

The ROHATYN CENTER *for* GLOBAL AFFAIRS  
STUDENT ACADEMIC JOURNAL | VOLUME 3



**G**LOBAL  
**R**EADER ..... 2019





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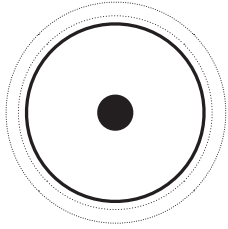
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*Printed May 2019*



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# Foreword

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This year, the Global Reader celebrates its third birthday. This unique student academic journal continues to provide a platform for exceptional student work in the field of global affairs. We are committed to the production and dissemination of knowledge about international and global issues, spanning cultures, borders, and disciplines.

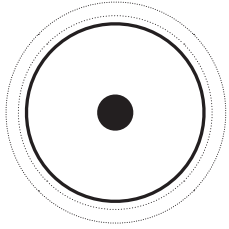
Students at Middlebury College produce high-quality academic work every day, but the opportunities to share it outside the classroom remain scarce. The Global Reader seeks to fill this void. The topics discussed in the third volume range from international security, activism, and unique cultural traditions to humanitarian and sociological research. Nonetheless, the authors share the understanding of the importance of a global perspective in an increasingly complex international system.

I would like to thank the Rohatyn Student Advisory Board for their help in the editing process. Their insights regarding the scope and purpose of this academic journal, as well as their attention to stylistic detail and emphasis on quality over quantity, were crucial in selecting the final entries for publication. Additionally, I am extremely grateful for the advice and input of Valerie Costello, whose expertise in graphic design was invaluable throughout the entire creative process. Finally, an important thank you goes out to Charlotte Tate, RCGA's associate director, and Tamar Mayer, RCGA's director, for their work towards the enrichment of students' academic lives through exposure to global issues at Middlebury and beyond.

I invite you to engage fully with this publication; read it, form strong opinions, share them, and keep both a writing utensil and an open mind close at hand.

Sincerely,

Robin Vincent  
*RCGA Program & Outreach Fellow*  
Middlebury College '18



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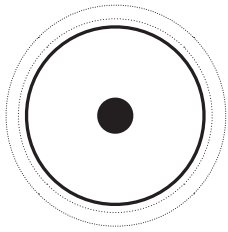
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## Go Hard and/or Go Home? Migrant Children's Negotiation of Educational Choices, Aspirations, and Attainment in Beijing, China

### Abstract

This thesis excerpt examines how migrant children navigate educational trajectories in contemporary urban China. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 21 adults who attended six migrant schools in Beijing, my study focuses on the processes in which individuals made their educational decisions and how legal status, families, and schools influenced those decisions. I divide my findings and analyses based on my participants' educational attainment—those with an associate's or a bachelor's degree and those without. I find that legal status structures migrant students' educational aspirations and resources over time, although the degree of its impact on students' educational attainment varies based on their school's and family's resources. In particular, migrant schools saliently shape migrant children's educational aspirations and orientations, which influence these individuals' negotiation of their pathways after middle school. Indeed, the educational processes migrant youth experience during and after middle school have a strong impact on their long-term educational attainment.

**M**y research focuses on the educational experiences of migrant children before, during, and after middle school in Beijing in order to explore their educational pathways and prospects in contemporary urban China. I explore how migrant schools and families have affected these students' aspirations, resources, and trajectories in the context of migrants' structural educational obstacles, focusing on legal status as a force of stratification. As a sociology of education project, my research examines the following questions: 1) How do legal barriers like *hukou* act as a dimension of stratification that limits migrant children's educational choices? 2) In what ways have migrant schools and families influenced those migrant children's educational goals and resources? 3) How have migrant school students perceived and negotiated their educational trajectories after middle school? With my interviewees' narratives, I hope to project a multifaceted snapshot and individualizing lens of the migrant children education issue. Migrant children's education issue makes China's internal migration experiences and related educational processes a unique and important case study for social stratification because it can shed light on the intersection of the sociological phenomena of migration, education, and legal status that are applicable in many parts of the globe in an era of migration.

### China's *Hukou*, Migration, and Migrant Children's Education

China's *hukou*, the household registration system, is the de jure institutional force that stratifies and restricts migrant children's educational choices. During the central planning era, the state established *hukou* in 1958 in order to manage population, social policies, and limit migration from rural to urban areas. However, when the 1978 capitalistic market reform triggered large-scale industrialization, urbanization, and demand of labor, the state loosened migration restrictions. The *hukou* system registers citizens as either rural or urban according to their place of birth. Children's *hukou* is linked to their mother's birthplace: *hukou* is hereditary, producing and reproducing inequality of legal status at birth. Indeed, *hukou* structures social stratification as it entitles the holder to access local government's social services such as housing, healthcare, pensions, and most importantly for the sake of this study, education.

First, who is a "migrant" in China? The official government census defines migrants as those who have migrated domestically to a region where their *hukou* is not registered and where they have lived for at least half a year ("Population Status" 2017, 1). Typically, migrant workers have low education levels and come from poorer countryside areas to developing or developed urban areas in search for better economic opportunities. State discourses and media reinforce

the appeal of migration by portraying the urban lifestyle as more “advanced” than the rural one, therefore influencing rural parents’ aspiration that their children will become “modern” urban citizens (Goodburn 2015, 2). However, migrants still are legally treated as part of the rural population, or “urban floating population” (*liudong renkou*), and they are not eligible for urban welfare benefits reserved for “locals” (Chan 2010, 359). Indeed, *hukou* divides citizenship into two categories, thus geographically, socially, economically, politically, and educationally perpetuating a “two-class urban society” of rural and urban residents (Chan and Zhang 1999, 830).

Since the late 1990s, family migration has become more common than individual migration (Chen et al. 2012, 109). As a result, many children of migrants were born in cities or came to cities with their parents—they are the so-called “migrant children,” officially labeled as part of the migrant population. In other words, they are another social category and identity constructed by *hukou* and migration phenomena. “Migrant children” refer to those aged 0-17 whose *hukou* is not registered at a location where they have lived for at least half a year. As of 2015, China had about 270.84 million children, in which migrant children accounted for 12.6% of the total children population, or about 34.26 million (“Population Status” 2017, 2). Migrant children embody the rising tension of in-betweenness that is neither fully rural nor fully urban, as they do not fit neatly into China’s standard urban-rural categories in an era of rapid social transformation. Similar to their urban-rural status tension, migrant children’s education situation is structurally embedded in the urban-rural divide.

Structurally, *hukou* shapes migrant children’s access to primary, secondary, and tertiary educational opportunities, dictating what they are legally entitled to in a certain region. China’s dominant education system is one of public education run by the Ministry of Education. It consists of six years of primary school, three years of middle school, three years of high school (after taking *zhongkao*, the National Senior High School Entrance Examination), and four years of college (after taking *gaokao*, the National College Entrance Examination). The legal framework, the Nine-Year Compulsory Education Law of 1986, guaranteed nine years of public education for children aged six to fourteen “regardless of sex, ethnic status or race, family financial conditions, religious belief, etc.” In 2017, China had about 18.97 million migrant children within the age range that qualified for the Nine-Year Compulsory Education: about 14.05 million (~74%) were of elementary school age and 4.92 million (~26%) of middle school age (Urbanization Observe 2018). However, there is a major gap between nominal mandates and reality within China’s decentralized education system. Local authorities are delegated to implement the law, so they have strong political and economic incentives to keep public education exclusive to local *hukou* holders. Many municipalities have counteracted the central government’s orders by issuing their own mechanisms to raise the bar of public school entrance with difficult exams, quota systems, expensive fees, and/or extensive document requirements that migrants tend to lack (Feng 2014, 9). Also, migrant students are not allowed to take *gaokao*, the key to higher education access, in urban regions where their *hukou* does not legally belong. Thus, migrant children’s education issue in China is a

core case of education inequity with implications on the social stratification and mobility of millions.

Trying to meet migrant children’s nine years of “compulsory schooling” needs, the so-called “migrant children schools,” “migrant self-run schools,” or “migrant workers’ children schools” emerged. These schools tend to focus on primary education, with a smaller number of them offering middle school education as well. Migrant children’s demand for middle school education is smaller than that of elementary schools, because many migrant parents send their children to their *hukou*-origin regions to attend middle and high schools in order to prepare for standardized exams. Unlike public schools, migrant schools require neither documents nor *hukou*—only a fee affordable to most working-class migrants. Typically, they are located in urban villages (*chengzhongcun*) that have large migrant communities. As marginalized, privately run schools, migrant schools have little to no state recognition, funding, and social prestige.

Indeed, migrant children’s education exclusion is the outcome of institutional processes that operate at macro, meso, and micro levels. At a macro-level, *hukou* institutionally determines migrant children’s educational resources from primary to tertiary education in both urban and rural locations. At a meso-level, local urban authorities tend to only take responsibility for the education of local-*hukou* children within their legal jurisdictions, perpetuating the exclusivity of education resources. At a micro-level, local residents and educators are the “insider” group with little disposition to share their “entitled” educational infrastructures and resources with migrants who are the “outsiders.” Together, these urban institutions and residents are “social collectivities [seeking] to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles” (Kabeer 2000, 92). After middle school, migrant youth have limited options: to move to their rural hometown to attend an academic high school and prepare for *gaokao*, to stay in the city where they cannot take *gaokao*, or to join the labor market. Thus, at a young age, migrant youth have to make decisions among limited choices that have ramifications for the rest of their educational lives. In contemporary China, the hegemonic understanding of higher education as the basis for children’s upward mobility is deeply normalized, as are the structures and systems that perpetuate it (Woronov 2011, 83). As indicated in *The China Society Yearbook*, migrant children’s education issue was—and, I argue, still is—the most pressing and sensitive problem involving social inequality in China (Ru et al. 2009, 93).

### Educational Reproduction Processes

Although there has been extensive literature on both Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of reproduction and China’s migrant children education issue, few have applied a Bourdieusian lens to explore migrant children’s educational perceptions, experiences, and attainment in relation to various levels and locations of structural forces (Feng 2014, Koo et al. 2014, Li 2011, Li 2013, Wei 2016, Yu 2016, Zhang et al. 2015). My research uses Bourdieu’s theoretical frameworks of capital, field, and *habitus* to conceptualize how migrant families and schools affect migrant children’s educational aspirations and orientations (*habitus*) and resources (economic, social, and cultural capital) and how migrant children use those resources to maneuver through educational systems (fields)

structured by legal status. Migrant students' educational resources are theorized in terms of economic, social, and cultural capital influenced by their families and schools. My study conceptualizes their educational aspirations and expectations as part of their *habitus*, which shaped their perceptions and actions that influenced their educational attainment. Lastly, schools—including urban migrant schools and rural public schools—are conceptualized as fields that affected migrant students' *habitus* and capital. My research participants, all with similar marginalized legal status in the urban field, negotiated their educational aspirations and pathways as they responded to an environment of immense institutional barriers. According to Bourdieu (1992), a field is an arena of social relationships, positions, and norms characterized by power differentials among different interests seeking to pursue resources. Comparing a field with a card game, Bourdieu describes that a field provides the “rules of the game.” What influences one's “feel for the game” is *habitus*, which is essentially the ways in which the culture of a particular social class is internalized in the individual throughout the individual's primary and secondary socialization—through family and school, respectively. The legally, geographically, academically, and culturally divided urban-rural educational systems required different rules of the game, and how my interviewees thought of their educational possibilities, used their available educational resources, and navigated urban-rural educational systems had a significant effect on their educational outcomes.

Despite differences in experiences with migrant schools and educational attainment, all interviewees' stories reflect that the key component that differentiated their educational aspirations and attainment were their schooling experiences at migrant schools, which critically influenced their perceptions of the future and hence pathways after middle school. My interviewees' educational experiences mirror Bourdieu's argument that timing and one's “feel for the game” are important in the stratification processes of schooling. The interaction between participants' personal “feel for the game” regarding educational transitions and educational institutions played a key role in their educational stratification processes. I placed an emphasis on individuals' decision-making processes and understanding of their own education in order to highlight the involvement of structural forces and individual actions in certain times and spaces. I divide my findings and analyses based on my participants' educational attainment—those with an associate's or a bachelor's degree and those without. The Appendix at the end shows my participants' detailed profile of characteristics. Although I interviewed 21 people, I selected only seven interviews that are the most relevant to my research questions and analyses.

**Migrant School Attendees with Lower Educational Attainment** Stories from Si Cheng (Moon School), Yang Kun (Ocean School), Long Kai (Sun School), and Tong Mei (Ocean School) reflect the diverse ways in which migrant students did not and could not access higher education. Their cases illustrate migrant students' reduction of their own educational aspirations and expectations in relation to their experiences with and awareness of institutional obstacles. Their resources—or the lack thereof—from their schools and families played a critical role in their failure to access certain educational resources and orientations at critical

educational phases such as during migrant middle school, which influenced their long-term educational attainment.

Both Si Cheng and Yang Kun had a *habitus* that was not conducive to educational aspiration and achievement as they were involved with a counter-school culture, which emphasized rebellious views and behaviors against education and authority figures like teachers. Compared to Si Cheng's, Yang Kun's parents were more proactive in enhancing Yang Kun's educational possibilities, and also they fortuitously lived near Ocean School, the best migrant school in Beijing. Although both of them developed their *habitus* in similarly adverse educational environments, their different encounters with migrant schools led to radically different education and life outcomes.

In Si Cheng's case, his counter-school behaviors have contributed to his current low education level as a middle school dropout. In elementary school, his *habitus* oriented toward counter-school activities gradually developed as his teachers increasingly perceived, labeled, and treated him as a burdensome and “bad” student who did not conform to the strict Chinese educational system. His teachers frequently used corporal punishment against him and prohibited him from physically being in the class. Si Cheng had put a lid on his educational aspirations before they even had a chance to develop due to an adverse educational environment without any supportive teachers. Si Cheng's counter-school perceptions and behaviors reached a height during middle school at Moon School—he got into a fight and cut a peer's leg. Before, during, and after the incident, Moon School did not offer him any support although there were possibilities for the educators to intervene and help. The clash between the institution and the individual paved a path for social reproduction. In retrospect, he understood the relationship between structural and personal factors that would have potentially undermined his educational pathways even if he had aspired to attend college. He had a fixed perception that the rules of the education game were always against him. As his family could not provide him with much parental support and social connections, his negative experiences at migrant school overwhelmingly shaped a school-to-prison pathway after he was expelled from middle school.

In contrast, Yang Kun was engaged in counter-school activities and was expelled from middle school in his rural hometown, but attending Ocean School in Beijing completely transformed his *habitus* and educational capital, and hence educational attainment. Similar to Si Cheng's teachers, Yang Kun's teachers in rural China used corporal punishment and prohibited misbehaving students like him to be in the classroom. After dropping out and experiencing exhausting working-class jobs as a youth, Yang Kun internalized the hardships of the real world outside of school and agreed with his parents that he would return to school. Even though Yang Kun's academic performance was so poor that he failed Ocean School's entrance exam, the leadership of the school still encouraged him to start middle school all over again to catch up. At Ocean School, Yang Kun fell prey to “recidivism,” getting into a fight with others. In contrast to Moon's principal, Ocean's principal did not expel these “bad” students—instead, she used an empathic pedagogical approach by supporting them to reflect on themselves and creating a community engagement club for them. Academically, Yang Kun improved tremendously thanks to



constant support and encouragement of his teachers.

At Ocean School, Yang Kun became aware that so many people worked hard in order to see him succeed, and such awareness made him more open to the importance of education. However, gradually, his perception of the future had changed as he gained more understanding of the rules of the higher education game such as *gaokao* exam. Evaluating his chances with *gaokao*, he decided to lower his expectations of higher education. The change in perception led to the change in his behavior—he wanted to “strive less” after middle school. He enrolled at a public vocational school and subsequently worked in a white-collar job related to interior design. Although he did not achieve the “conventional” pathway of higher education success, he has achieved more positive educational and occupational outcomes than Si Cheng thanks to the positive changes of educational resources, behaviors, and perceptions he had at migrant school.

Long Kai, although not involved in any counter-school culture, had more heightened experiences with lowering his educational expectations in relation to his experiences with structural educational obstacles. As suggested by previous literature (Fang et al. 2014), the more time migrant students spend at migrant schools, the more their academic performances decline. Long Kai’s educational aspirations and resources weakened increasingly throughout migrant schools, which structured his *habitus* as he realized that certain educational pathways might not be possible for migrant kids like him. In particular, when he enrolled at Sun School’s middle school, he experienced increasing difficulty completing assignments and had teachers who did not care about his academics at all. With low levels of education themselves, poor workplace treatment, and stressful migrant lives, his migrant school’s teachers struggled to support Long Kai and his classmates with their limited personal and institutional capacities.

Long Kai and his classmates had a solid “feel for the game” in the education fields: they knew that the schooling game had harsh rules against them because legally they could not take the *gaokao*—the exam needed to access higher education—in Beijing after middle school. Such experiences with structural barriers and poor school resources caused him to lower his expectations regarding educational possibilities—his *habitus* changed in reaction to the bitter structural realities. In the second year of middle school, he dropped out—he and his family thought that further schooling would have been meaningless given the inevitable future obstacles. Afterwards, Long Kai started working in the blue-collar sector as a waiter, a security guard, a construction worker, and a package deliverer, which became his career. The doors of educational institutions were shut, and those of the migrant labor market became his only choice, which was a product of structural educational inequities.

Tong Mei, unlike Si Cheng, Yang Kun, and Long Kai, was a high-aspiring and high-achieving student at a migrant middle school, but moving to a rural middle school during the final and most important year of middle school became detrimental to her educational aspirations and resources. Migrant students with experiences in both rural and urban systems may succeed in one but not the other, especially for those who re-migrate to the countryside and adjust to different educational norms after middle school. At Ocean School, principal, teachers, volunteers, and alumni were Tong Mei’s role models who solidly instilled

ideas and norms of higher education in her. However, when she moved to a rural hometown for familial reasons, she had a decline in educational resources and orientations because of the different educational norms that she had not anticipated—and could not adjust to—in the rural hometown academically, linguistically, culturally, and socially.

She aspired to attend college during Ocean School, but she lowered her expectations because of the challenges she faced navigating the rural education field as a “return migrant child” who had no previous experiences with and awareness of life in rural China. Subsequently, she enrolled at a vocational school instead of an academic high school. At her vocational school, her college dream was further undermined as she experienced more gaps between expectations and reality: she realized that she would not make it to a good-quality university via the vocational school pathway. At the end, she has achieved only a vocational educational level. The case of Tong Mei illustrates that navigating the rural and urban educational fields with little personal awareness and institutional and familial support has an adverse impact on migrant students’ academic aspirations and attainment.

#### **Migrant School Attendees with Higher Educational Attainment**

In contrast, those with at least an associate’s degree—Shuo Hao (Cloud School), Lin Lin (Ocean School), and Yu Zhen (Ocean School)—accessed stronger social and cultural resources such as support from teachers and volunteers at migrant schools. Stories from Shuo Hao, Lin Lin, and Yu Zhen illustrate that a *habitus* oriented toward achievement and resources from personal and institutional levels converged to further their educational perceptions, actions, and attainment. In all of these cases, social and cultural capitals from migrant schools helped them develop and/or reinforce a *habitus* oriented toward benefiting from educational resources, which positively affected their pathways after middle schools. These individuals have achieved exceptional educational outcomes as migrant school students, reflecting the exceptional resources available to them as they navigated the urban-rural education fields with a certain extent of awareness of the importance of educational decisions. Lin Lin’s and Yu Zhen’s stories in particular demonstrate the high aspirations and resilience that migrant children develop in despite detrimental structural circumstances (Ensor 2010; Wu et al. 2014).

In the case of Shuo Hao from Cloud School, his aspirations toward higher education were developed and reinforced thanks to resources such as volunteer mentors and private foundation during migrant school. As previous research (Dumais 2006; Roksa and Robinson 2017) argues, cultural capital positively influences the educational experiences of students from marginalized backgrounds more than those of students from more privileged backgrounds. For example, less advantaged students may be more motivated to make use of their cultural capital to succeed in school. At Cloud School, Shuo Hao was at a scholarship class sponsored by a corporate foundation’s ten-year philanthropic project. Being in the scholarship class allowed him to access not only invaluable resources such as mentors but also an environment of similarly high-achieving, academically oriented migrant students. These mentors acted as both social and cultural resources for migrant students. For example, he shared, “...they chatted with us about possible future education planning.” Such

institutional support strengthened his educational aspiration as he felt a stronger motivation to give back, similar to Yang Kun from Ocean School.

Unlike many migrant students, Shuo Hao had normalized the idea of college in his *habitus*. Comparing the educational outcomes of those in his rural town and migrant school, he wanted to differentiate himself from them—he wanted to attend college. Thus, in the last year of middle school, he moved to rural China because he was aware that he had to take the *gaokao* in order to fulfill his college dream. After taking the *gaokao* in rural China, he enrolled at a three-year professional university and obtained an associate's degree. Compared to Tong Mei who barely had any idea of the rules of the schooling game such as urban-rural educational differences and college recruitment, Shuo Hao was more strategic at using his resources to advance his educational goals—he knew what he wanted and how to work hard to get it.

Unlike Shuo Hao and Yu Zhen, Lin Lin was a middle school dropout. However, the timing of her academic aspiration and resource enhancement converged as she returned to school during middle school—such a transformation led to her effective use of the academic capital available to her. Similar to Yang Kun, Lin Lin dropped out of middle school and did blue-collar labor as a youth. Working in the real world and learning about her family's hardships at first hand changed her perceptions of education: she realized how exhausting the lives of migrant workers were. Although the dramatic change in her *habitus* oriented towards education brought her back to school from the rough migrant labor market, structural educational barriers were still immense. Planning to start middle school all over again, she had tried three migrant schools—until she found Ocean School. At Ocean, Lin Lin gained social and cultural capital like English summer camp, international volunteers, dedicated educators, and motivated peers.

Although Lin Lin was aware of barriers like *zhongkao* and *gaokao*, she and her family did not know how to plan her educational pathway at all. Activating its impressive social capital, Ocean School collaborated with a public vocational school that agreed to offer a class with an academic high school curriculum for Ocean School graduates exclusively. Most importantly, the high school offered them workshops on future planning, and so Lin Lin learned about possible future options such as vocational school, the job market, *gaokao*, and college. Ocean School and the high school helped her deeply internalize the possibility of college—the want had become a need, which then became a reality. Lin Lin decided to move to her rural *hukou* town to repeat the final year of high school and prepare for *gaokao*, which was an excruciating experience because of rural education field's harsher standards and competition. At the end, she attended four-year university, and her educational aspirations were so strong that she tried to attend graduate school, but she did not get her ideal score on the graduate school exam.

Lastly, Yu Zhen achieved a high educational attainment through *zikao*, the self-study education system, unlike the majority of the college-educated individuals in my sample and in China who obtained college degrees through the conventional *gaokao* pathway. As Lin Lin and Yu Zhen were classmates, Yu Zhen had similarly exceptional academic capital from the Ocean School and vocational high school, where they received an

academic high school's curriculum. Although she was a driven student who wanted to attend college, she did not dare to aspire to college attainment because she perceived it as inaccessible for migrants like her who constantly had to worry about education access. With struggles accessing middle and high schools, she did not know what to expect of her future: she was afraid to dream too big. Unlike Lin Lin, she still had a 'go-with-the-flow' mindset regarding her future pathway after high school because of her perception of structural uncertainties, and she did not return to her rural *hukou* hometown for *gaokao*.

Through a volunteer from Ocean, she learned about *zikao*, which was the only institutionalized, "legitimate" option for adults who are no longer in school to pursue higher education. Though *zikao* was extremely difficult, she self-studied and passed 31 exams and wrote a thesis, receiving both an associate's and a bachelor's degree. Obtaining degrees via *zikao* is exceptional in and of itself, and even more so for migrant students like Yu Zhen who had to overcome structural challenges at every educational stage. She framed achieving a higher educational level as part of self-improvement, perceiving educational success as a core part of her identity. Unlike the other eleven interviewees who accessed higher education via *gaokao*, she fulfilled her college dream through a pathway that reflects the strength of a *habitus* oriented toward high educational aspirations and motivation and diverse academic capital that she developed and reinforced as a result of Ocean School.

## Conclusion

More than a local case study limited to China, my research sheds light on comparable educational processes of choices, aspirations, and attainment faced by young migrants globally who also confront dichotomous categories and limited educational choices due to their legal status. In China, the second-generation migrant youth growing up in their parents' adopted cities symbolizes the ambiguity of legal status in the administrative regulation, the sociocultural order, and the educational system. The institutional processes structured by the *hukou* system contribute to migrant children's marginalization throughout various times and spaces in their educational careers enable "the practices of legal exclusion of sovereign subjects within national boundaries" (Ling 2012, 282). The *hukou* system restricts their educational choices, aspirations, and outcomes within the legally, culturally, and spatially divided urban-rural educational systems. Critics of education policies against migrant children such as Ming Lu argue, "Most of China's urban issues are caused by cities' inadequate public services" (Wang 2017). As a matter of fact, choice is a "medium of power and stratification" (Giddens 1994, 75). Migrant children's "educational choices" reflect the structural inequities that China has been grappling with in an era of ongoing economic, educational, political, demographic, and social transformations. As China is searching for its home in the global order, where is its migrant children's "educational home" in the highly stratified urban-rural educational systems? As my interviewee Ling Shi stated, "All the choices were not really choices... Can we really choose to stay in Beijing or go 'home' for school?"

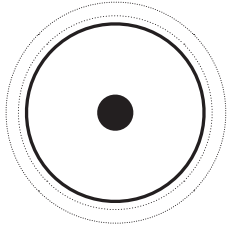
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## Appendix: Research Participants' Profile

<b>Name</b>	<b>Migrant School</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gaokao</b>	<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Father's Education Level</b>	<b>Mother's Education Level</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Hometown Province</b>
Tong Mei	Ocean School	21 (1997)	No	Vocational high school	Middle school	Middle school	Female	Henan
Yang Kun	Ocean School	22 (1996)	No	Vocational high school	High school	Elementary school	Male	Henan
Jiao Lan	Ocean School	22 (1996)	No	Vocational high school	Elementary school	Middle school	Female	Shanxi
Hong Lin	Ocean School	20 (1998)	No	Four-year university	Lower than elementary	Elementary school	Male	Henan
Fei Jun	Ocean School	22 (1996)	Yes	Three-year university	Lower than elementary	Elementary school	Male	Henan
Nan Ying	Ocean School	21 (1997)	No	Three-year university	Middle school	Middle school	Female	Hebei
Fu Ze	Ocean School	20 (1998)	Yes	Three-year university	High school	Lower than elementary	Male	Henan
Luo Lu	Ocean School	26 (1992)	Yes	Four-year university	Elementary school	Elementary school	Female	Henan
Ling Shi	Ocean School	26 (1992)	Yes	Four-year university	Elementary school	Lower than elementary	Female	Anhui
Sheng Yun	Ocean School	27 (1991)	Yes	Four-year university	Middle school	Lower than elementary	Male	Anhui
Lin Lin	Ocean School	26 (1992)	Yes	Four-year university	Middle school	Middle school	Female	Henan
Yu Zhen	Ocean School	27 (1991)	No	Four-year university	High school	High school	Female	Shanxi
Bin Shan	Bridge School	28 (1990)	Yes	Four-year university	Elementary school	Elementary school	Male	Inner Mongolia
Han Dan	Bridge School	21 (1997)	No	Vocational high school	Elementary school	Elementary school	Female	Hebei
Yi Ren	Moon School	25 (1993)	Yes	Four-year university	High school	Middle school	Male	Henan
Si Cheng	Moon School	27 (1991)	No	Lower than middle	Lower than elementary	Lower than elementary	Male	Anhui

Shuo Hao	Cloud School	22 (1996)	Yes	Three-year university	Middle school	Middle school	Male	Sichuan
Hua Min	Cloud School	22 (1996)	No	Middle school	Middle school	Elementary school	Female	Henan
Jin Ting	Forest School	27 (1991)	No	Middle school	Lower than elementary	Lower than elementary	Male	Anhui
Long Kai	Sun School	30 (1988)	No	Lower than middle school	Lower than elementary	High school	Male	Henan
Chao De	Sun School	28 (1990)	No	Academic high school	High school	Lower than Elementary	Male	Hubei



Shan Zeng '19

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## Weaving Traditions with Modernity: Interdisciplinary Research on the Cultural History of Japanese Sacred Rope

### Abstract

The term *shimenawa*, or “enclosing rope,” refers to sacred ropes used to construct sacred space in the worship of kami (Shinto gods) by demarcating the boundary between the world of the kami and that of the human. Today *shimenawa* are often part of the shrine architecture and constitute an indispensable element of Japanese religious space. However, although *shimenawa* are imbued with significant religious functions and cultural meanings, they have until now been grossly ignored by architectural historians and art historians, appearing only in ethnographic scholarship. Combining the textual and visual history of *shimenawa* with contemporary information collected through the author’s fieldwork in Japan, this paper traces the development in *shimenawa*’s materiality and symbolic meanings.

The term *shimenawa*, or “enclosing rope,” (most commonly written as しめ縄 or 注連縄 in Japanese), refers to sacred ropes used in the worship of *kami* or Shinto gods (Fig. 1). They are boundary markers between the sacred space of the kami and the mundane space inhabited by humans. *Shimenawa* are stretched before or around the residence or body of a kami, which can be either a shrine or a magnificent natural structure such as a waterfall, a large tree, or a monumental stone.

The earliest written evidence in Japanese for the use of *shimenawa* can be found in the earliest chronicles of Japan—*Kojiki* 古事記 (“Records of Ancient Matters”) (ca. 712 CE) and the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (“The Chronicles of Japan”) (720 CE). In addition, *shimenawa* also frequently appeared in the *Manyōshū* 万葉集 (“Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves”)—the earliest existing anthology of Tanka poems compiled during the Nara, and the *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (“Anthology of Tales from the Past”)—an eleventh century collection of over one thousand folktales during the late Heian period. The earliest visual depictions of *shimenawa* that have survived, however, date much later to the Edo period. They are found in widely published print books known as *meisho zue*, 名所図会 (“illustrated guidebook to the famous places”) and individual woodblock prints known as *meisho-e*, 名所絵 (“painting of the famous places”).

The Japanese word “shime” in *shimenawa* has three meanings in the verb-form: “*Shimeru*

(old Japanese *shimaru*) to bind, to close. *Shimeru* (old Japanese *shimu*): to occupy and *Shimesu* (old Japanese *same*): to signify” (Nitschke 1993, 95). The use of *shimenawa* encompasses these distinct but also intimately connected meanings. The act of *binding* a rope *signifies* a kami’s presence, which has *occupied* that object, area or land.

To better understand how *shimenawa* functioned, let us return to the concept of kami. The belief in kami permeates almost all aspects of Japanese religion and is not confined to Shinto as an organized religion; in fact, the belief in the power of kami is arguably one “of the most important aspects of Japanese religious life” (Holtom 1997, 9). The Japanese word kami is used to denote any entity that evokes feelings and experiences beyond the mundane human world. An 18th-century Japanese scholar, Motoori Norinaga, provides a classical definition of kami: “In ancient usage, anything whatsoever which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power or which was awe-inspiring was called kami” (qtd. in Holtom 1997, 10). Mysterious or awesome, marvelous or strange, kami coinhabit the world with human beings as “mythological divinities, powers of nature, revered human beings and even spirits of the dead” (Holtom 1997, 9). Kami are believed to have always been present in Japan; they reportedly created the Japanese archipelago and the creatures (from lesser kami to humans to animals) on these islands themselves. Kami can come to contact with humans by manifesting themselves temporarily through

natural objects or human beings (Zgheib 2001, 2). Kami disdain pollutions (*kegare*) such as filth, blood, and death. As a result, the sanctified places where the kami manifest themselves, as well as the people participating in the worship, undergo regular and repeating ritual purification (*kessai*) (Holtom 1997, 9). The idea of purification is essential to kami worship and is manifested through various renewal rituals, from the yearly replacement of village shimenawa to the reconstruction of the Ise Grand Shrines every twenty years.

In Japan, shimenawa have been an integral part of kami worship since the very beginning because of their power to cordon off anything that may cause pollution. This property has also turned them into signifiers of what is pure and sacred. The earliest kami shrines therefore consisted only of magnificent natural objects, such as trees and stones, and simple shimenawa. The Meoto Iwa (the Wedded Rocks) and the Nachi Waterfall are two examples of this kind of early shrine (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). Later on, influences from Buddhism introduced permanent architecture into kami worship: the storehouse (*kura*) and the deity hall (*shinden*) (Nitschke 1993, 67). Today all three kinds of shrine architecture coexist and are at times found side by side (Ibid.). Even in more elaborate shrine structures, shimenawa have remained an important element to the sacred precinct, often found underneath the beam of the deity halls or on a *torii* 鳥居, the symbolic gateway in front of the buildings marking the entrance to the sacred precincts of a Shinto shrine.

Many scholars and Shinto priests have claimed that the modern-day use of shimenawa, like other contemporary Shinto practices, have been unchanged for thousands of years. These ahistorical assumptions easily break down when we examine the various factors that have reshaped kami worship and Shinto from the late nineteenth century. These include the National Learning movement towards the end of the Edo period (1603-1868), the government's forceful separation of Buddhism from Shinto Meiji (Jan 25, 1868-Jul 30, 1912), the creation of *Jinja Honcho* 神社本庁 (The Association of Shinto Shrines) and shrine mergers that destroyed many local shrines and absorbed the rest into one centralized hierarchical system, the elevation of Shinto to a de facto "state religion" and the transformation of every household into a shrine up till World War II, the legal separation of Shinto from the state ordered by the occupation government, and continued globalization and urbanization (Reynolds 2001, 324).

A close look at these events reveals how the functions, materials, and meanings of shimenawa—far from being homogenous and timeless—have in fact adapted to changing social, economic, and political conditions from the late 19th century to today. In particular, I will argue that since the end of the 19th century, shimenawa have transformed significantly from ritual objects used to construct temporal religious space to elements that constitute a much more permanent presence in existing religious and non-religious space. Their symbolism has expanded to include

new meanings under the paradigm of Japanese national and cultural identity. Even their materials are changing from organic to inorganic, reflecting nationalist ideals of a modern industrialized government rather than religious aspirations common to traditional kami-worship.

### Post WWII and Contemporary: Architecturalization and Aestheticization of Shimenawa

Following Japan's defeat in WWII in 1945, the Allied occupation government instituted sweeping reforms that affected every aspect of public life (Reynolds 2001, 324). Not unlike what the Meiji government did almost a century ago, having determined that there were close ties between Shinto and war time politics (especially ultra-nationalism), the occupation government quickly placed religion at the center of their reform programs for postwar Japan. The Shinto Directive of December 1945 legally separated Shinto from the state; state funding for Shinto institutions, including Ise, was stopped (Ibid.). Shinto was no longer allowed to be taught in the public schools and on January 1st, 1946, Emperor Shōwa (Hirohito) denied his divine status (Ibid.).

Carmen Blacker (1971) has eloquently summarized the state of Shinto post World War II:

The years immediately after the war saw the collapse and disgrace of the system of State Shinto, which for a generation had sought to persuade the Japanese people that they were uniquely singled out for divine favours, and ineluctably destined to rule the world. This disgrace was succeeded by the catastrophe, unprecedented in Japanese history, of defeat and occupation by a foreign power. (571)

When the occupation finally ended in 1952, many Japanese politicians and intellectuals poured their energy into the Japanese cultural identity, feeling the need to fill the breach in Japan's cultural boundaries caused by military defeat and occupation (Reynolds 2001, 324). Such a need fell particularly on Shinto priests and leaders, who were actively searching for a new interpretation of their own religion after the humiliating US occupation damaged the image of State Shinto and tainted Shinto in general, while also facing the challenges posed by increasingly deepened globalization and secularization.

Ironically, and yet not surprisingly, the movement turned towards the communal and regional aspects of traditional kami worship—exactly the same elements that State Shinto, at its most powerful time, strived to oppress and control (Ibid.). Against this background, ritual objects like shimenawa have become a popular subject for the discourse and the use of religion leaders, politicians and intellectuals, alongside a fascination of the general public. Unlike iconic institutions like the Ise Grand Shrines and the Yasukuni Shrine, shimenawa have managed to maintain a relatively apolitical status and were minimally impacted by State

Shinto's military past. Even though there was indeed a clear connection between shimenawa and nationalism, this connection has been largely kept silent.

This apoliticization of shimenawa was achieved through a process of ahistorization and aestheticization; post WWII shimenawa serve more like decorative additions to existing architecture, made to appeal to gaze of the tourists and pilgrims and less regarded as ritual tools that create sacred spaces. The contemporary popularization of shimenawa has turned them into symbols of a unique, traditional, uninterrupted Japaneseness. This newly ascribed meaning has led to two main developments in shimenawa's usage. First, they became increasingly combined with torii and began to function as semi-permanent architectural structures. Second, they became increasingly produced by specialized artisans and workshops as opposed to being produced communally by local communities (Fig. 4). The shimenawa at the North entrance of Mount Fuji, and at the Grand Shrine of Izumo are two telling examples for how shimenawa were transformed during this period (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6).

Mount Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan and one of Japan's holiest mountains. The entire mountain has been considered a sacred realm from prehistoric times to the present and had been venerated by various religious groups (Earhart 2011, 2). However, access to the mountain was tightly restricted until the Edo period, during which it became a highly popular pilgrimage site attracting more than ten thousand pilgrims each summer climbing season (Fumiko 2005, 339-340). Today, a bronze torii with a large shiny golden shimenawa marks the north entrance of the *sandō* 参道 (pilgrimage path) that leads to the mountain's *Kitaguchi Hongou Fuji Sengenjinja* 北口本宮富士浅間神社 (North Entrance Main Sengen Shrine), also known as Fujiyoshida Sengen Shrine. Sengen Shrine (or Asama shrine) are shrines primarily dedicated to the worship of Mount Fuji. They can be found at different entry points to Mount Fuji while as well as in other parts of Japan.

The North Entrance Main Sengen Shrine used to be the common starting point for ascending Mount Fuji from the north ("Fujiyoshida Sengen Shrine—Shrine in Fuji Five Lakes"). Previously a local shrine, this Sengen shrine became part of the *Jinja Honchō* 神社本庁 (Association of Shinto Shrines) during Meiji period. In 2013, the North Entrance Main Sengen Shrine, along with eight other Sengen shrines around Mount Fuji, were recognized as a World Heritage site related to Fujisan. The trailhead is still located directly behind the right side of the shrine's main hall, and some traditionalist hikers still begin their ascent with a prayer at the shrine before passing through the wooden torii gate in the back of the shrine grounds.

First established in 1788, the bronze torii leading to the North Entrance Main Sengen Shrine is said to be the first torii built within the realm of Mount Fuji; it was built with bronze since its initial constructions ("富士山の「一ノ鳥居」"). Given that access to Mount Fuji remained forbidden to women until 1860, twelve years before the Meiji government banned the long-held exclusion of women from sacred places, the bronze torii was a forbidding sign to female pilgrims aspiring to ascend the mountain (Fumiko 2005, 339-340). In May 1962, the first shimenawa was added to accompany the torii, seven years after the torii's post-war reconstruction in August 1955 because the

pre-war torii was donated and melted down to assist Japan's war efforts in 1944 ("富士山の「一ノ鳥居」"). The large shimenawa was replaced every six years until 2001, when the replacement paused for 17 years until it was finally resumed again in 2018. It is very possible that this pause was a result of the shrine's financial hardship. After becoming recognized as a UNESCO site in 2013, the shrine's revenue has likely improved and made it possible to commission a new shimenawa; the new shimenawa was made of synthetic materials to further economize the budget. This current shimenawa was produced by a workshop located in Toyama Prefecture, that specializes in handweaving shimenawa using polysynthetic fibers (Nawawaseya "都道府県別納品実績" 2018).

The delayed decision to incorporate shimenawa into a post-war reconstruction of Shinto architecture can also be observed at the Izumo Grand Shrine, one of the oldest and most important shrines in Japan (Fig. 7). The ancient history of the Izumo Grand Shrine, together with popular belief in its power to help in the development of romantic relationships, is at the heart of its touristic and pilgrimage appeal. Recently, the largest shimenawa in the whole of Japan decorating the shrine's dance palace (*Kagura den* 神乐殿), a 1981 reconstruction, has also become a popular tourist attraction and is arguably the most effective visual symbol for the shrine. Replaced every six years, this giant shimenawa is frequently featured in advertising materials for the region's tourism industry (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9). Unbeknownst to many, however, the shimenawa is a rather late incorporation to the ancient shrine that only started after 1955 (Showa 30) ("We Making Shimenawa").

The monumental shimenawa at Mt. Fuji's North Entrance Main Sengen Shrine and at the Izumo Grand Shrine possess several commonalities that deserve our attention in this analysis. First, both are important pilgrimage or tourist sites. Second, as mentioned above, both were added to existing shrine architecture much later on. Third, unlike small and rustic shimenawa found in earlier visual depictions or at places not ascribed pilgrimage significance, they are extremely large and beautifully made. Fourth, both of them are on display for a period of time significantly longer than is traditional for shimenawa. The polysynthetic shimenawa at North Entrance Main Sengen Shrine is designed to be used for at least 15 years, while in theory its material will not naturally break down even after thousands of years. Even though the giant shimenawa at Grand Shrine of Izumo is made of an organic material—rice straw—it is still only replaced every six years; the monumentality of the object makes it financially and logistically impossible to be replaced annually. Lastly, both were made by shimenawa specialists who produce shimenawa for shrines across the nation rather than by volunteers from local communities. The preference for monumentality and permanence found in these shimenawa deviate significantly from premodern shimenawa, for which temporality holds foremost religious significance.

Klaus Antoni (1995) suggests that the construction of monumental torii out of steel during Meiji period—an "imperishable" materiality claimed to last 1300 years and not an obvious choice given Shinto's preference for organic matter—made it an embodiment of the nationalist ideals of a modern industrialized government rather than traditional kami-worship (142). If metallic torii



symbolized the ambitions of the Meiji government, what does the construction of large artisan-made shimenawa since the 1950s tell us about post-war Japan?

First, as discussed above, the humiliation of defeat and occupation produced a desire for nationalist circles to reinstate the integrity of Japanese national and cultural identity. The desire to create a boundary between what is considered Japanese and foreign, to purify Japan from the “contamination” of occupation, made shimenawa a particularly potent purifying boundary-marking symbol. The mystery surrounding shimenawa’s history and symbolism (a result of insufficient studies on objects of popular religion), combined with their omnipresence in Japanese society, keep them insulated from close examination but just visible enough to serve as an emblem of an uninterrupted Japanese identity (Reynolds 2001, 329). There is something in shimenawa’s formal qualities, too. The image of rope, given its cultural association with the Jomon period, conjures memories of the ancient past—“long before the conflicts of the twentieth century to an imagined era when there was one unified Japanese society (Fig. 10)” (Ibid.). The sense of permanence and monumentality embodied by these big, eye-catching, picture-perfect shimenawa allow them to function as visual anchors for Japanese identity in a period of time of increased foreign influences and rapid social changes.

In keeping with scholarly thought about the revived connection between Shinto and nationalist circles, I found subtle connections with the nationalist circles at most of the shimenawa sites that I have visited. At the Iinan-cho Ohshimenawa Sou-saku-kan, the workshop that produced the monumental shimenawa for Izumo shrines, I noticed a commemoration plaque displayed close to the entrance of the museum-like workshop which features a photograph with members of the shimenawa production group standing next to Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2006-7, 2012-present) in a conference like setting. Even though the display of the plaque is modest enough to easily go unnoticed, its location close to the entrance suggests its importance. Members of the workshop may easily point the plaque out to visitors when needed. As for the rope specialty shop I visited in Tokyo, the Yasukuni shrine is their top client and is featured prominently on their website. Finally, the hemp shimenawa revivalist group I met with at Ise Grand Shrines is also part of the larger national Shintoist movement. With a mildly essentialist view on Japanese culture, they hope to reestablish hemp’s role as the orthodox “Japanese fiber.”

Meanwhile, people seeking new representations of Japanese identity are aware that their choices need to differ enough from the regalia used by the ultranationalist war time government. Shimenawa have assumed a very “folk” role in post war discourse on Shinto and Japanese culture, successfully maintaining a clear distance from imageries of State Shinto. The collective silence on shimenawa’s complicated history with State Shinto is very similar to what Jonathan Reynolds (2001) has observed in the post-war treatment of the Ise Grand Shrines. After WWII, he suggests, Ise’s long cultural and political heritage was rarely at the front of discussions; instead, much of the discourse is centered around the idea of an essential Japanese aesthetics. In the case of shimenawa, most discourse centers around their formal features. Online posts and popular publications on shimenawa are filled with specula-

tions about the symbolisms behind their various shapes and their relationship to fertility worship, agricultural rites and primitive religions, etc. Shimenawa are treated like visual symbols that defy the crushing force of history and change. Ironically, this formalizing and aestheticizing impulse may have in turn impacted shimenawa’s form, changing the supposedly unchanged. As shimenawa have become increasingly treated like aesthetic objects—either as folk art or as architectural components—we have seen the emergence of artisanal professionals who specialize in the production of shimenawa, a phenomenon unknown before WWII. The high quality shimenawa produced by these artisans are put up in ‘semi-permanent’ displays and admired by domestic as well as international visitors; as their aesthetic appeal grows, their ritual power become diluted. The artisan group at Izumo has even set up a museum-like space to curate their own shimenawa (Fig. 11 and Fig. 12).

It is important to point out that the post WWII change in shimenawa should not be understood only as a political move motivated by nationalist agendas. Many Shinto leaders I spoke to were aware of the inconsistencies in their practice and were indeed reluctant to change, though economic constraints have made it very hard for them to continue the production of shimenawa in their historical form. After the occupation, as governmental funding for shrines was stripped away, shrines began to source their own income entirely from private contributions (Reynolds 2001, 326). With secularization on the rise, the donations that shrines receive from parishioners have been in a constant decline. All of my interviewees mentioned the financial challenge that contemporary shrines are facing; the situation applies to both smaller shrines and major shrines like the Izumo Grand Shrine and even the Ise Shrines.

While the budget is shrinking, the cost of producing shimenawa is on the rise. Take for example hemp and rice straw, the two most common materials for making shimenawa before WWII. Under the Cannabis Control Law passed by the Occupation government in 1948, the cultivation of hemp requires permission from a prefectural government and this regulation has been tightened over in the past decade (“Domestic Hemp Industry Facing Extinction” 2017). Together with competition from imported hemp, domestic production of hemp in Japan has been declining since WWII. Today, Japan’s hemp cultivation industry is facing near extinction (Ibid.). As its supply declined, the price for Japanese hemp has risen astronomically. At present, two pounds of Japan-produced hemp for rope-making can cost about 40,000 yen (about 360 dollars), nearly 100 times more than the cost of rice straws for rope making. Even the relatively affordable cost of rice straw shimenawa (an average of 15,000 yen per piece) can still be too much for small shrines. With rice straw also becoming increasingly unavailable, the cost is expected to rise. Since shimenawa made of organic materials are replaced yearly, the increasing price for raw materials is turning plant shimenawa into a luxury item for many Shinto shrines (Ibid.).

Despite being yet a huge investment, there are advantages towards commissioning a beautiful monumental shimenawa as well. Not only can such shimenawa bolster local pride and elicit greater support from local parishioners for the shrine, they also serve as great attractions for tourists and bring in revenues for the shrines and local communities. This seems to apply to both

Izumo Grand Shrine and the Mount Fuji's North Entrance Main Sengen Shrine, which are popular tourist sites and have actively used their monumental shimenawa in advertising materials. Ancient mysteries, reverence for the kami, national and ethnic pride—whatever these shimenawa conjure in contemporary tourists' mind, they seem to hold as much charm as the shimenawa did for Edo pilgrims.

I have primarily focused on shimenawa used in public domains above, but small shimenawa used in households in many ways follow the development we have seen in larger shimenawa. These small shimenawa have been referred to as 'shimenawa decoration' in contemporary Japan, a term that suggests the emphasis is on their visual qualities over their ritual power. The use of shimenawa in settings like restaurants and stores demonstrates the extent of aestheticization and secularization. My interviewees at the Grand Shrine of Izumo told me that the use of shimenawa developed according to shrine personnel's different interpretations of how to make people most respectful and aware of the kami. Against the backdrop of all the changes brought about by the end of WWII—political, cultural and economic—it seems to me that the monumental shimenawa at Mount Fuji and Grand Shrine of Izumo perfectly represent the ideal image of a post-war Japan. Reborn from its militarist and expansionist past, the new Japan is a well-mannered member of the international community. Not only is it very modern, orderly, and technologically advanced, but it has maintained its uniqueness (and hence exotic charm) by preserving its traditions, albeit in a highly curated manner that prioritizes traditions that are aesthetically appealing to modern eyes.

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According to historian and religion scholar Mircea Eliade (1961), the identification of the sacred in the mundane world creates reality and order for the religious. In his words, "the experience of sacred space makes possible the 'founding of the world' ... The world becomes apprehensible as world, as cosmos, in the measure in which it reveals itself as a sacred world" (63-64). Shimenawa have been important religious objects in kami worship due to their function as space markers and, subsequently, space-makers. By signifying the presence of kami and dividing the sacred from the profane, shimenawa are integral in creating experiences of the sacred space. Even as shimenawa's symbolic functions have expanded from the Edo period, they continue to evoke experiences of higher meaning through new paradigms of mass culture, nationalism, modernization, and heritage. Shimenawa not only physically and symbolically occupy the liminal space between the sacred and the profane—they also straddle the conceptual boundaries between art and craft, local and national, history and historicization.

Most of current scholarship has used shimenawa as a rhetoric trope to fulfil the larger nativist narrative of Shinto and Japanese identity. By examining the changes in popular religious life through this specific material object, however, my study of shimenawa asks questions on how the state's involvement with Shinto has changed the character of religion in Japan and impacted popular religious life. My fieldwork demonstrates that shimenawa embody processes of economic, sociopolitical, and ideological negotiation and challenges the dominant view that shimenawa are static in meaning.



Fig. 1. Example of a shimenawa found under a torii gate, with shide attached. David Boggett, Kamigamo Shrine, Torii gate draped with straw shimenawa rope and folded paper shide, 20th century, documentary photograph, accessed January 20, 2019, [http://library.artstor.org/asset/ABOGGETTIG\\_10313357905](http://library.artstor.org/asset/ABOGGETTIG_10313357905).



Fig. 2. Shimenawa are often tied around magnificent rocks, such as the husband-and-wife rocks at Iwato, Mie prefecture, a popular pilgrimage site before people visit the Ise Jingu. Photographed by the author, August 2018.



Fig. 3. (left) "Hiking to Nachi Taisha & Nachi-No-Taki Waterfall, Southern Wakayama," accessed: Sep 19, 2018, <https://travelwithnanob.com/2017/08/05/hiking-to-nachi-taisha-nachi-no-taki-waterfall-wakayama/>



Fig. 4. 佐野一雄, Making shimenawa, Showa 50s, Kyoto Photography Association (京都写真連盟), accessed January 10, 2019, <https://meiji150.kyoto/photo/photo-2928/>



Fig. 5. Golden shimenawa at Asama Shrine. 北口本宮富士浅間神社 金鳥居しめ縄 献納 / Mt. Fuji and Sacred Rice straw Ropes, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ESQfwLNPm0>



Fig. 6. A scene from the promotional video made by the Western Japan Railway to encourage tourism to Western Japan, accessed January 10, 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsHgHDhpd2g&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2u-V5C0uh-q1c88ZSiqueGpY7IzDd9cR6mDHbCO5f0LlmwwldSNbfU3AMcY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsHgHDhpd2g&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2u-V5C0uh-q1c88ZSiqueGpY7IzDd9cR6mDHbCO5f0LlmwwldSNbfU3AMcY)



Fig. 7. A shrine maiden praying next to the “Uzu” pillars unearthened within the Izumo Grand Shrine precincts. Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo, “Exhibition of “Uzu” pillars in the main lobby unearthened within the Izumo Grand Shrine precincts,” accessed January 10, 2019, [www.izm.ed.jp/english/chuou.html](http://www.izm.ed.jp/english/chuou.html)



Fig. 8. (left) Advertising material for Shimane Prefecture featuring Izumo Grand Shrine and its shimenawa, accessed January 10, 2019, [www.izm.ed.jp/english/chuou.html](http://www.izm.ed.jp/english/chuou.html) <https://www.kankou-shimane.com/>



Fig. 9. This poster was frequently sighted by the author during her trip to Izumo area in the summer of 2018, accessed January 10, 2019, [www.izm.ed.jp/english/chuou.html](http://www.izm.ed.jp/english/chuou.html) from [http://www.crew.jp/works\\_2017.html](http://www.crew.jp/works_2017.html)

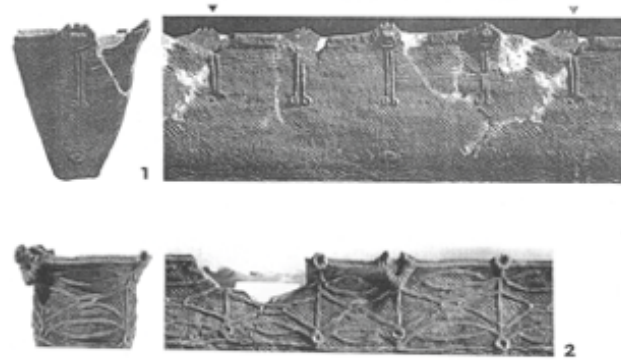


Fig. 13. Ceramic vessels with relief decoration imitating hanging cord (1) and net-like (lacy) cordage (2). Middle Jomon sites Kaya karizawa (Akita prefecture) and Usujiri (Hokkaido prefecture) (From Kobayashi 1989:190, 192).

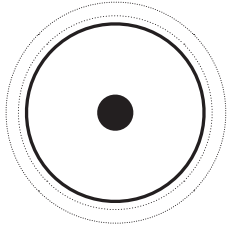
Fig. 10. Patterns found on Jomon potteries that resemble shimenawa. Irina Zhushchikhovskaya, "Jomon pottery: cord-imitating decoration," *Documenta Praehistorica* 34 (2007): 27.



Fig. 11. Museum-like "big shimenawa production gallery" at Shimanwe accessed January 10, 2019, <http://www.shimane19.net/column/2018/07/13-1658.html>



Fig. 12. Inside of the "big shimenawa production gallery", accessed January 10, 2019, <https://minkara.carview.co.jp/image.aspx?src=https%3a%2f%2fcdn.snsimg.carview.co.jp%2fminkara%2fuserstorage%2f000%2f046%2f617%2f496%2fdac-1067dcc.jpg?ct=9146d22d2444>.



Garda Ramadhito '19

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## Decolonizing Fundamentalism: Darul Islam's Islamic State in Post-Colonial Indonesia

### Abstract

Widely misunderstood as an exclusively Middle Eastern phenomenon, Islamic fundamentalism has greatly impacted politics throughout the Islamic world. Using the case of Darul Islam (DI) in post-1945 Indonesia, this paper aims to explore the political imagination of Islamic fundamentalists in the context of decolonization. Based on the analyses of DI's historical origins and its vision of an Islamic state, the paper reveals that DI's Islamic state presented a powerful and nearly viable challenge to the secular nationalist vision of Indonesia espoused by the country's founding father Sukarno during its era of revolutionary decolonization in the late 1940s.

### Relevant Abbreviations

BP: Barisan Pelopor or Pioneer Corps

DI: Darul Islam

JI: Jemaah Islamiyah

MIAI: Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia, or the Islamic Superior Council of Indonesia

NII: Islamic State of Indonesia (Negara Islam Indonesia)

PNI: Partai Nasional Indonesia, or the Indonesian Nationalist Party

PSII: Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, or the Indonesian Islamic Union Party

SI: Sarekat Islam

TII: Tentara Islam Indonesia, or the Islamic Army of Indonesia

The phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism in the modern era seems to be characterized by a preoccupation with the concept of the Islamic state. According to Almond, Appleby, and Sivan (2006), fundamentalism can be defined as a discernible pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors (17). Beginning with the gradual imposition of European imperial powers over Muslim lands in the 19th century, Muslims have been faced with difficult questions regarding the legitimacy of the existing political order, which has prompted a wave of reformist thought among Islamic intellectuals and leaders. While some Muslims like Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Egyptian Wafd party came to embrace European-style secular nationalism, many others like Hasan al-Banna in Egypt and Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi in Pakistan sought to

bring back Muslims to the Islamic "Golden Age" by creating an Islamic state governed by the Shari'a, or Islamic laws derived from the tenets of Islam (Mandaville 2014, 70-75). In Indonesia, while relatively isolated from the core of the Islamic world, i.e. the Greater Middle East, Muslims faced similar questions over legitimate political order. Long colonized by the Dutch since the 17th century, Indonesians gained a collective consciousness as a nation in early 20th century, eventually proclaiming independence in 1945. The successes of Darul Islam (DI)—founded by Kartosuwiryo—in controlling wide swaths of territory within the country after the proclamation of independence showed the appeal of the Islamic state, despite the enormous military power held by the mainstream secular Indonesian nationalist movement. The brief but threatening existence of the Islamic State of Indonesia (Negara Islam Indonesia, or NII) from 1949 to 1962 raises two important questions: how was the Islamic State envisioned by Darul

Islam? Can we characterize Darul Islam as fundamentalist? This essay aims to answer those questions by tracing the historical roots of DI, analyzing DI's vision of an Islamic state in Indonesia, and evaluating the fundamentalist characteristics of that vision.

### History of Darul Islam in Indonesia

Before delving into the theology of the Islamic state of DI, it is imperative to examine the historical context in which DI operated. The beginning of the 19th century before the proclamation of independence in 1945 was a transformative period for indigenous Indonesians and was crucial for the development of pro-independence movements, including Kartosuwiryo's DI. In 1901, the Dutch colonial government introduced the "Ethical Policy" to raise the welfare of Indonesian colonial subjects with the expectation of bringing them closer to their colonial masters and ensuring their loyalty to the Dutch (Brown 2003, 106). The reforms implemented under the Ethical Policy included increasing access to education for native Indonesians and creating a national language to unite the linguistically diverse population (Ibid.). These changes created an educated class of native Indonesians from different backgrounds and changed the outlook and consciousness of native Indonesians from one that was local and ethnic-based to one that was nationally-oriented. These educated Indonesians formed civic associations, initially for non-political reasons such as trade associations which provided the necessary networks for pro-independence movements.

One of the most influential political organizations founded during this period was Sarekat Islam (SI, Islamic Union), originally Sarekat Dagang Islam, or Islamic Traders Union, a trade association for batik, or traditional fabric, merchants (Formichi 2012, 20). The second head of SI, Haji Agus Salim, a markedly pious and modernist Muslim intellectual who lived in Saudi Arabia, Islamized the organization by pursuing explicitly Islamist interests, straying farther from founder Tjokroaminoto's goal of socioeconomic empowerment of indigenous Indonesians (Formichi 2012, 23). When Atatürk dismantled the caliphate in 1924, Islamic interests quickly overshadowed other interests within the organization and Salim focused the resources of the organization into efforts towards the restoration of the caliphate, such as hosting the al-Islam Congress in Surabaya and working with the Khilafat movement in India (Formichi 2012, 19-23). While increasingly becoming an explicit Islamic organization, SI still provided a vehicle for educated Indonesians to discuss affairs and for political action to resolve socioeconomic issues. With the mentorship of Tjokroaminoto and Salim, prominent figures in the movement for Indonesian independence emerged: Sukarno of the secular nationalist faction, Semaun of the socialist faction, and Kartosuwiryo of the Islamist faction (Brown 2003, 121-124; Formichi 2012, 25).

Investigating Kartosuwiryo's background and involvement in pre-independence politics prior to the establishment of DI is

necessary to understand DI's Islamic state in Indonesia. Born in 1905 to a family which belonged to the "low-priyayi" class, a class of indigenous colonial administrators, Sekarmaji Marjan Kartosuwiryo was fortunate enough to be educated under the Dutch educational system based in then colonial Indonesia up to the tertiary level (Formichi 2012, 15). However, he was expelled from the medical school he attended, which was itself a rare opportunity because the Dutch suspected him of engaging with subversive political activities (Soebardi 1983, 109). Indeed, in 1925, he was involved in the Young Muslims Union, coming into contact with Tjokroaminoto, the founder and then leader of SI (Ibid.). In 1927, Kartosuwiryo joined SI where he served as Tjokroaminoto's private secretary (Ibid.). Tjokroaminoto had a profound influence as Kartosuwiryo's mentor; the former advocated for an Islamic state based in Indonesia (Soebardi 1983, 110). At the same time, Tjokroaminoto developed good relations with Sukarno, the would-be founding father of the Indonesian nationalist movement (Ibid.). However, the ideologies of Sukarno and Kartosuwiryo would diverge significantly. The former advocated secular nationalism, and the latter—Islamism—is often defined as a political ideology that seeks to create a political order defined by Islam (Mandaville 2014, 22). Regardless, Kartosuwiryo would then transform SI into Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, or the Indonesian Islamic Union Party (PSII) in 1930 as a response to Sukarno's formation of Partai Nasional Indonesia, or the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) in 1927, which undermined SI as the main political organization for indigenous Indonesians (Soebardi 1983, 110). Yet PNI was still able to gradually marginalize PSII in the pro-independence scene because of the orthodox and exclusivist Islam PSII advocated (Ibid.). Despite an increasing wave of Islamic modernism led by the Muhammadiyah movement, a significant number of Indonesian Muslims, especially the Javanese, remained syncretic in their orientation – mixing Islam and indigenous beliefs – as shown by the popular establishment of the organization Nahdatul Ulama (NU) in 1926 by scholars who wished to maintain this Islam against Salafism (Brown 2003, 115-116). Furthermore, PNI's relatively secular orientation appealed to non-Muslim Indonesians who wished to participate in the nationalist movement.

Kartosuwiryo would not regain relevance until the defeat of the Dutch colonial administration by Japanese forces in 1942 during World War II. In order to mobilize natives against the Allies, the Japanese occupying administration appealed to the independence movement, including Islamic nationalists by promising for an independent Indonesia in the future (Formichi 2012, 70). The Japanese immediately allowed the re-establishment of *Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia*, or the Islamic Superior Council of Indonesia (MIAI), an organization loosely-tied to PSII, which was banned before the Japanese occupation (Formichi 2012, 72). While Kartosuwiryo enthusiastically supported the Japanese for fostering the growth of MIAI, Kartosuwiryo's ideas

of further Islamizing Indonesia under Japanese rule prompted a backlash from the Japanese (Formichi 2012, 75). They feared that anti-colonial sentiments that thrived in such Islamist circles would transform into anti-Japanese sentiments (Ibid.). Hence, they banned MIAI and in its stead, formed *Majelis Sjoero Muslimin Indonesia* or Muslim Consultative Council of Indonesia (Masyumi) controlled by Muhammadiyah and NU, which were seen as less politicized (Ibid.). As Japan was losing the war, the Japanese allowed the formation of Hizbullah, an armed militia under Masyumi intended to fight for independence in the case of Dutch return to Indonesia (Formichi 2012, 76). However, earlier PSII members like Kartosuwiryo did not join Hizbullah; ironically, they joined *Barisan Pelopor* or Pioneer Corps (BP), the military wing of Sukarno's secular nationalist movement, because of Masyumi's decided exclusion of PSII (Ibid.). Kartosuwiryo would serve as a trainer of BP's Banten branch (Ibid.). After the surrender of the Japanese on August 15, 1945, and the proclamation of independence on August 17, 1945, Islamists, both belonging to Masyumi and Kartosuwiryo's PSII, would find themselves sidelined by Sukarno's secular nationalist movement, despite the involvement of Islamist militias in the fight against Dutch recolonization attempts from 1945 to 1949 (Brown 2003, 169-170; Formichi 2012, 107). Headed by Kartosuwiryo, these militias would then form DI in 1948 as a challenge against the secular nationalist state headed by Sukarno and soon declare NII in 1949.

#### DI's Vision of the Islamic State in Indonesia

Now that the historical background of Islamist politics and Kartosuwiryo during the pre-independence era has been examined, the Islamic state of Darul Islam can be analyzed. Two frameworks for analyzing the conception of the Islamic state will be used: Roxanne Euben's (2001) "dialogic model of interpretation" (157) to analyze Kartosuwiryo's conception of the Islamic state and Mark Juergensmeyer's (2009) concept of "religious rebellion" to provide a "thick description" of NII from 1949 to 1962 (2-3).

It is imperative to engage with Kartosuwiryo's works on a dialectic level to critically examine his conception of the Islamic state. In her book *Enemy in the Mirror*, Euben (2001) recommends a "dialogic model of interpretation" to "ensure that the process of explicating meanings and advancing causal explanations begins with the terms and categories used by the participants themselves" (157). This model rejects "positivist standards of objectivity in favor of a view of understanding as a reciprocal, transformative, and perhaps above all, ongoing process" and possibly reduces the potential of interpretation as a way of imposing power on the subject by making aware of the interpreter's "conditionality" (Ibid.). She uses this model to interpret Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones* as a work of rich and meaningful political theory in response to post-Enlightenment rationalism (157-158). Hence, this framework is an effective way to interpret the works of Kartosuwiryo on the Islamic state. It is also important to note that this paper will use secondary sources to analyze Kartosuwiryo's works, thereby necessitating a critical analysis of the authors' interpretations.

According to Soebardi (1983), Kartosuwiryo's main objective of the Islamic state was to assure the well-being and safety of the Islamic community of Indonesia as well as other Indonesians

(126). Kartosuwiryo's ideology "hoped to build a new world: the Mardhotilah (the place blessed by Allah) and the Darul Islam (the Abode of Islam)" (Ibid.). Ultimately, with the establishment of the Islamic state, Muslims could obtain salvation in the after-life (Ibid.). Soebardi's brief interpretation of the ideals of Kartosuwiryo's Islamic state is appreciated because it is bereft of the imposition of categories which Euben warned against. The recognition of "Mardhotilah" as a legitimate political term of itself highlights Soebardi's awareness of the ideal state Kartosuwiryo envisioned in his work. With these ideals in mind, it is possible to delve deeper into Kartosuwiryo's Islamic state.

The implementation of Shari'a or Islamic law under the objective for the welfare of Indonesians characterizes Kartosuwiryo's imagining of the Islamic state. According to Karl Jackson (1980), "in this religiously preordained political order, all sovereignty rested with God, and government legislated only on matters not specifically dealt with in the time of Muhammad" (1). This would translate into the making of Qur'anic injunctions into law, such as penalizing the use of alcoholic beverages, adultery and most importantly, religious apostasy (2). Concurrently, the Constitution and the Penal Code of NII had supposedly 'modern' provisions (1). For example, "the head of state, the Imam, would be elected by the Parliament and could not make laws without it" (Ibid.). Jackson (1980) concludes that they both constitute a "mixture of Islamic fundamentalism derived directly from the Koran and a blueprint for a somewhat modern, although nonetheless Islamic, state" (2). It is worth criticizing how the term "modern" is used by Jackson—his use of "modern" presupposes that the concept of the Islamic state is not modern while concepts like the head of state and the parliament are modern. This kind of imperialist categorization of what is modern and what is not is precisely what Euben warns against. Kartosuwiryo's theory of the Islamic state is modern because it arose from modern, existential questions over the role of Islam in a state newly independent from colonial powers. Other than that, Jackson provides a useful insight into Kartosuwiryo's vision of the Islamic state as it sheds light on the role of Shari'a in NII through its Constitution and Penal Code.

However, analyzing Kartosuwiryo's Islamic state in Indonesia purely through his works alone is not sufficient. The unstable and competitive conditions of post-colonial Indonesia almost definitely affected how Kartosuwiryo envisioned the Islamic state. Juergensmeyer's concept of "religious rebellion" becomes particularly useful in making a "thick description" – essentially a meaningful and context-conscious description of human behavior – of NII from 1949 to 1962. According to Juergensmeyer (2009), fundamentalist groups around the world are actually activist religious movements rallying against secular nationalism because "Western models of nationhood" have failed, particularly by creating a vacuum for the public importance of religion and its values (3, 6). In addition, Juergensmeyer asserts that many of such religious groups "see no contradiction in affirming certain forms of political organization that have developed in the West... as long as they are legitimized not by the secular idea of a social contract but by traditional principles of religion" (7). This characterization fits almost perfectly with Darul Islam as shown by the similarity of NII to its secular nationalist rival state envisioned by Sukarno. NII did not just base its legitimacy from Islam but also



the revolutionary and nationalistic fervor of Sukarno's secular republic as shown in the resemblance of Kanun Azasy (basic laws), NII's constitution with the 1945 constitution (Temby 2010, 5). For instance, NII was slated to be a republic like its secular counterpart but in the constitution, the comparable Islamic term "djumhuryah" is used (Ibid.). Furthermore, the overlaying of a crescent and star – an apparent Islamic symbol – over red and white in NII's flag demonstrate how NII was closely modeled after the secular nationalist version of Indonesia (Ibid.). While such similarities might seem antithetical to the vision of a purely Islamic state, Jackson (1980) argues that "while Islamic precedent spoke precisely regarding moral duties and obligations, the institutional contours of the state remained undetermined, thereby allowing [Kartosuwiryo] to devise a republican constitution while remaining true to Koran" (3). As such, Kartosuwiryo was able to conceive a politically competitive vision of the Indonesian state that was based on Islam rather than secular nationalism.

Despite the close resemblance, DI nonetheless operated as powerful and militarized religious rebels against secular nationalists in the context of post-colonial state consolidation in Indonesia. In line with Juergensmeyer's claim regarding the failure of "Western models of nationhood," a major reason behind Kartosuwiryo's decision to "rebel" against the secular nationalists was the latter's failure to live up to an earlier constitutional compromise between a secular and an Islamic state. In the Jakarta Charter, a precedent for the 1945 constitution of Indonesia, secularists and Islamists negotiated to make a special provision for Muslims: "with the obligation for the adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law" (Van Dijk 1981, 48). However, due to concerns from non-Muslim communities that the stipulation would endanger their status, Sukarno decided to drop the provision after proclamation of independence in August 1945, rendering Indonesia's state philosophy Pancasila to be non-confessional (Formichi 2012, 4). Furthermore, the 1949 Royen-Roem agreement made between the secular nationalists and the Dutch, who had attempted to recolonize Indonesia from 1945 to 1948, to create an independent Islamic state was a decisive factor that prompted Kartosuwiryo to proclaim the NII, as he perceived the agreement as treachery (Van Dijk 1981, 92). Kartosuwiryo would then invoke *perang suci*, or holy war, first against the Dutch and then the newly formed Indonesian republic (Temby 2010, 5). The concept of *perang suci* bears a striking resemblance to that of *jihād*—a violent struggle in the name of Islam, as legitimated by Sayyid Qutb in his work *Milestones*. It could then be argued that Kartosuwiryo was a proto-*jihād*ist and thus DI a proto-*jihād*ist organization. Hence, the inherent violence to the state-building process Kartosuwiryo prompted in post-colonial Indonesia demonstrates the overt militant nature of DI as a movement of religious rebellion.

Expanding on the fact that Kartosuwiryo's Islamic state did not operate in a vacuum, NII could be described as a part of a broader, transregional trend towards an Islamic state across the Muslim world. In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, Muslims were grappling with the question of legitimate political order as many of them fell under European colonial rule. Similar to al-Banna and Mawdudi, the founders of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jemaat-e-Islami in Pakistan respectively, Kartosuwiryo desired to Islamize an existing state, com-

binning nationalism with a broader goal of Islamism as a response to colonialism (Mandaville 2014, 75). Like Mawdudi, who theorized an Islamic state, the Kartosuwiryo vision of an Islamic state was laid out in a viable constitution. However, that vision was not a sophisticated and as systematic as Mawdudi's theory, which builds on the notion that sovereignty belongs exclusively to God (Mandaville 2014, 81, 82). It can then be said that Kartosuwiryo was closer to the activist approach of al-Banna (1947), who famously wrote a letter to King Faruq in 1947 containing specific viewpoints and directives for Islamizing the Egyptian state.

However, the circumstances in which Kartosuwiryo imagined his Islamic state were decidedly distinct. While Egypt and Pakistan negotiated their gradual independence, Indonesia violently fought for it, leaving to various pro-independence militias to achieve monopoly of legitimate violence—the Weberian definition of a state—on their own terms. Essentially, Kartosuwiryo was given ample opportunity to conceive an Islamic state through violent struggle with the formation of *Tentara Islam Indonesia*, or the Islamic Army of Indonesia (TII), the military wing of DI, in 1949 (Formichi 2012, 36). Hence, Kartosuwiryo was unique among Islamist ideologues in his time like Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi because he pursued an Islamic state through violent means encouraged by the Indonesian revolutionary struggle. In short, DI can be categorized as part of a larger movement in the Muslim world aspiring to achieve an Islamic state, albeit through immediate bloodshed.

#### **Conclusion: DI as an Early Islamic Fundamentalist Movement**

By analyzing the Islamic state that Kartosuwiryo envisioned for Indonesia, it can be argued that Darul Islam was fundamentalist. DI fulfils several of Almond, Appleby, and Sivan's (2002) "properties" of fundamentalism as outlined in their book *Strong Religion*, namely reactivity to the marginalization of religion, sharp boundaries, and authoritarian organization (93-98). As mentioned earlier, the marginalization of Islamic nationalists in the Indonesian nationalist movement in favor of the secular nationalists led to the coalescence of Islamic militias into DI. Furthermore, the NII constitution was based on the *Shari'a* but it was also modeled off the 1945 Indonesian constitution, demonstrating the reactionary nature of DI's ideology. Moreover, Kartosuwiryo's invocation of holy war indicated that DI drew sharp boundaries against the secular nationalists whom the former perceived as treacherous. Finally, the militancy of DI as a movement implies an authoritarian structure centered on the charismatic Kartosuwiryo, the self-proclaimed "Imam" of NII. Based on these three characteristics, DI was indeed fundamentalist. The brief success of this fundamentalist group in establishing a state became mythologized in the imaginary of its notorious successor, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI): "If you are serious about seeing the glory of the buried Islamic State of Indonesia rise again, shed your blood so that you won't be ashamed to face Allah, you who acknowledge yourselves to be children of DI/NII" (Temby 2010, 5). In sum, DI's vision of an Islamic state in Indonesia was among the first to leave a legacy for Islamic fundamentalists to challenge the hegemony of the secular nationalist state worldwide.

## Glossary

### **Ataturk, Mustafa Kemal**

The secularist founding father of modern Turkey.

### **Darul Islam (DI)**

The main Islamist organization that fought for the establishment of an Islamic state in post-1945 Indonesia.

### **Hizbullah**

The armed militia under Masyumi that was allowed to form under Japanese occupation.

### **Indonesian Islamic Union Party (Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, PSII)**

The Islamist party founded by Kartosuwiryo in 1930 as a response to Sukarno's PNI. Existed prior to Japanese occupation.

### **Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia, PNI)**

The main secular nationalist party in Indonesia formed by Sukarno in 1927. Existed prior to Japanese occupation.

### **Islamic Army of Indonesia (Tentara Islam Indonesia, TII)**

The military wing of DI formed after 1945.

### **Islamic State of Indonesia (Negara Islam Indonesia, NII)**

An Islamic version of the modern Indonesian republic consisting of territories controlled by DI.

### **Islamic Superior Council of Indonesia (Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia, MIAI)**

An organization loosely tied to PSII, which had been banned by the Dutch before Japanese Occupation.

### **Islamic Union (Sarekat Islam, SI)**

A trade union that turned into the one of the first political organizations for native Indonesians under Dutch colonial rule.

### **Jemaat-e-Islami**

A major Islamic political organization founded by Mawdudi in 1941 in British India.

### **Kartosuwiryo, Sekarmaji Marjan**

The founder and first leader of DI; the main Islamist figure in post-colonial Indonesia.

### **Mawdudi, Sayyid Abu'l-A'la**

A renowned Islamist ideologue who founded Jemaat-e-Islami in Pakistan.

### **Muhammadiyah**

One of the two major Islamic non-governmental organizations in Indonesia. Advocates for Islamic reformism and modernism, as opposed to NU, which protects traditionalism and syncretism

### **Muslim Brotherhood**

A Sunni Islamist organization based in Egypt founded by al-Banna in 1928. Considered to be the mother of all Islamist organizations.

### **Muslim Consultative Council of Indonesia (Masyumi)**

A less political version of MIAI controlled by Muhammadiyah and NU.

### **Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)**

One of the two major Islamic non-governmental organizations in Indonesia. Protects traditional Indonesian Islam and syncretism, as opposed to Muhammadiyah which advocates reformism and modernism.

### **Pancasila**

The secular state philosophy of Indonesia. Considered the official ideology of the modern Indonesian republic.

### **Pioneer Corps (Barisan Pelopor, BP)**

The military wing of Sukarno's secular nationalist movement for Indonesian independence

**Qutb, Sayyid**

An Islamist ideologue and prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s who first called for *jihad*, the violent struggle for Islam.

**Salim, Haji Agus**

Second leader of SI. Credited for Islamizing the originally secular SI.

**Semaun**

The main figurehead of socialism in Dutch-colonized Indonesia during the 1920s.

**Sukarno**

The founding father and first president of the modern Indonesian republic. Also known as the leader of the secular nationalist movement in Indonesia.

**Tjokroaminoto**

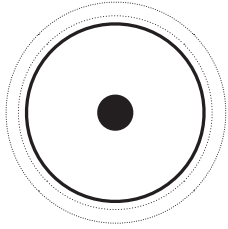
The founder and first leader of SI. Originally intended SI to be a secular organization for the socioeconomic empowerment of indigenous Indonesians.

**Wafd Party**

The main secular nationalist political party in Egypt during the early twentieth century.

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## Queer Identity and Organizing in the Middle East

### Abstract

This brief foray into queer identity and organizing in the Middle East aims to explore the role of the international queer activist community (referred to in the paper as the IQAC) and the ways in which it interacts with local organizers. Drawing upon scholarly work surrounding queer Muslim identity and two case studies of local queer activist groups in Lebanon, the paper highlights that one of the biggest faults of the IQAC's approach to activism in the Middle East rests in its failure to address queer issues in their intersectional and glocal (the intersection of global and local) contexts. The paper ultimately aims to emphasize that—in order for it to engage in effective activism—the IQAC must abandon its pedestalization and essentialization of the queer Muslim subject and center the lived-realities of queer communities in the Middle East in its work.

On December 30th, 2017, the *New York Times* published an article titled “Coming Out in Lebanon” in which the first line read: “Throughout the Arab world, gay, lesbian and transgender people face formidable obstacles to living a life of openness and acceptance in conservative societies” (Boushnak and Boshnaq 2017). The article, among countless others published on LGBTQ+ rights in the Middle East, recapitulates the increasingly common narrative that violence and oppression by regressive regimes define LGBTQ+ issues in the Middle East. This recurring narrative is what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) terms “the single-story” in her talk at the TEDGlobal Conference: a singular narrative that, while often arbitrary, is so commonplace that it becomes accepted as reality. In the case of queer identity and organizing in the Middle East, a deeper analysis reveals a vastly complex narrative with intersectional and glocal identities. The term intersectional (or intersectionality), coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 in the U.S., was originally conceived of as a means to articulate the multidimensional oppression of black women. Crenshaw (1989) explained the ways in which racism and sexism, while treated as mutually exclusive, compound one another along multiple axes of oppression and leave black women “theoretically erased” (139-149). For the purpose of this paper, however, Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality is expanded and used as an umbrella term to refer to the ways that organizers' compounding identities as queer individuals, as Muslims, and as citizens of their countries and regional communities interact with one another to shape their lives and hardships.

It alludes to how queerness is specifically articulated in and shaped by different contexts. All of these identities compound one another and illustrate that there is no single-story of queer organizing in the Middle East. Consequently, in assessing the status of queer communities in the Middle East, it becomes essential to deconstruct the single-story narrative. Through problematizing the role of the international queer activist community (IQAC) in the Middle East and an analysis of a Lebanese case study's glocal nature and relationship with the IQAC, many contradictions arise that ultimately highlight the need for an intersectional approach to international queer activism.

However, before getting into the specifics of activism, reconceptualizing queer Muslim identity in relation to the “single story” is an essential first step towards understanding the interplay of the global and local in queer activism. In his article “Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities,” Momin Rahman (2010) outlines how the West often depicts Islam as antithetical to western values; he suggests that queerness, through its association with the West, is portrayed as wholly incompatible with Islamic identity and culture. According to Rahman, this view is rooted in political scientist Samuel Huntington's “Clash of Civilizations.” In the piece, Huntington argues that the fall of the cold war bipolar system of struggle left a void that will be filled in the future by supposedly fundamentally incompatible civilizations – such as the West and the Islamic world (944-946). This is not to ignore existent hostility towards LGBTQ+ individuals in the Middle East but rather to problematize this narrative. An *Economist*

article emphasizes that this narrative completely ignores the role colonialism played in creating this environment: “of the more than 70 countries [in the Middle East] that criminalise homosexual acts today, over half are former British colonies [where the British outlawed sodomy in 1885]” (“How Homosexuality Became a Crime” 2018). Turning to the map in Figure 1, which depicts the legal status of homosexuality around the world, we can see the influence of the West’s epistemological view of Islam as incompatible with queerness. The map’s framing limits one’s conceptualization of queerness to a liberal western framework of rights, of which queer activists in the Middle East often operate outside. Additionally, in her introduction to “Deconstructing Sexuality in the Middle East,” Samar Habib (2011) emphasizes that “western NGOs approach [issues concerning LGBTQ+ rights in the Middle East] as emerging as a consequence of Islam” (114). However, Rahman (2010) problematizes this narrative and explains that “understanding gay Muslims as intersectional identities [in and of themselves] demonstrates that cultures and identities are plural and overlap rather than being monolithic and mutually exclusive” (948). Thus, this western perspective provides a critical point of comparison to help us better understand the reality of many LGBTQ+ activists in the Middle East.

Turning now to the role of the international community, it becomes clear that the IQAC engages with international activism in many problematic ways, highlighting the importance of intersectional activism. In his article “Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World,” Joseph Massad (2002) explains that the IQAC – which he refers to as the “Gay International” (GI) – has played a missionary and self-righteous messianic role based on a supposed universalist definition of queer rights that, in reality, was rooted in a white western experience (361-385). Massad’s analysis illustrates importantly that the IQAC’s assumptions are essentialist and serve to flatten identities. As Ghassan Moussawi (2015) explains in his article “(Un)critically queer organizing: Towards a more complex analysis of LGBTQ organizing in Lebanon,” this becomes evident in the GI’s focus on coming-out narratives:

The coming-out narrative and the concept of the closet [...] do not always capture the lived realities of many people by not being attuned to the intersectionality of race, class and gender (Seidman, 1994). [...] In addition, the uses of the coming-out narratives, in nonwhite, non- middle class, and non-western contexts have often been employed with undertones of developmental narratives of “modernity,” which often position queers of color as being able “to step out of the shadows” of their oppressive and oftentimes “immutable” cultures. (599)

Moussawi also remarks that the use of universalist narratives such as that of coming-out often leads to backlash against the

very populations they are trying to help (596). Furthermore, the afore-mentioned *Economist* article touches upon this contradiction: “Khalid Abdel-Hadi, the founder of My.Kali, a Jordanian gay-and-lesbian online magazine, says: ‘Our priority is not [gay] marriage.[...]Our families see the stereotypical images of [gay] marriages and parades in the West and ask us ‘Is this what you want?’ Western-style activism may indeed attract dangerous attention” (“How Homosexuality Became a Crime” 2018). Additionally, in his discussion of coming-out narratives, Moussawi points to the racist epistemologies that inform the IQAC’s work. In fact, Sara Ahmed (2011) explains in her article “Problematic Proximities: Or Why Critiques of Gay Imperialism Matter,” that the IQAC’s role is imperialistic: “empire is what gives the other freedom, what brings the other into modernity. The languages of freedom, equality, civility, diversity and light become associated with whiteness, as being what white subjects (queer or not queer) will give to others” (131). Notably, this narrative parallels how the IQAC’s activism has promoted a falsely universal message. Deeb and Al-Kassim (2011) add that orientalist rhetoric has “always worked through a set of gendered and eroticized metaphors that have real-world effects and cast a long shadow” (4). With all of this in mind, it becomes evident that the current state of international queer activism necessitates an intersectional approach.

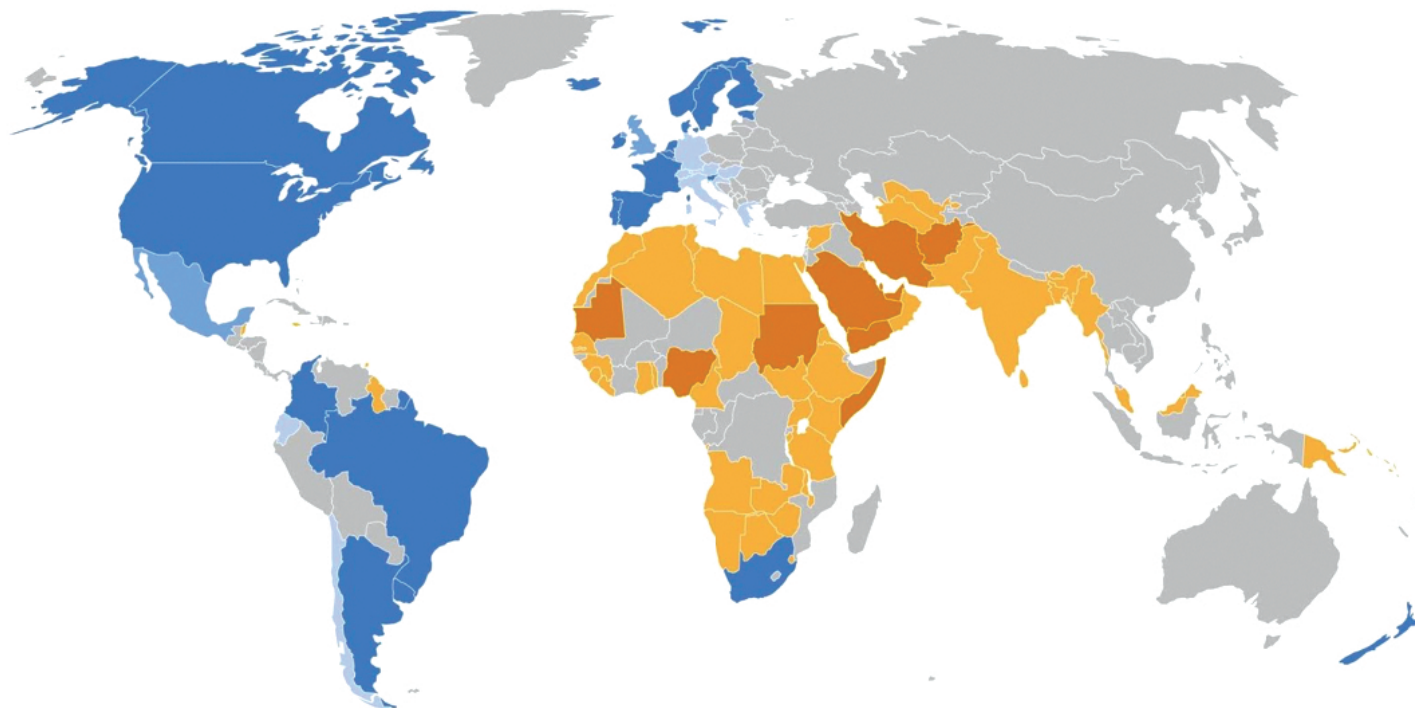
Turning to local queer activism in the Middle East, local activists’ relationships with the IQAC are shaped by a forced reconciliation of global and local interests of which the IQAC appears largely ignorant; this further necessitates the introduction of an intersectional approach to international queer activism. In his article, Moussawi (2015) highlights two Lebanese groups, Meem and Helem, that are engaged in glocal and intersectional work. Moussawi explains that while Helem is a highly visible NGO that orients its collective identity in relation to human rights-based understanding of queerness, Meem is a mostly invisible grassroots and radical organization focused on intersectional consciousness raising for queer women in Lebanon (594-595). Thus, the variety of organizing styles contradicts the essentialist view of the international community. Moreover, Meem is representative of activist groups that operate outside the liberal framework of rights and thus contradicts the IQAC’s framework for activism. These groups also have to translate global conceptions of queerness to local contexts, largely through communication with the IQAC (606-607). This forces groups like Meem and Helem “to toe the line to some extent” (Tauqir et al. 2011, 182), as activist Tamsila Tauqir explains in “Queer Anti-Racist Activism and Strategies of Critique: A Roundtable Discussion.” Additionally, activist groups like Meem and Helem are developing language to discuss queerness in a more comprehensive way. For example, using the neutral term *mithli*, which means “same-sexness,” as opposed to *shaadh*, which means “deviant” (qtd. in Moussawi 2015, 607). Furthermore, groups like Meem and Helem situate themselves in their geopolitical contexts like the Iraq War and

the Israel/Palestinian Conflict (Moussawi 2015, 608). In “Queer Imaginaries: Tensions in Academic and Activist Frames,” Sinan Goknur (2015) explains this phenomenon in relation to the Israel/Palestinian Conflict:

The Palestinian queer movement cannot be considered outside Israeli occupation and apartheid. Despite Israeli pink-washing efforts, Palestinian queers are as much Palestinian as queer, and their day-to-day experiences of Israeli injustices and violence are shared with other Palestinians. As such Palestinian queers see Palestinian autonomy and self-determination as necessary conditions for their queer liberation movement. (333)

Taken all together, these examples illustrate the complexity of local activist groups that the IQAC seemingly fails to recognize. Thus, the intricacies of local queer activist groups’ organizing and collective identity illustrates that the IQAC would better be able to support queer communities and activists in the Middle East with a more comprehensive and intersectional approach to their activism.

In the end, it becomes clear that the ways in which the IQAC engages with local activists is problematic but that these local activist groups are working around that and positioning themselves in local and global contexts. Both instances problematize the single-story narrative and allow us to see the intricacies of queer activist organizing and identity that is based around battles specific to one’s immediate community (the local context) as well as the struggles of the broader queer community in the Middle East (the global context). This also stresses the importance of bridging the disconnect between the IQAC and the lived reality of queer activists in the Middle East. Whether through better communication or a willingness to explore the complexity of issues, meaningful change will likely require a concerted effort on the part of local and global actors. Just as Adichie (2009) explains, “when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise” (00:18:17). For queer activists in the Middle East, this paradise will hopefully involve an environment of support by the international community that is able to bridge the knowledge and normative gaps that characterize the relationship between the global and the local.



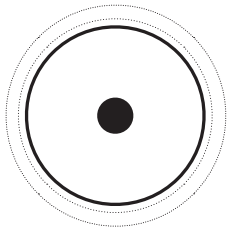
**Figure 1.** The Legal Status of Homosexuality around the World



Source: “Legality of Homosexuality.” Washington Post, 16 June 2016, [www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/gay-rights/img/map.jpg](http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/gay-rights/img/map.jpg).

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## Colonialism Lingers: Evolution of the Perception of Homosexuality in India

### Abstract

This paper aims to describe how colonialism has left an indelible mark on perceptions of homosexuality in India. Although Indian literature and religious texts highlight a liberal view of same-sex relationships before the nineteenth century, the acceptance of homosexual practices was later suppressed by colonialist impositions. Sexual preference was not universally considered an identifying factor until the creation of the terms “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” during the Victorian era in Europe. By the time of the British Raj, the idea that homosexuality was tied to immorality was already strong in Europe and these Victorian ideas were central in the process of ‘civilizing’ India. India was then subject to changes in legislation reflecting repressive British values. The recent lifting of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (Gay Sex Ban), implemented in 1864, highlights the lasting cultural impact of colonialism as India’s understanding of homosexuality continues to change.

It is September 6th, 2018, people are hugging and crying in the streets of New Delhi, Bombay, Chennai, and countless other Indian cities. Colorful flags are painted on faces and raised proudly in the air. Finally, after more than a century, the Indian supreme court has unanimously revoked one of the world’s oldest bans on gay sex, calling it “indefensible” (Gettleman et al. 2018). This was a great victory for gay rights, but it was also seen by many as a step in the process of ridding India of colonial influences. This leads us to the central question of this research paper: how did British colonialism impact views on homosexuality in India?

In this paper I will show how the land of the Kama Sutra, a famous ancient Indian text in which homosexual practices are described in detail and even homosexual marriage is assumed natural, became a place where homosexuality was criminalized and even punished by lifetime imprisonment (“Supreme Court” 2018). To understand this, my paper will analyze some of the important factors that influenced homosexuality’s role in Indian and British society, such as the repressive Victorian era, the role of Christianity and the British fear of the “uncivilized.” Ultimately my research shows that homosexuality in India was generally not seen as immoral prior to British colonial rule, and that homophobia was not only a consequence of colonialism, but also used by the British as a “civilizing tool.” To explain imperialism’s effect, we must compare how understandings of

homosexuality were prior to, during and following colonialism in India.

In order to understand how Indian society changed with colonialism, one must begin by looking at the view on same-sex relationships in pre-19th century India. Although the period before colonial rule was comprised of a variety of views depending on the time and place, the Indian view towards sexual difference has historically been liberal and eclectic, with neither mythology nor history revealing persecution based on sexual differences (Vanita 2013). In *Same-Sex Love in India*, the authors present a vast collection of writings on same-sex relations from over 2,000 years of Indian literature. An example of the tolerant Indian view can also be seen in the many ancient Hindu temple sculptures and carvings showing homosexual acts (Ramadurai 2015). These examples show that homosexuality was not only accepted in pre-colonial India, but that India was also remarkably open to different forms of sexuality. In addition to sexual fluidity, arguably fluidity in biological sex was also assumed natural. Hindu texts include stories of characters, including Gods, who start out as female and transform into men, or are born half man, half women (Tharoor 2018). Hinduism also acknowledges a third gender known as *hijra*, a term given to eunuchs, intersex people, and transgender people in India (Tharoor 2018). These are widely accepted identities and hijras have often lived in formal organized communities together



throughout history.

To contextualize homosexuality's role, it is helpful to understand how sexuality has been viewed outside of India. It must be noted that not only in India, but around the world, sexual preferences were not seen as an identifying factor until the creation of terms "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" during the 19th century (Katz 1997).

Jonathan Katz, a historian of human sexuality, explains how there is a difference between homosexual behavior and homosexual identity—homosexual identity (the naming and categorizing of sexual acts) is a historically specific idea while homosexual behavior has always existed (Ibid.). The word "heterosexual" was first printed in May in 1892 (Ibid.). This shows us that the idea of a sexual partner's gender implying something about one's identity is neither universal nor deeply-rooted in western history. Thus, the ancient Indian view was not unique in seeing sexuality as something unfixed nor as a significant identity marker.

Arguably, it is with colonialism that India begins to encounter homosexual definition and homophobic structures (Vanita 2013). The British Raj was the period of British rule in India between 1858 and 1947. In 1864, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, also known as the Gay Sex Ban, was implemented by British colonial authorities. It was used to criminalize "unnatural" sex and was also used as a model for sodomy laws in other British colonies. The law was inspired by British legislation and heavily reflected the European views of time. To understand how colonialism impacted Indian views of homosexuality, it is helpful to understand the development and driving factors behind the anti-homosexual British attitude. The Victorian era is essential to understanding this, as it compasses the rise in awareness of sexual practices, ideas of Christian morality, and the inferiority of the "uncivilized."

The colonization of India coincided with the height of the repressive Victorian era, a period highly influenced by the ideas of categorizing sexuality based on the belief of acceptable procreative sex and "degenerate" non-procreative acts (Ahmed 2017; Pickett 2018). The rise of urbanization brought what was believed as a rise in "degenerate behavior" such as prostitution, which led to increasing public awareness of sexual practices.

Religion played an important role in enforcing the Victorian principles in Europe. Christianity classified certain sexual behaviors (the non-procreative acts) as immoral or sinful; the Bible, for example, condemns homosexual sex and masturbation. By the time of the British Raj, the idea that homosexuality was tied to immorality was already strong in Europe and these Victorian ideas were central in the process of "civilizing" India. Many imperialists believed in the British empire's moral duty to civilize the natives in the colonies, a narrative the British government supported as it strengthened the imperial support in Great Britain. The British influenced many parts of Indian society,

including transforming the education system. However, one of the most influential actors was the church. The Anglican Church, the established church of England, had a great impact on India with the arrival of the British. The British Prime Minister Robert Gascoyne-Cecil is known to have said "It is not only our duty but is in our interest to promote the diffusion of Christianity as far as possible throughout the length and breadth of India" (Kanjamaala 2016).

In addition to the ideas of a superior Christian morality, the British were also imposing the Victorian principles out of fear of the "uncivilized" culture. The purpose of these colonial penal codes was also to protect soldiers and colonial administrators from becoming corrupt in the foreign countries (Han and O'Mahoney 2018). There was a fear that the Christian men might turn to homosexuality as a result of being so far from their homes and wives (Ibid.).

India gained independence in 1947, officially ending the British Raj. Unfortunately, after many years of imperialist rule, the colonial attitudes were internalized by many of the victims and it took another 71 years after the colonizers left before the law was revoked. Although the criminalizing legislation is now abolished the cultural impact of colonialism remains. Major political parties in India, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party, were against revoking Section 377, saying that they believe homosexuality is an unnatural act and cannot be supported. However, studies show that while the majority of Indians remain opposed to same-sex relationships, Indians' views on homosexuality have become less rigid over time; young people are especially far more accepting today ("Homosexuality in India" 2018).

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code is emblematic of imperialism's many forms of influence, even hundreds of years later. In pre-colonial India there were an established set of norms surrounding sexuality, which were neither negative nor defining. Through colonization the British forced their own code of ethics, which India is still suffering from today. I believe there is much to be gained by analyzing the factors that influence views on homosexuality, as this can help us understand how to change them.

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