

背景論：
胡德夫可以唱出基礎設施的主權架構嗎？

陳璽安
獨立策展人

Background Theory (Haikeiron) : Can Ara Kimbo Sing
the Sovereignty Framework of the Infrastructure?

CHEN Zi-An
Independent Curator

國立台灣美術館
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts

摘要：

日本左翼的視覺理論風景論 (fukeiron) 曾在 70 年代如此宣稱：「所有我們所看到的風景，無論在面上如何自然或者優美，其實都內在於看不見的治理之下。」背景論 (haikeiron) 與風景論一音之隔，強調在個體聲音的細微氣流變化中進一步找到切入點。我試圖以此回應胡德夫和劉窗各自的文化工作為案例，他們在分析資本流動的主權架構時，都注意到這些分析需要嵌套在種族圖景上來進行批評。他們編織出自己與土地此刻的連結，看見隱蔽的垂直架構，卻不一定擁有媒體地質學所需要的科技及媒體知識。背景論寫給如我一樣，不必然有尖端科技知識的讀者們。這是一則為了自我訓練觀看技術而寫的初步宣言。

為什麼／這麼多的人

離開碧綠的田園／飄蕩在無際的海洋

為什麼／這麼多的人

離開碧綠的田園／走在最高的鷹架

繁榮／啊／繁榮

為什麼遺忘／燦爛的煙火

點點落成的角落裡的我們

……

為什麼／這麼多的人

離開碧綠的田園／飄蕩在都市的邊緣

為什麼／這麼多的人

湧進昏暗的礦坑／呼吸著汗水和污氣

轟然／的巨響／堵住了所有的路

洶湧的瓦斯／充滿了整個阿美族的胸膛

為什麼啊／為什麼／走不回自己踏出的路／找不到留在家鄉的門

——胡德夫，《為什麼》

國立台灣美術館
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts



綠色小組，〈原權會五週年晚會：重建的盼望〉，1989.4.3，
網址：<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVOWLS2TtSY>

前言：胡德夫可以唱出基礎設施的主權架構嗎？

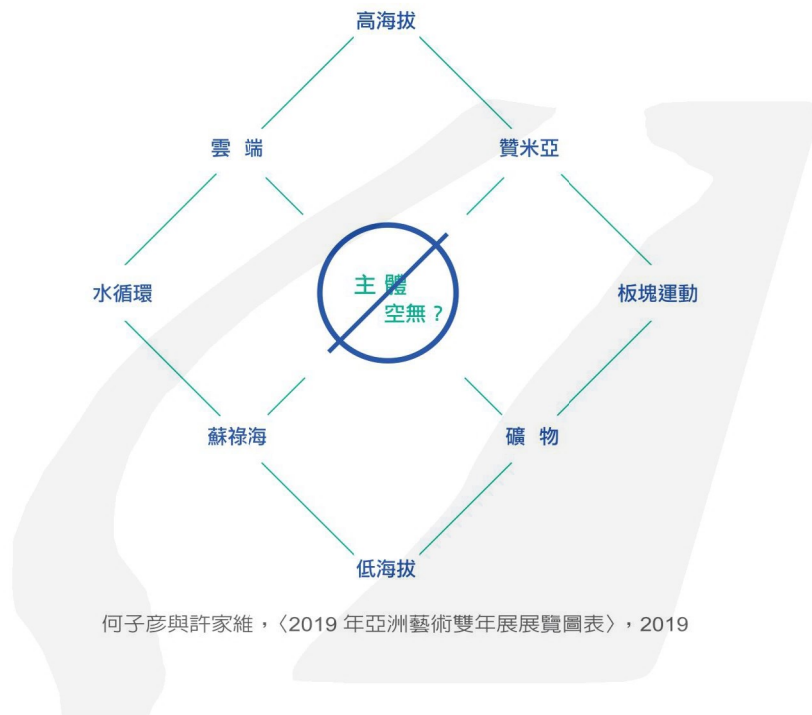
1989年，在台灣原住民族權利促進會五周年的晚會上，卑南、排灣出身的歌手胡德夫自彈自唱這曲《為什麼》，以紀念1984年海山煤礦爆炸的受難者——他們多是阿美族勞工。胡德夫當時與另一位排灣族詩人莫那能在救援行動中，花了一夜共譜這首曲子，也引發後續原住民權利的行動，也在年底草創台灣原住民族權利促進會。這時期的胡德夫與他的70年代民歌運動時期實在是不可同日而語。如果說宣揚「用自己的語言，創作自己的歌曲」的70年代，還只是用抒情歌曲來間接為政治意識加溫，那麼，《為什麼》可以說是激進的80年代報導音樂濫觴。音樂演唱本身就是社會運動的現場，也是一種高度複雜的論述語言——短短三分鐘的吟唱，帶我們到海拔完全不同的風景中。昏暗礦坑，無盡的海洋，高空中的鷹架，很難想像，可能只有空拍機才有機會覽盡的這些場景，居然是來自一群手上最沒有權力的族群之所見。

我們可以在演唱影片的細節中發現，胡德夫披上母族排灣的一襲人形紋飾刺繡長袍。他的唱詞像是巫言，像是巴西人類學家卡斯特羅（Viveiros de Castro）說的「跨越式薩滿」——後者講的是美洲印第安人巫術傳統和天主教神學體系的融合，「人類中心視角混合植物靈的力量，多神論與十誡……所有這些事物的對半拼配」¹。原權會組織的抗爭運動，也系統性地借用了基督教長老教會的城鄉宣教訓練為教材，而胡德夫則用外來政權的語言，用最美的中文，唱出當代原住民的存有狀態²。巫者的吟誦並不僅止於祭祀，巫的任務還在於媒介天與地的關係。如果仔細再聽一次歌曲，那是一系列跨越高低海拔，在不同技術環境之間的事物連繫方式：勞動者之於礦區的廢氣、勞動者之於歌唱的呼吸（aspiration）、勞動者之於聲帶的震動、勞動者之於礦坑的低鳴、勞動者之於基礎設施的高架工程、勞動者之於海洋自然資源、勞動者之於80年代臺灣經濟起飛的剝削。這樣的視角幾乎連接天地，濃縮在短短幾句詩歌當中。

1 Borges, Fabiane M, "Seminal Thoughts for a Possible Technoshamanism," Trans. Carsten Agger, 2014, http://www.modspil.dk/docs/technoshaman-%20ism_fabi_borges.pdf

2 拉娃吉·拉歌拉格，〈原住民族運動路線的反省——台灣原住民族權益抗爭運動〉，《台灣原住民族研究學報》第8卷，第2期（2018年），頁173。

所有巫儀的傳承都強調不要忘記自己與土地的連結。在這個案例裡面，歌者要我們找到資本是如何建構了土地與人的關係：資本和政權的剝削體系，有辦法將游離的少數族裔，從臺灣的高山和海島驅逐到海拔零度的礦物層和遠洋，並站上代表基礎設施擴張的鷹架前線。



何子彥與許家維，〈2019年亞洲藝術雙年展展覽圖表〉，2019

我們在這首 80 年代的歌曲中，找到類似於本次亞洲藝術雙年展中，兩位策展人繪製的那張展覽圖表所提示的觀看架構。這張圖表引用高地區域和海面上運行的無政府主義作為代表激進政治的軸線，另一個軸線則放上兩種媒體地質學的材料：雲端技術和礦物資源，與前者的高與低相對應。這份有力的結構主義圖表如是提出它的觀點：地緣政治可以思考媒體地質學。更進一步，胡德夫的歌曲裡，基礎設施的主權架構之所以是垂直的，歌聲傳給身在不同海拔高度的同胞，還是有賴於他們的社會劣勢，才迫使垂直的主權架構被看見。他們編織出自己與土地此刻的連結，看見隱蔽的垂直架構，卻不一定擁有媒體地質學所需要的科技及媒體知識。問題的契機在於：不必然有尖端科技知識的人們，可以如何觀看？借用《為什麼》的鼓舞，以下是背景論的初步宣言。

—

背景論是一項觀看實踐的提案。觀看的主角之於被看對象，這兩者構成一幅傳統視覺架構的首要關係。但在背景論的關注中，我們的視覺經濟學（visual economy）的架構會像是本傑明·布拉頓（Benjamin Bratton）的「堆棧」（stack）那樣，視覺所建構的關係只是一個層面，它會被疊到其它的分析性架構之上。在一幅畫面中，這幾種不同的架構往往混雜在畫面的背景裡面。這時候，人們只能挪動既有的視點，進一步在看似是噪點的空間當中，閱讀其中的訊息。這並非捨棄觀看—被看的分析軸線。背景論所做的，是將這個軸線變位，類似於將一張平面的風景照做成立體的摺紙（origami），讓人們可以從摺紙所搭建出的稜線中，以不同的角度進入圖像裡的背景，進入到城市的基礎設施和各種圍繞著畫面主體的環境。

二

我們的觀看訓練需要重新適應這種在不同海拔的環境當中運行的垂直架構。基於平地固定視角的視覺經濟關係，一旦換了新的環境，給定新的生態條件，便會開始改變其運行的規律和速度。背景論借鑑以下各種亞洲的視聽文化論述，從挪用和即興出發，是低成本，高速物流的裝配線，這些貨物有：足立正生和中平卓馬的風景論（1969）、胡德夫的《為什麼》（1984）、阿巴斯（Ackbar Abbas）的破理論（2011）、卡路拜恩（Buen Calubayan）的《風景觀看操作圖》（2014-）、陳界仁的〈變文書〉（2014）、劉窗的〈比特幣礦與少數民族田野錄音〉（2018）、何子彥與許家維的〈2019年亞洲藝術雙年展展覽圖表〉（2019）。它們都將注意力投向驅除強加在他們視野中的主權，並制作出各種取景的藝術。

三

背景論是個取景器（Viewfinder），把所有景色都當作數據來閱讀。訓練觀看的重要性遠遠大過對於生產圖像的訓練。而觀看數據的工作，正是藝術的工作，因為它涉及視覺再現的問題，而藝術家的訓練，正是為了處理種再現的狀況。因此，從背景中進行閱讀，是在解碼（figuring out）和配置（configuring）觀看的架構。背景論的觀看實踐乍看之下有點類似數據幻視（aphoria）的體驗，像是神經網路在畫面背景中看似空無一物的地方，指認出清晰可辨的圖像（figure）。不過，與數據幻視相反，背景論這種從背景中看出圖像的能力，是窮盡我們有限的各種參數，將它們嘗試應用到對一張圖像的閱讀中，是為自己的觀看賦權的行動。

四

除了視覺經濟架構以外，我們開始要加入不同的分析架構到一張畫面當中，以深入一幀風景背後的不同圖景。看看一張風景照的背景，一些不顯眼的地方，記錄了技術圖像可以運行的空間：

這是劉窗的〈比特幣礦與少數民族田野錄音〉（2018）前的開場片段截幀：你看到各種清朝末年北京城的圖像，在多工處理手勢的操作下，不斷向兩側滑動，並且放大到特定細節上。觀眾在看影片開場的過程中，大概需要花上一分鐘的時間，才能慢慢了解手勢的注意力不在於前景的城市景觀、古蹟、市民，而是集中在背景中——那裡有令人忽視的電報線。劉窗這件作品的敘述涉及技術發展的迭代：是電報員的病痛，間接引發了多工處理手勢的科技。另一方面，清朝時期電報網路的路線，也與當代中國鋪設海底通訊電纜的路徑有異曲同工之妙。



劉窰，〈比特幣礦與少數民族田野錄音〉，三頻道錄像，影片截幀，2018。

影片中的檔案來自美國社會學家甘博（Sidney D. Gamble）1925年三月於北京拍攝的孫中山葬禮場景，以及隨之而來的街頭抗議。

五

除了技術圖景，我們也強調用這樣的地質學視角發展出對族群圖景、金融圖景（financescapes）、媒體圖景（mediascapes）、觀念圖景（ideoscapes）等不同架構在同一空間中相互交疊的透析方式。背景論是真正多焦點的相機眼（camera-eyes），用來在不同維度之間交叉比對，以重新建構觀看主體的能動性。在不同學科的重疊領域中，我們依次切換濾鏡，活用不同圖景之間的可用工具，嫁接出多孔的知識網路，在其中來回穿梭。

六

劉窰原先在 2017 年的調研中所預想的主題，還僅僅出於一種巧合的發現：中國境內比特幣礦場的季节遷徙，其路線和少數民族的聲音採集所走之處有所重疊。自然資源豐盛的地帶，是大型基建所覬覦之場所，也是文化多樣性的保留之地。

劉窰關注詹姆斯·史考特（James C. Scott）的重點在於：主權對贊米亞的治理和歸化，也往往是暫時性的，這群人有時候進入國家與歷史，有時候又退出，其過程是高度動態的。劉窰試圖建構的一種觀看技術是對此預設的回應。他在作品中一直試著觀察，低海拔發展出來的科技，一旦登上高地生態，在與少數民族的互動過程中會有什麼突變？

七

劉窰注意到的是高地社會中的低技術巧妙組合。港口地帶的特區科技產能，一旦延伸到了山脈的橫斷地帶處的自然社會，就會碎裂形成各種低技術組成的別緻產物。「EVD」這種結合音響、家具、平面電視、同步燈控的家庭式娛樂設備就是這種搭配。生於產能過程的低地製造業襁褓，它們主要流通在中國的内陸城鎮，其存在僅僅是過度性質，也因此會有各種拼裝的變奏版本。他在訪談中也舉例到，比特幣礦機在剛開始發展的過程中，其配置的設計同樣是因為各種嘗試而高度不穩定。直到迭代到一定程度，它的樣式也會相應穩定下來。

八

在劉窗的觀察中，由於少數民族對歌唱與自然韻律的敏感度，在他們眼裡，低地電子樂幾乎一無是處。而 EVD 的燈光系統之作用正是在此，在於促進他們對低地賽博文化的接受過程——就如同觸屏手機能夠有效吸引人們的注意力一樣。而結果就像是〈比特幣礦與少數民族田野錄音〉中的那一段山歌片段，少數民族也開始習慣用微信錄製原本以聲帶震盪，穿越山谷而傳遞的旋律和訊息。劉窗在研究過程中，大量借用了演化生物學的斷點平衡（Punctuated equilibrium）說法：此種演變涉及了同一件事物一旦錯置不同的環境中，就有可能導致生態位階（niche）的缺口。而物種演化在多數時候其實也都處於穩定靜止的狀態，只有在不同的生態位進入的時候，短期內便會迅速發生巨大改變。

九

在〈比特幣礦與少數民族田野錄音〉的結尾，劉窗蠱惑人心地宣稱：「地球上那些消失的種族復活了」。畫面接著便是《星球大戰》納布女王的肖像登場，並且不斷易容。她的頭飾、服飾，慢慢漸變為東亞地帶少數民族的樣式。畫外音則闡釋了前一段引用到的畫面《索拉里斯星》中，由外星生命變容的宇航員之妻。乍看之下，劉窗像是諧擬了俄羅斯宇宙主義的人類共同目標，透過科技讓死者復甦。而劉窗在作品中的演示，則如同俄羅斯宇宙主義的反證——歐洲啟蒙的擴張已經促使許多少數民族的「宇宙」消失在地球上，然後又讓他們用特定一種電影模式復甦他們的黥面和衣著。只是形像被打散重組，變成了外星人的裝束。劉窗的演化生物學思辨在這裡為他口中的「科幻人類學」找到了一個有意思的發言立場。因為他看到的這個族群圖景（ethnoscape）與科技圖景（technoscape）重疊的地帶，其實一直都內在於科學幻想的建構中。

十

劉窗的結論讓人注意到一件事情：將同一個問題，從此處放到彼處，會有不同答案。如果將隱藏在媒體考古學背景中的科幻文本拿到視野的前方檢視，也可以改變知識生產的生態位階。流行文化的符號帝國中也會有這樣的間斷演變動能。背景論借鑒間斷演變的思考，強調不同批判性工具之間相互借用、轉化，並引發一連串事物變化狀態的觀測。這種高度複雜的形態學問題，無法簡單以圖像概覽的方式被呈現。

十一

背景論也以超出學術引用規範的方式借用日本風景論。人們對這個日本激進左翼在 1969 年的視覺理論的認識，往往是透過足立正生 1969 年的電影《略稱：連續射殺魔》，以及中平卓馬 1970 年出版的攝影集《為了即將來到的語言》中發表的三篇論述。足立正生的影片以當時震驚日本社會的 19 歲少年連環殺人事件為背景。但他沒有直接拍攝社會事件的主角永山則夫本人，而是一路沿著他成長的軌跡，從郊區的風景拍到城市。讓人想起胡德夫口裡的碧綠田園，無際海洋，同樣由社會事件而引發。風景論修正法國情境主義的論述，在日本本土的大眾媒體語境中，大力抨擊資本主義和主權政府如何藏在人們的視野之下。它將電影鏡頭倒轉 180 度，從拍攝主角本身，轉過來拍攝主角可能看到的風景。這樣的影像實踐意味著，需要觀察的事物並不僅僅只是主角，而是主角身處的社會脈絡以及其視覺建構，應著背景以及視角的遠近，找出重新政治化觀看行動的方式。

十二

風景 (fukei) 和背景 (haikai) 的一音之隔，強調的是在個體聲音的細微氣流變化中找到切入點。我試圖以此回應胡德夫和劉窗各自的工作，他們在分析資本流動的主權架構時，都注意到需要嵌套在種族圖景上來進行批評。強調生物腔室中的氣流，也是因為我們打算透過靈活運用時遠時近的不同視角切換，回應中平卓馬在他的攝影論述中多次致意的「遠近法」(enkinhou)，即日文的透視法 (perspective)，也許泛靈論中所涉及的視角主義 (perspectivism) 是背景論需要進一步考慮的話題。視角主義這種特殊的本體論不把人類的文化和非人類的自然當成分開的事情看待。德斯科拉 (Philippe Descola) 為這種靈活的移動視角總結道，在「外觀不相似」時，也能保留事物內在的相通性³。背景論視這種祖靈的遠近法為重要的借鑒。我們應該自由設定各種不同的閱讀參數，來觀看同一幅畫面。同一幀歷史風景照，在你那裡涉及族群圖景的勘察，但在我這裡可以是一幅關於電報分佈的技術風景的照片。在不同的圖像觀看體制之間，來回逡巡，互換視角，與過去發生斷裂，以求演化和發展。



國立台灣美術館
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts

3 Descola, Philippe, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, Trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2013), 178.

Background Theory (Haikeiron) : Can Ara Kimbo Sing the Sovereignty Framework of the Infrastructure?

CHEN Zi-An

Abstract:

The Japanese left-wing visual theory *fukeiron* ("Landscape Theory") of the 1970s made this declaration: "The visible landscape around us, from its most picturesque to its most banal aspects, is a pure expression of the dominant political power." *Haikeiron* ("Background Theory") differs from *fukeiron* by a single syllable, and the subtle change in airflow between these two individual sounds serves as the starting point of my exploration. The cultural work of Ara Kimbo and Liu Chuang serve as case studies. When analyzing the sovereignty framework of capital flow, they both have noticed that criticism can only proceed when these analyses are embedded within the ethnographic picture. They wove together connections between themselves and the land in a particular moment in time, glimpsing the hidden vertical structure, but they did not necessarily possess the knowledge of technology and media required by the geology of media. The Background Theory (*haikeiron*) was written for readers who, like me, do not necessarily have sophisticated technological knowledge. This was a preliminary declaration of self-training in how to view technology.

Why are so many people

Leaving the green fields and floating on the borderless seas?

Why are so many people

Leaving the green fields and walking on the sky-high scaffolding?

Prosperity! Oh, Prosperity!

Why have they forgotten us

Lit up by the bright fireworks, fallen in the corner

...

Why are so many people

Leaving the green fields and floating on the margins of the city?

Why are so many people

Entering the gloomy mines and breathing dirty water and air?

A thunderous noise has blocked all the roads

The raging gas fills the chests of all the Amis

Why? Why can't the road we're on take us back?

Why can't we find the door left in our hometown?

—Ara Kimbo, *Why?* (1984)



Historical footage of Ara Kimbo singing *Why?* April 3, 1989, posted by Green.I.A. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVOWLS2TtSY>

Introduction: Can Ara Kimbo Sing the Sovereignty Framework of the Infrastructure?

In 1989, at a 5th anniversary celebration of the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines, the singer Ara Kimbo, himself an aborigine of Puyuma and Paiwan descent, played and sang the song *Why?* commemorating the victims of the 1984 Haishan Mine explosion – most of whom were Amis laborers.

Soon after that event, he had spent the night penning the song together with another Paiwan poet, Malieyafusi Monaneng, and then sang it the following day at a rally in support of the victims at the 228 Peace Memorial Park. It ignited an activist movement that by the end of the year had given birth to the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines. The Ara Kimbo of this period can hardly be mentioned in the same breath with him and his campus folk movement of the 1970s. If by advocating “Use your own language to create your own songs” in the 1970s he was just warming up the people’s political consciousness with the lyricism of his songs, then *Why?* could be described as the origin of the radical “reportage music” of the 1980s. Musical performances themselves were the scene of the social activist movement, and a highly complex idiom of discourse – in a short three minutes of singing, they transported us across landscapes at completely different elevations. The dark mine, the boundless ocean, the scaffolding high in the air. Perhaps only an aerial drone would have the chance to survey all these settings in one breath. But ultimately, they were visualized by a group with the least power among us.

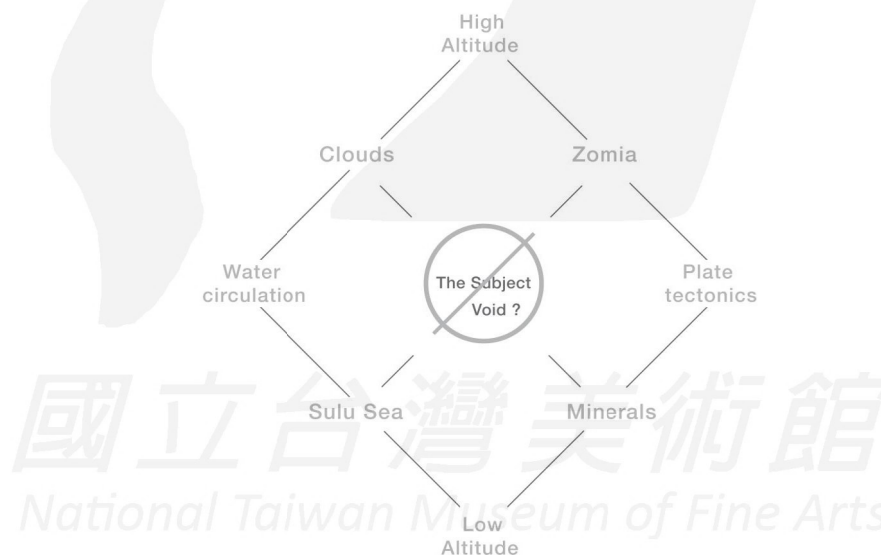
Kimbo’s lyrics are like a witch’s incantation, or in the words of Brazilian anthropologist Viveiros de Castro, “transversal shamanism” – a hybrid of American Indian shamanic traditions and Catholic theology, “of humanizing policies with the power of herbs and rituals, of polytheism and the ten commandments, [...] of all those beliefs which are half one and half the other.”¹ The resistance movement of the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines also systematically borrowed teaching material from the Presbyterian church’s Urban Rural Mission,² while *Why?* blended in the language of the Mandarin-language education they had received from the island’s rulers. Employing the master’s language in a supremely excellence, Kimbo expressed in song the power relationship

1 Borges, Fabiane M. “Seminal Thoughts for a Possible Technoshamanism,” trans. Carsten Agger, unpublished, 2014. <http://www.modspil.dk/docs/technoshaman-%20ism_fabi_borges.pdf>

2 Rakerak, Lavakaw, “A Reflection on Taiwan Indigenous Rights Struggle Movement,” *Journal of The Taiwan Indigenous Studies Association* 8, no.2, (2018) : 173.

that lay in the background behind this language, as well as the state of being of the indigenous people of that time. This shamanic chanting is not merely ritualistic, not is it because we can discover in the details of the concert footage that Kimbo was cloaked in a long robe of his mother's people, the Paiwan, embroidered with human-shaped patterns. Traditionally, the role of the shaman was to mediate the relationship between heaven and earth. If we listen closely to the song once again, it connects a series of things at disparate levels of elevation and in different technological environments: connections between laborers and coal mine emissions, between laborers and the breathing of song, between laborers and the vibrations of their vocal chords, between laborers and the deep reverberations of the mines, between laborers and the towering scaffolding of public works projects, between laborers and the natural resources of the ocean, between laborers and the exploitation of Taiwan's economic boom of the 1980s. This angle of view nearly unites heaven and earth, condensed within a few short lines of verse.

All shamanic teachings emphasize not forgetting the connection between oneself and the land. In this case, the singer wanted us to search for how capitalism had structured the relationship between the land and the people: The exploitative system of capital and governmental authority were able to drive itinerant ethnic minorities from the high mountains and offshore islands to the mines and the far seas at an altitude of zero and to stand on the scaffolding that represented the expansion of infrastructure.



Hsu Chia-Wei and Ho Tzu-Nyen, *The Exhibition Diagram of 2019*
Asian Art Biennial, 2019

In this song of the 1980s, we can discover a viewing framework similar to the one presented in the exhibition diagram drafted by the two curators in this Asian Art Biennial. This diagram utilizes the anarchism in operation in the highland plateaus and the seas to form an axis of radical politics, while another axis is placed upon two materials reflecting the geology of media – cloud technology and mineral resources – in an attempt to establish a correspondence with the former. If we were to propose the perspective of this structuralist diagram, it would be that geopolitics can take into consideration the geology of media. Furthermore, in the songs of Kimbo, the reason that the sovereignty framework of the infrastructure was vertical and he sang to his compatriots at different

altitudes was because of their social disadvantage, and this forced the vertical structure of sovereignty to be seen.

They wove together the connections between themselves and the land at that moment, and they saw the hidden vertical structure, but they did not necessarily possess the knowledge of technology and media required by the geology of media. Here, the Background Theory (*haikeiron*) was written for readers who, like me, did not necessarily have sophisticated technological knowledge. This was a preliminary declaration of self-training in how to view technology.

1.

The Background Theory is a proposal regarding the practice of viewing. The viewer and the viewed constitute the primary relationship in the visual structure. However, in the focus of the Background Theory, the framework of our visual economy is similar to Benjamin Bratton's concept of "the Stack"; the relationships formed by vision are only one level and will be layered on top of other analytical structures. These several different frameworks are often mixed together in the background of the picture. At this time, all that people can do is to shift their original point of view to read the information within the space seemingly filled with noise. This does not exclude the viewing-viewed analytical axis. What Background Theory does is reposition the axes, similar to turning a flat scenic photograph into three-dimensional origami, allowing people to enter the background of the diagram through different sightlines along the ridgelines formed by the folding, to enter the urban infrastructure and various different environments surrounding the central picture.

2.

The way we are trained to view things must be readjusted to take in this vertical architecture that operates in environments at different altitudes. Once we alter the visual economic relationship that was based on the fixed perspective of flat terrain, specifying new ecological conditions, then the laws and operative velocity of this new environment will also begin to change. Acting in the spirit of appropriation and improvisation, the Background Theory draws on the following discourses by Asians regarding audiovisual cultural, conveying these discourses as cargo along a low-cost, high-speed logistics assembly line: Masao Adachi's and Takuma Nakahira's *On Landscape* (1969), Kimbo's *Why?* (1984), Ackbar Abbas's *Poor Theory* (2011), Buen Calubayan's *Instructions on Viewing the Landscape* (2014-), Chen Chieh-Jen's *The Book of Transformation* (2014), Liu Chuang's *Bitcoin Mining and Field Recordings of Ethnic Minorities* (2018), and the Exhibition Diagram of 2019 Asian Art Biennial by Hsu Chia-Wei and Ho Tzu-Nyen. They all focus on expelling the sovereignty imposed upon them, in which they managed to re-frame the viewpoint as their primary production.

3.

The Background Theory is therefore a viewfinder, treating all scenic pictures as data to be read. Training one's viewing is far more significant than training the production of graphic images. And the task of viewing data is the task of art, because it involves the question of visual reproduction and representation, and an artist's training is meant for processing presentation. Thus, engaging in reading from within the context of the background arises from the viewing framework of "figuring out" and "configuring." At first glance, the viewing practice of the Background Theory is a reminiscent of the experience of apophenia, as if one's neural network discerns from the void of the background with plausible figures and shapes. Yet quite the opposite of the apophenic hunt for patterns, the Background Theory, which is the ability to perceive images from within an operative background, is an act of fully using up our limited parameters in an attempt to apply them to the reading of an image, and thus to empower our own viewing.

4.

In addition to the framework of visual economy, we may begin to add different analytical frameworks to an image. We may penetrate the different scenes lying in the background of a landscape photo, detecting some of its more inconspicuous places, which document the spaces where images of technology are allowed to operate:



Liu Chuang, *Bitcoin Mining and Field Recordings of Ethnic Minorities*, three channel video, film stills, 2018. Photographs from the American sociologist Sidney D. Gamble, shot during March 1925 in Beijing during Sun Yat-Sen's funeral, followed by the street protest.

This is a still from the opening sequence of Liu Chuang's *Bitcoin Mining and Field Recordings of Ethnic Minorities* (2018). You can see several images of Beijing in the late Qing dynasty. With the use of multitasking gestures, the photos constantly slide to the side and zoom in on certain details. After watching the film for a minute or more, we slowly realize that our attention is being directed not toward the objects in the foreground – the cityscape, the historical buildings or the crowd – but on one thing lurking in the background: the easily overlooked telegraph wires. The narrative of this work by Liu Chuang then involves an iteration of technological development: the illness and suffering of the telegrapher has indirectly brought about the technology of multitasking gestures. Meanwhile, the routes upon which the Qing-era telegraph networks were laid have an intriguingly iterative relationship with China's deployment of submarine cables in the current day.

5.

Besides technoscapes, we also emphasize using a geological perspective to develop an analytical method in which different frameworks, such as ethnoscapescapes, financescapescapes, mediascapescapes and ideoscapescapes, mutually overlap in the same space. The Background Theory employs multifocal camera-eyes to cross-reference among different dimensions to reconstruct the dynamic nature of the viewed subject. We switch filters one by one through the many overlapping realms of different disciplines, flexibly employing whatever tools are available to consider different scenes and thus graft together a porous network of knowledge, moving back and forth among them.

6.

The theme that Liu Chuang originally envisioned in his 2017 survey arose from a coincidental discover: the seasonal migration route of Bitcoin mines within the borders of China overlaps with the routes taken to collect samples of the voices of ethnic minorities. This belt of abundant natural resources is a coveted place for large-scale infrastructure projects, and also an area where cultural diversity is preserved.

Liu Chuang focuses on the central thesis of James C. Scott, which was that the governance and seizure of Zomia by sovereign powers was usually temporary. These peoples have sometimes been incorporated within nations and history, but sometimes they remove themselves. The process is highly dynamic. The viewing technique Liu Chuang tried to construct was a response to this proposition. In his work he continually attempted to observe what kind of mutations have occurred in the technologies developed at low elevations as they have ascended to high-altitude ecosystems and interacted with ethnic minorities.

7.

What Liu Chuang noticed was an ingenious combination of low technologies in highland society. Once the technological production capacity of the special economic districts centered around ports extends to the nature-grounded communities in the transect zones of mountain ranges, it fragmented into various unconventional products assembled from low-tech components. One example is the “EVD,” a form of home entertainment equipment that is a hybrid sound system, piece of furniture, flat-screen TV and synchronized light controller. Born out of the low-end manufacturing industry, EVDs are mainly distributed throughout the small towns and cities of China’s hinterland. They are transitory by their very nature, and thus can be cobbled together in an endless variety of versions. In an interview Liu also cited as an example that when Bitcoin mining machines were first being developed, they were highly unstable, because their design configurations were attempted in many different ways. Only when the designs reached a certain number of iterations did they become correspondingly stabilized.

8.

According to Liu’s observations, as minority peoples are so attuned to natural rhythms, in their eyes the electronic music of the lowlands is of virtually no merit whatsoever. And this was precisely the role of the EVD’s lighting system, to promote the process of accepting lowland cyberculture, just as a touch-screen smart phone can effectively attract people’s attention. The result – as can be seen in a segment in *Bitcoin Mining* featuring folk songs – was that minorities got in the habit of recording their melodies and messages on WeChat, instead of passing them through the valleys with their own vocal cords as they had originally done. In his research Liu made considerable use of a concept from evolutionary biology, “punctuated equilibrium”: that in the process of evolution, when one thing is placed within a different environment to which it does not belong, it may lead to an opening in its niche with strong selection and rapid change.

9.

At the end of *Bitcoin Mining*, Liu Chuang deceptively declares: “Races once extinct have now been resurrected on Earth”. Next, a portrait of the Queen of Naboo from *Star Wars* appears, and then constantly morphs into other faces. Her headdress and clothing slowly transform into those of ethnic minorities of East Asia. The off-screen voice, meanwhile, interprets the image from *Solaris* appropriated in the previous segment – the cosmonaut’s wife transfigured from alien life. At first blush, Liu Chuang seems to be satirizing the universal human goals of Russian cosmism, using technology to bring the dead back to life. What Liu presents in his work is like the counter-argument against Russian cosmism – the expansion of the European enlightenment has forced the cosmos of many ethnic minorities to vanish from the earth, and then it has allowed their visages and garb to be resurrected cinematically. In what he has called “science fiction anthropology,” Liu Chuang’s speculation in the mode of evolutionary biology has found an interesting position from which to speak out. Because the territory he has seen in which ethnoscapes and technoscapes overlap has always existed within the internal composition of science fiction.

10.

The Background Theory is not a dogmatic opinion that the background must hold a greater abundance of interpretive material than the foreground. However, the Background Theory does emphasize that as we move between different terrains of knowledge at different levels, we can stimulate an intermittent evolutionary kinetic energy in knowledge production by introducing an ecological niche. This is similar to punctuated equilibrium in evolutionary biology. Homeostasis remains the norm. Only when it enters a different niche will change occur rapidly in a short period of time.

11.

The Background Theory (*haikeiron*) was adopted from a critical visual theory from Japan, "The Landscape Theory" (*fukeiron*). Its development did not conform to the rules of academic citation, but drew on the idea of punctuated equilibrium. Here we transplant a visual theory from Japan of 1969 to Taiwan of 2019. Things are isolated, and then they mutate, develop, and evolve. Today, even knowledge production is rapidly changing along the epistemological fault line of the anthropocene. The Background Theory borrows this niche, emphasizing the mutual borrowing and transformation among different critical tools, in order to initiate a series of observations of the changing state of things. Those familiar with landscape theory know it mostly from the 1969 film *A.K.A. Serial Killer* by Masao Adachi, as well as the thesis in the photo collection *For a Language to Come*, published in 1970 by Takuma Nakahira. Adachi's film was based on the case of a 19-year-old serial killer that had shocked Japanese society at the time. Adachi did not directly film the perpetrator himself, but instead showed scenes from the places he lived growing up, from the suburbs to the city. Landscape theory declared: "All the landscapes which one faces in one's daily life, even those such as the beautiful sites shown on a postcard, are essentially related to the figure of a ruling power." (Sharp) We must observe not only the subject, but also the subject's social context and its visual construct, in search of a means to re-politicize the act of viewing, based on background and perspective.

12.

The Japanese words for landscape (*fukei*) and background (*haikei*) differ only by a single syllable. The subtle change in airflow between these two individual sounds serves to highlight the key premise. I have attempted to respond to the critical consciousness of ethnological landscape present in the respective works of Ara Kimbo and Liu Chuang. Indeed, Japanese left-wing visual theory can be rediscovered, and even repurposed, by contemporary critical discourse. Our emphasis on the air currents in the lacuna of living creatures is intended to resonate, through a flexible use of switching back and forth between different angles, with the idea of *enkinhou* – "perspective" in Japanese – which Takuma Nakahira advocated many times in his theories of photography. This suggests associations with the perspectivism that is present in animism. This ontological trope does not view culture and nature as respective categories. Establishing a flexible and mobile viewing angle can connect things in different natural states into an integral whole. Such a stance is not an attempt to find lost pre-modern traditions, but rather to borrow one of the strengths of animism, that is, "dissimilar in physicality," to identify the inherent similarity of things³. This allows us to freely establish a variety of different interpretive parameters with which to view the same picture, and to go back and forth between different image-viewing systems, interchanging perspectives. Put simply, a photograph may be showing an ethnoscape to you, but I may interpret the same photo as a technoscape that reveals the distribution of telegraph wires. This also reminds us that different technologies, like bionics, borrow resources from each other. In this way, they enter the Blue Ocean of different niches, breaking with the past to seek evolution and development.

3 Descola, Philippe, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, Trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2013), 178.