Bonn Oriental and Asian Studies insights

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Bonn Oriental and Asian Studies insights
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Concept
BOAS insights is an online, open-access, peer-reviewed journal with articles as well as reviews which cover a variety of topics and themes across Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean. The editors encourage multi-disciplinary approaches which incorporate diverse perspectives and bridge deeply specialized fields. BOAS insights operates out of the Oriental and Asian Studies Department at the University of Bonn and includes an advisory board of senior faculty members. All submissions to the journal are subject to double blind peer-review.

Table of Contents

Editorial

Bonn Oriental and Asian Studies insights is an online, open-access, peer-reviewed journal covering a wide range of disciplines including art history, political science, archaeology, religious studies, and more. The journal is committed to bringing this research together, providing a platform for new studies to be published by students, early-career researchers and experienced academics alike. We offer an important avenue for researchers and casual readers alike to identify the major questions and trends in the different fields that fall under the general umbrella of Asian and (North-)African Studies. Our journal also provides a way for researchers from these seemingly disparate disciplines and traditions to connect and learn from one another. As demonstrated by the content of this issue, the kind of research being done by those in the various fields of Asian and (North-)African Studies crosses many disciplinary lines. We believe that being aware of the research outside of our individual fields is incredibly important for the growth of all disciplines.

The second issue of BOAS insights has been a long time in the making and was a real labor of love. Upon beginning the second issue, the editorial board found itself with fewer members, and those that remained were and are dealing with changing life circumstances. As such, this issue took two years to finish, with all the editorial members having to complete the required tasks for the journal alongside their own academic work. Financial constraints also led to the prolonged completion date of this issue, as those of us who are on the editorial board do this work due to our own personal convictions regarding the importance of a journal such as this one. However, thanks to the patience and commitment of all contributors and especially to the online format of the journal, we were able to publish things incrementally, which alleviated some of the pressures of working with limited resources. While it was no easy feat for everyone involved, our small group managed to put together an interesting issue featuring exciting new research and some colorful takes on current events. To that end, the format of this issue has foregone the rigid structure of typical academic journals and includes an opinion essay in addition to two articles and a book review.

The first article by Cornelia Bogen explores how a media campaign by the Chinese Communist Party affected perceptions of their handling of COVID-19 by the local population. The article further interrogates the values that underpin the nationalism distinct to China and demonstrates how these values were

manipulated by the Chinese Communist Party to evade criticism in their handling of the pandemic. In the second article by Ngọc Hân Lê we travel a short distance to Vietnam to examine a collection of material representing the Han-Viet class, a social class that existed during a time in Vietnam's history that has been little explored so far. The artifacts under scrutiny were unearthed during excavations that took place in the 1930s, when Vietnam was under Chinese occupation. The article examines the historical background in which these expeditions, which were conducted by a Swedish mission, took place, offering a glimpse into how colonial archaeology functioned at the time. The issue's first essay submission by Zuhal Yeşilyurt Gündüz takes us to Turkiye, where we explore the nature of gold extractivism and its impact on the human and non-human populations of the country. In addition to emphasizing its environmental impact, this essay connects the neoliberal policies of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to its endeavors for continual capital growth, which is examined through the lens of gold extractivism. Finally, this issue of the journal features Sümeyra Yakar's book review on *Islam and Muslim Resistance to Modernity in Turkey* by Gökhan Bacık.

It is the hope of the editorial board that the content of this issue as well as that contained in the previous issue demonstrates the importance of this platform. With many of the editorial members taking on new challenges and starting families, its future is open to change. For anyone reading this who might want to gain invaluable experience in putting together an academic journal, please consider joining our editorial board, where you will most certainly acquire skills that will aid your academic career for a long time. For more information, please email insights@uni-bonn.de.

As we publish our second issue we stay committed to our goals, as outlined in our first issue: we continue to look for new connections which offer alternative perspectives, we continue to promote underrepresented studies and we will keep on searching out scholars and contributions engaged in cross-disciplinary research in the frame of the diverse fields of Asian and Oriental Studies. Any author willing to be a part of this collaborative endeavor is most welcome to submit their manuscript to us. Check out our new website (https://www.boas-insights.uni-bonn.de/en) for the latest news, call for papers and constantly up-to-date submission guidelines and feel free to contact us anytime.

Editorial Board

Review:

Gökhan Bacık*: Islam and Muslim Resistance to Modernity in Turkey*.
XII+136 pp. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 53,49 €.
ISBN 9783 030 25900 6.

In *Islam and Muslim Resistance to Modernity in Turkey,* Gökhan Bacık explores critical aspects about the Islamic idea of nature and its theological debates between the Ashʿarī and the Māturīdī schools. The Islamic idea of nature from the theological perspective is attributed to the interpretation of causality, the free will, the theory of knowledge and the idea of God (p. 61). The book brings together diverse intellectual and theological discussions which offer an analysis of the Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools and their interpretations of these four fundamentals. The theological affiliation of Turkey is underscored with the intention of providing further insight into its contemporary approaches to scientific developments.

Reviewing theological debates and the expansion of the Māturīdī school in Turkish society, the book is composed of six chapters. In the introductory chapter, Bacık connects the undeveloped status of the contemporary Muslim world in general, and Turkey specifically, with their theological understanding of fate. The main argument of the text is that although Turkish people are themselves affiliated with the Māturīdī school, they are followers of the Ashʿarī school in terms of their understanding of nature and theology. Chapter Two deals with the revival of Sunni orthodoxy, its origins, and intellectual debates. The scholastic contribution of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505 H/1111 CE), an authoritative Ashʿarī intellectual, is referenced in tandem with his close proximity to governors and the dominance of the Ashʿarī school at that time to demonstrate the interwoven character of religion and state (p. 38–43). Chapter Three looks at the elaborate linkage between the key elements of the Islamic idea of nature, which include causality, free will, the theory of knowledge, and the idea of God. Al-Ghazālī's theological explanations are widely presented to clarify the Ashʿarī stance towards these fundamental concepts while the approaches of the Māturīdī and Muʿtazilī scholars are referenced according to their original sources (p. 81–82). Chapter Four examines the role of Sunni orthodoxy in Turkish communities and offers a diachronic view of how and why Turkish people are affiliated with the Māturīdī school. At this point, the book provides an accurate snapshot of the relationship between the state authorities and various

religious groups during these periods of history in Turkey. Chapters Five and Six examine the different ways in which the Turkish people obtain their religious education through ingroup socialization. These chapters offer insight into the platforms in which the Diyanet, three mystical religious movements, and religious textbooks provide religious education, communication, and domination. The expansive representation of the three Naqshbandiyya mystical religious movements (Işıkçılar, İskenderpaşa, and Erenköy), their diachronic revival, and their contribution to religious education provides substantial insight into the configuration and dissemination of the mystical factionalism in Turkey. At this juncture, Bacık's analyses of the close relationship between these mystical groups and political authorities, along with the former's hierarchical kinship structures, increase the value of the book (p. 135, 140, 143).

As Bacık accentuates, the dominant theological approach amongst Turkish people is the Māturīdī school, but the author gives the impression that the Ashʿarī school's theological doctrine invisibly percolated into the widespread Māturīdī theological doctrines. He states:

> [...] the boundary of Ottoman Maturidism was blurred, due to its continuous receptions from the Ashʿari. Thus, whereas the Turks are staunchly Hanafi, their doctrinal identity has been syncretic. Recognizing this syncretism is essential to understanding the Turkish case with regard to Islamic theology as well as the Islamic idea of nature. (p. 102)

Al-Ghazālī's method of establishing cooperation between religion and state in the Ashʿarī theology is brought as evidence to substantiate the argument, but this notion is also an entrenched doctrine in the Māturīdī school. In emphasizing the alliance between the state authorities and religious scholars during the time of the Ottoman Sultanate, the author argues that the same relationship exists in contemporary Turkey.

Using al-Ghazālī's idea, that religion is the foundation of the state, and the state is the protector of religion – that is, the state is necessary to maintain religion, and religion is necessary to legitimate the state – the author argues that this new concept of transcendental statehood empowered authorities to enforce state-supported religious understanding (p. 35–44). However, al-Ghazālī's views regarding mysticism, rather than theology and philosophy, need to be explained to understand how his mystical opinions influenced the mystical religious movements in Turkey that are the focus of the last two chapters.[1] It

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[1]   A good example that provides deep insight into al-Ghazālī's mystical stance and his undeniable contribution to the enhancements of mystical movements is provided in Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 35–46, 64–67.

would have been insightful and elucidative for the author to mention the mystical stance of al-Ghazālī to clarify the sympathy of Turkish mystical movements toward his opinion.

In explaining religious education and socialization, Bacık gives privileged status to the official religious institution of Turkey, stating: "The Diyanet is also a major agent of the reproduction and transmission of Islamic faith in Turkey" (p. 131). However, it seems that he privileges the theological influence of the three mystical religious movements over the Diyanet's theological predominance while overgeneralizing the repercussions of these religious movements on Turkish society. The resistance to modernity in Turkey is implicitly linked to the affiliation with the Māturīdī school, but this argument explicitly disregards the scientific, philosophical, and medical developments that took place in the time of the Matūrīdī-affiliated Ottoman Sultanate.[2] It should also be noted that since these religious movements are mainly categorized as mystical groups rather than theological movements, the selection criteria identified by the author are not comprehensive and seem to have been chosen somewhat arbitrarily. The Diyanet and these groups express themselves as the followers of the Māturīdī school, but the author combines their teachings with the Ashʿarī school (p. 148, 149). The strong adherence of the İskenderpaşa, Işıkçılar and Erenköy groups to al-Ghazālī's mystical opinions is evaluated by the author as a theological commitment to the Ashʿarī school.[3] Regarding the interpretation of Māturīdī theological understanding, the author connects the adherence of these groups to al-Ghazālī's mystical approach with resistance to modernity.

Additionally, the author's argument regarding the use of religion by the previous Turkish states to control Turkish society is not sufficiently explained. It is important to note that after the establishment of the Turkish government in 1923, the state implemented a strict secular agenda by making a sharp division between religion and state. The mission, responsibility, and role of the office of Shaykh al-Islām could therefore not be transferred to the newly established religious institution, the Diyanet.[4] The origins of problematic theological inter-

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[2] See for example: Howard R. Turner, *Science in Medieval Islam: An Illustrated Introduction* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1997), 1–10; Miri Shefer-Mossensohn, *Science Among the Ottomans: The Cultural Creation and Exchange of Knowledge* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2015), 7–17.

[3] The teachings of these mystical groups and their connection with al-Ghazālī's mystical opinions are deeply elucidated in their own publications. See for example: Osman Nûri Topbaş, *Sufism: A Path Towards the Internalization of Faith (Ihsân)* (Istanbul: Erkam Publications, 2017), 54, 83, 103; Hüseyin Hilmi Işık, *The Sunni Path* (Istanbul: Hakîkat Kitabevi, 2013), 65; Mehmed Zahid Kotku, *Nefsin Terbiyesi* (Istanbul: Server, 2013), 20, 30.

[4] The establishment of the Diyanet, its relationship with the state, and its connection with the Office of Shaykh al-Islâm are provided in Emine Enise Yakar, *Islamic Law and Society: The Prac-*

pretations in contemporary Turkey therefore may be linked to the state's secularization policy, since the government applied both the secularist principles and imposed the state-controlled religion upon the Turkish people with the intention of consolidating its authority in the initial period of the Turkish Republic.

Despite these shortcomings, Bacık's book indeed fills a gap in the literature regarding the origins of theological schools and the Islamic idea of nature, along with the role of the Diyanet and mystical groups for the transmission of religious knowledge in Turkey. The last parts of the book provide quite detailed explanations regarding the revival and organizational system of religio-mystical movements, their hierarchical structure and economic powers which broaden the readers mind concerning the influence of religious groups. The additional contribution of the book is the author's analysis of the influence of religious movements on contemporary politics of Turkey.

Sümeyra Yakar
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tice of Iftā' and Religious Institutions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 74–90; Emine Enise Yakar, "A Critical Comparison between the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) and The Office of Shaykh al-Islâm," *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2019): 422, 448.

Essay

Zuhal Yeşilyurt Gündüz[*]
Neoliberalism and Extractivism in Turkey

> "*Toprağın üstü **altın**dan değerlidir*!" -
> "What is above the earth is worth much more than what is **beneath**!"/
> "What is above the earth is worth much more than **gold**!"[1]

Abstract: This essay aims at revealing the connection between neoliberalism and extractivism in Turkey by focusing on gold extractivism. It begins with the conceptual background of neoliberalism and extractivism, then describes how neoliberalism met Turkey on January 24, 1980, and how it continued during the military regime and the following Turgut Özal regime. The essay will also demonstrate how the current Justice and Development Party (AKP) improved neoliberalism in Turkey. Finally, the essay will reveal how extractivism and especially gold extractivism has continued and increased and the harm that it has done to human and non-human populations, nature, and the environment.

Keywords: Turkey; Neoliberalism; Extractivism; Gold; Justice and Development Party (AKP); Growth Fetish

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[1] A famous slogan of environmental movements. In Turkish there is word play, as *altın* means gold and *alt* means underneath. It is a call to use what is above the soil (agriculture), and not to drag out what is beneath.

Introduction

Centered on free market economy with its continuing production and consumption chains, capitalism needs constant, steady growth to sustain itself. Further production and consumption are needed for growth, and they mutually reinforce each other. Whereas this system requires unlimited and infinite production and consumption, the essential natural resources are *not* unlimited and infinite. This is what ecological economist Herman Daly depicts as the "Impossibility Theorem" of limitless economic growth.[2] As the realization of this kind of economic growth, production, and consumption would deplete the earth's resources, it is simply impossible.

Still, however, capitalism's main imperative remains growth. Therefore, it is possible to speak of the nexus of capitalism's crises of accumulation and inequality, which causes diverse national effects, including crisis of legitimacy within states. As to overcome the economic predicaments and to increase legitimacy, extractivism and authoritarianism are being applied by powerful, charismatic leaders. As an answer to the weakening economy, leaders opt for extractivist policies. When extraction does not suffice or worsens socio-economic problems, the next step to follow is authoritarianism. Thus, extractivism and authoritarian populism go hand in hand.[3]

Turkey is a significant example for rampant capitalism: a triumvirate of neoliberal economics and political authoritarianism mixed with Islamist conservatism. The ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) has constructed the image of the "need to grow" and to "develop" and portrays extractivism as the way to continuing economic growth and the solution for economic predicaments. Thus, we witness former Prime-Minister and current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's coming to power and holding on to power as the nexus between authoritarian populism, extractivism and neoliberalism.[4]

This essay aims at providing an outlook at both neoliberalism and extractivism in Turkey. It first gives an outline of neoliberalism and a short history of Turkey's 40 neoliberal years. The paper then aims to reveal the augmenting extractivism policies that lead to ever growing and nonrepairable destruction

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[2]   Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster, *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism: A Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011), 7.

[3]   Fikret Adaman, Murat Arsel, and Bengi Akbulut, "Neoliberal Developmentalism, Authoritarian Populism, and Extractivism in the Countryside: The Soma Mining Disaster in Turkey," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 46, no. 3 (2019): 516, https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2018.1515737.

[4]   Ibid., 520.

of nature and environmental degradation. The focus will be on gold mines and gold extractivism. Notwithstanding the ecological and economic disaster that extractivism leads to, government and economic circles continue to construct extractivism as economically beneficial. Neither the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, nor global warming were able to make them rethink and slow them down. On the opposite side, environmentally destructive policies are on the rise.

Neoliberalism

The concept of 'neoliberalism' was developed within the economic context from ancient Greek *νέος neos*, 'new' and Latin *liberalis* 'concerning freedom' – *neos liberalis* – by the French politician Pierre Étienne Flandin in 1933. It is a hetero-geneous flow of numerous schools and theorists like the Freiburger School (Wilhelm Röpke, Alexander Rüstow, Walter Eucken, Franz Boehm), the Chicago School (Milton Friedman, Henry Simons, Irving Kristol) and the Austrian School (Friedrich August von Hayek, Ludwig von Mises). The Chicago School de-veloped the core ideas of neoliberalism in the sense of supply-side economic poli-cies. Ever since its launch, the term 'neoliberalism' has been an economic buzz-word with negative connotations connected with market fundamentalism.[5]

With the end of the Second World War, Western European countries found "the social-democratic historical compromise that forced capital to adjust itself to the demands of social justice expressed by the working classes".[6] It included the quest for full employment, Keynesian monetary and fiscal policies and so-cial welfare not depending on the labor market, and was built upon industrial development, mass consumption, and social protection.

With the oil and economic crisis in the 1970s, the neoliberal project began with the process of re-establishing conditions for capital accumulation and res-toration of class power of capital. In *A Neo-Liberal's Manifesto*, Charles Peters claimed that the 1970s revealed

> […] declining productivity; the closed factories and potholed roads that betrayed decaying plant and infrastructure; inefficient and unaccountable public agencies that were eroding confidence in government […] Our primary concerns are commu-

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[5] Taylor C. Boas and Jordan Gans-Morse, "Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 44, no. 2 (June 2009): 141–46, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-009-9040-5.

[6] Samir Amin, "U.S. Imperialism, Europe, and the Middle East," *Monthly Review – An Independent Socialist Magazine* 56, no. 6 (November 2004): chap. 5, https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-056-06-2004-10_2.

nity, democracy, and prosperity. Of them, economic growth is most important now, because it is essential to almost everything else we want to achieve.[7]

The prioritizing of prosperity and economic growth above everything is the main difference of neoliberalism. All else loses its importance. As long as it serves economic growth everything is allowed, everything is possible, and everything can be made.

What's more is the belief that *all* social, economic, and political predicaments can be addressed with fast economic growth. Neoliberal developmentalism easily uses state power whenever necessary to attain and sustain economic growth, and disregards any costs, such as depletion of natural resources, ecological degradation and pollution, waning of democratic values and norms, harsh suppression of social resistance movements, etc.[8]

Neoliberalism was initiated in Chile in 1973 after the US-led military *coup d'état* against the democratically elected socialist president and the creation of a military dictatorship. This turn from Keynesianism to neoliberalism – named 'Reaganism' in the USA and 'Thatcherism' in the UK – after the economic crisis of 1973, aimed at boosting capital accumulation and was a farewell to Keynesian principles of planning, regulation, controlling and management. Neoliberalism was represented in the Washington Consensus in 1989 and dispersed by financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.[9] The neoliberal promise to bring wealth and economic development through deregulation, liberalization, and privatization has come true for giant national and international corporations, not, however, for the common people.[10] Claudia von Werlhof states: "While a tiny minority reaps enormous benefits from today's economic liberalism, the vast majority of the earth's human and non-human population, and the earth itself suffer hardship to an extent that puts their very survival at risk. The damage done seems irreversible."[11]

As for neoliberalism, economic growth comes first, and everything is subordinated to it, including nature. From the beginning, nature has been involved in the production of capitalist value, either as raw material input to production, as a product as the result of production, or as trade in natural assets. Nature was seen as an element of capital accumulation even in the theory of property

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[7]   Charles Peters, "A Neo-Liberal's Manifesto," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 1982.

[8]   Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut, "Neoliberal Developmentalism," 519.

[9]   Wil Hout, "The Only Game in Town? European Social Democracy and Neo-liberal Globalisation," *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 2/2006 (2006): 10–11.

[10]   Claudia von Werlhof, "The Globalization of Neoliberalism, Its Consequences, and Some of its Basic Alternatives," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 19, no. 3 (September 2008): 103, https://doi.org/10.1080/10455750802348903.

[11]   Ibid., 94.

advocated by liberal John Locke three centuries ago. In this respect then, it needs to be asked what is new today and why there is a need for the "neoliberalization of nature".[12]

The United Nations Stockholm Environment Conference and the accumulation crises of capitalism in the 1970s coincided around the same period. In the years following the conference, environmental protection was gradually becoming a universally accepted value and principle. Thus, the environment ceased to be the free property as envisaged by liberalism. In the debate on whether environmental protection should be carried out by state intervention or by market actors, liberal/neoliberal writers advocate the privatization of ecological assets and the commercialization of those that cannot be privatized. With the privatization and commercialization of nature, the neoliberalization of nature begins with new state regulations that increasingly see the environment as part of free market relations. By this, ecological assets that previously were not subject to private ownership and trade now are turned into products, goods, and investment objects for market actors in the process of the neoliberalization of nature. Besides, calls and demands for the protection of environment and nature are being answered by claims to do exactly this via commercialization and privatization. The more nature deserves and needs to be saved and protected, the more nature heads towards depletion and destruction, and the higher is its market value; thus, its attractiveness for companies.[13]

David Harvey's significant concept of the theory of "accumulation by dispossession" depicts how capitalism applies power to deprive people and nature from value due to its unsatisfiable lust for profit.[14] While nature is being commodified and captured by capital, its protection and privatization simultaneously are in the hands and responsibility of the state.[15]

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[12] Aykut Çoban, Fevzi Özlüer and Sinan Erensü, "Türkiye'de Doğanın Neoliberalleşmesi ve Bu Sürece karşı Mücadeleler" ("The Neoliberalization of Nature in Turkey and Resistances against this Process"), in *Yerel Yönetim, Kent ve Ekoloji* (*Regional Government, City and Ecology*), ed. Aykut Çoban (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2015), 401.

[13] Ibid., 400–1.

[14] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 159: "These include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations [...]; conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights [...]; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neocolonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade (which continues particularly in the sex industry); and usury, the national debt and, most devastating of all, the use of the credit system as a radical means of accumulation by dispossession".

[15] Çoban, Özlüer and Erensü, "Türkiye'de Doğanın Neoliberalleşmesi," 400–2.

Extractivism

Henry Veltmeyer and James Petras[16] define extractivism as extraction of more and more natural resources and export of these primary goods for economic 'development' and 'growth', whilst ignoring its health, social, and environmental detriments. Extractivism looks back at a history of five hundred years, when the colonizers structured their model around the raw materials, they 'discovered' there and subsequently robbed. The natural resources-hungry and insatiable capitalist centers have presented extractivist accumulation as a requirement and necessity.

Alberto Acosta emphasizes "the resource curse" and "the paradox of plenty". He also highlights the fact that the multinational corporations always are the "major beneficiaries of these activities".[17] Extractivism is more than resource extraction as it is "today's imperialist plundering", disguised as a development model.[18]

Neoliberalism Meets Turkey

Neoliberalism entered Turkey as early as January 24, 1980 when the then ruling center-right Justice Party government introduced severe economic restructuring steps that were built upon privatization, liberalization, deregulation, decreasing state control on economics, capital accumulation and export support, turning the state into a mere servant of capital, while opening Turkish economy to unlimited foreign capital penetration.[19] This undermined the importance of local and rural actors and boosted the international financial institutions' roles, especially the World Bank and IMF. One of the 'must do's' was the elimination of agricultural subsidies, promoted as the only way to increase efficiency.[20]

Thus, the move from developmentalist programs and policies to neoliberalism augmented the role and growth of transnational corporations in Turkey to

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[16]   James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *The New Extractivism. A Post-Neoliberal Development Model or Imperialism of the Twenty-First Century?* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2014), 42, 44.

[17]   Alberto Acosta, "Extractivism and Neoextractivism: Two Sides of the Same Curse," in *Beyond Development. Alternative Visions from Latin America,* ed. Miriam Lang and Dunia Mokrani (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2013), 61, 67, https://www.tni.org/files/download/beyond development_complete.pdf.

[18]   As Cristóbal Kay puts it in the blurb for Petras and Veltmeyer, *The New Extractivism*.

[19]   Nilgün Önder, "The Turkish Political Economy: Globalization and Regionalism," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 6 (2007): 231–33.

[20]   Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut, "Neoliberal Developmentalism," 9.

the detriment of the local population and led to the internationalization of agriculture. The pressures of the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization, European Union and the United States led to the elimination of subventions and the end of parastatal organizations in Turkey. While Turkey had hoped for further integration into global markets and economy, this enabled the transnational corporations a stronger standing in the country. When Turkey was made to sign the Staff Monitored Program with the IMF in 1998, deep institutional modifications resulted in the further internationalization of agriculture, which led to de-agrarianization and de-peasantization, with huge impoverishment and destitution among the rural people and areas.[21] All this eventually led to profound institutional transformations and the unmet needs of farmers and peasants in Turkey in addition to the disregard for food security.

The military junta, ruling Turkey from September 12, 1980 onwards for three years furthered the neoliberal regime and enabled more transformations deemed necessary. Although the EU and the USA criticized the increasing demolition of democracy in Turkey, the strengthening of the neoliberal system by the military regime satisfied the aspirations of capitalist powers. Workers' rights were undermined, trade unions constrained, and an export-oriented economy was further advanced. With the return to a civilian government, the neoliberal system was developed under Turgut Özal's Motherland Party, 1983 to 1993. The neoliberal system itself fostered one economic crisis after the next: 1994, 1999, 2001, 2008–2009, 2018, 2020, 2021-continuing. All these crises proved that neoliberalism was hazardous and volatile but instead of leading to a reverse, neoliberalism was promoted even more by the crises it had generated itself.[22]

Turkey's economy exposes two dilemmas. The first is the "perverse and rather premature neo-liberal development"[23] that made it impossible to balance liberalization with reconciliation of its severe effects on the population via regulations for healthy development. The second is Turkey's legacy of populism and patronage that made necessary but difficult to enforce reforms impossible to be realized. Political breakdown, military interventions, tense coalition governments and frequent elections led to further populist policies.

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[21] Zülküf Aydın, "Neo-Liberal Transformation of Turkish Agriculture," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10, no. 2 (April 2010): Introduction, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0366.2009.00241.x.

[22] Pınar Bedirhanoğlu, "Restrukturierung des türkischen Staates im Kontext der neoliberalen Globalisierung," in *Perspektiven auf die Türkei. Ökonomische und gesellschaftliche (Dis)kontinuitäten im Kontext der Europäisierung*, ed. Ilker Ataç, Bülent Küçük, and Ulaş Şener (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2008), 111.

[23] Mine Eder, "Implementing the Economic Criteria of EU Membership: How Difficult Is It for Turkey?" *Turkish Studies* 4, no.1 (2003): 223, https://doi.org/10.1080/714005711.

Turkey's model of capital accumulation since 1980 and increasingly during the AKP-regime had been via quick rentier accumulation with the commodification of space and commons in the construction, energy and extractivism sectors.[24] With its imperative to grow, Turkey's neoliberal capitalist model, based on economic growth, triggered a relentless drive for ever-increasing capital accumulation and growth irrespective of their social, health or ecological costs. Therefore, neoliberal policies, including privatization, commercialization, deregulation, harmed nature and led to increasing environmental degradation and pollution, due to overuse of natural resources, and waste production and disposal.[25]

Neoliberalism and the AKP Regime

Neoliberalism was not only continued but made 'perfect' by the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) after 2002, who married Islamist populism with neoliberalism.[26] The AKP turned the state into a promoter and accomplice of neoliberalism with all its dogmas as well as the guardian of private capital and the capitalist class. As to appeal to popular classes and their votes, AKP connected traditional religious values with liberal ones such as globalization. AKP's cultural-religious conservatism's key is Islam itself and it epitomizes the nexus between Islam and neoliberalism. Finance and capital driven growth, austerity policies, privatization, commodification of formerly public services and lands, declining living standards, wage cuts, cheap labor, a high trade deficit, reduction of real production while Turkey became dependent on importing capital goods, energy, and agricultural goods – these are applauded as 'growth' and 'development'.[27] The AKP regime enables enormous rent gains (easy, effortless, quickly earned money) via commodification and commercialization of the

[24] Korkut Boratav, "Korkut Boratav, Gezi Direnişini değerlendirdi: 'Olgunlaşmış bir sınıfsal başkaldırı…'" ("Korkut Boratav Evaluates the Gezi Resistance: 'A Mature Class Revolt…'"), interview by Özay Göztepe, *Sendika*, June 22, 2013, https://sendika.org/2013/06/her-yer-taksim-her-yer-direnis-bu-isci-sinifinin-tarihsel-ozlemi-olan-sinirsiz-dolaysiz-demokrasi-cagrisidir-korkut-boratav-120919/.

[25] Defne Gönenç, "Litigation as a Strategy for Environmental Movements Questioned: An Examination of Bergama and Artvin-Cerattepe Struggles," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 24, no. 2 (2022): 309, https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2021.2006004.

[26] Simten Coşar and Gamze Yücesan-Özdemir, "Introduction", in S*ilent Violence: Neoliberalism, Islamist Politics and the AKP Years in Turkey*, ed. Simten Coşar and Gamze Yücesan-Özdemir (Ottawa: Red Quill, 2012), 9–11.

[27] T. Sabri Öncü, "The Standing Man of Turkey," Counterpunch, published June 21, 2013, https://www.counterpunch.org/2013/06/21/the-standing-man-of-turkey/.

commons. Rivers, mountains, farmland, historical buildings, woodlands, forests, gardens, parks, seas – nothing is safe from commodification and privatization. This sale of public, common land reached tremendous levels during the AKP regime. Policies of deregulation and commodification of rural and urban areas have been taken to the extreme. The revisions made on the Public Procurement Law that regulates the awarding of state contracts are taken to the extreme. In 2018, a news source stated that the AKP in its 187 months of rule had changed the Public Procurement Law 186 times.[28] The same trend continues today with decreasing transparency.[29] The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulation entered into force in 1993. By 2015, it had been amended 17 times, with seven of these being fundamental changes. For a comparison, by 2015, the European Union's 1985 EIA Directive had been amended only three times. Aykut Çoban, Fevzi Özlüer and Sinan Erensü prepared a chart revealing that more than half of the legislative changes took place after 2003 and were thus realized by the AKP governments. In this time period, the Forest Law had been amended 24 times since 1956, with 12 revisions in the first 12 years of AKP-rule. Frequently changing legislation, mostly to ease work for corporations on costs of nature and environment, makes it impossible to follow the many changes in regulations for citizens, and has limiting effects on the realization of legal control.[30]

Contracts awarded by open auction dropped from 100,820 in the year 2005 down to 65,016 in 2014, while contracts were increasingly awarded with discretion, behind closed doors, favoring some while leaving out others. This leaves huge space for corruption, which by now has nearly become 'normalized'. "A new class has been on the rise since 2002, the Islamist *nouveau riche*: businesses that use religion to form connections with the government."[31]

As a critique of AKP's direct interference to secure and enrich its advocates, regarding private-public-partnership-funded under-used but highly paid-for bridges, highways, private hospitals, the opposition Republican People's Party

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28　Nurcan Gökdemir, "İhale Kanunu 187 ayda 186 kere değiştirildi" ("The Procurement Law Was Changed 186 Times in 187 Months"), *Birgün*, May 19, 2018, https://www.birgun.net/haber/ihale-kanunu-187-ayda-186-kere-degistirildi-216485.

29　"2002'den bu yana 191 kez değişen Kamu İhale Kanunu bu kez sil baştan değişiyor" ("The Public Procurement Law That Has Been Changed 191 Times since 2002, Will Be Totally Revised"), *Independent Türkçe*, October 5, 2021, https://www.indyturk.com/node/420056/ekonomi%CC%87/2002den-bu-yana-191-kez-de%C4%9Fi%C5%9Fen-kamu-i%CC%87hale-kanunu-bu-kez-sil-ba%C5%9Ftan-de%C4%9Fi%C5%9Fiyor.

30　Çoban, Özlüer and Erensü, "Türkiye'de Doğanın Neoliberalleşmesi," 425–26.

31　Thomas Helm, "How Neoliberal Is Turkey?" *The Turkey Analyst*, March 8, 2018, https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/596-how-neoliberal-is-turkey?.html.

stated: "This […] is not about people. It is about making AKP supporters rich."[32] These megaprojects enrich the loyal Islamist *nouveau riche* and construct a fake image of a strong, rich, modernizing, developing country model to the world in general and AKP voters in particular.

This "merciless growth" surrenders everything – humans, nature, environment, and the commons for the "absolute fetish of economic growth".[33] Cities are opened up to the services of capital and look like construction areas. Huge skyscrapers, shopping malls, bridges, airports, nuclear plants, hydroelectric and thermal power plants, gold mines and other projects constitute Turkey's 'development'. Nature and humans pay the price for this type of 'growth' with their health or even with their lives, aside from the environmental destruction.

If 'necessary' the AKP-government does not shy away from using its power to boost its favored industries, such as the mining and construction industries.[34] Neoliberal developmentalism centers on extractivism and the construction industry, which are both connected to the energy sector, and decreases the value and importance given to other sectors such as that of agriculture. As a result of this, all over the country peasants and farmers have been pushed out of farming and into working in these extractivist mines or the construction sector with low workplace safety standards. Following the neoliberal imperative to economic growth, increased production and productivity was prioritized over everything else. The workers were thus forced to work mostly for minimum wage under extremely harsh and dangerous, life-threatening conditions as they "did not have much to rely on to counter neoliberal policies that have been transforming their rural lives and offering them jobs in the extractives sector."[35]

It is possible to state that the COVID-19 pandemic made the neoliberalist drive even more intense as pauperized peasants, farmers, and workers had to decide whether to (continue to) work in the extractivism sectors or suffer larger poverty. Many spoke out clearly: "We will not die due to the virus, but due to starvation"; "We will die either through the virus or through starvation".[36] Thus, they had to choose between not working in the mines and dying of starvation today or working in the mines and dying of environmental degradation tomorrow.

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[32] Helm, "How Neoliberal Is Turkey?".

[33] Halil Gurhanli, "Mass Murder in Soma Mine: Crony Capitalism and Fetish of Growth in Turkey," *Politiikasta*, June 9, 2014, https://politiikasta.fi/en/mass-murder-in-soma-mine-crony-capitalism-and-fetish-of-growth-in-turkey-2/.

[34] Gönenç, "Litigation as a Strategy," 309.

[35] Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut, "Neoliberal Developmentalism," 516.

[36] Sibel Gülersöyler, "Coronadan değil açlıktan öleceğiz" ("We Will Not Die due to Corona, but due to Starvation"), *Sözcü*, December 4, 2020, https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/Istanbul da-kafe-ve-bar-calisanlarindan-sessiz-eylem-coronadan-degil-acliktan-olecegiz-6153911/.

Increasing Authoritarianism

For Turkey, Soma stands as a symbol of rampant neoliberal and deadly capital-ism.[37] Soma, in the Aegean province of Manisa, once had great farming land and was rich in agriculture. With a state decision, agricultural subsidies were stopped for this region in the 1990s, leading many to give up farming and mi-grate to the cities. Soma was made into a lignite coal-mining hub, leading to immense environmental degradation. Thousands of former farmers were co-erced to mine under extremely dangerous conditions. In 2005 the mine had been privatized, leading to a decrease in production costs from $130 to $24 per one ton of coal by 2012, due to reductions in wages and lack of investment in safety measures. Most of the mine workers were temporary or unregistered and therefore not sufficiently trained and equipped, with some even being un-derage. On May 13, 2014, a tragic disaster cost the lives of 301 mine workers in Soma's coal-mine. Clearly this was not an 'accident' but "one of the greatest workplace murders in Turkish history."[38] Soma "was not a random accident; it was the direct consequence of a decade of neoliberalization."[39]

Following the Soma disaster, the AKP regime hardened its position by in-creasing its authoritarianism. As to reinforce its declining legitimacy, the AKP applied both authoritarian populism, including coercion to maintain total con-trol and state rule, *and* extractivism as the means to economic growth, which became ever more pressing, as it made possible to continue the distribution of populist material concessions.[40] Extractivism – notwithstanding its unsustain-ability – can indeed, at least for a brief period of time, "create the illusion of dynamic economic growth."[41] By forming new connections between the state and corporations, the speed and scope of commodity extraction was boosted, leading to short term economic growth and employment in these sectors. The AKP created precarity, poverty and pauperization and then provided short-term, temporary solutions in the form of precarious, dangerous, cheap work; thus, "the type of policies enabled by extractivism are populist mainly because

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[37] Zuhal Yeşilyurt Gündüz, "The 'New Turkey': Fetishizing Growth with Fatal Results," *Monthly Review – An Independent Socialist Magazine* 67, no. 2 (June 2015), https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-067-02-2015-06_3.

[38] "Turkey's Neoliberal Death Toll: Hundreds of Miners Died in Great Soma Massacre," *Sendika*, May 14, 2014, https://sendika.org/2014/05/turkeys-neoliberal-death-roll-hundreds-of-miner-died-in-great-soma-massacre-189942/.

[39] Pieter Verstraete, "Turkey Coalmine Disaster: Accident or Murder?" *Roarmag*, Capitalism & Crisis, May 14, 2014, https://roarmag.org/essays/turkey-soma-coalmine-disaster/.

[40] Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut, "Neoliberal Developmentalism," 517.

[41] Ibid., 519.

they do not aim at genuine socio-economic transformation."[42] Another transformation has indeed been realized. Looking at Turkey, it is possible to state that "Erdoğan gradually dismantled the neoliberal regulatory architecture, paving the way for an inchoate and personalistic but ultimately dirigiste presidential system."[43]

With the increasing recognition of the social problems and environmental degradation caused by extractivist policies, social movements of resistance have made their voices heard. The leading example of this is the Gezi resistance, which took place from May to June 2013 for environmental protection and human liberties and against governmental plans to demolish Gezi (the public park) to build a shopping mall there. The resistance soon grew into the largest anti-government protests Turkey has ever witnessed.[44] Other examples of well-organized environmental resistance movements followed as a result of social and environmental costs of AKP's neoliberal extractivist policies.[45] Most of these resistances were tracked down more or less violently: "Only those in power still have rights. […] Those who get in their way or challenge their 'rights' are vilified, criminalized and to an increasing degree defined as 'terrorists'."[46]

Two examples for this vilification process can be given in the Bergama and Gezi resistances. Bergama, in the Aegean city of Izmir, was the first gold mine of Turkey. The Bergama movement has fought against gold mining and the use of cyanide acid for extracting gold there since the 1990s.[47] Taking legal action, the Bergama movement applied to the Council of State and went as high as the European Court of Human Rights. However, "although initially judgment by the Council of State in Bergama scared-off other gold-mining investors, the non-implementation of this decision in the long-term and the only monetary fines imposition by the ECtHR further encouraged the investors to pressure for mining projects".[48] Thus, even with positive court judgements for the activists, it was not possible to reach environmental justice; "due to robust limitations to

[42] Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut, "Neoliberal Developmentalism," 519.

[43] Sinan Erensü and Yahya M. Madra, "Neoliberal Politics in Turkey", in *The Oxford Handbook of Turkish Politics*, ed. by Güneş Murat Tezcür (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), chap. Neoliberal Triumphalism: Responding to the Crisis of the 1990s.

[44] Aslı Iğsız, "Brand Turkey and the Gezi Protests: Authoritarianism, Law, and Neoliberalism (Part One)," *Jadaliyya*, July 12, 2013, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29078; Matze Kasper, "To Survive, the Movement Will Have to Compromise," *Roarmag*, January 11, 2014, https://roarmag.org/essays/media-gezi-park-protests/.

[45] Gönenç, "Litigation as a Strategy," 309.

[46] Von Werlhof, "The Globalization of Neoliberalism," 112.

[47] Aykut Çoban, "Community-based Ecological Resistance: The Bergama Movement in Turkey," *Environmental Politics* 13, no. 2 (2004): 442–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/0964401042000209658.

[48] Gönenç, "Litigation as a Strategy," 315–16.

the effective delivery of environmental justice through courts, similar injustices are repeated, and environmentally destructive projects continue."[49]

The second example is the controversial Gezi Park verdict from April 5, 2022 that sentenced philanthropist Osman Kavala to a life sentence without parole for "attempting to overthrow the government by force" for 'organizing' the 2013 Gezi protests. Seven other activists were sentenced to 18 years for purportedly assisting Kavala. Ever since the Gezi protests, Erdoğan had frequently depicted the protests as an uprising to topple the government.[50]

Sinan Erensü and Yahya M. Madra state it openly: "The never-ending mass-mobilization campaigns accompanied by a ferocious crack down on civil liberties as well as the lockdown of political dissidents amounts to an ongoing state of emergency and diminishing social trust [...]. In an interesting twist of fate, the adventure of neoliberal politics in Turkey began with a military coup and a state of emergency and today, if it is coming to an end, it is happening in a de facto state of emergency where President Erdoğan exerts unprecedented levels of executive power. Yet his refashioning of the Turkish state as a corporation where his presidency functions as the seat of a chief executive officer (CEO) could also be construed as the apotheosis of the ultimate neoliberal dream: the complete submission of the state to the rule of markets".[51]

Neoliberalism makes for a strange bedfellow. It is this neoliberal style of privatization, deregulation and wage declines that makes Turkey profitable for Western capital. President Erdoğan and his AKP have been fulfilling the wildest dreams of the IMF, World Bank, the USA, and the EU with wage and pension cuts, privatization of state-owned enterprises and commodification. James Petras states: "Erdoğan's combination of Islam with brutal neo-liberalism attracted support from Brussels, Wall Street and the City of London. Large inflows of speculative foreign capital temporarily inflated Turkey's Gross National Product (GNP) and Erdoğan's wealth and ego!"[52]

The AKP's neoliberal program is built upon continuous economic growth, and therefore the government increasingly resists, omits and neglects workers' safety regulations. The Workers Health and Safety Labour Watch (İSİG) provides data on workers who died while working, on their way to the job, and due

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[49]   Gönenç, "Litigation as a Strategy," 315–16.

[50]   Berk Esen, "What Does the Gezi Trial Tell Us about Erdoğan's Regime in Turkey?" Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Publications, published May 9, 2022, https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/what-does-the-gezi-trial-tell-us-about-erdogans-regime-in-turkey.

[51]   Erensü and Madra, "Neoliberal Politics," chap. W(h)ither Neoliberalism? The Neomercantilist Turn and Rise of Corporate Nationalism.

[52]   James Petras, "Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Portrait of a Backstabbing Neoliberal Pasha," Global Research, published December 16, 2015, https://www.globalresearch.ca/recep-tayyip-erdogan-portrait-of-a-backstabbing-neoliberal-pasha/5496081.

to diseases caused by the work they do.[53] What is shocking is the continuous increase in work-related deaths. In 2003, 811 workers died, while in 2021 it was 2,170. So far, the record year was the COVID-19 year of 2020, with 2,427 workers reportedly having died while working. Turkey ranks first in Europe (eight-and-a-half times higher than the EU average) and third globally in workplace accidents – all in the name of 'growth'.[54]

Gold Extractivism

Across Turkey there are 19 gold mines currently at work, with more being planned by the AKP.[55] Gold extraction equals long-lasting poisoning. The "use of low-cost cyanide heap leaching techniques to recover metal from ores has allowed miners to profitably extract gold deposits. The chemical compound has on occasion been mishandled, and in some locations releases have created environmental problems."[56] Here gold is being gained by the most primitive way possible, heap leaching, the process used by mining companies to separate gold from ore, which damages the surrounding environment. Heap leaching is a process that uses a cyanide solution to dissolve the gold and extract it from its

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[53]   See the website of the Workers Health and Safety Labour Watch, https://www.isigmeclisi.org/.

[54]   Year: death numbers: 2003: 811, 2013: 1,235, 2014: 1,886, 2015: 1,730, 2016: 1,970, 2017: 2,006, 2018: 1,923, 2019: 1,736, 2020: 2,427, 2021: 2,170. Between January and October 2022, 1,521 workers died at work. In the 20 years of AKP rule at least 30,224 workers died at work. Data taken from https://www.isigmeclisi.org/.

[55]   İbrahim Gündüz, Altın Ölüm (Gold Death) (Ankara: Galeati Yayınları, 2022), 102. The gold mines that are at work, the mining companies and the starting year are as follows: 1) Ovacık Altın Madeni | İzmir/Bergama | Koza Altın | 2001; 2) Sart Altın Madeni | Manisa/Sart | Pomza | 2002; 3) Kışladağ Altın Madeni | Uşak/Eşme | El Dorado Gold/TÜPRAG Madencilik, Kanada | 2006; 4) Mastra Altın Madeni | Gümüşhane | Koza Altın | 2009; 5) Çukuralan Altın Madeni | İzmir | Koza Altın | 2009; 6) Çöpler Altın Madeni | Erzincan/İliç | Anagold – SSR MİNİNG (Alacer) Kanada/Lidya (Çalık) | 2010; 7) Efem Çukuru Altın Madeni | İzmir | El Dorado Gold/TÜPRAG Madencilik, Kanada | 2011; 8) Kaymaz Altın Madeni | Eskişehir | Koza Altın | 2011; 9) Bolkardağ Altın Madeni | Niğde | Gümüştaş Madencilik | 2012; 10) Midi Altın Madeni | Gümüşhane | Yıldızbakır | 2012; 11) Himmetdede Altın Madeni | Kayseri | Koza Altın | 2013; 12) Fatsa Altın Madeni | Ordu | Altıntepe madencilik | Bahar/Stratex|Oriole/Cominco | 2015; 13) Bakırtepe Altın İşletmesi | Sivas | Koç/Demir Export | 2015; 14) Kaş Altın Madeni | Kayseri | Koç/Demir Export | 2016; 15) İnlice Altın Madeni | Konya | Eczacıbaşı/Esan | 2016; 16) Kızıltepe Altın Madeni | Balıkesir | Zenit Altın | El Dorado Gold | 2017; 17) Lapseki Altın Madeni | Çanakkale | Nurol/Tümad Madencilik | 2018; 18) İvrindi Altın Madeni | Balıkesir | Nurol/Tümad Madencilik | 2019; 19) Öksüt Altın Madeni | Kayseri/Öksüt | Öksüt Madencilik/Centerra | 2020.

[56]   Jan G. Laitos, "The Current Status of Cyanide Regulations," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, Features, Published February 2012. https://www.e-mj.com/features/the-current-status-of-cyanide-regulations/.

ore.[57] Cyanide can leak into and thus pollute local dams, waters, rivers, and soil. Life will not be the same after the environment is poisoned by cyanide.

Many accidents have happened in the past on a global scale where cyanide entered soil and water flows, killing humans and animals, and damaging the environment.[58] One of the deadliest accidents happened in 1971 in Romania when the Certej gold mine waste dam exploded and 300,000 cubic meters of poisoned water flooded to the district of Certeju de Sus, killing 89 people. Also in Romania, in January of the year 2000, in the Baia Mare gold mine the cyanide pool broke down due to heavy rain and cyanide toxic waste waters flooded to the Danube River, poisoning the drinking water of 2 million people. This was the second largest environmental disaster in Europe after the Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident. Although the corporations assure how "safe and secure" this system is and pretend nothing bad will happen, global evidence proves these to be lies.[59]

Many countries have suffered consequences as a result of these disasters. Europe applies a very low-level limit on cyanide use with Directive 2006/21/EC. Mines built after May 2008 are prohibited from discharging waste with over 10 ppm (parts per million) WAD (weak acid dissociable) cyanide, while mines built before that date may not waste more than 50 ppm at the outset, decreasing to 25 ppm in 2013 and 10 ppm in 2018.[60] Operators of mines are obliged to guarantee cleaning after the completion of work at the mine.[61]

Following the Baia Mare disaster, the European Union took the necessary steps to revise the EU Mining Waste Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive. In many EU member states gold production through cyanide leaching was criticized and debated, resulting in the banning of cyanide mining in the Czech Republic in 2000, Germany in 2002 and Hungary in 2009.[62] On the fifth

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[57]   Catherine Bennett and Ilgın Yorulmaz, "Canadian Gold Mine in Turkey Sparks Environmental Protests," *The Observers*, August 7, 2019, https://observers.france24.com/en/20190807-turkey-protesters-canadian-gold-mining-alamos-kirazli.

[58]   Gündüz, *Altın Ölüm*, 39–50; see also: Ronald Eisler and Stanley N. Wiemeyer, "Cyanide Hazards to Plants and Animals from Gold Mining and Related Water Issues," *Reviews of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology* 183 (2004): 21–54; Friedhelm Korte, Michael Spiteller and Friedrich Coulston, "The Cyanide Leaching Gold Recovery Process Is a Nonsustainable Technology with Unacceptable Impacts on Ecosystems and Humans," *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety* 46, no. 3 (July 2000): 241–45; Friedhelm Korte and Frederick Coulston, "Some Considerations on the Impact on Ecological Chemical Principles in Practice with Emphasis on Gold Mining and Cyanide," *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety* 41, no. 2 (October 1998): 119–29.

[59]   Haluk Kalafat, "Türkiye'nin Siyanür Tehlike Haritası," *bianet*, May 12, 2011, https://m.bianet.org/bianet/cevre/129955-turkiye-nin-siyanur-tehlike-haritasi.

[60]   Laitos, "The Current Status of Cyanide Regulations".

[61]   Ibid.

[62]   Gündüz, *Altın Ölüm*, 53–54.

of May, 2010, the European Parliament passed its resolution on a general ban of the use of cyanide mining technologies in the European Union.[63]

In order to make one ounce of gold (31 gram) – the amount of a golden ring – gold diggers must extract between 30 to 50 tons of rock from mountains[64] Even before that, a huge amount of beautiful, life-bearing trees is to be cut down. This destruction harms the environment in an irreparable way, as the rock is being crushed out of the mountains, crumbled down in tiny little pieces with dynamite and finally scattered on the bare soil. Then, the leaching process using cyanide begins. Cyanide, one of the world's most toxic and deadliest chemicals, is passed through these tiny pieces of rocks. This procedure enables the division of the rock into 'useless' sediment left behind and the object of desire: gold. This gold is then liquified and re-solidified through a process that includes the further use of toxic materials. In some of the larger mines, half a million tons of soil and rock are dismantled every day and piled up. International companies and compradors in Turkey make huge gains from extracting gold deposits with cyanide heap leaching. Whatever life used to exist there in those mountains, forests, lands, is never to be seen again.

Another interesting point is that in 1997 the Turkish Council of State had forbidden gold production with cyanide leaching by law on the basis of Article 56 in the Turkish Constitution that ensures the right of the people to live in a healthy and balanced environment and gives the state and the citizens the duty to improve and protect the environment.[65] However, due to intense lobbying by the international mining corporation, Eurogold, this lifesaving law was changed on 13 August 1999 in order to bring direct foreign investment to Turkey. This constitutional reform eliminated the above-mentioned law and

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[63] "European Parliament Resolution of 5 May 2010 on a General Ban on the Use of Cyanide Mining Technologies in the European Union," European Parliament, published May 5, 2010, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2010-0145_EN.html: "1. Considers that compliance with the EU's objectives under the Water Framework Directive, namely to achieve good chemical status for water resources and to protect water resources and biological diversity, can be achieved only by banning cyanide mining technology; 2. Calls on the Commission to propose a complete ban on the use of cyanide mining technologies in the European Union before the end of 2011, since this is the only safe way to protect our water resources and ecosystems against cyanide pollution from mining activities, and to carry out an ordinary impact assessment at the same time;3. Takes note of the relevant initiatives within the EU and the UN systems and strongly encourages the development and application of safer – in particular cyanide-free – mining alternatives; 4. Calls on the Commission and the Member States not to support, either directly or indirectly, any mining projects in the EU that involve cyanide technology until the general ban is applicable, nor to support any such projects in third countries".

[64] Gündüz, *Altın Ölüm*, 32–33; 167.

[65] Laitos, "The Current Status of Cyanide Regulations".

opened all the natural resources of Turkey to multinational monopolies.[66] One should note that this change in law/constitution took place before the AKP.

The Mining Law, originating from the 1865 Ottoman Law, *Dilaver Paşa Nizamnamesi*,[67] was altered for the first time by the then Prime Minister Turgut Özal of the Motherland Party, who in 1985 opened the state-based mining industry to domestic and foreign capital.[68] Under the AKP this rule has been revised 21 times – that is more than one revision per ruling year. All the changes led to easier and arbitrary distribution of licenses instead of the conservation of natural resources and supervision of mining activities.[69]

All these changes were to the advantage of global/international mining corporations and to the detriment of the environment and the local people. While ever-growing groups protest and demonstrate against this selling off of land and soil, the government is quick in claiming that these mining facilities would develop the economy and create jobs. Only a few people actually work in gold mines, which function for around 8 to 16 years, and the income from gold is taken mostly by the foreign mining corporations.[70] People are left with little more than a destroyed natural environment.

Concluding Words

It is the responsibility of the state to save its people, not to poison them. Article 56 of the Turkish Constitution states:

> Everyone has the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment. It is the duty of the State and citizens to improve the natural environment, to protect the environmental health and to prevent environmental pollution.[71]

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[66] "Bergama gerçeği ve siyanürlü altın madenciliği" ("The Bergama reality of cyanide gold mining"), Geological Engineers Chamber Turkey, Head office, published July 21, 2005, https://www.jmo.org.tr/genel/bizden_detay.php?kod=30#.XeQF2ugzaUm.

[67] Remzi Özmen, "1865 Tarihli Dilaver Paşa Nizamnamesinden 1985 Tarihli Maden Kanununa…" ("From the 1865 Dilaver Pasha Order Rule to the 1985 Mining Law…"), *Terazi Hukuk Dergisi* 9, no. 94 (June 2014): 82–83. https://www.jurix.com.tr/article/2308.

[68] "Maden Kanunu" ("Mining Law"), Resmi Gazete, published June 15, 1985. https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=3213&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5.

[69] Bahar Ünlü, "Maden Kanunu 21 kez kimler için, nasıl değişti?" ("For Whom and Why Was the Mining Law Changed 21 Times?"), *Gezegen 24*, May 4, 2021, https://gezegen24.com/maden-kanunu-degisiklikleri/.

[70] Miyase İlknur, "Kaz Dağları gerçeği: Bu vatana nasıl kıydınız?" ("The Reality of Ida Mountains: How Could You Do This to This Country?"), *Cumhuriyet*, August 11, 2019, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/yazi_dizileri/1530192/kaz-daglari-gercegi-bu-vatana-nasil-kiydiniz.html.

[71] "Constitution of the Republic of Turkey," Turkey, accessed September 26, 2022, https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf.

The legal text and the real life, however, differ fundamentally and there is a gap between the de jure stipulation and the de facto application. Although the constitution provides the "right to live in a healthy and balanced environment" and makes this the duty of state and citizens to protect and improve the environment in Turkey, environmental degradation proceeds at ever-faster speed and reaches health-threatening levels. This is an obligation and a responsibility that the state has failed to realize and keeps on failing to realize.

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Cornelia Bogen[*]

The Covid-19 Pandemic as a Test Case of Cultural Values: Reconstructing China's Nationalist Discourse in Social Media

Abstract: A variety of nationalisms are said to have emerged worldwide since the Covid-19 pandemic; however, scholars struggle to determine the mutual impact of nationalism and the pandemic, and they do not agree on what constitutes Chinese nationalism in particular. China's national narratives of the 1990s and digital nationalism in the first decades of the 21st century have highlighted the unique characteristics of Chinese culture, so it comes as a surprise that the vast body of research about China's Covid-19 pandemic nationalism has not yet determined the specific role cultural factors played in fostering nationalist sentiment. Hence, this article first uses the concept of national identity in Blank et al. as an analysis grid in its literature review to reconstruct a potential shift from patriotism to nationalism within China's Covid-19 discourse and explore the political and cultural factors that allegedly impacted the handling of the crisis by different countries. Second, a thematic analysis of a randomly selected sample of Chinese media articles and social media posts published in 2020 and 2021 aims to carve out the specific set of values that various Chinese discourse participants – ranging from the political and social elite to ordinary internet users – proclaim to be the reason why China succeeded to contain the first wave of the epidemic.

This literature review shows that the patriotic media campaign, launched after the official announcement of the epidemic, was led by the Chinese Communist Party to counteract Chinese public criticism of media censorship during the outbreak and maintain political stability. After the epidemic became a pandemic and China had successfully contained the first wave, Chinese internet users, as well as political and social elites, jointly engaged in the construction

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of a nationalist narrative to counteract international anti-Chinese discourse. Furthermore, this thematic analysis of Chinese social media discourse show-cases how Chinese online publics ideologically constructed themselves as a homogeneous group defined by descent, race, and culture. This nourished nationalistic sentiment and helped to establish a boundary to the external other by ascribing the failure of foreign countries to contain the disease to their lack of certain Confucian values. In doing so, Chinese discourse evoked centuries-old Western orientalist stereotypes on 'Confucianist collectivism' that they used to foster nationalism while rejecting international criticism. Othering narratives in the pandemic discourse of China and liberal Western countries were based on nationalism, culturalism, racism, and the larger 'orientalist' idea of China versus 'the West' as homogeneous, transnational and imagined communities.

1   Introduction

1.1   Nationalism(s) and the Covid-19 Pandemic

Political scientists describe nationalism as a political ideology that assists territorial communities to refer to themselves as nations, with the right of self-determination within world politics.[1] After a period of 'methodological statism' (equating the state with the nation and treating nationalism as a state policy), international relations scholars have come to regard nationalism as a dominant discursive shaped by different groups who socially construct bounded, imagined communities. Herein, the state is viewed as a governing apparatus, the nation as a cultural community, and nationalism is viewed as a cultural and discursive practice in everyday life that regulates order within the state, serves as

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[1]   Eric Taylor Woods et al., "Covid-19, Nationalism, and the Politics of Crisis: A Scholarly Exchange," *Nations and Nationalism* 26 (June 2020): 808, https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12644.

a source of political legitimacy, helps to reinforce collective identity, and constructs group identity from within while making sense of the world around.[2]

Nationalism can be activated by any country, especially during a crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic (with its outbreak in China in December 2019) is a crisis that has challenged both democratic and authoritarian states, as the legitimacy of their leaders stems from their capacity to protect their own populace first and foremost.[3] In early 2020, many governments worldwide managed to create a dominant narrative to guide public reactions to the pandemic. However, the user-generated content that flooded public discourse in the following months helped many alternative narratives emerge, which made it more difficult for the public in many countries to agree on a strategy for epidemic containment.[4]

International studies scholar, Benedict Anderson, who coined the term *imagined communities* in the 1980s,[5] traced the "cultural artifacts" of nation-ness and nationalism back to the bureaucratic and commercial middle-class of late eighteenth century literate bourgeoisie who had immigrated to "the New World" of the Americas. He points out the crucial role of mass media, print language, and print-capitalism for the emergence of solidarity on a solely "imagined basis" (one that goes far beyond the solidarity constructed by ancient and pre-modern dynasties based on kinship, clientship, and personal loyalties).[6] With the emergence of the internet and digital communication technology, classical critical theories of nationalism such as Anderson's have been revived by media theorists to analyze the rise of "new nationalisms" in digital capitalism.[7]

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, scholars have noticed the emergence of a variety of nationalisms in both democratic and authoritarian states (e.g., "pandemic nationalism",[8] "corona-nationalism"[9]). Other national-

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[2]   Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Nationalism, World Order, and the Covid-19 Pandemic," in: Forum: Thinking Theoretically in Unsettled Times: Covid-19 and Beyond, *International Studies Review* 23, no. 3 (2021): 1108, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab018.

[3]   Ibid., 1109.

[4]   Annette Freyberg-Inan, "Separating the Old from the New, or the Death of Liberal Order (Not from Covid-19)," in: Forum: Thinking Theoretically in Unsettled Times: Covid-19 and Beyond, *International Studies Review* 23, no. 3 (2021): 1104, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab018.

[5]   Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, New York: Verso, 2006), revised edition.

[6]   Ibid., 4, 77.

[7]   Christian Fuchs, *Nationalism on the Internet. Critical Theory and Ideology in the Age of Social Media and Fake News* (New York, London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 13, 16.

[8]   Pichamon Yeophantong et al., "A Relational Reflection on Pandemic Nationalism," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 26 (June 2021): 550, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-021-09736-5.

[9]   Unmut Ozkirimli, "Coronationalism?" OpenDemocracy, April 14, 2020, accessed May 30, 2022, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/coronationalism.

isms identified include "medical nationalism"[10] and "vaccine nationalism",[11] which refer to countries competing to develop the first vaccine, and also hint at a global North/South divide regarding an unequal distribution of vaccines and medical resources. "Biopolitical nationalism" has been identified in both East Asian states like China[12] and Western countries,[13] and is characterized by public discourse that depicts state-imposed public health measures with metaphors of war (e.g., the population being at war with the viral invader, reproducing inside/outside borders,[14] and medical personnel being staged as soldiers fighting at the 'frontline').[15]

"Exclusionary ethnonationalism" refers to governments that employ medicalized prejudice to justify restrictive immigration policies,[16] and "exclusionary nationalism", while similar, is based on racist, xenophobic sentiments.[17] Yeophantong et al. reconstruct "exclusionary nationalism" as a legitimizing ideology in the pandemic nationalism of both China and Taiwan, and observe two types of "nationalist othering".[18] Chinese nationalism was observed to employ *discursive othering*, (e.g., "othering the virus as an alien intrusion; othering Wuhan's residents as the virus"[19]), whereas *mutual othering* was observed in Taiwan (e.g., labeling the coronavirus as "the Wuhan virus" after China rejected Taiwan's offer to repatriate travelers on government-chartered flights who had travelled to Mainland China to visit their relatives for the Chinese New Year Festival).[20] This self-other binary was based on Taiwan discursively treating those Taiwanese citizens as 'Wuhan' residents and excluding them from re-

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[10]   Jeremy Youde, "How 'Medical Nationalism' Is Undermining the Fight Against the Coronavirus Pandemic," *World Politics Review*, March 23, 2020, accessed May 30, 2022, https://www.world politicsreview.com/articles/28623/how-medical-nationalism-is-undermining-the-fight-ag ainst-the-coronavirus-pandemic.

[11]   Bollyky et al., "The Tragedy of Vaccine Nationalism: Only Cooperation Can End the Pandemic," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 5 (2020): 96–108.

[12]   Jeroen de Kloet et al., "We Are Doing Better: Biopolitical Nationalism and the Covid-19 Virus in East Asia," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 23, no. 4 (2020): 635–40.

[13]   Lauren Wilcox, "The Biopolitics of the Wars on Covid-19," in: Forum: Thinking Theoretically in Unsettled Times: Covid-19 and Beyond, International Studies Review 23, no. 3 (2021): 1111, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab018.

[14]   Ibid., 1110.

[15]   Ibid., 1112.

[16]   Erin K. Jenne, "Varieties of Nationalism in the Age of Covid-19," *Nationalities Papers* 50, no. 1 (2022): 29, https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2021.104.

[17]   Yeophantong et al., "A Relational Reflection on Pandemic Nationalism," 552.

[18]   Ibid., 564.

[19]   Ibid., 563.

[20]   Ibid., 564.

turning to Taiwan, while allowing other returnees from the United States and Europe.[21]

"Othering the virus" was not only a discursive strategy employed by the governments in China and Taiwan, but also by Western countries in January and February 2020. Observing public discourse in Australia, the UK, USA, and Germany, sociologist Meinhof argues that the West underestimated the virus and did not prepare to contain the epidemic in a timely manner because of three prevailing attitudes: (1) *sinophobic racism*, which blames Chinese cultural traits for the outbreak (e.g., eating wild animals); (2) *new orientalism*[22], which establishes a boundary between liberal countries and the authoritarian 'other', and interprets the outbreak as a symptom of the failure of authoritarian regimes; (3) *colonial temporality*, which establishes a boundary between the healthcare systems of the "backward other" in contrast to "modern" countries that can handle a health crisis.[23] These three prevailing notions prevented Western countries from "relating Chinese disasters to 'us'", taking necessary precautions, and learning lessons from Asian countries (including liberal democratic countries like South Korea or China, whose "authoritarian disease control" was staged as impossible to be implemented in democratic countries). After the first wave was successfully contained in China and Western countries proved incapable (as a result of othering the virus), the Chinese population embraced the propaganda narrative of the Communist Party of China (CPC) that equates the CPC with China, with many Chinese perceiving the governments of the United Kingdom and United States as "malign, caring more about economic stability than the health of their people".[24]

Meinhof's observation about sinophobic racism in Western media should be supplemented by Liao's observation that Chinese nationalist discourse contributed to the racialization of the virus during the pandemic. Some liberal

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[21]   Yeophantong et al., "A Relational Reflection on Pandemic Nationalism," 564–65.

[22]   The term 'orientalism' was conceptualized by Edward Said who regarded it as an integral part of a Eurocentric perspective on the world during the nineteenth century, when contemporary scholars and intellectuals judged non-European societies on the basis of what they 'lacked' in comparison to Europe, which was depicted as 'modern' and 'civilized'. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage books, 1979). In contrast to Said, Dirlik considers orientalism not to be a phenomenon of the past. According to Dirlik, Eurocentrism has continued to characterize Western world views during the 20th century, as exemplified in post-World War II modernization theory. Comp. Arif Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," *History and Theory* 35, no. 4 (Dec., 1996): 100, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505446.

[23]   Marius Meinhof, "Othering the Virus," *Discover Society*, March 21, 2020, https://archive.discoversociety.org/2020/03/21/othering-the-virus/.

[24]   Ibid.

countries, such as the USA and UK, depicted the virus as "Chinese"[25] and ethnically Chinese U.S. citizens were physically and verbally attacked, with verbal abuse prevalent within Western social media networks. In response, Chinese pandemic nationalism staged the West as a 'racist other' before and during the first four months of the pandemic. Employing Lacan's differentiation between *the other* (another person that the self faces) and *the Other* (a thing distinct from the self and the other), Liao observes that despite the construction of the 'racist other', the Chinese government and (social) media (specifically Weibo) attempted to shift the blame of Western countries of *the other* (China) to *the Other*, that is, the virus itself.[26] According to the author, this strategy was informed by former president's Hu Jintao's statement of a "community of shared future for mankind" and aimed at strengthening the notion of a community of common destiny and appealing to global solidarity.[27]

Despite these varieties in "exclusionary nationalism" and allegedly new types of nationalism proclaimed during the health crisis, scholars point out that some already existed before the pandemic. Bieber observed a discursive and social shift since the 2010s towards exclusionary nationalism in the UK (Brexit), European member states (migration crises) and the USA (election of Donald Trump).[28] Nationalism has also reportedly been on the rise in authoritarian China since the 1990s. During the post-Cold War period, the Chinese government launched patriotic education campaigns to deal with the internal legitimacy crisis of Communist ideology.[29] These campaigns actively promoted a sense of national greatness and emphasized the unique characteristics of Chinese culture. While the Chinese government architected the campaigns, other groups also participated in the nationalist discourse to promote their own in-

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[25] During a press conference, former U.S. president Donald Trump labeled the Coronavirus as a "Chinese virus", see: Donald Trump, News briefing in Washington on March 16, 2020, *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pjsx94m8qA. One year later, anti-Asian hate in social networks continued, see: Queenie Wong, "Twitter, Facebook and Others Are Failing to Stop Anti-Asian Hate," *C/net*, April 7, 2021, https://www.cnet.com/news/twitter-facebook-and-others-are-failing-to-stop-anti-asian-hate/.

[26] Lois Liao, "The Two-Way Othering during the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Role of Political Statement and Media," *Journal of Behavioral Economics for Policy* 4, no.3 (2020) (=Covid-19 special issue): 68–69 and 74, https://sabeconomics.org/journal/RePEc/beh/JBEPv1/articles/JBEP-4-S3-5.pdf.

[27] Ibid., 70, 74.

[28] Florian Bieber, "Global Nationalism in Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic," *Nationalities Papers* 50 (2022): 16, https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2020.35.

[29] Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 3 (1998): 287, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0967-067X(98)00009-9.

terests, including ordinary citizens and social elites (e.g., intellectuals, journalists) who amplified these messages and guided public opinion.[30]

Carving out the specific characteristics of disaster[31] nationalism in the Chinese context, Zhang observes that the party state narrated national tragedies (e.g., Sichuan earthquake in 2008) with stories of people's heroic sacrifices, the Party's strong leadership, and the unity of both to construct national community and national identity. Disaster nationalism has also combined an older notion of victimhood identity (suppression and semi-colonization by Western powers) with a more recent "historical imaginary that frames the nation as rising from a traumatic past".[32] Similarly, in order to address the perceived hostility from the international community, official and popular narratives of Covid-19 regenerated the collective memory of humiliation to emotionally mobilize the people and reinvent national history as a "seemingly timeless past".[33]

There is no agreement over the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on nationalism,[34] so scholars have recently attempted to elaborate on the mutual impact of nationalism and the pandemic. Some political scientists conclude that in contrast to previous pandemics, it was "ethnic nationalism" that shaped many states' responses to the current health crisis. They argue that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the future development of nationalism could be a deepened divide along ethnic and national boundaries.[35] Furthermore, although there is no consensus over what constitutes Chinese nationalism,[36] scholars have observed a transformative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Chinese nationalism, as the country's successful containment of it over the last two years has fostered a sense of national pride and belief in the "superiority of the 'Chinese Model' of politics".[37]

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[30]   Simon Shen, *Redefining Nationalism in Modern China. Sino-American Relations and the Emergence of Chinese Public Opinion in the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 165.

[31]   When speaking of disaster, Zhang includes both natural and human-made disasters, as it is the way in which the state and the public frames a certain event that counts. Chenchen Zhang, "Contested Disaster Nationalism in the Digital Age: Emotional Registers and Geopolitical Imaginaries in Covid-19 Narratives on Chinese Social Media," *Review of International Studies* 48, no. 2 (2022): 220, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210522000018.

[32]   Ibid., 223.

[33]   Ibid., 223–24.

[34]   Yeophantong et al., "A Relational Reflection on Pandemic Nationalism," 550.

[35]   Woods et al., "Covid-19, Nationalism, and the Politics of Crisis: A Scholarly Exchange," 809.

[36]   Jessica Chen Weiss, "How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public? Another Look at 'Rising Nationalism' and Chinese Foreign Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 119 (March 2019): 682, https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1580427.

[37]   Woods et al., "Covid-19, Nationalism, and the Politics of Crisis: A Scholarly Exchange," 814.

1.2   Nationalism in China's Cyberspace

In line with Anderson's claims that the evolution of mass media enabled the global spread of imagined communities of nationality, we must consider the role of the internet in transforming nationalism. Recent literature has emphasized the role of the internet and social media in fostering *digital nationalism* in China. Schneider (2018) observes that nationalist discourse in China's online public sphere is fostered by the spread of digital information and communication technologies, state governance of the internet, and social groups as networked communities (e.g., digital nationalists).[38] Schroeder considers social media to be the major communication tool of Chinese right-wing populist movements in opposing allegedly liberal mainstream media.[39] Although the term 'right-wing' in China ranges from advocating Mao's Communist values, to traditional Confucian values, or capitalism, a sense of the superiority of Confucian civilization is identified as a central characteristic of contemporary Chinese nationalism.[40] Online Chinese nationalists advocate a distinctive path of national development and praise the superiority of the Han-Chinese people.[41] Current literature on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Chinese nationalism suggests that China's relative success in handling the spread of the virus and the failure of Trump's administration has further nourished nationalist sentiment, national pride and a confidence among the youth in the 'Chinese model', as opposed to that of the United States.[42]

It is important to consider the communicative possibilities of digital space when investigating recent transformations of Chinese nationalism during the pandemic because its multi-channel direction may transform the state-encouraged nationalism of the 1990s into a nationalism carried not only by politicians and social elites, but by ordinary internet users as well. This is supported by further observations that despite the CPC using 'emotional mobilization' as a crucial part of its propaganda since the Maoist era, affective governance has become less top-down with the emergence of the internet. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the CPC appeared to allow internet users to become "'thought

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38   Florian Schneider, *China's Digital Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

39   Ralph Schroeder, *Social Theory After the Internet. Media, Technology, and Globalization*, (London: UCL Press, 2018), 60, esp. Chapter 3: "Digital Media and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism", 60–81.

40   Ibid., 77.

41   Ibid., 74–76.

42   Hongying Wang, "The Global Pandemic and China's Relations with the Western World," Opinion series "Global Cooperation after Covid-19," Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), July 22, 2020, accessed February 25, 2022, https://www.cigionline.org/articles/global-pandemic-and-chinas-relations-western-world/.

work collaborators' through social media engagement"[43], and express themselves as long as they communicated "positive" energy and emotions that foster a "feel-good politics of cohesion".[44] Expressing negative feelings against the 'hostile' foreign countries that were criticizing China's national pandemic politics was also accepted by Chinese authorities because it helped to nourish a "dichotomous framing of ideological competition" whereby China appeared superior to Western liberal democracies (who failed to contain the spread of the virus).[45] In the past decade, scholars have observed a discursive shift in digital space from "a largely 'legitimacy-challenging imaginary grounded in (Western) democratic reference' towards a more regime-supportive framework of 'civilizational competition'".[46] This new form of affective governance (i.e., allowing users to express their feelings online) is combined with direct persuasion, hegemonic intervention, and online censorship.[47] However, it was not only the scientific concept of herd immunity and Western countries' alleged prioritization of 'freedom over life' that Chinese online users mocked;[48] a variety of different political and cultural factors were addressed and juxtaposed by Chinese debaters in their reflections of different countries' performance in epidemic control. These factors were crucial in fostering a sense of national superiority among the Chinese online publics and in discursively constituting a binary between China and the West.

1.3 'Competitive Nationalism'

Despite China being an authoritarian capitalist country,[49] U.S. American and Chinese media fell back into Cold War rhetoric over the course of 2020 by staging the pandemic as a proxy war between the allegedly two competing ideologies of "capitalism/anti-communism" and "communism".[50] Nationalism has been used by political leaders in both democratic and authoritarian-ruled countries to pursue their own goals, so the Covid-19 health crisis has become

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43   Zhang, "Contested Disaster Nationalism in the Digital Age," 233.

44   Ibid., 224.

45   Ibid., 237.

46   Angela Xiao Wu, "The Evolution of Regime Imaginaries on the Chinese Internet," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 25, no. 2 (2020), 139–61, quoted after Zhang, "Contested Disaster Nationalism in the Digital Age," 237.

47   Zhang, "Contested Disaster Nationalism in the Digital Age," 225.

48   Ibid., 237.

49   Michael A. Witt et al., "China: Authoritarian Capitalism," Faculty & Research Working Paper, INSEAD, The Business School for the World (2012), accessed October 20, 2021, http://ssrn.com/abstract=2171651.

50   Pan Wang, "Reporting and Combating the Health Crisis: An Analysis of the PRC Media During the Covid-19 Pandemic (2019–2020)," *Media Asia* (November 2020): 47, no. 3–4 (2020): 158, https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2020.1847995.

another means for both China and the USA to further engage in "competitive nationalism".[51] Zhang describes "the imaginaries of geopolitical and ideological opposition between China and the West" as having been mutually produced through "othering narratives from both sides",[52] and "co-producing binary oppositions between the self and the other".[53] As described previously, Meinhof speaks of a new form of orientalism, with Western liberal countries depicting China as the authoritarian 'other' by interpreting the outbreak as a symptom of the failure of authoritarian regimes and the coming end of the Communist Party's rule. As a result, China similarly started to regard pandemic management as a "contest between 'our' and 'their' political systems".[54]

Dirlik has demonstrated that such processes of 'self-orientalization' are not new, but a historical phenomenon of Chinese nationalism. In contrast to Said's conceptualization, orientalism has not only been a construction of Asia made by Europeans, but also by Asians, particularly by intellectuals who studied abroad. Since the 19th century, Euro-American intellectuals jointly participated in a culturalist construction of the orient as an internally coherent culture bound together by a common spirit.[55] With the presence of Western powers, nationalism emerged in China, and culturalism and nationalism entered into a partnership in China's new national narration, when 20th century Chinese integrated European-American images of the Chinese past into a new national identity. Chinese liberals and conservatives as well as Chinese diaspora identified China with Confucianism, despotism, bureaucratism, familism, and particular racial characteristics that are all traceable to 19th-century orientalist representations.[56] Dirlik concludes that "Confucianism [was codified] as an emblem of Chinese society not just for Euro-Americans, but also for twentieth-century Chinese who drew not only on Chinese but also Euro-American scholarship in their own evaluations of China's past".[57]

Nationalist narration has undergone a change since the 1980s, when China's economy rapidly grew and globalized. Although Dirlik regards contemporary Chinese nationalism as a form of *cultural nationalism* and an expression of *orientalism*, the depiction of the significance of Confucianism has been transformed from being an obstacle to China's modernization to being functional to capitalist development.[58] Hence, since the 1980s, Asian intellectuals (e.g., in

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[51]   Yeophantong et al., "A Relational Reflection on Pandemic Nationalism," 549.

[52]   Zhang, "Contested Disaster Nationalism in the Digital Age," 238.

[53]   Ibid., 241.

[54]   Meinhof, "Othering the Virus".

[55]   Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," 98, 107, 109, 115.

[56]   Ibid., 106.

[57]   Ibid., 105.

[58]   Ibid., 109.

Singapore and Malaysia), Chinese scholars, state leaders, and businessmen as well as Western sociologists and futurologists have proclaimed a Confucian revival or *new Confucianism*.[59] Dirlik regards new Confucianism as an expression of a new sense of power in East Asian societies that "reassert themselves against earlier Euro-American domination" and "against Euro-American cultural hegemony"[60] by highlighting "Asian cultural differences" in discussions about democracy. This has helped the Chinese government to suppress differences within the nation, justify oppression inside the country, and reject "democracy" and "human rights" as a form of "cultural imperialism".[61] Ironically, Dirlik uncovers that new Confucianism actually reinforces 'Western' ideological hegemony by "internalizing the historical assumptions of orientalism",[62] such as the use of modern Europe as a benchmark for judging non-European countries, regarding Confucian values of harmony, familism, patrimonialism as synonymous with Chinese culture,[63] and overlooking differences within individual societies and between Asian societies, i.e., "culturalist essentialism".[64]

Hence, the combined arguments of Zhang, Meinhof, and Dirlik suggest that the mutually constructed competitive nationalism observed in the othering narratives of Chinese and liberal Western countries' pandemic discourse during the outbreak was not only based on culturalism and racism, but on the idea of competing political systems. Furthermore, beyond nationalist sentiments, there was also a larger 'orientalist' idea of China versus 'the West' in this discourse. As shown below, in contrast to the pre-internet age, it is ordinary Chinese internet users who now join the social and political elites within these processes of self-orientalization, as witnessed in China's digital pandemic nationalism.

One year after the outbreak, in early 2021, worldwide media finally started to debate the cultural (rather than political) reasons for why some East Asian countries handled the pandemic 'better' than their Western counterparts. Despite having different political systems, citizens in Confucian-based societies like China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan were perhaps more accepting of social tagging (tracking) technologies, because they saw this as part of a social contract and civic responsibility to contribute to the public good in times of crisis, rather than an invasion of personal privacy.[65] However, such explana-

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59   Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," 108–9.

60   Ibid., 113.

61   Ibid., 109–10, 114.

62   Ibid., 114.

63   Ibid., 109.

64   Ibid., 97.

65   Victor Cha, "Asia's Covid-19 Lessons for the West: Public Goods, Privacy, and Social Tagging," *The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 10–13, https://doi.org/10.1080/016366 0X.2020.1770959.

tions were rejected as an 'Oriental fantasy' created by the West, because it does not acknowledge that East Asian countries are neither harmonious nor communitarian-spirited societies.[66] Kleine suggests that it would be "more fruitful for comparative cultural studies, [...] to ask which external attributions and self-perceptions are evoked in the discursive competition for the best cultural and religious preconditions for fighting the pandemic than for actual causalities".[67]

2   Aims and Methodology

Scholarly studies exploring varieties of nationalism during the Covid-19 pandemic have overlooked the role of cultural factors in fostering nationalist sentiment in China's debate of its own and international epidemic containment responses. This is astonishing since scholars have highlighted their crucial role over the last three decades. For example, Zhao emphasizes the unique characteristics of Chinese culture in state-led nationalism of the 1990s[68] and Schroeder observes a sense of superiority of Confucian civilization in China's digital nationalism.[69] Against this backdrop, Section 3 of this article reconstructs how China's patriotic discourse evolved into nationalistic discourse after the first wave of the epidemic had been contained. Describing *patriotism* and *nationalism* as specific expressions or 'consequences' of the more general concept of national identity, Blank et al. consider patriotism as a 'counter-concept' to nationalism.[70] Here, nationalism is characterized by: (1) idealization of one's nation and its history; (2) feelings of national superiority; (3) uncritical acceptance of authorities; (4) strong connection of one's self-concept to national affiliation; (5) suppression of ambivalent attitudes towards the nation; (6) defining one's belonging to the group by descent, race, and culture; (7) perception of this group as homogeneous; (8) derogating comparison with other groups.[71] Whereas 'patriotism' is characterized by: (1) critical opinion-making of the nation; (2) support of the nation ends as soon as it violates humanist values; (3) multiple viewpoints of group history are cherished; (4) rejection of a state-authoritarian 'culture of subjects'; (5) rejection of an uncritical ac-

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[66]   Christian Kleine, "Has Confucius Won the Corona War?" ReCentGlobe Blog #40, University of Leipzig, January 12, 2021, accessed March 03, 2021, https://recentglobe.uni-leipzig.de/zentru m/detailansicht/artikel/blog-has-confucius-won-the-corona-war-2021-01-12/.

[67]   Ibid.

[68]   Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism," 287.

[69]   Schroeder, *Social Theory After the Internet*, 77.

[70]   Thomas Blank et al., "National Identity in a United Germany: Nationalism or Patriotism? An Empirical Test with Representative Data," *Political Psychology* 24, no. 2 (June 2003): 291–93.

[71]   Blank et al., "National Identity in a United Germany: Nationalism or Patriotism?," 292.

ceptance of national authorities; (6) acceptance of negative emotions towards the nation; (7) no overemphasis of national affiliation in the individual's self-concept; (8) relevance of temporal comparisons; (9) rejection of objectivist criteria for one's group.[72]

Notwithstanding the challenge of applying a 'Western' concept of national identity to the Chinese context, the current paper uses the absence of cultural factors in the definition of patriotism as a guiding reference point for its literature review. Since the paper explores the cultural factors that were addressed in Chinese public discourse during the pandemic, nationalism's characteristic of "defining one's belonging to the group by descent, race, and culture" has been selected as a potential indicator of a shift in public discourse from patriotism to nationalism. As such, Blank et al.'s conceptualization is used as an analysis grid in this review of the scholarly literature, which covers China's pandemic nationalism to identify the tipping point from patriotism to nationalism within Chinese Covid-19 pandemic discourse.

In a text mining analysis of more than 5000 user comments on Weibo published between the end of December 2019 and the end of May 2020,[73] Wang et al. found that out of six criteria for identifying nationalism, "the inclination to define one's own group by criteria of descent, race, cultural affiliation" was not identified very often,[74] while "the suppression of ambivalent attitudes toward the nation" and "feeling of national superiority" made up the largest proportions in Chinese public discourse on the pandemic.[75] However, the authors overlook that the "feeling of national superiority" can stem from internet users' attempts to construct a group identity based on cultural values, which groups outside this imagined community are said to be lacking. Hence, this literature review has two goals. Firstly, to assess whether a turning point from patriotism to nationalism in China's public discourse could have formed the basis for a growing consciousness of not only political, but cultural factors that allegedly impacted the handling of the crisis by different countries. Secondly, to identify the main actors who promoted either patriotic or nationalist sentiment during different stages of the health crisis (i.e., from the outbreak of the epidemic until after the successful containment of the first wave by March 2020). A closer examination of the initiators, facilitators or 'bandwagoners' before and after a presumed turning point can shed light on whether contemporary Chinese na-

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[72]   Blank et al., "National Identity in a United Germany: Nationalism or Patriotism?," 292–93.

[73]   Zhenyu Wang et al., "Many Nationalisms, One Disaster: Categories, Attitudes and Evolution of Chinese Nationalism on Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 26 (2021): 532, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-021-09728-5.

[74]   Ibid., 538.

[75]   Ibid., 535.

tionalism is still led by the CPC as it was in the 1990s, when the internet was not yet being used on a large scale.

In a second step (Section 4), within the context of Kleine's (2021) recommendation above, this critical digital social research study will reconstruct the cultural values proposed by China's nationalist public discourse and explore how they allegedly equipped China to handle the health crisis. The empirical analysis presented here of China's self-perception of its pandemic management shows that from mid-March 2020 onwards, a nationalist discourse emerged in leading social networks (e.g., Weibo, Weixin/WeChat, Bilibili, and Toutiao) ascribing the failure of foreign countries to contain the disease to their lack of certain Confucian values.

Social media is the dominant channel for debating current affairs in contemporary China, so this study conducts an elaborate search on prominent platforms where individuals, companies, government offices, media outlets,[76] and other organizations run public accounts to provide information and communication offers. These platforms include Tencent's WeChat (Weixin), microblogging service Sina Weibo, Bytedance's TikTok (Douyin), Bytedance's information release and recommendation platform Toutiao, video platform Bilibili, discussion forums like Baidu post bar, and the question-answer forum Zhihu.

To reconstruct the nationalist discourse of 2020 and the first half of 2021, my research assistant and I conducted a manual search using the Chinese search engine Baidu and screened the aforementioned social media platforms. The first search was conducted in June and July 2020, with a second search one year later in July and August 2021. We used certain key words (e.g., "Covid 19/Corona, 新型冠状病毒肺炎, xīnxíng guānzhuàng bìngdú fèiyán", "epidemic, 疫情, yìqíng", "war, 战, zhàn") in combination with phrases such as "national culture (国家文化, guójiā wénhuà)," or "Confucian culture (儒家文化, Rújiā Wénhuà)," and "China's success (中国的成功, Zhōngguó de chénggōng)" to randomly collect a sample of dozens of media articles, user posts, and short video clips. The search revealed hashtags such as #Join forces to win the battle against epidemic prevention and control# (#众志成城打赢疫情防控阻击战#, #Zhòngzhìchéngchéng dǎyíng yìqíng fángkòng zǔjízhàn#),[77] and discussion threads initiated by state media on Weibo such as #Prevention and Control of Epidemic Highlights the Advantages of Chinese Culture# (#疫情防控彰显中国

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[76] Media outlets such as Xinhua News Agency, Guangming Daily, The Paper and Beijing News. The platform Toutiao, for example, covers 3700 media outlets. Cf. "Search Word 'Toutiiao'," Baidu Encyclopedia, accessed August 2, 2021, https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%BB%8A%E6%9 7%A5%E5%A4%B4%E6%9D%A1/4169373?fr=aladdin.

[77] Dongdong Yang, "Lu Yanhai: Mobile Cultural Volunteers in Residential Areas," Beitun Convergence Media, Weibo, March 2, 2020, https://m.weibo.cn/2884508570/4478074425284851.

文化优势#, # Yìqíng fángkòng zhāngxiǎn Zhōngguó wénhuà yōushì#).[78] Next, a close reading of the collected articles and posts was conducted to identify the particular values highlighted by different discourse participants to explain (the success of) China's epidemic control and containment of Covid-19 during the first wave. Texts that reflected the role of culture in China's pandemic nationalism in detail were selected rather than using the most frequently quoted/read/ liked articles, or those appearing first in the search order.

While the main platform for discussion in 2020 was the microblogging service Sina Weibo, in 2021 the short video sharing platform Bilibili became another prominent platform. Bilibili targets young online users, with some videos being viewed by millions of netizens. We also observed that some of the media articles and posts collected in summer 2020 were no longer accessible one year later (e.g., discussion threads on the platform Toutiao that had highlighted the advantages of Chinese culture in epidemic control).

To avoid stereotyping on the one hand or providing single, non-generalizable cases on the other,[79] the analyses of media reports and 'netizen's' self-expressions (micro-analytical approach) from a one and a half-year period (2020 and the first half of 2021) are linked to the following question: what kind of media regulations, national values (specifically the Confucian core value of harmony and national unity) and cultural traditions impact the representation of China's management of health crises in online publics (macro-analytical approach)?

3   From Patriotism to Nationalism – The Role of Different Actors and the External Other

When Covid-19 broke out in Wuhan (Hubei province) in December 2019, the Chinese government tried to suppress online rumors about the spread of an unknown pneumonia by deleting social media posts of doctors like Li Wenliang or Ai Fen who warned their colleagues about an unknown, SARS-like virus

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[78] People's Daily Online, "Weibo Discussion Topic: #Prevention and Control of Epidemic Highlights the Advantages of Chinese Culture#," Weibo, July 14, 2020, https://s.weibo.com/weibo ?q=%23%E7%96%AB%E6%83%85%E9%98%B2%E6%8E%A7%E5%BD%B0%E6%98%B E%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E6%96%87%E5%8C%96%E4%BC%98%E5%8A%BF%23.

[79] Jürgen Bolten, "Kultur und kommunikativer Stil," in *Deutsche Sprachgeschichte nach 1945. Diskurs- und kulturgeschichtliche Perspektiven*, ed. Martin Wengeler (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2003), 103–24. Quoted from a pdf-version provided on the website "Prof. Dr. Jürgen Bolten, Seniorprofessur Interkulturelle Wirtschaftskommunikation, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena," 8, accessed August 3, 2021, http://www.iwk-jena.uni-jena.de/ iwk/team/juergen-bolten/.

within private chats on the platform WeChat.[80] Such 'offensive' censorship of unauthorized, negative information, in combination with 'defensive' mechanisms (e.g., filtering and lists of taboo-words) are common[81] and considered essential in times of national (health) crisis.

The official announcement of the epidemic's outbreak to Chinese audiences on 20 January 2020 was accompanied by the launch of a patriotic media campaign, appealing to national unity. The percentage of front-page news reports covering the 'people's war' against the epidemic increased considerably.[82] State media like People's Daily used their public social media accounts (e.g., on Weibo and Douban) to not only mobilize collective support, but also let netizens actively join the patriotic discourse with short personalized videos showing support for Wuhan.[83] When live streams documented the construction of emergency hospitals, netizens flooded live broadcasting rooms and gave nick names to site vehicles.[84] Artists[85] and museums represented China's "heroic battle" in art form.[86] Hence, patriotism served as cement to hold official politics and the populace together. However, after the "whistle blowing doctor" Li Wenliang died from Covid-19 in the first week of February 2020 and the hashtag "I want freedom of speech" went viral, the unified spirit was at risk. As a result, all related online debate on Weibo was quickly removed by internet

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[80]   Yang Gao, "Doctor Wenliang Li, Who Was the First to Warn about the Disease, Passed away," *Shanghai Xinmin Evening News*, February 7, 2020, paper.xinmin.cn/html/xmwb/2020-02-07/4/57160.html.

[81]   Ying Jiang, *Cyber-Nationalism in China. Challenging Western Media Portrayals of Internet Censorship in China*, (Adelaide: Adelaide University Press, 2012), 81–83.

[82]   Changkun Cai et al., "Campaign-Style Crisis Regime: How China Responded to the Shock of COVID-19," *Policy Studies* 43, no. 3 (2022): 605–6, https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2021.1883576.

[83]   Wang, "Reporting and Combating the Health Crisis," 155.

[84]   The construction of provisional hospitals in Wuhan was broadcasted online via livestreaming. From January 30, 2020 onwards, internet users who witnessed the construction process in real time started to give nick names (e.g. nick name "Guangwu Di" for a particular forklift) to the construction vehicles and created images with new buzzwords that were spread as internet memes on popular social media platforms like Weibo. This phenomenon is typical for the so called Fanhuan subculture where fan communities follow certain stars or, as in this case, follow certain topics collectively to influence the ranking list of trending topics. For a collection of such images, see: Zhang et al., "Behind the Epidemic – New Words, New Images During the Epidemic," WeChat public account named "Yuming Peak Nursing Home," March 24, 2020, mp.weixin.qq.com/s/_SRsU05qk9m_jt9UCAvQiA.

[85]   "Artists Create Works for Fight Against Epidemic," *China Daily*, February 13, 2020, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202002/13/WS5e44d465a3101282172774c4.html.

[86]   "China Promotes its 'Heroic' Battle Against Coronavirus in a New Exhibition," *South China Morning Post*, August 11, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3096916/china-promotes-its-heroic-battle-against-coronavirus-new.

censors.[87] China's Cyber Administration Office also enacted a law in March 2020 to allow any social media accounts that spread online rumors about unconfirmed details of the epidemic (e.g., government mismanagement) to be deleted.[88] Meanwhile, state media tried to address internet users' criticism of the government's lack of timely dissemination of information at the initial stage by rehabilitating doctor Li Wenliang as a hero who had tried to save his colleagues and students from the virus.[89] Despite public criticism of China's initial response to the crisis, one scholarly study found that online users still supported the government.[90] Ultimately, the state media's patriotic campaign had shifted "the focus of public opinion from interrogating state censorship to combating the disease".[91] In the initial stages of the epidemic, the CPC launched a patriotic campaign in collaboration with journalists to counteract public criticism of how the government had handled the outbreak.

As China slowly recovered from the epidemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced on 11 March 2020 that it had turned into a global pandemic. Anti-Chinese discourse had already manifested in Western media reports (e.g., Denmark, the USA, Australia) since the end of January, portraying SARS-CoV-2 as a "Chinese virus"[92] or a "communist coronavirus",[93] but this remained largely unaddressed by China as it was preoccupied with epidemic containment. Authors found that nationalism emerged on the Weibo platform only after China had successfully contained the first wave of the epidemic,[94] when Western countries started to become overwhelmed by it. Wang et al. identified two categories of nationalism (as defined by Blank et al.) to be the most frequent in comments on Weibo: (1) a "feeling of national superiority" stimulated by a "comparative response to international competition" in epidemic containment, and (2) "the suppression of ambivalent attitudes toward the nation",

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[87]　Josephine Ma et al., "Death of Coronavirus Doctor Li Wenliang Becomes Catalyst for 'Freedom of Speech' Demands in China," *South China Morning Post*, February 7, 2020, www.scmp.com/print/news/china/politics/article/3049606/coronavirus-doctors-death-becomes-catalyst-freedom-speech.

[88]　Long Qiao, "China Steps up Social Media Censorship with Mass Account Deletions," *Radio Free Asia* (RFA), March 2, 2020, www.rfa.org/english/news/china/deletions-03022020114458.html.

[89]　Gao, "Doctor Wenliang Li, Who Was the First to Warn about the Disease, Passed away".

[90]　Xiaoyu Zhao, "A Discourse Analysis of Quotidian Expressions of Nationalism during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Chinese Cyberspace," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 26 (2021): 290, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-020-09692-6.

[91]　Wang, "Reporting and Combating the Health Crisis," 156.

[92]　Ibid., 157.

[93]　"Opinion: A Communist Coronavirus," *Wall Street Journal*, January 29, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/video/opinion-a-communist-coronavirus/3C311BB5-4526-4A17-ADD6-E7240443FA55.html.

[94]　Wang et al., "Many Nationalisms, One Disaster," 538, 544.

stimulated by discursively counteracting an "external threat" – that is, other countries' criticism and stigmatization of China.[95] Another study found that internet users regarded claim damages from China and "potential anti-China coalitions" in the United States and the 'West' as an "external provocation".[96]

Highlighting the different expressions of nationalism among Chinese internet users, Zhao described "external provocation" and "stand firm" as major aspirations characterizing the nationalist discourse of netizens who had shown a "tough stance".[97] Zhao even observed internet users displaying a "confrontational and xenophobic" posture,[98] as they not only related China's "impressive performance" (in epidemic containment and provision of international aid) to the "advantages" of China's political system and the discipline of its citizens, but also juxtapose it to the ineffective responses of other countries, which they trace back to "the indiscipline" of the populace and the "nonfeasance" of foreign governments.[99] Li and Meinhof demonstrate how the state's censorship of social media comments – made by journalists, intellectuals, and internet users who criticized officials' silencing of the outbreak[100] – and the need to address unfair accusations (raised by either Chinese citizens or the international community), helped to re-imagine the pandemic from a narrative of failure to a narrative of success.[101] They argue that the dynamics of social media, fostered by the entanglement of official discourse and counter-official accounts of the health crisis,[102] contributed to a horizontal nationalist discourse.

In summary, rather than assuming that a state-encouraged nationalism characterized China's discourse on the pandemic,[103] these studies suggest that the internet transformed the top-down approach that characterized Chinese nationalism in the 1990s[104] into a horizontal relationship with the government, journalists, and internet users, jointly fueling nationalist sentiment after the

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[95]   Wang et al., "Many Nationalisms, One Disaster," 525, 544.

[96]   Zhao, "A Discourse Analysis of Quotidian Expressions," 285.

[97]   Ibid., 285, 291.

[98]   Ibid., 289.

[99]   Ibid., 289–90.

[100] Lisa DeTora et al., "Introduction. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) and International Media – Issues, Challenges, and Opportunities," in *Covid-19 in International Media. Global Pandemic Perspectives*, ed. John C. Pollock and Douglas A. Vakoch (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2022), 13.

[101] Yawen Li and Marius Meinhof, "Imagining Pandemic as Failure: Writing, Memory, and Forgetting under Covid-19 in China," in *Covid-19 in International Media. Global Pandemic Perspectives*, ed. John C. Pollock and Douglas A. Vakoch (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2022), 83–92.

[102] Lisa DeTora et al., "Introduction," 13.

[103] Wang, "The Global Pandemic and China's Relations with the Western World".

[104] Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism," 287.

first wave was contained. However, this is in contrast to the patriotic discourse during the initial phase, which was initiated by the government in collaboration with state-media and aimed to promote a spirit of unity after netizens criticized online censorship by the CPC.

Interestingly, none of the reviewed studies discuss the effect of cultural factors in shaping public debate. Scholars explored political factors by pointing out ordinary internet users' focus on the benefits of China's political system for epidemic containment.[105] They describe nationalist sentiment as stemming from a sense of national superiority,[106] but fail to identify what this sentiment draws upon. Hence, this final section showcases how Chinese online publics ideologically construct nationalism based on a collective political *and* cultural identity that allegedly helped China to succeed where other countries failed.

4   Constructing an Imagined Community Based on Cultural Identity

The patriotic discourse at the initial stage of the pandemic did not refer to cultural values to foster a common spirit among the populace. After the outbreak was officially announced, media, academics, and internet users were eager to stage the 'war' against the epidemic as a 'united fight' to mobilize the people.[107] Media outlets acknowledged the efforts of different social groups, including the restless standby duty of medical professionals, community workers,[108] volunteers distributing household supplies and singing in residential communities to cheer up the "impetuous mood"[109] as well as college students translating epidemic control measures into local dialects.[110] They reported how workers were supported by local trade and labor unions to post and recite poems like "Salute to the Angel in White" in WeChat groups (e.g., Liaoning Workers' Cultural National Reading WeChat group), to pay tribute to medical professionals and to "build an indestructible spiritual great wall through the power of words

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[105]   Zhao, "A Discourse Analysis of Quotidian Expressions," 290.

[106]   Wang et al., "Many Nationalisms, One Disaster," 525.

[107]   Cai et al., "Campaign-Style Crisis Regime," 8.

[108]   Ping Zheng, "#Prevention and Control of the Epidemic, We Are Together#," Weibo video account of Tianjin Binhai Civilization, Zheng Ping at District Cultural Center, Weibo, March 12, 2020. https://m.weibo.cn/5284546164/4481683560986207.

[109]   Yang, "Lu Yanhai: Mobile Cultural Volunteers in Residential Areas".

[110]   China Gannan.com, "#Gannan is United in the Fight Against the Epidemic.# #Epidemic Prevention and Control, Gannan is in Action#. The Villagers Need Me, so I Must Take Responsibility," Weibo, February 11, 2020, https://m.weibo.cn/3182957143/4470794199098089.

and voices".[111] Party-affiliated Youth Leagues at universities reassured young audiences that victory was in sight.[112] Internet users participated in the patriotic discourse and appealed to the unity of people.[113] Despite the stigmatization of China by some foreign countries as the virus began to spread outside China, Chinese netizens appeared to stay focused on their own lot in January and February 2020.

However, once China had successfully contained the first wave of Covid-19 in March 2020, public debate appeared to shift from patriotism to nationalism, as the public turned its attention to the epidemic containment approaches of the international community. However, I argue it was the tendency of the general public to imagine itself as a homogeneous group defined by descent, race, and culture (one of the major characteristics of nationalism outlined by Blank et al.) that nourished nationalistic sentiment and helped to establish a boundary to the external other. As one user suggested, the Chinese public started to view the pandemic as a "test case of a country's culture and values".[114]

Chinese media showcased academics that used cultural factors to explain the success of China and the "failure" of the U.S. government. Presenting China as an "unbeatable nation", the quick containment of the epidemic was credited to the efficiency of the government, "the concerted effort of the whole country and the cohesion of Chinese culture", and "our patriotism" (e.g., "When the motherland needs us, none of us will be absent. This is our culture").[115] China's three-level administrative system that has evolved over centuries (i.e., central government; provinces including cities and autonomous regions; communities and villages), was described by lawyers as being better equipped to manage crises and natural disasters compared to the federal systems of the West (e.g., the European Union and the United States) since the federal systems have re-

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[111] Xu Liu, "Three Crafts Court. Sound Liaoning · Support Wuhan," *Worker's Daily*, February 16, 2020, fourth version, http://media.workercn.cn/sites/media/grrb/2020_02/16/GR0401.htm; see also: Chinagong.com, "Three Crafts Court. Shengdong Liaoning · Support Wuhan," Weibo, February 16, 2020, https://m.weibo.cn/2292896411/4472551780795340.

[112] Shandong Campus, "#Fighting the Epidemic, Colleges and Universities Are in Action#." Weibo account of Shandong Normal University Youth League Committee, 1801 Youth League Branch of History and Culture College, Weibo, February 28, 2020, https://m.weibo.cn/2340515697/4477022237853046.

[113] Goose Does Not Gugu, "The Power of Cultural Rendering Can Be Said to Be a Booster That Ignites the Enthusiasm of the People," Weibo, January 29, 2020, https://m.weibo.cn/5491372381/4466197192282037.

[114] Hollow-Conscience Xu Kaiwen, "A City, Thanks to the Country," Weibo, March 21, 2020, https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/241427301.html?weibo_id=4484996175811513.

[115] Huimin Wang, "Talking about 'Cultural Self-Confidence' during the Epidemic," College counselors online, March 15, 2020, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/UqZn49_m0ebG_KfvspVh5w.

duced power to enforce instructions in a top-down manner.[116] The individual contributions of everyone in society were acknowledged, including children, the elderly, poor villagers who donated money and food,[117] and female nurses who shaved their hair.[118] These were ascribed to the Confucian concept of benevolence and kindness towards others.[119] Collectivism as a traditional cultural value would have motivated Chinese people to give up their individual interests for the interests of the country when accepting lockdowns and self-isolation. The Confucian values of self-discipline, self-restraint, preparedness, and diligence helped prepare people to accept loss of income, take precautions for emergency deposits and supervise each other's compliance with epidemic containment rules.[120] Interestingly, the social elites (media outlets' coverage of academics) describe these traditional cultural values as being inscribed in the populace's blood,[121] with collectivism "run[ning] through the blood".[122]

When China sent medical support teams and supplies to foreign countries in March 2020, media outlets organized campaigns alongside charity organizations to collect donations.[123] State media asked netizens whether the "demeanor of a great power demonstrated by this initiative [was] worthy of praise?".[124] The news outlet *People's Daily* used the hashtag #Prevention and

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[116] Hubei Chuyun Law Firm, "Peng Dejiang, Interpreting the Cultural Code of China's Success in Preventing the Corona Epidemic," Toutiao's Headlines – Lawyer Peng's opinion, March 27, 2020, https://www.toutiao.com/a6808846266542326285/.

[117] Wang, "Talking about 'Cultural Self-Confidence' During the Epidemic".

[118] Before medical teams from different provinces were sent to the epicenter of the epidemic in Wuhan in February 2020, hospitals instructed female employees to shave their head, to reduce the risk of contagion. This triggered heated online discussions which, in the course of year 2020, transformed into a wider public discourse of women's rights and discrimination against women in contemporary Chinese society. A reconstruction of this debate can be found here: Cornelia Bogen, "Was There a Countersphere in China's Nationalist Narration of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020? A Perspective from Feminist Internet Studies," *Interculture Journal* 21, no. 36 (2022), special issue: "Cyber Dystopia/Utopia? Digital Interculturality between Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism," 133–39.

[119] Cuiyan Yang (Associate Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Shandong Normal University), "The Prevention and Control of the Epidemic Demonstrates the Advantages of China's Excellent Traditional Culture," *Toutiao Dazhong Daily – Today's headlines*, April 28, 2020, https://www.toutiao.com/a6820485218701410829/.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Wang, "Talking about 'Cultural Self-Confidence' During the Epidemic".

[122] Yang, "The Prevention and Control of the Epidemic Demonstrates the Advantages".

[123] Phoenix Satellite TV, "Phoenix Satellite TV, Mammoth Foundation and BGI Gene Signed a Contract for the Global Public Welfare Action against the Corona Epidemic," March 23, 2020, https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/241222146.html?weibo_id=4485706300461965.

[124] CCTV, "Chinese Anti-Epidemic Expert Team Sets off for Italy," Official account of CCTV, March 12, 2020, https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1660923826184164179&wfr=spider&for=pc;

Control of Epidemic Highlights the Advantages of Chinese Culture# (with 1,55 million readings), concluding that:

> In contrast to the Western cultural confines of individualism, liberalism, and isolationism, China has always adhered to the values of collectivism, family, patriotism and shared destiny, fully demonstrating its cultural advantage [...] in unifying the whole country [...].[125]

Chinese scholars pointed out that it was the Confucian concept of benevolence and kindness towards others that prompted the government to send medical teams and materials to foreign countries.[126]

Similar to the social elites of journalists and academics, internet users on platforms like Weibo, Toutiao, and WeChat praised Chinese cultural values for having played a crucial role in epidemic control. Commenting on a CCTV news report about people in India burning a puppet symbolizing the Corona virus,[127] one user remarked that instead of such religious practices, the "spirit of mutual help in China's excellent traditional culture" served as a guiding reference point.[128] This idea of India as "backward" and "superstitious" was, as Li showed, employed in Chinese pandemic public discourse against India, but did not explain why the EU or the USA failed to contain the virus.[129] Li argues that while Chinese internet users interpreted the alleged refusal of Europeans and U.S. Americans to home quarantine and to wear masks as a sign of cultural difference, they ridiculed and labelled the behavior of Indian people (e.g., bathing in the Ganges River during a religious festival) as "backward". In doing so, Chinese internet users would have repeated the discursive strategy of 'otherization', a strategy employed by Western media when referring to China's pandemic policies during the early stage of the pandemic.

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see also: Huan Li et al., "Chinese Anti-Epidemic Expert Team Sets off for Italy Today," *Sichuan Daily* (reposted by *Beijing Daily*), March 11, 2020, https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1660846149827401797&wfr=spider&for=pc.

[125] People's Daily Online, "Weibo Discussion Topic: #Prevention and Control of Epidemic Highlights the Advantages of Chinese Culture#".

[126] Yang, "The Prevention and Control of the Epidemic Demonstrates the Advantages".

[127] CCTV News Client, "A Statue of a Corona Virus Monster Was Burned in the Streets in India. A Total of 61 Cases Have Been Confirmed," Minnan Net, March 11, 2020, http://www.mnw.cn/news/world/2259784.html.

[128] Poet and Orion_, "Although I Don't Think It Is Good, I Respect the Local Culture," Weibo, March 11, 2020, https://m.weibo.cn/5850773857/4481215853669765.

[129] Yawen Li, "Can we 'Breathe together' with Fate: Revisiting Sino-Indian pan-Asianism under the Crisis of the Epidemic in India," *The Paper*, May 8, 2021, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_12541750.

Moreover, similar to the social elite, social media users employed metaphors of blood and genes to describe Chinese people's deep internalization of traditional Confucian values that successfully guided them through the pandemic. Users claim that values like collectivism[130] and "feeling like a family"[131] rooted in the "blood"[132] enabled a united fight against the epidemic. Fearless medical workers, an "incredible unity", and the willingness of people to contribute to society are described as Confucian values "engraved in our genes".[133] Commenting on a news report by state television CCTV featuring the return of Chinese medical teams by mid-March from abroad,[134] a user ascribed the willingness of people to help each other to the "family culture" rooted "in the genes of every Chinese person".[135]

Online users also employ body metaphors when they attribute cultural values to foreign countries. Chinese media reported that the U.S. Department of Health made a television statement on 9 March 2020 urging the younger generation in the USA to not be afraid of the coronavirus because it was mostly the elderly that died.[136] Commenting on that report, a user described the Confucian concept of "filial piety" as being fundamentally opposite to the concept of "natural selection" "in the bones" of Europeans and Americans.[137]

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[130] ANNA_Y_B, "#Italy Asked China for Urgent Help. ## Chinese Anti-Epidemic Expert Team Sets off for Italy #," Weibo, March 15, 2020, https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/241432143.html?weibo_id=4482758308954737; see also: Celia·Nele, "The Covid-19 Epidemic Has Overwhelmed the World, and Culture, Ideology, Capital, Medical Resources, Social Structure, People's Consciousness... Are All Vividly Displayed in the Process of Responding to This Epidemic," Weibo, March 13, 2020, https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/241438088.html?weibo_id=4482060742030466.

[131] Sage turtle, Untitled, Weibo, April 4, 2020, https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/241205218.html?weibo_id=4489902295028037.

[132] Host Wangtian, "#Confirmed Cases Outside China Reach 1050828 Cases#," Weibo, April 13, 2020, https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/241206217.html?weibo_id=4490707831667117.

[133] Celia·Nele, "The Covid-19 Epidemic Has Overwhelmed the World".

[134] Boyu Sui, "'Thank You for Working Hard for Hubei!' The National Emergency Medical Rescue Teams of Shaanxi and Hainan Returned Today," *CCTV News Client*, March 17, 2020, http://m.news.cctv.com/2020/03/17/ARTIL510FYmEYABXUrSl1i0B200317.shtml.

[135] Dream, User Comment to CCTV News "Medical Teams Have Started Their Evacuation from Hubei!#," Weibo, March 17, 2020, https://share.api.weibo.cn/share/241429197.html?weibo_id=4483442563315650.

[136] YZM, "US Medical Director Says 'Relax' on Covid-19: Because Young People Are More Likely to Die from Influenza," *Global Times*, March 11, 2020, https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1660850929286342385&wfr=spider&for=pc.

[137] One of the Hundred Schools of Scholars, "Facing the epidemic, Europeans and Americans exposed the concept of 'natural selection and natural elimination', which makes people feel a bit stunned," User comment on Weibo, March 12, 2020, https://m.weibo.cn/2490734504/4481572696420835.

Although the sketched discourse supports scholars' observation that attempts by media outlets to spur nationalist sentiment were primarily to cultivate a sense of self-assurance in domestic audiences,[138] the emphasis of cultural factors after China had contained the first wave also suggests that it was meant to counteract international anti-Chinese discourse. The findings presented here support the observations by other researchers that the struggles of other countries to contain the pandemic were often mocked or even celebrated by internet users in Chinese public discourse.[139] This is further supported by the numerous videos posted on Bilibili in 2020 and 2021, watched by millions of internet users, that comment on how other countries were handling the pandemic, with netizens proclaiming "the collapse of Western values"[140] and Western democracy.[141] Netizens concluded that young Chinese people would no longer look at the West as a role model.[142] Since youth are the target audience of the video sharing platform Bilibili, with three-quarters of users in 2017 being below 25 years old,[143] we can assume that this young generation was part of an online public promoting nationalistic sentiment during the pandemic, either as active media producers of such videos, as passive viewers, or as active discussants (e.g., commenting on videos with barrage subtitling, where registered users add a large number of text comments that appear onscreen and follow the timeline of the video).[144] These findings support Wang's observation that China's relative success in handling the spread of the virus during the first wave nourished nationalist sentiment among the youth.[145]

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[138]   Wang, "Reporting and Combating the Health Crisis," 158.

[139]   Yeophantong et al., "A Relational Reflection on Pandemic Nationalism," 552.

[140]   Xianjian, "The Collapse of Western Values during the Epidemic," Bilibili, March 25, 2020, https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1hE411w7S1?from=search&seid=10662298040820423441.

[141]   Guanchacn, "[Yi Sharp Language] From Biden's 100-Day Rule to India's Corona Virus Epidemic, Is Western Democracy Alive? Please See for Yourself," Bilibili, April 30, 2021, https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1Cv411L7Zf?from=search&seid=10662298040820423441; see also: Guanchacn, "Macron: China Has Successfully Delivered Vaccines to Other Countries, and Western Leaders Feel a bit Ashamed," Bilibili, February 5, 2021, https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1pV411B7eL?from=search&seid=16725095386509425190.

[142]   Li Paian Zhao, "Chinese People No Longer Look up to the West. Chinese Young People Are Becoming More and More Confident! The Epidemic Reveals the Failure of the System in Western Countries," Bilibili, April 3, 2021, https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV11K4y1N7gq?from=search&seid=10662298040820423441.

[143]   Seio Nakajima, "The Sociability of Millennials in Cyberspace: A Comparative Analysis of Barrage Subtitling in Nico Nico Douga and Bilibili," in *China's Youth Cultures and Collective Spaces: Creativity, Sociality, Identity and Resistance*, ed. Vanessa Frangville and Gwennaël Gaffric (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 106.

[144]   Ibid., 99.

[145]   Wang, "The Global Pandemic and China's Relations with the Western World".

5   Conclusion

After China had contained the first wave of the pandemic, the sentiment in public discourse shifted from patriotism as an expression of special concern for one's country, to nationalism as an expression of defensive feelings justifying (discursive and actual) hostile acts against others.[146] This shift appeared to be fueled by the interaction of negative Western media coverage of China's initial epidemic policy, China's comparatively quick epidemic containment between 20 January and mid-March 2020, the time delay for the outbreak to reach Western countries, and the Chinese general public's urge to counterattack foreign criticism.

After the outbreak had been officially announced, patriotic discourse was directed towards domestic audiences. It was mainly initiated by the CCP and state media to appeal to national unity at a time when public criticism of government policies (online censorship of user statements about the outbreak of an unknown virus) endangered political stability. In contrast, nationalistic discourse stemmed from the urge to counterattack criticism raised by some Western media. It was mainly carried forward by internet users (including youth) and social elites, who not only praised China's own efforts in containing the epidemic but contrasted it to the poor handling of it by foreign countries. The flames of nationalist sentiment were fanned by depicting the populace of China as a coherent community (defined by descent and Confucian culture, which was allegedly inscribed into Chinese blood and genes) that were culturally better equipped to handle the epidemic than most Western countries. In doing so, Chinese discourse evoked older orientalist stereotypes on 'Confucianist collectivism', used it as a source for nationalism and for rejecting criticism from the international community (e.g., staging human rights as incompatible with Confucianism).

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Five conclusions can be derived from these findings. First, critical reactions of some Western countries to China's initial response to the outbreak were considered to be external threats that provoked a 'counterattack posture' in Chinese public discourse. Hence, external attributions and self-perceptions dynamically interact in a globalized world of interconnected online publics to construct imagined communities of nationality. Second, by demonstrating how Chinese online publics ideologically construct nationalism based on a collective

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[146]   Yeophantong et al., "A Relational Reflection on Pandemic Nationalism," 559.

political *and* cultural identity, it has been shown that the identification of specific nationalism categories within a certain time frame of a given discourse can help to identify a tipping point from patriotism to nationalism. This case study suggests it was the debate of distinctive cultural factors allegedly shaping the responses of different countries to the pandemic that helped promote this turning point. Third, interactive, multi-directional, digital communication channels have transformed the relationships between the Chinese government, elites, and general public. This was a vertical relationship within the CCP-led nationalism of the 1990s but became horizontal during the Covid-19 pandemic with state media outlets and internet users having jointly stirred up nationalistic debate. As the availability of social media has further spurred participation in public online discourse, any future study on varieties of nationalism should shed light on different actors' contributions to shaping the social construction of imagined communities. As this study did not consider how nationalist discourse related Confucian values to Chinese Han culture, future studies could explore the role of ethnic minority groups in fostering, challenging, or not impacting (due to the absence of their voice in public discourse) the social construction of a national identity based on the notion of a culturally homogeneous group. Another outlook for future research is to inquire into the sustainability of Chinese pandemic nationalism, since this study of Chinese pandemic nationalism focused on 2020 and 2021 without comparing the findings to events in 2022, when the second wave hit China.

Fourth, despite the fact that Asian intellectuals (e.g., from China, Malaysia or Singapore) and the Chinese leadership from the 1980s onwards have proclaimed a Confucian revival (i.e., that is a "deterritorialized" or new Confucianism represented as a general characteristic of East and Southeast Asian societies[147]), we have seen how Chinese pandemic nationalism again reduces Confucianism to Chinese territory. This is similar both to what 19th-century missionary Jesuits – inspired by the contemporary self-image of the Chinese bureaucratic elite – did in their representations of China as a Confucian state,[148] and to what 20th-century Chinese intellectuals did when writing Chinese history.[149] There is even a parallel between the Confucian revival and Chinese pandemic nationalism in that they both seek to refute Western orientalist evaluations of Confucianism. The Confucian values of harmony, familism, and patrimonialism that Max Weber considered to be an obstacle to the development of capitalism in China have been re-interpreted by advocates of the Con-

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[147]   Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," 109–10.

[148]   Ibid., 105.

[149]   Ibid.

fucian revival as functional to capitalist development.[150] As this study has demonstrated, it is exactly these Confucian values, combined with collectivism, benevolence, and self-restraint, that are re-interpreted by today's Chinese discourse participants as functional to China's successful epidemic containment. In this respect, ironically, Chinese pandemic nationalism scales down Chinese intellectuals' millennia-old debate of Confucianism to a reduced set of values which rather corresponds to Western orientalist ideas of Confucian mentality. Finally, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on nationalism suggests that the future development of Chinese nationalism could center around a sense of superiority of the Chinese Model of politics and an imagined community based on Confucian cultural identity.

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[150] Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," 109.

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Ngọc Hân Lê[*]

The Olov Janse Collection: Material Evidence for the Han-Viet Burial Tradition

Abstract: In the 1930s, the Swedish archeologist Olov Robert Thure Janse conducted excavation expeditions in Indochina. His expeditions revealed brick tombs in North Vietnam during a period when Vietnam was under the occupation of imperial China. The discoveries allowed scholars to gain new knowledge about the ceramic tradition in Vietnam and are one of the most important collections in dating the Han-Vietnamese ceramic wares. The Han-Viet ceramic wares and burial goods in particular are not well researched. To improve this situation and to encourage further research, this article will introduce some of the burial goods of the Olov Janse collection and the burial tradition in the area, which, among other things, followed the Đông Sơn culture. Furthermore, besides the burial goods of the Olov Janse collection, the article also offers a short critical reading of the historical background of the period in which the excavations were conducted, which was dominated by Eurocentrism and a colonialist approach to archaeology. The article concludes that on the whole, the abundant discoveries in the brick tombs are evidence for the influence of Chinese culture in northern Vietnam.

Keywords: Vietnam; China; Han-Viet Social Class; Đông Sơn; ceramics; burial tradition; brick tombs

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1   Introduction

The collection of Olov Robert Thure Janse is one of the most important collec-
tions in dating the so-called Sino-Vietnamese[1] or Han-Vietnamese[2] ceramic
wares. Janse's excavation expeditions revealed brick tombs in North Vietnam,
during a time period when Vietnam was historically under the occupation of
imperial China. His expedition allowed scholars to gain new knowledge about
the ceramic tradition in Vietnam. Furthermore, the Han-Vietnamese ceramic
wares from this time period and collection, which are mainly burial goods, re-
flect the direct influence of China on the Vietnamese ceramic culture. Through
this collection we are able to study the burial tradition at the time and which
kind of ceramic types were used. Besides helping to date this specific ceramic
group, the expeditions and excavations of Olov Janse in Indochina[3] are the ma-
terial evidence for the existence of the so-called Han-Vietnamese social class.
Although the Janse collection is one of the most important collections in dating
the Han-Vietnamese social class, little research on it has been realized so far.
This article emerged from the work on the current author's dissertation, which
focuses on Vietnamese ceramic culture, and only briefly engages with the Janse
collection and the burial tradition at that time. As such, it is the goal of this
contribution to initiate further research on the Han-Viet social class and its as-
sociated burial goods. Furthermore, this article aims to provide food for
thought for subsequent critical discussions of the Olov Janse expeditions to In-
dochina, as they occurred during French colonization of Vietnam.

    First of all, because of his contribution to Vietnamese ceramic culture, this
article will shortly illustrate Olov Janse's biography and how his expeditions to
Indochina came about. In this context, the article cursorily deals with the po-
litical situation of Vietnam during the times of the expeditions. Following
Janse's career in archaeology and a critical discussion of his expeditions, the
development of the Han-Viet social class and the nature of burial traditions in

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[1]   The term 'Sino-Vietnamese' pertains to the Chinese-derived elements in Vietnamese culture.

[2]   The term '*Han Hàn* 漢' refers to the Han dynasty 漢朝 (206 BCE – 220 CE), which ruled over
Imperial China. Furthermore, the Han Chinese are also an ethnic group in present-day China
(they are the largest ethnic group in China). Because of the dynasty's prominence in Chinese
history, Chinese people began identifying themselves as the 'people of Han Hànrén 漢人'.

[3]   The term 'Indochina' was coined in the early 19th century, emphasizing the cultural influence
of Indian and Chinese civilizations on the area. The term was later adopted as the name of the
colony of French Indochina. French Indochina, also referred to since 1887 as L'Union Indochi-
noise, comprised present-day Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. At that time Vietnam was divided
into Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina. See Helen West, *Insight Guides Vietnam* (London: APA
Publications Ltd, 1995), 30.

Han China and *Đông Sơn* Vietnam will be explained. Finally, the article will delve into detail about the objects that were found during the excavations of Janse and his team.

2 Janse's Archaeology Career and His Indochina Expeditions

Olov Robert Thure Janse was born in 1892 in Norrköping, Sweden. His first archaeological work in Indochina was from 1934 to 1935 when he was the director of an expedition sponsored by 'La Direction des Musées Nationaux of France', the 'École du Louvre' in Paris, the 'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)' in Hà Nội, and the French colonial government of Indochina. His second expedition to Indochina, supported by the same sponsors, took place from 1936 to 1938. Janse is best known for his excavations at Đông Sơn[4] and nearby related sites during these two expeditions, as well as for his three-volume publication on this work. His third expedition included both Indochina and the Philippines, sponsored by the Harvard Yenching Institute and the EFEO.[5]

The first volume of his survey is the result of the archeological excavations in Indochina from 1934 to 1939. The purpose of his campaign was to study Chinese civilizations in Indochina, especially under the Han dynasty, and its possible connections with the West. They explored several tombs in present-day North Vietnam. The most numerous tombs were discovered in the province of Thanh Hóa 清化 in northeastern Vietnam in the districts of Hà Trung, Hậu Lộc, Đông Sơn, and Quảng Xương, whereas in the region of Lạch Trường in Hậu Lộc and Bỉm Sơn in Hà Trung, the most important groups of tombs were discovered. Their fieldwork brought to light many bronze, ceramic, lacquer, and wooden objects as well as some textiles, but in the destructive humid climate of Vietnam, wood, leather, bone, or any other organic material decayed rapidly.[6]

To go back to the thought that the purpose of all of his expeditions was to research the possible connections with the West, it is appropriate to briefly discuss the political situation at the time, as Janse's motivations were quite Eu-

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[4]   The *Đông Sơn* culture was a Bronze Age civilization in the Red River Delta. This culture was characterized by the manufacture of richly decorated bronze drums, which were used as musical instruments. These kinds of drums were also found in different places in mainland South-East Asia and China. See William J. Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow, 1998), 71.

[5]   Wilhelm G. Solheim II, "Olov R. T. Janse 1895–1985," *Asian Perspectives* 26 (1984): 9–13. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42928101.

[6]   Olov R. T. Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), preface, V–X.

rocentric. The expeditions occurred during a time period when Vietnam was administered by a French governor, and as such, the natural resources of Vietnam and its people were exploited to the benefit of the French government. Thus, there was a close entanglement amongst archaeology, imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism. This type of colonial archaeology resulted in the Indigenous populations falling victim to imperialism while simultaneously seeing their lands confiscated, artifacts looted, and ancient remains commodified. This was also the case during the expeditions conducted by Janse; in the end, the excavated objects were shipped to several museums outside of Vietnam. After Janse and his team finished the first expedition, they returned to Paris in May 1935, where a collection of the most typical objects was placed on display for about a year in an exhibit that took place in the Musée Cernuschi. The objects of were then divided between the EFEO (Hà Nội) and the museums of Paris (the Louvre, Guimet, and Cernuschi), with the majority of the objects remaining at the Musée Cernuschi. On the occasion of the visit of Crown Prince Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, the Prince received a small collection of the most characteristic objects from their findings on behalf of the Museums of Paris. As a token of appreciation for their financial support, another small collection was presented to the Musée du Cinquantenaire (present Musée Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire) in Brussels.

The first mission was sponsored by the French Department of National Education, the Museums of Paris, the government General of Indochina, and the EFEO. The excavated objects from the second expedition, with few exceptions, were sent to the Musée Guimet in Paris in 1938. The third expedition was sponsored by the Harvard-Yenching Institute of Cambridge, Massachusetts, with all of the finds being shipped there. Initially, they were unpacked and placed on display in the Semitic Museum in Cambridge. In April 1941, an exhibit of more spectacular finds was opened in the Fogg Museum in Cambridge. In April 1942 another exhibit with special emphasis on the historical and documentary interest of the collection was opened at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Cambridge.[7]

As demonstrated, most of the artifacts that Janse excavated during his three expeditions in Vietnam can be found in museum collections around the world today. In the 1930s/1940s, most of the artifacts were located at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris. At that time, René Grousset (1885–1952) – a close friend of Janse – was the director of the museum. Grousset's continuous support of Janse's expeditions surely account for why the artifacts were shipped and archived there. The Musée Cernuschi holds about 1,300 objects of bronze and pottery from Janse's first expedition, as well as other objects of stone, iron,

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[7]   See Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, preface, V–X.

glass, and bone. Some artifacts from Janse's expedition are also on display at the Musée Guimet in Paris, the National History Museum and the Vietnam National Fine Arts Museum, both in Hà Nội. Part of the aforementioned collection offered as a gift to the Crown Prince Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden includes one complete ceramic vessel, 72 potsherds, 25 stone artifacts, 23 bronze objects, 34 beads, and 30 other artifacts. The Prince would later donate these artifacts to the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm.[8]

Despite this Eurocentric and colonial background of the expeditions and the displacement of the objects found, the excavated materials remain highly relevant to research on the Han-Viet group.

3   The Emergence of the Han-Viet Social Class

The emergence of the Han-Viet social class is historically related to the occupation of Vietnam by China. With the defeat of the rebellion of the 'Trưng sisters 紅婆徵'[9] in 43 CE by Ma Yuan Mã Viện 馬援 (14 BCE – 49 CE) and his troops, the Han-Viet Era began. Ma Yuan was a Chinese military general who led the Han army through difficult terrain towards the Red River Delta where they arrived in early 43 CE.[10] The intrusion of Ma Yuan and his troops had far-reaching consequences for Vietnam. Before Ma Yuan, the southward expansion of the Chinese government held Vietnam under its control, but it was still an indirect administration through the local Vietnamese aristocracy. After repressing the Vietnamese revolt, the Han tightened their control over the rebellious people and forced their integration into the Chinese empire. Vietnam was no longer a semi-autonomous territory, but directly incorporated into the Chinese administrative structure, and as such, was fully exposed to Chinese political institutions, art, architecture, literature, and the written language.[11]

Besides these major changes on the administrative levels, Han soldiers were deployed to protect the Han officials. These adjustments relocated thou-

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[8]   Anna Källén and Johan Hegardt, *The Archaeologist in-between Olov Janse 1892–1985,* (Göteborg & Stockholm: Makadam Publishers, 2021), 453–455.

[9]   The two sisters, Trưng Trắc 徵側 and Trưng Nhị 徵貳, were two highly educated daughters of a Lạc lord. They led the revolt against the Chinese administrators, after the dissatisfaction of the Vietnamese people when taxes were raised. The older sister Trưng Trắc declared herself queen when she successfully banished the Chinese administrators. Although the rebellion of the 'Trưng sisters' did only last for approximately three years, they became cult figures in Vietnamese history for their role as heroic patriots. See Duiker, *Historical Dictionary of Vietnam*, 258.

[10]   Keith Weller Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 39–43.

[11]   See William J. Duiker, *China and Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1986), 3–4.

sands of Han Chinese to Vietnam and thus were considered to be one of the first major establishments of Han immigrants in Vietnamese society. Before Ma Yuan's strategy to relocate thousands of Han Chinese to Vietnam, there had already been occasional relocations of Chinese in Vietnam every time Vietnam was occupied by China, but not to this extent. Under Ma Yuan's strategy, not only did Han officials immigrate to Vietnam, but also soldiers settled there. However, this massive number of immigrants led to a certain problem: the formation of their own families. Some men married women who came from northern China and were sent there just for the marriage. Others married women who were of Chinese descent, though most married local women.[12]

Besides the emerging Han soldiers and local Vietnamese groups, another group was formed: the Han-Vietnamese social class. Han officials and Vietnamese locals built this new social class, which, over time, became increasingly characterized by local concerns, partly reflected through their engagement in periodic revolts. Despite the passage of time and the alleged benefits of Chinese rule, many Vietnamese refused the occupation outright, and the full integration of the Han-Viet people into Vietnamese society resulted in them turning against their former home country.[13]

4   Burial Traditions

Tombs in ancient China can be categorized into different groups by means of materials (timber, brick, stone), locations (open-pit, cave, rock), structural type (flat-roofed, arched, vaulted), layout design (single-chamber, multiple-chamber, front-rear), and decorative details (pictorial-bricks, stone-relief, mural-painting).[14] During the Han dynasty, the center of ancestral worship shifted away from royal temples to tombs of powerful local rulers and finally to individual tombs. Consequently, tomb construction and burial goods became more important, and, over time, the construction of these tombs acquired temple-like architecture.[15]

Generally, a Han tomb consisted of a substructure and a superstructure complex. The underground chambers varied in material, form, layout, and construction. During the Han dynasty, timber tombs were gradually replaced by

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[12]   Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam,* 45–49.

[13]   Duiker, *China and Vietnam*, 4.

[14]   Qinghua Guo, "Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China: Old and New Questions," *Architectural History* 47 (2004): 2, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1568814.

[15]   Hung Wu, "Enlivening the Soul in Chinese Tombs," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55/56 (2009): 22, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25608834.

masonry tombs. The number of subsidiary spaces increased and the tombs and were equipped with daily household objects as well as miniature versions of those objects. The Han Chinese believed that the afterlife was similar to the present life in the manner of living; consequently, the deceased was treated as if alive, and provided with all necessities, including a kitchen and bathroom.[16]

Before the arrival of Han immigrants, the burial tradition in the area followed the Đông Sơn culture (ca. 10,000 BCE – 200 CE), where the deceased was buried in an earthen tomb. In these earthen tombs, the deceased was either buried without a casket, in a boat-shaped coffin, in a bamboo basket, or even in ceramic jars.[17] According to Nguyễn Văn Cường, director of the National Museum of History: "Burial is an important ritual in Đông Sơn culture, as people believe that each death marks the beginning of a new life in another world. As such, they buried the dead with their tools, weapons, musical instruments, jewelry, etc."[18]

After the settling of Han officials and Han soldiers in Vietnam, they eventually gained extensive influence over the local burial traditions. The new Han-Viet social class combined the Han and local traditions with funerary customs exemplifying this combination, with the introduction of brick tombs being a case in point. More than 100 Han-style brick tombs have been excavated in northern Vietnam, though notably, no brick tombs have been discovered further south than the Thanh Hóa province, in present northeastern Vietnam.[19] This is due to the extent of Vietnamese territory at that time, which reached no further than what is now Central Vietnam.

The composition, material, and especially the burial goods offer an insight into the new Han-Viet social class, with certain objects made especially for burial as a symbolic reminder of the world of the living. Architectural models, implements of funerary offerings, and ceramics imitating everyday objects belonged to this tradition, representing the wealth of the deceased.[20] Among the

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[16] Guo, "Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China," 1, 16, 20–21.

[17] The use of boat-shaped coffins reflected the idea that the life of a person is connected to the water, while the burial of corpses in the earth was meant to give back to the cycle of life. Văn Đoàn Nguyễn, "Dong Son culture," last modified July 25, 2022, http://baotanglichsu.vn/en/Articles/3188/16726/dong-son-culture-in-vietnam-90-years-of-discovery-and-study-part-2.html.

[18] Trinh Nguyen, "Dong Son artifacts," last modified July 25, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20220127204034/http://www.thanhniennews.com/arts-culture/dong-son-artifacts-on-display-in-vietnams-capital-34115.html#:~:text=%%20E2%80%9CBurial%20is%20an%20important%20ritual,%2C%20etc.%E2%80%9D%20he%20said.

[19] Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam,* 54.

[20] Helen Loveday, *Viêt Nam: Collection vietnamienne du musée Cernuschi* (Paris: Findakly/Paris Musées, 2006), 61.

burial goods, the durable ceramic objects depict Han-style ceramic patterns produced with materials from northern Vietnam. The Han-style ceramics differ from the Đông Sơn ceramics, which were simpler and not as sophisticated as its bronze vessels, for which it is famous. The ceramic objects were usually unglazed earthen wares with imprinted comb or wave patterns, whereas the Han-style ceramics usually featured a grayish white glaze, sometimes with green glaze spots. The most common Han-style ceramic shape was the so-called *hu* (壺), a baluster-shaped vase, which copied bronze vessels.

Besides the imitation of bronze vessels, the Han-style ceramics also copied lacquerware. For instance, it seems that lacquered wood cups with two handles were too expensive to be burial goods and hence ceramic versions were produced (Fig. 1). Janse and his team excavated these ceramic wood cups with two handles but did not find any 'lacquer version' of these cups in the Han-Viet tombs. However, such lacquered wooden cups with two handles were discovered in the famous Mawangdui tomb, which belongs to the open-pit timber tomb category. This and other tombs belonged to the family of the Chancellor of the Changsha Kingdom Li Cang 利蒼.[21] The artifacts of this tomb show a high level of craftsmanship and provide a good example that no expense had been spared for the upper class.

Fig. 1: Ceramic wood cups with two handles, 2nd to 3rd century, Vietnam National History Museum (photo by Ngọc Hân Lê).

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[21]   Mawangdui (馬王堆; lit. 'Mound of the Horse King') is an archaeological site located in Changsha, China. The site consists of two saddle-shaped hills and contained the tombs of three people from the Changsha Kingdom during the western Han dynasty (206 BCE – 9 CE). The site was excavated from 1972 to 1974. See David D. Buck, "Three Han dynasty tombs at Ma-wang-tui," *World Archaeology* 7, no. 1 (1975), 30, https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.1975.9979619.

The brick tombs and their burial objects are evidence of the material culture of the Han-Viet social class (Fig. 2). However, one must bear in mind that these brick tombs, along with their burial goods, were reserved for the aristocratic class. Even if the burial goods imitated expensive bronze vessels and lacquerwares, they were nonetheless costly. Therefore, it should be taken into account that not all Han immigrants were from a ruling class, with the majority of the immigrants of the Ma Yuan era being soldiers, laborers, and technicians.[22] While the emerging Han-Viet social class and their burial tradition suggests that Vietnamese people completely assimilated to the new rule of the Han Chinese, the discovery of ancient villages and earthen graves in Hà Nội demonstrates that the Vietnamese still maintained aspects of Đông Sơn culture. The ancient Vietnamese villagers maintained the traditional lifestyle associated with rice cultivation and fishing, and, importantly, they buried their deceased within the settlement site. The Han brick tombs and the indigenous earthen graves co-existed, interfered with each other, and continuously changed.[23]

Fig. 2: Han tomb excavated in Nghi Vệ (Bắc Ninh province) (photo courtesy of the Vietnam National History Museum).

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[22]   Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam,* 52–54.

[23]   Tổng Trung Tín, *Văn hiến Thăng Long: Bằng chứng khảo cổ học Thăng Long Civilization: Archaeological Evidence* (Hanoi: Hanoi Publishing House, 2020), 129, 137.

5   The Brick Tombs

The tombs that Olov Janse and his team excavated were mainly constructed of bricks and date back to the Han 漢朝 (206 BCE – 220 CE), Tang 唐朝 (618 – 907 CE) and Song 宋朝 (960 CE – 1279 CE) dynasties. In his report, he described the tombs as being comprised of a mound or tumulus covering a hypogeum or subterranean construction, which were generally made of bricks. Usually, the hypogeum was covered by a mound of sand, or clay mixed with sand or soil. In close proximity to the tombs, there were occasionally one or more wooden houses or shelters intended for the cult of the deceased.[24]

The excavation in North Vietnam revealed that the mound likely had the shape of a truncated pyramid on a rectangular base. Janse described this kind of tomb as being typical for the Qin 秦朝 (221 BCE – 206 BCE) and Han periods. In North Vietnam and China, the mound and the trench contained the hypogeum. They were often oriented to the cardinal points, but the orientations of the mound and of the hypogeum were not always exactly in the same axis. He noticed some differences between the tombs in China and those that he discovered in North Vietnam. The Chinese tumuli (mostly tombs for the upper-class people) were bordered by a trench or an enclosure, forming a rectangle and having four entrances which marked the cardinal points, whereas the North Vietnam tombs had no trace of such trenches or enclosures. Until today there has been no more evidence contradicting Janse's observations on that matter.

The size of the tumuli apparently corresponded to the rank of the deceased. The average size of the tumuli in North Vietnam was about 18 to 21 meters in length by 15 to 18 meters in width with a height of about 1.5 to 2 meters.[25] Most of the brick tombs are in the shape of a funnel or two semi-cylinders placed on the same axis. The entire construction measures about 6 to 8 meters in length, about 2 meters in width, and 1.5 to 2 meters in height. Above the tombs of the deceased could have been a cabin or a shelter made of bamboo and provided with a roof, where, during the period of mourning, relatives gathered to pay their respects and tributes to the deceased. However, because of the perishable nature of the materials, none of them have been preserved, though it is likely that this custom existed then, as it is a funerary custom in North Vietnam today.

The interior of the hypogeum was generally divided into two or three compartments or chambers, usually separated by arches. Because of the fact that a

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[24]   Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 3.
[25]   Ibid., 3–5.

few of the tombs[26] that Janse and his team excavated were untouched since the time of burial, with each funerary object being found in its original position, it was easy for the team to determine the purpose of the different compartments. When there was only one compartment, it was certainly intended for a coffin. Usually, food vessels were placed around the coffin or at one end of the tomb. When there were two compartments, the larger one was intended to house the coffin, and the food vessels were placed at its sides. The second compartment may also have been used as an offering hall. When there were three compartments, the central one was intended for housing the coffin, the compartment at the far end of the tomb was intended for storing the food, and the other compartment at the tomb's entrance was an offering hall. A tomb having more than three compartments was uncommon, and in those cases, Janse was not sure what purposes they served.[27] As of yet there is no research indicating their purpose.

The material used in the constructions of the hypogeum was overall brick, but in some cases, wood was used for the construction of walls and roofs. Unlike the Chinese tombs, which were made mainly of stone, the North Vietnamese tombs were constructed of bricks and wood. The bricks, which were rather brittle, were red and undecorated and measured 35 x 15 x 3.5 centimeters. Janse observed that no mortar was used, with the interstices rather being filled with a very thin layer of sand or earth.[28]

Generally, there was only one hypogeum under each mound, but in some cases, two tombs were covered by the same mound, which may have belonged to a married couple, with the larger of the two possibly belonging to the husband. In some cases, the larger tomb was emptied of its funerary deposits and the body and the smaller construction were left untouched. This phenomenon could be explained by the rule that requires the bones of ruling-class Han Chinese men to be returned to their homes for burial, regardless of where they died. As such, the remains of the wife were probably left behind while those of the husband were sent to China to be buried amongst his departed relatives.[29] Another explanation for why the tombs often contained no skeletal remains is the fact that bones and any other perishable material disintegrated due to the corrosive soil and harsh climatic environment of North Vietnam.

The place and orientation of a tomb are very important in Chinese and Vietnamese culture, and therefore, the location of the brick tombs was likely cho-

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[26] Tombs that were discovered untouched since the burial have been found: *Lạch Trường* 3, 4, 13A, *Hoà Chung* 1B, *Thung Thôn* 1A, 1B and *Mân Thôn* 1A (according to Janse's categorization).

[27] Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 16–17.

[28] Ibid., 7–8.

[29] Ibid., 14.

sen very carefully. Some factors may have been the connection to streams, aerial currents as well as hills and mountains – the so-called *Yin* and *Yang* principle.[30] The choice is considered to be very important not only for the deceased but also for the relatives still alive. It is believed to this day that the deceased one, on entering a posthumous life, becomes a powerful spirit who is capable of influencing the welfare of the entire family. It is still customary among the Vietnamese to impute misfortune in the family to a parent inadequately buried. In such cases, an exhumation of the body is conducted and the remains of the deceased are buried elsewhere in a place carefully selected by a geomancer, who consults a special compass.[31] Despite the current cultural weight of burial places, the orientation of the brick tombs seems to have followed no general pattern, though it might be expected that the old Chinese rule of orientation in the direction of north and south would be prevalent, with the dead facing south.

One tomb that stood out from the others because of its size was the tomb from Đại Khối, a district in Thanh Hóa. This tomb has five compartments: a central one, square in cross-section, and four diametrically arranged elongated ones at each side. The central compartment was perhaps the offering hall, the first compartment may have been intended for food storage, the second and third compartments may have been intended to house the coffin of a man and a woman, and the last compartment may have been intended as the entrance.[32]

The untouched tomb Lạch Trường 4 was very helpful regarding the classification of the compartments. This tomb was divided into three compartments: a large central one for the coffin and western and eastern compartments. The former was used for food storage while the latter was used for offerings. The offering hall contained a few objects, like vases, dishes and a lamp. It is possible that these objects were placed like this for the altar of the ancestors. A wooden or lacquered wood table or a tray for offerings have not been found, maybe because its material may have decayed. In general, the putative offering hall was larger or higher than the food storage compartment. Often there was found a niche or alcove formed by an arch supporting the far wall, but its purpose is unknown.[33]

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[30] The concept of *Yin* and *Yang* is associated in Chinese thought with the idea of a cyclical theory of becoming and dissolution and interdependence between the world of nature and human events. Thus, the surroundings (streams, aerial currents as well as hills and mountains) play an essential role in how the location and orientation of a tomb are decided. See "Yinyang," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified September 3, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/topic/yinyang.

[31] Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 21–24.

[32] Ibid., 13, 17.

[33] Ibid., 17–18.

Other untouched tombs besides Lạch Trường 4 are Lạch Trường 3, 13A, Hoà Chung 1B, Thung Thôn 1A, 1B and Mân Thôn 1A. These untouched tombs allowed Janse to identify the position and contents of the funerary goods. Funerary goods are clothes and objects of personal adornment, such as rings, coin charms, and beads. Other personal belongings were also excavated, such as a few bowls, and in some exceptional cases a sword and a mirror and a few objects of iron. Food and drink were also placed in the tombs preserved in jars, vases, cooking vessels, or imitations of such. Miniature house models were placed in one end of the tombs, often in a special storage room, among the jars. Most of the objects are made of terracotta, but a few are of bronze. Besides the rare bronze objects, various objects of lacquered wood, terracotta and sometimes of iron were discovered, probably connected with the idea of worship and sacrifices as lamps, incense burners, cups, and so on. These objects, of which the wooden and perishable ones were not preserved, were originally positioned near the false entrance of the tomb, and in many cases in a special compartment separated from the coffin by an arch.[34]

Of all the tombs that Janse and his team excavated in North Vietnam, only once did they discover parts of a wooden coffin (Lạch Trường 8). It was discovered placed on two transversal levels, but most likely it had been removed from its original position during a violation of the tomb. The original shape of the coffin is unknown because only the lower part of the coffin had been preserved. It could have been made from a hollowed trunk of a tree. According to the *Lǐjì* 禮記 ('Book of Rites') the custom of burying the deceased in wooden coffins became common during the Shang dynasty 商朝 (1600 BCE – 1046 BCE).[35]

According to Chinese rituals, High Officials were supposed to be buried in coffins placed inside one or two others and the empty space between the coffins was filled with shells. In the tomb Đông-ta'c 1 they discovered large shells, which may indicate that this tomb followed this particular Chinese custom.[36]

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[34]   Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 24–25.

[35]   In Chapter 35 'Questions About Mourning Rites 問喪' (*Wèn sàng*), the second passage stated: "三日而斂 · 在床曰尸 · 在棺曰柩 · 動尸舉柩 · 哭踴無數 · " (*Sān rì ér liǎn, zài chuáng yuē shī, zài guān yuē jiù, dòng shī jǔ jiù, kū yǒng wúshù*) the following is relevant: '在棺曰柩 · 動尸舉 柩' (*zài guān yuē jiù, dòng shī jǔ jiù*). This means that the deceased is placed in a wood coffin. The *Liji* 禮記 ('Book of Rites') is one of the Five Classics of the Confucian canon. The book was rewritten and edited by the disciples of Confucius and their students after the 'Burning of the Books' during the rule of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, around 213 BCE. The work describes the social forms, governmental system, and ceremonial rites. Confucius, Lu Deming, approximately 550–630 Annotator, and Xuan Zheng, Li Ji, [Jian'an, Fujian, China, 1194, 1190] Pdf, https://www.loc.gov/item/2021666359/.

[36]   Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 19–20.

The materials used for the construction of the brick tombs are also material evidence of the Han-Viet social class. As stated before, the large brick vaults, which were used for the tombs in the province of Thanh Hóa were introduced by Chinese burial customs. For instance, Chinese burial customs followed the belief that there is a spiritual afterlife to which the soul journeys after death. As mentioned, it was believed that the dead would need physical objects in the afterlife and so were buried with prized possessions, such as gold, jewelry, and pottery. These brick tombs coexisted for a time with the simpler graves of the Đông Sơn culture.

The cultural influence of the Đông Sơn appeared in the form of decorative motifs stamped on bricks. It is very likely that this type of stamped decoration did not exist in imperial China, which in turn suggests that these tombs were not necessarily of Han Chinese officials who came to administrate the region but may have been of local or mixed Han-Viet residents. These stamped bricks may be material evidence for the assimilation of Vietnamese residents into Chinese customs.[37]

6 Ceramic Objects

Among all objects found in the tombs, ceramic objects are the most common. The shape of the ceramic objects varies greatly. The most common vessels are jars, vases, large bowls and other containers for food and drink, like cups and dishes, trays or low tables for serving food or offering food, imitation of cooking vessels, kettles, steam pots, sauce pans and tripods. There are several kinds of wares, with the red ware being the most common, comprising jars, vases, cups, and house models. There are also white or almost white wares that are well-baked and were originally covered with a cream colored or slightly greenish glaze that often formed blisters. The forms of this kind of ware comprise vases, bowls, incense burners, and lamps. There are several ceramic jars, lamps, cups of a well-fired blue-grayish or grayish ware of unknown origin. There are also very soft and badly fired whitish, slightly pink-, and cream-colored wares (jars, vases, house models, miniature furniture, etc.) of unknown origin. In addition, there are a few specimens of hard, well-fired brownish ware, covered with a brownish glaze, perhaps imported from China. Lastly, there are a few objects of grayish, very soft, unglazed and badly-fired ware. The interior is

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37 Monique Crick, *Viêt Nam: Collection vietnamienne du musée Cernuschi,* (Paris: Musées Association, 2006), 72–73.

black, owing to the low temperature of firing, and the shape is mainly globular.[38]

The so-called tripod ceramic objects, which were discovered in the brick tombs, clearly demonstrate the influence of Chinese culture in Vietnam. Before the cultural encounter with China, this shape may have not existed in Vietnam, because no tripod ceramic objects have been discovered before the excavation of the brick tombs. The tripod is a three-legged vessel, which was one of the most typical ceramic products of ancient China. It appeared in Neolithic times in the Yangshao culture 仰韶文化 (5000 BCE – 3000 BCE) in Central China. Two main types that occurred are the '*Li lì* 鬲 tripod', the legs of which are hollow, and '*Ding dǐng* 鼎', with solid legs. The '*Li* tripod' was placed directly into the fire where its contents could be heated and cooked more efficiently than in earlier vessels. Over time tripods of the '*Ding*' type replaced the '*Li* tripods', and notably, only the '*Ding*' type tripod is represented in the Han tombs in Vietnam. The *ding* vessels appeared in China during the early to middle Neolithic period, about 9000 BCE.[39] Its body is bowl-shaped and on the belly is a horizontal dish-shaped rim. At the mouth there are two diametrically placed vertical handles, each in the shape of a band, and at the top is an elliptic opening. The vessel is grayish, hard pasted, and covered with a light-colored glaze. Since the Bronze Age in the Erlitou culture 二里頭 (1900 BCE – 1350 BCE),[40] the classic legged vessels were used for ancestor worship, divinatory ceremonies for sacrificial offerings, or was buried with its owner in a tomb. The rank in the social and political hierarchy of a person determined the number of *ding* a person owned.[41] The shape of the contemporary *ding* vessels do not differentiate drastically from the *ding* vessels found by Janse. From that point onward, they appear both in ceramic and bronze. In the Han tombs the tripods were made out of ceramic (Fig. 3). They could have been imitations of bronze vessels used for cooking food and were probably not meant for any practical use, but were meant to be part of the funerary deposit and a symbolic reminder of the world of the living.[42]

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[38] Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 27–29.

[39] "Ding," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 Jul. 2018, last modified October 16, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/art/ding.

[40] "Erlitou culture," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 21 Jul. 2013, last modified February 13, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Erlitou-culture.

[41] "Ding," *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

[42] Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 33–34.

Fig. 3: Ceramic *ding* vessel, 2nd to 3rd century, Vietnam National History Museum (photo by Ngọc Hân Lê).

House models represent an important group among the ceramic objects (Fig. 4). Although the house models found in North Vietnam are generally less elaborate and less skillfully made than those found in China, they still are of great documentary interest, as they provide detailed information about the architecture of the Han-Viet period. The houses are often accompanied by models of enclosures and of different household utensils and furniture and sometimes there are imitations of stoves, ladders, wells, and so on. In general, the house models give a good idea of what daily life looked like for both Chinese farmers who settled in Vietnam during the Han period as well as for an average person during the Han-Viet period.[43]

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43   Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 41–43.

Fig. 4: Terracotta house model, ca. 1st century, Vietnam National History Museum (photo by Ngọc Hân Lê).

According to Taylor, these house models indeed depict farmhouses, which indicates that the owners of the house models were once landowners whose wealth derived from agriculture. Furthermore, Taylor states that these models resemble those found in China and strongly suggest that the landlord families in China had their counterparts in Vietnam. These landlord families were probably wealthy merchants or powerful officials who accumulated land.[44]

The general plan of these residences is simple: there is a square court with a wall (in several cases two parallel walls) with the entrance, which possibly faced south. The enclosure was originally protected by narrow saddle roofs and the exterior of the walls was occasionally decorated with horizontal and vertical strokes. The parallel walls were divided by walls into small rooms, probably intended for the servants, slaves, and cattle, with the upper floor reserved for the masters of the house. A small structure that was sometimes placed above the entrance of the enclosure may have served as an outlook or

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[44]   Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam,* 50.

watchtower. The houses are almost cubical in shape, but the walls sometimes lean slightly outwards. They are generally one story, in a few cases two. The roof was constructed of split bamboo stems. The main entrance to the house is generally a square and on the walls are holes in the shape of a keyhole, a triangle, an upside-down T, or a narrow elongated horizontal or vertical rectangle, which probably served as windows. To reach the second story, an opening either in the wall or in the floor was inserted to place a staircase, which could be taken out in case of danger. The reason why the Chinese placed these miniature houses in the tombs may be that these models, with their various accompanying objects, were to remind the deceased one of their earthly residences and the duties they must continue to fulfil in their posthumous life. Alternatively, it could have been meant as a residence for the beyond. Even to this day, the Vietnamese and Chinese funerary traditions offer the deceased a house model, but nowadays they are made of multicolored paper and are burned at the burial.[45]

The abundant pottery discoveries in Han tombs allows the categorization of the pottery from that period as follows: objects imported from China, Han style objects made in Vietnam, and Han-Vietnamese objects exhibiting both Chinese and Vietnamese elements. These objects can also be categorized as unglazed earthenware, glazed earthenware and stoneware.[46]

7   Bronze Objects

The quantity of bronze objects is not as numerous as ceramic objects due to many tombs having been looted. The bronze objects are often rather brittle. They are generally greenish or greenish-gray and the surface is often corroded. A mold for casting axes, an unfinished axe and an unfinished vase were discovered in Đông Sơn and may indicate the existence of a local bronze industry.[47]

A bronze lampstand in tomb Lạch Trường 3 depicts a kneeling human figure (Fig. 5) with indeterminate, non-Chinese facial features accompanied by ten dwarfish musicians. This could be the product of a local artistic tradition in Vietnam. In general, the discovery of lampstands indicates the use of leisure time with night time entertainment.[48]

Besides the objects mentioned above, the excavation team discovered objects of iron, silver and gold, lacquer, textiles, wood, glass, jade, beads, and

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[45]   Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 41–43.

[46]   John Stevenson and John Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics: A separate Tradition,* (Chicago: Art Media Resources, 1997), 102.

[47]   Janse, *Archaeological Research in Indo-China*, 45–47.

[48]   Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam,* 50–51.

Fig. 5: Bronze lamp in the shape of a kneeling man, 3rd century, Vietnam National Fine Arts Museum (photo by Ngọc Hân Lê).

stone, though these discoveries were not numerous due to the fact that organic objects like lacquer, textiles and wood do not survive well in the destructive climate of North Vietnam. However, in a few cases lacquered objects were preserved. For instance, in tomb Thung Thôn 1B, a lacquered wooden box was discovered near a bronze mirror in the north-eastern part of the tomb. It is possi-

ble that the bronze mirror was placed inside the lacquered wooden box and the metallic salts of the bronze preserved the wood and surrounding soil. Also, in tombs Bỉm Sơn 3, 9 and 10, fragments of red and black lacquer wooden bowls and boxes were discovered. Textiles were even more rare. In tomb Mân Thôn 1 and Lạch Trường 3 fragments of textiles that were found, some of which seemed to be silk, were too small to detect any patterns.[49]

The numerous burial objects show a combination of Chinese influence as well as local Vietnamese customs. The *Ding*-shaped tripod (a three-legged vessel) and the house models as burial objects are clearly influenced by Chinese culture, whereas the kneeling human figurines with indeterminate non-Chinese facial features show the influence of the Đông Sơn culture.

8   Conclusion

During the excavation of these brick tombs, Olov Janse was not aware of the importance of the ceramics he and his team unearthed. He intended to study Chinese civilizations in Indochina, especially under the Han dynasty and its possible connections with the West. His intentions and perspective were Eurocentric and of a colonialist influence. Nevertheless, his expeditions revealed important burial goods as well as evidence demonstrating that the brick tombs and the indigenous earthen graves co-existed, interfered with each other, and continuously changed. Although it is not clearly proven that these brick tombs are the final resting place of Han-Chinese immigrants, the numerous objects at least reflect the slow intermingling of Đông Sơn and Chinese traditions, with the ceramic wares of the tombs reflecting a high material culture. The durable ceramic objects reveal Han-style ceramic patterns produced with materials from northern Vietnam. The emerging Han-Viet social class and the associated burial tradition suggest that some people from the ruling class in Vietnam had adapted the material culture of China, but at the same time, the discovery of ancient villages and earthen graves in Hà Nội demonstrates that some Vietnamese still maintained parts of the Đông Sơn culture with the tradition of burying their deceased within the settlement site in earthen graves. These brick tombs might be related to Han-Chinese immigrants and local Vietnamese who may have intermarried, producing new or hybrid burial traditions. The Han-Chinese people, who settled down in North Vietnam, may have considered this area as their home, but without human remains it is difficult to prove. No complete human remains have been discovered in these brick tombs; only in Mân Thôn 1 some teeth were discovered. As mentioned before, the corrosive

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[49]   Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam,* 53.

soil and harsh environment of North Vietnam is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the lack of preserved human remains.[50]

The abundant discoveries in the brick tombs are at least evidence of the influence of Chinese culture in northern Vietnam. The numerous shapes, decorative elements and motifs in the tomb furnishings in North Vietnam demonstrate the impact of Chinese artistic influence there, while also maintaining traditionally Vietnamese characteristics.

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[50]   Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam,* 50–55.

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