Through the Eyes of the Hermit
by Baya HARRISON

Masculinity in Chinese History
by Mu ZHOU

The Last Empress of China - A Misunderstood Figure
by Zoe Yu JIANG
The cover picture features an extremely overcast day at Fenghuang, Hunan Province, China. Monsoon would like to thank Kai He for his contributions. He is a third year student at Brandeis University, majoring in Economics and Mathematics.

A Miao girl in typical Miao costume (The Miao is a minority ethnic group in China).
**A Message from Monsoon’s Co-Editor-in-Chief**

As a third-year premed student at Brandeis, I have been working in the Brigham & Women’s Hospital Emergency Department since the beginning of last semester. My job as a Business Specialist revolves around secretarial work and assisting physicians. My goal there, of course, is to check off one of the countless criteria set by the medical school admissions, a hopeless struggle to maintain my position in the ever-increasingly competitive medical school application process.

Besides being able to observe emergency medical procedures, my work was mostly tedious and mindless, until one night, on my shift, I came across an article in the Brigham & Women’s journal, titled “Touching the World.” The article caught my eye because it mentioned a very familiar name. The name belonged to an emergency room physician, Dr. Cranmer, whom I worked with occasionally. I never had much interaction with Dr. Cranmer; she gave me an impression of someone who is serious about her work, and not exactly a sociable type. Nevertheless, as I read the article about her four-week long stay in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, after the tsunami disaster as leader of a medical relief group, I soon developed wholehearted respect and admiration for this doctor who I never got to know.

As of April 8th, 2005, the estimated number of lives that were swept away by the December 26th tsunami was 217,241. The countries that suffered the top death rolls were Indonesia (163,978), Sri Lanka (30,957) and India (16,389). When news of the tsunami broke, Dr. Cranmer received a call from a friend who said that the International Rescue Committee needed doctors to help the tsunami victims. Without hesitation, on the night of January 5th, Cranmer packed for her departure for Indonesia. Upon landing, she was immediately faced with the severity of the situation: contaminated wells, overcrowded refugee camps, psychologically traumatized victims, and rampaging illnesses such as scabies and malaria. Cranmer kept a journal during her work in Indonesia, which records the difficulty of organizing relief work due to the lack of resources that had been a problem even before the tsunami. Her entries also describe the devastation the victims had endured, the strength they showed in the battle for survival, and the compassion they demonstrated in helping others in disaster relief. One such entry dated January 31st, 2005, writes:

One of the nurses we’ve been working with at the clinic came by the hotel to say good-bye to a team that was leaving. He had just returned from Banda Aceh himself, with the sad news that no one is left from his entire family. He and his wife and child will now move permanently to Seunuddon. And he made sure to let me know he’ll be ready for work tomorrow, amazingly. He has been a treasure at the clinic…helping as much as he can, with his wife, who is a midwife. I know he is sad to see this team leave, but he will be a great asset to the next [team] coming. How he finds the strength to do so is just unfathomable. He doesn’t cry—none of our staff have, at least not in front of us.

After reading the article, I cannot help but wonder: will I, one day, get to make a difference like Dr. Cranmer did? Will I have her strength and determination to lessen a people’s suffering, to change the world for the better? Often, as we are busy studying and working to reach our goals, we might have forgotten to slow down a little to ask ourselves these questions. Is going to medical school really about earning a six-digit salary? Or is it about arming yourself with the knowledge and the ability to make a difference where you are needed the most, whether it be the tsunami or Hurricane Katrina? Maybe some of us will find that the satisfaction of having helped others in need is incomparable with anything in the materialistic world.

Karen Jiang
Co-Editor-in-Chief

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**FOREWORD BY JENNY FEINBERG**

President, Student Union Government

To the Readers and Members of Monsoon Magazine:

In the fall of 2003, as Monsoon Editor-in-Chief Karen Jiang and I embarked on the beginning of our college careers, the Brandeis community faced tremendous racial and political tension. There was a clear need on campus for enhanced outlets of diverse discussion. As first-years, many students and I found solace in the founding of Monsoon magazine, the first Asian journal of Brandeis University. Monsoon’s rich content provided numerous opportunities for Brandeis students to learn about Asian culture, connecting us to new information.

While much work is still needed to bridge cultural divisions on campus, I feel confident that the continued work of our community leaders will gradually establish deeper understandings between our community members. Through social events, debates, and discussions, we must all work together in this worthy effort. As a community leader myself, I feel extremely fortunate to read Monsoon every semester and gain a closer connection to so many of my peers.

Thank you so much, Monsoon, for providing me with such an opportunity.

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Fondly,

Jenny Feinberg
President, Student Union Government
North Korea is a geopolitical anachronism. Its place in the international community is that of a living diorama, into which outsiders peer to observe the vestiges of an era past. As the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and other communist states either collapsed or opened their governments and markets, North Korea clung to its command economy and totalitarian dictatorship. A combination of government repression, misguided economic policies, and natural disasters has left half the population malnourished, a quarter of a million displaced, and upwards of a million killed by famine. An army of one million men, armed with equipment from the 1950s and ’60s, stands along the four-kilometer-long Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) facing South Korea. North Korea’s most recent offense is also its gravest: in 2003, North Korean negotiators claimed to have produced nuclear weapons. Though officially titled the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), North Korea’s isolation from the international community has earned it the name “hermit kingdom.” President George W. Bush called it a “narcissistic, bloated, delusional evil.”1 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice termed it an “outpost of tyranny.” The U.S. perception of an evil North Korea run by madmen presents few alternatives to regime change as a solution to the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.

On the other hand, understanding North Korean leaders as rational actors concerned with the security of their country gives a more realistic interpretation of their pursuit of nuclear weapons. A recent publication by the Woodrow Wilson Center provides evidence for just such an argument.1

In May 2005, the Wilson Center released a series of diplomatic correspondences from Russian and Hungarian archives. These documents include communications between Soviet and Eastern European foreign ministers and their ambassadors in North Korea between 1962 and 1986. While most analyses of the North Korean regime take place from the outside looking in, these documents offer the unique perspective of foreign dignitaries working directly with North Korean officials and sometimes with Kim Il Sung himself, North Korea’s “Great Leader” from 1948 to 1994. These exchanges strongly suggest that North Korea’s search for nuclear weapons was a rational effort to guarantee its security against a U.S. attack.

The documents make it clear that Kim Il Sung believed a U.S. nuclear strike against North Korea was two merely a possibility, it was a certainty. In November 1967, Kim expected the U.S. to reignite the conflict in the Korean peninsula, despite the deep U.S. involvement in Vietnam.1 As late as February 1976, two decades after the armistice ending the Korean War, high-ranking DPRK officials did not believe that peaceful means could unify Korea. They were ready for the next war, which they anticipated would be fought by nuclear bombs rather than armies.2

The North Korean leadership recognized that in the event of another war, it would lack the non-nuclear weapons it possessed during the last conflict against the U.S. In August 1962, Pak Song Ch’ol, the DPRK Minister of Foreign Affairs, observed that the U.S. nuclear arsenal was an obvious advantage over North Korea: “Their possession of nuclear weapons, and the lack thereof in our hands, objectively helps them, therefore, to eternalize their rule.”3

The Great Leader initially took comfort in the belief that North Korea’s mountainous terrain would limit the destruction of a nuclear attack. His military advisors presumed that similar terrain in Vietnam prevented the U.S. from using nuclear weapons there as well. Kim concluded confidently that “a lot of such bombs would be needed to wreak large-scale destruction in the country.”4

Nevertheless, Kim undertook extensive measures to protect the North Korean leadership from a nuclear attack. By 1963, Kim claimed to have constructed a nation-wide network of caves and tunnels to shelter the regime.5 The tunnels were interconnected with provisions to provide their inhabitants with “everything that they needed.”6 In 1967, military attacks from several communist Eastern European governments reported that the North Korean army staged military exercises simulating a nuclear attack. They also noted that preparations had not been taken to prepare civilians for such an attack.6

Moreover, the capital city of Pyongyang was prepared to shelter its population in its cavernous subway tunnels. According to one account, North Korea “has been turned into a system of fortifications, important factories have been moved underground... and airfields, harbors, and other military facilities were established in the subterranean cave networks.”7 The accuracy of these statements is doubtful, as the same report indicated that the DPRK had already moved its nuclear warheads through indigenous capabilities, which it had not.8

Though his preparations for surviving a nuclear attack were extensive, Kim Il Sung’s determination to obtain his own nuclear deterrent was notable from the outset. In 1963, Soviet specialists studying raw uranium ore in North Korea observed that the North Koreans were determined to mine large amounts of uranium ore despite all odds.9 US Defense Secretary McNamara told a Korean engineer that the impoverished DPRK economy prevented production of a nuclear weapon, the engineer retorted that North Koreans would provide free labor for years if necessary.10 This dedication brings to mind Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfiqar Bhutto’s statement that Pakistanis would eat grass until they could afford to build. He stated to GDR Secretary General Erich Honecker that it would take only two nuclear bombs to destroy the DPRK. The presence of over 1,000 U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea proscribed a DPRK offensive against South Korea.11

Those documents carry a useful lesson. For all his failings as a leader and a human being, Kim Il Sung was not a madman in foreign relations. Kim’s fear of a nuclear attack was not based on explicit threats from the U.S. during the 1950–3 Korean War and the presence of U.S. nuclear forces in South Korea. He and other North Korean officials justified their pursuit of a nuclear deterrent as necessitated by the overwhelming military strength of the U.S. By seeking to level the vastly uneven playing field between North Korea and the U.S., Kim took the only rational action available.

Though half a century has passed since the Korean War, Kim Il Sung’s son and successor, Kim Jong II, also has reasons to pursue nuclear weapons: North Korea is quite literally on a U.S. “hit list.” In “The Nuclear Threat,” a 2002 report of the U.S. Department of Defense, North Korea was named a potential target for attacks, perhaps nuclear, if the situation on the peninsula deteriorated.12 North Korea had never been more provocative since the January 2003 declaration by North Korea that the U.S. was willing to go to war to prevent a state from acquiring nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, it may also have underscored the necessity of possessing a nuclear deterrent to prevent such an attack.12

Stephen Walt, Professor of International Affairs at the Kenney School of Government, notes that in pursuing nuclear weapons, North Korea has simply mimicked the policies of the powerful members of the U.N. Security Council, which developed nuclear weapons to deter their enemies.13 The recently released diplomatic correspondences support Walt’s claim: North Korea may be an international pariah and an anachronism, but its leadership is still rational and bent upon survival. Even hermits need protection from the rain. North Korea hopes that a nuclear bomb may just be the perfect umbrella.

Sources:

3 “Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Song Ch’ol; 24 August 1962,” p. 2.
issue of Monsoon, depicts, the political culture of Hong Kong embodies the unwillingness of both the Hong Kong government and the so-called Pan-Democrats to engage in productive cooperation with each other. I concluded my article by warning that the hostility between the two parties would become “more severe if none of the two parties would attempt to leave their positions at the extremes and start learning the virtues of productive cooperation.” As both parties, and particularly the Pan-Democrats, have been harmfully unproductive to Hong Kong’s political development, my article ended by suggesting that the Hong Kong politicians “may well just all go home and pray that ‘Politics for Dummies’ will be next in the publication series.”

As strange as it may sound to those who are accustomed to Hong Kong’s unproductive political culture, the situation did begin to change in recent months. Perhaps some sort of “Politics for Dummies” did indeed land in Hong Kong together with its new Chief Executive Mr. Donald Tsang, who replaced Mr. Tung Chee Hwa upon the latter’s resignation on March 10, 2005. Hong Kong’s “political climate” has been improving significantly as evidenced by the increasing number of dialogues between government officials and the anti-government Pan-Democrats. Be this a result of the new Chief Executive’s proactive and open-minded approach in dealing with the Chinese? Or might it be an improbable softening of the hostile stance of the Pan-Democrats due to the resignation of Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, Hong Kong’s “political climate” did seem to have been heading towards a more promising direction than it ever had since 1997.

A recent episode in Guangdong, however, reminds one to too be too optimistic about Hong Kong’s political culture. The Pan-Democrats, as described in my aforementioned article, have after all been “playing the role of the ‘protestor’ who stands in the opposite end of the political spectrum to both the Hong Kong government under Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa, as well as the Chinese government under the Chinese Communist Party.” The unproductive environment in the Legislative Council since 1997 has taught one that productive cooperation between the Chinese and the Pan-Democrats, as usual, unproductive hostility dominated Hong Kong politics. What seems most unusual, however, is that both the Chinese and the Hong Kong government are adopting a proactive approach in the hope to break the ice between themselves and the Pan-Democrats - a move that was seldom seen before Mr. Tsang’s reign as Chief Executive. This is dealing with the Chinese government has removed several Pan-Democrats from the “black list,” which banned them from entering the mainland, to facilitate their September 25 Guangdong visit. The Pan-Democrats accepted the invitation - but it turned out that they arrived in mainland China with hostility and turbulence on their agendas rather than to seek rooms for productive cooperation.

On September 25, 2005, the new Hong Kong Chief Executive led 59 legislative councilors on a visit to Guangdong to see how and why they themselves are the source of showing opposition against the Chinese government. The door for dialogue was wasted for productive cooperation between the Chinese politicians in Hong Kong who hold minority or even radical opinions, but that another opportunity had been in the future to come.

What is worrisome is not that there exists politicians in Hong Kong who hold minority or even radical opinions, but that another opportunity had been wasted for productive cooperation between the Chinese government and Hong Kong politicians. At the historical Guangdong meeting initiated by the governments of China and Hong Kong, the Pan-Democrats, rather than showing a gesture of friendliness and willingness to productively cooperate, instead, wasted their time on issues that were not directly related to Hong Kong’s well-being or on topics that were created for the purpose of showing opposition against the Chinese government – something that they have always been doing, and unfortunately something that they seem to be committed to in the future to come.

Hostility and unproductiveness still characterizes the nature of Hong Kong politics. Yet, this time, these negative qualities of Hong Kong’s political world was around, only because the Pan-Democrats decided to slap the friendly hands offered by the Chinese and the Hong Kong government. The door for dialogue was opened, and opportunities presented, yet it was the Pan-Democrats who refused to display the differences in political stances and engage the friendly hands of their “enemies.” Perhaps a “Politics for Dummies” is no longer necessary. The Pan-Democrats of Hong Kong should instead reach for the mirror, to look and see how and why they themselves are the source of the many problems in Hong Kong’s political culture.

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Globalization, Poverty, and Growth in Bangladesh
- by Janice HUSSAIN

“In Bangladesh, it is not uncommon to see a mahji, a fisherman or boatman, fishing from his boat. Often he is alone. He spends many a lonely hour, casting his hand net into the water, trying to catch a few fish for his family or perhaps to sell some in the market so he can earn money to support his family. A day after the meeting, Singtao News of Hong Kong reported a comment by Party Secretary Zhang regarding his dialogues with the Pan-Democrats during the meeting – “Even half a sentence is too much for those who aren’t on the same page,” an old Chinese saying that is usually used to describe hostile and unproductive conversations. The Pan-Democrats, on the other hand, appeared furious upon their return to Hong Kong, accusing the Chinese government of being “insensitive” of Pan-Democrat opinions. Once again, as usual, unproductive hostility dominated Hong Kong politics.

Even half a sentence is too much: Another wasted opportunity to improve the unproductive political culture of Hong Kong
- by Tak-Hin Benjamin NGAN

As my article “The Unproductive Political Culture of Hong Kong,” published in the April 2004
no identity. To painters and innocent eyes, the image is quite artistic. But for countless of Bangladeshis, it is a metaphor of life, a shadow of bare survival as it serves as a constant reminder of hardship.

In September of 2000, the leaders of the world assembled at the United Nations Millennium Summit. In this three-day meeting, one of the most urgent problems they were to address was poverty. Of the world’s 6 billion people, almost 3 billion lived under $2 per day. South Asia alone had 44% of the world’s poor. Regarding poverty and inequality, the UN conference set several goals of international development to be accomplished by 2015. Some of these goals included reducing half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, providing primary education, reducing infant mortality by two-thirds, offering universal access to reproductive health services, and implementing strategies for sustainable development in every country by 2025.

Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, states that poverty is not only defined by having low income. He explains that poverty is also about low national achievements in education, health, and nutrition. These factors are embedded in the lack of opportunity for human development, jobs, credit, markets, and health services. Bangladesh encompasses many of these issues that Chowdhury states with poignancy.

The economy of Bangladesh is dominated by agricultural industries such as fishing, raising animals, and farming. These industries employ over 50% of the labor force and 35% of all export. The majority of the population (80%) lives in rural areas. Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world. It currently has a population density greater than 900 persons per km², which means the average population density is over 2 persons per km². By contrast, Bangladesh has the fewest arable land per capita in the world (.15 acres per person). Among all the crops, Bangladesh produces mainly rice, which occupies up to 75% of the total cropland and is grown virtually everywhere except for hilly areas. Bangladesh’s tropical climate and abundant water supply allow farmers to cultivate and harvest rice up to three times a year.

Bangladesh was severely hit by the policies of Bretton Woods Institutions’ Structural Adjustment Programme introduced in the 1980s. Its objective was to control the GDP growth of Bangladesh at 5% per annum to maintain macro-economic and budgetary stability. The country consequently enforced a tight monetary policy to reduce public spending. These policies included the withdrawal of subsidies from food and agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides, and also cut back on public schools and hospitals’ spending. Bangladesh was severely hit by the policies of Bretton Woods.

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Masculinity in Chinese History

The ideal image of a masculine man in China in 1840 bears almost no resemblance to its western contemporaries or its predecessor a thousand years ago. Westerners at that time perceived Chinese men as “sexless” or “feminine,” while the Chinese perceived western men as “barbarians equipped with advanced weapons.”

The concept of masculinity in China is closely associated with the economic and cultural development across different regions and over different historical periods. However, its overall trend of development throughout Chinese history has been quite linear. By the end of the 18th century, the ideal Chinese image of the beard, martial, military, force, and power. As for whether yin or yang is to account for these traits, Confucian emphasizes, “wen and yin necessarily occurred in the male sex.”

People adhering to wen were restricted to the rules of being righteous, courageous, responsible, self-disciplined, and loyal to the emperor. According to Louie, they were different from European knights, because they “eschewed women,” and didn’t have many of the “aristocratic values” or “fetish ideals” as the European knights did. They also differed from the Japanese samurai, whose behaviors were not guided by righteous ideals, but were only loyal to their feudal lords. People of wen, in contrast, were not less righteous, disciplined, nor courageous, but expressed these qualities through the arts and literature. The scholarly government minister who drew paintings and composed great poems is the

Yin is the black sphere, while yang is the white sphere. Both yin and yang occupy a spot in the dominant sphere of the other, representing a potential for change. Mr. Kam Louie, a native of Hong Kong and a professor of gender studies, writes in his book Theorising Chinese masculinity, “real men are supposed to have plenty of the yang essence,” which is “defined vaguely as determination, strength and good self-control.” However, the ideal man is not absolutely yang, but possesses both masculine and feminine merits. As Louis points out, “the ideal situation is when [the man] absorbs yin essence from the woman, without losing his precious yang essence to her.” The opposite holds as well. In Confucian ideology, which originated in the Spring and Autumn period (770BC - 476BC), the state is run by two forces: wen and wu. According to Louie, the former meaning of wen centered on the concept of 22 attainments that would distinguish a civilized man from an untutored savage. The core meaning of wu centers on martial, military, force, and power. As for whether yin or yang is to account for these traits, Confucian emphasizes, “wen and yin necessarily occurred in the male sex.”

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Due to differences in economic and cultural development, the perception of masculinity in different regions of China differed significantly. In many poor regions in ancient China, where people exerted every bit of their manpower to grow crops, there were hardly any cultural improvements, nor were there gender roles. Men and women had to work in the fields all day long, or else the family would lose its chance of hunger. On the contrary, in rich areas such as the Jiangsu province, there had been obvious gender roles, since women were not needed in doing heavy manual labor. Moreover, men were more caught in rich regions in the south than in poor regions in the north. As a result, soldiers in the northern part of China were more valorous in combat than the ones in the south. This difference in the concept of masculinity is primarily due to the variations in economic development. Gender roles and masculine ideology could only exist in relatively rich, particularly urban, areas of ancient China. It was in these areas that the notions of yin and yang, wen and wu, had been most striking and prominent in defining masculine roles in the society.

According to Louie, Confucius and his followers, who originally introduced the concept of wen and wu, evidently favored wen over wu. In his writings, Confucius would often praise scholars and bureaucrats as the most influential members of society. Nevertheless, by the Han dynasty (206BC-AD), wen was the dominant over wu in male society. In earlier periods of Chinese history, particularly in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States (770BC-221BC) Period and the Qin dynasty (221BC-206BC), wen officials in general had enjoyed higher positions than wu officials had, because the ruling class had placed emphasis on military affairs. One of the kings of the Zhao Kingdom of the Warring States period, for example, ordered a mass mobilization of troops, instructing his people to dress in the fashion of warlike northern tribesmen, so that the people of Zhao could gain the martial skills and ferocity of the tribesmen. This another, more gruesome example of wen’s dominance over wu during the aforementioned periods, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty ordered thousands of scholars to be burned alive and their works burned, in order to strengthen the dictatorial power and weaken the influence of Confucianism and wen. The Qin emperor put great trust in his generals, who governed vital areas of the empire, and were in charge of the construction of his mausoleum and the Great Wall. At that time, instead of bookworms, a man endowed with physical strength, bravery and leadership among soldiers was highly recognized and admired upon.

Later on in Chinese history, particularly since the Western Han dynasty (206BC-8AD), Confucianism became officially accepted as the official doctrine in guiding government policies. China had been unified, and in addition, the threat of invasion from barbarian tribes had diminished. Therefore, economic and cultural development dominated most of the central government’s attention. Moreover, as Louie argues, Confucius mentions in his The Analects that the rulers of the state should rule with moral power, instead of by force. According to Confucianism, “wu is inferior to wen as representing the force to achieve one’s goals.” Naturally, wen officials came to enjoy higher positions than wu officials did. With the official adaptation of Confucianism, wen officials and force became relegated to a minor role than the most central and important of Confucianism’s influence of Confucianism and wen officials ascended to the elite part of the hierarchy of talents, and the wen officials stayed in the non-elite part.

Pre-revolutionary China was a period that lacked of necessity degraded military readiness, while the emperors of China began centralizing their power by reducing the influence of the military. As soon as he was enthroned, the first emperor of Northern Song (960AD-1127AD) announced that all leaders of the municipality, many of which were wu officials, be replaced by wen officials. He also persuaded his generals on a banquet to give up their position in the military and be content about being a millionaire. The emperor did so because he didn’t want any treason in the military to pose a threat to his rule. This policy of degrading wu officials undermined military strength on the one hand, but on the other, it extinguished any possibility of the outbreak of civil wars within the dynasty. The policy also promoted the status of wen officials, which reduced the aggressiveness of the entire nation. This centralization of military was mostly carried on and carried forward in later dynasties.

Physical strength no longer appeared in the criteria in judging a Chinese gentleman. The ideal masculine man had gradually become a knowledgeable and intelligent person, who was consummate in reasoning and morality, and at the same time, loyal to his emperor and country. Many heroes who emerged in the later part of China’s dynastic period, which ended in 1912, were wen officials, who defended their nation against foreign invasion. For example, Prime Minister Wen Tiantang (1235AD-1283AD) and General Northern Song (1127AD-1279AD) against the Mongolian invasion, was well known as a patriotic writer. General Qi Jiguang (1555AD-1587AD), famous for his feats in suppressing the rebellion of Chinese bandits, was also a poet who achieved high literary recognition. The decline of wu reached its bottom during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912AD). As Guilke observes: "Ancient lovers [were] preferably depicted as younger men without beard, whiskers. The Chinese, and more especially the members of the literary class, began to consider physical exercise as vulgar and athletic prowess. The ideal lover is described as a delicate, hypo-sensitive youngster with pale face and narrow shoulders, passing the greatest pain with a smile among his books and flowers, and who falls ill at the slightest disappointment."

Sexuality: “Chinese literary history has been a history of men who want to become women.”

The aforementioned phenomenon of the Qing dynasty might not had necessarily been the result of the progressively more virilistic and masculine image, probably due to the official adaptation of Confucianism; perhaps rather, as Professor Schrecker of Brandeis University contends, it was “a period in which a culture fell on hard times.” In the 19th century to the mid 20th century, the masculine image changed drastically from the mid 19th century to the mid 20th century. This probably explains the revitalization of the wen spirit that had occurred throughout the 20th century.

Empress Tzu Hsi is a much-maligned figure in Chinese history. She is often portrayed as a vicious and scheming leader whose ineffective rule ruined China by failing to resist Western imperialism. However, this monstrous image of Tzu Hsi originated from people with a biased vision and may not be the historical inaccuracies. Furthermore, the threat of invasion from barbarian and rumors associated with Tzu Hsi need to be analyzed in terms of source motive and accuracy, and may allow readers to see her in a rather different light.

The Last Empress of China – A Misunderstood Figure
- by Zoe Yu JIANG

Empress Tzu Hsi is a much-maligned figure in Chinese history. She is often portrayed as a vicious and scheming leader whose ineffective rule ruined China by failing to resist Western imperialism. However, this monstrous image of Tzu Hsi originated from people with a biased vision and may not be the historical inaccuracies. Furthermore, the threat of invasion from barbarian and rumors associated with Tzu Hsi need to be analyzed in terms of source motive and accuracy, and may allow readers to see her in a rather different light.
emperor through an extensive network of palace insiders and played an active role in governing China. In 1898, Kuang Hsu initiated the One Hundred Days Reform with the guidance of court official and reformist thinker K’ang Yu-wei. The reform outraged conservative forces in the imperial court, who then urged Tzu Hsi to return to Beijing and reclaim power. With support from the anti-reformists, Tzu Hsi crushed the reform movement, convening an imperial council of her living quarters, and once again became ruler of China, until her death in 1908.

In the 1900’s, the Boxer Uprising, foreign encroachments, and revolutionary movements shook the foundations of imperial China and eventually led to its demise. Kuang Hsu died shortly after Tzu Hsi, in 1908. The Qing Dynasty disintegrated soon after, in 1912.1 Was Tzu Hsi, in fact, a vicious individual who allowed her beloved son for the sake of power. 2

Despite these facts, in many historical accounts Tzu Hsi was the scapegoat for Tung Chi’s death, primarily due to the rumors spread by K’ang.3 K’ang claimed that he had many personal encounters with Tzu Hsi and that he had many insights into the imperial life in Beijing. Following the failure of the One Hundred Days Reform, K’ang evaded capture by Tzu Hsi and would launch venomous attacks against the empress’s reign, accusing her of the grossest indecencies.4 Hailed as “the sage of modern China,” K’ang easily gained the belief of Westerners and Chinese readers despite the obvious tendency for bias in his description of Tzu Hsi.

Another rumor concerning Tzu Hsi involved her alleged sexual escapades with palace eunuchs. Tzu Hsi was depicted as a promiscuous and debauched woman, as well as an unfaithful wife, by another contributor to the popular view of Tzu Hsi. Along with Morrison and Backhouse, K’ang played a central role in negatively portraying the empress dowager by spreading these unfounded allegations.

One rumor about Tzu Hsi concerned the death of Emperor Tung Chi. According to official palace records, shortly after Tung Chi’s sixteenth birthday (the legal age to take over the throne), he died of smallpox. People were quick to blame Tzu Hsi for Tung Chi’s death. It was believed that the power-craving Tzu Hsi encouraged Tung Chi to engage in orgies and visit brothels, so that he could contract syphilis and die an early death.5

According to K’ang, Tzu Hsi ordered Li Lien-Ying, one of her favorite eunuchs, to give a smallpox contaminated handkerchief to Tung Chi to wipe his face.6 Tung Chi, already sickly due to his indulgent lifestyle, was unable to survive the combination of syphilis and smallpox. With Tung Chi’s death, Tzu Hsi’s detractors claimed that she had indeed committed murder and her rule began without putting yet another child-emperor, Kuang Hsu, on the throne. It would be a mistake, however, to say with certainty that Tzu Hsi had killed her beloved son for the sake of power.

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It would be a mistake, however, to say with certainty that Tzu Hsi had killed her beloved son for the sake of power.7 Furthermore, after the death of Hsien Feng, Tzu Hsi was not firmly in power yet, and her virtue was constantly under inspection, especially by powerful rivals like Empress Hsi An. Any misdeed would have led to the empress dowager’s downfall. It is quite hard to believe that Tzu Hsi would have dared to violate palace laws for the sake of a few eunuchs during her early days as co-regent.

Another accusation surrounding Tzu Hsi involved the empress dowager in the Boxer Uprising. The Boxers were a group of anti-Christian and anti-foreign peasants from the impoverished province of Shantung. In 1900, Boxer rebels occupied Beijing and besieged foreigner churches and consulates. The Chinese government did little to remedy the situation, and an allied coalition of Western troops stormed Beijing to rescue the besieged foreigners. In Beijing, the allied troops conducted massive looting, and many Chinese residents were killed in the chaos.

There were many versions told about Tzu Hsi’s role in the Boxer Uprising. In Princess Der Ling’s account, Prince Tuan was the one who supported the Boxers. Tzu Hsi was initially hesitant to go against the foreigners due to their armed might, but Prince Tuan arranged a clever hoax to demonstrate that the Boxers were immune to Western firearms in front of the empress dowager. By fooling Tzu Hsi, Tuan gained authorization to aid the Boxers, and led to the ruinous occupation of Beijing by the allied forces. In the final battle, the Boxers were defeated. The empress dowager was goaded into action when Prince Tuan presented to Tzu Hsi a forged letter from foreign governments demanding that Tzu Hsi step down from power. Enraged beyond control, Tzu Hsi proceeded to side with the Boxers against the foreign governments.8

From the above two versions, it can be concluded that Tzu Hsi did not intend to attack foreigners, that she was forced by Prince Tuan. Furthermore, according to Seagrave, contrary to popular Western belief, Tzu Hsi did not “declare war on the world.” It was the allied fleet which initiated official hostilities by attacking Chinese forts and. In Morrison’s view, Tzu Hsi was a group of anti-Christian and anti-foreign peasants called the Boxers, and Tzu Hsi’s reputation today remains an unfortunate victim of the pen.

Sources:

3. Seagrave p. 7
4. Seagrave p. 9
5. Seagrave p. 9
6. Seagrave p. 9
7. Seagrave p. 9
8. Seagrave p. 9
10. Seagrave p. 19 – 42
11. Seagrave p. 137
12. Seagrave p. 9
13. Laidler p. 201
14. Seagrave p. 10
15. Seagrave p. 270
17. Der Ling. p. 245-249
18. Laidler p. 222
19. Seagrave p. 352
21. Zoe Yu JIANG (’06) is a final year student at Brandeis University majoring in Biology.

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Whether watching a Bollywood film, flipping through Indian magazines, watching Miss India pageants, or reading matrimonial ads, there is one common feature in all of them: the women have fair skin.

The Indian fascination with fairness of skin is not confined to a mindset. Every year, millions of Indian women go out and purchase fairness creams, soaps, and lotions. One brand alone, Fair & Lovely, had an estimated consumer base of sixty million throughout India in 2002. Skin fairness products account for 60 percent of the country’s skincare sales - bringing in over $140 million to GDP. The skin fairness business is one of the largest industries in India.

Indian women use fairness creams that act to temporarily lighten skin color through chemical agents that reduce melanin production. Melanin is a pigment responsible for the darkening of skin and is produced in the skin by melanocytes, which are melanin-producing cells. Exposure to the sun stimulates melanin production. Fairness products block melanocytes and prevents tanning.

The Indian fascination with fair skin isn’t a recent phenomenon. Rather, it is thought to originate during the days of British rule. Some say that the fairness fixation is a remnant from colonial days, when Indians had lower social status than the British. The fairer one’s skin was, the closer one resembled the white ruling class, and therefore light skin was considered a desirable quality. Indian murals and artwork from the period would depict dark-skinned people as inferior, while the royalty, landowners, and priests were drawn as fair-skinned.

Furthermore, it has long remained a phenomenon that is not confined to a mindset. Every year, millions of Indian women go out and purchase fairness creams, soaps, and lotions. One brand alone, Fair & Lovely, had an estimated consumer base of sixty million throughout India in 2002. Skin fairness products account for 60 percent of the country’s skincare sales - bringing in over $140 million to GDP. The skin fairness business is one of the largest industries in India.

As I walked to my gym class earlier this evening, I realized that although Japan’s economy is going through a slump, Japanese culture is still being disseminated overseas on an ever-larger scale. Today, Japanese names are not only seen on electronics or video game covers - they are making their way into all aspects of our daily lives. My ponderings quickly dissipated when my Italian roommate and I walked out onto Fells Point Main Street and passed by the Giant Japanese videogame console, Microsoft’s XBox, on the Saturday morning cartoon line-up on WB consists of back-to-back episodes of Pokémon followed by Yu-Gi-Oh and Megaman. Another look shows that the most prominent advertisement on Cartoon Network’s website is for the September premiere of Naruto. Even the sole non-Japanese videogame console, Microsoft’s XBox, depends on Japanese software companies such as Namco and Konami to supply popular games.

The market for fair skin in India

Did you know......

Cosplaying as anime characters is usually restricted to conventions and cosplay events. Gothic Lolitas, however, are prevalent in the Harajuku district in Tokyo all year round. It’s considered an underground cultural movement.

Anime comes in as many genres as you can think of. Sci-fi, romance, sports, and even adult anime are all popular among fans.

Japanese Culture in America – A Unique View from Otakon 2005

I step into a local Japanese restaurant in downtown Baltimore, starving from a full day of walking. The scene before my eyes immediately takes me back - it wouldn’t be odd to see a man in his early thirties drowning sake in a corner, except that this one is dressed in a bright yellow Pikachu suit. His companion is wearing kitten ears and a fluffy tail pinned to her dress. Standing in front of me, clusters of brightly costumed people are waiting to be seated - looking as hungry as I am. For one weekend each year, this is a common sight in Baltimore, as local restaurants struggle to accommodate members of Otakon 2005, the largest Japanese anime convention on the East Coast. I’ve never been to a convention of any type before Otakon, but this year I decided to join some high school friends at a small reunion and to see what this extravaganza is all about.

Otakon’s name comes from the Japanese word “Otaku”, which in slang refers to an overly obsessed fan of anime or manga. However, the Otakon is not only about anime people from all age groups and professions gather here to participate in countless events centered on Japanese video games, fashion, food, and pop culture. Many members cosplay (costume-play) to look like their favorite anime or game characters. Cosplayers from all over America, from Ah My Goddess to Zelda make their pilgrimage through the gargantuan convention center to attend countless screenings, panels, and workshops. Most of my friends disappeared to the concert hall-sized video game room about twenty minutes after we arrived.

For an event all about things Japanese, there were surprising few Japanese, or even Asian members, among the 23,000 people who attended. Although these folks live across the world from Japan, many of them speak fluent Japanese and have visited the country in the past. I often only shake my head in response as they discussed their favorite Japanese games and artists.

Through my inquiries about how the other Otakon attendees obtained so much information about Japanese culture, it quickly became apparent how dramatically Japanese cultural exports such as cartoons and games have changed the lives of American youth. These exports especially permeate the children’s entertainment industry in the US. A quick glance at TV Guide reveals that the Saturday morning cartoon line-up on WB consists of back-to-back episodes of Pokémon followed by Yu-Gi-Oh and Megaman. Another look shows that the most prominent advertisement on Cartoon Network’s website is for the September premiere of Naruto. Even the sole non-Japanese videogame console, Microsoft’s XBox, depends on Japanese software companies such as Namco and Konami to supply popular games.

Games are a crucial part of Otakon. Para Para is a popular dancing game played usually on a platform. The girl shown above won second place in the Para Para Contest.

Besides children’s entertainment, Japanese presence in American pop culture extends as far as Hollywood and MTV. American film makers are increasingly incorporating anime styles into action films such as Kill Bill. Additionally, US releases such as The Ring (2002) and The Grudge (2005) were taken à-la-carte from their Japanese original counterparts, and remade for an American audience.

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Japanese street fashion in ‘Harajuku Girls’, a song that is the centerpiece of her new album. Needless to say, the growing presence of Japanese influences in the American entertainment industry has made many people more curious about Japan. There are dozens of anime conventions across America, such as the annual Anime Boston event. Anime is also popular in Europe, although far fewer Japanese cartoons are incorporated into European children’s programs.
and television ads are also flooded with fair-skinned beauties promoting fairness products. One such ad portrayed a young, dark-skinned girl’s retired father dissatisfied that he had no son-in-law to provide for him, and that the daughter’s part-time work provided insufficient salaries. Implied is the fact that the daughter can neither get a good job nor get married because of her dark skin. The girl then uses the cream, becomes fairer, and gets a better-paid job as an airhostess. She can then support his father, instead of being a burden on him. Another ad shows two young women conversing in a bedroom. The lighter-skinned woman has a boyfriend and, consequently, is happy. The darker-skinned woman, lacking a boyfriend, is not. Her friend advises her to use soap to wash away the dark skin that chases men away. Yet another commercial involves a dark-complexioned girl who is engaged to a much older man. The situation is a depressing one until she uses a fairness cream and a handsome young man is attracted to her and becomes her husband.

It is apparent that Indian women have been sold on the skincare industry’s message that fairer is better. The market for fairness creams has been increasing at 25% per year, compared to the overall cosmetic market growth of 15% per year. This statistic does not include the many women who go to beauty parlors and clinics, paying even hefty sums to lighten their complexions. India’s most prized women, such as Aishwarya Rai and Miss World 1994, generally have fair skin, light-colored eyes, and hair. India is an extremely large and diverse country, and its citizens encompass a wide range of ethnicities, physical characteristics, and skin tones. However, fashion advertisements continually aim to promote a characteristic held by a tiny minority of Indian women.

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