Prelude to Bandung: A Decision-Making Analysis of Jawaharlal Nehru

By Anthony W. Ferguson

Introduction

International politics has been defined as the "... processes of state interaction at the governmental level."¹ The study of international politics then, would become the study of these processes. Although this provides the researcher with an operational definition of what his area of study is, the definition still lacks an adequately isolated subject of inquiry. The "state" as such is an abstract description of numerous processes, actors, and institutions.² Authors Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin attempt to solve this problem by defining the state as "... official decision-makers - those whose authoritative acts are, to all intents and purposes, the acts of the state." And these authors clarify further that "state action is the action taken by those acting in the name of the state."³ The study of official decision-makers must include an examination of the setting or environment within which these decision-makers operate. Decision-makers "... act upon and respond to conditions and factors which exist outside themselves and the government organization of which they are a part."⁴

The state under examination within this paper is India. The decision-maker is Jawaharlal Nehru, and the immediate setting is the Bandung Conference and the events leading up to it.

Methodology

The model of decision-making analysis to be used within this paper is a modified version of the one presented by Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin.⁵ The final object of their construct is to provide the researcher with a means of explaining why the decision-maker chose to follow a certain course of action rather than another. They do this by providing a "... set of categories of 'potentially relevant factors and conditions' which may affect the action of any state."⁶

⁴Ibid., p. 203.
⁵Ibid., p. 201.
⁶Ibid., p. 203.
The authors hypothesize that, depending upon the way in which the decision-maker "defines his situation," or in other words, assesses what possible options are open to him and which of these options he perceives as the most beneficial, he will choose his course of action. They divide the categories of "potentially relevant" variables into four subcategories: internal setting of decision-making, external setting of decision-making, the decision-making process and decision-makers, and the social structure and behavior (see Figure 2).

The primary problem with the model presented by Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin is that there is a duplication of categories. This duplication hinders the model's potential as a tool of explanation, description, and prediction. David Singer has suggested that all models should aid in fulfilling these three functions. In order to enable Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin's model to fulfill these functions, it has been altered for the following reasons, and in the suggested ways.

Society has been defined as "... a group of human beings sharing a self-sufficient system of action which is capable of existing longer than the life-span of an individual..." If we accept the definition of society as being a "system of action," then many of the classifications listed under the subcategory "social structure and behavior" could logically be placed within the classification "society" under the subcategory "internal setting of decision-making." For example, the classifications "major institutional patterns," "major characteristics of social organizations," and "role differentiation and specialization" all have to do with the "systems of action" found within the infrastructure of the state and its setting, and could therefore be placed within the "society" classification just as well. Culture "... is a product; it is historical; is selective; is learned; is based upon symbols; and is an abstraction from behavior and is the product of behavior." Based upon this definition, the classifications of "major common value orientations," and "relevant social processes" could likewise be taken from the subcategory of "social structure and behavior" and transferred to the culture classification within the subcategory "internal

10For a visual representation of these distinctions and those to follow, refer to the copy of Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin's model, Figure 2.
setting of decision-making." The model to be used within this paper is given in Figure 1. It employs the suggested revisions just made regarding the Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin model. Only three subcategories of setting are employed: internal setting, external setting, and the decision-making process, with decision-makers themselves being a part of this final subcategory. Human and non-human environment have been retained as having the basic classifications with all of the former classifications of the "social structure and behavior" subcategory integrated within the "internal setting" subcategory.

Included within the original model and retained within the revised construct is the concept of feedback. Not only are the decision-makers affected by the external environment, internal environment, and the decision-making process, but they are also affected by their own actions as they alter the setting in which their roles are performed. In the case of Chou En-lai's pronouncement at the Bandung Conference of China's willingness to negotiate the Formosan problem, his pronouncement resulted in a softened line on the part of the United States—who agreed to the Warsaw talks—and thus, at least for the moment, altered their relative positions in the cold war.

The central theme and object of this paper will be to describe and explain the reasons (define his situation) for Nehru's actions at the Bandung Conference. Because Nehru is now dead, prediction of his future mortal behavior can not, of course, be made (except that he shall continue to be extremely inactive). The attempt will be made, however, to point out those forces within the Asian setting that existed during Nehru's lifetime and are now present which can be expected to continue to mold the "standards of acceptability" of Indian foreign policy.

Pre-Bandung Setting

The model (Figure 1) presents the researcher with a wide variety of variables in order that he might be as comprehensive as possible. The problem that arises with so many variables is that the description of the subject may tend to become so clouded with data that clarity of explanation and the possibility of prediction are greatly impaired. This may be partially avoided by including only those variables considered important by the decision-maker himself in "defining his situation." The attempt will be made in this paper to limit the variables covered to those hypothesized as being important to him.

It has been hypothesized that people learn their political attitudes from the time they are children until they reach adulthood.

---

12Snyder, pp. 204-205.
13New York Times, April 27, 1955, p. 8
14Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin define "standards of acceptability" as those standards " . . . which (1) narrow the range of perceptions; (2) narrow the range of objects wanted; and (3) narrow the number of alternatives." Snyder, p. 203.
and are recruited into roles. This, the process of socialization, is an important variable to be considered within the internal setting. A great deal has been written about Nehru's childhood, in which his initial opinions were formed. Michael Brecher, in his political biography of Nehru, indicated that his father, Motilal Nehru, was a determining factor in the development of his son's personality. The younger Nehru described his father as "... the embodiment of strength and courage and cleverness." Because of the overpowering nature of Motilal's personality, all of the Nehru children developed a reluctance to make decisive choices. Their father not only provided them with security, but also relieved them of the burden of making decisions on their own. Later in his life, Jawaharlal found in Gandhi a replacement for his father as a maker of final decisions. Nehru was, however, to develop into "... a polished aristocrat, in a triple sense: he was a Kashmiri Brahmin; he was the son of a distinguished and wealthy lawyer; and he had acquired the manners and habits of an English nobleman." These early childhood experiences may be considered as part of the opinion formation processes from which Nehru received a number of his early political attitudes.

Colonialism and the cold war can perhaps be viewed as the two most important politically socializing influences or processes through which Nehru as an adult gained his political attitudes. Theoretically, these forces may be seen as influences originating in external environment, but affecting Nehru through the internal environment. His experiences in his fight against colonialism and later his struggle to remain unaligned in the cold war were to totally dominate his political attitudes and activities. Related to his fight with colonialism, in 1927 Nehru attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels. It provided him with his first contact with orthodox Communists, left-wing socialists, and radical nationalists. He had experienced an intellectual attraction to socialism while at Cambridge. From the conference on, however, he became converted to the need to incorporate socialism within India's future. Later, at the Bandung Conference, Nehru noted that that conference was merely a continuation of the anti-colonial sentiments formulated at Brussels. Nehru often stated that he felt that India's foreign policy was an extension of its battle with colonialism and foreign imperialism. He sought to steer India clear of all varieties of domination. This policy was to evolve into a "middle course" of action.

17 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
18 Ibid., p. 51.
19 Ibid., p. 109.
In 1946 he stated:

In the sphere of foreign affairs, India will follow an independent policy, keeping away from the power politics of groups aligned one against another. She will uphold the principle of freedom for independent peoples and will oppose racial discrimination wherever it may occur. She will work with the other peace-loving nations for international cooperation and goodwill without the exploitation of one nation by another.21

Thus, Nehru sought to forge for India an independent position in the world because of his experiences with colonialism. He felt that the Soviet bloc and the United States West European bloc, by fearing each other, were simply creating a war-like atmosphere in their attempts to protect themselves. He felt that if the emerging nations joined either bloc they would only add to the danger of the cold war. He conceived that if India were to remain "non-aligned" she might be able to be a force for peace.22 Moreover, he saw this as being in India's best interests, which he felt to be the motivating factor in the foreign policy of all nations.23

The threat of nuclear war appears to have been a very real threat and therefore an adult politically socializing experience to Nehru. Some years before the Bandung Conference in his own analysis of the situation facing Asia, he said:

As the danger of modern war became more and more evident, an ever increasing number of states decided to remain non-committed to the power-motives of the biggest power. Few of the small countries wished to take risks with power politics, thereby exposing themselves to nuclear war.24

It was from this setting, desire for a "middle way" and for a means of preventing nuclear holocaust, that Nehru developed his panchshila or "five principles" which later were to play such an important role at Bandung. The "five principles" were: "Respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence."25 Even before Nehru's ideas had

22Ibid., p. 441.
23Ibid.
25Ibid., p. 207.
crystalized into the "five principles," however, many of the nations of Southeast Asia had adopted his non-alignment policy. Contiguous to this development was an increase in Nehru's status as an important world statesman. As he became more aware of his new role, he gained a greater desire to become an even more forceful figure in achieving world peace. Nehru "... desired to play a big role on the world stage as the interpreter of Asia and Africa to Europe and America, and as an honest broker between the United States and Russia." 26 Examples of this new desire were expressed in his activities surrounding the Korean cease-fire and at the Geneva Conference. 27 These are also examples of India's willingness not to be counted as a "neutral" state. Nehru was irritated by those who said India was neutral. He felt that his stand against Korean aggression and regarding the partitioning of India proved that it was not neutral. India was not "neutral," but it did want to remain "isolated" from certain unwanted problems of the world. 28 He did not want India to ". . . retreat, encase herself in an ivory tower . . ." but rather, to avoid "foreign entanglements." 29 It is hypothesized, therefore, that the experiences Nehru acquired when handling India's affairs regarding colonialism and the cold war were important socializing variables in the molding of his political attitudes.

Nehru's Perception of China

A third politically socializing force originating in the external environment, but affecting Nehru's perception of the world, was the emergence of Communist China. From the outset Nehru felt that because of China's geographic proximity to India, good relations with the Chinese were essential. He recognized that a conflict of interest between India and China could possess a vulnerability to war that a similar conflict between the United States and China would not. 30 Commencing with the October Revolution, Nehru had been favorably impressed by the Communists. But at the same time, he was ". . . irritated . . . by their dictatorial ways, their aggressive and rather vulgar methods, their habit of denouncing everybody who did not agree with them." 31 Nehru saw the victory of the Peking regime, however, not as a victory of Communism, but rather, as a final victory of an Asian power over colonialism. Nehru perceived the containment policy of the United States as the integrating impetus between the Soviet Union and China. Moreover, he was apprehensive that if the two communist powers should become united in purpose and policy, the existence of such a pact would facilitate a war with the West. Nehru therefore sought to increase Sino-Indian ties of friendship in an effort to create an enlarged "third area of peace." With such a peaceful third block he hoped to balance the world power struggle and create a stalemate of peace. 32 One month prior to the Bandung Conference, Nehru hypothesized

26 Karnick, p. 98
27 Tbid., p. 98.
28 Moraes, p. 443.
29 Tbid., p. 445.
30 Tbid., p. 589.
31 Tbid., p. 113.
32 Tbid., pp. 590-591.
that if nations of Southeast Asia such as Laos and Cambodia were drawn into an alliance with the West, China would be forced to object "strongly". On the other hand, if these two countries became subservient to China "... the countries on the other side would naturally be frightened."\textsuperscript{33} He perceived the only solution to be:

Either you have a war to decide who is stronger, or you place Laos, Cambodia, and all the Indo-China states more or less outside the spheres of influence, outside the alignments, and outside the military pacts of the two groups, so that both could feel, at least to some extent secure in the knowledge that these Indo-China states were not going to be used against them. There is no other way out.\textsuperscript{34}

There were many nations in Southeast Asia that did not agree with the Nehru thesis. Nehru, however, ignored their protests and argued with them to put aside their fears about China. While at the Baguio Conference in the Philippines, a short while before Bandung, the suggestion was made for the non-communist nations to form an anti-communist coalition force within the United Nations. Nehru "resisted" this suggestion and recommended that they inquire more into their own problems and possible solutions.\textsuperscript{35} Later, just a month before the Bandung Conference, he was asked by a British correspondent why, if colonialism was a scheduled topic, was not communism also included as a subject for discussion? Nehru replied "... if communism represented a threat, it would be discussed under the heading of aggression, which was a problem in which they were all concerned."\textsuperscript{36} It would seem that he had already decided that colonialism was still a threat but that Chinese communism was not a threat. His critics have since this time pointed out that China was his "blind spot". Nehru:

\textldots talked many a time against communism and more particularly against the activities of Indian communists, but to identify Russia or China as a communist power and to attribute to them the desire to advance communist aims and policies was, he thought, to indulge in cold war.\textsuperscript{38}

For this "blind trust" in China he "... had to pay a heavy price before too long."\textsuperscript{39}

Even though China had occupied Tibet by force and had been perpetrating illegal subversion in Indonesia, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Burma,
Nehru felt that China was not really aggressive by choice. Chinese communism possessed three qualities that were very close to Nehru's own feelings. These properties were a historic battle against colonialism, the position of being a non-white or colored nation, and a "... professed passion for peace." Nehru's positive stance toward China was reinforced by Chou En-lai's pledge in 1954 to abide by Nehru's "five principles of co-existence". Nehru later stated that China had to be provided with an opportunity ",... to prove whether or not it would honor this pledge." The Bandung Conference was viewed by Nehru as the environment within which China could prove its true motives. It was the hope of all the Columbo powers, who were the organizers of the Bandung Conference, that more extensive contacts with China would be established. The objective was that if such contacts were achieved, China, better informed of the peaceful motives of the Southeast Asian countries, would be "... less inclined to undertake rash moves which might weight the balance further in favor of world war." George M. Kahin summed up the goals of India and its fellow Columbo powers on the eve of the Bandung Conference as being:

(1) Avoidance of war, most immediately between China and the United States; (2) development of China's diplomatic independence of Soviet Russia; (3) containment of Chinese and Vietminh military power and political influence at the southern border of China and the eastern boundaries of Cambodia and Laos and the combating of illegal and subversive Communist activities in all non-Communist Asia, particularly in their own countries.

Nehru was very conscious of what he felt India's role to be in Asia. Prior to the Bandung Conference he had stated that "whatever regions you have in mind the importance of India cannot be ignored ... whether it is a problem of defense or trade or industry or economic policy India cannot be ignored." His plan was then to lead the countries of Asia into a "middle way" of conducting foreign affairs.

It is hypothesized, therefore, that even before Nehru had arrived at Bandung he had already "defined his situation". By doing so, he determined what India's objectives would be and in what areas compromise was possible. In general, Nehru would try to steer those attending the conference clear from voicing any allegiance to either the Soviet, the Chinese, or the Western bloc. Philip Mason, a British journalist,

41Moraes, p. 469.
42Kahin, p. 8.
43Ibid., p. 6.
44Ibid.
45Moraes, pp. 446-447.
46Snyder, p. 203.
characterized Nehru's probable attitude toward the Bandung Conference as being: "We will get together; we will explore the avenues; we will discuss, and we will appreciate each other's point of view; we are not anti-anything; we do not want to hurt anyone; we do not want to form blocs or alliances."\(^{46}\)

This analysis is reinforced by the reasons Nehru gave for the Columbo powers not having invited certain nations of geographic Asia. In the case of almost every non-invited nation the cause was related to avoiding any pre-determined conflict. The Union of South Africa was considered to possess a too "aggressive racial policy". North and South Korea were not invited because it was reasoned, if you invite one, it would be necessary to invite the other and Chou En-lai was not ready to sit at the same conference table with Syngman Rhee as yet. Nationalist China was not invited for much the same reason. Other reasons varied, for example, Japan and Nigeria were not considered by Nehru as being sufficiently free as yet.\(^{48}\)

The Bandung Conference

Initially, Prime Minister Nehru was very reluctant to convene a conference of the type that the Bandung meeting proved to be. Whether or not this was merely an example of Nehru's inability to be decisive is unclear. Nevertheless, in time, Indonesia's Prime Minister Ali Sastromidjojo convinced him that the meeting in Bandung could prove to be productive.\(^{49}\) The formal decision to convene the Bandung or Afro-Asian Conference was made at the Bagor meeting of the Columbo powers in December of 1954.\(^{50}\)

The formal decision-making processes were designed by the Columbo powers to emphasize the common characteristics shared by those attending the conference, and to de-emphasize their differences. All decisions reached at the conference had to have a "consensus of opinion" and therefore, usually, only questions about which there could be total agreement were debated.\(^{51}\) The existence of this "institutional pattern" was later shown to be very important. Three committees were formed from the general body of those attending: the political, the economic, and the cultural. It was expected from the outset that the political committee, of which India was a member, would be the most important one. A temporary secretariat was also appointed under the management of the chairman of the Indonesian delegation, Roestam Abdulkani.\(^{52}\)

---

\(^{46}\) Snyder, p. 203.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., pp.166-167.
\(^{49}\) Kahin, p. 2.
\(^{50}\) Korass, p. 452.
\(^{51}\) Kahin, p. 10.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., pp. 10-11.
Although the rule that decisions be made only with a "consensus of opinion" already de-emphasized differences of opinion, Nehru attempted, the afternoon before the conference was to begin, to reduce the hostile propensities even further in the conference. He obtained a "grudging" agreement from the nations, who like India had arrived early, to forego the preliminary speeches in order to save time. Actually, as he divulged to certain of the delegates, this was done to prevent any early disagreement over issues in which he was personally interested. His success was later foiled when the Pakistani delegation arrived and demanded that the decision be recanted by contending that neither India nor the small number of nations assembled early had the right to make decisions for the conference as a whole. Actually, Pakistan's behavior was a reflection of its dispute with India over Kashmir. In this and other "moments of exasperation" Nehru was seen to "... indulge in bouts of temper and tantrums as is his habit--understood and forgiven in India, but less easily excused abroad ..." It could be concluded, therefore, that Nehru's over-indulged and pampered childhood had not been completely submerged in the diplomatically proper role of Prime Minister.

Nehru had to deal with two primary issues at the Bandung Conference. The first of these was his continuing fight with all vestiges of colonialism. The second, paradoxically, was to combat those who wanted to turn the conference into a platform from which they might attack what was termed Communist or Soviet colonialism. It was in this area that his politically socialized attitudes towards colonialism and communism became apparent. Nehru set the tone of his attack on all remnants of colonialism during his opening remarks when he stated:

... in the future we shall only co-operate as equals; there is no friendship when nations are not equal, when one has to obey the other and when one dominates the other. That is why we raise our voices against domination and colonialism ... and that is why we have to be very careful to see that any other form of domination does not come our way.  

To Nehru, "any other form of domination" meant the signing of military pacts with either the Communist or Western blocs, especially the latter. Although he recognized the gains of China in Tibet and forwarded Chinese hegemony in Asia, Nehru was referring particularly to gains made by the United States with regard to the Middle East Defense Organization of which Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq, all present at Bandung, were members. Nehru considered pacts of this nature as having ". . . encroached considerably on the 'area of peace' . . . which he valued so much as a means of preventing nuclear war."

53 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
54 Moraes, p. 455.
56 Moraes, p. 451.
alliance system as a means of being allied to problems rather than to security. In the same speech at Bandung he said:

I do not want anybody to quarrel in Europe, Asia, or America, but if the others quarrel, why should I quarrel and why should I be dragged into their quarrels and wars? I just do not understand it. Therefore, I hope, we shall keep away from those quarrels and exercise our will not to quarrel.57

There were many, however, (mainly those who belonged to military pacts tying them to the West) who did not agree with the policy of non-alignment or what has been termed the "nehru thesis". These nations believed that they, unlike the geographically large India, needed to develop defensive alliances.58 Pakistan's Mohammed Ali, in fact, took to the offensive by introducing his own thesis, the "Seven Pillars of Peace". Five of them were identical to Nehru's "Five Principles of Co-existence". The remaining two were concerned with the right to collective defense pacts and the obligation for all nations to settle disputes by arbitration. The latter principle was designed to force India to agree to arbitrate the Kashmir dispute.59 In the end, the disagreement between these two theses was negotiated by including within the final communiqué's statement of principles the following clauses:

5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
6. (a) Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the Big Powers.60

This statement satisfied Pakistan's need for collective defense and Nehru's need to guarantee, at least on paper, his "third area of peace", from the encroachment of what he felt to be post-colonial colonial aspirations.

The second problem with which Nehru had to deal was not circumvented so easily. He did, however, remain unswayed from his desire to steer the conference clear of any type of alignment when he prevented its issuance of a statement condemning "soviet colonialism."61 (This statement would have indicated a Western bloc bias.) The issue of Soviet colonialism was first mentioned quite subtly by the representatives of Iran and Iraq in their opening speeches. Later, however, the representatives of Cambodia and Thailand spoke directly to the problem of

57 Ministry of Information, p. 9
59 Kahin, p. 12.
60 Ministry of Information p. 37.
61 Ibid., p. 18
communist colonialism. Thailand was especially concerned with the question of dual citizenship of its Chinese residents. Sir John Katelawala of Ceylon actually proposed in his introductory remarks that the conference should prepare a resolution condemning Soviet colonialism. Into this setting stepped Nehru, still determined to prevent the conference from leaning to either one side or the other. Arguing that Chou En-lai would never agree to such a resolution and that debate of the issue would only disrupt the conference since a consensus was needed for any resolution, Nehru was able to dissuade Sir John from presenting his resolution formally in committee. Moreover, he argued with the other delegates saying that since the countries of East Europe were recognized as free nations by the United Nations, they could not possibly be colonies of the Soviet Union. He also pointed out that the countries under question were European and therefore beyond the jurisdiction of the conference.

Those opposing Nehru were appeased in the end when Nehru proposed that instead of naming "communist colonialism" specifically in the final communiqué, they should rather "condemn colonialism... in all its manifestations." Nehru's conduct in these matters is an excellent reflection of his attitudes favorable to the plight and goals of communism which were obtained through his early political socialization. Nehru also sought to avoid extremism with regard to the wording of the statement concerning North Africa. When Pakistan sought to strengthen the language of the North African resolution from merely "voicing support" for the right of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia for self-determination to one of demanding that France restore their national sovereignty, Nehru was successful in retaining the more conservative language.

If one were to gauge the success of the Bandung Conference in terms of the three goals sought by India and the Colombo powers in general, the conference would have to be acclaimed a success. The impending war between Mainland China and the United States, as perceived by the Colombo group, was postponed by Chou En-lai's proposal at the conference that his government was willing to negotiate a peaceful settlement. China exhibited a high degree of diplomatic independence from the Soviet line. Moreover, the total atmosphere was relaxed by Chou's moves to settle the Formosa question, the dual citizenship problem of Chinese in Indonesia, and his proposal to adopt the expression "live together in peace" from the United Nations Charter as a guideline for international relationships.

However, if one were to gauge the success of the Bandung Conference in terms of the professed goals of Nehru's "third area of

---

63 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
64 Ibid., p. 21.
65 Sington, p. 235.
67 Refer back to page 8.
68 Kahin, pp. 25, 36-38.
peace" doctrine, the conference would have to be termed a failure. At best some of those who attended the Bandung Conference, Burma and Indonesia in particular, have attempted to be neutral. But they have failed to be a part of the non-aligned unity of nations, designed to offset the larger and opposing Communist and Capitalist camps.69

Nehru, himself, felt that he had been a success at Bandung. Upon his return, he took great pleasure in telling the Indian Parliament that the Bandung Conference had in effect adopted his "Five Principles of Co-existence" and that it had not turned into a new power bloc. He also felt that Chou En-lai’s pronouncement concerning Formosa was a direct result of the conference and more specifically because of India’s efforts in that regard.70 As moraes (one of Nehru's biographers) noted: "Chou En-lai might have played his cards skillfully, but it was Nehru who made it possible."71

Conclusion

It would seem then, that Nehru as decision-maker and as a representative of the Indian state had, prior to the Bandung Conference, already defined his situation based upon knowledge he had gained during his adult socialization process. His attitudes toward Asian alliances with outside powers and his trust of what he perceived to be the true motives of the Chinese changed little at all during the conference. It would seem, however, that the conclusions just given are "truisms". Nevertheless, given the setting at the time of the Bandung Conference, the Indian posture might have been quite different had its delegation been headed by someone else who had undergone a different set of political socialization experiences. Perhaps to another Prime Minister the Chinese conquest of Tibet, Chinese threats to use overseas Chinese as tools of expansion, the Chinese support of communist guerilla forces in Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, and Malaysia, and the apparent might of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe might have appeared to be more threatening than a treaty organization made up of a number of small defenseless states (Middle East Organization of States). But Nehru, who had experienced the war with colonialism, feared all former colonial masters and their fellow travelers. To Nehru, a belief in independence became a policy of non-alignment with the West. Nehru’s judgement of China, the conqueror of colonialism on the China mainland, was shown to be wrong a few years later when the same China decided to enlarge its borders.

Post Note on Method

By now, it is probably quite apparent that only a certain number of variables were considered in analyzing Jawaharlal Nehru's position at Bandung. When analyzing a historical situation the researcher must rely

69Brecher, p. 594.
70Ministry of Information, pp. 20-22.
71Moraes, p. 456.
on what the political actors or what the period's political observers might have written down because it was felt to be important. If, for example, they did not say anything about the effect of Nehru's role within the society or India's political sub-system, the current day student of Indian foreign relations can only suppose that these variables were not critically important. The same is true of the possible effect of the many national and international groups, population pressures, and pressures originating in other cultures and societies. Until information can be provided about the effects of all of these forces upon the decision-maker, and until a way of juxtaposing their importance as factors of influence is determined, decision-making models such as the one employed in this paper continue to be merely more systematic ways of doing biographical analysis than that performed by traditional political scientists and historians.

Anthony Ferguson, a graduate of B.Y.U. in Asian Studies and Political Science, is presently working towards his Master's degree in Political Science. He, like many other B.Y.U. Asian Studies students, served as a missionary in Taiwan. His current area of interest is the application of sociological methods to the study of Asian political behavior. He was recently granted a graduate fellowship in order to attend the intensive Chinese language program at Stanford this summer.
FIGURE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>INTERNAL SETTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Society and related processes and roles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.) Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.) Opinions formation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.) Adult socialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) Major social institutional patterns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) Role differentiation and specialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.) Groups: Kinds and functions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Population*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>EXTERNAL SETTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Other cultures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Other societies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Societies organized and functioning as states. Government actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. NON-HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The population classification shall be construed to refer to two forces. First, the impact of the physical size of the population itself; and second, the hypothesized impact that public opinion might have.

** "The term non-human environment is construed to mean all physical factors (including those which result from human behavior) but not relationships between human beings or relationships between human beings and these physical factors. The latter relationships belong under society . . ." (Snyder, p. 201).
FIGURE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Internal Setting of Decision-Making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-Human Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Human Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>Social Structure and Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Major Common Value Orientations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Major Institutional Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Major Characteristics of Social Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Role Differentiation and Specialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Groups: Kinds and Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Relevant Social Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Opinion Formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Adult Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Political</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F</th>
<th>External Setting of Decision-Making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-Human Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other Societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Societies Organized and Functioning as States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONSIDERING
THE FESTIVAL OF THE FIFTH DAY OF THE FIFTH MONTH

By Douglas McOmber

Introduction

Festivals are an expression of man's hopes; they are usually happy times. The evolution and present practice of a festival is a fascinating study. Perhaps the only problem lies in deciding which festival to consider. If one were to search for a land of tradition, culture, and festival, perhaps he could find no better land than China. The Chinese calendar is replete with celebrations and remembrances; it has at least one large celebration every month. (While speaking in the present tense, though, one must realize it is the present of a Taiwan China, or a Hong Kong China, or else the past of a China of at least twenty years ago, a China that was open to see.) To the Chinese, celebration of festivals is almost invariably a group activity, a time to lift up life, a time to feast, a time to feel that life does indeed hold at least the reward of a fine repast. Even the poor exert themselves to the utmost (and sometimes it means going further into debt) to make the occasion extra good. 1 Of course, the question may arise, does every person celebrate such and such an event? It is reasonable to say that not everyone does, but in China, the land of great traditions, a large majority certainly follows the customs.

Most of the festivals in China, if not all, are semi-religious. Apparently most participants do not lose sight of the religious meaning of a festival,2 and besides, to a great extent "... it is religion which breaks the monotony of female life, and collects within the temples, on the various festivals, an array of painted faces and embroidered skirts." 3 If the women like them, what else can be done but to have them?

The celebration of the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, most widely known as Wu Yue Chie (五月節), or Tuan Wu Chie (端午節), is a lively, colorful, and multifarious affair. Many people who write of China at least mention this event, and after a perusal of many sources, one would soon see that Jan de Groot's work

---

3 Herbert A. Files, China and the Chinese (New York, 1902), p. 121.
on Chinese customs is probably the most precise, detailed, and scholarly of any work available. He was a Dutchman who worked as an interpreter for the Oriental Dutch Indies Government, and as such he spent many years in China during the last century. He had an excellent command of the Chinese language, and he quotes heavily from Chinese sources pertinent to the topic at hand. Much of what he writes he writes from first-hand knowledge, too, and he seldom foists value judgments onto Chinese customs. On the contrary, he often points out that most Chinese superstitions have close parallels to those of many other cultures of the world. Perhaps it is from his works that many other authors get their material. Often even their wording is quite similar to that of de Groot.

Other authors, of course, have done their own research in original sources and have had their own experiences. Some authors present Chinese customs well, but in regard to the Wu Yue Chie, it appears that some have reasoned out their own explanations. It only stands to reason, of course, that every region of China will vary somewhat in its practice of and explanation for this festival. Since different authors have experienced different areas of China, naturally they would write of a festival differently than the next author. Some authors, however, show in their books a very poor attitude, even a prejudice toward the Chinese people and their culture. They take the haughty, sophisticated approach to "stupid Chinamen and their superstitions." To sum it up, then, besides de Groot, the three authors V. R. Burkhardt, Wolfram Eberhard, and Li-ch'en Tun have been the source of greatest worth to this paper's study of Wu Yue Chie. What is Wu Yue Chie? What are its practices and what is its origin? The following is an attempt to answer these questions.

Being almost totally an agrarian nation, the Chinese people would be most concerned about planting and harvesting. So it is not unnatural that an important festival comes right at the changing of spring into summer. Wu Yue Chie is the biggest event of the summer, and it is called the second of the three big "lucky festivals" (New Year's and Mid-Autumn being the other two). The fifth month is also an ill-omened one, and this fact plays an interesting role in the celebration of this festival. This second festival, the festival of life or the festival of joy, the Chinese quite often refer to as the Festa of the Fifth Month (Wu Yue Chie), or the Double Fifth. Some call it the Festival of the Fifth Day (五五), but this is not too accurate for actually the festival lasts more than one day. De Groot explains the meaning of one of the names of this festival, Tuan Wu Chie, saying

---

4"Henri Dore, Recherches sur les Superstitions en Chine (Shanghai, 1912), pp. 441-442.
that *tuan* means the point or precise instant of resistance or opposition; thus *tuan wu* means the exact solstice of summer. *Chie*, of course, means "festival."  

The Pekinese call this festival *Tuan Yang Chie* (*端午节*). Li-ch'en Tun mentions that some people feel *tuan* may be a corruption of *tan* (*端*), for the fifth day is the single fifth (*tan wu*; 五) of the month. This doesn't seem too logical, though. Of course, the fifth day of the fifth month is the only fifth. That is so obvious and ordinary that it hardly seems likely such an important event would have obtained a name in that manner. Besides, Tun offers no evidence, no historical etymology. It appears someone is conjecturing. The Northern Chinese often use the term *Tuan Yang Chie* because it means the "Upright Sun Festival," *tuan* also meaning upright and *yang* meaning sun. It is an occasion to them for nature worship. One last name for this event: it is sometimes called *Hsia Chih* (*夏至*), or Summer Solstice, for it marks the turn of the year for agriculture and makes the summer official to the Chinese.

**Summer Solstice**

*Wu Yue Chie* is usually celebrated between May 28th and June 28th, and it has two parts. One is the Festival of the Five Poisonous Animals (*五毒节*), or the Summer Solstice. The other is the Dragon Boat Festival (*Tung Chou Chie*; *龍舟節*) with its boat racing and *tsungtzue* (*粽子*). In North China this day is marked by only a few ceremonies, the court nobility and officers receiving grass linen and round painted fans from the Emperor, but in the South it is a very special event. Both aspects of this festival are of great antiquity. Although there is much of interest, its origins are obscure because of the early times at which it had root (that is, because of lack of records and because of the amount of time existing to develop many stories and myths to answer every question or explain almost every situation connected with it, the truth is difficult if not impossible to ascertain.

In Imperial China, the first aspect of *Wu Yue Chie* included at least the first five days of the fifth month. These five days were often called the "children's festival." Customs concerning it are not too well known abroad, but they are found in nearly every part of China. The summer in most of China proper is not a pleasant phenomenon. It is terrifically hot—up to 100°F—and a hot wind, called typhoon of fire (*火*), shrivels and scorches the earth. In the South, the

---

8 Li-ch'en Tun, trans. by Derk Bodde, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking* (Hong Kong, 1965), p. 42.
9 Tun, p. 111.
11 Eberhard, p. 89.
12 Groot, p. 321.
mysterious heat rises slowly. Everything seems eery and dead. The
vapors of the air breathe contagion, and the vital force of the body
evaporates. Pestilences attack, and so to the mind untutored in the
laws of physics and biology, the heat does indeed bring evil spirits.

A person's object in such a situation would naturally be to
ward off the diseases and evil influences. Thus ". . . an element
of fear or horror is hidden in every ceremony. . . man is on the de- 
ensive against. . . overwhelming powers. . . the only thing he can do is 
divert their attacks from him to some object. . . "13 For example,
it is believed that children born on the festival day shouldn't be
allowed to live or else they will kill their parents as owls do. Then
after their death, such children's bodies never decay.14 This was a
belief prevalent in China at least up to the 1940's.

Such superstitions, of course, invite vendors to take pecuniary
advantage of people, and they do a thriving trade in selling charms.
Of course, the highly educated people use common sense and wisdom
when the hot spells come, and rely less or not at all on talismans.
But it is the customs of the common people to which this paper refers.

For the common people, the religious part of the Summer Solstice
takes place in the home. Ancestors and gods must be honored with
sacrifices lest they lose their tempers.15 Candles and incense are
burned to the idols and to the ancestral tablets. Offerings of
tsungtze, together with cherries and mulberries, since these two fruits
are in season, are proper, although money is often burned and often
as many as ten dishes are set before the tablets. (Perhaps this is
because the family later eats the food offerings.)

Since the day of the festival engenders many dangers because
of roving spirits, many methods, called pi hsie (避邪), are used to
get rid of them.16 This part of the festival is sometimes called the
Feast of the Middle Heaven (天中清食). The women bake medicinal
cakes at noon and send them to friends. To ward off evil influences,
they then hang on doors and gates sago palm leaves, cactus tree
branches, and bulbs of garlic.17

The people have devised many other charms to protect them-
selves at every turn of fortune. All these talismans or charms they
call p'ing an fu (平安符). They commonly hold the belief that using
these charms and drinking magic potions will turn that which is feared

13Eberhard, p. 70.
14Ibid., p. 80.
16Groot, p. 323.
17John Henry Gray, China--A History of the Laws, Manners and
into something which is useful. At the middle of the fifth day, charms of paper and silk and charms made of images are pasted on doors. Images are often of demon killers, two of which are especially popular, Chang T'ien Shi (張天師), also called Chang Tao Ling (張道陵), the chief of the first Taoists, and Chung K'ui (鍾馗). Other demon chasers include San Chie Ta Ti (三界大帝), Liu Hai Hsien (劉海仙), T'ien Kuan (天官), and Kuan Yin P'u Sa (觀音菩薩). Long red pieces of paper (對子) with characters written on them are pasted on door posts, near household gods, and near ancestral tablets. Foot-long yellow streamers with vermilion seal impressions or pictures of the Heavenly Master (皇天師), Chung K'ui, or forms of the five poisonous creatures also hang from the gates. Gourds are cut out of silk and paper and pasted inverted above gates, thus representing a pouring out of poisonous vapors. The gourd is used as a receptacle for drugs and so it suggests the power of healing, too. Small tigers, tsungtze, cherries, and mulberries are also cut out of silk gauze. The women then string them on colored silk thread and suspend them either from the hair or from the back of the collar. These charms, sometimes called "threads of long life," will also ward off infectious diseases, demons, and even soldiers. Those who are in prison are especially careful to use all these charms to keep away evil influences.

Other means are also used to make life more secure. Sulphur firecrackers with little bang and much yellow smoke are set off in the house to drive out evil spirits and insect pests. A phosphorous wine, called lung kung chiu (龍鳴酒), or samshu is also used. Also a red dust, or hsiang huang (霞黃) is mixed in a cup of water or wine. Then the mixture is daubed on the body, set before the ancestral tablets and the gods, and then the people drink the remainder. Red phosphorous is supposed to be able to frighten bad spirits and keep away epidemics. The air is sweetened with aromatic herbs to please the spirits and realgar (arsenic sulfide) is used to ward off the poisonous creatures. Realgar is used to clean the house, and some of it, like the phosphorous, is mixed with wine and painted on the forehead (the character wang, 王, which represents the markings on a tiger's forehead, is often painted on a child's forehead), ears, and nose of children, and it is put into the festival food (just a pinch).

Love charms do not miss their yearly debut on this day either. Small stones from the magpie's nest for both sexes, or a man's wearing a bracelet of the hair of unmarried girls on one leg, are believed to

---

19 Tun, p. 45.
20 Gray, p. 261.
21 Groot, p. 324; Dore, p. 432.
22 Tun, p. 44.
have great effect in charming someone into love. A red powder got by extraordinary means also has great effect. If one puts the five poisonous animals together, the strongest will eat all the rest. The strongest is then fed red vermillion, a powdery poison of concentrated power, and it dies. It is then dried, and the resulting powder, if put into someone's food, causes the eater either to fall in love with the one who serves it or die trying to find who served it. A wife could feed such a powder to her husband just before he went on a long journey as a means of securing his return.23

At least twice mention has been made of the five poisonous animals. The common people take these animals quite seriously. The snake, centipede, scorpion, lizard, and toad are the five, and their evil spirits are served by the souls of unlucky people whom they trapped. The only way these poor souls can escape is by trapping somebody else and making that person take their place. In regard to this, many stories of the evils of the five poisonous animals are told.24

The charms to protect oneself against these fearsome creatures are many. Noble families exchange gifts of tsungtze together with cherries, mulberries, water chestnuts, peaches, apricots, rose cakes, and cakes of the five poisonous creatures. (This gift exchange was mentioned before in connection with charms for other purposes; one charm covers a multitude of evils.) The cakes of the five poisonous creatures (wu tu ping, 五毒餅 ) have the animals' effigies molded on top, the scorpion being shown winged and legless.25 Also considered effective against these evil creatures are prints of a cock killing them, done in red print on yellow paper, red being the color of vigor and life (the sock is the animal of fire, the personification of male power), and yellow representing the sulfur which is also supposed to kill them. Chang T'ien Shi kills these animals too, using his magic sword and his "chaotic box." (He was mentioned before and is supposed to be historical, having founded a secret Taoist cult for magic arts in Eastern Han times--First and Second Centuries B.C.)26 Chung K'ui also is an effective killer of these creatures. He comes from the story of the dream of the Emperor T'ang Ming Huang (173 - 712-756 A.D.). The fevered emperor in his dream saw a ghost kill an imp. Upon inquiring, he found the ghost to be that of a scholar who had been cheated out of official position but was later buried with great honors when he died because an emperor learned of the injustice. Out of gratitude, the ghost thereafter protected the emperors. When Ming Huang awoke he found his fever gone. He then canonized Chung K'ui with the title "Great Spiritual Chaser of Demons for the Whole Empire."27

23 Eberhard, p. 72.
24 Eberhard, p. 95.
25 Tun, p. 42
26 Eberhard, p. 90
27 Tun, p. 44.
Besides these charms and demon killers, some plants are used to charm the summer evils into a less destructive state of mind. People hang artemisia or iris branches tied together with silk thread of five colors on the door hinges. As one story goes, long ago a woman tried to save both her son and daughter from bandits. The bandits were so impressed they told her to mark her house with wild iris (flag) and artemisia so that her house and her neighbor’s houses would not be harmed in the future.28

On the first day of the fifth month the people put up artemisia (mugwort), and calamus, too (sweet flag). The plants are tied in bundles and then hung six to eight feet above the ground. The leaves of the calamus (ch’ang p’u) have power to keep out evil vapors and noxious influences. Their long leaves look like swords, and so they are supposed to frighten away evil creatures. Artemisia (aitze, 花 ), leaves have a pungent, yet fragrant odor, and along with garlic, are valued because the odor can drive away evil. The artemisia leaves have somewhat the shape of a tiger, and so they are good for scaring away evil spirits, too. The long leaves of the calamus also represent long life, and artemisia stems are good for making a concoction with which to wash the body on the auspicious fifth day of the fifth month.29

Thus it is that the Chinese have built up a great arsenal to see themselves safely through the summer. This listing by no means is complete, yet it does help one appreciate better what the Chinese mind has been among the common people concerning untoward circumstances. Should one ever live in China, knowledge of these customs would help him have an understanding friendship with his neighbors, and would help him enjoy his environment.

**Dragon Boat Race**

Perhaps the previous section detailing the customs relating to the Summer Solstice is somewhat interesting; perhaps it is somewhat tedious. However it may be, the real celebration of the Wu Yue Chieh is the Dragon Boat Festival. Herein lies the gaiety, color, and excitement. For foreigners, it is perhaps the most popular of Chinese religious observances.

The boats for the occasion are unusual, and they are especially made. Either companies of men or a temple will supply the funds to build one and finance its racing. The boats are quite large, some forty or fifty feet long, some eighty to one-hundred feet long. They are about 5½ feet wide, thus seating two men abreast, and they have a

28Gebhard, p. 84.
29Groot, pp. 335 and 337.
30Doolittle, p. 55.
depth of almost 2½ feet. On the bow of the boat is a dragon's head, carved in detail and gilded. The stern is the dragon's tail accompanied by a banner on a long pole. The rest of the boat is shaped like a dragon, and it is gilded and painted red. A drum and gong are placed either in the middle, at the stern, or at the bow. From fifteen to fifty rowers may be seated in the boats, depending, of course, upon the size of the particular boat. A leader in white with a banner in his hand signals the movements of the rowers. The boats are too long to turn sharply, so they are built to travel in either direction, the stern of the boat being only that part toward which the rowers have their backs. When the end of a run is reached the rowers just turn around on their seats, reverse the position of the head and tail of the dragon, and then paddle.

In Hong Kong, boats are stored in various places, some of them out in the open with just a rattan matting for a cover, but the dragon head and tail are kept in some sacred place. When the Tam King Festival (天后節) of the fourth month, eighth day is celebrated, boat crews usually start training for the races to come. They fly the banners they have won in previous races, tipping each one with a sprig of evergreen. They decorate the dragon's head with boughs of cypress, and at the stern is a triangular ensign with a wavy design bordering the name of the boat and its sponsor.

All decorated, then, the boat heads out into open water. In Hong Kong at Stanley, the boat heads seaward, and then it makes three runs to the beach in front of the T'ien Hou Temple (天后廟), a burst of firecrackers and a drum roll signalling each backwater. Having thus obtained the blessing of the temple, training begins in earnest. Sprints are gradually lengthened, and motorized junks pace them, and the incessant drumming and gonging can be heard for many days, presaging the advent of the Dragon Boat Festival.

Dragon boat races are exclusively a feature of the South. It used to be that the government prohibited such races, even though the prohibitions were blithely ignored. (The race was dangerous, for if a boat capsized nobody would try to save the non-swimmers, thinking that the will of the spirits was that the unfortunate were to die. Some boat leaders even killed an innocent victim and fixed the head on the prow. Of course, this is no longer so in Hong Kong, but still crews are in high spirits and are heady with wine. The boats sometimes do collide or hit bridge abutments and break in the middle. The literati in Peking celebrate with frog-hunting expeditions, or have horse, cart, and camel races since they have no water for boat

---

31 Burkhardt, I, p. 27.
32 Ibid., p. 69.
33 Ibid., p. 68-69.
34 Eberhard, p. 73.
35 Doolittle, p. 58.
racing. Mongolians celebrate it by having theatrical representations. But in the South is the great spectacle of boat racing. Buddhist priests are prominent at this official festival. Great crowds watch it, although present performances do not match the greater pageantry of a century ago. The whole family dresses up in its holiday best and lines the shore to watch the races from buildings and junkns. Even sampans are rented for a front-seat view. The people then loll about feasting and visiting while they wait for the races to begin.

In Aberdeen (Hong Kong), heats run from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine. The sprints run between the quay and Aplichau (a seaward island). A motorized junk tows the boats to the place of starting. The crew leave their "hotel" (the junk). They get ready, supposedly to offer rice sacrifices on the water to a certain Ch’u Yuan who drowned long ago, but in reality, of course, to win the race. Then they take off in a loud burst of firecrackers which lasts for the first mile or so. The boats race past in a cloud of spray, wetting the crew and stirring the heart and eyes of the crowd to excitement. Excitement is aroused by the noise and the fast, rhythmical, circular motion of the paddles, one slip of which would capsize the boat. Seen on the beam:

they really give the effect of some sea monster tearing through the water at incredible speed and with singleness of purpose. When moving out to practice, they are more majestic, and they give the impression of benevolence as their paddles rotate in perfect rhythm. But pitted against one another, there is something terrifying in their dash, suggestive of a beast of prey in its final spring upon the quarry.

The boats race two at a time, the crowds making great noise and gesticulating wildly. The speed of the boats is amazing, and can match that of a fast launch towing two dragon boats. Finally five boats are matched for the final race, the reward being the honor of winning the race. Prizes are but tokens: a cake, a handerchief, or a fan set up in a little pavilion. The winning crew, after due adulation is received from the crowd, then take trays of food to offer to the Queen of Heaven (天后) in her temple. Then in the evening the boats, decorated with colorful lanterns, return to parade the river.

Beyond excitement and the observance of an ancient custom, the dragon boat has another use. Brought out and paddled at or near the time of the festival, it will scare away the plague.

36Gray, p. 260.
37Burkhardt, I, p. 27.
38Ibid., p. 28.
39Ibid., II, p. 70.
40James D. Ball, Things Chinese (Shanghai, 1925), p. 195.
Young boys also take advantage of the day of the festival to go from house to house with models of a dragon boat on the end of a stick. They have carved the boat from pieces of wood, the dragon most likely having a red beard and having green feathers on its tail, the rowers wearing conical red hats, and three officials standing on an upper deck, the leader being sheltered by a red flag. The boys sing a special boat song at the house gate to the accompaniment of a gong and drum hanging from straps around their neck, nail the boat model to the gate post as a charm to ward off disaster and bad luck, and then collect the reward for their services.41

How the Dragon Boat Festival began perhaps will never be known for sure, but explanations and hypotheses are not lacking. Most of the common people will say that the festival started with Ch'ü Yuan, and that on the first anniversary of Ch'ü Yuan's death began the ceremony of looking for his body.42 Ch'ü Yuan was a literary genius, a poet and official of the State of Ch'ü. He probably lived from 332 to 296 B.C. Although Ch'ü Yuan was loyal, his ruler listened to scheming men who wanted Ch'ü Yuan out of the way and as a result banished him. Ch'ü Yuan, after a time of despondency, finally thought death to be better than life, and so holding a stone, he threw himself into the Mi-lo River (an affluent of Tung Ting Lake in Hunan in Southern China). This is supposed to have happened on the fifth day of the fifth month. A fisherman who Ch'ü Yuan had just finished talking to raced to save him, as did all the people nearby. When his body was not found, out of pity the people sent boats to search for it43 and vied to be the first to retrieve it.

Now the people go out in the dragon boats every year searching for Ch'ü Yuan's body. The boats are also supposed to have the power to scare away the big reptile which ate Ch'ü Yuan's offerings. The noise of the gongs is to dispel hungry ghosts who would prey on the spirit of the departed.45

This explanation, however, is not without its shortcomings, no matter how good it may sound. As de Groot puts it:

Il est inadmissible que le triste sort d'un ministre d'etat, qui se tue parce qu'il est tombe en disgrace, fasse une impression si profonde que le souvenir s'en perpetue dans une fete des plus populaires qui se celebre partout, de Pekin a Batavia.46

41Burkhardt, II, p. 71.
42Ball, p. 194.
44"China," p. 3.
45Gray, p. 259.
Besides, the people never paid that much attention to government and politics. They did not even know anything about government affairs. Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, who recorded the story of Ch'u Yuan's death, does not make any mention of the fisherman or of any people rushing to save Ch'u Yuan.

Another explanation which is not only reasonable but plausible as well is as follows. The Tai people who lived in the Ch'u area before Chinese culture spread below the Yangtze River had an agricultural society. They depended on rice for life, and to insure fertility of the soil they sacrificed human beings to their gods. As Chinese culture overtook the region, the natives kept this custom by changing it from head hunting to sham rock battles or to wading through a river, all in order to sacrifice a life. In fact, in 1865 on the island of Honam and at Yimpoo (somewhere in South China) the villages still had the custom of sham rock battles.

However, most areas changed to an even more sophisticated form--boat races. They saw it as an ordeal: some god expected a victim from among the rowers. If anyone's life was endangered, people let him be, for to save the man and contravene a god's will would be to offer oneself a substitute sacrifice for the rescued person. In fact, Ch'u Yuan's death may well have been looked upon as a sacrifice. The story of his death and events subsequent to it may have been told to rationalize the age-old custom of human sacrifice and even to give it popular ceremonial status.

The dragon boats have more meaning than just that of looking at a racing meet. The god of water being the dragon, its even belonging down in the water, its being the controller of waters and the dispenser of rain, would naturally make the people wish to seek its propitiation. With summer coming on, the crops needed rain to mature. So the dragon boat races represented fighting dragons. The people believed that the dragons above when they saw the dragon boats racing each other below would be stimulated to fight, and that the resulting fight in the heavens would be accompanied by a heavy rain. Thus:

the Tai Tribes of South China have preserved the most basic elements of the dragon boat festival and have brought them into the unity which is now the Chinese civilization.

The Tsungtze

The tsungtze are another important, even standard part of the

48 Eberhard, p. 75.
49 Gray, p. 256.
51 Tun, p. 43.
52 Eberhard, p. 96.
dragon boat festival. This food is made out of glutinous rice or millet, green beans, pork, lotus seeds, and the yolk of a salted egg. This mixture is wrapped in five leaves (special bamboo leaves if in the South), tied with raffia fiber, and boiled for four hours. Then this triangular tsungtze is eaten or used in offerings. For feasts it is eaten with roast pork and liquor.53

What is the origin of the tsungtze? Again according to tradition, when Ch'u Yuan died, offerings of rice were scattered on the water. Perhaps they at first served just one purpose, but now they serve a multitude of purposes. During the boat races, men standing on the bow of the dragon boat are supposed to scatter the tsungtze on the water to appease Ch'u Yuan's spirit. The rice is put into bamboo tubes, the top of which is closed with lily leaves and tied up with colored silk so that the scaly dragon won't get them.54 A soul that gets no offerings will suffer from the pangs of starvation, so some say they wish to feed Ch'u Yuan's soul. Others say that the original purpose of the tsungtze was to feed the fish so that they wouldn't eat Ch'u Yuan's body.

These explanations most likely stem from some very ancient and very basic practices. In the ancient Chinese pantheon, the water gods and especially the water spirits included the ghosts of those who had drowned and thus had no comfortable sepulchre. These ghosts, being uncomfortable, often became malevolent spirits. Offerings of rice were cast upon the waters to placate the water spirits and divert their attention from fishermen. Chuang-tze (莊子) in his essay, Autumn Water (秋水) mentions the fishermen who brave the waters containing the scaly dragons (蛟龍). These offerings were also to please the water gods so that a good fish harvest would result, and tsungtze were probably also offered to the scaly dragon in the waters in supplication for rain. Perhaps it was because of these traditions that at the time of Ch'u Yuan's death that people threw rice in the water. However it may be it certainly does not stand to reason that they suddenly thought up using bamboo tubes to offer rice in Ch'u Yuan's behalf at the time he died. But beyond this, there is historical evidence of these offerings occurring before Ch'u Yuan's time.55

The origin of the colorful wrapping on the tsungtze has a very interesting explanation. As tradition has it, Ch'u Yuan appeared as a spirit to a fisherman and complained that the scaly dragon was eating up his rice offerings. He suggested that they wrap the offerings in pointed leaves resembling the demon-dispelling sword and bind them carefully with five silk threads, each of a different color.56 Whether

53 Burkhardt, II, p. 69.
54 Tun, p. 43.
56 Groot, p. 354.
or not this is a story that people originated with the legend of Ch' u Yuan is not clear. It may have been an earlier practice to wrap the rice offerings in this way, but no sources mention it as being a practice of origin earlier than the time of Ch' u Yuan. Whatever the actual truth of the whole matter may be, Tsungtze are an enjoyable part of the Dragon Boat Festival.

Conclusion

The Summer Solstice and the Dragon Boat Festival are still very much a part of the annual celebrations in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and, to a lesser extent, of Chinese in parts of the world away from China. This celebration is not only colorful and enjoyable, it represents a oneness of heritage and belief, a brotherhood, and a factor of identification and unity for the Chinese people. One would doubt very strongly that this festival which has dominated a part of Chinese life for centuries can be suppressed and made to die in one or two generations. So it is not unlikely that on the mainland of China at least a remembrance of this festival lives on in the hearts of the people. Only a small part of the Chinese know or accept Marxism as a coherent philosophy of life, and so even though they are deprived of or ridiculed for the observance of the festivals, still religion and festivals live on in their heart. Certainly the Dragon Boat Festival and Summer Solstice are not the least of those festivals which thus survive.


Douglas McOmber is graduating with majors in Chinese and Asian Studies. He served a mission in Hong Kong and later studied in Taiwan for two months. His present home is Fremont, California, and he plans to do graduate work in Chinese Literature at the University of California at Berkeley.