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The Amir, Neutrality and Rumour During the First World War

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The following paper will examine the relationship between the Amir of Afghanistan and the British Raj during the First World War. Furthermore, the way in which the war affected Delhi's attitude towards Afghanistan and how this shifted over the course of the hostilities will be explored. For the British in India this was a time of great anxiety, as much of their military resources were needed in Europe and the Mesopotamian campaign. Not only were there anxieties over the potential threats from Germany and then Turkey, the British authorities in India also worried about how their neighbours, Afghanistan, would act throughout the hostilities. Complicating matters is the role that rumour played in influencing North-West Frontier relations.

The neutrality of the Afghan Amir, Habibullah Khan, was strategically important for Britain during the First World War. With the North-West Frontier of India acting as a global crossroads where both physical and psychological influences were at play, British authorities looked at ways to safeguard the region as hostilities commenced in 1914. This was not the first time that an Amir's conduct was put under scrutiny. During the 1897 'Frontier Uprising' Habibullah Khan's father, Abdur Rahman Khan's, conduct and actions towards the frontier and British India were scrutinised by British Officials in India. Keith Surridge explains that the hostilities surprised the British authorities, especially in their scale. Many British officials, in trying to understand its origins, looked towards Amir Abdur Rahman Khan and his alleged involvement. Surridge argues that the Amir was a duplicitous enemy of Britain.¹ Lord Lansdowne, in 1889, described the Amir as 'a cantankerous and suspicious old savage'.² However, all in authority did not share these views. Lord Curzon commented that 'in spite of his uncertain temper and insolent language, [he was] a consistent friend of the British alliance'.³

The frontier between Afghanistan and India historically was used as a gateway to enter India. During the nineteenth century European powers looked to gain a foothold in India. With British influence in India expanding as the century began, one eye was kept on Afghanistan to see whether any external power was trying to influence the country. France, under Napoleon Bonaparte, showed intentions towards India. To make matters worse, in 1807 the French signed a treaty of alliance with Russia in Tilsit. So it was decided in 1808 that a diplomatic mission, led by Mountstuart Elphinstone, was to be sent to the court of Amir Shah Shuja to gain influence in Kabul.⁴ It was hoped that a friendly alliance with Afghanistan against the threat of a French invasion of India would be secured between the two countries. However, the perceived French threat was short lived, being replaced in the 1820s by Russian designs in Central Asia and played out during

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¹ K. Surridge, 'The Ambiguous Amir: Britain, Afghanistan and the 1897 North-West Frontier Uprising', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 36 (2008), p. 417

² T. Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A biography* (London, 1929), p. 106

³ G. Curzon, *Tales of Travel* (London, 1923), p. 54

⁴ The mission was also sent to Sindh, Iran and Jodhpur

the rest of the century in Afghanistan with India as the key stake. As the twentieth century approached, a new player in the so-called 'great game' entered the arena: Germany. This was to impact on neutrality between Britain and Afghanistan as the First World War played out.

The policy of neutrality between Britain and Afghanistan originated in the reign of Abdul Rahman Khan (1880-1901). It was born out of British success in the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80). By winning the war, and forcing the Afghans to sign the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879, the British created a series of buffer zones on the Afghan-Indian border. However, the policy was a very informal agreement based on the special relationship between the Amir, rather than the state, with the Government of India. It was founded on letters exchanged in June and July 1880 between Abdul Rahman and Sir Lepel Griffin, the chief British political officer in Afghanistan. These established British control of the Amir's foreign relations, gave him the promise of British protection against unprovoked aggression and recognized him as the Amir of Kabul. Britain was to refrain from intervention in his country's internal affairs and the Amir was to receive a regular subsidy, which was increased, in 1893, to 1,850,000 rupees (18.5 lakhs of rupees).⁵

When Habibullah Khan took the throne in 1901 he was well aware that the agreement between his father and the British had been a personal one. The new Amir wanted the relationship to continue, but this time on a more formal basis between states rather than persons. The Amir wanted some form of protection from the Russian Empire, which had expanded greatly over the nineteenth century. The British preferred to keep the arrangements renewable with each change of ruler as this gave them scope to amend as they saw appropriate. Louis Dane, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, arrived in Kabul on 12 December 1904 with instructions to amend the old terms and negotiate a binding personal treaty with the Amir. After three months of negotiations Dane was authorized to accept Habibullah Khan's terms, which reaffirmed the old agreements but turned them into a treaty between nations.⁶ The annual subsidy granted to his late father was renewed, after initially being halted, and he was also permitted to collect arrears from the period it was suspended. Since he was recognized not as Amir of Kabul, nor even as Amir of Afghanistan, but as the independent king of Afghanistan and its dependencies, his country's territorial integrity was implicitly guaranteed. In return, he allowed Britain to retain control over his foreign relations.⁷ Despite the resulting agreement not being to the satisfaction of the officials in India, the British Government was satisfied that the 1905 settlement would forestall any future frontier complications. However, with the frontier acting as a global crossroads and geopolitical events affecting the region, rumours concerning Afghan neutrality continued to circulate.

Rumours

India during the nineteenth century was seen by the British authorities as an information and rumour rich-society, which they could not control.⁸ This continued in the early years of the twentieth century and Martin Sokenfeld argues that British policy towards the Northern Frontier of India was entangled in these rumours instead of (unavailable) reliable information.⁹ It would be useful to define what a rumour is. The psychologist

⁵ L. W. Adamec, *Afghanistan 1900-1923: A Diplomatic History*, (Berkeley, 1967), pp. 172-75

⁶ Ibid., pp. 49-64

⁷ Ibid., pp. 59-64, 178

⁸ C. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1996)

⁹ M. Sokefeld, 'Rumour and Politics on the Northern Frontier: The British, Pakhtun Wali and Yaghestan', *Modern Asian Studies*, 36 (2002), pp. 299, 311

Robert Knapp, in 1944, defined rumour as 'a proposition for belief of topical reference disseminated without official verification'.¹⁰ It is this kernel of truth, of topical reference, that was the biggest problem for the British authorities. With rumours containing something believable, this had the potential to threaten the fragility on the Frontier and unite certain peoples against the authorities. Furthermore, Ben Hopkins argues that the 'rumour's power lay in its ability to erode British prestige'.¹¹ It is this that made rumour important on the Frontier and offers a way of thinking about the nature and limits of colonial power. The British authority's sources of information were deficient; they did not trust the local population, resulting in anxiety among officials.

The Balkan Wars

During the Balkan Wars of 1911-13, the authorities reported that many Afghans undertook their duty 'to show sympathy for the Ottomans' and to 'offer their services as volunteers, or to subscribe for the wounded'.¹² Abdul Qaiyum reported on this subject to the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province, George Roos-Keppel, writing that:

There are distinct signs of very strong feelings among the educated classes in this province ... and I shall not be at all telling the truth if I say that the Afghans of this province do not feel for what is going on in the Muslim world – Tripoli ... There is no use attempting to cast doubts on the truth that the war in Tripoli has stirred up feelings of Muslims ... All these stages of the war are being most closely followed by even the most ignorant tribesmen on the frontier and people have freely subscribed toward the "Red Crescent Societies" ... [and] they have a special regard for the Sultan of Turkey.¹³

With the excitement on either side of border, Britain maintained a strict policy of neutrality during this conflict. However, this did not stop the rumours spreading that Britain was assisting Italy. The British Agent at Kabul recorded that 'the impression that the British Government was at the bottom of the Italian attack has not been removed, and it is said in Court circles that the appointment of Lord Kitchener in Egypt was intended to prevent the Egyptian Government from siding with Turkey'.¹⁴ Not only were the British viewed as assisting Italy, they were also lamented with actively preventing Egypt, a fellow Islamic territory within their Empire, from lending its support to their co-religionists. Even though the Amir of Afghanistan sent financial assistance to Turkey, militarily he remained resolute.¹⁵ The British Agent at Kabul illustrated this point in a diary entry in 1913:

Padshah Sahib ... spoke about the Turco-Balkan war. He said that it was a religious war in which all the European powers were helping the Balkan States in their struggle against the Turks, that

¹⁰ R. Knapp, 'A Psychology of Rumour', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 8 (1944), p. 22

¹¹ B. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 42

¹² British Library, Indian Office Records Library, L/P&S/10/200, *Memo of Information*, North-West Frontier of India, week ending 6th January 1912

¹³ BL, IORL, MSS EurD613/1, *Sir George Roos-Keppel Papers*, Abdul Qaiyum to Roos-Keppel, 25 August 1912

¹⁴ BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/200, *Diary British of the Agent at Kabul*, No. 55, week ending 3rd December 1911

¹⁵ BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/200, *Memorandum of information received during the month of May 1912 - North-West Frontier of India and NWF Provincial Diary*, No. 46, week ending 16th November 1912

the British Government, who had armed the Arabs and had caused their revolt against the Sultan in Arabia, and had been at the bottom of the Italian attack on Tripoli, was also chiefly responsible for this struggle, that if the King of Islam (the Amir) were simply to allow ... a few ... Mullahs, to proclaim a *jihad* against the said Government, the Afridis, Mohmands and other Frontier tribes would in a short time teach them a lesson and liberate the Sultan. The Amir ... overheard ...[and] rated the Saiyid very severely ... and that if he heard any one else indulging in such talk he would have his tongue cut off.¹⁶

Again, the talk is of the British assisting the Italians with their attack on Tripoli despite the supposed neutrality of Britain. What is interesting is the harshness of the Amir's response to any further idle gossip of a *jihad* against the British in India via the frontier tribes. For the Amir, any such *jihad* against Britain would break his policy of neutrality and financially weaken his position, as the British authorities in India would immediately halt his annual subsidy. Furthermore, an expedition into Afghanistan would probably follow and his replacement by a new 'British friendly' Amir on the throne would no doubt ensue.

The First World War

As the First World War broke out and Turkey allied with Germany, the pressure on the Amir to defer from the policy of neutrality and join the *jihad* was relentless. One argument levelled at Habibullah as to why the policy of neutrality was followed came from within Kabul. Many who believed he had embraced western ways chastised him. Mullas were heard to say that 'His Majesty the Amir has secretly sold Afghanistan to the British Government' and '*Pashton Wali lar*' (old Afghanism is gone).¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, the British paid the Amir an annual subsidy to keep him on the path of neutrality. I would suggest that for the anti-British element within Kabul a distinction could be made between the Amir's alleged western ways, subsidy and neutrality juxtaposed to supporting their fellow co-religionists. It would have seemed that money and the support of Britain outweighed joining the *jihad*. The talk of the Amir's westernising ways originated from his successful visit to England in 1907. During the visit, Habibullah was treated and greeted as a King. This was further reinforced with a telegram from King Edward VII, in which he addressed Habibullah as His Majesty.¹⁸

The pressure for *jihad* came, not only from the Mullahs and clerics, but also from within the Amir's family. A rumour circulating Kabul in early 1916 alluded to the difference of opinion between the Amir and two of his sons. It was reported that 'Nasrullah Khan and Inayatullah Khan have openly said that the Amir may be bound by treaties and promises to the English but that they are not and will join the *jihad* in the spring'.¹⁹ With the intense pressure placed upon the Amir, especially from within his close circle, a rumour that, 'the Amir is thinking of abdicating in favour of his son Inayatullah Khan', propagating Kabul does not seem too fanciful.²⁰ If this rumour was true and the Amir did harbour these deliberations, I would suggest that this was a natural thought process. Habibullah faced a difficult challenge in continuing neutrality as he was confronted by many among his own subjects so to give it all up was one option available to him. In the following diary entry it was recorded that, 'rumours are prevalent in Khost that the Amir will shortly issue a

¹⁶ BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/200, *Diary of the British Agent at Kabul*, No. 110, week ending 15th February 1913

¹⁷ BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/201, *Diary of the British Agent at Kabul*, week ending 8th February 1914

¹⁸ P. Sykes, *History of Afghanistan II*, (London, 1940), p. 226

¹⁹ BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/202, *North-West Frontier Diary*, No. 2, week ending 8th January 1916

²⁰ BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/202, *North-West Frontier Provincial Diary*, No. 10, week ending 4th March 1916

proclamation for *jihad* to commence immediately after the Nauroz'.²¹ Khost is a city on the Afghan-Indian (now Pakistani) border. As with the previous rumour, for the Amir to declare a *jihad* would be the second of three options available to him. The third option available to the Amir was to continue the policy of neutrality.

Continuing the sequence of diary entries, it was reported that:

The wildest rumours are current in Khost regarding the political situation at Kabul. One says that a force of 22,000 Turks and Germans ... has arrived at Kabul, another that the Amir has been dethroned and Nasrullah Khan set up in his place, and a third that the pay of an Afghan sepoy has been raised ... All rumours agree that a holy war is shortly to be proclaimed ... It is said that the Amir was recently asked by the Turkish and German officers in Kabul to make a definite pronouncement of policy, and that he replied that he would throw in his lot with the Germans after they had conquered Egypt but not before. The foreign officers then told him that he would get no share of India if he continued to hold aloof from the war.²²

Over this three-week period, conflicting rumours and stories of the Amir, either abdicating in favour of his sons or declaring *jihad*, found their way back to the North-West Frontier Provincial diarist. An interesting way of interpreting the importance of these rumours is through the letters and reaction of Roos-Keppel and the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, regarding the position of the Amir. On the 13 March, Roos-Keppel wrote that he thought the Amir was 'playing rather a dangerous game'.²³ This was due to the Amir summoning to Kabul many of the Mullahs in order to discuss with them the future policy of Afghanistan. Roos-Keppel believed that 'a good many people here think that it is on the cards that the Amir will find himself face to face with so universal a demand for war that he will give in and may abdicate in favour of his son or, if he declines to do this, that his disposition is not altogether improbable'.²⁴ Worryingly for the authorities, it was recorded in Peshawar that 'the belief is universal that we shall find ourselves at war with the Amir during the course of this summer ... If the Afghans come in we shall have very large questions to tackle after the close of the war'.²⁵

What can be observed from this report is how important Roos-Keppel viewed the rumours, as he deemed them significant enough to include in his correspondence to the Viceroy. Roos-Keppel does not commit to whether he believed that they were true, but does offer an opinion that if Afghanistan were to enter the war against Britain it would cause serious challenges on the frontier. The crux of the correspondence is that Roos-Keppel believed that the Amir was conducting a dangerous game. The game in question was the Amir's dealing with the Turco-German mission that reached Kabul in October 1915.²⁶ It was hoped that the mission would encourage Afghanistan to declare full independence from the British Empire, enter the First World on the side of the Central Powers and attack India.²⁷ Or in other words, to change the

²¹ BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/202, *North-West Frontier Provincial Diary*, No. 11, week ending 11th March 1916

²² BL, IORL, L/P&S/10/202, *North-West Frontier Provincial Diary*, No. 12, week ending 18th March 1916

²³ BL, IORL, MSS EurD613/3, *Sir George Roos-Keppel Papers*, George Roos-Keppel to Lord Hardinge, 13th March 1916

²⁴ *Ibid.*,

²⁵ *Ibid.*,

²⁶ Also known as The Niedermayer-Hentig Expedition

²⁷ For further reading on this subject see P. Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople*, which contains a number of chapters on the Niedermayer-Hentig mission

policy of his neutrality followed by the Amir. Roos-Keppel understood this game was to be won by the highest bidder.

The Viceroy replied by stating that, 'I quite realise that the Amir is playing a dangerous game, but – I still believe that he will remain staunch and in his power to do so'.²⁸ Hardinge, it seemed, had more confidence in the Amir and the policy of neutrality. Maybe he showed less confidence in the reliability of what was being recorded by the North-West Frontier diarist and more conviction in the power of the connections between Afghanistan and England. Subsequently, Lord Chelmsford replaced Lord Hardinge, in April 1916, as Viceroy and Roos-Keppel, in welcoming the new Viceroy, wrote a survey of the position on the frontier over the previous 18 months. Within this survey, Roos-Keppel reported that:

Habibullah Khan is determined to maintain his attitude of neutrality as long as it is possible for him to do so ... I cannot share in the admiration sometimes expressed of his loyalty, as it seems to me inconsistent with his obligations as our ally that he should receive in Cabul a German Mission ... at the same time one must recognise that he has an extremely difficult game to play. I do not think that he has any particular affection for us, probably the reverse, but he is a clever opportunist and will doubtless use his utmost endeavours to remain on the fence until he becomes certain which is to be the winning side.²⁹

This is an interesting appraisal of the Amir by Roos-Keppel to the new Viceroy. It can be interpreted as an honest, but hardly complementary, assessment of Habibullah's attitude towards Britain. By Roos-Keppel calling the Amir a 'clever opportunist', it illustrated in his eyes the fragility of the friendship between the two countries. If Britain were to suffer a catastrophic military defeat against Germany, Roos-Keppel was under no illusions that the Amir would forgo the policy of neutrality and join the *jihad*.

Regarding the policy of Afghan neutrality, A. H. Grant, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, commented on the options available for the British concerning this policy in 1915:

The disadvantages of mere neutrality are –

- (1) that it leaves the door open to a subsequent breakdown and that, with a neutral neighbour, we can never feel absolutely certain that he may not at any moment become a hostile neighbour;
- (2) that the continuance of the Amir's mere neutrality would not have any real effect on Moslem opinion in India, which would doubtless be greatly excited by the addition of a second Muhammadan Power to the Turco-German camp;
- (3) that with the Amir neutral, Afghanistan would still remain open to Turco-German intrigue, and would afford an asylum to Turco-German parties fleeing from Persia.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of securing the Amir's active co-operation, should this be possible, are –

- (1) that it might cause a revolution in Afghanistan itself
- (2) that it would entitle the Amir to make exorbitant claims for compensation at the end of the war
- (3) that there is danger in drawing the Afghan sword

²⁸ BL, IORL, MSS EurD613/3, *Sir George Roos-Keppel Papers*, Lord Hardinge to George Roos-Keppel, 18th March 1916

²⁹ BL, IORL, MSS EurD613/3, *Sir George Roos-Keppel Papers*, George Roos-Keppel to Lord Chelmsford, 13th April 1916

- (4) that by letting loose the Afghan forces on the more or less defenceless adjoining provinces of Persia, we should be causing unnecessary hardship to the civil population.³⁰

Grant then considered the two arguments and concluded that, 'I think that we should be wise to attempt merely to secure the Amir's continued neutrality'. It seemed that Grant advocated the continuation of the policy of neutrality as he was worried that if the British pressed for the Amir's active support, the consequences in Afghanistan would have out-weighed the support. He believed it would have put Afghanistan in a state of revolution because the Amir would be openly supporting the British against their co-religionists. Also the worry would be that Afghanistan would turn on the British despite the British encouraging their active support. This would have put the Turco-German Mission on a course for the invasion of India or at least assist their 'stirring up' of the frontier people against the British. So, neutrality was the best policy in 1915. Grant then commented on the Amir's policy of neutrality in 1916 after a year of intrigue. This time Grant looked at the options the Amir had at hand: 'A blank refusal to the Amir ... would give dire offence and precipitate trouble: a complete acquiescence is obviously impossible. A half-way course is therefore indicated'.³¹

However, it was the events on the battlefield that could have swayed the Amir to change his policy. Roos-Keppel was well aware of how a decision or action in Europe or Central Asia played out on the frontier. He commented to Chelmsford that, 'It is possible that he [the Amir] may turn against us should the Islamic situation change to our detriment and if we have to acknowledge failure in the Dardanelles and to withdraw ... the pride of Islam would receive such a fillip that Musulmans in general and the exceptionally ignorant Afghans in particular might lose their heads and the Amir be carried with the tide'.³² With the British also fighting against Turkey, events were being closely watched on the Frontier and in Kabul. India and Turkey were closely linked and, since 1876, the Turkish sultan also held the title of 'Supreme Caliph', with the task of protecting the Muslim religion.³³ Furthermore, some in British authority had previously questioned this dual loyalty. Antony MacDonnell, commenting in 1897, worried that the Sunni Muslims held a double allegiance, on the one hand to Britain, and on the other to their Khalifa. Moreover, MacDonnell believed that they were interested in the fate of Turkish and Afghan arms for his own peace of mind.³⁴ With this close relationship, news was monitored closely when it concerned the sultan and his Turkish forces.

Rumours circulated the bazaars that Afghanistan was ready to join Turkey in hostilities against the British. Roos-Keppel hoped to hear of a British victory to quell these rumours as he feared a defeat would exacerbate the situation in Kabul and make it harder for the Amir to continue his policy of neutrality.³⁵ However, at the Battle of Ctesiphon (22-26 November 1915) the British forces were defeated, with more than half of the 8,500 British and Indian troops who fought killed or wounded. The survivors then endured a

³⁰ BL, IORL, MSS Eur E265/55, Foreign and Political Department, Frontier Branch, Confidential A, Proceedings of 1917, Nos 54 – 131

³¹ BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Endorsement to the Army Dept, No. 62 F-C, 25th May 1916 – AH Grant

³² BL, IORL, MSS EurD613/3, *Sir George Roos-Keppel Papers*, George Roos-Keppel to Lord Chelmsford, 19th April 1916

³³ Article 4, "The Ottoman Constitution, Promulgated the 7th Zilbridje, 1293 (11/23 December, 1876)" (1908) 2(4) *The American Journal of International Law*, Supplement: Official Documents (October 1908), p. 367

³⁴ BL, IORL, MSS EUR F84/71, *Earl of Elgin Papers*, MacDonnell to Elgin, 16 July and 22 August 1897. Antony MacDonnell held numerous roles in the administration of India between 1881 and 1902.

³⁵ BL, IORL, MSS EurD613/2, *Sir George Roos-Keppel Papers*, George Roos-Keppel to Lord Hardinge, 22nd September 1915

dangerous and exhausting retreat to Kut-al-Amara without decent medical or transport facilities. Bolstered by 30,000 reinforcements, Turkish troops besieged General Charles Townshend's forces in Kut-al-Amara before the Allied troops could act on the British War Cabinet's advice to withdraw further down the Tigris. The siege of Kut-al-Amara lasted 147 days before the 11,800 British and Indian troops inside the garrison town finally surrendered on 29 April 1916.³⁶ With this humiliating defeat, British authorities became anxious of how this news would be met by the frontier tribes. Roos-Keppel reported to Grant that 'letters received from Kabul from Sharif Khan describing great rejoicings at news of Turco-German victory ... Notices alleging victory of Islam and conversion of German thereto were posted in the city'.³⁷

The policy of neutrality was under serious pressure from Turco-German intrigue. Two days later, more news emerged from Kabul that, as a consequence of the British losses at Kut-al-Amara, 'belief has been strengthened that an early date when the Turkish and German forces will now be enabled to reach Afghanistan'.³⁸ The report also mentioned that rumours and wild stories were also circulating Kabul exaggerating the British losses. This was an attempt to antagonise the anti-British sentiment in Kabul to bring Afghanistan into the *jihad*. Interestingly, the British Agent in Kabul reported that the 'news of the fall of Kut had been received calmly', while Grant accepted Roos-Keppel's picture of Kabul, which he described as 'rejoicing' over the British defeat.³⁹ The Viceroy then waded into the discussion over the consequence of the defeat at Ku-al-Amara and the rumours surrounding it. He wrote to Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, that the:

Information regarding situation in Kabul which has been furnished by Indian Mission is a naturally biased and unworthy of serious consideration. Following appears to be actual situation in Kabul. Fall of Kut seems to have reinforced pro-Turk enthusiasm and to have been hailed as Islamic victory. In the Amir's policy of neutrality, however, no change is indicated.⁴⁰

As Viceroy, Chelmsford had to tread diplomatically over these troubled waters and somewhat calm British anxieties on the Frontier. Thankfully, in June, Roos-Keppel had two pieces of good news to report. Firstly, he had been informed the 'German Mission has left Cabul and I hope that this may be true'. Secondly, and more importantly, Roos-Keppel reported to the Viceroy that 'it is now safe to say that the fall of Kut has had little or no effect upon public feeling'.⁴¹

An interview with the Amir conducted by the British Agent at the end of May 1916 highlighted the pressure that he came under during this period. In the interview, the Amir is reported to have said that 'the intervention of Turkey in to the war has caused my position to become indescribable; I am between the devil and the deep sea ... Lord Hardinge had rightly admitted the nature of the difficulties I was in on account of the Turkish concern in the war'.⁴² After reading the report the Viceroy commented to the Secretary of State for India that the Amir thought 'there was no further case for anxiety now as he had been able to set things

³⁶ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/battles/mesopotamia.htm>

³⁷ BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Roos-Keppel to Sec to the GoI F&P Dept, 17th May 1916

³⁸ BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Major Finlay to General Staff, Simla, 19th May 1916

³⁹ BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, AH Grant, Sec to the GoI F&P Dept, 23rd May 1916

⁴⁰ BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 24th May 1916

⁴¹ BL, IORL, MSS EurD613/3, *Sir George Roos-Keppel Papers*, George Roos-Keppel to Lord Chelmsford, 4th June 1916

⁴² BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Extract from the diary of the British Agent at Kabul for the week ending 31st May 1916 (interview with the Amir on 27th May 1916)

right - presumably by dismissing German Mission from Kabul and squaring tribal representatives'.⁴³ However, over the next few months, rumours continued to circulate that either the Amir had joined Germany or that another Mission had reached Kabul. Many British officials still were not convinced that the Amir was able to resist German advances. Conversely, the Amir was getting annoyed by this attitude towards him and answered these accusations in an interview in December. It was reported that 'resentment was displayed by him at passage in Viceroy's message emphasising desirability of Amir's issuing stringent orders to prevent Afghanistan becoming a base for alien intrigue'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it was noted that the 'Amir holds he deserves thanks unqualified by any well-reasoned admonition for the immense service he has done to British Government in keeping Afghanistan neutral'.⁴⁵ Denys Bray, Deputy Secretary of the Foreign Department, commented on the Amir's comments: 'In short his attitude is this; he has given his word, he has acted up to his word, he has put us under an immense obligation; and yet he is "misunderstood"'.⁴⁶ Interestingly, the Viceroy commented that 'the Amir's reply to it is characteristically Oriental'.⁴⁷

The British authorities in India viewed the Amir through an 'orientalist' lens and this is observed in some of the language used by the officials, especially Roos-Keppel who labeled him a 'clever opportunist' who was waiting to see to which side he should align Afghanistan. Furthermore, the British feared another Muslim uprising similar to 1857, and the prospect of the Amir leading the Frontier populous against them was a factor in persuading Afghanistan to remain neutral.⁴⁸ Not only were the authorities worried about the 'tribesmen', the Indian Army had a large Muslim contingent. In 1909 the number of Frontier 'tribesmen' in the army totaled approximately 10,500.⁴⁹ With the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, and the entry of Turkey, there was the possibility that Muslim troops might have to face each other in battle. Furthermore, the Sultan and Ottoman Government issued five *fatwas* in which they called upon all Muslims to wage jihad on the Allies.⁵⁰ For the Muslims of the Indian Army the consequence of taking up this call would mean desertion from their positions. It has been recorded that by the middle of 1915 some ten per cent of the Afridis in the Indian Army had deserted. Roos-Keppel commented that the constant desertion of Pathans from regiments is an unsatisfactory feature.⁵¹ He also observed that the Afridis desertion was so contagious that '[he] fear[ed] the deserters will become a serious menace to our present good relations with the Afridis'.⁵²

During 1916 the news of the desertions had reached Kabul, and the British Agent reported that one such story referred to a number of Indian troops who had mutinously and disloyally deserted ... and joined with the enemy's forces, and great praises and tributes are being paid to the religious sense of the

⁴³ BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Chelmsford to Chamberlain, 8th June 1916

⁴⁴ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Secretary of the Government of India Foreign and Political Department to Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 14th December 1916 [Regarding an interview between the Amir and British Agent, 2nd December 1916]

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁶ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Memo dated 16th December 1916 by Denys Bray

⁴⁷ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, 25th December 1916 by Lord Chelmsford

⁴⁸ For more on the potential of a repeat of 1857 see K. Wagner, 'Treading Upon Fires: The Mutiny-Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India', *Past & Present*, 218 (2013)

⁴⁹ D. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army 1860-1940 (Studies in Military and Strategic History, 1998)* (London, 1998), p. 20

⁵⁰ Richard Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire 1904-1924* (London, 1995), p. 179

⁵¹ BL, IORL, D613, *Roos-Keppel Papers*, Volume 1, Roos-Keppel to Hardinge, 10th March 1915

⁵² BL, IORL, D613, *Roos-Keppel Papers*, Volume 2, Roos-Keppel to Hardinge, 19th July 1915

deserters.⁵³ News of these desertions would have been welcomed by the anti-British element in the Kabul court and would have inspired greater efforts. Later in 1916 this subject was again being discussed in Kabul. This time the Afridis were singled out and the report mentioned the large numbers deserting their regiments.⁵⁴ The combination of rumour and desertions created an environment where the neutrality of the Amir was believed to be crucial to the administration of the Frontier.

During 1917 nothing changed, rumours and reports still continued that the Amir was being pressured to change his position. Interestingly, the Afghan Envoy to the Government of India was reported to be exaggerating the news from the frontline in order to turn the Amir to see the virtues of joining the side of Germany. In June 1917 the British Agent recorded that 'the Afghan Envoy with the Government of India is reported to be active in supplying ... the Amir garbled and exaggerated news regarding the effect of the war on India, in which he pictures the supremacy of Germany, and the approaching and imminent overthrow of the British Government ... In short, Germany is better than the Allies in the field'.⁵⁵ Later that month, another rumour on British weakness and pressure on the Amir circulated the frontier.⁵⁶ However, it was the reports emanating from Afghanistan in the second half of 1917 which put pressure on the policy of neutrality. These concerned a plot to either depose or assassinate the Amir. In August it was reported that a criminal society had been set up in Kabul with the objective to secure the deposition of the Amir.⁵⁷ It was then rumoured that the Amir had been taken prisoner and his brother and son were now in charge.⁵⁸ If this report was true and the anti-British group took power in Kabul then the policy of neutrality would have ended and put the frontier under severe pressure as the War continued.

In early 1918 again the reports from the frontier were full of rumours that the Amir had been deposed.⁵⁹ Thankfully, for the British authorities the Amir was still in power as the summer came. It was at this point when a special meeting of the Afghan Royal family met to discuss a letter received from the Sultan of Turkey asking the Amir to join the Central Powers. The War was discussed and, again, relief for the British that the Amir is reported 'to have expressed his intention of continuing, at any rate for the present, the policy of neutrality which he has adopted'.⁶⁰ This was what the Viceroy and the British Government back in London wanted to hear. However, it was still only an intention and not a concrete guarantee. But, this news did not go down to well in Kabul. In July it was reported that the Amir had been shot at while driving through

⁵³ BL, IORL, E264/55(b), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Hafiz Saifullah Khan to Captain NNE Bray, Kabul, 12th April 1916

⁵⁴ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Hafiz Saifullah Khan to Captain NNE Bray, Kabul, 1st November 1916

⁵⁵ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Extract from the Diary of the British Agent at Kabul for the week ending 15th June 1917

⁵⁶ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Extract from the Diary of the British Agent at Kabul for the week ending 23rd June 1917

⁵⁷ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Secret Memo - Meshed, 23rd August 1917 - EAF Redl, Lieutenant-Colonel, GSO

⁵⁸ BL, IORL, E264/55(c), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Extract from an Intelligence Summary No.34 for the week ending 25th August 1917

⁵⁹ BL, IORL, E264/55(d), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan, Quetta to Secretary to the Government of India Foreign and Political Department, 26th March 1918 and Secretary to the Government of India Foreign and Political Department to Chief Commissioner and Agent to Governor-General NWFP, 26th March 1918

⁶⁰ BL, IORL, E264/55(d), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Extract from the weekly diary of events No.27 - Major RF Finlay, Intelligence Officer, NWF

Kabul.⁶¹ If true, the motive behind this attempt on his life can be linked to the Amir's comment to remain neutral. Furthermore, it was suggested that his son, Amanullah Khan, was behind the assassination attempt.⁶² The result was that more rumours circulated pertaining to the potential of war breaking out between Afghanistan and Britain.⁶³

Despite all the rumours that circulated during the War years and the intrigue of Germany, Turkey and the anti-British party in Kabul, the Amir kept to his policy of neutrality with the British. He resolutely ignored the clamour for him to join the *jihad* against Britain and for the Central Powers to use Kabul as a launch pad to India. However, despite the continuation of the policy of neutrality, the Amir was not allowed to participate in the talks after the ending of the hostilities. Back in 1916 the Amir approached the Government of India with a request for the representation of Afghanistan at the Peace Conference at the end of the war.⁶⁴ The Viceroy thought that this demand was 'preposterous' and that Britain could not justify the representation of a neutral state.⁶⁵ The Amir was thus informed on 31 July 1916 that, since the Peace Conference would be attended by the representatives of the belligerent powers, only to deal with the matters concerning the countries belonging to those powers; the question affecting Afghanistan would not come within the purview of such a conference. Should any question affecting the interests of Afghanistan arise as a sequel to the Peace Conference, nothing would be decided without consulting the Amir.⁶⁶ This rebuttal upset the finely balanced friendship between the Government of India and the Amir but not enough to end the policy of neutrality.

After the War had finished, the Amir, in February 1919, wrote to the Viceroy demanding 'written recognition by the Peace Conference, of Afghanistan's absolute liberty, freedom of action and perpetual independence'.⁶⁷ However, the Amir was not to get his reply as events were to transpire out of his control. On the 20 February 1919 it was reported that the Amir had been shot dead at Laghman.⁶⁸ It was confirmed a few days later that this was not a rumour and Habibullah had been murdered. The decision to follow the policy of neutrality and not join the *jihad* had ultimately cost his life.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, the intelligence available to the British authorities on the Frontier was deficient as there was not much investment. Furthermore, they did not trust the local population, which resulted in anxiety among many of the officials. With this deficiency, the officials relied upon rumour that circulated the Frontier. With the hostilities playing out and the potential threat to India, the men on the ground took rumours more seriously for two important reasons. The first reason being that the risk of ignoring them became greater for the authorities on the Frontier who during these years of hostilities had less military

⁶¹ BL, IORL, E264/55(d), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Major Finlay, Peshawar to Chief of General Staff, Simla – 15th July 1918 and AH Grant, 2nd August 1918

⁶² BL, IORL, E264/55(d), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 2nd August 1918

⁶³ BL, IORL, E264/55(d), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, General Mallerson, Meshed to Chief of General Staff, Simla, 3rd August 1918

⁶⁴ A. Sareen, *India and Afghanistan: British Imperialism vs. Afghan Nationalism 1907-1921* (Delhi, 1981), p. 96

⁶⁵ Foreign Department, Frontier Confidential A, 1917, Nos. 54-131, Prog. No. 117

⁶⁶ Foreign Department, Confidential A, 1917, Nos. 54-131, Prog. No. 125

⁶⁷ Foreign Department, Secret Frontier, October 1920, Prog. 705

⁶⁸ BL, IORL, E264/55(d), *Lord Chelmsford Papers*, British Agent, Kabul to Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, 20th February 1919

strength to call upon. The second reason, that Roos-Keppel believed, was that rumour had the potential to aggravate the situation in Kabul and make it harder for the Amir to continue his policy of neutrality.

The issue of a potential Muslim uprising, greater than the events of 1897 but similar to 1857, also played on the mind of the authorities in India. The rumoured desertion from the Indian Army and the perceived potential of these soldiers joining the *jihad* meant that the attitude of the Amir was crucial to whether this 'second Mutiny' would commence. This was a contributing factor as to why the attitude of the British authorities shifted over the War years. As events and influences surrounding the geopolitical Frontier had the potential to pull the Amir away from neutrality, the British authorities' attitudes shifted. But once the Turco-German had been perceived as not influencing the Amir's decision then the British authorities' attitude again shifted. However, one feature that complicated matters throughout this period was that of rumour.

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Mothers and Labourers: North Korea's Gendered Labour Force in *Women in Korea*

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In this paper, I analyse the English language magazine *Women of Korea*, published in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) by the Working People's Organisation Publishing House between 1964 and 1992. The magazine was modelled after the Korean equivalent, *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women).¹ While the Korean magazine was designed for the Korean population, the English language magazine was designed to inform the international community of women's roles in the DPRK, as well as the government's achievement of promulgating gender equality in state laws and policy. In the magazines, the North Korean government emphasises the roles of ordinary women as wives and mothers who supported their husbands, sons and families by working inside and outside the home. Although the emancipation of North Korean women from the patriarchal family structure is strongly emphasised in the magazine, the domestic labour women performed was seen as an important aspect of the national economy. To ensure women were able to perform their domestic responsibilities, as well as join the social labour force, the North Korean government socialised childcare and the preparation of food by creating compulsory kindergarten participation and rice-cooking shops. This illustrates that women were assigned to stereotypical feminine roles in the home as the primary carers of children and were responsible for the majority of domestic chores.

It was believed that the participation of women in carrying out the national economic plan contributed to building the economic base of an independent sovereign state,² which would then supposedly free them from their household work, as well as removing social inequalities in the DPRK.³ However, realistically, joining the official workforce did not eliminate cultural and patriarchal restrictions placed on North Korean women. Instead, once women left the home to join the labour force, the government assigned them to occupations deemed suitable to their characteristics; for example, teaching and occupations in the so-called "light-industries". The visual images and text in *Women of Korea* reveal a gender-segregated labour force in the DPRK, where the government assigned women to specific roles in the economy. It can be said, therefore, that the pages of *Women of Korea* expose the government's acceptance of institutional gender inequality for the purpose of mobilising women into the social labour force.

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¹ For further information on the Korean magazine *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women) see S. Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52 (4) (2010), pp. 742–767; S. Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), pp. 174–203.

² "The Pyongyang Changgwang Garment Factory", *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), pp. 19, 20.

³ Ibid.

The Women of Korea Magazine

Between 1964 and 1992, the Working People's Organisation Publishing House, situated in Pyongyang (the capital of the DPRK), published the English language magazine *Women of Korea*. The magazine was issued under the guidance of the Korean Democratic Women's Union (KDWU, Women's Union) and was designed specifically to inform the international community of the position of Korean women in society, the political and economic goals of the DPRK and the state's achievement in promulgating gender equality in domestic laws. In North Korea, the printed word is largely limited to several state-owned newspapers and books that are published by a small number of state-owned publishing houses.⁴ Therefore, information released is strictly controlled by the state and is deemed suitable for the international community, as the government wants to project a positive image. A writer for *Women of Korea* would have had all work approved by state officials before it was published and released to the world. Writers for the magazine were members of the KDWU.

Each edition of *Women of Korea* followed the same format as the Korean equivalent, *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng*.⁵ Content in both magazines covers a wide range of subjects, from reports on economic development to the social and domestic responsibilities of women. The magazines also include an editorial section, a column on homemaking, educational material and an arts and literature section. The theme that emerged in the earliest editions of the magazines was the ability of ordinary North Korean women to combine their duties as wives and mothers with their new positions as workers outside the home.⁶ This theme has continued in the Korean magazine to date.

During the 1960s and 1970s, *Women of Korea* emphasised visual images and stories of revolutionary heroines, the history and politics of the DPRK, homemaking articles and North Korean arts and literature. From the 1970s, the magazine addressed ordinary women's participation in the social labour force and the socialisation of childcare facilities and the food industry to ensure they were able to leave their homes. The magazine also criticised various situations in South Korea; for example, the failure of women's rights. In later editions of the magazine, articles included women's fashion in the DPRK and traditional Korean food. Throughout the history of the English magazine, articles also promoted the government's role in promulgating provisions for gender equality in state laws and policy.

In a society where the government shapes reality, North Korean visual culture is far from spontaneous, as it educates, entertains, and mobilises people into the workforce.⁷ The North Korean government has strategically placed paintings, posters and other forms of visual media, such as magazines, in spaces where the population have easy access.⁸ Therefore, in the DPRK, magazines entertain people, inform people and are employed to mobilise people to certain government causes, such as women joining the social labour force. Internationally, North Korean magazines work to inform the world of events happening within the DPRK and to

⁴ S. Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion: Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 35 (2000), p. 323.

⁵ Just weeks after the promulgation of the Law on Equality of Sexes in September 1946, the first Korean-language magazine designed specifically for women was published, *Chosŏn Yŏsŏng* (Korean Women).

⁶ Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", pp. 754, 755.

⁷ S.Y. Kim, "Dressed to Kill: Women's Fashion and Body Politics in North Korean Visual Media (1960s–1970s)", *positions: asia critique*, 19 (1) (2011), p. 162.

⁸ J. Portal, *Art Under Control in North Korea* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2005), p. 21.

propagate the government's policies towards achieving gender equality, economics, and the reunification of the Korean peninsula.

The Law on Equality of the Sexes in *Women of Korea*

In *Women of Korea*, it states that the first leader of the DPRK Kim Il Sung (1912–1994) personally promulgated the Law on the Equality of the Sexes on 30 July 1946.⁹ North Korea claims to be the first country in Asia to address discrimination against women in its legal system.¹⁰ However, provisions were included in the 1930 Chinese Civil Code by the Nationalist government (1927–1948) during the Republic of China (1912–1949). The Chinese Civil Code regarded men and women as individual persons, equal in status, rights and obligations. In particular, daughters obtained equal rights to inherit their fathers' property, wives gained mostly equal rights to marry and divorce and men and women shared nearly equal rights over their children.¹¹ Nevertheless, the Chinese Civil Code was hardly adopted or implemented due to the chaotic political situation and the brief rule of the Nationalist government.¹² In the DPRK, similarities in provisions to ensure gender equality can be seen between the North Korean Law on the Equality of the Sexes, the Chinese Civil Code and the earlier 1936 Soviet Constitution.

Article 1 of the Law on the Equality of the Sexes was closely modelled after Article 122 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution, which stipulates equal rights for women in all spheres of economic, social, cultural and political life. The North Korean Law also includes provisions for women to vote and to be elected to local and supreme organisations (Article 2), have equal access to labour, pay, social insurance and education (Article 3), and to own or inherit land (Article 8). The Law provides equal rights for women to marry and divorce freely (Article 4 and Article 5), and the legal age for females to marry is set at 17 years and, for males, 18 years (Article 6). The Law protects women against violations such as polygamy, trafficking, concubinage, licensed or unlicensed prostitution and the *Kisaeng* system and nullifies the Japanese laws and regulations relating to the rights of Korean women (Article 9).¹³ In the magazine, laws such as the Law on Equality of the Sexes were included to promote the idea that gender equality had been addressed by the state.¹⁴

⁹ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women", *Initial Report of States Parties: Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, CEDAW/C/PRK/1 (Beijing: thirty-third session, 5 to 22 July 2005), (distributed 11 September 2002), para. 70 and para. 71, p. 11.

¹⁰ C. K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 93.

¹¹ M. Kuo, *Intolerable Cruelty: Marriage, Law and Society in Early Twentieth-Century China* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), p. 4

¹² Y. C. Chen, "Civil Law Development: China and Taiwan", *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, 2 (2002), p. 9.

¹³ A *kisaeng* is a female entertainer, trained in music, dancing, and poetry composition. R. Barraclough, "A history of sex work in modern Korea" in M. McLelland and V. Mackie (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 294–304.

¹⁴ "In the Days of Proclaiming Law on Sex Equality", *Women of Korea*, 3 (123) (1989), pp. 27, 28; "Developing Women to Be Pillars of Society Turning One of Its Two Wheels", *Women of Korea*, 4 (124) (1989), p. 28; "State Benefits to Women – through the laws proclaimed immediately after liberation", *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), p. 11; T. S. Choe, "Recollection of the Promulgation on Sex Equality",

In *Women of Korea*, Choe Tan Sil's article, "Recollection of the Promulgation on Sex Equality" states that before the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), Korean women had been subjected to exploitation and oppression for a long time.¹⁵ Restraints imposed on Korean women during the colonial period included no right to free marriage, confinement to their houses, or being sold like goods.¹⁶ However, just one year after the liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945, it is said that Kim Il Sung made preparations for the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes.¹⁷ On 30 July 1946, Kim Il Sung proclaimed to the world:

With the liberation of Korea from the colonial rule of Japanese imperialism, the social position of women changed. The democratic reforms being carried out in north Korea have provided conditions for liberating women from the former inequalities in the political, economic, cultural and family life.¹⁸

On the same day the Law was promulgated it is said that the first wife of Kim Il Sung, Comrade Kim Jong Suk (1917–1949), met officials of the KDWU to share the joy with them about the new Law. As celebrations were going to be held in the capital and provinces, Kim Jong Suk is quoted as follows:

The celebrating meetings will be an effective occasion for education to get the women to know well about the significance and importance of the Law on Sex Equality and make firm resolution to repay the favour to General Kim Il Sung who enacted the law.¹⁹

Kim Jong Suk is then said to have taught the women how to hold celebrations regarding the Law, which took place across the country. She attended the celebration held in Pyongyang, where she appealed to Korean women to take an active part in nation building to demonstrate the validity and vitality of the Law on Equality of the Sexes.²⁰ It is also said that Kim Il Sung personally gave continuous guidance to the North Korean people so that the Law thoroughly materialised in all fields of state and social activities.²¹ In *Women of Korea*, it is claimed that North Korean women enjoyed a happy life and had no idea of gender inequality because of the promulgation of the Law on Equality of the Sexes.²² The Law is said to have protected women's rights in family life and society; however, visual images and text in *Women of Korea* reveal

Women of Korea, 3 (111) (1986), pp. 7, 8; "Fifteen Women Labour Heroes", *Women of Korea*, 3 (111) (1986), pp. 10, 11; "Democratic Revolution and Women's Problem", *Women of Korea*, 1 (105) (1985), pp. 4, 5; "Historic Days of Realising Sex Equality", *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 4–6; "Towards Civilisation", *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), pp. 10, 11.

¹⁵ Choe, "Recollection of the Promulgation", p. 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "In the Days of Proclaiming", p. 27; Choe, "Recollection of the Promulgation", p. 7.

¹⁸ "In the Days of Proclaiming", p. 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Choe, "Recollection of the Promulgation", p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*

gendered assumptions made by the North Korean government, which are discussed further below.

North Korean Families in *Women of Korea*

Unlike other socialist states, such as the Soviet Union and China, the North Korean government kept the nuclear family together to ensure stability in society and the economy.²³ This meant, however, that gender inequality and the gendered division of domestic labour in the home was maintained. It was thought that if the North Korean government had challenged the stereotypical gendered roles within families, it may have led to instability in society, the labour force, and the basic unit of reproduction of future generations. Instead, the nuclear family as the basic social unit remained intact with gendered division of domestic labour.²⁴

In *Women of Korea* the representation of women as mothers appears from the initial publication in 1964.²⁵ For at least two decades after the end of the Korean War (1950–1953), women were under intense pressure by the state to produce more children.²⁶ By the 1980s, however, the fertility rate in the DPRK was in decline, with the average number of children born to a family decreasing from 6.5 in 1966 to 2.5 in 1988.²⁷ The tendency to marry relatively late may be one factor affecting fertility rates.²⁸ Kim Il Sung is quoted as emphasising women's natural duty to give birth and to raise and educate children at home.²⁹

The mother has to bear the major responsibility for home education.
Her responsibility is greater than the father's because it is she who
gives birth to children and brings them up.³⁰

This statement reinforces gender stereotypes within families and does not alter the model whereby men work outside the home and women look after children.³¹ Maternity and childbirth have been given special protection in North Korea's legal system, as seen in Article 77 of the 1972 DPRK Constitution.

Women are accorded equal social status and rights with men. The State
shall afford special protection to mothers and children by providing

²³ *Women of Korea*, 4 (136) (1992), p. 22.

²⁴ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 333.

²⁵ "Mother", *Women of Korea*, 3 (22) (1966), pp. 6, 7; "Mother", *Women of Korea*, 3 (22) (1966), p. 39.

²⁶ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 332.

²⁷ K. Jung and B. Dalton, "Rhetoric Versus Reality for the Women of North Korea: Mothers of the Revolution", *Asian Studies*, 46 (5) (2006), p. 754.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "New Aspects of Pyongyang", *Women of Korea*, 1 (97) (1983), pp. 22, 23; "Mangyongdae in Blooming April", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), pp. 18–21; "Merry Laughing Voice Floats Out of Each and Every Home", *Women of Korea*, 4 (105) (1985), p. 32; "Women Enjoy a Rest to the Full", *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), pp. 22, 23; "Mother of 12 Children", *Women of Korea*, 4 (108) (1985), p. 30; "State Benefits to Women and Children", *Women of Korea*, 1 (109) (1986), pp. 27, 28; "Mother of 16 Bereaved Children", *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), p. 28.

³⁰ I. S. Kim, "The Duty of Mothers in the Education of Children: Speech at the National Meeting of Mothers", (16 November 1961), in *Selected Works 3* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), p. 216.

³¹ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p. 335

maternity leave, reduced working hours for mothers with many children, a wide network of maternity hospitals, crèches and kindergartens, and other measures. The State shall provide all conditions for a woman to play a full role in society.

The granting of equal rights in law was not enough to liberate women from patriarchy within the family structure.³² The concept of equality was strongly resisted by some in society such as in family relationships,³³ which only superficially changed. For example, domestic work and the nurturing of children continued to be seen as “women’s work” by both the state and the majority of North Korean people.

Although women’s work outside the home was promoted, the DPRK had a larger number of women who stayed in the home compared to other socialist countries. There are many possible reasons, including: tradition dictating that, once married, a woman should stay at home to serve her husband and care for her children; marriage to high-income earners; reluctance of employers to retain married women; decline in North Korea’s economy and economic opportunity outside the official economy; the government’s lack of concern for the number of married women staying in the home.³⁴ Once married, some women gave up their jobs voluntarily but sought ways to generate income while also having the opportunity to stay at home. This practice was supposed to reduce the “double burden” of housework and economic employment, while increasing their economic independence.³⁵ Whatever the reason, the number of homemakers increased to around 60 to 70 per cent by mid-1980.³⁶ The fact that a large number of women remained in the home suggests that views of gendered roles were strongly rooted despite legal provisions mandating equality.

Even though the principles of Confucianism are not law in the DPRK, the Kim family and the elite ruling class have enacted laws to bring society gradually into line with these principles, ultimately to strengthen their own power. Although initial state reform in North Korea attempted to liberate women from the home, no legislation or political campaign ever denounced tradition or Confucianism per se, as occurred during the Communist Revolution in China (1949–1950) when the family was configured as the source of women’s oppression, a position that aligned nationalism, feminism, and Marxism against a common enemy.³⁷ In North Korea, rather than the family being faulted for women’s oppression, the family and the home came to symbolise the Korean nation in the revolution.³⁸ In this context, motherhood became the primary trope by which to construct not only women’s revolutionary subjectivity but also all North Koreans, as everyone was extolled to emulate mothers as the sacrificial model citizen.

In accordance with Confucian teachings, North Korean women learned their role in the family unit as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters.³⁹ The role of mothers is taken extremely

³² Kyung Ae Park, “Women and Revolution in North Korea”, *Pacific Affairs*, 65 (4) (1992–1993), p. 534.

³³ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 754

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 752.

³⁵ Park, “Women and Revolution”, p. 540.

³⁶ It should be noted that work in sideline production teams or neighbourhood work units were not officially counted as employment. E. Y. Shin, “Ideology and Gender Equality: Women’s Policies of North Korea and China”, *East Asian Review*, 13 (3) (2001), pp. 89, 90.

³⁷ Kim, *Everyday Life*, pp. 176, 177.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁹ S.Y. Kim, *Illusive Utopia: Theatre, Film and Everyday Performance in North Korea* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 205.

seriously as the preservation, rise and fall of the family were thought to depend on the education of the children, and mothers were regarded as their primary educators.⁴⁰ Suk-Young Kim argues that, regardless of North Korean laws or the social circumstances within the country, women's identities are seen through the prism of familial relationships.⁴¹ This attitude is reflected in the painting "*Dandelion*" (see figure 1) which was published in *Women in Korea* in 1991.⁴² The representation of Korean women as mothers was not new and can be seen from the mid-1920s when the "wise mother, good wife" ideal was promoted.⁴³ As colonial oppression grew stronger in Korea during the 1930s, the doctrine of dedicated mothering gained even greater traction and many Koreans believed that their people's future, including freedom from colonialism, depended on women's willingness to sacrifice themselves to stay at home and raise good sons and daughters.⁴⁴ Becoming a mother was promoted as the most sacred duty, and females who turned away from this role were accused of being over-sexed and vain.⁴⁵

In the painting, the mother supports the young child by wrapping her arms around the child's waist. The figures stand outside among flowers and both gaze at a flower held by the mother. Both child and mother blow lightly on the flower petals, which float gently through the air. The child appears to be safe and happy with no care in the world. Suk-Young Kim states that in other North Korean cultural forms almost all female protagonists are projected in familial relationships, as mothers, sisters and daughters, to ensure that female characters do not incite erotic thoughts.⁴⁶ This is confirmed by the visual images published in *Women of Korea*, which predominantly represent women as mothers or wives and who were traditionally surrounded by their children.

⁴⁰ Bae-Yong Lee, "Family Ethics and Women's Status within Confucian Tradition and Its Transformation", in Hwa Oh Jung (ed), *Feminist Cultural Politics in Korea* (Seoul: PrunSasang Co., 2005), pp. 11–38.

⁴¹ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 205.

⁴² *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), p. 34.

⁴³ A. Y. Wong (ed), *Visualizing Beauty: Gender and Ideology in Modern East Asia* (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 96. For comparable ideas of the "good wife, wise mother" (*ryōsai kenbo*) in Japan, see S. Koyama, "Domestic Roles and the Incorporation of Women into the Nation State: The Emergence and Development of the 'Good Wife, Wise Mother' Ideology", in A. Germer, V. Mackie and U. Wöhr (eds.), *Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp. 85–100.

⁴⁴ Wong, *Visualizing Beauty*, p. 96.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 222.



Figure 1 "Dandelion". Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 4 (132) (1991), p. 34.

The Socialisation of Household Chores

During the Korean War, both North and South Korea suffered economic and infrastructure damage, as a result of bombings and artillery strikes, as well a workforce shortage. After the War ended in 1953, the North Korean government viewed women's participation in the social labour force as a way to supplement the labour shortage.⁴⁷ In this context, the promotion of a strong woman whose existence extended beyond the domestic space was part of the government's attempt to mobilise them. This created the illusion of women's liberation without actually addressing gender inequalities in society or the domestic sphere.⁴⁸ North Korean women remained the subject of gendered expectations from the state, in which they were predominantly responsible for domestic chores and the care of children, as well as participating in the social labour force. Kim Il Sung is said to have personally acknowledged the hard work of women in building an economically independent nation combined with their roles in the home. In the article, "At Sight of Women Carrying Water Jar on Head" published in *Women of Korea*, Kim Il Sung is quoted as saying:

⁴⁷ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 751; J. W. Kang, "The Patriarchal State and Women's Status in Socialist North Korea", *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 6 (2) (2008), p. 61.

⁴⁸ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 210.

Men eat meals cooked by women, and so, they do not know well about how painstaking women are. But women, even after they worked as hard as men did have to fetch water, cook rice and do washing.⁴⁹

The sharing of housework responsibilities between husband and wife has remained uncommon in North Korean families.⁵⁰ Many North Korean men excluded themselves from household chores and even demanded women perform full-scale house cleaning.⁵¹ To ensure women were able to leave the home, the government developed policies designed to lighten their domestic workloads.⁵²

The North Korean government strongly encouraged mothers to put their children into state-run childcare facilities and viewed it as the state's responsibility to provide childcare, teaching and nursing necessities. The state followed the principle, "The best thing [for] the children".⁵³ Although attendance at nurseries was optional, it was available for three months to four year olds, while attendance at kindergarten was compulsory for children aged five to seven years. Between 1956 and 1960, the number of childcare facilities is said to have increased 31 times, accommodating about 700,000 children.⁵⁴ As of 1966, around 60 to 70 per cent of all the children in the country were said to be at pre-school, cared for by a total of 130,000 nursery and kindergarten teachers.⁵⁵ It was reported that by 1985, more than 60,000 nurseries and kindergartens had been built, accommodating more than 3.5 million children.⁵⁶ All nurseries and kindergartens are said to have been staffed by competent teachers with adequate food and furniture.⁵⁷ State owned supply offices were said to have been established near each nursery and kindergarten, and were responsible for providing foodstuffs such as milk, meat, eggs, fruit, vegetables and sweets as well as nursing and educational equipment, musical instruments, printed matters and teaching aids.⁵⁸ No payment was required for the use of the childcare facilities and they were divided into three types: daily, weekly and monthly, so that mothers could meet their work commitments.

From the 1970s, the focus of the North Korean government was to develop the food industry to lessen the time women spent preparing meals in the kitchen. Kim Il Sung is said to have stated that the "most important thing we can do to lighten the women's kitchen chores is

⁴⁹ "At Sight of Women Carrying Water Jar on Head", *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 5; "Korean Women's Burden of Household Work is Becoming Lighter", *Women of Korea*, 3 (107) (1985), p. 11.

⁵⁰ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 753.

⁵¹ Shin, "Ideology and Gender Equality", p. 97.

⁵² Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 749.

⁵³ "The Raising of Children at State and Public Expense", *Women of Korea*, 2 (130) (1991), p. 25.

⁵⁴ I. S. Kim, "Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Fourth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea" (11 September 1961) in *Selected Works 2* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), p. 160.

⁵⁵ I. S. Kim, "The Communist Education and Upbringing of Children Is an Honourable Revolutionary Duty of Nursery School and Kindergarten Teachers: Address to the National Congress of Nursery School and Kindergarten Teachers", (20 October 1966), in *Selected Works 4* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), pp. 467– 469.

⁵⁶ "Anti-Japanese Women's Association and Its Immortal Achievement", *Women of Korea*, 4 (100) (1983), pp. 11, 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ J. S. Kim, "Upbringing of Children at State and Public Expense", *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), p. 15.

to introduce innovations into the food industry”.⁵⁹ The development of the food processing industry included the production of boiled rice, noodles, bread and other foodstuff. At the same time, factories were established in towns and workers’ districts to process vegetables, meat, fish and other food products by industrial methods so that women could prepare meals quickly and easily in the home.⁶⁰ There was also a network of food take-out services for busy working women to collect premade food after work and before returning home. The variety of food that could be purchased from the stores was extremely limited.⁶¹ It is said however, that North Korean people’s diets improved with the changes in the food industry.⁶²

By socialising domestic chores such as childcare and cooking, the North Korean government believed that it had addressed the burdens of women to ensure they could leave their homes to join the social labour force. Yet, the representation of the North Korean labour force in *Women of Korea* reveals gender inequalities, as women were assigned by the state to certain occupations deemed suitable.

North Korea’s Labour Force in *Women of Korea*

From the mid-1970s, the visual images in *Women of Korea* depicted women working outside the home in society, which coincided with the government’s emphasis on women leaving the home to build a sustainable light-industry. In order to provide suitable work for women, the North Korean government transferred many men from the so-called “light-industries” to the “heavy-industries”.⁶³ Light-industries included work in the education and health sectors, office work and work in restaurants, while heavy-industries were occupations in the mining and building sectors, positions in the military and government. However, the transfer of men from one employment sector to another resulted in significant occupational segregation between genders, with women being assigned to low-skilled labour and unpopular work,⁶⁴ usually with lower pay. Alternatively, North Korean men dominated higher-paid jobs in the mining and building industries, and took those with the highest status, as managers, university professors and doctors.⁶⁵

By 1970, women accounted for 70 per cent of the work force in the light-industries and 60 per cent of those employed in the agricultural sector.⁶⁶ The 1980 data shows that women composed 70 per cent of the workforce in light-industry and just 15 per cent in heavy-industries.⁶⁷ Specifically, women occupied 56 per cent of the labour force in the agricultural sector, 45 per cent in the industrial sector, while just 20 per cent in mining and 30 per cent in forestry. In education, women accounted for 80 per cent of elementary school teachers, while the figures for middle and high school, technical school and college were 35 per cent, 30 per cent, and 15 per cent respectively.⁶⁸ Among professionals and technicians, women accounted for

⁵⁹ “Personal Visit to Rice-cooking House”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 3.

⁶⁰ “Korean Women’s Burden”, p. 11; “With a Mind to Free Women from Household Chores”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (102) (1984), p. 2.

⁶¹ Park, “Women and Revolution”, p. 536.

⁶² “With a Mind to Free Women”, p. 2.

⁶³ Shin, “Ideology and Gender Equality”, p. 93.

⁶⁴ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, p. 751.

⁶⁵ M. R. Yun, *North Korea’s Policy on Women* (Seoul: Han’ul Publishing Co., 1991), p. 203.

⁶⁶ Jung and Dalton, “Mothers of the Revolution”, pp. 750, 751.

⁶⁷ Ryang, “Gender in Oblivion”, p. 332; Kang, “The Patriarchal State”, p. 61.

⁶⁸ T. Y. Lee, *Pukhan Yosong* (North Korean women) (Seoul: Silch’on Munhaksa, 1988), p. 194.

more than 37 per cent in 1989.⁶⁹ From these figures it appears that the proportion of women of working age participating in the North Korean workforce in the 1970s and 1980s was almost equal to men's, seemingly showing gender equality. However, women worked predominantly in feminised sectors such as agriculture, education and light-industries, which are typically paid lower-wages.⁷⁰ Furthermore, even though many women worked as managers or supervisors in female preferred jobs, the proportion of women in high-level positions was very low,⁷¹ while men dominated higher-paid occupations in the mining and heavy-industries, as well as managerial positions.⁷²

The North Korean government promised women the same work privileges, wages and social security as men; however, in practice, women were not paid comparable wages for essentially comparable work, and they were not equally promoted.⁷³ By 1980, women earned just 70 per cent of the average income level that males earned, but continued to contribute significantly to household earnings.⁷⁴ Although state legislation insisted on equal employment and equal pay for men and women, there remained significant occupational segregation between the genders.⁷⁵ While wages in North Korea do not have the same impact on the quality of people's lives, as in capitalist societies, such job segregation results in not just unequal pay, but also unequal status.⁷⁶ The gender inequality shown in job segregation by gender reveals that the apparent equality of women's economic participation did not necessary guarantee actual equality in social activities.⁷⁷

The North Korean government emphasised the mass production of consumer goods centring on the light industries and emphasising this campaign as part of the process of the "Revolution of Technology".⁷⁸ This Revolution was established as part of the "Three Revolutions" and included the "Revolution of Ideology" and the "Revolution of Culture". It was established on 24 June 1971. Then, in 1972, at the Fifth Congress of the Workers Party of Korea, Kim Il Sung is quoted as saying that one of the "vital tasks in the technical revolution is that of freeing women from the burden of kitchen and household work".⁷⁹ As discussed above, the government attempted to provide facilities such as childcare amenities, the pre-packaged food industry and laundromats to address the burdens of women in the home. However, such a suggestion rests firmly on the belief that a home is not a workplace run by both genders.⁸⁰ Nowhere did Kim Il Sung mention men's duties to undertake housework or caring for children.⁸¹ Furthermore, although Kim Il Sung had promised timesaving equipment, it did not materialise

⁶⁹ A. S. Kim, "Yosong-ui Kyongje Hwaldong" (Women's economic activities), in *Bukhan Yosong-ui Suktae* (The status of North Korean women) (Seoul: The Second Ministry of Political Affairs, 1990), p. 189.

⁷⁰ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 61; Kim, *Everyday Life*, p. 201.

⁷¹ Yun, *North Korea's Policy*, p. 203.

⁷² Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 61; Kim, *Everyday Life*, p. 201.

⁷³ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 209.

⁷⁴ Shin, "Ideology and Gender Equality", p. 93.

⁷⁵ Laws that protected equal employment and equal pay for men and women include: the Labour Law for the Factory and Office Workers in North Korea (1946), and the Law on the Equality of the Sexes (1946).

⁷⁶ In the DPRK housing, education, healthcare, and food are free or heavily subsidised by the government. Kim, "Revolutionary Mothers", pp. 765, 766.

⁷⁷ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 61.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷⁹ "With a Mind to Free Women", p. 2.

⁸⁰ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion", p.335.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

for the majority of ordinary women, as items such as washing machines remained the property of a privileged few.⁸²

As the North Korean government deemed factory work suitable for women to perform, women played a major role in the state's economic policy to increase consumer goods. This assumption is represented in visual images published in *Women of Korea*; for example, the poster captioned, "Let Us Produce Mass Consumer Goods More and Better!" (see figure 2).⁸³ In the poster, a woman stands among consumer products such as food, medical and stationery products. In her hands, she holds two reams of fabric and behind her are items of clothing. These products were aimed at working women, who had to take care of their families while working in the official economy. This image was also designed to encourage women to work harder to produce more consumer goods for society.

The fact that the North Korean government has resorted to campaigns to promote consumer goods production points to the improper functioning of the day-to-day management system, as well as a lack of incentives for workers to achieve the desired economic results. These campaigns also suggest that the liberation of women from the home was not based on any radical change in social or cultural norms, but were included in state laws and policies to achieve economic campaigns through the participation of women.⁸⁴ Representations of women in the labour force aimed to promote the idea to the world that women had achieved gender equality in North Korean society and were able to participate in the state economy.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 41.

⁸⁴ Jung and Dalton, "Mothers of the Revolution", p. 747.



Figure 2 “Let Us Produce Mass Consumer Goods More and Better!” Poster. *Women of Korea*, 2 (98) (1983), p. 41.

The visual images and personal stories in *Women of Korea* reflect the importance placed on women to educate the younger generation according to Kim Il Sung’s *Juche* idea.⁸⁵ In North Korea, education is considered crucial to the destiny of the country.⁸⁶ All children, even those who live on remote islands or in mountainous areas are said to be educated at state expense and are regarded as the “Kings of the Country”.⁸⁷ There is said to be a free universal education system, which consists of a twelve-year program, compulsory for children to attend (1972 DPRK Constitution, Article 45). By 1980, North Korean women composed 80 per cent of the work force of primary school teachers and nursery school teachers.⁸⁸ This dominance in the sector can be seen in visual images and articles published in *Women of Korea*. For example, the article “Woman Principal in Mountain Village”, tells the story of a female teacher, Kim Yong Suk,

⁸⁵ While Marxism-Leninism is still important in the DPRK, *Juche* has superseded this as the official state ideology. The three principles include: “political independence”, “economic self-sustenance” and “self-reliance in defence”. E. K. Choi, E. H. Kim, and Y. Merrill (eds.), *North Korea in the World Economy* (London: Routledge Advances in Korean Studies, 2003), p. 159.

⁸⁶ “Primary importance to education”, *Women of Korea*, 3(135) (1992), p. 11.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Yun, *North Korea’s Policy*, p. 203.

who worked for more than twenty years at Sodu Senior Middle School, located in the remote area of Paegam County (Ryanggang Province, DPRK).⁸⁹ The article states that she went to teach the students because no other teachers would live in a remote location. From the first day, Kim Yong Suk is said to have pledged to the students that she would stay in the area and not return to the city to marry as other female teachers had done previously.⁹⁰ This claim places great importance on women's contribution to educating the future generation rather than fulfilling one's own plans, thus sacrificing one's own happiness for the betterment of the country.

The female teacher, Kim Yong Suk, was said to have been so dedicated to her work that even after teaching the students during the daytime, she would visit the students' homes at night to guide them with their homework. However, the students work did not improve greatly so Kim Yong Suk started walking with them to and from school and teaching them along the way. She is said to have made small plaques with mathematical formulas and foreign languages painted on them and placed the plaques on the trees along the path where the students walked. Kim Yong Suk was dedicated to improving the marks of students because she knew that they were the future of the revolution.⁹¹ All students at the Sodu Senior Middle School were said to have become honour students because of Kim Yong Suk's hard work. This article not only exemplifies qualities that all women were to emulate, it also places great importance on women as educators. This shows the international community that women are equal with men, but also that women are willing to sacrifice themselves for the country's revolutionary cause.

The importance of women in working in education is represented in the visual image "*Children Enter School*" (see figure 3), which depicts three teachers welcoming students into the classroom.⁹² The large figure of the female teacher in the foreground is dominant as she towers over the students and looks down at them happily. In comparison, the other teachers fade into the background and appear only in a supportive role to the main figure. The main teacher holds in one hand a book and, with the other, she is greeting a male student as he enters the classroom. In the painting, students enter the classroom and walk towards their desks. Some children carry colourful bunches of flowers and one student a hat. In this image, both male and female students attend school.

⁸⁹ "Woman Principal in Mountain Village", *Women of Korea*, 3 (111) (1986), p. 14.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹² *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), p. 22.



Figure 3 “Children Enter School”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 3 (131) (1991), p. 22.

The North Korean government places great importance on self-sufficiency and food production. In the agricultural sector, efforts to increase production included a variety of experiments with land tenure, farm organisation and managerial techniques.⁹³ Women were active members of the agricultural workforce during planting and harvesting, and laboured in road construction, land reclamation projects and similar endeavours that required mass mobilisation.⁹⁴ In the visual images and articles in *Women of Korea*, women are often represented working on cooperative farms and producing food to sustain the country.⁹⁵ The government saw women’s roles in the agricultural sector as an important contribution to self-sufficiency. However, working on a farm or producing food was not so different to domestic

⁹³ J. S. Chung, “The Economy”, in A. M. Savada, *North Korea: A Country Study* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1993), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kptoc.html> (accessed 6 May 2014).

⁹⁴ Kim, “Revolutionary Mothers”, p. 765.

⁹⁵ “Faithful Servants”, pp. 21–23; “Personal Visit”, p. 3; “Bringing Up Women into Socialist Builders”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (104) (1984), pp. 2, 3; “Manageress”, pp. 13, 14; “At Chongryu Restaurant”, *Women of Korea*, 4 (105) (1985), pp. 31, 32; “Upbringing of Children at State and Public Expense”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (106) (1985), pp. 12–15; “The Child Is King”, pp. 22, 23; “Mistress Responsible”, pp. 26, 27; “Li Byong Nam, “Direct Sale store Crowded with Shoppers”, *Women of Korea*, 1 (109) (1986), pp. 30, 31; “Tenth Anniversary of Promulgation of Law on Nursing and Upbringing of Children”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (110) (1986), pp. 25, 26; “Shop”, *Women of Korea*, 2 (122) (1989), p. 40.

activities performed by the majority of women in the home. Visual images of women working on cooperative farms as food producers appear regularly in the magazine; for example, “A Nesting Place” (see figure 4).⁹⁶ It is unusual, though, to find depictions of men working alongside women in the agricultural sector in the magazine.

In the painting (figure 4), three people are working on a farm in a mountainous region of North Korea.⁹⁷ The location is unspecified in the accompanying article. The small work team, or perhaps a family work unit, is composed of a man or “father figure”, a woman or “mother figure” and a young woman or child. The man or “father figure” kneels beside the birdcage, looking down towards the pheasants that he is releasing into the wild, while the older woman or “mother figure” stands beside the man with her hands in the air releasing one of the birds. The position of the woman within the artwork and the colour of her clothing draws the viewer’s eye to the figure. The woman stands tall and strong and wears the ethnic Korean dress for females, the *hanbok*, with some alterations to allow for easier mobility.

In the painting, the younger girl stands in the background watching the male figure release the birds, while carrying a cage of pheasants towards him. The young female figure is lost in the background as the events in the painting take place in front of her. This suggests the young girl is less important than the other figures and is acting in a supportive role to her male counterpart. This painting confirms the government’s assumptions about the role of men and women in the workforce, assigning women to less prominent roles, even in industries thought to be suitable to their characteristics.⁹⁸ It also shows that the gendered segregation of work begins when North Koreans are young and continues into their adult lives.



Figure 4 “A Nesting Place”. Date unknown. Oil Painting. *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 24.

⁹⁶ *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 24.

⁹⁷ “A nesting place”, *Women of Korea*, 3 (103) (1984), p. 24.

⁹⁸ Kim, *Illusive Utopia*, p. 216.

Conclusion

To conclude, visual images and articles published in the DPRK's English language magazine *Women of Korea* represent the government's constructed view of femininity and masculinity in the family unit and the social labour force. It is evident in the visual images and articles published in the magazine that women's primary role is seen to be as mothers and that the state assigns women to gender specific jobs in the social labour force, which are based on perceived attributes rather than actual ability. However, work in these industries is paid less than other occupations and women have fewer opportunities to progress to managerial roles outside work deemed appropriate by the state. This means that any gender equality laws promulgated in the North Korean legal system, such as the Law on Equality of the Sexes (1946), are undermined by the segregation of women to gender-specific roles in the labour force. Therefore, the magazine reveals the way in which the North Korean government chose to promote formal gender equality in order to mobilise women for the goal of economic development, while at the same time disregarding actual social, cultural, and familial gender equality.⁹⁹ Furthermore, under the surface of claims made by the North Korean government, that women had achieved equality because of the laws promulgated, the visual images and text in *Women of Korea* reveal that the stereotyping of men and women to certain roles in families, as well as discrimination against women, continued to persist socially and culturally.

⁹⁹ Kang, "The Patriarchal State", p. 62.

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The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television, 1960 – 80 by
Gavin Schaffer, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 312 pages. ISBN: 978-0-23-029298-7,
Paperback, £16.99.

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Television, as historians are increasingly recognising, was a central medium of everyday life in the 1960s and 1970s. Not only were family and community life re-organised around the television schedule, but television offered a vision of the everyday, and an imagination of community, back to its audiences. At a time when Britain's ethnic diversity was increasing apace, as Gavin Schaffer shows us in *The Vision of a Nation*, government ministers, television executives, programmers and writers continually debated the kind of everyday to be represented, and the parameters of community to be included, as they approached television as a site for representing and attempting to recreate Britain as a multicultural society. The range of this book is impressive. Schaffer explores government initiatives for ethnic minority programming, the treatment of race politics in news and current affairs, marginal voices in public-access broadcasting, writing and casting black and Asian Britain in television drama, and race as entertainment in the race comedies of the sixties and seventies. The picture that emerges is of contestation: the responsibility of television for creating social harmony, and the strategies for doing so, were interpreted differently by different people, and sometimes in ways which seem, with hindsight, frankly absurd. What is certain, though, is that the importance of television in the making or unmaking of multicultural Britain was recognised by all. In an era of social discord in which the stakes for Britain's future were often thought to be routed through the politics of race, it was this recognition that caused such contestation.

Much of Schaffer's book considers the debates about what could and couldn't, and should and shouldn't, be said about race on television. By the late 1960s – and the impact of Powellism was surely decisive here – broadcasters were shifting toward more daring inclusions of extremist race politics in their schedules. In part, this came down to shifting understandings of the remit of race relations legislation in relation to programming. Indeed, as it became understood that broadcasters were unlikely to be successfully prosecuted under the Race Relations Act, many grew bolder in testing the waters. However, Schaffer also allows us to understand this shift as a trajectory away from an early era of antiracist liberalism which refused platforms to such politics. As this early liberal antiracism lost ground, it was increasingly common for broadcasters to allow the voices of both 'immigrants' and their detractors to be given free expression in the name of openness and 'balance'. It was through such decisions that by 1976, as Schaffer shows us in one eye-opening example, one could tune into the BBC's late-night 'Open Door' programme to find a Conservative councillor with links to the National Front given a platform to call for the revocation of the Race Relations Act and the repatriation of immigrants.

Ironically, however, even with such platforms available, the assumption by many was that the public sphere in the age of race relations acts was marked by censorship and exclusion,

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in which the views of 'ordinary people' were systematically refused. It was this assumption of public censorship around issues of race that underpinned the race comedies of the 1970s. Schaffer's discussion of these comedies is a highlight of this book, and he deftly demonstrates how these programmes played constantly with the limits of what it was acceptable to say about race. Schaffer's discussion of these programmes reveals that, even when far of the mark in their interpretations of the actual force or remit of the Race Relations Act, these comedies, and people's reactions to them, were often motivated by the idea that the right of people to express their opinion on immigration was being denied.

As the above indicates, race relations legislation and policy loom large in this story. The government's dealings with television companies were informed by the dual strategy to combine immigration restrictions with race relations management. Schaffer is largely, and rightly, concerned with how this race relations policy was viewed by television professionals and television viewers. However, he also shows us how government intervened in television programming. In the 1960s, Maurice Foley, a minister in the Department for Economic Affairs, took a central role in lobbying for 'immigrant' programming. Foley's lobbying was persistent and effective, and much of the programming for South Asian communities which was produced in this era was a credit to his determination, and reflected his understanding of what multicultural integration meant. Considering the role of the government is important for understanding not only how far the making of multiculturalism on television *was* planned by the state, but also what the relations between television content and state policies were in an era in which the government was increasingly seen as playing a censoring role on issues of race relations. As Schaffer shows, through figures like Foley the government did manage to directly influence the programming schedule on race relations, even if this influence was a marginal part of the overall programming schedule.

Reading *The Vision of a Nation*, one is often reminded how different were dominant ideas about race and multiculturalism in this era. For all their professed aim of improving social relations, for example, the government-backed programmes of the type advocated by Maurice Foley often betrayed what Schaffer terms 'strong assimilationist tendencies', which were as likely as much of the race rhetoric of anti-immigration politics to highlight 'immigrant' lives as problematic. *The Vision of a Nation* is not without its moments of hope – the dogged persistence of *This Week's* Desmond Wilcox to challenge anti-immigration politics is a particular highlight – and it would be wrong to write off men like Foley too readily. However, if one were reading this book in a pessimistic mood there is much to provoke the conclusion that, even in its liberal guises, race relations programming often held too much in common with what it apparently stood against. Emphasising the need to tutor new immigrants on the structures of the social services, housing, child-minding, the role of job centres, or the correct use of bins, the Foley-inspired programming for immigrants constructed the 'problem' of integration around the supposed unpreparedness of these communities to be responsible citizens of a modern welfare state. In this, it seems, there was some continuity between the liberal race relations agenda of sections of the government and the broadcasting authorities, and the logic of the race comedies of the 1970s, or the more hostile responses to black and Asian communities explored elsewhere in this book. When Schaffer cites a white man in Brent claiming on the aforementioned *Open Door* show of 1976 that 'immigrants' in his council flat 'wet the lifts, they're taken short, they drop their trousers and do their business and that's it', the assumed unsuitability of 'immigrant' populations to modern life held more than a passing resemblance to the milder assumptions underpinning some of the 'immigrant' programming of an earlier era.

Vision of a Nation is a welcome addition to the growing literature on race politics and multiculturalism in postwar Britain. Certainly, this move to consider television's place in this history is long overdue. There is much to suggest that, of all the television genres discussed by Schaffer, it was the race comedies that most defined this era, and that contributed most to redefining everyday life. The viewing figures alone suggest their importance: at their height, *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Love Thy Neighbour* could draw in audiences in the tens of millions. Despite its controversial content, the BBC was reluctant to sanction *Till Death* precisely because of its popular appeal. And yet, at the same time, it was perhaps here more than anywhere that the vast plethora of racial epithets that saturated British society in this era were sustained, and that new regimes of racial knowledge were produced. In memoirs of this period by black and Asian writers, it is common to hear of the impact of these programmes on senses of self and belonging, and as a mediating presence in their relations with others. While Schaffer only touches occasionally on the responses of viewers – white and black – to the television shows discussed in this book, it is here that researchers might turn next.

Frontières de Sable, Frontières de Papier Histoire de territoires et de frontières, du jihad de Sokoto à la colonisation française du Niger, XIXe-XXe siècles by Camille Lefebvre. Bibliothèque historique des pays d'Islam, 2015, 543 pages. ISBN: 978-2-85944-883-7, Hardback, €45.

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For a work that is about borders, Camille Lefebvre does a very good job of breaking some down. Lefebvre's argument, which she sustains doggedly throughout her book, is that the early boundaries and political maps of Africa conceived by Europeans were not "artificial" but a collaborative effort involving a wide range of local actors. Furthermore, these documents did not *at first* constitute a rupture with local concepts of "border" and "space", but were rather an elaboration of a concept that had been and continues to be in semantic flux. The title of her book, "Frontiers of Sand, Frontiers of Paper" points to the essential dichotomy of a border, namely that it is both "sand" (natural, organic) and "paper" (defined by man).

Lefebvre uses the accounts of fifteen major expeditions to West Africa by Europeans between 1797 and 1877, French colonial records and most importantly the various spatial representations of the West African region from Muhammad Bello's 1824 map of the course of the River Niger to rough sketches by twentieth century French colonial officials. Her book is split into three parts: European presence in the Western Sudan from 1797 to 1877, European colonisation of the region from 1890 to 1922 and colonial rule in the French colony of Niger from 1922 to 1964.

Early European explorers to the region such as Mungo Park, Captain Clapperton and Heinrich Barth often came alone, with few resources and with little background in geography. They gained their geopolitical and spatial understanding of the terrain largely from conversations with local informants. Inserting themselves into pre-existing trade routes and patterns of movement, Lefebvre suggests that their observations and spatial representations of terrain can tell us more about "African methods of travel...and existence in space" than is commonly supposed. Through a reanalysis of their writings and drawings, Lefebvre theorises that political power was not gained by a ruler setting limits in space by the construction of a physical border, but lay in the degree to which movement and mobility could be controlled and commodified to the ruler's advantage across a space that was not completely their own.

Lefebvre points to the jihad of Usman dan Fodio in 1804 and the "chain reaction" of similar movements as a key development in West African concepts of space. According to Lefebvre, the jihad rested upon a conceptual division of space between "Muslim" and "non-Muslim" but under the Sokoto Caliphate developed into a territorial empire. Meanwhile, the jihad's opponents created their own spatial entities of resistance such as at Maradi and Argungu. This politicisation of space and the mushrooming of state-like entities occurred more than a century before the advent of European colonisation. Lefebvre uses these observations to critique notions that African societies were somehow "frozen" before the advent of colonisation.

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The second part of her work deals with the period 1880-1922, in which European exploration and mapping of space became a means to territorial acquisition. Maps from earlier expeditions made with the help of African informants now gave the impression of an empty space defined by Europeans and attractive for colonisation. The Say-Barroua line used to divide up French and British territories was, Lefebvre reminds us, originally an expression of the territorial limits of the Sokoto Caliphate as evinced by local informants. It is here that Lefebvre localises her study, focusing on the border region between the modern states of Niger and Nigeria.

Niger was at first seen as a negligible colonial possession and had minimal French personnel. Here above all it was necessary to turn to local concepts of space and border to create “authentic” divisions between zones in order to facilitate administration. In the third section, Lefebvre traces the development of Niger from the conception of the Say-Barroua line all the way to its modern borders. She demonstrates how over time –and especially since the strategic importance of Niger increased after 1938– the collaborative nature of these border agreements was forgotten and a new generation of French administrators came to regard maps of their territory as purely European innovations. The result of this was two-fold. Firstly, originally “authentic” spaces that had been fixed on paper quickly became emptied of meaning in a local context as the permanent nature of a map could not represent the ever-fluctuating limits of control over space. Secondly, Europeans and Africans alike grew indignant at what appeared to be “artificial” boundaries of space imposed arbitrarily by an all-powerful colonial master.

The sources for Lefebvre’s works are all freely available and her point, that much of post-colonial discourse in fact relegates Africans to a far more passive role than they actually had, is not a new one. However, it is her clever and effective use of a particular concept, the border, which she pursues throughout her material that makes her point so effective. Nevertheless, as with most studies on West Africa, the weakness is in the scarcity of the source material. With her analysis based largely on the account of fifteen travel accounts, two maps drawn by West Africans and a dozen or so by Europeans, she is at times saying a lot about a little. But in the field of African studies, so often divided between the colonial and post-colonial periods, it is refreshing to find a work that bridges the gap. Lefebvre demonstrates the dynamism of nineteenth century Western Sudan, in which concepts of border were being renegotiated in the aftermath of the jihad by traders, Caliphs, scholars and rebels. At the same time, she also debunks some myths of the colonial experience, depicting it as fraught with indecision, inconsistency and incoherence.

Lefebvre writes in a style that is both engaging and authoritative and she includes extensive appendices full of information on all aspects of the European exploration of the region, along with reproductions and explanations of the maps to which she makes reference to in the text.

Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses by Megan G. Leitch. Oxford University Press, January 2015, 249 pages, ISBN: 978-0-19-872459-9, Hardback, £55.00

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Romancing Treason is a detailed and valuable investigation into a specific and understudied political discourse of the late medieval period. The author's central argument is based on a series of perceptibly-distinctive, socially-relevant characteristics unique to treason-focused texts produced between c.1437 to c.1497. Here Leitch claims a divergence in romance texts from the usual concerns. Prior to and after the period under consideration romances were largely preoccupied with the concept of providence, making Leitch's period unique in its treatment of and concern with the 'earthly moment' (p.1). By employing literary evidence the implications of treason on late medieval ideas of community, identity, expression and morality are also considered. Leitch takes special care to draw attention to her consideration of the historiographical relationship present between the late medieval and early modern periods, more specifically to the space between the respective literary cultures of the fifteenth-century Lancastrians and sixteenth-century Tudors.

The introduction effectively demonstrates the merits of considering the symbiotic relationship between the respective disciplines of English and history as a foundation for the remainder of the study. The compelling example of MS Rawlinson D82, f.34r – an annotated verse from a vernacular miscellany – illustrates the potential impact of the political climate on literature even post-production. Here the presence of treason is indicative of a breakdown of political and social faith. Thus it played a key role in the construction – and deconstruction – of ideas of identity and community. The latter part of the introduction aligns literary treason with its historical context. It should be noted that romance manuscripts are considered alongside contemporary correspondence, chronicles and political texts (e.g. parliamentary attainders). It is indicative of the author's ability to treat semantically literary and non-literary texts, providing a multi-dimensional study.

The inclusion of these non-literary texts creates a natural focus on a particular social collective, most notably comprising the aristocracy, gentry and mercantile classes. The variety of texts is most effective in the second chapter, which delves into the social and legal implications of references to 'treason' and 'traitor', both horizontally and vertically. A masterful comparison between the French and English laws of treason is an example of the microscopic attention Leitch pays to her sources, distinguishable elsewhere in the chapter. Evidence found in the presence of the English word 'treson' in a Latin narrative, for example, is carefully extracted and examined for the implications behind it.

The third chapter considers the synchronic/diachronic contexts of contemporary literature. It begins by exploring the preoccupation with treason in prose, poetry and drama, with the latter part dedicated to a fascinating comparative study of earlier and later periods. It is interesting to note that the word 'treason' entered the vernacular during the fifteenth century. Following a masterful and in-depth analysis, Leitch concludes that the most prominent and distinguishable feature of her treason romances is the specific inclusion of moral instruction. The fourth chapter turns to the lexicon of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, where treason is held as the benchmark against which ideals should be measured. The *Morte* and its contemporaries were subjected by their authors to a revision which placed social instruction at the fore. The penultimate chapter places the *Morte* alongside other prose romances printed by William

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Caxton, who is argued to have sought, translated and printed specifically treason-focused texts. The potential of printing for vast distribution was dependent on public demand, thus presenting the possibility that Caxton's selection rested on the concerns of his audience.

The final chapter, or 'post script', considers treason post-1500. Its demotion to 'post script' is slightly disappointing, given the aforementioned intent to bridge the historiographical divide. It does, however, provide potential for further research and development of the author's theory: post-1500, treason is no longer the capital preoccupation, just one concern among many. Leitch has provided a chronology of contexts and texts in the appendix. This is an extremely interesting exercise. It appears, however, to contravene the firm assertion that 'this study proposes neither one-to-one correspondence between text and event nor points of strict political allegory' (p. 14). The issue is circumnavigated in the notion that the texts can at least be dated to the period in question. However, it would be more helpful perhaps for the appendix to have been organised in a fashion better suited to a chronology.

Romancing Treason joins the ranks of research dedicated to the consideration of the cultural, social and political concerns of the period defined by the Wars of the Roses. It is markedly different, however, in taking up the theme of treason in the context of a literary study. Given the topic it is surprising that a couple of recent studies on romances during this period have not been referenced, but this is a minor point. The author should be congratulated on producing such an intelligently written and well-researched study. *Romancing Treason* is highly successful in building upon current studies of romance manuscripts and their literary culture in its treatment of a theme which undoubtedly occupied the minds of those who lived in a period of such turbulence and uncertainty.

The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland: Literacy, Politics and Nationalism, 1914-2014 by Kate Skinner, Cambridge University Press, 2015, 320 pages. ISBN: 978-1107074637, Hardback, £60.

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Kate Skinner's excellent new study, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland*, examines the status and significance of 'the British Togoland question' over the period 1914-2014. Originally part of the German protectorate of Togoland, British Togoland was administered by the British government from 1914 onwards, first under the League of Nations' mandate system and subsequently as a United Nations trust territory. After a plebiscite in 1956, the territory was integrated into the Gold Coast and became part of independent Ghana. The book traces the origins and evolution of the political movement known as Abloqe ('freedom' in the Ewe language), which opposed this integration and sought reunification with French Togoland (the other 'half' of the original German protectorate, which was administered by the French until 1960 when it became the independent Republic of Togo). It is based on meticulous consultation of a wide range of archival material, printed sources and private papers, as well as dozens of interviews with Abloqe activists on both sides of the Ghana-Togo border.

In Skinner's hands, the ostensibly parochial question of the status of a small UN trust territory becomes a window onto wider debates about decolonisation, African nationalism, citizenship and political activism. In many respects, *The Fruits of Freedom* is an unusual kind of history. It takes an uncommonly long view of the British Togoland question, covering a hundred-year period and cutting across conventional colonial/postcolonial divides. Moreover, Abloqe does not sit squarely within the national history of any one country. Instead, Skinner shows how closely the movement's fate was bound up with the changing fortunes of the Gold Coast (later Ghana) and with those of French Togoland (later Togo). Yet Abloqe was neither a project of ethnic nation-building nor a case of ethnogenesis. Not only were there many 'native' Ewe beyond the borders of British Togoland (in the coastal area around Anlo, for example), there were also many people *within* the territory for whom Ewe was not a first, or even a second, language. Moreover, activists did not seek to establish an ethnic homeland, but a multiethnic polity with the same boundaries as the original German protectorate. The book thus serves as a timely reminder that African languages can serve as vehicles for projects other than ethnic nationalism and that such projects can summon wider, more cosmopolitan publics. Finally, *The Fruits of Freedom* shifts deftly between scales, from the local to the international, in an attempt to do justice to the 'geographical mobility and intellectual range' (p. 256) of the Abloqe activists themselves.

The book's seven chapters reflect its impressive reach. Chapter one serves as an introduction to the Togoland question and to the implications of writing the history of a political movement 'from below and from within', as Skinner succinctly puts it. Chapters two and three show why teachers played such a prominent role in the movement. Skinner argues that teachers were an educated rural intelligentsia rather than a wealthy elite and were subject to the

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expectations and pressures of the rural communities around them. Chapter two focuses on the role that formal schooling played in offering new avenues for social and material advancement and shows how inseparable issues of individual status and livelihoods were from wider questions of progress and 'development'. Chapter three focuses on adult extra-mural education. Designed to prepare Africans for citizenship, Skinner shows that these classes also provided a kind of rural public sphere where educated Togolandese could talk politics and make contact with other potential activists.

Chapter four examines the way that conversations held in these educated circles spilled out into, and were in turn shaped by, vernacular debates, often conducted in Ewe. Of particular value here is Skinner's focus on Ewe language texts written by Togolandese, many of which she has collected from activists' own 'tin trunk' archives. Several of these draw on powerful kinship-based idioms to describe the position of British Togoland, with the territory often portrayed as an 'orphan' or 'stepchild' at the mercy of hostile forces within the household. Equally central to such texts are vernacular ideas about 'freedom', which Skinner discusses at some length. On Skinner's reading, freedom was defined both negatively against forms of servitude and positively as 'having a state of one's own' (p. 143). Skinner's material also suggests, though she does not make this point explicitly, that freedom might be understood as a component or outcome of relationships, with activists hoping to draw on certain kinds of dependent relationships in order to free themselves from others that they associated with British rule. Far from being of parochial importance, then, vernacular idioms were an important source of ideas about the future of British Togoland and this flourishing print culture can be seen as a popular counterpart to the formal petitions submitted by activists to the United Nations. Texts served to forge connections between activists and, as Skinner argues convincingly, can be read as 'outcomes of a traceable sequence of local and transnational relationships and encounters – between school pupil and teacher, author and printer, buyer and seller, political ally and opponent' (p. 25).

Chapters five, six and seven show the remarkable persistence of this constituency of British Togolandese in the years after the plebiscite of 1956. Chapter five examines the fate of the reunificationists who were forced into exile in Togo between 1958 and 1961. The centre for these refugees was the town of Kpalimé, where activists and writers more or less took up where they had left off. In particular, Skinner documents the role of a local newspaper, *Ablɔde Safui* ('Key to Freedom'), an important vehicle for 'debat[ing] what it meant to be a citizen of a newly independent state and how an individual should go about the business of "making politics"' (p. 172). The presence of the refugees made the Togoland question a pressing concern for French Togoland, as well as for Nkrumah's newly independent Ghana. Chapter six extends this focus with a fascinating discussion of the overtures made to the reunificationists by Togolese president Gnassingbé Eyadéma (as Skinner explains, a rather unlikely ally), in the context of the rocky postcolonial relationship between Ghana and Togo. It also shows the persistence of concerns about the unequal treatment of British Togolandese in Ghana. Chapter seven suggests that the Togoland question sits awkwardly within existing interpretations of postcolonial Ghanaian politics, notably the conventional distinction between 'elite' and 'populist' traditions. Skinner argues that although the question has never quite been at the centre of national debate in Ghana, neither has it entirely disappeared from view.

Densely argued and packed with rich empirical material and careful analysis, the history of *Ablɔde* that Skinner tells is painstakingly pieced together from over a decade of research on both sides of the border. Skinner has reconstructed an extensive network of *Ablɔde* activists, writers and supporters, who might otherwise have been left out of the historical record. *The*

Fruits of Freedom is replete with biographical sketches and personal encounters which bring the book to life and the reader is conscious that it is not only the political activist who must forge relationships, make connections and follow leads. If 'making politics' was a personal business for Ablɔde activists, Skinner shows that writing history is too.

The Fruits of Freedom is a history of a 'nation that never was', of a movement that never quite got off the ground. Skinner is frank about the difficulty of how best to frame Ablɔde, but seeks to turn this into a strength, arguing that it helps historians to get a better hold on the 'contingencies of decolonization in Africa' (p. 3). On the one hand, it is hard to see the movement as anything other than a failure, on the other, it has had a 'surprisingly long post-colonial tail' (p. 168). Skinner discusses its legacies in modern Ghana, one of which is a powerful mistrust of 'politics' among former activists. But Ablɔde also remains a powerful rallying cry in contemporary Togo. When Togolese citizens debate the meanings of 'freedom' (*ablɔde*), describe themselves as 'orphaned' by the death of their first president, Sylvanus Olympio, or appeal to the United Nations or the African Union to assist them in their plight, they are drawing (often unwittingly) on the movement's legacy. Ultimately, as Skinner shows, Ablɔde was about 'the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, the nature and form of self-government, and the place of trust territories in the international order' (p. 257). Insofar as these questions remain urgent for Ghanaian and Togolese citizens today, Ablɔde may well continue to cast a long shadow.

Mermaids and the Production of Knowledge in Early Modern England by Tara E. Pedersen, Ashgate, Farnham and Burlington, 2015, 155 pages. ISBN 978-1-4724-4001-3, Hardback, £60

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Tara E. Pedersen argues that mermaids are 'superb figures to think with'; this punchy dissertation proves that fact beyond all doubt. Beginning with some provocative and fascinating questions ('What is the sex of a mermaid? What is the gender?'), Pedersen takes her reader through a whirlwind tour of early modern drama, showing at each stage that the definition-defying and boundary-crossing mermaid offers a fascinating window into the malleability of early modern concepts such as sex and gender, genre, agency, selfhood, and mystery.

Each chapter of *Mermaids and the Production of Knowledge* is based upon specific pieces of early modern drama, working through Dekker and Middleton, to Cavendish, via Spenser, and finally to Shakespeare. However, Pedersen's work is at its most insightful when looking beyond the script and stage and informing our understanding of how ideas about mermaids were used and distributed in early modern society more generally. There are, for example, some beautiful and fascinating examples of a mermaid tureen, an image of a mermaid on a dish, and most interestingly of all, carvings and figures of mermaids in English churches. All images are black and white, but they add a surprising and visually-pleasing element to a book which is otherwise immersed in intricate textual details and interpretations of early modern metaphor.

Pedersen herself has attempted to avoid being limited by theatrical sources. In fact this self-conscious act of avoiding categorisation as a historian makes for an interesting question about whether or not Pedersen is creating a mermaid persona for herself in this book. This question occurs to Pedersen in her afterword, and she is forced to conclude with the comment: 'I am not ready to say that I am not a mermaid'. Because this work is at its most inventive when it crosses disciplinary boundaries, this reviewer found the relatively lengthy introduction a particularly rewarding segment. *Mermaids and the Production of Knowledge* engages with an impressively diverse range of theoretical and methodological frameworks, all of which are helpfully described in the introduction with frequent lengthy quotation from relevant secondary literature. For this reason, the introduction will be valuable particularly to university students of early modern theatre and literature who are seeking to develop an understanding of the theoretical landscape available to them.

Following the introduction Pedersen explores *The Roaring Girl*, in order to demonstrate the power of the mermaid to reshape the simplicity of the viewer/object relationship. Chapter 1 paints the picture of early seventeenth-century London as a cabinet of curiosity in which cultures of display and market exchange are challenged by ambiguous figures like the mermaid, thus calling into question the perspective of the viewer.

Chapter two, which uses Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure* to explore the potential for creating self-generated marginal identities which impact on simple binaries of man and women, is a modest reworking of what appeared in 'Early Modern Women: An

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Interdisciplinary Journal' in 2010. As far as the evidence goes in this chapter it is convincing and thought provoking. However, this reviewer was left wanting even more. At only 155 pages including bibliography and index this is a short work and quick read which occasionally leaves the reader hungry for further examples and even more variety in the types of sources used. For example, the argument about the gender-defying nature of Cavendish's mermaid would surely have been informed and perhaps nuanced by analysis of another of the Duchess of Newcastle's works: her utopian *The Description of a New World Called the Blazing-World*. In that work, the inquisitive Empress (who is a doppelgänger of Cavendish's own identity in her imagined world) asks her servants - the 'fish-men' - if they have 'ever observed Animal Creatures that are neither flesh, nor Fish, but of an intermediate degree between both?'. Moreover, these hybrid creatures who serve the Empress themselves defy definition, the author being unsure whether to label them 'Fish- or Mear-men, otherwise called Syrens'.¹ This evidence of ideas about mermen, and their position of subjugation to the female Empress does not put any of Pedersen's conclusions into doubt, but would provide an extra level of detail about the potential for the fish-human hybrid to cross gender boundaries.

Chapter three uses Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* to engage in the anti-theatre debates of the 1590s. Again Pedersen shows a compelling ability to cast original interpretations and surprising twists upon seemingly comfortable ideas. If the reader will come away wanting anything more from this chapter it will be a clearer argument about what precisely the mermaid - as a hybrid idea existing simultaneously at the fringes of our understanding and in the centre of our imagination - offers as a concept which is distinct from other hybrid creatures, such as the centaur. Chapter 4 and the Afterword (which takes the place of a typical conclusion) focus upon *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Hamlet*. It is clear that Pedersen is well at home in her analysis of sub-surface meanings in Shakespeare, but her novel ideas will no doubt provoke debate amongst students of early modern reading and writing practices in general, as well as those with an interest in Shakespeare studies.

Very much like the figure of the mermaid, which Pedersen analyses with such accomplishment, this book is both alluring and combats any attempt to define or categorise it. As a result, the reader searching for firm conclusions about what the idea of the mermaid really meant to early modern authors may find the answers here too slippery. On the other hand, the imaginative and innovative interpretations of familiar texts presented by Pedersen make for a very persuasive argument that when assessing the figure of the early modern mermaid we are handling an ambiguous but powerful conceptual tool that raises important questions about the definitions and dichotomies that we, as historians, artificially impose upon the early modern period.

¹ Margaret Cavendish, *The description of a new world, called the blazing-world written by the thrice noble, illustrious, and excellent princesse, the Duchess of Newcastle*, 1668, pp. 15, 35

HIV Exceptionalism by Adia Benton. University of Minnesota Press, 2015, 176 pages.
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Benton's book looks at what HIV exceptionalism has meant for one country in Africa, Sierra Leone. HIV exceptionalism is a phrase that has emerged to describe HIV's treatment as different to and more urgent than other health issues, and the high level of funding and attention devoted to HIV programs with respect to the rest of the health system in many countries. Benton points out that treating HIV as exceptional and heavily targeting it with resources in Sierra Leone has made little practical sense because the infection rate in the country has remained low at around one point five percent of the population. Theories that the recently ended war must have created the conditions for infection rates to rise have been proved wrong, leading to a situation where resources have been poured into a condition that effects only a tiny fraction of the population.

The book is broken down into three sections. The first looks at the 'HIV industry' in Sierra Leone and explains how HIV's exceptional status has been rationalised and defended in the face of statistical reports of low prevalence. Benton describes the tensions between two different versions of the 'truth' about HIV in the country, the probabilistic and the vernacular. Statistical reports have repeatedly shown that prevalence is low, but NGOs claim that their experience tells them that vulnerability to HIV is a real issue. The government is left in the strange position of having an HIV rate which is too low, as a proven low rate puts funding levels at risk.

The second section looks at people living with HIV in Sierra Leone and how HIV exceptionalism creates, maintains and teaches new subjectivities. Benton describes how for those living with HIV, NGO support brings with it the responsibility to disclosure and talk about their HIV status. In addition to this, those living with HIV find themselves under pressure to project a positive image of themselves, dressing well and looking their best so as to combat negative stereotypes which surround HIV and AIDS. At the same time, however people also need to present themselves as vulnerable to groups and organisations that might be able to help them. For those who rely on NGO resources, a careful balance between performing 'positivity' and performing neediness has to be maintained. Being HIV positive, or at least being so in the 'right' way, is something that has to be learned and worked at.

The final section looks at the relationship between HIV, the state and government. HIV prevention is often a key element of nationalism in Sierra Leone, despite the fact that it is not one of the country's key problems. Fighting HIV is seen as part of the process of both rebuilding and defending the state, and the statistics on both the prevalence of HIV and the activities being undertaken to control it are seen as key indicators of good governance. There is a special focus here on women, who are urged to use restraint and to practice safe sex for the good of their country as well as themselves. This makes women's sexual behaviour a topic of general concern.

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One key idea here is how HIV highlights the relationship between the state and the concept of 'care'. The state is shown to be failing in its duty to care for its citizens through the involvement of international NGOs, but the state's responsibility to care is reinforced as its failings are underlined. People are shown to still see the state as a provider of care. The necessity of care *for* the state, of people's responsibilities to the state through preventing new transmissions, is also highlighted.

The strength of this book comes from the depth of its exploration of what HIV exceptionalism can mean in practice. Benton demonstrates that the decision to target large amounts of resources in vertical programs in Sierra Leone has not just meant imbalances in health funding; it also creates real changes to the society. People living with HIV have to come to terms with the unique responsibilities which come with the access to resources that their status provides them with. Many come to see their situation and their suffering as unique and incomprehensible to those who are not infected.

Although I found this description fascinating, I did not feel entirely convinced by the argument against treating HIV as exceptional. In the preface Benton includes a quote from the former head of UNAIDS, Peter Piot, who states that the danger presented by HIV does make it exceptional and worthy of the vast resources devoted to it. The book does not seem to give enough space to really countering this particular argument. In the conclusion Benton points out that HIV prevention models do not account for 'the shifting, situation specific, and dynamic nature of risk' (13), but if risk is dynamic and shifting, surely it is possible that the situation could change in a country like Sierra Leone and infection rates increase sharply due to a change in circumstances? If the exceptional response is aimed at the potential for catastrophe, then the current low prevalence rate in the country does not automatically mean that an exceptional response is not needed.

This book will provide a big contribution to the literature on HIV in Africa more generally as well as its specific contribution to HIV exceptionalism, being the product of over two years' and a real understanding of the context and the country. One feature which I found particularly enriching, and which will be particularly interesting to anthropologists, was the first chapter in which Benton describes maps out in short, detailed sections the sites of her fieldwork and the sources that she used, allowing the reader to get a real feel for the process of her research.