] absence of priests" these communities faced (Turnbull 1998, 79).

The continuation and preservation of these traditions and communities would not have been possible without the influence of the *dōjuku* trained as a result of Valignano's seminaries. While they had been in a supporting

role to the Western brethren before 1614, the *dōjuku* eventually took on an administrative role when it became increasingly dangerous for Westerners to be moving within Japan. Ultimately, it was to them that the fate of the Church would fall. As previously mentioned, these were men like Bastian, a *dōjuku* who played an important role in the communities south of Nagasaki in the 1650s. Though an extraordinary character, Bastian can be seen as an archetype of these *dōjuku* and laymen who were left to lead the church.

Bastian, who had received training and been serving in his community in Fukabori, became a travelling companion of a Western preacher named Juan. Though little is known about Juan's true identity, Juan and Bastian served together among Christian communities near Nagasaki through the 1650s in secret and eventually became martyrs to those they taught (Turnbull 1998, 117). Aside from his prophecies introduced earlier, Bastian was also known for his administrative reform to the calendar for some of these communities. Following the death of Juan, Bastian was left to lead and advise the communities, a task which he struggled with, especially in the administration of holidays and feasts. After fasting for twenty-one days, Bastian reported that he had a vision in which Juan had appeared and taught him when and how to administer the holidays (Turnbull 1998, 119; Harrington 1993, 36). According to Bastian, Juan instructed him to use the feast of Annunciation, a feast occurring halfway through Lent, as the point to derive the dates of other holidays since the feast always fell on the spring equinox when following the lunar calendar. This calendar system attributed to Bastian remained the basis for festival calendars for a number of communities and one of his lasting legacies (Harrington 1993, 36–37; Turnbull 1998, 138–140).

Through *dōjuku* like Bastian, the church continued and slowly transformed into the communities of worship that would be observed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their status as those that had been instructed and authorized to lead by Western brethren was clearly recognized as the decisions made like Bastian's calendar had lingering effects and acceptance within the local communities. Similarly, many of the *dōjuku* were remembered and celebrated as martyrs by these communities. As such, these *dōjuku* and other laymen played leading and lasting roles in the development of these communities. As seen through their prominence in the communities and decisive focus on communal worship, baptism, and catechetical teachings, the evidence seems to demonstrate the residual effects of Valignano's administrative decisions from the 1580s on these communities.

## Conclusion

So, what did Valignano manage to accomplish by making decisions to expand the native clergy? While views of cause-and-effect relationships of historical events are something to be cautious of in historian's work, what is not disputed is that the number of Christian converts in Japan grew from 130,000 in the 1570s to around 300,000 by 1614 (Ross 1994, 87). Additionally, though the admittance of Japanese converts in the Society stemmed back to 1557, in just thirty-three years (1590), seventy Japanese converts had become brothers within the order, accounting for half of Jesuits in Japan and fifteen percent of all Jesuits who were working in Asia" (Costa 2007, 71). These numbers were quite impressive and indicative of the success that the mission had achieved in the years since Valignano's first four-year visit, as well as the success of Valignano's desire to increase the number of indigenous clergy.

Though, crediting Valignano or any of the Jesuit missionaries as solely responsible for this great success of Christianity in Japan would be disingenuous to the historical record. As beautifully said by Costa, "the reason for this success from a religious perspective was the real conversion of thousands of Japanese to the Gospel and the decision of hundreds of them to take an active role in the support of their religious lives" (Costa 2007, 73). When the persecution of the Christians heavily and violently escalated in Japan in 1614, it was individual faith and communal support that allowed Christianity to continue to survive in hiding, even long after the Jesuits and other Christian orders were expelled in Japan. Valignano's facilitation of the training and expansion of the native clergy gave the people the knowledge and self-empowerment to teach amongst themselves and allow Christianity to take root and become uniquely Japanese. Though, his vision for an independent Christian Japan would not come to fruition. The drive for that vision, however, created a Christianity that was able to endure among the hidden Christians all the way until Western missionaries were able to re-enter Japan in the mid-nineteenth century.

While Valignano's administration was rife with internal conflict and criticism inside and outside the Jesuit order, he was able to fight through anti-Japanese attitudes and establish a long-standing Japanese clergy. In his own way, he was able to achieve the Society's goal "to preach, hear confessions, and use all the other means it can with the grace of God to help souls" by helping create the environment for the Japanese to testify and convert their fellow brethren (Ignatius 1970, 172). If one were to compare Valignano to a brewer trying to create beer on his own, his training as a Jesuit had taught him a traditional recipe for European Christianity. In Japan, though he had the recipe, he had to improvise with the ingredients and

environment available to him. Rather than opting to make the European recipe work on his own, Valignano chose to train those with familiarity to the environment, the *dōjuku*, to be those handling the ingredients. Valignano elected the course for Christianity to brew in Japan, but as the native clergy did the work, Japan had created its own form of Christianity on home brew, distinctly Japanese but Christian nonetheless. As Moran stated in the closing statements of his book on Valignano, “It was the Father Visitor, more than anyone else, who taught the missionaries that becoming a follower of Christ does not mean becoming a European or ceasing to be Japanese” (Moran 1993, 192).

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# दहेज: Dowry and Its Repercussions on Indian Society

*Lindy Miller*

**I**n Dudu, a small village in the Indian state of Rajasthan, the bodies of three sisters and their children were found at the bottom of a well in the spring of 2022. Kalu, Kamlesh, and Mamta Meena stated in their suicide letter, “We don’t wish to die but death is better than their abuse. Our in-laws are the reason behind our deaths. We are dying together because it’s better than dying every day” (CBS 2022).

The Meena sisters married three brothers of the same family as child brides. As is the custom in rural areas, the sisters stayed in their family homes after marriage until their 20s and then moved in with their husbands’ family, bringing their dowries with them. For years, the sisters’ husbands and in-laws physically beat and verbally abused them in order to extract more dowry. The abuse worsened when the sisters’ family was unable to meet the growing demands. Sardar Meena, the sisters’ father, stated, “We had already given them so many things, you can see them in their home” (CBS 2022). He described the beds, TV, and refrigerator he had gifted to his daughters’ husbands. “I am the father of six girls, there is a limit to how much I can give. I had educated them and just doing that was difficult” (CBS 2022).

The difficulty and stigma of divorce trapped the sisters in their abusive relationships. “Once they were married, we thought they should remain in their marital homes, to maintain the dignity of the family,” Sardar said. Sardar retrieved the bodies of Mamta and Kamlesh, who were both pregnant, and Kalu and her two young boys: four-year-old Harshit and an infant. The



police arrested the three brothers, their mother, and sister on charges of dowry harassment and dowry deaths.

The efforts made by the Indian government to eradicate the practice of dowry have been unsuccessful. Why has dowry maintained its hold on Indian society, and how can the government mitigate its damaging and sometimes deadly effects? While the root of this problem can be traced back to patriarchy, dowry can be used as a microcosm to better understand why certain patriarchal practices have maintained prevalence despite development and government discouragement. This paper argues that by transitioning from prohibition to heavy regulation, the government could create better support for those who experience dowry abuse. Legalization creates opportunities for better management and documentation, providing legal aid for women before abuse can occur.

### Context

In 1961, India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act. However, dowry has continued to be practiced and, in fact, increased over the decades (Chiplunkar et al 2021). The Prohibition Act defines dowry as “any property or valuable security” given by either party in connection with a marriage. Dowry, or *dahej* in the Hindi language, is the transfer of wealth from the household of the bride to that of her groom. Dowry, to a large extent, drives who will marry whom in India. High-value grooms—men with higher education, proper caste, upstanding family, a government job, fair complexion, or with greater height—can demand more in dowry.

In the past, dowry looked different. Because married women would move out, parents rarely gave them immovable property in their inheritance. Instead, they gave movable property that they could take with them at the time of marriage. As they moved into their new household, they brought a sort of pre-mortem inheritance. Technically, the dowry is the bride’s property. However, dowry has evolved in a patriarchal environment, becoming something to secure a marriage and benefit the in-laws rather than the bride. Women no longer have control over their inheritance, and in most cases, it is no longer considered an inheritance at all.

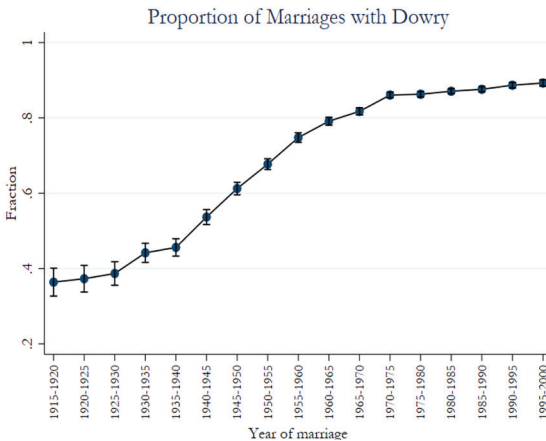
Despite being illegal, dowry remains a significant problem in India. Husbands and their families demand excessive transfers of wealth and gifts from their in-laws as a part of the marriage agreement. These demands can involve significant abuse, violence, and even murder. Most cases of dowry harassment take place among Northern, middle-class families. In 2022, 6,753 women died—almost 20 every day—due to dowry harassment. This includes women who were murdered or felt compelled to take their own lives (National Crime Records Bureau 2021). Compared to the 1.4 billion people currently living in India, this figure seems statistically

small. However, the patriarchal system and the apathy of many in law enforcement result in many unreported or unprosecuted cases, and the abuse doesn't always end in death. In addition to murder and harassment of brides, there are many cases of dowry-related infanticide. Dowry abuse is prevalent enough to shape Indian culture and media, often making an appearance in Bollywood cinema.

Despite the dangers dowry can bring, it also can have positive impacts on some of the women and families who participate in it. Women who bring dowry into the marriage are less likely to experience poverty and often have more say in the family finances (Teays, 1991). This tends to be more correlative than causative—wealthy families buying their daughters' marriage into wealthy families—but dowry gifting can help secure economic security. It can give less “desirable” brides a chance to compete for “better” grooms. But with these benefits come a host of potential problems, which largely stem from dowry greed. While beneficial to some, in the modern practice of dowry, “brides are more often controlled by rather than controllers of property” (Teays 1991).

Dowry practice has seen a significant increase over the years, even after its prohibition in 1961. While the increase has tapered recently, as shown in Figure 1, 90% of Indians continue to practice dowry (Chiplunkar et al 2021). In nearly every other case across the world, countries abandon dowry as they develop economically. What makes India different? The many crimes and tragedies associated with dowry and its unmodern, shameful appearance create a significant incentive for the government to take steps towards ending the practice. Why has the legislative effort failed?

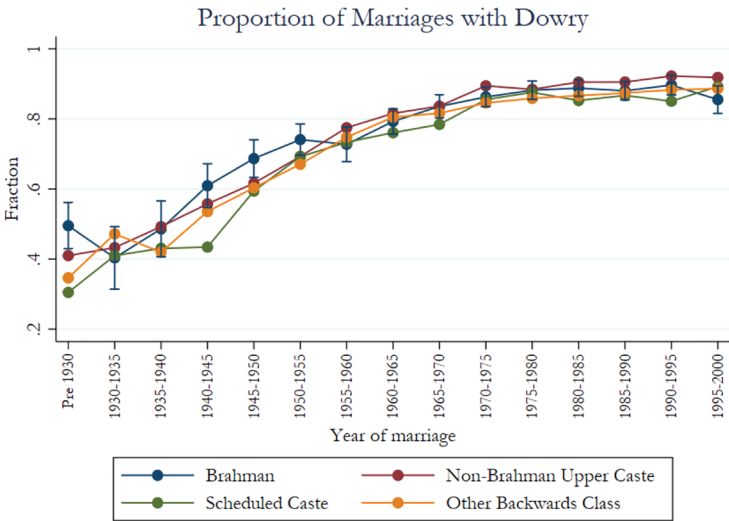
Figure 1. Chiplunkar et al, 2021



**Sanskritization Theory**

Some have proposed Sanskritization as an explanation. A term coined by Prof. M.N. Srinivas, an Indian sociologist, Sanskritization refers to the process of adoption of upper caste practices into lower castes as an effort to increase standing. Traditionally, dowry was practiced among the priestly Brahmin caste, the highest and most powerful within the caste system. Hoping for social mobility, lower castes began to emulate the upper castes, adopting traditions and practices such as dowry. Its practice has increased in all classes, so it could explain some micro-level behavior. If Sanskritization alone explained the rise in dowry practice, we would see the rise concentrated in the lower castes. When separating the rise of dowry by caste, there is a consistent rise between caste groupings.

**Figure 2. Chiplunkar et al, 2021**

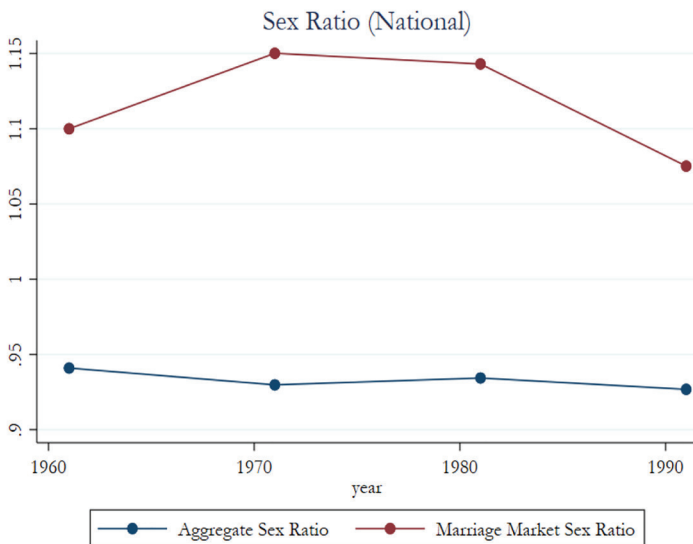


**Marriage Squeeze Theory**

The second theory is labeled the marriage squeeze, which explains the rise in dowry practice through population imbalance. In 1990, the sex ratio in India was 94 women for every 100 men (Chiplunkar et al, 2021). But the marriage market sex ratio—sex ratio based on average marriageable age—shows a switch in the competing vs competed for sex, 107 women for every 100 men. Men traditionally get married at an older age than women:

25 years and 19 years, respectively. As India's population grows exponentially, each generation's population is larger than the last; thus, there are more women of marriageable age than men. There is a greater population of women than men looking to get married. Apply the laws of supply and demand, and it can be assumed that women and their families, looking to compete for grooms, turned to dowry. This theory is not wholly satisfying, as there is flexibility in the marriage age, but it could explain some pressures that women and their families experience.

Figure 3. Chiplunkar et al, 2021



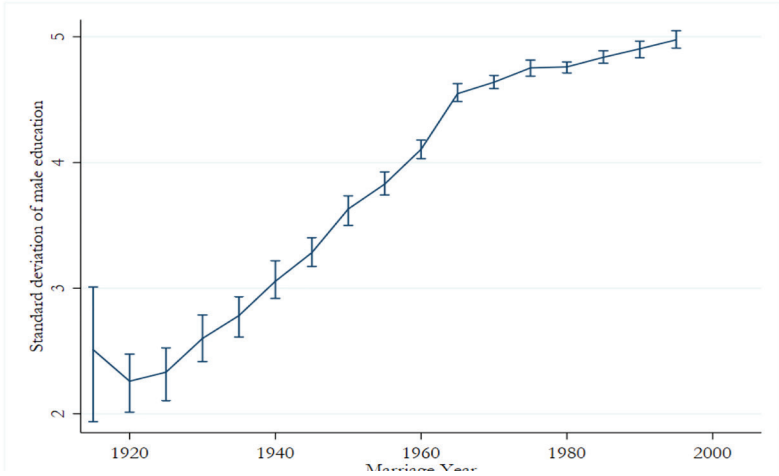
### Groom Price Theory

The third theory is the idea of groom price. Often, the dowry amount agreed upon directly correlates to the groom's "market price." To determine a groom's price, various factors are considered: Is he from an acceptable caste? Does he have a good job? Did he go to a good school? As India developed, as shown in Figure 4, education became more accessible; as a result, the average groom's price increased, and dowry became more widespread. At the same time, if a dowry negotiation failed, women and their families were now more likely to find another groom with similar qualities, creating a more negotiable dowry. While dowry practice has increased,

high-value dowry payments are declining. What used to be almost two years of annual income has dropped to one in recent years (Chiplunkar et al, 2021), making dowry cheaper. Dowry can be practiced by more because now it is affordable and therefore accessible. This theory, though still imperfect, has proven to be the most stable when applying it to the big picture.

Figure 4. Chiplunkar et al, 2021

Dispersion of education (overall)



No single explanation can diagnose an issue this complicated, but the underlying patterns supporting dowry over the years are helpful when attempting. For most Indians, when asked why they practice dowry, they would credit tradition, the same reason you might get if you asked brides in the Western world why they wear white. But this practice goes much deeper because of the economics and social systems to which it is connected. Families often pay over Rs. 30,000 for their daughters’ marriage, about \$370 USD, or the equivalent of a full year’s worth of wages. In turn, families encourage their sons to receive more in dowry, perhaps giving them more education, to recover or exceed their losses.

The vicious cycle is this: Women are considered an economic burden on her husband’s family, despite the large amount of unpaid labor she provides, and so dowry is given as a way to “make up for” the supposed burden. Her family, a full year’s salary poorer, sees proof of the economic burden of women. Her in-laws, a full year’s salary richer, see proof of the economic boon of having a son. This perpetuated cycle, along with groom price, is more than enough to maintain and grow dowry practice. It also contributes to the rate of female infanticide. The price of gold is one way

to track this connection. Ninety percent of dowry payments include gold (Chiplunkar et al 2021), and studies show that dowry costs rise almost proportionally with gold prices, with no change in earnings or cost of living (Teays 1991). As gold becomes more expensive, dowry becomes more expensive, which in turn makes daughters more expensive. After 1985, a 1% rise in the global price of gold led to an extra 33,000 “missing” female births over the next few years (National Crime Records Bureau). Tests to determine a fetus’ sex are illegal in India for this reason, but it is common for families to pay a doctor for the service.

### **Exploring Solutions**

Because dowry is a large contributor to the accepted worth of women and girls in society, it needs to be minimized as much as possible, either through fewer or cheaper dowries. There are many hurdles in accomplishing this. Though the Dowry Prohibition Act specifies that Dowry Prohibition Officers should “prevent, as far as possible, the taking or abetting the taking of, of the demanding of, dowry,” there have been very few cases of action being taken against dowry by officers, and it continues to be demanded and paid openly. The 90% of Indians practicing dowry includes those in law enforcement. The government is fighting thousands of years of cultural and religious practice with an ineffective and inconsistent police force. What is the benefit of the law if there is no enforcement? Can a new law be written regarding dowry?

By switching the focus from prohibiting dowry to regulating dowry, the Indian government can better achieve the goals that motivated the Prohibition Act. Better records mean better data for further studies. Additionally, requiring a written contract and evidence of negotiated price could increase a woman’s standing in her home. The records then would act as a prenuptial agreement, making dowry a woman’s inheritance again. This would give her greater say in the family’s finances, and in the case of abuse, she would have property that she can take with her if she needs to escape a harmful situation. Including a cap on the expense of dowry, such as a percent of the family’s annual income, would minimize the importance of dowry on a marriage agreement. Cheaper dowry would mean less expensive daughters, hopefully decreasing sex-selective abortion and infanticide. If groom price is a large driver of dowry, then a focus on increasing the worth of brides could balance the scales. Education for women could help create that balance. When confronting problems with deep cultural roots, legislation must be flexible. With better records, the Indian government can track the effects of the new laws and adjust accordingly.

Expanding the dowry question exposes the fact that prohibiting deeply ingrained cultural practices does not always give the expected outcomes. But by using cultural fluency and working with the traditions of the area, governments can steer the practices and minimize violence against minority and marginalized groups. Exploring the theories behind dowry's continued hold on Indian society creates well-informed and effective actions. The theories of Sanskritization and groom price would call for vastly different solutions, one focusing on upper caste behavior, and the other looking at the socioeconomic and education status of a wider population. While there continues to be need for further research, through case study and historical comparisons, the stories of the women affected—women like Kalu, Kamlesh, and Mamta Meena—are enough to prove the need for change.

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# How the West is Represented in Modern Fictional Chinese Dramas

The Real Life Political and Economic Influences Over the Past Decade on Western Representation in Fictional Chinese Television Dramas

*Natalie Lyman Shields*

## **Abstract**

Lois Tyson once said, “Neither human events (in the political or personal domain) nor human productions (from nuclear submarines to television shows) can be understood without understanding the specific historical circumstances in which those events and productions occur” (Tyson 2006, 54). To parrot Lois Tyson, in order to understand human productions such as modern Chinese dramas, one must understand the specific historical circumstances set around those story plots. This paper will dive into how the West is represented in modern fictional Chinese dramas. In order to do this, this paper will explore the cultural and political circumstances at the time that affected these fictional stories. When referring to the ‘West’ in this paper, it will include Westerners and their cultural norms from the years 2014 to 2022. In these fictional worlds of modern Chinese dramas, Western education is seen as desirable. However, Western morals are typically portrayed as low. Throughout the past hundred years or so, the Chinese people have traditionally accommodated Westerners, but gradually, the portrayal of the West in fictional dramas has started to shift to where the West is seen to accommodate the Chinese people in terms of language and business functions.

## **Introduction**

Media theorist Denis McQuail explained in 2010 the importance of social media when evaluating a country’s ideologies: “Mass media can often

be thought of as a metaphorical mirror, reflecting myriad events in social and physical worlds . . . media [can] hold up a faithful reflection of the current societal norms, and social structures” (Eastin 2014, 233). While the narratives of these dramas are fictional, this form of mass media is seen as a reflection on the social norms of the times. I have chosen three modern fictional Chinese dramas to illustrate how the West is represented in these stories. While these are fictional narratives of interactions with Westerners, according to McQuail’s claim these dramas demonstrate how China as a country feels about the West. The three dramas chosen span over eight years but all focus on a similar narrative of office romance. The first drama is *Boss & Me*, the second, *Go Go Squid*, and the third is *Master of My Own*. For consistency’s sake, these dramas will be referred to by their English titles.

### ***Boss & Me***

The first drama *Boss & Me* in Mandarin is known as *Shan Shan lai le* 杉杉来了 (Gu, 2014). This 2014 drama became one of the most successful dramas up to date. On YouTube it has 17,933,3387 views and over 40,000 likes on the first episode alone. While YouTube is banned in China, it is used here for this primary purpose of demonstrating the international success Chinese dramas have. In terms of domestic comments, *Boss & Me* have approximately 117,521 comments, making it a popular TV show during the year 2014. That same year, the leading actress Zhao Li Ying won Most Popular Actress in a TV show for her role of Shan Shan in *Boss & Me* during the 6th China TV Drama Awards. Currently she is the most watched actor with her dramas combined with over 110 billion views, and has only grown in popularity since 2014. The leading man of the show, Zhang Han, won Most Popular Television Actor at the Star Moon Award Ceremony, along with the Asian Star Award at the 10th Seoul International Drama Awards for his role of Feng Teng in the drama. Between the two stars, *Boss & Me* received major critical acclaim both internationally and domestically.

*Boss & Me* is a drama following the love life of naive, yet sweet, ingénue Shan Shan who works as an accountant for Feng Teng Company where she meets and falls in love with the devilishly handsome boss, Feng Teng. While he is calm and put together, she is common in appearance and her clumsy attempts at love make her an incredibly lovable character, leaving the audience cheering for her success which she eventually gains during her Cinderella transformation into a competent businesswoman.

The show itself often discusses Western education as six characters in the show received their education from prestigious Western schools such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and the University of Chicago. Each of them studied business and returned to China in this fictionalized account

to become successful entrepreneurs who are named among the Shanghai elite of the time due to their Western education that allowed them to get a head up on the business competition due to their fluency in English. As the only character without a prestigious Western education, Shan Shan is often shown struggling in international settings as her status isn't as high without a Western education to back her. This shows how desirable a Western education was to Chinese people at the time.

As Shan Shan starts dating her wealthy boss Feng Teng, he is shown to do all his business transactions wholly in English, without a translator. Throughout the drama, he flies to Western countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom in order to complete business negotiations due to his competent ability in the international business language of English. His interactions with American companies specifically are highly successful. This reflects the financial status between China and the United States at that time. In 2010, China became an international powerhouse, second only to the United States. During this time, China became the most worked-with trade partner to the United States in terms of international business. Consequently, this drama shows economic prosperity and mutual trade agreement between the two countries. *Boss & Me* shows successful business negotiations between the two countries, and throughout the drama the United States is portrayed as a good and honest trading partner whose success has come from a good Western education system.

While the United States appears in this drama to be in China's good graces, Great Britain, on the other hand, is not portrayed as kindly. Chinese dramas of this era typically view Western education as desirable and even necessary for a successful career in elite business; however, Western morals are typically portrayed as low, with Westerners themselves as aggressive. In this drama, Great Britain receives the lowest blow when their morals are portrayed as despicable on the screen.

In episode 19, a young woman named Li Shu, who unsuccessfully vies for Feng Teng's romantic attention, goes to London on a business trip with Feng Teng and his best friend. When Li Shu enters a pub in London, she is approached by a drunk British man asking to buy her a drink and is offended by his approach. In this scene, the young British man is portrayed as aggressive when he boldly asks a young Chinese woman to go for a drink with him. In Chinese culture it is too abrasive to invite an unacquainted woman at a bar to get a drink, whereas in Western culture buying someone a drink at a bar is a fairly common exchange. This interaction between the young Chinese woman and the young British man was not added into the drama casually; this scene sounds similar to the embarrassment of the One Hundred Years of Humiliation which dealt with the

interactions of a young country named Great Britain with an older beautiful country known as Qing China.

In recent years, the slogan “Never Forget National Humiliation” was adopted by the CCP government. Zheng Wang, an associate professor in the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University and a global fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in his book *Never Forget National Humiliation* evaluates the Chinese ideology by claiming, “The legitimacy of China’s current rulers is highly dependent upon successful performance on the international stage” (Wilkinson 2022, 189). In order to bolster China on the international stage, the idea of legitimacy lands on the idea of dignity which, for hundreds of years, was tarnished by the imperial British (Wilkinson 2022, 6). With the CCP government pushing the slogan forward in 2014, the scene between a young Chinese woman being accosted by a British man was likely put into the drama to reflect the cultural slogan of the time. This slogan specifically targets the British imperialists and portrays the West (in particular Great Britain) with a good education system but with low morals and brutish manners. The popular reception nationwide in China to the drama reflects the government’s resentment towards the West for China’s One Hundred Years of Humiliation and how the people received it openly.

### ***Go Go Squid!***

The second fictional Chinese drama to analyze is *Go Go Squid!*, known in its native language *Qin'ai de, Re'ai de* 亲爱的, 热爱的 (Mo 2019). This 2019 drama was an all-time hit and won Drama of the Year at the China New Entertainment New Consumer Annual Summit and Best Drama at the China College Students Television Festival. The main actress, Yang Zi, won the Outstanding Actress at the 6th Actors of China Award Ceremony and Most Watched Actress at the 8th China Student Television Festival for her work in the title role Tong Nian, nicknamed “Little Squid.” Li Xian, the male lead of the show won Most Popular Actor of the Year by GQ Men of the Year China for the creation of his role Han Shangyan. Internationally, the drama won critical acclaim with 12,280,991 views and over 83,000 likes on the first episode. Domestically it was a success as well with 423,824 domestic comments, almost four times more than *Boss & Me*.

*Go Go Squid!* follows an office drama of a young entrepreneur, Han Shangyan, who creates a company of his dreams and encounters by chance a young content creator, Tong Nian, who is unaware of how Han Shangyan’s business works. In order to curry his favor, she learns the ropes of his business and becomes his trusted confidant. Her sweet attitude and respect for everyone she meets melts his cold demeanor, revealing a caring and understanding boss who only wants the best for his employees.

This drama is one of the first to ever show a foreigner doing business fully in the Mandarin language without a translator or a voice over. The business language is shown for the first time as starting to revolve around Chinese speakers and not catering to foreign businesses in the international business language of English. It should be mentioned that the character Han Shangyan also was fluent in English, with some conversations done in English to demonstrate his Western education and Shanghai elite status.

The introduction of a foreigner speaking fully in Mandarin for business deals is reflective of the economic influence China began to have on the international business scene starting in 2019. Due to economic prosperity, China started attracting foreign businesses in high quantities (Morrison 2015). With such a high demand for business deals with Chinese companies, many foreign companies are starting to use the Chinese language in order to appeal more to the Mainland-based companies. Economically, the following year was also important for China: “Despite a year when the Covid-19 pandemic plunged major world economies into recession, China’s economy expanded 2.3% in 2020” (He 2021). While the rest of the world was economically hit, China was able to expand their economy: “Ning Jizhe, head of the statistics bureau [of China] . . . said in 2020 the size of China’s economy surpassed 100 trillion yuan, or the equivalent of \$15.4 trillion, while GDP per capita topped \$10,000 for the first time” (Cheng 2021). The development of the economy during a worldwide pandemic drew more international business to China, increasing the demand for Mandarin speakers to represent foreign companies in China (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2020).

On January 1, 2020, the Foreign Investment Law of the People’s Republic of China (FIL) came into effect (Chen 2021). The FIL was designed to encourage foreign investment in China and international trade to bolster up the economy (Jiang 2022). In terms of the economy opening more international trade, “the FIL reaffirms China’s basic policy of opening up to foreign investment, encourages foreign investment in China, implements policies on higher-level investment liberalization and proclaims a commitment to building a stable, transparent, reliable and fair market environment” (Chen 2021). The FIL continues to encourage foreign investments in China, which can be seen in this drama. One main foreign investment company is shown in *Go Go Squid*, but multiple are also mentioned through the show as competitors to the foreign company that Han Shangyan works closely with. Due to more foreign companies using Mandarin to do business, international companies were typically seen in a good light by the general public, as this drama shows. Many of the foreigners in this drama even become good friends of the main characters, which is the case in real-life business dealings with foreigners.

### *Master of My Own*

The final drama to analyze is the 2022 drama *Master of My Own*, or in Mandarin *Qing Jiao Wo Zongjian* 请叫我总监 (Hu 2022). Unlike the other two dramas, this drama has yet to receive any awards as no award ceremonies have been held since its recent release as of December 2022. While no rewards have been given yet, it did do fairly well domestically with 46,625 comments. On YouTube as of November 2022, international audiences received it well with the first episode having 18,000 likes and 1,858,710 views alone.

The plot of *Master of My Own* also revolves around an office romance like the previous two dramas, following secretary Ning Meng, played by Tan Songyun, a Forbes China 30 under 30 actress, who leaves her overbearing boss, Lu Ji Ming, played by Lin Gengxin who has appeared in several number one box office hits himself, to become a successful businesswoman herself. Their toxic relationship of boss and employee withers away as they become business partners who respect and deeply care for each other; the story follows their love story until the last episode when they confess their love for each other.

While international trade is indicated through the plot, this is the only drama of the three reviewed that does not show a single Westerner in the drama. This is partly due to Covid-19 restrictions that caused many foreigners to leave China in order to avoid the zero-Covid policies or many who were unable to return to China due to border restriction (Klein 2022). From 2020 to now, the Chinese government has started to push the idea that foreigners are no longer considered vital to the nation's economic progress, and the country should be self-sufficient. One way the government is progressing this ideology is portraying the West in a poor light through fictional media, as seen in this drama. The West is viewed as prejudiced, full of racism, and backwards in thinking in comparison to the open market and intelligent Chinese in recent media. The highly valued Western education that was once viewed as essential to succeed in international business in this drama is portrayed as corruptible. The idea of Western morality as low is reflected in a character in the drama named Jason.

In this drama, the female character Ning Meng becomes romantically involved with a former college classmate of hers named Jason. As a young student at college in China, he was the top student of his class and viewed as extremely honorable and trustworthy. After graduation, he moved to the United States to work on Wall Street before moving back to China for better employment. In episode 11, Jason confides to Ning Meng that he was a victim of racism when finding a job in the United States, and most of his American co-workers looked down on him due to his Chinese morals. This interaction between the two characters demonstrates how the perspective

of Western morals of being low are shown recently in fictional dramas. This show reflects the negative bias the government has been pushing through art lately in China, particularly towards their biggest trade partner.

As current chairman of China Xi Jin Ping put it, the country “will never again tolerate being bullied by any nation” (Buckley 2021). While the United States did not humiliate China like Great Britain did during the Hundred Years of Humiliation, China does not tolerate the United States bullying itself into other countries’ problems, and these politician tensions are starting to be shown in the fictional drama worlds (Mitter 2021).

Jason, as a character, is used to demonstrate how Western beliefs corrupt Chinese youth. As the plot continues, Jason, who worked in the United States, admits to dealing in illegal trades—something he learned from his time in the United States. However, he comes to his senses when his pure Chinese girlfriend Ning Meng, who has no contact with the Western world, reminds him of his trustworthy Chinese-like manner of interacting honorably with people. In a moment of desperation, he is reminded of his upbringing through the Chinese education systems and the morals it taught him. He becomes a decent person and turns himself into the police. As a character, Jason is reflective of the current cultural belief that Western values corrupt the pure Chinese morality. The drama ends with Ning Meng proclaiming her love to a respectable hard-working Chinese man who has no international business dealings with any United States companies, and her Americanized boyfriend, Jason, behind bars.

## Conclusion

To summarize, the West was once considered by many as fashionable with its culture and education a decade or so ago and was reflected in dramas such as *Boss & Me*. Some dramas demonstrated respect for the West but also the need for international companies to cater to Chinese needs as seen in *Go Go Squid*. However, due to modern economics and government policy changes, Chinese fictional dramas have started reflecting the view that the West needs to start learning from China as Western ethics and morals are low, as seen in the drama *Master of My Own*.

In conclusion, Lois Tyson stated the following about art:

“[Art] does not exist in some timeless, aesthetic realm as an object to be passively contemplated. Rather, like all cultural manifestations, it is a product of the socioeconomic and hence ideological conditions of the time and place in which it was written, whether or not the author intended it so. Because human beings are themselves products of their socioeconomic and ideological environment, it is assumed that authors cannot help but create works that embody ideology in some form” (Tyson 2006, 55).



Each fictional drama mirrors something politically, socioeconomically, or culturally in its plot, whether the creators did so intentionally or not. As more cultural push and government influence appears in Chinese fictional dramas, it is likely that Chinese dramas will continue to reflect poorly on Western countries and the ideas they represent.

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# Asian American Identity and Museum Collections

*Natasha Wang*

## **Introduction**

In June of 2022, the Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture Act was passed in Congress (Commission to Study 2022, 117-140):

As part of the report, the Commission will need to address:

- (A) The availability and cost of collections to be acquired and housed in the Museum
- (B) The impact of the Museum on existing Asian Pacific American history-related museums. (Hirono 2022)

While the national museum would include Pacific American history and culture, this paper will only address Asian American museums and collections. Among the Asian American museums and collections that currently exist are mostly limited to groups that fall under the umbrella term of Asian American, a geographic region in the United States, or collecting criteria, scope, or policy that is inadequately defined. If existing Asian American museums are having difficulties defining the parameters of their collections, then this presents a major issue for the much larger national museum. This paper examines four examples of existing Asian American museums: The Museum of Chinese in America in New York, the Filipino American Historical Society Museum in Stockton, California, the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles, and the Japanese American Museum in Oregon.

A contributing factor to poorly defined collection policies is that the term Asian American, in reference to identity at this point, is much too broad, inconsistently defined, and actively changing. One needs to understand the history and dialogue around Asian American identity to understand the full impact of an Asian American museum. First, how we define Asia is already complicated, creating its own issues, but adding the layer of national identity makes defining and understanding Asian American identity very complex. The term encompasses a vast and diverse group of people whose day-to-day experiences are not unified, until they are faced with discrimination and violence.

Museums are places where cultural memory is preserved, and identity is negotiated and formed. As a result, an Asian American museum poses a great opportunity to form and shape or further fracture and blur Asian American identity. Museums fill a role in preserving memory and forming identity through its housing and use of collections. All museums are legally defined as having and using collections to achieve specific goals. Collections also require management policies that include collecting scope and criteria. Acquisitions adhering to a policy ensures objects are evaluated consistently and will directly support the museum's purpose and mission. But without a clear collecting scope, criteria, or policy, the National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture will have a hard time supporting and achieving the mission of educating the public on Asian American history and culture and preserving Asian American cultural heritage.

While an Asian American museum faces unique challenges in organizing and creating policies to manage their collections, there are other museums that can serve as examples of possible ways Asian Americans can be represented. Even so, as a distinctive and living culture, those models cannot and will not be a perfect way to organize an Asian American museum or its collections.

### **Asian American Museums and Collections in the United States**

First, there are not very many "Asian American collections" that currently exist. Most collections are more specific to ethnicity or nationality such as Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, et cetera. Currently, collections that are deemed as Asian American have broad definitions that include the process of an immigrant becoming American, both in legal status and culturally. This phenomenon extends to museums in that 'Asian American' is the becoming, but begins with a specific nationality or ethnicity. This paper does not address the full scope of all the different Asian American museums across the United States; however, I will highlight a few. I was able to contact a few Asian American museums about their collections' policies or I found them online available to the public.

*The Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York*

The MOCA's mission is "a full-time, professionally staffed not for profit museum dedicated to the reclaiming, preserving, and presenting the history and culture of people of Chinese descent in the United States. Through its thought-provoking exhibits and programs, MOCA encourages dialogue among people of all cultural backgrounds" (Collections 2022). (This mission is supported with additional guidelines, including for acquisitions and accessioning. Aside from general practice for these processes, like legality and ethical binds, the MOCA has a single guideline pertaining to their collecting scope. That guideline is that "the Museum can accept only those items that are pertinent to its mission" (Collections 2022). The guidelines and mission of the MOCA allow for a lot of room for interpretation. While getting more clarification in a phone call with Harvey Ngai, a collections associate at the MOCA, he said that objects directly from China or of Chinese origin would not be considered for potential acquisition unless it had a compelling connection to, or history of, being related to a person of Chinese descent in America. Additionally, the terms 'people of Chinese descent' and 'Chinese American' were used interchangeably. This ultimately means the legal status of one's citizenship does not impact whether one is considered "Chinese American."

The MOCA collection's policy also addresses material types of objects that they would be willing to accept. It reads:

Collection building is fundamental to the long-term success of the museum. MOCA aims to include in its collection, but not be exclusive of, historical objects, documents, photographs, audio and visual material and ephemera relating to the history of Chinese persons in the United States. Of particular interest are those objects with a clear link to the Chinese American experience. Relevant secondary source materials in varying formats also will be collected for staff and research use. All permanent collections and library material will be evaluated in terms of its historical significance and relationship to other material in the collection. (Collections 2022)

It is clear from this section of the museum's policy that the collecting scope in terms of object type is also very broad. The broad nature of this collections policy allows for flexibility in potential acquisitions, but the ambiguity can also be risky. At this museum, it is ultimately up to the best judgment of the acquisitions committee to decide what will be acquired and accessioned. Furthermore, doing so without good guidance of clear parameters or written definitions would obstruct following and adhering to the museum's mission. The collections can easily become burdened with

objects that do not support the goals of the museum and ultimately drain limited resources.

### *The Filipino American National Historical Society Museum (FANHSM), Stockton, CA*

In an email, Terri Torres, the Museum Manager, was able to clarify their museum's collections policy. She stated:

The FANHS Museum collects and showcases the history of Filipino Americans in the United States from as early as the 1500s to current day. Right now, it covers the US, but areas of North America, Central America and South America are considered depending upon history or artifact. All generations are considered, our strong focus is on the 'disappearing' generation—those who are in their 80s and 90s, to get their stories before they pass. (Torres 2022)

In terms of the museum's current collecting goals, it is to collect "anything that we can find to preserve that history and retell it" (Torres 2022). This collecting goal has no specific stipulations of what should be collected.

Both aspects of the collecting policy and scope of the FANHS Museum are broad and unfocused. There are no specific objects or limitations to focus the collection. The geographic region of objects considered as potential acquisitions spans continents. Like the MOCA, while the broad collecting criteria and scope creates flexibility in what the museum can accept, the burden falls on the staff to decide what is consistent with the museum's mission and does not guarantee consistency in the collecting criteria or standards. While at this point, they may be working on building up their collections; a clear policy regarding scope and criteria would ensure that all objects support the museum's mission and purpose and efficient use of resources.

### *The Chinese American Museum (CAM), Los Angeles, CA*

The Chinese American Museum has their collecting scope and criteria posted online. It says, "The Chinese American Museum houses objects related to the history, livelihood, and experience of Chinese Americans, particularly in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area, and the Garnier Building. The collection has grown to over 7,500 artifacts, documents, and photographs, spanning the late 19th century to the present" (Collections 2022). The Museum outlines its areas of interest and collection. Some of the list are as follows:

- Immigration to the United States, immigration issues (past and present)
- Sun Wing Wo Herb Store, which operated out of the Garnier Building
- Chinese American participation in the U.S. Military

- Clothing, costumes, and other textiles
- Work created by Chinese American Artists
- The San Gabriel Valley (Chinese American Museum)

Their collecting scope has some criteria specific to their local geographic region as well as other criteria that are very broad. This shows both focused and flexible categories of potential acquisition.

### *The Japanese American Museum (JAM), Oregon*

This museum's mission statement states, "The mission of the Japanese American Museum of Oregon is to preserve and honor the history and culture of Japanese Americans in the Pacific Northwest, educate the public about the Japanese American experience during WWII, and advocate for the protection of civil rights for all Americans." Their website further states that the museum is "charged with preserving and sharing the history and culture of the Nikkei community—Japanese emigrants and their descendants" (Mission and History 2021). Like the Chinese American Museum, they limit their collecting scope to a local geographic region. They also focus on a specific time period in history and generation of immigrants.

While the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles and the Japanese American Museum of Oregon have relatively clear collecting scopes and objectives, one of the issues with these museums is that they focus on a specific group that falls under the Asian American umbrella and local history. The strong benefit of these collections is that they can focus on local history and a subset of Asian identity, making their mission and collecting practices clearer and more attainable. The disadvantage, of course, is that they have limited appeal. As far as a comprehensive Asian American museum and collections, a collecting focus on local history and a subset of Asian identity will not be able to encompass the entire nation's Asian American history and culture.

### **Asian American Identity**

One of the key elements of creating a policy for an Asian American museum is understanding Asian American identity. The policies of the museums mentioned previously are byproducts of each museum's understanding of Asian American identity. The term "Asian American" is not adequate in describing who falls under the term, what experiences unify groups that fall under the term, and how it represents all these elements in a museum or collections.

The Asian population in America is very diverse and includes a vast group of people. For the U.S. Census Bureau, a standard was created on race and ethnicity (US Census Bureau 2022). Their definition for "Asian"



is “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam” (Census Bureau). Thus, the Asian population in America encompasses many very different experiences and cultures. The definition used for Asian does not account for regional differences, and the “Far East” is a broad region not representative of local regional divisions or social identity divisions (The Far East Definition & Meaning 2022). Adding in the element of how each of these cultures present themselves” in the American context and how people viewed their own identity makes this an incredibly complex issue that this paper cannot fully dissect.

The term Asian American was coined sometime in the mid-1900s as an effort to unite Asians in America under a pan-ethnic term for purposes of fighting for rights and a rejection of other terms (Ghymn 2000, 12-13). Asians came together against the discriminating and racist attitudes of America at the time and were inspired by African American movements (Juan 1994, 20-21). However, because of differences in economic situations and day to day experiences, Asian Americans are easily divided (Coleman 2021). The term Asian American does not encompass the experience of all that fall under it. The term also seems to be adopted most frequently in the presence of violence against Asians in America (Coleman 2021). In recent history, Asian Americans found themselves the target of discrimination, violence, and racism because of COVID-19. Even so, this “unifying” experience was for people who had certain physical features more characteristic to East Asia and not in other regions of Asia.

As seen in the examples presented in the previous section, museums representing Asian Americans struggle to define the parameters of the community and have worked around it by focusing more on a single ethnicity, nationality, or geographic region. Even then, it is unclear what represents each group’s experience and what makes this experience different or the same as other Asian Americans.

### **Museums, collections, and identity**

The legal definition in the United States of a museum is, “a public, tribal, or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational, cultural heritage, or aesthetic purposes, that utilizes a professional staff, owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for the tangible objects, and exhibits the tangible objects to the public on a regular basis. Such a term includes museums that have tangible and digital collections...” (Museum and Library Services Act 2018, 115-410). This definition displays that a museum’s primary focus is the use of objects, or collections, for a specific purpose.

Functions of a museum are meant to fulfill the mission and purpose. In August of 2022, the Extraordinary General Assembly of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) approved the proposal for a new museum definition that states that a museum, “researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing” (Museum Definition 2022). The ability of a museum to conserve, interpret, exhibit, and facilitate research depends solely on the objects or collections that it has. Collections are the foundation of other museum functions but also at the core of a museum’s mission and purpose.

Along with its collections, museums are legally required to create policies regarding collections management. In the legal case of the Museum of the American Indian, the attorney general of the state of New York stated that the museum, as a charitable corporation, has certain obligations to the public (Malaro 2012, 15). These obligations require a standard of conduct that, at minimum, establish policies and keep records concerning the acquisition and disposal of collection items (Malaro 2012, 15).

Managing and maintaining a collection involves many processes. The Smithsonian Directive 600, the collections management policy of the Smithsonian, “covers all aspects of collection management, including acquisition and accessioning, deaccessioning and disposal, preservation, documentation, life-cycle management, inventory, risk management, safety and security, access, storage, loans, and intellectual property management” (Smithsonian Directive: 600 1980, 1-134). Most museum collections policies include the same elements and are based on “a museum’s purpose, scope and uses of its collections, and more immediate goals” (Malaro 2012, 49). All parts of collections management are ultimately to support the museum’s purpose and mission the most effectively and efficiently.

Amongst the many aspects of collections management, acquisition and accessioning are the first steps as an object enters a museum. Once an object enters the care of the museum, the museum is bound by ethics to care for the object (Besterman 2011, 437). It is, however, ethical to refuse to acquire an object (Besterman 2011, 437). Because a museum’s resources are limited, it is critical to have a clear acquisition policy. This ensures that potential acquisitions support the museum’s mission and purpose. If a museum does not have a clear policy specifically addressing acquisitions, it allows for the potential for a museum to acquire objects outside the scope and purpose of the museum. Not only does this waste limited resources and allow for inconsistency in the collections, but this will also affect all

functions that rely on and utilize the collections. Those functions, like research and education, will eventually find it difficult to fulfill their roles supporting the mission and purpose of the museum.

Museums also have the power to shape and affirm identity. In the past and present, museums give people, “the opportunity to amass and present evidence of their own pasts, so turning their histories into ‘objective’ fact and legitimizing their right to exist” (Macdonald 2011, 85). An unconscious assumption made about objects acquired for museum collections is that what is collected is valuable. A museum exhibition communicates this value to its audience. In history, the development of “[n]ational museums acted as symbols of the existence of the newly formed nation-states . . . they helped materialize the new political-cultural forms into beings” (Macdonald 2011, 85). While legal and sociopolitical atmospheres have changed, museums have carried the power, prestige, and status acquired in the past into the present day. So, not only does a museum’s collection carry an unconscious assumption of value: it can also be a symbol. Susette Min, an Associate Professor at the University of California-Davis states, “Asian American art is now on the verge of institutional legacy and legitimacy as (1) something to be collected by museums such as the Smithsonian and Asia Society...” (Min 2018, 1). The reason why legitimacy is gained from the museums, she mentioned, is that objects in those collections are assumed to be valuable. Furthermore, a museum like the Smithsonian directly symbolizes the United States and what being American means and looks like. Even though an Asian American museum could shape and affirm Asian American identity, one without a clear definition could have negative effects. It has the potential of further blurring the experiences and identity of Asian Americans, erasing the diversity of the groups that fall under it, and not acknowledging the living and changing cultures of Asian Americans (Min 2018, 17).

Creating a collections policy for an Asian American collection presents certain challenges. As previously stated, Asian American identity is still constantly evolving and being redefined. The way we define Asia and Asian Americans as well as what experience binds them together is broad and ambiguous. This is evident in organization structures of Asian American collections currently organized. The lack of all-encompassing Asian American museums or collections raises the question of whether it would be feasible to represent those who fall under the term adequately. Breaking down the term Asian American in parts to attempt to define policy or scope only raises even more questions.

Furthermore, if the goal of Asian American museums and collections includes creating legitimacy and visibility of Asian immigrants who have become American, is this really the solution? An Asian American museum

still perpetuates an othering and foreignness, rather than integration of Asian Americans into the mainstream canon of American history, where they have been and do belong.

### So What?

Asian American identity has and will evolve continuously, making the creation of an effective collections policy a perpetual challenge. Even so, some ideas can be gleaned from other institutions that represent different minorities and living cultures like the African American Museum of History and Culture and the National Museum of the American Indian. Currently, the African American Museum of History and Culture divides up its gallery space, which reflects its collections, into twelve exhibitions (Meet Our Curators 2022). They also have special exhibits. Their history exhibits are divided into three time periods: *Slavery and Freedom*, *Defending Freedom*, *Defining Freedom: Era of Segregation 1876–1968*, and *A Changing America: 1968 and Beyond*. The community galleries focus on specific stories of African American communities. The culture galleries examine African American music, the idea of African American, and African diaspora culture, African American art and artists, the history of African Americans in film and theater, and African American contributions in sports (Exhibitions 2022).

For an Asian American museum, it is possible to focus some galleries on specific stories of Asian American communities and cultural contributions, but Asian American groups do not necessarily fall into similar historical patterns, community experiences, or contributions. It would take more examination on where the crossroads are between all these groups and if there are enough similarities to create cohesive exhibits.

The National Museum of the American Indians's object collection, accessible online, divides their collections as follows: North American ethnology, North American archaeology, Central American ethnology, Central American archaeology, Caribbean ethnology and archaeology, South American ethnology, South American archaeology, and Modern and Contemporary arts (Object Collections 2022). From there, each category breaks down into regions, sometimes a specific state, country, or people (Object Collections 2022).

This can also be a plausible way to divide up Asia—accounting for existing collections that are tied to specific nationality or ethnicity. But from that point, would the collections be divided by regions of the United States? Or, broken down by descent, then region in the United States, and subsequently with every other region of Asian descent and region in the United States? These categories are not only extensive but have the poten-

tial to overlap in ways that objects will not fit into each category neatly. It is also possible to split up the collections by geographic regions in the United States, then by descent. This has the advantage of emphasizing the focus on the American experience of people of Asian descent. However, both of these potential structures do not account for multiracial individuals or when those categories may become obsolete.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the four museums and collections presented in this paper, collections policies of Asian American museums either center on specific nationality or ethnicity, historical periods, regional or local history, or case-by-case assessments without a detailed policy. Neither method is fully effective. The collections policies of Asian American museums and collections are, in part, a reflection of Asian American identity, which is actively changing and being redefined. It is also a broad and ambiguous term, one that some argue is outdated and can no longer serve the needs of all people that it claims. This is all important in the context of a potential Asian Pacific American Museum of History and Culture, as museums are places where identity is formed and shaped. If museums are unaware or unclear in their representation of the Asian American community, it can directly impact Asian American identity.

Even so, the examples of other museums representing living cultures and peoples that can give insight to a potential Asian Pacific American Museum of History and Culture. The Museum of African American History and Culture has historical, community, and cultural exhibits that allow for different kinds of interpretation and topics. Another museum is the Museum of the American Indian which uses both geographic and sociopolitical elements to organize its collections. Elements of both museums could help create an effective collections policy, while others would be incompatible with the context of Asian American history and culture.

This research barely scratches the surface of difficulties that face the potential creation of an Asian American museum. Even before creating an effective collections policy, the museum has fundamental things to decide like Who is the audience of this museum? What is the appeal for people to go to this museum? If the purpose of the museum is for people to see and understand the contributions of Asian Americans, is an Asian American museum going to be effective? Or, would it be better to integrate that content into the Smithsonian National Museum of American History? There will also need to be considerations for things that may arise down the road like, What will happen to the museums that have catered to their local communities and their collections? Will Asian American museums across the United States be able to come together to add to this space

collectively? As a group that is evolving and changing, an Asian American museum will need to be active and engaged in the community as it works through these details.

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