# C.8 GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND LOCAL TRADITIONS



## GLOBALIZATION AND HYBRIDIZATION IN A POST-NOMADIC NATIVE COMMUNITY: THE CASE OF VASHRA'II K'OO, ALASKA

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For 10,000 years, Alaska's Native peoples lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers, surviving off the land against difficult odds in one of the most severe climates on Earth. This began to change following European "contact" about 250 years ago. With contact, Alaska Native social, economic and political structures were actively altered by the colonizers as they conquered the vast territory that would eventually become the forty-ninth state. The rifle replaced the bow and arrow, the fur trade augmented subsistence activities, and Christianity was adopted by all of Alaska's Native peoples (nominally, if not in actual practice).

These changes were most clearly brought to the fore through the settlement of the Native peoples during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into small villages scattered throughout the wilderness. Settlement was fostered though the formalization of educational and religious institutions, centered round the local school building and the church. However, jobs in the new villages were few, and subsistence remained a mainstay; by the latter part of the twentieth century, such villages could be typified as economically disadvantaged — suffering from high wage-labor unemployment and from numerous social problems including high rates of alcohol/drug abuse, wife/child abuse and suicide, and political structures dominated by familial/tribal influences.

Using data collected in one village, Vashr'aii K'oo, the paper examines how the village continues to develop and evolve as a Native space since its initial creation in 1908. I compare and analyze data I collected using a household survey in 2006 (following the completion of a number of community development projects) with that I collected in a 1999 survey. In this way I have been able to address and measure a number of issues, including the village residents' economic standing; subsistence activities; attitudes toward their children's education; use and attitudes toward their healthcare service; satisfaction with the governance of the village; residents' overall attitudes toward the degree to which their village actually functions as an "ethnic space" (measured indirectly through a variety of pieces of data).

It was my previous conclusion (2005) that the residents of Vashr'aii K'oo have used globalizing forces to their advantage, effectively bridging the Native and white worlds in a manner which allows them to live in both, yet retain a strong sense — or perhaps, a stronger sense — of their ethnic identity now that they reside in a settled, postnomadic environment. The paper concludes by suggesting that the development of this hybridized Alaska Native — one who hunts caribou by day and surfs the Web by night; who fishes with a line wrapped round a coffee can before going home to watch Dish television; who heats his home with wood, but fetches his wood with a snowmobile and chain saw — may be viewed as yet a further adaptation to an ever-changing environment by a population that remains who they are and always have been: the Caribou People of the Chandalar.

## MUSCAT: RETHINKING ITS HERITAGE

*Mohamed El Amrousi*

The emergence of Dubai as a modern Arab city that caters to a society of the spectacle has evoked abrupt changes in the urban milieu of neighboring cities like Muscat, in Oman. Muscat, with a rich multiethnic background dating to the time of Portuguese traders in the sixteenth century, and including a well-developed Arab-Indio architectural heritage, is currently undergoing a major reconstruction. However, by reconstruction I do not mean a process of technical restoration, but one of cultural inclusion and exclusion.

Today Muscat's Indian/Shia quarter, al-Lawatiya, with its ornate facades, projecting balconies, poly-lobed arches, has been included in this process. Known as Matrah, this part of the city underwent restoration in the 1990s and has been reinhabited by its Shia community, contingently placing it beyond hyper-realism. However, Muscat's administrative center is today undergoing cultural and physical fragmentation. Much of the fabric of the old city has been bulldozed, and only selected buildings remain intact. Muscat's plan to evolve into a modern/global city has contributed

to this erasure of collective memory. Today, the reshaping of its central district has brought urban simulacra and entangled orders of cultural simulation. Since the seventh century Ibadies have managed to preserved Muscat via a religio-political dogma that promoted a small-scale, unpretentious urbanism. However, a series of ambivalent results have emerged as these policies have intersected with global challenges.

Muscat's contemporary urban evolution has also involved creation of monumental religious institutions in new parts of the city. The neo-Mughal-styled mosque of Sultan Qabus al-Akbar, accessible only by car, transcends the physical scale of any mosque in Oman. Furthermore, its choice of a representational architecture seems to pay greatest tribute to Raj architecture in New Delhi — in particular, the Government and Secretariat buildings. In reference to postcolonial discourse, these new "forms of dominance" attempt to replace Ibadi urban traditions. Furthermore, while Ibadi mosques are generally modest, the interiors of this grand structure employ elaborately netted stucco, extensive surfaces of marble, and finely executed tile mosaics. The allegorical reference here is to Ibn Battuta's visit to the Omani coast in fourteenth century, and his allusion to a mosque with tile mosaic *zelij*. However, Ibn Battuta's words have been transformed to representational imagery — then sublime reality.

The paper explores the contemporary urban facets of Muscat as an emerging modern capital city. It highlights Muscat's urban policies of inclusion and exclusion of pasts, employing representations that transgress reality.

## ASCENDING DRAGONS OF THE MEKONG: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN CAMBODIA, LAOS AND VIETNAM

*Joseph Aranha*

Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, formerly known as Indochina, are countries linked as well as divided by the Mekong River. During the latter half of twentieth century this region was torn apart, fragmented and impoverished by war, genocide and political change. These countries were also isolated from the rest of the world until relatively recently. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, this region is one of the most rapidly growing and developing regions of Southeast Asia. These nations of the Mekong are now at peace, and have reopened their doors to tourism and the free market.

While trying to fulfill aspirations for the future by creating buildings and places that convey modernity, these countries are also being challenged by the realities of the present, such as urban growth and the condition of traditional river communities. They are simultaneously being energized by new freedoms that provide opportunities to continue or to revive traditions of the past. These forces of change are creating a dynamic mosaic consisting of traditional landscapes, ancient temples, and restored shophouses, together with newly created "hyper" places for tourists and the newly wealthy.

This paper addresses notions of "hyper" versus "real" places through an observational field study of four cases from the region. It will describe and discuss landscapes of tourism, floating communities, urban heritage preservation, and the changing character of cities in this region.

## A VILLAGE IN THE *GARRIGUE*: COMPETING VISIONS FOR THE *MIDI* OF CÉZANNE AND THE ARTISTS

*Elizabeth Riorden*

The traditional regions of Southern France, as is the case with many cultural landscapes worldwide, are threatened by development pressures and new settlement patterns. Unlike many other cultural landscapes, however, the *Midi* is known to a wide audience through the images of artists such as Paul Cézanne. At the extreme, Van Gogh's "Starry Night" has become something of a regional cliché. However, the devaluation of these images through overuse has done little to diminish their potency in the popular imagination.

The cultural landscape of the *Midi* received attention from scholars in the 1960s. Recently, however, the literature is relatively silent about the region, almost as if the painted images we know so well suffice, and as if further study, reflection, and conservation proposals are unnecessary. Based on observations made over a period of 34 years, this paper begins to address the lack of analysis of a place subject to rapid, and possibly irrevocable, change.

By the mid-twentieth century there were already two distinctly opposed populations in the area: the indigenous ex-rural ("residents"), and the seasonal aesthetes ("visitors"). Each group had a differing relationship with authenticity, vis-à-vis cultural representation, and each also had corresponding preferences for living space. The "residents" preferred new buildings, identifiable as houses with yards and areas for parking. The "visitors" preferred old buildings, usually vernacular and recycled, within traditional organic village formations, or otherwise integrated into the landscape. For years, the "residents" have taken their cultural heritage somewhat for granted (at least, it was not exotic to them, because familiar). However, it has remained an important alternate source of income, especially for those who once struggled to farm marginal land, such as the rocky, scrubby *garrigue*.

Recent infrastructure advances (high-speed trains, abundant electricity from nuclear plants, low-cost airlines), have accelerated development growth for both populations. As with the recent protest against a proposed wind farm, the stage is being set for possible confrontation.

The common pattern of artist colonies leading the way to gentrification has happened here on a macro-scale. The "visitors" have put the traditional farmsteads, or *mas*, to new uses, many converted to holiday homes and hotels — their owners often British, German, Swiss or American. Such people invest in the region because they understand and appreciate its cultural landscape. For them, it is unique and evocative, despite its diminishing authenticity.