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Long T. Bui

University of California, Irvine, longb@uci.edu

Ayako Sahara

Kyoritsu Women's University, aysahara@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article explores two case studies related to South Vietnam and Japan, relating them to the controversial history and legacy of the Second Indochina War. The first is the Japanese adoption and adaptation of South Vietnamese antiwar music. The second is a Japanese film, uncovered decades later after the war, exposing the role of Japan in South Vietnam. Cultural productions, from nations allied with the United States, sought to expose the popular struggle for peace against the rising tide of Cold War military violence and corporate capitalist exploitation. Through interviews, archival research, and textual analysis, the article argues for a deeper understanding of the transnational alliances and forms of what we call creative citizen peacebuilding forged among musicians, filmmakers, and audiences.

Keywords: *South Vietnam, Japan, Music, War, Art, Film, Indochina, Vietnam, Pacificism*

Author Bio(s)

Long T. Bui is Associate Professor, Department of Global and International Studies University of California, Irvine, USA

Ayako Sahara is Associate Professor in of International Studies, Kyoritsu Women's University, Japan

Creative Citizen Peacebuilding: Japanese Artists and Audiences Respond to the Vietnam-American War

Long T. Bui and Ayako Sahara

Art can bring people together, even in times of adversity. This article explores the American-Vietnam War or the Second Indochina War (1955-1975) as a transnational phenomenon that inextricably linked the people of Japan with the people of South Vietnam across time and space. Through the mediums of music and film, it analyzes the expressive media forged in the fog of war and how Japanese artists pushed for peace against United States (U.S.) militarism. We investigate two specific examples: (1) the Japanese adoption and adaptation of South Vietnamese anti-war nationalist music in the 1960s and 1970s and (2) a Japanese film about a Japanese salaryman in South Vietnam in 1975 that was produced during the war, but later discovered and released four decades after the conclusion of fighting. Of interest is how Japanese artists and people—connected to South Vietnam by way of the country’s militarized relationship with the United States—cultivated a pacifist anti-war ethos disruptive to Cold War bellicosity. As creative citizen peacebuilders, they “emphasize the possibility of genuine dialogue and collective identification among people across various borders” (Wu, 2013, p. 11).

In this vein, we compare different modes of engagement—affect, agency, assumptions—that inform how Japanese artists and audiences engage the political. What are the imagined creative forms of citizen peacebuilding enabled through and against the war machine? Overall, the Japanese point of view about Vietnam needs further exploration as well as the history of Japanese solidarity with Vietnamese people. Despite the prominence of the U.S. war in Vietnam, there is still much being uncovered about this infamous event, which makes apt our choice to analyze music produced during the war and a film released 40 years after fighting.

Through an exegesis of one slice of Japanese music history and a critical review of a Japanese film released long after the conflict had ended, we offer different facets of Japan’s Vietnam War history. The main objective here is to analyze how Japan’s artists and audiences found affinity with the South Vietnamese, showing compassion for a distant population against a rising tide of military adventurism in the Pacific Rim. Such exchange, however uneven, was made possible by Cold War cultural circuits and economic channels, which enabled musicians from South Vietnam to travel to Japan and allowed Japanese cinema artists to come to South Vietnam to make films.

We do not make a grand argument about how significant this artistic exchange was to social, political, or cultural developments in Japan or even to Vietnam. Instead, we contextualize these social arrangements based on the unique attitudes, voices, and orientations of cultural producers themselves. We indicate the ways Japanese people were implicated within the powerful struggle of pro-peace movements against warmongering forces. Through newspapers, archival research, interviews with artists, and close analysis of audio-visual texts, we suggest that the war generated new critical possibilities for envisioning the modern order.

Also, how were Vietnamese artists received in Japan by audiences there? First, we discuss the cultural theater of war and how art fits into Cold War geopolitics. Then we delve into a trip to Japan by Trịnh Công Sơn and Khánh Ly, the most famous songwriter and singer to hail from South Vietnam. Both became notable figures in Japan after being invited to the land of the rising sun to perform their anti-war music. While providing context for their visit, we analyze their song lyrics, which were translated into Japanese and performed by the two musicians. This section ponders how Vietnamese popular messages about the brutality of war were received in Japan, an officially neutral country stuck in the role of supplying aid to the United States. Next, we discuss a recovered film titled *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon*, providing background on its director, Norio Osada, who went to Vietnam to shoot during the last days of the war. Beyond its central story about the love of crime (and the crime of love), the film inadvertently exposes the privileged position of Japanese businessmen living and working in Vietnam. Discovered and released four decades after the war, we closely analyze this film, discussed on a broader level through an interview with the director.

While each example is interesting on their own, we believe pairing the case studies together, though they are distinct, bears implications for our objectives. Both discussions address key questions, as they are empirically substantiated. This article answers this double-sided question: How were Vietnamese artists received in Japan and how did Japanese filmmakers/artists respond to the war in Southeast Asia? How is the war remembered and represented, and what are its legacies? First, it is best to situate why popular culture and art matter for the Japanese and the Vietnamese during one of the most divisive wars in history.

The Transcultural Theater of the U.S.-Vietnam War

The Vietnam-American War was a major proxy war within the larger Cold War struggle

between pro-Western/capitalist forces and decolonizing/socialist movements in Southeast Asia. This divide was represented by the pro-Western anti-communist Republic of Vietnam (RVN) or South Vietnam as it was called colloquially poised against the communist People's Republic of Vietnam or North Vietnam. This decades-long conflict consisted of more than a violent armed struggle, but a major cultural event that galvanized and inspired countless creative projects. Yet, there exists little research on Japanese creative thoughts on South Vietnamese society during this time. This article does not attempt to fill a scholarly gap in Japan-South Vietnam diplomatic relations. Rather, it focuses more on Japanese artists' and audiences' comprehension of Japan's vexed role in Vietnam.

More discussion of post-war Japanese politics is necessary, especially as a measure of anti-war sentiment since the 1960s. The Vietnam War became entangled with the issue of the U.S. bases in Japan and Okinawa, sites of disembarkation for U.S. military personnel headed to Vietnam. In 1965, Japan's Sato government ranked as a top priority the return of Okinawa. Popular demonstrations against the Vietnam War with chants of "Return Okinawa!" expressed ordinary people's frustration, uniting competing factions on the Left such as anti-imperialist liberal democrats, communists-socialists, union activists, and revolutionary students' movements. Lingering memories of World War II were alive during the 1960s and the start of the 1970s attenuated emotions to wage war again. After the *Daigo Fukuryū Maru* incident in 1954, when Japanese fishermen were contaminated by fallout from the U.S. testing its nuclear weapons in Bikini Atoll, resistance against U.S. bases was fueled by fears of nuclear weapons. Mass demonstrations against renewals of the Japan-US Security Treaty (Anpo) ensued (Sasaki-Uemura, 2001).

Countering this general fear of dissent was Beheiren, also known as the Citizen's League for Peace in Vietnam. This organization of artists mobilized thousands in a rally in 1970 as a demonstration of power, which was described by the Japanese presses as constituting the New Left, a coterie of various interest groups who feared the U.S.-Japan security pact (Fukashiro, 1970, pp. 27-28). Formed in 1966, Beheiren evinced Japanese interests in the Vietnam War. With hundreds of local groups all over Japan and thousands of participants, the innovative movement remains legendary in Japan. They organized an overnight discussion which was broadcast live by a national television station, inviting famous politicians, academics, and activists to fight for peace.

Although Japan was a high-income nation at peace, its citizens were aware of a real political situation and structure in which Japan as an economic partner was drawn into U.S. foreign wars. Japanese did not wish to see their country humiliated like it was during World War II by fighting the United States again, and they could not fight their own government partly because they knew that Japan's prosperity was underwritten by the U.S. empire. For the most part, Japanese reception of Vietnamese people was very much influenced by the government's alliance with and dependency on the United States, staying politically neutral but contributing necessary supplies. As historian Moyar (2006) makes clear, the Vietnam War was a conflict that registered a range of feelings for people unable to decide on what their role was in the conflagration. He writes:

In Japan, the ghosts of World War II precluded military participation in the Vietnam conflict and all other military conflicts of the day. The Japanese people generally paid less attention to Vietnam, for few of them realized that the high volume of trade between Southeast Asia and Japan made the former a vital interest of the latter. (p. 387)

Post-World War II prosperity converged with the movement against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and U.S. military bases, and the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese authority. This larger geopolitical context is essential for examining Japanese-Vietnamese cultural exchange.

South Vietnam's citizens were not passive players obedient to their state's warmongering. Competing interests of citizens were fought out in public literary forums and newspapers (Tran, 2006). While much has been written about the role of music in structuring the political consciousness of the South Vietnamese nation and diaspora, not much has been written about the cultural representation of South Vietnam in Japan or conversely Japan's cultural industry in Vietnam (Reyes, 1999; Valverde, 2003; Wong, 2004). Rock and folk music gained popularity among the Vietnamese people during the U.S.-Vietnam War with the advent of new musical recordings and devices, now made easily marketable to countries thousands of miles away. This militarized globalizing moment allowed the Japanese public to listen to music from the rest of the world, including Vietnam, while Vietnamese artists traveled for the first time to Japan.

As the Vietnam War was the first conflict not to be censored in the Japanese press, citizens' mass protests against it brought a number of constituencies together. For many in the general public, Japan's growing prosperity and "non-involvement" implied "the conflict in

Indochina usually seemed too remote for them to run the risks of public dissent” (Shillony, 1998, p. 101). Insofar as Japan’s press and leaders sent conflicting messages about Vietnam, everyday Japanese held much ambivalence about the war. Yet, they found alternative, creative modes of engaging with the war as citizen peacebuilders.

Performing the Music of South Vietnamese Resistance in Japan

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Japanese glimpsed the arrival of Vietnamese celebrities in their country for the first time and these artists hailed from Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. Saigonese urban youth subculture bloomed in the late 1960s as the war increased, and many of its members became increasingly critical of the United States, despite following American fashions and tastes. But humanitarian/radicalized Vietnamese found ways to criticize U.S. interventionism, much as their Japanese counterparts did.

Khánh Ly (born Nguyễn Lê Mai) remains the most celebrated South Vietnamese female singer. She along with Trịnh Công Sơn, the legendary prolific songwriter, became noted celebrities in Japan at the height of the war during their visit. Both are recognized as cultural ambassadors because they did not come to Japan as official representatives of the beleaguered regime of South Vietnam but arrived as invited guests by the Japanese public. These two public figures brought folksy war-themed music to Japanese audiences riveted by their sentimental love songs about refugees and conflict. The irony of Vietnamese singers being asked to perform in Japan (a former imperial power that had occupied Vietnam during World War II) and achieving some fame in this industrialized country where there were hardly any Vietnamese people demonstrates how war incites powerful new cultural exchanges and conversations.

Though born in the northern capital of Hanoi, Khánh Ly began her professional career as a singer performing at many local clubs in the south. In 1964, the young composer Trịnh Công Sơn, after switching from pure love songs in the 1950s to anti-war anthems in the 1960s, requested the emerging young star to perform his songs, inspiring a fruitful long-time collaboration that led to lasting fame for both. Today, when one thinks of South Vietnam, these two are its cultural icons. Ly and Sơn performed widely at colleges at a time of much student unrest. Ly, particularly, was sponsored by the South Vietnamese government in the late 1960s to travel to Canada, the United States, and Australia. She achieved fame as the first Vietnamese woman to headline her own world shows. With a smokey agile voice that sounded mature for a young person, Ly was able to convey the realities of bloodshed. In 1969, the South Vietnamese

government sponsored her to travel to Europe as the first Vietnamese entertainer invited to perform in any foreign country, primarily to entertain Vietnamese exchange students and expats. As the war escalated, Son composed a group of songs dedicated to hope for peace with Buddhist connotations, while Ly expanded her repertoire of shows for RVN troops on the front lines; performing new music by Son that took on more ominous tones. Their love songs doubled as war songs, given the geopolitical context (Schafer, 2007, p. 610).

The duo shaped the style of South Vietnamese popular music. While Vietnamese music had already been modernized since the 1920s, incorporating Western elements into its repertoire, the further introduction of jazz, disco, and rock n' roll, as well as folk changed the musical landscape, connecting it to a larger American musical tradition increasingly resistant to authority and tradition. Such foreign music was seen by communist critics as a neocolonial poison corrupting the minds of Vietnamese society, diminishing their desire for socialist liberation (Taylor, 2000). While the northern communists promoted the honorable traits of "red music," the "yellow music" of the south took on the mixed quality of democratic-yearning fervor like the kind offered by Ly and Son. So even though they were from the south, they became regarded as anti-war, simply because they wanted peace. The pair had been known among Japanese anti-war activists after a Japanese journalist recorded their songs in South Vietnam and brought them back to Japan (Yamamoto, 2005). Concerns with the plight of the Vietnamese people gained traction to bear upon a growing anti-war movement.

While Japan is not usually known for widespread political protests, a sizeable peace movement emerged right after World War II due to fears of nuclear war destruction under rival superpowers like the United States and the Soviet Union. The dread of total mass destruction was warranted, given the destruction leveled by the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, Japanese people overall were little interested in the Vietnam-American War until 1965, when bombing in North Vietnam by the Johnson Administration ignited global anti-war sentiments. A scientific and scholarly community in Japan called Beheiren or the Citizen's League for Peace in Vietnam voiced strong opposition.

A peace movement burgeoned, synchronized with intensifying media reporting on the war. The three major daily newspapers (*Asahi*, *Mainichi*, and *Yomiuri*) had obtained a joint circulation of 24 million and along with other dailies stoked pro-peace feelings among Japanese people (Havens, 2014, p. 27). Alongside newspapers, weekly magazines covered the Vietnam

War as well. In 1965, Japanese journalist Akihiko Okazaki published *War Report from South Vietnam* and Takeshi Kaiko started his Vietnam War reporting called the “Vietnam War Diary” in a magazine. Their coverage provoked even stronger fury against the United States. In 1965, images of U.S. military B-52 raids in North Vietnam reminded Japanese citizens of World War II and made them sympathetic toward the Vietnamese people. According to a survey by *Asahi Simbun* in 1965, 75% of people who were aware of events in Vietnam opposed the war (Havens, 2014, p. 50). Japan’s mass consumer society did not shield the average person from the violence happening around the world.

Japan’s postwar economy was helped tremendously by U.S. war efforts in Vietnam, and one of the implicit purposes of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia was to find new markets for Japan’s growing economy. But the Japanese public began to rail against state ventures in Vietnam around the time that many Americans started opposing the war. The government of Japan could not openly oppose the war but as the conflict dragged on, many Japanese citizens recognized the complicated basis of Japan-U.S. relations. The United States had forced Japan to take a minimalist stance on defense and national security, while renouncing all intentions for war. World War II had not finished and right before the war’s end, the United States had “enlisted the assistance of Japanese troops against indigenous resistance in China, Vietnam, and Korea—even before the terms of Japan’s surrender could be signed” (Katsiaficas, 2012, p. 63). What kind of collective art then could respond to these international relations?

Folk emerged as the genre of anti-war music during the 1960s for the younger generation to express themselves against autocratic leaders. Japanese youth started to gather in public spaces to demonstrate anti-war populist messages, and Japanese police began to call their random sing-along concerts as “folk guerrilla” (Yoshioka, 1970). They often took place in big train stations such as Shinjuku in Tokyo and Umeda in Osaka, drawing 7,000 participants a day. Son’s music became very popular in Japan with many of his songs translated into Japanese.

When Ly and Son were invited to contribute to the arts and peace movement in Japan, they appeared at a crucial moment. For even if they disagreed with the U.S.-backed authoritarian RVN regime, the two musicians located their national pride in songs that voiced being specifically South Vietnamese and worries over the nation of South Vietnam. Emotive music for South Vietnamese cultural identity provided a cultural bedrock during rocky times when their government was falling apart and under attack by both the U.S. government and its own citizens.

By 1972, South Vietnam nationalism became untenable, especially during President Richard Nixon's effort to phase out American presence and withdraw all military troops from the region. This strategy of de-escalation in fact meant raining bombs to fight the communist insurgency in Laos, and a secret invasion by South Vietnam of Cambodia in 1970. Killings increased as the fate of South Vietnam stood in the air. Such events bear a special resonance for their time and figures like Ly and Son endure in people's cultural memory of South Vietnam and its political project (Bui, 2018).

In Japan, Son turned into a symbol of the anti-war movement by the late 1960s, especially for young people. The musician was introduced to the public as an anti-war poet on *Asahi Shimbun* on August 17, 1972. Son's masterpiece "Lullaby" (*Ngủ Đi Con*) about a mother mourning her soldier son became a hit song in Japan. It bears similar themes to "*Boya Ookiku Naranaide*" (I Do not Want Our Boy(s) to Grow Up) originally by a folk band called Michaels and later covered by a famous Japanese folk singer, Tomoya Takaishi. The song has been recognized as one of the most if not the most popular Vietnam War songs in Japan akin to songs like the American classic, "Where Have the All Flowers Gone" (covered in Japanese as "Hana Wa Doko E Itta" by several music artists). Trịnh Công Sơn was called "Vietnam's Bob Dylan" in Japan. Songs by Son, indicated Japanese creative peacebuilding, linking two societies: Vietnam in its transition to ending war and Japan in its transition toward peace. The popularity of Son's music and Ly's singing counters any sense of political indifference from the Japanese towards the war. Politics seep into social life, whether individuals actually want to care about politics or not.

While performing their songs in Japanese (despite not being fluent in the language and learning it phonetically), the duo also sang well-known Japanese songs in Vietnamese. One major legacy of the Vietnamese-American War is the flurry of South Vietnam popular commercial music produced, which included an array of political-minded tracks but also simple love songs about family, country, and romance; all of which lent emotional resonance to nationalism (even if those songs also critiqued the nation itself). For example, "*Ngủ Đi Con*" (Lullaby), which is similar to Son's other songs that glorify femininity and motherhood, contains a subtle anti-war message in its musical telling of a parent's loss of a child, a political setback when read in historic context as a "metaphor of Vietnam's loss" of lives (Olsen, 2008, p. 137). The sleep-inducing power of "Lullaby" bears witness to the slow death of Vietnam under the

stranglehold of unbridled militarism. Such sappy love songs masquerading or ventriloquized as anti-war protest songs suggest the quiet ways the personal is political, and how the propagandist messaging of nationalist politics cannot always capture the layered, complex sentiments of human life during a volatile time of military revolutions, political assassinations, and interstate rivalry.

Popular with the Vietnamese masses, such revolutionary-though-ambiguous music speaks to a different kind of politics. This creative layering of peacebuilding made Trịnh Công Sơn unpopular with *both* the South Vietnamese government as well as the Hanoi-based socialist northern regime. When Sơn's family fled overseas after the war, he chose to stay behind in his beloved homeland only to end up spending a decade in communist re-education camps (Olsen, 2008, p. 134). This occurred even though Sơn could neither be conflated with South Vietnamese nationalism or pinned down as a communist sympathizer. At the beginning of the war, Sơn set out to compose songs expressing love for all of humanity and urging the people to stop fighting between fellow Vietnamese. A Japanophile himself, Sơn composed songs about the bombing of Hiroshima among other topics. For him, peace meant more than just in Vietnam. His theme encompassed tranquility for the entire planet.

Japanese responded to his songs in deeply appreciative ways. In one of the representative books on the radical student movement of the late 1960s, *Nijyussai no Genten* (The Starting Point of the Age 20), writer Etsuko Takano wondered how she as a Japanese person could understand the condition of Vietnamese women who were losing their lives and children in the war. When she heard the Japanese radio version of *Ngủ Đi Con*, the song inspired her to bond with Vietnamese women via general anti-war pro-life feelings (Takano, 1971). College students like her listened to Sơn's songs and sought solidarity with Vietnamese people through transcultural products. Songs like "Lullaby" evoke the sadness of the war for not only soldiers but for mothers everywhere, whether Japanese or Vietnamese.

Among the many collaborative songs by Trịnh Công Sơn and Khánh Ly, the most popular remains "*Điểm Xưa*," known in Japan as "*Utsukushii Mukashi*" (Beautiful Past). Ly performed it when she was invited as a representative of South Vietnam at the World's Expo in Osaka, 1970, because Sơn could not make it to the festival in Japan. It was the first and the last fair in which South Vietnam officially participated. The theme of the pavilion of South Vietnam was "the development of past, present and future of the Republic of Vietnam to keep harmony

with countries of the free world” (Hirano, 2014, p. 125). Seventy-seven countries held their pavilions, and more than 64 million people attended the expo, which was the highest number in the history of the expo (Hirano, 2014, pp. 2-3). Countries competed to attract people to their pavilion to propagate their national ideologies. The singing duo felt so excited to visit the fair, because they were able to learn about the world and peer into the future. Attending the expo provided them the sense of (South) Vietnam as a member of international society. Japanese audiences adored the poetic songwriter and admired the powerful alto, whose rich deep warm tones and rasp emoted Vietnamese lyrics, captivating Japanese audiences with places so far away.

After the Osaka Expo, Ly recorded “*Diễm Xưa*” and released the song as “*Ameni Kieta Anata*” (You, Disappeared in Rain) through Columbia Records in Japan. It was re-released under a different title as “*Utsukushii Mukashi*” (The Beautiful Past) when it was selected as the theme song for the television drama “*Saigon Kara Kita Tsuma to Musume*” (a Wife and Daughter from Saigon), which aired in a series of four episodes in late 1979. The drama was based on the same title book by a Japanese journalist Koichi Kondo who was stationed in Saigon between 1971 and 1974 and again in between March and May 1975. Kondo married a Vietnamese woman and his book describes his daily life in Saigon and encounters with the southern Vietnamese. The song sold over two million copies and Ly turned into an instant celebrity throughout Japan. It has been recognized as *the* hit song of the 1970s, its popularity enhanced by a second time release of the song in 1981. The Japanese version of lyrics by “*Utsukushii Mukashi*” expressed true heartbreak. The 1979 version followed a hybrid mixture of Japanese (first verse) and Vietnamese (second verse). We include the Japanese verse and the English translation of sample lyrics:

The end of the red land/earth
Who did you tell there was a love that you did not know?
Did a little bird tell you or was it a rumor?
If you stayed not knowing love,
I could still be by your side
Keep dreaming as our life continues
Now to seek love in the end of land/earth
Invited by rain you are disappearing

The Japanese version of the song tells the story of a woman grieving about a man whom she loved and had disappeared in the rain. The main theme of the song evokes rain and missing someone close. To keep the original melody, Japanese lyrics were made more elementary and sung slower. We can read an anti-war message in the sad tones of this love song.

Son's lyrics come off as some of the most difficult, due to their cryptic figurative language. Translating his poetic music into another language adds another challenge, but the Japanese version retains the mystique of the Vietnamese original, and Japanese audiences are drawn to things which reveal as much as they conceal. The beginning of "*Akai Chinohateni*" is impressive because "*akai chi*" means both "red land/earth" and "red blood." As "*hateni*" means "the end of," the lyrics infer "the end of the red land/earth." This red land/earth evokes the Mekong Delta, a tropical climate setting famous for its red clay mud. The melody with lyrics moves us to imagine a foreign land far from Japan, exoticizing the Vietnamese perhaps for the Japanese audience. The cover to the original record features a crying boy. The visualized child and a photograph of Ly with headphones appearing over him like a musical mother figure illustrates a connection between the high-tech and the pastoral, the maternal feminine and tortured boyhood.

It is commendable that Ly chooses to sing in another language not of her own, her pronunciation of Japanese imperfect and a little bit awkward, but the second verse sung in Vietnamese perfectly brings out the inherent beauty of the lyrics and melody:

The rain still falls on small leaves
In the afternoon rain I sit waiting
In your footsteps leaves quietly fall
Coldness suddenly pervades my soul

The rain still falls, life's like a sea storm
How do you know a gravestone feels no pain
Please let the rain pass over this region
In the future even stones will need each other.

This song is an even less politicized than “*Ngu Di Con*” (Lullaby) composed by Son. Ly’s famous song “*Ca Dao Mẹ*” (A Mother’s Lament) from 1970 stood out as testimony to Ly’s ability to stand in for the feminized yet strong body of South Vietnam. “Mother’s Lament” and “Lullaby” were interpreted as defeatist by the ailing South Vietnam regime, despite their broad peace themes, but such music struck a chord with not only the Vietnamese but also for the Japanese audience (Mydans, 2001).

War-time music like those of Ly and Son manifested as a kind of unspoken form of historical witnessing through personal testimony, conveying sentiments that reach beyond the curated messages of government authorities. The overwhelming positive artistic reception of the duo in Japan showed that popular culture does not merely reflect and refract political events but provides the alternative form to state politics (Lowe, 1996). The poetics of music can challenge state doublespeak and international barriers. The Japanese were not always distant bit players or observers of the war but also direct participants with an ambiguous or exploitative role.

Filming and Finding the Japanese Salaryman in Saigon

Next, we shed light on the work of one Japanese director who filmed a movie in the throes of war. This film was discovered and released to the public four decades later. Pairing Vietnamese singing and acting star Thanh Lan with Japanese heartthrob Yusuke Kawazu, this film was shot during the war in its final stages. An interview with the director and a close reading of the film *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon* exposes the dubious status of Japanese men living in South Vietnam. This example of Japanese filmmakers in South Vietnam complements the previous analysis of South Vietnamese musicians traveling to Japan.

Documenting the heavy corporate presence of the Japanese salaryman amid the war challenges the neutrality of Japan. Through the cinematic eye of a Japanese auteur born in Beijing and a product of Japanese imperialism, we can dissect the complexity of inter-Asian relations under military-enforced globalization. Japan became part of this Cold War economy as the largest exporter of goods and supplies for the U.S. command in Southeast Asia. This region presented a virgin capitalist market for Japan to expand international exports. Industrial overcapacity and rising costs in commodities led Japanese firms to supply foreign credit and products to keep afloat the bubble wartime economy of South Vietnam. Japan even signed a trading agreement and treaty with Saigon, disregarding Hanoi’s protests (Shiraishi, 1990). These economic bonds cemented a political alliance in which the United States looked to Japan and

South Vietnam as the two primary bulwarks to prevent the communist forces from gaining another foothold in the continent, particularly after the fall of China to communism in 1949 (Shiraishi, 1990).

Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon did not directly broach these larger historical and political contexts, but it did signal them through a story about the private affairs of the heart. The film's murder mystery-love story touched upon not only the corporatization of South Vietnam by Japanese businesses, but also directed attention to the phenomenon of romances between foreign Japanese men and Vietnamese women, while also illuminating the plight of mixed-race orphans abandoned by Japanese soldiers after Japan's occupation during World War II.

In terms of plot, the film narrates the story of a Japanese man who kills his Vietnamese employee and then flees to communist North Vietnam. From there, he aims to return to Japan and bring his mixed-race buddy and Vietnamese fiancée out of the tropics to Japan. Such plans bring up questions about which subjects held the privilege to travel freely and what it means to be a foreigner with money and status, whose class enables disenfranchised others to also emigrate with him.

Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon features thick interpersonal relations between Vietnamese and Japanese, so this film is not the usual war movie put out by Hollywood that ignores Vietnamese voices and glorifies American soldiers. As a cultural artifact, this 1975 film is a rare time capsule, shot on location in Vietnam in the last year of the war before the communist takeover of Saigon. Filmed in the months between December 1974 and April 1975, the film was believed to be lost until a copy was rediscovered in the Japanese National Film Archives and the film found public release nearly four decades after its original production. Directed with an eccentric zany style by Norio Osada, the drama portrays the Japanese during the U.S. War in Vietnam as economic intruders, killers, and lovers.

The opening montage starts with background information on the 1973 Paris Peace Accords (also called the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet Nam) and how the United States promised to continue supporting South Vietnam, despite stated promises of military withdrawal. This opening with a historical fact transitions to a montage of dead soldiers with a woman's voice. The voice, belonging to Vietnamese actress and singer Thanh Lan, speaks of the Vietnamese tradition of planting bougainvillea plants on the body of a corpse in a coffin, allowing it to feed on the body, and bloom above the ground—a metaphor for the

rebirth of life. The opening shots segue into the establishing shots of Saigon's teeming city life full of beggars and hustlers. Toshio's Sugimoto is first shown dressed in all white sitting by the river, devouring a scrumptious meal provided by his company, Far East Trade.

Knowing nothing of Vietnam before he came here to work as a buyer and trader of seafood, Toshio begins his opening monologue saying he now likes the country and that "home's where you hang your hat," describing a transient but royal expat sensibility, especially compared to Japan where he is considered a lazy bum. Saigon is safe, he says, compared to the fighting elsewhere but the war overall is inconsequential, he concludes, since "it's got nothing to do with me." This apathetic sense of non-involvement would unravel through the course of the film. The first action sequence commences with a little Vietnamese newspaper boy shouting at the protagonist with the greeting, "Hello, Japanese. I like Japanese. Japanese, number one!" a compliment that delights our smiling (anti)hero. He then meets up with Fan Ho Fun, a disgruntled employee who embezzled from Toshio's company, due to worries of an impending marriage, a sick mother, and a brother trying to escape the South Vietnamese draft. A detached Toshio tries to elude him, saying these personal problems were not of his concern. He is not to be bothered about Vietnamese everyday affairs or lives. "Vietnamese are passionate to a fault about family ties and mutual charity," Toshio muses on a Vietnamese trait which he finds laudable but obstructive to his efforts as a businessman. These observations mark a broad contrast between a reserved Japanese ethic based on economic efficiency and an overly expressive Vietnamese culture based on communal relationships.

Such a cool attitude becomes upended by a display of rage. During an argument, Toshio murders a disgruntled former employee who tried to blackmail him. The frightened businessman makes a last-minute plan to flee to the communist north with his Vietnamese girlfriend. This pairing links up Vietnamese singing and acting star Lan (the "Diva of Vietnam") with Japanese heartthrob thespian Kawazu. The couple make a new acquaintance named Taro, a mixed-race child of a Japanese soldier and Vietnamese woman (Kenji Isomura) who is now a gang member working for a mafia boss. Taro wants to leave with Toshio and his girlfriend, hoping to become a special kind of refugee to Japan through connection with Toshio. Though he never met his Japanese father, a soldier of war, Toshio professes his hatred of arrogant Japanese even if he contradictorily loves Japan, his mythical fatherland, and all that it positively represents in terms of peace and wealth against the brutality and impoverishment of Vietnam.

After the murder, Toshio loses his vaunted social status as rich foreigner quickly, and he becomes a desperate pariah in a poor country where Japanese wealth gives enormous opportunities for abuse. Though Toshio appears like the victim, the film's character development and exposition is such that the protagonist is appearing to flee from the hounding question of "Am I a killer? This lurking question haunts and intensifies the moody ambience or tone of the film. What drives the plot is the question of whether the character is fleeing towards liberation and freedom or moving towards death and destruction.

While considering himself only a businessman without politics, Toshio is in fact a political man who exploits a politically divided Vietnam to his advantage. As the war comes to an end, threatening his economic prosperity, Toshio realizes that he is already caught in the everyday politics of Vietnam that coincide with the development of high state politics. His deep personal reflection on the act of killing a former employee ruptures any sense of ignorance or innocence. Killing seems an everyday occurrence or practice accorded to those able to commit crimes seemingly without impunity. They can be in the form of uncovered massacres like My Lai or happen in secret. In this case, Toshio's murder is exposed outright, and he must flee.

During his harrowing escape, Toshio is hounded by the city's denizens who pelt him with rocks, demanding to know what he did to his employee. Fearing for his life in Saigon, he shoots one innocent bystander, and the chase is on for a serial killer. The chase scenes crystallize the menacing pervasive influence of Japanese in the chaotic metropole. There are panoramic shots of Toshio skipping through the streets canvased with prominent advertising billboards featuring Japanese products from multinational companies like Seiko as the pervasive signs of high-tech Asian globalization and Japanese economic modernity hovering right above the sign of "Vietnam" (also spelled Vieta Nam). Toshio's sophistication and urbane quality is represented by his sleek white suit against a sea of brown streets and rickshaws, but this upper-class status is destroyed by the aggression he commits against locals.

Toshio descends into Vietnam's seedy underworld, brokering a deal with a Chinese mobster named Chen who secures him a fake passport out of the country and helps him escape the south. Toshio does not possess the money to pay the mafia boss and must withdraw money from his firm's offshore bank account, which is used to avoid taxes in Japan. Holding the Japanese businessman hostage, mafia boss Chen plans to take Toshio's money without giving him the passport, torture the latter to extort more money, and hand him over to the police. Taro,

the new friend, releases the Japanese man from capture and the two flee by night along with Toshio's girlfriend (who Taro also likes) toward a ship full of refugees, outbound to Hong Kong from the central Vietnamese city of Hue. As our trio pushes north into enemy territory, Toshio speaks to the irony of their journey as refugees, instead of "escaping from the battlefield, we escaped toward it." Internal refugees come in all shapes.

Director Norio Osada says that he decided to release the film following the massive earthquake and tsunami which broke out in Japan in 2011, causing explosions in nuclear power plants in Fukushima, and displacing and killing scores of people within their own country. Fukushima was the biggest nuclear disaster since Chernobyl, and radiation from the fallout affected countless regions. The director felt that this tragedy occasioned a need for contemplation about the fate of the Japanese people (past, present, and future) and whether the nation's relentless pursuit of wealth can continue forever. His Cold War film finds resonance, when nuclear proliferation and war again promises to end humanity in the twenty-first century. The Vietnam-American War was the watershed event of the twentieth century according to the director, but he did not make *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon* to be explicitly an anti-war movie. He wanted to entertain audiences while expressing "the Japanese presence in Vietnam and our own sense of discomfort over how Japanese people were acting back at that time . . . and how things were in Vietnam back then."

The historic film offers both a broad anti-war critique of humanity's follies and a specific social criticism of the rich Japanese businessmen taking advantage of Vietnam's dire situation. The director's views on the Japanese have not changed since its original production date. During his interview with us, research participant Osada emphasized that there still needs to be more social change, since "the principles of economic and efficiency-oriented prosperity are still rooted deeply in Japan." Despite the de-politicized image of the salaryman as a reflection of alienated modern work life, the film exposes the global hegemonic masculinity that the figure embodies in battle-scarred spaces like Vietnam. The salaryman's loyalty to Japanese corporate management means conformity to a global class hierarchy with Vietnamese at the bottom (Dasgupta, 2012; Slater, 2011). Insertion of a Japanese professional lifestyle onto a hypermilitarized environment imbues stark meaning to this film about criminal runaways, where the ascetic coolness of the Japanese salaryman flashes hot in a violence-stricken country full of poor people and displaced migrants.

To give support to the local cultural industry, Osada decided to employ a Vietnamese production company for his feature debut, giving this Japanese film somewhat of an insider view. Despite its sensationalized melodramatic qualities, *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon* gives audiences an ethnographic glimpse into what quotidian encounters among everyday people might have looked like in Vietnam when “individuals crossed national boundaries.” Insofar as the film’s message offers a “prayer for a better world,” Osada considers himself more than an artist churning out mindless entertainment; a socially-minded artist intent to obviate the “unreasonableness in this world,” urging audiences to face real-world problems, even participating in social movements opposing impulses for greed and murder. To extrapolate the personal from the political, what audiences find in this remarkable film is a call for human dignity and peace and an end to violence.

While the history of U.S. meddling in Japan and Vietnam is well known, more attention needs to be paid to the interaction between these Asian countries. This includes a discussion of the challenges of the filmmakers as they shot in Vietnam facing real danger in active war zones. Together, we hope to explore the interconnections between nations caught with uneven power relations. Viewed through the prism of Japanese paternalism and economic colonization in South Vietnam, the audience recognizes how Vietnamese women and men are racialized as poor Third World subjects against the “light-skinned, upper-class Japanese, who come from a post-capitalist Asian country located in a first-world economy” (Duong, 2012, p. 102).

While highlighting given divisions, *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon* recasts geopolitical geographies, repositioning the capital of South Vietnam as a danger zone and the communist north as the potential site of safe refuge. This south to north route runs counter to the usual mass migration of Vietnamese from north to south after the country was divided in 1954, thus confusing the debate of which part of Vietnam is the better option for people. On an international level, the film examines the culture of entitlement accompanying Japanese businessmen overseas who must re-negotiate their cultural assumptions and lifestyles abroad vis-à-vis the besieged embattled locals. Attention to the work of the Japanese in Vietnam will enable a better grasp of intercultural relations in the context of war. These kinds of war films constitute not simply popular entertainment but the primary modes for appreciating or apprehending a foreign Other. This objective is helped by a Japanese film director with the time, money, and flexibility to move into active war zones to make movies, while most Vietnamese

needed to find desperate ways out of them. Through the Japanese expat-turned-exile figure, the director addresses the imbalance of power between peoples and societies.

This neocolonial position becomes revealed when Toshio asks to borrow the car from a fellow Japanese friend, someone who refuses him, admitting he prefers Vietnamese over Japanese people after living in the country for so long. After making a snide remark that the Japanese have no problem with murdering Vietnamese, this friend is coldly shot to death by Toshio, the latter embracing his dark side and descent into brutality (after having dreams of his own premature death). Publicity posters for the movie would pose questions like “Japanese guy! What the hell are you doing here!” or “On the road towards liberation or total catastrophe?” These questions offer a subtle way of talking about the Japanese situation in South Vietnam. The film’s title *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon* betrays the reality of Japan’s failed market enterprises abroad, Japan slipping from number one to number 10 or last place.

Cinema is key to visualizing social antagonisms in the realm of gender and class across geography. Film scholar Lan Duong (2012) advances a trans-Vietnam study of Vietnam-related cinema that focuses on treacherous alliances among transnational subjects. We can perceive the dangers of such collaborations in the film, when Toshio’s girlfriend Lan is beat up, abused, and almost raped by gang members. Her lover promises to protect her and take her with him to Japan. The film ends with the pair unable to flee to their destination and stumbling into a shootout with Chen’s gang. Lan is captured and Toshio escapes with Taro who tries to abandon his erstwhile friend of convenience. Taro does not want to witness another reenactment of a familiar scene close to his heart: The Japanese man leaving the Vietnamese woman. Lan is killed and, while standing over her corpse, Chen proclaims, the girl died in vain since her lover was the enemy. Japan is thus implicated in the Southeast Asian war that claimed many lives.

Death brings finality to our wartime love story. A disappointed Taro angry at Toshio screams to the fleeing Japanese man, “You lowly number 10 Japanese maggot!!” and shoots him down. Toshio’s diminished status and death spells doom for Japanese supremacy and manhood in Vietnam since Vietnamese hold the power to destroy Japanese lives as well. Beyond Japan’s fall from grace, the betrayal by a Vietnamese friend can serve as a powerful metaphor that severs the South Vietnamese and Japanese wartime connection (as anticommunist allies of the United States).

The final shot of the film is personalized. It displays young South Vietnamese draft

dodgers escaping to Hong Kong and Japan, a harrowing scene overlaid with a closing narrative about the fall of Saigon to northern liberation forces. There is no need to second-guess the director's usage of real wartime footage, since this final message illuminates history as the summation of human tales about disloyalty, abandonment, and desire. The film's ethical meditation revolves around quandaries of whether a rich Japanese man who kills a disgruntled former employee (who blackmailed him) is a murderer in a context where people are killing daily.

Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon has been given new life through screenings in Japanese venues and Vietnamese diasporic communities. Once an aspiring screenwriter, Norio Osada did not make any more films after his directorial debut, working instead in other media. Kenji Isomura who plays the side character Taro, actually worked as a Japanese businessman in real life. The film's revival stresses the ways buried memories and traumatic events crop up again in the public consciousness years after a specific historical moment has passed.

The film's cinematic realism atomizes the larger human struggle hidden beneath the turmoil of war. It offers a love triangle between two men and a woman, tying them with the criminal activities of gangsters. Following the standards of 1970s exploitation/grindhouse movies, this pulp fiction work is a piece of history, a product of its time. Its recovery as unreleased film transforms it into archival footage, recovered in time for the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war. Osada's undiscovered masterpiece contains real-life gunfire whizzing in the background to complement its scripted shootout scenes. The film's realistic mis-en-scene humanizes the state of war, even as it pulls us into a fantasy world.

Though not technically about war, *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon* gives audiences a rear view of the war, and thus can be read as a historical document and given its late release, postwar commentary. Ultimately, this film drives home the message that people always seek to survive war in all its manifestations. Geopolitical conflicts among nation-states form the backdrop for interpersonal battles waged among lovers, friends, or family. The story about Vietnam is a story about Japan. Lan, the young woman from the countryside who elopes with Toshio, tells her family before leaving that she is preparing to leave the country and that she truly loves him, but she remains committed to the family and her homeland. Lan expresses her dire situation: "I want to work harder and save money to buy a big house, where I can live with them, but maybe I'll never be able to do it now."

Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon puts a twist to the Orientalist story of the rich white man who comes to Asia to rescue a poor brown Asian woman from a life of poverty and prostitution, and the woman dies by her own hand as in seen in the opera *Madame Butterfly*. It casts the Japanese man in the role of the colonizing lover, but it is the Asian woman who saves the Western man from peril. Lan's devotion to her lover is perhaps not as strong as her loyalty to family, but we can recognize that her economic situation can be improved by associating with a rich foreigner who, though lacking cash for the moment, carries enormous human capital. Is this love, a money transaction, or both? Is she a collaborator or traitor? A friend and enemy? In times of war, all social boundaries are muddled.

One of unintended results of the film discovered in a later time, when Vietnamese people have afforded more time to reflect (to write blogs or social media posts), was that some in the diasporic community found his war-time movie to be merely sensationalist, especially given the portrayal of a famous singer like Thanh Lan in a sexualized role. Lan had performed naked in previous films and given the name "sex bomb" by Vietnamese media and male directors, which led to her being asked to film nude scenes for Osada's foreign male film crew in a private room at a secluded villa. Osada's film (whose title is translated in Vietnamese as *Tình-Khúc Thứ Mười*) also called just a small inconsequential "pebble" of a film by one Vietnamese newspaper, which lambasted the ways the Japanese filmmakers exploited Vietnam for their gain. It dismissed the film as the product of a "group of Japanese tourists traveling to Vietnam . . . to shoot beautiful scenes in Vietnam along a tourist itinerary" (Thanh Thuy, 2013).

Much like the abstract songs of Trịnh Công Sơn, the film leaves much room for interpretation. The film knits together social networks among different social classes, the interaction between artist and audiences, the tense relationship between client states and political allies, and the temporal states of history, where the buried past collides with the here-and-now. Filmic events in *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon* unfold to reveal not another romantic tragedy or a mythologized story of heroes versus villains, but a complicated, unfolding drama where realistic characters are both moral and immoral; fragile and brave; powerful and victimized.

Conclusion

This article emphasizes openness of culture to anti-war activism and art, and how histories of war traverse various spatiotemporal modalities through which wars are imagined and framed. The analysis presented here considers the reception and circulation of the music and film

from South Vietnam to and from Japan during the Cold War, and what they might say about war-time cultural exchange and production. After the collapse of South Vietnam, Japan only accepted a little more than 10,000 refugees from Vietnam, due to strict immigration policy and racist nationality laws, whereas the U.S. accepted hundreds of thousands of these refugees (Sahara, 2013). The globalized humanitarianism and ethnonationalism of Japan contributes to the forgetting of the difficult aspects of Japanese participation in the U.S. war machine. While many Japanese citizens today consume Vietnamese culture as one exotic component to the fascination with an abstract foreign (Carruthers, 2004), early forms of cultural exchange can be traced to the political tumult of the pre-1975 era.

The Vietnam-American War struck at the heart of Japanese politics, informing the contentious issue of Japan-U.S. relations and Japanese national security. Since the end of World War II, there had been strong public movements against U.S. bases in Japan, appealing to basic human rights and sovereignty. Those protest movements not only increased national pride, but also reduced bases on the mainland, even as they increased bases in Okinawa. What it means to be Japanese in Japan and in the world is always in flux, changing with the times. In the realm of culture, we recognized how Japan's artists and public articulated bonds of affinity with the South Vietnamese, and how Japanese subjects promoted creative forms of peacebuilding. Insofar as Vietnamese and Japanese artists crossed paths and forged cultural exchanges built upon the American war machine, they used those militarized circuits to criticize war. Close readings of music by Khánh Ly and Trịnh Công Sơn and a film by director Norio Osada reveal messages of peace and humanitarianism as they are creatively experienced.

Osada spent the rest of his life as a regular script writer at a Japanese film company, writing scripts for others. Osada had written for a dozen Japanese productions, ranging from murder mysteries to anime and period television dramas. He is well known for his screenplay for the revenge classic 1973 *Lady Snowblood* (the inspiration for the Hollywood hit *Kill Bill*), but *Number 10 Blues* remains the only film that he directed. That the movie was buried unnoticed for 40 years in a basement unearths some interesting queries, such as whether the director might have been a socially minded artist only in retrospect. The rediscovery of his wartime film came with some fanfare, striking a chord with Vietnamese international audiences and former refugees who could see again their former country albeit through a Japanese lens.

The film came out in 2014, but business did not go well at the box office. The movie

received some attention, at times negative. One Japanese reviewer of the movie gave this scathing judgement about Japan's role in Vietnam: "After WWII, what did the Japanese people do to achieve economic growth? After that, through the Vietnam War to the present, hasn't anything changed? This film is like a dagger that stabs such a theme sharply in the back . . . but unlike most films shot on location in foreign countries, which are often full of Japanese, this is an extremely unique film that has a strong smell of the actual tense battlefield, the ordinary people living in it, and the tasteful Vietnamese actors'" (ter*****, 2014). The belated awareness of the film suggests the ongoing legacy of the war, and the need for more recognition of ordinary Vietnamese lives, and Japan's cultural and economic imperialism—even as the film registers different meanings for viewers.

As for Ly and Son, they remain as popular in the Vietnamese diaspora as in Japan (there is an active webpage dedicated to their Japanese fans), adored by the older war generation. Their songs are the cultural touchstone for a generation, invoking sentimental memories for peace by Japanese but also the millions who left South Vietnam after its fall to communist forces. Their transnational impact surpasses the unknown legacy of *Number 10 Blues/Goodbye Saigon*, which says much about war after the fact and other limitations (the film was rarely viewed beyond film festivals but can still be purchased).

Mainly, the cultural work of artists from two Asian countries during the Vietnam conflict helps us consider popular forms of conflict resolution efforts, through the creative peacebuilding efforts of its citizens and audiences. These examples are connected by critiques of imperial Japan and the United States as well as the connections made among artists who once fought for and are still fighting for a better world.

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