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Our Mandate

This journal represents an attempt to explore issues, ideas, and problems that lie at the intersection between the academic disciplines of social science and the body of thought and political practice that has constituted Marxism over the last 150 years. New Proposals is a journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry that is dedicated to the radical transformation of the contemporary world order. We see our role as providing a platform for research, commentary, and debate of the highest scholarly quality that contributes to the struggle to create a more just and humane world, in which the systematic and continuous exploitation, oppression, and fratricidal struggles that characterize the contemporary sociopolitical order no longer exist.

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Cover: An indigenous Truku woman, Shu-yin Syu, at her inauguration ceremony as new township magistrate, Hsiulin Township, Taiwan in 2006. Scott Simon photograph.

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Contents

Introduction

The New Liberation Movements 5
Charles Menzies

Special Theme Articles

Introduction: Indigenous Peoples, Marxism and Late Capitalism 6
Scott Simon

Turning Land into Capital, Turning People into Labor: Primitive Accumulation and the Arrival of Large-Scale Economic Land Concessions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic 10
Ian G. Baird

The Circulation of Labour and Money: Symbolic Meanings of Monetary Kinship Practices in Contemporary Truku Society, Taiwan 27
Ching-Hsiu Lin

Class and Indigenous Politics: the Paradox of Seediq/Taroko Women "Entrepreneurs" in Taiwan 45
Scott Simon

A Call for Attention to Indigenous Capitalisms 60
Alexis Celeste Bunten

Comments and Arguments

Finance Capital, Sovereign Debt, Selective Hegemony and Pissed-off Populations 72
Gavin Smith

Relative Surplus Population and British Riots 74
Judith Anne Whitehead

Revolution, Or The Repetition of the Same? 77
J. Peter Wilson

Making Sense of the 'Senselessness': Critical Reflections on Killing Rampages 80
Matthias Dapprich

Book Review

Magical Marxism: Subversive Politics and the Imagination 86
Amanda Fickey

New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry
Vol. 5, No. 1 (November 2011) P. 5

Introduction

The New Liberation Movements

Charles R. Menzies
New Proposals Editorial Collective

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We live in a time of possibility. From the so-called Arab Spring, the anarchic riots of Vancouver to London through Indignants in Europe and the Occupy Together movements in North Amercia the world's majority peoples are finally standing up and taking a stand – of sorts. What remains to be seen is whether or not we have the staying power to keep the pressure on. Those who stand the most to loose know it and, as history has shown us, they will stop at nothing to keep their power and privilege. But their power is really an illusion, a façade.

Power involves a capacity of control and a psycho–social component. The capacity of control is technical in nature. Thus the powerful may control the police, they may control the politicians, they may own all of the property. But their ability to use that control over these things rest upon the majority's acceptance of the status quo; upon the majority's feeling that they might gain something by going along. What the Arab Spring, Indignants and Occupy Together movements have shown is that we don't have to accept the minority's control – when challenged we can force them down and cause change – real change.

The power of the new liberation movements lies in their distributed and anarchical forms of leadership. This is also a site of key weakness that mainstream pundits have picked up (and on) in their well-funded opposition commentaries. "They're earnest and quaint, but don't know what they want," has been a standard complaint of the media pundit. Perhaps the focus of these conservative commentators on this aspect of the new liberation movements arises out of their realization that the lack of clearly defined leadership and a well developed program is a real threat to the powerful minority that pays the pundits.

The Romans found themselves stalled in their advance across Europe when they encountered the tribal Celts. The British and French had to develop new techniques of warfare when they confronted the Iroquois and Mohawk in North America. The US found themselves stymied in Vietnam when confronted with a new form of guerrilla warfare. And, as the 20th century ground to a close the anarchic and distributed terror of small well-connected networks has essentially brought the world's major imperialist powers to an economic crisis not seen for generations.

Out of this maelstrom of war, protest, and crisis has arisen a new liberation movement that has the potential to shake off the shackles of nihilism and create the grounds to overthrow the minority rulers of late capitalism.

New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry
Vol. 5, No. 1 (November 2011) Pp. 6-9

Introduction

Indigenous Peoples, Marxism and Late Capitalism

Scott Simon
University of Ottawa

The relationship between indigenous peoples and Marxism has long been ambiguous. Marx himself, as a 19th century philosopher influenced by social Darwinism, assumed that "tribal" peoples represented simple forms of productive relations and were destined to disappear (Marx 1887:51). For him, tribal peoples represented the beginning of social evolution, as expressed in *The German Ideology*: "The first form of ownership is tribal [*Stammeigentum*] ownership. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture" (Marx and Engels 1965:33). Indigenous people have sometimes been equally dismissive of Marx. Native American author Leslie Marmon Silko, for example, thought that Marxism and indigenous rights were incompatible because Marxism, like capitalism, requires the exploitation of natural resources and industrial development that conflicts with indigenous ideas about the sacred nature of the Earth (Teale 1998).

Undeniably, however, the result of more than four centuries of imperialism and colonialism has ensnared indigenous peoples in the traps of the capitalist world system (Bodley 2008). Around the world, indigenous lands are expropriated by states and capitalist corporations, in order to channel natural resources from above and below ground into ever-widening streams of capital accumulation. Indigenous labour is appropriated by capitalist firms in multinational systems of production that transform indigenous people into members of the proletariat. The expansion of this system alters indigenous communities, creating elite groups and new identities in its wake, with the result of accelerating the entire process of capitalist incorporation. Canadian geographer and ecological philosopher William T. Hipwell argues that socialism and capitalism alike destroy the environment and the human spirit in an overarching system he calls "Industria" (Hipwell 2004:370). Regardless of what one may think of Marxism as a political project, however, the intellectual contribution of Marxism to the anthropological study of capitalism remains relevant. If we use Marxist concepts as part of a larger set of methodological tools, rather than Marxism as a blueprint to yet another form of industrial society, our studies may contribute to even wider goals of social justice.

The contributing authors of this special issue of *New Proposals* originally delivered the research presented here in the November 2010 meetings of the American Anthropological Association, as part of a panel on "Indigenous Peoples and the Circulation of Labour" sponsored by the Society for the Anthropology of Work. In papers discussing cases from Alaska, Canada, Taiwan, Laos, and New Zealand, these papers all explore the ways in which the capitalist world system expropriates land, natural resources, and labour from indigenous communities. All four papers, in spite of the obvious differences between them, attempt to use Marxist concepts to understand the situation of indigenous peoples in late capitalism. All four papers are based on an understanding that capitalism exploits indigenous peoples

and lands, that a shift toward indigenous self-determination and social justice is desirable, and that anthropology can contribute to positive change by providing ethnographically grounded analysis of dynamics in various local circumstances. All of them avoid the teleological assumptions and economic determinism that has characterized some Marxist thinking in the past.

Ian Baird, in a particularly rich ethnography of Laos, demonstrates the ongoing utility of the Marxist concept of "primitive accumulation." It is useful that he does this in a nominally socialist country, because it makes us reflect on how Capitalism and Marxism in practice have both led to the destruction of nature and of subsistence-based societies. Having collected data for over fifteen years, and serving as Executive Director of the non-governmental organization Global Association for People and the Environment, Baird testifies to the acceleration of "violent capitalist accumulation by dispossession." Lands once used by indigenous people for swidden agriculture are transformed into rubber plantations, with rubber destined to be sold on export markets.

Baird makes a strong connection between the expropriation of land and the creation of a new proletariat. As indigenous people lose access to their subsistence resources, they are increasingly forced to work on the capitalist labour market. This process is often violent; indigenous people report they have been forced to move when their property and crops are destroyed to make room for plantations. In spite of, or perhaps *because of*, the country's Marxist-Leninist ideology, the government has facilitated the expropriation of lands formerly used by ethnic minorities for swidden agriculture. In fact, officials call this process "development" in the belief, inspired by their interpretations of Marxism, that they are merely shepherding backwards people through the inevitable historical stages to industrialization. These officials describe land expropriation as a necessary strategy to get indigenous people to move out of their subsistence lifestyles and join modern labour markets. Baird reminds us that they can do this even more efficiently than western capitalists, since they are not obliged to respond to political opposition. When Capitalism and Marxism converge on a similar destruction of the environment and local cultures, a new word is needed to describe them both. Industria seems to fit the bill nicely.

Ching-hsiu Lin and Scott Simon provide complementary perspectives on the relationship between capitalism and the Truku people of Taiwan. As can be seen in Lin's paper, primitive accumulation on Truku territory began much earlier than in Laos. As early as the period of Japanese administration (1895-1945), the colonial government forced egalitarian communities of hunter-gatherers to permanently settle on reserve lands and adopt modern agriculture. After the transfer of Taiwan to the Republic of China, reserve land was privatized. Lin evokes how privatization of land led to the emergence of social stratification, as better educated and better informed individuals could gain access to prime land to be sold to state and industrial concerns. Over time, poorer people became landless because they had to sell land to pay debts. The process of accumulation and dispossession was thus led partly by members of the same community, leading to a social cleavage between elites and ordinary people. He categorizes the elites as (1) the "political" elite dependent on the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT); (2) the "intellectual" elite, e.g. pastors, who may be critical of the KMT; and (3) the offspring of these elites, who may live outside of the community.

Lin focuses on the symbolic meanings of the circulation of labour and money since the land privatization and "integration" of Truku workers into the labour market in the 1960s. Seemingly arguing against Marx, he argues that money is not alienating to indigenous workers. Instead, money earned as wages becomes a mechanism for maintaining social relations. When male workers reach marriageable age, they must, with support from wider kin networks, find ways to finance a wedding feast and expensive rituals of pig sacrifice. Previous marriage customs, which involved provision of brideservice and raising of pigs, have been replaced by a commodity economy in which the young men and their families must raise money to purchase pigs and hire professional banquet caterers. This is where Marx becomes relevant. Just as Marx predicted, primitive accumulation and integration into the labour market has led, even

in a previously egalitarian society, to social and economic stratification.

Scott Simon focuses even more closely on how capitalism has led to the creation of socio-economic stratification in Truku societies. Following in the footsteps of Hill Gates, one of the pioneers in the anthropology of Taiwan, he attempts a Marxist class analysis of Truku villages, but with the goal of better understanding the social and political dimensions of women's entrepreneurship. Descriptive statistics, as well as field work data from 18 months of field research, reveal the existence of a large "Lumpenproletariat." Like the indigenous people in Laos, they have been deprived of their former means of subsistence due to primitive accumulation, but rely on precarious day labour rather than becoming permanent members of a working class. Simon shows the social cleavages between these ordinary workers and the new village elite that was created at the time of land privatization. He focuses on what Lin calls the "political" elite dependent on the KMT.

Simon is primarily interested in the social production of class. He describes the small shops in the villages, demonstrating how women entrepreneurs, as part of the small petty bourgeoisie, use their small businesses as social space useful to KMT political control of the villages. These women shopkeepers, by asserting a place in the circulation of goods and ideas, can facilitate the entry of their family members or even themselves into the political elite. They thus contribute to the larger system of township and village politics, through which the state and capitalist firms gain legal access to land and natural resources that were previously managed as hunting territories by acephalous Truku bands.

Alexis Bunten, who bases her reflections on multi-sited research in Alaska and New Zealand, takes a different approach and is much more optimistic about the potential for capitalism(s) to empower indigenous peoples. Looking primarily at the Alaska Native Corporation Chenega and the Maori Ngai Tahu, she emphasizes the plurality of capitalisms. She argues that indigenous peoples have been forcibly incorporated into late capitalism, but maintain a large degree of agency and can even be empowered by new economic activities. Her paper leads the reader to reflect on the double meaning of *incorporation*, as indigenous peoples are not merely objects incorporated into a system not of their own making, but also subjects incorporating their economic activities into share-holding legal entities that contribute to indigenous self-determination. She argues that these indigenous forms of capitalism are "rooted in local concepts of wealth, accumulation and distribution." Indigenous capitalisms, unlike non-indigenous corporations, are characterized by consciousness of the colonial relations that led to incorporation, an articulation of indigenous values and capitalist goals, and the dual possibility of both subsumption into capitalism and self-determination facilitated by new capital.

Basically, Bunten makes the argument that indigenous capitalisms are different than non-indigenous capitalisms because indigenous economic behaviour is embedded in indigenous cultural values, such as stewardship of nature and contribution to community. Indigenous capitalism is thus potentially empowering, at least to the extent to which it permits indigenous peoples to negotiate some of the terms of their incorporation into larger economic systems. At the end of the day, however, every compromise between capitalism and indigenous values was made by states and corporations with the ultimate goal of accessing natural resources on indigenous land. As Bunten notes, "non-Native corporate interests impatiently waited in the wings for land disputes to be settled so that they could access subsurface resources." States and corporations are willing to make some concessions to indigenous "autonomy," but largely because it provides new ways to get to natural resources.

Taken together, these four essays explore, to different extents, Marxist concepts of primitive accumulation, alienation, class, and capitalism, and their applicability to the studies of indigenous political economy. In all four articles, the authors document how indigenous peoples have been incorporated reluctantly into economics of resource exploitation. Whether this process happens through violent expropriation of land in Laos, through the creation of political opportunity structures and an indigenous political elite in Taiwan, or through the creation of indigenous capitalisms in Alaska and New Zealand, the objective is to gain access to natural resources,

land, and labour power for the economic benefit of outsiders. The indigenous peoples have a certain agency, and seek certain forms of autonomy, but only within the limits of an economic system created by others and imposed upon them.

The relationship between Marxism and indigenous peoples, like that between Marxism and anthropology, has long been tenuous. Many anthropologists working with indigenous peoples have eschewed materialist and class-based analyses in favour of cultural relativism and its postmodern variants. There are good reasons for a distrust of Marxism. As Ward Churchill discovered a generation ago, Marxists often relegated indigenous peoples to the evolutionary past and indigenous leaders often found Marxism irrelevant to their priorities of ecological stewardship and community. Churchill deplored this situation, saying that "No American theory can write the Indian off as irrelevant; the Indian's is the first vision in this hemisphere, not only as a chronological fact, but because the Indian experience was and remains formative to this society's psychological and material character" (Churchill 1983:11). This observation is certainly as applicable to indigenous situations in other cases as well, including those explored in this special issue.

Anthropologists working with indigenous peoples, including the four authors in this special issue, have moved beyond the ethnocentrism of earlier generations of Marxists. They have listened carefully to their research partners, and learned to appreciate the knowledge of indigenous people on a plane of epistemological and ontological parity. They know about expropriation of land, economic disparities, the creation of political elites, and the benefits of indigenous capitalisms, not because they read it in a dusty volume by Marx, but because they lived in indigenous communities for long periods of time and indigenous people shared these stories with them. Since capitalism has become part of our shared political and economic environment, this also counts as indigenous knowledge. For this reason, indigenous people and anthropologists alike have found it useful to use terms that resonate with Marx's analysis of capitalism, even as they reject the ethnocentrism of 19th century evolutionism. This genre of anthropology may even contribute to the construction of new relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people, as all peoples suffer from environmental degradation, resource expropriation, and elite formation at the expense of the majority. For the purpose of anthropology, some Marxist concepts, applied respectfully and wisely in the context of detailed ethnography, can help us understand indigenous situations in late capitalism. If combined with other forms of knowledge, moreover, especially indigenous knowledge of the environment, these concepts can also contribute to real indigenous autonomy and perhaps a better future for all of humanity.

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Turning Land into Capital, Turning People into Labour: Primitive Accumulation and the Arrival of Large-Scale Economic Land Concessions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic

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ABSTRACT: In recent years the government of Laos has provided many foreign investors with large-scale economic land concessions to develop plantations. These concessions have resulted in significant alterations of landscapes and ecological processes, greatly reduced local access to resources through enclosing common areas, and have ultimately led to massive changes in the livelihoods of large numbers of mainly indigenous peoples living near these concessions. Many have lost their agricultural and forest lands, or conditions of production, making it difficult to maintain their former semi-subsistence livelihoods, and thus compelling many to take up employment on the same plantations that displaced them, despite frequently having to work for low wages and under poor conditions. Using two case studies involving large economic land concessions in southern Laos, I argue that applying the theoretical concept of primitive accumulation is useful for better understanding the political processes and motivations of government officials, including justifications for the rural dispossession that is occurring in a nominally 'socialist' country.

Keywords: capitalism, socialism, primitive accumulation, labour, land concessions, land grabbing

Introduction

In 2007, Michael Perelman wrote an article entitled, "Primitive Accumulation from Feudalism to Neoliberalism," in which he argued that Karl Marx's concept of primitive accumulation[1] continues to be important, but only in a partial way. Explaining that primitive accumulation involves the direct expropriation of people's conditions of production, the purposeful forcing of people into wage labour, and the intentional manipulation of the social division of labour, Perelman wrote that "it is not likely that we will see all these conditions met very often in the contemporary economy, one ominous exception is expropriation" (Perelman 2007:59). Perelman's view is understandable, considering that his focus was on the United States of America, where much of the population has long been highly integrated into a wage-labour economy. For Perelman, the example of the USA is best suited for considering the role of multinational corporations in taking control over resources, including water, forests, and land for mining in ways that he links to primitive accumulation. His interest is thus on the ways that privatization has facilitated expropriation of resources.

1 Karl Marx described the process of forced proletarization as "primitive accumulation," which can be translated as "previous" or "original" accumulation from the original German, *ursprunglich* (Grandia 2007).

Perelman is certainly not alone in tending to view full-fledged primitive accumulation as something that occurred in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and is unlikely to fully manifest itself at present. Ellen Wood (2002), for example, implies that capitalism can move ahead of political authority and develop elsewhere without the particular forms of violence through state involvement that occurred as a result of the primitive accumulation in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Liza Grandia (2007:11) puts it, "many strict Marxists treat primitive accumulation as a closed, historical accident – therefore of little theoretical interest."

In geography and related disciplines, however, this is increasingly not seen to be the case, and there has been a significant revival of interest in primitive accumulation in recent years, especially as a result of the work of David Harvey (2003), and since then by others, such as David Moore (2004), Jim Glassman (2006), Gillian Hart (2006), Chris Sneddon (2007), and Michael Webber (2008), just to name a few. Crucially, most geographers now consider that primitive accumulation is continuing to commonly occur, especially in the Global South, but also in the Global North (Harvey 2003). As Glassman puts it,

> Though primitive accumulation is a process that some have considered a historical phase through which societies pass on the way to more fully proletarianized social structures based on expanded reproduction, the current state of global affairs makes it evident that primitive accumulation has maintained or even increased its salience, meaning either that it is in fact central to capitalist accumulation in general or else has a much longer period of historical 'dissolution' than previously imagined. [2006:621-622]

Here I wish to contribute to this literature by arguing that the concept of primitive accumulation is useful for understanding how the development of large-scale economic land concessions are impacting on rural peoples, and particularly 'indigenous peoples'[2] in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR or Laos). In particular, I want to highlight that one of the main motivations of the government of Laos in granting large-scale land concessions is to remove peasants, and particularly indigenous peoples, from their conditions of production because they are seen as making unproductive use of resources and as being resistant to fully integrating into the market economy.

Indeed, in Laos most indigenous peoples have, until quite recently, been heavily reliant on mixed subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture in which a large portion of the food consumed has been obtained through family farm agriculture, as well as hunting, fishing, and the gathering of a wide variety of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) from the commons. Crucially, these peoples have not become embedded in the wage-labour economy like most rural populations in the USA, Western Europe or other industrialized parts of the world. This does not mean that indigenous peoples in Laos do not, at times, depend on wage labour, especially during the agricultural off-season. Moreover, as Rigg (2005) and Shoemaker et al. (2001) have pointed out, wage-labour is becoming increasingly important in rural Laos, even without the introduction of large-scale economic land concessions. The degree of importance is, however, geographically uneven, with some regions, villages and peoples engaging much more in wage-labour than others, and indigenous peoples tending to rely less on it than others. Thus, while the role of subsistence agriculture in rural Laos should not be overemphasized or romanticized; neither should we underappreciate nor deny the continued importance of subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture for large portions of the population, at least for the time-being, and especially for upland indigenous peoples whose livelihoods are particularly linked to the land.

Still, many indigenous farmers are rapidly being propelled into wage-labour markets in ways that cannot be considered voluntary, and since this is the focus here, I will not dwell on less coercive transformations of labour that are occurring simultaneously, although I do recognize their importance. I wish to demonstrate that the policy of the government of

2 Here, I use the term 'indigenous peoples' to refer to the various groups of largely upland ethnic minorities in Laos, even though the concept is not well recognized in Laos, including amongst these people themselves. I do not see the concept of indigenous peoples as being static or easy to understand, but as being a part of a socially constructed emancipatory political project designed to support disadvantaged and marginalized ethnic groups (For a fuller explanation, see Baird 2011).

Laos to 'turn land into capital' is crucially intertwined with another important aspect, 'turning people into labour' (even if it is not directly referred to as such). Thus, the system of issuing large-scale economic land concessions to foreign investors from other Asian countries such as Vietnam, China, Thailand and others, constitutes, I believe, a much more comprehensive form of primitive accumulation than what Perelman argued is occurring in the USA. It not only involves the expropriation and enclosure of land and resources – considered by many to be the key point of primitive accumulation (Moore 2004) – but also driving semi-subsistence farmers into labour markets. This transformation of semi-subsistence farmers into people highly dependent on wage-labour is sometimes – but not always – important to the investors themselves, but crucially for this article, drawing the Lao labour force into the market economy is, for many reasons, one of the key justifications amongst officials in Laos for the present land concession system. Entering into agreements that disempower indigenous peoples and even the state is frequently accepted due to the belief that such sacrifices are at worst, a necessary evil, something that is needed to propel Laos into the modern world and eventually out of poverty. Much like Marx, whose ideas were paraphrased by Glassman (2006:611), many officials believe that "primitive accumulation, however loathsome in its violence and hypocrisy, is a necessary step in the direction of fuller human development."

In this article, I start off by very briefly explaining relevant aspects of recent Lao history, including the gradual expansion of large-scale economic land concessions, in order to historicize the present circumstances. I then present two case studies, both based on research I conducted during the 1990s and 2000s in southern Laos. The first, in Paksong District, Champasak Province, is short and illustrates how the development of one of the first large land concessions in southern Laos was attempted in the 1990s, and how it led to considerable conflict with the upland indigenous peoples, before finally collapsing. The second case study is more detailed and represents the core of the article. It relates to the rapid expansion of three large economic land concessions in Bachiengchaleunsouk (Bachieng) District, also in Champasak Province, beginning in the mid-2000s and continuing to the present. For this case study I focus more on labour issues. I then briefly discuss the apparent paradox of a nominally socialist country such as Laos promoting violent capitalist accumulation by dispossession, before reviewing the links between land and labour. Finally, I provide some concluding comments.

Before proceeding, however, some explanation regarding methodology is required. The data presented in this article have been intermittently collected during fieldwork in Laos over the last 15 years. During the first decade I was a full-time resident in southern Laos, thus giving me continual access to the field, both directly through frequent visits to villages and via friends and colleagues from areas of interest. Over the last few years I have not resided full-time in Laos but have still spent substantial periods there each year. In addition, I have also relied on data collected by indigenous and ethnic Lao colleagues working for the Global Association for People and the Environment (GAPE), a non-government organization (NGO) that I was executive director of for over a decade, between 2001 and mid-2010.

The Government of Laos and the Early History of Land Concession Development

On December 2, 1975 the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) was officially established, with the Lao People's Revolutionary Party taking full control of all aspects of the Lao state. With the strong backing of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which had taken control of Vietnam during the previous months, and the Soviet Union, the Lao PDR government established a political system that modelled other Soviet-bloc countries, and was committed to a one-Party political system based on Marxist-Leninist principles.

The limited agriculture cooperatives established after 1975 failed and were quickly abandoned. Other economic reforms were instituted in the mid-1980s, including the New Economic Mechanism (*Chinthanakan Mai* in Lao) (Evans 1990). Many were strongly supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and various Western

government-supported bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, which promoted foreign direct investment and export oriented economic development based on market principles. Fully state-owned companies and factories (what few existed) were also shut down (if not economical), privatized, or most commonly, transformed into 'state enterprises' (*lat vixahakit* in Lao).[3] However, despite the gradual dissolution of the various aspects of socialist economic policies and practices that were part and parcel of the government of Laos' early foundations, the political system established in 1975 has remained intact, without implementing any significant political reforms.

Unlike the former French colonies of Indochina – Cochin China, Annam, Tonkin and Cambodia – Laos was exceptional in not being subjected to the development of large-scale plantations during the French colonial period.[4] The lack of rubber development in Laos was a direct consequence of the inland country's relative remoteness, the abundance of land in the other parts of French Indochina, and the relative lack of large numbers of reliable and cheap labourers in Laos (Baird 2010a). In other words, geographical factors were crucial.

The sustained violent conflict that began only a few years after the withdrawal of the French from Laos in 1954 also prevented the development of plantation agriculture during the early post-French period. And then, in 1975, when the Lao PDR was established, the continuing instability in much of rural Laos – largely owing to generally low-level but sustained armed conflict resulting from continued right-wing and neutralist resistance to the new government of Laos and their Vietnamese mentors – was not conducive to the development of large-scale plantation agriculture.

While the government of Laos became increasingly open to direct foreign investment from capitalists in the late 1980s and 1990s, investors initially showed little interest in developing large-scale agricultural plantations. Continuing insecurity, poor infrastructure, and a bureaucratic and opaque government, as well as tense relations between Thailand and Laos, prevented most plantation-oriented investment. However, relations between the governments of Laos and Thailand began to improve after 1988 when the Chatchai Choonhaven government in Thailand shifted its foreign policy towards Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (former Indochina) significantly by declaring that the Thai government wanted to transform 'battlefields into market places' [*ao sanam lop pen sanam kan kha*].[5] Laos experienced relative peace and stability beginning in the 1990s, especially in the south, where armed rebel activities ended in 1990 (Ruohomaki 2000). Even in northern Laos, where rebel activity continued to linger on, conflict declined.

The Paksong District Land Concession Case Study

In the early 1990s some foreign companies began pursuing large-scale concessions to develop plantation agriculture in Laos. One of the first was the Thai firm, Asia Tech Company, which in November 1990 requested a 16,000 hectare economic land concession on the Bolaven Plateau in Paksong District, Champasak Province, southern Laos. A year later the government of Laos approved the concession for a 30-year period, taking a five percent ownership in the project. After surveying the land, however, the government found only 12,404 hectares that could be given to Asia Tech (Lang 2002). I had the opportunity to interview many of the ethnic Jrou (Laven) indigenous upland farmers impacted by the concession in the mid-1990s. Although I did not directly publish on this fieldwork, I provided Chris Lang with much of the data that he later wrote about in 2002 (Lang 2002).

In 1992 Asia Tech began developing a eucalyptus plantation, and then in 1995, after the eucalyptus experiment failed, efforts were made to develop an *Acacia mangium* plantation, although almost all the trees died. Conflicts with indigenous people in 19

3 State enterprises are essentially companies that operate with more independence than state companies and are supposed to be managed based on profit-led market principles, or what has been called a "Socialist business accounting system" (Evans 2002).

4 However, the French did try to develop plantation agriculture involving coffee and tea on the Bolaven Plateau in present-day Paksong District, Champasak Province. This included promoting direct French investment in plantation agriculture on the Plateau.

5 Although the government of Laos was initially quite sceptical of Thailand's new policy, fearing that Thailand was trying to orchestrate a new way of dominating Laos, relations between the two countries have gradually improved.

villages located within the concession area accelerated in 1996-1997 when Asia Tech planted pine trees on 900 hectares, clearing forests and enclosing land, thus preventing local people from grazing cattle and accessing forests, including forest strips at the edges of their coffee plantations that were crucial for preventing coffee plants from dying due to excess exposure to frost during the cold season (see, also, *Watershed* 1996). Some indigenous peoples resisted the expansion of the plantations by setting fires in the dry season that destroyed some of the pine trees.

In 1997, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry removed 4,000 hectares from the Asia Tech concession, but rather than return the land to the indigenous population, it was given to other companies to plant coffee and other crops. Finally, the so-call Asian financial crisis[6] of 1997-1998 devastated many Thai companies, including Asia Tech, thus bringing an end to their efforts to develop plantations in Champasak Province (Lang 2002). The first major attempt at accumulation by dispossession through large-scale agricultural plantations had failed.

Crucially for this paper, during the 1990s the government of Laos still had some hope that small farmers could transform themselves into producers of commodities for export. The government was strongly promoting the idea of producing for export, or *phalit sin kha pheua song oke*, but hoped that peasants, including indigenous peoples, would be the drivers of these changes, transforming from a largely subsistence to an export oriented economy. This is reflected in the government-supported land use planning that occurred during this period, which emphasized the demarcation and organization of land types and the allocation of land to small farmers to produce crops for export (Fujita and Phanvilay 2008). Therefore, while the government was still interested in potentially allocating 'unproductive' or 'empty' land to investors to increase agricultural production and export opportunities, they were primarily focused on encouraging small farmers to expand their production capabilities to increase exports. Thus, there was little motivation to drive them from their conditions of production in order that they might more easily be integrated into the wage-labour economy. As is demonstrated through the next case study, however, the view of the state towards small farmers, and especially indigenous farmers, has gradually changed in recent years, even if the rhetoric of support for the land rights of small farmers has not been totally abandoned (see, for example, Lao People's Revolutionary Party 2011).

6 Glassman (2003) points out that despite being called the 'Asian financial crisis' it did not only have Asian origins.

The Bachieng District Land Concession Case Study

During the late 1990s and early years 2000s, Laos and the region were still recovering from the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, but as the regional and global economy recovered and expanded new opportunities for developing economic land concessions became available in Laos and other countries in mainland Southeast Asia. In particular, the growth of the manufacturing power of India and especially China became important as demand for commodities increased in Asia, and globally, resulting in expanding demand for raw materials. This led to dramatic price rises of various commodities, the most important for the development of new land concessions in Laos being rubber *(Hevea brasiliensis)* (Alton et al. 2005; Vongkhamhor 2006). Other crops, such as jatropha, which has potential to produce bio-fuels, also began being promoted due to climate change concerns, and the push to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Concessions were also allowed to cultivate other crops, such as cassava and corn (see Dwyer 2007).

Thus, beginning in the early 2000s, and especially after 2003-2004, there was a rapid increase in demand for economic land concessions in Laos, as well as other previously marginal areas, including Cambodia, Burma, and more remote parts of China, Vietnam and Thailand (Ziegler et al. 2009; Cheang 2008; Luangaramsi et al. 2008; Shi 2008; *Thanh Nien News* 2007, 2009; Manivong and Cramb 2008; Myanmar Times 2006). This coincided with the government of Laos becoming less confident in the ability of small farmers to increase their agricultural production in order to produce for export markets. In fact, the increases in production expected to result from Land and Forest Allocation (LFA)

(initially *beng din beng pa* and later *mop din beng pa* in Lao) in the early 1990s had largely failed to materialize (see MAF 2005), and by mid-1996 Prime Minister's Decree #6 was released, which made it clear that the government was thinking more about the possibility of issuing large land concessions to foreign investors. In addition, when the 1999 Land Law was revised in 2003 the provision that required unused land to be returned to the state was removed, apparently as a way of ensuring that land speculation would be easier.[7] Finally, this period also coincided with the rapid deterioration of government faith in the original socialist ideals of the Lao PDR government and the increasing penetration of market economics, thus leading to an increasing propensity for officials to engage in corrupt behavior (Stuart-Fox 2006), including central, provincial and district officials accepting bribes to provide investors with economic land concessions, and village headmen receiving payments to find land for investors (Baird 2010a). Essentially, the combination of expanded demand for land concessions in Laos, less faith in the ability of semi-subsistence farmers to increase their contribution to production for export, and a growing propensity for corruption amongst government officials created the 'perfect storm' that led to a massive boom in large-scale land concessions in Laos.

Investment in rubber plantations has recently increased dramatically in Laos, and there are now monoculture rubber plantations in all provinces of the country, with the earliest dating back as far as the 1990s, but most having been developed since the mid-2000s (Dianna 2007). Although it is uncertain exactly how many hectares of rubber have been planted in Laos – due to the 'free-for-all' nature of the issuing of land concessions at various scales of government, including at the national, provincial and district levels – it has variously been suggested that rubber be limited to 150,000, 200,000 and most recently 300,000 hectares throughout the country (*Vientiane Times* 2008d; Pongkhao 2009b; 2010a and b). Rubber planting may, however, have already exceeded the 300,000 hectare limit (Pongkhao 2010a), especially considering projections for the large amount of rubber Vietnamese companies plan to cultivate in Laos (*Thanh Nien News* 2009).

Rubber planting continued throughout 2008-2009 when rubber prices dropped considerably due to the economic crisis.[8] Even now, rubber prices remain below their peak of a few years ago, but have risen considerably (Pongkhao 2010a). Rubber tree planting is continuing in various parts of Laos as of this writing.

Research indicates that the rapid transformation of landscapes from mixed agricultural/forest lands to monoculture rubber plantations has had dramatic social and environmental impacts (see, for example, Baird 2010a; Kenney-Lazar 2010; Barney 2009; Thonmanivong et al. 2009; Village Focus International 2008; Luangaramsi et al. 2008; Lao Biodiversity Association 2008; Hanssen 2007; Dwyer 2007; Chamberlain 2007; Obein 2007).

Probably the most vivid example in Laos of large-scale rubber development and its negative social and environmental impacts – and certainly the best documented – is in Bachiengchaleunsouk (Bachieng) District, on the foothills of the western side of the Bolaven Plateau in Champasak Province, an area largely populated by a number of historically upland indigenous ethnic groups,[9] including the Jrou (Laven), Souay, Brou (Taoi), and Brao (Lave), the main groups in Bachieng. I am not suggesting that what has happened in Bachieng is typical of the overall circumstances in Laos, as experiences involving Chinese rubber concessions and contract farming in northern Laos differ considerably. Still, the circumstances in Bachieng do approximate what has transpired with other Vietnamese rubber concessions in southern Laos (see, for example,

7 I am indebted to Mike Dwyer for pointing out PM Decree #6 and the changes in the Land Law to me.

8 For more information about declines of regional rubber prices in 2008, see Chun and Nguon (2008).

9 The government of Laos recognizes 49 ethnic groups and well over 100 sub-groups, even though there are undoubtedly more groups than that. In any case, about a third of the population are ethnic Lao and another third are included in other Tai language speaking groups. The remaining third speak languages in the Mon-Khmer, Sino-Tibetan and Hmong-Ieu Mien language families. These latter groups are sometimes considered to be the 'indigenous peoples' of Laos, although the concept of 'indigenous peoples' is not recognized by the government of Laos, at least in the sense of providing people with special rights. Instead, all peoples are considered to have equal rights under the law (Baird 2010b). In southern Laos, virtually all the indigenous peoples speak languages in the Mon-Khmer family.

Kenney-Lazar 2010; Lao Biodiversity Association 2008; Chamberlain 2007).

Based on my own extensive discussions with indigenous farmers affected by land concessions in Bachieng, research conducted by GAPE (see Baird 2010a), and other investigations in the district (Luangaramsi et al. 2008; Obein 2007; Chamberlain 2007), many rural people there are upset about the enclosure and loss of agricultural and forest lands, with compensation for agricultural land being low, and even less or nothing for fallow swidden fields. Compensation for lost common grazing lands is also not being paid, as the land has been classified as 'state land.' Crucially, the government of Laos has also maintained a development policy which has advocated the 'fixing of villages' and occupations, and the eradication or reduction of swidden agriculture (see Baird and Shoemaker 2007; Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Vandergeest 2003). In particular, it is hoped that large-scale plantations can replace swidden agriculture. Illustrative of one of the government of Laos' concerns about swidden agriculture, the *Vientiane Times* (2010a:1) wrote,

> To encourage funding from private and government organisations or domestic and foreign countries and to provide permanent jobs for farmers and villagers, it is essential that a return to slash and burn [swidden] cultivation is avoided.

Swidden cultivation is seen as a threat to foreign investment and development more generally. There is also considerable prejudice about those most commonly associated with swidden agriculture, the indigenous peoples who are seen to be 'backwards' and holding back the 'development' of the country (Baird and Shoemaker 2007; Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Vandergeest 2003).

In some cases agricultural land has been bulldozed at night without warning. I heard of one instance in which peoples' perennial crops, including pineapples, fruit trees and coffee were clandestinely cleared at night during a village festival (*boun ban* in Lao), when villagers let their guard down. They awoke the next morning to find the landscape completely transformed. Changes in landscapes and associated livelihoods are taking place over very short periods of time, with most land being converted within a week or two, a few days, or even just one night.

According to Obein (2007), in the 33 villages in Bachieng impacted by the Viet-Lao Rubber Company,[10] 83 percent of the agricultural land had been lost to rubber by the end of 2006. Of those, 18 villages were left with 10 percent or less of their agricultural lands, and of those, four had no agriculture land whatsoever. Obein was critical, but suggested that some of the villages with hardly any land should be relocated, although he acknowledged that internal resettlement can result in various negative serious social and environmental impacts (see Baird and Shoemaker 2007; Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Vandergeest 2003). More recently, large numbers of families impacted by these plantations have moved into large organized settlements called '*nikhom*' in Lao. The idea is that the people can live in these rubber plantation company-developed settlements and work on the plantations, thus solving the problem of land-less people while providing the company with labour at the same time. As of 2010, the Lao-Viet company was planning three '*nikhom*' in the middle of their plantations (Mana Southichak, personal communication, May 30, 2011).

Common forests and pasture lands crucial for the collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), hunting and fishing, and the grazing of livestock have been lost, and biodiversity has been severely impacted, transforming people's livelihoods both directly and indirectly. For example, one village that does blacksmithing as its main occupation reported losing access to crucial firewood that is important for blacksmithing. Sneddon (2007) has emphasized the need to consider the role of biophysical changes resulting from primitive accumulation. In the case of Bachieng, mixed agricultural lands have been cleared, as have communal forests. This has also led to dramatic changes in adjacent aquatic resources.

Indigenous people in Bachieng frequently report going from producing 90 percent of their own food, and buying only 10 percent, to having to purchase 90 percent of the food they consume and only being able to produce 10 percent (see, also, Luangaramsi et al.

10 12,644 people were being affected by the Viet-Lao Rubber Company plantations (Obein 2007).

(2008). In many cases, however, people have managed to retain larger portions of their land, thus making the proletarianization process much more partial. For example, based on a survey of 189 families in six villages affected by rubber plantations in Bachieng, it was found that the number of families who were able to grow enough rice to eat for 11-12 months a year fell from four in five in 2003 to just one in five in 2007 (Baird 2010a). The impacts of rapid change on the abilities of rural peoples to produce food for family consumption should not be underestimated. The implications of not having food to eat are real, as are the psychological implications of dramatic livelihood shifts, especially for older people. Peoples' lives have changed from being more or less self-sufficient to becoming heavily dependent on rubber company labour, or when that has not been possible, many have become idle due to a lack of farming and foraging opportunities. Some migration has also occurred, both within Laos and to neighbouring Thailand.

The roles of people in society have been transformed together with their socio-economic conditions, thus leaving some without their old roles but not easily able to transition into new satisfactory ones. For example, older women used to help weed the fields, but now there are no fields to weed. Men in their fifties were the masters of their agricultural lands, but they are now without their land while not being allowed to participate in the wage-labour economy due to being classified as too old to work for the rubber companies (see below). Many point to the fact that they previously worked their own hours, but now have little choice but to send some family members to work for the very companies that stole their land.

Large-scale land concessions have been controversial not only in Bachieng, but in Laos more generally. Indicative of the upheaval that has occurred, in May 2007, after two high-profile land concessions were investigated, including the rubber plantations in Bachieng District, the Lao Prime Minister at the time, Bouasone Bouphavanh, declared a moratorium on issuing of new economic land concessions throughout the country (*Vientiane Time*s 2007b). This was followed, in the second half of 2008, by the provincial governments in both Xekong Province in southern Laos and Luang Namtha Province in northern Laos declaring that they would not allow the expansion of rubber plantations within their respective political boundaries (*Vientiane Times* 2008a and c; Pongkhao 2009a). Although the national concession moratorium, which was never strictly implemented, was revoked in mid-2009, it was reintroduced, albeit in a more watered down form, just a few weeks later, apparently due to pressure from the National Assembly, which has been inundated with complaints from rural constituents (*Vientiane Times* 2009a and b; 2010c). Whereas the National Assembly was once considered simply a 'rubber stamp' for Party and government policies, recently National Assembly members from different parts of the country have complained openly about economic land concessions (Sengdara 2010; Pongkhao 2010b). The former Minister in charge of the National Land Management Authority, the ex-neutralist General, Khammouane Boupha, has also become an outspoken critic of land concessions in Laos (KPL 2008; *Vientiane Times* 2008b; 2009c; 2010b).

Focusing on Labour

So far the research conducted on land issues in Laos has tended to focus on the types of land concession agreements that have been negotiated, and the impacts on the environment and the livelihoods of rural people who have lost their agricultural lands, forests, and streams to land concessions. However, the situation in Bachieng over the last few years (see, in particular, Baird 2010a; Luangaramsi et al. 2008) indicates that labour issues are extremely important to locals, including the largely indigenous population living near large plantations in Bachieng. It even seems at times that there is more concern about labour issues than with the loss of land.

Some of those in Bachieng who have lost land to rubber concessions have been underpaid for their labour. The minimum wage according to the Lao labour law is supposed to be 25,000 kip/day, but in reality, villagers have sometimes only being paid 18,000 kip/day. Another problem is that few labourers have been given permanent contracts. This is because the labour demands of the plantations vary from season to season, and also depend on the stage

of plantation development. Labourers are often hired on a piece work basis, with some obtaining 300,000 to 500,000 kip (US$30-50)/month for weeding in the dry season. However, much of the weeding work is done in the rainy season, with labourers receiving about 3,700,000 kip (US$370) for weeding 25-hectare plots. In addition, contracted labour cannot look for other employment during the slow season. This is a serious concern, because sometimes villagers cannot make enough income to make ends meet. Luangaramsi et al. (2008) found that the average number of working days per year in Bachieng was less than a quarter of the working year, thus making it very difficult for people to make a living through working on the plantations.

Companies have also frequently failed to pay labourers in full so as to prevent them from abruptly resigning. The idea is that if people are owed money, they will not sacrifice it by quitting without providing adequate notice. This appears to be a common strategy used by employers in Laos to control the labour force, one that the government does not appear to be cracking down on. Essentially, the companies are doing their part to transform local people through introducing new forms of labour discipline. Rules designed to control the labour force are particularly despised by villagers, but are especially important for capitalists.

Another concern of indigenous people in Bachieng has been that they are punished by not being allowed to work for 15 days if they are deemed to have missed a day of work without justification, or if they miss a day they are sometimes not paid for the previous few days. In some cases they are only paid if they are able to work 15 days in a row. Sometimes if workers miss three consecutive days, they are fired, frequently without being paid for previous work. Workers often have a hard time not being able to rest when they feel like it, or choose to take an afternoon nap. Labourers in Bachieng also report that when at work, they are often expected to take shifts that are longer than permitted by law. A couple of years ago the head of Champasak Province's Governor's office promised to launch an investigation to determine whether payments to labourers by the rubber developers were appropriate; however it does not appear that much has come from this investigation, if it even happened. Some believe that officials are unwilling to do much due to the corrupt payments they are receiving from companies.

One serious problem reported by people in Bachieng is that middle-aged people are not being hired as labour by the rubber companies. For example, Dak Lak Rubber Company, from Vietnam, one of the three rubber companies operating in Bachieng, only allows those between 18 and 35 to work as day-wage labourers, while those working for another one of the three companies, Viet-Lao Rubber Company, must be between 18 and 45 years old. The weak, sick or disabled are also prohibited from working on the plantations. Women are also not allowed to bring young children to work with them, a common practice in government and other jobs in Laos. Overall, in February 2008, research done in two villages in Bachieng found that 64 percent of those who wanted to work in the plantations were not being employed as full-time labourers, despite losing a considerable amount of land to rubber companies.

Labourers on the plantations are also frequently exposed to dangerous herbicides or other chemicals applied to the rubber plantations, causing various health problems. Protective materials (gloves and masks) have, for the most part, not been provided, and sometimes labourers have been asked to apply chemicals without receiving adequate safety training. In some cases workers have been forced to work in areas containing recently applied chemicals. Spraying has also been done next to villages on windy days, irritating and likely harming people. Those who work on the rubber plantations are not, however, receiving any health benefits, and those not working for the companies who have been negatively affected by spraying are also not receiving any company compensation or specific assistance.

There are, however, those who favour rubber development, especially poorer people who had little or no land before rubber development began. Many of these labourers are relatively recent migrants with less attachment to the places that are being transformed, and more of a need for paid employment as labourers due to lacking land-bases to make a living.

Still, overall, there is significant evidence that

the indigenous peoples are generally unhappy about being forced to rely on insecure and poorly paid employment on plantations. This is indicated by the emotion that people show when speaking about various labour problems. Many are also resentful with both legal and illegal Vietnamese labourers working for the rubber companies. In one case, an ethnic Brao elderly man unable to work in the plantations because of his age expressed his concerns about illegal Vietnamese labourers. In an animated way, he described, in his own language, how fun it was to watch the illegal Vietnamese workers run when someone dressed up in a Lao policeman's uniform and walked out into the plantations, seemingly to confront them. He laughed with joy when he described how the scared Vietnamese ran from the police. At first, I thought he was describing something that actually occurred, but later I realized that he was simply presenting how fun it would be if someone was actually brave enough to be so brash. His performative narrative was a way of letting off steam and discursively expressing his frustrations with labour problems without doing anything that could get him in trouble with the authorities. This is reminiscent of the type of character assassination and other forms of resistance commonly encountered amongst peasants (see Scott 1985).

Economic Land Concessions as a Means for Transforming Labour

The primitive accumulation process occurring in Laos today is partially justified on the grounds that taking land away from peasants is a sure-fire way to indirectly compel them to enter the wage-labour market associated with plantations. The Lao politicians and officials who advocate this transformation are hoping to revamp the relations of production so as to develop a capitalist society involving a small number of capitalists and many more wage-earning workers. Essentially, they want to introduce new economic imperatives to society so as to transform Laos' economy into something 'modern' and 'developed.' We can see the roots of what is happening in Laos within John Locke's deeply influential treatise on government (1689), in which he considered that Native Americans had failed to generate recognizable profits, so therefore even though they clearly mixed their labour with the land, their property claims were considered to be less valid than those of European settlers focused on "improvement" (Locke 1988).

Over the last decade or so I have heard government of Laos officials refer to this as being an important part of what is frequently referred to as "development" (*kan phatthana* in Lao). It is this condition – combined with the enclosure and expropriation of land and resources – that links what is happening in Laos so closely with Marx's primitive accumulation or Harvey's accumulation by dispossession. Many politicians and officials in Laos believe that even if land must be forcibly taken from peasants, before the former occupants are coerced into providing cheap labour, the trauma that people endure is warranted because the expected changes make the suffering worthwhile in the long run. The sense that indigenous people need to sacrifice now for a better life in the future is a similar narrative to what is frequently stated in relation to resettling people from the uplands to the lowlands (Baird and Shoemaker 2007; 2008). There have also been examples of the resettlement of indigenous people in the northern province of Phongsaly in order to serve as labour for tea plantations (Vanina Bouté, personal communication 2007), and in Luang Namtha Province ethnic Akha people were apparently moved from a remote area to near a main road in 2006 with the idea that their labour was needed for cultivating rubber. The reason stated for moving the people was to locate them closer to government services, but people were told that one of the advantages of resettlement would be that they could work on the rubber plantations for wage-labour. Furthermore, soon after being resettled many of the relocated people were taken to work for a plantation (Bill Tuffin, personal communication, June 1, 2011; see also Lyttleton 2004).

Illustrating the mind-set of the highest levels of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the 9th Political Report of the Central Committee states,

> Our Party has also sought to improve and raise the capacity and efficiency of the economic management of the state, increased the strict management of national resources and environmental protection,

> for instance, forest protection linked with reforestation promotion to expand green areas across the country. At the same time, we have carried out land allocation across the country, and adopted a national policy on the sustainable use of land and natural resources. [Lao People's Revolutionary Party 2011:2]

Crucially, the same document also states:

> Our party and state should clearly define poor areas and focal development areas … and allocation of land for people's settlement and livelihood in association with the creation of permanent jobs to bring an end to slash and burn cultivation. [Lao People's Revolutionary Party 2011:13]

At a lower level of government, the Director of the Champassak provincial Agriculture and Forestry Department, was quoted by the *Vientiane Times* (2007a) as stating, in specific reference to economic land concessions for rubber in Bachieng:

> We accept that there will be some problems with villagers initially, but if we don't change today from local production to industrial production, when will we do it?

Reflecting a similar perspective, but this time in the context of internal resettlement of uplanders to the lowlands, an ethnic Brao official in Phou Vong District, Attapeu Province, southern Laos, stated,

> The Brao are being moved to the lowlands because they have been poor in the mountains for centuries. How will anything change if they don't move to the lowlands? [Baird 2008:285]

These sorts of comments can be heard frequently in Laos, and they indicate how government officials at various levels, including sometimes indigenous officials, have internalized certain ideas that justify their involvement in promoting concessions that do not benefit the government or local people. When applying primitive accumulation as a concept it becomes easy to see how the establishment of large-scale plantations is seen by some as a vehicle for transforming the landscape and the people in the name of ending swidden agriculture, promoting 'fixed livelihoods,' and ultimately compelling people to enter the wage-labour economy. Summarizing the overall situation, a Lao development worker commented,

> Lao officials take subsistence economy as inferior to a more modern, cash income economy. By allowing a big investor to modernize the production mode over the same piece of land (which often means totally changing what is produced there), officials believe that poor, subsistence villagers will do better with compensation for relocation and cash income jobs. It will also be better for the overall economy. It makes economic sense from the perspective of raising land productivity – income earned per hectare of land. … Of course, another perspective is that government earns revenues from a large company but not from subsistence farmers. It also raises efficiency in government revenue collection. Revenue collection cost for government also reduces substantially going with a large investor (collecting tax from one company versus hundreds of villagers who cannot pay).

Increased Mobility of Labour and Capital

Today's improved transportation and communications have generally facilitated the movement of labour in ways that were much less possible in the past, and this time-space compression is greatly influencing the circumstances in Laos today. Whereas many Lao officials are motivated to promote economic land concessions partially because they want locals to be hired as wage-labourers, the Vietnamese investors in southern Laos appear to be less concerned about accessing local labour, except to maintain favourable relations with the government of Laos and prevent unrest in plantation areas. The companies would, it appears, rather import Vietnamese labour into Laos to work on the rubber plantations, and once tapping begins, and more labour is required, more Vietnamese labour is expected to arrive for tapping the rubber trees. This, in fact, mirrors the situation during the French colonial period, when the French tried to promote Vietnamese immigration into Laos because it was felt that Vietnamese labour was more efficient and industrious than Lao labour, a view that persists today (see also Hodgdon 2008). Moreover, with transportation routes in better condition than

ever, and the Vietnamese labour force being even more used to travelling than in the past, bringing labour from Vietnamese is easy, provided that the government of Laos allows it to happen.

It appears that the Vietnamese intend to take advantage of a clause in Article 7 of the Lao labour law that states that, "Any labour unit in economic sectors may employ foreign workers when necessary, if no appropriately qualified workers are available in the Lao People's Democratic Republic" (Government of Laos 1994). Therefore, by claiming that certain jobs require foreign labour, possibly because Lao labour has not performed well, it is possible to justify hiring more foreign labourers at the expense of locals. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Lao people are travelling every year to Thailand to work, most illegally, thus reducing the amount of available labour for plantation work in Laos, and making it easier for the Vietnamese to justify importing labour from Vietnam. The Vietnamese concession owners generally find it easier to work with Vietnamese labour, which they are more familiar with and are more easily able to control. Most Vietnamese companies also seem to prefer importing labourers from Vietnam because they believe that they work harder for lower wages and are more dependable. One can see similar patterns in the logging industry in Laos, as well as in the construction industry, both of which are dominated by Vietnamese labour. The inability or unwillingness of Lao officials to clamp down on illegal Vietnamese labour has also made it possible for plantation owners to hire illegal labour from Vietnam. The ability for companies to access Vietnamese labour, either legally or illegally, is thus a crucial factor, as it has resulted in a particular dynamic in Laos that is linked to labour mobility and availability.

Another important difference with the past is that investor capital is much more mobile and able to transcend national borders than previously. Now, foreign capitalists can invest in plantations, and once a single cycle of planting has been completed, and the trees are cut and sold, the investor is not required to reinvest profits in tree planting. Therefore, investors can no longer claim that they are "in it for the long run." This is especially true for Vietnamese investors, who are able to move capital between Laos and Vietnam quite easily, partially due to the 'special relationship' between Laos and Vietnam (see Lao People's Revolutionary Party 2011), and also because of the geographical conditions in the region, including the long porous border between the two countries, which makes it easy for Vietnamese to transfer capital between the two countries. Ultimately, this ability to insert and remove capital from Laos makes periods of boom and bust based on Vietnamese capital mobility much more likely.

Primitive Accumulation in a Nominally Socialist Country

> Villagers in Bachieng district of Champassak province envisage a dark future now that their lands have been taken over by investors for a rubber plantation. Local authorities have allowed the investors a concession on the land and encourage villagers to work as labourers for the investors. The resulting shortage of land for agriculture will force some families to leave their homes in search of alternative land to earn a living. [The first few lines in an article about rubber plantations in Bachieng, *Vientiane Times* 2007a]

Some may be surprised that such rampant primitive accumulation is being allowed and even promoted by many in a country like Laos, one of the few nations left that espouses a Marxist-Leninist political philosophy, and whose main support base during the revolution were the indigenous peoples now being largely disenfranchised due to economic land concessions. We should not, however, be so surprised, as Marx thought that primitive accumulation and capitalism were necessary to pass through before capitalism would eventually plant the seeds of its own destruction, making it possible for socialism to emerge (Marx 1976). It was, however, Vladimir Lenin who proposed to jump frog an era of private capitalism through the development of what he called "state capitalism" (Bandera 1963), an idea that Kaisone Phommihane, the former Prime Minister and President of Laos, also promoted in 1986 through the New Economic Mechanism, with the hope that this path would eventually lead to socialism (Evans 2002). As Marx (1976:915-916)

put it, the state frequently works "to hasten, as in a hothouse, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition." The same can be said to be happening today. Since one of the key requirements of primitive accumulation is forcing people from semi-subsistence economies to ones dominated by wage-labour, only governments that are not obliged to respond to political opposition, and tend to support the implementation of top-down policies – such as has long been the case in Laos – are in the position to really make all aspects of primitive accumulation occur. Furthermore, the profits from rubber plantations can be expected to largely be exported back to Vietnam rather than being reinvested in Bachieng. Thus, the end result may be more sustained conditions of primitive accumulation, the type of problem warned of by Harvey (2003) and Moore (2004).

The types of so-called economic or neoliberal 'reforms' being promoted by the IMF, World Bank, ADB and other Western donors actually fit well with Leninist 'state capitalism,' except that one emphasizes the private sector while the other is focused on state control. But crucially, both are linked to accumulation by dispossession, and this is especially possible when backed up by an authoritarian political system such as the one in Laos. Furthermore, the lack of transparency and accountability in Laos tends to result in the type of 'behind doors deal making' and corruption that is frequently occurring (Stuart-Fox 2006).

Conclusions

One of the things that struck me during my field research in southern Laos was how much labour issues were of interest to the indigenous peoples who have lost land to concessions, even to the extent of overshadowing concerns about losing land. There are various possible explanations for this. First, labour is something that is intimately connected to the people; it relates directly to their bodies, an idea that Marx himself recognized (Marx 1976). The government of Laos has recently redefined many village forests, and some villager agriculture lands, especially those used for swidden agriculture and in fallow, as 'public' or 'state' lands, enclosing the commons through discursively transforming the land into 'state land' (see Locke 1988; Moore 2004), and thus 'legally' separating the people from their conditions of production, the land. Thus it is much more difficult to separate one's labour from oneself, which probably results in people feeling more confident to complain about their labour conditions than with their loss of land.

In addition, indigenous peoples' concerns about labour conditions may represent a proxy for resentment about losing land, both agricultural and common lands, a concern that they are prevented from complaining about openly because the state has (re)defined the land taken from them as being 'state land' rather than their 'villager land.' It is hard to know how closely these issues are linked, but many of those in Bachieng who I have spoken with – and are concerned about losing their land – frequently bring up labour problems. To most, it would appear that land and labour are parts of the same package.

Many indigenous peoples would probably be willing to accept the loss of at least some of their land if they were provided with opportunities for good and stable employment, but once they realize that the land they have given up is not bringing them the secure and well-paid employment which has frequently been vaguely promised to them, their tendency is frequently to feel cheated. This is part of the reason why so much resentment has been generated against rubber companies in southern Laos.

Crucially, this paper has demonstrated that applying Marx's framing of primitive accumulation is useful for analyzing what is happening in relation to large-scale land concessions for plantations in southern Laos today, and potentially in other parts of the world as well. It is also evident elsewhere in Laos and in relation to other kinds of land and resource concessions in the country, including those related to mining and hydropower dam development, and there is considerable potential for fruitfully framing various 'development' activities in Laos in relation to primitive accumulation. Sneddon (2007) has, for example, usefully applied the concept to fisheries in Cambodia.

One of the main points of this paper is to demonstrate that the motivations of the government of Laos in agreeing to large-scale economic land concessions is partially to propel the rural population from the semi-subsistence livelihoods directly into

an economy dominated by wage-level. Even if suffering follows, such drastic measures are justified as a necessary evil, something required to ensure that the long-term normative 'development' prognosis is good. As Hodgdon wrote, quoting a high-level official in the Department of Forestry in Vientiane about the government's resettlement of upland indigenous peoples from the uplands to the lowlands of Laos,

> We see that the resettlement policy is not working for everyone. … But, in fact, it will remain a main element in the development approach we will take in Laos. If you look at it objectively, all it is really doing is implementing through policy what has taken place naturally all over the world throughout history. … Societies develop, and as they do, certain ways of living have to be changed, for the good of the whole nation. It is painful in some cases; but sometimes we have to ask our people to starve for a day, to sacrifice, to make the country stronger. [Hodgdon 2008:64]

These comments clearly indicate the sentiment of many in the government of Laos who believe that forcing people out of subsistence and semi-subsistence economies – whether through resettlement, the eradication of swidden agriculture, or in the cases highlighted in this paper, the enclosure of upland agriculture lands or common forests – will ultimately bring about positive 'development.' This is not, however, only the case in Laos; but is similarly occurring in other nominally socialist countries, such as Vietnam and China (see, for example, Webber 2008).

Understanding what large-scale economic land concessions are doing in countries such as Laos is crucial, especially where subsistence economies remain important, and indigenous peoples are still living 'close to nature.' As has already been widely reported, 'land grabbing' through various means, including the issuing of large economic land concessions, is frequently responsible for serious environmental impacts, ones that are negatively impacting on both biodiversity and rural livelihoods (GRAIN 2008; Cotula et al. 2009; Ziegler 2009; FIAN 2010; Zoomers 2010). There has been, however, less written about how the process of land and resource expropriation is integrally intertwined with efforts by governments to integrate rural populations into the wage-labour economy. This is important for many in the government of Laos, thus making what is happening as much the result of state policy and practices as due to the investment of private capital. Finally, the primitive accumulation framework helps us look beyond the enclosure and dispossession aspects of land grabbing, as important as they are, and directs us to analyze the circumstances of enclosure in tandem with labour issues, a useful endeavour indeed.

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The Circulation of Labour and Money: Symbolic Meanings of Monetary Kinship Practices in Contemporary Truku Society, Taiwan

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the symbolic meanings attributable to the circulation of labour and the earnings of migrant labourers in contemporary Truku society, one of Taiwan's indigenous groups. With the integration of Truku society into capitalist market-based economies from the 1960s onwards, for many the most effective way to extricate themselves from the problems of poverty has been to secure work as a migrant labourer. In this paper, I attempt to discuss the interrelationship between migrant labour and monetary kinship practices in order to give consideration to the external and internal symbolic meanings which are attributed to the earnings from migrant labour. I argue that it is necessary for Truku people to follow a complex set of norms in the regular cycles of kinship practices, because they are based on social and kinship morality and belief in ancestral spirits. As such, any surplus from the earnings of migrant labour goes mainly toward monetary kinship practices, rather than for economic development in local society. However, for those Truku suffering from poverty, the performance of monetary-based kinship practices can become an onerous financial burden. As a consequence, it is through monetary kinship practices that the relationship between the poor and the rich is converted into a long-term relationship between the debtor and the creditor respectively. Hence, monetary kinship practices have become a mechanism for wealthier households to strengthen their social and political influence in society. As such, the circulation of labour combines with monetary kinship practices in the process of forming social and economic hierarchy in contemporary Truku society.

KEYWORDS: monetary kinship practices, migrant labour, Taiwanese indigenous people, Truku people

Introduction: Indigenous People and Circulation of Labour in Taiwan

During my fieldwork (2005 and 2006) I would often accompany indigenous friends on Sundays, to Shingchen Station in Fushih Village, Taiwan. These friends were migrant labourers who worked in urban areas on weekdays, returning on the weekend to their hometown, Fushih Village in Shioulin Township, in the eastern part of the island. For these indigenous migrant labourers, returning home is usually something to look forward to, because they can meet their families, relatives, and friends. At the same time, they can meet other migrant labourers who work in different places, and share work related information. When appropriate, these labourers often request time off from work in order to participate in festivals, weddings, funerals, various sorts of ceremonies, or even athletic meets being held in their hometown. Participating in these sorts of events is one of the ways in which indigenous migrant labourers maintain their social and kinship relations.

For many indigenous people in the village, migrant labour is an important part of life. Prior to the advent of migrant labour in the locality, most of the indigenous people in the village conducted cash cropping. However, with the recognition in the 1970s that waged labour was potentially more remunerative than farming, increasing numbers left their households to become migrant labourers. According to the official 2009 census, the village contained 2,158 residents, including 1,153 males and 1,005 females, and 635 households (Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan, CIP, 2009). However, during my fieldwork there were approximately 1,100 people in residence, many others having left to pursue employment or education elsewhere, or having moved out of the village after marriage. Demographically, the majority of residents still living in the village were over the age of fifty, many of them in households with their unmarried children or grandchildren. Many younger people live and work outside of the village and have left their children with the grandparents.

Most of the indigenous people in Fushih Village are Truku. According to archaeological and linguistic studies, Taiwanese indigenous people had lived on Taiwan for more than 6 thousand years before Chinese migrants arrived in the 16th century (Bellwood 1991; Blust 1999). They are an Austronesian people, and differ from the Chinese, who belong to the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family, and for centuries Taiwanese indigenous people have experienced economic competition and military conflict with a series of colonizing peoples (Simon 2005). On the basis of the official ethnic classification of 2009, there are 14 indigenous groups in Taiwan. The population of Taiwanese indigenous people is just over five hundred thousand, representing two percent of the population in Taiwan in 2009 (CIP 2009). Taiwanese indigenous people, as the ethnic minority, are not only confronted with the displacement of their culture and languages, but also with the loss of their living areas (Lin 2010b).

Truku people had been officially classified as Atayal, a Taiwanese indigenous group, in order to facilitate colonial administration. However, Japanese ethnographers have classified Truku people as one of the 'sub-groups' of the Sediq group, noting that their language, customs, and legends were different from the Atayal (Mori 1917). As recently as January 14, 2004, the Truku people were recognized by the state as an indigenous group independent from the Atayal, another Austronesian group. The emergence of the Truku group as an official indigenous group can be regarded as an achievement of the Truku Name Rectification Movement, which began its campaign in 1996 (Siyat 2004). The population figures given for Truku people in 2009 were 25,286; 12,298 male and 12,988 female (CIP 2009). Most Truku live in the eastern mountains and on the east coast of Taiwan.[1]

Although each indigenous group in Taiwan has its own particular culture and social organization, each of them, being an ethnic minority, face similar economic, social, and political difficulties. In order to solve problems relating to poverty, many Taiwanese indigenous people have devised similar strategies, such as the use of tourism (Rudolph 2008) or working as migrant labourers in the urban areas of Taiwan (Fu 1994). However, although working as a waged labourer goes some way to dealing with poverty itself, most indigenous migrant labourers do not earn as much as they would wish to. In Wallerstein's theory of 'world system' (1979), the pool of cheap labour available for core area relies on peripheral areas and pre-capitalist societies. Most indigenous migrant labourers in Taiwan have continued to face cultural, economic, and social disadvantage in urban areas. Most of them are lower-skilled workers in factories, crew members on pelagic fishing boats, miners or construction workers. Typically, their work is low paid, temporary, and dangerous (Tsai 2001).

The emergence of migrant labourers in Taiwanese indigenous society from the 1970s onwards is not unique. Many people in rural areas or indigenous

1 According to the ethnic classification made by many Japanese anthropologists, the Sediq is comprised of three sub-groups: Truku, Tausai (=Teuda), and Tkydaya (Mori 1917). However, since the Truku became an indigenous group, there has been a contest between Sediq identity and Truku identity in Truku society. Under the ethnic classificatory system current in 2004, the government used the term Truku to describe the Tausai and the Tkydaya, as well as Truku people. However, many Tausai people, Tkydaya people and the Western Sediq people disagreed with this categorization of their identity as Truku. In this article, I adopt Truku rather than Sediq to refer to the people with whom I worked, because most of the villagers in my fieldsite have registered as Truku, while the Sediq had not yet been classified as an official ethnic group.

societies around the world have become temporary or permanent migrant labourers, as societies have become integrated into the global capitalist economy. While migrant labourers are geographically distanced from their hometown, most of their earnings are sent back home. Despite the distance from their hometown, most will usually find various ways to maintain social and emotional connections with their kin groups, household, and friends from their place of origin. Importantly, even though they are living away from their home communities, migrant labourers' earnings can be regarded as an essential element of the household economy back home. Ballard (1987) describes how Pakistani migrant labourers in Britain and the Middle East tend to use their earnings to build a new house for themselves or for their households, or to purchase land. He suggests that "this partly reflects a concern for honor and status, and the wish to demonstrate how much success they have achieved overseas, but it also reflects a desire to build up security against the day when they finally return home" (1987:22). Similarly, Murray (1981) points out that while circulation of labour divides families in the rural areas of Lesotho, the earnings from migrant labour contribute continually towards the maintenance of the household back home, in addition to enabling households to "seek access to arable land as a provision of some marginal security in old age" (1981:104).

Stark suggests that "the migrant furnishes his family with their remittances, the family furnishes the migrant with more insurance and so forth" (1978:220). In this sense, there are many social and economic functions attributable to the earnings from migrant labour, both for the labourers themselves as well as their families. Importantly, the relationship between migrant labourers and their households is connected through the flow of earnings from the urban to the rural. Moreover, these earnings also offer the hope of future economic well-being, for both labourers and their households.

Indeed, the advent of migrant labour brings about changes of social, economic, and political relations in their society of origin. Firstly, the migration of young men and women may challenge existing structures of authority whereby older men have had almost exclusive control of the means of production, and access to land and resources (e.g. Stichter 1985). Secondly, the absence of men likely leads to unstable conjugal relations (e.g. Murray 1981) and changes in the operational principles underlying the sexual division of labour (e.g. Lin 2010a; Marx 1987). Additionally, migration provides young women with opportunities to escape from the control and authority of their kinsmen back in their natal communities (e.g. Ong 1987), and their economic contribution to the household may effectively empower them in their home communities (e.g. Gamburd 2004). Finally, the circulation of labour can change economic relations and activities in rural as well as indigenous societies. For instance, Standing (1985) suggests that the circulation of labour can impede agricultural development, alter relations of production and shape or reshape the economic hierarchy.

In different societies, the circulation of labour can influence different social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. In different contexts, people will have different ideas about migration or have distinctive or even contradictory perspectives on the circulation of labour. At the same time, the circulation of labour, entailing as it does the physical absence of migrant labourers and the presence of money, makes existing social, kinship, and political relations become negotiable and changeable. However, the advent of migrant labour is symbolic of people's response to social and economic changes in the dynamic processes of entering the capital global marketplace. Hence, examination of the symbolic meanings of migrant labourer's earnings in local society can lead us to look at how people react to social and economic changes, how social relationships are involved in two circulations – the circulation of labour and of money, in society – and how social, economic, and political changes can be attributed to the introduction of capitalism.

This article looks at the symbolism of money mainly earned by migrant labourers in the intersection of economic change and social change in contemporary indigenous society. In particular, I examine the ways in which the circulation of labour is involved in the monetization of kinship practices in indigenous society in Taiwan. Stark (1978) suggests

that in many societies, people tend to use surplus household income gained from the earnings of migrant labour, for the purposes of agriculture. In Taiwanese indigenous society, however, most people prefer to spend their surplus household income on monetary kinship practices and marriage exchange rather than economic development. As such, in this article, I analyze what social and cultural inner logic guides indigenous people to manage their money. Finally, I also discuss how this phenomenon influences social and political changes and creates new forms of social interaction and relationships in contemporary indigenous society.

The Emergence of Migrant Labourers in Contemporary Truku Society

Standing suggests that "labour circulation is a reflection of the dynamics of socio-economic change, in itself merely one form of migration or population mobility that should be approached in terms of its relationships to the process of socio-economic transition" (1985:3). It is necessary to analyze macro and micro levels of social and economic changes, if we attempt to understand local meanings of the circulation of labourers in rural or indigenous societies. Following Marxism, many scholars argue that migrant labour would erode the existing social order in society. This argument might presume that there seems to be concrete or unchangeable social orders in each society. Under this presumption, when the principles of capitalism and global markets permeate in society, people usually play a passive role in the adaption of economic changes. In addition, this presumption also implies that the migrant is extraordinary. Examining the history of the Truku, we can see that 'migration' is a characteristic of Truku society.

Prior to the Japanese colonial government (1896-1946), Truku people inhabited the central mountain range in the western part of Taiwan. They were hunter-gatherers and also conducted swidden agriculture. In order to maintain subsistence, they frequently moved to new land in order to gain sufficient natural resources in mountain areas (Mori 1917). The Truku people originated in the central mountain range of western Taiwan. Mowna, a Truku anthropologist, estimates that the ancestors of the Truku people had, since the late 16th century, gradually migrated over the central mountain range and settled in the eastern part of Taiwan (Mowna 1977:63).

The exploitation of the abundant forest resources found in the mountain areas of Truku territory figures significantly among the notable effects that the Japanese colonial regime had on Taiwanese society. In order to take advantage of these natural resources, the regime had to have dealings with the Truku people who lived in the mountain forests. The colonial government set up reservations in the plains in the eastern part of Taiwan, and forced Truku people living in the hills to move into the reservations. As a result, Truku people moved from the highlands to the lowlands under the Japanese colonial regime. This shift of the Truku from the highlands to the lowlands was not simply a change of geographical location: it also altered ways of cultivation. In the lowlands, the Japanese government introduced new technologies for the farming of paddy fields, and the construction of irrigation facilities. Finally, Truku society was transformed from a hunter-gatherer society to an agricultural society.

Under the Japanese colonial government, Truku people were subject to strict state control. Not only were they prohibited from leaving their reservation areas, but they were also subject to exacting regulations when selling surplus agricultural products, and were limited to exchange for money or for specific commodities, conducted within a local official trade center specified in each of the reservation areas (Lin 2010b). During this period, after settling in the reservation areas, the circulation of labour as well as money was static rather than active.

Standing illustrates that circulation of labour can be regarded as a "safety-valve circulation" (1985:8). Circulation of labour is a means of preserving forms and social relations of production in rural areas, and is often able to ease the pressures which arise from poor agricultural yield. In Fushih Village, the emergence of migrant labour, I argue, can also be regarded as the response of villagers to the dramatic economic changes which occurred from the 1960s onwards. During the Kuomintang (KMT) regime (1946-2000), the government produced a series of

policies on indigenous land reservation in order to affect "state-controlled capitalism," as a means to improve economic conditions in indigenous societies (Hsiao 1984:135). Owing to the policies on paddy field agriculture and cash crops, education, and the development of forestry, the mode of agricultural production in villages has become increasingly capitalized.

However, most Truku residents did not benefit from cash cropping in the processes of capitalization. There were many structural problems related to agricultural production in indigenous societies. Li (1983), a Taiwanese anthropologist, points out that a shortage of finance and mechanized production, incomplete systems of irrigation and infrastructure, and comparatively low levels of agricultural technology and knowledge were widespread in indigenous societies.

In particular, the privatization of land ownership meant most villagers lost much of their land. Taiwanese indigenous peoples did not gain ownership of their lands until the 1960s. Although the government allowed indigenous people to have some degree of ownership of their land, it is important to point out that under the KMT regime the land tenure system in indigenous societies was different to that used in mainstream Taiwanese society. Firstly, the government held the title to all reservation lands, not indigenous landowners. Indigenous people were legally entitled to the usufruct rights of their lands, but were not granted legal land ownership. Secondly, indigenous people did not have the right to rent or sell their land to non-indigenous people. Thirdly, usufruct rights were granted only under the condition that crops were planted for ten years. Furthermore, it had to be either cultivated or ceded to the government as state property.

However, the indigenous land reservation polices have, in part, been seen by many indigenous people as one of the principal barriers to the economic development of indigenous societies. In addition, the legal restrictions placed on the utilization, inheritance and transaction of indigenous land reservations has meant that indigenous lands are worth far less than land outside the indigenous reservations. Besides, owing to privatization, Truku people have had to pay taxes relating to their land ownership and to the income from their agricultural production.

Truku people, like most indigenous people in Taiwan, are suffering poverty due to the significant loss of their territory (Simon 2005). Fushih Village is highly representative of the problems which have affected indigenous Taiwanese peoples in terms of land. On the one hand, a considerable number of those residing on the hill in Fushih Village have had their land occupied by the Asia Cement Company, a private enterprise which was established in 1973 (see Lin 2010b; Simon 2005). On the other hand, Fushih Village is located in the foothills of the Taroko National Park, which was established in 1986. For most residents, their traditional territory or hunting lands are now the national park. In addition, according to the law, people are legally prohibited from working and living in the national park, thus the national park is a serious threat to their subsistence and living space. Additionally, some residents have had their land occupied by government corporations, such as the Taiwan Power Company and Taiwan Water Corporation.

As Taiwan's economy became increasingly industrialized and capitalized from the 1950s to the 1960s, the government in the meantime began to improve agricultural production through a series of land policies, thereby capitalizing agricultural production in indigenous societies (Li 1983). Many indigenous peoples, with the encouragement of the government, became involved in long-term agricultural production, such as fruit farming and forestry, and growing special products, such as tea and sugar (Taiwan Province Government 1980:35-38). Long-term agricultural products and special products were more valuable in the market than short term products, such as rice, potato, beans, vegetables and taro. (Taiwan Province Government 1980:35-38). In order to increase the profit from these two sorts of agricultural products, most indigenous people used large areas for planting to enable them to produce for, and distribute to, mainstream society (Li 1983).

Concerning the conditions under which cash cropping developed from the 1970s, Truku people not only faced a lack of financial investment and insufficient amounts of cultivated land, but also lack

of labour. In Truku culture, the household, including a married couple and their unmarried children, is the basic economic unit. Householders usually farmed together. However, the working relationship between married couples and their children has changed with the governmental imposition, in 1968, of 'Nine Year Compulsory Education.' Schooling has superseded the household in the formal education of the young. While children spend more time on schooling than working with their parents, the absence of their labour has become a problem for household farming. At the same time, tuition fees and school expenses have continued to increase the financial burden on most households. Consequently, for many Truku households, the income from cash cropping was too slight to guarantee subsistence. Hence, more and more Truku villagers found that they could earn more working as migrant labourers than they could from farming at home.

From the 1970s onwards, increasing numbers of Truku people abandoned their cultivated lands in order to become waged labourers or migrant labourers. There was also an increase in non-agricultural income and an accompanying decrease in agricultural income. For example, agricultural earnings in Sioulin Township in 1967 counted for 73.9 percent of the total income, while non-agricultural earnings were 26.1 percent (Hualien County Government 1967). In contrast, in 1972 the rate of agricultural earnings decreased dramatically to 47.7 percent, while non-agricultural earnings increased to 52.3 percent (Hualien County Government 1972). In 1985, non-agricultural earnings amounted to 82.2 percent of the total income in the township (Hualien County Government 1985).

The advent of migrant labour has created a new form of sexual division of labour in Truku society. Many Truku men went to the cities alone, while their wives, older parents, and children remained at home. The earnings of these male Truku migrant labourers constituted the major proportion of the income of the households back in the village. Most of these migrant labourers worked together on urban construction sites with their kinsmen and perhaps a few kinswomen, usually in part-time jobs with low salaries. They would keep some money to meet their daily expenses while staying away from home, but sent most of their earnings back to their households at home. These earnings from migrant labour enabled them to maintain a connection with their household. Wages from migrant labour have been used to pay household costs, such as bills, taxes, and tuition fees, and to refurbish or construct houses. In addition, these male migrant labourers were expected to save enough money to furnish the costs of their own or their sons' wedding rituals and bridewealth.

Although male migrant labourers were absent from the village, the contribution of their earnings to household income has afforded them a more active and important role than their spouses in terms of the subsistence of their households. As a result, male migrant labourers have been seen as the main economic providers for their households. Nevertheless, in terms of agriculture, with large numbers of men becoming migrant labourers, women began to farm their own or their husband's lands. With male labour absent in the village, the economically sustainable agriculture that was encouraged by the government in the 1960s and 1970s gradually disappeared. Most of the paddy lands which were reclaimed in the 1950s had become dry lands, and the villagers (women and elders) decided to grow short term crops. Subsequently, the way of agriculture shifted from economic agriculture to subsistence agriculture. Most agricultural produce was not sold at market, but was used by female farmers to contribute to the subsistence of their households or to exchange and share with their neighbors and relatives.

From the 1960s and 70s, the conditions of public transportation in Fushih Village significantly improved. As a result, the improvements in public transportation enabled Truku people to leave their hometowns more easily than before. Shingchen Station was originally established in 1975 in order to transport the mining products of the Asian Cement Company. In terms of the economic changes in the village, the establishment of the Asian Cement Company represents the point at which many Truku people lost their lands due to government-led economic development and the privatization of land ownership. As such, since the 1970s Shingchen Station has born witness to a decrease in agricul-

tural production and the growing circulation of waged labour. For many Truku villagers, the station is also the starting point of their experience of being migrant labourers.

In examining Truku history, we can see that migration has been one of the most important ways by which they have adapted to environmental and economic changes. When living in the highlands, Truku people frequently moved and reclaimed new land in order to ensure sufficient land and natural resources for the maintenance of subsistence. At that time, Truku people usually moved with their household or their kin groups and thereby gradually extended their territory. Similarly, the new wave of migration from the 1960s onwards can be regarded as a means adopted by Truku to combat the problems of poverty which have arisen from the effects of capitalization and the reductions to their land. However, in this new wave of migration, most migrants are Truku men and young Truku people, who leave to work as migrant labourers; their households have usually remained within the home communities.

Reflecting on the history of the circulation of labour from the 1960s onwards, I suggest that the emergence of migrant labour can be seen as the result of complex processes of social and economic transformation in contemporary Truku society. In the next section, I will analyze how migrant labourers and their earnings are involved in, or accelerate, the process of monetization of kinship practices in society, and how they are associated with social change in Truku society.

Monetization of Kinship Practices and Symbolism of Money

The main aim of Truku migrant labourers is not only to earn money in urban areas in order to maintain the subsistence of their household, but also to meet the expense of monetary kinship practices, particularly wedding rituals. For many households, although the earnings from migrant labour enable them to escape from poverty, in most cases this is all that is achieved. In Truku society, there are various kinds of kinship practices which are based on ancestor worship and on a complex set of norms. Most kinship practices can be viewed as rites in Truku society, and contain kinship and social obligations. With the introduction of capitalist economics into Truku society from the 1960s onwards, most kinship practices have become gradually monetized. Subsequently, the expense of monetary kinship practices has become one of the major economic issues for many Truku households. Because most Truku people are too poor to afford the cost of monetary kinship practices, any surplus in household income is usually used to meet them. The major proportion of household income comes from the earnings of migrant labourers; the urban-to-rural flow of money earned by these labourers is symbolic of kinship and social relations in Truku society.

Migrant labourers earn their money in urban areas. Their earnings can be viewed as the result of the commoditization of their work. For Hart, following Polanyi's theory, money is a social token created by the state and a commodity made by markets (1986:638). Furthermore, he argues that money must be personal in order to connect each individual to the universal of relations to which they belong. In Marxism money is a fundamental instrument rendering various sorts of foods and services comparable by measuring their value on a shared scale. Furthermore, labour in capitalist society is alienation and money is impersonal. Although money is impersonal, Hart (1986) asserts that people make everything personal including their relations with society.

In the Truku language, money is called '*pila*', a term which is not always associated with moral issues (c.f. Bohannan 1959; Taussig 1980). Money has different symbolic meanings across different cultures and societies (Bloch and Parry 1989; Maurer 2006). Bloch is critical of the view that money is an acid attacking the very fabric of kinship-based moral society as:

> actors seem to know the impact of money on themselves, secondly, money is a symbol referring to the new relations of production, and thirdly, it oversimplifies the contrast between a pre-monetary state of affairs and a post-monetary state of affairs. [1986:171]

In this sense, the symbolic meanings associated with money should be understood by investigating the interrelationship between monetary practices

and culture. Bloch and Parry assert that we need to understand the ways in which "money is symbolized and in which this symbolism relates to culturally constructed notions of production, consumption, circulation and exchange" (1989:2). In order to examine the symbolic meanings of money in contemporary Truku society, I focus on analyzing the monetization of kinship practices and the influence of this process on social and kinship interaction between Truku people.

In Truku society, the household consists of a married couple and their unmarried offspring, and perhaps the husband's parents. The household is the basic unit of production and consumption. Each married couple is politically independent and relatively self-sufficient, economically. A married couple will take full control of the subsistence of their household. Before many Truku villagers became migrant labourers in the 1970s, a couple would usually bring their unmarried children with them to farm in their fields. Although a married couple and their unmarried children would co-operate with their kin groups in agricultural production, prior to the introduction of commercial agriculture to Truku society in the 1960s they would retain most of their harvest for themselves. At that time, a household would freely consume its own agricultural produce, decide when and how to cook its domestic livestock and store any surplus from its own harvest. A small amount of agricultural produce would be retained for the household and might be shared or exchanged with other households.

Truku concepts relating to kinship practices

In Truku society, social relations are based on various sorts of interrelationship between different households. In respect of the relationship between different households in agricultural production, many Truku residents over the age of forty recalled that when most residents were farmers before the 1980s, during the height of the farming season, most members in a community would help each other. Truku people call this cooperation of production '*smbarux.*' Under *smbarux* Truku would organize cooperative labour not only in agricultural production, but also in the building of new houses (or huts) and in dealing with other complicated social and economic tasks.

However, the role of the *smbarux* system in agricultural production has gradually disappeared due to the increasing number of Truku people who have turned to migrant labour from the 1960s onwards. On the one hand, the physical absence of the migrant labourer means that fewer people are able to participate in the *smbarux* system. On the other hand, the need for using the *smbarux* system in farming has declined due to the gradual decrease in agricultural production and development. Although the *smbarux* system is no longer significant in terms of farming practices, it still exists in terms of kinship practices.

In Truku society, the *smbarux* system is not only involved in the exchange of labour in farming, but also guides kinship practices based on concepts of *gaya* in their everyday life. *Gaya* means a complex system of social and religious norms related to supernatural beliefs and ancestor worship. Many anthropological studies of *gaya* (e.g., Kim 1980; Lin 2010b) show that in Truku ancestor worship, an ancestor's spirit is believed to wield great authority, having special powers to bless or curse, and to determine the well-being of their living relatives. Kim (1980), who defines *gaya* as the 'natural order' indicates that when Truku people consider something to be out of the ordinary, such as sickness, accidents, and death, it is considered that someone has broken *gaya*, and consequently the relationship between living householders and ancestral spirits is transformed from one of harmony to one of tension. This tension is considered to be a source of many adversities in society, and is believed to cause people to suffer nightmares, accidents, sickness, lethal injuries or death.

Truku people will hold a ritual to beg for forgiveness from the ancestral spirits, but also as thanks for their blessings. In terms of *gaya*, ritual is a dynamic process of worship where the living communicate with the ancestral spirits by making offerings, such as livestock, food, and drinks. Truku people call this kind of ritual '*powda gaya.*' On the basis of my fieldwork, I classify *powda gaya* rituals into two categories: one is for celebration of the blessings from ancestral spirits, and the other is to relieve the tension between

the ancestral spirits and the living which arise from offences against *gaya*.[2] For Truku residents, the *powda gaya* ritual deals with infringements of *gaya*, and the dangerous contamination which results. As such, it is only the offender's household, the offender's sibling's and parents' households, which have a duty to conduct this ritual. Moreover, only one pig is slaughtered for the *powda gaya* ritual. In the *powda gaya* for the celebration of the ancestral spirits' blessings, such as to share the blessings which come from the ritual and from the host's good fortune, the social groups involved include the host's household and their kin groups, including households of the host's siblings, parents, first (or perhaps second) cousins, and the host's spouse's kin groups. In these ceremonies, the host's household provides at least two pigs. In terms of *powda gaya* for celebration, for Truku people the wedding is the largest scale event. The household of both the bride and the groom, and their kin groups, neighbors and friends will be involved in the wedding.

It is through the medium of ancestor worship, and through obedience to *gaya* rules and obligations and the practice of *powda gaya* rituals that Truku people form social and religious communities. It is through the *gaya* concepts which underlie ancestor worship that the sharing of foods and labour, either in ritual practice or everyday life, gain their importance and power. As such, the cohesion of Truku society cannot be understood without reference to notions of collective vulnerability to spiritual or otherworldly aggression, and the need to sustain a broad alliance amongst households in order to counter it. This alliance is achieved through a series of *powda gaya* rituals.

Reflecting on the process of the *powda gaya* rituals, I argue that the household is the basic social and religious entity, not the individual. The *powda gaya* ritual can be seen as a social field in which different households interact with each other. When a guest household receives an invitation, it is expected to send more than one adult person from the household to represent the household. Representatives are not only duty bound to take along their own portions of pork, but they are also required to assist the host in the process of the ritual. Assisting the host during the ritual is regarded as a form of formal labour exchange between households. If an individual or couple who expects to be invited is for some reason omitted, he or she will usually visit the site of the ritual anyway, in order to remind the host and so obtain an invitation. The exchange of labour in the process of the *powda gaya* ritual is also based in the practice of *smbarux*. Hence there are two different types of exchange within the *smbarux* system of relations as applied to *powda gaya* rituals. In respect of the distribution of pork, the host, having been a debtor, holds the ritual or celebration in order to offer equal reciprocation to his guests (the creditors) by paying each one portion of pork. In this sense, all participants at the ritual hold positions of both creditor and debtor, and must reciprocate by fulfilling the parallel obligations at the same time, represented in the exchange of pork and labour. In addition, while fulfilling existing exchange relations, both guests and hosts shape new obligations in labour and pork distribution, for the next *powda gaya*.

In particular, Truku people form the *gxal* group through weddings. In reflecting on the meanings of the *gxal* group in Truku people's everyday lives, I assert that the *gxal* group can be regarded as one of the most important social and kinship groups. A *gxal* group includes the Ego's household, and the households of its *mnswayi* (siblings), *lutut* (such as the Ego's siblings, cousins, and parents' kin groups), affines, and also non-kin such as neighbuors, colleagues, Church congregation, and friends. I suggest that the concept of the *gxal* group is similar to Mabuchi's study of the 'feast group' in Truku/Sediq society. In Mabuchi's description (1960), Truku/Sediq used 'feast groups'

2 I did not have the opportunity to participate in the *powda gaya* ritual to deal with offences against *gaya*. Firstly, most informants did not announce this ritual event to outsiders. Secondly, even if I knew someone would hold a *powda gaya* ritual relating to the infringement of *gaya* and asked his or her permission to engage in it, I would not ever have been allowed to do so. The main reason is that my informants worried that I would be placed within a dangerous environment in the ritual. However, sometimes, I suspected that they might not want me to know what kind of infringement of *gaya* had occurred in their households. Finally, these *powda gaya* rituals, involving slaughtering a sacrifice (a pig) and conducting ancestral worship, were usually held secretly in the garden or backyard of the house of the person who had offended against *gaya*. Hence, it is difficult for outsiders to participate. As such, it is necessary to note that all the *powda gaya* rituals in which I participated were for celebration, to thank the ancestral spirits for their blessings.

as a term to describe ritual groups. The "feast groups assemble for marriage festivities and for ceremonial pig sacrifices, as well as more informally to distribute the meat of wild game and to drink millet beer and feast on pork in slack periods of the agricultural cycle" (Mabuchi 1960:130). In this sense, I suggest that the '*gxal* group' resembles the '*kaban*' in Buid society as described by Gibson (1986), and in both cases the "idiom of companionship implies that social actors come together as autonomous agents to pursue a common goal" (Gibson 1986:72-3).

In their everyday lives, though, sharing food and labour in informal situations is an interaction which occurs not only within *gxal* groups, though it also plays a part in maintaining and strengthening *gxal* group identity. For most Truku people, if they do not maintain their own *gxal* group, they risk suffering a shortage of labour for *powda gaya* rituals especially, for example, wedding rituals which they may wish to hold in the future.

The monetization of the wedding

For most Truku people, the wedding ritual is the most important kinship practice of all. The principal aim of many of those who became migrant labourers in the 1970s was to earn enough money to invest in their own wedding or that of their siblings. In analyzing the recent history of marriage in Truku society, I find that the practice of using money in bridewealth originated in the economic developments of the 1960s. None of the 27 marriage stories of informants who married before the 1960s included the giving of money as payment of bridewealth. Moreover, the fulfillment of brideservice was an element in all of the 27 marriages. However, most of those informants who married in the 1960s and the 1970s indicated that money had become part of the bridewealth. Despite this, the groom's household still had to rear pigs in order to afford the bridewealth, and still worked to meet the requirements of brideservice prior to the wedding ceremony. However, among 43 cases of marriage conducted after the 1970s, in 39 instances the payment of bridewealth and brideservice was made entirely by money.

In Truku society, marriage can be understood as a long-term process in which bridewealth and brideservice are exchanged for the bride. Truku people call bridewealth '*gnhiyi.*' '*Hiyi*' means body, and *gnhiyi* is the exchange of one's body. Therefore *gnhiyi* is the exchange of bridewealth, provided by the groom's household, in return for the bride's person. Similarly, the brideservice is called as '*gnjiyax.*' *Jiyax* means 'time' and *gnjiyax* refers to the exchange of time.

The main element of the bridewealth is the pig. Before the monetization of bridewealth in the 1960s, the parents would rear at least 3 pigs to coincide with their sons' attainment of marriageable age. Normally, the groom's household would provide one pig at the stage of betrothal, and two or three for the wedding ceremony stage. On average, it would take three years or more to rear a pig for bridewealth for the wedding. Indeed, if parents wanted to indicate that their son was not old enough for marriage, or did not yet possess the requisite abilities to establish and maintain his own household, they would say "our pigs are not big enough for the wedding."

The pig not only plays an important role in the marriage process, but is also the main offering in the *powda gaya* ritual. Many Truku elders over the age of sixty told me that in life in the highlands, because the pig was the most valued and important element of bridewealth and sacrifice, it would not be consumed in the normal course of daily life. Meat that would be eaten at feasts would include domestic chicken, wild game, and pork given by the kin groups or affines. Hence, pigs were valued not in terms of daily use, but in terms of exchange in the pre-capitalist period.

Many of those over the age of sixty associated the number of pigs that a household might posses with the extent of its wealth, when they discussed with me the importance that pigs used to have in Truku society, that is, before the 1960s. Prior to the 1960s, pigs symbolized the household's economic strength. In rearing pigs, people would need land to cultivate crops for pig feed, to provide living space for the pigs, and would spend a great deal of time in rearing and caring for them. Consequently, the pig should be regarded as the surplus of economic production, and as the principal indicator of wealth. So if a household had many pigs, it meant that it was wealthy enough to afford the necessary land and labour.

Concerning the brideservice, the groom's house-

hold should provide between fifty and eighty *jiyax* for the bride's side. *Jiyax* (literally 'time') is a unit of time, and one *jiyax* is equivalent to an adult's working day. Prior to the monetization of brideservice in the 1960s, the groom and his parents would organize a working group to work for the bride's household in order to fulfill brideservice. The members of this working group were the groom's parents, siblings, cousins, and close friends. In order to fulfill brideservice, they worked with the bride's householders and kin groups. Generally, the bride's household would decide on the particular type of work to be carried out by the groom's side, such as building or refurbishing a house, reclaiming lands, converting dry land to rice land, etc. In the working day, the bride's household might prepare food and drinks for the groom's workers.

In terms of the monetization of brideservice, the value of one *jiyax* is based on the worker's average daily salary, and on average ranges between US$34 and US$68. It was said that, customarily, the groom's household would provide from fifty to eighty *jiyax*. In other words, they would have to give monetary brideservice of between US$1.7 thousand to US$5.5 thousand. Although pigs are the most important element of the bridewealth, Truku people increasingly buy pigs from pig farms rather than rearing them themselves. Before the 1970s the groom's household and *gxal* group would prepare the wedding feast by themselves; now, however, they pay money to a catering company to do it.

Similarly, the preparation of the bridewealth is also based on the assistance of the groom's *gxal* group. The groom's household also cooperates with their *gxal* group to organize the wedding feast. Before the monetization of the wedding feast, each household of the groom's *gxal* group would be expected to provide one chicken, vegetables, rice, some wild game meat and alcohol. At the end, the groom's household and their *gxal* group would enjoy the wedding feast with the bride's household and *gxal* group in the groom's parents' compound. Now that the wedding feast has effectively been monetized, each household within the groom's *gxal* group will give a red envelope containing money to the groom's household to help them to pay for the feast.

The bridewealth, comprised of pigs, is not consumed by the bride's householders, but by the *gxal* group. When the bride's householders receive the bridewealth from the groom's side, the bride's parents are duty bound to distribute one portion of the wedding gift to each household of their *gxal* group. Hence, the number of pigs required depends on the number of households in the bride's *gxal* group involved in the marriage process. The groom's householders seldom bargain with the bride's side over the number of pigs. By sharing the bridewealth in this way, the bride's parents can reconfirm and reinforce kinship identity within their *gxal* group.

In life in the highlands, the new house was provided entirely by the groom's household. All building materials (bamboo, wood, and stones) and the building site itself, came from the groom's household's land. The groom and his male householders, with the help of close kinsmen from within the same community, worked together to construct the new house (Mowna 1998:21). However, with the absorption of Truku society into the Taiwanese economy in the 1960s, building a new house has become increasingly expensive. In the first place, owing to the shortage of land, many people do not have enough land to provide building sites for their sons. Furthermore, the privatization of land has significantly increased the market value and price of land. In terms of building materials, most new houses are now insulated concrete buildings. If the groom's household wants to build a new house, they need to spend a considerable amount of money on building materials. Although many Truku men now work in the construction industry and thus have the requisite skills, even between close kin it is still considered necessary to pay for labour. In many cases, people will go to the expense of hiring a construction company to build the new house. In addition, if we take upholstery and furnishing into account, the cost of building a new house has increased significantly.

For many Truku people, not only is the cost of the monetary wedding exchange and ritual too expensive to afford, but also the expense of building a new house for a newly married couple has significantly increased. Given this situation, most Truku people are too poor to afford the expense of building and

equipping a new house. Although owning a house is an important priority for most people, earnings are in most cases insufficient to meet the building or purchase costs. As a result, excluding a few wealthier households, for most Truku people it takes a long time to secure the financial resources to build a new house, time and resources which cannot be generated within the marriage process. In this situation, many newly married couples live in the husband's parents' house. Living in the parental house after marriage would normally be regarded as a temporary solution for newly married couples because they are usually expected to move out from the husband's parental house as soon as possible. In many cases, the newly married couple will rent a flat and try to find work in an urban area in Taiwan. In such situations, most couples prefer to ask their parents to take care of their children.

In order to examine the symbolic meanings which money has in different cultures, Bloch and Parry (1989) suggest that monetary exchange contains an interrelationship between long-term exchange and short-term exchange. They illustrate this in respect of the relationship between a cycle of short-term exchange, which is the legitimate domain of individual – often acquisitive – activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order (1989:2).

I argue that, in Truku society, monetary kinship practices also contain an interrelationship between long-term exchange and short-term exchange. Concerning short-term exchange, in kinship practices prior to the 1960s, people would exchange pigs, goods, and labour with each other. However, due to the capitalization of society, Truku people have had to use money in order to purchase pigs and services in the maintenance of kinship practices. For Truku people, this short-term exchange articulates a long-term relationship of exchange, which is based on their ideas of ancestor worship and on a complex system of norms (*gaya*). Although the pig is still the main offering made both in ancestor worship and for weddings, people are able to organize these ritual and kinship practices using money in order to do so. In this sense, money is not always impersonal, but is involved symbolically in long-term and short-term exchange. Money is an essential aspect of the reproduction of social order in Truku society.

Although Bloch and Parry's theory of monetary exchange can help us to examine the symbolic meanings attributed to money in different societies, it overlooks the fact that each individual or household has different economic conditions in the practice of "ceremonial exchange" (Crump 1981). For example, Carsten (1989) describes how women cooperate within social networks in Langkawi society in order to manage money that their husbands have earned by fishing, to ensure their household subsistence. She does not show, however, how Langkawi women manage should there be a shortfall in household income. How do they manage when their resources are insufficient to meet the needs which arise from kinship morality and obligations? In the next section, I will describe how poverty impacts on monetary-based kinship practices, and analyze its influence on social and economic relations in contemporary Truku society.

Monetary Kinship Practices as the Mechanism of Social Stratification

During my fieldwork, I participated in seven weddings. At each wedding, in excess of ten pigs and twenty tables (ten people per table) were required for the wedding feast banquet. On average, the price of a pig was US$275, and the cost of a table in the wedding feast was about US$120. Hence, each of these weddings cost in excess of US$5000. However, if we also take the monetized brideservice and the cost of gifts given by the groom's households into account, in addition to the donations made to the Church (if required), the cost of each wedding was in excess of US$8600. In fact, the costs of marriage are far too high for most Truku people to afford. According to a government report in 2006 (CIP 2007) over 70 percent of Truku households earned less that the average Taiwanese disposable income of US$14 thousand per year.

Masan is 27 years old. He and his wife, Iwar, have a 7-year-old daughter and live with his parents. Although their marriage has been legally registered, they did not hold a formal wedding ritual. Hence, his parents and parents-in-law did not consider the

marriage to be fully 'established.' Masan and Iwar had actually infringed *gaya*, by having sex before marriage. Because of the infringement, eight years ago Masan's parents were obliged to pay two pigs in compensation to Iwar's parents' household. However, at the time, Masan and his household were too poor to afford bridewealth or organize the wedding rituals. Masan's parents were farmers and he and Iwar were part-time workers. In 2005, the government bought two pieces of his father's land, and thus Masan's parents had enough money to organize the wedding. Although Masan's parents-in-law asked for six pigs rather than a monetary sum for bridewealth, the sum of money given by the government was insufficient to meet the costs of a full wedding ritual. Because of this, Masan's father asked a number of his relatives to help him to pay for his son's marriage. Generally speaking, the average cost of a new house is in excess of US$ 32 thousand. In terms of individual monthly income in Truku society, 37.4 percent of Truku people over the age of fifteen do not have a regular income, and 35 percent regularly earn less than US$800 per month (CIP 2005:96).

Rowty is one of Masan's uncles and is a man of wealth in Fushih Village. Masan's household did not own a car, but Rowty freely provided three cars for the wedding. Rowty asked me to drive one of the cars on the wedding day. After finishing the early morning wedding *powda gaya*, I took Iwar to her natal family in anther Truku village. Masan was absent. On the way, she said,

> One of Masan's brothers married twice and another married brother committed adultery. In order to organize the weddings for Masan's brothers, and compensate for the infringement of *gaya*, (her parents-in-law) had to completely exhaust their reserves of money and lost a great deal of land. It was unfair, particularly because when Masan worked as a migrant labourer, he was regularly asked by his parents to help his brothers, but his brothers did not contribute to our marriage. My parents wanted to have a wedding ritual because of *gaya*, but we were so poor, you know. Even though my parents wanted to help Masan, they were actually as poor as my parents-in-law.

From Masan and Iwar's marriage story, we can see that monetization of bridewealth and marriage has made it difficult for many poor Truku families to hold wedding rituals.

If poverty is so widespread, how do households meet the expense of weddings? During my fieldwork, people accumulated the money for the bridewealth and the wedding feast in various ways. In times past, land and labour would provide the bridewealth; now, the production of bridewealth has become much more difficult, especially for poorer households. Often, Truku people will take on work as migrant labourers in order to enable themselves, or their brothers or sons, to pay bridewealth and afford all of the expenses of the marriage exchange process.

The *gxal* group and other kin groups and social networks, such as friends, colleagues, and neighbours, also play an important role in collecting money for the bridewealth and wedding feast. In addition, Truku people use the 'red envelope' system to sponsor the wedding feast. I suggest that red envelopes are normally associated with Taiwanese and Chinese weddings in Taiwan. Normally, if a guest is invited to join a wedding feast, he or she will bring his or her householders, and give a red envelope containing over US$35 to the host. The basic principle of delayed reciprocity operates: if you give US$35 to the host, he or she will give you more than US$35 in return, when you or your children hold a wedding ritual.

According to my investigation of red envelopes culture in Truku society, for most households the new setup for wedding feasts, including the use of red envelopes, is something of a gamble. The money which is collected from the wedding feast can be understood as the 'wedding fund' for the process of the wedding ritual. Most people worry about how much they will receive from the red envelopes as this is their principal source of finance for the wedding and the wedding feast. If there is any money left over after expenses are met, the groom's household can use the remainder to pay for any other expenses incurred by the wedding, or to contribute towards the building or refurbishment of the new home. If there is insufficient money from the red envelopes to cover the expenses of the wedding and wedding feast, then the groom's household may be faced with severe

economic problems. Hence, the practice of giving red envelopes seems to have become embedded in Truku concepts and practices relating to the *gxal* group. In this way, I argue, the circulation of wedding funds, based on red envelope 'culture,' ensures that most people have enough money to meet the cost of the wedding feast and perhaps also the monetary bridewealth.

From exploring the various ways in which sufficient money is accumulated in order to organize a wedding in Truku society, I found that although the funds raised through the giving of red envelopes can cover the expense of the wedding feast, it is not enough to meet all of the costs of the wedding process. Another effective way to gain sufficient money is to borrow money from richer relatives, or from the banks. The groom and his parents may borrow money from or sell parts of their land to their wealthier relatives, neighbours, or friends. Moreover, they may be forced to mortgage land to the banks in order to pay the bridewealth. In addition, they may have to borrow money from richer members of their social network.

According to Japanese ethnographies of Truku society (Mabuchi 1960), there was no strict social hierarchy in Truku society. Although each Truku tribe had a head of the tribe, who was regarded as a spokesman for the tribe, he did not have the authority to dominate the others. Most political and economic decisions relied on a common consensus among most elders in the same community. Since the government's privatization of land ownership and introduction of commercial agriculture in Truku society in the 1960s, social and economic stratification has gradually developed. Chen (1986), a Taiwanese anthropologist, investigates how the imposition of privatization and cash crops influenced the western Sediq people in the 1970s. He (Chen 1986) describes that in Sediq society, a few Sediq elites, who had better education and the ability to get more information than the others, benefited from privatization and land reform. These elites had more economic capital to purchase expensive agricultural machines and fertilizer to improve the quantity and quality of their agricultural products, while most common people still lacked the money to invest in commercial agriculture. Consequently, a significant poverty gap developed in Sediq society, and this economic gap was associated with political and social hierarchy at the same time (Chen 1986).

In Truku society, I classify Truku elites in three categories: (1) the 'political elites,' who are loyal to the KMT, and they might be local politicians, governmental servants, teachers, and policemen; (2) the 'intellectual elites' who are well educated, but who are not loyal to the KMT; they might be ministers or Christians in the Presbyterian Church in Truku society; (3) the younger Truku elites who are descendants of both 'political elites' and 'intellectual elites.' They might be under- or post-graduate students or have graduated from universities or colleges in Taiwan. Most of the younger Truku elites do not live in their hometown, while the political elites and intellectual elites are usually involved in various public affairs and local politics.

With the privatization of land ownership and the monetization of bridewealth, the cost of weddings now exceeds the economic capacity of most Truku households. In order to gather sufficient money to invest in a wedding, most people need to ask their richer relatives for help, or borrow money from them. However, for most poor people, the amount of money borrowed from richer relatives is too much to pay back quickly, and turns into a long-term debt. Consequently, after the expense of a wedding, the relationship between households is often transformed in that the poorer family and its richer relatives become debtors and creditors respectively.

Furthermore, many people decide to sell their land to their rich kin in order to secure enough money to organize a wedding. As a result, wealthier households increase their share of landed property, while land shortage has become a serious issue for many poor households. Therefore, the monetization of weddings has effectively worked in the favour of richer Truku households, in terms of land distribution, with rich families becoming increasingly influential in society.

If we consider the number of people involved in slaughtering pigs, in making wedding gifts, and involved in the wedding feast, we can see that the wedding ritual is not only a social space for the richer households to display their wealth, but also

an opportunity for them to show their social and political strength. In Masan's story, I mentioned that his household was too poor to afford the expense of the wedding, and had to ask for help and economic support from Rowty, his father's cousin. Rowty and his wife are retired elementary school teachers. After retiring from school teaching, he became the deputy head of the local government. They have three sons; two of them are also teachers and the other is a doctor. In contrast to most of those residing in the village, he and his wife and children have stable full-time jobs with high salaries.

For his eldest son's wedding ceremony in 1998, Rowty provided twenty-two pigs and set up fifty tables for the wedding feast. The expense of the wedding ritual was almost 500 thousand Taiwanese dollars, twice the average cost of weddings in Truku society. According to Rowty's memory of his eldest son's wedding, there were more than 70 adults involved in making the pork wedding gifts, with each pig divided into twenty-five portions; more than 550 households received gifts. He continually recalled that around five hundred guests, including his householders' kin groups, neighbours, colleagues, and friends, attended the wedding feast. For many informants, this wedding was an unforgettable event in Fushih Village. The wedding was more than simply a kinship event for Rowty's kin group; it was a public occasion for the village. According to *gxal* group principles, those who had received wedding gifts from Rowty's household became members of his *gxal* group. Therefore, the wedding ceremony not only afforded Rowty an opportunity to display his economic status, it also allowed him to extend and strengthen his household's social network.

When I asked Rowty why he had provided so many pigs for his eldest son's wedding, he replied "I must do that. This is a social expectation. Honestly, most residents of the village expected me to show my '*mhowayi*' (generosity). On the other hand, the household of my daughter-in-law is as wealthy as my household." In saying this, Rowty indicates the importance of this extravagant wedding for two different kin groups: his own kin group and neighbours, and that of his affines. When Truku people lived in the highlands, people would show their *mhowayi* by sharing their wild game with others. Recently, however, people tend to show their *mhowayi* through the distribution of wedding gifts and provision of extravagant wedding feasts. While wealthier households use the wedding ritual to show their wealth and *mhowayi*, the ritual process is also a social space in which the guests can share in the host's good fortune through the consumption of the wedding gift and the wedding feast. Holding an extravagant wedding thus seems to have become a social obligation for the wealthier households in contemporary Truku society.

In fact, Truku elites prefer to form marriage alliances with each other. If the parents of young people do not agree to a marriage, they will try to delay it. In order to do so, parents will often articulate their disagreement with the marriage in terms of an infringement against *gaya*, on the part of the young couple. As such, one or two pigs will be provided, as compensation, by the household of the lover of their son or daughter. Although this does not mean that they altogether refuse the marriage, by delaying the wedding the parents can use this strategy to communicate their opinions. Conversely, most poor households cannot afford such a strategy. Thus, with the monetization of bridewealth and wedding rituals, marriage not only provides elite households with the opportunity to create alliances with one another, it also functions to produce and reproduce a social and political hierarchy between wealthier households and poorer households.

Conclusion

This article examines the symbolic meanings attributable to the circulation of labour and the earnings of migrant labourers in contemporary Truku society. For Truku people, migration is one effective way of dealing with economic problems and seeking a better standard of living. Historically, Truku people moved in mountain areas to locate 'good land,' in order to find the natural resources essential to the subsistence of their households. With the integration of Truku society into capitalist market-based economies from the 1960s onwards, for many the most effective way to extricate themselves from the problems of poverty has been to secure work as a migrant labourer. For most Truku households, the earnings from migrant

labouring are essential not only to pay for household expenses, but also to ensure that they meet their obligations in terms of a variety of kinship practices in everyday life, including wedding rituals.

In Truku society, it is through offering pigs as sacrifices to the ancestral spirits, and the subsequent exchange of pork meat with one another in ancestral worship and kinship practices, that people maintain their social and kin relationships, as well as maintaining a harmonious relationship with their ancestral spirits. In particular, the wedding is the most important of kinship practices because of all ceremonies it is the largest in scale, involving as it does the creation of a household, itself an essential social and economic unit in Truku society. Furthermore, it is through weddings, through the distribution of pork-based wedding gifts, that Truku people shape and reshape their social and kinship relations. Additionally, these kinship practices and rituals are based on native concepts of norms and morality. Hence, even though such practices are monetized and there may be many who are too poor to afford the expense, most Truku people still do their very best to meet their obligations in the conduct of monetary exchange within their kin group and social network.

Most Truku believe strongly in the obligations related to *gaya* regulations, or norms, which inform the kinship practices underpinning their relationships with their kin groups. Despite the fact that Truku migrant labourers are living and working away from their home communities, their earnings enable them to engage in monetary kinship practices and rituals. At the same time, the circulation of labour accelerates the monetization of kinship practices. In Marxist terms, money from migrant labour is the result of the alienation of labour under capitalist economics, and it is by definition impersonal. However, earnings from migrant labour constitute the largest part of household income for most Truku households. When Truku migrant labourers send or take money back to their home communities, it is through monetary-based kinship practices that they become personalized and socialized. Hence, it is the earnings from migrant labour which have become the basic mechanism by which Truku people maintain their kin relations as well as social relations in their 'home' society.

In this situation, the circulation of labour and of earnings is associated with the interrelationship between short-term exchange and long-term exchange in contemporary Truku society. Although Bloch and Parry's theory of symbolic money (1989) brings us to explore the cultural and social meanings in monetary exchanges, I argue that their research overlooks the interrelationship between monetary exchange and external economic factors. That is, monetary exchange would not happen in an isolated society, but its form is always influenced by the process of capitalization. In the process of capitalization, human beings create or reinforce social and economic hierarchy. In particular, capital markets usually create a significant gap between the poor and the rich.

Prior to capitalization, Truku society was characterized by essentially egalitarian social relationships between different households. Kinship and social relationships were based on equal exchange and reciprocity between different households. However, in the process of capitalization, a hierarchy between the poor and the rich emerged in contemporary Truku society. Because most people are too poor to afford all of the expenses of kinship practice, this situation engenders a long-term relationship between the debtors (the poor) and the creditors (the rich). Moreover, this long-term debt-credit relationship is not only economic, but also social and political. On the other hand, monetary kinship practices create a social space for wealthier households to 'perform' their wealth and display their generosity. Consequently, monetary kinship practices have become a mechanism for wealthier households to strengthen their social and political influence in society. As such, the circulation of labour combines with monetary kinship practices in the process of forming social and economic hierarchy in contemporary Truku society.

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Class and Indigenous Politics: the Paradox of Sediq/Truku Women "Entrepreneurs" in Taiwan

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Abstract: Class is an important concept in studying the political economy of indigeneity. This paper looks at the role of women shopkeepers in Sediq and Truku indigenous communities in Taiwan from a perspective of Marxian class analysis. By creating and controlling social and political space in their shops, they become key players in local political struggles that reinforce a bipolar class structure composed of a small elite class and a vast lumpenproletariat. In some cases, they may even be able to launch themselves or family members into positions of political power. This phenomenon is an integral part of the capitalist system that expropriates indigenous land, labour and natural resources. In fact, the creation of new elites in previously egalitarian societies makes such expropriation possible in the first place.

Key words: indigeneity, class, political economy, Taiwan

Introduction

Certain intellectual currents in the anthropology of indigenous peoples have romanticized the lifestyles of indigenous people, emphasizing cultural relativism, for example, as "differences between their ontologies and epistemologies and those of the Europeans" (Blaser et al. 2010:7). In spite of a tendency toward cultural essentialism, detailed ethnographies of indigenous life in North America and elsewhere enrich anthropological knowledge of indigenous societies and worldviews, making important scientific contributions to such fields as Traditional Ecological Knowledge and human-animal relations. Nonetheless, the emphasis on a radical epistemological and ontological gap between indigenous people and settlers obscures the fundamental mechanisms of a world capitalist system that exploits labour and appropriates natural resources from indigenous and non-indigenous people alike, albeit through different locally-defined strategies. As Petras and Veltmeyer recently pointed out, such classless approaches underestimate the degree of capitalist penetration, class differentiation, and political polarization in indigenous communities (Petras and Veltmeyer 2010:444-445). In an attempt to reconcile the goals of both class and ethnic social justice, it is important to round out the literature on indigenous studies with greater attention to political economy and the social reproduction of class. That is the goal of this article.

After more than two decades of postmodern reflection in anthropology and a global indigenous social movement seemingly eager to replace class with ethnic identity as the engine of political change, there is a gradual return to fundamental issues of class exploitation and capitalist appropriation of natural resources. In an analysis of Maori "neo-tribalism," for

example, Elizabeth Rata (2000) reasoned that modern tribes are organizations of capitalist accumulation legitimized through indigenist ideologies that recreate class relations and obscure them in precolonial terms. Ingo Schröder (2003), applying this theoretical framework to American Indian tribes, argued that tribal elites and ordinary people are part of a two-tiered system of categorical inequality maintained by exploitation and opportunity hoarding. Kim Clark (2005) similarly concluded that the indigenous movement in Ecuador is best understood within a context of changing class relations, responses to modernist state projects of inclusion, and a changing international political economy. Gerald Sider, studying the Lumbee of North Carolina, maintains that we must rework our understanding of class, shifting analysis away from production to the social reproduction of inequality (2006: 282). Such Marxian approaches can help us better understand the nature of economic inequality within indigenous communities.

I build here upon these arguments, but with a gendered twist, in a study of village political elites, women shopkeepers, and ordinary people in three indigenous communities in Taiwan. From 2004 to 2007, I conducted research on economic development in two Truku villages in Hualien and one Sediq village in Nantou, with approximately six months spent in each village. I have subsequently made annual field trips to these same villages. The Truku and Sediq groups were considered by anthropologists to be Atayalic groups ever since the Japanese period (1895-1945), but have developed distinct social and political identities fortified by social movement successes in the past two decades. The villages are located on adjacent territories and share relations based on marriage exchange and political contacts. They were classified as the same tribe, parts of the Atayal tribe with different local identities, at the time that this research project began.

The ethnogenesis of the Truku and Sediq is precisely where the competing strategies of local elites, responding to larger political opportunity structures, are most visible (Chi and Chin 2010). In 1999, Truku and Sediq delegates signed the "New Partnership Agreement between the Indigenous Peoples and the Government of Taiwan" as distinct nations with then presidential candidate Chen Shui-bian of the independence-minded Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). During and after Chen's presidency (2000-2008), the Truku and Sediq groups, in spite of overlapping claims to populations and territory, forged new ethnic identities, provoking emotionally-laden conflicts about identity within local villages and even within families. The Truku were formally recognized by the Republic of China (ROC) Executive Yuan in 2004 and the Sediq in 2008 (see Simon 2009a), making it possible for Atayal people in the participating townships to register as members of the Truku or Sediq tribe. The Truku and Sediq groups, with the Truku (pop. 26,812) concentrated in Hualien and the Sediq (pop. 7,114) largely in Nantou, have established preparatory tribal councils and are positioning themselves to establish regional indigenous autonomy zones. An Indigenous Autonomy Bill was under debate in a second reading at the Legislative Yuan even as this article was written in June 2011, but is unlikely to arrive at a vote before the end of this legislative session and the January 2012 elections. If the bill were to pass, members of the tribal elite in both groups would gain new positions and control over resources.

In daily life, but especially during election campaigns, autonomy and other issues are debated in the small shops were villagers gather to share drinks and enjoy the company of family and friends. Throughout the day, there is a circulation of people through the grocery stores, karaoke shops, and noodle shops. Inevitably, there will be same-sex groups of friends who have finished their work for the day, taken the day off, or could not find work at all. In the evenings and on weekends, the same shops are sites of beer drinking and socializing.

What is interesting about Sediq and Truku villages, especially in contrast with Han Taiwanese communities, is that businesses are usually owned by women. Ever since the 1980s when men migrated as labourers to cities in larger numbers than women, leaving women behind to farm and run small businesses, women have invested in small grocery stores and/or karaoke pubs (Lin 2010:177-78). An important part of my research was done in these enterprises, as I spent hours each day drinking beer and chatting

with the people who congregate there from early morning until after dark. The owners emerge as strong personalities and respected opinion makers in the villages. The customers are mostly the working class members, or "ordinary people" of the community, who refer to their social class in Mandarin as "*lao baixing*" ("old one hundred surnames").[1] This article is based largely on conversations with these people, but also with members of the local elite.

Viewed from a purely economic perspective, these small shops pose somewhat of a puzzle. Although some of them are formal businesses with shop signs, others are quite invisible, especially small shops where women merely sell drinks from a refrigerator in their living rooms. An outsider could easily pass by and see only a small group of people drinking in a private courtyard. In interviews, moreover, these women generally insist that they earn very little profit, especially since many people buy on credit and never pay their debts. I personally observed them refuse payment for food and drink, and at times had to insist that they take money even from me. They open and close their shops arbitrarily, seemingly uninterested in profit. Yet these shops are the main sites where commodities and people circulate in the villages. As I demonstrate in this article, these small shops allow women to position themselves as opinion shapers and power brokers in village politics. It is important, however, to situate these activities within large class dynamics; and that is the main purpose of this article. What do small businesses mean to Truku women shopkeepers? How does this work insert them into evolving class relations? How do those women contribute to the social reproduction of class?

Women Entrepreneurs and Class Relations

There is a growing literature in anthropology on women entrepreneurs, with mixed results. Scholars working in Marxian frameworks usually argue that micro-entrepreneurship reproduces poverty and existing forms of subordination (Ypeij 2000). In a multi-country study, Prügl and Tinker (1997) found that entrepreneurship masks production in subcontracting networks, in which case it may be more exploitive than factory work and reinforce gender subordination in the household. Scholars using Foucauldian perspectives argue that NGOs promoting entrepreneurship (Escobar 1995:143, Lazar 2004) or other development projects designed to integrate women into development (St-Hilaire 1996) incorporate women into neoliberal hegemony without necessarily increasing their autonomy. In these cases, "entrepreneurship" obscures the facts that these women are still subalterns in larger patterns of capitalist labour relations.

Even in cases where entrepreneurship increases social and political power for some individual women, as I argue is the case in Truku and Sediq villages, it is important to place such dynamics in the context of wider class relations and capitalist appropriation of resources. These women, to a large extent, simply gain slightly more advantageous class positions in the larger political economic context in which their communities as a whole are still exploited. They may even promote themselves or family members into relatively well-paid positions as elected political leaders. Under capitalism, however, members of local elite groups, especially township office managers in this case, may end up facilitating the capitalist exploitation of natural resources. It is especially important to reveal these class dynamics on Taiwan's East Coast, where indigenous people lose land to mining companies, tourism development projects and national parks; and where many villagers are employed as day labourers in local mines, cement factories, and construction projects (Chi 2001; Simon 2002). In this article, we will see that women's entrepreneurship, at least in the three villages studied here, is more than a study of gender subordination. It is an integral part of the social reproduction of class, thus contributing indirectly to local capitalist penetration.

Taiwan's indigenous peoples, although they have contributed both labour and land to Taiwan's capitalist development (Chi 2001), have been rarely studied in western-language anthropology; and even less so from Marxian perspectives. Representing the

1 There is a certain irony in the use of this term, which like Mandarin itself is a colonial imposition. The Sediq/Truku did not have surnames, until they were forced to adopt Japanese surnames under Japanese colonial administration, followed by a switch to Chinese surnames after the War. In their own naming system, the personal name is followed by the father's name, e.g. Walis Watan is Walis, son of Watan.

oldest branch of the Austronesian language family stretching from Taiwan to New Zealand and from Madagascar to Easter Island (Bellwood et al. 1995), these peoples have lived on Taiwan for at least 6000 years. They now number more than 500,000, or slightly more than two percent of Taiwan's population.

Taiwan's non-indigenous ethnic groups are descendents of Han settlers who began arriving from China in the 17th century when the Dutch established a colony (1624-1661) on the southwest coast and needed to import sugarcane workers. The non-indigenous Han Taiwanese are usually categorized, according to linguistic classifications and migration histories as Hoklo (from southern Fujian) or Hakka (mostly from Guangdong). They have the historical experience of having lived in Taiwan under Japanese administration (1895-1945), which is why they are often confusingly called "Native Taiwanese" in the academic literature. In addition, there are diverse cohorts of "Mainlanders," who arrived in Taiwan from China following the 1949 Chinese Revolution (Gates 1981). The Hoklo, Hakka, Mainlander and indigenous groups represent, respectively, 70 percent, 15 percent, 13 percent and 2 percent of the island's population (Yang and Chang 2010:110).

From the perspective of the indigenous peoples, 387 years of colonization analogous to European expansion in the Americas brought to Taiwan new forms of economy, agriculture, property rights, and state-organized violence. The Dutch East India Company, at approximately the same time that they established themselves in Manhattan, represented the first state to establish relations with Taiwan's indigenous people. As part of their global trading strategy, they purchased deer skins from the indigenous people, leading to a stark decline in the deer population. They also developed land for agricultural production, especially sugarcane, which necessitated for the first time in Taiwanese history the foundation of long-term Chinese settlement (Andrade 2008). The Chinese rebel Koxinga evicted the Dutch in 1662, bringing in new waves of Chinese settlers, but was soon replaced in 1683 by the Manchurian Qing Dynasty, which ultimately settled the entire western plains (Brown 2004; Shepherd 1993). Plains indigenous peoples, known as *pingpuzu*, resisted fiercely, but were ultimately resigned to intermarriage with settlers and/or displacement further inland. For nearly two centuries, the Qing state established a boundary between settler-controlled plains and indigenous-controlled mountainous areas, basically leaving Austronesians with effective sovereignty of over half the island.

Austronesian incorporation into capitalist world markets happened only after Japan annexed Taiwan in 1895. In search of mountain resources, including highly valued camphor trees, the Japanese military "pacified" the mountain tribes after two decades of warfare in difficult mountainous terrain. They subsequently transformed the various nomadic and settled groups into modern villages with tribal councils and reservations based on the model of American Indian policy (Fujii 1997). As in South and North America (Clark 2005; Sider 2006), class relations and indigenous tribal communities were simultaneously created by the state through processes of appropriation of tribal land and incorporation of indigenous labour into new economic forms. Without the history of colonialism and expansion of the capitalist system, today's indigenous communities would not exist in their current form. They would not have lost their vast traditional territories in the mountain forests, and would not have been forcibly relocated into settled communities. Without the exigencies of colonial administration, band-centred social identities would not have been fixed into wider ethnic-based tribes with tribal councils, chiefs, and other mediators with the state. All of this was done in order to manage populations, making them "legible" in the words of James Scott (2009:74) to facilitate capitalist appropriation of natural resources. This history on Taiwan is thus part of the global process by which "people of diverse origins and social makeup were driven to take part in the construction of a common world" (Wolf 1982:385).

Japan was forced to cede Taiwan at the conclusion of World War II, and the island was transferred to the ROC, under the leadership of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). Following the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949, Taiwan became positioned on the frontlines of the Cold War. Hoping to offer "Free China" as an alternative future for the

region, the US supported the ROC government for decades militarily and economically. Privileged access to the American consumer market led to further industrialization and rapid economic growth. From an Austronesian perspective, the two major social transformations resulting from this larger political economic situation were land loss (see below) and the insertion of indigenous workers into the wage economy. During the rapid economic growth of the 1970s, often celebrated by liberal economists as the "Taiwan miracle," indigenous people streamed into cities in search of industrial work. Due to these changes, only an estimated 60.1 percent of indigenous people now live in indigenous townships (Zhang et al. 2009:6).

Indigenous communities and lifestyles, although impacted by these changes, continue to exist in thirty mountain townships, where indigenous people live on the reserve lands originally created by the Japanese. Tense relations between the indigenous and non-indigenous Han Taiwanese have contributed to the development of an indigenist ideology that draws a strong moral distinction between the supposedly communitarian indigenous and the allegedly money-grubbing Han. Indigenous people are keenly aware that Taiwanese investors and corporations have legally and illegally seized indigenous land across the island. Due to the small size of Taiwan and relatively convenient transportation, even village dwellers can seek employment on nearby labour markets, forming part of the subaltern classes. Temporary and seasonal labour migrations are common, and those within relatively short distances from towns and cities commute to work. Indigenous workers usually end up with the most precarious jobs and dangerous working conditions. Many workers claim to have at least one negative experience in which a Han Taiwanese subcontractor failed to pay wages as promised.

Liberal ethnic discourse highlights the cultural differences between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, usually masking the political economic processes that create and attenuate such distinctions. Such discourse tends to overlook class distinctions *within* indigenous communities, as well as class-based solidarity between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. In each village in this study, visible class distinctions stand in stark contrast to the continuing presence of an egalitarian ideology and frequent reference, especially by working class members, to an egalitarian past. In the indigenous townships, the post of magistrate is reserved for indigenous candidates. Most members of the township assemblies, as well as employees of the township office, are indigenous. At the national legislative level, there are six reserved seats for indigenous legislators. An entire political framework, constructed during the past century of colonialism and capitalist accumulation, has contributed to the creation of an indigenous elite in all villages.

Sinologist Michael Rudolph, who has also done limited field work in Truku and Amis villages, strongly criticizes the new indigenous elite, arguing against the indigenous movement with the argument that: "by establishing the concept of '*Aboriginality*' (Stainton 1995), they (aborigine elites) finally achieved a high amount of recognition in Taiwanese society; in contrast, common people felt much more attracted by the value-orientations of a consumption-oriented Han middle class" (Rudolph 2004:252, italics in the original). Rather than examining village level class politics, however, Rudolph draws attention to the macro-level of Taiwan's relationship with mainland China. As for the indigenous movement, Rudolph argues that "all these efforts of course had not only the aim to demarcate Taiwan culturally, but also politically from China" (Rudolph 2006:46 fn. 12).

This argument, which seemed reasonable during the DPP presidency, has been disproven since the Chinese Nationalist KMT regained power under the leadership of President Ma Ying-jeou in 2008. Since then, Taiwan has moved politically and economically closer to China. At the same time, however, there have also been important advances in indigenous rights, including revision of certain laws and moves toward creation of indigenous autonomous zones. I thus think we should reject Rudoph's hypothesis that the indigenous movement is a political tool to separate Taiwan from China. It is more useful to see it as a tool of capitalist accumulation, as it legitimizes access to resources on indigenous territory no matter which party controls the presidency. The rituals and other social processes described by Rudolph are thus the product, not of Taiwanese nationalism, but of

political economy. This includes the social reproduction of class.

In addition to the political elite, each village has a cohort of relatively wealthy teachers, military officers, policemen, and firemen,[2] as well as a small number of unionized factory workers with permanent jobs. These people have become distinct from the majority of villagers because of their work identities. Policemen and firemen, for example, tend to socialize and drink with work colleagues on their days off, maintaining some social distance from other villagers except at weddings, funerals, and other kin-based events that transcend the relatively new class distinctions. The most important moments for cross-class social cohesion are at pig sacrifices to the ancestors that occur most lavishly at weddings, but also at other life transitions. All members of the extended family receive an equal portion of pork at these moments, reinforcing a feeling of kin solidarity. Funerals, preceded by a wake of up to seven days, also strengthen kin networks. Wealthier members of a band are expected to contribute financially to group activities and express generosity to poorer kin. The pressure to share, in fact, is so strong that some indigenous entrepreneurs claim that they have to move away from their home communities if they wish to accumulate wealth and reinvest their profits.

In each village, there is also a large working class. Large numbers of people with no permanent jobs insist that they prefer temporary or seasonal work. Every morning, labour brokers gather up people from the villages to work in nearby factories, construction sites, or farms. From a Marxian perspective, indigenous temporary workers occupy the most subordinate positions in the local class structure, as well as in the Taiwanese economy at a macro level. On the other hand, workers say these arrangements give them freedom to choose when to work and when to dedicate their time to other tasks. These workers spend a good amount of time in the small shops, sharing beer with friends and colleagues after receiving their wages.

The emic perspective of the "ordinary people" cannot be ignored. For men, part-time proletarian work is appreciated because it leaves time for other important activities including hunting, trapping, fishing, and generous periods of same-sex socializing. They boast that they can provide meat for their families and others by hunting, and prefer to work only when they need cash (Simon 2009b). Women, on the other hand, say that indigenous men spend too much time drinking and socializing with other men.[3] With a sense of stoic determination, they emphasize their own labour, which they say is necessary to take care of their families. A full analysis must include both this emic perspective and the etic approach provided by Marxist class analysis.

Indigenous Eastern Taiwan: A Marxist Class Analysis

In a seminal article on class in Taiwan, anthropologist Hill Gates (1979) analyzed class formation in Taiwan as a whole, using statistics from a variety of government ministries. She classified the Taiwanese population roughly into five classes: 1) the lumpenproletariat (5 percent), 2) the grand bourgeoisie (5 percent), 3) the petty bourgeoisie composed of agricultural owner-operators (32 percent) as well as small businesspeople and artisans (15 percent), 4) the permanent proletariat (20 percent), 5) and the new middle class (20 percent) of lower ranking cadres in business and government offices, as well as career military officers. Gates carefully noted the difficulty of trying to place all families into classes, and her percentages fall short of 100 percent. As she noted, however, the five-class classification, rather than being a precise statistical tool, "is merely an attempt to describe the social setting within which a particular pattern of labour use has emerged" (Gates 1979:394). Her main argument is that Taiwan had yet to develop a permanent working class with class consciousness due to the existence of a large petty bourgeoisie that sent its youth temporarily into the industrial workforce with the hope of eventually moving into the new middle class. This development was caused by the dependency of Taiwan on the US market for consumer goods. The larger international

2 The use of the masculine is intentional here, as I encountered no women police officers or fire fighters.

3 Drinking customs go back to the Japanese period, when Japanese officials used drinking and friendship as part of their strategies to bring indigenous communities under Japanese state administration (Barclay 2003).

Table 1: Indigenous Income Distribution, 2009

	No income	Less than NT$10,000	NT$10-20,000	NT$20-30,000	NT$30-40,000	NT$40-50,000	NT$50-60,000	NT$60-70,000	More than NT$70,000	NA
All Taiwan Indigenous	28.09	19.64	15.96	17.05	10.04	4.07	1.94	1.15	0.84	1.21
Eastern Indigenous Townships	27.32	24.44	15.75	13.58	9.84	4.37	2.06	1.45	0.70	0.49

Source: CIP 2010: Table B5.

context is the same for indigenous communities, but they remain in an even more subaltern position than the Han Taiwanese groups studied by Gates.

Taiwan has changed greatly since 1979. First of all, rising wages led to an increase in the cost of production. Taiwan thus moved higher up the value chain, and much of the labour-intensive industrial production moved to the People's Republic of China, which in the same period opened up to foreign direct investment. Second, Taiwan began importing foreign workers in the 1990s, leading to a work force composed largely of foreign workers, but also of older Taiwanese women who worked in factories as young women, resigned at marriage, but then returned after their children grew up and left the home (Simon 2000, 2005). Due to these changes, there are fewer job opportunities in urban areas for indigenous people, and the villages are increasingly filled with returnees from the West Coast.

Considering these changes and the specific conditions of indigenous communities, it is useful to conduct a local class analysis of indigenous Eastern Taiwan, in order to better describe the conditions of class reproduction in those villages. Indigenous labour statistics, gathered regularly and made available on the web site of the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP), make it possible to conduct such an analysis.[4] CIP data makes it possible to analyze separately the data from the indigenous townships in Eastern Taiwan where the bulk of this research was conducted. This is the best possible statistical description of the wider context of social reproduction of class analyzed in this article. As Gates found, however, the method permits only a rough classification useful to describe the wider context and analyze the social reproduction of class.

In terms of income and employment, Taiwan's indigenous people remain marginalized relative to other ethnic groups. In 2009, the average monthly salary in Taiwan was NT$30,707 (DGBAS 2011).[5] In the same year, the average monthly income for indigenous people above the age of 15 was NT$14,770. For working indigenous people, the average salary was NT$24,729 (CIP 2010:XI). In Eastern Taiwan indigenous townships in 2009, 58.01 percent of the population over 15 were on the labour market, and 41.99 percent were not on the labour market for various reasons (CIP 2010:Table C-1). In those townships, there was an unemployment rate of 12.96 percent (CIP 2010:Table C-2). More revealingly, 58.2 percent of indigenous households were below the official poverty line (CIP 2011:x). A study of income distribution shows that the vast majority of indigenous people are concentrated at the low end of the income spectrum. The data thus reveal the existence of an emerging village elite materially better off than the ordinary people. Table 1 shows data from Taiwan as a whole, as well as from Eastern Taiwan.

A classification into five classes, as Gates attempted for Taiwan's population as a whole, is even more difficult to apply to indigenous communities. A four-fold classification is more appropriate, as the grand bourgeoisie, the owners of large firms and high-ranking officials, are not present in these villages and probably have very few indigenous members at all. These are the urban-based employers

4 Comparable statistics are not available for other ethnic groups, as only the indigenous people have legally protected minority status and are considered to be in need of affirmative action-style policies.

5 During research, CAD$1 was approximately NT$30.

who own the cement factories, mines, and construction companies that employ indigenous workers, but who actually run their companies from Taipei or other urban centres. In the case of construction, they do so through dense networks of subcontractors. The Chair of the Executive Yuan Council of Indigenous Peoples and a quota of six legislators are all indigenous, but these short-lived positions are not sufficient to catapult them permanently into the grand bourgeoisie.[6]

The lumpenproletariat, which would include large numbers of temporary workers, is much larger than the five percent of the general population estimated by Gates as belonging to this class. The main issue here concerns the creation in villages of landed and landless families. Some families still have agricultural land from the reform of the reserve land regulations beginning in 1966, when indigenous families were allowed to claim usufruct rights to land they had cultivated. According to law, they received title after ten years of cultivation. Some people, however, were unaware of the need to register land, losing it in some cases to more knowledgeable members of their communities, who registered the land in their own names. Some people subsequently sold or otherwise lost their land. Even though the law technically limited sale to indigenous people only, the reform was basically a form of privatization by stealth and led to the creation of a landless proletariat. Ordinary people still discuss with bitterness how a small minority of township employees benefitted from the sale of reserve land for the creation of industrial zones, especially when they did so by registering land cultivated by others in their own names. They thus remember the creation of reserve land as the policy that crystallized class distinctions in the community (cf. Lin, this issue).

The village lumpenproletariat, landless and without permanent employment, are by no means as poor as their urban counterparts, as they have better access to food. Many villagers, in fact, even told me that they returned from cities to the village

6 Their role in the political economy is primarily to facilitate the strategies and interests of the grand bourgeoisie, although they sometimes also can exercise their own agency in unexpected ways and advance an indigenist agenda (see Iwan 2005; Ku 2005).

A woman shopkeeper, now village mayor, speaks at a public hearing on indigenous autonomy. (Simon photograph)

partly because of the relative abundance of food. Access to forests means that food is available even to the poorest of the poor. Every morning, women gather wild plants in the surrounding hills. Men contribute occasional protein by hunting and fishing. And, during the rainy season, people wearing headlamps can be seen by the side of the road in search of snails. These strategies, combined with family combinations of wages and welfare provisions for low-income families and senior citizens, mean that most poor families can survive without chronic hunger. Nonetheless, they remain at the bottom of the local class structure. Like Gates, I found it difficult to classify people into this category. Considering that 51.76 percent of the villagers earn less than NT$10,000 a month, and that a similar percentage are unemployed or outside of the labour market, it is probably safe to assume that at least 45 percent of the indigenous villagers can be classified as belonging to the lumpenproletariat.

The petty bourgeoisie, composed of agricultural owner-operators, as well as small business owners and artisans, is smaller in indigenous communities than in towns and cities. Of employed people in indigenous Eastern Taiwan, 13.17 percent, or approximately 6.35 percent of the population, are in agriculture (CIP2010: Table D-1). Considering that 73.05 percent of the farming population (CIP 2010: Table D-3) report that they must also do temporary labour, however, few can be considered to be professional farmers. Indeed, farming on small plots is part of a diversified family economy, and probably underrepresented in the statistics. In terms of employment status, some 8.3 percent of the labour force, or four percent of the population,

are self-declared as owner-operators of companies (CIP 2010: Table D-1). These small business owners would include the women shopkeepers described below. Considering these limitations, the indigenous petty bourgeoisie probably represents no more than ten percent of the population.

The permanent proletariat would include most employees in the private sector, accounting in indigenous Eastern Taiwan for 70.17 percent of the labour force, or 32.76 percent of the population (CIP 2010: Table D-7). We can also include police officers and fire fighters, even though they are part of the 18.42 percent of indigenous people who earn over NT$30,000 a month. A small minority of high earning industrial workers, such as machine operators at Asia Cement, also earn NT$30,000 – NT$50,000 a month. The new middle class, or aspiring new middle class, would include some of the 20.39 percent of the workforce in indigenous Eastern Taiwan who are government employees, representing about 10 percent of the population (CIP 2010: Table D-7). Only the higher ranking officials and well-paid workers can be considered new middle class, however. I thus roughly classify 35 percent of the population in Eastern indigenous townships as belonging to the permanent proletariat and no more than 10 percent as new middle class.

The contrast with the communities studied by Gates is stark. She found that a large petty bourgeoisie sent their youth temporarily into the industrial labour force, with the hope that they would join the ranks of the new middle class, and thus had low class consciousness. The main differences between urban Taiwan in her study and rural, indigenous Taiwan include the much smaller petit bourgeoisie and the presence of a large lumpenproletariat in indigenous villages. Class dynamics are thus not about a vast group of petit bourgeoisie families sending their youth temporarily into the industrial workplace in hopes that they will eventually join the new middle class. Instead, stark class differentiation reinforces social and economic cleavages between a village elite and a large mass of "ordinary people." The number of people working in government offices, or with the qualifications to do so, is probably high enough that most families see joining the new middle class as a possibility for their children. The lucrative possibility of working class government career paths, such as working as police officers and firemen, also adds legitimacy to the current system.

At the same time, however, the township office is the main government body responsible for authorizing industrial and commercial use of indigenous land. The local government is thus the main mediator of capitalist accumulation and appropriation of natural resources. As mentioned above, villagers accuse township government employees of having gained personal profit from privileged insider's information that permitted them to acquire and later sell land destined to be developed. The ordinary people believe that these strategies are illegitimate, but they tend to blame individuals rather than the capitalist system as a whole. They even say that the ancestors curse such people, and point out as evidence the presence of handicapped or chronically ill people in elite families. Amidst these polarized class relations, mediation between the two groups is important, especially at crucial elections, when the village elite need the votes of the ordinary people. The petty bourgeoisie, especially women shopkeepers, play a key mediation role in class relations.

Two Life Histories

In daily conversations and formal interviews, most women shopkeepers made it clear to me that they do *not* self-identify as entrepreneurs. For the majority of women shopkeepers, the main theme emerging from interviews and conversations is that they wished to stay in the village and take care of family members rather than migrate or commute to work. They stressed the social side of their work, noting the pleasure they derive from chatting with people who congregate in their stores. They complained about people who purchase on credit and never pay, saying that they are embarrassed to insist on payment from kinfolk in difficult economic circumstances. They pointed out examples of women who had to close stores because they could not keep up with payments to suppliers or creditors. The women understand the financial situations of their neighbours very well, as most of them get credit from or invest in informal revolving credit groups composed of women.

Women shop owners modestly say that they make only "a few hundred" New Taiwan dollars (NT$) a day in profit. Based on my observations, I estimate that even the smallest shops can earn around NT$500 (CAD$16.60) a day, just if they earn NT$10-20 on each bottle of beer or Whispy (a "medicinal" drink with low alcohol and high caffeine content). In spite of their claims to poverty, this compares well to the NT$700 a day that women earn as agricultural day labourers. After a month, it may even exceed the income of male construction day workers who earn NT$1600 a day, but who may work only ten days a month. They may consider themselves to be poor, but they are certainly not poorer than their customers. Their modesty, however, is necessary in a social setting where the private accumulation of wealth is discouraged. The following women's stories are typical examples.

Cimay, a 43-year-old widow, sells noodles from a tin shack in front of her house. She left Cyakang at 23, moving between factory jobs in Taichung and Hsinchu, where she made such products as ceiling fans or light bulbs and remitted much of her salary to her parents. She always returned to the village at harvest time. After marriage, she settled down in her Truku husband's village and opened a store. Occasionally, she took part-time jobs in restaurants and in a school cafeteria. After the death of her husband to liver cancer, she returned to her natal village and opened a noodle shop so that she could care for her aging mother and her grandchildren. She estimated that she grosses NT$2000 to NT$3000 a day, and costs are minimal, but she is not in business for a profit. The goal, she said, "Is just to have a little extra income. As long as we have enough to eat, we are doing well enough."

Fifty-year-old Habaw runs a small general store with six rows of shelves. She sells a variety of goods, including betel nuts, snack food, candy, instant noodles, household supplies, beverages, and alcohol. Just outside the store are a table for customers and a coin-operated karaoke machine. She began her work life as a cook at the "Atayal Resort," a Han-owned amusement park on fraudulently acquired reserve land that is also an important source of employment for the villagers. She complained, however, that the pay was low (about NT$12,000 to NT$16,000 a month) and the work tiring. In 1997, her husband, a construction worker, built the store on land that she had purchased and with materials that she had bought. During the economic boom at the time, she said, there were plentiful construction jobs and villagers were wealthy. She thus grossed tens of thousands of New Taiwan dollars a day, but now earns "only enough to eat." She initially traded shifts with her husband, but he would frequently get drunk with customers and was unsuitable for the job. He now works with an itinerant crew of betel nut pickers. She also owns paddy fields, which she rents out to Hoklo farmers. As for her motivation to open a store, she said she only wants to be free: "I don't like to have people telling me what to do."

Habaw insisted that "of course women are better at business." Men, she said, don't like being tied down in one place and have alcohol problems. Her husband could only work for a few days before he would disappear with friends. She said that women are better at "speaking directly," which is important when a business owner needs to manage disputes with wholesalers, delivery people, or difficult customers. Men are reluctant to express their needs directly, she said, and are thus easy to take advantage of. She works long hours from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., when she has to turn off the karaoke machine, and has little time to sleep. She has three sons, but only one helps out in the store. She said he is not like other men because he doesn't drink and he doesn't want to work in a job where he will be exposed to the sun. "He is the only good one," she concluded.

These life histories demonstrate the strong sense of agency that women gain from entrepreneurship. They tell stories of their work histories and entrepreneurial skills that portray themselves as hard-working, but modest, women who know how to manage both businesses and families. A focus exclusively on work and economics, however, overlooks the greater social significance of these shops. Their modesty, moreover, conceals the fact that some women shopkeepers become wealthier than others and may even gain local political power.

A campaign feast held for a candidate for village mayor in front of his mother's general store. (Simon photograph)

Women's Stores and Village Politics

Women-owned stores play a central role in electoral politics (Chao 2007, Lin 2010). As sites for the circulation of both goods and people, they become political arenas where candidates ply for votes and parties can spread ideas. The dominant political party in indigenous communities is the KMT, which maintains strong networks throughout rural Taiwan. Cadres from the KMT "People's Service Station" make the rounds of the villages, where they discuss political ideas with local people. They frequent grocery shops and purchase beer to share with people while spreading their ideology. One county-level politician even told me that he started his career with the KMT People's Service Station because he wanted to be paid to drink with his friends.

During electoral campaigns, candidates and supporters make the rounds of the villages with loudspeakers blaring music and slogans from campaign trucks.[7] Because people congregate in grocery stores, they stop, distribute literature, purchase alcohol, and socialize. They also host feasts in shop courtyards. Some shop owners become actively involved. In Bsngan, one shop owner was so active in the KMT that villagers were afraid to say anything negative about the party in her presence. Another shop owner in the same village ran for village mayor. She won the election during my fieldwork period with a clear majority, partly because she could mobilize the votes of people who regularly congregate in her shop. In fact, each election has women candidates and they have a good record of being elected (Simon 2010a).

Although these women often claim poverty, they can use their social position to help other members of the family gain entry to the new middle class. For example, Lawa, a woman in her 60s, helped her son get elected as Cyakang mayor during my fieldwork period. She runs a shop, as well as a small swimming pool popular among children in the summer. Her business practices were critical in assuring her son's election, because of the fictitious sisterhood she cultivated in drinking with village women every day.

7 For ethnographic studies of electoral practices in Taiwanese indigenous villages, see Ku (2008) and Simon (2010b).

An election team distributes literature in front of a woman-owned general store. (Simon photograph)

Since marriages are generally patrilocal, these women are mostly unrelated, but play important mediating roles between families.

Lawa, like most village shopkeepers, has a long-standing habit of giving treats to customers or their children, even if only small drinks or candies, but nonetheless building up goodwill and a general sense of indebtedness. Influential male and female elders often came to her shop during the elections, some urging customers to vote for Lawa's son. Lawa's supply network also gave her access to drinks, snacks, and alcohol at wholesale prices, giving her and her son a cost advantage during the campaign. Lawa mobilized friends and allies to cook meals for election feasts; the meat and vegetables were contributed by her friends, relatives and customers. Her business acumen was also important, as Lawa kept her son's campaign financial records (Chao 2007:60-61).

Even for the majority of shopkeepers who are neither candidates nor supporting the campaigns of kinfolk, these women can broker politics in other ways. In the Cyakang village elections, which were eventually won by Lawa's son, a nearby woman shopkeeper hosted feasts in her noodle shop for a competing candidate. Even when she was not visibly involved in other campaigns, she used her position as shopkeeper to try to persuade customers to support her candidate. In this case, the two women were married into two different clans; and had different social networks based on participation in different churches. These women, and others like them in other villages, play important roles as opinion makers in the public sphere of village (Chao 2007:61).

Women shopkeepers also play important roles in other political arenas such as community development associations, non-governmental organizations and churches. Their stores transform their homes into public space, where "gifts" of meals, drinks, and candy can be used to augment their power in other arenas. To the extent that power comes from controlling circulation, some Sediq and Truku women have learned to use property ownership and shop keeping skills to their own advantage. They can even transform their social capital into political power for themselves or members of their families. Of course, power is always relative. These women gain power relative to the large lumpenproletariat in the villages, and often relative to their own husbands. As shopkeepers, they have less power than high ranking township office employees and other members of the local elite. Nonetheless, they have realistic chances of catapulting their own family members into that new middle class, not unlike the Han Taiwanese members of the petty bourgeoisie previously described by Gates. For indigenous people, however, the entire community is still subordinate within the larger political economy of Taiwan. The strategies of women shopkeepers thus contribute to a larger capitalist system that exploits indigenous labour and extracts natural resources from indigenous traditional territory.

Conclusion

Around the world, new dynamics of class formation are emotionally charged in indigenous communities, especially those with egalitarian traditions such as the Truku and Sediq. Ordinary villagers perceive these dynamics very clearly; many of them even say to visiting anthropologists that the main problems in their communities are the village elites who hoard opportunities and accumulate profits at the expense of other villagers. They are especially concerned that their elites benefit from the construction of everything from mines to elementary schools. They perceive this as a moral issue, and even directly accuse local elites of being *lohei*, or thieves. Yet, technically, these local elites have only in few cases violated the laws of the state. They merely respond to political opportunity structures created by the state. The formation of local elites is encouraged by state actors as

a way of facilitating integration into capitalist markets in communities on the frontlines of particularly intense capitalist appropriation. Policies similar to colonial indirect rule have proven to be effective and efficient ways of gaining access to natural resources on indigenous territories with a minimum amount of resistance and protest.

Close attention to class renders visible processes of the social reproduction of class, which inevitably have special characteristics in indigenous communities. The state, by defining the limits of communities and demarcating their territories with special property rights regimes, has created indigenous tribes as a by-product of the same processes designed to facilitate the appropriation of natural resources on those territories. This is not to say that all members of the new middle class are unaware of their predicament. In Taiwan, as elsewhere, they sometimes participate in the wider indigenous social movements and sometimes make decisions that protect their communities from the most extreme ravages of capitalist appropriation. Even in the colonial period, collaboration as well as resistance can be a form of agency (Camacho 2008).

Resistance to such dynamics is also important. In fact, ordinary people complaining to foreign anthropologists about the actions of their community elites are a strong expression of that resistance. Even members of the elite also described their communities as being in a colonial situation, and expressed displeasure about their inability to bring about substantial change. In Taiwan, an autonomous social movement, often tied in a complex, multi-stranded relationship to certain factions in the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT) (Allio 1998; Stainton 1995), challenges this system.

In May 2011, as I worked on this article in Taiwan, these social dynamics were quite visible. I attended, for example, a public meeting in which a representative from the CIP, as well as delegates from the Truku and Sediq groups, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed new law on indigenous autonomy. At the same, some factions of the indigenous movement, especially those related to the PCT, expressed misgivings about a system of regional autonomy that did not include collective property rights over traditional territories and would likely only create new elite positions within existing administration boundaries. The political struggles of indigeneity continue. Marxian approaches give us intellectual tools to perceive them as class-based struggles, rather than merely ethnic conflicts between indigenous peoples and settler groups.

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A Call for Attention to Indigenous Capitalisms

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ABSTRACT: Indigenous Capitalisms are rooted in local concepts of wealth, accumulation and distribution, but they must operate within current global markets. Indigenous Capitalisms reflect Indigenous peoples' shifting political relationships to settler colonial states and the supranational organizations that drive international policy. As such, articulations of Indigenous Capitalisms can be measured as indices of self-determination, demonstrating to the world that Indigenous political entities engaging in global commerce will likely not simply dissolve into a multi-cultural body politic. Future research in this area should offer new ways of understanding the ties between economic issues and Indigenous lives, challenging existing stereotypes about Indigenous peoples' stakes in the global economy contributing to the growing discipline of Indigenous Studies.

KEY WORDS: Indigenous, capitalism, corporations, self-determination, Indigenous studies

Introduction

An Alaska Native corporation, Chenega, increased its revenues from 13 million to 1.1 billion between 2005 and 2009, largely due to various multimillion dollar 8a US Federal contracts to rebuild Iraq, secure Guantanamo Bay and repair x-ray machines at airports and borders. Despite the fact that it saves American taxpayer dollars, the US SBA 8(a) Program has recently come under fire as "unfair" for the 2% sole source Federal contracts it awards to Alaska Natives as part of a larger mandate to help minority businesses grow (Halcro 2009). Since 2008, Chenega has spent 2.7 million to lobby Congress, and distributed roughly $30,000 a year split among some 170 shareholders (Lafleur and Grabell 2011).

Meanwhile across the Pacific, the Maori corporation Ngai Tahu's earnings from its tourism subsidiaries dropped 15% in 2009, part of an overall economic slowdown that witnessed its surpluses decline from 58.2 million to just 13.3 million over the previous financial year (Heather 2009). Ngai Tahu's responses included increased diversification across domestic and international markets including a $15 million shareholding in Agria Singapore Pte Ltd and Chinese company New Hope Group, which owns Agria, New Zealand's largest rural services company driven by federal agricultural programs there and abroad (Ngai Tahu Holdings Group 2011).

These corporations are robustly engaged in late capitalism, characterized by techno-bureaucratic control and organizational structures that go beyond the monopoly stage of capitalism to transnationalism (Jameson 1991). Both corporations use modern technology to obtain lucrative government contracts that secure resources. While one specializes in information technology to contain and control an oil-rich part of the world, the other uses biotechnology to

increase valuable crop yields for food, energy, and raw material. From a superficial perspective, these entities appear to follow the same sets of antihumanist assumptions and goals that inform capitalism. Upon a deeper examination, however, Indigenous corporations share a set of features that distinguish them from their non-Indigenous counterparts shaped through the same global market forces that dictate organizational structures and operations.

This set of features, or a theory of Indigenous Capitalisms, can be understood in terms of an overarching ethos and "structure of feeling" influencing praxis. These include**: (1) historical and political relations of incorporation; (2) mitigating value systems; (3) a dual promise of subsumption and self-determination**. Indigenous Capitalisms describes a distinct strategy employed by Indigenous communities to take part in national and international level political economies while negotiating and asserting self-determination. Indigenous Capitalisms are complex; they are rooted in local concepts of wealth, accumulation and distribution, but they must operate within current global markets. Indigenous Capitalisms reflect Indigenous peoples' shifting political relationships to settler colonial states and the supranational organizations that drive international policy. As such, articulations of Indigenous Capitalisms can be measured as indices of self-determination, demonstrating to the world that Indigenous political entities engaging in global commerce will likely not simply dissolve into a multicultural body politic.

My interest in this topic is derived from my previous research comparing Indigenous-owned tourism in the US and New Zealand, where I found striking similarities in Maori and Native American business strategies (Bunten 2010). After visiting many sites and conducting interviews with key stakeholders, I became interested in the diversified holdings of Indigenous corporations for whom tourism is just one business and the ways that these operations are managed. I found that among Maori and Native Alaskans, both groups share similar strategies rooted in Indigenous value systems. Through these preliminary findings, I have begun to build upon the concept of "Indigenous Capitalisms" as a distinct strategy to achieve culturally appropriate participation within the global economy.

From these initial observations, I came to ask: Is there something about the way that Indigenous groups run corporations that demonstrates Indigenous versions of capitalism, in organization, philosophy, and practice? Are there patterns that emerge in comparing business practices among Indigenous groups that point to a shared consciousness or a distinct moral economy that can be extrapolated and theorized as "Indigenous Capitalisms?" My own optimistic take on Indigenous corporations understands them as a mechanism by which to gain equal footing with the settler state while simultaneously reinforcing Indigenous values. An alternative viewpoint considers incorporation as a smokescreen for the adoption of a materialist perspective, a sort of Faustian pact whereby Indigenous peoples finally benefit from their resources, but at the ultimate price of internal colonization.

Scholars have begun to shift their depictions of Indigenous communities as pre-capitalist to understanding them as complex, multifaceted, and dynamic in regard to economic issues. They are beginning to explore the issues surrounding Indigenous economic development and wealth in the United States (Mason 2002; Champagne 2007; Cattelino 2008, 2010; Harmon 2010), Canada (Hindle et al. 2005; Calliou 2005; Kuokkanen 2011) New Zealand (Petrie 2007; Wiketera and Bremner 2009; Spiller et al. 2010), and Australia (Foley 2000, 2006, 2007; Altman 2010). Still, Indigenous peoples are sorely missing from historical and contemporary accounts of capitalism in settler societies. Moreover, these writings are largely written from the logic of the dominant culture rather than one that privileges Indigenous epistemologies. And while work in comparative capitalisms has brought increased attention to Eastern European, Asian and Islamic versions of it (Yanagisako 2002; Gomes 2004; Vaknin 2005; Tripp 2006), scholars and policy makers have yet to consider Indigenous models in their understanding of development. This essay explores the key tenets of Indigenous Capitalisms through a brief examination of some of the issues faced by Indigenous corporations. It is a call to action for further research on this topic. With increased understanding, the concept of

Indigenous Capitalisms can be used as a theoretical tool to analyze complex processes of critical importance to Indigenous peoples' lives as they shape their evolving participation in global and local economies.

Historical and Political Relations of Incorporation

Indigenous Corporations are not new; Alaska Native corporations have existed for 40 years. However, Indigenous business development has witnessed unparalleled growth and diversification over the past decade due to an emergent willingness of these communities to engage in the global economy, increased educational opportunities for their members and policy that encourages the formation and expansion of Indigenous businesses. Indigenous corporations are beginning to gain attention for their success in diversified ventures, particularly those that practice responsible investment driven by culturally-based value systems. Although like others operating within a capitalist framework, Indigenous corporations strive to maximize profit, establish entrepreneurship-development and environmental sustainability, and/or dovetail with older forms of welfare capitalism, they should be understood as related to, but not necessarily part of a single continuum of the Western capitalist framework.

Indigenous capitalism fundamentally differs from Western capitalism beginning with the historical-political conditions of incorporation. We find Indigenous corporations in Anglo, liberal-democratic, settler colonial states that both recognize the existence of Indigenous peoples, but grant them dependent sovereignty in the place of absolute sovereignty (if they recognize it at all). These nations have coerced incorporation on the Indigenous peoples within their borders through policy designed to mitigate inherent and treaty rights with economic development in the surrounding cash economy.

A corporation is formed when an individual or a group of investors decide to create it, to raise capital to invest and exchange specific commodities on the cash market. As such, corporations are the result of conscious decision-making on the part of those who form them, and they are willingly created. Indigenous corporations, on the other hand, may or may not be the preferred institution from which to engage in commerce. As with most other Western institutions, the corporate structure was forced on Indigenous peoples by settler colonial governments as a way to manage fiscal reparations for broken promises, stolen lands, and the genocidal acts of colonization. Settler colonial governments bequeathed a business structure and capital on their Indigenous peoples, and told them to invest with it without initial purpose or buy in.

Alaska Native Corporations were formed through the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act as a way to manage $962 million in reparations for lands erroneously sold by the Russians.[1] Similarly, Canadian Indigenous economic development corporations began to emerge one by one, starting in the 1970s and through the 1980s, as structures to manage land claims settlements and to 'give' Canadian First Nations a 'window' onto the Canadian corporate world (Whittington 1986:38). Following several amendments to the 1975 Treaty of Waitangi Act, Maori Iwi and Hapu (tribes and sub-tribes) in New Zealand began the process of negotiating their land claims against the British crown for the breeches against the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Similar to North American settlements, Maori land claims (some of which are still in negotiation) take the form of cash and/or property, and following the Maori Land Act of 1993, many Maori beneficiaries have elected to manage investments through incorporation. Unlike Alaska and Canada, Australia passed the 1976 Aboriginal Councils and Association Act that provisioned for Aboriginal incorporation prior to landmark land claims settlement acts. Later, it was amended by the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander) Act, which eliminated communal ownership of some Aboriginal lands previously vested as inalienable and provided new measures and regulations for Aboriginal incorporation.

In all of these cases, settler colonial governments justified incorporation as the path to economic development and in three out of the four nations discussed, non-Native corporate interests impatiently waited in the wings for land disputes to be settled so that they

1 While other Native American tribes outside of Alaska have established corporations, they were not mandated under direct legislation.

could access subsurface resources. Unlike the settlements negotiated in the British Commonwealth nations, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act decided the fate for all Alaska Natives in one fell swoop after oil was discovered in Alaska's North Slope in the late 1960s. Oil executives knew they needed to settle land claims across the entire state before they could construct an oil pipeline that would traverse lands traditionally occupied by several different tribal groups. They were painfully aware that Alaska Natives could potentially deadlock development for years, and were therefore eager for congress to negotiate terms that would be viewed as favourable to Alaska Native leaders, but would pave the way for natural resource extraction. Construction on the pipeline began in 1974, just three years after ANCSA was signed into law.

Like the Maori, Canadian and Australian incorporation via land claims was more piecemeal, with each individual group settling their claims with the government by terms set through shifting legislation. For example, the 1984 Western Arctic Claims Settlement Act resolved a decade-long dispute over Canada's assumption of Inuk resources, with CAN$45 million dollars to be managed by the Inuvialiut Regional Corporation and the establishment of the 90,000 square kilometre Inuvialiut Settlement Region, among other concessions. The Inuvialiut Final Agreement resulted in a tiered land rights system, in which the Inuvialiut maintained first land rights over 13,000 square kilometres of the settlement region. The rest of the region's subsurface resources remained under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Although developers are guaranteed access to these resources, the Inuvialiut must be compensated for it through a negotiation process in which all parties set the terms and conditions of land use. Moreover, the agreement allows for Inuvialuit to extract their own resources through concession (Cassidy and Dale 1988:161). By 1986, Esso Resources Canada Ltd. reached a concession agreement with the Inuvialiut that included the newly formed Inuvialiut Petroleum Corporation, three years after a memorandum of understanding between the two was first established. Following this timeline, the terms of the Western Arctic Claims Settlement Act were negotiated just one year after the oil company and the Indigenous community agreed to work together.

Whereas natural resource extraction companies were forced to negotiate with North American Indigenous groups with respect to their sovereign status, they could avoid negotiating the terms of a land use agreement if state recognition of Aboriginal inherent rights could be circumvented.[2] After bauxite aluminum ore was discovered in the Cape York area in the 1950s, the Queensland state government forcibly displaced Aboriginal peoples from their homes through the 1957 "Comalco Act" which revoked reserve status and awarded a 110 year mining lease to Rio Tinto Aluminum. In collusion with mining interests, the state police arrested and burned the homes of those who still remained in 1963. Those displaced peoples fought for return of lease lands culminating in the 1993 federal court proceedings, *Wik vs. the Peoples of Queensland,* arguing that the mining leases were invalid because the Queensland government breeched fiduciary duties as a trustee to the *Wik* people by granting the mining leases (Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Commission 1997).

Three years later, the Court determined that Native title could co-exist with pastoral leasing (as held by Comalco) culminating in the 2001 Western Cape Communities Coexistence Agreement between Indigenous groups with ancestral and historical ties to the lands, Comalco, and the Queensland Government. This ambitious agreement ensured that Comalco would continue it's mining operations, while supporting regional Indigenous development (among other stipulations) through participation in bauxite mining operations. The Cape York Land Council Aboriginal Corporation was among the signers representing a consortium of tribal entitles native to the region. Since then, the Traditional owners of the Western Cape York have been granted their claims to lands under lease by Rio Tinto Aluminum Limited. It's sister organization, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation, serves as the policy and

2 Aboriginal battles to retain and regain sovereign title and rights to their ancestral lands were challenged by leaseholders of state lands supported by the common law premise that the acquisition of British sovereignty excludes preexisting Indigenous sovereign power.

business branch of the Cape York Aboriginal Trust, offering policy development, business consultation, financial management, and other services in pursuit of the Cape York Agenda, a comprehensive plan to combat passive welfare endemic to the region by staking a role in the "real" Australian economy (Pearson 2005:9).

Mitigating Value Systems

Government mandated incorporation of Indigenous peoples into larger and larger political economic spheres characterized land claims settlements in the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. These resolutions included diminished tracts of land, absolute or shared rights to surface or subsurface use, compensation for stolen or otherwise occupied lands, and a means to invest it through corporate organization integrating Indigenous peoples in the management of renewable and non-renewable resources. These processes shifted Indigenous peoples' positions vis-a-vis natural resources on their ancestral lands; instead of bearing witness to outsiders developing local resources or even putting up obstacles it, they became facilitators.[3]

In the early days, Indigenous corporations did not possess the expertise to manage the capital acquired through land claims settlements. One report examining 93 Indigenous corporations in Australia identified governance ill suited to corporate goals, directors and staff who are unable to perform their duties, and conflicts of interest as the main causes of failure (Swansson 2010:5, 70). Another paper stated that half of Alaska Native corporations lost money throughout the 1980s, suggesting that had they originally invested their original capital in conservative stock and bonds, they would have instead shown steady gains over time. These analyses stated that Indigenous peoples initially lacked the adequate knowledge and experience to successfully take part in the global economy, with one stating that "the market values of regional resources were poorly understood by anyone, and the development of those resources, even if development were desired, posed unknown risks" (McNabb 1992). As one shareholder of a bankrupt Alaska Native corporation put it, "If I was living in a big city and had $100,000, I wouldn't look for a subsistence hunter to go invest it for me" (Thompson 1999). A combination of inadequate business training, confidence, and the cultural capital necessary to succeed in a white man's world stacked the odds against Indigenous corporate success in the early years.

Today, many Indigenous corporations are thriving, in part, because they overcame their obstacles by honing cross-cultural competency. Legislated incorporation in partnership with resource extraction industries pitted Indigenous conceptions of land use against Western attitudes towards it. It required Indigenous peoples to exploit resources they either viewed as inalienable, or else did not initially value as a commodity. Under this pressure, many Indigenous corporations operated against their communities' core beliefs through their business practices, unaware of alternatives. Without an original business plan guiding capital accumulation to service the goals of incorporation (as with most business in general), most preferred to diversify their investments leading to the creation of industrial conglomerates with multiple divisions (Flanders 1989). Still, others used their settlements to provide jobs and improve infrastructure by investing in their local communities. Despite the wide range of business sectors impacted by Indigenous Corporate activities today, one factor has consistently impacted management and operations, stock ownership.

When corporations need to mitigate risk and raise capital, they sell stock. Indigenous shareholders cannot share their stock, nor can they transfer it out of tribal ownership. Indigenous corporate shareholders are made up of enrolled or recognized tribal members.[4] These shares cannot be exchanged on the free market (or sold to non-Natives), but they can be gifted to certain relatives, ostensibly retaining the corporations' tribal interests in perpetuity. This arrangement, meant to ensure that Indigenous corpo-

3 Indigenous peoples did not become facilitators in all cases. There are plenty of occasions by which they protested (and continue to oppose) sub-surface development, but the land claims acts discussed in this essay were clearly intended to facilitate natural resource extraction in partnership with newly formed Indigenous economic organizations.

4 The way that Indigenous corporate shareholding works, however, risks external and internal slippage between the categories of race, ethnicity, political identity. Similarly, the public tends to stereotype Indigenous economic interests as "special interests" based on dominant racial schemas rather than an inherent political right.

rations reflect the wishes of their tribal shareholders – as they do business with non-Indigenous third parties while navigating non-Native politics and capital flows – requires Indigenous corporations to continuously negotiate between traditional value systems and those of the dominant state apparatus.[5] While commonly shared Indigenous values for egalitarianism, communal ownership, and stewardship appear to dovetail with Marxism's vision for a socialist world order, outsiders often overlook the fact that many Indigenous societies also have internal systems of class, privatization, and accumulation (and redistribution) of excess wealth that can be understood as an alternative form of capitalism. These "Indigenous Capitalisms" overlap with both economic approaches in evolving and complex ways.

Just as Indigenous peoples often talk about "walking in two worlds," mitigation between value systems is a constant facet of Indigenous corporate ethos, discourse and practice. Evidence of tough decisions made by corporate leaders that prefer one set of values over the other or else attempt to balance the two, prevail throughout corporate documents, activities and outcomes. The most difficult challenges pit diversified economic development over enculturated ways of making a living. There are many examples in which Indigenous corporations place the dollar above communally defined tribal interests, despoiling natural resources at the expense of balanced eco-systems intimately tied to lifestyles and worldviews. On the other hand, Indigenous communities enjoy the benefits of highly profitable but morally ambiguous ventures such as mining, logging, gaming, and corporate farming. In fact, several settlements stipulate that Indigenous corporations must invest a certain percentage of their earnings back into shareholder communities. Well-being improves as communities whose basic needs are met can use surplus corporate funds to support education, health, and emotionally satisfying cultural activities such as subsistence, the arts, ceremony, language, and passing on traditional knowledge.

While there is no single solution to the conflict between Indigenous and imperial neoliberal value systems, Indigenous corporations have forged a middle ground, an Indigenous set of "best practices" that guide operations with respect to shareholders. As such, these corporations do not necessarily advocate Western ideals of "rational" economic action to maximize profits above all other objectives, nor do they practice welfare capitalism. They operate within the logic of Indigenous Capitalisms. As such, Indigenous corporations (many are non-profit) espouse the values of longevity and sustainability maintaining an accountability to community members, including those long passed and yet to be born. Most are committed to a holistic approach to business that considers ecological and cultural stewardship as important as making money.

Take the corporate objectives of Makivik Corporation (Canada):

> To receive, administer, distribute and invest the compensation money payable to Nunavik Inuit, as provided for in the James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement; to relieve property, to promote the welfare, advancement, and education of the Inuit; to foster, promote, protect and assist in preserving the Inuit way of life, values and traditions; to exercise the functions vested in it by other Acts of the Agreement; and to develop and improve the Inuit communities and to improve their means of actions.

Wakatu Incorporation (Aotearoa/New Zealand):

> We are Wakatū, we are a business of the land and the sea and we embrace our history and our tikanga. While we grow our business for the future, we honour and respect our past. We are always mindful of the way things were, the way things are, the way things should be. Our dream has a purpose and our dream has a history; we are Wakatū and we embrace our *tikanga*.

Gumala Aboriginal Corporation (Australia):

> To alleviate poverty through proactive measures to achieve economic, social and community development while promoting and protecting the cultural values of the Traditional Owners.

5 Certain aspects of traditional value systems are not necessarily incommensurate with dominant/Western ones.

Doyon Limited (Alaska, USA):

> Doyon's mission is to continually enhance our position as a financially strong Native corporation in order to promote the economic and social well-being of our shareholders and future shareholders, to strengthen our Native way of life and to protect and enhance our land and resources.

And the preamble to Doyon's values:

> The River ran through the lives of our grandparents; it runs through our lives; it will run through the lives of our grandchildren. . . A dynamic force masked by a static constancy, the River will speak to those who listen – our land speaks. Doyon values its relationship to the Place of our people: to our land, our culture, our way of life. We value our Place as the historical successor to our grandparents' ownership and stewardship of our land; as the fiduciary for our shareholders; as the trustee for our grandchildren's inheritance. We are intimately, subtly and profoundly connected to our Place – our corporate values flow from this sense of Place.

A Dual Promise of Subsumption and Self-Determination

Indigenous Corporations take their missions seriously. They use their platforms to uphold Indigenous resources under threat. In 2009, Alaska Native regional corporation Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) voted against the impending development of Pebble Mine on nearby state lands citing the "unquantifiable impacts the project could have on the natural resources of the Bristol Bay region" (Juneau Empire 2009). The Pebble Limited Partnership, formed between England's Anglo American PLC and Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd, whose shareholders include Mitsubishi and (the aforementioned) Rio Tinto PLC, is poised to extract an estimated 94 million ounces of gold, 72 billion pounds of copper as well as molybdenum, silver, rhenium and palladium. If built, Pebble Mine will be America's largest gold and copper mine, situated at the headwaters of one of the world's richest salmon fishery. The potential long-term negative environmental impacts of this mining operation are catastrophic and probably unavoidable. BBNC president and CEO, Jason Metrokin, wrote, "a project of this perceived magnitude, in one of the world's most sensitive areas; and when the economy and cultural livelihood are so dependent on the renewable natural resources such as fish and game, is a project that our board feels is not worth the short-term gain. As an Alaska Native corporation, our timeline is in terms of generations so after almost 40 years of doing business we feel that we have only just begun" (Lavrakas 2010). Five Alaska Native village corporations representing the communities closest to the mine protested the vote. One village CEO wrote in an email, "We have no idea why BBNC took this approach. . . Does BBNC intend to continue to pursue mineral development on their lands with Bristol Bay? Why were we not consulted before BBNC made this decision on Pebble when we actively work with Pebble?" While it may appear that this village corporation is colluding with the Pebble Mine developers in respect to their own potential stakes in it, making sense of this statement requires remembering that ANCSA only granted subsurface land rights to regional corporations. Whose values are at stake in this situation in which regional and village corporations do not see eye to eye? Have the village corporations in opposition to BBNC's stance forgotten their ancestral dependence on healthy salmon fisheries, or are they looking forward to new cash jobs in an undiversified region?

A Marxist perspective might analyze this situation as evidence for subsumption, that the village corporation has been cannibalized by the functions of capital, while the regional corporation struggles against it. Legislative acts to settle land claims injected capital into Indigenous relations of production, ensuring that outside corporate interests must negotiate with newly formed Indigenous corporations. As these corporations became better and better at investing in more and more diverse sectors from military security to agritech, they widened their economic reach (capital growth). These processes abstract cultural understandings of the relationships between the environment, economy, social life and spirituality threatening Indigenous ontologies. For example, an arctic subsistence hunter understands his place in relation to the environment (provides

for material needs), food he eats (economy), his community (food distribution), and spirituality (explains these relationships and proscribes ways to keep them in balance). The hunter, a shareholder of an Indigenous corporation, on the other hand, may receive a dividend for surplus earnings made from investments in a Mexican manufacturing firm and a telecommunications merger, abstracting the relationships between economy, social life and spirituality. The deep division between what is culturally understood as holistic and the processes of interpellation to the rules and systems of late capitalism mediated by the state, tears apart Indigenous understandings of how the world works.

Though not entirely incommensurate with a Marxist viewpoint, an Indigenous Capitalisms approach sees corporate praxis in terms of potential empowerment. By engaging in late capitalist production, Indigenous Corporations can use political clout acquired through the accumulation of large amounts of capital to support self-determination through a strategy to "beat the systems in power at their own game."[6] Once these corporations and their shareholders have gained the cultural and emotional capital "do well" by the standards of the settler colonial state and it's corporate collaborators, will they have lost something inherently "Indigenous"? Does success come at the cost of internal colonization? The answers to these questions do not fit within an "either/or" binary. James Clifford shared his ideas about this issue in a 2009 lecture given to the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania.

> At one pole, familiar kinds of world-system functionalism say, in effect, 'if any alternate social or cultural forces exist that do not *transform* the system they must be *part* of the system.' This system-centered view certainly accounts for part of what's being articulated and performed in recent claims for Indigenous sociocultural diversity. But it wipes away all the local histories of social negotiation and struggle, transformative continuity and place-based living, denying them any meaningful historical momentum in the contemporary moment. [Clifford 2009:247]

Looking at the events surrounding the overlaps of different economic spheres through the lens of Indigenous Capitalism can help illuminate the complex interstices between cross-cultural forces at play (and if it is truly wrestling with the nature of reality, it will probably result in more questions than answers).

Indigenous Capitalisms acknowledges that although most of the world's Indigenous peoples have been integrated into regulated cash economies through colonization, many have maintained an internal logic of accumulation, exchange and circulation of wealth that corresponds with other aspects of social life. These worldviews emerged from a subsistence economy "premised on an ethos of reciprocity in which people reciprocate not only with one another, but also with the land and spirit world" (Kuokkanen 2011:220). These internal logics have been challenged through assimilative and genocidal acts over the past five hundred years, the latest posed by the lures of wealth made possible through (seemingly beneficial) laws and policies that enable (and force) Indigenous peoples to organize their economic futures around neoliberal corporate capitalism. Toggling back and forth between the dialectics of internal value systems and those that drive dominant political economies, Indigenous corporations can provide new pathways for nation-building and self-determination, but they could also be harbingers of partial or total subsumption. As such, tribal members feel ambivalence towards many Indigenous corporate activities. Like the shareholders of financial institutions trading derivatives and managing hedge funds before the 2008 global financial collapse, sometimes Indigenous shareholders want the big pay out now regardless of future costs. They like benefits afforded through the excess accumulation of capital in the form of dividends, scholarships, programs that support language and heritage, branding campaigns that redress negative stereotypes, and structural improvements that upgrade homes, office buildings, schools and community gathering places. However, many continue to rally against pressures to abandon traditional worldviews in favour of corporate values, workplaces, and operations.

The logic of Indigenous Capitalisms acknowledges that Indigenous corporations bear the

6 Jessica Cattelino makes a similar argument in her 2008 book, *High Stakes: Florida Gaming and Sovereignty*.

continued pressures of assimilation to the global marketplace, but they also carry a promise for decolonized futures. Indigenous Capitalisms operate within the dominant paradigm that determines some, but not all of the social relations of exchange. Self proclaimed "traditionalists" who fight against incorporation argue that exploitation, at the heart of Marxist notions of capitalism, contradicts a worldview shared by many Indigenous peoples to take what you need and share with others. This stance, however, willfully ignores Indigenous moral economies about the accumulation and redistribution of wealth that are integrated into Indigenous corporate missions.

Indigenous law, culture, kinship, and behavioural norms have always been embedded within Indigenous corporations (although at particular times it is more or less visible to outsiders). Traditional forms of kinship are integral to human resources departments and business transactions. Business activities are trumped by important cultural events. The tone and nature of internal communications do not necessarily match the kinds of domineering and masculine speech patterns that pervade in Western business places. Indigenous Corporations operate non-revenue generating branches dedicated to education, language the arts, and the stewardship of natural resources. While they may not result in immediate profit, these organizational arms are integrated into overall fiscal goals and result in new practices that locate different kinds of profit in new ways, such as through cultural branding, developing sustainable products, or investing in youth.

Whereas culturally-based modes of production reinforce local value systems within corporate philosophy, organization and practice, self-determination within the current world system can only be achieved through outside acceptance codified into international law. Federal acts mandating Indigenous incorporation have a dual potential for simultaneous subsumption and self-determination. The irony of this equation is that self-determination depends on being able to prove to the world that a given Indigenous community differs from the rest of the multicultural body politic residing in the surrounding nation state through inherent rights vested in their continuous historical relationship to their lands. Corporate engagements with Indigenous lands through natural resource extraction threatens the legitimization of traditional use and alienates Indigenous shareholders from social and moral economies upon which their sovereignty is based. The future of self-determination lies in international law that recognizes the ongoing (but in some cases shifting) relationships between Indigenous peoples and their lands and establishes Indigenous peoples as legal actors on the international stage to whom states and other international legal actors owe legal duties and obligations.

The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes "the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources," and affirms "the fundamental importance of the right to self-determination of all peoples, by virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." In 2010, President Barak Obama reversed the Bush administration's opposition to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples becoming the last nation to adopt it after Canada, New Zealand and Australia had also reversed their votes against it.[7] In the future, this document will likely be called upon to combat the adverse consequences of the international legal order's validation of these imperial powers' ongoing forms of subjugation through assimilation by neoliberalism.

A Call to Action

We cannot begin to unpack and translate the internal logic of Indigenous Capitalisms as they operate at various levels of political economies without understanding how they relate to the cultural values intertwined in the everyday lives of Indigenous peoples. Nor can we ignore the continued impact of colonial interventions on the decisions that

7 See Valerie Richarson. Obama adopts U.N. manifesto on rights of indigenous peoples. *The Washington Times*. December 16, 2010.

Indigenous community members and business leaders make today. An Indigenous Capitalisms viewpoint departs from a Western framework that often touts "one size fits all" solutions to social and economic problems without taking into consideration the particular ways that colonial pasts come to bear upon contemporary Indigenous communities.

This essay speaks to the economic relations within Indigenous communities, and between them and the rest of the world through the concept of Indigenous Capitalisms. It is written to raise more questions than it answers, and to call for continued applied scholarly engagement. Building a theory of Indigenous Capitalisms is key to the goals of Indigenous Studies. As Duane Champagne remarked,

> Indigenous studies lends itself to a wide variety of comparative analysis and case studies about colonialism, economic development, political autonomy, culture change and continuity, and changing international relations. … There may be over 375 million Indigenous peoples in the world, and they often have issues in common with other Indigenous communities over relations with nation states and national cultures. [2009:88]

Future research in this area should offer new ways of understanding the ties between economic issues and Indigenous lives, challenging existing stereotypes about Indigenous peoples' stakes in the global economy contributing to the growing discipline of Indigenous Studies. This research can borrow theoretical tools and analytics from many fields including anthropology, cultural studies, economics, and political science, but it should take an Indigenous Studies perspective that does not necessarily follow the same set of assumptions put forth in mainstream academy (such as models of linear progression, rational-actor, atheism/Judeo-Christianity, nation-state, world systems, etc.). In doing so, this field of inquiry can reach out to the mainstream as we see more and more non-Indigenous corporations and governments working together to implement "new" ideas for sustainability and long term planning.

Areas of research could include, but are not limited to, considerations of the cross-cultural interplay between moral economies, structures of power, gender, law, and governance. Land claims acts that impose assimilative development structures need to be closely monitored for potential slippages that may alienate Indigenous peoples from their inherent rights and assets. This research should attend to the future role of traditional and subsistence economies in relation to other spheres of Indigenous lives. This research should have practical applications by helping to identify best practices, new areas for entrepreneurship, models for effective governance, and enhanced educational opportunities. This area of study should extend beyond this essay's brief discussion of corporations in Anglo settler colonial nations to include other Indigenous peoples operating under other sets of moral, legal and political constraints. It should recognize the non-linear relationship between the past and the future, as well as the beyond-spatial interpenetrations between the local and global to see Indigenous Capitalisms as a tool to analyze a wide range of issues salient to Indigenous worldviews. Finally, it should question the nature of reality itself; an Indigenous Capitalisms approach imposes the questions, "For what end do I labour? What defines happiness? Is identity individual or collective? What is the relationship of humans to the animals, plants, rocks and other elements with whom we share the planet?" and even, "What does it mean to be Indigenous in the twenty-first century?"

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Finance Capital, Sovereign Debt, Selective Hegemony and Pissed-off Populations

Gavin Smith

9 Aug 2011

It is interesting to see over the past five days the juxtaposition of (a) the attack on "democratic" states by finance capitalists; (b) organized actions in Santiago; (c) flying picket style actions in London.

B and C are both the result of the fact that the financing of liberal democratic states has shifted from a combination of the tax system and 'savings bonds' sold to the (middle-class) population, to reliance on financial markets and their attendant instruments for 'proper government.' It is worth noting the connection between those pressure groups who have insisted that sovereign states be run on the same economic criteria as limited-stock companies – specifically 'balancing their books' – and the increasing reliance of these same states on funds raised through finance capital.[1] Obviously by insisting on the former you can drive states further into the latter. As each state becomes more reliant on this very specific form of 'good house-keeping,' so any orthodox political party associates the running of the state with the running of the exchequer on these terms. The fact that the millionaire right-wing President Sebastian Piñera sounds little different from Ed Miliband illustrates the issue perfectly.

The so-called progressive press keep speaking of "the worst days since the end of Lehmann Brothers," and of the fact that the protesters are all "youths." The first notion obscures the fact that Lehmann Brothers was not an elected government, indeed in principle at least the purpose of Lehmann Bros was not supposed to be exactly the same as the purpose of a liberal democratic state. What is happening now is that the saving of 'x' number of "Lehmann Bros" is taking place at the expense of targeted sovereign states. The towel is being wrung out in Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and so on (keep tuned!) so the juices can run into the various financial institutions – from banks to hedge funds – who speculated on them in the first place. (As well, it is sad to say, so the juices can

1 There is in fact no reason at all from an economic point-of-view why states should need to balance their books in the same way as firms. Indeed even firms only have to balance their books when there is a loss of faith in their futures on the part of investors. Moreover, nobody has yet come up with an agreed-upon accounting formula for figuring out when a sovereign state tips over from black to red: the accounting is just too fuzzy. For example Italy's debts is said to be "1.9 *or* 2.6 trillion euros." This is like giving yourself a margin of error on your family budget of $50,000 around $18,000. Go figure!

run to other states who themselves are using hedge funds and banks to prop up their own operations (yes the wheel does indeed loop right round!). Nobody is saying that this was a bad way to finance a sovereign state in the first place, or that it would be a bad way to do it in the future. Indeed the whole point of not declaring sovereign bankruptcy right now is based on the assumption that this is the only way a state can be financed.

The same commentators, and the politicians who read their lips, speak of the evil rating agencies (especially Standard and Poors) and even tell us that they were the cause of the first crash. But hang on a minute. The problem first time around was that the agencies consistently got their ratings wrong! One reason they got them wrong was because the instruments they were rating were being sold by the same people who were paying them for the ratings in the first place. And this hasn't changed. Now we have supposedly sophisticated economics analysts telling us that these 'regulators' should be replaced by, for example, a UN rating agency. But the ratings agencies are like the leaders of a mob who asks which way the crowd is moving so they can get at the head of it. They are desperately trying to buck the obvious truth which is that they are weathermen who try to predict the weather that is being controlled by other people. It's not a question of getting it wrong; it's a question of appearing to get it right in the eyes of the right people. In this sense ratings agencies are simply feeble refs negotiating a deal between distrustful players.

And then, second: Is it the case that 'we' should, to quote Jimmy Cliff, "Treat the youths right/Instead of putting up a fight." To suggest so would seem to obscure more than it reveals about the differences between Santiago and London. The papers have argued that all the London actions are really about are radical shopping, but the evidence suggests the writers don't know where the actual shopping is happening – on the black market the day after. (Try Craigslist for a Prada handbag the day after they hit Harrods.) London youth are simply the front-line infantry for other generations in the same fix. As such they are evidence of the beginning of a polarized class war: between the property-less 'residue' and the 'selected population' – the bottom end still clinging on for dear life to the council houses they were sold a generation ago, the rest even more deeply convinced that the few "assets" they think they have represent their true worth as human beings… and in deep denial about just how little they know about how this bloody machine they are caught up in actually works.

The extremely well-organized Santiago actions are a different matter altogether. Admirable though they are, they are about negotiating the conditions for being one of the selected in the finance-dominated hegemonic field. If, as Bourdieu would have us believe, the educational system is mostly about institutionalized misrecognition, then there's nothing wrong with wanting to get it free, but what comes in the can is likely to reproduce the values peddled within the field of selective hegemony.[2] And since the political economy of post-secondary education is shaped by the same political class that endorses the way in which sovereign government is financed, so the content of education becomes the distorted child of an institutional form increasingly aping the (demonstrably out-dated) capitalist enterprise.

The dots do connect. The issue is how to make the connections so manifest that they can no longer be denied.

2 For a more extended version of the arguments alluded to here, see Smith, 2011, Selective hegemony and beyond – populations with 'no productive function': a framework for enquiry. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 18:2-38, with Commentaries and a Reply.

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Relative Surplus Population and the London Riots

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'Black' August in Britain was marked by multiple crises, the news of each seeming to successively overwhelm the last, or at least to push it off front page news. There was the spectacle of hackergate, in which journalists from Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World*, politicians of all stripes, and the police were finally revealed to be in collusion with each other after years of stonewalling. There was yet another panic on financial markets, as the non-stop risky and fraudulent behaviour of banks ran afoul of the fact that sovereign states could no longer bail them out through ever-more draconian austerity programs for which the poor have to pay the most. And then there were the 'riots,' the only crisis in which swift retributive punishments were handed out even before the loot could be sold. As Naomi Klein noted, there was looting in broad daylight by the super-elite, and looting at night by the dispossessed. Yet one group has been left quite undisturbed and still wields a powerful global voice. The other, that of the dispossessed, has been so swiftly criminalized that we have not even been allowed to hear what they have to say, or indeed, learn if they have anything to say at all. If only such treatment had been meted out to Philip Godwin or James Murdoch, then perhaps late British capitalism might have staved off its looming crises of legitimacy. And here, I suspect, lies the meaning of the swift, repressive hand of the English state in dealing with the 'rioters.'

It is amazing to see how many articles have since been written about the 'meaning' of the riots without ever interviewing a single rioter. They have become invisible, criminalized beyond the reach of reason, rather like the category of 'madness' so deftly excavated by Foucault. And yet, the events in London were immediately preceded by a demonstration of a black man's family and its supporters at the Tottenham police station, seeking to find out what had resulted in his killing by the police and being refused that basic courtesy. Those few 'rioters' who were interviewed in the early days, before the press stopped speaking to them, complained of continual stop and search procedures by police of young black men (racial profiling), the lack of jobs, a government that cared only for the rich, cutbacks and austerity that hit deprived communities most aggressively, and so on. Joined by dispossessed white youth as well, they talked about hopelessness, the venality at the

top, and the need for money in England's shining global city. So did Darcus Hare, a 68-year old black social justice advocate roughly shut down by a BBC interviewer when he used the term 'insurrection' to describe the events of August 7-11th. The rioters seemingly took their cue from the bankers, who looted England's treasury and were rewarded. How could such parallel behaviour at the top and the bottom not have a political sub-text?

I happened to be staying in Notting Hill, doing research at the British Library. Notting Hill was one of the minor sites of this insurrection, to use Darcus Hare's term. I'd just stepped out to get my Oyster card on Monday evening, and instead walked into a wall of police cars streaming into the high street, sirens wailing, a few hooded kids running away into the no-exit alleys that police cars could not follow, and, later, the sounds of windows smashing as the police were called away to other sites and other scenes of state breakdown, while the youths returned. The 'rioters' were much better organized and fleet-footed than the police, and the simultaneous insurrections dispersed across the city revealed the vulnerability of the state at a time when the police itself was demoralized by major cutbacks. The state lost total control of the streets on August 8, and on August 9 the major politicians were forced to return from their respective holidays. Notting Hill was the scene of tremendous tumults by West Indians in the 1980s when Brixton and Tottenham also burned at the start of Thatcher's first austerity drive. It is also the venue of a famous carnival that haunts historical memory as a sign of its former black presence, now largely confined to the northern part of the neighbourhood. The rest of Notting Hill is now gentrified beyond belief and certainly beyond the means of almost anyone but the criminals at the top. Yes, many of the hooded youth I saw were 'black,' and yes, they did loot mainly electronics stores in a former heartland of West Indian life and culture in London. In a neighbourhood that now houses hardly any black people, could this not also be read as a retaking of spaces that they had been fiercely excluded from by money-power in the post-Thatcher years? In a city in which most of the public walkways and parks have been privatized as well, could not control over the streets be a significant act of reclamation?

Certainly, there was evidence of fine-tuned organization of groups of through Blackberry Messenger across the gentrified and not-so-gentrified spaces of central London. The security of Blackberry's messaging service makes it the smart phone of choice for the rebellious and the dissident, and not only for CEOs. It is evident that not all of the 'rioters' lived in the affected neighbourhoods and they appeared able to amass and disperse at will. They utilized bicycles that could navigate the no-exit lanes and alleyways to hide in when police patrolled neighbouring high streets. They then returned when the Metropolitan Police were called out to other sites of conflagration. Their simultaneous appearance in over fifty places in Greater London on August 8 meant that they, and not the government, controlled the streets. If nothing else, the London 'riots' provided a model of how urban insurrections can be successfully planned and executed. For revealing this breach in state discipline, they required the full and swift force of state retribution before anyone had time to think or even blink. The irony of Cameron threatening to shut down the internet, while disparaging Mubarak for doing the same in Egypt in January, was lost in the rush to criminalize and marginalize those who were framed increasingly as pure criminals, lacking morality, and symbols of 'broken Britain.' The unanswered question here is who broke it?

Speaking objectively, many of the 'rioters' belong to the burgeoning surplus population, a group without jobs and futures, dispossessed of educational and other state provisions, and existing beyond even the functional needs of a reserve army of labour (Smith 2011). This observation has been supported by recent profiles of those caught: the vast majority were not gang members, but rather those youth who were unemployed and had 'low educational attainments.' Their numbers are growing, both in the recession-prone 'advanced' economies, and even in the 'fast-growing' emerging countries, where they are often referred to as 'the informal sector,' i.e. people working in jobs that they have largely had to create for themselves, at very low pay and with no benefits. In India, strikingly, a 2007 government report noted that 92 percent of the labouring population works in this sector, and many economists there have referred

to the neoliberal phase as one of 'jobless growth,' while others argue that the massive growth in the informal sector represents a 'distress sale of labour.' In emerging countries, many of the dispossessed arise from an agrarian crisis, in which small holders have become pauperized or had their land appropriated for development purposes. In most neoliberalized countries, i.e. in most countries, this sector of the population is racialized as well. In India, *adivasis*, or aboriginal people, and *dalits*, or ex-untouchables, are over-represented in this surplus population and are usually the major victims of land appropriation or slum clearances. In England, it is black Britons who are the most disadvantaged. In France, it is the children of families from former French colonies in North Africa. In the U.S., one commentator has noted that the housing crisis represents the greatest appropriation of African American assets ever (Harvey 2009). This surplus population sees its future, realistically, as one of hopelessness. Is it any wonder that they take to guns in central India, or looting in fashionable Notting Hill?

Ignoring the big picture, liberal commentators on 'the riots' are prone to hegemonic appropriation, as even sympathetic journalists speak neoliberalism's preferred language. For them, this is all about exclusion, as if stopping the riots was merely down to making people feel more culturally at home in multicultural Britain, or as if more neoliberalism were needed so that the 'trickle-down' effect would finally 'include' the majority. Such is the debasement of social science language in the past 30 years of post-Marxism. Yet, we must recognize this surplus population for what it is: an inevitable effect of a rising organic composition of capital in the face of a much-enlarged global proletariat, dispossessed from their land, jobs, futures, and any other assets and with nowhere to go and nothing to do. The insurrectionists of London, Birmingham and Bristol have already been criminalized and invisibilized. The *adivasis* of central India, likewise. What is next in the array of state repression for governments that have run out of 'conventional means' for dealing with the global slump and its surplus populations? Bodily rather than spatial ethnic cleansing?

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Revolution, Or the Repetition of the Same?

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[Instincts] reveal an effort to restore an earlier state of things. We may suppose that from the moment at which a state of things that has once been attained is upset, an instinct arises to create it afresh and brings about phenomena which we can describe as a "compulsion to repeat." (Sigmund Freud, New Lectures)

In a crisis, assets return to their rightful owners. (Andrew Mellon)

"The Tunisian Revolution is being twitterized…History is being written by the people."

On January 14, 2011, tyrants from Maghreb to the Persian Gulf were forced to confront an ominous conjunction – a fed-up majority keen on usurping power from dying autocrats, and Twitter. As revolutionary demands galloped across national borders on social media's invisible stag – "The revolution is coming!" – only the most cynical observer could deny that something massive was astir. In Tunisia, the oafishly corrupt regime of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali was dissolving in real-time before the eyes of the world. The winds of change soon reached Cairo, where Hosni 'The Lizard' Mubarak clung desperately to his grip on power. A terse tweet captured the mood: "#fuckmubarak." Mubarak's thirty-year spell, sustained by media suppression and military force, was being lifted. And thanks to Twitter, the bold defrocking of another autocrat was told in the words of the victims. Indeed, History WAS being written by the people.

As the blossoms announcing the 'Arab Spring' in Egypt and Tunisia began to wither, giving way to the uncomfortable summer of constitutional reform, the media went on the offensive. Cut to the grotesque visage of Muammar Gaddafi, suiciding Libya to save the status quo. Now split the frame and paste the sinister gaze of Bashar al-Assad, with captions confirming his genetic proclivity for mass butchery.

The media's demand for spectacle is easily satisfied by identifying 'regime' with 'cuckoo dictator,' a face to rally against, a scapegoat to slaughter. But before we allow the media to hijack our capacity for nuanced judgment, perhaps the time is right for an intermission, a moment for somber reflection on what has become of Egypt and Tunisia, before projecting aspirations for "regime-change" further a field. Perhaps it's time to ask more fundamental questions, such as what, precisely, is the nature of a "regime," and thus what constitutes "change"? It was Socrates

who claimed justice without knowledge is a form of cunning; can the same not be said of "revolution"?

The warrens of Medina are now empty. Silence grips the colourful stalls where euros and dollars were once traded with profligacy for ornate rugs and silks. Near the Bay of Tunis, sublime ruins of Carthage have reverted to mute granite slabs, signalling a time before 'tourism' was an industry. In short, Tunisia's economy is on the skids. Five percent of Tunisia's population is economically dependent on tourism. Now, in these times of political turbulence, and the conflagration across the border in Libya, tourist money has fled Tunisia for safer havens. Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, founder of Tunisia's Progressive Democratic Party, while acknowledging the dire situation, promises that the failing economy is a mere aftershock of the revolution. Soon a transparent government, adhering to democratic principles, will spur economic growth: "With democracy and good governance," says Chebbi, "we will have more growth because nepotism, the abuse of power and so on hampered the growth." Tunisia offers slim hopes of an orderly transition from autocracy to some form of constitutional democracy, and this opening towards democracy appears destined for a Pyrrhic victory, as Islamists are slated to make significant electoral gains. More disturbing for the future stability of Tunisia is a deal struck last February, when the Austrian based OMV purchased Tunisia's petroleum industry for eight hundred and sixty six million dollars. Tunisians can now voice their grievances against the government without fear of imprisonment, and they are doubtless better off for it. But will the carrot of an editorial invective offset the stick off crushing poverty? Unlikely.

A grimmer picture has emerged in post-Mubarak Egypt, where the Supreme Council of the Armed Forced (SCAF), while crassly indulging in revolutionary rhetoric, has adopted the fear-mongering policies of the deposed tyrant Mubarak. The SCAF speaks of "incremental change," they warn of "domestic instability," and stoke fears of a festering "Islamism," to justify continued oppressions. Moderate and liberal forces in Egypt are veering towards irrelevancy. A Muslim parliamentary bloc, both anti-Western and fervently Islamic, is on the ascent, and the economy is swerving towards collapse. For Egypt's Coptic Christians, women, and civil rights, the future looks bleak.

False revolutions in Egypt have deep historical roots. In the time of the New Kingdom (1550-1100 B.C.), the Pharoah Amenhotep IV changed his name to Akhenaten, in brazen defiance of the god Amen. The entrenched priesthood at Thebes was humiliated, as their esoteric alliance with Amen was exposed as a fraud. Akhenaten then resolved to make his revolution complete, the worship of Amen was suppressed, temples were shut down, and Akhenaten's goons, the original SCAF, blotted out the name of Amen wherever it could be found, public festivals of the gods ceased, and a new capital was erected between Thebes and Memphis called Akhetaten – "horizon of Aten." These radical measures were orchestrated in the belief that eliminating the name of the god Amen would secure the annihilation of the god himself – out of sight, out of mind. A similar belief has taken hold in Egypt. Oppression found its platonic form in Mubarak, and by removing the arch-image of oppression, the content is magically sundered from its roots. The tyrant is dead, long live tyranny! 'First as tragedy, then as farce;' Marx's words apply to the history of Egypt with a cruel cogency. There has been no sincere effort to revamp the autocratic constitution of 1971. Egypt, post-Mubarak, is marked by the continuity of oppressive policies, rather than the deliverance from oppression tweeted so fervently from Tahrir.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud remarked how "This 'perpetual recurrence of the same thing' causes us no astonishment when it relates to active behaviour on the part of the person concerned and when we can discern in him an essential character-trait which always remains the same and which is compelled to find expression in a repetition of the same experiences." Like the spawning migration of fishes, and the migratory flights of birds, it appears that Egypt is manifesting a biological instinct of conservation, to repeat what has come before, regardless of its monstrous and oppressive nature, ad nauseam. But perhaps Freud is being too liberal with his application of the term 'instinct,' and what he claims is a natural compulsion to repeat, is, in the human sphere, more aptly called ideological domination. Akhenaten

attempted to consolidate power by effacing the memory of previous gods. Today what has been effectively deleted from human consciousness are alternative systems of economic organization. Regime-change is equated with onerous politicians, who no doubt deserve to have their powers annexed by the people. Yet the staggering profits made from the phosphates and iron ore of Tunisia, and Egypt's oil industries, will continue to be diverted away from the people who need them most. Until regime change signals a fundamental restructuring of wealth distribution, the compulsion to repeat the same vile mistakes will assert itself as ineluctably as the swallows' annual longing for Capistrano.

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Making Sense of the 'Senselessness': Critical Reflections on Killing Rampages

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How many times have we heard the words "senseless shooting," "senseless violence," or "senseless killing" in reference to the Tucson tragedy of January 8, 2011 and to similar events in recent years? Quite the contrary is argued in this text and that the actions by Jared Loughner and other gunmen on the rampage make perfect sense in light of a critical analysis of how a private individual's consciousness is shaped in our capitalistic society.

Of course, the tragedy of Tucson is another sad event in the long list of killing sprees in the United States and elsewhere. This, however, should not prevent us from considering the rationale of these terrible events that leave behind dead bodies and a paralyzed public. Even though shootings don't make sense to us immediately, after digging a little deeper and putting the puzzle pieces together, I claim that a killing rampage follows its own rationale no matter if it takes place at a school or university, or aims to kill a member of Congress and her supporters. Moreover, for those already critical of the capitalistic economy and its complementary political system, the issue of killing sprees offers even more grounds for criticizing the current state of affairs in our modern society.

The criticism, however, touches upon a delicate topic, especially among those leaning to the left: morality. In this essay I claim that the consequences of radically applied morality are decisive for making sense of the 'senselessness.' In other words, and as a practical consequence of this, as long as those damaged by the capitalistic order behave merely like so many little "ensembles of social relations" (Marx 1969:14), they and their applied morality have to be the object of criticism. In addition, and I accept that this is a provocative hypothesis, it is argued that those running amok are nothing but the radicalized forms of appearance of those backing the accepted norms and values of the capitalistic society. Whereas Lenin and many other leftists argue that the values of the bourgeois society provide a potential leverage for agitating those suffering under the ruling politico-economic system, it is my conclusion that, quite the opposite, these values and norms form a barrier to social change and, periodically lead to terrible actions, such as those in Tucson, Columbine, or at Virginia Tech.

In our modern democratic societies, the free will of the individual is the basic principle of law and,

therein, a matter of fact. By conceding its citizens the right to act as legal entities and, thus, as persons with their own interests and purposes, the state substantially restricts the free will of individuals living under its rule. The legal act of accepting the individuals' free will, which already exists prior to and independent of this acceptance, is virtually identical to the submission of this will to the interests of the authority guaranteeing such rights. Thus, the legal acceptance of the individuals' will is both the most abstract and also most comprehensive form to submit the specific content of this will to bourgeois rule because "the positive form of command in the last resort (has) a prohibition as its basis" (Hegel 2001:54). For this reason, no sphere of capitalistic life is excluded from legal regulation and, as a result, the state provides the exclusive conditions in which the individual is able to exert his or her free will. Because the individual's will is accepted, per se, none of its particular interests are acknowledged by the state. The bearer of such a will is free to accept the state-imposed restrictions as the quasi-natural condition for the application of his will. The modern individual accepts these legal conditions as the starting-point for his calculating behaviour. Therewith, the will is "abstractly free" because by incorporating the legal requirements of the capitalistic state into his formation of will, the private individual abstracts from these restrictions and acclaims his realm of freedom. This affirmative stance towards the capitalistic state is deeply rooted in the re-interpretation of restrictions as civil liberties. By submitting his existence to the requirements of the ruling politico-economic interests, the modern individual cultivates his specific way of dealing with the consequences of living in capitalism. He wants to prove himself in the system of exploitation and, therefore, declares himself responsible for the outcome of his efforts. Consequently, the political, economic, and social requirements are transferred to a psychological level. This transfer, however, is identical to ignoring the objective interests and purposes attendant as baggage with the capitalistic order. A person who is willing to cope with the vicissitudes of life merely from a psychological point of view translates every experience into his particular balance of self-worth. This re-interpretation has its consequences.

Because the material aspirations of modern individuals only exist in the form of proving themselves in the competitive capitalistic system, people accept the struggle within the hierarchy of occupations as their sole means for material well-being and, therefore, demonstrate their *abstract free will* (Held 2003-2009). Before applying the "rationale" of this will to the case of the Tucson shooting, I will succinctly exemplify the intrinsic logic of people running amok with the phenomenon of school shootings.

At an early stage of their lives, modern individuals are introduced and subjected to competition: the education system. Moreover, students are forced to teach themselves how to deal psychologically with the consequences of competition during their respective educational careers. Students are supposed to learn how to maintain a positive attitude towards themselves separated from any specific success they may have or not: to develop their *self-esteem*. For this reason, many institutions have started to promote actively the development of "ego-strength" in recent years. However, in the light of this ambitious program, it is no coincidence that some students fail to cope with the insufficient success they suffer in one form or another. The socially accepted forms of how to deal with the outcome of competition are, however, ignored only by a minority of students. Some of them radicalise their desire for being a respected protagonist of successful decency and reject the societal judgement of their efforts in the different spheres of life, i.e., political, economic, and private sphere. Here, the category of successful decency refers to the two basic principles of life in our modern societies: (1) the rule of law; (2) competition.

The fact that killing rampages of young people generally take place at schools is no coincidence. Students are confronted with a competitive education system and its corresponding criteria of achievement. This state-organised "training" for becoming willing competitors, however, is not reduced to the education system and, so, students apply the criteria to the private and also political sphere. Adequately provided with the mental equipment through their respected educational careers, many students have to deal with the rather insufficient outcome of their educational and/or social ambitions. Students, who

do not accomplish what they strive for, frequently perceive the difference between the ideal they have constructed of themselves and reality as an *injustice*. For them, the ideal of decency and success falls apart; they do not get what they feel they are *entitled to*. Bringing forward one's rejected interests in this aggressive way, however, is anti-critical because individuals complaining about the injustices that the world offers accept the criteria of meritocracy but merely reject the output of their application.

By translating all positive and negative experiences of their life into a balance of self-worth and by continuously comparing their own psychological diagnosis with the psychologically interpreted results of competition, modern individuals perpetuate the "cult of self-esteem." The objective situation of an individual's situation in capitalistic society is of no interest to such a person. Moreover, the *ideal of oneself*, which is attended to the concept of self-esteem, is defended against any disproof (i.e., failure to meet the criterion of successful decency). This is, however, paradoxical because an individual cultivating its ideal of itself can never correct its objective situation. Self-esteem is, therefore, a psychological technique to conform to the requirements of the capitalistic society. However, because an idealist re-interpretation of one's own achievements and potential capabilities is not aimed, even able, to change the imposed conditions of life, self-esteem is, per se, at risk.

Individuals applying the standard of successful decency to themselves do not determine the systematic obstacles hindering their interests but frequently move on to the level of interpreting rejected interests as an *insult* to their entire personality. Individuals perceiving the discrepancy between their own feeling of self-worth and societal judgement in this aggressive way sometimes interpret this situation as intolerable. The perception of such an insult as an *honour offense* leads individuals to the idea of correcting the discrepancy of ideal and reality by means of violence. This practical correction, of course, cannot effectively change society's judgement but enforces the congruency of both judgements and, thus, results in the rehabilitation of the individual's honour. Without any material considerations on the shooter's behalf, a particular person or "society" itself is confronted only with the shooter's damaged honour. It speaks for itself that this act is based on a false critique of competition and its consequences. Why do people resort to violence as their ultimate means for rehabilitating their damaged honour?

The firm conviction of the moral self-perception does not allow any criticism, which generally results in various *compensation* efforts. Although common ways to compensate the moral self for his or her failure to meet the criterion of success properly are socially accepted and desired (e.g., fandom, sports, honourary positions, and family life), unlawful compensatory efforts are denied. The latter often incorporate physical violence, applied when reality is to be consistent with the ideal of the individual. However, compensation has an immanent deficit: it does not change objective reality; the compensatory efforts of bourgeois individuals are therefore *delusional*.

The mental content of socially accepted conformity varies from "I just want to be respected by the ones I love" to "I am worth more than I am honoured and will prove my significance to the rest of the world." Persons running amok radicalise the latter extreme and feel the need to achieve *within* the capitalistic society what this society "owes" them. The forced acceptance of their personality, however, results in a practical paradox: the acceptance is merely the product of physical violence and, thus, not the outcome of successful decency. How are these two aspects reconciled?

The *absolutisation* of its specific psychological self-perception implies an individual's existential commitment to prove his "worth." With this step he has completely separated himself from any material calculations. When the idealistic self-perception is challenged in the form that the higher values one identifies with (e.g., justice) are in his mind denied their required *respect,* he perceives this as an attack on his entire personality. For a moral self that is challenged in this abstract and radical way, the rehabilitation of his personality is a question of honour. He aims to obtain the definite proof for the validity of his ideals to such an extent that this ambition remains his final *purpose in life*. Thus, committing suicide, as so many gunmen on a rampage have done,

is the ultimate act of individuals, who – after having rehabilitated their honour in the light of their idealistic self-perception – cannot allow others to disprove the validity of their applied standard of successful decency. The killing rampage has purposed what it was aimed to deliver and those committing suicide demonstrate to what an extent their behaviour is calculated. This calculating behaviour becomes apparent when everything is planned in great detail, suicide notes are composed, and the social environment, the family, friends, and others are systematically deceived (Huisken 2002).

The purpose of violent self-expression in this brutal way is usually led by thoughts of *revenge*. When the radicalised individual follows the purposes he feels entitled to realize, he does not show consideration for his fellow citizens. A person that seeks to prove to "the world" the validity of his ideal of himself is usually not selective, and because of that everyone and anyone can be subject to his violent ambitions. Such an individual does not care about the particular stance of the victim to himself. Most times, the victims had not even known the gunman personally, but were idealised representatives of "the world" that the perpetrator aimed to attack. The project to enforce "the world" to pay respect to a personality who does not meet the accepted criteria of achievement in our capitalistic society – no matter whether this is true or only perceived as such – is all-encompassing and therefore everyone is a potential victim. The delusion to feel entitled to satisfy one's desire for revenge, because one acts in accordance with higher values, results in the idea that the perceived annihilator of these values (i.e., in his mind the rest of "the world" and their representatives) is allowed to be eliminated with violent means. "The world" is equated in these individuals to the school, as this is the place where they are required to prove themselves in competition (e.g., on the academic level through grades, but also on the social level: who wears the best clothes? etc.). The perceived *entitlement* is the "logical" conclusion of individuals believing in the idea of being defenders of universally valid values. In doing so, modern individuals are not original. In fact, they imitate what the bearer of monopoly of force, the capitalistic state, does when he enforces law and order within his territory or sends his armed forces to foreign countries: use of force as the *ultima ratio* of policy makers. The monopoly of force and the armed forces are generally used for the protection or enforcement of higher values, such as freedom, democracy, justice, and humanity.

In the viewpoint of a person running amok, *his values* are restored, and therein, the killing spree is never "senseless," as generally perceived by others.

Given this, the circulating ideas about killing rampages, no matter whether these ideas are of academic or non-academic origin, that they are the result of various contributing factors, e.g., easy access to guns, inflammatory political rhetoric, or lack of self-esteem, must remain insufficient as long as the applied abstract free will of modern individuals is disregarded (Newman 2004; Langman 2009). In other words, people actively apply their moral standards to the capitalistic world they are living in, and only those believing in the idea of themselves as keepers of universally valid laws will consider a killing rampage as their appropriate means for retaining the identity of ideal and social reality. Accordingly, the idea of Sarah Palin's infamous "It's time to take a stand"-map influencing Jared Loughner in any way is absurd. Whereas liberal columnists, such as Paul Krugman (2011), emphasize the current political environment that they contend encourages outrage and violence, more conservatives, such as David Brooks (2011), point out that the suspect is mentally ill. The explanations seem to divide along liberal and conservative lines. However, without taking the applied will of the shooter seriously, it is simply impossible to make sense of the "senselessness." Loughner's choice of victim, however irrational, was politically motivated. So, what kind of person kills others for his political beliefs?

Analog toward the description above, it is important to emphasis that a gunman is convinced to execute "just violence." Being entitled to assassinate a member of Congress because she violated the higher values and beliefs Loughner identifies with, justifies – in his point of view – the brutal violence of his action. Loughner, who attacked the U.S. federal government and religion in several videos on YouTube, developed his own incoherent views on a

necessary political revolution. He was prepared to fight "the longest war in the history of the United States," called for a new currency, a return to the former gold standard, vehemently criticized the current job employment situation, and backed Arizona's restrictive immigration laws. In addition, he felt that Gabrielle Giffords, who he had met once in 2007, is "stupid and unintelligent" (*Daily Mail* 2011).

According to former classmates, Jared Loughner became increasingly erratic in recent months after being suspended by a local community college because of his rambling outbursts on the internet. He was told by the college authorities that it would be necessary for him to obtain "mental health clearance" before returning to the college that Loughner described as a "torture facility." In fact, he did not participate in any program stabilizing his mental health but further radicalized his political views and, finally, felt entitled to commit his crime for the good of his beliefs. The practical execution of his radical moral attitude towards life is what we have to deal with these days.

Finally, what can open-minded thinkers learn from the tragic phenomenon of killing rampages? What is the practical consequence to be drawn from the events in Tucson, Columbine, or Virginia Tech? From a psychological viewpoint it is important to be highly sceptical about the concept of self-esteem and the idea that this psychological instrument would be of importance for individuals living in capitalism. What might be irritating for most of us in the first instance, the idea of self-esteem as a necessary component of mental health, should be challenged because its ultimate purpose is to theoretically separate the individual's good and bad experiences from his ideal of himself and, therefore, the society he lives in. The theoretical indifference towards systematically colliding interests within the capitalistic societies is implied in this dealing with one's own experiences psychologically.

From a philosophical point of view we should be sceptical about any political ambitions that emphatically rely on aspiring to higher values and norms. This not only refers to capitalistic states that wish to impose their version of "freedom" and "democracy" on other societies but also to those leftist intellectuals, organisations, and parties agitating for their political goals with the argument of realising universally valid values. The idea that it would be necessary to connect with the values of the working class, which is in line with Lenin's approach, has to be challenged (Held and Hill 1989). The same counts for the idea of Marx being a moralist. If anything, Marx taught us the power of scientific reasoning and in the tradition of his approach we should be critical about the regular attempts to psychologically deal with the consequences of a politico-economic system that offers the vast majority of its members poor perspectives for their material well-being. The moralist world view of modern individuals, if we like the idea or not, is a major cornerstone for making sense of killing rampages. In other words, those who reflect on the most radical protagonists of successful decency should not ignore the societal foundations from which they emerge.

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Book Review

MAGICAL MARXISM: SUBVERSIVE POLITICS AND THE IMAGINATION. By Andy Merrifield. London and New York: Pluto Press, 2011. 189 pp.

For the majority of the world's population, working life is dead life. Alienated from both time and labour, individuals exist in a zombie-like state, often experiencing an insomnia plague that allows people to accept a repressive situation as natural reality. Andy Merrifield suggests however, that there are individuals that form "pockets of resistance," engaging in fair trade and food sovereignty issues, global landless struggles, or even free software movements (xvi). Such actions form an underground that Merrifield attempts to explore throughout Magical Marxism in a new (read: less systemic and scientific) Marxist style.

In *Magical Marxism*, Merrifield calls for a denial of the real world. A more 'magical' Marxism is about "invention not discovery, about irrationality, not rationality. There's no fetishism anymore, no absolute truth hidden behind innumerable fictions and false images of the world… its [Magical Marxisms] critical power doesn't come from criticism but from an ability to disrupt and reinvent, to create desire and inspire hope" (18). Merrifield presents his argument for a Marxism that pivots on possibility rather than critique through six independent chapters, all which attempt to inspire the reader to believe in the existence of alternatives to capitalism and then to see them in the landscape.

Throughout this work, readers are exposed to numerous forms of direct-action anarchism which Merrifield suggests is necessary to reinvigorate classical Marxism. Merrifield's discussions of the communal publication of subversive books and the appropriation of spaces such as building rooftops, improvised street markets, and second hand bookstores for alternative, radical uses are meant to make believers out of skeptics. Such examples illustrate the ways in which individuals are engaging in subversive acts and living differently, often choosing to create "post-capitalist communes of like-minded adventurers, people who work together, practically, energetically, while expanding their individual selves" (73).

Although such attempts to live differently have led to a rebirth of the phenomenon of violence, acts of resistance must not become limited to violence or succumb to realist actuality. Rather, forms of resistance must inspire hope. Building upon Marx's parable regarding spiders, bees, and architects, Merrifield suggests that we find solace in our ability to first imagine and then to change physical and mental forms as these abilities distinguish the worst of architects from the best of bees. We as humans can invent future scenarios, engage in formulating abstractions, all of which are magical acts. Those of

us on the left must begin to imagine another destiny, becoming the architects of a new society.

In the last section of the book, "Soft Dreamers, Intellectual Anarchists," Merrifield reflects upon one of the most powerful and subversive sensibilities in society – the poetic sensibility. In Merrifield's words, "Power fears poetry… Poetry resides somewhere else, somewhere inaccessible to power; it evokes sentiments, touches being, and speaks in a strange tongue" (163). I need only to reflect upon my own experience of crying quiet tears while listening to labour songs being performed at the 2011 Mountain Justice camp (a direct-action training camp held in the Appalachian region), to understand how subversive poetic sensibilities can be. Perhaps such artistic forms are far more effective in creating social change than any academic text… Individuals like those engaged in the direct-action group, Mountain Justice, build solidarity that moves far beyond the narrow confines of a unified working class, forming a strong political force through a common desire to oppose environmental degradation. Merrifield's work then provides a critical lens through which to better appreciate and understand such activist groups within the context of Appalachia and beyond.

Although Merrifield seeks to present and better understand alternative practices, it is curious that the author makes no references to literatures pertaining to alternative economic and political spaces or even diverse economies. Researchers in these fields have worked diligently to both document and advocate for alternative practices. In addition, when Merrifield attempts to address questions of the role of the state, he tends to write the state off without fully exploring the threat of state co-option. In the end, Merrifield is ultimately unable to answer the lingering question of whether or not some so-called alternative practices are simply forms of neo-liberal social enterprises that address the failures of capitalism without actually doing anything about it.

With that said however, *Magical Marxism* provides a foundational text for believers and skeptics alike, and for all those who hope and dream of something beyond capitalism. The book could easily be assigned for a graduate level course (along with other works that have been published as part of the Marxism and Culture series), and perhaps an upper-level undergraduate course (although Merrifield draws heavily from numerous theorists such a Derrida, Lefebvre, Marx, Debord, as well as others, and some familiarity with these theorists is crucial for understanding the text).

Overall, *Magical Marxism* is a delightful, hopeful text that challenges previous theoretical conceptions and understandings of Marxism as well as the academy. One is left wondering after reading this text if action is far more useful than abstract thinking. Merrifield offers the following note on the importance of action. "Action brings us to life, gives meaning to our lives, and helps us become subjects in the creation of this life, masters of our own activity and body" (42). Perhaps as academics we might give more meaning to our scholarly lives by engaging willingly in action-oriented research – certainly an important issues for all academics to consider.

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