



John Vlachopoulos

**Travels to the Far East
and the Pacific**

Of his travels to the Far East,
Author Lafcadio Hearn wrote in
1904: "Here, all is enchantment.
You have entered bodily into
Fairyland—into a world that is not
and never can be your own. You
have been transported out of your
century into an era forgotten, back
to something as ancient as
Nineveh."

Time Magazine 1956

Travels to the Far East and the Pacific

Prologue

I embark on this historical travelogue from Bangkok, Thailand, journeying south to Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, then further east and north to Fiji, Tahiti, Hawaii, before turning west towards Japan and Korea, and finally to Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and India. With the exception of the Himalayas, I have visited all the locations I write about, most of them several times since my first trip around the world in 1983. My most recent visit was in 2018 when I flew from Vienna to Taiwan. These visits were part of my activities as a university professor, researcher, lecturer, and industry consultant. I have been to Japan 15 times, Australia 5 times, Thailand, Taipei, Korea 3 times each, and China and India twice each. I've visited Hawaii 3 times for conferences and 4 other times as stopovers on my way to or from destinations in the Far East.

The enchantment and utter fascination that Lafcadio Hearn observed more than 120 years ago are still present, while the deep ancient cultural roots have given rise to spectacular modern developments. Cities like Singapore, Tokyo, Taipei, Seoul, and Shanghai exude futuristic modernity. Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, Hong Kong, and Beijing boast an unusual amount of urban vibrancy and diversity. In Bangkok and New Delhi, tradition harmoniously coexists with modern life. The authentic naturalness and beauty of Fiji and French Polynesia is pervasive. Even the massive developments of Honolulu have not impacted the surrounding natural beauty of Oahu. The imperial grandeur of China has been amplified by its stunning economic progress over just forty years.

This travelogue is a compilation of my Facebook posts from the last 30 weeks or so, with some editing. Like my previous four travelogues, which are downloadable from McMaster University's MACSPHERE, I have attempted to condense and distill the information I have gathered from reading and combine it with a few personal observations, experiences, and photos.

John Vlachopoulos

Burlington, Ontario, Canada

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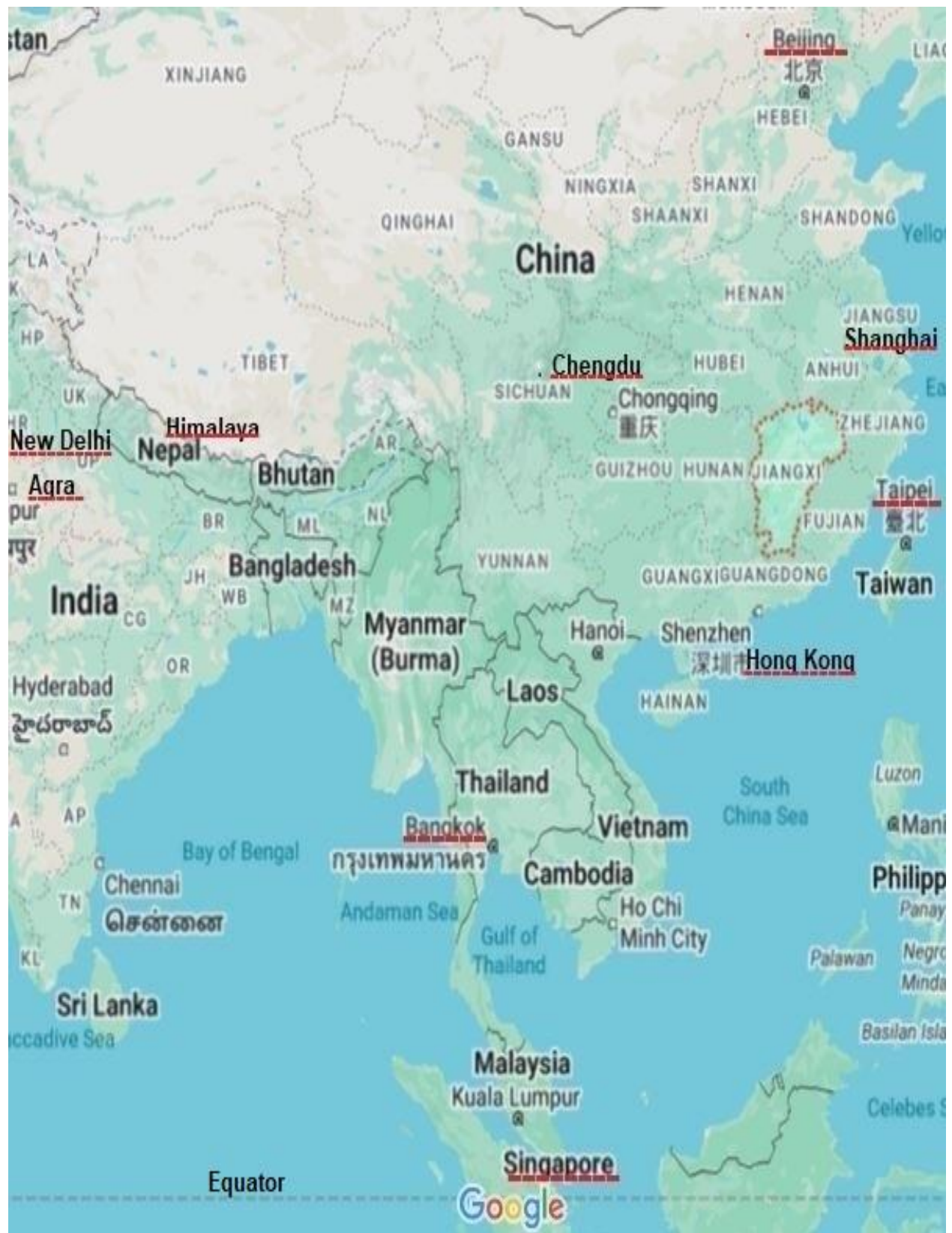
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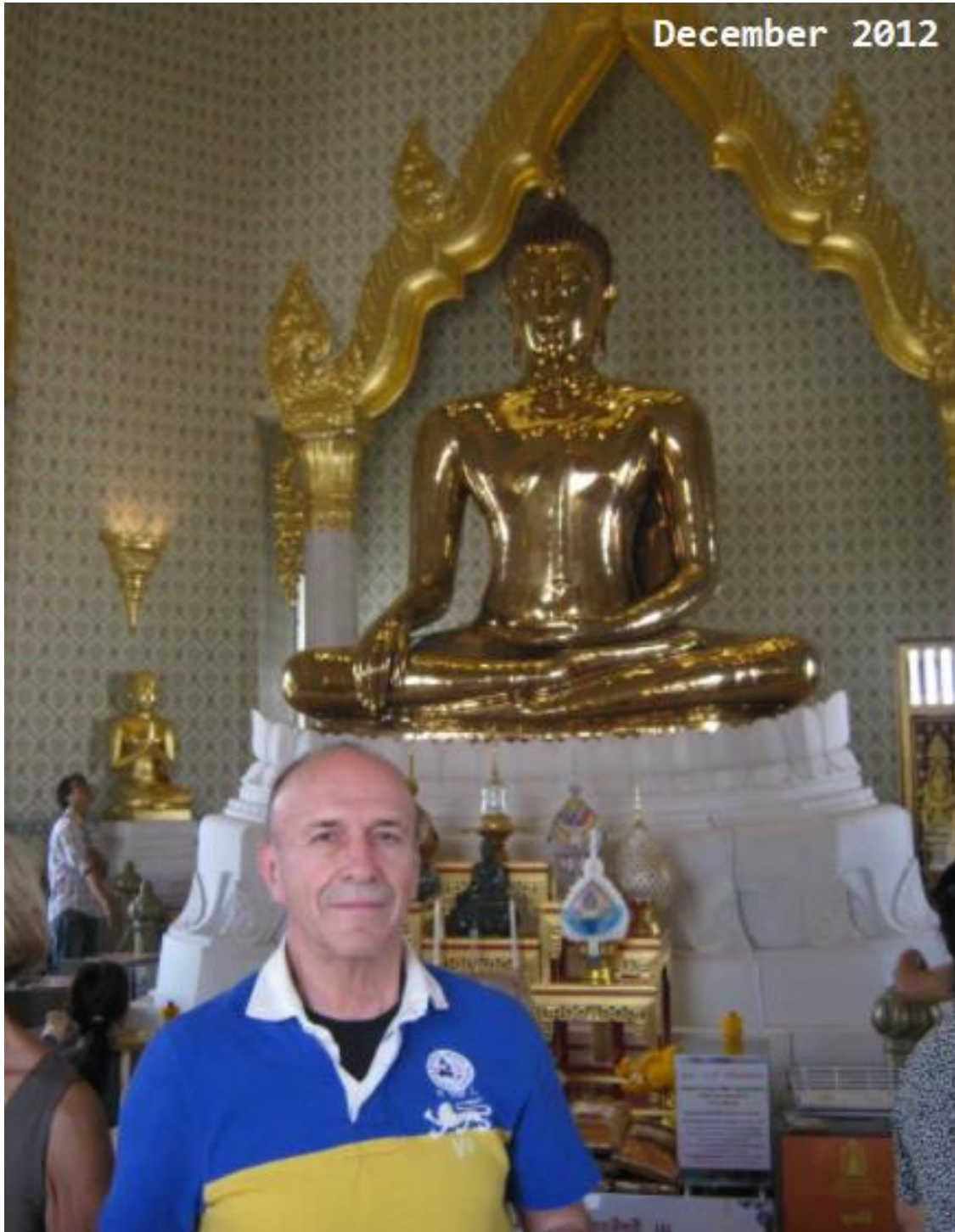
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BANGKOK, THAILAND



The 5.5-ton **Golden Buddha** statue, located at Wat Traimit Temple, was apparently crafted in the 14th century. It had been covered with some kind of plaster for a couple of hundred years, presumably to protect it from potential thieves. Not much attention was paid to it in one of the hundreds of Buddhist temples in Bangkok. However, in 1955, when an attempt was made to move it, the ropes broke, probably due to a miscalculation of its weight (gold is about seven times heavier than plaster). Parts of the plaster chipped off, revealing the golden interior. During my third visit to Bangkok in December 2012, I wanted to recreate my picture of sitting cross-legged in front of the statue just as during my 1983 visit shown on the front cover. However, the statue had been relocated to a new building and placed on a pedestal.

Buddha, which means "the awakened one," was born as Siddhartha Gautama in Nepal, most likely in 563 BC, and passed away at the age of 80 in 483 BC. According to legend, he was born into a royal family but chose to renounce his royal privileges and become a wandering ascetic teacher. His teachings emphasized moderation, advocating the avoidance of both overindulgence and severe asceticism, ultimately leading to Nirvana. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Nirvana means "the extinction of desire, hatred, and ignorance, and ultimately, the end of suffering and rebirth." It involves mental training, including meditation, ethical conduct, kindness, and mindfulness.

Buddhism does not entail belief in a creator or almighty god. Instead, it offers teachings and practices to attain enlightenment. There are two main branches and interpretations of Buddhism. The Theravada branch is predominantly practiced in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, while the Mahayana branch is practiced in Nepal, Bhutan, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. Additionally, there are smaller branches and sects practiced throughout Asia. The Dalai Lama is the leader of Tibetan Buddhism. It is estimated that there are approximately 550 million Buddhists worldwide, but relatively few in India, where Buddhism originated.

In Japan, according to recent statistics, 67% of the population participates in Buddhist activities and festivities, and 69% in Shinto (a polytheistic religion). The sum exceeds 100% because many Japanese people practice both faiths. Lafcadio Hearn's book "Japan's Religions: Shinto and Buddhism" provides unique insights into the philosophical foundations of both religions and comes highly recommended.

THAILAND AND I

May 1983

December 2012



I was in high school when I saw the blockbuster movie "**The King and I**," starring Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr. I was fascinated by the story, the exoticism, and the mystery, and I hoped that someday I would visit Thailand. The first opportunity arrived in May 1983 when I flew to Seoul, Korea, for lecturing at a conference and presenting a seminar at the University of Kyoto, Japan. For my return to Canada, I decided not to fly over the Pacific Ocean but to go around the world with a stop in Bangkok.

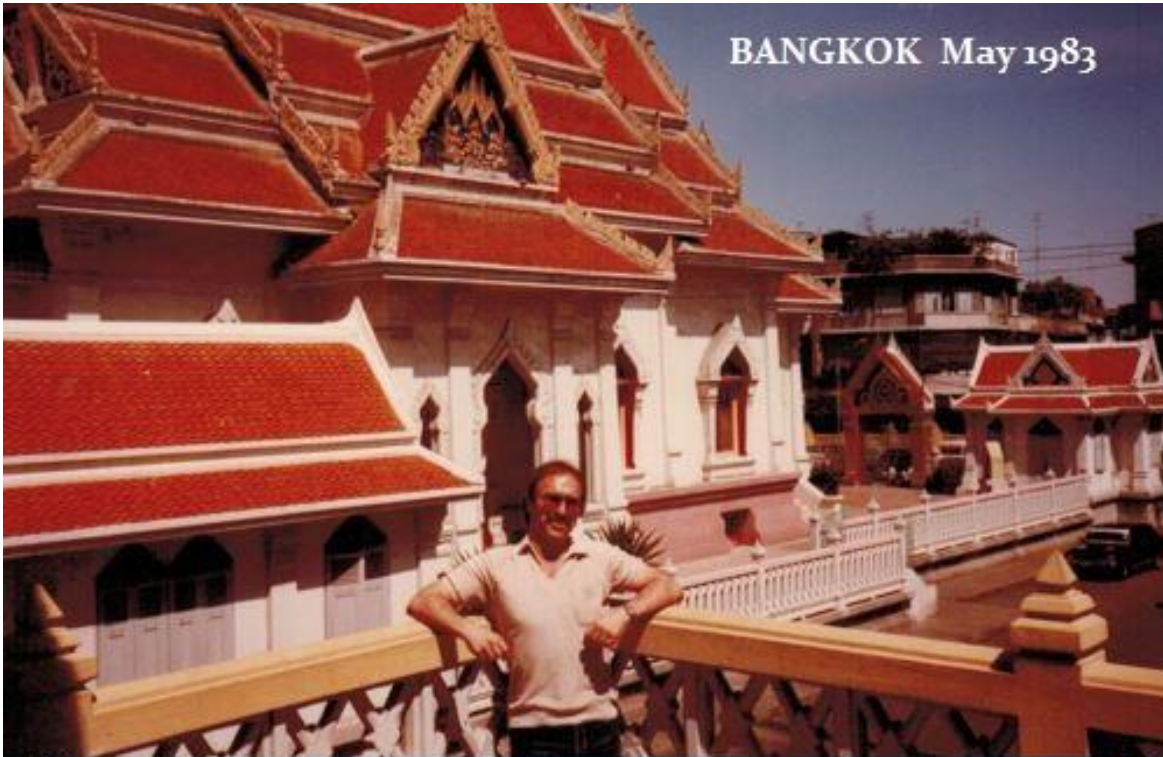
My second visit to Bangkok was in December 1999, and my third visit was in December 2012 for Polymer Processing Society conferences. When I was in Bangkok in 1999, a new movie based on the same story titled "Anna and the King," with Jodie Foster and Chow Yun-fat in the leading roles, was released. The showing was banned in Thailand due to historical inaccuracies and insults to the memory of King Mongkut (1804-1868). The story is based on the popular published memoirs of **Anna Leonowens** (1831-1915). She was born in India at an army barracks and married an army private. Her husband died in 1859, leaving her impoverished in Singapore with a young daughter and a son.

Anna quickly realized that the best way to survive among the colonial society of British military officers and merchants in Singapore was to invent a new identity. She claimed that she was an upper-class lady born in Wales and the widow of an army major killed in battle. In reality, her husband was never promoted beyond the rank of sergeant, and he had died of a heart attack. She opened a school teaching the children of British officers. In 1862, she accepted an offer to teach English to the 35 wives and 82 children of **King Mongkut of Siam** and remained in Bangkok until 1868.

Her memoirs involved exaggerations based on Anna's fertile imagination, which were further amplified in numerous on- and off-Broadway musicals and movies. Yul Brynner starred in 4,625 performances as King Mongkut, proving Oscar Wilde's quote that "nothing succeeds like excess." The king is portrayed as a brutal tyrant, which is highly improbable for a man who had served as a Buddhist monk for 27 years. Anna is portrayed as a sophisticated and opinionated lady with liberal ideas. Whatever the exaggerations might have been, she had a definite influence on Crown Prince Chulalongkorn, who abolished slavery and created European-style schools, when he became king.

Anna Leonowens moved to New York and eventually settled in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she founded the Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design, recently renamed NSCAD University. Her son returned to Siam and became an officer in the royal cavalry. Her daughter married a Scottish banker by the name of Fyshe and raised a family in Canada. In the late 1980s, I had a chance meeting with a great-grandson of Anna in Hamilton, Ontario.

BANGKOK AND BEYOND



BANGKOK May 1983



PPS Conference, Pattaya, THAILAND, December 2012

Thai national identity began to take shape during the Sukhothai kingdom in 1238. However, it was during the Ayutthaya era that a country known as **Siam** was established. The name was officially changed to Thailand in 1939, meaning "land of the free." Thailand remained independent, avoiding colonization despite being situated between French colonies in the east and English colonies in the west. During the Ayutthaya era, Siam was considered one of the great powers of Asia, alongside China and India.

The kingdom reached its zenith of wealth and power under the absolute monarchy of King Narai (1656-1688). An adventurous Greek named Constantine **Gerakis** played a significant role as the de-facto prime minister of Siam for several years. He was born on the island of Kefalonia in 1647 and left home at the age of 13. He became a cabin boy on an English ship and eventually arrived in London. He served in the Royal Navy and fought against the Dutch. He enlisted as a gunner and clerk in the English East India Company and traveled to Indochina in 1669. His family name in Greek means 'falcon' in English ('faucon' in French), and Gerakis Franco-Anglicized his name to **Phaulkon**. By the time he reached Siam in 1675, he was fluent in English, French, Portuguese, and Malay, and he learned Siamese within a couple of years.

Phaulkon was introduced to **King Narai** as a trade facilitator. The king asked him to examine the kingdom's accounting books and determine how much money Siam owed to a group of Persian traders. Phaulkon concluded that the Persians owed money to the kingdom, not the other way around. The king also tasked him with determining the weight of a heavy cannon. Phaulkon loaded the cannon onto a boat, marked the waterline, and then filled the boat with rice until the mark was reached. King Narai was greatly impressed by Phaulkon's abilities and appointed him to important government positions, eventually making him his chief minister.

In 1682, Phaulkon married 16-year-old Maria de Guymar de Pinha, of Japanese-Portuguese background, and they had two sons. By 1685, he was the second most powerful man in the country. He cultivated diplomatic relations with the French and was ennobled by King Louis XIV. His rapid rise to power aroused envy among senior court officials. When King Narai fell ill, rumors spread that Phaulkon was planning to rule the country with the presumed heir to the throne as a puppet king. This led to a military coup, and Phaulkon and the heir were arrested, tortured, and executed in 1688. Phaulkon's wife became a slave in the palace kitchens but later rose to head the kitchen staff and eventually gained her freedom. She is known for introducing dessert recipes to Siamese cuisine.

Modern Thai history began with the founding of the current reigning dynasty in 1782. Notable monarchs include Mongkut (r. 1851-1868), Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910), Bhumibhol (r. 1946-2016), and the current king, Vajiralongkorn, who has been in power since 2016.

SINGAPORE



Marina Sands Hotel, Singapore



Changi Airport,
Singapore, August 1988

In the early 1800s, Singapore was a tropical island inhabited by fewer than a thousand people. It has since transformed into an economic Asian tiger with a population of nearly 6 million, boasting one of the world's highest GDPs per capita. This transformation began with the arrival of an ambitious British pioneer named Stamford Raffles in January 1819, a name forever linked to Singapore. The prestigious luxury **Raffles Hotel** has been attracting wealthy clientele since 1887 and is synonymous with high-class living. The modern and iconic **Marina Bay Sands Hotel** caters to the nouveau riche.

Raffles was an officer of the English East India Company, while the island was under the rule of the Malay Sultan. Raffles, on his own initiative, invited the Sultan's disgruntled brother and proclaimed him Sultan of Singapore, ruling over a few hundred native fishermen and sea gypsies. The East India Company was buying tea from China and selling opium, produced in Northern India, to the Chinese. The trade ships were passing through the Malacca Straits, with Singapore serving as a pivotal port.

Raffles recognized that the best way to attract people was to make Singapore a tax-free port. Chinese and Indian traders flocked to the island, along with Malays from neighboring regions. Raffles spent less than a year in Singapore, but his visionary city planning left an enduring legacy with his name linked with various entities in Singapore and worldwide.

British colonial rule ended in 1959, and **Lee Kuan Yew**, the leader of the People's Action Party (PAP), became Prime Minister. After a brief period of federation with Malaysia, Singapore became an independent republic in 1965. Today's Singapore has been profoundly shaped by Lee Kuan Yew, who served as prime minister until 1990. When I was a doctoral student at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, I attended a speech by Lee, where he famously described Singapore as "a high-compression engine."

Remarkably, Lee managed to build a cohesive society despite significant demographic differences, with approximately 74% Chinese, 14% Malay, 9% Indian, and 3% other nationals. This was achieved through a focus on hard work and productivity. Foreign corporations were attracted by favorable tax policies. The government established state-owned corporations that had to be profitable. Homes were built by the government, but instead of renting, citizens were encouraged and assisted in buying them. Strikes were restricted, and strict laws were enacted and enforced. In 1994, an American teenager was sentenced to four months in jail and six cane lashes for vandalizing a few cars. Lee's party, PAP, never lost an election, with its lowest popular vote share being 61% in 2020. Lee's eldest son, Lee Hsien Loong, has been serving as prime minister since 2004, now in his fifth consecutive term.

During my second trip around the world, I spent two days in Singapore. I had previously spent two months in Greece, then flew to London for a few days before continuing to Singapore on a British Airways flight, with a refueling stop in Dubai.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



In August 1988, I flew to Melbourne from Singapore to attend a Rheology Workshop. Afterward, I took a train to Sydney for the 10th International Congress on Rheology. The train was slow, and it took approximately 12 hours to cover the 900-kilometer distance. I was in no hurry, so I had the opportunity to enjoy the picturesque landscape of green fields, sheep, and kangaroos. This trip marked my first of five visits to Australia (in 1988, 1993, 2000, 2003, and 2016).

The **Sydney Opera House** is among the world's most iconic buildings. The international design competition received 233 architectural entries from 32 countries. The winner was Danish architect **Jørn Utzon**, and construction commenced in 1959. The unconventional design, with its complex geometry, led to significant structural challenges that the engineers at Ove Arup and Partners eventually managed to overcome. There were substantial cost and time overruns, along with serious disagreements between the architect and the local government. It became the proverbial case of foreign genius versus local political mediocrity. The first opera performance held there was, well-chosen, Sergei Prokofiev's "War and Peace" in 1973.

The day after I took the picture in 2016, I had the opportunity to watch a masterful opera about the building itself (!). It was performed outdoors on the steps of the Opera House, which had been transformed into a theatrical stage using tremendous Aussie ingenuity. The operatic performance highlighted the challenges and criticisms faced by Jørn Utzon, including derogatory remarks about his design (like "cement armadillo" and worse), conflicts with government ministers, construction delays (1959-1973), escalating costs, Utzon's resignation, and the eventual completion by an Australian architectural team. Utzon never returned to Australia to see his design completed, but he was eventually honored in various ways.

Not far from the Opera House, at Sydney Cove, is where a convoy of 11 ships arrived in 1788 under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip. These ships carried 736 convicts (75% men), along with approximately 300 mariners and other passengers. A penal camp was established, and on January 26, the British flag (Union Jack) was raised. This date is celebrated as Australia's National Day. However, it remains controversial because it marks the establishment of a penal colony in an Aboriginal land. In the 1700s, the British devised a means of dealing with overcrowded jails by transporting undesirables to the colonies. Simultaneously, this practice provided a labor force to distant locations.

Before the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, several thousand convicts were transported to Maryland. With the loss of the American colonies, Australia became the primary destination for convicts. After serving their sentences as laborers and servants to the "free settlers," these convicts were integrated into society. The transportation of convicts to Australia continued until 1868. It is estimated that about 160,000 individuals were transported, most of them for petty crimes and Irish for rebellious activities. The indigenous population was probably around a million before the arrival of the Europeans.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



The first humans arrived in Australia more than 50,000 years ago. At that time, the sea level was approximately 130 meters lower, making it easier for these early humans to travel between the islands. The indigenous Australian population had reached about one million before the arrival of Europeans. The Latin term "Terra Australis incognita" (unknown southern land) was used by Europeans in the Middle Ages to describe a hypothetical continent in the south. This hypothesis was proposed by Ptolemy in the second century AD, suggesting that the landmass in the north should be balanced by a land in the south on the Earth's globe.

The first known European to set foot in Australia was Dutch navigator Willem Janszoon in **1606**. Several other explorers followed, and in 1770, the famous British explorer James Cook arrived and made contact with the natives. After the establishment of the first penal colony in Sydney by Captain Arthur Phillip in 1788, convicts and free settlers began to arrive. However, it was the discovery of gold in 1851 that brought waves of non-convict migrants to Australia, mainly from Britain and Ireland. Excluding the natives, the population had reached about one million by 1860.

National Australian consciousness was forged during World War I when the Entente Powers of Britain, France, and Russia were fighting against Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. About half a million Australians volunteered for the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (**ANZAC**). Their most famous battle was at Gallipoli against the Ottomans. Despite an extraordinary display of courage, it resulted in a humiliating defeat due to poor planning. Approximately 10,000 Australians were killed. The 1981 movie "Gallipoli," starring Mel Gibson, depicts the experiences of young enlisted Australian men before and during their futile campaign against the Turkish troops.

Melbourne and Sydney are both wonderful cities to live in or visit, with roughly the same population size (around 5 million). The question "which is better?" is frequently asked in travel guides and by travelers. Of course, it is impossible for any city in any part of the world to look more picturesque than the area around the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge. Melbourne boasts better restaurants and nightlife, while Sydney offers a much better coastline with some very popular beaches like Bondi and Coogee. Regarding weather, Sydney can be very hot and humid in the summer, but both cities are very pleasant in the winter. Melbourne appeared to me to be more dynamic in terms of technology and industry, but I may be influenced by my own experiences. I have visited both cities during my five trips to Australia, but I have given lectures in Melbourne during all five visits (some of them lasting several hours), whereas I have only lectured in Sydney once.

My picture was taken during a visit to Melbourne for a lecture at the Asian Workshop on Polymer Processing and the 74th presentation of my course on rheology/extrusion in 2016. To my left is Martin Quaedflieg, Commercial Director at Xplore Instruments (Netherlands), and my former postdoctoral fellow, Professor Shih-Jung Liu (Chang Gung University, Taiwan).

BEYOND SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE

Near Adelaide, Australia, December 1993



Every rose has its thorn, and every country harbors its dark secrets. Australia's dark secret lies in the inhumane treatment of its indigenous inhabitants, the Aborigines. They lived in near-complete isolation for tens of thousands of years, developing their own cultures and over 250 languages. These hunter-gatherers lived in semi-nomadic groups, enjoying a good life. There was some conflict between tribes, primarily related to asserting superiority, applying customary laws, seeking justice, seeking revenge, and kidnapping women.

The first encounter between indigenous natives and mariners, accompanying Willem Janszoon in 1606, resulted in the death of 10 Dutchmen and an unknown number of casualties among the indigenous people. When Arthur Phillip arrived in 1788, there was low-intensity conflict with the natives. With the arrival of many British settlers in the 19th century, the conflict escalated. It's estimated that at least 100,000 Aborigines and about 2,500 Europeans were killed during the so-called frontier wars. Firearms proved far deadlier than spears and boomerangs. Additionally, many indigenous Australians succumbed to European diseases like flu, smallpox, measles, and tuberculosis. There have been over 400 recorded massacres of indigenous Australians and at least two dozen intentional mass poisonings using farm chemicals. Historian Lyndall Ryan from the University of Newcastle has documented several hundred massacre sites.

In December 1993, I flew from Toronto to Los Angeles in just over 5 hours. After spending several hours at the airport due to a flight delay, I flew to Sydney, Australia, which took more than 15 hours. I was both relieved and exhausted when I arrived at my hotel. My next stop was **Brisbane** for the 3rd Pacific Polymer Conference held at Gold Coast, located about 70 kilometers to the south. **Gold Coast** boasts a long sandy coastline and is a popular tourist destination. Following that, I flew to Melbourne to present a day-long seminar on computational methods in polymer processing. My next flight took me to Adelaide, where I visited my high school friend Spyros and his wife, Georgia Aliagas. Spyros was serving as the Consul General of Greece.

While in Adelaide, I learned a lot about **Coober Pedy**, situated approximately 850 kilometers to the north-northwest. Coober Pedy is a small town known as the **opal capital** of the world. Opals are precious silica stones that change their dazzling array of colors as the angle of view or illumination changes. Industrial mining of opals is not feasible as they cannot be detected using science-based technology. It's a matter of random digging and luck. Opals attract many fortune hunters to Coober Pedy, and there are reportedly more than 250,000 mine shaft entrances. Due to scorching daytime temperatures, many residents live in underground homes bored into the hillsides. The Greek Orthodox church is above ground, while the Serbian Orthodox church in Coober Pedy is underground.

NEW ZEALAND



I have visited New Zealand twice, in February 1997 and November 2016. However, due to a busy schedule of conferences and lectures, I never ventured far from Auckland, which has a population of 1.5 million. I enjoyed a delightful view of the waterfront area during a boat ride, courtesy of the conference organizers in 1997. The lush greenery captured in the photo was in front of the hotel during my 2016 visit, situated outside the downtown area. New Zealand, with a population of 5 million, boasts an innovative economy in both agriculture and manufacturing. The **Kiwi bird** is indigenous and frequently serves as the self-reference of New Zealanders. The **Kiwi fruit**, on the other hand, was imported from China and cultivated in New Zealand since the early 1900s.

No humans had set foot on the two large islands of New Zealand before around 1300 AD. It was in the early 1300s that settlers arrived from Polynesia and developed a distinctive culture known as **Māori**. The Māori culture was characterized by a warrior ethos, leading to frequent wars between different tribes. Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, after whom Tasmania was named, arrived in 1642. During the first encounter, four members of Tasman's crew were clubbed to death, and it remains unknown whether any Maori were killed.

Europeans did not visit until **1769** when British explorer **James Cook** arrived. Following Cook's arrival, several other European ships arrived, selling manufactured goods and firearms to some Maori tribes. Intertribal warfare persisted with more deadly consequences for tribes without European weapons. Due to wars and European diseases, the Maori population decreased by 60% within 40 years in the early 1800s.

Conflict arose between Maoris and British settlers during the 19th century. The settlers, consisting of working-class people with egalitarian ideas, contributed to New Zealand being the first nation in the world to grant the right to vote in political elections to women in 1893. Similar to Australia, national consciousness in New Zealand was forged during the First World War, when many New Zealanders volunteered and joined **ANZAC**. They participated in the unsuccessful Gallipoli campaign from 1915 to 1916. ANZAC Day is commemorated annually in New Zealand and Australia on April 25. ANZAC was the main allied force in the Battle of Crete in May 1941, where German paratroopers landed and occupied the island, suffering horrendous losses.

In 1984, the government declared New Zealand a nuclear-free zone, prohibiting ships powered by nuclear energy or carrying nuclear weapons from traversing the country's waters. In 1985, the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior, on its way to protest a French nuclear test in Polynesia, was bombed by French intelligence services, resulting in the drowning of a photographer during the sinking of the ship. The French operatives responsible were captured, sentenced to jail terms, and the French government faced embarrassment for an act of state terrorism.

FIJI



I briefly visited Fiji for three days on my way back to Canada after speaking at a conference in New Zealand in February 1997. In this part of the South Pacific, around one million people reside across 100 inhabited islands. Approximately three-quarters of the population live along the coast of the largest island, Viti Levu. **Indigenous Fijians** make up 57% of the population, while **Indo-Fijians** comprise 37%.

The earliest settlers in Fiji arrived from other Pacific islands around 3000 BC. They developed a unique culture, engaging in agriculture, intertribal conflicts, and cannibalism. The first European to reach Fiji was the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in **1643**. Subsequently, James Cook arrived in 1774, and in 1789, William Bligh mapped the islands. Bligh is renowned for the mutiny on HMS Bounty, during which he and two dozen loyalists were set adrift on a small boat. Initial European visits to Fiji were friendly but later turned violent. Coastal Fijians were coerced into forsaking their culture and adopting Christianity. British settlers utilized them in conflicts against inland Fijians who maintained their traditional lifestyle, including cannibalism. Further conflict led to rebellions and massacres of the indigenous population.

In 1879, the colonial governor began importing contract laborers from India to work on plantations. Their wages were meager, and their living conditions were unacceptable. By 1916, over 60,000 laborers had been brought in, with many choosing to stay in Fiji rather than returning to India. This altered the ethnic composition, raising concerns among indigenous Fijians about losing control over land and resources to the Indo-Fijians after Fiji gained self-government in 1967. Independence was granted by the British in 1970. Subsequent military coups were triggered by the perception of Indo-Fijian dominance in the government.

Fiji experiences a warm, tropical climate throughout the year without extreme heat, attracting tourists to its white sandy beaches, primarily from Australia, New Zealand, the USA, China, Japan, and Canada. However, this tropical paradise faces challenges due to **climate change**. Rising sea levels have forced some Fijians to abandon their coastal homes and relocate inland. The frequency of cyclones is increasing, and they are going to significantly impact agriculture and the economy.

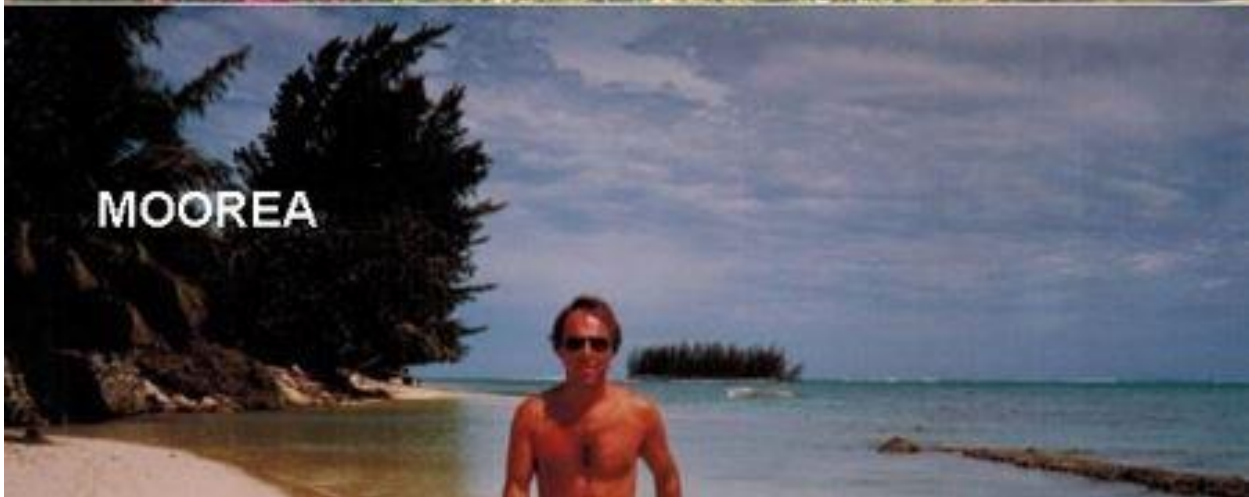
TAHITI, FRENCH POLYNESIA



Around the World / June-August 1988



TAHITI



MOOREA

In August 1988, after presenting a lecture at a conference in Sydney, I flew to **Pape'ete** in **Tahiti** (situated about 6,000 km from Australia and about 8000 km from Chile). The hotel swimming pool and reception were at the top of a hill and we would take the elevator down to our rooms. The beach was a short downhill walk, shown in the middle picture. I took a ferry boat to reach the enchanting island of Mo'orea some 25 km away from Pape'ete.

British sailors were circumnavigating the globe aboard HMS Dolphin under the command of Captain Samuel Wallis and sighted the island on June 18, **1767**. HMS Dolphin had completed another circumnavigation of the globe between 1764 and 1766, under the command of John Byron, with Samuel Wallis a crew member. John Byron was the grandfather of the renowned romantic poet Lord Byron, hero in the Greek war of independence, who died at Messolonghi, Greece, in 1824.

After the British docked at Matavai Bay (where Pape'ete later emerged) Tahitians approached on canoes and some of them climbed aboard the ship. They were displaying immense curiosity towards iron objects like nails and cleats. Astonished by their inability to break these items, the Tahitians swiftly transitioned from the Stone Age to the Iron Age. When too many of them arrived near the boat wanting to get some iron-work, the British fired a heavy gun over their heads to scare them away. A day or two later the Tahitians were throwing stones and the British responded by firing their muskets, killing two of them and injuring a third. In a subsequent encounter the Tahitians sent canoes full of beautiful naked young women. Amicable relations were quickly established with the members of the crew seeking amorous liaisons with the women, in exchange for nails and other iron objects.

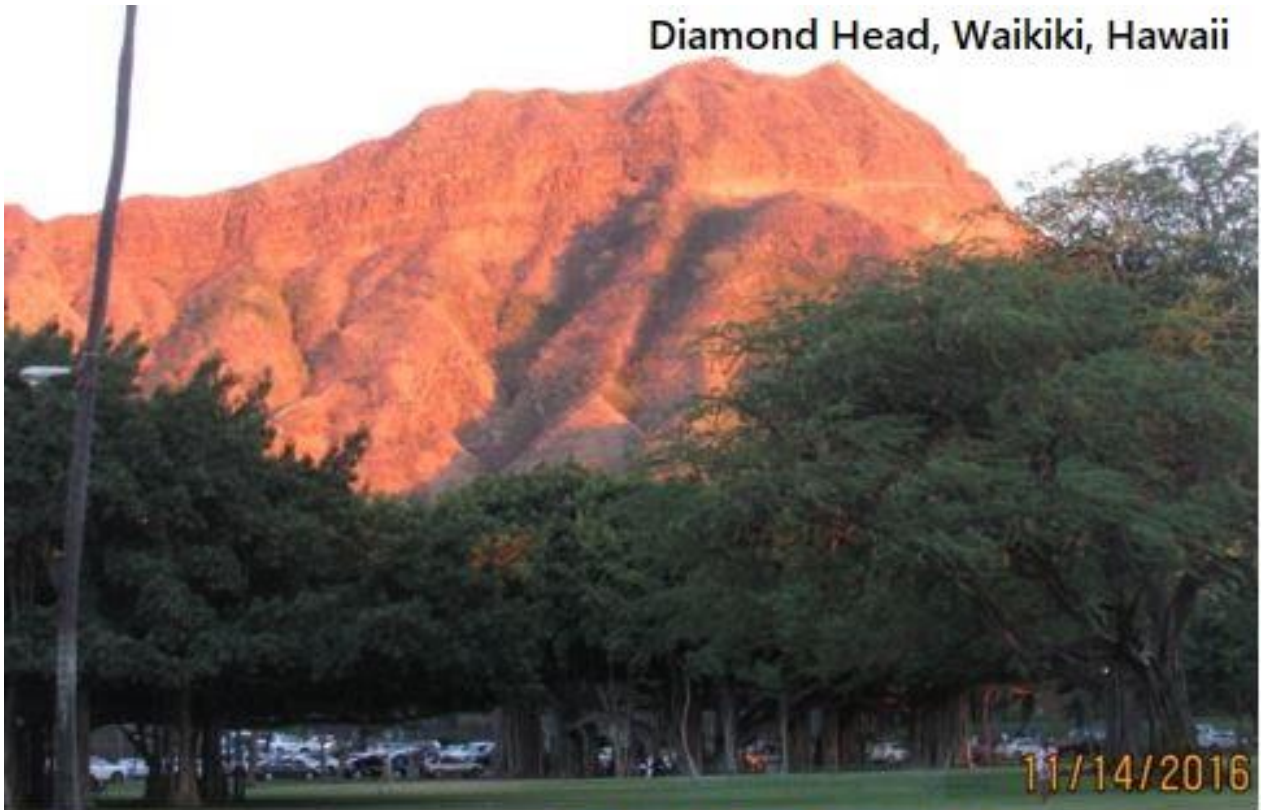
Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, French navigator, soldier, statesman and mathematician (author of a book on integral calculus) arrived with about 350 crew in two ships, on April 4, 1768. The French were welcomed by the Tahitians. Here is what Bougainville wrote in his book: "All these people came crying tayo [it means brother or friend]....the canoes were full of females.....Most of these were naked....It was very difficult, amidst such a sight, to keep at their work four hundred young French sailors, who had seen no woman for six months.". Bougainville named the island Nouvelle Cythère (New Kythera), after the birthplace of Aphrodite (Venus) the goddess of love, in Greek mythology.

Influenced by the romanticized stories, French painter **Paul Gauguin** abandoned his job as a stockbroker, his wife and five kids and went to Tahiti in the 1890s in search of paradise. Gauguin's paintings of tropical sensuality reflect his powerful imagination and artistic brilliance, but not the reality of his life there.

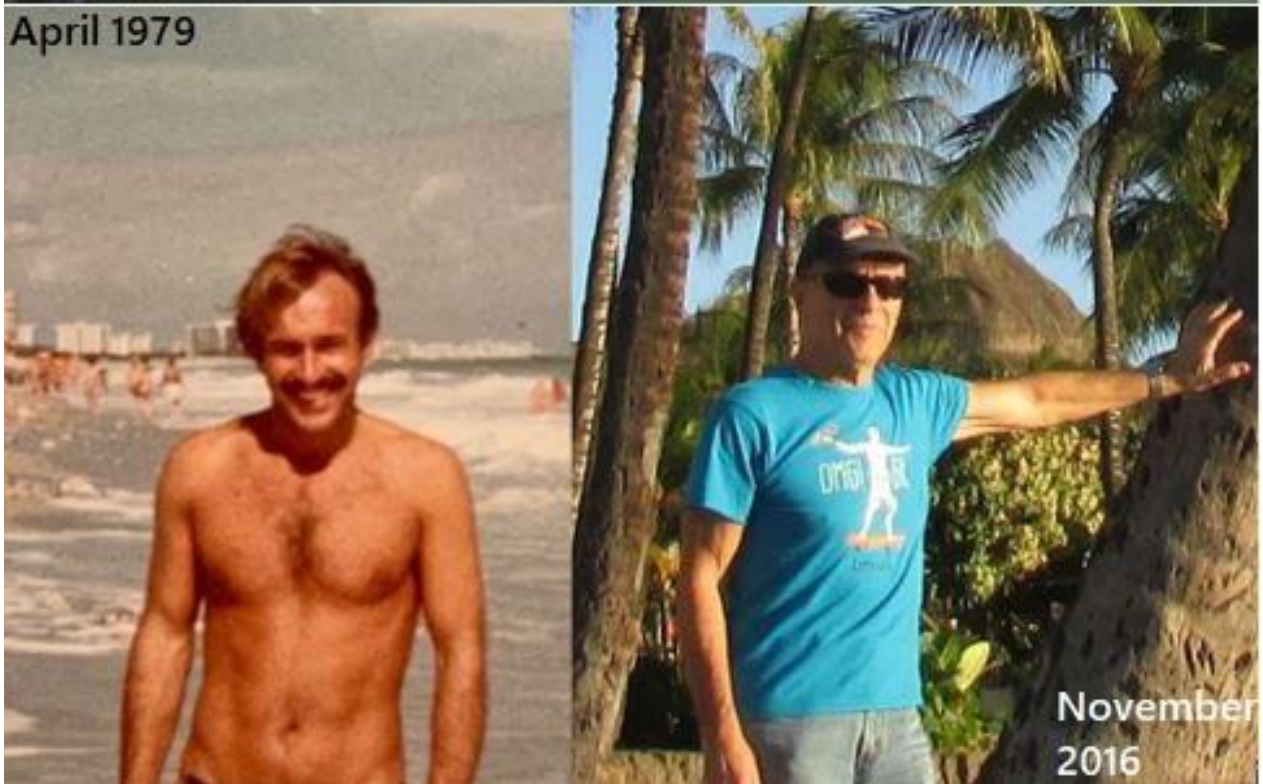
For me, it was a very pleasant short stay, before my next flight to Los Angeles on my way back home to Canada two months and ten days after I had left.

HAWAII

Diamond Head, Waikiki, Hawaii



April 1979



Hawaii is situated in the heart of the Pacific Ocean, approximately 2000 km north of the equator, while Tahiti sits roughly 2000 km to the south. Renowned for their natural beauty and delightful tropical climate, these islands boast temperatures rarely exceeding 32°C or dropping below 18°C, regardless of the season. Among the islands, **Oahu** attracts the most visitors and serves as an ideal stopover for those travelling between North America, the Far East, or Australia. I first visited in April 1979 and most recently in November 2016. During my travels, I've been to Honolulu on Oahu (where the majority of the population resides) seven times, twice to Maui (known for its best beaches), and once to the Big Island (also known as Hawaii), which is obviously volcanic.

The first European explorers to reach Hawaii were Captain **James Cook** and his crew in **1778**. Unfortunately, during Cook's second visit in 1779, a dispute with a local chieftain led to a violent confrontation and his death. In 1795 a powerful leader, later known as Kamehameha I, founded the Kingdom of Hawaii. The last monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani, was deposed in 1893 by a small group of sugar and pineapple plantation owners, with assistance from US troops. The arrival of Europeans brought with it diseases like smallpox, tuberculosis, and measles, causing the native population to dwindle from approximately 500,000 to 50,000 by 1890. Hawaii was annexed in 1898 and officially became the 50th US state in 1959.

The early development of tourism in Hawaii is attributed to George Lycurgus, a flamboyant Greek-American entrepreneur and adventurer. In 1893, he established one of the first hotel resorts at Waikiki beach, named Sans Souci (meaning "without worry" in French), after Friedrich the Great's palace in Potsdam, Prussia. My 2016 picture was taken at Sans Souci beach park, while the 1979 picture was captured just a kilometer away. George Lycurgus, born near Sparta in 1858, passed away on the Big Island in 1960. He was also involved, alongside other royalists, in the unsuccessful 1895 counter-revolution aimed at reinstating Queen Lili'uokalani to the throne.

Diamond Head forms part of a volcanic crater that emerged thousands of years ago. The surrounding national park is highly popular among tourists. Honolulu Airport lies a mere 15 kilometers along the coast, and Pearl Harbor is in close proximity. The surprise Japanese attack on the US naval base at **Pearl Harbor** on December 7, 1941, resulted in the deaths of 2403 Americans and significant damage to several ships. Interestingly, "Wiki-Wiki," meaning "quick-quick" in Hawaiian, refers to the buses shuttling between the airport terminals. This term inspired the name of the computer software that eventually led to platforms like Wikipedia, Wikimedia, Wikidata, and Wikileaks.

MOUNT FUJI, JAPAN



I have included 26 pages of pictures and text on Japan in another travelogue titled '[In the Footsteps of Lafcadio Hearn aka Koizumi Yakumo.](#)' Lafcadio was born in the Greek island of Lefkada to a Greek mother and Irish father. He grew up in Ireland, went to school in England and France, immigrated to the USA, spent two years in Martinique and arrived in Japan in 1890, where he resided until his death in 1904. Lafcadio was a prolific writer, he became famous for his books about Japan's folktales, ghost stories and legends, and for introducing Japan's exoticism to the West. My Lafcadio travelogue is accessible from McMaster University's MACSPHERE by clicking <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27486> and a Greek translation by clicking <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27487>.

The magnificent symmetrical cone of Mount Fuji, known also as Fujiyama or Fujisan to Japanese speakers, is the symbol of Japan. Japanese are expected to climb Mount Fuji once in their lifetime. It is an active volcano with low eruptive danger, with its last eruption having occurred in 1707. It is a sacred mountain in the indigenous **Shinto religion**. Shinto is polytheistic with numerous Kami (deities or spirits), which are supposed to inhabit volcanoes, rocks, trees, the living, the dead and natural phenomena like wind, rain, and sunshine.

Japan's pre-modern history traces back to 1543, marked by the arrival of three Portuguese navigators who introduced firearms to Japanese warlords. In the late 1500s a formidable leader emerged. **Tokugawa Ieyasu** was formally appointed **Shogun** by the emperor, who had only titular authority. Japan remained secluded from the rest of the world for 250 years. In July 1853 American Commodore **Matthew C. Perry** arrived at **Edo** (Tokyo) Bay, with four steam-powered ships, less than 100 kilometers from the base of Mount Fuji. Perry's arrival and the heavy guns of his ships intimidated the Japanese, leading to an agreement to open the country for trade. The social and political order was disrupted, the shogunate was abolished and the 16-year-old emperor **Meiji** was brought from Kyoto to Edo (Tokyo). The Meiji restoration (revolution) of 1868 initiated a wave of Western modernization in Japan. By the 1890s, Japan was technologically advanced and militarily very strong. It emerged victorious in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).

In 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria, and other parts of China during the Second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945). In the Second World War (1940-1945) Japan allied with Germany and Italy. Following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Americans retaliated by bombing Yokohama and Tokyo in an air raid planned and led by colonel (later General) James Doolittle in April 1942. Despite the devastating firebombing of Tokyo on the night of March 9-10, 1945, resulting in 100,000 dead, Japan showed no intention of surrendering. President Harry Truman then ordered the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9). The unconditional surrender was announced by **Emperor Hirohito** on August 15, 1945

My picture on Mount Fuji was taken at an altitude of 2305 meters. The peak reaches 3776 meters above sea level.

TOKYO, JAPAN



Tokyo serves as Japan's capital and it is the world's most populous city, having a population of over 40 million within its encompassing urban area. This megalopolis seamlessly merges modernity with tradition, featuring a striking coexistence of ultramodern skyscrapers alongside revered Shinto and Buddhist shrines. While its streets bustle with activity, Tokyo boasts an extensive subway and rail network, facilitating the daily movement of tens of millions of passengers.

My first visit to Tokyo coincided with the commencement of **Golden Week** in May of 1983. Unaware of the major holiday, I was taken aback when, at 8:00 AM the next morning, the streets and subways appeared remarkably deserted—a surprising revelation. During my 2016 trip, while atop the observation deck of the Skytree tower (depicted in the picture), an earthquake struck, adding an unexpected twist to my experience. On my 15th journey to Japan in 2017, I travelled to Matsue to visit Lafcadio Hearn's residence and the nearby museum.

Following Japan's unconditional surrender, **General Douglas MacArthur** assumed the role of de facto absolute monarch for six years (1945-1951), earning the moniker 'Gaijin Shōgun' (foreign Shogun). Skillfully orchestrating the conclusion of the war, the occupation, and Japan's reinvention, MacArthur recognized the paramount importance of politeness, generosity, saving face, and tradition in Japanese society. Despite pressures from some Washington politicians to “hang Hirohito” as a war criminal, MacArthur chose not to disgrace him in any manner, marking the successful reformation of Japan.

Japan underwent unprecedented economic growth from the conclusion of World War II until 1991, largely attributed to the implementation of W. D. Deming's methods for enhancing quality and productivity. Invited by General MacArthur, Deming, an American engineer, statistician, and economist, played a pivotal role in Japan's infrastructural and economic reconstruction. The economic model employed resembled a form of state capitalism, prioritizing global market expansion over profits. Though books once lauded Japanese management practices in the 1980s, they have since waned in popularity. In my view, it wasn't merely the management style but rather the Japanese people's diligence and willingness to work tirelessly for extended hours that propelled the nation's prosperity.

While Tokyo's landscape is dominated by neon lights, designer brands, and a plethora of restaurants catering to diverse tastes and budgets, Japanese traditions persist. Illustrated in the picture I captured of a wedding procession at the Meiji Shinto shrine, near Omotesando-dori—a bustling shopping street—these traditions endure. Completed in 1920 and dedicated to Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken, the shrine was destroyed during World War II but swiftly rebuilt. Traditional practices like the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, incense appreciation, and bowing continue to be revered and practiced in modern-day Japan.

SEOUL AND DAJEON, KOREA



I have had the opportunity to visit South Korea three times. In May 1983, Korea seemed to be a "developing" country, similar in development level to Greece and Portugal. During my second visit in March 1995, it had clearly transitioned to a "developed" status comparable to Italy and France. By my third visit in June 2015, it was vying for the top spot among technologically advanced countries globally. Bloomberg's headline in 2015 read, "South Korea Leads World in Innovation as U.S. Exits Top Ten." The driving force behind the Koreans' progress seems to be their collective and individual sense of "han," a feeling that encompasses both resentment for historical injustices and misfortunes and hope for a better future.

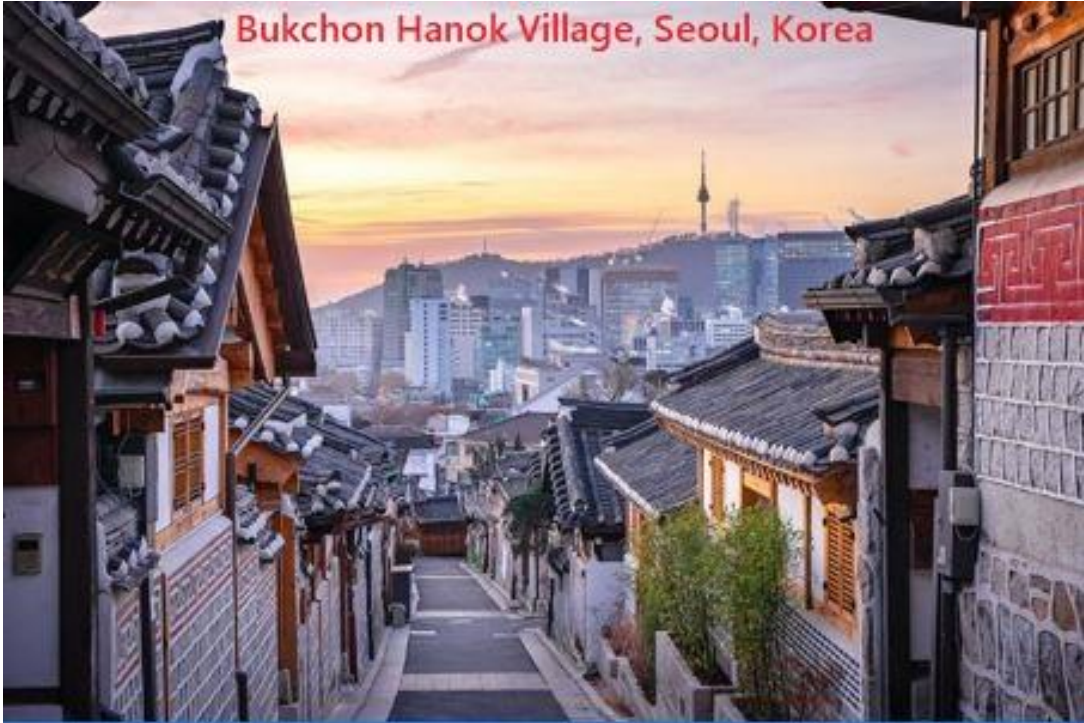
Following the Korean War, a unique form of state-guided capitalism emerged, somewhat akin to Japan's model and with the Korean "chaebol" resembling, but also different from Japan's "zaibatsu." "Chaebol" translates to "rich family" and refers to massive industrial conglomerates like Samsung, Hyundai, LG, and others. The fundamental idea is rooted in a family's vested interest in ensuring the longevity of a corporation for future generations rather than solely prioritizing shareholder short-term income.

During my visit to Seoul in 1995 for a Polymer Processing Society conference (PPS-11), I was invited to present two lectures at a research center of the HANWHA Group, a large business conglomerate (chaebol) with diverse interests in defense systems, explosives, energy, materials, aerospace, real estate, finance, and insurance. A two-hour train ride took me to **Daejeon**. When I congratulated my hosts for the appealing architectural design of their newly established research building, I learned that Dr. George Lianis, the ambassador of Greece in Korea and someone I knew well, had been present during the center's inauguration. Dr. Lianis had served as professor at Purdue University, the University of Thessaloniki and as minister of research and technology of Greece. My hosts promptly arranged a meeting with Dr. Lianis upon my return to Seoul.

Dr. Lianis shared with me that Hanwha had its origins as an explosives company founded in 1952 by Kim Chong-hee, who later became the honorary consul-general of Greece in 1968. However, after Kim Chong-hee's passing in 1981, there was no longer diplomatic representation from Greece in Seoul. During Dr. Lianis's tenure as the Greek ambassador in Japan, he was responsible for consular affairs in Korea. Kim Chong-hee's son suggested to Dr. Lianis that establishing an embassy, rather than a consulate, would be preferable for Greece and offered office space rent-free. Currently, the embassy is situated on the 27th floor of the **Hanwha Headquarters Building**.

In 1983, my picture was taken during the conference banquet held in an elaborate old theater, where we also enjoyed a captivating onstage performance by a folk ballet featuring very young girls using large fans. A performance, with large fans was also presented at Incheon Airport, when I was waiting for my return flight to Canada.

SEOUL, KOREA



Gyeongbokgung Palace, Seoul



The name "Korea" originates from the Goryeo dynasty, established in 918 AD. This dynasty was succeeded by the Joseon dynasty in 1392, and its capital eventually became what is now known as Seoul. Korea existed as a sovereign state within China's sphere of influence. However, after China lost the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Korea briefly became an independent Korean Empire before being annexed by Japan in 1910. Under Japanese rule, there was a concerted effort to eliminate Korean culture, language, and identity. During World War II, many Koreans were sent to labor camps, thousands were conscripted into the Japanese armed forces, and around 200,000 young women were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military.

As Japan neared surrender, plans emerged to divide Korea into American and Soviet occupation zones. On August 10, 1945, two young officers, Dean Rusk (later Secretary of State) and Charles Bonesteel, were tasked with defining the American zone in Korea. With Soviet troops advancing south and little time for decision-making, they drew a straight line along the **38th parallel**, on a National Geographic map, just north of Seoul. This division placed 16 million Koreans in the southern zone and 9 million in the northern zone. President Truman accepted this proposal, as did Stalin without further negotiations. The north was rich in mineral resources, while the south possessed better arable land.

The Soviets established a communist dictatorship under Kim Il-Sung in the north, and the Americans set up an authoritarian government under Syngman Rhee in the south. On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops raced through the 38th parallel. The South Korean army "either didn't fight or couldn't fight or ran away" according to historian Bruce Cumings, of the University of Chicago. Within three days, North Korean troops captured Seoul. The UN Security Council authorized military intervention, and President Truman approved the use of American troops for a "police action" in Korea on June 30, 1950.

As the North Koreans advanced south, the death toll among civilians and the military was horrendous. At Daejeon, between July 16 and 22, 922 Americans were killed, 228 wounded, and 2,400 were missing or captured, including their commander, Major General William F. Dean. American and South Korean troops established a 230-kilometer defense perimeter at Pusan (Busan) in the southeast. With the arrival of American reinforcements, they gained numerical superiority over the North Koreans, who faced logistical challenges and lacked naval or air support.

General Douglas MacArthur devised a plan for an amphibious landing at the muddy beaches of **Incheon**, near Seoul, 160 kilometers behind enemy lines. Initially the plan was rejected by the Joint Chiefs in Washington due to tidal challenges. At Incheon, tides reach up to 10 meters. The landing succeeded on September 15 with relatively low casualties, partly because it was not anticipated, by the North Koreans, at that unapproachable location. Seoul was recaptured on September 25, and the South Korean government of Syngman Rhee was reinstated.

KOREAN DMZ



After US troops landed at Incheon and liberated Seoul, **General Douglas MacArthur** became excessively confident in his forces' invincibility. President Truman convened a meeting at Wake Island, located 3500 km west of Honolulu and 3500 km southeast of Tokyo, on September 15, 1950. When the President arrived, MacArthur greeted his commander-in-chief with a simple handshake instead of the expected salute, defying military protocol. Truman cautioned MacArthur to advance north only if Chinese troops stayed uninvolved.

Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, fell on October 19. However, hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops crossed the **Yalu River** border, moving under cover of night and staying motionless during the day. The US/UN troops faced humiliating defeats in November and December 1950, in extremely cold weather. The communist forces recaptured Seoul on January 4, 1951, and reached the 37th parallel.

Due to the US/UN troops' air superiority, the communists were pushed back, and Seoul was reclaimed on March 4. President Truman fired MacArthur on April 11, 1951. When the General returned to the US, he delivered his famous speech in Congress: "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away," in a stentorian voice that even the best stage actor would admire. Deadly battles persisted for two years near the 38th parallel until the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. A demilitarized zone (**DMZ**) was established, roughly following the **38th parallel**. The war's casualties likely exceeded 3 million, mostly civilians. Military personnel dead and missing included: South Korea 162,394, USA 41,272, UK 1288, Turkey 904, Canada 517, Australia 382, France 310, Greece 195, Colombia 191, Thailand 134, and about 700 from ten other countries.

North Korea suffered the highest number of military and civilian deaths among the belligerents. The country's infrastructure was completely devastated, partly due to the widespread use of the incendiary weapon known as Napalm. The field commander, General Van Fleet, might have been the proponent of its use, having witnessed (or perhaps supervised) it during his tenure as head of the US advisory group in Greece during the Greek guerrilla war (1947-1949).

Since the **1953 armistice**, North Korea, a dictatorship under the Kim family (Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Un), has engaged in several acts of aggression. Very little information is coming out of North Korea. However, conditions have improved significantly since the famine in the 1990s, during which as many as one million people died, according to various sources. Pictures from Pyongyang show numerous modern high-rise buildings and wide streets with little traffic.

In South Korea, autocratic President Syngman Rhee was ousted in 1961 by General Park Chung Hee, who became a harsh dictator. During my doctoral studies at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri (1965-1968), I witnessed the ruthlessness of South Korea's dictatorship firsthand. Three well-dressed individuals visited our laboratory seeking a Korean fellow student. I directed them to the secretary's office. Unfortunately, I never saw the Korean student again. He was taken to Seoul and sentenced to five years in prison for studying in Germany on a North Korean scholarship. The dictatorship in South Korea ended in 1987, after which the country experienced remarkable economic growth.

TAIPEI I, TAIWAN



Taiwan was known as **Formosa** after Portuguese sailors marked it on their maps as "Ilha Formosa," which means "beautiful island." Settlements of the indigenous population date back thousands of years. The Dutch and later the Spaniards occupied parts of the island in the early 1600s. In 1683, Taiwan was annexed by the Qing dynasty of China until the Japanese occupation in 1895. Japanese rule lasted until the surrender of Japan after the end of the Second World War in 1945. In 1949, the Nationalist forces, under **Chiang Kai-Shek**, lost the civil war to the communist guerrillas of Mao Zedong. About 2 million, mostly soldiers, were evacuated to Taiwan and added to a population of about 6 million already residing on the island. Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang party established a ruthless autocratic government, which ruled under martial law until 1987.

I visited Taiwan on three occasions: November 2002, November 2014, and May 2018 for conferences organized by my former postdoctoral fellow, Professor Shih-Jung Liu (Chang Gung University). One of the attached photos was taken outside, and the other inside **Grand Hotel Taipei**, where the Asia-Australia Polymer Processing Society (PPS) Meeting was held in 2002, and the banquet during PPS-34 International Conference in 2018. In the top picture, to my left is my former doctoral student Professor Evan Mitsoulis (E.M. Polytechnio, Athens (NTUA)). Next is Kassiani and her father Costas Tzoganakis, also a former doctoral student of mine, a professor at the University of Waterloo, Canada. Costas was honored at PPS-34 with the prestigious James L. White Award for inventing a breakthrough technology for recycling discarded tires. Based on Costas's invention, two plants are in operation in Canada, another one in the Netherlands, and interest has been expressed in building recycling plants in several other countries.

Grand Hotel Taipei was built in 1952 by Chiang Kai-Shek for the purpose of accommodating foreign dignitaries. Guests have included four US Presidents (Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, Clinton), Nelson Mandela, kings, and queens, and several prime ministers. The extravagant design was based on Madame Chiang's concept for a hotel looking like an imperial Chinese palace. She was an American-educated sister of Sun Yat-Sen's wife. Sun was a revolutionary leader, currently revered in both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan. He was the first leader of Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China, KMT). Three years after he died in 1925, Chiang Kai-Shek succeeded him as the leader of KMT.

When Chiang Kai-Shek arrived in Taiwan, he kept the title Republic of China (ROC), bizarrely claiming to represent the entire Chinese nation, even though PRC had 100 times more population than Taiwan. The permanent seat at the Security Council of the UN was held by ROC until 1971, before being replaced by PRC. Most countries around the world switched diplomatic recognition to PRC. In the 2024 presidential elections in Taiwan, the winner was Lai Ching-te, who has been labeled as a "stubborn worker for Taiwan independence" by Beijing. This means that tensions between P.R. China and Taiwan/US will remain very high for at least the next four years.

TAIPEI II, TAIWAN



The election of Lai (William) Ching-te as the president of Taiwan on January 13, 2024, is likely to shape the geopolitics of the Far East in the foreseeable future. President Xi Jinping of China told US President Joe Biden that Taiwan is "the biggest and most dangerous issue in China/US relations." To grasp the complexity of this problem, we need to examine the recent history of Taiwan, particularly after the arrival of Chiang Kai-shek, his Kuomintang (KMT) party, and the imposition of a harsh dictatorship for nearly forty years (1949-1987).

Chiang passed away in 1975, succeeded by his son. Following his death in 1988, the presidency was assumed by Taiwan-born Lee Teng-Hui, also from the KMT party. During Lee's visit and speech at Cornell University, he introduced the notion of an independent Taiwan, leading to a military crisis in the 180 km wide strait between China and Taiwan. The People's Republic of China (PRC) fired missiles, prompting President Bill Clinton to dispatch two aircraft carriers. In 2000, a Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, advocating even more pro-independence views, won the presidency. However, most Taiwanese preferred to avoid escalating tensions with China, leading to the election of a KMT candidate in 2008, who favored friendly relations with the PRC.

During my visit to Taipei for a polymer processing conference in 2002, the plenary speaker was YC Wang, the founder and Chairman of Formosa Plastics Corporation, Taiwan's second richest billionaire according to Forbes magazine. He advocated for closer ties between Taiwan and China, a stance significant enough for Beijing to broadcast a part of his speech on national Chinese TV. Some of Wang's ten children, especially his daughter Cher Wang (a smartphone pioneer), achieved entrepreneurial success, like their father. Forbes ranked Cher as the richest person in Taiwan with a net worth of \$8.8 billion in 2011. Cher and at least two of her brothers are staunch supporters of closer ties with the People's Republic of China.

In 2016, Taiwan elected its first female president, Tsai Ing-wen, of the DPP. She rejected President Xi Jinping's proposal of "one country, two systems" for eventual unification. The recent election of William Lai from the DPP will likely further escalate tensions between the PRC and Taiwan.

TAIPEI 101, completed in 2004, held the title of the world's tallest building at 509 m until 2010 (now in the eleventh place, with Burj Khalifa in Dubai claiming the top spot at 828m). This 101-floor skyscraper features a **660-ton steel pendulum** serving as a mass damper, suspended from the 92nd to the 87th floor. The pendulum sways to offset building movements caused by strong wind gusts or earthquakes. On August 8, 2015, strong winds from Typhoon Soudelor caused the steel sphere to sway by 1 meter(!).

I lectured at Kenting in 2014, located at the southernmost point of Taiwan, approximately 350 km from Taipei.

HONG KONG



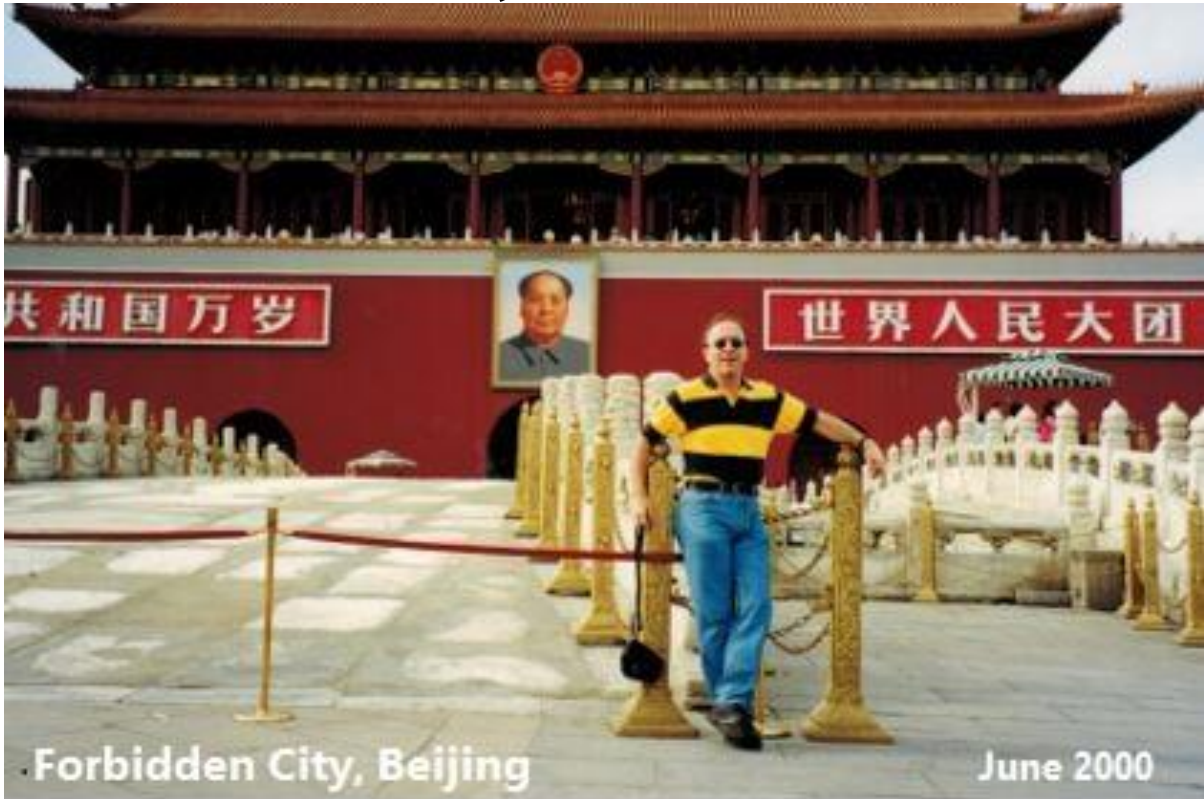
In the late afternoon on May 12, 1983, I arrived in Hong Kong on a very bumpy flight from Tokyo. Landing took place on the single runway at the old Kai Tak airport, also known as “Kai Tak heart-attack” due to its challenging flight path over and between buildings. Although I stayed for just two days, I felt the non-stop activity and excitement, in this densely populated city. Life seemed to move at a faster pace than in Tokyo, New York, London or Paris. Hong Kong was a shoppers’ paradise, particularly for electronics and gadgets. I revisited the (new) Hong Kong airport in December 1999, but I didn’t venture into the city due to short layover between flights.

Hong Kong is located near the southern port of Canton (now Guangzhou). Canton was designated as the only port for trading with the West by the Qing Emperors of China. They were isolationists, did not want to buy anything from Europe, and demanded payment in silver, for selling tea, porcelain and silk. The British East India Company was importing huge quantities of tea from China. However, they had very large expenses because they were also supporting a private army of about 100,000. Payments in silver were difficult to make, so they started mass production of opium in India and selling it illegally to the Chinese near Canton. The task of eradicating the opium trade was assigned to Lin Zexu, an incorruptible official, who collected and dumped opium stockpiles in the sea. The British responded with gunboats and demanded compensation for the opium quantities destroyed.

The Chinese were easily defeated during the **First Opium War** due to the technological superiority of the British. An agreement was signed and the island of Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842. Hostilities over opium trade escalated into the **Second Opium War** and the British invaded China, assisted by French and German troops. The Qing imperial troops were defeated again. The British plenipotentiary James Bruce, 8th Earl of Elgin, ordered his 3,500 troops to burn down the Old Summer Palace, in the outskirts of Beijing. Some art treasures were looted, but the vast majority of artifacts was completely destroyed. James Bruce’s father was the infamous 7th Earl of Elgin, who vandalised and took away the marbles from the Acropolis of Athens, selling them to the British Government.

The Hong Kong colony expanded with the acquisition of Kowloon and the New Territories in 1898, through a **99-year lease**. On July 1, 1997, it was transferred to China, with an agreement to continue political and economic systems for 50 years. Fear of a communist takeover prompted hundreds of thousands of Hongkongers to emigrate, many to Canada. While China largely upheld its promise for about 20 years, new laws limiting political freedoms led to massive riots in 2019 and 2020. It remains to be seen how and for how long the policy of "one country, two systems" of the People's Republic of China will continue in Hong Kong.

BEIJING I, CHINA



I am standing in front of Tiananmen Gate, the entrance to the Forbidden City in Beijing. **Tiananmen Square** gained widespread publicity due to the violent student-led protests that occurred on June 3-4, 1989, resulting in several hundred deaths. A video and photographs of an unidentified protester blocking a column of tanks went viral. Inside the Forbidden City during my visit in June 2000, the tour guide of a group of medical doctors from Greece held the Greek flag, coincidentally visiting at the same time as my group of polymer engineering professors.

The immensity of the Forbidden City is awe-inspiring. It is the world's largest palace complex, roughly one kilometer long and three-quarters of a kilometer wide, occupying an area of 720,000 square meters (180 acres). It boasts 9999 rooms, one less than the celestial palace of the supreme deity in the heavens, with 10,000 rooms, according to ancient Chinese legends. Built between 1406 and 1420 by one hundred thousand skilled craftsmen and one million conscripts and convict laborers, on the orders of Zhu Di (known as Yongle Emperor), the overambitious fourth son of the founder of the **Ming dynasty**. Zhu Di also sponsored massive exploration voyages by 300 ships led by Admiral Zheng He. The Chinese armada ruled the oceans as far as Africa for 28 years, with the largest ships carrying nearly 1000 men.

The Ming dynasty was replaced by the **Qing dynasty** in 1644. The Forbidden City housed 10 Ming Emperors and 14 Qing Emperors, with the last one being Puyi. He ascended to the throne before the age of three in 1908, was forced to abdicate at the age of six, and expelled from the Forbidden City in 1924. Puyi was chosen by Empress Dowager Cixi, who ruled China for nearly 50 years (1861-1908). She entered the Forbidden City at the age of 16 as one of the numerous concubines of the emperor, gave birth to his first and only surviving son. She was well educated and helped the ailing emperor in governing China. After his death in 1861, she became regent and was the real power behind the throne until her death. Cixi is described frequently by historians as a ruthless despot of extravagant tastes.

The 1800s marked a period of decline for the Empire of China. Six European powers (Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary), along with the USA and Japan, were granted commercial concessions with unfavorable terms for China. During the Second Opium War, British and French forces reached Beijing. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 resulted in China losing influence over Korea. Inside China, there was resentment against foreigners, especially Christian missionaries. An anti-foreign and anti-Christian group of peasants, practicing martial arts and known as "Boxers" in English, converged on Beijing in the early months of 1900. They attacked the diplomatic compound, defended by a small force of the Eight-Power Alliance. Most diplomats survived and were saved with the arrival of a large military force in August 1900.

BEIJING II, CHINA



Temple of Heaven

Beijing, China

Heart of Heaven

June 2000

The Temple of Heaven is located a short walk away from the Forbidden City in Beijing. It was constructed from 1406 to 1420 by the **Yongle Emperor** and served as the place of worship for the supreme god in heaven. Chinese history and religion date back to 2500 BC. Ancient Chinese believed in one God, the almighty creator of heaven and earth. Their ancient religious beliefs share many similarities with the more recent monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, with the passage of time, especially with the emergence of Daoism (Taoism) in the 6th century BC, polytheistic ideas were introduced, including the worship of spirits and ancestors. Confucius (circa 551-479 BC) did not promote religious beliefs but rather philosophical ideas about personal and governmental morality, kindness, and sincerity. Buddhism came to China from India and did not include belief in a creator or almighty god.

After the death of the first Ming emperor, his fourth-born son Zhu Di usurped the throne, moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing (Peking), and became the Yongle Emperor. The Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven were constructed during his reign, presumably to legitimize his rule as the Emperor of China, the son of Heaven. Twenty-two Ming and Qing Emperors offered sacrifices of calves (often white) and incense at the Temple of Heaven.

At the Heart of Heaven, where I am standing, the emperor would pray for favorable weather and a good harvest. The round marble plate is surrounded by nine plates, then by 2x9 plates, and so forth, extended further to 9x9 plates. The number nine was sacred to the Chinese and represents the emperor. The walls are decorated with dragons. In Chinese culture, the dragon is not a malevolent monster as in Western cultures but symbolizes good luck, strength, and health. The Chinese New Year that started on February 10, 2024 is the year of the dragon.

During the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, many violent confrontations occurred near the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, and both were looted by foreign soldiers. There is a 2-hour-42-minute epic film available for free on YouTube titled "55 Days at Peking," released in 1963 and starring Charlton Heston, Ava Gardner, and David Niven. It is a fictionalized version of the siege of the foreign legations compound. Charlton Heston's character is based on the real US Marine Major (later General) John Twiggs Myers. David Niven's character is based on the real British diplomat Colonel Sir Claude MacDonald. In the legations compound, there was a young mining engineer named Herbert Hoover, who later became the 31st President of the USA (1929-1933). There was also an Austrian navy officer named Georg von Trapp, who was decorated for his performance during the Boxer Rebellion. He is the von Trapp of 'The Sound of Music' fame. I sometimes wonder if art imitates life or life imitates art.

GREAT WALL OF CHINA



The Great Wall of China was constructed to defend the Chinese states from nomadic Mongol invaders, who sustained themselves through conquest and plundering. It is not a singular wall but rather a series of walls built from around the 8th century BC. During this period, China was not a unified country; instead, it consisted of seven states engaged in warfare against each other: Qin, Wei, Zhao, Qi, Han, Yan, and Zhongshan. King Zheng of Qin conquered the other six states and proclaimed himself the **First Emperor of China** in **221 BC**. He ordered the demolition of certain walls separating the states and initiated the construction of a new wall for protection from the north.

King Zheng ascended to the throne as a 13-year-old boy in 246 BC, following his father's death. During his youth, Lu Buwei, the lover of his mother, served as prime minister until his banishment. The emperor survived at least three assassination attempts and harbored a deep fear for his life, bordering on paranoia. He became fixated on finding a mythical elixir for immortality. Ultimately, he died at the age of 49, likely due to the frequent ingestion of an elixir containing mercury. He was interred in a mausoleum alongside more than 7,500 lifelike terracotta soldier statues in modern-day Xi'an, Northwest China.

Following the death of the first emperor, his Qin dynasty's rule was short-lived. The Han dynasty ruled China from 202 BC to 220 AD, and Han-Chinese is the ethnicity of more than 90% of the current population of the People's Republic of China. Another significant dynasty was the Tang, reigning from 618 to 907. One of the notable rulers of the Tang dynasty was Wu Zetian, who entered the imperial palace as a 14-year-old concubine to the emperor. After his death, she married his son and successor and ruled China from 665 to 705. Her reign witnessed a cultural, economic, and political revival, though historians have been critical of her.

Despite the fortifications of the Great Wall, Genghis Khan, leading an army of nomadic Mongol horsemen, invaded northern China in 1211, eventually reaching and sacking its capital (modern-day Beijing). His grandson, **Kublai Khan**, seized control of the remainder of China and established the Yuan Mongol dynasty. Kublai Khan espoused Confucianism for governmental ethics and Buddhism for religion. During his reign, several Europeans, including Marco Polo, visited his palace in Beijing and marveled at a highly civilized society ahead of Europe.

Skeptics have questioned the accuracy of Marco Polo's accounts, noting his omission of the Great Wall. The segment of the 8,850 km wall shown in the picture was constructed during the Ming dynasty in the 14th century using large bricks. However, earlier walls were built by compacting earth and gravel between wooden planks, potentially leaving them in ruins during Marco Polo's time. Ibn Battuta, a Maghrebi explorer who visited China around 1346, was the first foreigner to mention the Great Wall, although he did not see it himself.

SHANGHAI, CHINA



Adapted from King of Hearts, Wikimedia Commons

Pudong, Shanghai



The Bund, Shanghai

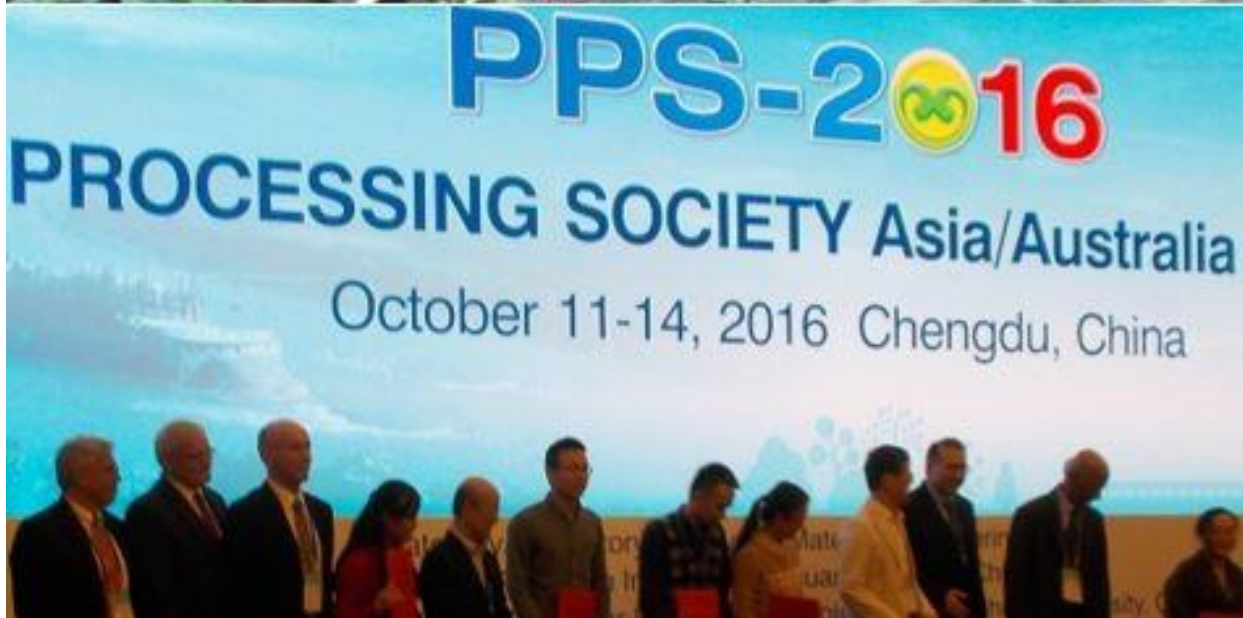
The 16th International Conference of the Polymer Processing Society (PPS-16) took place at the Pudong Shangri-La Hotel in the heart of vibrant Pudong, Shanghai, in June 2000. Situated on the waterfront of the Huangpu River, and directly opposite the historically famous Bund. This 27-floor hotel (barely visible to the right in the photo) is dwarfed by the nearby skyscrapers of the financial district. The Bund encompasses the International Settlement (British/American) and the adjacent French Concession, dating back to the mid-1800s. Foreign banks and trading houses arrived after China's defeat in the First Opium War (1839-1842), marking the beginning of China's 'century of humiliation'.

Prior to its decline, Imperial China experienced centuries of greatness. The emperor was believed to be the Son of Heaven, akin to a deity living on earth. An intriguing legend recounted by Lafcadio Hearn in his book 'Some Chinese Ghosts', published in 1887 in New Orleans, tells of the Yongle Emperor in the early 1400s desiring a huge bell that could be heard one hundred Chinese 'li' away (about 50 kilometers). China's best molders and bellsmiths labored tirelessly for days and nights without success. An astrologer prophesied that the task wouldn't be possible "until the flesh of a maiden be melted in the crucible." The stunningly beautiful daughter of the Mandarin-in-charge jumped into the molten metal to save her father from the Son of Heaven's wrath. The resulting 50-ton bell now resides in the Great Bell Temple in Beijing.

Following the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Japanese traders settled in Shanghai, exploiting, like other foreigners, Chinese laborers. In 1912, the Qing dynasty collapsed, giving rise to several power-hungry warlords and a visionary leader, **Sun Yat-sen**. Sun passed away in 1925, and the leadership of his Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China, KMT) passed to Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang, though a capable soldier educated in Tokyo and Moscow, lacked the political acumen and far-reaching vision of his predecessor. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in a house in the French Concession in Shanghai in 1921. Chiang Kai-shek ordered the Shanghai Massacre of April 12, 1927, resulting in the deaths of several thousand communist adherents and sympathizers. The Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931 and bombed Shanghai in 1932. In 1937, Japanese troops occupied the Chinese-administered parts of Shanghai outside the International (British/American) Settlement and the French Concession.

The comfortable lives of the foreigners at the Bund came to an abrupt halt when the Japanese stormed in soon after the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941. Shanghai, along with other parts of China, remained occupied until Japan's unconditional surrender in August 1945. Two years after Mao Zedong's death in 1976, **Deng Xiaoping** became China's paramount leader. Deng's policies of reform and opening up resulted in massive redevelopment and intense revitalization of Shanghai. With a population of 25 million, it is now China's most populous and wealthiest city, serving as a world center of finance, business, technology, and manufacturing. Shanghai stands as a glittering showcase of what free market capitalism can achieve even under a communist government.

CHENGDU, CHINA



Chengdu, situated approximately 1700 km west of Shanghai with a population of nearly 21 million, is the capital of the Sichuan province. Pandas, the Chinese national symbol, inhabit the bamboo forests on the hills of Sichuan and the nearby mountains. It is an endangered species with fewer than 2000 pandas remaining in the wild.

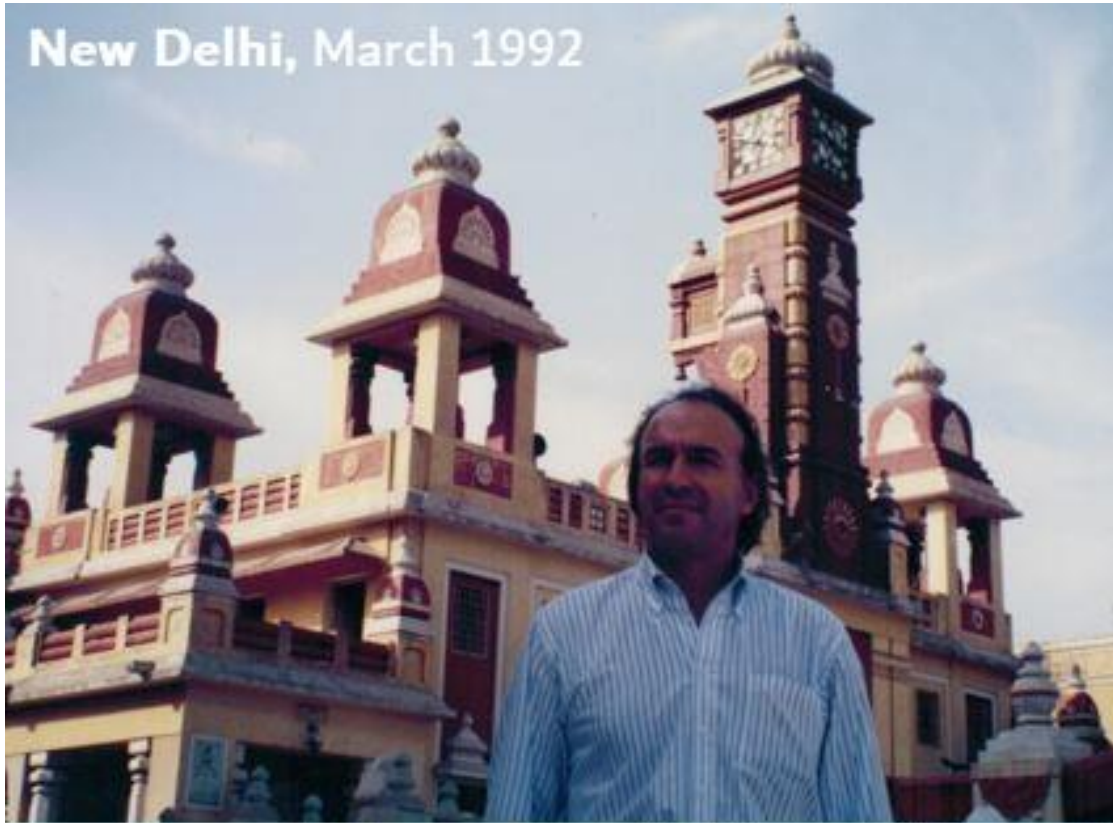
In the early 1930s, **Chiang Kai-shek's KMT** and communist guerrillas were fighting against each other, and to a lesser extent, against the Japanese invaders. The Red Army moved southeast, pursued by the KMT forces. About 90,000 troops and civilians escaped by going west and south of Chengdu, further west, then north, and ended their long march at Yan'an. The 10,000 km march, involving crossing rivers and mountaintops, was completed in a year by about 7,000 troops under Mao Zedong's command, with Mao rising to prominence within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). At Yan'an, Mao was welcomed by Xi Zhongxun, the father of the current paramount leader of China, **Xi Jinping**.

Although Japan surrendered in August 1945, the Chinese Civil War lasted until 1949, culminating in the defeat of the Kuomintang (KMT) forces and the evacuation of around 2 million nationalists to Taiwan. Mao Zedong implemented a Soviet-style administration, and in 1953, he announced a five-year plan to improve the economy. Encouraged by modest success, Mao proclaimed the Great Leap Forward, aiming at massive industrialization and agricultural collectivization (1958-1962). This plan resulted in disastrous mismanagement of the economy and the Great Chinese Famine, with deaths estimated between 15 million and 55 million.

Mao Zedong launched the **Cultural Revolution** in 1966 with the purpose of purging China of suspected bourgeois elements. Young people, mostly students, formed cadres of Red Guards against "old ideas, old customs, old culture, and old habits." The Forbidden City was saved because Zhou Enlai had stationed an army battalion. More than two million people were humiliated, tortured, or killed. Deng Xiaoping was exiled and worked at a factory for five years. Xi Jinping was 15 years old when he saw his father paraded and humiliated as an enemy of the revolution. Young Xi was sent to work in a poor village for seven long years before returning to study chemical engineering at the prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing. **Deng Xiaoping** became the paramount leader in 1978 and influenced Chinese policies until his death in 1997 at the age of 92. Xi Jinping has been the paramount leader of China since 2012.

Mao unified China under the CCP, Deng made China wealthy with his reform and opening up policies, and Xi wants to make China a central world power through aggressive nationalism. It appears that Xi's policies are closer to Mao's authoritarianism than to Deng's openness. The Social Credit System for determining the trustworthiness of individuals, implemented since 2014, includes scores for actions ranging from jaywalking to excessive overspending. Trustworthy citizens might be able to purchase train or plane tickets at discounted prices, while untrustworthy individuals might be banned from traveling. Of course, in Western democracies, consumer credit agencies like Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion collect and aggregate information for over one billion individuals. It seems that China is leading the rest of the world into an Orwellian nightmare.

NEW DELHI, INDIA



Viceroy's House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan)



India is the most populous country in the world with 1.4 billion inhabitants. I have visited twice for my participation in two conferences of the Polymer Processing Society (PPS) in New Delhi (1992) and in Goa (2009).

India has a very long history, with urban culture having flourished from about 2500 BC. The scriptures of Hinduism, known as the Vedas, were composed between 2000 BC and 500 BC. Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama around the 5th century BC. Alexander the Great defeated King Porus in Punjab in 326 BC and founded two cities, Boukephala and Nikaia, presumably near modern-day Jalalpur, Pakistan. Several kingdoms emerged in the Indian subcontinent, and after the 10th century, Muslim nomadic tribes ruled over North India, leading to the establishment of the Mughal Empire in 1526.

In the early 1700s, European trading companies established coastal outposts. Gradually, the English East India Company sidelined the other Europeans and gained control, which lasted until the Indian Rebellion of 1857. This led to direct administration of India by the British government. Life in India was very attractive to British officers and civil servants for careers in an exciting locale, exotic hunting opportunities, many servants, and luxury that they could not have imagined at home. For example, Lafcadio Hearn's father, Surgeon Major Charles Hearn (<http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27486>), left Ireland for an assignment with a royal regiment to India in the summer of 1857.

During the First World War, over a million Indians volunteered to fight under the British flag. During the Second World War, the number of Indian volunteers exceeded two and a half million. Plans were underway for the transfer of power. The question was to whom and under what conditions. Field Marshal A. P. Wavell, who was the **Viceroy of India** from 1943 to 1947, made several attempts to reach an agreement between the 290 million Hindus and six million Sikhs on one side and the 90 million Muslims on the other. The leader of the Hindus, **Mahatma Gandhi**, was campaigning for a united India. **Muhammad Ali Jinnah** feared domination of the Muslims by the Hindus and the Sikhs. He ordered a day of 'direct action' in Calcutta in August 1946, during which about 4,000 people were killed in riots.

After the end of WW II, Winston Churchill lost the elections, and Clement Attlee of the Labour Party was elected Prime Minister. He appointed **Lord Louis Mountbatten** to be the last Viceroy of India. Mountbatten moved to Viceroy's House (which had several hundred rooms and a staff of 5,000) in March 1947, planning to relinquish British rule in June 1948. **Jawaharlal Nehru**, leader of the Hindus, agreed to the division of India into the independent countries of India and Pakistan. Mountbatten moved the day of independence to August 15, 1947, to avoid a civil war under his watch. Lawyer Cyril Radcliffe (who had never been east of Paris) was given the onerous assignment of dividing the country in just five weeks, using outdated maps and population data. Violence erupted during several months of ethnoreligious fear-motivated cleansing, resulting in about 14 million refugees and about one million dead.

TAJ MAHAL, INDIA



The Taj Mahal has been described as an architectural masterpiece, the world's most beautiful building, a magnificent monument to grand passion, and more. In my opinion, it is the world's most perfect building. Located in Agra, approximately 200 km southeast of New Delhi, it is a white-ivory marble mausoleum built by the **Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan** for his beloved wife, **Mumtaz Mahal**. The Mughal emperors were descendants of the great Mongol conquerors and emperors, Genghis Khan and Timur (Tamerlane).

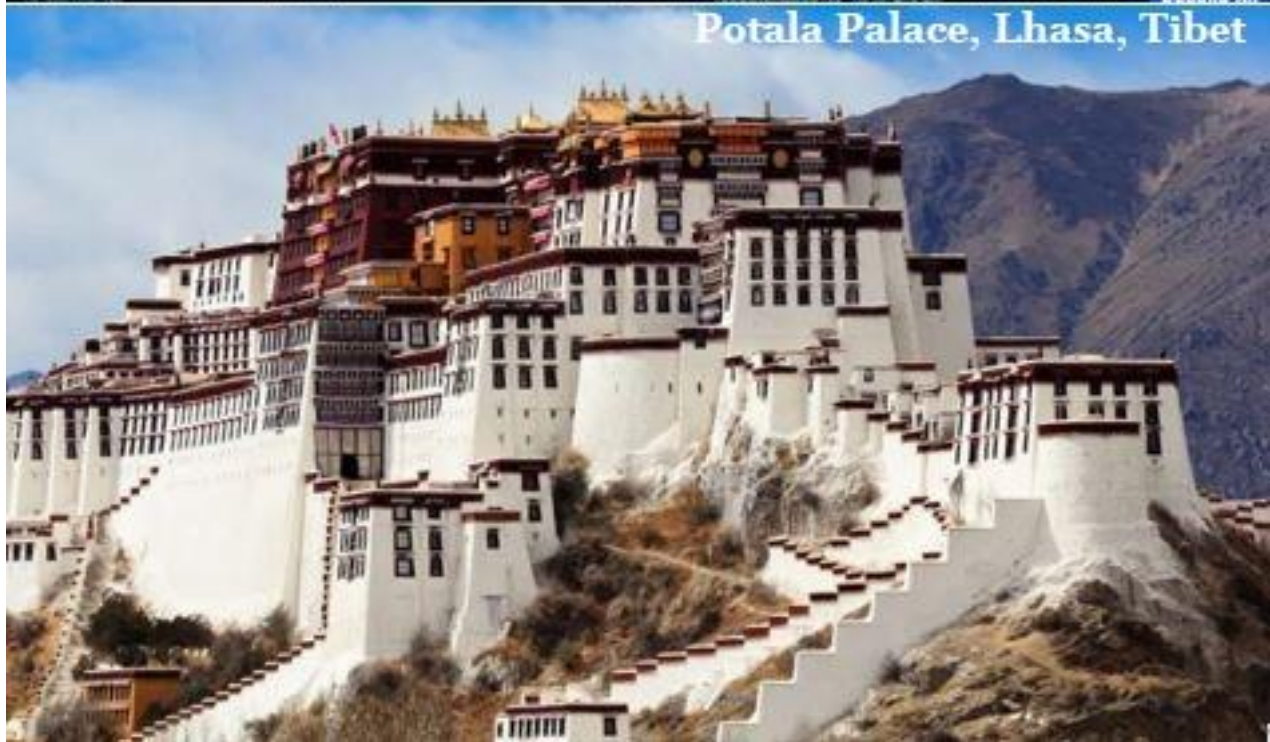
Shah Jahan, born in 1592, was the third and most admired son of his emperor father. At the age of 15, he was engaged to the stunningly beautiful Mumtaz, the 14-year-old daughter of a Persian noble family. They married five years later, in 1612. After eliminating his rivals, Shah Jahan became emperor in 1628. He was deeply in love with Mumtaz, who also served as his political advisor and trusted confidant. She accompanied her husband on his military campaigns. Tragically, she died in 1631 during childbirth of their 14th child, a daughter, who lived to the age of 75. The emperor was "paralyzed" with grief, secluded himself for six months, and his hair and beard turned white, according to court chroniclers.

No expense was spared in building the magnificent mausoleum. Twenty thousand builders, craftsmen, and artisans worked for 12 years under the expert guidance of the chief architect Ustad Ahmad Lahori, who possessed deep knowledge of Euclidean geometry and Ptolemaic astronomy. Marble and other materials were transported to the site by 1,000 elephants. An additional eight years were required to complete the exquisite artwork on the walls. Shah Jahan was deposed by his sixth son with Mumtaz and was confined to the Red Fort palace, near the Taj Mahal, from 1658 until his death in 1666.

Though Islamic in origin, the Taj Mahal is the symbol of India. About 79% of Indians are Hindus, 15% are Muslims, 2% are Sikhs, 2% are Christians, and 1% are Buddhists. According to the Supreme Court of India, "Unlike other religions in the world, the Hindu religion does not claim any one Prophet, worship any one God, believe in any one philosophical concept, or follow any one act of religious rites or performances; in fact, it does not satisfy the traditional features of a religion or creed. It is a way of life and nothing more." Buddhism, originating in India, does not include belief in a creator or almighty god. Buddhist teachings focus on ideas and training for humans to achieve enlightenment. Sikhism, also an Indian religion, originated in the Punjab region about 500 years ago. It emphasizes faith in one creator, the unity of all humankind, social justice, and honest conduct.

During my second trip to India, I visited Goa in March 2009. Situated on the southwest coast, Goa was a Portuguese colony from 1510 until 1961. I saw several Catholic churches during my visit, but no buildings or monuments that could be compared to the Taj Mahal.

HIMALAYA



As a young schoolboy, I was struck with amazement when I heard on the radio that **New Zealander Edmund Hillary** and **Sherpa Tenzing Norgay** were the first people to set foot on the top of Mount Everest at 8,850 meters (29,035 feet) on May 29, 1953. According to a website specializing in mountain climbing, there have been 11,996 summits of Everest through January 2024, by 6,664 different people. Kami Rita, a Nepali Sherpa, holds the record for the most ascents (28 as of May 2023). At least 322 people have died in their attempt to conquer Everest since 1922.

I have not visited any part of the Himalayas, and although I have flown a few times near the mountain peaks (airliners never fly over them), it was always at night. The attached picture is from a Nepalese airline website. I heard a fascinating story from Andrew (son of my colleague Professor John Brash) who was on his way to the summit with an American and a UK teammate and a Sherpa guide. They were just a couple of hundred meters from the summit when they saw a delirious Australian climber named Lincoln Hall, sitting cross-legged at the edge of a 3,000-meter drop, wearing no hat, no gloves, no sunglasses, and had no oxygen mask. Lincoln Hall had reached the peak the day before, but during his descent, he suffered cerebral edema, was unable to move, lost consciousness, and was abandoned for dead 12 hours earlier by his teammates. Andrew and his team abandoned their summit attempt and called for help. The rescue story is described in several YouTube videos.

Everest is located on the border of **Nepal** to the south and **Tibet** to the north. Climbing to the summit from Tibet is more challenging. Nepal was a kingdom, and after the abolition of the monarchy in 2008, it became a federal republic. From Nepal, come the Gurkhas, who are renowned for their prowess as soldiers and have served in the British military.

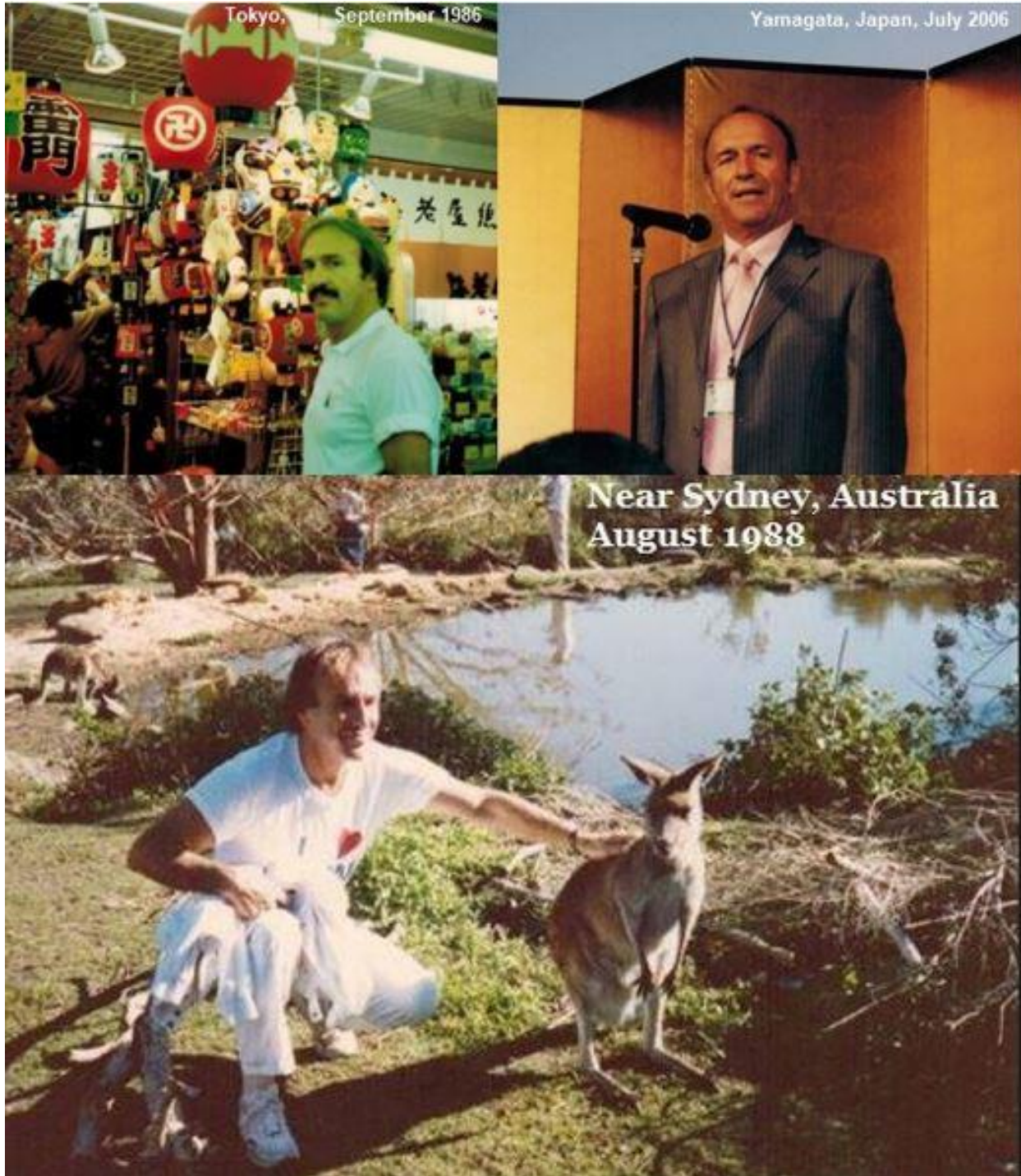
Tibet is an autonomous region within the People's Republic of China. Buddhism practiced in Tibet is different from other countries. The **Dalai Lama** is both the religious and secular leader of the nation. The present 14th Dalai Lama was born in 1935 into a poor family of farmers. He was selected as the enlightened reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1937. The selection was based on a divine search, oracles, and the identification by the two-year-old boy of certain objects belonging to his predecessor. He was enthroned in the Potala Palace, Lhasa, in 1940 (at the age of 5). In 1959, he fled to India and established the Tibetan government-in-exile.

After the openness of Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese Communist Party embraced not only capitalism but also Buddhism. There are monasteries, monks, and several hundred reincarnated Buddhas living in the Tibet Autonomous Region. A railway line connects Lhasa to other Chinese cities, including Beijing. The highest point is at 5,072m, and the carriages are equipped with oxygen supply for each passenger. As business opportunities increased, many exiled Tibetans started returning to their homeland.

MORE PICTURES FROM THE PACIFIC



It looks like Mykonos, but it's in the Pacific Ocean. In fact, 2024 marks the 40th anniversary of the sister city affiliation between these two islands. I first learned about it from my high school friend Spyros Aliagas. During my visit to Japan in 1999, Spyros, who was serving as First Secretary at the Greek Embassy in Tokyo, recounted his visit to Yoron on behalf of the Greek government.



My trip to Japan in 1986 was in connection with lecturing at the World Congress of Chemical Engineering and two other lectures. My photo was taken probably at the Asakusa shopping area. My trip in 2006 was in connection with the international Polymer Processing Society (PPS) Conference and three other lectures. I was President of PPS and my photo was taken during the conference banquet. My 1988 trip to Australia was for lecturing at the International Congress on Rheology.

Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, Taipei, Taiwan





There are nearly 1,000 enormous statues on **Easter Island (Isla de Pascua)**. The name was given by a Dutch explorer who 'discovered' it on Easter Sunday in 1722. It belongs to Chile, and I took this picture in **Valparaiso**, near Santiago, Chile, in December 2013. It is perhaps the most remote island in the world, located in South Pacific, about 4,000 km northwest of Valparaiso, half the distance to Tahiti.



Sakura (cherry blossoms) is a captivating spectacle in Japan. It occurs at the end of March and early April. In my hometown of Burlington, in Canada, it's somewhat later. Burlington is a sister-city of Itabashi City, part of Tokyo.

3.18 PM April 8, 2024



From my balcony ~3.19 PM April 8, 2024
Burlington, ON, Canada



The photo of the solar eclipse was taken by Angeliki, daughter of my friend Errikos Margaritis, using her cell phone at nearby Dundas, Ontario. The eclipse path started from Cook Island in South Pacific (near Tahiti) to Mazatlán, Mexico, through the USA, Niagara Falls, Canada and ended in the Atlantic.

