Maps! Living with Ghosts
Alternative Landscapes, Peoples, and Architecture in Ungoverned Spaces

地图！ 共生幽灵
“法外之地”的景观、人群和建筑

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In a debate with Theaetetus, Socrates explained memory with an analogy to a piece of wax. Everyone has a piece of wax, varied in size, shape, and texture, a gift from Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. When trying to remember something, an imprint is made on the wax, and the thing being remembered is transformed to an image on the wax, becoming a person's knowledge. Those that cannot leave a mark on the wax will be forgotten.

Introduction

Cartography, Representation and Image: Ungoverned Spaces

Ximeng Luo

Bruno Latour set the stage for us here by claiming that "to define humans is to define the envelopes, the life support systems, the *Umwelt* that makes it possible for them to breathe."[1] The envelope of our contemporary world, though becoming increasingly homogenized with developing communication and transportation technologies, is still closely tied to localized contexts. From different geographical and ecological conditions to distinct physical and metaphysical human constructions, pieces of land, whether defined by geographical boundaries or political ones, have their own life and character. The envelope created with large-scale contextual information of societies can scale down to shape individual living experiences.

Contemporary narratives deriving from these information define our understanding of reality while constructing and morphing our daily living experiences, manifested through the marks left on the landscape, such as those produced by the practice and performance of architecture. Take the border as an example. The land under our feet is continuous in a material sense, yet sliced and separated in ideological sense—claimed territories of modern nation states set boundaries for real-life activities and result in certain restrictions in visibility and accessibility for subjects involved. Border monuments and checkpoints are just scattered constructions placed on the landscape, yet have the ability to set invisible borders for the physical world, on natural surfaces. The unique duality between existence and non-existence of the border is an epitome of the envelope: non-existing but with long-lasting material effects. Hence, it makes sense for Peter Sloterdijk to argue that "modernism is a very specific type of architecture," expanding the concept of architecture to the immaterial construction

of ideological environments.[2] Similarly, in attempts to understand today's material architecture, we are always situated in an immaterial architecture built with mega power structures.

What?

In studying the manifestation of such envelopes, the thesis is interested in the concept of governance and its representation—or, image. The presence of the government as a modern device to control land and populations is a medium between the macro-structures of global politics, economy, and history (the reflection of them,) and the micro-environments of specific cultures (a force behind their formation.) The thesis is set like an experiment, with the level of governance as the variable, and proposes a series of alternative representations of sample sites in addition to existing maps and drawings which are increasingly homogenized with modern cartographical and architectural techniques.

Why?

The concept "ungoverned space" is defined by political scientist and anthropologist James Scott as a stateless area and has gradually developed into the mode of an area of "small-scale states encircled by vast and easily reached stateless peripheries."[3] These territories may be loosely confined within a state's boundary, but due to geographical obstacles, beyond the reach of state institutions and organization. First proposed by Holland historian Willem van Schendel in 2002, the concept "Zomia" refers to the mountainous region of South Eastern Asia, including parts from claimed territories of nine Asia states.[4] The region became the most known example of ungoverned spaces in Scott's later theory on geography, agriculture, and governance.

According to Scott in *The Art of Not Being Governed*, his theory of the ungoverned is "a deconstruction of Chinese and other civilizational discourses about the 'barbarian,' the 'raw,' the 'primitive.'"[5] Ungoverned is further explained as "not-yet-incorporated," and areas like Zomia, with its ecological variety and distant relationship to states, still host some of the last ungoverned peoples. Scott's main argument is that complex geographical conditions found in highlands would serve as a refuge for peoples that refuse to surrender under the control of states. Being physically distant and unreachable from the center of state power protects the ungoverned peoples so that they maintain their traditional ways of subsistence and living. However, Scott also acknowledges that with developing modern technologies, or "distance-demolishing technologies," the image of free, ungoverned peoples created in his theory had begun to fade away.[6] Railroads, telegraph, highways, telephone, helicopter, and latest communications technologies all contributed to the de-friction of the terrain, smoothing out

previously obstacles that rendered the land inaccessible. In the research, we identify these technologies, especially their material forms, as infrastructure that assist in the transition of an ungoverned space. In turn, infrastructure can also be found in the efforts of peoples who resist the modern colonization of nation states.

"Ungoverned space" in this thesis project is understood according to Scott's definition as "locations where, owing largely to geographical obstacles, the state has particular difficulty in establishing and maintaining its authority."[7] While Scott's more or less idyllic take on the land and culture of ungoverned tribal communities may be overly romanticizing life in the peripheries, his analysis provides a point of departure for us to observe and try to understand life and architectural practices in obscure regions distant from the center of discussion—in the state narrative and in the field of architecture. Especially when the concept of the ungoverned came to be re-interpreted with the rise of "terrorism" in the early 21st Century by mass-media, entering the public's view as dangerous, chaotic regions occupied by anti-state armed groups, re-reading Scott sparked our interest in the dynamics in distant regions. With attention directed to spaces that are less discussed in the architectural discourse, we investigate how humans make changes to land as they gradually transform ungoverned spaces into governed ones.

Areas that are considered "periphery" by the mainstream escape the gradually digitized understanding of the world. Discourse on this unique contemporaneity is largely absent in the discourse of architecture and landscape architecture which grows increasingly obsessed with modern urban environments. The impact of modern systems, resistances of the local people, and transformations in ways of building as these ungoverned spaces clash with the governance of modern states reflect values and relationships different from our own. The people involved have their own envelope.

While governed spaces remain the protagonists in architectural discourses, vast territories within the boundary of modern nation-states are beyond the reach of governmental control, or rather, exposed to little governmental control. These spaces, whether scarcely populated by groups of humans or transformed by settlements, cities even, present an aporia of boundaries, identities, and materialities. Populations without a written history in mainstream language are often wiped out of existence by official narratives of history coming from modern nation-states. Communities that build temporary structures in wood, bamboo, or reeds left scarce archeological records as well. Towns and cities far from a nation's center of power are frequently neglected and left to themselves. With an increasing state presence, the relationship between these communities and the natural and built landscape changes, and the graphic representation of these areas shifts accordingly. In borderlands where the presence of nation-states is weak and ambiguous, geographical elements connect various forms of living and play a significant role in local representations of the people's perception of their surroundings. Empirical knowledge determines how they

understand and depict the land. Yet with the increasing penetration of the state, regions that were once "wilderness" become regulated and categorized with modern cartography, aided with modern cartographical techniques, flattened to become 2D graphs.

In the contemporary context, the same piece of natural land often displays a superimposition of various truths. The collapse of overlapping spacetime can be found in marks created by human construction activities, compressed into the concept of contemporaneity. For example, a post-industrial city in Northeastern China often possesses infrastructures and factories built in the last century, orthodox-style architecture left by Russian merchants and residents who still cannot get away from the memories of their collective youth, and on top of that new political boundaries, modern constructions, and natural areas that remain rather intact. The living environment other than our familiar metropolis, advanced technologies and infrastructures seemed to be the B-side of so-called modernity, escaping from the narrative based on data flows and digital devices. Peripheral lands and populations exist beyond the capture of cameras, overlooked by official historical accounts, as real as metropolises but somewhat as a phantom of the "modern" life. The research does not see the development of society as progressive and believes that these lifestyles are not in different stages of development, but are all contemporary. Scarce biological remains and traces left in the vast marginalized regions and glorious metropolises that are portrayed with grand narratives are equivalently important truths under the concept of "contemporaneity."

Why bother?

The theories that we are familiar with in architecture seem to lose their validity here. But after all, how do the populations in ungoverned territories modify the natural environment, and how do they create constructions and occupy space? How does their architecture reflect the contemporaneity of the various lifestyles different from our own controlled urban environment? Architecture and actions taken in creating architecture is a product of different relationships between communities and landscape and authority. Human constructions reflect and reinforce existing living relationships, maintain certain social processes through repeating the practices of daily activities through designed physical spaces. Construction activities reflect what the people consider as important and what not, what to keep and what to destroy as they proceed their lives. On top of this and more specifically, how does modern cartography depict these regions and populations and is it adequate? Would there be an alternative method of representation, coming from a more local perspective, that expands our current understanding of architectural representation? In the project, we will make a few attempts.

Where?

The scene is set along the Heilongjiang.[8] Heilongjiang for the Chinese, Sahaliyan Ula for the Manchu, Амар мөрөн for the Mongols, and Река Амур, or the Amur for the Russians, the river contains much richer diversity as compared to Heilongjiang as a provincial concept. A fluid water body with a drainage basin of 1,855,000 square kilometers, it feeds populations in the Russian Far East and Northeastern China, simultaneously delineates the long and winding national border between contemporary Russia and China. When talking about the Chinese Northeast, people immediately think of overwhelming amounts of snow, colorful Russian-style onion domes, traditional padded jackets, blurry steam in public baths and pompous golden necklaces that float in water once you sit in one of the baths. These representations together construct the image of this distant border region. However, when we peel off the pictures from streaming media, what kind of marks does the northeast, once called "the eldest son of the Republic" for its rapid industrial development in the last century, leave on earth?[9] Infrastructure such as collective farms in fields, tree farms in forests, roads and electric towers become devices for the government to exercise control from a distance, and between the network formed by these structures lay scattered villages and towns among untamed wilderness. The project traces the river downstream, investigating specific man-made landscapes in the forms of nomad camp, temporary settlement, village and town, and cities in this borderland far from the state's central power; looking into both the natural landscape and environment, presence of the authority, and the resulting forms of living.

How?

The thesis departs from James Scott's theory on ungoverned space, interpreting and analyzing the borderland through which the Heilongjiang flows. Research is conducted on three progressive scales: the Amur River drainage basin, sample settlements, towns, or cities, and specific lifestyles and architectural typologies. The project starts with analyzing large-scale geographical, climatic, and social and political conditions, producing maps and diagrams, then moving on to analyzing the organization and planning of local sites, before finally narrowing down to specific architecture respective to each site, producing architectural drawings and models. Presence of authority, or "governance" in regards of the definition of "ungoverned space," is evaluated in terms of existing state institutions, compliance to laws, alternative source of authority such as tribal leaders, physical infrastructures, control over borders, the monopoly and use of force, and language. Morphing of the landscape is analyzed by three aspects, the actions taken and tools used to make marks on the land and the traces left by such actions. Pieces of architecture are analyzed in terms of material, tectonics, function and symbolic meaning.

When approaching a very specific topic from the perspective of an "outsider," we are inevitably influenced by our backgrounds, values, and biases, resulting in a displacement of viewpoints (between us as researchers and the people who experience that life subject to this research.) Hence, our project does not seek to make any assertions, but aims to produce an observation, a collection of information on contemporary forms of living and the resulting architecture through an interdisciplinary study of "ungoverned spaces," and use it as a basis to create new ways of graphic representation. We hope that the thesis could shed light on marginalized territories and populations, serving as a useful source for scholars who are interested in the borderland between China and Russia, architecture in ungoverned spaces, and the diversity of manmade landscapes beside the metropolis.

Notes

[1] Latour, Bruno. "A World Composed of Objects Does Not Have the Same Type of Resistance as a World Composed of Agents." In Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climate Regime, English Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

[2] Sloterdijk, Peter. "Foreword to the Theory of Spheres." In *Cosmograms*. M. Ohanian and J.C. Royoux, ed. New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2005, 223-241.

[3] Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

[4] Schendel, Willem van. "Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20, no. 6, December 2002, 647–68. https://doi.org/10.1068/d16s.

[5] Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Heilongjiang, or Heilong River, lit. "black dragon river" in Chinese. All names of people and locations in the research, when lacking a general translation, are translated into English based on Mandarin phonetics, followed by Russian or other dialects when applicable.

[9] "The eldest son of the republic" is a term used in Chinese to specifically refer to the general Northeast region which contributed greatly to the industrialization of the PCR since 1949.

Part I - Framework

01 Diaspora Creates the Ghost

Ximeng Luo

"Distance-demolishing technologies—railroads, all-weather roads, telephone, telegraph, AirPower, helicopters, information technology…"

James Scott, 2009[1]

Imagine tracing the Heilongjiang from its source in the Greater Khingan Range in some kind of moving vehicle. Like many other rivers on earth, the sectional profile of the Heilongjiang starts from a drastic fluctuation which marks the mountains, gradually smoothing down to an elegantly descending curve, representing the flood plain. If we have a "map" that records the scenes captured by a quickly moving pan-view vision at eye level, we would have a collage of difference scenes by the time we get to the river delta in Russia. Industrial technology found root in the flat, frictionless river plain and encroaches on the surrounding environment, spread to conquer the once wilder northeast Asia. Scenes would flash like a powerpoint slide, jumping from forest and mobile tents to small villages, farms, then to highways and cities.

Civilizations often began from flat and fertile grounds. mountains and hinterlands are like two complimenting pieces of the same puzzle, articulating opposing ends; for anthropologist James Scott, it is the "state people" versus the "stateless people," and for geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, it is "fearless societies" versus societies that are familiar with fear.[2] The mountains are understood first as physical geographical barriers that define hinterlands, bearing characteristics different from valleys and other flat areas, then as a geographical agent that is somewhat symbolically interpreted by the states, as the B-side of their very own flat-land narrative. Scott defines the state as "the concentration of as much arable land and as many people to work it as possible within the smallest radius," indicating geography and natural conditions as the root for civilizations.[3] The role of the mountain as a geographical

barrier is a result of its inaccessibility, aridity, and consequent inability to hold populations; hinterlands, on the contrary, are characterized by their relatively convenient transportation, fertile lowland soils and the tendency for populations to gather and settle down.

Difference in accessibility is the most direct outcome of contrasting geographical conditions. Hinterlands are accessible while mountains are not. Scott argues that the flatness of land reduces friction, that calm, navigable waterways, along with routes that humans and animals can easily trek, is advantageous to the concentration of populations and eventually to state making.[4] Ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia achieved "remotely self-sufficient economies" because of its access to water.[5] The early sedentary community of the Yellow River drainage basin in China also benefited from the convenience in transportation offered by the lower reaches of the river. Mountains, on the other hand, are often rocky and dangerous, difficult even to pass through, let alone fostering concentrated settlements. Thus, they assisted states in maintaining and growing populations in the lowlands, creating societies that are "caged" in the control of the state.[6] These caged societies often maintain a close relationship to its authority's center of power, directly subject to its or its sub-agencies' surveillance. The border area of northeast China, however, geographically and politically distant from the authority, is in a default status of diaspora, with most of its current inhabitants a result of large-scale immigration from the central and southern part of the country since the early 1900s under the central government's strategic tactic to develop the peripheral regions.

Distance from the center of power reduced the visibility of the border region for the authority, resulting in difficulties in exercising control, specifically in the following terms. First comes the difficulty in access, with no efficient way of transportation in modern sense. Soil and vegetation condition in the region determines whether an area is suitable for agriculture or not, and if not alternative means of subsistence must be considered. Though the flood plain of the Heilongjiang provides an ideal geographical condition for agriculture, the long and cold winter hinders the formation of stable, sedentary communities before the mass migration movement. On top of the above, without efficient industrial infrastructure, the state cannot establish valid law systems and institutions, leading a piece of land, though claimed under an authority, but to some extent ungoverned. The Heilongjiang, with its upstream in the forests of the Greater Khing'an Range, and despite the increasing state presence which probably brought more difficulty than convenience to the locals who would prefer to maintain their previous life, still provides shelter for some tribal societies.

The Heilongjiang runs through geographical episodes, the wilderness, the transformation (from wilderness to regulated land), the transformed manmade environment, and connects them like a thread. In the process of transformation, or "state-making," modern technology continues to transform the landscape and creates an overlay of new relationships on top of the old one. Industrialization has created a new kind of human being—the proletariat—one

that doesn't rely on the land and their hands to sustain, but depend on an indirect relationship with the land through the mediation of economy. The new status of the space and people is then articulated through documents, maps, and infrastructure. Since humans transform the external world while themselves adapting to it, "the group's image of its external milieu and its stable relationships with this environment become paramount in the idea it forms of itself, permeating every element of its consciousness, moderating and governing its evolution."[7] The objects and details of a space has specific meanings among members of the group, "for each portion of its spaces corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society, at least of what is most stable in it."[8] When being separated from its familiar context, the collective is detached from its established identity. Diaspora derives from the gap between the old and new relationships, between the people's memories and the written history. The Oroqens, a tribal people who hover the mountains for centuries, were brought downhill to live in settlement villages.[9] The Ewenki, a tribal people who refused to leave the forest, were also provided with newly constructed hunter stations, camouflaged to appear as if they were not new installments introduced by the government.[10] The places and events in the mountains that they remembered through words of mouth are re-marked on new maps, if not completely erased from the neat and scientific account. Further down in the flood plains where the great reclamation area of Northeast China lies, as the leftist enthusiasm for a communal society dies down, the past of the collective farms were tore off from the landscape like propaganda posters from the walls. The memory of the people went astray amidst the confusion of diaspora.

Going from indigenous societies without written language like the Ewenki and the Oroqen, to a society with written accounts, memory become replaced by history. The individual's memory of spaces continue to fill in the blanks left by the general descriptions of an official history; they remain as a type of private history, a collection of imprinted images of events and spaces. An individual's sense of belonging to a certain place is often "not anchored in the place as it is now, but in the memories of the place as it was in the past."[11] Indigenous knowledge and local understandings get lost in the supersession of the old understanding of space by the new that is observably dictated by modern maps. Hence, memory itself becomes a representation of the space being understood and remembered, and it continues to influence people's perception of the reality, like a ghost that haunts the living. While the nation state can easily encroach upon ungoverned spaces and wipe out their past, the people who lived on the land carried their ghosts with them as they proceed in life.

The past is like a ghost; it appears in society as history, and in the hearts of people as memories. Humans organize their pasts as memory in ways that are meaningful to others in their shared culture.[12] Through going back and forth in time, "[one] compares past and present selves, by which [one] construct[s] a culturally appropriate sense of a coherent self."[13] The ghost of memory is a representation of the individual's self-identity, and the elimination of which in today's scientific account of "the past" denies the existence of

alternative narratives on a space. Overtaken by the written and recorded history, the ghost in mind often does not align with the reality, producing a displacement between the indigenous knowledge and the information on modern maps, another layer of mental diaspora besides the physical one. The official understanding of space is incomplete, and to capture the diaspora, to insert such indigenous knowledge and the lost memories, through drawings and representations, back into the material reality—in the project, individual memories are collected and translated into certain forms of representation and overlaid on top of the scientific map, showing transparency as well as complexity, a new composite representation of spatial relationships and identities.

Notes

[1] Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

[2] Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Landscapes of Fear*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1980.

[3] Scott, James C. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Mann, Michael. *The Sources of Social Power,* vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

[7] Halbwachs, Maurice. "Space and the Collective Memory, 1925." In *Memory*. Farr, Ian, ed. Documents of Contemporary Art Series. London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel and the MIT Press, 2012.

[8] Ibid.

[9] The government of the Oroqen Autonomous State organized the Downhill Movement of its people, in the hope of adapting the tribal people into a "modern" living environment. The government constructed one to two stories dwellings and relocate the people from their tents in the forest to newly formed villages at the foot of the mountain. Through mobilization meetings, many of the Oroqens volunteered to leave the mountains.
Chronicle of the Communist Party in the Oroqen Autonomous State. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region: Inner Mongolia Cultural Press, 2003.
《中共鄂伦春自治旗党史大事记》，内蒙古文化出版社，2003.

[10] The difficulty in mobilizing and relocating the Ewenki was far more as compared to that with the Oroqens. Many of the Ewenki refused to abandon their previous lifestyle. Not to force the relocation yet to keep track of the Ewenki who live a mobile life, the government set up "hunter stations" in the mountains for camping, under the supervision of various sub-branch forestry bureaus.

[11] May, Vanessa. "Belonging from Afar: Nostalgia, Time and Memory." *The Sociological Review 65*, no. 2 (May 1, 2017): 401–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12402.

[12] Pickering, M., Keightley, E. *Photography, Music and Memory: Pieces of the Past in Everyday Life*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

[13] Albert, S. "Temporal Comparison Theory." *Psychological Review*, 84(6), (1977): 485-503. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.6.485

02 The Body of Water

Shihui Zhu

"The human body is the first and the most immediate cultural location of water."

Margaret Somerville, 2013[1]

"We are the watery world," cultural theorist Astrida Neimanis claims in her work *Bodies of Water*, which brought our attention to the biological characteristics and implications of water.[2] From elementary school textbooks, we have learned that water has covered the surface of the Earth since its early existence, and that animals evolved from these oceans, step by step set foot on land. In other words, water as the source of life creates everything in the world under the molecular formula H2O. Architect Andrés Jacques, in describing bodies of water, argues that "human bodies are interconnected with other bodies, with infrastructures, landscapes and environments; through diverse forms of fluidity. breathing, sueding, menstruating, flushing, discharging, ejaculating, feeding, transfusing, decomposing are all bodily features that challenge the notion of the individual bodies as self-confined."[3] From a single breath to the participation in an ecosystem, humans are so interdependent and interconnected with water. Water as the very basic element of life that runs across land and through blood veins, is often interpreted less in its material sense in today's discourses, but rather confined to historical, geographic, and environmental topics.

Beyond the physical body, regional characteristics of water are preserved in the geological layers. From dry soils to wet and fertile fields, water changes its surrounding land and consequently, the people. Forms of water vary in oceans, rivers, lakes and ponds, and they create different ecosystems. Bodies of water run through the continents, from the Euphrates and the Tigris in the Mesopotamia, the Nile in Egypt, to the Yellow River in

China and the Rhine in Germany, the great river basins gave birth to early human civilizations, and with the flow of water, spread to other parts of the world, eventually weaving the world together as we know today.

Rivers not only change the geological conditions of its surroundings, but also enhance the diversity of ecosystems and allocation of resources on both shores. Fish, algae and other aquatic animals travel with the river, and fruit trees along the river banks spread seeds through water. Communities are fed by the river, using water for drinking, washing, and irrigation. By examining the soil wetness and changing color, the level of minerals and other chemicals, and the contained organisms of the river basin, archaeologists can develop a thorough natural image of the land; sediments capturing the geological movements and human activities along the banks are recorded in the government's documents and maps. The gradual changes from dry to wet soil as one approaches the river slices reveal physical traces of indigenous cultures, even if very scarce. The river grants fluidity and viscosity to the territory, neither entirely liquid nor solid, but like an amphibian that depends simultaneously on water and land, linking the living and non-living parties.

Water also carries cultural contents through its ripples. A city or a town's memory is often tied to the memory of water, let it be natural bodies of water or simply water coming from pipes. The connections between people, between the body and the environment emerge since. The "body of water" we are concerned about in the project, the Heilongjiang, is both a border river between modern China and Russia and a system of local human-water memories, from which different communities build up their respective lives.

The two principal rivers in Eastern Asia, the Yangtze River and the Yellow River, originate from the glacial meltwaters from the Tanggula Mountains and Bayan Har Mountains[4] on the Tibetan Plateau, and together their drainage area cover approximately one-third of modern China's territory. Both run from west to east, nurturing almost all of China's culturally rich cities along their ways, supporting more than half of the country's population. They are known as China's mother rivers.

In comparison, the Heilongjiang, third-longest river in China after the previously mentioned rivers, is not known and appreciated as a mother river in China's mainstream narrative, though it is by all means no less generous in terms of feeding populations and supporting lives. The river is located at a far more remote geographical location compared to the Yangtze and the Yellow, serving as the northern border of China and the southern border of the Far Eastern Federal District of Russia. Originating from the Ergun River[5] in Mongolia, the Heilongjiang, or "black dragon river," got its name due to the color of the soil on both riverbanks. As the upstream of the river speeds down from the grasslands in Inner Mongolia, a large amount of black humus soil is washed down into the river and is deposited at the river bottom, giving the water a black hue even when it is in fact crystal clear.[6] The

black river flows with more than 950 tributaries through the Greater and Lesser Khing'an Ranges, the Changbai Mountain (China), and the Stanov Mountains (Russia), across the Sanjiang, Songnen and Koya Plains, and finally into the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Tartary. The 2,824 kilometer-long river rushes to the ocean with the sedimentary particles swept up along its way, like picking up evidences of natural and human activities. The river is celebrated in different languages by the members of various ethnic groups in its drainage area, and eventually developed a very different regional culture as compared to the Yangtze and the Yellow.

Hydroelectric projects along the Heilongjiang and the Jianshanjiang Reclamation Area in the alluvial plain have impacts beyond the region itself. Tribal minorities have moved downhill from the mountains to start new, so-called civilized lives. Villages along the national border have erected a number of monuments to solicit business. Meanwhile on the other side, in the Russian city of Komsomolsk, the ideology of the past lingers like minerals and organic matters suspending in the water of the Heilongjiang, with material traces of the past still prominent in the large factories and urban structures along the river… Together with its affiliated cultures and histories, the water body creates an assemblage that can be understood as "geo-body," an expansion on the exact concept proposed by historian Thongchai Winichakul. A piece of land is not merely natural, it is also a cultural construct that bears both material and psychological significance. Winichakul's theory focuses on the development of "nationhood," a sense of belonging to a shared identity created under the title of a nation, and he explains that geo-body "describes the operations of the technology of territoriality which created nationhood spatially."[7] The concept discusses the spatial and territorial quality of a piece of land along with the abstract power relationships imposed on it. The original emphasis on nationhood in the concept of geo-body, when placed in areas where the ideological presence of a nation is not very strong, may be replaced by a community-based sense of belonging rather than a national one. Hence, the geo-body of the Heilongjiang's drainage basin includes its geographical reality and the "man-made territorial definition which creates effects - by classifying, communicating, and enforcement - on people, things, and relationships."[8]

The Heilongjiang develops a unique identity in the northeast of China through a mixture of indigenous knowledge, local memories, and the implementation of modern technology which aims at introducing sense of nationhood, especially in places with territorial disputes. The current reshapes the geographical feature and brings a rough vitality to life.

Geographical samples selected for this study echo the human geography of the Heilongjiang's upstream and downstream, from the historical habitat of the Ewenki and Oroqen peoples to the vast reclamation area at Sanjiang Plain, and to the contested Heixiazi Island, or Bolshoy Ussuriysky Island (in Russian) on the national border. As one of the earliest national "barn" and "mine" of China, the drainage basin of the Heilongjiang had

once provided a constant supply of food and energy for the development of agriculture, industry, and infrastructure throughout China, accelerating industrial production and the circulation of populations throughout the country. Though that aspect of the river had gradually died down as the country leapt into industrialization, the Heilongjiang as the divider of China and Russia's water network and political body, continued to carry out its responsibility as the connector between the culture and people on both sides of the river, which is a crucial part of its diversity.

The historical and political upheavals that the Heilongjiang region has experienced in its modern history have created a distinctive landscape centered around a body of water. A specific school of writers and artists rose from the history and culture of the northeast. Since the beginning of the 20th Century, this region has confronted protracted territorial disputes and cultural invasions of Japan and Russia; these social and cultural intruders inspired native authors to create unique works concerning their collective identity. This attempt has resulted in the specific "Heilongjiang experience" of a group of young literary workers, from Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun to Chi Zijian, Shuang Xuetao, and Jia Xingjia; their literature spread with the water, shaping the outside world's understandings and assumptions of the region.

The Hulan River by Xiao Hong and *The Last Quarter of the Moon*[9] by Chi Zijian, along with the other works by authors native to the Chinese Northeast become a series of textual references that link the border sentiments of the Heilongjang, the characters become derivatives of the river, and the blurred ex-utopia depicted by the mottled texts demonstrates a dream-like quality. The proses by Shuang Xuetao and Jia Xingjia, as representatives of this school, focus on the physical and psychological space of the marginalized peoples in this region. Fragmented history transforms into ghosts of memory in literary narratives that present a wet, fresh reminiscence uniquely linked to the Heilongjiang.

Besides the literary texts, there are also documentary texts such as "Map with places manually marked in Ewenki language of the Shilu Branch" and "Gazetteer in Ewenki language of the Shilu Branch" by Dong Liansheng, which, in collaboration with the indigenous Ewenki people, contribute to an academic catalog, labelling the origins and meanings of more than 300 Ewenki names in the northwest region of the Great Khing'an Range.[10] Unlike the ambiguous place names found commonly in traditional literature, these texts from an indigenous perspective are reproduced in the mouths of the local people, confirming the accurate data on names of places. These documents preserve knowledge that otherwise would have been like "meteors that glides across the sky" and "small right-bank tributaries of the Ergun that are mostly disappeared."[11]

The water body of the Heilongjiang is linked to the bodies of local inhabitants. A languid river extends between the people and the land while its natural environment, political significance, and historical ramifications strengthen the intrinsic connection between the

local inhabitants' bodies and the environment. Thus in the project, the Heilongjiang is an assemblage of everything. When the peripheral geographical location and neglect resulted in a less systematic collection of data and conventional cartography cannot fully depict the symbolism and meaning of this meandering river, we proposed a secondary analysis of the local literature, memoirs, reports, and other human-centered information. Combined with mapping methodology and techniques from ancient and indigenous maps, the project attempts at systematically present the superfluidity of the Heilongjiang.

Notes:

[1] Somerville, Margaret. *Water in a Dry Land: place-learning through art and story*. Innovative Ethnography Series. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

[2] Neimanis, Astrida. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. Garrard, Greg and Kerridge, Richard, ed. Environmental Cultures Series. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

[3] Stevens, Philip. "Interview: Andrés Jaque, chief curator of the shanghai biennale, introduces 'bodies of water'." *Designboom*. June 25, 2020. https://www.designboom.com/art/interview-andres-jaque-shanghai-biennale-bodies-of-water-06-25-2020/

[4] Widely recognized source of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers; in Mandarin, 唐古拉山, 巴颜喀拉山.

[5] Ergun River, or just the Ergun in following texts, refers to the source river of the Heilongjiang in Mongolia; also as E'erguna in Mandarin.

[6] 黑龙江省地方志编纂委员会。《黑龙江省志 地名录》。黑龙江人民出版社，1998年2月：578-584.
The Heilongjiang Local History Editorial Committee. *Heilongjiang Provincial History: Gazetteer*. Heilongjiang Province: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 2018, 578-584.

[7] Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

[8] Ibid.

[9] The title of *The Last Quarter of the Moon* was an adaptation into English. The original title of the novel would have been translated directly as "the right bank of the Ergun River."

[10] 董联声。《"使鹿部"鄂温克语地名手工标注图》和《"使鹿部"鄂温克语地名名录》，来自《中国最后的狩猎部落》。内蒙古人民出版社，2007.
Dong, Liansheng. "Map with places manually marked in Ewenki language of the Shilu Branch" and "Gazetteer in Ewenki language of the Shilu Branch." *China's Last Hunting Tribe*. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House, 2007.

[11] 迟子建。《额尔古纳河右岸》。北京十月文艺出版社，2005.
Chi Zijian. *The Last Quarter of the Moon*. Translated by Bruce Humes. New York: Penguin Random House, 2013.

03 Languages, Dialects, Texts

语言，方言，文字

Shihui Zhu

"Language is the foundation of civilization. It is the glue that holds a people together. It is the first weapon drawn in a conflict."

Arrival, 2016[1]

Civilizations are born alongside their languages. Improved language led to efficiency in communication, and eventually to the development of more complex social relationships. Our perception of the external world is constructed in relation to our spoken and written language.[2] The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity, proposed by Sapir and further developed by Whorf, explained the idea more descriptively. The anthropologists claim that the particular language one speaks influences how one thinks about reality; the structure of the sentence, grammar, and indication between the word's female and male tense could affect the speaker's understanding of the world. Linguistic relativity is related to semiotic-level concerns with the general reference to language and thoughts. It generates a discourse-level influence on how patterns of language used in cultural context can affect thoughts.[3]

The theory has been dramatically discussed in "The Story of Your Life," a short science fiction written by Ted Chiang and later adapted into the movie *Arrival,* adapted into a theory proposed by the protagonist, in which she argues that "language is the cornerstone of civilization."[4] In the film, countries are trying to comprehend the language of invading aliens, drastically different from the human langue. Human languages are based on linear logic and texts, in which one thing leads to another in causal relationships, while the alien's writing is circular with no forward or backward direction, sentences appear as images to be read at once. "Nonlinear orthography needs alien to know the whole process before they

speak, which eventually allows them to think circularly."[5] In other words, this language enables them to understand issues four-dimensionally, in terms of past, present, and future at the same time. The book (film) reaches its climax when the character understands the language and can think circularly like the alien.[6]

In reality, different languages and dialects do not have the same drastic effects as claimed in the romanticized interpretation of the film; yet still, dialects may depict a world different from our standardized worldviews, with distinct thought processes and lives. Dialects are often tightly connected to the repeated daily activities of a people. The Oroqen language used by the tribal Oroqen peoples living in the mountains in the Heilongjiang region was born out of their hunter-gatherer lifestyle. The Oroqen language, especially when it comes to depicting animals, makes very clear differences between male, female, adult or cub, age, being in mating season or not, to the convenience of hunters. [7] Words for bear and tiger are viewed as taboos for the traditional Oroqen language, not only due to the local Shaman and Animistic beliefs, but also because these fierce animals were of direct threat to a hunter's life. The language also has nouns for "respected hunter" and adjectives describing "the wobbly figure of a drunken person riding on a horse."[8] With the central government's strategic policy to preserve natural resources and to fully prohibit hunting, the dialect and taboos are just like traditional Shaman clothing that ended up behind the glass in museums, exhibiting as cultural heritage; nobody cares about the possible dangers on life when a certain word is being uttered.

In preserving and translating words that belong to a dialect, especially when the specific context of which is gradually vanishing, poses an intricate problem to scholars. Though primary schools in the Oroqen Autonomous Region can incorporate a Oroqen lesson into its curriculum, none of the kids would have the associative memory to understand the meaning behind the words. Translations either focuses too much on the sound and pronunciation, or burdened with long phrases trying to explain what it means. There are of course terms that cross the cultural and language boundary: the word for "mother" often seems to be mama or has a nasal sound similar to m, like nana. The word for "father" often seems either papa or has a sound similar sound, like b. Shared memory and experience allow humans to create word phrases with similar pronunciations and meanings. The Heilongjiang falls under this category, as its meaning in different settings are all linked to "river with black waters." However, more frequently found is the differences between dialects and widely-used official languages. For example, the name of places are often bonded with vital geographical features or cultural implications in dialects, and the meanings of which are very likely to be lost in translation, especially when many translators choose to translate names phonetically.

Greater Khingan Range
Chinese: 大兴安岭（*Large Xinan Range)*
Manchu: *Ang Bang Hing an Jotun (Mountains rich in gold or resources/Mountains covered by snow most of the time)*
Halbin
Chinese: 哈尔滨/ ***Manchu:*** *Halfiyan*（*Flat island*）
Qiqihar
Chinese: 齐齐哈尔 *(places where wild deer live)* / ***Manchu:*** *Bukui (The dwelling place of the strong and good (Mongolian) people)*
Mongolian: Чикихар （*great pastur/next to river*）
Kiamusze
Chinese: 佳木斯/ ***Hezhe***: *Jiamusi (Bones of people who drowned from the upstream)*
Shuangyashan
Chinese:双鸭山（*Double Duck Mountain)* / ***Manchu:*** *Juru Nih Alin (Wild Duck Mountain)*
Hulin
Chinese: 虎林/ ***Manchu***: *Xilulin*（*places where the sand gulls live and breed)*

The objective world is in fact far more complex as compared to its neat image in maps. Our understanding of everyday social activities turns into the "particular language which has become the medium of expression for our society."[9] One example of cultural meaning lost in translation is the name 澳门 (Macau). The Chinese name 澳门 (phonetically translated as Ao'men) means "inlet gates," referring to two gate-like mountains, the Nantai and Beitai. However, with the the English name "Macau," the reference to geographical features are lost. "Macau" is thought to be derived from the Templo de A-Má (妈阁庙), a still-existing landmark built in 1448, dedicated to the goddess of seafarers and fishermen, Matsu. There is a well-known mythology about how the name came to be: when Portuguese sailors arrived in the region for the first time, they inquired about the name of this region. The miscommunication led the locals to believe they were asking about the name of the temple, and they responded: "妈祖 (Matsu)." The Portuguese subsequently named the peninsula Macau, and the name was spread throughout the world. Similar stories can be found elsewhere in the world. Hence, interacting with a community and understanding their behaviors isolated from the context, causes and effects, would lead to mistakes and misunderstandings.[10]

Seeing the language as a tool for determining people's minds and expressing their culture, anthropologist Akhil Gupta assigns the tongue a third-primary role by describing how countries' borders are divided as a result of different languages.[11] Gupta points out that the map is a tool for division, and that different languages that cause less communication or miscommunication is one of the primary supporting sources. After the development of European cartography, modern maps reached a kind of institutional unification, scattering the land under the European gaze, losing the knowledge and perspective of the indigenous peoples. Recognizing conventional mapping as a traditional historical document that solely records facts, the idea of indigenous maps generated by a group of Japanese anthropologists advocates to record a region in correspondence to its cultural background, using maps as the

"ethnography type of writing."[12] The methodology aims to preserve at least part of the information embedded in dialects, portraying the bottom-up understanding of the local civilians on their homeland.

Indigenous maps embrace the changes that happen along language changes; these format include the different identity of nationality, while the political boundary is no longer the only line that separating the land, religious boundary and self-identity boundary…...all these definitions converge at the borderline enrich the context of the map. The locally-generated map acknowledges the blurriness generated from the combination of psychological maps, ancient maps, and collages of memory.[13] The contemporary map standardizes language, encourages a more direct comprehension and comparison between regions and eliminates distinctive place-specific identity. Perhaps everyone living on earth would end up in countries with all kinds of culture and simultaneously no culture at all, with the trend of globalization.

Notes

Hodder, Ian and Hutson, Scott. *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

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[1] Villeneuve, Denis, dir. *Arrival.* 2016. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures.

[2] Sutton, David E. and Wogan, Peter. "Introduction." In *Hollywood Blockbusters: The Anthropology of Popular Movies.* London: Verso Books, 2009.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Villeneuve, Denis. 2016.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Sutton and Wogan. 2009.

[7] GQ报道。《大兴安岭深处，一堂微信群里的鄂伦春语课》。2021. https://www.huxiu.com/article/421030.html
GQ Report. *Deep in the Greater Khingan Range, a Oroqen Language Lesson in a WeChat Group.* 2021.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Sapir, Edward. Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1949.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Gupta, Akhil and Ferguson, James. "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology,* vol. 7, no. 1 (1992): 6-23. https://www.jstor.org/stable/656518

[12] Clifford, James. "Introduction: Partial Truths." *In Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography.* James Clifford and George E. Marcus ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986.

[13] Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

04 Producing Images

生成图像

Ximeng Luo

"…we conceive the world via the mediation of a certain conception."
Thongchai Winichakul, 1994[1]

The perception of our surrounding world as a whole, with the developing graphic and communications technologies since the last century, has largely depended on the images and graphs that circulate through different forms of media. Even before the emergence of modern technology, people benefited from information collected and complied by external parties, let it be other people or institutions. As the scale of the earth grew, it became inadequate to solely rely on personal empirical knowledge in understanding the full complexity of the world. Representation creates narratives—or, interpretations of material reality. Despite some level of abstraction, representations are often built from associations with real-life objects and relationships.

The map as a form of representation does the translation job: it is "a medium between spatial reality and human, of both cartographer and user, to help human beings perceive such space without the need of direct experience."[2] Maps translate from 3D to 2D, from the producer to the reader, from object to signs. It is a coded language which only those who know the rules can comprehend. A local map drawn by an indigenous person may only be legible to community members who are familiar with their set of signs, while modern, scientific maps share a common set of labels and are available to a much broader audience. The modern map hence becomes a global language, and due to its ability to "mimic relationship with reality" and to accurately depict territories and their boundaries, it has gained increasing political significance with the development of nation states.[3] The growing

accuracy of maps in representing physical space resulted in the increasing political sensitivity in the practice of cartography, especially when it comes to contested areas. The decision of where to put the boundary line is influenced by political strategies and standpoints, and may result in various consequences from different parties.

When we expand the boundary of the map and take a step aside from the scientific version of the map which the contemporary person has become so accustomed with, maps, instead of making an imprint of physical landscapes with invisible, political marks, play a more important role in revealing their creator's perception of space and spatial relationships. The modern map is heavily impacted by the conceptions of nation states and their consciousness on territory and sovereignty, and is hence devoted to a pre-dedicated determination as of form and style, while ancient maps and indigenous maps emphasize on expressing an understanding of land and objects it contains. They choose to include different sets of data. In the absence of precise data, the latter is informed by religion, folk tales, local knowledge and imagination, and the portrayed space may not correspond correctly to the physical earth. Distances between places are often adjusted according to how they are felt by the observer, and the size of certain places may not match the overall scale in the sense of underlining their cultural or religious significance. In ancient Chinese maps, specifically in those produced by provincial governments to obtain an understanding of their territories, the size of buildings and temples are almost the same as mountains, clearly standing out to the reader. In addition, instead of using a standardized set of legends, these ancient maps would incorporate a large body of text embedded between lines that represent rivers, mountains and checkpoints, as a graphic device to add complexity and information to the drawing. They "operate in a certain domain of human affairs and everyday life."[4] In this sense, spaces are made meaningful by making connections to symbolic objects (institutional buildings and temples) and memories of events. Similarly, in indigenous maps, certain features on the landscape are magnified to show importance, and the position and distance between places are based on loose measurements and experiences.

Typing in "indigenous map" in the search bar, most of the returned results are "maps of distribution of indigenous peoples" in different countries or continents on a familiar base map. Finding a map produced from the local perspective takes much longer. In the governmental archives of different ethnic autonomous regions in China, atlases are all "official" maps produced by either a committee or an institution using general cartographical techniques, making marks on standardized, GIS-generated base maps. Some indigenous information, such as "Map with places manually marked in Ewenki language of the Shilu Branch" by Dong Liansheng, was produced following a similar methodology, only that the person who makes marks belongs to the indigenous group, not a geographer approaching from an "outsider" perspective. Through our research, it was especially hard to obtain maps produced solely by the local people, not even from local cultural museums and ethnic scholar's archives. This may also be because of indigenous peoples of the Heilongjiang

region don't have written languages. We were able to find traces of how they understand space: in both Ewenki and Oroqen communities, the group leader's tent is usually the largest, with a piece of public space in front for rituals and gatherings; the river is used as a natural mark on the ground to orient themselves, especially in the summer when they retreat to the mountains to avoid the heat; they use the surface of trees' stem as paper to leave marks claiming that there are supplies such as fresh bark and timber buried under the trees. The Oroqens also draw on boiled and dried birch bark, mostly scenic pictures, animals, or scenes depicting a certain event, for example hunting or religious rituals. Knowledge on geography and events passed around through words of mouth, forming a series of "oral maps" that are not necessarily accurate, but enough for the people to identify locations and places. The main task of these cartographic information is to strengthen the community members' collective spatial understanding, reinforcing the idea that the leader's home is larger and hence more prestigious, that the river is the main "road" and activities happen around it, and that the soils in empty lots under trees can often be used as a storage space.[5] These places and geographical features sew together the daily life of the local people, giving them a sense of familiarity and belonging.

Societies without a written language understands and remembers space through the creation and reinforcement of a collective memory. The natural landscape, as a physical surrounding, "bears ours and others' imprint."[6] The imprints are easily decipherable by members of the same community, and from which knowledge of space can be extracted. However, literate societies with full capacity to record information in texts and images still, besides documents and standardized drawings, rely heavily on memory and spoken language to retrospect familiar spaces in their cognition. In essence, spatial memories of humans are sensational, complex, sometimes ambivalent and random, mingling 2D and 3D perspective. Even with the neat and precise cartographic techniques today, people nonetheless don't think and perceive in accordance to cartographic methodology, but remain rather subjective —empiricism in this sense preserves irrationalities in life, and the capture and record of which has been a particularly difficult task.

Expanding on the sensu stricto "indigenous map," our definition of an indigenous map is a drawing coming from a local perspective, based on individual understandings and experiences, in which spaces are linked by events, or occurrences, and their significance and meaning to the individual. Under this conception, a situationist would very likely agree that what we consider as indigenous maps fall under the realm of psychogeography—where "unities of atmosphere" are connected by arrows, marked on the basis of an urban map. Situationists focus on the map as "a figurative narrative rather than as a tool of universal knowledge," turning the map into a device to record emotions and significant moments in daily life.[7] When approaching the concept of indigenous knowledge and its representations in an abstracted state, it becomes a specific method of capturing and expressing a subject's surrounding environment, and jumps out of the platitudinous misconception that

indigenous knowledge has temporal restrictions and belongs only to certain pre-modern societies, suffering from the deficiencies that comes from the lack of an adequate scientific system to help interpret the world. Some may still think that indigenous maps are carved in stone or scratched on dried animal skin, crude and simple; yet maps based on indigenous knowledge are not necessarily ancient maps but can be contemporary and relevant. They are alternatives to their scientific counterparts, directing attention to spatial indicators that otherwise would not be included in a map, adding layers of sensational, subjective, ambiguous, and sometimes irrational information to the category.

In the attempt to represent shared spaces in Boylan Heights neighborhood in North Carolina, artist and cartographer Denis Wood chose to map pools of light casted by streetlights on the ground at night. Without any additional lines, puddles of light that look like splashes of white paint on a black background outlined the streets in the neighborhood.[8] The map presents a human perspective, input being a person's walk at night under the guidance of streetlights, a street-level experience that would easily be ignored in maps. Another example is the "Free Entry" atlas drawn by architect Theo Deutinger. Departing from the perspective of a citizen of a certain nation state, Deutinger carved out countries that do not allow free entry to this citizen of a specific nationality from the world map, and what is left is the "size of earth" to people from that country.[9] This is a visualization of "access" under modern concepts of sovereignty, diplomatic relations and visa, very specific to each state, for its people automatically forms a collective which shares the same national identity—essential to a modern person's living experience in a globalized world.

Shifting to a more relevant context, artists and architects from Northeast China had experimented with similar techniques to make sense of their identities in relation to events in history and emotions in memory. Artist Wei Hu created a temporal map through superimposing images from different time periods on People's Square, formerly known as Stalin Square, in Dalian, a port city in northeastern China with a heavy Russian cultural influence. As a major city in this peripheral region, Dalian shifted from colonial land to a socialist ideology testing ground, then to the paradise of market economy, and the image of People's Square changed accordingly. The installation and removal of a statue of Stalin, collapsed into a few frames of picture, is transformed into a social drama. The artist used archival photos to piece out a map that narrates the changes of a piece of public space through time, incorporating the authority's power in controlling what can be seen by the people and the wobbly collective identity.[10] Hu's practice is also about images, their production, interpretation, and how is information processed when producing such images. The artist implemented a vicarious, de-regionalized approach to depict a familiar space, which corresponds with the production of contemporary images: a miscellaneous, heterogenous status.[11]

The contemporary practice of image production is always conducted under a certain conception, creating narratives that fit into certain values. Representation shapes our perception of reality and determines how we approach our physical spaces, and in a way, plays the crucial role of recreating realities for different groups of people. Representation is in a reciprocal relationship with our world's macro-structure (the "envelope" proposed by Latour,) born out of its narrative while reinforcing the narrative through the ability to disseminate it. Images and narratives are often regarded as media between the object being represented and the subject receiving information, while the subject or object producing the images are like ghosts, floating with their biases in images and narratives that pervade life, influencing the receiver's perspective. There is always an input for any representational output, yet the process of transforming that input into something comprehensible and accessible to the public is largely neglected and invisible. In the thesis research, we collected local narratives from interviews, casual conversations in travel logs and local literature, hoping to piece together a rough image of the physical spaces, histories, and memories from an indigenous perspective. We summarize the findings in words and plugged them into an online algorithm that then gave us graphic results of what it thinks should be the resulting image. In analogy, during the process of creating drawings from the indigenous point of view, we as the producers of images—or equivalently the producers of narratives—act just as the AI, masticate the collected data before generating an output through our own algorithm. The process is subjective, impacted by our background, thoughts and thinking process. Yes, we are creating an alternative reality for the local communities through our drawings.

Living in the 21st century is to accept that the intertwining realities and representations of realities are of equal importance in our time. Bear in mind that there is inevitable displacement between the contents presented in this research, the indigenous people's cognition, and the physical reality. Now join us and see through our eyes.

Notes

[1] Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] GQ报道。《大兴安岭深处，一堂微信群里的鄂伦春语课》。2021. https://www.huxiu.com/article/421030.html
GQ Report. *Deep in the Greater Khingan Range, a Oroqen Language Lesson in a WeChat Group*. 2021.

[6] Halbwachs, Maurice. "Space and the Collective Memory, 1925." In *Memory*. Farr, Ian, ed. Documents of Contemporary Art Series. London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel and the MIT Press, 2012.

[7] McDonough, Tom. "Situationist Space." In *Guy Debora and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

[8] Wood, Denis. "Street Light Map." In *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas*. Los Angeles and New York: Siglio Press, 2010.

[9] Deutinger Theo. "Free Entry." In *The Handbook of Tyranny*. Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2018.

[10] Hu, Wei. *Proposal for Public Assembly/Encounter*. 2018. https://www.threeshadows.cn/jimei-arles/exhibitions/2018/hu-wei/

[11] A+ Contemporary.《挽歌：有关怀旧的五种欲望机制——胡伟》。上海，2019. http://aplusfoundation.art/aplus/挽歌：有关怀旧的五种欲望机制-胡伟/?lang=zh-hans
A+ Contemporary. *Elegy: Five Desire-Driven Mechanisms about Nostalgia—Hu Wei*. Shanghai, 2019.

Part II - Sampling

01 Ridge Peoples
The Ewenki and the Oroqen

Ewenki: Altaic languages, Tungusic language family;
people who live in the mountains, people who live on the southern slope of the mountains, people who come down from the mountains.

Oroqen: Altaic languages, Tungusic language family;
people who live in the mountains, people who own reindeers.

Let's start from the origins of the Heilongjiang—the Ergun River. The body of water originates from the west side of the Greater Khing'an Range, runs east as it collects the winding inland streams, finally converges with the Shika River and forms the Heilongjiang that flows toward the Pacific Ocean. During the Qing Dynasty, the Ergun was recognized as the imperial border by both sides. With the signing of the Treaty of Nibuchu by both countries in the 1660s, the Ergun became the earliest national border of modern China, meanwhile becoming one of the first rivers to obtain a political significance on top of its geographic feature. Besides the powerful political symbolism, the Ergun River also has a unique ethnic trait. Tribal peoples that wander the forests of the Greater Khing'an Range relied extensively on the river, notably the Ewenki and Oroqen people, who live in the upper reaches of the Ergun since the Qing Dynasty.

Unlike many recorded ethnic minority groups in China, the Ewenki and the Oroqens who lived in this region have strived to preserve their nomadic characteristics even in contemporary society. As they migrate according to seasonal changes between the mountains and the plains, they build up a specific culture of food, clothing, housing, and transportation, often determined by the most commonly available animals and plants in the region. The people wear clothes made from animal skin, eat half-cooked or salted raw meat, dwell in a lightweight umbrella-like tent, the "Xielengzhu," to facilitate hunting, and transport mainly on foot, with the reindeers carrying the old and weak, etc. This unique way of living, translated into a shared cultural bond, enables the people to form a local consciousness of the land and environment.

Under this section, three specific indigenous minority sites are discussed: the Ergun River, Xinsheng Village, and an Ewenki Hunting Point in the Greater Khing'an Range. The trio present the way the two mentioned ethnic minorities groups react to modern state control.

As the birthplace of the two peoples, the Ergun River is distant and has long been deserted, becoming a source for romanticized literature. The novel "The Last Quarter of the Moon" creates a window for the public to sneak a peak at these ethnic groups that seldom appear in mainstream culture. The author, ZiJian Chi, depicts the daily lives of the Oroqen people. The poetic, swirling warmth enhances the strength of the everyday diversity. The poetic language promotes the long-forgotten land, acts as a gentle ghost that smooths out the barbarity and cruelty, leading the literary work to become a symbol of romanticized land. The work evoked a wave of interest in the nomadic life under the modern context through the description of how the indigenous people cherished the Ergun. Our composite representation re-maps the region in the format of extended genealogy, using local mapping techniques such as the Ewenki's practice of making marks on trees.

In the 1950s, the downhill movement of the Oroqens started as an intervention of the central government after a large wildfire took place in the Greater Khing'an Range. The central government set up settlement villages in the valleys and plains for the tribal peoples to live downhill. These settlements were quipped with collective heating and water supply, built up in reference to the traditional Oroqen tent. Xinsheng Village, located in the western end of the flood plain of the Heilongjiang, is one of the relocating villages that contains more than 200 Oroqen villagers. They had to give up their traditional nomadic culture to adapt to a sedentary living. The formalist transition from "primitive society" to the so-called "modern society," however, was not as smooth as the government expected, since the "modern" is much more than agriculture and being sedentary. Hunters could not be turn into farmers immediately, the adaptation is formal as well as psychological. Therefore, the sedentary hunting points in the forest becomes a compromised option between the "civilized life" and the "primitive" nomadic life. In the 2000s, the government set up 14 scattered hunting points, belonging to the Bureau of Forestry, under the jurisdiction of the local government, and the Ewenki or Oroqen villagers who prefer the traditional life may move from the settlement villages to the hunter points to, to some extent, continue their reindeer-related culture and lifestyle.

Under this cultural background, many of the younger generation who were born downhill and lived a life without nomadic hierarchy. They already cannot understand the indigenous language and did not know nor understand their history. The cultural disconnection makes these ethnic minorities, and many others around the world, to disappear rapidly. In the eyes of the younger generation of Ewenki people, their perception

of the home and the land is no longer bonded to indigenous understandings. They see the land similar to the conception of a standardized, scientific map.

02 The Northernmost Point

Beiji and Beihong Villages

Moving east along the river comes two famous sight-seeing villages located in the arctic circle, under the administration of Mohe City in Heilongjiang Province: the Beiji Village and the Beihong Village. These village duo are frequently presented in different travel guides as the symbolically significant northernmost point of China, and with its cultural and tourist characters integrated, its political attributes of the "first post in the north" were diluted.

Beiji Village (53°29'52.58"N) was commonly recognized as the "northernmost point" of China, yet, this name was merely a cultural product rather than a geographical one. The physical northernmost point is at Ussuri Shoal (53°33'37"N, 123°16'12"E), about 61 kilometers northwest of the Beiji Village. In addition, even the authentic northernmost village is another village called Beihong Village (53°33'43"N.) The Chinese government in the 90s chose to develop tourism in Beiji Village rather than the two other sites due to its more extensive scale and the proximity to the airport. In 1997, the village was signed as a scenic area. Under the support of governmental policies, Beiji Village soon became a 5A scenic area (a Chinese classification, credited based on traffic, safety, telecommunications services, business management, resources, environmental protection, market attractiveness, annual tourist volume, and tourist satisfaction rate). Since then, the local government had developed a promotional rhetoric: from year 2000 onwards, Beiji village was transformed from the original agricultural town into a microcosm of tourism. Visitors have to pay an entrance fee to enter the village gate; restaurants, shopping malls, bars, and even public

toilets that serve people's livelihood have a unique naming scheme to attract customers. There are countless "north" characters inside the village, starting from the wooden entrance sign marked the "Northernmost Point," similar diction appears in every store, every hotel, and every corner of the natural sight, even some written on trees and some carved in stone, encompassing all the "North" Chinese characters that can be found in the ancient and modern worlds.（北，地图）

In comparison, Beihong Village, the *de facto* northernmost village in China, rarely received the credit it deserved. In 1997, the "Land of the Far North" monument was removed from its original site in Beihong Village and relocated in Beiji Village, an addition to the latter's fetishized "north" mania. By ceding the title of the northernmost point to Beiji Village, Beihong Village had escaped the fate of being reiterated by the modern perspective, yet at the same time it had lost its chance to economic prosperity. Beihong village did not have full electricity coverage until 2009; before that, the residents lived on a unified power generator which has a daily time limit. Only on New Year's Eve of each year, the village would have an overnight power supply. Nowadays, Beihong village still lays under-developed with only 320 villagers. Though tourists have gradually recognized the site for its original geographic meanings, the underdeveloped transportation system hinders the development of its tourism industry, and maintained its primitive characteristics. Beihong villagers still live on farming and fishing rather than tourism; hand tractors, motorcycles, cows, and horses are still their primary labor tools.

03 The Field of Hope

The Great Collective Farms of Jiansanjiang

Qindeli Farm, Heilongjiang Province, China

The first reclamation area to welcome the morning sun.

最早迎接太阳的垦区。

Jiansanjiang: Chinese, 建三江; Developing the Sanjiang Plateau.

jian, 建，to construct, to develop; Sanjiang, 三江，the three rivers, referring to the Sanjiang or Three-River Plateau formed by the convergence of Heilongjiang/ Amur, Songhua and Ussuri Rivers

Qindeli: Chinese, 勤得利; diligence makes a fortune.

qin, 勤，diligence; de, 得，to obtain, to gain; li, 利，profit, fortune

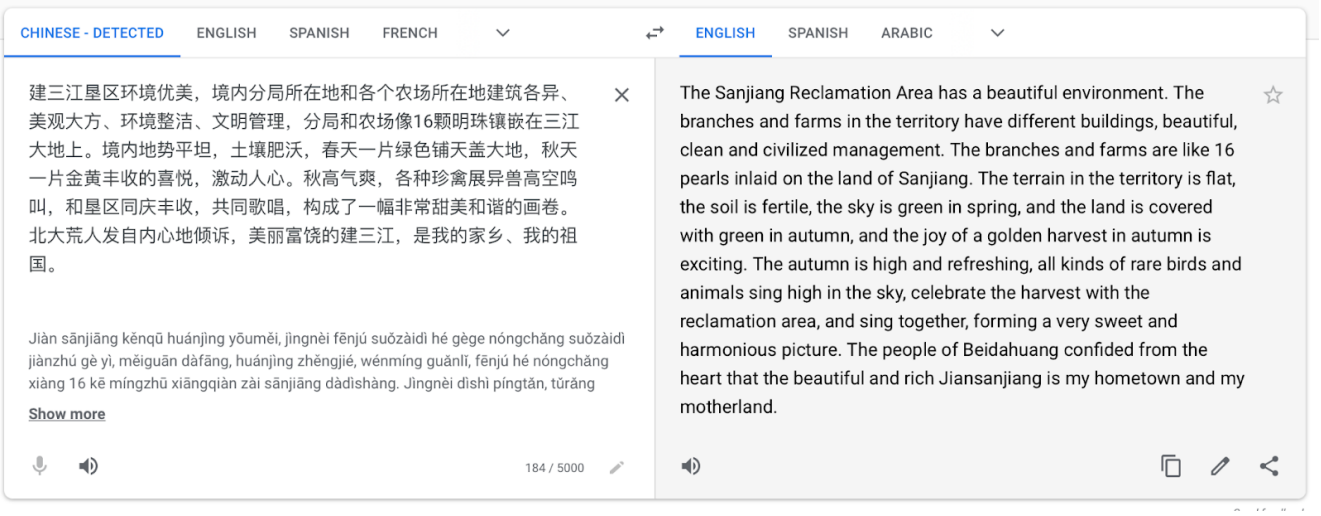
Now we are at the downstream of the great river Heilongjiang. The river runs towards east, mighty and fast, meeting the west-east Songhua River and south-north Ussuri River at the Chinese-Russian border. The flood plain of these three rivers are called Sanjiang, meaning literally "three rivers." Rivers brought fertile soils from upstream, and sedimentation on this flat landscape eventually formed the Sanjiang Plateau. This northeastern flood plain had not came near any of the dynastic capitals in Chinese history, let alone the Russian one, and had consequently remained the major habitat for many ethnic groups, notably the Manchu and Nanai, who lived in tribal societies that subsisted on hunting and fishing.

The area that we now consider as the Chinese northeast was gradually claimed by Chinese dynasties over the course of centuries, starting from Xia Dynasty (2205-1766 BC), the first dynasty of China which claimed part of modern-day Liaoning, continuing to Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), which gained control over almost half of the region, and finally Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 AD) whose territory expanded beyond modern borders into outer Manchuria. The Russians only started to expand eastwards across the Ural Mountains in the late years of Yuan Dynasty, around 1598, after the death of Tsar Fyodor I. Qing Dynasty (1636-1912 AD), the last in China's imperial history, through a series of lost wars and treaties

with Russia, agreed to the cession of part of its northeast and settled with the result that Heilongjiang becomes the border river between the two countries.

Despite that the Chinese dynasties had claimed authority over the northeast for over thousands of years, they had established only loose control over the region through a series of subordinate authorities, some self-governed by ethnic group leaders, some led by officials sent from the capital. Before the establishment of the PRC in 1949, tribal groups still roam the marsh lands of the north.

During the early years of the republic, the northeastern region was previously referred to as Beidahuang, meaning the "great northern wilderness," due to the extreme cold weather and its sparse population. Since 1950, the central government had decided to take advantage of the natural resources and develop the once wild northeast into a lively mixture of farmlands, oil fields, and mines, so that it feeds the nation while powers its aspiration for rapid industrialization. The operation was named "Jiansanjiang," literally meaning "developing the Sanjiang Plateau." The region was then referred to as Jiansanjiang Reclamation Area. The late 1950s saw over 140,000 veterans and civil servants, 200,000 border-support youths and 540,000 educated youths departed for the northeast. Together thees new "immigrants" set up 4 farms in the Sanjiang Plateau, yet large-scale, centrally planned development of land did not start until the establishment of the 6th division of Heilongjiang Production and Construction Corp in 1968, which specifically aimed at developing the great collective farms at Sanjiang Plateau. In 1976, the Corp was restructured as Jiansanjiang State-Operated Farm Administration, further dividing the duties of the 4 farms, and eventually formed 15 state-owned farms, covering around 12,400 square kilometers of land. Administrative bodies entered Jiansanjiang after the formation of the administration.



With the 1992 Economic Reform, the state farms started shifting from administrative management to enterprise-style management. However, the Heilongjiang Province Reclamation Area Ordinance was announced to cease to have effect in as late as 2018, and the farms had finally transformed into a limited liability company in 2020, came directly under control of the Central Ministry of Finance. Currently the 15 farms remain as sub-branches of the company, continuing their duty as the "national barn."

Farms were developed in the flat floodplain in a large scale. From satellite maps, each farm appears as a light green patch with linear patterns on the ground, with small clusters of three or four farm houses popping up every now and then. Today with the aid of modern agricultural equipment, the humans occupying spaces as small as three or four bungalows were able to exercise control over a considerably large piece of land, nonetheless it was the early surge of volunteers and veterans who pulled through difficulties and transformed the hard frozen soils into today's fertile black soils, ultimately changing the natural landscape. At first the difficult winter weather and the barren land was a major and deadly obstacle, and the fact that volunteers had to abandon their previous lives and move to an unknown region was a huge personal sacrifice. With a faith tied to ideology and practical needs, the people pulled through. After two generations' effort, by the end of 1980s, the 15 farms together yield more than 2 billion kilograms of grains per year. Following the people came radio, railroads and highways, electricity, and much later an airport, making the region more accessible from the central hinterlands. The reclamation area has its own governance system in which production teams report to the farms, and the farms report to the Jiansanjiang administration bureau, yet due to its vastness and distance, inevitable gaps between the governed and the ungoverned allowed for ambiguity. Local gangs, labor camps for political prisoners, and mental health facilities for detaining people who were reluctant to migrate and support the Jiansanjiang operation can all be found in the region, and one of the most famous dissident religious group in PRC history, the Falun Gong, emerged from this area. Things that were difficult to take root in the mainstream reality were nurtured here.

Not only serving as the major fields that yield grains for the country, the great farms also carried the political task of setting a successful standard for "the modern socialist large-scale agricultural practice." Propaganda posters, wall newspapers and prints were enthusiastically produced with a high level of artistic value and circulated around the region. Public spaces were decorated with posters and blackboard art, creating an incessant exposure to the ideology. The positive image that has to be maintained for propaganda and the bitter reality in the 20th century lead to a unique artistic school in the Northeast. Intellectuals gathered in Jiansanjiang from different parts of the country, and together built a new culture that is a mixture of everything they've learned from their previous lives, blended with the cold, ice, and dull sky. Traces can be found in prints, drawings, and literature, in which artists and writers sought to break from the mainstream narrative and reiterate their de-familiarized life, looking for a more precise method to produce works that are relatable and empathetic. The

phrase used by the official media is "the spirit of the great northern wilderness," while more privately, the creators themselves like to say it's "the spirit of the frozen soil." Characters, or simply the content, seem uncertain and bewildered, often focusing on the ordinary person and his or her circumstances.

The image of the Chinese northeast remains distant and ambiguous, especially in the 21st century in which the region had long completed its role as the major, if not only engine during China's rapid industrialization process and fall silent in obscurity. Even literature and art today, following their predecessor's paths, struggle to develop a contemporary profile of the region. Temporal elements can still be found in many of today's northeastern literature, depicting past events and their repercussions, showing a sense of powerlessness regarding the inability to fully understand and analyze from a perspective that goes beyond the event itself. Yet almost every child could sing a popular verse promoted by the Communist Youth League: "our hometown/is the field of hope; our dreams/is planted on the field of hope; our future/lies in the field of hope…"

Now, brushing away the excess of images, memes, and video clips on streaming media, the foggy image of the northeast lies somewhere between the glory of the mega-factories and the honorable accomplishments of the great farms. No matter the former pop-culture representation or the later classic official one, the complexity of the place is flattened on a 2D surface composed of key words and pictures. Behind the noise, what is the afterlife of the collective farms?

04 "Border" Border
Heixiazi Island

Approaching the border in the northeast corner of China, at the confluence of the Heilongjiang and Ussuri River, lies a triangular sandbar formed from the sediment brought by the two rivers. This is the Fuyuan Delta, with a major island call Heixiangzi Island (黑瞎子岛), also known as Bolshoy Ussuriysky Island in Russia. The island region consists of 93 islands and sandbars, including larger ones such as Yinlong Island (银龙岛) and Heixiangzi Island, with a total island area of around 335 square kilometers, which is about one-third of Hong Kong, 12 times the area of Macau, and a little smaller than the land area of Singapore.

610 years ago, the northeast was under the control of the Yuan Dynasty. The fleet of Yishiha (亦失哈) landed in the region and set up an official post connecting the hinterlands of the North China Plain and the flood plain of the Heilongjiang, which determined the geographical and political significance of the Fuyuan Delta. Though the Heixiazi Island has been recognized as part of the Chinese territory since the Yuan Dynasty, in the contemporary context, the ownership of this site has been under constant dispute. The difficulty in settling the border dispute involved competing interests between modern states of Russia and China.

To settle the boundary along the lines claimed by China would have caused a small Russian population in the area to fall under the range of an artillery emplaced on the Heixiazi. However, if China cedes the entire island to Russia, the latter would have controlled the entire Heilongjiang and Ussuri waterways, creating a comfortable buffer zone on the Far East and could refuse navigational access of the Heilongjiang and the Ussuri to Chinese ships.

The Convention of Peking in 1860 stipulated that the boundary between Russia and China lay along the Heilongjiang and Ussuri rivers. As such, the islands at the confluence of the two rivers were Chinese. Fast forward to the 20th century, the Soviet Union occupied Bolshoy Ussuriysky and Yinlong Islands in 1929 by force in the wake of a Russo-Manchurian conflict, which was not accepted by China. While Russia placed the islands as part of Khabarovsk Krai, China claimed them as under Fuyuan County in Heilongjiang Province, the easternmost part of China.The border dispute led to military presence at the border, with both sides imposing military control, putting up guarded posts and barbed wire fences along the border line and gunboats stationed at the waterway.

In 1949, the People's Republic of China was established, and due to a shared political lineage with the Soviet Union, both countries maintained a relatively friendly border relationship. The Heixiazi Island had became a buffer zone for them. From February 25 to August 15, 1964, the PRC and the Soviet Union started the first border negotiation in Beijing. The two sides held eight plenary sessions to reach a consensus on the eastern section of the border, however, the sudden step-down of Khrushchev paused the session. From October 1969 to June 1978, the second border negotiation between the two parties was held. The discussions were suspended again when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. In February 1987, the third Sino-Soviet border negotiation tool place, which lasted for four years. The then Chinese President Jiang Zemin(江泽民) signed the Agreement, which would officially take power in 2004.

On October 14, 2004, the Complementary Agreement on the Eastern Section of the China-Russia Boundary between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation came into effect. Russia agreed to hand over the control of Yinlong Island and roughly half of Heixiazi Island. The territory ceded to China was around 170 square kilometers, with the rest remaining under Russian control. China agreed to relinquish any territorial claims to the remaining Bolshoy Ussuriysky held by Russia in exchange for the ability to navigate ships through the Heilongjiang's main channel. The agreement, however, was never published to the public for various reasons, and only the local officials in-charge have the knowledge of where exactly the line falls and where access can be legally made. The unknown national boundary spans the open fields and rivers, and the mysterious ambiguity attracted tourists to pay visits and take cruise ship tours led by the local shipmen, or simply stand on the river

bank to look at a point somewhere in the void. While the small fishing boats driven in the shallow Fuyuan waterway may occasionally cross the national boundary unknowingly, the cruise ships would suddenly come alive and ring their sirens as warning.

The barren land decorated with scattered monuments and protected areas is engulfed by a plethora of policies and historical news; its political implications deconstruct its landscape. The Chinese and Russian governments have pursued radically divergent development strategies in recent years, with the Chinese side constructing a vast network of transportation infrastructure including bridges, motorways, protected landscapes, and several monuments. The Russian side, however, is still in a barbaric state. On the map, there should be some farms on the Russian side further east of the national border, yet sitting on the scenic bus, tourists could only see the post from a distance, and an Orthodox church on the Russian side. Beyond the reach of tourists, there is a barbed wire fence along the border, mercilessly cutting the island in half.

05 Manmade Land
Komsomolsk-on-Amur

The Russian's first attempt to successfully cross the Ural Mountains at the border of Europe and Asia by the end of the 16th century marked the beginning of its long presence in Asia. The Russian Empire stretched from the Baltic Sea all the way to the Pacific, running across the vast Siberia region, taking the Far East region from the hands of the Mongol Empire. Snow-covered coniferous forests, tundra, and firm permafrost had hence became an important part of the Russian memory. Komsomolsk-on-Amur, as its name tells, rests on the shore of the Amur River (Russian name for the Heilongjiang), towards the end of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the world's longest railway line. It is a city built from scratch at the command of a strategic order from Moscow in the 1930s.

Sporadic migrations of Russian peasants from Perm Krai, the western slope of the Ural Mountains, began to occupy what is now known as Komsomolsk and established the small village of Permskoye. The plan to build a military base on the Pacific shore almost 6,000 kilometers away from Moscow was made in 1931, a distant result of the bitter defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05. At the order, volunteer labor from the Soviet Youth League, Komsomol, began to migrate to the Far East. The city got its name accordingly—Komsomol, the city of youths, a made-up word that is probably a perfect description of the completely artificial city. The village Permskoye was wiped out, replaced by the newly constructed city.

At first it was extremely difficult, for the area was unbearably cold, and the small agricultural practice of the villagers could not support the lives of the newcomers that flooded in all at once, nor were there enough shelter for all. Construction had to start from clearing out the woods and making room for cultivation, and the long winter months spent in wait caused high mortality rates among the young volunteers.

Relying solely on the youths would not have had an industrial city this scale and this far from the economic center of a country built. War prisoners and political prisoners were also sent to camps near the site, joined in the effort to turn a magnificent city from blueprint to reality. By September 1933, the first wave of prisoners, around 2500 people, arrived at Komsomolsk; the winter in high latitudes took away most of the lives, and by spring there were only 57 people left. The city was built on flesh to fulfill a vision. During the Stalinist Purge from 1936 to 1938, the site became a major gulag center in the Far East, with a number of prison camps and up to a million prisoners. These labor were used extensively in the construction of Komsomolsk, indeed making great progress.

During the 1940s, Komsomolsk took shape and developed into a major industrial center on the Far East. At first the plan was to build a shipyard, but by then it already had industries also in metallurgy, machinery, oil refining, and aircraft manufacturing. The aircraft factories produced planes that supported the Red Army in the western front fighting against Germany. After 1945, a second surge of war prisoners from WWII were sent to the gulags at Komsomolsk in support of further construction and factory work. From 1959 to 1993, due to the political sensitivity of the military aircraft industry, the city was closed to visitors, and reciprocally the residents were unable to leave. It was only until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 did the environment start to loosen.

According to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR in 1943, the city was divided into Leninsky, Stalinsky and Central districts based on different major enterprises that operated in each district. In 1972, the city was re-divided along the Silinka River into the Center where the shipyard was located, and the Dzemgi, the "sleeping" area, and the districts last until today. While the Center is composed by a mixture of 40s and 50s Stalinist building and factories, the Dzemgi was made of typical panel apartment blocks. Though given the name "the sleeping area," Dzemgi also has factories and many of its residents work within the district.

In an environment carefully planned and monitored, life was subject to constant control from clerks, police, and from supervisors in work. Even in regions as far from the capital as Komsomolsk, its strategic importance and bureaucratic structure transformed it into another starched satellite city under the tight grip of the state. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the city is forgotten in time. Lingered on the streets were the atmosphere of fear from the previous decades' life under surveillance. In travel logs and a few journal articles, the authors

reflect that the city feels very much like back in the Soviet era, with police officers on the streets questioning pedestrians at will; the title on the police uniforms are still Okhrana, used way back in the Tsarist era. Despite the nostalgic architecture, mosaics on the buildings' party walls showed images of communist youths hard at work and constructions, factories, and airplanes; statues that decorated the city's public squares, streets and water fronts together tell a story of the Soviet achievement, adding to the sense of temporal stagnation. The factories and ex-military sites are now open to visitors if registered a month before the visit, though there are hardly a few travelers who end up here on their own accord.

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