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in the multicultural context of Singapore. In this context, this kind of representation of the female figure may have been a medium that enabled the artist and viewers to gain independence during the process of building a nation-state. This aspect is worth considering. So the theory can be supported, but I think this painting leaves an impression that this is not the only thing with which it is concerned. Mr. Mashadi, perhaps, you could elaborate on this painting and its background.

Moderator (Matsumoto): Mr. Mashadi, please.

Ahmad Mashadi: Cheong Soo Pieng came from China to Singapore in 1947 and painted this work in 1950, just three years after his arrival. Indeed, even in 1952, there is a certain fascination with the female figure, particularly in the works of Cheong Soo Pieng on Bali.

Having said that I think the work has to be put into the context of the relationship to his own notions of Chinese-ness, his notions of the Nanyang region, and the art historical baggage he may have brought with him from China. So, I think the subject is for him first a painterly subject, as exemplified by the Cubistic rendering, but also an ethnographic subject. And hence, it warrants some kind of investigation in terms of his association or his interpretation of the local culture and local women. But I hesitate to impose a stronger interpretative notion on it. To me, at best, this art work is perhaps a symbolic entry to, if not a kind of an appropriation of, the Nanyang, the South Seas. We must take into perspective the fact of him being an immigrant artist, as well as the values he held, or what he found as new, i.e., his interest in primitivism and his interest with finding a language in order to describe the new environment around him.

Moderator (Matsumoto): The prominent feature of this painting is the female figure, as we know it, and the straight line that divides the picture plane. This is in a sense "defamiliarization," to use Professor Winther-Tamaki's word. The straight line was a decisive factor in our selection of this work for this show. So, let me question you again, Mr. Mashadi. Has Cheong Soo Pieng painted other works that also cut the figure by a straight line?

Mashadi: Cheong Soo Pieng came to Singapore in 1947 and he died in 1983 in Singapore, so he practiced art for about 36 years in Singapore. This picture provides an interesting account of an entry into Singapore, done three years after he arrives. He was also keen to enhance and develop notions of the modern through this artwork, through creating these sharp

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lines. He was also looking, perhaps, at the figure, the subject matter being new to him, being unfamiliar to him. So it was advantageous to mobilize local subject matter in order to arrive at a kind of distinctiveness, perhaps comparable to a primitivist attitude towards art making. Over time, a sensual element began to emerge in his artworks, particularly after the 1952 trip. By the time we get to the late 1970s and early 1980s, he was doing series upon series of paintings of Balinese women, highly decorative, highly sensual, with elements of Gustav Klimt being added. The female figures appear refined, elongated, and subjected to a kind of exotic profile.

So, he had a long-standing relationship with female subject matter, going back to 1950. Over time, his work has become more intense in exoticism. In some ways, I would say that he has appropriated native characteristics and he had a fascination with the primitive that took him in that direction.

Moderator (Matsumoto): Professor Ushiroshoji, please.

Ushiroshoji Masahiro: Mr. Tanaka quoted my text, so let me comment. Among Cheong Soo Pieng's works, this painting is exceptional. The emphasis on disharmony, and its uncanny nature is something that is out of the ordinary for the artist. Singapore and its surrounding areas, or British-ruled Malay at the time, were not sure how their country would be shaped as a nation under the unstable and rapidly changing conditions of the times. So, although everybody may have become a member of the same nation in the end, in the process of nation-building, what was previously an exotic gaze turned into a sincere one, and fear and anxiety came along with it.

Mashadi: In some ways, Professor Ushiroshoji is correct in identifying Cheong Soo Pieng's interest in multiculturalism and engagement with the natives. But, on the other hand, one may look at his attitude with the subjects that engaged him. These subjects exist purely as subjects. And most of the time they seem to appear in idyllic moments. There are people resting in the villages, people undertaking chores in the village, and so on. At the same time, as in ethnographic study, there is an interest in observing the Malay people, the features that distinguish them from Chinese and other races. So that's the baggage of Chinese-ness that he brings into it.

Also, if you look at the situation carefully, the 1950s in Singapore is a time which is very, very fragmented, and conditioned by suspicion, and by a lot of tension between the political groups, as well as the ethnic

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groups. In 1950, there were racial riots that took place after the High Court ruled that Maria Hertogh, a Dutch girl adopted and brought up by a Malay woman during the war, was to be sent back to Holland after her natural mother came back to claim her. It was a very tense moment, indeed, but that tension should be seen as informing the shifts in Cheong Soo Pieng's mind.

I think many of these artists do not really create their work with an especially deep understanding of culture and history. They mostly remain on the periphery in terms of their engagement with the language and culture. Most of the time, they depicted Malays in an idyllic state, although the 1950s were not an idyllic time between in terms of attempting to create multicultural engagement. I think their work shows the tensions and the difficult position we were in, but I would hesitate to think that the artists were trying very hard in order to mediate those hard conditions.

Moderator (Matsumoto): Thank you for providing us with some background information. Let's depart from our discussion on Cheong Soo Pieng and discuss Souza's work. Mr. Tanaka applied Freudian theory in reading this work, but Professor Winther-Tamaki interpreted it from a different perspective. Professor Winther-Tamaki, do you have any comments on Mr. Tanaka's view, or do you have any other arguments?

Bert Winther-Tamaki: In connection with Mr. Tanaka's paper, I was reminded of a series of paintings by Satomi Katsuzo. Not the paintings in this exhibition and not the Cubist works, but the ones from the late 1930s that have the title of *Onna* (Woman). Those paintings have a very striking sadistic quality and I think that Mr. Tanaka has provided some useful directions for looking at paintings of this kind, particularly in the last section of his paper when, as he put it, he made "a leap" to the political situation. That is very tempting to do and can be very effective if carried out together with an analysis of the political context. Satomi Katsuzo was living during the period of fascism in Japan. In his writings, he addressed the topic of the nation with much passion and in his paintings of women, he used his paint brush like a weapon. So his women lost their prettiness and became darker and more miserable as he continued to paint. As Mr. Tanaka noted parenthetically, the kinds of impulses seen in Satomi's work were certainly not limited to Cubism; they were broadly symptomatic of *yōga*, or the practice of "Western painting" in Japan, of which Japanese Cubism was a sub-category. Artists like Satomi sustained a foreign professional identity and *métier* in the context of increasing militarism and ultra-nationalism. They had to contend with the alterity of their

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European professional artistic identity. I think Mr. Tanaka offers a very helpful theoretical framework for the analysis of such cases as Satomi's depiction of the female nude in Western painting in the context of Japanese fascism.

Hayashi: Related to what was just said, I think Souza's case is similar to that of Satomi. What I mean is that Satomi, being a painter who was prominent in the field of *yōga*, was very absorbed in the Western medium. As a Japanese artist, he had to find a way to take initiative and establish independence from the West, so he searched for a device that could guarantee his position as an active agent. To reverse his position as a passive or even impotent figure, he may have decided to become excessively violent against his targeted device. The deformation of Souza's female figure is very excessive like that of Satomi's. Souza was born in Goa, and then moved to London to work, so he was brought up in a multicultural environment. He was placed in a Western environment and chose to pursue Western oil painting as a medium for his expression. He started from the negative end of the scale of gaining independence, but to catch up and move forward, he may have become extremely aggressive in depicting the female figure which was his targeted device for manipulation.

Winther-Tamaki: Yes, in the way Souza writes about his own experiences, it does seem like that's a smart way to pursue the analysis of his work.

On the other hand, you can easily imagine the emergence of an artist of an entirely different character from the same context. And this is true of Satomi's context as well. So, it can't be a deterministic relationship at least in the way we negotiate the analysis. But, yes, the excessiveness of it is remarkable. Of course, the history of the avant-garde provides a tradition in which excess in shock value is nothing new. It's almost an obligation of an artist to contest their rival avant-gardists by being even more shocking. I think that's probably part of what was driving him to that kind of excess.

Moderator (Matsumoto): Mr. Tatehata, please.

Tatehata Akira: Cheong Soon Pieng's *Malay Woman*, in particular, as well as Souza's work, both emphasize the uncanny and excessive violence. It is true that these are essential qualities of these paintings, but they are basically caricatures of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*. So there is humor embedded in these works. For example, the feet of the woman on the left are changed to hooves. This reverses and restores the rights of

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primitivism with a Cubist approach. I think they had a way of relativizing Cubism through caricature. It is a fact that excessive violence, which is essentially Cubist, is there, but we also need to look into its ambiguity. The gaze of *Malay Woman* is uncanny, and reflects the insecurity experienced by a Chinese artist looking at a Malay woman during the years of establishing national identity. Yet, although her gaze is disquieting, her figure is rendered in a solid triangular shape, representing a strong and robust woman. A barbarous vertical line divides that stable structure. I think there is ambiguity in the uncanny gaze of the woman who embodies healthy and robust liveliness.

Hence, ambiguity is very important. Having listened to Mr. Tanaka and Professor Winther-Tamaki, I think I understand better why female figures were represented in Cubism, particularly around 1950, when the nations were gaining independence. Cubism was introduced as an ideology suited to the period of transition, but was never meant to settle and stay in its adopted country. As seen in the case of Indonesia, other than the fact that the Indonesian people were under colonial rule, there wasn't any single principle that bound them together. Nationalism emerged under the principle of gaining independence from colonial rule. So the notion of the citizen was fabricated in the process of becoming a nation-state. A ruling authority suitable for the nation-state was adopted during this period, in replacement of the colonial authority, in order to establish an imagined nation. Nations were built as the consequence of this process. By the time a nation-state was established, Cubism was no longer important. So, in summary, nationalism was fabricated through imagining a nation-state, where the governing authority switched from colonial rule to an independent state. Cubism was adopted during this process. It had to be Cubism; Fauvism or Surrealism would have had more links to the original identity. Cubism brought symbols that were external and Western, symbols of the Other. Portraying woman with Cubist symbols gave the artist power. Cubism may have had the same power and authority as the force that shaped national identity.

Hence, Cubism survived only during the transitional period. Once the power was in place, it did not have a role to play. I think Cubism should be perceived as such,. Hence, female representations were necessary in this context. Women in general are uncanny by nature, but in the process of building a nation-state, they became a target for domination.

What I found interesting is the fact that Cubism, which emerged during the transitional period, experienced a natural decline and exclusion once the nation-state was firmly established. It was not Realism in the style of Soedjojono, but Cubism of Western origin, with a typical

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otherness and symbols that should have been rightly excluded, that was adopted during a particular period. I have a hunch that Cubism is relevant to a transitional period during which the power structure undergoes a change. Cubism is an ideology that applies entirely to transition, and it could perhaps only exist under such conditions.

Moderator (Matsumoto): Wasn't Singapore already independent when this painting was completed in the 1950s?

Tatehata: I think we are talking about a period that spans several years before and after independence. In some cases, independence as such would not be manifest in a nation-state. A will for independence would develop before the actual independence, so we are not talking about a fixed set of years when we talk about the transitional period.

Mashadi: Singapore in and around the time of independence is one example, but the timing of independence varies from one country to another. Nation-building efforts had been seriously pursued at the time. The spirit of independence emerged in this region. So, this is a transitory period. It would be difficult to pin point one specific year.

Moderator (Matsumoto): Can I refer to Mr. Tatehata's comment on ambiguity? In the case of *Malay Woman*, the triangular structure shows stability and dignity on the one hand, but the diagonal line divides the surface into two on the other. The face, for example, has two different characteristics; the face on the left is feminine, and the one on the right is masculine. I think this is one of the examples of the ambiguities embedded in this painting. There are various examples of such ambiguity. In the female image which Mr. Tanaka presented, we found menacing qualities. A simple answer as to why they are menacing is that the women have male identities. In other words, they represent both male and female. This may underline the uncanniness. In searching for the uncanniness in Cubist paintings, we arrive at its origin, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*. The images of the women in this painting are deformed in an unprecedented style, and in a way, they are seen as victims. But the deformation allows for the figures to have both male and female qualities, and enables them to countercharge the viewers. Hence, the victims turn into victimizers. This is the ominousness of this painting. Mr. Tatehata has presented the notion of "transitional period" as a period in which various factors intermix inclusively, as opposed to going through a selective process. I have an impression that many sorts of ambiguity are drifting.

Professor Hayashi, please.

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Hayashi: I agree to what you said about ambiguity, but to describe these traits as “maleness” and “femaleness” may be problematic. Maybe they should be termed “passiveness” and “aggressiveness.” In listening to Mr. Tanaka and Professor Winther-Tamaki, I thought about how the *Les Femmes d'Alger* is an exception among many of Picasso's Cubist works. There is a debate as to whether or not this work marked the beginning of Cubism or not. William Rubin claims it did, while Leo Steinberg disagrees. In any case, in moving on to analytical Cubism, Picasso did not incorporate expressions in the eyes as such in rendering the human body, and his mask-like expressions become more abstract. I think this was a process of academicization, if not neutralization. So, in this context, *Les Femmes d'Alger* would appear to be an exception. This is interesting because by gazing back at Picasso through our discussion on Cubism in Asia, we can make a new discovery of Picasso's work.

Moderator (Matsumoto): Professor Flores, please.

Patrick Flores: I want to go back to Professor Clark's comments because I think he raised a very important methodological issue that has not been adequately discussed. In his keynote speech, Mr. Tatehata offered the provocative phrase “productive mistranslation.” It made me think that maybe the issue is not really just translation, but also translatability. To what degree is Cubism translatable within an Asian context? And so, I think one way of answering the issue of translatability is reassessing our own methods in making sense of these things. I was wondering how, for instance, we could translate Freud in the context of Asian Cubism and how productively we could mistranslate Freud in discussing two concerns — Asian Cubism and also women. There is literature that is critical of Freud — critical because his ideas are part of the Imperialist discourse and critical because his ideas are part of a patriarchal discourse. So, Freud, before we actually cite him in the context of Asian Cubism and in the context of women in Asian Cubism, must also be critiqued or subjected to some form of informed translation. I was little bit worried about how Mr. Tanaka would assume, or would treat Freud's ideas as givens and not as problems in the context of this discussion. And I was also wondering how Professor Kim would respond to Mr. Tanaka's paper.

Kim Young-na: I would like to first hear how Mr. Tanaka could interpret some of the Korean paintings in his context. If you apply Freudian interpretation, how would you interpret paintings like the *Open Stalls* by Park Re-hyun? This image is not very terrifying, but it is rather dignified.

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So, how would you read this image?

Tanaka: I would like to answer Professor Flores and Professor Kim. First of all, Professor Flores, I think your criticism is correct. I may not be giving you a straightforward answer, but I used Freudian theory to propose one way in reading Cubist works. I think that we could read various artworks through this method, and critique Freud as its consequence. The reason I applied Freud in looking at the set of paintings is that I could not find a better theory to base my argument on desire and power. So it was useful for me to start my argument with this theory. It could not be helped that I sounded as if I had agreed with Freud completely in this case. I wanted to specifically cite Freud because I found possibilities of interpreting Cubist works through him.

Kim: One of the difficult things in discussing Asian Cubism is that we really don't know each country's social and political context, and I really wonder whether you can really interpret the paintings without having knowledge of this particular artist's works, biography and so on. Many Asian countries experienced war in the 1940s and one is tempted to connect some images with the war experience. However, in case of Korea, which experienced the Pacific War and the Korean War, there were few paintings which dealt with this.

Due to the violent social upheaval that Korean artists experienced as a result of the Korean War, their choice of apolitical artistic styles and subject matters and their interest in formalistic Cubism comes as no surprise. Precisely because there was so much political, cultural and ideological confusion after the war, Korean artists tried to disengage from social and political concerns in their art.

Some of the paintings in the 1950s by Park Re-hyun and Kim Whan-ki found refuge in pure painting and modern formalism. I can only say this as the case of Korean art. Artists in other countries may have reacted differently. So it is hard to apply one frame of interpretation to works from different social and political background.

Moderator (Matsumoto): We are already running out of time, but I would like to ask the two who raised their hands to respond briefly.

Tanaka: I would like to answer Professor Kim's question. Regarding Park Re-hyun, I think it is important to note that she was a female painter. In my reading, through Freud and through my own observation, the way in which we see the work is already biased by gender. In other words, the reason I selected specific works for my presentation may reflect the part

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that gender plays in my accepting these works. In dealing with female artists, there is a criticism against Freudian theory itself to the effect that it is biased by gender, because the issue at hand cannot be dealt with simply by discussing castration anxiety, and thus calls for careful examination. So, I have a question to Professor Kim in return. I would like to know the background or the social context that explains why so many mother and child images were produced after the Korean War. It may be possible to explore a national ideology at play, as the situation may be similar to that of Europe after the First World War, when many works portraying mother and child were produced. These images of a mother nurturing a child emerged during the years after a war when the nations were trying to rebuild. Perhaps the ideology that supports women's roles was also being reinforced.

Moderator (Matsumoto): You're referring to government policy?

Tanaka: Yes. Setting Freud aside, I am interested in how a kind of ideological issue may have occurred.

Moderator (Matsumoto): So, do you have anything to say regarding the portrayal of mother and child?

Kim: In the 1950s, the Korean government was trying to persuade people not to have too many babies. Before, four or five children in one family were not unusual. But as government pushed the family plan with slogans such as "two is enough," "three is too much," the number of children began to decline sharply. I understand the family plan worked very successfully in Korea. So, I don't think it really has anything to do with government policy at the time. It has to do more with the absence of men and the breakdown of large families. And the mother became the center of the family.

Moderator (Matsumoto): To apply Freud or other theories, I think we need to be informed in details about the background of the artworks. Now, can we have our final comment from Professor Winther-Tamaki?

Winther-Tamaki: Professor Hayashi commented that *Les Femmes d'Alger* is exceptional in the context of Cubism and in some ways this is quite true. Yet Yve-Alain Bois wrote that the whole Cubist movement was a deferred response to the trauma of this painting. If we think of Cubism very narrowly, limiting Cubism to what came immediately after *Les Femmes d'Alger*, then the expressive violence of this painting may

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seem irrelevant to Cubism.

But maybe then we are not seeing Cubism's larger historical significance. *Les Femmes d'Alger* and *Guernica* were Picasso's most influential paintings. Restricting "real Cubism" to its formal, rational and analytical aspects and erasing its messy irrational impulses causes us to lose sight of some of the larger historical consequences of Cubism for modernity. Cubism triggered Surrealism in a way. The Cubism that we see in Asia certainly does have these menacing qualities and I would hesitate to marginalize that dimension of Cubism from the discussion.

Hayashi: I fully agree. Saying that it is an "exception" may have been too strong a word. Thank you for following up on my comment.

Moderator (Matsumoto): We shall now take a break.



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## Session 4

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### “Narrative/Myth/Religion”

A representative characteristic of Cubist styles in Asia was that they were applied to works of art with subject matter from religion, myth, or local folklore. Simply stated, it might be said that this was a diversion of Cubism to narrative iconography. Considering that Cubism in the West emerged through an exploration of anti-narrative painting, this application can be described as an adaptation of Cubism that denies or betrays its original intention. Thinking about why it developed in this way should be a useful way of bringing out the special features of the reception of Cubism in Asia. One issue that is likely to emerge from this discussion is the common characteristics of Cubism where it emerged as a secondary tendency in regions other than Asia, including Europe. With respect to formal issues, for example, there may be a discussion of how the multi-faceted treatment of the pictorial surface in Cubism was diverted to narrative expression. Or more broadly, we may want to discuss what type of narratives tended to be the subject matter, or which social classes formed the audience. The discussion will undoubtedly lead to issues that are completely different from those in the European context. We hope that the debate in Session 4, building on the achievements of previous sessions, will lead to more universal horizons.

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Moderator: Tsuji Shigebumi

Presentation 1 Asian Cubism and “Narrative”  
Ushiroshoji Masahiro

Presentation 2 Cubist Aesthetics and Narrative Strategies in  
Postrevolutionary Mexican Art  
Karen Cordero Reiman

Presentation 3 Narrative Cubism  
Tatehata Akira

Discussion (Q & A)

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Wrap-up Hayashi Michio

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## Asian Cubism and “Narrative”

Ushiroshoji Masahiro

[Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Kyushu University]

As Mr. Tatehata Akira said in his keynote presentation at the beginning of yesterday’s session, even if we can find pioneering examples of Cubism in Asia in the 1910s and 1920s, conditions were not yet in place there, leaving aside a few exceptional regions, to receive Western modern art. It was not until the 1930s that the buds of modernism, including Cubism, began to appear in many different Asian regions. During the 1940s, Asia was ravaged by the storms of war, which hindered the growth of these buds. The application of Cubism in Asia reached a peak in the 1950s after the Pacific War came to an end.

It was a time when new nation-states were emerging, or attempts were being made to form states with prospects for the future all over Asia, starting new after overcoming the postwar instability and colonial domination. The period in which Cubism emerged coincided with the building of nation-states system. “Nations” were established, “national languages” were created, a shared “history” was produced, “national territories” were observed, “traditions” were investigated, and “national identity” was explored. It could be said that the age of “Asian Cubism” was marked by the age of the “nation.”

The fourth session, “Narrative / Myth / Religion,” is described as follows in the program: “A representative characteristic of Cubist styles in Asia was that they were applied to works of art with subject matter from religion, myth, or local folklore. . . . Considering that Cubism in the West emerged through an exploration of anti-narrative painting, this application can be described as an adaptation of Cubism that denies or betrays its original intention.” The issues presented for discussion include the question of how a Cubist stylistic language was used to express narrative, what sort of narratives were used as subject matter, and to which social class the audience belonged.

I believe there are certain facts that form the premises for this discussion. Modern art in Asia made use of the doctrines of modernism, the pursuit of the autonomy of the work of art and a pure formalism, but at the same time it showed a strong tendency toward narrative and symbolism. In other words, a desire or inclination to tell a story often outweighed autonomy and formalism. This also applies to examples of art employing a Cubist style. I have been involved in a few exhibitions with a



Ushiroshoji Masahiro

similar understanding of these issues, and I would say that this understanding of the narrative and anti-formalist qualities of the modern art of Asia is widely shared in the region.

It is comparatively easy to find the sources of these narrative qualities in the rich legacy of past visual expression in Asia. Even today, there are numerous examples that clearly indicate that this tradition of narrative art is not lost. Even in Islamic countries, where worshipping idols is expressly forbidden, traditions of visual narrative overcome, or coexist with, the Islamic prohibitions. The narrative miniatures produced today in Pakistan are obvious examples. There are also stories told in the almost excessively decorative rickshaws that race through the city of Bangladesh.

I would like to start by answering the question: “What is the character of the narratives that are being used as study matter?”

First, I would like to call attention to a painting presenting a common, ordinary scene, *At the Kampung Shop* (fig.1) by Mohammed Salehuddin. A Malay Muslim family has come to shop in a store run by one of the many Chinese who live on the Malay Peninsula. An immigrant from southern India are walking on the street outside. It is a “politically correct” picture that might be seen with some irony today, but the artist put very sincere feeling into this work at the time he painted it. It is not a Cubist painting, but I have referred to it because I want to explore the attitudes and issues involved in works of art of the period when Cubism was practiced in Asia.



fig.1: Mohammed Salehuddin, *At the Kampung Shop*, 1959, oil on canvas

Here is one more painting that is unrelated to Cubism. It shows a classroom, another very mundane scene. However, if we think about the context of Singapore at the time it was painted, from the 1950s to the early 1960s, people of varied ethnicities living in British Malaya and the surrounding regions were engaged in a trial and error process of developing what would ultimately be an independent people’s state, coming together and separating in different ways. The Malay teacher in the painting is working in the midst of this situation, teaching national language, Malay to Chinese whose native language is Chinese. It is impossible to ignore the politics of this picture and the ideas that the artist has put into it.

As I mentioned at the beginning, Cubism in Asia was introduced against the background of a great historical turning point, the formation of nation-states. Therefore, the stories told and the symbols painted there were related to the social concern of forming a nation and the search for national identity.

Most of the countries of Asia achieved independence in the 1950s, and drew national borders that are more or less the same today. This fact is connected to the negative legacy of the colonial system that was in place from the 19th to the 20th century. The tendency to form certain

groupings is what Benedict Anderson has described in his book, *Imagined Communities*, and in many Asian countries, filled with a variety of ethnic groups and ethnicities, art had to take the role of cultivating a national consciousness and supporting the newly emerging unity of the nation's people. Through painting, "history" became shared (the mural at Manila City Hall by Carlos Francisco and Juan Luna, "Blood Compact" by Vicente Manansala, fig.2), "national lands" and "the nation" were newly discovered, and religion and myths were discussed in new ways as a basis for national identity.



fig.2: Vicente Manansala, *Juan Luna, "Blood Compact,"* 1962, oil on canvas

This may explain how the art of a certain period formed a national narrative, showing a close relation with the social context in which the art was born. The modern art of Asia was involved in a search for national identity, reflecting the historical background of the formative period of nation-states. However, it does not explain why Cubism was particularly chosen for this purpose; why the style had to be Cubism. Unless we examine this, we cannot answer the question at hand. We would have to draw the conclusion that Cubism just happened to be the art movement that appeared during the high tide of nationalism around the time of independence of Asian nations.

I would like to consider why Cubism in particular became connected to the narratives of Asian painting.

I believe that several reasons have already been given in the course of this symposium. First, it has been mentioned that the multi-faceted viewpoint of Cubism was suited to telling a story, opening up greater narrative possibilities. When many viewpoints coexist in one painting, it is possible to combine a number of different narrative sequences.

This point recalls the multiplicity of viewpoints contained by the traditional painting styles and structures of Asia (concrete examples include the picture scrolls of Japan and the Northern Song landscapes of China). Before the mixing of multiple viewpoints in one painting appeared as a characteristic of Cubism it was already a feature of styles of painting traditionally cultivated in Asia. In long horizontal compositions, the narrative is developed by shifting the point of view and grouping images. This traditional form of composition may have served as an important foundation for telling stories in art when Asian painting

encountered Cubism (fig.3).



fig.3: Chia Yu Chian, *Untitled (Village Scene)*, 1959, oil on canvas

At the same time, as I have already mentioned, Asian art during this period was oriented toward establishing a national identity, and an energetic effort was being made to explore and rediscover tradition. There was a tendency in much Asian art to refer to traditional styles and techniques, painting formats, and esthetic attitudes, mixing or blending them with modernism. Thus, there is a need to think of multiple viewpoints in the context of a return to tradition (related to the “national narrative”).

I would like to show some traditional Chinese painting as examples, but I hesitate somewhat because I am not prepared right now to show how the painters of the Malay peninsula (many of whom received their art training in Shanghai in the 1930s) studied the history of Chinese painting, what they took as a standard, and what sort of paintings they were able to see. I would guess that they looked at paintings of the late Qing dynasty. Here I present two well known works as examples.

I would also like to discuss another topic that I mentioned at the beginning in relation to the issue of Cubism and narrative, the social class of the audience. In the 19th century, painters who came from Europe depicted the unknown ecologies of tropical regions and the “savage” people who lived in them based on the viewpoint of natural history or anthropology. Their stance was eventually adopted by local artists who painted in much the same way, and their approach was passed on in the production of much souvenir art. Soedjojono, known as the father of Indonesian modern painting, dealt with this situation in a famous essay, “Paintings in Indonesia: The Present and the Future,” in 1939. He passionately advocated painting that is not directed at an audience of “tourists” or “Dutch travelers on a pension” but “shows the world” or “society” the “healthy, exhilarating new ideals” that have “arisen from our everyday lives.” The “Indonesia” referred to by Soedjojono did not yet exist historically. He was speaking about a nation that was then rising from the darkness of the Dutch East Indian colonies. He had an early perception of how the audience for painting would change from tourists to “the people of the nation.”

The embryonic movements of modern art that began to appear in many Asian countries in the 1930s were opposed to romantic landscape

paintings filled with an exotic atmosphere and coquettish female images. This tendency was not peculiar to Indonesia but was seen to a lesser or greater extent in other countries as well. Soedjojono himself advocated a stance of confronting reality and developing an individual sense of beauty in order to move beyond tourist paintings and idealized landscapes but did not promote a specific style such as Cubism. Speaking with reference to yesterday's presentations, it may have been the result of *kagunan*, but most of the young artists who responded to this call later came to use Cubism. Cubism rejected the easy acceptance of exoticism. It broke down the naturalist worldview that takes the form of a unified visual image and encouraged artists to restructure the world subjectively and intellectually.

Patrick D. Flores noted the similarity between Cubist motifs and the actual cityscapes composed of cubic structures created by the temporary housing called *barongbarong* that proliferated in the recovery that followed the death and destruction of war. Looking at Asia as a whole, it seems possible that a similar statement could be made about other countries, including India and Korea. I would like to close my presentation with the observation that the formal language of Cubism fit the spirit of an age of destruction and revival, rejection and creation.

(Translated by Stanley N. Anderson)

## Cubist Aesthetics and Narrative Strategies in Postrevolutionary Mexican Art

Karen Cordero Reiman

[Distinguished Professor, Art History Department, Universidad Iberoamericana]



Karen Cordero Reiman

This talk will focus on the ways in which Cubism was appropriated in early 20th century Mexican art and the manners in which its aesthetic contributions were adapted to the artistic and political context of postrevolutionary Mexico, in several of the proposals for the construction of a modern Mexican art which were advanced in the 1920s and '30s.<sup>1</sup> In particular, it will focus on the use of Cubist aesthetics as the basis for new narrative strategies for the presentation of history and the resignification of mythological, religious and daily life iconography in this context.

While, initially, the invitation to participate in this symposium brought to my mind specific cases of interchange between artists of Asian origin and the postrevolutionary Mexican context — for example the work of Kitagawa Tamiji in relation to the Open Air Art Schools and the 1936 mural by Isamu Noguchi in the Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez — and, indeed, my reading and research in preparation for this event have been helpful in contextualizing their work in new ways, the revision of the conceptual proposals of the exhibition and the congress invite attention to broader issues.

The images and catalogue essays of the exhibition “Cubism in Asia: Unbounded Dialogues,” suggest both significant parallelisms and differences with the Mexican experience, and have been revealing to me, as a scholar whose background includes a limited knowledge of modern Asian art, with regard to comparisons and contrasts which can be drawn regarding the reception of Cubism outside of Europe. As in Asia, the experience of Cubism was the subject of selective appropriation by artists working in Mexico; it was resignified in many cases, both in its formal aspects and its contextual reception, with regard to the specific aesthetic and socio-cultural concerns of postrevolutionary Mexico. This was the case, both with those artists — such as Diego Rivera and Ángel Zárraga — who had direct contact with Cubism during the years of its gestation and development, and with those who came into contact with Cubism later or in a mediated fashion — such as Fermín Revueltas, other artists associated with the Estridentista movement, José Clemente Orozco, Rufino Tamayo, Frida Kahlo and photographers such as Agustín Jiménez and Manuel Álvarez Bravo. At the same time, verbal discourse influenced by Cubism accompanied its introduction into the Mexican milieu,

both as a vehicle for the promotion and defense of new aesthetic strategies, as in the manifestos published by David Alfaro Siqueiros and the writings of Diego Rivera, and as a means of echoing new visual strategies in literary, poetic terms.

As was the case in Asia, according to the catalog essayists of "Cubism in Asia: Unbounded Dialogues," in the Mexican experience the conceptual definition of Cubism stretches and blurs its boundaries and acquires new configurations which perhaps require new nomenclature. This semantic issue is part of a more general debate on terminology which is alive and well in the discussion of the appropriation and hybridization of foreign stylistic elements in Latin American art. Here, however, given our time restrictions, I will deal with the visual and conceptual characteristics of these appropriations, which include aspects not only of the various stages and aspects of Cubism, but also of Futurism, Orphism and other related currents.

#### Aesthetic Renovation

The revolutionary, deconstructive aspects of Cubism, which allowed the integration of new multi-perspectival perceptual models and the compression of different temporal moments into a single, simultaneous image, were taken up by Mexican artists as a means of signifying modernity and creating images which underline the desire to create a new image of Mexico and its art in the context of the efforts to reconstruct a national aesthetic and imaginary in the wake of the social, economic and political fragmentation provoked by the armed struggle. Significantly, however, the formal contributions of Cubism also provided a vehicle, in Mexican art, for addressing the contradictions which arose between European models of modernity and the realities of a nation with a still primarily rural economy and incipient processes of mechanization. Works by Rufino Tamayo of the 1920s and '30s respond to this situation by focusing insistently on artifacts of modernity such as the light bulb and the phonograph as subjects of metaphysical and formal contemplation and reconfiguration in still life compositions, rather than the more traditional tabletop scenarios explored in European Cubism.

The reception of Cubism revealed in a number of works produced during and following the armed struggle of the second decade of the century, also makes specific reference, however, to aspects associated with pre-modern or artisanal technology, in the context of spatial and temporal constructions which catapult perception into the realm of relativism and simultaneity. This is the case of several Cubist works produced by Diego Rivera in Paris in the second decade of the century where, in a similar manner to Russian contemporaries, he incorporates the geometric patterns of woven serapes — a reference to the use of "popular art" as a source for renovated aesthetic proposals both for



fig.1: Diego Rivera, *Paisaje Zapatista* (Zapatista Landscape), 1915, oil on canvas

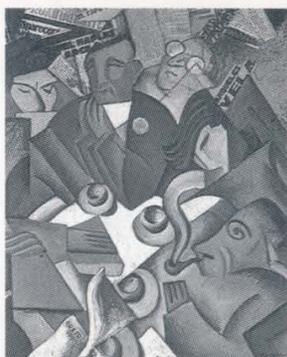


fig.2: Ramón Alva de la Canal, *El Café de Nadie* (Nobody's Café), second version, 1930, oil and collage on canvas



fig.3: Jean Charlot, *Retrato psicológico de Manuel Maples Arce* (Psychological portrait of Manuel Maples Arce), cover of the magazine *Ser: revista internacional de vanguardia*, Nos. 7-8, Puebla, 1921

artistic and political reasons — during the years while the battle between diverse “revolutionary” factions was still in process (fig. 1).

Several works by Fermín Revueltas impose modernist compositional vehicles as well on scenes of work in rural Mexico, recalling a similar dynamic in paintings produced in areas with related economic situations, such as the Russian painter Malevich's *The Knife Grinder* (1912). Likewise, the process of incorporation of Cubist aesthetics in Mexican photography of the 1920s and '30s — in large part, through the influence of the Mexican production of Edward Weston — often takes place in works where the subject matter alludes to the persistence of traditional visual culture and modes of production, alongside references to industrial transformation of this realm.

The graphic component of the movement known as Estridentismo, however, is perhaps one of the cases where the reconfiguration of such apparent discursive contradictions is clearest. In the early 1920s, as Mexico attempted to reestablish centralized State power with recourse to cultural politics as one of its primary arms, the group of poets and visual artists associated with the Estridentista movement took recourse to Cubism as a means of asserting their avant-garde identity, in collective portraits which represented the group in its café encounters, using the visual strategies of Analytic Cubism (fig. 2). At the same time, their written proclamations incorporated clear references to Futurism, in their strident criticism of bourgeois complacency and established traditions and institutions, and their call for a cosmopolitan, industrial ideal, promoting an urban utopia which had never existed in Mexico.

In the visual manifestations of Estridentismo — primarily illustrations in the magazines and volumes of poetry edited by the literary protagonists of the movement — however, there is little evidence of the Futurist cult to velocity, but the European movement's idealization of the metropolis and the concept of internal and environmental dynamism, reflected through the simultaneous evocation of sensory and spatial experiences, are adapted to local circumstances. In particular, the Estridentistas take up the Futurist use of Analytic Cubism — combining fragments of diverse realities in evocative, poetic compositions; this simultaneist perspective had previously had a limited impact in Mexican circles, which were dominated, rather, by the neo-Classical spirit, more common, by the 1920s, among the Parisian avant-garde.

The covers of Estridentista publications, demonstrate a creative and aggressive use of typography. The graphic production of the movement refers consistently to symbols of industrial modernity: radios, scaffolding, skyscrapers...indicators of cultural and material change reflecting the intent to recreate the sensorial complexity of the city, with its bombardment of visual and auditory information (fig. 3).

The visual and literary images of Estridentismo, however, are

marked by a “primitivism” which lends the movement a handmade, artisanal seal. References to the “barbaric” vein in Latin American culture in the poetry of the movement find their visual equivalent in the extensive use of the wood and linocut, absent in European Futurism, with a deliberately rough technique in which the presence of the gesture of the artist’s hand is underlined; probably, this reflects the impact of South American derivatives of Futurism, linked with the Argentinian *Martinfierrista* movement, particularly the woodcuts of Norah Borges. German Cueto, a sculptor related to the *Estridentista* group, explores similar formal ideas in the same period through a series of makes, and a Cubistic *tehuana* in which the traditional massivity of sculpture gives way to planar slippage.

#### Cubism and the Narrative Strategies of Muralism

The recourse to the devices of Analytical Cubism as a vehicle which fragments in a prismatic fashion the traditional post-Renaissance unity of time and space, is concurrent, however, in the development of 20th century Mexican art, with the appropriation of Synthetic Cubism’s more constructive, accumulative process and the spirit of “neo-Classical” Cubism which in Europe, as Kenneth Silver has shown in *Esprit De Corps*,<sup>2</sup> reveals the desire to mend divisions and reconstruct identities, in the period following the First World War. The pertinence of this tendency for Mexican art, responding to a period of internal division with an attempt to construct a new, modern, national and more socially inclusive mode of visual culture, seems evident. David Alfaro Siqueiros’ 1921 manifesto, published in Barcelona, shortly before his return to Mexico, calls upon Latin American artists to prefer a constructive, linear and geometric aesthetic — which may be related to some formal aspects of prehispanic art — for the production of a new modern visual culture,<sup>3</sup> and several of the postrevolutionary murals of the early and mid-1920s seem to reflect a response to this call.

In particular, the political radicalization of muralism during the final years of Obregon’s regime (1923-1924) resulted in the transformation of the idyllic, universalistic allegories which characterized the earliest postrevolutionary public art into rural scenes inserted into concrete social and historical realities. The grouping of the artists who developed an early series of postrevolutionary mural proposals in the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* into the *Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos, Pintores y Escultores* (Union of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors), associated with working class movements and an incipient socialist ideology, led gradually to a collective concern with producing an art with more direct social consequences, thus distancing the artists from earlier proposals of a spiritual nationalism. The political and artistic leadership of Diego Rivera was a key element in this process, and — not

surprisingly — it is in his extensive mural program in the Ministry of Public Education, where this transformation can be most clearly observed.

French émigré Jean Charlot's rendering of the *Battle of Tenochtitlan* on the basis of careful geometric structuring and incorporating mechanisms of temporal compression, was surely an important model for the transformation of Rivera's work, and a mediating factor for his renewed reference to his Cubist antecedents as the basis for a distinctive narrative construction.

Rivera's paintings on the first level of the government building, begun in 1923, reveal close ties to the decorative exaltation of popular traditions and everyday rural life, but modulate its representation with a carefully controlled interplay of formal poetics. *El baño en Tehuantepec* (Tehuantepec Bath) painted at the entrance to the elevators, for instance, reveals a carefully calibrated rhythmic composition, which celebrates the exoticism and sensuality of its subject matter, while transforming the labors of these quintessential mestizo women into a ritualistic dance (fig. 4). The influence of Rivera's Cubist formation in the geometric, self-referential structuring of these panels is paramount, as is the use of biblical parallels to aid in the didactic and moralistic interpretation of the narrative scenes. In *La salida de la mina* (The Exit from the Mine), for example, the compenetration of layers of significance facilitated by Cubist composition allows the conflation of a reference to religious martyrdom and contemporary social injustice.



fig.4: Diego Rivera, *El Baño de Tehuantepec* (Tehuantepec Bath), ca. 1923, fresco

Nevertheless, the characteristics of Rivera's murals on the second and third levels of the Education Ministry: compositions saturated with figures, located vertically in carefully organized apertures, so as to guarantee narrative readability, and linked horizontally in a dynamic political narrative, are those which define not only his personal style, but the dominant tonic of the mural movement during the following decades. His ability to combine picturesque, anecdotal details; legible theoretical constructs which link narrative groupings in a broader ideological and historical discourse; and the curvilinear contours which dominate his work, suggesting an overall harmonic resolution in spite of the dialectical counterpoints which inform his compositions, help to make Rivera's work an ideal model for the "graphic design of the Revolution." Here, and in his works of the following decades, Rivera's Cubist antecedents serve him in two ways: they aid him in the handling of complex compositional structures which maintain their clarity in spite of the compressed spatial presentation of narrative elements, and they allow the temporal compression of different moments in Mexican history in order to construct a symbolic narrative, closer to myth than to history, which establishes metaphorical, rather than causal, relationships between historical processes of the Mexican past, present and future, in

terms influenced by sources as apparently diverse as Marxism and Masonic doctrine (fig.5).



fig.5: Diego Rivera, *México en la historia* (Mexico in Historical Perspective), 1929-1935, fresco

Variations in this same sense, though perhaps with a less complex narrative structure, can be found in the changes in the use of Cubism in the work of Ángel Zárraga, although much of his mural and easel production took place in Europe.

These brief examples suggest, I hope, some of the ways in which the processes of reception of Cubism in Mexico and in Asia reflect tendencies and patterns which seem to be transcultural, reflecting their oblique position — aesthetically and socio-historically — in relationship to the references of the European movement. At the same time, they make us aware that the analytic usefulness of stylistic categories is as much or more in the marking and analysis of differences and ambiguities as in the confirmation of similarities.

Notes:

1. For a more comprehensive revision of these proposals, see my essay "Constructing a Modern Mexican Art, 1910-1940" in James Oles, et al., *South of the Border: Mexico in the American Imagination 1914-1947* (New Haven and Washington, D.C.: Yale University Art Gallery and Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), pp. 10-47.
2. Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit De Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
3. David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Tres llamamientos de orientación actual a los pintores y escultores de la nueva generación americana" in Raquel Tibol, ed., *Palabras de Siqueiros* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996), pp. 17-20.

## Narrative Cubism

Tatehata Akira

[Director, The National Museum of Art, Osaka]



Tatehata Akira

I have already given my general views in the keynote presentation. Here I would like to add to the discussion in this session in response to the presentations of the other panelists. Cubism certainly has the character of a formal language, but this does not necessarily mean that it must oppose or reject narrative elements. Rather, I believe it has functioned as a device to arouse them. Some examples that would support this point of view include the facets used to divide the picture vertically, which I talked about in my previous presentation, and the Transparent Cubism that I will discuss here.

Clement Greenberg referred to the monochrome facets in Picasso's Analytic Cubism as "illusion with comparatively shallow depth." Certainly, these facets were not flat but treated with gradations of light and dark, giving a sense of depth by means of diagonal movement in various directions.

In contrast, Cubist facets in Southeast Asia and South Asia, with some exceptions, are generally filled in with flat color. In these regions, the facets are treated in a different way as a method of flat color division.

The so-called Sinigang Cubism, or Transparent Cubism, of Vicente Manansala of the Philippines is mostly monochrome and has the illusion of depth. This depth is created by overlapping a number of semi-transparent layers of color. The facets themselves are not diagonally oriented. Furthermore, it is questionable whether we should see the divided color areas of Sinigang Cubism as "facets." Depending on one's point of view, it might be said that a visual effect similar to Cubist facets is created by the overlapping edges of these layers (fig.1). (I might add that, according to Professor Ushiroshoji, *sinigang* is a type of Philippine soup. Thus, Sinigang Cubism simply refers to a local form of Cubism. If it were expressed in Japanese, it would be *miso* soup Cubism.)

This means that Asian Cubism does not depend on multiplicity of viewpoint but lets multiple spaces exist in juxtaposition on the same plane or as multiple layers. If this pluralism reflects a temporal character, Cubism comes to function as a container of narrative elements.

Another example of Transparent Cubism is the *Beijing Opera* series (fig.2) of Lin Fengmian of China. This subject matter was popular at the time, so it is thought to be somewhat compromising on the part of the artist. It may not be the best example of Lin's work, but it is worth looking closely at the depiction of the actress's costume. The layering of



fig.1: Vicente Manansala, *Conquistador*, 1979, watercolor on paper

space in veil-like semi-transparent layers creates the effect of elegant dance movement. That is, sequential images are presented as simultaneous images with this layered kind of depth. Yet, it is different from the work of the Futurists because it is not an expression of dynamic movement. Rather, it recreates the atmosphere of a theatrical scene.

The simultaneous existence of multiple points of time is contradictory in terms of ordinary ideas of time. Therefore, without a common understanding that induces a narrative reading among the audience, time would not operate as time. That is, narrative Cubism is based on the premise of commonly shared knowledge of a community. Naturally, the most typical case of this is found in a nation (imaginary community) sharing a common mythology or religion. As Professor Ushiroshoji points out, the Cubist paintings of South and Southeast Asia were mostly produced during the period when these countries were gaining independence from colonial status, so its narrative elements, religious and mythical, contribute to the formation of national identity in many cases.

We need to consider that a temporal interpretation of Cubism is, in fact, not a special interpretation or twisting of Cubism, but a capability inherent to Cubism. Albeit Asian Cubists may or may not have recognized this conceptual implication. But the fact that they referred mainly to Salon Cubism and Orphism demonstrates that the attitude of a narrative reading of simultaneous space should not be described as a departure from the original context of Cubism.

As Professor Tsuji pointed out, an ambiguous relationship between sequential and simultaneous states is an issue of modernist painting in general. A certain aspect of Asian Cubism seems to reflect the essence of Cubism as a “container of flexible possibilities.” Cubism is a great knot that brings together various aspects of modern art, so its character as a formal language tends to be emphasized. If we emphasize what was done outside of the pure experiments of Picasso and Braque, however, there is much room left for interpretations based on Reflectionism.

With respect to the problem of the audience, it is possible to point out a variety of other features. The subjects of agricultural societies, city slums, and wartime experiences in Cubist paintings are related to an anti-colonialist agenda in many cases, and they convey direct and indirect messages to certain communities.

In fact, the style did not have to be Cubism. However, as I stated in my keynote speech, Fauvism and Surrealism also had elements that were more or less responsive to traditions found in many regions of Asia, whereas, Cubism was entirely a sign of the Other. It had an invigorating effect, opening up new possibilities for narrative that might otherwise have fallen into cliché.



fig. 2: Lin Fengmian, *Opera Figures*, early 1950s, ink and color on paper

(Translated by Stanley N. Anderson)

## Discussion

Moderator (Tsuji Shigebumi): Since we now approach the grand finale of the symposium, I would like to ask for your further patience and cooperation. Mr. Tatehata's commentary covered not only the topic of Session 4, but also provided us with a prospect for this symposium in general, as it touched on issues concerning formal development, contents, nationalism and ideology. Professor Ushiroshoji and Professor Cordero's presentations also covered issues related to the reception of Cubism in Asia. Professor Cordero, in particular, informed us about the reception of Cubism in Mexico, which could be understood as a prelude to or a precondition of the introduction of Cubism in Asia. The previous discussion has illuminated many issues connected to Cubism in Asia. As we proceed with our discussion, I shall welcome questions that refer not only to Session 4 but also to the other sessions. I would also like to encourage questions from the floor in the latter part of our session. Any questions or comments?

Bert Winther-Tamaki: I found Professor Cordero's discussion on Mexican paintings and Cubism to be very interesting and useful. I applaud the organizers for including discussion of Mexican Cubism in the discussion of Asian Cubism. But there was an odd transition when we moved from Professor Cordero to Mr. Tatehata, because Mr. Tatehata was focusing on the Asian-ness of Asian Cubism, looking again at Transparent Cubism and vertical compositional formations or the Vertical Fragmentation. I wondered whether Asian Cubism is something that we can specifically say is not Mexican Cubism. If we cannot make this claim, maybe "post-colonial Cubism" would be a more intellectually sound rubric than "Asian Cubism." I wonder if the presence of Mexico in this symposium problematizes the concept of Asia in this respect?

Karen Cordero: I think there are very significant differences, but what I do see as a comparative element is the kind of nationalization of the avant-garde and selective ways of using Cubism. One of the conclusions which I have reached in seeing the exhibition and looking at these different presentations, is that Cubism isn't appropriated in Asia or in Mexico, so much as a language. Rather, it became a subversive moment

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which opened up different possibilities for seeing a representation.

What we are seeing is the ways in which these possibilities are taken up in ways which sometimes have a formal similarity with Cubism, but often using the formal devices of Cubism in very different ways. So, perhaps we could see it as a field of action or of reverberations or consequences of Cubism in different areas, in which Cubism, or the effects of Cubism are used selectively for purposes which may have little or nothing to do with the original intentions of its European manifestation.

Moderator (Tsujii): Could I ask Professor Ushiroshoji to make comments in response to Professor Cordero's comments on how Cubism was incorporated into nationalism or put under postcolonial conditions?

Ushiroshoji Masahiro: I would say that these are issues specific to Cubism, and that Cubism played a particular role. Cubism was appropriated by accident. If Cubism was completely an abstract language, it would not have been an appropriate framework to fit the national narrative. Yet naturalism-based realistic representation could not represent modernity and its zeitgeist. I think Cubism was an inevitable choice at the time, given the background of its foundation.

Moderator (Tsujii): Mr. Tatehata, please.

Tatehata Akira: I would like to speak on behalf of the organizers, and tell you the several reasons why we wanted Professor Cordero to speak about Cubism in Mexico. In examining Cubism outside of the West European sphere, we were interested in the movements, such as the case in New York, where four or five Cubists worked together on Park Avenue and organized exhibitions, or in Poland, where there are Cubist architecture. We were interested in them in looking at the periphery, but the Cubist movement in Mexico attracted our attention in particular, so we were eager to refer to it as we discussed Cubism in Asia. First of all, the Mexican mural movement had a significant influence on the Japanese Cubist movement. Secondly, the Mexican case provided us with interesting ways of observing the relationship between the timing of independence and emergence of Cubism. The Cubist movement in Mexico seems to have a very close commonality with the Cubist movement in the Philippines. Did Diego Rivera ever visit the Philippines? Such inquiries were on our mind, although we were careful not to over-estimate the influences resulting from exchanges between specific individuals.

Naturally, as I listened to Professor Cordero, I found commonalities

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and differences between the Cubist movement in Mexico and Asia. Cubism's strong links with the socialist movement made it quite different from the Asian context. Also, I mentioned the primitive attributes of Asian Cubism in my keynote speech, but primitive attributes in Mexican Cubism seem closely tied to its folk artforms in a way not common in Asia. This left a strong impression on me.

So these are some of the differences between the cases in Mexico and Asia, but, for example, the woodblock prints from the Estridentista movement reminded me of Lu Xun's New Woodcut Movement in China. Professor Cordero, can you comment on the role of woodblock prints in the Estridentista movement and the Cubistic influence which was also seen in the Chinese printworks?

Moderator (Tsuji): So, Professor Cordero, can you touch upon the woodblock prints briefly?

Cordero: I hope I remember the woodcuts clearly. I think they were more specific representations related to social protest.

Tatehata: Yes, the Chinese woodcut movement was directly related to social protest and education to enhance revolutionary momentum.

Cordero: I think there's a similar use of the diagonals to break up space. But in the case of the Chinese woodcuts, I think there are many more lines of force related to the movement of the human figure, which is used in other aspects of Mexican muralism, but not particularly in the Estridentista movement. Estridentismo rarely represents the human figure, but rather technology, urban culture and architecture, and so on. If human figures are present, they are usually broken down in the manner of Analytic Cubism as in these café scenes. However, the idea of using the woodcut as a very direct form of expression with a high contrast between black and white that assures the graphic impact of these force lines and the dynamic quality of Cubism, is shared by these two examples.

Moderator (Tsuji): Do you think woodcut was effective for the propaganda of social movements as it was possible to produce multiples?

Cordero: These particular woodcuts of the Estridentista movement are related to a more poetic and intellectual movement which also had some social objectives, but in fact, they did not have much real social impact. However, later, many of the same artists who were involved in this movement continued to use woodcuts, linocuts and other printmaking

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techniques in ensuing graphic movements in Mexico, which were more closely related to specific political causes. The best known of these is the *Taller de Grafica Popular* (Popular Graphics Workshop) which in fact continues up to this day, but was founded in 1937. However, throughout the 1920s, there were various graphic movements linked to leftist political groups and associations, like the LEAR, which published their work in Socialist and Communist magazines. They also created isolated prints as a more accessible means of distributing social propaganda. Jean Charlot was one of the most important promoters and teachers of woodcut technique in the 1920s and '30s. Thus prints were very important means of social and socialist propaganda in Mexico, though they did not always adopt a Cubistic mode.

Moderator (Tsuji): In the 20th century, woodcut movements unfolded widely over a long period, so limiting our discussion to its relation to the Cubist movement may be problematic. But we cannot deny the fact that woodcuts played a very important role in the development of Cubism. This is not only true in Asia, but also in the Estridentista movement. It also became extremely important for the socialist propaganda. Looking back in history, woodcut played an important role during the Reformation in the 15th and 16th century, too. By understanding the contexts of woodcuts, we understand the kind of audience that was targeted through the Cubist movement and other new movements in the 20th century. Woodcuts are cheap and easier to reproduce. Therefore, they can be accessible to a wider audience, beyond the limited circle of the privileged class. In relation to this, we touched on the woodcut movement in China. I wonder if Professor Shen could add anything in regard to the relationship between Chinese woodcuts and Cubism.

Shen Kuiyi: From my presentation, you already know that Cubism actually did not have a strong influence on the Chinese woodcut movement. We should say that we can find a few examples of Cubism among a small group of artists in the early stage of the woodcut movement in the early 1930s.

Later, the Chinese woodcut movement turned into a more revolutionary, or socially concerned movement. Then the modernist tendency gradually disappeared and it turned into a kind of social propaganda, also used by different forces in China at that time. Cubism takes only a small role in the Chinese woodcut movement.

Moderator (Tsuji): Any comment from a different viewpoint?

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Hayashi Michio: This is a comment, and not a question, on Professor Winther-Tamaki's question. When speaking of Transparent Cubism and Vertical Fragmentation as unique features of Asian Cubism, as described by Mr. Tatehata, we need to qualify our observations. We have started our research in this field only very recently, and we are at a nascent stage where we are still identifying basic phenomena. We have found that Manansala in the Philippines produced Cubistic works, and similar works exist in China and Korea. What does this mean? We are still asking these very basic questions. If we were to apply our observations to all of Asia, we need to be very careful, because we have researched only a limited number of countries in the region up to this point, and because, for example, we do not see the same phenomena in India. It may be coincidental that we are finding commonalities, and it may be even a particular cultural or political context that is driving these phenomena. I think these are issues to be explored in the future.

Winther-Tamaki: There is, in my previous question, a note of skepticism about this process that you described. And that is, I am wondering whether in the process, you are constructing a cultural category of Asia. Otherwise this is not a category that necessarily has an integrity that's separate from places like Mexico and uniformly includes its presumed Asian contents. I know Professor Clark has done a lot of thinking about what is Asia and what isn't Asia and so on.

John Clark: I come from the South of Asia, Austral Asia, which is not yet part of Asia according to some people. And according to others, including the "Asians"[also "pink Asians" like myself] in Australia nowadays, it is just a very different part of Asia. I have been thinking that we have put this discussion about Asian Cubism in a place in our minds, or we think we are talking about a style, talking about a place rather than a discourse and series of formal questions. The discourse is the Asian discourse. Asia is not a place, it's a kind of possibility that relates cultures which may have geographical locations associated with nations, but this discourse perhaps only latently is intended to subversively use the Euramerican model so as to map what Cubism might be, or to as we have seen here, to take the mapping from the Mexican position today.

Somewhere in the middle of these three overlapping circles is Cubism. The problem is much more profound. Is there a modernity which is outside Europe, parallel to European modernity, or in another kind of domain in European modernity?

When we map that modernity, we are taking something else or talking about something in parallel, a different kind of existence. So I

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think that Cubism is not the problem. There is Cubism which is not Euramerican, and so, do we use Cubism to map what is not Euramerican modernity? That's the problem. That's why Mexico or India or Kazakhstan, and so on, is relevant.

I've been noticing that we have tracked the following kinds of distinction from the American set: narrativity or non-narrativity; mass and artist; transparency and modeling; populism against elitism or artist-centered analysis; flattened space against deep space; the social, the political and religious dimensions or possibilities for deploying Cubism against secular neutral Western modernization. Obviously, one of the features of Asian Cubist works we've seen is rural subject matter against quintessentially or paradigmatically urban subject matter, which is where we think the European experience comes from. And where all the social theorists of Western modernity say it comes from, such as Marshall Berman, and so on. For him three cities, St. Petersburg, Paris, and New York, typify the experience of modernity.

But I know a lot of Malaysian peasants don't think that. I've known them for about thirty years. They live in a modern world because they are listening to transistor radios and are selling their fish on a market controlled by local Chinese intermediaries. The fish is then transmitted to Tokyo where the price differential between what they got from the Chinese merchant and the price it sold to the customer in Japan in 1976, when I first saw this, was twenty times. That is a difference of 2000%. So, they indeed know about the modern world, even though they are living in simple fishing villages dotted around Southeast Asia.

Finally one may mention the contrast of organicity against mechanicity. Is there something more organicistic about Asian notions of life as a discourse than the Western modern one? Or is the contrast simply one of slow and fast?

All of these ways of mapping modernity are also ways of mapping Cubism as a stylistic discourse. I think there's another layer, which is a much more abstract layer. But we have to start talking about the abstract layer of difference and its historical contingency, about the functionality of discourses as ways of representing in different places.

The problem is one about the relevance or non-relevance of discursive teleology to a broader and more inclusive view of modernities or of modernisms: the paradigmatic Western location of stylistic discourse is that the rediscovery of the new is itself the purpose of art innovation. This position about modernity is held in the "West," regardless of whether the local situation is different or the same, particularly in "Asian" contexts. So, we have to talk at a much higher level of artistic problematics than just simply the binary pairs we can all map more-or-

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