

## Trajectories of memory embodied in memorial and historical sites

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Dossier Cambodge. Tuol Sleng ou l'histoire du génocide en chantier / Tuol Sleng. A History of the Cambodian Genocide Under Construction

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Scholars, artists and eyewitnesses participated at a conference in Utrecht in 2017 to discuss the history of memory embodied in Tuol Sleng, a Phnom Penh secondary school converted into a special interrogation and execution place by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. They discussed the memorial museum itself, but also artifacts, pictures, movies, theatrical productions and paintings that contain tangible and intangible traces of the Khmer Rouge's mass slaughtering, which turned Cambodia into an enacted utopia between 1975 and 1979, inspired by Maoist China. The results of this conference are now bundled in a special issue of the French magazine *Mémoires-en-Jeu* that deals with trajectories of memory embodied in memorial and historical sites. It also tries to analyze what it means in contemporary society to memorialize a divided past that produces asymmetries in rethinking and mastering memory.

The no longer mysterious Communist Party of Cambodia went on a rampage against its own population. By compartmentalizing their self-created adversaries into enemies and

giving others licenses to kill, Pol Pot and his henchmen provided the motives and orchestrated the means of the killers.

The special issue, edited by a French-Spanish editorial board (Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier, Anne-Laure Porée and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca) devotes much space to the well-known collection of mugshots that the Tuol Sleng prison guards left behind when Phnom Penh was liberated on January 7 by the Vietnamese army and a small group of defected Khmer troopers. A small unit accompanied by a Vietnamese cameraman discovered a place euphemistically called Security Office 21 or S-21, which served as the main interrogation center for KR-cadres of the Pol Pot regime. The thousands of photographs made by the Khmer Rouge in the prison became an impressive memorial for the victims who were executed 15 kilometers from Tuol Sleng/S-21 at Choeung Ek. The prison was the summit of a system of 197 interrogation centers that together formed the center of the Killing Fields of Cambodia. In Tuol Sleng alone an estimated number of 18.000 people were interrogated, tortured



Chan Kim Srun and her baby before she got a name (left, above). Display of mugshots in Tuol Sleng. Photo taken by John Kleinen in May 1991.

and killed. Just a dozen male prisoners and four children survived. Pol Pot's reign of terror between 1975 and 1979 was accountable for the death of at least 1.7 million people.

Nowadays Tuol Sleng is open to the public as a genocide museum. It plays a role in the painful 'heritage' left by the former regime, for imagining a past that is remembered, but nearly lost. As proof of an atrocity it tells a narrative that is elsewhere created. The contributors of this special issue reflect upon this legacy in a kaleidoscopic way. Important is that local voices are included here, like the former and present directors of the museum, Chey Sopheara and Chhay Visoth, who give the reader an intrinsic Cambodian perspective upon a painful past. They also tell of the laborious way the museum had to struggle with the help of foreign donors to engage with the institutional technology of representation. Rachel Hughes' article about the role and function of visitor books is a refreshing contribution to this field.

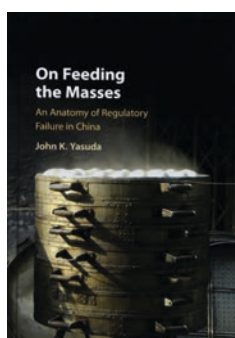
Much attention is devoted to what Tuol Sleng has been made known for outside Cambodia: the more than 7000 pictures of mostly anonymous victims taken by their torturers, at a certain moment before their execution. By combining the images with written documents that were left

in the prison archives, researchers have been able to provide names and sometimes background information for those taken to S-21. Journalists, playwrights, artists, photographers and filmmakers have dealt with this collection. Playwrights Catherine Filloux and Randal Douc show in their contributions how the traces of genocide have inspired their work in different situations. Cambodia's most famous film director Rithy Panh discovered one prisoner's name and background: Hout Bophana, the wife of an important KR-cadre, who remained loyal to her husband when he fell out of grace and was brought to the interrogation centre. Vicente Sánchez-Biosca tells the story of how her portrait became a source and a medium of agency, even until today. A well-known iconic image is the photo of prisoner number 462, a mother and her child; she too had her name returned to her. Chan Kim Srun became the symbol of the way the Khmer Rouge crushed innocence and reduced people to dust.

The display of photographs also played a pivotal part in the outreach work of the extraordinary chambers in the courts of Cambodia (ECCC). While the verdicts of judicial cases against the main perpetrators might have been a deception for many who suffered from the Pol Pot regime, the criminal

## A Problem of Scale: Food Safety in China

Sacha Cody



On Feeding the Masses: An Anatomy of Regulatory Failure in China

John Yasuda. 2018.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press  
ISBN 9781107199644

Ten years have passed since China experienced one of its worst food safety incidents. In July of 2008, melamine, a resin used to manufacture plastics, was discovered in several infant milk formula products. It was illegally added to increase the products' apparent protein content. Six babies died and up to 300,000 were affected, many with kidney stones. Twenty-one companies were implicated. As time has passed, more food safety incidents have occurred and systemic regulatory failures have been identified.

There has not been a shortage of analysis and commentary on, as well as efforts to improve, China's food safety problem. Regulators have promoted 'tried-and-tested' methods from the West to bring China up to global standards. Meanwhile, social scientists have situated food safety problems within questions of morality and social trust amidst rapid urbanization and industrialization of the nation's food economy.<sup>1</sup> Yet problems continued, and we have been waiting for a more definitive and book-length assessment of the situation.

John Yasuda's new book *On Feeding the Masses: An Anatomy of Regulatory Failure*

in China is worth the wait. The book's basic premise is that food safety in China suffers from 'scale politics', a conclusion Yasuda reached after conducting over 200 interviews with academics, conventional and organic farmers, food processing center staff, food safety auditors, and government officials working in the domestic, export and organic farming sectors across three provinces and in three food categories.

Yasuda takes his interviewees seriously when they say they want to solve food safety problems yet are unsure where to start or what to consider. He dismisses easy explanatory targets, such as authoritarianism, corruption, local obstructionism, lack of political will or even the argument that food safety is a problem developing countries have that is eventually solved. For the quantitatively-minded reader, Yasuda supports these dismissals with robust data at several points in his book.

It is easy to think of scale politics along the following lines: "Of course, China is a big country, so there are bound to be problems of scale". Yasuda's sophisticated analysis goes much deeper. 'Scale' does not refer to geographical scope or population size.



process is, like Sarah Williams argues in her contribution “only one dimension of an ongoing process of remembering” (p.75). Julia M. Fleischman, however, suggests that the results of forensic medical anthropology in the form of human remains are used quite late during the trials of former Khmer Rouge leaders. Her findings are supported by the contributions of Chhay Visoth (about explicit graffiti) and Magali An Berthon (about textile and clothing), who also make an appeal not to dismiss these forms of evidence.

This special issue dealing with the Cambodian genocide – still a term that requires explanation – also gets its weight from the visual material it presents (including archive photos of the museum itself) and the various interviews the editors held with Cambodian and non-Cambodian artists, who were asked to share details of their relationship with Tuol Sleng and the ways in which their work is influenced by the past.

The interview by Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier with American anthropologist Eve Zucker concludes the section with a fascinating account of memory practices of villagers who try to cope with the horror in their community. It also reflects on the fieldwork she conducted in Cambodia – an experience she recounts in her book *Forest of Struggle: Moralities of Remembrance in Upland Cambodia* (2013) – as she tracked the recovery of a village community in the southwest of the country, a site that was a Khmer Rouge base and battleground for nearly thirty years. The interview opens up the question of the remembrance of Khmer Rouge atrocities beyond Tuol Sleng and the urban environment. It points to a nationwide traumatic landscape, which in turn helps to better understand the role of the museum in today’s Cambodian memory politics, and to imagine alternative forms of memorialization of a historical period that continues to haunt generations of Cambodians. This closing paper reminds the reader of the limited space most of the authors have contributed to debates about theoretical issues. Ever since Jean Lacouture’s inapt verdict about the Khmer Rouge as an expression of tropical fascism, allusions to the Gulag or Laogai systems have been scarce. As said, the Khmer Rouge’s mass slaughtering as a means to create an enacted utopia, inspired by Maoist China, comes closer to realities than the many references to Nazi-Germany. An approach as proposed by Dutch sociologist Abraham de Swaan in his book *The Killing Compartments* (2015) might be a way-out to understand and to compare the tragedy that struck the inhabitants of Cambodia between 1975 and 1979.

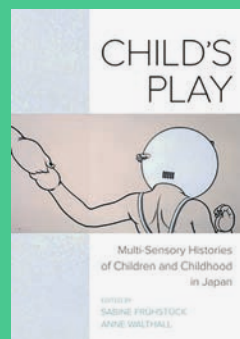
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## Child’s Play

Gwyn McClelland



Monju-kun, Cartoon character as protestor.



### Child’s Play: Multi-Sensory Histories of Children and Childhood in Japan

Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (eds). 2017.

Oakland, CA: University of California Press  
ISBN 9780520296275

The burgeoning field of the history of emotions has continued to develop in scholarship out of Europe and the United States over the last decades. One fascinating segment of this field describes children’s emotions, or emotions directed towards children in history. However, within such emerging research, there is much less consideration of Asia, and Japan specifically, and this is the gap addressed by this new book, *Child’s Play*. In this collection, Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall perform the somewhat complicated task of ‘combing’ periods of Japanese history in order to highlight issues such as how children were distinguished from adults in Japan and how the study of children and childhood may be analysed in this particular context for emotion, affect, and sensibility. At first glance the scope of the collection appears wide and the subject matter eclectic. Essays muse on wide ranging issues including, for example, the social position of male acolytes in medieval Japanese Buddhist monasteries, boys’ androgynous qualities, and male–male love affairs; the identification of conceptions of childhood for Taisho

period designers of furniture in Japan; or the intricacies of the ideological dynamics of the Asia Pacific War, including ways children’s individual emotions were suppressed and the so-called ‘emotional capital’ of children was utilized in propaganda. Such topics and more, revolving around the concept of childhood and the history of emotions are examined from the perspective of Japanese history, albeit for the most part in recent periods. In short, the editors aim to make understandable the relationship of various identifiable phenomena to our understanding of the history of children and childhood and experiences of affect.

Certainly, this book offers an opportunity to at least partially correct the common bias, which is to examine childhood and children predominantly through a European-American lens. The essays presented were initially outlined at a workshop held at the University of California on 27–28 February 2015. Frühstück and Walthall arrange the essays by historical period and the contributors offer cross-disciplinary and varied viewpoints and methodologies.

A limitation is that the majority of the writing within the volume covers the early 20th century, with the exception of three essays couched as premodern, including two from the Edo period and one from the 19th century. Despite this gap in the contribution toward understanding pre-18th century Japan, the approaches of the authors in Part 2 are compelling, including Jinno Yuki’s study of material objects of the Taisho period and Harold Salomon’s discussion of childhood films in wartime Japan. Salomon surveys films released from 1932 to 1941, a period which reflects the emotional proclivities of the generation immediately before. The materials are sourced from an earlier period, perhaps explaining why the editors decided to place Salomon’s essay in the early 20th century section rather than the preceding wartime series. Of course, the initial Japanese invasion of Manchuria took place in 1931.

The last section of the volume considers contemporary issues that children encounter in Japanese society, ranging from a discussion of the relationship of childhood development to a wider discourse about soccer and the nation, to two ethnographic studies of the treatment in Japan of children with developmental challenges. Kathryn Goldfarb writes about a group of children and institutionalisation, using the case study of Chestnut House, a child-welfare institution located in Tokyo.

It seems no collection on Japan is complete without a reference to the nuclear age, and the final essay provides an example of protest in the shape of a cute character – Monju-kun, a cartoon character modelled after a reactor in Fukui after the 2011 Fukushima disaster. Noriko Manabe discusses how Monju-kun became a symbol of protest, subverting propaganda and disrupting silences around irradiation and the health of mothers and children. In my own oral history research, for which I interviewed survivors of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, my interviewees were children themselves in 1945. Having grown up in the Taisho and Showa eras, these survivors remember their own negotiation of adulthood over a time of great tumult and disruption. As a result, I read with interest about the reflections of the scholars in this collection on how understandings of childhood and children have been imagined and exhorted within Japan over disparate time periods. Japanologists, historians, and those who have an interest in finding out more about childhood from an East Asian perspective will certainly benefit from reading this book. The editors achieve the cited aim of re-orienting discourse about childhood by considering new, worthwhile and important perspectives from Asia.

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It is, rather, relational. Specifically, scale concerns how “size interacts with the way individuals perceive and relate to space, jurisdiction, knowledge, time, networks, and management styles”. Scale politics is “the fierce conflicts that emerge when policy communities operating at different levels – national, provincial, municipal, prefectural, county, and township – are forced to integrate to develop a unified regulatory system” (p. 4).

Yasuda finds in China an inability to nest differing scales inside a multilevel regulatory framework because of three perennial problems: an inability to determine the scale of the problem; persistent mismatches across scales of governance; and a lack of sensitivity to scale externalities. The real problem lies with China’s domestic food supply, the largest by volume and strategically important for social stability in China. Yasuda shows how regulation and better food quality found in the export sector does not scale down, while regulation and better quality found across grass-roots sustainable food movements does not scale up for these three reasons. To make his conceptual model and policy

framework as robust as possible, Yasuda tests his findings against other industries in China (environmental protection, fishery management, and aviation safety) as well as food safety regulatory frameworks elsewhere (the European Union, India, and the United States). Yasuda recommends the EU model as offering the best learnings and hope for China’s future.

Yasuda has big ambitions for his scale politics framework. Food safety in China seems to be his first case in what is an ongoing research agenda to “unveil the root causes of the world’s worst regulatory failures, and the solutions to address broken systems of governance”.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Yasuda sees similarities between his research in China and significant incidents elsewhere including the Fukushima meltdown, the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and the Global Financial Crisis.

A research programme such as this aspires to inform and influence regulatory frameworks, governance and policy at a national or international level. Naturally, Yasuda has had to make trade-offs between presenting high-level macro analysis and findings versus revelling in detail. As an anthropologist reviewing this book, I can

only imagine the fascinating insights and stories that are contained in the presumably hundreds of pages of interview transcripts Yasuda used to build his conceptual framework.

Thus, for readers like myself who are also looking for ‘thick description’ surrounding the dynamics of various actors involved in food regulation in China, or for those seeking an investigation into a particular element of the political economy as it pertains to food in China, we will need to listen to Yasuda present his work – presentations I heard are bursting with fascinating stories from the field – and consult other material.

One book that can be read alongside Yasuda’s is Guanqi Zhou’s recently published work *The Regulatory Regime of Food Safety in China: Governance and Segmentation*.<sup>3</sup> Zhou discusses regulatory segmentation in China, and both he and Yasuda are in broad agreement regarding its ill effects. Yet while Yasuda briefly touches on the topic and dismisses it as a failed strategy in managing scale, Zhou builds his entire analysis around it and argues that regulatory segmentation dating back to the 1950s – when redistributive politics allowed food to be siphoned off cheaply from rural collectives to urban work-

units – is the root cause of China’s food safety problems today.

Part of the appeal of Yasuda’s conceptual framework is its ability to incorporate so much analytical territory. Overall, Yasuda’s book will appeal to political scientists and policy analysts researching China, as well as anyone researching or working in the food industries in China. It is also an excellent teaching resource for undergraduate and graduate courses on food and governance in China.

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#### Notes

- 1 Yunxiang Yan. 2012. ‘Food safety and social risk in contemporary China’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71(3):705–29.
- 2 See John K. Yasuda, <http://www.johnkyasuda.com>, accessed 2 May 2018.
- 3 Guanqi Zhou. 2017. *The Regulatory Regime of Food Safety in China: Governance and Segmentation*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.