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IIAS

International Institute for Asian Studies

theNewsletter

Encouraging knowledge and enhancing the study of Asia

Food Security and
Land Grabbing

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FOOD
SECURITY
STRATEGY

The Focus 'pull-out' supplement

Local crop or foreign commodity? Guest editor Annelies Zoomers considers the food security debate in Asia, in the context of domestic and international land acquisitions intended to meet increasing demands for both food and (bio)energy. Various strategies, such as offshore farming, the creation of agro-hubs, and foreign investors, aim to increase food security, yet often have an adverse impact on local communities and their ecosystems.

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The Focus Food security and land grabbing



Pages 19-20

Food security strategies in South and Southeast Asia

Guest Editor **Annelies Zoomers** introduces The Focus section on food security and land grabbing. Solving the food problem often proves to be incompatible with other priorities. With a variety of food securing strategies, the possibilities for regional solutions are limited, also because of the lack of coherent policies and competing agendas.

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Rethinking China's 'land grabs'

Irna Hofman and Peter Ho research Chinese land acquisitions. Safeguarding domestic food supplies is presumed to be one of the core motives underlying China's foreign land investments, there-with infringing upon food security of vulnerable livelihoods in recipient countries, and now China's neo-colonial image dominates over an altruistic portrayal.



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A new equation for oil palm

Paul Burgers and Ari Susanti discuss how using crops for biofuels (e.g. palm oil) can be a route out of poverty for many rural people by, for example, generating significant export earnings. But the industry also displaces people from their land and leads to mass deforestation. And now, oil palm expansion is controversially competing for land with staple foods.



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Food security and energy development in Vietnam

Pham Huu Ty, Tran Nam Tu and Guus van Westen suggest that policies promoting the development of sustainable energy sources, particularly hydropower, can paradoxically create problems of poverty and chronic food insecurity for displaced people.



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Land acquisitions by non-local actors

Men Prachvuthy and Guus van Westen discuss how transfers of land to external investors and users greatly affect local communities' existing livelihoods and development. The policy of agro-industry attempts to develop an intensive agricultural base and increase employment opportunities and diversification – the reality mostly involves disastrous outcomes for local inhabitants.



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Forests and food security

Terry C.H. Sunderland shows how biodiversity provides an important safety-net during times of food insecurity, particularly during times of low agricultural production. If the current model of commercialised monoculture is to be followed, feeding the global population will require the conversion of yet more wild lands, at the expense of biodiversity.



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The IIAS reaches out

The last few months have seen many transformative happenings at IIAS: a revamped website, the institute's first summer school, a major EU grant for our urban initiative, and other important events. But I should start by welcoming my new colleague, Dr Willem Vogelsang, to the position of IIAS Institute Manager. Willem is an accomplished scholar – an archaeologist and art historian of Central Asia. After spending years in Afghanistan, involved in cultural-related post-conflict activities, he is now back at his alma mater to help IIAS pursue its growth into a more coherent and meaningful institution serving Asian studies.

Philippe Peycam

WELCOMING A NEW COLLEAGUE often goes with a farewell. Willem's appointment follows the departure of Dr Manon Osseweijer, formerly Deputy Director at IIAS. Manon was my working partner since my arrival at the institute eighteen months ago. She started working for IIAS in 2004. She was an invaluable source of learning, inspiration and support to me. Thanks to her, my beginning at the institute was a smooth and focused one. Dr Osseweijer decided to move on with her already impressive career. And so, on behalf of IIAS's staff and board, I wish Manon the very best in her future endeavours.

Among the other major happenings of the last months, the ones surrounding IIAS's communication overhaul must take prominence, especially with the airing of our new website. The new IIAS website (www.iias.nl), the result of a collective effort under Thomas Voorter's skilful coordination and Sandra Dehue's vital input, has already received widespread acclaim for its visibility and didactic mode of operation. The site vividly highlights the institute's new programmatic and activities architecture, especially its new thematic initiatives. Functions that IIAS has been performing for years – fellowships, publishing, The Newsletter, ICAS, etc. – are gaining in visibility while synergies between them are made more apparent. The new website is of course an ongoing project; during this trial phase we are eager to hear from users. Feel free to contact us if you spot discrepancies or points for improvement. The website and The Newsletter, under the new editorial management of Sonja Zweegers, together with all other IIAS activities, are designed to serve the scholarly community in Asian studies, while aiming to reach out to the civil societies of the Netherlands, Europe, Asia, and beyond.

The effective launch of our three thematic clusters – Asian Cities, Global Projection of Asia, and Asian Heritages – is another major development of the last few months. It started in earnest with the first batch of research fellows who chose one of the three themes for their research project, including, under the Global Asia initiative, the IIAS-ISEAS joint fellowship on intra-Asian connectivity. We received an exceptionally wide range of applications, a majority of which selected the Asian Heritage cluster. Thinking in terms of the dynamics of cultural and knowledge production appears to be a topic of great interest among many young scholars on Asia.

This trend was further demonstrated by the great success of our first annual Summer School, which took place in June, under the topic of "Contested Heritages in Asia and Europe". The programme brought together a group of twenty-four young MA and PhD researchers from fifteen countries – out of two hundred applicants – for six intensive days of discussion, led by Professor Michael Herzfeld and Professor Nira Wickramasinghe, respectively from Harvard and Leiden universities. IIAS intends to continue to explore this ground-breaking topic of Heritage studies and what it means in terms of social agency in Asia and elsewhere.

The Asian Cities cluster also started in full swing with two major events occurring in July, including an international roundtable in Palembang, Indonesia, on the subject of climate change and its impact on Indonesian cities, particularly those coastal cities under the threat of flooding as a result of rising sea levels and massive destruction of their surrounding ecosystems. The event was a perfect example of an IIAS-led

collaboration involving the Indonesian Ministry of Planning ("Bapenas"), nine Indonesian municipalities (including the host city of Palembang and its Mayor, HE Eddy Santana), and a multi-sector organisation, the Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development (PRCUD), with its unparalleled international network of urban scholars, planners, civil society activists and municipality representatives. Made possible thanks to the European Commission-funded EUforAsia programme, the Palembang PRCUD Forum is one of the most daring local policy-relevant initiatives ever undertaken by IIAS as part of its new Asian Cities cluster. It reflects IIAS's new vision to serve as an effective conduit between policy making and social sciences communities.

The Palembang roundtable found its institutionalized expression in the form of a major EU grant awarded to IIAS to support an inter-institutional international knowledge network (Urban Knowledge Network in Asia – UKNA). The award of the 1.25 million Euro grant was largely the result of the efforts of Dr Manon Osseweijer and Dr Gregory Bracken. UKNA is the first international knowledge network of its kind ever to have been constituted. It is, through its association with PRCUD and other networks, about developing new knowledge, and articulating new questions in this critical subject. In this project, like in other new initiatives, IIAS strives to communicate new questions in a way that they reflect the interests and needs of Asia's fast changing societies – a new contextualized knowledge that can help revamp the field of Asian studies.

Philippe Peycam,
Director of IIAS

From the Editor

THOSE OF YOU FAMILIAR with The Newsletter are already aware of its successes as a medium for sharing scholarly knowledge, not only within the academic world of Asian Studies, but among interested parties worldwide. In light of its past achievements I am extremely proud to have been given the opportunity to produce this issue, #58 and my first as editor of The Newsletter, and I fully intend to repeat its success in the future. I have chosen not to make any significant changes to a formula that clearly works, but would nevertheless like to introduce a number of new features and ambitions.

Firstly, the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore (ISEAS) and the IIAS have initiated a new section in The Newsletter that will provide readers with firsthand "News from Asia" that is of scholarly and intellectual interest. The information will be provided by a number of regional editors within Asia. The section in this issue has been compiled by our regional editor, Lu Caixia, a former print journalist and current research associate at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre (ISEAS). We are extremely grateful for all the time and effort she has put into this task. For future issues The Newsletter hopes to develop collaborations with other Asian institutes

to act as regional editors, so that eventually the "News from Asia" section will represent Asia as a whole. We welcome recommendations for possible partners in this endeavour.

The following new item you will encounter in this issue is found in The Review section. It aspires to present the various regional actors involved in book/film production, websites, blogs, newsletters, poetry and literature, and so forth, relevant to Asian Studies. This issue presents to you a translator, carrying out his profession in Indonesia. The item explores the specific nature of this work as performed in various locations in Asia. We hope to make this a recurring item, and welcome contributions.

In the IIAS network pages of this issue we have chosen to highlight three IIAS fellows, who have written a short piece about their research and IIAS fellowship. A full list of IIAS fellows can be found on the IIAS website. You will also find in this section an introduction to the new research clusters of the IIAS, reports of past events, and announcements. My thanks go to my colleague Sandra Dehue for compiling the IIAS network pages.

I would like to express my extreme gratitude to the contributors to The Focus and in particular Professor Annelies Zoomers, our guest editor for this current issue, for all her input and eventual success, despite the extremely limited time I gave her. Thank you!

I also thank Thomas Voorter for all his work on the new and improved IIAS website, and for introducing it to us here. The IIAS website and The Newsletter will become increasingly interactive as more and more of our readers are opting for the digital version – this will soon include, among others, additional online images, audio/video, and opportunities for feedback on articles. In fact, we hope to receive constructive feedback from our readers in general, so as to work on improving The Newsletter.

Finally, we invite you all to find us on Facebook and Twitter – and to continue sending in your articles, suggestions, feedback, reviews (www.NewAsiaBooks.org), opinion pieces, etc. We appreciate all your good work, and hope that together we can continue to deliver a publication for us all to enjoy.

Sonja Zweegers, Editor, The Newsletter

The Newsletter and IIAS

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a post-doctoral research centre based in the Netherlands. IIAS encourages the multi-disciplinary and comparative study of Asia and promotes national and international cooperation.

The Newsletter is a free quarterly publication by IIAS. As well as being a window into the institute, The Newsletter also links IIAS with the community of Asia scholars and the worldwide public interested in Asia and Asian studies. The Newsletter bridges the gap between specialist knowledge and public discourse, and continues to serve as a forum for scholars to share research, commentary and opinion with colleagues in academia and beyond.

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Maclaine Pont and the discovery of Bharada's Hermitage

When King Airlangga divided his realm between his two warring sons in 1052, he asked the Buddhist sage, Mpu Bharada, to draw the dividing-line between the Janggala and Panjalu kingdoms in Java. For nearly a millennium, the legends about this remarkable sage and his mysterious hermitage-cemetery at Lēmah Tulis were handed down from one generation to the next. In 1926, the archaeologist Henri Maclaine Pont claimed to have excavated the hermitage site. But his findings passed into a strange oblivion. Now, after three years of intensive detective work, the present authors have resolved this mystery in Trowulan archaeology and can confirm Maclaine Pont's remarkable claim.¹

Amrit Gomperts, Arnoud Haag and Peter Carey



1.



2.



3.



4.

OUR JOURNEY STARTS WITH A STONE STATUE some 1.7 metres high and the quest for its original location. Joko Dolog is the local name of this statue. It depicts a Buddhist monk of expansive girth seated in the posture of an *Aksobhya* or 'The Imperturbable One' (Figures 1, 2). According to our interpretation of the inscription on the statue's pedestal the crucial Javano-Sanskrit verses translate as follows: At daybreak on 21 September 1289, King Kērtanagara "with deep devotion established him in the form of a great *Aksobhya* who formerly established himself at the cemetery called Wurare/Awurare".²

We know from the Old Javanese text *Calon Arang* (1540) that the person "who formerly established himself" at the hermitage-cemetery of Lēmah Tulis was the sage Bharada. After he had attained liberation, this sage's Lēmah Tulis hermitage-cemetery became known by the name of Murare, which is the locative rendering of Wurare in Javanese.³ Therefore, the Joko Dolog statue portrays Bharada himself, and not, as previous scholars have argued, King Kērtanagara.⁴ We have found compelling evidence to support our thesis.

Oral Tradition

In the year 1817, the statue of Joko Dolog or literally 'The Plump Lad' was moved from the site of the 14th-century Majapahit court-capital at Trowulan to a park in front of the then Residency office in Surabaya, now the palace of the Governor of East Java. Although the Trowulan inhabitants were almost certainly aware of the original position of the statue until well into the 20th century, they did not understand its archaeological significance. As a result the exact spot was never documented.

In a note in the proceedings of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in 1872, we find the first reference to the statue's original location. According to the testimony of the late 19th-century Javanese *bupati* (regent) of Surabaya, R.A.A. Cokronēgoro IV (in office 1863-1901), the Joko Dolog statue originally stood on a spot locally known as *Kandang Gajah*, literally 'The Elephant Stable'. According to the same testimony, the Trowulan legend referred to a Majapahit king who ordered Joko Dolog to wage war in Bali. But instead of battle, he entered a deep meditative state and vanished, leaving only the petrified 'Plump Lad' statue as a reminder of his former earthly existence.⁵

1: A recent photograph of Joko Dolog adorned for a Buddhist ceremony (© Arnoud Haag).

2: The 1815 drawing of Joko Dolog (© courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

3: One of the urns Maclaine Pont excavated at Bharada's hermitage cemetery Lēmah Tulis/Lēmah Citra/Awurare/Wurare in 1925 (© Balai Pelestarian Peninggalan Purbakala Trowulan).

4: Face to face with oral tradition. Pak Mahsoen pointing to the spot of the Lēmah Tulis cemetery excavated by Maclaine Pont in 1925 (© Peter Carey).

This local legend may well allude to Bharada. According to the Old Javanese texts, the *Nagarakērtagama* (1365) and *Calon Arang*, the sage Bharada once visited the island of Bali to confer with the fellow Buddhist adept Mpu Kuturan. In 1914, the head of the Archaeological Service, N.J. Krom (in office 1913-6), informs us that, according to the Javanese *bupati* of Mojokēto, R.A.A. Kromojoyo Adinēgoro (in office 1894-1916), the Joko Dolog statue originated from the hamlet of Kēdungwulan in the Trowulan area.⁶

Intrigued by the possibility that parts of Bharada's legend were still known locally in the community, we decided to ask the Kēdungwulan villagers near Trowulan a few open questions. Their responses were illuminating. The old name of the Kēdungwulan hamlet, they told us, was indeed Lēmah Tulis which literally means 'Delineated Land'. It measured an area of some 1.5 square kilometres. One of our local informants, Pak Mahsoen, even spontaneously showed us the spot in the Lēmah Tulis area which local tradition associates with 'The Elephant Stable' (Figure 4). This was memorialised in stone by the elephant's tethering post which once lay in the adjacent sugar-cane fields. According to the villagers, this area was previously set aside for the ordained Buddhist monastic community at the Majapahit court-capital in the Majapahit period. Another essential piece of evidence confirms that this local tradition is indeed authentic.

On 22 August 1815, the British Lieutenant-Governor of Java, Thomas Stamford Raffles (in office 1811-1816) ordered the Dutch-Javanese army surveyor Captain J.W.B. Wardenaar (1785-1869) to map the remains of the 14th-century capital of Majapahit at Trowulan. In September and October of 1815, Wardenaar undertook an extensive survey of the archaeological site, then largely covered by teak and scrub. Considered lost for almost two centuries, we were able to track down Wardenaar's *Plan of Majapahit* (scale 1:12,000) in the 1939 Drake Collection of the British Museum on 12 March 2008 (Figure 6). Just over a month later, on 20 April 2008, we travelled to Trowulan in East Java with the captain-engineer's map in hand. When we traced the position of the statue as indicated on the 1815 Plan of Majapahit with a GPS (Global Positioning System) receiver on site, we discovered something extraordinary: Joko Dolog stood just 100 metres to the south-southeast of the spot which our informant associated with

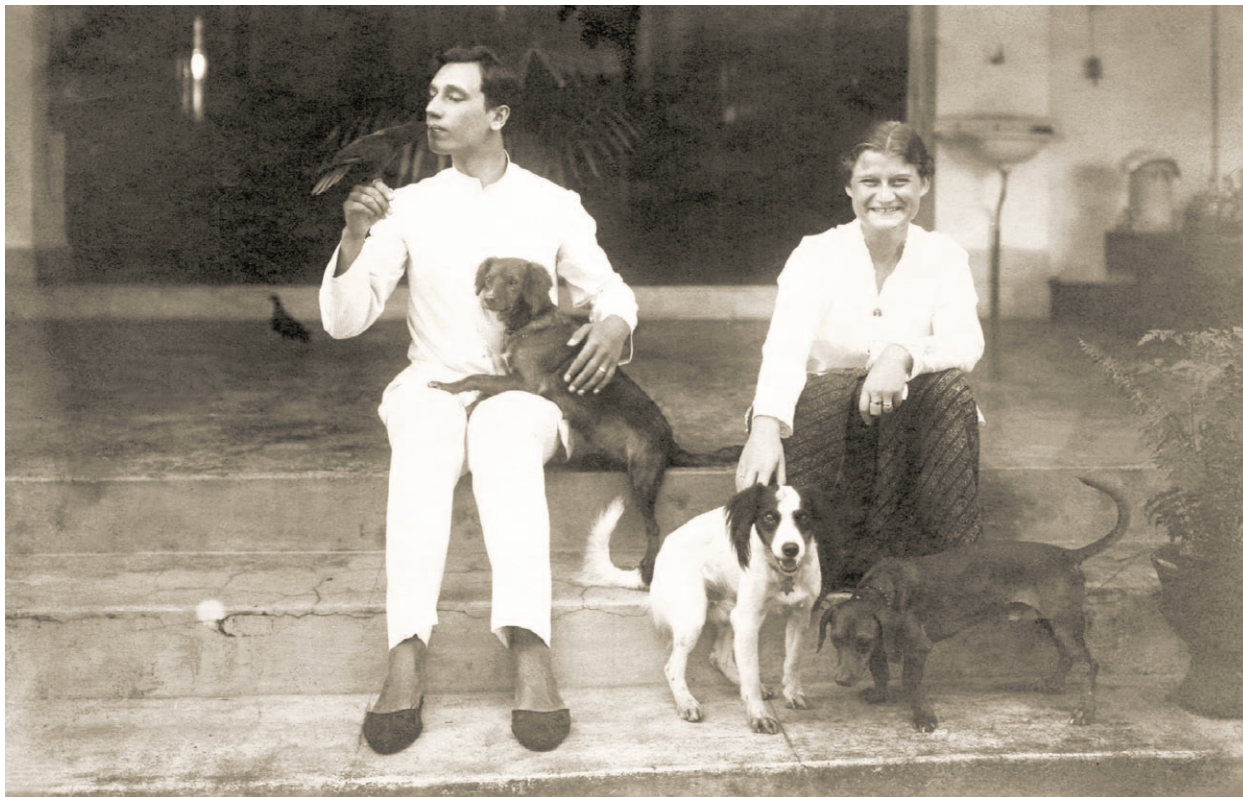
the Lēmah Tulis 'Elephant's Stable'. Now we were certain that we were on the right track. In search of further evidence, we stumbled upon one of the greatest unpublished archaeological finds of late colonial Java.

Henri Maclaine Pont

With a father, who hailed from the Dutch upper-middle-class, and a mother with noble Buginese ancestry, Henri Maclaine Pont (1884-1971) trained as an architect at the Delft Polytechnic (Figure 5). His family background and evident ability soon marked him out as a man to watch in the late Netherlands East Indies. In 1919, he was commissioned to design and supervise the construction of the *Indische Technische Hogeschool*, the famous Bandung Polytechnic, now known as the Institut Teknologi Bandung. Having sold his share in an architectural design firm in Java, Maclaine Pont turned to archaeology and moved to Trowulan in October 1924. He and his family settled in a former forester's cottage situated on the southern perimeter of the Lēmah Tulis area, some 400 metres to the southeast of the original spot of Joko Dolog, according to Wardenaar's 1815 plan. From his writings, we infer that Maclaine Pont was actively searching for Bharada's hermitage-cemetery. In 1925, he probably started asking the Kēdungwulan villagers similar questions to our own. Based on the information provided by his informants, Maclaine Pont selected a small elevated earthwork, which he started to excavate, probably at the end of the monsoon in April or May 1925. In a published article a year later, the archaeologist made a passing remark that he had excavated a 'medieval cemetery' in an area called Lēmah Tulis.⁷

His 1926 article also included a map of the archaeological remains of the Majapahit court-capital at Trowulan on which the position of the Lēmah Tulis cemetery is clearly marked. Analysis of the archaeologist's 1926 map and Wardenaar's 1815 *Plan of Majapahit*, using GIS (Geographical Information Systems) software led to the conclusion that the position of the Joko Dolog statue in 1815 exactly coincides with the medieval Lēmah Tulis cemetery excavated by Maclaine Pont in 1925. Moreover, on 7 October 1928, Maclaine Pont wrote a personal letter to his friend Mrs van der Does de Willebois in which he clearly states that the excavated medieval cemetery at Lēmah Tulis once housed Bharada's hermitage. Maclaine Pont also usefully included a sketch plan of the excavated

5: Henri Maclaine Pont and his wife Noortje in the late 1910s (© Stichting Maclaine Pont).



trenches. Guided by the directions given by two Kédungwulan villagers and the retired head of archaeological field operations of the Indonesian Archaeological Service in Trowulan, we consulted high-resolution satellite images. Detailed cartographical analysis and on-site terrain observations followed. It then became clear that Maclaine Pont had indeed unwittingly excavated the same elevated earthwork in 1925 where the Joko Dolog statue had once stood in lonely eminence from 1289 until 1817 (Figure 6).

A last piece of evidence eventually brought the whole picture together. In 1968-9, Maclaine Pont wrote a testimony of his excavations. The archaeologist stated that he had unearthed intact urns at the medieval cemetery of Lēmah Tulis in 1925. He subsequently asked Dr J.F.H. de Graaf (1876-1958), a physician and director of the Eschauzier Hospital in Mojokërto, to examine the contents of the urns. The Dutch medical doctor concluded that the urns contained ashes and partially burned children's bones. As far as we know, this is the only existing evidence of a medieval cemetery in Java. We retraced one of these urns in the Maclaine Pont Collection at the Trowulan museum but its contents had evidently been lost (Figure 3). Nevertheless, Maclaine Pont's conclusion that the site was a children's cemetery – clearly alluding to the name of the cemetery mentioned in the Javano-Sanskrit inscription, Awurare/Wurare or literally 'Children's Ashes' – now made complete sense. It enabled us to conclude beyond a shadow of doubt that the archaeologist had indeed discovered Bharada's hermitage-cemetery in 1925-8.⁸

The Aftermath

The case of Maclaine Pont's discovery of Bharada's hermitage-cemetery at Lēmah Tulis is an intriguing one in the archaeology of Java. It relies fully on the method of classical archaeology. As such, one might have expected that the archaeologist would have received the plaudits of his peers. But that never happened. Although the Archaeological Service (*Oudheidkundige Dienst*) of the former Netherlands East Indies was formally involved in Maclaine Pont's work and the head of the Service, F.D.K. Bosch (in office 1916-1937), in particular, was fully aware of the archaeologist's Lēmah Tulis excavations, the Service never published any reports on his remarkable discovery. Bosch was subsequently involved in another mystery in Trowulan archaeology, the seemingly intentional obfuscation of the identification of the Majapahit royal palace.⁹ Personal politics and professional jealousies seem to have eclipsed the ethics of science and scholarship in these twilight years of the Netherlands East Indies.

Historical Significance

History has shown that dividing and reunifying countries are amongst the most dramatic events in the life of a nation. Bharada's division of Java in 1052 and King Wijaya's final reunification of Java in 1294 were surely just such moments in the history of modern Indonesia. The geographical identification of Bharada's 1052 dividing line is still obscure. Stuart Robson provides us with a correct translation of Prapanca's description of the 1052 dividing line in the 1365 historiography of *Nagarakërtagama* 68.3, writing: "From west to east up to the

sea, north and south were divided from each other [not far]. But as far as if separated by an ocean – and from then on Java had two kings".¹⁰ From the context, it is clear that Prapanca describes the boundary in proximity to the geographic positions of the 14th-century Majapahit court-capital and Bharada's cemetery-hermitage Lēmah Citra, a variant of the name Lēmah Tulis. From present evidence, we also believe that Robson's geographical identification of Bharada's dividing-line seems the most reliable. It plausibly proposes a natural boundary between the Kingdom of Janggala with its capital at Jiwana (or Kahuripan) in the north, and the Kingdom of Panjalu with its capital at Daha (or Kadiri) in the south, on the river Brantas – from the present-day town of Mojokërto downstream to the mouth of the river Porong.¹¹ This perhaps suggests that Bharada's hermitage-cemetery was originally situated in the Panjalu area. Furthermore, three years after King Kërthanagara of Singhasari (reigned 1254-1292) had erected the Joko Dolog statue, his opponent, King Jayakatwang of Kadiri (reigned 1271-1293), conquered Singhasari and killed Kërthanagara.

A few months later, Wijaya, a former commander in Kërthanagara's army, pledged loyalty to Jayakatwang and began the construction of the Majapahit palace. In early 1293, a 20,000-strong Mongol-Chinese expeditionary force invaded Java. Wijaya, initially allied himself with this invading Mongol-Chinese army and participated in the sacking of the royal palace of Kadiri. But when the Mongol-Chinese commander then demanded the four daughters of Kërthanagara as his reward, Wijaya decided on resistance. These royal princesses were under his personal protection in the Majapahit palace and to hand them over would be a disgrace. Laying a skilful trap, he ensured that all 200 Mongol-Chinese were ambushed and killed in the city of Majapahit. This stunning action persuaded the three Mongol-Chinese generals that they had nothing further to gain from pursuing their military campaign in Java. Having lost around 3,000 of their total force, they returned to their homeland. By unifying Bharada's divided Java, Wijaya became the first King of Majapahit after marrying all four of Kërthanagara's daughters in 1294. He founded his royal palace just 1.5 kilometres to the southeast of the place where the Joko Dolog statue stood on the consecrated ground of the Lēmah Tulis hermitage-cemetery. This sacred spot would one day become the historic centre of the future Indonesian Republic and the spiritual basis for its claim as a unitary nation-state (Figure 6).

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- This article highlights the authors' further research on Majapahit archaeology. See also Amrit Gomperts, Arnoud Haag and Peter Carey. 2010. 'Rediscovering the Royal Capital of Majapahit', *The Newsletter* #53, pp. 12-13. Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies.
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6: Wardenaar's 1815 Plan of Majapahit (© courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum). The letter 'I' marks the position of Joko Dolog (indicated with the white arrow). On the eve of the destruction of the archaeological landscape, the plan shows the Trowulan area largely covered by teak and scrub in 1815. The added gridlines represent geographic coordinates with intervals of 1000 metres (WGS84, UTM, zone 49M).



The Chinese century



China's recent emergence as a world power will undoubtedly be seen by future generations as one of the transformative events of our time. The country's recent and remarkable re-emergence onto the world stage has startled everyone, not in the least China itself, whose leaders seem to be almost as surprised as the rest of us by its all-encompassing swiftness. The twentieth century was dominated by the West, particularly America. After World War II it even began to be known as the 'American Century', with the War representing the height of American values, not to mention their power and military might. The Cold War that ensued led to a somewhat tense stalemate that ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the domino effect of democratization in Eastern Europe, prompting Francis Fukuyama to go so far as to claim we had come to the 'end of history'.

Gregory Bracken

Above:
Shanghai skyline
(© G. Bracken).

AS IT SPREAD EVER EASTWARDS, the Western model of liberal democratic capitalism seemed poised to conquer the rest of the planet, but then the unexpected happened: the Chinese embraced Western capitalism, *without* dismantling their one-party Communist political system, which would have been unthinkable back in the 1980s when capitalism seemed premised on the notion of democratic freedom. 'Capitalism with Chinese characteristics' has shown us that financial systems can and do operate independently of any of the idealism driving the political ones.

Niall Ferguson thinks that Fukuyama was somewhat premature in proclaiming the end of history, pointing out that 'this seems fundamentally to misread the trajectory of the past hundred years, which has seen something more like a reorientation of the world towards the East' (2006, p.lxvii). East Asia is one of the world's fastest-growing regions, and has been for some time. Economically and politically the region's increasing importance has led some to see the twenty-first century as the Asian century. We are certainly likely to see an increasing shift from an Atlantic-centred view of geopolitics to a Pacific-centred one, with all the ramifications that will bring. One of the major factors fuelling Asia's remarkable growth is urbanization, particularly China's recent and remarkable economic expansion. Shanghai's trajectory in this is peculiar because, as Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom points out, the city is in fact wrestling with a process of *reglobalization* (2009, p.18).

Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in 1978 sparked off a 'second revolution' in China, turning it into the world's workshop and enabling the country to move into the footlights of the world stage. The carefully controlled capitalist enterprise known as capitalism with Chinese characteristics has enabled China to overtake Japan as the world's second-largest economy (in August 2010). Some commentators even suggest that the country might be in a position to overtake the United States by about 2030 – America's economy is still three times that of China, but if China manages to sustain its annual economic growth rates this could well be a possibility.

China's economic miracle has had its downsides, however, something that is particularly obvious in the country's cities. With a population five times that of the United States, its per capita income is only on a par with countries like Algeria, El Salvador and Albania (i.e. approximately \$3,600 per annum, while the United States enjoys approximately \$46,000). Despite this, China has become the world's largest market for cars, reflecting an interesting new stage in the country's economic development, in that it no longer relies on the export of the cheap toys and clothes that first earned it its nickname 'workshop of the world', and has instead begun to turn to domestic demand in an effort to boost production and encourage Chinese people to buy products that are made in the country.

While this may seem a step in the right direction it is having some unfortunate side-effects, such as the environmental impact of increases in steel and cement production, as well as an increase in the demand for power, which is still primarily fuelled by coal (China surpassed the United States as the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gasses as far back as 2006). However, China has recognised its problems and has begun to take steps to address them. Li Daokui (an economics professor at Beijing's Tsinghua University) was quoted by Alan Wheatley in an article in the *International Herald Tribune* (17 August 2010) as saying that investment in a low-carbon economy, as well as urbanization and the development of the interior, will be the main factors in sustaining China's projected annual growth rate of 9 percent over the coming decade. Professor Li sees the country about to enjoy a 'golden period' where there will not only be a new focus on energy efficiency, but also a shift to growth in the domestic sector. Red China, it seems, would like to be seen as Green China from now on.

A multi-polar world

A number of countries in the early stages of economic reform have experienced rapid growth, but nothing has ever come close to what has been achieved by China in recent years. According to Ted C. Fishman, the country's economy has doubled nearly three times over in the last thirty years (2006, p.12). This impressive rate is all the more remarkable for having been achieved not by right-wing capitalists, but by whom Niall Ferguson calls 'card-carrying Communists'. Indeed, Ferguson points out that 'the man responsible for China's economic miracle was the same man who ordered tanks into Tiananmen Square' (2006, p.635).

What has been happening in China is in stark contrast to Eastern Europe, where the Soviet leadership tried to introduce economic reform and ended up with a revolution followed by economic collapse. The Chinese wanted, and got, economic reconstruction without political reform. How were they able to do this? Ferguson maintains the answer is simple: when a potentially revolutionary situation developed in 1989, the regime did what Communist regimes have routinely done when confronted with internal dissent, they sent in the tanks; on 4 June 1989 the Democracy Wall movement was ruthlessly suppressed. But perhaps this answer is too simple. The Chinese authorities may have suppressed dissent, even brutally so, but they also managed to lift more people out of poverty in the last thirty years than any other regime in history, communist or capitalist. Hundreds of millions of people have seen their lives vastly improved thanks to China's agricultural and economic reforms.

The IIEC and CSIS¹ consider China's rise as a global economic and political power to be 'one of the transformative events of our time' (Bergsten et al. 2006, p.ix). Yet what do the other world powers make of this transformation? According to the

IIEC and CSIS, 'Some devotees of *realpolitik* [sic] will fear that China's size and growing military capabilities will produce a new strategic threat to the United States and its allies while other observers see a strong and more self-confident China as a likely force for stability in the region and the world' (ibid., p.x).

Beijing is now calling for the creation of a 'multi-polar world', something that is widely seen as a thinly veiled challenge to the United States (ibid., p.18). It is a fact that China, not only by virtue of its size, but because of what will happen to the world economy if the country's economic expansion continues unabated, does indeed pose unprecedented challenges. And not just for economies; there are environmental challenges as well. China is poorly endowed with natural resources (apart from coal), and its increasing use of coal and other fossil fuels is exacerbating global pollution. China's thirst for fuel is also causing other concerns around the world, particularly because of its relationships with less-developed countries, which are beginning to look alarmingly colonial. And China will unlikely allow itself to be dominated by the United States in the way Japan was in the past. The country will not only have the willingness to take on a territorial leadership role within the Asia region, it will have the capacity to do so as well.

China's development

China is a new world power; it is the world's third largest country, and the world's most populous. It dominates the Pacific coastline of continental Asia, and shares over 14,000 kilometres of land frontier with over a dozen countries, including fellow giants Russia and India. In 1950, approximately 30 percent of the world's population lived in cities (a mere six percentage points under China's current figure). In fact, for most of the second half of the twentieth century China's pace of urbanization lagged behind the rest of the world; so is it any wonder that it is trying to catch up? However, according to the IIEC and CSIS, China's current pace of urbanization is unparalleled in history; the estimate is that China's urban population has ballooned by 200 million within the space of a decade (ibid., p.31).

One of the most important challenges facing China's government in the future will be lessening the income gap between urban and rural areas. One other area of inequality that has long existed in China is that of the developed coastal regions and inland areas, a gap that has continued to increase in recent years. The infrastructure that is being created in order for the country to compete globally is also causing populations to become displaced. According to a 2005 report by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences it is estimated that up to 40 million peasants have been forced off their land to make way for these new infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, airports, dams, and factories, with an additional two million being displaced every year (ibid., p.41). These millions become China's 'floating population' and are flocking into urban areas in search of new means of livelihood. Vast migrant-worker 'towns' are springing up on the edges of major cities, storing up potential environmental, health and safety issues, as well as poverty and rising levels of dissatisfaction with the way the country is being run.

What China has been experiencing in recent decades is nothing less than the largest mass migration in human history. According to the IIEC and CSIS, China's National Population and Family Planning Commission estimated the number of internal migrants to be 53.5 million in 1995 and well over 140 million by 2004 (ibid., p.46). Alan Wheatley estimates that the number of migrants in China reached 211 million in 2009.² Migrant workers are said to account for approximately 20 percent of China's working-age population (15-64 years old) (ibid.).

In the early 1980s Deng Xiaoping dismissed any potential problems regarding future inequality with the memorable phrase 'some people have to get rich first'. Recently though, Chinese leaders have begun to take cognisance of the fact that such inequalities, if they are allowed to continue unabated, could lead to political instability, with the result that they have now begun to implement policies designed to accelerate both the pace of farm-income growth and the economic development of interior provinces that have been left behind in the rush to the market.

Manuel Castells sees major problems remaining to be solved in China, and he is not at all certain that the country will be able to continue to be 'a little bit global' and 'a little bit capitalist' (1998, p.323). Observers of the new China often seem to make an implicit assumption between development and democracy, thereby seeing either a gradual erosion of Communist power or even a sudden toppling of it as somehow inevitable. Castells does not think that the available information supports this view. He sees the power of the Communist Party as relying on 'a delicate balance of power-sharing and wealth distribution between national, provincial, and local elites. This central/provincial/local arrangement of the Chinese state in the

process of primitive accumulation may well be the key mechanism in ensuring an orderly transition from statism to capitalism' (1997, p.337). He identifies the most immediate problem as being the massive rural exodus provoked by the modernization and privatization of agriculture, which has affected an estimated 300 million peasants. He sees this mass of uprooted migrants as unable to assimilate into the notion of a civil society and correctly identifies these inhabitants, who are unorganized and lacking in cultural and political resources, as being 'an extraordinarily volatile element whose potential rage could destabilize the whole process of transition to a market economy, should they come into contact with messianic leaders or with splintering factions of the Communist party', similar to what happened in the mid-nineteenth century during the Taiping Rebellion (1998, p.326).

A rising tide raises all boats

Kishore Mahbubani maintains that the Chinese people are among the most industrious in the world. He cites as examples the successes that overseas Chinese have had in almost every society they migrated to. In fact, he reminds us that it was the apparent success of the overseas Chinese, when seen against the low productivity of mainland China, that confirmed Deng Xiaoping's suspicion that China had adopted a wrong economic system when it embraced the Marxist-Leninist model (Mahbubani 2008, p.53).

For all the downsides that rapid economic development may have it is still overall a good thing. A rising tide should indeed raise all boats. Kishore Mahbubani likens what is happening in China to the Renaissance in the West. A sustained period of improved economic performance and the accumulation of wealth is leading the country to reconnect with its rich past, as well as develop new cultural perspectives as a result (ibid., p.147). Arts are thriving in China, museums and galleries are opening at astonishing rates, there is even what almost amounts to a craze for antique collecting. This is a China reverting to its old ways. As Mahbubani says, 'Six decades of communist rule has not changed the Chinese soul, which has developed over thousands of years of history' (ibid., p.149). He cites the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) as one of China's 'golden eras'. Tang rulers welcomed foreign ideas and made Chang'an, their capital, one of the most diverse and dynamic cities in the world. Under the Pax Sinica the Silk Route, the most important trading route in the world at the time, reached its apogee, with traders benefitting from exchanges between East and West (ibid.).

This ancient Silk Road, which the Chinese call *si chou zi lu*, has begun to re-establish itself in recent decades as China re-engages with its neighbours and the wider world. This reflects what Ben Simpfendorfer calls '...a larger global rebalancing that represents the rise of the East after centuries of Western dominance' (2009, p.2). We must not forget that the rise of China is not an isolated event, it is being seen as part of a powerful historical tide sweeping across Asia and the Middle East. Simpfendorfer tells us that former economic powers are beginning to resurface after centuries of slumber; in many ways it is simply a rebalancing of world power. He tells us that China in the seventeenth century was estimated to have accounted for 29 percent of the global economy (which had fallen to a paltry three percent by the 1980s). In fact it was the decline of China that contributed to the collapse of trade along the Silk Road, with the Ming dynasty's decision to forcibly assimilate Arab traders leading to the break up of these trade links. Simpfendorfer also notes that the Arab world was itself also in decline in this period. This, coupled with the burgeoning power of the Western European sea powers, which moved Asian trade along the new African route, also delivered a decisive blow to Arab economies (ibid., p.79).

What makes this story so powerful is that the rise of the Arab world is now taking place simultaneously with that of China. The changes witnessed by the events beginning in Tunisia and rapidly spreading to neighbouring countries such as Egypt and thence throughout the whole of the North-African and Middle-Eastern world to produce the Arab Spring. These events are a testament to how fast the Arab world is changing (or would like to, if it could manage to throw off the shackles of ossified regimes). The resurgence of these two regions isn't a coincidence. They were once great trading partners along the Silk Road and today China's rise is acting as an accelerant for the rise that is occurring in the Arab world, with demand for oil fuelling growth, and China's factories churning out goods for the shopping malls of Riyadh and Dubai. China sees West Asia as an alternative strategic partner too, which may also offer the Arab world a way to hedge its bets in its increasingly troubled relationship with the West. Simpfendorfer is right to point out that 'The resurrection of the Silk Road is a timely reminder that the world's centre of gravity may not always lie in the West' (ibid., p.1).

Freedom to think

One thing that alarms many in the West is the perception of China as being undemocratic. It certainly does not operate a political system that could be characterised as democratic, but its one-party state does operate as a meritocracy, one where talent, hard work, and drive will be rewarded. Meanwhile, democracy has not remained static in the West in the millennia since it first emerged in the Greek city states. Western democratic systems also all vary greatly from country to country, with everything from the presidential system of America and France to the parliamentary democracies of most of the rest of Europe, (some of whom still have hereditary heads of state, and even, as in the United Kingdom's House of Lords, a still influential body of hereditary legislators).

What therefore really frightens most Westerners in their perceptions of China is the lack of freedom of speech, which is after all one of the cornerstones of the West's liberal identity. Here Kishore Mahbubani draws an important distinction between freedom of speech and freedom to think. He admits that Chinese society does appear to be at a disadvantage, remaining as it does a politically closed system. But it is what Mahbubani calls 'one of the typical paradoxes of our modern times, [that] China is in social and intellectual terms an increasingly open society'. He cites 'The dictates of modern economics demand that Chinese traders, entrepreneurs, and bankers must have the same access to global information flows that their economic competitors in other modern societies have. At the same time, modern technology, especially the proliferation of access to the Internet, has made it difficult to cut off the flow of information' (2008, p.139).

Mahbubani is right to suppose that most Westerners cannot 'see a distinction between freedom to think and freedom of expression' (ibid.), yet he also points out that the Chinese people have never been freer. 'Relative to their ancestors, they are the freest people China has ever had'; and as they look to the future, Mahbubani sees the Chinese as being increasingly confident that things will continue to improve (ibid., p.144).

The Chinese leadership takes a 'long view' in a way that few Western leaders can afford to do today (ibid., p.122), mired as they are in what Ben Simpfendorfer calls 'The vagaries of the electoral cycle' (2009, p.159). This has resulted in the petty fickleness of the Western democratic system where it's enough simply for a party to change its slogan to change the power structure (once, of course, the electorate has grown tired of those already in power). With change increasingly being embraced simply for the sake of it, how can anyone make plans for the long term in the West?

Is a newly resurgent China a threat to the West? I for one certainly do not think so, and Simpfendorfer would seem to agree. He sees the China model as being built on foundations similar to those of the West, in particular the pursuit of a market-based economy and the higher standards of living that come with it (ibid., p.161). In fact, because China has relied so heavily on advice from Western institutions in pursuit of these aims, the country can play an even more important role in the future by showing how, with judicious tweaking (which they must be allowed to do – like imbuing capitalism with 'Chinese characteristics'), this advice can be redistributed to the rest of the developing world, using China as an example of what can be achieved by thoughtfully blending different traditions.

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Notes

- 1 Institute for International Economics & Centre for Strategic and International Studies.
- 2 International Herald Tribune, 3 August 2010.

Shanghai under siege: letters and photographs of Karel Frederik Mulder

The Dutchman Karel Frederik Mulder (1901-1978) lived as a businessman, journalist and amateur photographer in the Chinese treaty port of Shanghai. During the siege of the Shanghai International Settlement by the Japanese military (August 1937-December 1941) he wrote reports and letters to his family. But there are also snapshots of the chaotic events of the Japanese attacks of the Chinese districts of Shanghai, of his personal life as a member of the International Volunteers Corps and of the changing political and human atmosphere in the Shanghai International Settlement. Louis Zweers interviewed his daughter Tineke Mulder (born in 1927, in Dairen, Manchuria), read the unpublished letters and researched the photographic material of his private collection.

Louis Zweers

MULDER STARTED HIS CAREER as a young planter of a tobacco-plantation near Medan in Deli (north-east Sumatra). The city of Medan developed rapidly as a trading centre, with a fast growing cosmopolitan population. In 1925 he moved to China as a businessman; first he lived in Dalian (Dairen), the commercial port of South Manchuria (at that time colonized by the Japanese), and then, as of the summer of 1931, in Shanghai, the treaty port at the mouth of the Yangtze River. The city flourished as a centre of commerce between east and west and became a multinational hub of finance and business in the 1930s. Mulder spoke fluent Japanese, Russian and Chinese (Mandarin) and some Chinese dialects, and was the owner of the Java & China Trading Company. But he was also a journalist and amateur photographer who delivered photos and articles about his travels in China to the Australian magazine *Argus* and the Dutch illustrated weekly magazines *De Prins* and *Het Leven*. In a letter to his brother Wim in Amsterdam, dated 20 August 1931, he wrote about his first impression of Shanghai:

— *Alles gaat hier op zijn Amerikaans: full speed, hurry up and the devil take the hindmost. Behoorlijke trams of autobussen zijn er niet. Ik heb een tweedehandse Chrysler gekocht. Iedereen die geld heeft, houdt er zijn lijfwacht op na, veelal Wit-Russen, vroegere officieren die zijn gevlucht tijdens de (Russische) revolutie van 1917.*

In the 1930s Shanghai was a metropolis; the population stood at three million. The city had a cosmopolitan reputation with frivolous clubs, the famous Cathay Hotel in Art Deco style, the classy Shanghai Club with the longest bar in the world, popular night-spots, beautiful cinemas, theatres, restaurants and many shops and stores with luxury goods. Foreigners – mostly Americans, British, French, Russians, Japanese and a few dozen Dutch – comprised less than three percent of the local population. They resided in the villas of the French Concession, on impressive avenues lined by plane trees, and in the International (Anglo-American) Settlement with its colonial buildings, mansions and apartments located close to the waterfront (the area known as the Bund, near the Huangpu River, a tributary of the Yangtze). These areas of the city were under foreign jurisdiction and foreigners lived an extraordinary and wealthy existence. They enjoyed the bulk of the city's riches and pleasures; the fabulous nightlife rivalled that of Paris or Berlin.

During the Sino-Japanese war, the occupation of Chapei (the Chinese area of Shanghai), and the siege of the International Settlement by the Japanese army in August 1937, life for most 'Shanghaiers' (as the expatriates were referred to) became hard but not unbearable. Although Shanghai found itself in the throes of war, every effort was made to carry on a semblance of the pre-war high life. But many immigrants like the European Jews (an estimated 30.000) and White Russians (20.000), although escaping Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, lived in desperate conditions in the poorest and most crowded area of the city.

The Jewish refugees sheltered in the small houses of the Chinese Hongkou district that sits north of the Bund and the Suzhou Creek. Most of them barely succeeded in staying alive. The situation was partly the result of the disapproving attitude of the Shanghai foreign communities towards the mass immigration of European Jews and White-Russians, nurtured by economic and political fears. The former Jewish quarter became a ghetto in WWII.

In his unpublished typewritten letters (250 pages) Mulder wrote to his family about daily life during the siege of Shanghai, the activities of Chinese warlords and guerrillas, the Japanese military, the International Volunteer Corps,

the international rivalries and national interests, the local Chinese residents, the Jewish refugee community, the nightlife, the opium-dens, the brothels, the gangsters and the ongoing anarchy in the declining and war-torn city. In his authentic reports he brings to life with clarity, not only one of the most convoluted episodes of modern Chinese history, but also the intensity of life experienced by the international community in the besieged treaty port of Shanghai.

For their own safety he sent his wife, daughter and son to family in the former Dutch East-Indies. However, Mulder visited Japan by boat as late as the autumn of 1938; it was a popular holiday destination for the expatriates of Shanghai. There was still an open connection with the outside world via the Yangtze River. Mulder stayed in the mountains near Kyoto and Nara; after four months he returned to Shanghai. About the military situation he wrote:

— *Under the Japanese regime the territory around Shanghai has become a no man's land, unsafe for citizens to visit. The country is overrun with guerrillas and robber bands. The river is just as unsafe and pirates frequently attack ships. Their junks are armed with machineguns and very often they succeed in taking a ship ... Ashore the guerrillas are having it very much their own way and the Japanese venture only in large numbers outside the occupied part of Shanghai, which has been transformed into a strongly defended camp. Even then they are not safe for the guerrillas to unite and form large detachments and sometimes full-sized battles are fought, each side using artillery. Gunfire is then audible all over Shanghai. The Japanese even use planes and when visiting the Eastern city limits it is not unusual to see bombers arrive at the military aerodromes and take off again fully loaded. Battles are fought so close to the city that the smoke columns of the exploding bombs are clearly visible. Similar reports arrive from other parts of China and it is evident that of the enormous territory, theoretically occupied by the Japanese, only the railways, the rivers and narrow zones along these communication routes are actually in Japanese hands.²*

In the spring of 1939 Mulder made a trip by car in the area occupied by the Japanese around Shanghai; he had been granted a special permit.

— *The Suzhou Creek, which flows through the town, divides what is left of the International Settlement from the Japanese occupied zone. Barbed wire entanglements close the bridge over the creek with only a small opening at both sides for pedestrians and a larger one in the centre for cars. British soldiers guard the south side of the bridge. The Seaforth Highlanders form part of Shanghai's British garrison and they make a picturesque show in their kilts. The Chinese call them 'lady soldiers'. Japanese soldiers and marines who keep a watchful eye on everything occupy the other side of the bridge. Chinese are carefully inspected but Europeans are not searched. The occupied area is deserted and quiet as the grave. The houses and shops are closed, most of them boarded up. Now come the first ruins: shelled and burnt houses, first isolated ones, then whole blocks. Tumbledown walls rise out of the debris. Here and there Chinese squatters have piled up bricks to make rough walls, using bamboo matting as a roof, and they live in these caricatures of human dwellings. It is remarkable how they manage to exist at all ... A curious thing is the absence of Japanese soldiers. This confirms the rumour that the Japanese are short of troops in the Shanghai area and it explains the fact that Chinese guerrilla bands dare operate within sight of the town and even in the Japanese occupied zones of Shanghai.*

The goal of his trip was to visit an American factory in the open country to the Northwest of Shanghai.

— *I leave the ruins behind me and drive past neglected fields. The farmers have fled and the land lays waste. Not a single living being in sight. This part of my trip is not entirely without danger as the country around Shanghai swarms with guerrillas and bandits.'*

He reached the factory without mishap, but on his way back Mulder was forced to brake hard and suddenly to avoid crashing into a tree lying across the road. At the same time a number of Chinese jumped out from behind a number of haystacks in the surrounding fields. They were dressed as peasants, but were armed.

— *The car has stopped and my hand rests on the butt of the automatic weapon under my right thigh. Now to keep cool! The leader comes up to my car and starts to talk to me. He speaks the Shanghai dialect that I fortunately understand. With a wide grin he asks for cigarettes. I have half a tin in the car, which I give to him through the window. He thanks me politely and divides the cigarettes among his men ... They belong to the Chinese 19th Route Army and have been in the neighbourhood of Shanghai since November 1937, harassing the Japanese. Sometimes they slink past the Japanese posts into the city, but most of the time they remain in the country. "We are going to win the war even if it takes us another ten years", grins the Chinese.'*³

In December of 1939 Mulder had the opportunity to visit Nanking, the former capital of the Republic of China, two years after the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians and the plundering of the city by soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army. He wrote about his visit to this traumatized city that was still occupied by the Japanese military.

— *It seems that the Nanking Chinese lost the strength to go ahead. Everywhere is the sweet smell of opium. More than a third of the population is addicted to opium.'*⁴

It is impossible, Mulder reports, to give even an impression of the total sadness in Nanking.

His last 'Shanghai Letter', dated early May 1940, was sent to his family just before the Germans occupied the Netherlands. In the beginning of December 1941, after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese army invaded the Shanghai International Settlement with force. Some days later all the 'hostile citizens', such as the British, Americans, Dutch and Belgians, were ordered to register. Their factories, real estate, classic cars and bank accounts were registered too, later to be frozen or confiscated. In March 1942 they were ordered to wear red armbands for identification purposes; the armbands were marked with a letter to indicate nationality: 'A' for America, 'B' for Britain and 'N' for Netherlands. Armbands were not worn by 'non-hostile citizens', such as Germans, Italians and Vichy-French. The 'hostile citizens' were forbidden to enter parks, cinemas, theatres, bars, clubs and hotels. In November 1942 the Japanese imprisoned Mulder, along with many other Anglo-Americans, in the prison camps at Haiphong Road in Shanghai and later in Fengtai near Beijing, under exceedingly difficult conditions. He became an interpreter because he spoke fluent Japanese. There he lived in crowded, hellishly hot barracks until the end of the war. After his return to Shanghai he was reunited with all his documents, papers and photographs, which had been hidden and kept safe by a Chinese friend. When, in 1949, Mao Zedong's Communist Party took over Shanghai, Mulder departed for America. He lived in New York until his death in 1978.

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1. Shanghai, Chinese sector, summer 1939. Mulder drives his car through the western Chinese part of the city, which is occupied by the Japanese. In the forefront you see a man pushing a traditional wheelbarrow. Most of the shots taken in these Chinese neighbourhoods, also known as the 'badlands', were taken furtively through the window of his car. The neighbourhoods were not safe for westerners.

2. Shanghai, March 1939. Traditional riverboats waving the Japanese flag on the Yangtze river.

3. Shanghai, Chinese sector, summer 1939. Armed Japanese military march through the Chinese sector. Chinese children watch, enthralled.

4. Whilst the International Settlement in Shanghai was spared, the Chinese sector faced extreme destruction - Mulder visited the heavily damaged part of the city by car. At the beginning of March 1932 a ceasefire was declared. Shanghai, Chapei, 1932.

5. Shanghai, International Settlement, 1939. Mulder in the uniform of the International Volunteer Corps.

6. Shanghai, International Settlement, winter 1938. Rickshaws in the snow.

7. Shanghai, International Settlement, late 1930s. Mulder sitting behind his desk.

8. Karel Frederik Mulder, armed with just his camera, poses here next to a stronghold of sandbags, built and abandoned by Japanese Marines - the Japanese flag still flying. He went on to photograph human victims and city structures reduced to ashes by Japanese bombings in the Chinese sector. Shanghai, Chapei, 1932.

Additional photos from the collection can be viewed online at <http://www.ias.nl/the-newsletter/article/shanghai-under-siege>



4.



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8.

The photo collection (© K.F. Mulder)

The main part of Mulder's photographic work covers the period 1920-1939; it consists of thousands of photographs taken by Karel Frederik Mulder and prints belonging to international press photographers. There are photographs of Europeans living in the enclaves in East Asia, depicting social gatherings, festivals and sporting events. There are also travel photographs with nature scenes, temples, pagodas, ethnic minorities, street scenes and city landscapes. The lives of the Europeans and those of the local Chinese populations are kept mostly separate in the photographs. When photographing people and things in the European enclaves, Mulder brought his Exacta-camera in close, and the captions underneath the photographs include names. However, when photographing the Chinese, Mulder clearly kept more distance. In his albums, the series of photographs, which can be ascribed to the private sphere of the photographer - such as the snapshots of his holiday trips, parties, picnics, friends and family - are interspersed by photographs of socio-political and military events.

Notes

- 1 Shanghai Letter, 20 August 1931.
- 2 Shanghai Letter, 12 April 1939.
- 3 Shanghai Letter, 20 March 1939.
- 4 Nanking Letter, 6 January 1940.
- All collection K.F. Mulder.

The cultural crossroads: St. Petersburg, Batavia, Amsterdam

The archives and libraries of the Netherlands, Indonesia and Great Britain preserve many collections of Malay written documents: witnesses to the long history of presence and activity of Dutch and British trading companies in the Malay Archipelago. Our exploration of these documents brought us to three cities – St. Petersburg, Batavia and Amsterdam – and conjured past images of their 17th and 18th century histories.

Irina R. Katkova

St. Petersburg collection

Outstanding Russian collector and scholar N.P. Likhachev (1862-1936) possessed a rare erudition and sophisticated knowledge in the fields of history, palaeography, diplomacy, sphragistics and numismatics; he made a great contribution to these fields and built an extremely rich collection of rare documents, manuscripts, seals, icons, pictures, charters, coins, ex libris and autographs. Among all these objects one can find both western and oriental samples including a rare collection of old Malay letters from the archives of the Dutch East-India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* – VOC). As indicated in Likhachev's notes, he bought the Malay letters in 1910, from the auction house Muller in Amsterdam. A number of the letters that are in Chinese were purchased earlier, in 1890, from a famous Paris antiquarian, Saffroi (image 2).¹

All but one of the letters had come from the family archive of Joan van Hoorn; most had been addressed to him as director-general of the Dutch-Indies (1691-1704) and as governor-general of the Dutch-Indies (1704-1709). The one exception was the letter addressed to his predecessor, governor-general Willem van Outhoorn (1691-1704). However, one could consider this letter to be a family heirloom as well, because Joan van Hoorn married Susanna Angela van Outhoorn, daughter of Willem van Outhoorn, in 1691.²

VOC and Joan van Hoorn

Monumental changes occurred in the China Sea region in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, as a result of dynastic transformations in China and Japan, and the expansion of European maritime trade in Asia. These global forces found their expression in new port cities. The port of Batavia was established in 1619 as a typical colonial castle town at the site of the former port of Jayakarta, or Sunda Kalapa. Its rise came at the expense of nearby Banten, which had served as the terminus of Chinese, Indian, Arabic and European trade on Java.

Joan van Hoorn was born in Amsterdam, on November 16th 1653. In 1663 he departed to the Dutch-Indies with his father Pieter van Hoorn, *Raad extra-ordinair van Indie*, on board of the ship "Alphen". At the age of twelve he started his career as *onderassistent* in the VOC, and eventually worked his way up to *Directeur-Generaal* of the Dutch-Indies in 1691, and *Gouverneur-Generaal* in 1704. He is known for amassing a huge fortune during his lifetime, and famous for establishing the first coffee plantations on Java. The Dutch had already brought coffee plants from Mocca and Yemen, but only after some experimenting in the Priangan area south of Batavia, by van Hoorn, did the cultivation of Java coffee become a huge success. Joan van Hoorn ended his career in the Dutch-Indies in 1709; he was succeeded by Abraham van Riebeeck, father of his third wife. Soon after he sailed to Amsterdam, as an Admiral aboard the ship "Zandenburg". He died less than a year after his return.

Batavia and Malay Letters

By the beginning of the 18th century Batavia had become known for its luxurious way of life, high class citizens, cosmopolitan nature and eclectic cultural mix of residents. Every indigenous merchant visiting the city was provided with a translator to help with writing diplomatic letters to neighbouring port principalities. Moreover, in the Malay world great symbolic value was attached to the exchange of official letters, especially where the status of the sender and the recipient were both significant. The writing of diplomatic correspondence was elevated to an art, including in itself the

arts of calligraphy and illumination (embellishment of text with gold or silver), and written according to the rules of composition as defined in the *Kitab Terasul*. The letters were brought to Batavia Castle where they would be ceremoniously presented to the *Gouverneur-Generaal* and the members of the *Raad van Indie*. Many surviving letters from the VOC archives, beautifully illuminated with gold leaf, still bear witness to those days. Some can be found among the collection from St. Petersburg (image 3).

Likhachev's collection contains 54 documents, written in various languages: Malay, Javanese, Dutch, Chinese and Spanish; and in different scripts: Jawi, Pegon, Javanese, Chinese and Latin. Containing fine examples of Arabic calligraphy, they were composed by Sultans and nobility of various Malay Sultanates, such as Palembang (image 4), Cirebon (image 5), Banten, Japara, Bima on Sumbawa Island, the Sultanates of Bone, Gowa and Tallo on South Sulawesi, Bouton on Butung Island, Malacca and Manila. One letter was written by Joan van Hoorn himself in 1696 and addressed to Pangeran (Prince) Cakraningrat on Madura. Several letters depict trade relations; for example, a letter written in 1706 by the first Balinese captain in Batavia *Lampiden*, and a letter from the Spanish *Compania A'Olanda* in South Sulawesi. One letter from Agra witnesses the trading activities of Joan van Hoorn and his mission to India.³

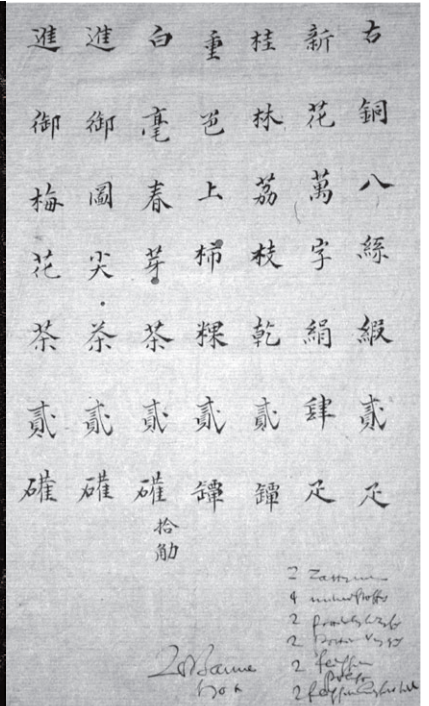
All the documents mentioned above date back to a rather early period, namely 1680-1710, which is when the so-called "old" Malay letters were created. Their style of composition, inscription and decoration is of utmost sophistication and elegance. Some of Likhachev's items, including the letter written by Joan van Hoorn himself, display the unique and beautiful flower decor, which is a distinguishable feature of Banten illuminated letters (image 6).

Whilst perusing through the illuminated letters one cannot help but notice the significance of one other particular person. Dutch artist and traveller Cornelis de Bruyn (1652-1727) combined his many talents in various arts and sciences, and was blessed with an adventurous and curious soul. He is mostly remembered for the written records of his extensive travels through Egypt, Persia, Jerusalem, Constantinople, India, Moscovia and Batavia, which are accompanied by fine drawings and portraits. After painting Peter the Great in 1704, he left Moscovia, and travelled through Persia, reaching Java in 1706. In Batavia he was introduced to the *Gouverneur-Generaal* Joan van Hoorn and painted his portrait, which is now exhibited at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

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Notes

- Opis 2. Arhiv RAN. *Svedenija o proishojdenii, sostave i opredelenii predmetov iz kolekcii Likhacheva N.P.*
- Rhede van der Kloot, M.A. van. 1891. *De Gouverneurs-Generaal en Commissarissen-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indie 1610-1888. Historisch-Genaeologisch Beschreven.* s'Gravenhage: Van Stockum & Zoon.
- Katkova, Irina. 2010. "Pisma hollandskoj Ost-Indskoj kompanii iz kolekcii N.P. Likhacheva v sobranii IVR RAN". *Pismennij pamjatniki Vostoka*, 1-12.



1: Portrait of Joan van Hoorn (1653-1711). Painted by Cornelis de Bruijn. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

2: Chinese letter (1702). VOC collection in St. Petersburg.

3: Letter (1709) by Sultan Abual-Muhasin Muhammad Zain al-Abidin of Banten. VOC collection in St. Petersburg.



4: Lamp-black seal of Sultan Ratu Palembang (1709). VOC collection in St. Petersburg.



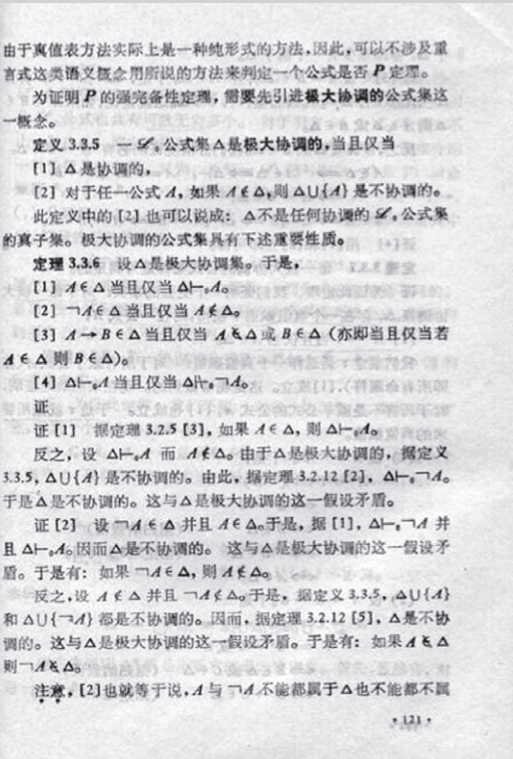
5: Letter from Cirebon (1688). Red wax seal of VOC.

6: Letter by Governor-General Joan van Hoorn to pangiran Cakraningrat at Madura (1696). VOC collection in St. Petersburg.

Chinese logic and Chinese philosophy: reconstruction or integration?

“Logic” derives from the Greek $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$, meaning word, speech or discourse. Its translation into Chinese is 逻辑, which is merely phonetic. “Philosophy” derives from the Greek $\phi\iota\lambda\omicron\sigma\sigma\omicron\phi\iota\alpha$, meaning a love of wisdom. Its translation into Chinese is 哲学 (zhixue) “the study of wisdom”, which strikes an odd note due to the Confucian sublimation of wisdom to more important virtues such as 仁 (ren) “humanity”. These Greek words have played a defining role in Western intellectual history, so much so that it would be difficult to imagine the result of somehow subtracting them to see what remains. By contrast, attempts to find logic and philosophy in Chinese tradition meet with only partial success.

Fenrong Liu and Jeremy Seligman



CERTAINLY, CHINESE PEOPLE SINCE ANCIENT TIMES have thought and written about fundamental questions of human life similar to those studied in the West and recognized as “philosophy.” And, if we try hard enough, we can find in ancient Chinese texts an interest in the sort of thing that fascinated Western thinkers under the designation “logic.” But is this comparative similarity enough to justify thinking and talking of two traditions of philosophy and logic: one Western and one Chinese? Or is this categorization of subject matter an essentially moribund imposition of Western concepts on a foreign culture? This latter view is resisted even by prominent Chinese thinkers. In his book 《逻辑指要》“Essentials of Logic”, 章士钊 Zhang Shizhao said “The name logic was initiated in Europe, but the principles of logic exist everywhere ... the principles of logic existed already in China.”

Although these academic questions excite considerable interest today among scholars in West and East, their answers (if any) are in danger of an ironic fate: anachronism. As history marches forward, generations of Chinese students have studied Western philosophy and logic, and increasingly more Western students are exposed to Chinese thought. The intellectual frontiers in China today are drawn by individuals well versed in Western intellectual tradition. And this includes not only those working in mathematics and physics, but also 现代新儒学 the “new” Confucianism and 国学 “Chinese studies.”

This leaves the question of how to approach ancient Chinese texts in philosophy, and especially logic, without a clear direction. In particular, we may wonder how to approach texts that appear to be concerned with issues that Western scholars brand “logical”. Is it a matter of reconstructing the text in modern (Western) notation, with the implicit claim that the authors were grasping towards something that was probably much better understood in the West? Or should we be trying to extract an indigenous logic, one that is fundamentally at odds with Western “binary polarities” and which reveals an essentially Chinese way of thinking about the world? We believe that this is a false dichotomy, and that methods developed largely in the West can be used in a culturally neutral way, to reveal the operation of genuinely non-Western modes of thought. But this is getting a little ahead of ourselves. First, let us go back to the first indications of the problem, the first contact between China and the West.

In China, the first sign of any recognition of Western civilization is the word 蒙奇兜勒 (mengqidoule), found in two books: 《后汉纪》“The Annals of the later Han Dynasty” and 《后汉书》“The History of the later Han Dynasty (25-220 A.D.)”, describing a visit by a foreign envoy in the year 100 A.D. It is thought that these four characters are a phonetic transcription of “Macedonia”. In Europe, the Roman historian Florus describes a visit by envoys from the Seres (Chinese) to the Roman Emperor Augustus: “even Scythians and Sarmatians send envoys to seek the friendship of Rome. Nay, the Seres came likewise, and the Indians who dwelt beneath the vertical sun, bringing presents of precious stones and pearls and elephants.” Later commercial contact along the Silk road, both on land and sea, are well-known.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, many Jesuits went to China. Perhaps the most famous was Matteo Ricci, who arrived in China in 1583 and stayed until he died in 1610, introducing the imperial court to science, mathematics and astronomy, as well as Western ideas about the visual arts. With the help of 徐光启 Xu Guangqi, he translated Euclid’s Elements, revered in the West as an early exemplar of systemic logical deduction. But the Jesuits were also very active in transmitting Chinese ideas to Europe. Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, “Confucius, the Philosopher of the Chinese,” was published in Paris in 1687. By the middle of the 17th century, accounts of the Eight Trigrams and Yin/Yang appeared in Europe, influencing Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the prolific rationalistic philosopher and mathematician, to invent binary notation and to propose his *characteristica universalis*, “universal language,” which would eventually lead to the birth of modern logic.

At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, the ruling Chinese dynasty, the Qing, was in decline, and shocked into humbling concessions to foreign powers. Somehow, the West had risen from its barbarous past to become masters of technology. In sharp contrast to China’s

previous indifference to the West, many students were now sent abroad to study this foreign wisdom. Later, between 1909-1929, about 1300 students were sent overseas through the Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Scholarship Program. Tsinghua College, a preparatory school for that program, was established in 1911 in Beijing. Now, “Tsinghua University” employs one of the authors of this article.

Logic has always been closely allied to science, and science to technology. It is therefore no surprise that the Chinese also have an interest in Western logic. The generation of the 1930s and the 1940s who studied abroad, returned to China and started passing on their new knowledge. Jin Yuelin, for example, initiated the department of philosophy at Tsinghua University, Wang Xianjun taught logic at Peking University, and Mo Shaokui at Nanjing University. Including them, there have now been six generations of logic students in China, with numbers expanding dramatically since the general opening of China in the 1980s. Now, as China claims its place in the world, an appreciation of Western methods is accompanied by a renewed interest and celebration of traditional Chinese culture. This has led, in recent years, both to a questioning of the Western labels “philosophy” and “logic” and to a growing interest in indigenous traditions, especially 名学 (mingxue) “the study of names” and 辩学 (bianxue) “the study of argumentation” as alternatives. These subject titles go back at least 2000 years in the Chinese tradition. The emphasis here is on reconstruction: discovering what from the past is distinctively Chinese.

When looking at ancient Chinese texts of a logical nature one is presented with an enigma. For the most part, these texts had little impact on the progression of Chinese thought in general. The temptation is to think of them as a curious foray into an alien world. One example here will suffice. In the Mohist Canon, an extraordinary book of miscellaneous logical and scientific texts, we see 以言为贵, 辩。说在其言。 “To claim that all saying contradicts itself is self-contradictory. Explained by: what he says himself.” This is so similar to Eubulides’ “What I am saying now is a lie” (4th century BC), that we cannot but assume that these geographically and culturally remote thinkers had something of the same revelation. Yet by examining the text in context, we see that it is likely that the Mohists were more concerned with providing a manual for court rhetoric rather than an inquiry into the nature of truth. Those who seek a distinctively Chinese logic see more than just a difference of emphasis. Hidden in these ancient texts, perhaps, are the secrets of quite a different way of looking at the world.

The search for cultural uniqueness is understandably celebrated everywhere. We all want to know what special contribution we made to the sum of human history. Yet the associated tendency to ignore similarities is commonly an unnecessary and regrettable intellectual myopia. All but the most isolated and authoritarian societies show an abundance of diversity, and even when it isn’t revealed, we suspect that it nevertheless exists, hidden and repressed.

In a recent book, George Nisbett claims that “to the Asian, the world is a complex place, composed of continuous substances, understandable in terms of the whole rather than its parts, and subject more to collective than to personal control. To the Westerner, the world is a relatively simple place, composed of discrete objects that can be understood without undue reference to context, and highly subject to personal control.” But such gross generalizations, when lifted out of context, are obviously false. Those Chinese students, for example, who study logic and mathematics in Western universities probably do not actually think of themselves as “holistic thinkers”.

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Notes

- 1 Yule, Henry. 1915. *Cathay and the way thither*. London: J. Jetley. p.18.
- 2 Parker, John. 1978. *Windows into China: the Jesuits and their books, 1580-1730*. Boston: Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston. p.25.
- 3 Nisbett, R.E. 2003. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently ... and Why*. New York: Free Press. p.100.

1: A page from a book on modern logic, written in Chinese. Is there anything similar in China’s own tradition? (© Beijing Normal University Press).

2: The first group of students sent to America in 1872, aged between 12 and 20. Imagine what an extraordinary world lies ahead of them.

3: Pages from *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (China’s Philosopher Confucius), 1687.

Power politics and the contested meaning of heritage

Historically embedded beliefs can be reproduced or contested through art, rituals, myths, structures, people and sacrifices – and employed by different interest groups, in the context of war – to build up status, goodwill and power. The concept ‘heritage’ is an interesting entry point for recognising authority structures and power politics, whereby one must also explore and understand the ways in which ‘heritage’ is conceptualised, theorised and applied in today’s globalised and rapidly changing world. Here the focus is on South Asia – Nepal in particular – and how heritage played a role in the quest for power before, during and after Nepal’s civil war (1996-2006).

Marloes van Houten

TO COMPREHEND THE ROLE that cultural and natural heritage played in the context of Nepal’s civil war, it is important to take note of the historical relationship between power distribution at the micro and macro levels of the physical world and the allocation of power in the supernatural world. Nepal’s ontology has traditionally been one of a cosmological order in which power is distributed by Hindu gods and deities. Natural heritage was assigned accordingly, and rituals and sacrifices reproduced and fortified the cosmological order of the Nepalese society. Religion stands in close relation to Nepal’s politics and at a number of points in history this form of cultural heritage has been capitalised upon by power seekers and power holders.

Before, during and after Nepal’s civil war, the United Communist Party Nepal-the Maoists (UCPN-M)¹ engaged in rituals to negotiate their position of power. So too did the other warfare actors: the Monarchy (including the army), the Nepali Congress (NC) Party, the Communist Party of Nepal-the United Marxists-Leninists (CPN-UML), and others.

– *People of a political party other than the UCPN-M were not allowed to stay in the village. The Maoists compelled the Damais [Dalits] to play the drums, which they traditionally only played at funerals. The Maoists meant to say to us: if you do not leave the village immediately, we will make sure that it will not take long before a burial will happen. If you do not obey our commands, we will come to kill you and your family.*

In the quote above, an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) from a village in the Rukum District explained how the UCPN-M had made use of the symbolic power of ritual services to demand obedience and establish a firm position of authority at a local level.²

Nepal’s rich cultural and natural heritage

Nepal has a rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage. The UNESCO World Heritage List records 830 properties with outstanding universal value. Nepal was originally a Buddhist society, with a Mongoloid population from Tibet. Around 200A.D. the Licchavis (Indo-Aryans) invaded from the north of India and spread Hinduism throughout Nepal. In general, Nepal’s long history of immigration from the north and the south has produced an ethnic and cultural diversity. The abundance of memorial sites, ritual places, temples, monasteries, shrines monuments, festivals, and 92 languages spoken as a mother tongue, are a good illustration of this. However, the ethnic and cultural differences not only indicate diversity, but have historically also led to struggles for social, political, and land tenancy survival and predominance.

Generally, the Nepali people’s deep belief in Hindu, animist, and related traditions, is easily discounted by Westerners, who see them as merely superstitions, or quaintly interesting, yet restricted to religious areas of life. But rituals, myths, and sacrifices play an important role in the *everyday* lives of Nepalis, not only within their religious lives. These forms of cultural heritage determine the rhythm of the day, divide the year into seasons, and structure the society into different castes and status groups. Even amidst the political turmoil of the civil war, “religious rituals at the Agnimatha, the Vedic fire temple in Patan, continue to be carried out, modestly and silently, with the idea that they guarantee the continuation of the cycle of the sun and the moon and thereby secure human existence on earth” (Shrestha & van Willigenbrug 2006). Families with barely a morsel to spare will offer the best they have to a particular deity (e.g. spirits of the woods and rivers), or Goddess(es) such as Shiva (of fertility and life). The evident importance of these rituals for the Nepalese has been strategically engaged in times of conflict to attain political power.

Power and governance in Nepal’s history

The geographical area that is now known as Nepal was a collection of small states until the 18th century, and ruled by Hindu kings. According to Nepalese folklore, the god/saint Goraknath commanded Drabya Shaha to conquer the Kathmandu Valley (then known as Nepal), and two centuries later, between 1743 and 1775, Prithivi Narayan Shah completed the unification of the states into one Nepal. This 16th century legend is not an exception; there are many more examples indicating the strong connection between religion and governance in Nepal.

According to the Puranas, the mythologies of the (Hindu) Vedic literature, the kings of Nepal are the incarnations of the protagonist God Vishnupurana (Lord Vishnu). Based on these scriptures, the actions and legitimacy of the (Shah) kings were in many cases excluded from critique, at least until the fall of Nepal as a Hindu state (May 2008). Natural heritage, such as ritual places, temples, natural sites, were not only dedicated to a supernatural entity, but also to the kings of Nepal, because they themselves were seen as a reincarnated deity.

The French anthropologist Lecomte-Tilouine in fact refers to the old kings of Nepal as ‘Hindu Warrior Kings’, since traditionally every Hindu king was a member of the Kshatriya or warrior caste. In the process of determining which warfare strategies to use and to legitimise the violent means exercised to secure the power position of the kings of Nepal, the interaction between the supernatural world and the natural world has been significant. Three Warrior Kingship rules can be identified based on the religious beliefs and traditions of Nepal’s past. It was, firstly, the obligation of the Hindu kings to enact blood sacrifices, by offering an animal and by initiating war “the sacrificial function of the king’s sword revives his sovereignty: at regular intervals the king is required to carry out blood sacrifice, [...] [this] blood regenerates his power” (2004:15). Secondly, much emphasis was put on people’s individual responsibility to take part in the warfare. When the king declared war – after the gods had instructed him to do so – every household had to provide one man to fight. And thirdly, war was placed outside the Hindu law, and the country was plunged into temporarily lawlessness. This meant that all rules of the caste hierarchy were allowed to be broken in times of mortal danger, including the murder of a Brahmin, a woman, a child, or a cow. Warfare also altered the usual norms of purity and impurity, whereby the slaughter of an enemy did not lead to impurity for the belligerent, and neither did *bali dan* (self-sacrifice) for the relatives of the warrior who died as a martyr.

However, there have always been fractions that take another view on the effects of religious beliefs and practices on governance patterns in Nepal. Some, for instance, indicate that the Hindu scriptures never literally identified the kings as gods, but that it has been merely a political manoeuvre right from the start. Another point of critique is that the elite has consistently refused to accept all religious Vedic literary works, focussing instead on the content that would justify their rightful claim to power, according to the cosmological order outlined in the Puranas.

The Monarchy, heritage and its claim to power

The question of a godly-determined sovereignty was a significant one in the collision between the Monarchy, the main political parties and the UCPN-M throughout the civil war. “Gyanendra, considered by loyalists to be a reincarnation of a Hindu god, ascended to the throne in 2001 after most of the royal family were slain by a drugged, drunk, lovelorn and suicidal prince. But the new king failed to win the support of the public, many of whom believed conspiracy theories linking him to the killing.”³

– *Steeped in the sea of blood which was the occasion for his [King Gyanendra] accession to the throne, and the father of a prince infamous as the alleged perpetrator of hit-and-run man-slaughter offences, the king is described by the Maoists with sanguinary imagery: ‘As if to fulfil a predetermined quota of human sacrifice every day, on an average more than two dozen persons per day have been brutally massacred by the security forces.’ (Lecomte-Tilouine 2004:19)*

Gyanendra made no attempts to disassociate himself from this bloodthirsty image; in fact he embraced it. At his first *Dasain* as king,⁴ he performed a pilgrimage to worship and sacrifice at all the temples of the Nepalese territory (such as Lasargha, Gorkha, Nuwakot, Dasain). With this sacrifice Gyanendra intended to reaffirm his sovereign position as a godly installed king, a legitimate ruler, and as a chief in command of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA).

On 29 May 2008, ‘Mail & Guardian Online’ reported that “The flag of Nepal’s 240-year-old Shah dynasty was taken down from the main palace in Kathmandu on Thursday after legislators abolished the world’s last Hindu monarchy ... The royal flag was replaced by Nepal’s national flag inside the palace on Thursday morning ... The king has been given 15 days to vacate the sprawling pink palace at the heart of Kathmandu, which will now be turned into a national museum.”⁵ The symbolic meaning of flags makes them a common and fundamental tool in the quest for power between different fractions.

Anti-monarchism was not limited to the UCPN-M. Individuals frequently expressed their doubts about the royalty in general, and about Gyanendra in particular, often indicating their suspicion of Gyanendra’s involvement in the Royal Massacre. The situation was aggravated by widespread disillusionment in his unfulfilled promises to end corruption and to bring about development. Anti-monarchy civilians, whether UCPN-M members or not, began to cover up the word ‘royal’ on signboards (i.e. property, national parks, forests, army territories, temples and museums) – hereby declaring: ‘away with the king and royal property legislation’ and ‘equality to all, we do not longer want the central power to be in the hand of the Monarchy’. The king, previously regarded as an incarnation of Vishnupura, and thereby a legitimate ruler, was no longer spared from critique.

The UCPN-M, heritage and its claim to power

After the Royal Massacre, the UCPN-M set about to unhinge the cultural construction of the king as the sovereign ruler, representing Lord Vishnu on earth. The status quo could only be overthrown, so the UCPN-M argued, if people identified themselves with the party and supported their call to take up arms and start a revolution. The legitimisation of their rule of law and the violence used to install it, was set in motion by reviving the Warrior Kingship rules.

Revival of the Warrior Kingship rules

Until the 18th century ‘bravery and war related sacrifices’ were associated with a confirmation or promotion of one’s position in the cosmological order (concerning the king) and possibly also in terms of social stratification (for the rest of the Nepali people), such as a shift from lower to higher caste. The UCPN-M strategically played upon the first and third Warrior Kingship rules: every king had the right and duty to wage war and enact blood sacrifices, and to thereby plunge his kingdom periodically into a state of temporary lawlessness.

The UCPN-M reasoned that their act of bravery (the initiation of war in 1996) placed them in the same position of sovereignty as the Shah Hindu kings. The UCPN-M leaders, as modern incarnation of the Warrior Kings, explained that they had no other choice then to start an armed conflict to ‘cleanse the country from within’ of all forms of exploitation.⁶

Bravery and war-related sacrifice, until the 18th century, had led to a higher status within the caste validation system – now it would lead to promotion within the UCPN-M hierarchy. Anyone killed by government forces was recognised as a martyr. If a UCPN-M combatant killed (‘sacrificed’) an enemy, it was believed to create a direct connection, without interference of the Brahmin priests, between the combatant and the Hindu gods. The highest offer one could bring was a *bali dan*: “by offering themselves in sacrifice through their commitment, Maoist soldiers became living dead, martyrs-to-be” (Lecomte-Tilouine 2004:17). Every UCPN-M combatant is thus both pre- pared to make a sacrifice and a willing sacrificial victim. Like the Tamil Tigers who flaunted a cyanide capsule pendant, the UCPN-M forces, and nowadays the Youth Communist League, wore the sign of their imminent demise on their foreheads: a mourning headband (*kaphan*) or a red star, which is said to indicate that they are willing to accept their own death.

Nepal's civil war (1996-2006)



1.

The second Warrior Kingship rule commands that 'every man is a potential warrior and thus expected to contribute to the war'. The UCPN-M capitalised on the traditional rule to justify their 'involuntarily' manners of recruiting people. In fact, they extended it to include women and children, so that at least one member of each household could take part in the UCPN-M meetings, forced labour and armed conflict.

Contesting national and supernatural heritage

Before, during and after the civil war the UCPN-M damaged and destroyed national and 'supernatural' heritage to contest the authority structures they symbolised. State representations (such as flags and signs) were removed or destroyed by the Maoist forces; government buildings, police offices, government schools and any buildings embodying the Royal House and the state were demolished or raided and used for UCPN-M purposes such as stockpiling of weapons or housing UCPN-M leaders. Murals, red painted messages on walls of houses, public buildings, buildings of historical value, and so forth, would exhibit rules and regulations, and broadcast threats to anyone who dared disobey them. Using murals to strengthen support for a political claim is a warfare strategy more often applied; during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) Red Guards knocked down old buildings, burned Buddhist images, and destroyed old Buddhist texts, replacing them with red painted slogans such as 'Long Live Chairman Mao'.

UCPN-M's anti-monarchism had consequences for Nepal's intellectual heritage. The government's sphere of influence was relinquished in schooling programmes, this included a ban on singing the national anthem and teaching Sanskrit. Instead, teachers were pressured to educate pupils in the Maoist Leninist Maoists-the Prachanda (MLM-P) ideology.



2.



3.

UCPN-M's aim to install an all-encompassing governance structure, included coming to terms with the power holders of the supernatural realm. Hence, the local faith healers and mediums (*dhami-jhankris*) were prohibited from doing their work. In addition, the UCPN-M did not appreciate the healers' expressions of worship to Hindu gods and local spirits as they were a source of power that conflicted with the UCPN-M plans of total governance. The party propagated development and progress for the rural population, and opposed the animist and shamanist beliefs of the healers and spiritual leaders – considering them 'backward'. These kind of shamanist practices enhanced social inequality because the *dhamis* (Brahmin upper caste) functioned as (paid) brokers between ordinary people and the Hindu gods. Here, the UCPN-M strategically called upon the third Warrior Kingship rule, whereby caste hierarchy should be broken in times of mortal danger (wartime).

Cultural beliefs, social practices, rituals, sacrifices and memorial sites

Cultural beliefs and social practices, which underlined the existing inequalities in Nepal's social stratification, were curtailed by the UCPN-M. As a consequence, any cultural practice that would confirm caste differences, gender inequality, or differences between poor and rich or educated and non-educated, were challenged and brought in line with the MLM-P ideology. The latter emphasised the importance of social equality and the inclusion of all. This did not happen without the use of verbal, physical and psychological violence. For example, armed UCPN-M members were known to threaten higher caste people with force into permitting lower caste people into their homes, and to then cook for them. Furthermore, wealthy households were coerced into giving up part of their land or salaries. Just like the sovereign rulers of

1: This *jhankri* had been threatened by the UCPN-M during the war and was no longer allowed to practice as a spiritual medium and faith healer (© van Houten).

2: A photo-montage published after the Royal Massacre in 2001, in the pro-Maoist journal *Naulo Bihani* (2001), clearly illustrates how the UCPN-M underplay the legitimate rule of Nepal's successive Shah kings, to fill these posts of godly given legitimacy themselves. On the cover of the journal, the pictures of successive Shah kings are shown whereby the headline reads 'following the royal massacre the end of the traditional monarchy in Nepal and the establishment of a republic'. At the bottom, three UCPN-M leaders are pictured, as if they are the natural successors of the Shah kings, supplemented with the comment 'the central people's government is prepared' (© van Houten).

3: Members of the Youth Communist League march through Khalanga, Rukum district, wearing the distinctive *kaphan* to express their commitment as 'martyrs-to-be' and their preparedness to die for the UCPN-M cause (© van Houten).

the past, the UCPN-M leaders started to raise taxes on land, property, natural resources, usage of infrastructure, and loans. People were forced to turn in 'donations': a portion of their food, livestock, and land. If they refused, they were beaten, kidnapped or sent to a labour camp.

In terms of gender equality, the UCPN-M reasoned that women should also be given a citizenship card, perform the same tasks as men, join community meetings and groups, and marry late so that they too could finish their education. Young girls and women were involuntary recruited for the party and the PLA, with the argument that women needed to break away from any cultural tradition that subordinated them.

In some cases the UCPN-M did not contest local tradition (religious beliefs, social practices, rites, etc), but purposefully employed them to suit their needs, as was the case when forcing the Damai to play their drums. They would punish thieves publicly by painting their faces black, shaving their heads, adorning them with garlands of slippers and parading them around the village, accompanied by armed UCPN-M members. The shaving of the head is a Hindu rite of purification; a garland of flowers honours a person – one of slippers does the opposite.

In the past, resting platforms and paths were built in memory of the dead. Among the Kham Magars it is believed that the spirit of the dead will ensure prosperity in the locality where its memorial has been built and where it receives regular worship. In line with this local belief, the UCPN-M memorialised their dead by constructing platforms, paths, gates, and gardens. In addition, natural areas such as forests or rivers, and public services (like water taps), originally named after the deity or God who reigned over the resource, were renamed for Maoist martyrs. It was not only about commemorating the dead; it was also establishing a shift in authority.

Conclusion

Heritage is neither a thing, a movement or a project, nor does it exist by itself. "Heritage is about the process by which people use the past; a discursive construction with material consequences" (Harvey 2008:19). At different points in Nepal's history the Monarchy, the UCPN-M and its opposition parties, called on their shared cultural heritage, in particular by reviving the ancient Warrior Kingship rules, to legitimate the use of violence to impose their authority on the local population. Ramirez writes "[Nepal accommodates] a society where religion does not constitute an autonomous domain [and] the practice of Nepalese Maoism is hardly a secular affair" (Gellner 2007:350). Different fractions have purposefully and opportunistically ascribed their own meaning to existing heritage, thereby invoking among the population the shared beliefs necessary to attain their respective goals. Whether through embrace or destruction – depending on which group was gearing up to take power – the significant meaning of heritage was contested.

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Notes

- 1 The UCPN-M was established in January 2009 when the Communist Party of Nepal-the Maoists (CPN-M) unified with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre-Masal).
- 2 For security reasons the VDC and village name are not identified.
- 3 [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jQhDpbHPipVypRDjAorpRS9RvWjg; accessed 4 October 2011.](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jQhDpbHPipVypRDjAorpRS9RvWjg;accessed 4 October 2011)
- 4 *Dasain* is the 'great warrior festival' – one of the most important annual festivals.
- 5 [http://mg.co.za/article/2008-05-29-royal-flag-lowered-as-nepal-monarchy-abolished; accessed 4 October 2011.](http://mg.co.za/article/2008-05-29-royal-flag-lowered-as-nepal-monarchy-abolished; accessed 4 October 2011)
- 6 Interview with UCPN-M Chairman Prachanda, 28 May 2001, *A World to Win*, No.27, 2001.
- 7 *Dhami-jhankris* act as mediators between the material and spiritual worlds.

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The making of Southeast Asian silicon valleys

Although many parts of Southeast Asia lag behind in terms of Internet penetration, recent years have witnessed an explosion of Internet use across the region, largely supported by the increasing accessibility of mobile technologies, growing digital literacy and the popularity of social media. As the information and communication technologies (ICTs) become more pervasive across the region, there are more and more young people who see their lives inextricably tied to technologies¹ not only as users, but also as creators. Software developers and hardware engineers, hackers, new media specialists or technology enthusiasts in general, who refer to themselves and each other as geeks,² are not only to be found in Silicon Valley. Young men (and to a lesser extent, young women) in Singapore, Bandung, Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere, also try to take part in and benefit from the so-called digital revolution, by exchanging knowledge, collaborating and celebrating the geek culture or 'geekdom'.

Zane Kripe



THE FORMATION OF SUCH GROUPS OF PEOPLE should not come as a surprise in countries that have, during the last few decades, discursively and politically positioned the ICTs as the basis for prosperous development and deeper integration into global markets. However, the question now is how the geeks, upon which the realization of such development largely relies, see themselves? Do they align with the discourse pursued by the states or do they draw their understandings about what it means to be a geek in the 21st century from elsewhere?

This article is based on ongoing research, part of a wider project at Leiden University, for which various ideas and perceptions about the future, in relation to technology and the so-called digital revolution, are explored.³ As the research is in its infancy, it cannot yet provide any nuanced or elaborate arguments; instead what I attempt to offer with this article is a peek into the early explorations of the field in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia, which seek answers to questions such as what it means to be a geek in Southeast Asia. What are the aspirations of geeks, and how do they act upon them on a daily basis?

The notion of the English word 'geek' developed in meaning over the course of many years and only in the 1980s did it start being linked to people with a great passion for computer technologies (Blu Buhs, 2010). The image of computer geek in the Western hemisphere has until recently been largely negative, connoting a person who is intelligent, yet socially awkward, with an 'uncool' or 'different' dress sense, and often with poor hygiene. However, since the late 1990s certain shifts have occurred, eventually transforming the perceived image of a geek into a more positive and even desirable one. As the ICTs play an increasingly more important role in the everyday lives of a growing number of people, the importance of geek knowledge and skills increases and so too does their economic and political power (Kelty, 2008). For example, well known geeks such as Bill Gates (Microsoft), Steve Jobs (Apple),

Larry Ellison (Oracle), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) and Google's Larry Page and Sergey Brin, not only list amongst the richest people in the world, but also amongst the most powerful, according to Forbes magazine.⁴ They now stand alongside the heads of state and religious leaders of the world. In mass media, increasing attention is also given to various issues of geek lifestyle, culminating in something known as 'geek chic' – a style of dress that includes T-shirts printed with insider jokes⁵ or images of science fiction characters, horn-rimmed glasses, shoulder-strap messenger bags, Converse trainers, an array of electronic gadgets, etc. As Feineman declared in 2005: "There's never been a better time to be a geek." Although such images of geek appeal go global through mass media, they largely stem from the USA and do not necessarily represent the reality elsewhere. Is 'geek' also the new cool in South East Asia?

When geeks come together

The last five years or so have been filled with a growing number of geek activities in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Online platforms for the discussion of geek communities and entrepreneurship cover national, regional and international issues; events that bring together hundreds and thousands of geeks have been happening with increasing regularity, and even permanent collaborative spaces have been effectively established by geeks themselves, with no large company or governmental financial support. Geeks are a relatively mobile and very connected part of society; they are informed about successful activities elsewhere and often try to repeat them in their own contexts. In this way, they create new spaces for coming together - both virtually and physically. It is not rare that such spaces transcend the local boundaries and establish connections across borders within and outside the region. Intensifying communications and socialization are both a reason and stimulus for further development of such communities, in which shared problems surrounding 'being a geek' are addressed and more, or less, ambitious future aspirations expressed.

Discovering and interacting with a group of likeminded geeks often inspires and encourages individuals to present at a following meeting, or to pursue a project idea that had been abandoned.

There are many questions regarding the genesis and development of geek practices in the region and what such developments indicate in relation to globalization, knowledge economy and the state; yet for now I will take a brief look at three particular media that appear to be instrumental in strengthening and celebrating geek culture in the region.

BarCamp

In 2005 a unique form of social collaboration, designed to boost creativity after the burst of the Internet bubble, emerged in Silicon Valley; known as BarCamp unconference,⁶ it rapidly gained popularity throughout the internet-savvy world. The one or two day event is referred to as an 'unconference' to stress the lack of central authority – there are no invitations or registration fees and, most importantly, the agenda is set by the participants themselves as they arrive at the event. Everyone is a potential speaker, panelist, moderator and organizer, and topics discussed reflect the vast array of interests – ranging from very technical programming aspects, to discussing dating strategies.

BarCamps reached Southeast Asia in 2007; starting off in Singapore, the idea quickly spread to neighboring countries (under the same or different names) bringing together mainly young males aged between 20 and 35. Most of them come from a rather well-off background and have studied or traveled abroad. Usually they share a deep passion for technology and their technological knowledge and skills are their source of income. The main initiators behind BarCamps, or similar meetings in the region, are in most cases geek entrepreneurs, who either work as freelancers or have their own software or web companies. It is not rare for one's organizing efforts to be compensated by the creation of new contacts, increased visibility and the authority gained through the process.

During the meetings knowledge and ideas are shared, new friendships established and many who only knew each other

Above: Opening of BarCamp Yangon Myanmar 2011 that gathered 4000 participants.

Below: Hackerspace Singapore.



The perspective of the geeks

from online environments finally have the chance to meet face to face. The novelty of such meetings, combined with the bonding processes throughout the meetings, contributes to the high levels of excitement (see also Coleman, 2010) that are openly shared through social media platforms before, during and after the actual events. It is for good reason that Malaysian BarCamps are described as “One big tech *kenduri*”,⁷ and that for the second year in a row the BarCamp in Yangon, Myanmar has been the world’s largest gathering of this kind with 4000 participants.⁸

Discovering and interacting with a group of likeminded geeks often inspires and encourages individuals to present at a following meeting, or to pursue a project idea that had been abandoned. It was in fact during the BarCamps in Singapore and Malaysia that the idea about more permanent collaborative spaces for geeks found fertile ground, and less than two years ago the first Singaporean HackerSpace was established, as well as two in Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru).

HackerSpaces

If BarCamps are creative and nearly ad-hoc gatherings, taking place within a limited time frame, then HackerSpaces are permanent establishments with a physical location where geeks can come together, work on their software or hardware projects and learn from each other.⁹ HackerSpaces are community-run and self-sustained; they eschew financial support from governments or companies. The origins of HackerSpaces can be found in the aftermath of the hippy-counterculture movement in the USA¹⁰ – they provide an alternative creative space, separated from state and market. To date there are approximately 500 active HackerSpaces around the world,¹¹ and it is important to note that, in comparison to other forms of geek gatherings, sustaining a HackerSpace requires substantial dedication and effort, and thus can be considered to indicate the existence of a more developed and substantial geek community.

HackerSpaces appear to be gaining momentum in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, where within one year four new establishments have arisen: Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Medan. One is also in the planning for Jakarta. Interestingly, the HackerSpace in Bandung was created after a group of Bandung geeks, gathering under the name FOWAB,¹² visited the Singaporean HackerSpace and were inspired by the venue, activities and great vibes. It is no surprise that the Bandung HackerSpace has, in turn, inspired other geeks in Indonesia to gather the resources, both human and financial, to establish their own places. Excitement levels are high and it is not rare to hear geeks from these countries discussing what steps are necessary to make their particular locality the ‘Silicon Valley’ of the region.

Online platforms

Much of geek communication and learning happens through various online forums, discussion groups and news platforms. These are the virtual spaces where geeks find each other and all relevant information on upcoming events. Online news platforms, such as dailysocial.net (Indonesia), sgentrepreneurs.sg, e27.sg (Singapore) or entrepreneurs.my (Malaysia), not only promote local geek activities, but also strengthen the connections between the geeks in various locations and are often the organizers of various geek events, such as BarCamps. Online platforms actually often act as network brokers on local, regional and international levels; they are normally the ones contacted when someone of importance visits, let’s say from Silicon Valley, and wishes to explore the local geek communities. Furthermore, the four platforms mentioned above cooperate extensively with each other and effectively strengthen ties amongst geeks in the region.

Various sentiments

Meanwhile, being a geek in Southeast Asia doesn’t mean only hanging out with likeminded people at various places and events or reading online news and networking in addition to hours of programming or coding. It also entails frustration and struggle. Much about learning ‘how to be a geek’ comes from the West – either as a result of following news from the Western mass media, traveling, studying abroad and/or interacting with expat geeks (they form a rather large and active proportion of geek communities, especially in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore). This often creates tension. For example, one geek entrepreneur in Malaysia complained: “I am banana: yellow outside, white inside... I don’t belong here”. He was referring to how his understanding about how things should be are ‘Westernized’ and not in line with local circumstances. The tension works both ways. Geeks in Yogyakarta, for example, share the sentiment that Indonesian geeks are not deemed capable of more than being outsourced.

In many cases being a geek or self-employed geek is a status of dubious nature – not entirely accepted by parents, not well respected by peers outside the geek community and, as in

the case of Indonesia and Malaysia, poorly regulated within legislation with regards to Internet Commerce. Infrastructure issues are more of a problem in Indonesia and Malaysia, but Singaporean geek entrepreneurs worry about their small market, with only 5 million inhabitants.

The frustration geeks have with the various incompatibilities between governments’ claimed goals and the actual implemented policies are often part of the geek discussion. While geeks in Malaysia and Indonesia often look upon Singapore as the local, more attainable version of Silicon Valley, geeks in Singapore often joke that Singapore is too perfect and controlled to actually have ‘space’ for the next big thing: creative innovation that could shake the technological universe. Cultural explanations are sought to explain success or the lack of it. An excessive focus on prestige and success, risk aversion and unwillingness to share new ideas and collaborate, is often mentioned as the reason why Singaporean cultural environment is not well fitted for entrepreneurship.

I wish to conclude by mentioning two slogans under which the Singapore HackerSpace operates and which, to my mind, indicate the multifaceted reality of what it means to be a geek in Singapore. The first slogan, “The Zouk of Geekdom”, refers to the popular nightlife venue, and thus considers the HackerSpace as the place to celebrate ‘geekdom’ with likeminded people. The second slogan, “Kiasu free zone”, indicates the geeks’ desire to distance themselves from certain parts of the cultural environment, which they consider to be overly ambitious, greedy and selfish (*kiasu*).

During the next four years I will be exploring these and other media and practices of geeks in the region – to gain insights in the ways geeks think about and act upon their futures. They are neither activists nor policy makers, yet geeks have a special role to play in the announced comings of the digital revolution.

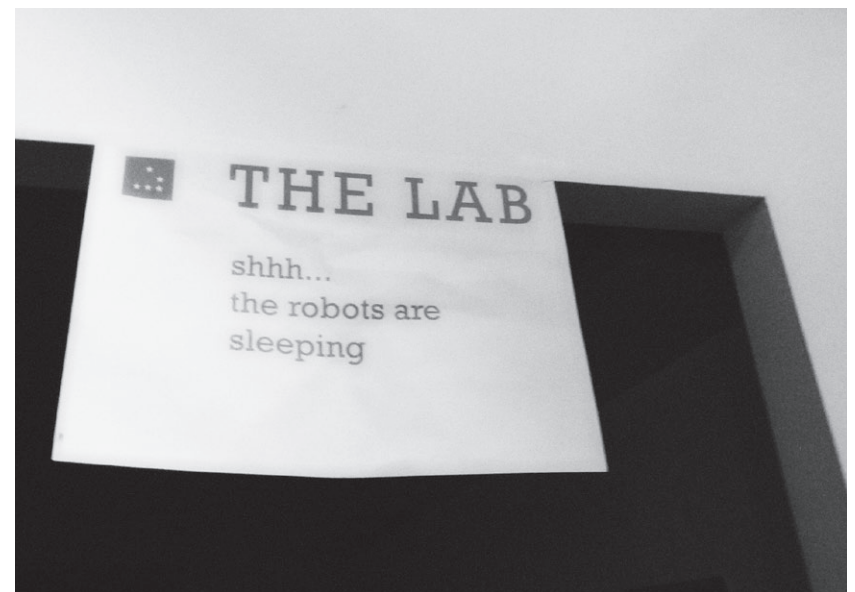
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Notes

- In this article ‘technology’ refers to hardware, software and the combinations of both.
- This label is used, in literature and practice, interchangeably with words such as nerds, hackers, developers, coders, etc. Each has a slightly different connotation. In this article I chose to use the word ‘geek’ as an umbrella term; it is also the term most often used when referring to the raising popularity of geek culture – it tends to describe a person with entrepreneur characteristics, rather than just a technical tinkerer.
- In September 2010, the research project “The Future is Elsewhere: Towards a Comparative History of the Futurities of the Digital (R)evolution”, commenced at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University. This research is funded by NWO.
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- As in ‘Bar’ and ‘Camp’, for more information see www.barcamps.org.
- Kenduri* is a Malay term meaning a religious ceremony, celebration and feast.
- Mong Palatino: “Myanmar: Barcamp Yangon 2011” in *Global Voices*, February 24, 2011: <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/02/24/myanmar-barcamp-yangon-2011/>
- For more information see www.HackerSpaces.org
- An interesting critical essay about the ideological underpinnings of HackerSpaces, “Hacking the Spaces”, written by Johannes Grenzfuhrner & Frank Apunkt Schneider, can be found here: <http://www.monochrom.at/hacking-the-spaces/>
- See the list of active HackerSpaces around the world: www.hackerspaces.org
- Forum Web Anak Bandung – FOWAB is a group of web technology specialists who organize regular meetings, in many aspects resembling BarCamps in Bandung.



Hackerspace Singapore.



BarCamp Yangon 2011 Second day – the slots for giving presentations are filled up.



Various stickers on laptops are often part of the geek image.



WordCamp meeting in Bandung Indonesia.

All photography courtesy of Zane Kripe.

Pyongyang goes back to the Party

The Opinion



The reversion to the *status quo ante* began almost three years ago as Kim Jong Il entered the endgame of selecting his successor and ensuring his legitimacy. Thus, last year's Party Conference was a final confirmation of this new direction, rather than its herald.

Glyn Ford

SEPTEMBER 2010'S PARTY CONFERENCE IN PYONGYANG was the first major meeting of the Korean Workers Party (KWP) since 1980, well before the death of Kim Il Sung. After his death in 1994, the Party was increasingly challenged as the most important decision making body in North Korea, by both the Military and the Cabinet. Its leadership had atrophied and died; of the 145 Members elected to the Central Committee at the 1980 6th Party Congress, over 60% were dead by 2010. At the lower levels this lack of direction and leadership meant posts were filled more on the basis of seniority than efficiency. The Party ran day to day affairs, but the key decisions made by Kim Jong Il were often driven by either the reforming zeal of the Cabinet or the deep conservatism of the Korean People's Army.

The first swallow of the Party summer was sighted in October 2008 when Rodong *Sinmun* (the daily paper of the Central Committee of the KWP) published an editorial lauding the fact that 4.2 million Koreans and 200,000 foreigners visited the Party Monument in the centre of Pyongyang annually (an average of 12,000 a day). All a figment of a collective imagination; there were neither the thousands of visitors an hour, nor the necessary infrastructure to welcome and support this supposed flood of pilgrims. The function of this editorial – editorials are collectively read and studied by Party branches – was, by the very absence of any factual basis, to place on record a restored primacy for the Party after its earlier benign neglect. This was followed, twelve months later, by a radical internal makeover of the Party, with hundreds of officials moved out, shuffled sideways or promoted. In the International Department of the Party, the long vacant post of Director was filled by Kim Yong Il (64), a dapper former Vice Foreign Minister responsible for relations with China and reputedly a member of the Kim family.

In addition to the promotion of Kim Jong Un (Kim Jong Il's third son) to the Party's Central Committee and Central Military Commission, Kim Kyong Hui (Kim Jong Il's sister) and Jang Song Thaek (Kim Kyong Hui's husband) to senior – but not top – positions in the Party and the military, September also saw Kim Yong Il's position further consolidated, keeping his Central Committee membership with promotion to an alternative member of the Politburo and the post of one of the Secretaries to the Central Committee. The new Central Committee and Politburo thus reflect both generational and political change, showing that Kim Jong Il has begun to delegate elements of authority to a core group of family members and a few others to form the basis of a new collective leadership. Yet, none of the trinity of sister, brother-in-law and son has access to all the centres of power. The son is not on the Politburo, the sister is not on the Central Military Commission and her husband is not a full Politburo Member.

What does this mean for the future? First, the era of the 'Great Leader' is over. Kim Il Sung was a partisan general who made his name in the resistance movement against Japanese colonialism – as much in China as Korea – before being picked by the Soviets as one of Korea's future leaders. Within less than fifteen years he had successively taken on and eliminated the other three factions within the Party and led alone for almost forty years. He started to prepare for Kim Jong Il's succession in the early 1970's; over a quarter of a century before his son formally took the reins in 1997 (three years after his own death). This time around, however, the long game is not an option. The biological clock is ticking. All the pieces have been put in place for a smooth transition at the appropriate time. The next steps – if fate does not intervene – will follow in 2012 as the celebrations of the centenary of Kim Il Sung's birth kick off.

The roadmap for the succession shows a re-emphasis on the Party's role within the State and the emergence of this future collective leadership, whose public face will continue to be the Kim clan. In a society where Confucian veneration for seniority has not entirely disappeared, Kim Jong Un as the public face of an old institution will play better. But while Kim Jong Il still retains control, Kim Jong Un will be placed front and centre as part of a 'group leadership', where relations rule and where power will increasingly be exercised through the institutional architecture of the Party, providing an underpinning legitimacy that would be absent from any attempt at third generation direct rule. The real question is whether the Party will really get its hands back on the levers of power or whether decisions made elsewhere will merely be laundered through its decision making machinery. Who will be the horse and who the rider is yet unclear.

What does it mean for North Korean relations with the world? The whiff of opportunity is in the air. Pyongyang is open for engagement and business even if for the moment Seoul is not responding. Indeed, in addition to Kim Yong Il and the reform-minded brother-in-law (Jang Song Thaek), Kang Sok Ju, the long-time Chief Negotiator at the Six Party Talks and the main interlocutor with Washington, has also been promoted to the Politburo. There is also a positive thaw in relations with China. 2009's year of Chinese-DPRK friendship in Pyongyang proved a pretty frosty year, with China allowing its resentment at Pyongyang's military provocations of nuclear tests and long-range missile launches to show in the UN Security Council; yet in August 2010, Kim Jong Il – accompanied by Kim Jong Un – travelled to his father's old stamping, or rather fighting, ground in North East China to be met by Chinese Premier Hu Jintao. After the September Conference leadership changes were announced; Hu issued a blanket invitation to Kim Jong Il. Subsequently, further visits followed in May and August, the latter after meeting Russian President Medvedev in Siberia.

Equally, the tense aftermath in Sino-Korean relations consequent on KPA military adventurism – albeit provoked by Southern incursions into disputed waters – with the sinking of the South Korean corvette Cheonan in March, causing the death of 46 sailors and the artillery assault on Yeonpyeong island, finally seems to be easing: the North did not get painted into the tight corner some had expected, although the message from the Party in Pyongyang is that no repeats are wanted. The question is whether the KPA wants to listen and learn.

While political reform is not on anyone's agenda in the North, the economy is following or being driven down a path that is an amalgam of that of China's Deng Xiaoping, who in the decade following his accession to power in 1978 brought China's economy 'from the plan to the market', and Vietnam's broadly parallel 'doi moi' (innovation/renovation) modernisation. This would allow the new leadership to establish its legitimacy through delivery and consequently tie the emerging urban 'entrepreneurs' to the fate of the Party and *vice-versa* – in what might be called a 'non-capitalist' market economy – locking the two in a mutual embrace where ultimately they stand or fall together. As Deng said, 'White cat, black cat; who cares as long as it catches mice'. In China, reform meant that State Operated Enterprises were matched by new industries run not by individuals, but by local government, by villages, towns and cities, and state entities such as sections of the Armed Forces, initially acting as contractors for the centre. These reforms lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, with the poverty rate falling from 53% during the Mao era to 16.6% today.

Above:
The Arirang games
(Grand Mass Gymnastics and Artistic Performance Festival in Pyongyang).

Below left:
Rollercoaster ride
at the Mangyongdae
Funfair in Pyongyang.

Below right:
Workers at the
Kaseaong Industrial
Complex.





Left: The 105-floor Ryugyong Hotel in Pyongyang. Although construction commenced in 1987 the exterior has just been completed. The interior is due to be finished in 2012.

Right: Monument to The Party.

All photography courtesy of the Author.

In North Korea, the agricultural reforms of 2001 have already rejuvenated farming with new low targets for delivery to the state allowing surplus production into the markets that have sprung up in the North's towns and cities. Out of North Korea's 22 million people, one million are allowed to live in Pyongyang. Among them are the 100,000 who matter in North Korea. It is this group that is being best served by the new economy that is currently pulling luxury imports into the country despite the UN Embargo. At the lower end the bustling Tong-il Market is full of mainly Chinese consumer goods, while for those with more means there's the fast food restaurant that sells hamburgers and fries washed down with a cola flavoured drink, and where a meal can cost more than a six-month season ticket for the metro. Then there are the German, Japanese and Italian designer shops for handbags and high heels. You can even buy a €40,000 solid gold Omega Speedmaster. Some top officials now drive shiny new SUV's rather than the tired Mercedes whose '216' number plates (in reference to Kim Jong Il's birthday on February 16th) have been replaced by those celebrating 'victory' in the Fatherland Liberation War.

Not that this means that the North is self-sufficient in food for anything but exceptional years. Last summer's floods have resulted in hunger, verging on famine, in the urban fastnesses of the North East and further afield, where the logic of the reforms the West pressed on the rest has resulted in less of a problem with food availability, but more one of accessibility. Ordinary people don't have the money to buy as the Public Distribution Service that used to deliver fortnightly rations has been reduced to an institution doing barely more than handing out food in celebration of anniversaries, birthdays and commemorations. Pyongyang's urgent request for humanitarian assistance in January finally saw the EU provide €10M in July.

Worse is true of industry. The 2002 industrial reforms that took 95% of industry off 'The Plan' have failed to have the same effect. Industry requires inputs in terms of energy and raw materials that just generally aren't available (for instance, electricity is limited to 4 or 5 hours a day outside of the capital). Allowing industries to hire and fire at will, and to choose process and product, has merely resulted in more firing than hiring, and in the partial re-ruralisation of the economy, as factory work teams are sent to grow food. The only major success of the reform was the pha rao (fence-breaking), with managers turning a blind eye to allow under-employed workers space to play the market. The result was that many families saw a family member, often women, set up micro-enterprises: buying and selling far beyond anything that might legitimately be seen at a 'Farmers Market' – with clothes, cigarettes, alcohol

and imported food products, along with 'pirated' computer software and games, in the market halls, on the streets and in the Metro. The successful new 'entrepreneurs' – many falling by the wayside into the arms of the 'loan sharks' with their double digit monthly interest rates - joined those of the Party and Military, who had long been running the international trading companies, with standards of living way beyond the ordinary residents of Pyongyang.

These *nouveaux riches* began to form a new class separate from the political elite, arrogant and into conspicuous consumption. It was this that triggered the need to restore control; they were becoming too self-confident and too independent. This took the shape of the currency reform of November 2009, restricting amounts of old currency people were allowed to exchange for new: 150,000 Won in cash and 300,000 Won in bank savings (a total of less than €200); this was initially coupled with a ban on the use of foreign currency. It was presented as an attempt to rein-in and bring under control the negative consequences of the 2002/3 economic reforms. Yet the clumsy attempt broke down almost immediately as the move threatened the traditional 'entrepreneurs' lifestyle with their inability to spend their euros and dollars. This reform did serve to destroy the secret savings of the new entrepreneurs as the old notes became no more than waste paper; but the reaction was sufficiently strong that they received an unprecedented public apology of sorts and the sacrifice of the official in charge as it became clear that the economic reform genie could not be put back in the bottle. Now the 'Kiosk Capitalists' have learnt their lesson and are keeping their heads down and their Kim Il Sung badges on. Instead, the next wave of new enterprises is emerging from within the military, local government and the party.

2009 also saw a new turn to heavy industry with the much publicised upgrading of the Kangsong steel works, which may indicate a partial return to earlier policies. This now uses anthracite rather than coke in steel making and therefore domestic rather than imported raw materials, fitting with Pyongyang's enthusiasm for *Juche* (self-sufficiency). The same is true of the Ryongsong Machine Building Factory in Hamhung.

The current goal is to achieve a strong and prosperous economy by 2012, the centenary of Kim Il-Sung's birth. The key question is cause and effect. If there are policy differences, they lie between those who believe military power comes from and is underpinned by industrial and economic strength and those who stand this causality on its head and follow a 'Military First' line. For them 'A cat cannot catch mice after knowing the taste of meat'. Inasmuch as we know anything, the new collective

leadership that has been put in place tends to favour the former. Yet, the West's obsession with the succession means new reforms have been overlooked.

Yet even that which has been achieved is under threat. One of the key motors of economic reform in China a quarter of a century ago was the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Shenzhen, cheek by jowl with Hong Kong: for many, North Korea's Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) abutting the South was believed to be capable of emulating it. Yet, the on-off serial provocations by both are threatening to fatally undermine investors' confidence in its reliability as a serious contributor to Southern profits and Northern reform. But Pyongyang's continued interest in SEZs as a source of finance has been confirmed by the announcement, in early June 2011, of the project to develop two 'new' SEZs in collaboration with Chinese and Russian authorities. But neither are 'new' and their prospects remain uncertain with both building on past failures: Rajin-Sonbong (an industrial development project virtually dormant since the mid-nineties) and the short lived plan from a decade ago for a Sinuiju Special Administrative Region.

Yet, investment is the key for the future. For instance, China's recent restrictions on the export of rare earth metals might just get some interest in Korea's deposits, or – if the North could agree a median line with China – the offshore oil deposits in the West Sea. This necessity has been recognised by the creation of the State Investment Committee that is to take over the currently divided responsibility for inward investment from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. It will report directly to the Prime Minister's Office.

The problem is that it will be difficult if not impossible to deliver without a settlement on the Peninsula. Few, apart possibly for Korean 'family', will invest in a pariah economy. It's not just Pyongyang that's at fault. There are neo-conservative groups in Tokyo and Washington resisting any settlement. Japan's neo-conservatives want to finally become a 'normal' country and abrogate the US imposed 'Peace' constitution, but that requires a Referendum. The Japanese public are lagging well behind their politicians in their enthusiasm for Japanese military forces being employed overseas. The only way to 'get out the vote' is to frighten people into the ballot box and for that North Korea is the only game in town.

Similarly in Washington, where the military-industrial complex wants to continue to ramp up the big hi-tech projects costing tens of billions. With the best will in the world the Taliban, Jihadi's and Al Qaeda's use of suicide bombers, booby trapped printers and the assassins' bullet really don't make the case for 'Star Wars'. In contrast, just talk up Pyongyang with a new 'dodgy dossier' claiming North Korea is on the verge of getting its long-range Taepodong missile to work (despite three failures out of three attempts over the last decade), successfully testing a nuclear weapon (two failures out of two), miniaturising them and marrying together rocket and bomb, thus leaving the Pentagon no option but to deploy Theatre Missile Defence (Star Wars Light) around Japan, so as to be in a position to launch a pre-emptive strike against the North, and to protect Japan in the event that this first strike missed any odd orphaned nuclear-tipped missiles.

There is a window of opportunity in Washington and Pyongyang. Obama's domestic agenda was put in cold storage for two years after last November's mid-term drubbing left him the option of taking up the foreign policy mantle that both Bush and Clinton donned after their own respective mid-term disasters. If in his first two years the President followed his predecessors' policies towards the Pyongyang of malign neglect, now there is a chance for progress if he can face down the Republicans and the neo-cons at home.

Alongside the new shops, restaurants and SUVs, Pyongyang is still littered with the leftovers from the Cold War: the last remaining US soldier who crossed the line to the North to desert, the members of Brazil's quirky national Marxist October 8th Revolutionary Movement at the Party School, and the last four Japanese hijackers from 1970 who made a stopover in Pyongyang on their way to Havana and never managed to leave. The question is, when hijacker Moriaki Wakabayashi (base player for the Japanese avant-garde rock band *Les Rallizes Denudes* and ardent Liverpool football fan) next sits down for a pizza at the new Italian restaurant close to the captured US spy ship the *Pueblo*, will Obama's policy still reflect the politics of the 1970s that brought him to Pyongyang or will Washington have finally moved on?

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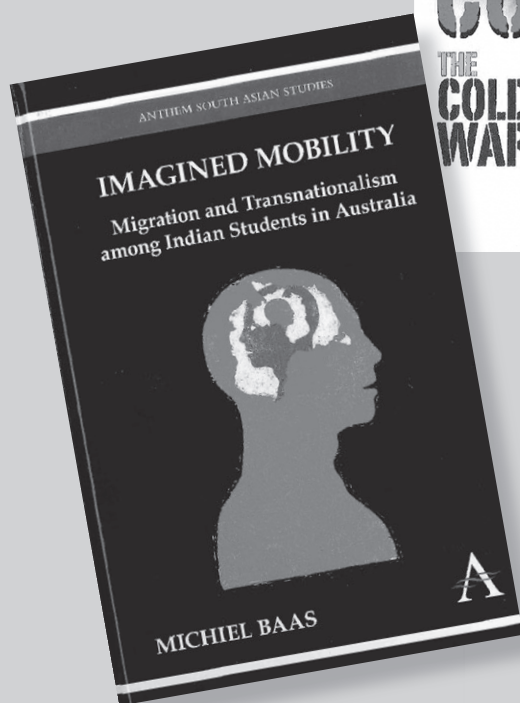
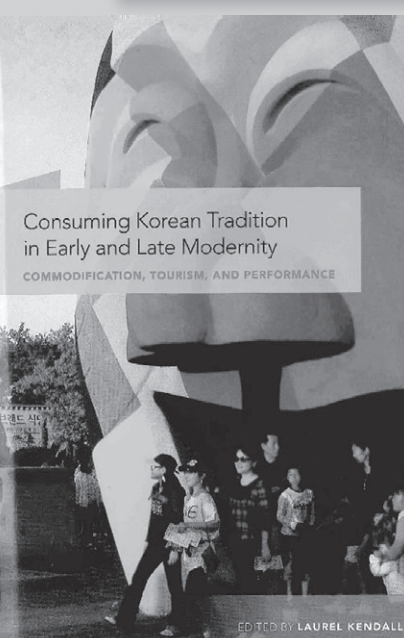
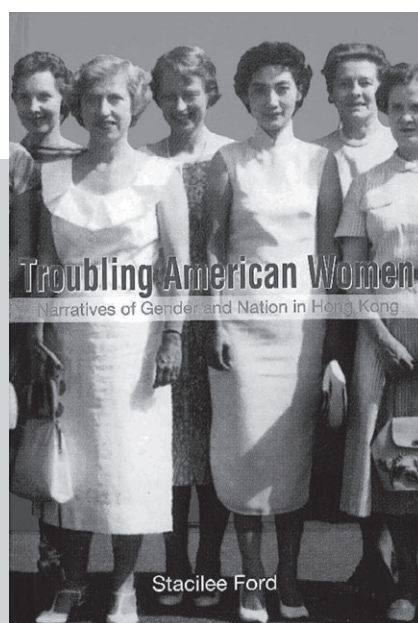
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Local economy and subsistence stretched beyond capacity due to mass influx of migrant workers for cash crop plantation

Villagers resettled elsewhere, indigenous forests cleared, and wildlife habitats destroyed to make way for the new hydropower dam

Economic Land Concession for foreign company

Food security strategies in South and Southeast Asia:

Improving food security in a context of land grabbing?

In the 1960s and early 1970s, many countries in South and Southeast Asia were the focus of world attention due to their frequent occurrence of food shortages. These shortages were met by large amounts of food imported through food aid or similar programmes. Several pessimistic predictions were made about the future of food security in Asia on the basis of the severity of these shortages. For example, the Asian Development Bank's 1977 survey predicted increasing food grains deficits unless remedial measures were undertaken in most of these countries, and by the late 1970s, India was categorized as a lost cause, since there was no hope for it to increase its food supplies.

Annelies Zoomers

Food security strategies in South and Southeast Asia

DESPITE THESE GLOOMY EXPECTATIONS, most of the populous countries of Asia were able to achieve significantly higher growth in domestic food production after the mid 1970s. Thanks to the Asian Green Revolution, by the mid 1980s most countries had recorded significant increases in their food production through the widespread adoption of new seed-fertilizer technology, and had considerably improved their performance in providing food to their people. However, a number of problems remained: the per capita availability of food grains (domestic production + imports) – or more specifically, the per capita food and calorie availability – remained inadequate in most of the countries. In addition, many countries were unable to find an appropriate solution to the problem of wide year-to-year fluctuations in their food output, and – despite rapid economic growth and higher growth rates in food production – many countries were unable to provide a large number of poor people with access to food.

Current problems

This section of The Newsletter, brought to you by the IIAS, provides an update on the food security debate in the context of Asia, by focusing on current trends in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and China. The FAO estimates that of the world's 925 million undernourished people, 62% are in Asia and the Pacific, where some 578 million people are suffering from chronic hunger, especially in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. Countries like China and India, which are home to 40% of the undernourished, have very little suitable land and clean water for growing additional food commodities (FAO/WFP, 2010). According to a recent report on the MDGs, people in Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, North Korea, India, Indonesia, Kazakstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan suffer from hunger in various forms (Mukherjee, 2008). Climate change is also having a negative impact on food security due to drought and the incidence of extreme weather conditions, making agriculture a more risky business and leading to all kinds of expected and unexpected effects (plagues etc.) that have negative implications for productivity.

Although population growth rates are slowing down in most Asian countries, the per capita demand for food grains in such countries as China, Malaysia and Indonesia is increasing very rapidly as a result of higher incomes. Hence, despite notable acceleration in the growth rates of domestic production, food imports have become an important source of increasing the availability of food. China currently imports 15-18 million tonnes of food grains annually; the figure for Malaysia and Indonesia is 2 million tonnes each. Given the expected growth in consumption in the rapidly growing Asian countries, the surpluses originating in the region will not be sufficient to meet import demands.

Rapidly rising food prices are making food imports increasingly expensive for food importing countries, and rising import and domestic prices of food grains are likely to adversely affect the poor and vulnerable sections in these countries. Increasing numbers of urban poor are food insecure due to their lack of purchasing power. In most Asian countries, the per capita availability of food and nutrition continues to remain far below the required levels.

Food security strategies today

Today, decades after the Asian Green Revolution and despite rapid economic growth, food security is again high on the political agenda. In his opening speech at the 18th ASEAN Summit in Jakarta in May 2011, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia called for clear and concrete cooperation among ASEAN member countries to secure food supplies for their peoples.² He suggested the immediate implementation of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework, which emphasizes food security and emergency/shortage relief, sustainable food trade development, an integrated food security information system, and agricultural innovation. However, solving the food problem is in many cases incompatible with other priorities. Current research in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, the Gulf states and Central Asia shows an enormous variety in food securing strategies, and the possibilities for finding regional solutions are limited, also because of the lack of coherent policies and competing agendas.

When characterizing countries on the basis of their food security strategies, it is interesting to make a distinction between three groups, each of which has different strategies that will slowly materialize into new, internal and external political relations.

The first category includes the capital-rich, resource-poor countries that are investing in offshore farming in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Countries like China, India, Japan and the Gulf states (as well as e.g. Brazil, South Africa and Mauritius) are actively searching for land in order to guarantee the food security of their national populations, and are buying and/or leasing large areas of land overseas. The most important host countries that are receiving large-scale farm investments are Cambodia, Laos, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Sudan.

The second category is composed of countries that are putting major efforts into becoming agro-hubs for certain commodities in order to achieve food security and to create a stable source of income. For example, Indonesia and Malaysia (co-financed by, for example, South Korea and Saudi Arabia) are making major investments in becoming world leaders in oil palm production, while Vietnam and Thailand are trying to become world leaders in rice, rubber, fish, etc. Such countries use domestic and foreign investments to strengthen food production in their own territories and to establish agro-hubs or develop corridors.

The third category comprises countries whose main strategy is to sell or lease out land to foreign investors. The ensuing economic development might in the longer run contribute to food security by improving people's purchasing power. Examples of such countries are Laos (investments in rice, rubber and coffee by Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia and Gulf states), Cambodia (investments in rice, rubber and tourism development by Gulf states, Singapore and Vietnam), and the Philippines (investments in rice, corn, sugar, fish and dam construction by China, Gulf states and South Korea). Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan also fall within this category. Interestingly enough, while 'selling' the land to foreign investors, national governments sometimes play an active role in facilitating outmigration and stimulating the inflow of remittances, and in strengthening linkages with the diaspora. Large numbers of people mainly from Bangladesh and Pakistan, but also from India and Indonesia, work abroad, for example in the Gulf or Malaysia. Stimulating outmigration (or exporting labour, as in the case of the Philippines) can also be seen as a food security strategy.

Forced displacement of local population

Sold

Deforested land

New rubber plantation

stimulation of oil palm production led not only to deforestation, but also to the spread of oil palms to environmentally more vulnerable peat land areas and to an inflow of migrants that far exceeds the carrying capacities of the local economy (Burgers & Susanti, this issue). In West Kalimantan, the area devoted to oil palm has grown from 500,000 to over 3.2 million hectares since the 1990s (an area six times as large as Bali) and caused a sharp increase in the number of land conflicts: about 400 communities in Indonesia are now involved in such conflicts, while the figure for West Kalimantan alone is more than 50. Foreign companies are also interested in investing in reforestation projects in the context of the Clean Development Mechanism.

Conclusion: ways forward

Within Asia, food security strategies are very diverse and the situation is extremely heterogeneous: some countries play important roles as the drivers, while others are the hosts of large-scale investments in farmland for the production of food and biofuels. What many countries have in common, however, is that massive urbanization (as an autonomous process) and huge investments in infrastructure, tourism and/or dam construction are responsible for land use change at the expense of agricultural lands.

Despite the major efforts that many Asian countries are making to increase food security through investments, offshore farming, agro-hubs, etc., increasing numbers of displaced persons will move to and settle in vulnerable areas, where they will be more susceptible to climate change and local food security will deteriorate. More attention needs to be paid to both this human dimension and the environmental aspect, as heavy mono-cropping will impose a heavy burden on the environment, as happened during the Asian Green Revolution in the 1970s.

More attention must also be paid to the future implications of climate change. In Asia, 40% of the population lives within 60 km of the coast, and it is estimated that some 332 million people living in low-lying coastal zones will be threatened by flooding or tropical storms. The number of environmental refugees is estimated at 10 million (Black, 2001); made homeless not only by flooding, but also by scarcity of resources and desertification. This will lead to large-scale, though probably gradual population displacements and new demands for land (Castles, 2002).

If food security is to be guaranteed in the long run, governments must protect the rights of local groups, ensure policy coherence (i.e. align food and fuel policies) and implement responsible land-use planning. Governments throughout the world should also remember that food security will become a great challenge not only for Asia, but for all of us.

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Notes

- <http://isidev.nic.in/pdf/fdst.PDF>
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Displacement and enclosure

As only three years have passed since the start of the most recent food crisis, it is too early to arrive at any conclusions. However, food security is increasingly at risk in all three categories of countries. The striving for economic growth and foreign investments is increasingly accompanied by development-induced displacement, namely the forced displacement of the local population. The World Bank estimates that in 2000, some 10 million people were displaced in China, India, Thailand and Cambodia as a result of economic growth (Cernea, 2000). Although countries like China might manage to secure food by buying and/or leasing land in, for example, Africa, Latin America or Kazakstan (Ho & Hoffman, this issue), such investments can be at the expense of local food security. Within China, large numbers people are displaced due to rapid urbanization or dam construction (in order to respond to China's growing need for fresh water, electricity and flood control). For instance, the building of the Three Gorges Dam resulted in the forced migration of 2 million people. Sullivan (2007) speaks of 'a war' between the Chinese state and the local society, whose food security is threatened.

In Cambodia, some indigenous groups have become enclosed by rubber plantations as a result of government policies focused on attracting foreign investment, and are thus losing access to forest areas and local food and livelihood security (Vuthy & van Westen, this issue). In Vietnam, the expansion of acacia plantations and the protection of forests have restricted people's access to woodland, while the construction of hydropower dams to meet the rapidly increasing energy needs often leads to the displacement or resettlement of local groups in more marginal lands with access to less land or woodland (Pham Huu, Tran Nam & van Westen, this issue). In Indonesia, the government's

Rethinking China's 'land grabs': Chinese land investments in Central Asia

In recent years, China's rapid economic growth has been coupled with a rising demand for natural resources. Great international concern has arisen over China's land acquisitions for agricultural and biofuel production, pejoratively called "land grabbing". Contrarily, when looking at China's land acquisitions in a global context, it is not that much different from land acquisitions by other countries and corporate players. In this sense, there are various parallels and differences between the governance of Chinese "land grabbing" versus a "globalization with Chinese characteristics".

Irna Hofman and Peter Ho



IT IS AGAINST THE BACKDROP ABOVE, that our research on Chinese land acquisitions is taking place. The research aims to arrive at an analytical framework with which one might better understand the processes of Chinese worldwide land acquisitions.

China going global

For one thing, the significant rise in China's global activities in agriculture with particular reference to its alleged "land grabbing" should not be seen as separate from the country's global expansion in other sectors. Instead of "land grabbing" we prefer to use the more neutral term "land acquisition". The activities may intertwine, for interests and preferences often align with governmental priorities. Chinese companies are involved in infrastructure projects, mining and oil extraction around the world, while smaller-scale private Chinese enterprises increasingly engage in overseas investment and production activities too. The particular pace of Chinese investments in the last decade follows the state's "going global" strategy, deemed crucial for national development by the central authorities.

Over the past decades China's sustained economic growth has put a rising pressure on the country's domestic natural resources. The oft cited numbers portraying the country's dire situation are that China boasts 21% of the world's population, while the country possesses only 8.5% of the world's available arable land, and 6.5% of the world's water reserves. To complicate matters, China lost 8.2 million hectares of arable land between 1997 and 2010, due to urbanization and environmental degradation (UNOHCHR 2010).

The pressure on the country's land and water resources is unquestionable. It is manifested in the different strategies that the authorities undertake to increase domestic food production. For the government, affordable food prices are perceived as being crucial to maintain social stability and guaranteed supplies are of utmost importance. To fuel its economic development, China increasingly projects its domestic shortages to other countries and regions abroad. The stimulus for this development has become even more pressing since the country's growing middle class pursues more luxurious life styles and consumption patterns. An increase in a range of particular food products, such as coffee, cacao, wine, but also animal feed, are more efficiently produced overseas, and thus imply new grounds for Chinese investments. In the past five years, the country has become a major player in the global land market. New unexpected agreements have emerged under which the Chinese government seeks to acquire large tracts of land and to access overseas resources.

"Land grabbing" or land acquisition?

Global land acquisitions are high on the socio-political agenda today. The recent developments have resulted in numerous research initiatives and reports in the last five years, with fierce debates about the impacts of the investments on local livelihoods and the environment. A frequently mentioned issue by critics is that the socio-political processes through which the land use changes are implemented are undemocratic and a testimony of "bad land governance".

There are several issues at stake here. For one thing, what "land grabbing" denotes is downright ill-defined. The term implies the theft of property and ownership. However, the recent land acquisitions regularly contain formally arranged

lease or concessionary rights, ranging from 30 to 99 years. Due to shortages in food and fuel, rapidly emerging economies have begun to outsource agricultural production by leasing or buying rural land in developing and developed countries. Assessing whether these land acquisitions are entirely negative for poor and socially vulnerable groups, or whether they might also bring positive effects for local communities, is the aim of our research.

The available information about Chinese land acquisitions is strongly determined by civic and non-governmental politics. For instance, an alarmist report by the NGO Grain in 2008 has identified approximately 30 agricultural-related land investments by Chinese investors up to 2008. Grain concluded that considering the total number of 100 identified international land deals by various investors worldwide, China could be labelled a major investor.

Securitisation of food availability?

Safeguarding domestic food supplies is presumed to be one of the core motives underlying China's foreign land investments, therewith infringing upon food security of vulnerable livelihoods in recipient countries. Chinese investments are, amongst others, found in countries that receive aid from the UN World Food Program, whilst lack of verifiable data makes that it is often difficult to identify if produce is exported back home. One of China's now emerging agribusinesses has announced to pledge large-scale investments all over the world, in which it is supported by its provincial government. The company's expansion is clearly given in by domestic demands.

The very fact that these large investments concur with China's aid projects in Africa makes that different appearances and ideas about "China's drives" intermingle. Clear is though that China's neo-colonial image dominates over an altruistic portrayal. This came to the fore plainly last July (2011), when a German governmental official assaulted China for having caused the current famine in the Horn of Africa (Szent-Ivany, 2011). Chinese officials have strongly contested this assault, and emphasised that Chinese teams working in Africa simply seek to enhance food security on the continent. The recently established agricultural training centres operated by Chinese teams are considered to support African countries in their securitisation of food supplies and interestingly, these recent projects mirror China's development aid projects in Africa in the early 1960s. How China's expansion affects land availability and food security of local communities is an essential point for further field research.

Filling the void

Yet, in fact we know very little about the range of Chinese investors involved, the motives behind their investments, and importantly the actual impact of Chinese land acquisitions at the grassroots. In particular, China's upcoming presence in Africa in the last decade has received considerable attention. Is China a neo-colonial power in the making? Chinese companies and their activities are most often portrayed in a rampant sense as an aggressive resource extractor. For this purpose, our research started with a comprehensive inventory of Chinese land-based investments worldwide over the period 1990-2011. In a next step, in-depth fieldwork will be undertaken, for which we will focus on Central Asia – a strategically important region with vital geo-political implications because of its natural resources, and its geographical location hemmed in between Asia and Europe.

Our research zooms in on the governance dynamics at the local level in Central Asia, and focuses on the following questions: How do Chinese land acquisitions impact local (ethnic) communities? What stakeholders are involved, and how do their vested interests determine their actions? What are the regulatory, legal and informal institutions that govern the land acquisitions on the ground? And how are customary rights systems affected by the Chinese land acquisitions?

Central Asia

One of the Central Asian countries targeted by Chinese investors is Tajikistan. The country is currently a typical economy-in-transition caught in the flux from a centrally planned to a market economy. In this sense, it is in certain ways similar to, yet, still lagging far behind the People's Republic of China.

In the Tajik context, two important land deals have caught the international media's attention. Very recently, the authorities of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in West China have

acquired a land concession of 2 thousand hectares, while not long before that, the Chinese (central) government concluded a deal with the Tajik government for the acquisition of 110 thousand hectares, which subsumes around 1.0% of Tajikistan's total land area. According to the Tajik government, the Chinese investments' accompanying advanced agricultural technology and know-how is crucial for the country's development. However, controversy has arisen over both concessions (Pannier, 2011).

Importantly Tajikistan is not outstanding in its potential for productive agriculture. The current limited food security is a case in point. Agriculture in Tajikistan relies heavily on irrigation and the mountainous landscape is not well suited for large-scale highly productive agricultural production. One could speculate that the Chinese investment is triggered by the crucial natural resources that the Central Asian state have to offer, as the Chinese government is increasingly active to foster trade and bilateral relationships with the Central Asian states. This is also given in by the importance to develop the bordering Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The region is an important bridge between Tajikistan and China, and social stability in the region is of utmost importance for the Chinese government. From this description alone, one may understand that there are potentially various motives that underlie Chinese land-based investments.

Concluding remarks

When analyzing China's developing "going global" strategy on the world map, we found a significant rise of land acquisitions that are increasingly located further overseas. Investments in Southeast Asia have consistently occurred over the last decade, while many Chinese investments in African countries have taken place in the last years. Recently China's acquisitions for agricultural land have also been taking place in South America.

At the same time, however, the lacuna in precise data and information about Chinese companies' structure, size and governmental backing constrains a better and detailed overview of the actors involved in Chinese foreign land investments. The diversity of Chinese investments involves multiple Chinese actors which may have distinct interests to operate overseas and expand their endeavours. The contexts in which Chinese actors acquire land, differ widely in socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental conditions, as do the particular resources that Chinese companies aim at and the approach they pursue. This influences the way Chinese companies approach the host society.

While it remains difficult to present a more complete picture than the hitherto speculative publications and anecdotal information, our research project aims to review the Chinese global activities in agriculture in a more comprehensive manner. The lack in data and information about the engagement of Chinese private company overseas limits exact quantification, and a reliable qualification of the Chinese projects. Several studies have been conducted on China's expansion in resource extractive industries and other sectors. Yet, China's global expansion in general is still poorly understood. In this respect, our research does not aim to provide definitive answers or conclusions, but aims to first scrutinize and re-examine the current discourse of what many call China's "land grabs".

This study is embedded in the larger China-GX (China's Global Expansion) research consortium, hosted by the Modern East Asia Research Centre (MEARC, www.mearc.eu). The China-GX research consortium will look at China's Asian expansion in terms of its influence on a wide range of issues: land investments, deforestation, the trade in protected animals and plants, energy and dam building, mineral exploitation, and new modes of knowledge production.

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The authors are currently working on a comprehensive review of Chinese land acquisitions worldwide, entitled "Revisiting China's "Land Grab" Discourse" which is expected for publication in early 2012.

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A new equation for oil palm



Never before have food, energy, and climate been so closely linked. Firstly, the world population continues to grow and will reach 9 billion by 2050. In order to feed the growing population, food production is estimated to have to increase by 70% (FAO, 2011). Although the exact amount of additional land required to meet the demands for food is unsure, the FAO estimates it will be around 70 million hectares in 2050. It is also said to be possible. However, these figures do not yet take into account the need for land necessary to satisfy the growing demand for biomass, for purposes other than food. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that land requirements for biofuel production under the IEA Alternative Policy scenario will amount to 52.8 million hectares in 2030 (IEA, 2006). Hence, competition for the remaining land base increases. Finally, the recent crisis has demonstrated that under certain conditions (high oil prices, government support) the use of crops for biofuels can expand rapidly. This is particularly the case where crops can be used for both food and fuel. The most well known crop in this respect is oil palm.

Paul Burgers and Ari Susanti

INVESTMENTS IN OIL PALM PRODUCTION are becoming a major driver for land conversion processes in Indonesia. As most of the biofuel demand is driven by the USA, Europe, China and India, the resulting land use change in Indonesia is referred to as Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC). In addition to land use changes, the on-going oil palm expansion in Indonesia has a profound impact on the local socio-economic and environmental circumstances. On the one hand, oil palm can be a route out of poverty for many rural people, provide significant export earnings, provide cooking oil and an ingredient in the processed food industry. On the other hand, it also poses problems by displacing people from their land, and is said to be a major driver of deforestation and its associated biodiversity losses. Recently, oil palm expansion meets with new controversies as oil palm is increasingly competing for land with staple foods.

It is against this background that we are conducting a multi disciplinary research in Riau province, Sumatra, entitled "Sliding from greasy lands". It is part of the wider Agriculture beyond Food programme, funded by the Dutch KNAW. This multidisciplinary research programme aims to provide scientific insights into the possibilities and opportunities, threats and limitations to judge a future of an agriculture beyond food. In this programme, technical, social, economic, environmental and legal scientists from Dutch and Indonesian Universities collaborate. Although our research comprises various components, here we will focus on the way demand for oil palm is shaping land use for food or fuel in the context of an oil palm driven changing population.

Palm oil and food security in Indonesia

"Food security will become a great challenge for ASEAN", the Indonesian head of state President Yudhoyono said in his opening speech at the 18th ASEAN Summit held in Jakarta, May 7-8, 2011: "The competition for energy, food and clean water will become part of the global competition," he said, warning that scarcity of resources of daily needs could occur globally when the world population grows from seven billion to nine billion by 2045 (ANTARA, 2011).

Despite this recognition, oil palm has been the most expansive perennial crop in Indonesia. In 2010 around 8.4 million hectares of land was occupied by oil palm plantations, producing around 19.8 million metric tonnes of palm oil (Directorate General Estate Crop Ministry of Agriculture, 2010). Together with Malaysia, Indonesia controls over 85% of the world market. The export of crude palm oil (CPO) and its derivatives provides an increasing contribution to the national income (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011d). So far, almost 80% of the palm oil in Indonesia is being used as an important ingredient in the processed food industry and is by far the main cooking oil for the population. It is also an official regulation that around 80% needs to be used for the food industry, not fuel. With an estimated population of 238 million in 2010 and a population growth of 1.55% per year, maintaining food security at affordable prices is important to national security. Biofuel production, however, is strengthened by the commitment to reduce 26% of national GHG emissions by 2020. For this purpose, a national energy policy has been developed. Biofuels should have a share of at least 5% of the national energy mix in 2025. This rapid development of oil

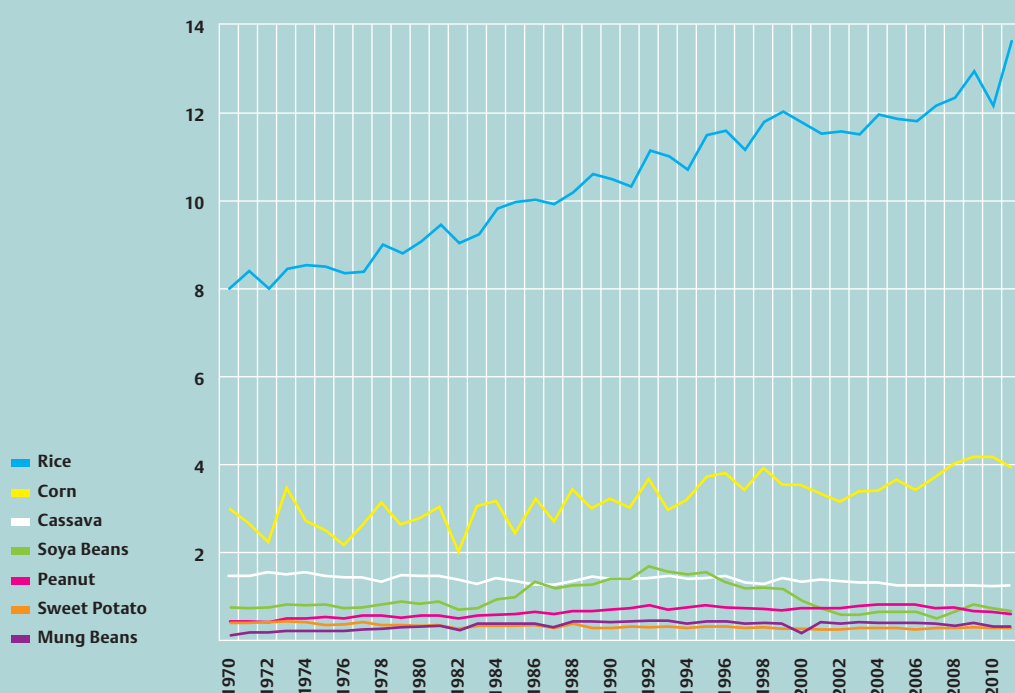
1: New oil palm plantation established on previously peat swamp forest. It has been replanted several times due to peat fires.

palm as a biofuel has raised concerns over land acquisitions to enable the growth of the oil palm sector to meet these demands. Balancing the need for large land areas to plant oil palm for biofuel purposes in combination with the need to add more land to feed a growing population, most notably rice cultivation, is an important challenge for the Indonesian government.

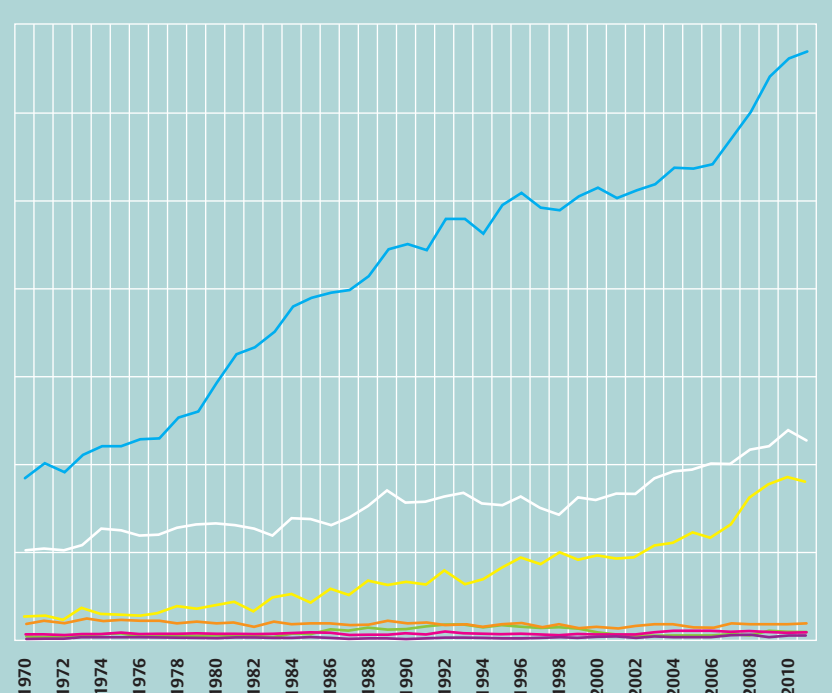
Indonesian rice polices

Rice has always been the main staple crop for more than 90% of the Indonesian population. At 139 kg of rice per capita per year, the Indonesian population is by far the world leader in rice consumption. This record, and the fact that the Indonesian population growth is 1.55% per year, makes food self-sufficiency in rice a hot political issue. Securing enough rice at affordable prices is critical to national security; this has been long reflected in Indonesian food policies. The National Food Logistics Agency (BULOG) is the most important national agency with the mandate to decrease vulnerability for price fluctuations. It manages issues of food security, buffer stock operations, and domestic food price stabilization through its monopoly over imports and distribution. This is even more important as the global rice market appears to be very thin. Less than 5% is traded internationally, and mainly comes from three countries: Thailand, India and Vietnam. Therefore, rice prices are very vulnerable to small changes in supply and demand (World Bank Jakarta, 2010). In addition to these volatilities in the market, the sustainability of rice production is also increasingly threatened by the irregularities caused by processes of climate change. For instance,

2. Area harvested for food commodities in Indonesia from 1970-2011* (millions ha) (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011b) * = prediction for 2011



Production of food commodities in Indonesia from 1970-2011* (millions tons) (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011b) * = prediction for 2011



Food, energy and climate policies in Riau Province, Indonesia

in 2010, the rice production did not meet the national target because of extreme weather and rainfall. BULOG imported 1.3 million tonnes of rice. By March 2011 the government issued a Presidential Instruction on rice production security. The Jakarta Post reported (29 September 2011) that the Indonesian government has provided an additional USD 116.58 million to BULOG, to purchase rice from farmers and to increase rice stocks in the world market. In total about 1.5-2 million tonnes are expected to be imported, mainly from Vietnam and Thailand. Despite these rather costly measures, the Indonesian Government continues to aim at self-sufficiency in rice and other food crops through domestic production. Figure 2 shows that out of all food crops, rice contributes around 63% to the total area harvested for food commodities. In terms of production, the share of rice in the total food crop production in 2011 is 59%. (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011b). The increase in rice production is mainly due to the expansion of the rice area in combination with an increase in productivity. Major improvements along these lines are needed to achieve a more food secure Indonesia under current population growth figures. This can, however, not be met by productivity improvements; there will be a high need for finding more suitable lands.

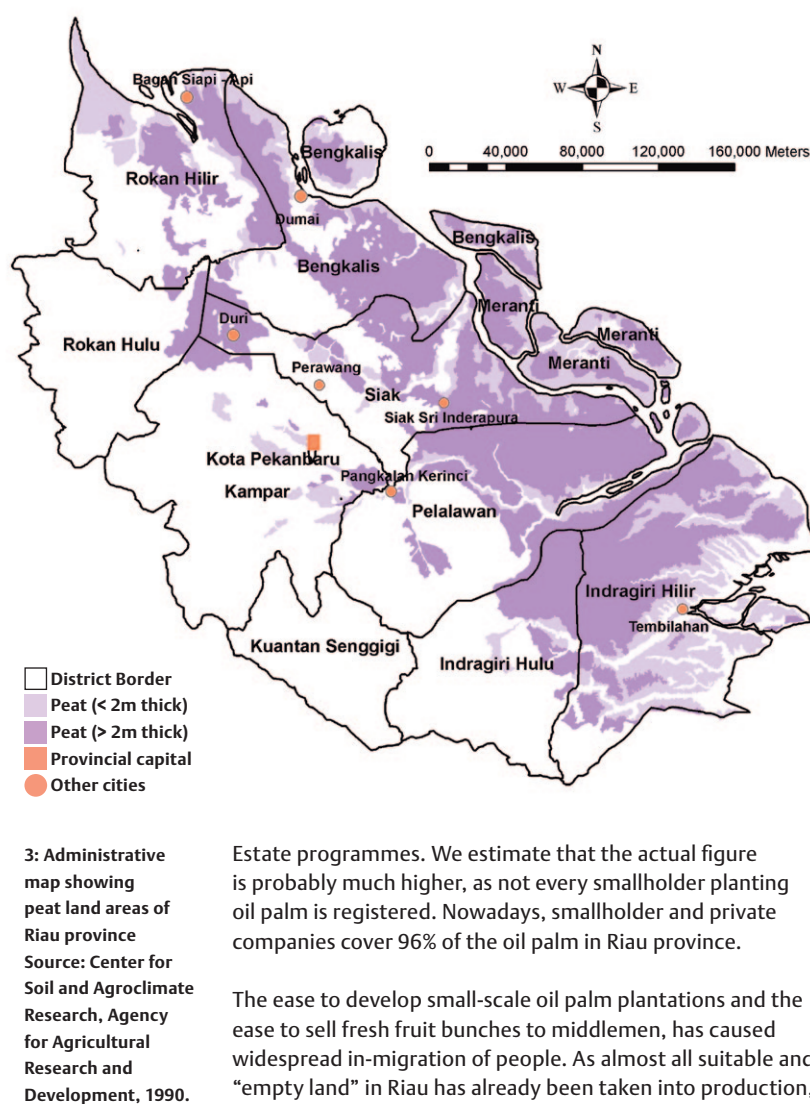
This is where Indonesia faces pronounced land use challenges, especially on the outer islands, which are believed to be able to absorb many of the land use needs. The possible expansion of rice cropping areas will have to compete increasingly with other, more attractive commercial crops, oil palm in particular. To what extent, in what form and how such competition impacts at field level, is shown in the next paragraph where we briefly explain some of the first findings from our on-going research in Riau, Sumatra.

Food versus fuel in Riau; findings from the field

Riau province is located in the centre of Sumatra along the Strait of Malacca (Figure 3). It has a total area of 8,867,267 hectares. The population of the province is around 4.7 million, with a population density of 50 persons per km². Around 49.3% of the labour force is employed in the agricultural sector. This includes cash crop cultivation, estate crop, live stock production, fishery, and forestry, both on large scale as well as small-scale enterprises (Badan Pusat Statistik Propinsi Riau, 2010).

Riau province is the major producer of palm oil in Indonesia. Oil Palm expansion has significantly contributed to (indirect) land use change in Riau. In 1975 the registered oil palm plantations only occupied 1,066 hectares or around 0.01% of the total area (Directorate General of Estate Crops, Ministry of Agriculture, 2010). By 2010, oil palm plantations occupied around 2 million hectares, equal to about 21% of the total land area in the province (Dinas Perkebunan Provinsi Riau, 2010). Many plantations were established by converting forest areas. The plantations consist of both large scale state-owned and private plantations and smallholder plantations. The smallholder plantations involve around 380 thousand families. The plantations produce about 5.9 million tonnes of fresh fruit bunches annually, which is processed in 144 palm oil mills in the province (idem). The production in Riau accounts for approximately 24% of the total national palm oil production (Directorate General Estate Crop Ministry of Agriculture, 2010). In 2010, these impressive figures led to the classification of Riau province as one of the oleo-chemical industry clusters, together with North Sumatera and East Kalimantan. The establishment of this cluster means that related downstream processing industries will continuously grow and develop. Oil palm related economic activities comprise roughly 18% of the regional GDP, generating USD 8.4 billion, only from export of crude palm oil (CPO) and its derivatives. Employment figures for the oil palm sector in Riau are estimated at 690,000 or 14% of the total population in the province (Dinas Perkebunan Provinsi Riau, 2010).

Most of the oil palm has been planted by large scale companies or as part of government sponsored programmes. In order to regulate oil palm expansion, it could only be planted in combination with a processing unit. Therefore, smallholder involvement in large scale agricultural activities was mainly confined to the so-called plasma system, associated with nucleus estate developments from the early 1980s onwards. Each plasma smallholding covered 2 hectares, the smallholder being a kind of sub-contractor able to access the central processing facilities. This completely changed, however, when the regulation to plant oil palm only in combination with a processing mill, was abandoned in 1995. Oil palm has been taken up by independent smallholders ever since, even when this regulation was abandoned again in 2005. It is estimated that nowadays about 377,183 registered families have their own small-scale oil palm plantations, occupying an additional 996,199 hectares in Riau (Dinas Perkebunan Provinsi Riau, 2010). These are mainly the former sub-contractors/outgrowers as part of the Nucleus Plasma



Estate programmes. We estimate that the actual figure is probably much higher, as not every smallholder planting oil palm is registered. Nowadays, smallholder and private companies cover 96% of the oil palm in Riau province.

The ease to develop small-scale oil palm plantations and the ease to sell fresh fruit bunches to middlemen, has caused widespread in-migration of people. As almost all suitable and “empty land” in Riau has already been taken into production, or comprises protected areas, Indirect Land use Change processes are increasingly targeted at these protected areas, and this time caused by small-scale producers. By using satellite images and GIS methodologies in combination with grassroots-level fieldwork, we are evaluating the extent of land conversion processes caused by small-scale migrants and local people, and whether land conversion is carried out for food or fuel production.

Oil palm induced forest frontier migration in Riau: the final blow for forests?

The ability to plant oil palm by smallholders themselves has made the small-scale oil palm plantations (usually less than 5 hectares) a highly attractive land use. Combined with relatively high financial returns, oil palm development increasingly attracts large numbers of job seeking migrants to Riau. Our research shows that not only Sumatrans migrate to Riau, large numbers of Javanese come to Riau to develop their own oil palm plantation. This influx of migrants has significantly contributed to population growth in the province (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2011a). Where the development of oil palm in Riau province has already contributed significantly to land use change, this on-going process of large numbers of migrants is causing additional stress on “remaining” land in the province. For instance, in 2010, WWF Indonesia estimated that of the 83,000 hectares in Tesso Nilo National Park, some 28,000 had been converted into small-scale oil palm plantations and settlements. Looking at the type of people involved in this conversion, 96% appeared to be migrants (WWF Indonesia, 2010). Our research shows that the two largest groups of migrants consist of migrants from Sumatra and from Java. This enormous boost in demand for land to plant oil palm causes tremendous pressure on remaining forested peat land, both for large scale and small-scale palm oil producers. In fact, around 60% of licenses for oil palm plantations from 2000-2005 involved peat land areas (Center for Soil and Agroclimate Research, Agency for Agricultural Research and Development, 1990; Ministry of Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2005). This is a very environmentally unfriendly development, as the required drainage of water to make the land suitable for oil palm increases peat decomposition and submergence, leading to tremendous GHG emissions. In addition, the soil is far from suitable for oil palm plantations.

Fuel instead of food: migrants versus local people

Our initial findings show that oil palm expansion in Riau has caused enormous population growth, mainly through in-migration. For them, the objective to convert forest into cropping land is for a cash income. Forest areas are often not claimed by local communities, and changing regulations at national level have often made it unclear where protected forest areas begin and end. Although migrants seem to be mainly involved in forest conversion for oil palm plantation our fieldwork has shown another controversial development

among the local people, who engage in wet rice cultivation as part of their agricultural system. Due to low profit margins of rice cultivation, a combination of rather low farm gate prices in combination with high input prices and the increased risks in the context of changing climatic conditions, local farmers are increasingly converting their rice fields into small-scale oil palm plantations. Provincial statistics show that this process started as early as 2002, when oil palm plantations started to boom. Between 2002-2009, around 15% of all small-scale wet rice fields in Riau were converted into other uses, such as fish pond, mining, rubber plantation, coconut plantation – but oil palm plantation is by far the major reason for conversion (40%) (Dinas Tanaman Pangan dan Hortikultura Provinsi Riau, 2010). As a result, the provincial government of Riau has become a major importer of food commodities. Recent interviews we held with government officials in Riau revealed that regulations (such as hefty fines) are being developed to prevent the continuous conversion of rice fields into oil palm or other land uses.

Conclusions and further research

This research hopes to contribute to an understanding of the impact that global demand for fuel and food has on food security and sustainable management of natural resources at a local level. Our ongoing study in Riau province increasingly shows that the growing global demand for palm oil both for food and fuel has triggered complex processes of land use change at the local level, usually not covered under the ILUC studies. Together with our Indonesian counterparts, we are now identifying the magnitude of these informal, indirect land use changes caused by migrants and local people. If the processes taking place in Riau are representative for development processes in oil palm producing areas elsewhere in Indonesia, it is clear that the new equation of food, energy, and climate change holds. The Indonesian land-based economy will have to face pronounced land use challenges, especially on how to balance food security issues with biofuel targets to reduce GHG emissions.

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Food security and energy development in Vietnam



Policies promoting the development of sustainable energy sources, particularly hydropower, can paradoxically create problems of poverty and food insecurity for displaced people. Securing electricity for economic development does not necessarily bring sustainable benefits to the affected rural communities, who may well experience more poverty and a decline in food security.

Pham Huu Ty, Tran Nam Tu and Guus van Westen

FOOD SECURITY HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED as an important dimension of 'development' in Vietnam since at least 2002, when it was formally included in the national policy framework. Since the mid-1980s, Vietnam has shifted from a fundamentally agricultural economy to a multi-sector-based one, propelled by a policy of promoting industrialization and modernization more generally. The contribution to the GDP of industry and the service sector has reached 41% and 38% respectively, while the share of agriculture has been reduced to 21% of total GDP (GSO, 2010). The rapid industrialization and modernization process in Vietnam has caused a high and rapidly increasing demand for energy, especially for electricity. As a result, a range of policies and initiatives have been put into practice in order to secure the energy needs for development, including hydropower, nuclear energy, fossil fuel-based energy (coal, gas, oil), wind power, and also imports from neighbouring countries. In an attempt to limit the rapidly rising bill for fossil fuel imports, the exploitation of the hydropower potential of the country's mountainous interior has received special attention in recent years. Currently, hydropower is the major source of energy for the country, accounting for more than 37% of the total energy supply (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2010). Hydropower dam construction, however, requires land to be converted into reservoirs, forcing the affected rural communities to move out of their homes and surrender their lands. Even before 1990, more than 120 thousand people were displaced due to the construction of the Thac Ba hydropower dam and approximately 90 thousand persons were displaced by the Hoa Binh hydropower project. In the mid-1990s, 60 thousand people and more than 24 thousand persons have been displaced respectively for the Ham Thuan – Da Mi and Yali hydropower dams. In the late-1990s, the number of hydropower dams increased threefold, with 400 thousand people being relocated. Between 1995 and 2009, Vietnam constructed over 20 large-scale hydropower dams (with capacity stations exceeding 100 MW), converting 80 thousand hectares into reservoirs and affecting 49 thousand households. As an example, construction of the Son La hydropower dam required the relocation of over 90 thousand people from 160 settlements in 17 communes and 3 provinces. This paper looks at the food security of such relocated communities before and after displacement due to hydropower dam construction. Data are drawn from our ongoing research on the impact of the Binh Dien hydropower project in Thua Thien Hue province, which considers three main aspects of food security, i.e. food availability, adequacy, and access to food by means of household surveys, interviews, focus group discussions and review of existing documentation.

Food security policies

As an agricultural country, Vietnam has adopted and implemented a comprehensive poverty reduction and growth strategy, and the dimension of food security is included into the policy framework for economic development, health care, women and child care, environmental protection and sustainability since 2002. As a result, poor households have received considerable support from the government so as to be able to escape from poverty and improve their livelihood conditions. They are prioritized for participation in rural development projects funded by the

government and international NGOs. Paddy rice production is the major agricultural activity in the country, and as such, development policies have launched a set of initiatives to secure the land area devoted to rice production and to increase productivity. For instance, the Directive 391/2008/QĐ-TTg was issued to facilitate the implementation of the agricultural land use plan and allocate land for rice production. Also, a national land use plan was issued for the period up to 2020 and partly towards 2030 that prescribes that least 3.8 million hectares of land be maintained for the purpose of producing paddy. Meanwhile, the land area under paddy production has in fact declined from 4.2 million hectares in 2000 to 4 million hectares in 2009 (GSO, 2009), due to competing claims on land use.

As can be seen in Table 1, the poverty rate has decreased in both urban and rural areas, but most markedly in the countryside. In 2010, the reported rates were higher because of a raise in the level of income below which people are considered poor. The food security for the poor in both urban and rural areas is a critical problem. Although the productivity of many staple foods has increased significantly since 2000 (Table 2), a majority of poor households have remained trapped in an insecure situation in terms of access to food on a temporary or chronic basis.

Food security for displaced persons due to hydropower development

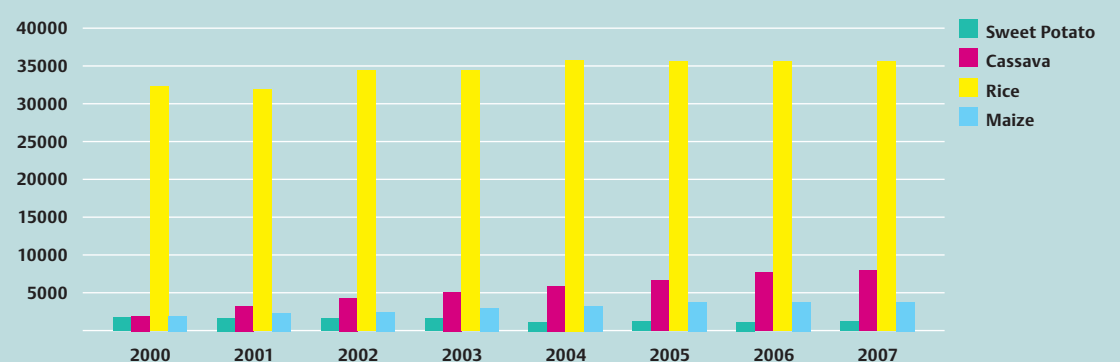
Displacement and resettlement due to hydropower development has caused transitory or chronic food insecurity for affected families. Displaced people cannot produce food to supply their families' requirements because of their relocation to new localities with limited agricultural land, often of a poor quality. Food has often become less available compared to the old situation where they could easily obtain food from various sources, such as fishing, hunting, collecting from forests, as well as cultivating rice, cassava, and raising animals on common grass and forest lands. As a result, the quantity and quality of the main meals of the study population have declined, especially as a result of lesser availability of rice. Many of the afflicted households have to borrow rice and money from neighbours, a traditional food safety strategy that becomes less effective since most families in such exchange networks are also poor and also because the relationship between people is less cohesive than it was reported to have been in the past. The tradition of exchanging food and money among community members is disappearing gradually. Resettled families have received support from the hydropower companies, but only on a temporary basis, creating a problem in the longer term. Once temporary resettlement support is withdrawn, people have to rely on their own resources to acquire the necessary foods. Then they are confronted with a harsh reality

Once temporary resettlement support is withdrawn, people have to rely on their own resources to acquire the necessary foods. Then they are confronted with a harsh reality that their access to income sources has dwindled.

Table 1: Poverty rate change between 2006 and 2010 in Vietnam (%)
Source: GSO, 2010.



Table 2: Production of some staple foods, Vietnam 2000-2007 ('000 tonnes)
Source: GSO, 2008; Nguyen Van Ngai, 2010.





Left:
The construction of the Son La hydro-power dam in Northwest Vietnam (© Tuấn CaNon panoramio.com/photo/55081112).

Bottom left:
Preparing family dinner in the new place with taro trunks.

Bottom right:
Cassava leaves and root – a favourite food in the new place.

that their access to income sources has dwindled. The transition from an agricultural livelihood to one that can be labelled as a limited-agriculture livelihood causes displaced people to lose out in terms of both income and sustainability of their livelihood, often leaving little alternative than becoming seasonal labourers.

Binh Dien hydropower dam construction project, Thua Thien Hue province, Vietnam

In 2004, the construction of the Binh Dien hydropower dam necessitated the removal of 50 households of Katu people, one of the ethnic minority groups in the central mountain range of Vietnam. They were moved to a resettlement site in Binh Thanh commune, Thua Thien Hue province. Their living conditions have changed considerably, especially when it comes to food security (see also Nuijen 2011). As stated by the villagers, their food situation had previously been more secure, because of several reasons. In the old settlement villagers were traditionally self-reliant, providing for their families through subsistence agriculture and harvesting of common pool resources by means of hunting, fishing, and collection of honey. In this way, most families could maintain their diet with three regular meals per day. They rarely worried about daily food supplies because foods were usually available locally. They could avail themselves of preferred foods without spending money and rarely needed to rely on borrowing from other households. After the relocation, however, their food supplies dwindled, became less adequate, and more difficult to obtain. In fact, many people are now struggling to meet their daily food needs. Main meals have been reduced from three to two meals per day.

Several reasons can be put forth to explain this situation. Firstly, the loss of agricultural land has decreased their ability to grow food crops. The village as a whole has lost 113.6 hectares of agricultural land, which corresponds to an average loss for each household of 2.7 hectares. Crop lands used to be situated along the river and had been used to plant *Lô Ô* bamboo trees, cassava, maize, and especially rice paddy. After relocation, all families have shifted their crop lands to acacia forests that take at least six years before they can be harvested, thus making the food supply much more vulnerable. The conversion to acacia planting is not just due to the quality of new lands, but must also be explained by the forest land allocation programme undertaken at the behest of the government and some donors, including the World Bank and JBIC. The forest land allocation programme has attracted the interest of displaced people to create acacia plantations, because they can receive support from those organizations; for instance support for Redbook certification (formalization of land rights), cash subsidies for growing acacia

and technical training. Secondly, they have completely lost their access to food sources from common pool properties, such as water bodies, grass and forest lands. Thirdly, the need to spend a lot of money on buying foodstuffs has eroded their financial position based partly on compensation money. The household survey indicates that 33 out of 50 households have dropped below the poverty line and 4 more families have become poorer three years after relocation. Fourthly, they now need to rely more on wage work that is difficult to obtain in this remote area. Hence, the option of acquiring food by means of purchase has also declined. Resettled villagers mostly do seasonal work for other land owners in the region, but this is a temporary and insecure livelihood source. Especially the poorer households have to rely on this option.

Discussion and conclusion

Hydropower dam construction is not the only intervention that puts pressure on small-scale farmers in Vietnam's interior highlands. Changes with respect to forestry management have at least as much impact as dislocation due to reservoir creation. Nevertheless, the policy to increase the supply of 'sustainable energy' has destabilizing consequences for the livelihoods of many thousands of people. Displaced households typically experience three successive stages in terms of food security. The first stage is the situation before displacement, when food was more accessible and adequate because there was sufficient land to grow food crops and further foods could be obtained from common pool resources. The second stage followed displacement, when the villagers received food support from the government and hydropower companies in the first and second year of resettlement. In this phase, food access was secured. Typically, in this phase, people are tempted to spend compensation money on buying clothes, motorbikes, and other commodities at the expense of investing money in agricultural land to produce food or to learn new skills to find alternative jobs. The third phase is when they do not have food support anymore, and the small plots received in the compensation package are not sufficient to meet their needs. They then have to use their money to buy food or rely on assistance from other villagers as they find themselves without sustainable income sources. Food insecurity and poverty have worsened the displaced peoples' living conditions, and they risk being caught in a poverty trap without perspectives.

The experience of the resettled people of the Binh Dien hydropower project shows the risks of assuming that standard compensation packages will be sufficient for displaced people to generate new livelihoods without more targeted assistance.

Compensation monies cannot easily replace the loss of lands for villagers, who lack the skills and outlook on life that would enable them to adapt to different economic and social conditions. Alternative employment is in short supply in most resettlement areas, which may eventually force people to take refuge in the densely populated cities on the coastal plain. Many will not experience that as 'sustainable development', nor is the aim of food security in any way served by the current state of affairs.

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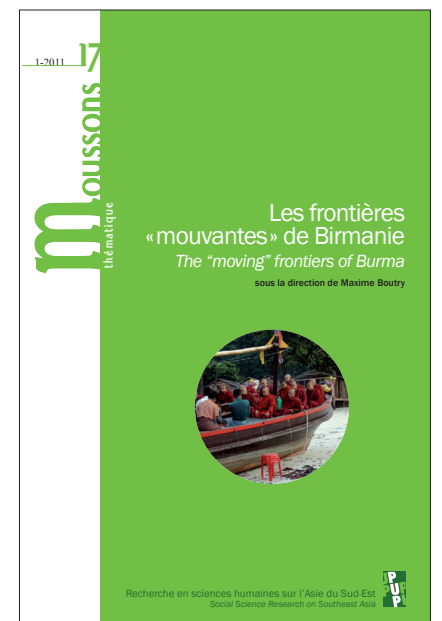
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Les frontières «mouvantes» de Birmanie

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Land acquisitions by non-local actors ...



In Cambodia there is an increasing trend of large land acquisitions, inadequate protection of land rights, and a high incidence of land disputes. About 1.04 million hectares were approved as Economic Land Concessions (ELC) for foreign and domestic companies in 2010, as a means of increasing economic growth and employment. Much of this land is located in the North-eastern provinces, home to indigenous communities that may seriously be affected as a result.

Men Prachvuthy and Guus van Westen

LAND ISSUES HAVE BEEN ON THE INCREASE since Cambodia adopted a free market economy in the early 1990s. Privatisation, large-scale infrastructural development, tourism, foreign investment and agro-industry have increased pressure on the availability of land for poor people. The opportunities of the free market have led the government to promote many large-scale land concessions. These transfers of land to external investors and users, both foreign and domestic, are greatly affecting local communities' existing livelihoods and opportunities for development. In Cambodia as a whole, about 75% of people earn their income mainly from agricultural production, so access to land is a major issue in attempts to reduce poverty and social inequity. In particular, the globalisation of land acquisitions challenges the livelihoods of Cambodia's indigenous groups (NGO Forum, 2010a). Here we look at the impact of economic land concessions on the livelihoods of indigenous communities in the northeast of Cambodia. In addition to a review of existing sources on land governance and indigenous people's rights, fieldwork was undertaken in Mondulakiri and Ratanakiri provinces.

Economic land concessions in Northeast Cambodia

Large-scale agro-industry is an emerging trend, with the Government granting large tracts of land to international and domestic investors under the 'economic land concessions' scheme envisaged in the 2001 Land Law. The main purposes of this policy are to develop an intensive agricultural base and promote a high level of capital investment in agro-industrial activities, as well as to increase employment opportunities and diversification in rural areas. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) grants leases of up to 99 years with a yearly fee of \$2-10 per hectare, depending on quality. According to the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) (<http://www.maff.gov.kh/en/> - May 2010), 86 valid economic land concessions have been granted since 1995, covering a land area of about 1,041,144 hectares in 18 provinces. However, the NGO Forum database, using information from different sources, indicates 229 economic land concessions. But, out of the reported 86 valid concessions, 52% have been granted to Cambodians and 48% to foreign investors, mostly from China, Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. An estimated 40% of economic land concessions are located in the Northeast of the country, populated in large part by minority groups. On paper, the indigenous people are fully protected by the Constitution of Cambodia (RGC, 2008) and laws such as the Land Law (2001) and the Forestry Law (2002) that allow collective land titling for indigenous groups (Nuy, 2010). However, since the introduction of a free market economy in the early 1990s and the gradual opening up of the Northeast through road improvements in the early 2000s, external influences have been on the rise, including (illegal) logging, settlement of Khmer families, and large-scale land acquisitions by outsiders, from about 2004 on. In group discussions, people complained about new challenges to their traditional lifestyle as a result of the inflow of outsiders. Deforestation and land grabbing were identified as the most challenging issues.

Our study uncovered a number of problems relating to economic land concessions. First, most concessions have been granted without proper environmental and social impact assessments. This conflicts with legal requirements (Ngo and Chan, 2010;

UNHCHR, 2007). Second, concessions have been allocated on forest and community land in spite of the protected status of such lands. Third, the majority of indigenous communities affected by the granting of concessions have not yet managed to register their collective land rights.

Compensation

The survey found that 54% of all respondents reported losing land to a concession company. The average amount of land lost was 5 hectares per family (mostly shifting cultivation land). The situation was particularly critical in Bousra commune: 84% of respondents reported losing land to the company compared to 27% in Kalai commune. However, the village mapping exercise conducted in Kalai indicated that the company there is targeting community land and has been clearing community forest land for rubber plantations despite villagers' protests. Soon the Kalai villagers will have lost as much land as they have in Bousra.

Only 34% of families interviewed reported filing a complaint against the concession company for taking their land. Most villagers had participated in demonstrations and complaints to the authorities and NGOs. Local and international NGOs play an important role in mediating between communities and concession companies, providing legal advice, and transmitting complaints to authorities. However, some 70% of land disputes are said to remain unresolved (NGO Forum, 2010b). Only 16% of families had actually received compensation from the company at the time of research, but few were happy, having at times been forced to accept a deal.

Companies usually offer three options. First, villagers are persuaded to sell their land at a price of \$100-500 per hectare. Second, villagers are offered the opportunity to join the venture by planting cash crops on their land (with the company taking half the harvest and deducting their operational costs and calculated interest). Third, villagers may be resettled, usually far away. Most respondents selected the first option, and as a consequence had to surrender their land rights. On average, compensation amounted to \$200 per hectare, depending on the negotiating skills of the families. Village chiefs and local authorities tended to receive better compensation, as did local people who managed to get a job with the companies (Ngo and Chan, 2010). The compensation, however, is not sufficient for recipients to buy new farmland locally – especially since companies have normally taken all available land.

Household incomes

Estimates in the household survey concern the period between July 2009 and July 2010. They are tentative in the sense that respondents found it hard to recall their income from different sources, such as wild fruits and vegetables, herbal medicine and other non-timber forest products (NTFP). However, household incomes of indigenous people are based mainly on agricultural production and NTFP collection. Agricultural incomes derive from production of rice, other cash crops (e.g. sesame, beans, cashew nuts) and livestock. NTFP incomes arise from resin, honey, bamboo, vines, rattan, wild fruits and vegetables, herbal medicines and handicraft production. Wage labour for work with a concession company emerges as a possible new source of income.

Rice production is considered the main source of household income as expressed in cash, although most of the harvest is kept for consumption. A total of 88% of respondents reported an income from rice production (mostly in shifting cultivation), generating an average of \$212 per year; 26% of total household income. Interviews revealed that rice yields have decreased dramatically since concession companies cleared the forest and took over community land; harvests had decreased by an average of 60-70% compared to years before.

The second type of household income from agriculture comes from cash crop production. Indigenous people integrate sesame, beans and other vegetables into their shifting cultivation of (mostly subsistence) rice, earning on average \$59 per household per year. Cashew nuts are a significant source of income, planted mostly in Ratanak Kiri province, but also expanding in nearby provinces. Cashew nut production can generate a massive average of \$326 per year for a household, which is why most respondents had transformed their shifting cultivation plots to enable the growing of permanent cash crops such as cashew nuts, with an average cashew nut plot size per family of 1.8 hectares. This conversion unfortunately represents a challenge to the collective land titling of indigenous communities, as it may contradict the criteria for qualification (Andersen et al, 2007).

Livestock generates an estimated average income of \$104 per family per year. Most indigenous households raise chickens, ducks, pigs, cows and buffalo – whereby the latter three are rarely sold because most families use them in spiritual ceremonies, praying for regular rainfall and high yields, as well as giving thanks for a good harvest. The survey showed that indigenous families retained an average of three buffalo and two cows, down from an average of 10-20 buffalo or cows. In-migrants and company security workers were said to have stolen the animals, and most of the grazing land has been converted to rubber plantations. Furthermore, companies do not allow livestock to roam free on their newly acquired land.

Non-timber forest products (NTFP) are another source of income for around 96% of indigenous families, yielding an average value of \$115 per year. However, availability of NTFP has decreased dramatically. Thousands of hectares of forest cleared for rubber plantations no longer provide NTFP, and any remaining forest lands are occupied by the companies and locals are prohibited from accessing them to collect NTFP. A male respondent in Kalai 3 village said, "I was threatened that I would be shot when I was walking on the company's forest land where I usually go to find wild vegetables and to hunt." Similarly, a very distressed woman in Lam Mes village, Bousra commune, said, "I, along with other villagers, was not allowed to walk across the company rubber plantation to another forest near Phnom Nam Leah to take care of my farm and collect food in the forest." In the survey, 87% of respondents mentioned a significant change in distance for NTFP collection, with an average increase of 8.4 kilometres. Some families now travel 20-35 km to gather NTFP and carry out shifting cultivation.

Handicraft production is a further source of income linked to NTFP. On average, households earn \$35 per year from this production. Most common products are bamboo baskets (kapha), chicken cages and rice cooking baskets (cha ang), among others. These products are part of the traditional culture and are mostly sold to community members and used at home. People complained of a shortage of raw materials such as rattan, bamboo and vines as a result of forest clearance.

Hunting and fishing are also important livelihood activities for indigenous households, mostly for subsistence. Families make an average of \$151 per year from this, with 50% of survey households reporting some involvement. In fact, the percentage is probably higher as hunting is illegal and may well have been underreported. Most respondents complained that concession companies had destroyed wildlife habitats, with the noise of bulldozers and tractors also being a factor in chasing away wildlife.

Above: Slash and burn agricultural practice in Kalai commune, Ratanakiri province.

Below: Group of indigenous people carry agricultural products to the provincial town market – walking distance: 7-10 km.



and the consequences for food security of indigenous communities

Timeline of indigenous communities marking key events and trends:

1980-93

Economic

- Shifting cultivation and NTFP collection the main forms of livelihood
- Good yield of rice, enough to eat and sell the remainder each year
- A lot of wildlife, so hunting was easy
- Land for farming could be taken up anywhere in the community

Environment

- Good landscape because a lot of forest
- River and lake water good quality (pure and natural) because no pollution by outsiders
- High and regular rainfall
- Vietnamese forest concession companies logging in indigenous community area in 1985, cutting big trees only

Socio-cultural and security

- Freedom to access land and forests anywhere in the community
- Good security (no thieves)
- Good health (natural environment)
- A variety of medical herbs could be collected from the forest
- Good traditional practices and spiritual ceremonies
- Good solidarity among community members during traditional ceremonies
- Belief in spiritual forests and ritual practices (spiritual forest land well protected)
- Use of traditional costumes by some indigenous families

Infrastructure

- Poor or nonexistent roads: difficult to travel to provincial town
- Travel by (bare) foot, elephant or oxcart

1994-2006

Economic

- Still good yields from shifting rice cultivation (enough to eat)
- Still sufficient wildlife and hunting easy
- Shifting cultivation and NTFP collection still the main forms of livelihood
- Cashew nut plantation expanded among communities, especially in Kalai, from 1996
- Deforestation emerging, affecting NTFP collection (especially resin production)

Environment

- Logging by local powerful people and foreign concession companies from 1998
- Still regular rainfall

Socio-cultural and security

- Local and international NGOs and Cambodian Red Cross promoting agricultural extension, human rights, community forestry, natural resource management, literacy
- Good security (no thieves)
- Good health
- Still practising traditional cultural and spiritual ceremonies
- Belief in spiritual forests and strict ritual practices
- Some indigenous families still wearing traditional costumes
- Some Khmer families migrating to settle in indigenous communities

Infrastructure

- Some bicycles and motorbikes
- Travel across Vietnamese border possible without restriction (open border)
- Roads to provincial town still in poor condition
- Community paved roads started to be built in 1997
- School and commune health centres constructed in 1995
- Open shallow and pump wells and latrines constructed by government and NGOs

2007-present

Economic

- Loss of shifting cultivation land and cashew nut farms
- Loss of NTFP and difficulties accessing forest because of concession companies
- Much less wildlife for hunting
- Rice needing to be bought from market
- Need to work on rubber plantations (concession companies) with wages used to buy rice from market (mostly Bousra)
- Loss of buffalos and cows: no place to raise them as companies have cleared forests and do not allow them on their land (threats of confiscation); many have died
- Need to work hard (get up early, that is, 2-3am); 'just work for food' (Bousra)

Environment

- Forest cleared by concession companies for rubber plantation
- Water pollution as companies use chemical pesticides and pest controls
- Irregular rainfall
- Climate changing: hotter than previous years
- Plastic bags wasted by the company (from rubber seedling bag)

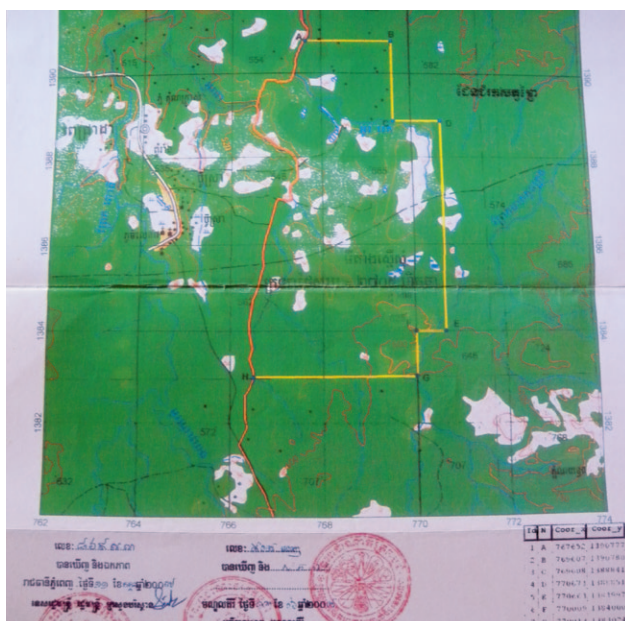
Socio-cultural and security

- Loss of traditional medicines: harder to find owing to forest clearance
- Loss of spiritual forest lands and burial forest lands
- More health problems
- Insufficient food to eat as wild fruits and vegetables no longer available in the forest
- Spiritual beliefs and traditional practices marginalised as spiritual lands destroyed
- NGOs working on agricultural extension, human rights, natural resource management, literacy, credit and savings, health education, advocacy, etc.
- Many Khmer families from other provinces in the area working with companies

Infrastructure

- Better roads and bridges built in community
- Most indigenous families have bicycles, motorbikes and better houses
- Better access to quality water (e.g. shallow and pump wells) and electricity

Source: Focus group interviews, Bousra, Mondul Kiri, and Kalai, Ratanak Kiri, July-August 2010.



Above: Forest land cleared by Dak Lak Co. Ltd concession Company (about 5000 hectares).

Left: KCD Co. Ltd Land concession border (yellow line) in Bousra, Mondul Kiri province (land was previously a wildlife sanctuary).

Employment on economic land concessions

While the activities above concern traditional income sources suffering from the loss of land, work in agro-industrial ventures could possibly provide an alternative livelihood. Most employment opportunities are on rubber plantations. On average, indigenous families earn \$249 per year from waged work, at \$3-5 per person per day. The focus group interviews revealed that wages have decreased to \$3.65 or less per person per day due to job competition from migrant workers. Only 30% of households interviewed said they had worked with concession companies. This corresponds to statements made by a concession company representative in Mondul Kiri province, that 39% of rubber plantation workers are indigenous (Phnong) people from nearby villages and 61% are migrants from other parts of Cambodia. Interviews with NGO representatives suggested that companies prefer migrant workers because they have more skills and accept lower pay. Interestingly, only 24% of households claimed they would accept a job offer from a company; not because they agreed with the situation, but out of the desperate need to work to survive. A woman in Bousra village said, almost in tears, "I forced myself to work for the company because I have no farm land anymore and it's hardly possible to find food from the forests now. There is no forest anymore. I don't know how to find money besides working on the rubber plantation. I don't know how to do business. I have no idea how to protest against the company to get my land back. We have already demonstrated but with no result. I want to return to work on my farm. It is hard to work on the rubber plantation."

The 76% of respondents who declared themselves unwilling to work for the concession company gave several reasons for this. 26% of respondents complained that the work was too hard with too little freedom – they would also have to get up in the middle of the night to travel to work and have limited time for lunch and rest. At least 12% were too angry with the company for taking land and destroying spirit forests to be able to work for them. In Kalai commune, a 58-year-old man said, "I am very angry with the company that destroyed our spiritual forest land and grabbed our farm land. I can say that I and my generation will not work for those concession companies even if we are starving." At least 11% claimed the company cheated people when paying wages, and that wages were too low anyway because of competition from migrant workers. Another 4% of respondents said their health prevented them from working for the company. Health is a challenge for indigenous communities, as facilities are limited. However, local authorities and a company representative revealed that one company has allocated funds for upgrading the health centre in Bousra commune.

Discussion and conclusion

The policy of granting economic land concessions to outside companies in the North-eastern provinces of Cambodia has had a largely negative impact on indigenous communities' livelihood and food security. Economic land concessions are not providing the benefits for local communities as proposed in policy discourse. At least 92% of respondents felt that concessions had not brought any significant economic benefits to their families and communities and that they had in fact harmed traditional livelihoods. Some wage employment has indeed been created, but local participation has remained limited and migrant workers actually appear to be preferred by the concessionaires.

Beyond the immediate impact on local livelihoods, economic land concessions have been found to raise even more issues than those discussed here. The allocation of concessions presents a challenge to the collective land titling process of indigenous communities. The concessions undermine the observance on a daily basis of indigenous traditions and culture, such as practices around spirits and ancestors, which are important criteria in granting communities legal entity status. Moreover, economic land concessions have created new challenges for the work of civil society and development organisations in support of indigenous community development. Civil society representatives complained that local people's participation in development programmes was decreasing, as villagers see little point in taking part in natural resource management and preservation initiatives if companies are allowed to clear forests.

The most important recommendation that can be offered is to prioritise the registration of collective land titles of indigenous communities and halt the economic land concession allocation process, at least in areas where indigenous communities' rights have not yet been registered. These initiatives could help minimise the negative impacts of concessions on indigenous livelihoods and eventually offer more opportunities for indigenous people to voluntarily access job opportunities with companies. Meanwhile, the food security of indigenous people in Northeast Cambodia seems better served by supporting initiatives from within local communities than by bringing in large scale investors from the outside.

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Forests and food security

Although long considered mutually exclusive, biodiversity conservation and food security are two sides of the same coin. Although ecologists and conservation biologists focus primarily on biodiversity conservation in non-agricultural lands it has been recognised that a strictly conservation focus is limited in scope, particularly in terms of fulfilling production requirements. This is pertinent given that the majority of the world's biodiversity remains outside of protected areas, often in complex, multi-functional landscapes occupied by people and their associated farming systems, particularly in the tropics.

Terry C.H. Sunderland



THE CONVENTIONAL MODEL to achieve food security has been to convert wild lands to intensive commercial agricultural use, leading to the increased homogenisation of natural landscapes. An immediate result of this model of land use has been a drastic loss of wildlands, the biodiversity they contain and the ecosystem services they provide; some suggest that society has “traded off biodiversity” to achieve food security. Approximately 30-40% of the earth's surface is now under some sort of agricultural system. Although the Green Revolution was intended to intensify production in existing agricultural lands, it is estimated that 20% of the yield increases resulted in direct land conversion. In addition, these increases in production have been achieved through industrial agriculture that is heavily dependent on fossil fuels and agro-chemicals, further indirectly affecting biodiversity and a wide range of ecosystem services, arguably contributing to climate change processes. With the human population estimated to grow to nine billion by the year 2050, it is suggested that there is a concomitant need to increase agricultural production two- to three-fold and that any marked increase in production will undoubtedly be at the expense of currently unproductive lands. However, further expansion of industrial agriculture through land conversion could have a continuing devastating effect of the world's remaining biodiversity. This is no less the case in SE Asia.

Biodiversity: a fundamental feature of agricultural systems and human well-being

Biodiversity at three levels – ecosystems, the species they contain and the genetic diversity within species – underpins much of modern agriculture as well as the livelihoods of many millions of people. The majority of today's modern crop and livestock varieties are derived from their wild relatives and it is estimated that products derived from genetic resources (including agriculture, pharmaceuticals etc.) is worth an estimated \$500 billion/annum. Biodiversity provides an important safety-net during times of food insecurity, particularly during times of low agricultural production during other seasonal or cyclical food gaps or during periods of climate-induced vulnerability. Wild harvested meat provides 30-80% of protein intake for many rural communities, particularly in the absence of domesticated alternative sources of protein. The World Health Organisation estimates that in many developing countries up to 80% of the population relies on biodiversity for primary health care and the loss of biodiversity has been linked to the increased emergence and transmission of infectious diseases with deleterious impacts on human health.

Many female farmers lack access to credit, despite evidence suggesting that investment aimed at women leads to the increase of both farm and non-farm incomes at the household level.

Around one billion people rely on wild harvested products for nutrition and income and the “invisible” trade in wild resources is estimated to generate \$90 billion/annum. In India alone the livelihoods of around 6 million people are maintained by the harvest of forest products. In many rural locations, particularly areas that lack basic infrastructure and market access, the collection of wild resources provides considerable subsistence support to local livelihoods. In addition, the harvest and sale of wild products often provides one of the only means of access to the cash economy. Access to markets is particularly important for food security; it is not enough to be able to collect or grow food, but the ability to purchase food is also a major factor in ensuring food security, hence the more vulnerable and poorest members of society are particularly at risk from lack of access to food. Highly urbanised societies such as Hong Kong and Singapore that have no agricultural base are food secure because of their considerable purchasing power, while India, although self-sufficient in agriculture, has much of its population that is food insecure primarily due to social inequity and poverty.

Challenges to biodiversity-friendly agriculture

Population growth

The world's population is expected to grow to nine billion by the year 2050. If the current model of commercialised monoculture is to be followed, feeding the global population is stated to require the conversion of yet more wild lands, at the expense of biodiversity and ecosystem service provision. Demand for meat is increasing globally, particularly from the burgeoning urban populations of India and China, and as the world becomes increasingly prosperous. Meat production is a notoriously inefficient use of resources and the implications of this are that a greater proportion of grains and oilseeds are being used to feed livestock and poultry, rather than people. A significant rise in greenhouse gas emissions is also a major side effect of the increased production in meat and dairy products. The diversion of foodstuffs to biofuel production also has an impact on food security. For example, nearly a third of all corn produced in the United States is now used for fuel and in 2010 this diverted more than 100 million tonnes of corn to ethanol production. Fuelled by considerable subsidies, ethanol production also contributes to price rises in grain and meat. Overall, it is argued, biofuel production does not improve energy security, increases environmental degradation, raises basic food prices and thus threatens food security. Finally, a considerable proportion of food is simply wasted in both developing and developed countries, but for different reasons. Loss of food in developing countries is often the result of pre- and immediate post-harvest losses due to pests and disease and poor market access, while waste in

developed countries is primarily due to the availability of large quantities of relatively cheap food, which is simply uneaten and discarded once it has reached the table, be it within the household or the commercial kitchen. Reappraising the non-consumptive uses of agricultural produce and mitigating food waste could result in an equivalent rise in agricultural output, lessening the need for further land conversion and further biodiversity loss.

Climate change

Climate change and its potential impacts represent one of the greatest contemporary threats to food security. Extreme and unpredictable weather will affect crop yields and it is estimated that agricultural yields in Africa alone could decline by more than 30% by 2050. Such yield declines will primarily affect the world's poor, who will not only lose direct access to food, but are less capable of absorbing the global commodity price changes that characterise a reduction in supply.

Climate-related events are being blamed for the recent spike in the price of staple foods, which are now at an all-time high. Extreme weather can have a devastating effect on crops as the recent droughts in Russia and China, and floods in Australia, India, Pakistan and Europe indicate. The impacts of rising temperatures and more-extreme weather events will likely hurt the poor, especially rural farmers; the World Bank estimates that 44 million more people have slipped back into poverty since June 2010. Urban populations who are more vulnerable to reductions in purchasing power are particularly vulnerable to increases in basic food prices. Food riots in Cameroon and Haiti in 2008 and the recent regime changes in Tunisia and Egypt have been directly linked to increased prices of basic foodstuffs.

Biodiverse multi-functional landscapes are more resilient to extreme weather effects and can provide a natural insurance policy against climate change. Greater crop diversification by integrating a diversity of crops and varieties into small-holder systems in particular will increase resilience to severe changes in weather patterns leading to calls for “sustainable agriculture”.

Gender inequity

Women are pivotal to ensuring food security. It is estimated that women produce more than 50% of the food grown worldwide, primarily in small-scale farming systems. Indeed women tend to grow a greater diversity of products, experiment more with folk varieties and landraces and are often reliant on biodiversity for the family herbal. Although women comprise up to 80% of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and 60% in Asia, ratios that are increasing due to male out-migration, their access and control over land and resources is generally inferior to that of men in the



same household or community. Where women do have access to land, they will generally use it for food production and income generated from such land is more likely to be utilised for the well-being of the household, whether for nutritional, health or other benefits. Women are also primarily responsible for food preparation and allocation and, as such, are usually the guardians of household food security.

However, many female farmers lack access to credit, despite evidence suggesting that investment aimed at women leads to the increase of both farm and non-farm incomes at the household level. Although development policy makers and agencies increasingly recognise the crucial contributions of women farmers to food security, contemporary agricultural policies and research do not often directly address the needs of women farmers, focusing more on traditionally male dominated cropping practices. Such “gender blindness” in the context of agricultural development is a major risk to future food security.

Tenure

Although it is argued that tenure rights in agricultural landscapes are less ambiguous for forested regions, greater clarity of tenure is needed across the entire biodiversity-agriculture nexus. Tenure rights have figured prominently in debates surrounding conservation; land tenure and food security have both, separately, been the subject of extensive research yet critical links between the two remain somewhat unexplored. Secure tenure is critical for food security in a number of ways. The lack of secure access rights and land tenure may be a disincentive for many poor or marginalised communities to invest in managing land more productively, investing in required inputs and making the raising of capital that much more difficult. Inadequate or unclear tenure regimes also limit the efficient delivery of payments for environmental services and other reward mechanisms.

Agricultural investment

International funding for agricultural development has dropped significantly over the last decade and is now at an historic low, representing around 3% of total overseas aid. Crop yields have fallen in many regions primarily due to declining investments in agricultural research, irrigation and infrastructure and the lack of agricultural development investment has led to yield declines in Africa of ca. 10% since 1960. National investment in agricultural development also remains very low, often representing less than 0.5% of agricultural GDP, despite the significant contribution of farming to most developing countries’ economies. This is primarily due to the gradual withdrawal of state support to

agriculture under structural adjustment conditionalities. Structural adjustment programmes also disaggregated agriculture from wider natural resource management (NRM) initiatives. Thus NRM and agriculture have been artificially divided. Unfortunately for the millions of small-holder farmers who are responsible for the vast majority of food production, bio-cultural diversity and agricultural production, these lines are considerably less well-defined.

Conclusion

Although food security is dependent on issues of sustainability, availability, access and utilisation, and not production alone, it is evident that a “new agriculture” needs to be found to feed the world’s population both efficiently and equitably. Increases in food production over the past fifty years have been at the cost of biodiversity and ecosystem service provision, yet there is considerable evidence that diverse agro-ecological systems can be equally productive, if not more so in terms of actual yield outputs, notwithstanding the biodiversity benefits of such approaches. As such, the United Nations envisions an “agro-ecological” approach that combines biodiversity concerns along with food production and provides a more compelling vision of future food production. The integration of biodiversity conservation and agricultural production goals must be a first step. Conservation and restoration in human dominated ecosystems must strengthen connections between agriculture and biodiversity. Managing landscapes on a multi-functional basis that combines food production, biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of ecosystem services should be at the forefront at efforts to achieve food security.

In order for this to happen, knowledge from biodiversity science and agricultural research and development, need to be integrated through a systems approach. This provides a unique opportunity for forestry and agricultural research organisations to coordinate efforts at the conceptual and implementation levels to achieve more sustainable agricultural systems. A clear programme of work on managing landscapes and ecosystems for biodiversity conservation and food security should be central to development aid.

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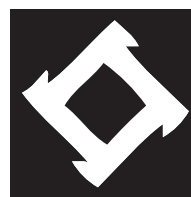


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Indigenous history: an antidote to the Zomia theory?



As with the 19th century's doomed plans to build a railroad linking India to China through the region, wild speculations and crackpot theories have blossomed forth from Western ignorance of "Upland Southeast Asia" – or, particularly, the mountains that isolate the ethnic minorities of Laos, Burma and Yunnan along the borders that join those countries. Social theories strike out on a bold course, and they head up into the mountains with European aspirations that are incompatible with local cultural reality – not to mention geography – much like the prospect of that abandoned railway.

Eisel Mazard

Volker Grabowsky & Renoo Wichasin. 2009.
Chronicles of Chiang Khaeng:
A Tai Lu Principality of the Upper Mekong.
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 424 pages,
ISBN: 978-1-930734-02-9 (paperback)

THERE IS STILL, however, a vacuum of knowledge to deter such expeditions: very few sources of indigenous history and local legal codes have been available to English-language scholars of Theravāda Southeast Asia (a fact lamented and, in some measure, meliorated by Huxley, 2006). In many cases, whatever primary sources are available first emerged in fragmentary quotations presented through the distorting lens of modern (and modernizing) national histories. In the historiography of the region, skepticism is easily preached but difficult to practice without some contrasting source of information.

It is little more than a platitude to say that the history of any given ethnos within Laos cannot be known from the national history of Laos due to all of the distortions that arise from the creation of such a national history. The distortion and disparity can be even greater for the smaller kingdoms and ethnoi subsumed into what is now Thailand, South-West China and Northern Burma. Without the contrast provided by (uniquely local) primary sources, the researcher must attempt the impossible, as Susan McCarthy (2009, p. 50) admits, in trying to "rescue" local histories from propaganda that was created to subsume them.

In Grabowsky and Wichasin's latest contribution (a translation and analysis of the *Chronicles of Chiang Khaeng*) we have the real antidote to the malaise of "retrospective modernity", namely, primary sources of indigenous history. I would add that this is a palliative for many of the theories that currently animate historians and social anthropologists of the region concerned.

Grabowsky and Wichasin's analysis neither romanticizes nor reviles the pre-modern cultures they have documented along this stretch of the upper Mekong. Perhaps because the tendency to romanticize ruins (as representing something other than ruination) is so strong in the Western literature, it is refreshing (and even startling) that the authors open their description of this strange crossroads of civilizations as a "godforsaken part of the world" (p. 1). Chiang Khaeng's (rather modest) monuments were inaugurated with the

aspirations of its rulers and reflected a unique feudal society that struggled to survive in difficult conditions, but they are ruins all the same. In the era examined, the authors are practically contrasting one period of calamity to another, one sequence of devastating wars to another, in an area that remains depopulated and poverty-stricken to this day. It is outstanding to see this treated without posturing or propaganda.

Given the array of languages that the authors were working with in compiling the book, it is a shame that the publisher could not resolve minor errors that persist within the English. I winced at a few flaws in the figures as well. The year 1502–3 is given as equivalent to both C.S. 886 and C.S. 904 on one and the same page; the census data was out-of-date at the time of publishing; and the uncited figures for local forest-cover should have been replaced with real data from geographical or ecological studies, or else omitted (as deforestation is a crucial vector in understanding the area, past and present).

The authors have taken great care in evaluating the local history in the context of events to the west, south, and east of Chiang Khaeng, whence would-be empires were approaching in the 19th century (with railroad schemes and the opium trade in mind), while local kingdoms continued to contest the control of territories and trade routes with one-another.

By contrast, very little ink is devoted to the events that were unfolding to the immediate north of Chiang Khaeng, as the Chinese scrambled to assert (and extend) their own territorial claims to halt the French and British empires. There were comparable struggles with local sovereigns (and cultural assumptions about local sovereignty) on all fronts. In this respect, Grabowsky and Wichasin's work can be augmented with a comparative reading of Hsieh Shih-Chung's (1989) PhD thesis; this reveals that the struggle to the north, likewise, ended much more recently (and indecisively) than China's national history would have us suppose.

In just taking these two works together as covering this mountainous borderland from all four directions, we have a compendious but brief corpus of work that describes the agriculture, economy, law and society of the subregion in recent centuries, on the basis of very palpable facts and well-demonstrated findings that are utterly incompatible with the "zomia hypothesis" that now commands so much attention. On the specific issue of the relationship between highland and lowland populations, the few pages devoted

Perhaps because the tendency to romanticize ruins (as representing something other than ruination) is so strong in the Western literature, it is refreshing (and even startling) that the authors open their description of this strange crossroads of civilizations as a "godforsaken part of the world"

Above:
Laos, Nong Khiaw
(© Ania Blazejewska).

to it in Grabowsky and Wichasin's new tome are vastly more useful than all the wild speculations to be found in the self-proclaimed "anarchist history" of James C. Scott (2010).

While the "official history" of any centralized state (such as Maoist China or Leninist Laos) may fail to give voice to the contrasting cultures and "dissonant histories" to be found along their rural peripheries, we can hardly redress this failure by looking to European colonial accounts of the same far-flung borderlands as if they represented the indigenous perspective. The latter is precisely the fashion that now dominates the anthropology of Southeast Asia, with quotations from colonial explorations taken as the primary sources to be extrapolated from, and the socio-political theories of Edmund Leach and Stanley Tambiah taken as guidelines for further speculation.

Although colonial archives are rich in precisely the sort of factual claims that one might elsewhere search for in vain, they certainly do not succeed at tasks they did not even attempt: they do not provide us with histories from the indigenous perspective. This is a deficit that cannot be compensated for with spurious comparisons between the Shan and the Berbers of Morocco (Scott, 2010, p. 29 & 277) nor with counter-posing evidence from the "maroons" of Jamaica and Brazil (*ibid.*, p. 25, 131–3, 189–90). Such comparisons cannot produce new facts for historians to consider; the careful work of both ethnography and philology that Grabowsky has offered throughout his career, can do just that.

Local history cannot be arrived at through logical induction from a general theory (neither one that unites "zomia", nor one that unites all "maroons" the earth over); instead, generalizations must proceed from the facts --and, even so, theories will always tell us less than firsthand fieldwork and the study of primary sources, never more.

For this reason, I would urge Grabowsky and Wichasin's book upon many scholars whose own research is far removed from Northern Laos.

Although the work was written without any reference to Scott's theories, it provides the contrast necessary to debunk them, and to instead situate the reader in the struggles that prefigured and produced the borders (and border-peoples) of Southeast Asia.

In addition to my respect for the monumental burden of translation that the authors have undertaken with the *Chronicles of Chiang Khaeng* (noting every Burmese and Pali loan-word that creeps into the narrative, etc.) I respect the detachment and accuracy that they have had in depicting this strange world between empires all the more. In contrast to the ideologies that have imposed themselves onto the history of the region (including current attempts to rewrite the area's history under the banner of academic "Anarchism", and even McCarthy's recent attempt to reconstruct local facts from national fictions) it is only here (in Grabowsky and Wichasin's tract) that I recognize the world being described from my own fieldwork in the region. This is a culture and a history poorly suited to carry the banner for any ideology, and, as the last of the forests fall and highways penetrate the mountains, it is now ever closer to the brink of extinction, amidst peace rather than war.

I hope that other researchers will be inspired by Grabowsky's work (as I once was myself) to conduct research by living in situ, working from the ground up, and using primary sources, instead of chasing after abstract theories that seek to join points on a map with the furthest horizons – to then end up, like the railway of old, nowhere to be found.

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Websites: <http://www.pali.pratyeka.org/> and <https://profiles.google.com/118222702679452306115/about>

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Upward and downward mobility through migration



Documentary films reveal and conceal. They are truthful without necessarily telling the truth. A film always shows just a slice of reality, and is the product of choices made by the main characters (who reveal certain aspects of their lives on camera) and the filmmakers (who select segments of these revelations to construct a story). When the film is screened, the question is how the main characters, and other audiences, will then decode the narrative. Do they experience the result as truthful? What strikes them as significant and meaningful in the film, and how does this further our understanding of social reality?

The anthropological documentary ‘Living Like a Common Man’ (2011), which traces the lives of Indian youngsters who recently migrated to London, was shown to a varied selection of audiences in India and Europe, including the main characters. This article discusses their reactions, recorded by the filmmakers for further study.

Mario Rutten, Sanderien Verstappen and Isabelle Makay

Above:
The filmmakers
from left to right:
Sanderien Verstappen,
Mario Rutten and
Isabelle Makay

OVER THE PAST DECADE, the total number of Indians entering the UK on a temporary work or study visa increased by more than 400 percent: from 18,578 in 2001 to 76,450 in 2008 (Entry Clearance Statistics UK 2005-2009). Most of these visas were issued to persons younger than 30 (Salt 2009). The documentary ‘Living Like a Common Man’ documents the struggles, hopes and despair of seven recently arrived young Indian migrants in London (aged 24-26), who moved to Britain for work and study less than three years ago. All of them come from relatively wealthy middle-class families in India and travelled to Britain on a student visa or a temporary work permit. Like many youngsters in developing countries, they dreamed of going to the West to earn money, to study and to get overseas experience to improve their positions at home. Once in London they ended up in low-status, semi-skilled jobs to cover their expenses, and were crammed into a small guesthouse with other newly arrived migrants.

‘Living Like a Common Man’ is a story about the contradictory faces of globalisation. Contemporary youngsters from middle-class backgrounds in India now have the resources and ability to move abroad for a few years for study or work. Their migration experiences are characterized by ambivalence and ambiguity, by both downward and upward social mobility. In Gujarat, they live in big houses with their families, but in London they face rather primitive circumstances and work in low-status jobs. Simultaneously, their stay in London has also increased their social status among family-members and friends back home. The situation creates an uncertainty about their future plans; i.e. whether to stay in Britain or return to Gujarat.

‘Living Like a Common Man’ is the visual outcome of long-term anthropological research in Gujarat and London. The film follows seven young Indian migrants in their daily lives in London, as well as their parents in the home region Gujarat, who have high expectations of their sons and daughters. The film is based on intensive interaction with the youngsters over a period of two years, between May 2008 and May 2010. During this period, we went to London ten times and stayed with the youngsters for three to five days at a time. We also visited India for three weeks to film the weddings of four of them, and to meet the parents of all seven. Initial contact with the youngsters was established through Mario Rutten, who has known the families of two of the youngsters for almost 30 years, having conducted research in their home village in Gujarat since 1983. Sanderien Verstappen and Isabelle Makay became equally close to the youngsters during our visits to London and India. As visual anthropologists, they operated the camera and edited the film.

Screenings and feedback

During the first six months of 2011, we had four public and six private screenings in India and Europe. The premiere of the film took place at the *Beeld voor Beeld* festival in Amsterdam, in a sold-out theatre. Other public screenings with feedback discussions took place in London, Leuven and Bangalore. Four private screenings (two in London and two in Gujarat) were specifically aimed at eliciting responses from the main characters. The first private screening took place in the same guesthouse where the film had been shot. Present were those main characters who still lived in the house, as well as newly

arrived migrants who had since moved into the house. Separate private screenings were organized for the main characters who had moved out of the house, elsewhere in London or back in Gujarat. In each case, family members or friends were present to watch the film with us.

Discussions after the screenings were revealing. It turned out that the main characters could identify with the story, and found that we had portrayed their lives realistically. Other (unrelated) viewers, with a personal migration experience, also recognized themselves in the film. In fact, a discussion with Gujarati immigrants in the Netherlands revealed that the film elicited vivid memories of the process of downward mobility in the initial phase of their migration process forty years ago.

Downward mobility

One of the key themes of ‘Living Like a Common Man’ is the process of downward mobility experienced by newly arrived Gujarati migrants after moving to London. Living in a smaller house than accustomed to, they are suddenly expected to perform household chores previously done by their mothers or servants at home: ‘I never made beds in India, and now you can see, I’m doing it. This is London. I have to do all the things on my own.’ At the workplace this young man had to do menial work that he would never have accepted in India: ‘At the first day of my job, my boss said, “You have to clean the garden”. I said, “what is this? I came here to clean the garden?” I went into the bathroom and I literally cried. I thought, “what am I doing here? Did I come to London to do all those things?”’ His move to London was a bad experience: ‘According to me, and from the culture I come, I think that I become smaller by doing all these things.’

The experience of downward mobility is expressed most clearly in the statement that gave the film its title: ‘Here in India I live like a prince. I don’t need to do anything, everything is ready for me. I don’t need to use public transport, because I got a car, I got a motorbike. It’s the life of a prince. But in London I live like a common man.’ The parents of the youngsters are also aware of this process of downward mobility. One father stated: ‘When he calls us, and we hear how he lives there, we feel a bit sad. Here he lived in a house with 10 to 12 rooms. We have four bathrooms. But there, they live with three in a room as big as our bathroom. So we feel a bit sad.’

Reflecting on downward mobility

When we showed the film to the main characters, they insisted that we should show the film to youngsters in India, ‘so that they know that life is not so easy in London and that we have to struggle’. It was also interesting to see the responses of newly arrived migrants during the first screening at the guesthouse. Although they themselves did not participate in the making of the film, having arrived only very recently, they could relate to what they saw and started to reflect on their decision to come to London. One girl who had arrived in London a few months before, told us after seeing the film that she felt a bit sad: ‘If I had seen this film in India I would have probably decided not come to London. Or, perhaps I would have come anyway, but if I had seen all of this I would not have been so disappointed.’

Responses to an anthropological documentary on Indian youngsters in London



Above: The Indian youngsters in front of their London house, Parents back home in India.

Below: London life: doing your own washing and ironing, watching TV together in the kitchen.



Indian, to show your love through food. England is of course famous for chocolates, but still my father sent chocolates from Austria to us in UK to show how much he loved us and wanted to be with us. The scene really brought back the emotional feeling I had at that time.'

Stories about social pressure seem to reverberate most with young viewers. A young Gujarati girl in the Netherlands explained how the film reminded her of a discussion she had with her nephew in India a few months back. 'My nephew is 14 years old and he has these fantasies about the West. He told me he dreams of going abroad for further study. I asked him why, but there was not much he could say. He has no idea about life here, except: "It is better over there. It is beautiful over there." He asked me a lot of questions and was especially interested in the freedom that we have here. Over there, when you talk to a girl (as a boy), people think you are flirting or even proposing. In India, friendship between a boy and a girl is impossible. He wants to befriend girls without getting in trouble. He wants to get away from all the social pressure in the family, even if it is just for a while. That is his main drive for going away. I recognized that in the film as well.'



How do the main characters themselves reflect on this issue of social pressure? Three of them already returned to India. We were interested to see how they are adjusting, and how they look back on their moments of relative freedom in London. One couple now lives with the boy's (joint) family in the village, with their newborn baby. When we watched the film with them, the girl immediately reacted: 'I want to return to England. I can't get used to living here again, in a family, listening to others, there is always something going on here. Yes we had a small room there in London. And yes, we have a big house here. But we have to share the space with many family members. So what is the difference?'

The parents in India also watched the film with great interest. They already knew that the living conditions of their sons and daughters in London were not very good, but they were very curious for visual information about their children's actual housing situation. Many questions were posed about what they saw on screen. One of the fathers in India smilingly informed us, after seeing the film, that 'You made a very good film, you portrayed the life of our son well, but the only thing that you got wrong is the title of the film. It should not have been "living like a common man", but "living as a common man"! Because they really live as common people in London.'

We also showed the film to a family of Gujarati migrants who had come to the Netherlands after they had to flee Uganda in 1972. The grandfather said that the film had reminded him of the time he moved from India to Uganda in 1956. 'I also faced many difficulties in adjusting to the new environment. At that time, I asked myself many times: "what am I doing over here?" Just like that boy in the film.' The film reminded his daughter of when they had left Uganda, in 1972, and had ended up in London before moving on to the Netherlands: 'I was 12 years old and I lived with my mother, brother and sister in the living room of a relative for three months. We had a nice house in Kampala and I felt that we had gone down by moving to Europe. The film reminded me of my disappointment as a young girl in the UK: "Is this Europe, will this be our future?" At the time we of course did not know for how long that situation would last. So I could very well imagine that these youngsters felt that they had gone down by moving to another country.'

Dutch youngsters reacted very differently. They had to laugh when the Indian youngsters expressed their difficulties in the film and told us: 'What's the problem with making your own bed, doing your laundry or having to clean the garden? What's the big deal?' A girl of the same age, but belonging to the youngest generation of the Gujarati family in the Netherlands, did not laugh, but said the film made it possible for her to see the past experiences of her grandfather, how it must have been for him as a new migrant: 'My grandfather told us how he felt when he first came to Uganda from India, how difficult it was for him to adjust. We knew about it, but watching the film we could actually see for the first time that life is very tough, living in such a bad house crammed into a room with four people. I could never really see my grandfather's past but because of your film I was able to see it, how it must have been to start a new life in another country.'

Older members of this Gujarati family in the Netherlands shared this recognition. One man said: 'Migrants always have to take a step back. Your language, your diplomas, everything is devalued in the new context.' His wife, who migrated from Bombay to the Netherlands about twenty years ago, told us that we portrayed a common aspect of migration. 'Migration is always a painful process. We know that because we have gone through that. The film portrays that well, but you (as film makers) are surprised by that and don't know that, because you did not experience that. For us it is a normal thing. It is part of the life of every migrant.'

One of the key themes of 'Living like a Common Man' is the process of downward mobility... Living in a smaller house than accustomed to, they are suddenly expected to perform household chores previously done by their mothers or servants at home.



The rewards

The audience of settled migrants commented on how a period of downward mobility can in the end lead to great rewards: 'What you filmed is the primary school phase of migration. Every athlete in the Olympic Games has to go through hard times to accomplish something. He falls down while practicing, maybe he breaks his leg ten times, but in the end he wins the gold medal. Not everybody can take this. Not everybody is fit to struggle like that and not everybody has the discipline and willpower. That is why only a small number of people migrate. Migration is always accompanied by suffering and pain, but you accept it because you know that in the end you gain. You have to go through this situation before you can blossom. The youngsters in your film are dedicated to make it work. They want to achieve something. Maybe after ten years, when you visit them again, they are better off than the British youngsters of the same age who started out with much more, but always stayed in the same spot.'

From these varied responses we conclude that the process of downward mobility expressed in the film (by the main characters themselves and in the editorial choices made by the filmmakers) rings a bell for past and present migrants, who recognize themselves and the difficulties they face(d) during migration. The film does not show the whole migration process, but gives an in-depth view of the 'initial phase' of migration. It will be interesting to film the main characters ten years from now, to see how they handled the migration process over time.

Family pressure

In addition to the conflicting situation of downward and upward mobility, the film calls attention to the social links between the youngsters in London and their family members in India. As filmmakers we attempted to portray London and Gujarat as connected and somehow even interchangeable. In London, the youngsters live in a completely Gujarati environment. The youngsters make phone calls to Gujarat on a daily basis and parents send goods to their children by mail. Family links are mainly positive, but can also be hard to deal with when there is social pressure involved. Some of the youngsters migrated to London to escape that pressure: 'No need to worry about other people, just think of yourself.' This aspect of migration as a strategy of avoidance is most clearly expressed in the film by one of the girls who states, 'If I had stayed in India, my parents would have forced me to marry someone else. So it was better to tell my family I wanted to study more and I wanted to go abroad for further study. If I'm here, my family can't force me to marry another person. So that's why I just came here.'

Reflecting on family pressure

Both the positive and the negative aspects of family linkages are acknowledged by viewers with a migrant background. One Gujarati migrant in the Netherlands said, 'When I saw the scene about the box with food that the parents send to their son in UK every three months, I was touched because it reminded me of 1972 when my father was in Austria, after having fled Uganda, and we were in UK with my mother. At that time, he sent us a box with chocolates. That is so

For her husband, watching the film prompted him to consider the choices he had made. One year earlier, on camera, he had enthusiastically described his business plan for a sandwich bar in Gujarat. But now, after their return to India, he has been unable to realize his dream. His family did not support his plans and he was expected to work in the family business. 'Seeing the film, I realize that I have a lot of thinking to do. When I was in London I wanted to go back to India so badly. But it turned out to be a disappointment. We just applied for a new visa. Seeing the film I realize that it will also be hard to go back to London, especially now that we have a baby.'

Seeing the film through the eyes of various audiences, and learning what aspects of their own lives they recognize, enriched our understanding of the lives of the main characters in the film and the complexities of the migration process itself. The film elicits reactions about the construction of the film as such, but also makes people reflect and talk about their own past experiences and future options.

We are still in regular contact with the main characters and their families, both in London and in Gujarat, and we are following their life trajectories with great interest. In the coming year, the film will be shown at various ethnographic and documentary film festivals, as well as in schools and colleges in Gujarat. We are especially curious to find out how youngsters who dream of migrating (but have not migrated yet) will respond to the film. What will this film reveal to them?

Living Like a Common Man (2011) was directed by Sanderien Verstappen, Mario Rutten and Isabelle Makay. For further details about the film and sale of the DVD and accompanying booklet, see: <http://sites.google.com/site/livinglikeacommonman>

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Resources

Salt, J. 2009. *International Migration and the United Kingdom: Report of the United Kingdom SOPEMI Correspondent to the OECD*. London, University College London, Migration Research Unit. *Entry Clearance Statistics UK (2005/6-2008/9)*. Performance Management, Analysis & Forecasting (PMAF), UK Border Agency – International Group.

Peripheral Philippines

When over lunch, I observed that the authors of the books I had been asked to comment upon characterised the dominant culture as ‘heterosexist, masculinist, and macho’, my lady friend couldn’t restrain a mocking smile, “Macho? Most of these poor devils are decidedly mother dependent, many a wife referring to her consort as her eldest son! When you come down to it, this place is run by women. The big boy just remains that, a big boy, full of bravado, which needs his wife to prop him up.” Her sneer reminded me of Thailand, where the lady of the house is referred to as ‘the hind legs of the elephant’ that would tumble without its mainstay.

Niels Mulder



Garcia, J. Neil C. 2nd ed. 2009.

Philippine Gay Culture: Binabae to Bakla, Silahis to MSM.
Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
xxv + 537 pages, ISBN 978-962-209-985-2 (paperback)

Tadiar, Neferti XM. 2009.

Things Fall Away; Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization.
Durham, NC: Duke University Press. ix + 484 pages,
ISBN 978-0-8223-4446-9 (paperback)

ACCORDING TO MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH LIFE among the Javanese, Thai, and Filipinos, for the children the mother is and remains the moral centre of the universe and the touchstone of their conscience. In this way, she becomes a cultic figure, with people in politics sometimes circulating pictures that show them paying respect to their mother as proof of their moral worth. Next to this, John Cadet reminded us that, at least in Thailand, “[W]omen are ascendant on account of their natural, that’s to say, biological power, while males wishing to assert and protect themselves are obliged to acquire power, mainly through initiation. Women do not need [to do so], since in the archaic culture their natural power overbids and threatens the acquired power of the male, which requires protection from it. [This] danger all mature females pose to the male [is] abundantly referred to in social practice and belief, as well as Thai folklore, literature and popular culture.” Residually, this situation is referred to by our two authors in their interpretations of the pre-colonial Philippine *babaylan*, and in the mocking smile of my lady friend.

The two authors, students of literature by training, each seek to come to grips with the position of peripheral groups in mainstream culture and aspire to write recent subaltern history, in the main using sources originating from the country’s very centre of Metro Manila. Garcia deals with gay culture and particularly with the position of the effeminate queer or *bakla*. Tadiar addresses the feminisation of labour, the experience of the urban underdog, and the revolutionary imagination of the masses. In order to do just this, both of them exploit scholarly literature and *belles-lettres*, and venture to theorise the condition of their subject matter.

To be gay?

Before concentrating on being gay in the last five decades, we should be reminded that general ideas about homosexuality stem from a rather recent, Western psychiatric discourse that has infiltrated, but not radically subverted, the native Tagalog-Filipino understanding of, to use another imported idea, ‘gayness.’ In the West as elsewhere, culture, or the understanding of life, is always on the move, even as in this post-colonial yet imperial capitalist era of globalisation the current Western understanding of human behaviour – and much else – is colonially pervasive.

So, however frequently Philippine culture is characterised as ‘heterosexist, masculinist, macho’ (and effeminate- and homophobic to boot), this current picture is no guide for understanding the past when, for example, power and dignity revolved around spiritual potency which was seniority rather than gender marked. From the extensive discussion of the pre-colonial female and the cross-dressing male *babaylan* (priest, medium, healer, spiritual leader), one might conclude that Cadet’s observation of the archaic natural power of mature females also held in the archipelago and that, over colonial history and into the present, this power persisted as mother’s (and wife’s) moral superiority.

Be this as it may, both Garcia and Tadiar suggest that the present-day cross-dressing *bakla* is a prestigious carry-over from animist days in which gender, gender-crossing and sexual practice were conceptually far apart from the novel notion of homosexuality. Meanwhile, though, for most members of the educated classes such distinctions ‘have fallen away’ and vanished into an irretrievable past. Consequently, the *bakla* is not only labelled ‘homosexual’, but becomes, in masculinist homophobic logic, the homosexual par excellence, whose interiority (*loob; kalooban*) is woman-hearted, and who enacts this inversion in everyday life.

It is this very enactment, this show of effeminacy, that makes the male homosexual a homosexual, not the sex act itself. Hence, his non-effeminate partner in sex remains ‘heterosexual’ or straight. This construction makes it plausible to suppose that the *bakla* queer is almost consciously part and parcel of the dominant macho culture, including its internalised homophobia, which leaves him lovelorn, anguished and self-hating.

As a male of the effeminate variety, Garcia knows what he writes about and, graciously, over the years in which the dominant discourse was imposed and gradually internalised, the seeds were sown for the emancipation from that very discourse, or, at least, of becoming a respected partner in the totality of the nation. Whereas a blatantly rampant and fabulous gay culture emerged in the 1970s, it seemed as if the same got bogged down in stereotypical comedy shows. Toward the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s, the pressure for emancipation in wider society gathered steam, and seen from the ‘Update’ added to the book’s 2008/9 editions, this movement toward full citizenship is well under way. Even so, the ‘coming out’ of the masculine gay, which is the perspective in which Garcia discusses the works of three authors, is a painfully slow process at the time that the capitalist juggernaut reduces the mother-dependent macho-males to puppets who need to shore up their egos through violence against women and *bakla* gays.

To be an exportable lower-class woman?

This very juggernaut looms large in Tadiar’s narrative and dominates the current phase in the evolution of the permanent crisis of Philippine culture. In this period, prostitution became the central metaphor for export-oriented and tourism-friendly policies that prostituted the nation as a whole and in which prostituted women became the paradigmatic figure of the crisis of Philippine culture (p.25-6). Where as this image, in which feminised bodies and natural resources are immorally used by multinational capital, pertained most saliently to the developmentalist policies of the Marcos period, under globalisation the crisis of culture comes to be expressed through the gendered and sexual imagery of overseas domestic work (p.27). Within this Olympian context of the international production processes and their attendant division of labour, the author proposes to explore the socio-subjectivity of female overseas contract workers through her exegesis of relevant *belles-lettres*.

Through going overseas, mothers, daughters, wives not only abandon their customary roles while tearing themselves apart from the security of their families, but also become ‘Women Alone’ in far-away places. The chapter concerned (chapter 2) starts on a quote from Nick Joaquin that reminds us of the fact that Filipinos grow up and live suffocatingly close together

Above: Bird Boy participating in the Babaylan Festival of Bago City, Philippines (CC Attribute: Billy Lopue; <http://flic.kr/p/9juWJT>).

which, according to Bulatao, leads to lowly individuated personalities who incorporate certain others (*kapwa*) in their self-experience (1964:430). As such, this 'tearing themselves apart' and becoming 'women alone' reminded me of a statement by the psychiatrist Lourdes Lapuz, who lamented, 'Perhaps, some day, the time will come when a Filipino no longer has to cross miles of ocean and continent to emancipate himself from his parents' (1972:180). It could be that this 'some day' has arrived with the massive deployment of Filipino labour world-wide which has opened the possibility for emancipation, individuation, and self-assertion.

First of all, this is illustrated at the poetry and stories of highly educated members of the middle classes in the capital that reflect on the experience of Filipinas living solitary lives. Some celebrate their independence of family and kin as 'a small victory' that 'gives form to their own wholeness' (p.59). The other thing to free oneself from is the tedium of a woman's existence, the monotony of attending to the activity of others. Subsequently, the narrator seeks the dream of enjoying her body and actions, of being free-floating, which, in turn, may affect her identity experience and results in a loneliness-induced madness.

I do not know how helpful these literary products are to understand the experiences and self-experience of the myriad manual workers, migrant domestics, unmarried mothers, mistresses and other single women living separately from their families, let alone the lives of the 'commoditised warm bodies' whose export was initiated under 'authoritarian modernisation.' Through imposing feminist, Marxist, literary, and a host of post-this and post-that theories on her subject matter, she attempts to catch the grain of subjectivity in the universe, whereas field anthropologists would prefer to see the universe in microscopic experience. Of course, sometimes that happens when certain writers visualise the 'fish bowl silences' of the wife in a society run by men to whom she is no more than 'rice, meat, dessert served for his pleasure' (p.77).

Less emancipatory and most pertinent in the case of the (female) overseas workers is the recognisable cultural theme of sacrifice – in the tradition of Christ, José Rizal and Ninoy Aquino – that purifies and ennobles, and that justifies the suffering in what is sometimes referred to as 'the prison without bars.'

To be urban underclass?

In the first chapter under the rubric 'Urbanization', Tadiar seems to move closer to actual experience through reflecting on a novel by Jun Cruz Reyes that highlights 'pedestrian testimony against the transnational spirit' at 'the time of catastrophe.' The person at the centre of the narrative is a university student who, because 'students are communists', is forced to save his skin through dropping out of college and abandoning his abode when Martial Law is declared. In this way, he becomes one of the streets, poor, scavenging, without a future, etc.; this gives Reyes the means of imagining life at the city's underbelly and, in the process, to delightfully expose the actions, ideas and stupidities of those in power.

Below: Annual Babaylan Festival, Bago City, Philippines (CC Attribute: Billy Lopue; <http://flic.kr/p/9juY1p>).



When, with the Marcoses in Hawai'i, the book finally appeared, its author reasoned its value as keeping history alive and preventing the reappearance of the horror of an authoritarian regime. About this, Tadiar is apparently doubtful, as she introduced the chapter with, 'I am troubled by the gradual obliteration of the past's capacity to disturb our present' (p.141). She is right; in the Philippines, I am steadily impressed by the absence of a sense of history. This absence makes the nation like the young as it floats, unburdened by its past, through an ever-present present in which Marcos's family and cronies are comfortably re-ensconced and in which a discredited president stood a serious chance of making a come-back.

In the second chapter of 'Urbanization', the author wants to explore 'different ways of understanding the modes of power and production that operate in postcolonial social formations and, therefore, for seeing the different forms that everyday struggles take' (p.187). These struggles are then visualised in individual cases of human 'metropolitan debris' who 'endure life as excess matter' (p.220), and whose misadventures and reflections are yet revealing of particular moments of Manila's metropolitanisation (p.229).

Revolution?

Whereas the resulting observations take us to the fly-overs symbolic of the Manila of the 1990s, she still thinks it useful to devote the last three chapters to 'Revolution', and so we are exposed to the Maoist romanticism of revolution-inspired 'masses' that should be 'served' and 'awakened' and with whom the (urban, educated) cadres 'become one' in order to achieve a 'cultural revolution' and a 'popular democratic' future. As long as the Marcos tyranny lasted – and even as the great Chinese example had already crumbled – such ideas and the armed struggle in the countryside held a certain promise. However, following the popular uprising of 1986, the revolutionary movement has been in steady decline, while the 'sorrows of the people' live on unabated. Even so, giving attention to the 'undercurrents of experience' is a legitimate exercise as it may reveal 'cultural resources of the living past that bear radical political potentials for unfinished imaginations of the revolution in the present' (p.378).

The living past

Within the scope of this review of voices from the periphery, it is not possible to do full justice to two very complex, at times rather abstruse and at other moments pellucid texts that, in the tradition of literary critics, caused me sometimes the feeling of reading discourses that were dressed up in such an esoteric babble as to leave the subject imperially bare in front of the uninitiated reader. About this, in the 'Note to the Second Edition', Garcia observed, 'I am glad that I am no longer the clumsily prolix, over-eager, wide-eyed, and theory-crazed person who cobbled together these words' (ix); this self-reflection gives hope that, one day, Tadiar will also come down to terra firma.

She took the view that the Philippines exemplifies an everlasting cultural crisis. There is no doubt that having been violently colonised (Newson 2009), exposed to Spanish racism, brainwashed into Catholicism, exploited to the hilt, etc., created doubt about the own being, about identity. Too much had simply fallen away. In passing, this was confirmed by the appalling absence of a sense of history that is possibly related to the cultural catastrophe of the American colonisation that created, in Nick Joaquin's metaphor, 'a generation without fathers and grandfathers', oriented to the timeless future of 'progress.' No cause for wonder that those who are aware of the triad culture-history-identity yearn for an autochthonal past that, in my view, is much more alive than most rabid nationalists are aware of.

In spite of Catholicism that, like the other religions of Middle-Eastern origin, is highly misogynist, homophobic, and, in its missionary zeal, racist, the pre-colonial, animistic past lives on, even as the life-giving, female representations of natural or animistic power in archaic Southeast Asian cultures have been repressed by the monotheisms focussing on the one, male creator God. Consequently, women were demonised as a danger to men, with Islam probably most obsessed with keeping Adam out of harm's, i.e., the polluting woman's, way.

Even so, morally mothers remain ascendant, an aspect of lowland Southeast Asian culture that Catholicism, through the Holy Mother, even reinforced. As the very name of this religion implies, it is extremely hospitable to original animist practices (Mulder 1997, chapter 2). The characteristic cult of the near ancestors – people whom we have known in life – became part of Filipino Catholicism as these forbears were incorporated as approachable, near saints who hear prayer and who are feasted at their graves on *Undras* or All Saints Day. Like the animist, Catholic Filipinos have no shortage of

power laden objects that may protect as amulets or that can be tapped for blessing through touching them, such as certain statues in power laden places like churches – that many observantly greet in passing, just like a Thai does in passing the abodes of powerful spirits.

When the Spaniards overran the islands, they found miniature social orders with which they were familiar, namely, hierarchically ordered polities with a *datu* on top, a layer of *maharlika* or privileged freemen, and the multitude (*masa*) to serve them. In Spanish times, the pyramid of command was extended to the *superdatu* in Madrid, and today, it extends to Malacañang or, as Tadiar would have it, to the IMF, the World Bank, and Washington. The point is that the order is not different from the order of the *barangay* and that nothing goes if you do not know the people concerned. And so, it is not strange that most peasants in the far-flung countryside rather aspire to an atavistic millennium than to revolutionary correctness.

A cardinal difficulty in spreading the class-struggle based gospel of the class-less society in which everybody is equal lies in the fact that it does not connect to the prevailing world view. In Southeast Asia, Western sociological concepts, such as class, are no part of the indigenous imagination. Javanese, Thai, and Filipinos see the social edifice as a moral arrangement based on the essential inequality of individuals who are obliged (or not) to each other through 'debts of gratitude' that spell their concretely experienced life worlds that shade off into the not morally obliging space of wider society. That space may be seen as 'public in itself', as the hunting ground where one vies for a prize, but it is not 'of the public' or 'for itself'.

Another most pertinent carry-over from the pristine past is the idea of power. In animistic thinking, morally neutral power pervades cosmos and nature, and the cult of it aims at appropriating such power or bending it according to one's wishes. Those who do so successfully and who come to embody potency, have acquired a highly admired social good; they will be women or men of prowess, bosses, patrons, (or *babaylan*), deferred to by the lesser creatures, and so there is small cause for wonder that the competition for power is fierce and often violent. The political game is about power as such, not how it has been acquired or even how it is exercised, and so it may be that in the days that *datu* were close to their constituents, they were held more accountable for their actions than today's distant, oligarchic politicians.

In the reflections on cultural crisis, it was also observed that the prevailing doubt about national identity may be related to the absence at the time of early colonisation of overarching institutions, such as royal courts, the state, cities, exemplary religious centres, and that those imposed by the Americans failed to take root, with the consequence that the pervasive orientation of most remains myopically focussed on family, relatives, and locality. Wider, public space remains like the surrounding nature of *barangay* days: it is a no man's land where one carries no responsibility and that nowadays appears as the private realm of politicians or *hacenderos*, and so a citizen-based culture of the commonweal fails to develop.

In view of these striking continuities and reflecting on the days that women and *babaylan* embodied potency and prestige, it may be concluded that the gravest cultural violence inflicted on the pre-colonial order of life was the ascendancy of men at the expense of women. (Lady friend, "Ascendancy? They're spoiled brats who need us to get their act together!") Apart from this discontinuity of original gender equality, the past lives on in the present, even as it seems to have 'fallen away' into the subconscious.

Niels Mulder has retired to the southern slopes of the mystically potent Mt. Banáhaw, Philippines, where he stays in touch through niels_mulder201935@yahoo.com.ph

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Festschrift: Asia in three parts



Writing from Asia is a festschrift: a posthumous collection of his research and articles from 2000 to 2009, with a focus on issues that are still unresolved.

Julia Read

Symon, A. 2009.

Writing from Asia.

Newcastle, Australia: Global Exchange. 220 pages, ISBN: 9781876438418 (paperback)

ANDREW SYMON WAS AN AUSTRALIAN JOURNALIST who was based in Southeast Asia, first in Indonesia in the early 1990s and then in Singapore from 1998. He specialised in mining and energy resources, although he also wrote about people and politics and had a deep personal interest in colonial history and its legacy which he also expressed in his journalism.¹ His understanding of Southeast Asia was held in high esteem before his unexpected death in October 2009.

Writing from Asia has three parts, containing 49 chapters consisting of articles he researched and wrote. The first part, 'Politics and Personalities', contains twenty articles that explore major geopolitical issues that confront the countries of Southeast Asia, such as climate change, energy resources, environmental degradation, political developments and population growth.

The second part, 'Energy and Resources', contains the meat of Symon's researches. These are detailed, carefully documented and wide-ranging studies of developments and issues related to mining and energy resources. The highlight of his career was probably a report commissioned by the Lowy Institute, an independent think-tank based in Sydney, in preparation for a conference dealing with Asia-Pacific perspectives

The Three Gorges Dam (hydroelectric), Yangtze River, China (CC License Attribution: Harvey Barrison <http://www.flickr.com/photos/hbarison/5891613667>).

on nuclear energy and global governance in April 2008: 'Nuclear Power in Southeast Asia: Implications for Australia and non-proliferation'.² The report makes the point, among others, that the general public in Southeast Asia and Australia already had little confidence in the safety of nuclear energy. This, of course, was prior to the Fukushima disaster.

The third part of the book, 'Book Reviews', showcases his multi-dimensional interests in the society and history of Southeast Asia. The book reviews are mainly essays that paraphrase and retell the messages of the authors in a way that reflects his focus on the public interest. The books covered in the reviews are varied: the story of Chin Peng, leader of the Communist rebellion in Malaya, explores the nationalist thinking behind his existential struggle;³ in 'The New Chinese Empire', veteran China watcher Ross Terrill forecasts likely future political developments in China; 'Target North Korea' explicates the development of the paranoid psychology of the North Korean regime and discusses the possibility of 'bringing them in from the cold' to end the suffering of the unfortunate populace. His review of Elizabeth Economy's 'The River Runs Black' details the efforts of the Chinese to address their pressing need to prevent further environmental degradation. He also reviews Anthony Reid's 'An Indonesian Frontier' by retelling the long history that preceded the Acehnese rebellion. He reminds us of the significance of the first great meeting of newly independent Asian and African states in 1955 in Bandung, explained by the late Jamie Mackie in 'Bandung 1995' as one of the first and most significant steps towards the

emergence of a new multi-polar world that developed later as the sharp polarities of the Cold War disintegrated. He also reviews John Monfries' 'Different Societies, Shared Future', clarifying that it is the cultural differences between the two societies that are the root cause of the continuous see-sawing that is a notable feature of the relationship between Indonesia and Australia, which needs 'ballast' in the form of more institutional and 'people to people' links. Another article introduces us to the charm of the unique architecture of the Khmer modernist movement that flourished under Prince Sihanouk, which was characterised by diversity, subtlety and innovation, but is now being lost through demolition and unregulated development as more money flows into Cambodia ('Building Cambodia' by Helen Ross and Darryl Collins). These are a few of the offerings in the last section of the book, which – unlike the earlier more dispassionate sections – is imbued with humanitarian and aesthetic values, and this enhances the other chapters for the reader by displaying the underpinning basis of Symon's world-view.

The paperback volume presents well, appears well-edited and includes an index, although on closer examination one finds quite a number of mangled sentences, incorrect page references, and so on, which betray its hasty compilation. For students and scholars, the value of this collection is faceted, like the structure of the book. For those interested in the region, not just in terms of mining and energy resources, it provides an extremely well-informed and broad, yet deep, introduction to enhance their understandings in many disciplines such as economics, engineering, environmental studies, history, politics and public policy. For students and professionals in mining and energy resources it should be required reading, one would think.

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Notes

- 1 In 2000, he wrote a popular series of articles about STOVIA (the Vocational School of Medicine for Indigenous Doctors), an institution of the Dutch Colonial Government that produced many thinkers of the revolutionary generation in Indonesia, for the Jakarta Post.
- 2 The report is also available on the Lowy Institute's website.
- 3 Published as 'Fact and Fiction on Chin Peng' by Andrew Symon, IAS Newsletter #33, March 2003.

Double feature

'Nearly all works on United States relations with Southeast Asia have traditionally started their analysis with 1945, or perhaps 1941', the author observes. (p. 9) Her book adopts a different line. That is welcome in at least two different ways. It tends to bring Southeast Asia into larger and more comparative studies, for example on US imperialism. That diminishes the risk, still prevalent, that Southeast Asia is ghettoised in more general works that draw their evidence and examples from other parts of the world, indeed other parts of Asia.

Nicholas Tarling

Anne L. Foster. 2010.

Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941.

Durham and London: Duke University Press. xii + 241 pp, ISBN: 978-0-8223-4800-9 (paperback)

IT ALSO OFFERS US A LONGER-TERM PERSPECTIVE on America's role in Southeast Asia. She takes little account of the role of Americans – and occasionally their state – in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia: we do not hear of the pepper-traders in northern Sumatra, nor of the adventurers in northern Borneo, though the Baptists in Burma – there before the British conquerors – are mentioned. Her focus is, as her subtitle indicates, on the inter-war period. But she might perhaps have criticised her colleagues not for starting in 1941 or 1945 but for regarding those as the

crucial dates for American involvement in the region. Surely it did not become a focus until 1950. The 'Cold War' – and in particular the triumph of the CCP and the 'loss' of China – are indeed the 'turning-points' that historians seek, even if that should not make the study of Southeast Asia, or of Vietnam, merely a Cold War study, as Foster rightly suggests has often happened.

The title indeed prompts a question. What was striking about the whole period up to 1950 was surely that the US did not project its power. That negative role indeed helped to determine the role of others. It enhanced the ambitions of the Japanese, who were to be all the more frustrated in 1941. It was only in December that year, however, that the US indicated that it would support the British in the event of invasion, and only after that could the British reassure the Dutch.



Movie theater in Phnom Penh (CC Attribute: Jen Leung; <http://flickr.jp/6kpMqd>).

No doubt the author recognises that, and the closing section of her final chapter offers some account of the reaction to the Manchuria incident. 'Japan became like a sore tooth', a curious simile runs, '– everyone felt compelled to poke at it, ... but no one really wanted to know how serious the problem was.' (p. 158) The subsequent pages rise above that level, but still are barely adequate. If she felt a need to defend her treatment of the subject, she would surely argue that she is concerned with power of kinds other than those the title would normally imply. The book, however, is weakened by an emphasis on them that displaces that larger context. She recognises the paradox in the US position – a world power with only limited interest in the region – but rather misses a dimension of it. 'The United States projected its power during

Powerplay

Research sometimes serves to deconstruct power relations: to show how some groups are disenfranchised, marginalised or removed from histories of nations through literature, film or other cultural practices. Academic work, in such cases, provides theoretical and direct criticisms of how power structures, institutions, politicians and others, assert power.

Andy Fuller

A review of two films on power:

Performances of Authority and *Being prominent in Indonesia, a day in the life of Ibu Mooryati*

RESEARCH PROVIDES GROUNDS for rights, representation, equality – at least in the mind, if not beyond it. Research often seems inextricably linked to causes, despite an academic's own claim to impartiality and objectivity. Sometimes an academic's cause, however, might just be to assert the importance of his or her own field. The political significance or actuality of a subject helps an academic gain prominence, funding and in some rare cases, fame beyond seminar rooms and lecture halls half-filled with familiar faces and indifferent students.

Two recent films from the KITLV¹ – *Performances of Authority* (*Performances* for short) by Fridus Steijlen and Deasy Simandjuntak, and *Being prominent in Indonesia, a day in the life of Ibu Mooryati* (*Being prominent* for short) by Henk Schulte Nordholt and Fridus Steijlen – present two different examples of inquiries into the power-plays and power structures of present day Indonesia.

Although both films are drawn from KITLV's *Recording the Future* project,² the two films were made in different ways. Steijlen has said that *Performances* came about after a reviewing of recorded material made throughout the eight years of this ongoing audio-visual archive project. He said that they didn't set out to film 'performances of authority', but that instead, performances of authority were revealed in their recordings of everyday life. As such, *Performances* is a gleaning of diverse material cut from recordings from

different locations and years. Locations are named, and the credits inform us that filming was completed between 2003 and 2009; viewers are thus given a taste of some of the 'performances of authority' in post-New-Order and perhaps post-*reformasi* Indonesia.

Being prominent, on the other hand, is an up-close and personal encounter with Indonesia's rich. Ibu Mooryati is a member of the Solonese royal family, founder of Mustika Ratu cosmetics company and a political representative. Recordings were made during several days in 2007. Andre Triadiputra (camera) and Lexy Rambadeta (camera and interviews) follow Ibu Mooryati on a tour of her 'everyday life'. The footage shows Ibu Mooryati with one of her grandsons, her personal assistant, her PhD supervisor, at a factory for her cosmetic products, at one of the Mustika Ratu spas, in parliament fulfilling the role of speaker, and at a promotional launch of traditional Javanese medicine attended by President Yudhoyono. The story of her everyday life is told in her own words and in responses to questions from the film's interviewer, Lexy Rambadeta. She speaks mostly in Indonesian, yet sometimes elaborates in Javanese or English. Javanese seems to be her language of familiarity and intimacy, while her use of English appears to be invested with a sense of authority and power.

Ibu Mooryati glides through her day, fully in control of herself and her surroundings. Yet, for brief moments, the veil of control and order is slightly dislodged: in one instance she admonishes Lexy for asking too many questions, while in another she scolds her assistant for not being on top of matters. These are rare moments and the somewhat manicured vision of Ibu Mooryati suggests that the film was intended to be made

these years in ways which have eluded the gaze of traditional diplomatic historians, but which structured the choices, dreams, and possibilities perceived by Southeast Asians and Europeans.' (p. 13) But she seems to have eluded the diplomatic historians, and indeed missed some of the contributions they have made even to her topic.

Parts of her case are thus made to appear more novel than they really are. '(S)cholars rarely know, let alone consider the implications of, the fact that from about 1910 the United States was the key recipient of exports from British Malaya, and in most years from the Netherlands Indies.' (p. 185n.) Surely it is widely known among scholars of the region at least. They also know of the low-level intelligence contacts among the governments of the region, well discussed in Chapter One. More might have been said of Quezon's ambivalence over the prospects for an independent Philippines. The 'diplomatic historians' offer evidence of his hopes of protection from the British Commonwealth and of the concern of the British that they might be burdened with an additional responsibility.

Foster looks rather to the 'power' represented by US trade and investment, focused mainly on oil and rubber, and thus largely on the Indies. She also discusses the penetration of American consumer goods and American movies. What their impact was remains unclear. Scholars of popular culture suggest that audiences and individuals in audiences react in ways not expected by the auteurs. The author relates a nice story of a French traveller who finds montagnards watching their first Chaplin. They found none of his antics at all amusing, but laughed uproariously at the 'young heroine ... weeping glycerin tears'. (p. 96)

In such cases assessing impact is certainly problematic. Here indeed the argument seems least well supported. Foster has read widely and explored unusual sources.

But too often she makes statements or extrapolations that seem to have no clear basis just when they most need them. 'Americans touted the benefits of American cultural products for Southeast Asia. ...they believed that American cultural influence produced modernity. But equally important, many Americans believed that if Southeast Asians did develop along this American path, these Southeast Asians would evolve, perhaps slowly but steadily, into people deserving of self-rule.' (p. 74) The backing for such generalisations seems insufficient. Some of it comes from consular reports. Whether that justifies talking of 'Americans' or 'many Americans' seems doubtful. Those phrases appear too often.

A review often terminates with what some see as nit-picking. Penultimately, this reviewer finds that Foster has created a governor-general of the Straits Settlements (pp. 32, 98), and put Sir George Grindle in the Foreign Office (p. 66). Patrons could stay as long as they wished in Malayan cinemas, she notes, and so four-hour shows 'closely approximated the length of traditional entertainments' (p. 101). But the practice of sitting through long shows was true in Britain, too: in the reviewer's remote youth, a ticket would allow you to stay as long as you liked, and see the A or B movie a second time should you wish.

Ultimately, he has to conclude that he was stimulated by the book, but also irritated. And the reason was rather fundamental. The author's case has been exaggerated rather than made.

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with her full collaboration. The lack of unguarded moments and the relative uniformity of the elite circles in which she moves, makes the film somewhat sterile, flat and lacking in conflict. But perhaps, that is the point. A different approach could have had the camera crew remaining in the background. Or, interviews could have been conducted in a more analytical manner. Perhaps these approaches could have provided a more nuanced perspective on her everyday life. But *Being prominent* shows Ibu Mooryati as she would like to see herself. As such, the viewer is given a first-hand experience of how she performs her authority – in this case, over the camera crew and over the viewer.

Performances, however, presents a greater opportunity for the viewer to derive meaning from the film. The film is fragmentary, questioning and postulating: it presents kinds of 'performances of authority' as practiced in everyday life in Indonesia. These range from the selected location for the new regional offices in Payakumbuh, the provision of security on the streets of Jakarta, the collection of small fees from bus drivers in Delanggu, the singing of the national anthem in Sintang and the attitudes of civil servants in Northern Maluku province.

The film is narrated through a multiplicity of voices, all representing different power structures. Interviews are carried out with both the disenfranchising and the disenfranchised. In Bintan Buyu, a narrative is given by a worker involved in the construction of a new office building, in which he speaks of corruption and malpractice. The film then cuts to an interview with a resident who is about to be removed from his property against his will and with little prospect of being appropriately reimbursed for his loss.

Authority, the film shows, is performed in many ways and by many actors. The film is not an exhaustive collection of all kinds of 'performances of authority' from the *RtF* archive; rather, it provides a model for ways in which the archives can be read.

Authority is performed through architecture, through uniforms, through body language, through paying protection money, through sitting around and guarding a foreign government representative's house. The interview with Mas Manca, a local tough guy (*preman*) in Pasar Baru, came about after he inquired as to what the crew were doing. His interview was both a skilful act to ingratiate themselves with the local and informal authority and also gave an insight into the way a local *preman* seeks to imagine his role amongst his community and how he seeks to imagine his identity. Mas Manca's manner of delivery, however, stands out from other encounters in the film – where he is smiling and opening up to the camera, others appear defensive and restrained in their comments; this is particularly evident in the "timer's" interview in Payakumbuh, when he whispers in reference to his semi-illegal role.

While *Being prominent* appears as the more complete and polished film, *Performances* raises more telling questions: it cuts closer to actual conflicts between different performers of authority and those who may or may not be the subjects of this authority. Indeed, there are moments when some of its subjects are either caught off-guard or in somewhat compromised situations. Some encounters between civil servant teachers and the candidates of civil service are particularly fraught; but is the bullying of one candidate strengthened by the presence of the camera – and the fact that the footage is being watched out of context? Elsewhere, a policeman responds in a confused manner to the interviewer's questioning. This policeman is shown to be compromised and unsure of how to articulate what his work entails (*antisipasi*). This provides a moment of humour and the viewer can ask: is one laughing at an individual, or is one laughing at a caricature of a representative of authority and power in Indonesia?

Being prominent, on the other hand, doesn't contain the practical dilemmas of *Performances*, for it is made in collaboration with Ibu Mooryati. The two films, each with their own set of questions about both authority and ways of documenting and filming, provide stimulating portraits of everyday life in Indonesia. They present audiovisual analyses and narratives that counter the overwhelming majority of written texts on studies of contemporary Indonesia. Moreover, the critical aspect of KITLV's *Recording the Future* project becomes apparent in these films.

This review is based on preview editions of the two films. Some minor details of the films may have been changed in the final stages of editing prior to the films' public release in December 2011.

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Notes

1 Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies; www.kitlv.nl

2 See <http://www.kitlv.nl/home/Projects?id=20>



Ibu Mooryati, Jakarta 2007.



Performer of authority, Jakarta 2003.

Lontar: found in translation

How do we get to know foreign cultures in general and Indonesian in particular? Through tourism? Tourists tend to scratch the surface and very selectively at that (many think the holiday ‘paradise’ Bali is an independent nation). Through the media? Media reports on the 2005 tsunami or the sporadic terrorist attacks do not offer a balanced perspective on Indonesia either. No, we can best become familiar with another culture by reading its literary works – and for that to work we need translations.

Roy Voragen

The Translator

LITERATURE IS A USEFUL TOOL to gain insight into a foreign culture, and the rich history of Indonesian literature indeed offers, when translated, a valuable gateway to Indonesian culture. Knowledge of this rich history is limited (although, this is unfortunately also the case for most Indonesians).

During the Cold War, the works of Indonesian authors that were translated mostly followed the ideological agenda of the recipient country. And then, with the waning power of the Communist bloc in the mid-eighties, the West appeared to simply lose interest in Indonesian literature. Lontar was established in 1987 to step into this void.

Unlike the Cold War lust for power, Lontar’s aim is a humanist one and, as Edward Said wrote, humanism is a “knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes.”¹ Lontar is an independent, not-for-profit foundation based in Jakarta, which aims to promote Indonesian literature and culture to an English speaking audience by, among other things, translating and publishing Indonesian literature so it becomes accessible to an international audience. Furthermore, Lontar aims to preserve the history of Indonesian literature.

Anthony Reid, eminent historian of Southeast Asia, said: “Lontar has become one of the most important windows on Indonesia for the rest of the world.”² Last June I went to Lontar’s office in the center of Jakarta to meet the chairman of the Board of Trustees and Wisconsin native John McGlynn and we had a meandering conversation on book publishing, the art of translating, money, culture and politics.³

Slightly more than two-and-half decades ago the poet Sapardi Djoko Damono was named recipient of the SEA-Write Award and invited to speak in Thailand. Realizing that he had no collection of translations of his poetry which he could present to his hosts, he asked his former student McGlynn, who had studied Indonesian literature at the University of Indonesia, to undertake some translations. The two invited the chief editor of Tempo Magazine and poet Goenawan Mohamad for a discussion; subsequently two more friends were invited: poet and literary critic Subagio Sastrowardoyo (1924-1995) and sociologist and writer Umar Kayam (1932-2002). And out of their discussions Lontar was born.

Since that time, hundreds of Indonesian authors have been translated and published by Lontar. However, the approximately hundred titles produced so far sell only 2000 copies on average and mostly within Southeast Asia because of poor distribution, which represents a failure and hampers Lontar’s goals. Not only is shipping costly, the burden of distribution lies with the publisher, i.e. it is on consignment and unsold copies are sent back or pulped at the expense of the publisher. However, new distribution methods and technologies of recent years might alter this situation, especially for a niche publisher like Lontar: online bookstores (Lontar’s publications can since recently, for example, be purchased at Amazon.com), e-books (Lontar’s publications are made available as e-books in cooperation with Book Cyclone), print-on-demand and online payment systems.

“Profit,” McGlynn says, “has never been the motive behind Lontar’s work, but how can Lontar survive if relying only on income from the sale of its books? Frankly, it can’t.”⁴ Lontar, therefore, depends for its survival on donors; sixty percent of Lontar’s resources comes from Indonesia and these donations are mostly in small amounts, for example, through fundraisers. Historically, some of Lontar’s largest grants have come from foreign donors, such as the Ford Foundation. Recently, however, Lontar has made more inroads into

obtaining grants from domestic resources. One example is a substantial grant from the Djarum Foundation, which made possible the translation and publication of the first ten titles in Lontar’s new Modern Library of Indonesia series.

Lontar has a policy to not allow donors to push their own agendas, and will refuse grants if necessary. But so far, donors have not influenced Lontar in a negative way; in fact there have even been positive interactions. For example, the Ford Foundation’s already existing focus on manuscripts led it to provide a grant to Lontar within this program, and which resulted in the publication of *Illuminations: Writing Traditions of Indonesia*.⁵

Until today, Lontar has received no substantial support from the government of Indonesia, financial or otherwise. The Indonesian political elite “does not properly recognize the significant role that language and culture play in identity and nation-building.” As elsewhere in the world, “enlightened government policies” are not on the political agenda. Still, Lontar tries to convince the government that it has an important role to play in conserving and promoting culture through offering subsidies and financial incentives. While Lontar claims, for good reasons, that literature should also be valued on its own merits, McGlynn realizes that the Indonesian political elite has to be approached on their own turf because, with very few exceptions,⁶ the merit of literature is simply overlooked. And so, some of the instrumental arguments put forward: it could improve Indonesia’s image abroad (Indonesia is more than an abundant reservoir of cheap labor); and by improving its image, Indonesia’s power could increase (this is Joseph Samuel Nye’s soft power argument); and, in turn, it could bolster Indonesia’s GDP (this is Richard Florida’s creative industry argument). Even if the government could be persuaded to implement policies beneficial to literature, it is unlikely that it will find the work by authors such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Goenawan

Mohamad, Seno Gumira Ajidarma or Ayu Utami acceptable for support, as their multifarious voices are far too critical for the liking of government officials. McGlynn is aware of this issue as he wrote that “history [...] is a synthesis of different voices, not just one; and we should be suspicious if the only story is the one told by the officials.”⁷

In 2007, McGlynn decided it was time to transition out, because Lontar needed to be able to survive beyond him. However, it was around the same time that new laws concerning foundations were put into effect and so McGlynn decided to return to Lontar as a major restructuring and reorganization became necessary. In fact, the new laws concerning foundations are so complex that “it makes it hard to make day-to-day decisions in an efficient, business-like manner.” Foundations are required to have three boards, and it can take six months to a year to make a management related decision. Moreover, Lontar cannot even own its own office building and it now only has land use rights, “which does not guarantee long-term stability of the organization.” The advantage of maintaining a foundation status, however, is that donors are more willing to donate.

McGlynn sees “Indonesia becoming left behind. [...] This nation [...] is [...] not a promoter of new cultural knowledge and values but a receptacle of ideas [...] while Indonesian writers have something to say to the world [...] and] the rest of the world could benefit from Indonesian ideas [...]” One important platform on which Indonesia could show its rich literary history is the Frankfurter Buchmesse; Indonesia has been invited to be guest of honor in 2015.⁸ “The Buchmesse represents a unique opportunity which Indonesia cannot afford to ignore [...]”. But will the Indonesian government commit the substantial financial resources necessary to afford the translation and publication of literary works of historical significance? Based on past experience, [McGlynn] would not want to bet on it.”⁹ Even if the government of Indonesia decides to set aside a budget for this purpose – unlikely in normal times, even unlikely in times of upcoming elections – then it should be done sooner rather than later. A translation of a novel requires one to two years, and no matter how good a translation is, it also has to go through a lengthy editing process.

A great many Indonesian authors have written novels, poems, drama and essays on par with what the world of literature has to offer. While Indonesian literature should be read first and foremost as literature, it can at the very same time be read to learn about and to become acquainted with Indonesia and its cultures. A third reason for reading Indonesian literature in translation is to discover ideas which can be valuable in one’s own culture. One idea Indonesia could share with the world is that of tolerance – Indonesians could learn from themselves though – and if tolerance is not merely a cliché, we have to see how it is practiced in, for example, literature. In Indonesian literary works, tolerance is shown thematically, for example by showing the fluidity of sexuality, or as embedded in literary style. Indonesian “writers are versatile and they have a consistent ability to cross genres.” And it is safe to claim that Indonesians practiced hybridity long before it was theorized as postmodernism.¹⁰

Sutardji Calzoum Bachri (1941)

What flows (1973, complete poem)

What flows? Blood.
What blooms? Roses.
What swells? Hope.
What feels? Regret.

With a thousand regrets
I search for You
With all means available
I search for you
With a thousand contrivances
I search for you
With a thousand temptations
I search for You

Sitor Situmorang (1923)

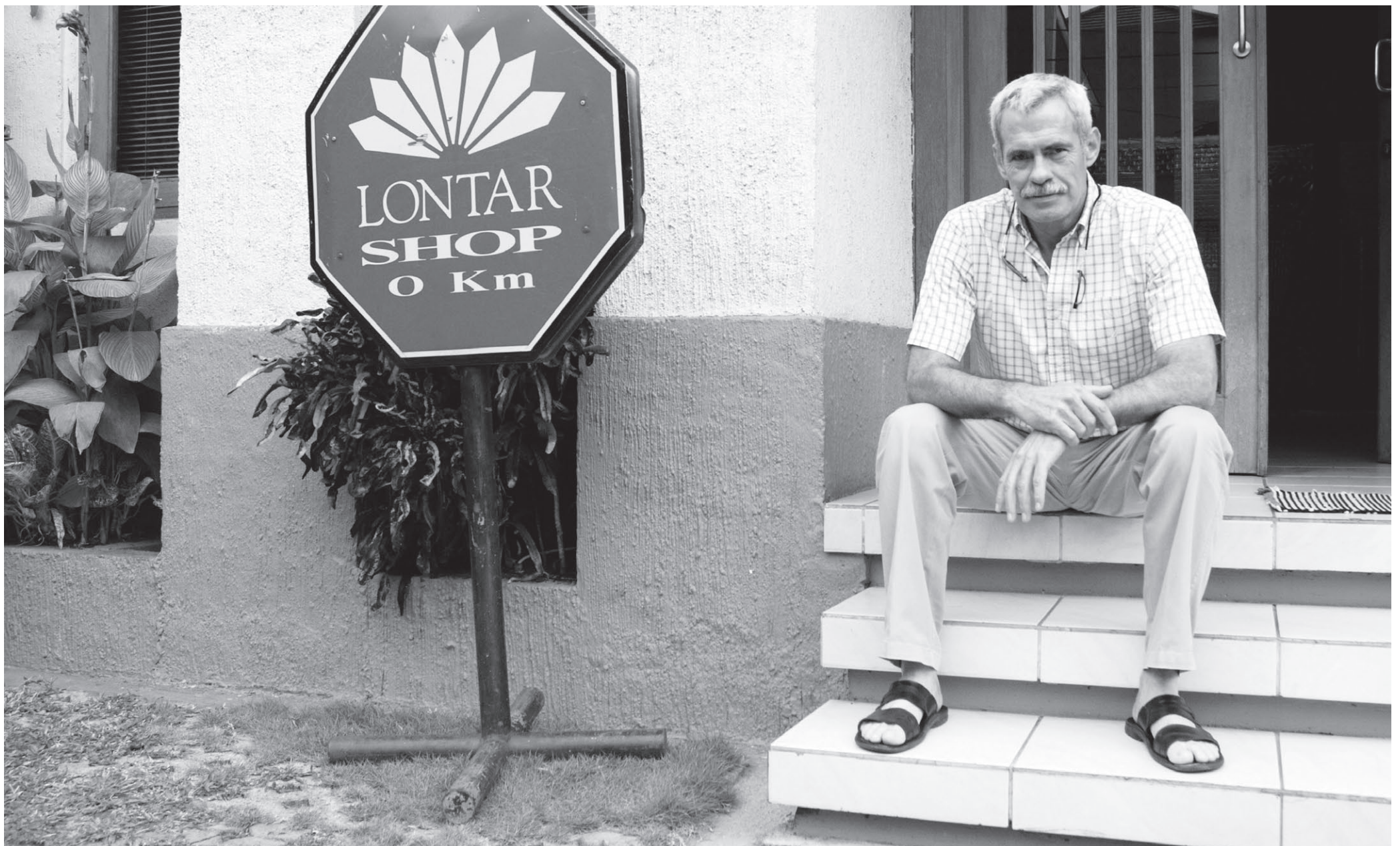
A Poem (1953, complete)

Why not believe in God?
Such sadness is poetry

On us he has no hold
In sorrow only does he stir

In our death
He too is stopped by silence

Publishing Indonesian literature in English



Chairil Anwar (1922-1949)

Pines in the Distance (1949, fragment)

Life is but postponement of defeat,
a growing estrangement from youth's unfettered love.
Knowing there is always something left unsaid
before we finally acquiesce.

Announcement (1946, fragment)

To dictate fate is not my intent,
fate is separate loneliness-es.
I choose you from among the rest, but
in a moment we are snared by loneliness once more.

There is though a tension between, on the one hand, this practice of tolerance and, on the other hand, a very long history of censorship. According to McGlynn, censorship is mainly horizontal in Indonesia. Even during Suharto's New Order (1966-1998), outright (or vertical) censorship was very rare (an exception was the forced closing of Tempo Magazine in 1994).¹¹ However, this situation offers Lontar opportunities, especially in cases concerning sensitive issues or topics, which major publishing houses choose to steer clear of. Lontar's *Menagerie* has been a particularly excellent platform for muted voices; for example, a collection of stories from former political prisoners in *Menagerie 6*,¹² and a collection of gay literature in *Menagerie 7*. Of the latter McGlynn said that the "Indonesian archipelago is as multi-sexual as it is multi-ethnic."¹³

Menagerie aims to give an overview of the rich Indonesian literature by selecting, translating and publishing short stories, poetry and essays. *Menagerie* is a "gradual construction, [a] step-by-step fitting together of the jigsaw puzzle that is Indonesian literature."¹⁴ And as such, *Menagerie* could very well be a never-ending story. *Menagerie* was initially planned to be published once a year, but there have been an average of more than two years between issues. So far it has been book-format, but soon this will be changed to an electronic format due to the high costs. Producing *Menagerie* is much more expensive than the usual publications, because so many authors and translators are involved for each issue.

While Indonesian literature should be read first and foremost as literature, it can at the very same time be read to learn about and to become acquainted with Indonesia and its cultures.

Lontar has produced a "cogent body" of translations "to study the scope, range, and depth of Indonesian literary history." Lontar likes to ensure that each piece of work it translates has already proven itself, and that there is already a consensus on its merits. Translating is dancing on a tight-rope: "respecting the integrity of the original while still honoring the intelligence of the reader is often very difficult." McGlynn claims that "very few literary critics are qualified to review translations of Indonesian literature. If they don't like the book, they blame it on the translation, as if something is lost in translation."

Unfortunately, for Indonesian authors it is not financially beneficial to be translated; nonetheless, it is an honor. It helps to give them a voice in the global (literary) community.¹⁵ Lontar will continue helping Indonesian authors by translating, publishing and archiving their work. Next year, Lontar will celebrate its twenty-fifth birthday. While questions concerning (financial) sustainability remain, Lontar certainly has shown the will to continue and so it will (with a little help from its friends and donors).

For more information on Lontar see www.lontar.org
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Notes

- Edward W. Said. 1994. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, p. xix.
- Quoted in the September 2009 Lontar newsletter. All newsletters on the website are written by John McGlynn, see www.lontar.org.
- Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes come from this interview, conducted on 22 June 2011.
- March 2011 Lontar newsletter.
- Ann Kumar and John H. McGlynn, eds. 1996. *Illuminations: Writing Traditions of Indonesia*. Jakarta: Lontar.
- An exception is the current minister of foreign affairs, Marty Natalegawa, who bought Lontar's books as mementos for foreign dignitaries, instead of the usual plaques; he was also the honorary chairman of the International Publishing Forum of which McGlynn was the chairman in 2010.
- John H. McGlynn. 2000. "Silenced Voices, Muted Expressions: Indonesian Literature Today," *Mānoa* 12, no.1 (Summer 2000), p. 43. *Mānoa* was founded at the University of Hawaii in the same year as Lontar, but there is no institutional connection. McGlynn is the Indonesian country editor for *Mānoa*.
- In an email (9-8-2011), Simone Bühler, Director Guest of Honour Programme at the Frankfurter Buchmesse (<http://www.buchmesse.de/en/>), wrote that she is not yet able to provide confirmation of Indonesia's invitation, because Indonesian literary organizations still have to go through the application process for this programme.
- May 2011 Lontar newsletter.
- For example, by one of its godfathers: Jean-François Lyotard. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, p. 79.
- For an excellent insight on Tempo's case see: Janet Steele. 2005. *Wars Within, The Story of Tempo, an independent magazine in Soeharto's Indonesia*. Jakarta and Singapore: Equinox and ISEAS. Tempo was founded in 1971.
- These political prisoners were alleged members of the former communist party and/or its auxiliary organizations. Ever since the bloody turmoil of 1965/1966 everything that smells like the left is considered taboo.
- May 2010 Lontar newsletter. *Menagerie 7* was also published in Indonesian as *Di Balik Kaca*.
- John McGlynn, ed. 1991. *Menagerie 1*. Jakarta: Lontar, p. xi
- And foreign publishers are herewith given easy access to consider the option for further translations of a book. Ideally, they still would have to translate from the original, which does not always happen – which, in turn, violates the rights of the first translator.

News from Asia

“News from Asia” offers you items of scholarly interest provided by our local partners in Asia. They can include, among others, information on regional events, art collections or places of interest. The news for this issue has been compiled by our regional editor Lu Caixia, a former print journalist and current research associate at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre in Singapore (ISEAS). Other than being involved in research and editorial work, she is also in charge of organising workshops and conferences for the Centre. Her research interest is in comparing historical and contemporary interactions between China and Southeast Asian countries and how these affect current mutual perceptions. For matters related to editorial contributions to this section as well as requests to be included in events listings, please write to her at iias_iseas@iseas.edu.sg



An artist impression of the new museum to be ready in 2014. Courtesy of W Architects Pte Ltd.

Singapore's Natural History Museum: Past, Present and Future

Tan Swee Hee

A MUCH-AWAITED NEW NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM is set to open in 2014, bringing some of the best of Southeast Asia's natural history collection to the public. This new museum is an expansion of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research (RMBR, rmbbr.nus.edu.sg), home to about 500,000 specimens of mammals, birds, amphibians and other invertebrates, some dating back to more than a century ago. The 7,500m² museum will be built within the grounds of the National University of Singapore (NUS) with funds raised from private and public donations.

The collection had its origins in the Raffles Library and Museum completed in 1887, a result of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' idea to set up a museum and library in Singapore as a repository for specimens relevant to the flora, fauna and human civilisation of the region. Visitors to the Raffles Museum in the early part of the twentieth century marvelled at some of the extraordinary exhibits such as the 42-foot skeleton of a baleen whale found beached at Malacca in 1892, hanging from the ceiling of the museum, impressive butterfly and bird displays, and the large skeleton of an elephant shot by the Sultan of Johor in 1909. After Singapore's independence in 1965, the Raffles Museum changed its name to the National Museum of Singapore and shifted its focus to national development and the arts. The natural history collection, deemed to be of little economic value, was to be disposed of, and the whale skeleton, the most iconic specimen, was actually given away during this time. The rest of the collection was moved to the former University of Singapore, where for more than a decade the collection was stored in wooden crates, at various locations, including warehouses, university departments and the library at the former Nanyang University. As the storage conditions were less than ideal, many specimens perished in the harsh tropical climate - it is remarkable that so many specimens survived to this day. This is due in no small part to the efforts of the curatorial staff. Despite the lack of space for research, the collection is well-regarded internationally and many researchers around the world continue to consult it. One of the collection's most illustrious visitors was the Emperor of Japan, His Imperial Majesty Akihito, as he had an active research interest in ichthyology.

Several years after the University of Singapore and Nanyang University merged into the NUS, the collection was finally given a permanent home and renamed the “Zoological Reference

Collection”. A further merge with the Botany department's Herbarium in 1998 formed the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research. The museum's focus was on research and to facilitate undergraduate and graduate education, which enabled it to reclaim the position as a leading biodiversity research centre in the region. However, the museum's collection was only accessible to researchers and not to the public, for whom the collection was originally intended. A 200m² public exhibition gallery was finally opened in 2001, but only started receiving an overwhelming number of visitors after news reports in 2009 highlighted the museum's vast yet little-known collection.

With its new-found popularity, the museum realised that current facilities were inadequate to service public demand, especially after more than 3000 visitors thronged the gallery on International Museum Day in 2009. The local newspapers were abuzz with public demands for the establishment of a proper natural history museum. In response, an unnamed donor offered S\$10 million (approx. US\$7.9 million) to help initiate the endeavour. This led to a major fundraising effort in which the museum had to raise enough funds within six months to secure a plot of land for the new building. Sufficient funding was finally obtained from various charitable foundations and organisations. The Lee Foundation pledged a massive S\$25 million (US\$20 million) and, in recognition of one of Singapore's most prominent Chinese businessmen and philanthropists, the new museum will be renamed the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum.

It has been two years since the first efforts were made to push for a new museum dedicated to natural history in Singapore, and a team of consultants has now been appointed to lead the new building's design, construction and setup. The museum has recently also raised enough funds to buy the skeletons of three giant diplodocid sauropod dinosaurs from the United States as the centrepiece of its gallery. When the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum opens its doors to the public in three years, we hope that it will herald a new era of interest in natural history, nature conservation and appreciation of the natural environment in Singapore.

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Sarawak Language Technologies (SaLT) Research Group – Preserving Sarawak's Indigenous Languages through Localisation and Internationalisation Approaches

Alvin W. Yeo

THE SARAWAK LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGIES (SaLT) Research Group at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) has initiated a number of projects to revitalise and maintain the indigenous languages of Sarawak by making use of information communication technologies (ICTs), and to bridge the digital divide between the rural and the urban communities by applying technology to local content.

Sarawak is one of two East Malaysian states located on the island of Borneo, and the largest state in Malaysia. With over 28 ethnic groups, the three main groups Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu constitute 43% of the state's population of 2.2 million. Each ethnic group in Sarawak has its own distinct culture, lifestyle and language. Yet the Sarawak languages are slowly dying out due to the dominance of Bahasa Malaysia and English; these two languages are, especially in urban areas, considered to be the national language and the international language respectively. As listed in the database of the *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, there are 46 Sarawak languages and 76% of them have fewer than 10,000 speakers.

SaLT has started a number of projects to preserve the indigenous languages of Sarawak through research and development in many areas of the Natural Language Processing (NLP) field. The objective is to digitise existing resources written in indigenous languages in order to build the corpora and processors, such as morphological analysers and part-of-speech taggers. These are necessary to develop applications such as spellcheckers and functions such as machine translation and speech recognition.

Internationalisation (removing culture and language specific components from the software so that it is language-independent) and *localisation* (adding the specific regions or languages to the internationalised-software) result in software that can accommodate the large number of existing indigenous languages – culminating in a single programme that could be run correctly anywhere in the world. This approach reduces the effort to build and maintain an application to accommodate multiple indigenous languages, thereby encouraging the provision of ICTs to indigenous communities by reducing the language barriers of using ICTs in their daily lives.

Since the formation of SaLT in 2007, we have focused on six indigenous languages, namely Iban, Melanau, Kayan, Sarawak Malay, Bidayuh and Kelabit. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing process of adding documents into both the monolingual and bilingual corpora. The research work of SaLT is divided into three broad categories: language resources, NLP tools and applications. For example, the *BarioLakuh Digital Library* aims to explore the cultural benefits of ICTs in stimulating the production, protection and popularisation of Sarawak rural communities' oral traditions; and *Methodologies for Translation of Indigenous Languages: English-Iban (TriBE)* serves to identify an effective approach to translate Iban to English by using a small Iban parallel corpus. Other ongoing projects include building a text-to-speech voice generator to read Sarawak languages.

SaLT researchers face a number of challenges. Most Sarawak languages have never been processed and do not have any electronic documents, with the exception of Iban and Bidayuh. Therefore, the digitisation of these under-resourced languages has to start from scratch, including building the spelling system. Another challenge is the standardisation of terminology. In order to localise a word processor to the Iban language, computing terminology is needed. Due to the absence of computing terminology in Iban, the SaLT researchers had to create this terminology and have Iban speakers verify it.

Through the collecting of local content, building the corpora and developing software tools and applications, the SaLT Research Group envisions the revitalisation of the indigenous languages and also an increase in the number of speakers. This revitalisation will only be achieved through close collaboration with the respective indigenous communities. Also, the research and development work conducted will culminate in a Cultural and Heritage Repository of Sarawak Indigenous Languages, which we hope will not only benefit the indigenous communities but also researchers domestically and internationally.

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SaLT
SARAWAK LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH GROUP

The Belitung Shipwreck Controversy

Lu Caixia

FOR TWELVE CENTURIES, a historical treasure lay untouched beneath the Gaspar Strait, one of the northern entrances to the Java Sea, unknown even to the inhabitants of a nearby island who ply its turquoise waters. It was not until one August day in 1998 that fishermen searching for sea cucumbers stumbled upon the amazing cache – the largest collection of Tang Dynasty artefacts ever seen, entombed in the oldest Arab vessel found in East Asian waters.

The Belitung shipwreck cargo, as it was later named after the island which lay a mere three kilometres away, has now encountered a fierce storm of another kind after emerging from its watery grave. The precious cargo – some 60,000 glazed bowls, ewers and other ceramics, as well as lead ingots, bronze mirrors and intricate gold and silver vessels – which survived the sea currents for more than 1000 years and even the political turmoil following the fall of Indonesian President Suharto, is now caught in a maelstrom of strong objections, by some American and European archaeologists and museum representatives, to its exhibition in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (part of the Smithsonian). These objections were expressed earlier this year to protest the Smithsonian's plans to exhibit the Belitung artefacts in Washington, D.C. They worry that the excavation was not conducted in accordance with the ethics governing underwater heritage and that the artefacts were excavated by a private company without proper recordings being made.

In 2005, Seabed Explorations, engaged by the Indonesian government in 1998 to conduct the excavation, sold the bulk of the cargo to Singapore for US\$32 million. Subsequently, the Singapore Tourism Board, the National Heritage Board of Singapore and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery collaborated to mount the exhibition *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds*. After it opened in February this year at the ArtScience Museum in Singapore, complaints by archaeologists, both within and outside the Smithsonian as well as museum associations, led to the postponement of the planned exhibition in Washington. They pointed out that the Smithsonian is bound by an ethics statement specifying that members shall “not knowingly acquire or exhibit artefacts which have been stolen, illegally exported from their country of origin, illegally salvaged or removed from commercially exploited archaeological or historic sites.”

Prominent among those who objected to the exhibition was Elizabeth Bartman, president of the Archaeological Institute of America, who issued a strongly worded statement saying that while the excavation and disposition of the materials may be technically “legal”, involvement by the Smithsonian in the exhibition “will serve to blur the distinction between bona fide archaeology and treasure hunting”, putting it “in the indefensible position of aiding those who believe that antiquities are a commodity to be mined for personal or corporate financial gain.”

Echoing her concerns, a group of archaeologists and anthropologists from the National Academy of Sciences wrote to Smithsonian Secretary Wayne G. Clough, cautioning that hosting the exhibition would “severely damage the stature and reputation” of the institution. Among the signatories of the letter was Dr. Robert McC. Adams, former Secretary of the Smithsonian. Some critics cited the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, which outlaws trade in marine heritage. However, others were quick to point out that the Convention only came into force in 2009 and that neither the United States nor Indonesia had ratified the Convention.

Left: In 1998, fishermen hunting for sea cucumbers stumbled upon an astonishing find – the largest collection of Tang dynasty artefacts ever seen. Photo by Dr Michael Flecker.

Not all experts critical of the commercial nature of the Belitung cargo's excavation object to its exhibition. James Delgado, director of the Maritime Heritage Program at the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, is one critic who argues for a thoughtful exhibition that not only highlights the historical value of the exhibits, but also clearly indicates what cannot be learned, interpreted or shared as a result of looting and contrasts what non-commercial excavations have achieved in offering a more scientific approach. “I see such an exhibition as a tremendous opportunity to educate and inspire discussion on the subject,” he said. Nevertheless, Delgado thinks that the debate is not simply about the Belitung. He said: “In many ways the questions have more relevance in terms of discussing what happens with new and important shipwreck discoveries in Indonesia. I believe, as do many of my colleagues, that significant shipwrecks should be excavated scientifically, with adequate funding to recover all artefacts and to preserve, study, and interpret them.”

Seabed Explorations founder Tilman Walterfang defended the company's work on the Belitung, arguing that immense pressure to save the shipwreck in the face of heavy looting and a volatile political climate dictated the pace and manner in which the artefacts were retrieved. When first approached by the Indonesian government for help, commercial benefit was the last thing on his mind; it became an emergency operation to save as much of the cargo as possible before it fell prey to looters.

Paul Johnston, curator of Maritime History at the Smithsonian questions the reasoning that political, legal or cultural conditions in Southeast Asian countries justify a less than professional approach. He asked those who raised this argument: “Do they suggest that international professional ethics, or the principles of scientific archaeological investigation, should not apply, because somehow things in Southeast Asia relating to culture or money are different?” He also feels that circumstances differed from country to country and case to case, pointing out that Cambodia has signed the UNESCO Convention, and that problems in conducting proper underwater archaeology do not apply to the region as a whole.

Continues on page 42 >>

Twentieth Annual World History Association Conference in Beijing

THE WORLD HISTORY ASSOCIATION (WHA) held its Twentieth Annual Conference at the Global History Center of Capital Normal University (CNU), Beijing, 7-11 July 2011. The conference drew 600 conferees from 36 nations, including 200 scholars and teachers from the PRC. To underscore its global reach, the conference is held outside the USA every third year, with the last three international venues being London (UK), Ifrane (Morocco), and Seoul (Korea).

China was selected not only for always having been a major force in the dynamics of world history, but also because of a rising interest in global history at a number of universities in the country. Capital Normal University was chosen for its location in the historically and culturally important city Beijing. Also, its Global History Center is the single most important institution for advanced global history studies in the PRC, and the conference organizers obtained enthusiastic and generous support from its president, Dr. Liu Xincheng. The conference's two themes, “China in World History,” and “World History from the Center and the Periphery”, were also chosen for their relevance to the host nation.

English and Chinese were the official languages of the conference, with English translations of Chinese papers, and simultaneous translation services provided for the three plenary sessions. The opening ceremony consisted of addresses by Professor Emeritus of History Qi Shirong, past-president of CNU and founder of CNU's Global History Center; the Honorable Hao Ping, the PRC's Deputy Minister of Education; and Dr. Alfred J. Andrea, president of the WHA.

President Liu offered the first of two keynote addresses on the “Global History in China”, which focused on the manner in which global history is becoming part of the educational curriculum in China, while Dr. Craig Benjamin of Grand Valley State University in Michigan, USA, presented the second keynote address “Considerable Hordes of Nomads Were Approaching: The Conquest of Greco-Bactria – The First ‘Event’ in World History.”

A total of 103 panels were held, with contributions by more than 500 people. A sample of just five panels suggests the range of topics discussed: “The Internationalization of Chinese Art”; “China and the World Trade System in Historical

Perspective”; “Using Primary Sources to Teach China in the Twentieth Century”; “Silver, Silk and Things: Connecting Commodities beyond Centers and Peripheries”; and “Beyond the Edge of Empires: Locating Edges and Centres in Eastern Eurasia.”

Three topics that generated an especially high level of exchange were: the relevance of the Silk Roads in the history of Afro-Eurasia down to circa 1500 CE; the usefulness of the “center and periphery” model to the histories of Afro-Eurasia and the Americas over the past six millennia; and the manner in which global history is taught in the schools of China and the USA.

The WHA recognized two “Pioneers of World History” for their long-standing contributions to world history scholarship and pedagogy. Dr. Liu Xincheng was honored for his pioneering work in promoting and serving as an exemplar of first-rate global history studies in China, while Dr. Jerry Bentley was recognized for his 21 years as editor of the *Journal of World History*, the WHA's flagship academic publication, which has, under his direction, become known as the leading journal in the field.

The WHA, founded in 1982, with its headquarters in the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, is dedicated to promoting research in and the teaching of a macro-history that transcends single cultures, regions, and polities. It currently enrolls approximately 1200 members, representing 36 nations. Also known as *global* history in many nations outside of the USA, world history focuses on, but is not limited to, such phenomena as contact and exchange on a significant scale between cultures, the analytical comparison of two or more civilizations or cultures, and the study in a macro-historical manner of a phenomenon that had a trans-regional or global impact. The next Annual WHA Conference will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico from 27-30 June 2012. Its dual themes will be “Frontiers and Borders in World History” and “Indigenous Peoples in World History.” Further information regarding the upcoming conference, as well as the entire program and paper abstracts of the 2011 conference, are available from the WHA's website.

The World History Association
Website: www.thewha.org
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Projections of Paradise

Ideal Elsewheres in Postcolonial Migrant Literature

Edited by
Helga Ramsey-Kurz with
Geetha Ganapathy-Doré



Paradise is commonly imagined as a place of departure or arrival, beginning and closure, permanent inhabitation of which, however much desired, is illusory. This makes it the dream of the traveller, the explorer, the migrant – hence, a trope recurrent in postcolonial writing, which is so centrally concerned with questions of displacement and belonging.

Projections of Paradise documents this concern and demonstrates the indebtedness of writers as diverse as Salman Rushdie, Agha Shahid Ali, Cyril Dabydeen, Bernardine Evaristo, Amitav Ghosh, James Goonewardene, Ramesh Gunasekera, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Janette Turner

Hospital, Penelope Lively, Fatima Mernissi, Michael Ondaatje, Shyam Selvadurai, M.G. Vassanji, and Rudy Wiebe to strikingly similar myths of fulfillment. In writing, directly or indirectly, about the experience of migration, all project paradises as places of origin or destination, as homes left or not yet found, as objects of nostalgic recollection or hopeful anticipation. Yet in locating such places, quite specifically, in Egypt, Zanzibar, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, the Sundarbans, Canada, the Caribbean, Queensland, Morocco, Tuscany, Russia, the Arctic, the USA, and England, they also subvert received fantasies of paradise as a pleasurable land rich with natural beauty.

Projections of Paradise explores what happens to these fantasies and what remains of them as postcolonial writings call them into question and expose the often hellish realities from which popular dreams of ideal elsewhere are commonly meant to provide an escape.

Contributors: Vera Alexander, Gerd Bayer, Derek Coyle, Geetha Ganapathy-Doré, Evelyne Hanquart-Turner, Ursula Klumick, Janne Korikka, Marta Mamei-Michalkiewicz, Sofia Muñoz-Yaldies, Susanne Pichler, Helga Ramsey-Kurz, Ulla Rathsieser, Petra Tournay-Theodotou.

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Rodopi

Excavation of the Cargo

An information kit produced by UNESCO noted that “the cargo of the *Geldermalsen* was looted for the commercial value of its artefacts and with little regard for its archaeological, historical and scientific importance.” The same can hardly be said of the Belitung excavation. Unlike the cases of the *Geldermalsen* wreck in the 1980s and the *Tek Sing* wreck in 1999, where the artefacts were auctioned off and dispersed, research conducted during the excavation of the Belitung culminated in published catalogues and made possible the accurate reconstruction of a ninth century dhow, the *Jewel of Muscat*, which sailed from Oman to Singapore.

Excavation of the Belitung began in September 1998 and was conducted over two seasons, disrupted by the monsoon. It was said that the Indonesian Navy patrolled the site during the monsoon break but was unable to stop looters entirely. During the second season, which began in April 1999, Dr Michael Flecker, a marine archaeologist with two decades of experience in Southeast Asia, came on board to supervise the operation and detailed records of the wreck and excavation were kept. Findings were catalogued, photographed *in-situ* and described, while their locations were mapped and plotted. According to an article written by Flecker in *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, even during the first season, the site was gridded and records were kept of the ceramics recovered.

Significance of the Belitung Cargo

Apart from the obviously significant vintage of the artefacts, the collection is more importantly a treasure trove of potentially new information on a range of subjects including historic trade on the Maritime Silk Route, ancient ceramic production, shipbuilding and even on the history of tea.

The timbers and style of the ship suggested that it was built somewhere near the Persian Gulf. This provided confirmation of documentary evidence of maritime trade between China and the Arab world from as early as the ninth century, and the vast number of Changsha ceramics also offered major new insights into Tang China’s industrial capability. As Wang Gungwu, a leading expert on Chinese history wrote in an introduction to a catalogue compiled for the exhibition: “There probably is no other find in the Nanhai (South China Sea) that could enlighten us further about Sino-Arab entrepreneurship and China’s industrial productivity.” Or as John Guy, curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art wrote: “This complex cargo, sourced from widely dispersed areas across China, is a barometer of the level of the commercial development that gained momentum during the Tang dynasty (618-907), when industrial-scale production emerged for the first time.”

Several high quality pieces were also found, including three very rare dishes decorated with cobalt blue, which are among the oldest complete blue-and-white ceramics made in China ever unearthed. Other astonishing finds include an octagonal cup made of solid gold, the cost of its material alone estimated to be worth ten years’ salary for a low-ranking Chinese official at that time, and a magnificent ewer over a metre tall, with a dragon-head stopper.

Continued from page 41 >>

Walterfang argues that not all commercial operators should be tarred with the same brush either. “Everything we did you would not expect from greedy treasure hunters,” he said. He added that the subsequent conservation work took six years to complete, after which a 750-page research report and another 150-page publication dedicated to the Changsha artefacts were commissioned and financed by his company.

Julian Raby, director of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, found it noteworthy that Walterfang wanted the cargo to be kept as a single entity when scouting for potential buyers. While recognizing the concerns, he dismissed those who simply objected to any commercial involvement and yet were unable to propose feasible alternatives. He said: “I think if nothing had been done, we would have lost a very important historical record. Many archaeologists who complained did not understand the importance of the cargo or the actual circumstances at the location of the shipwreck.”

According to Nia Naelul Hasanah Ridwan, a maritime archaeology researcher with the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries in Indonesia, the National Committee for Salvage and Utilisation of Valuable Objects from Sunken Ships (PANNAS BMKT) was formed in the late 1980s to deal with the issue of salvaging sunken treasures. Due to the rampant looting of unprotected shipwrecks and difficulties at government level to manage the salvaged artefacts, regulations were established to allow private companies to survey, explore and remove shipwreck artefacts. To complicate matters, management of PANNAS BMKT changed hands from the Minister Coordinator of Politics, Law, and Defence to the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries around the same time the Belitung was salvaged, leading to changes in views as to whether the artefacts should in fact have been sold. According to Walterfang, the Indonesian government decided on a onetime payment of US\$2.5 million and the return of the cargo excavated from the *Intan* (another tenth century shipwreck found in the Java Sea), as a final settlement for its share.

However according to Nia, there were also different opinions in Indonesia as to whether private companies should be allowed to survey, salvage, remove and sell anything from shipwrecks found in Indonesian waters. Although a law was passed in 1992 to mandate the protection of cultural heritage objects, earlier regulations allowing private companies to explore shipwrecks remain in force. Looting continues to be a serious problem for Indonesia’s underwater cultural heritage, and culprits are not just private companies, but also local fishermen who hunt for artefacts and even iron from old ships to supplement meagre incomes. “We always try to raise public awareness through workshops, focus group discussions, seminars and training whenever we go to the field ... Our audiences are the local government and local people such as villagers, local representatives, religious figures, divers, fishermen, youths, NGOs etc,” she said.

While seemingly irreconcilable differences remain, some feel that the ongoing debate is nonetheless a positive development and important for the future of maritime archaeology. Former Foreign Minister of Singapore George Yeo, who played a pivotal role in obtaining the Belitung cargo for Singapore, sees it as necessary for the development of greater international supervision of the salvage of old shipwrecks. “Singapore is all in favor of greater international oversight of the excavation of old ships. Even if international agreements cannot be forged or enforced, moral pressure should be brought to bear. It is a good thing that the Tang (Belitung) Cargo should be the subject of discussion about the ethics of maritime archaeology,” he said.

John Miksic, an expert on Southeast Asian archaeology, feels that regional collaboration could help overcome problems of a lack of resources and expertise. He notes that “there is a duplication of effort right now and Southeast Asian countries should cooperate”, suggesting that they could have one coherent policy which takes note of the UNESCO Convention, and possibly joint underwater research teams rather than separate teams for each country.

Pamelia Lee, a former senior consultant of the Singapore Tourism Board who also played a major role in bringing the artefacts to Singapore, feels that all those who believe in the protection of underwater heritage must find more realistic and workable solutions. She asked: “It begs the question: could Tilman Walterfang, the explorer salvager, be following equally high conservation and documentation standards, but carrying out the operation in accordance with the circumstances?” One suggestion she made is to grade commercial companies for professionalism, which separates treasure hunters merely in the game for profit from those who are more responsible and who fulfil the objectives of UNESCO and the scientific community. She said: “In my view, it is not the ‘hat’ that is worn, UNESCO or non-UNESCO, that is important. What is important is the integrity of the individuals leading the excavation as well as the depth of thinking and patience of the financial backers.”

The realities of Southeast Asia are harsh. With a dearth of public funds available for maritime archaeology, wrecks discovered have either to be left to looters or excavated in conjunction with commercial interests. There seems to be no other option at the present. However, the degree to which a scientific element is stressed during the excavation can distinguish what is desirable from what should be condemned.

The excavation of the Belitung has been acknowledged as an admirable example of what can be achieved under difficult conditions in Southeast Asia. What distinguished the company that carried out the Belitung project from some other commercial operators is that the ship structure itself was properly recorded, the cargo was kept together rather than dispersed, and the finds were well conserved, studied, catalogued, and published. A global exhibition was created and a reconstructed dhow based on information gleaned from the excavation sailed across the Indian Ocean. Few non-commercial excavations have achieved comparable results with

a project of this scale and complexity. It is difficult to imagine how this particular project could have been financed or organized without commercial involvement.

Dr Michael Flecker, maritime archaeologist and supervisor on the Belitung excavation, sums up the situation thus: “In an environment where most wreck-sites are threatened with looting or outright destruction, the priority must be to document those sites and the artefacts recovered from them before too much information is lost. The disposition of the artefacts after thorough documentation, while of great importance, should not dictate policy, for if commercial transactions are banned outright, the finders will be driven underground, and there will be no hope of archaeological intervention. Archaeologists, governments and salvors must co-operate. Archaeologists must be more tolerant, more flexible, for there is so much to lose. Governments and salvors must be made aware of the importance of good archaeological documentation. From a purely pragmatic viewpoint, the cargo from a properly documented wreck-site is worth more financially than the cargo from a looted site. Until cultural awareness gains the upper hand over profits and politics, this may be the best argument to ensure that irreparable damage is not done to the non-renewable resource of historic shipwrecks in Southeast Asia.”

The Belitung Tea Bowl in the Eyes of an American Scholar

(by Professor Victor H. Mair from the University of Pennsylvania)

The educational and historical value of the collection is simply enormous, and those who have called for the cancellation of the exhibition are, in effect and in fact, denying access to the wealth of information embodied in the Belitung shipwreck. As a remarkable case in point, the Belitung *chazhanzi* (“tea bowl”) constitutes the single most important and solid datum for the history of tea in the Tang period and arguably for the history of tea in general. So vital is this unique object from the Belitung shipwreck that it became the thematic logo for our entire book (*The True History of Tea*, written by myself and Erling Hoh), yet it is only one out of roughly 60,000 artefacts preserved and conserved by the excavators. I shudder to think that, were it not for their swift, yet rigorous and careful actions, this inestimably precious artefact might well have been lost forever to the depredations of callous looting and the vagaries of ocean currents. When we multiply the significance of this one bowl several thousand-fold, we can get a sense of the diminution that would have resulted if the Belitung shipwreck had not been rescued by the decisive actions of the excavators. Consequently, it should be obvious that the detriment to human understanding of the past would be of incalculably tragic proportions.

Future of the Cargo

Those who have worked on preserving, studying and exhibiting the cargo generally remain optimistic that its significance will not be diminished whatever the outcome of the debate on its display.

In spite of the uncertainties, risks and doubts surrounding the decision to acquire the cargo for Singapore, Pamelia Lee believes that it was a worthwhile effort because of the vast potential that this held for historical research and public education. She said: “While there is a wealth of information on the Overland Silk Route, there is far less information on the Maritime Silk Route. I hope the collection will change this imbalance in future.”

Meanwhile, in spite of the Smithsonian postponement, the Singapore Tourism Board said that planning for the world tour is ongoing, yet declined to reveal possible venues. As for the question of a permanent home for the Belitung artefacts, the National Heritage Board of Singapore confirmed that part of the collection is to be permanently exhibited in Singapore at a national museum.



1.



2.



3.



4.

1: This magnificent ewer draws on older metalwork examples, while the incised design originated in West Asia.

2: One of the three earliest known intact examples of blue-and-white ware, all found in the Belitung shipwreck.

3: An octagonal gold cup, adorned with Central Asian figures.

4: A Changsha bowl with the Chinese characters for “tea bowl” inscribed.

All images

© John Tsantes & Robb Harrell, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

IIAS News



Meet Willem Vogelsang – new Institute Manager at the IIAS

May I introduce myself? My name is Willem Vogelsang. I recently succeeded Manon Osseweijer at the IIAS. During the first few weeks I diligently worked through the files and instructions that Manon was so kind to compile for me. She left behind a very well-organized office, but the Asia Institute is an enormously active undertaking (as I quickly discovered). Fortunately, the Institute's staff are very professional and a real pleasure to work with.

I am not entirely new to this field of work. For many years I acted as Executive Secretary of the Centre for Non-Western Studies at Leiden University, and since we were, at the time, located in the same building as the IIAS (Nonnensteeg), I have been familiar with the Institute from its very beginning.

In addition to managerial work, which I always enjoy, I do have another passion, namely Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries. I studied ancient Iranian languages and cultures in Leiden. At first I was mainly interested in the ancient past of that area; my PhD thesis dealt with Afghanistan and eastern Iran around 500 BC, but over the years I became increasingly more intrigued with modern developments.

Between 2002 and 2008 I was the curator for Southwest and Central Asia at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde), and then I was given the wonderful opportunity to work 'in the field' in Afghanistan for three years, as the cultural advisor for the Dutch forces in the southern province of Uruzgan. My return to Leiden earlier this year was a great relief to my wife and children, but I personally experienced some problems, mainly with getting used to riding a bicycle again – instead of flying in a helicopter. It's the rain that bothered me most.

I would also like to mention two books that I (co-)authored, namely *The Afghans* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002/2008), translated into a number of languages; and a beautiful book co-authored with my wife about face veils in the Middle East, *Covering the Moon* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2008).

Re-engaging Europe with Asia

Final conference of the Europe-Asia Policy Forum (EUforAsia)

The Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague, the Netherlands.
14-15 December 2011.

The Europe-Asia Policy Forum (EUforAsia) is a three-year programme set up with support of the European Commission to improve Europe's understanding of Asia and to provide a growing rapport between the two regions. It is based on an extensive academic network of institutes, universities and think tanks in both Europe and Asia.

More information including the programme can be found at www.euforasia.eu

Asian Borderlands Conference: Connections, Corridors, Communities

Call for Papers – Deadline 1 December 2011

3rd Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network
Yunnan University, Kunming, China.
12–15 October 2012

Extensive land and maritime networks have crisscrossed Asia for centuries, providing the basis for encounters between diverse ethnic, linguistic, economic, religious, and political groups. Today, developments such as new infrastructural projects, an increase in media access, and renewed interest in shaping cross-border cultural identities serve to both underscore these longstanding linkages and create new forms of connections across Asia.

The Asian Borderlands Research Network invites submissions that address continuities and ruptures along routes and borders in Asia, broadly related to the theme "Connections, Corridors, and Communities."

For more details: www.asianborderlands.net; info@asianborderlands.net

Have you noticed that the IIAS website has a totally new look? After five years of serving up our web pages in a simple static way, we felt it was time for a complete overhaul of our site.

Thomas Voorter, Communications Coordinator IIAS

BUT WE DIDN'T REDESIGN for the sake of redesign. We wanted to present our online content more effectively, reflecting the broad scope of IIAS' activities. New IIAS institutional strategies and changing demands in the academic world – like the integration of social media, more interaction within and between research communities and other target groups, and the adaptation of mobile devices – prompted us to take a critical look at our online presence. We tried to strike a balance between a visually attractive layout and a carefully revised information and navigation structure. By analysing the web statistics and talking to end-users, it became clear how a new visual design could help us to achieve this. The Amsterdam web design agency Studio Parkers assisted us in this task.

What's different?

The current information architecture makes a clear distinction between essential and additional, static and dynamic information. A very important function of the site is to convey IIAS' research foci: Asian Cities, Global Asia and Asian Heritages. These three thematic clusters function as overarching navigation items through which all related content – like events, new research initiatives, fellows, Newsletter articles and other publications – can be found. A site visitor should now be able to explore all facets of a research cluster in an easy and straightforward way.

We reorganised our institutional information, following a more communicative and personal fashion, into three main chapters: 'Who we are', 'What we do', and 'Our Network', and we decided to place a large and prominent search box in the site header because research has shown the popularity of the search functionality. More attention has been given to producing easy to read online web texts, and with the creating of a 'Global Agenda' the first step has been taken toward more interaction and two-way communication, which is the next phase in the development of our website.

Future directions

With the new site we want to reach new audiences and strengthen ties with existing ones. Therefore, we would like the website to function as an open platform, on which academics can create their own profiles, and leave comments and other messages. We receive many requests to share information on our website from other organisations, so we incorporated a 'Global Agenda' in which third parties can post (international) events, information about research fellowships, grants, job opportunities, and other news. The agenda is interactive and any registered visitor can post relevant information. We also want to establish a repository with recordings of lectures, interviews, and other interesting audiovisual material. Social media buttons make it easier to share our information with your friends and colleagues.



The coming year we intend to make our online content – including the Newsletter – more accessible for mobile phones and tablets.

The new website will help IIAS in its ongoing endeavours to widen its global network, communicate knowledge and engage in new research projects, public service activities and outreach programmes. We hope that it will become your first online destination if you want to find out what is going on in your area of interest and in the field of Asian Studies worldwide.

The new flexible and solid design will help IIAS to achieve all these ambitions. We are continuously working on our website and we would love to hear your ideas for improvements. All your suggestions are greatly appreciated. **Please go to our site (www.iias.nl) and send us your valuable feedback.**

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN STUDIES has been awarded a grant of 1.25 million Euro under the Marie Curie Actions 'International Research Staff Exchange Scheme' (IRSES). This is part of the European Union's Research Executive Agency's Seventh Framework Programme. Entitled 'Urban Knowledge Network Asia' (UKNA), the new IIAS-led programme consists of a network of 102 researchers from thirteen partner institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States. Currently in the negotiation phase, the project is due to start in April 2012 and will run for four years.

The UKNA is the only global urban knowledge network of its kind and one of its key objectives will be the nurturing of contextualised and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities. This will be attempted via a series of research staff exchanges and specifically targeted case-study-based research, all of which relates to the network's three main themes of Housing, Heritage, and the Environment.

The International Institute for Asian Studies will be the coordinating institute, with Gregory Bracken acting as overall coordinator. The partner institutes are the Architecture Faculty of the Technical University of Delft in the Netherlands, the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville in France, and the Development and Planning Unit (DPU) of University College London in the United Kingdom.

The Chinese partner institutes are the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD) in Beijing as well as the Beijing University of Technology, Tianjin University, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) and Hong Kong University. India is represented by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) in Bengaluru, Ambedkar University in Delhi, and the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University in Ahmedabad. The University of Southern California's School of Policy, Planning and Development (SPPD) in Los Angeles is the UKNA's partner in the United States.

IIAS Research Projects

IIAS research is carried out within a number of thematic clusters in phase with contemporary Asian currents – all built around the notion of social agency. The aim of this approach is to cultivate synergies and coherence between people and projects and to generate more interaction with Asian societies. IIAS also welcomes research for the open cluster, so as not to exclude potentially significant and interesting topics.

Asian Cities

WITH A SPECIAL EYE on contemporary developments, the Asian Cities cluster aims to explore the longstanding Asian urban “tradition”, by exploring the origins of urbanism and urban culture in different parts of Asia and linking the various elements of city cultures and societies, from ancient to modern (colonial and post-colonial) times. Through an international knowledge-network of experts, cities and research institutes it seeks to encourage social scientists and scholars in the humanities to interact with contemporary actors including artists, activists, planners and architects, educators, and policy makers. By bringing together science and practice, IIAS wishes to initiate a productive dialogue where each participant can contribute his or her own expertise, with the potential to evolve into a broad multi-disciplinary corpus contributing to the actual development of Asian cities today.

PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

The Postcolonial Global City

This research examines the postcolonial cities of South, East and South-East Asia, and how some of them have made the successful segue from nodes in formerly colonial networks to global cities in their own right. This is intended to be an interdisciplinary approach bringing together architects and urbanists, geographers, sociologists and political scientists, as well as historians, linguists and anyone else involved in the field of Asian studies. A key factor in the research is architectural typology. Architecture is examined to see how it can create identity and ethos and how in the postcolonial era these building typologies have been superseded by the office building, the skyscraper and the shopping centre, all of which are rapidly altering the older urban fabric of the city.

Coordinator:
Greg Bracken
(gregory@cortlever.com)



Shanghai skyline. Photo © G. Bracken.

Asian Heritages

THE ASIAN HERITAGES CLUSTER explores the notion of heritage as it has evolved from a European-originated concept associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values. This includes the contested distinctions of “tangible” and “intangible” heritages, and the importance of cultural heritage in framing and creating various forms of identity. The cluster will address the variety of definitions associated with heritage and their implications for determining who benefits or suffers from their implementation. It aims to engage with a broad range of concepts including the issues of “authenticity,” “national heritage,” and “shared heritage”, and, more generally, issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage. It will also critically address the dangers involved in the commodification of perceived endangered local cultures/heritages, including languages, religious practices, crafts and art forms, as well as material vernacular heritage.

PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

Translating (Japanese)

Contemporary Art
Takako Kondo focuses on (re)presentation of ‘Japanese contemporary art’ in art critical and theoretical discourses from the late 1980s in the realms of English and Japanese languages, including artists’ own critical writings. Her research is a subject of (cultural) translation rather than art historical study and she intends to explore the possibility of multiple and subversive reading of ‘Japanese contemporary art’ in order to establish various models for transculturality in contemporary art.

Coordinator:
Takako Kondo
(t.kondo@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

ABIA South and Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology Index

The Annual Bibliography of Indina Archaeology is an annotated bibliographic database for publications covering South and Southeast Asian art and archaeology. The project was launched by IIAS in 1997 and is currently coordinated by the Post-graduate Institute of Archaeology of the University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka. The database is freely accessible at www.abia.net. Extracts from the database are also available as bibliographies, published in a series by Brill. The project receives scientific support from UNESCO.

Coordinators:
Ellen Raven
(e.m.raven@iias.nl)
and Gerda Theuns-de Boer
(g.a.m.theuns@iias.nl)

Global Asia

THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER addresses contemporary issues related to transnational interactions within the Asian region as well as Asia’s projection into the world, through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends will be addressed. The cluster wishes to contribute to a better academic understanding of the phenomenon by challenging the Euro-centricity of much of its current literature, acknowledging the central role of Asia as an agent of global transformations. It also wishes to explore new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interaction in the form of South-South and East-West dialogue models. By multi-polarizing the field of Asian studies, an enriched comparative understanding of globalization processes and the role of Asia in both time and space will be possible.

PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

Asian Borderlands Research Network

The Asian Borderlands Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. A conference is organised every two years in one of these border regions, in co-operation with a local partner. The concerns of the Asian Borderlands Research Network are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns.

More information:
www.asianborderlands.net

Energy Programme Asia – EPA

Established in September 2007, this programme addresses the domestic and geopolitical aspects of energy security for China and the European Union. The geopolitical aspects involve analysing the effects of competition for access to oil and gas resources and the security of energy supply among the main global consumer countries of the EU and China. The domestic aspects involve analysing domestic energy demand and supply, energy efficiency policies, and the deployment of renewable energy resources. Within this programme scholars from the Netherlands and China will visit each other’s institutes and will jointly publish their research outcomes. Institutes involved: Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Sponsored by: KNAW China Exchange Programme and IIAS.

Coordinator:
Mehdi Parvizi Amineh
(m.p.amineh@uva.nl)

Gender, Migration and Family in East and Southeast Asia

Developed from an earlier research project on ‘Cross-border Marriages’, this project is a comparative study on intra-regional flows of migration in East and Southeast Asia with a focus on gender and family. It aims at studying the linkage between immigration regimes, transnational families and migrants’ experiences. To investigate these issues, this project will bring together scholars who have already been working on related topics. A three-year research project is developed with an empirical focus on Taiwan and South Korea as the receiving countries, and Vietnam and the PRC as the sending countries.

Coordinator:
Melody Lu
(m.lu@iias.nl)

IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance

The IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance in Asia, is engaged in innovative and comparative research on theories and practices – focusing on emerging markets of Asia. Its multi-disciplinary research undertakings combine approaches from political economy, law, public administration, criminology, and sociology in the comparative analysis of regulatory issues in Asia and in developing theories of governance pertinent to Asian realities. Currently the Centre facilitates projects on State Licensing, Market Closure, and Rent Seeking; Regulation of Intra-governmental Conflict; Social Costs, Externalities and Innovation; Regulatory Governance under Institutional Void; and Governance in Areas of Contested Territoriality and Sovereignty.

Coordinator:
Tak-Wing Ngo
(t.w.ngo@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Jatropha Research and Knowledge Network (JARAK)

IIAS has become partner in a new network called JARAK, the Jatropha Research and Knowledge network on claims and facts concerning socially sustainable jatropha production in Indonesia. Jatropha is crop that seems very promising: it can be used as a clean non-fossil diesel fuel and it can provide new income sources in marginal areas that will grow the crop.

Coordinator: Dr. Jacqueline Vel
(j.a.c.vel@law.leidenuniv.nl)

Plants, People and Work

This research programme consists of various projects that study the social history of cash crops in Asia (18th to 20th centuries). Over the past 500 years Europeans have turned into avid consumers of colonial products. Production systems in the Americas, Africa and Asia adapted to serve the new markets that opened up in the wake of the ‘European encounter’. The effects of these transformations for the long-term development of these societies are fiercely contested. This research programme contributes to the discussion on the histories of globalisation by comparing three important systems of agrarian production over the last 200 years. The individual projects focus on tobacco, sugar, and indigo in India and Indonesia. Institutes involved: University of Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History (IISH, Amsterdam) and IIAS.

Coordinators:
Willem van Schendel
(h.w.vanschendel@uva.nl)
and Marcel van der Linden
(mvl@iisg.nl)

Science and History in Asia

First, one can focus on the ways in which the actors have perceived the complex links between science and history in Asian civilisations; how, on the one hand, they have used disciplines that we now categorise as sciences, such as astronomy, for a better understanding of their own past; and, on the other hand, how they have constructed the historicity of these disciplines, giving them cultural legitimacy. Secondly, one can reflect on how the sciences can be incorporated into historical narratives of Asian civilisations. This question is crucial, given the dominant 19th and 20th century view that science is a European invention, and that it has somehow failed to develop endogenously in Asia. This project will organise five international workshops in Cambridge, Leiden and Paris. Sponsored by: NWO Humanities, Needham Research Institute, Recherches Epistémologiques et Historiques sur les Sciences Exactes et les Institutions Scientifiques (REHSEIS) and IIAS.

Coordinators:
Christopher Cullen
(c.cullen@nri.org.uk)
and Harm Beukers
(h.beukers@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

Open Cluster

PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

Senshi Soshō

This project, funded and coordinated by the Philippus Corts Foundation, aims to translate a maximum of 6 official Japanese publications of the series known as ‘Senshi Soshō’ into the English language. From 1966 until 1980, the Ministry of Defense in Tokyo published a series of 102 numbered volumes on the war in Asia and in the Pacific. Around 1985 a few additional unnumbered volumes were published. This project focuses specifically on the 6 volumes of these two series which are relevant to the study of the Japanese attack on and the subsequent occupation of the former Dutch East-Indies in the period of 1941 until 1945.

Coordinator:
Jan Bongenaar
(jias@iias.nl)

Ageing in Asia and Europe

During the 21st century it is projected that there will be more than one billion people aged 60 and over, with this figure climbing to nearly two billion by 2050, three-quarters of whom will live in the developing world. Ageing in Asia is attributable to the marked decline in fertility shown over the last 40 years and the steady increase in life-expectancy. In Western Europe, ageing populations developed at a slower pace and could initially be incorporated into welfare policy provisions. Currently governments are seeking ways to trim and reduce government financed social welfare and health-care, including pensions systems, unleashing substantial public debate and insecurity. Many Asian governments are facing comparable challenges and dilemmas, involving both the state and the family, but are confronted with a much shorter time-span. Research network involved: Réseau de Recherche Internationale sur l’Age, la Citoyenneté et l’Intégration Socio-économique (REIACTIS) Sponsored by: IIAS.

Coordinator:
Carla Risseeuw
(c.risseeuw@iias.nl)

IIAS Fellows

IIAS hosts a large number of affiliated fellows (independent postdoctoral scholars), IIAS research fellows (PhD/postdoctoral scholars working on an IIAS research project), and fellows nominated and supported by partner institutions. Fellows are selected by an academic committee on the basis of merit, quality, and available resources. For extensive information on IIAS fellowships and current fellows please refer to the IIAS website.



Eriko Aoki –
Religious Life

IN THE LAST THREE DECADES I have conducted a number of anthropological studies on poetic knowledge, power, gender, children and fetish, with a theoretical framework based on the interface of signification and materiality. As an IIAS fellow, I am studying the changing religious life for the people in a Lionese-speaking village of central Flores in eastern Indonesia, where I have been conducting anthropological fieldwork since 1979. The changes are related to the global economy, Catholicism, nation-state, new media and the re-emergence of traditions.

The ritual control of the swidden agricultural cycle was believed to be necessary not only for a good harvest but also for fertile procreation in the village. Although rituals have flourished, they are now less embedded in a subsistence pattern because cash crop cultivation and emigration for wage labour have spread since the 1990s.

Catholic practices have become part of the village life; but the localisation of Catholicism has been put into practice by priests, based on the 'inculturation' policy since the late 1990s.

Until the 1980s, villages as the realm of tradition were separated from towns. Town dwellers were hardly ever interested in village religious life. Since the mid-1990s, however, several middle-aged men enjoying a high status in government offices have been eager to involve themselves in the traditional activities of their home villages.

Under the decentralization policy in the post-Suharto era and the influence of the global economy, the ritual-centres, their rituals and esoteric knowledge, have come to be officially recognised as 'cultural resources' for school education and tourism. Although the number of people who try to develop an intimate knowledge of the poetic language has decreased, the poetic language has come to be enshrined by, not only villagers, but also by town dwellers; it is now very much part of school curricula.

Against the introduction of new media, such as internet, digital cameras, movie-cameras and mobile phones, the traditional religious practices have become resilient and even re-enchanting.

Recently, many anthropological studies have looked at religious issues, such as the emergence of new types of witchcraft,

the Pentecostal transformations of Christianity, and the fundamentalist movements of Christians and Muslims. While these studies tend to explain religious phenomena by socio-political and economic issues, my current research tries to examine religious phenomena as they occur and to explore a theoretical framework to understand religious, social, political and economic issues at the same time. In order to do that, I will pay careful attention to the personal experiences of many people in central Flores, whom I have known for many years, and to explore documents and manuscripts concerning the 'contact zones' of peoples with diverse positionalities.

I greatly appreciate being in Leiden at the IIAS for this year, as I now have access to these documents and manuscripts (in Dutch, Indonesian and English), and have ample opportunity to discuss my research interests with other scholars. (aoki@soc.ryukoku.ac.jp)



Nikky Lin –
Back to Modernity

I AM CURRENTLY carrying out research at the IIAS, "The Return of Modernism: A Comparative Study between Modernist Poetry in Taiwan and Mainland China in the post-1949 era", in which I explore how modern poetry in China and Taiwan effectively re-introduced modernism during the post-war period. I have been kindly sponsored in this project by the National Science Council in Taiwan.

Partaking in a global literary phenomenon, modernism was enthusiastically practised by Taiwanese and Chinese literary circles in the 1930s. Poets from the Le Moulin Poetry Society in Taiwan upheld surrealism as their identifying marker, whilst in China magazines such as *Modern and Modern Poetry Style* emphasised literary modernity. Modernism had once served to broaden the aesthetic dimension for new poetry in Taiwan and China. However, such Western-inspired modernist poetry had lost its legitimacy after the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937. Realism, which was believed to be able to meet the political and social demands of the time, had been sanctioned by both camps as the literary orthodoxy. Modernism, in sharp contrast, was deemed a decadent middle-class literature by the Left, and individualistic and irrational by the Right. Nevertheless, modernism returned to the realm of poetry when the government in both societies was still heavily intervening in literature. This re-emergence began in the mid-1950s when the KMT government's interfer-

ence in art and culture was at its peak; in China, it began in the late 1970s just after the Cultural Revolution had ended.

My research primarily compares the phenomenon of how the concept of modernism was separately re-introduced to Taiwan and China. The return of modernism to poetry in Taiwan and China occurred at different times. However, instead of focusing on the lack of simultaneous development across the strait, my research centres more on the differing trajectories of the modernist movements. My research of Taiwan begins in the mid-50s, when modernism was formally placed at the fore of the literary movement, and continues through the early 70s when the Modern Poetry Debate brought doubts on Western influence and re-directed poetry to a "roots/tradition searching." As to China, my research starts in the late 70s with the emergence of Obscure Poetry, the beginning of avant-garde poetry, and continues through the Post-Obscure Poetry (Third Generation poets) in the late 80s.

Although the comparative research on Taiwanese and Chinese poetry started in the 80s, due to ideological limitations as well as misunderstandings generated from long-lasting separation across the strait, related research accomplishments have remained scarce. Therefore I believe that a comparative study would make strides toward this understanding. I found IIAS an ideal place to carry out the research of Chinese and Taiwanese modern poetry, due in part to its strong connection with Leiden University, which has an internationally unique collection of unofficial poetry journals from the People's Republic of China by Professor Maghiel Van Crevel, who has made a long term contribution to the study of Modern Chinese poetry. (nikky.lin@gmail.com)



Tim Kragh –
Unscrambling a
Woman's Voice
from the Past

TO ALLOW FOR THE POSSIBILITY of a female Self, it is rudimentarily indispensable to move away from the insistence by French Feminism, as formulated by Simone de Beauvoir and embraced by Luce Irigaray, that the female being invariably and always is the *male's Other*. To accomplish this, a new hermeneutics must be sought – a hermeneutics that rests on an adequate model of subjectivity and a corresponding literary method highlighting the significance of female writing from within its own horizon of interpretation. Literarily, this requires a methodological move, away from excessive reliance on male-authored historical sources providing only male representations of the female over to female-authored sources expressing women's own subjectivity.

Female Self-representation exposed in women's own writings differs from the male imagination, and there is accordingly a feminine dimension that still has not been disclosed. In classical literature, examples of women's writings are very rare, but an exception is, for example, found in a few works coming from a Buddhist Tantric community in *Uḍḍiyāna*, which included several female Buddhist teachers and author-esses. Among them, *Lakṣmī* (a.k.a. *Lakṣmīṃkarā*) was the most outstanding individual. Believed to hail from the ruling family of *Uḍḍiyāna*, her activities as a guru and commentator date back to the ninth or tenth century, and three works attributed to her are still extant.

In her largest text, *Sahajāsiddhipaddhati, Guide to the Accomplishment of the Inborn*, *Lakṣmī* sanctions her religious authority by invoking the Tantric lineage to which she belongs, particularly by describing it in a series of short biographies of her religious ancestors, disclosing the presence of a unique female heritage. Moreover, the *Guide* contains *Lakṣmī's* most profound explanations dealing directly with the innermost nature of meditation experience. She distinguishes her contemplative tradition from village shamanism, intellectual philosophizing, as well as from a large range of bodily and breathing yoga-techniques. She states that she has actualized mystical insight in her own meditative practice. Further, she describes in particular how she served as the spiritual guide to her elder brother, the King of *Uḍḍiyāna*.

Dr. Ulrich Timme Kragh, an independent scholar from Denmark, is a J. Gonda Fellow at IIAS for the period July-December 2011. It is his project to edit the primary sources of *Lakṣmī's Guide*, produce an English annotated translation, and discuss the authenticity of its alleged female authorship. His earlier publications on *Lakṣmī* include "On the Making of the Tibetan Translation of *Lakṣmī's 'Sahajāsiddhipaddhati'*" (*Indo-Iranian Journal* 53, 2010, pp. 195-232), investigating the only extant witness of the text, and "Appropriation and Assertion of the Female Self" (*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 27.2, October 2011), where he discussed *Lakṣmī's* gender role as presented in the *Guide* and her other writings in comparison with the ensuing male appropriation of her biography. (utkragh@gmail.com)

IIAS Fellowships



The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to work on an important piece of research in the social sciences and humanities with a postdoctoral fellowship. The deadlines for applications are 1 April and 1 October.

WE ARE PARTICULARLY interested in researchers focusing on one of the Institute's three thematic clusters: 'Asian Cities', 'Asian Heritages', and 'Global Asia'. However, some positions will be reserved for outstanding projects in any area outside of those listed.

Asian Cities The Asian Cities cluster deals with cities and urban cultures with related issues of flows of ideas and goods, cosmopolitanism, *métissage* and connectivity, framing the existence of vibrant "civil societies" and political urban microcultures. It also deals with such issues as urban development in the light of the diversity of urban societies.

Research projects that can contribute to new, historically contextualized, multidisciplinary knowledge, with the capacity of translating this into social and policy relevant initiatives, will be privileged.

Asian Heritages The Heritage and Social Agency in Asia cluster explores the notion of heritage as it evolved from a Europe-originated concept associated with architecture to incorporate a broader diversity of cultures and values.

Global Asia The Global Asia cluster addresses Asia's role in the various globalization processes. It examines examples of and issues related to multiple, transnational intra-Asian interactions as well as Asia's projection in the world. Historical experiences as well as more contemporary trends will be addressed.

For information on the research clusters and application form please see: www.iias.nl

ICAS



Host of ICAS 8... soon to be announced

Paul van der Velde and Martina van den Haak

WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF FINALISING NEGOTIATIONS with the future host of ICAS 8 (2013), and by the end of this year we will be able to announce both the venue and the organizer. It will be a big challenge for all involved to surpass ICAS 7, the joint ICAS-AAS conference that took place in Honolulu earlier this year.

The number of visitors found at ICAS 7 will certainly be hard to beat, but that is not our main objective for ICAS 8. With slightly over 5000 participants the joint conference was the largest meeting ever held in the field of Asian studies and was a clear signal to the outside world that it is a vibrant and varied field of study. During nearly 800 panel discussions, Asia scholars from all over the world exchanged thoughts on a wide variety of topics – from popular culture to colonial history, and from postmodern literature to natural disasters.

We received a large number of book proposals for the ICAS Publications Series (IPS), which are now being reviewed by the editorial board. Where as we received approximately 250 articles as the outcome of ICAS 4 and 5, the number of articles submitted after ICAS 6 and 7 dwindled, leaving us with insufficient volume necessary for the publication of edited volumes. There has been a clear shift to full book proposals by the participants, instead of individual papers, and so as of ICAS 8 we will only be inviting full book proposals.

After the ICAS-AAS joint conference we conducted a small survey among participants to gauge their feelings about the proceedings. We asked them about various components of the meeting, including the panels, roundtables, keynote speakers, the book prize ceremony, the cultural fringe programme, their overall satisfaction and the intent to attend future meetings. The turnout was approximately five percent; an expected figure for these kinds of surveys. Overall, satisfaction levels were high; for those interested in the outcome of the survey, please visit our website www.icassecretariat.org

Book Prizes in Asian Studies

As of ICAS 4 there always has been an ICAS insert in the Newsletter. Topics have included 'Publishing in Asian Studies', 'Academic Publishing Today', 'Choice in Academic Publishing' and 'Asian Book Series as Global Currency'. The insert for the Newsletter published around ICAS 8 will be about book prizes in Asian studies. Most of our readers are familiar with the seven book prizes awarded by the regional associations of the AAS, and the ICAS Book Prize consisting of five awards. But a quick internet search revealed at least ten more. We will of course continue our research, but encourage all secretariats of Asian book prizes to send us information (icas@iias.nl), so that we may compile a complete overview of book prizes in the field of Asian studies.

Prizes do matter in academic careers, which could be the reason why not only the number of prizes is increasing, but so too are the financial rewards, as is the case with the Asian Studies Association of Australia's ASAA Presidents' Prize (also sponsored by DK Agencies, a global book distributor in New Delhi). Publishers everywhere are getting more interested and involved; for example, Cambridge University Press has pledged 5000 pounds to the John Richards South Asia Book Prize in the field of South Asia history.

The organisation of a prize is an often overlooked and time-consuming feature. We are but too aware of the administrative burden of the ICAS Book Prize. For example, upon returning from a short holiday last year we were confronted by 6 copies of 200 books that had been mailed to us for the IBP. In order to reduce the burden somewhat we have conceived a new procedure – please read the Rules and Regulations section of our website. Nonetheless, we can say that the IBP is always a great joy. We will certainly celebrate its fifth edition at ICAS 8 in 2013. Publishers can start sending in their valued books as of 15 January 2012.

IIAS Outreach



Promoting public understanding of present-day Asian societies

Paul van der Velde, IIAS

This year IIAS has been working with a number of cultural and educational institutions towards the realisation of a series of activities to bring a wider public in contact with aspects of Asian cultures and societies. In doing so IIAS is giving substance to its ambition to promote public understanding of present-day Asian societies.

It was decided to concentrate on Amsterdam in the first year of the outreach project and gradually extend its activities beyond the capital during 2012. Three fields of culture were singled out: literature, movies, and art. Strategic partners for each of these sectors were sought and found. In addition, IIAS will cooperate with a number of event partners, such as the Rijksmuseum, the Prince Claus Fund, Art Cinema Rialto, Cinemasia, Foam Photography Museum Amsterdam and Spui 25, a centre in the heart of Amsterdam known for its lectures and lively discussions.

Asian Country Festivals

Besides the organisation of cultural events with an academic flavour, IIAS Outreach will be organising country-specific festivals with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) in Amsterdam, a strategic partner that is fully equipped to facilitate such broad events. All activities related to these festivals, such as dance performances, movies, theatre and exhibitions can take place in this stylish building.

Currently, we are discussing the possibilities for a Cambodia Festival in Amsterdam. Plans are to hold the festival in conjunction with a similar celebration of Cambodian arts and culture entitled *Seasons of Cambodia*, which is to take place in New York in 2013. The festival will consist of different components such as dance, cinema, contemporary art, crafts, photography, and workshops. Information will be posted on the IIAS website in due time.

Literature - writing in China

The IIAS strategic partner for literature is the Dutch Foundation for Literature (Het Nederlands Letterenfonds), which promotes literature in the Netherlands and beyond. The first joint activity

was a discussion meeting in October at Spui 25 on 'Writing in China', with two famous Chinese authors: Su Tong (*Rice, Women and Concubines*, on which the movie *Raise the Red Lantern* was based) and the foremost 'bad girl' writer Mian Mian (*Panda Sex and Candy*). Both authors were guests at the *Residency for Writers in Amsterdam* programme. In 2012 IIAS will co-organise a number of launches of Asian-language books translated into Dutch, and in the *Residency for Writers* programme.

Cinema – Thai Film Festival

The EYE Film Institute (the former Dutch Film Museum) was an obvious choice for the movie section of the Outreach programme. It holds a library and large database pertaining to movies, including Asian movies. It also has several movie theatres at its headquarters in the Vondelpark in Amsterdam. Here we co-organised a film screening of the movie *Poetry* by famed Korean director Lee Changdong, who attended the evening, after which a lively discussion with the audience evolved.

IIAS was also involved in the organisation of two bigger events. IIAS contributed to the Asian part of the World Cinema Festival – particularly to *Soul of India*, a programme compiled by film curator and film journalist from Mumbai, Meenakshi Shedde. A selection of independent productions, comprised of ten feature-length fiction films and seven short films, gave a vivid impression of India today. It took place at Art Cinema Rialto in Amsterdam from 10-21 August 2011.

With the EYE Film Institute, IIAS organised a Thai Film Festival from 26 September-5 October 2011, where six contemporary Thai movies were shown. Most of these movies were introduced to the audience by film critics such as Dana Linsen. IIAS invited Dr Rachel Harrison, of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, London), a specialist in the field of Thai culture, who introduced the movies *My Girl* and *Tears of the Black Tiger*.

Next year IIAS will also cooperate with Cinemasia, which organises a biennial Asia film festival. And after the move of the EYE office to its new premises on the riverbank in the north of Amsterdam (in April 2012), IIAS will cooperate in its Asia movies programmes.

Art – Association for Friends of Asian Art

The Association for Friends of Asian Art (Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst) was established in 1918. Its main activities are the organisation of lectures and visits to Asian exhibitions. Furthermore, it publishes a newsletter and a quarterly magazine on Asian Art. Its broad collection of Asian art is on permanent loan to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. IIAS and the association have already organised seven lectures on a variety of topics pertaining to Asian art and are planning to continue doing so in the future. These lectures mainly take place in Amsterdam, but also in other areas of the Netherlands. The association and IIAS will be involved in the grand opening of the Asia Pavilion of the Rijksmuseum in 2013.

For the IIAS Outreach Programme
see: www.iias.nl/outreach

Above: Indu Pandai dancing according to the classical Southern Indian dance style Bharata Natyam, at an IIAS event held on 9 June 2011 at Spui 25 in Amsterdam. The event launched the publication *Exotische Liefde* (Exotic Love); a modern revision, by famed Dutch author Thomas Rosenboom, of the main work of Dutch travel-story writer and anticolonialist Jacob Haafner (1754-1809), entitled *Reize in eenen Palanquin* (Travels in a Palanquin) published in 1808.

Asia Pacific Memo

Featuring accessible scholarly knowledge about contemporary Asia

Asia Pacific Memo presents short essays or video interviews on contemporary Asia twice a week. Each Memo addresses a single poignant issue rooted in current research.

Asia Pacific Memo is published by the Institute of Asian Research (IAR) at The University of British Columbia. The IAR also offers a Master of Arts - Asia Pacific Policy Studies program.

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a place of mind



IIAS Reports

Heritage Conserved and Contested: Asian and European Perspectives

Report of the first IIAS Summer Programme in Asian Studies 20-25 June 2011, Leiden, the Netherlands

THE SUMMER PROGRAMME in Asian Studies, *Heritage Conserved and Contested: Asian and European Perspectives*, took place in Leiden, the Netherlands, from 20-25 June 2011. Directed by Professor Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University) and Professor Nira Wickramasinghe (Leiden University), the seminar brought together twenty-four doctoral and master's students from fifteen countries across Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia. The aim of the program was to shed light on the various definitions, interests, and practices associated with cultural heritage in Asia and Europe.

The interdisciplinary field of heritage studies has grown remarkably in the past decades, attracting researchers from across the social sciences and humanities. Increasingly governed by state agencies and international organizations, heritage policies and practices retain an explicit socio-political dimension, often placing the field at the cusp of collective values and identity negotiation. Co-director Nira Wickramasinghe, Professor of Modern South Asian Studies, began her introductory lecture by quoting Lowenthal: "Heritage is not an inquiry to the past, but a celebration of it" (*The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 1997). Exactly how, why, and by whom heritage is celebrated were just a few of the questions investigated by this year's participants.

Renowned scholars, researchers, institutional leaders, and students considered a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary approaches to heritage studies and practices. Lecture topics ranged from urban heritage and housing politics to international cultural policy and its local application. Excursions to the National Museum of Ethnology (Museum Volkenkunde) and The Netherlands Institute for Heritage (Erfgoed Nederland) provided additional opportunities to explore how case studies and theory may be linked with institutional demands and heritage management practices.

The IIAS summer programme was concluded with a dinner; with IIAS director Philippe Peycam in the forefront and Professor Herzfeld heading up the table and showing his approval.



Thematic undercurrents of the program included state power and the view of heritage as a constructed, socio-political phenomenon. Participants explored how heritage policies are often used to negotiate power relations and legitimize official state narratives. In such contexts, competing narratives and alternative management strategies may be neglected or actively suppressed. "Heritage and corruption are two sides of the same coin," argued co-director Michael Herzfeld, Professor of Anthropology. In many ways, Professor Herzfeld explained, heritage can be seen as "the elevation of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness to the level of official policy." Considering such circumstances, participants agreed that heritage scholarship has a special responsibility to scrutinize political categories, claims of authority, notions of authenticity, and state/organizational methods.

The final two days of the program consisted of an international doctoral conference, where fifteen PhD students from eleven countries had the opportunity to present their work and gain feedback from the directors of the program and their student peers. Topics presented at the conference ranged from minority cultures and authenticity, to post-colonialism, conservation, and the institutionalization of collective memory.

Participants concluded that the concept of cultural heritage has taken on increased political urgency in recent years, as the processes of globalization continue to raise questions about identity, economy, power relations, and collective memory across Asia and Europe. Participants of the summer program *Heritage Conserved and Contested: Asian and European Perspectives*, continue their work and dedication to cultural heritage issues through research and practice.

Next year's Summer Programme in Asian Studies, *World Wide Asia: Asian Flows, Global Impacts*, will take place from 27 August through 1 September 2012 and will be organized in the context of the IIAS research cluster Global Asia.

More information on all the IIAS Summer Programmes can be found at www.summerprogramme.asia
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Institutional Voids and the Governance of Developing Economies

Report of the symposium held on 16 May 2011, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

JOINTLY ORGANISED AND SPONSORED by the IIAS Centre for Regulation and Governance, Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, Rotterdam School of Management, the Centre for Governance, Institutions & Organizations at NUS Business School, National University of Singapore and the Erasmus Research Institute of Management.

A common problem faced by many developing countries is the presence of institutional voids. While it is an established wisdom that institutions matter in development, most developing economies are characterised by the absence of much-needed institutional arrangements to regulate market exchange, mobilise economic resources, and coordinate social activities. The aim of the symposium was to explore the phenomenon of institutional voids and to locate the actors, source of entrepreneurial agency, organisational principle of firms, nature of government-business relations, structure of social order, and the wider socio-political context that are conducive to new forms of governance that fill those institutional voids.

The presentations covered different regions, perspectives and approaches. The regional aspect included England, China, Indonesia, Brazil, India, Bangladesh and Ghana, providing a wide perspective on institutional issues. Such issues were tackled through a variety of academic lenses, including historical analysis, institutional entrepreneurship, ethnography, political economics, development economics, elite studies, management science and industrial organisation. Strongly driven by empirical evidence, this symposium has resulted in a set of insights and questions for further research.

- Going beyond the state-market dichotomy
- Weak state as a condition for non-state actors to take over institutional functions
- Limitations of formal property rights explanation in economic development; rather emphasis on self-organising systems
- Creation of fully functioning markets, a so-called state in a state, although organisations do not become states but encroach into the realm of the state by providing public services
- States may expropriate successful new institutional practices

- Importance of experimentation for filling institutional voids. The context of experimentation matters a lot. For instance, there may be an extent of planned ambiguity in the context that allows for experimentation
- Political embeddedness may be a strategic choice in the pursuit of filling voids rather than a given, as in the interpretation of Granovetter's social embeddedness
- The importance of time and historical continuity in explaining and filling institutional voids while at the same time practices may be reinvented into different roles, limiting the continuity
- Institutional creation as a variation of practices that opens up new areas of practice. Filling the institutional void involves incremental organisational and institutional change
- Non-state agencies can set up programs to create legitimacy for a new institutional practice (such as venture capital)
- Importance of distinguishing between the accumulation versus distribution side of institutions

Questions for further thought:

- How to measure a need for institutions in a situation of institutional void?

- Why are certain organisations able to develop institutional capabilities?
- How are new institutional practices institutionalised?
- What are the boundaries of a state or market institutional void?
- How to conceptualise institutional voids?
- How to measure and empirically identify an institutional void?

General concluding remarks:

There should be a move away from normative explanations, from functional assumption of institutional supply. Voids should be understood as an absence of certain mechanisms – not necessarily a full vacuum. Institutional voids are a good heuristic to connect different academic fields that discuss similar problems.

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PRCUD Palembang Forum on Climate Change

THE PACIFIC RIM COUNCIL ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT (PRCUD) held its most recent Roundtable Forum in Palembang, Indonesia, 24–27 July, 2011. This was the eleventh such Forum organised by PRCUD since the series was initiated in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, in 1998. PRCUD itself was founded in 1989 in Los Angeles and has evolved over time into a global network of professionals who bring their expertise to bear on a range of urban development challenges throughout the Asia Pacific region.



Crucial support for the event was provided by the European Commission-funded EUforAsia programme under the auspices of the International Institute for Asian Studies. This event was the first collaboration between IIAS and PRCUD as part of the institute's Asian Cities research cluster; other such forums are likely to be organised with the new UKNA programme (Urban Knowledge Network in Asia).

This Palembang Roundtable Forum was tasked with advising Deputy Minister Max Pohan, and others at the National Development Planning Agency (*Bappenas*) of the Republic of Indonesia, on how best to integrate local perspectives into a national strategy to respond to the challenges of Indonesia's urban areas posed by global climate change; the host city Palembang, under the proactive leadership of *Walikota* (Mayor) Eddy Santana, offered itself as a live case study and common reference point.

The event began with a field excursion to sites that brought the forum topics into full relief, including visits to informal settlements along the banks of the majestic Musi River to review efforts by Palembang to provide improved services and basic infrastructure for those who live there. It also included a visit to a middle-class neighbourhood that has won many awards for its innovative approaches to creating a pro-green environment at a neighbourhood scale.

The following two days were devoted to the roundtable sessions, all with a focus on the national strategy on urban climate change: (i) community engagement, (ii) vulnerable populations, (iii) effective local institutions, (iv) the national-local nexus (v) next steps. Simultaneous translation throughout helped foster direct communication between local and international participants.

Several key points emerged. Participants noted that Indonesia has a fairly well established practice of neighbourhood level organisations, and this should be built upon. It is essential to engage the community to help identify the nature of the challenges, but also to enlist them as part of the solution. The forum recommended greater efforts on eliciting a broader awareness of climate change issues at these local levels, with more systematic connectivity between neighbourhood and municipal level organisations.

Vulnerable populations face greater exposure to the adverse impacts of climate change – yet the most effective mechanisms for addressing

these concerns might not always be "climate change" policies per se. For example, broader programmes to reduce income inequality, to improve land use regulations, or to provide essential infrastructure improvements may be the key to effective climate adaptation and/or mitigation. This underlines the importance of having more effective local institutions, and of the need for targeted training and other capacity building efforts.

The forum also highlighted the potential benefits of having a more finely tuned interaction between national and local level government institutions. Leadership at the national level is essential for promoting best practices and for coordinating across jurisdictional boundaries. In the end, however, policies to address urban climate change in Indonesia and elsewhere must be translated to on-the-ground programmes in specific localities.

Go to <http://sites.google.com/site/prcudweb/> for the final PRCUD report, photos, background materials, and additional details about the Palembang Forum.

Dr. Eric J. Heikkila is founding Executive Secretary of PRCUD, and Professor and Director of International Initiatives for the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California.

George Chinnery comes home

George Chinnery enjoyed a double career in the Far East. The first phase was in India, where he rose to become the principal artist of the Raj, a hookah-smoking 'old hand' with an Indian mistress and a huge appetite for curry and rice. 'Chinnery himself could not hit off a likeness better', exclaims the Colonel back from India, as he admires a portrait in Thackeray's *Newcomes*.

Patrick Conner

The Flamboyant Mr Chinnery (1774-1852) – an English Artist in India and China
Loan exhibition at Asia House, London, from 4 November 2011 to 21 January 2012

AT THE AGE OF 51, when he might have been expected to retire to Britain, Chinnery moved in the opposite direction. Pursued by his creditors, he took ship to the China coast, claiming that it was for the good of his health, or that he was fleeing from his vengeful wife. He never managed to clear his debts. Unable to make the voyage home, and against all the odds, the artist lived on for another twenty-seven years in Canton and Macau, where he died in 1852.

The loan exhibition being staged at Asia House suggests that Chinnery's misfortune was our gain. It is hard to imagine that he would have produced such a variety of vigorous and individual paintings and drawings if he had come home to a comfortable retirement in England. And it is remarkable that an artist whose work has been taken so seriously abroad – with substantial exhibitions held in recent years in Lisbon, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Macau – should have been apparently forgotten in his native land. The Tate Gallery held a Chinnery exhibition in 1932, and another was mounted by the Arts Council in Edinburgh and London in 1957, but the exhibition at Asia House is his first public loan show in Britain for over half a century.

Looking at the selection of his work displayed at Asia House we may feel that his art, or some of his art, is not quite what his public image might lead us to expect. Chinnery was renowned for his dinner-table wit, his genial temperament and his eccentric charm. In 1946 Maurice Collis, himself a former ICS administrator and amateur artist, wrote of ageing Englishmen in the East: 'who yet cannot tear themselves away from an unhurried life of soft wind, rich sunsets, sweet scents and black-haired beauties, and would rather be buried in a palm-grove within sound of the surf ... than face English cold, English haste and English women!'

Collis might have had Chinnery in mind, and indeed there are some 'black-haired beauties' and sunset vistas among Chinnery's subjects. But the truth was less idyllic. In his latter years the artist lived in straitened circumstances. He remained devoted to his work, but portraiture was no longer his mainstay. He would rise early and go out sketching before breakfast, making careful studies of porters, barbers, boatwomen, food sellers and blacksmiths and fishermen

on the beach (figure 1). These sketches are perhaps the most appealing element of his oeuvre. They reveal an almost obsessive determination to perfect his drawing of human figures engaged in their daily activities. These are not the work of an idle voluptuary, but of an artist dedicated to his ideal, which he pursued with a vigour seldom seen in his earlier sketches. His drawings were frequently imitated by visitors to the China coast, most of whom fell well short of the master's confident fluency with the pencil.

Some of his studies of informal groups resulted in small oil paintings, such as the one of street traders in Macau (figure 2). A turbaned figure leans out of his window to receive a basket being passed up to him; he drops a few coins down towards the group below, of whom the smallest seems to be holding out his broad-brimmed hat to maximise his chances of catching a coin. On the crumbling wall two poppies appear, providing the touch of bright red which is a leitmotif in Chinnery's oils and watercolours, and indeed in his portraits – one can play a satisfying game of 'hunt the vermilion' around the walls of this exhibition.

Chinnery would add notes in shorthand to his drawings, reminding himself of colours and textures, or whether the sketch was to be relied upon; he might name an individual who had commissioned a finished version, or jot down anything else that came to mind. He used the Gurney system of shorthand current at the time, of which his father had been a noted exponent. After his death the Gurney system fell into disuse, and by the twentieth century the dashes, dots and squiggles on Chinnery's drawings were entirely baffling. The Bengal historian Julian James Cotton (1869-1927) was asked to pronounce whether the writing was Tamil or shorthand; Cotton was at least able to certify that it was not Tamil.

In recent times a thorough study of Chinnery's shorthand has been undertaken by Geoffrey Bonsall of Hong Kong University Press; something of an eccentric genius himself, Bonsall also read out the early morning news on Hong Kong radio. He died last year at the age of 85, a sad event for Chinnery enthusiasts, but through his research he had succeeded in casting a great deal of light on Chinnery's methods and practices. Many of the translations of shorthand given in the exhibition catalogue were made originally by Bonsall.

The exhibition concentrates on Chinnery's fifty years in India and China, with a variety of portraits and landscapes on view; the visitor may be struck in particular by the simple charm of



1.

his watercolours of palanquin bearers in Madras, ruined tombs in Bengali villages, and junks at anchor on a calm evening on the China coast. His early years in England and Ireland are covered in summary fashion, but we do see a charming small portrait from that time: his young wife Marianne in 1800, looking out demurely from beneath a luxuriant mass of hair (figure 3). Chinnery left her behind in Ireland, with two infant children, when he returned in 1801 to his native London and then onwards to India in 1802. Sixteen years later she joined him there, but they soon separated again; she became the butt of many ungallant jokes, on the part of Chinnery, about her supposed unattractiveness – a notion scarcely supported by this portrait.

The artist would add however that he himself was uglier still; and we may judge this for ourselves in the eight self-portraits included in this show – five drawings and three oils. One of the latter is his famous late self-portrait, lent by the National Portrait Gallery, in which the artist stares belligerently at us over his spectacles; on his easel is a Bengal scene, and on the wall above is the 'Praya Grande' at Macau (figure 4). This self-portrait was sent back for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1846, as if to remind Londoners that, at the age of 72 and some ten thousand sea miles distant, he was still a force to be reckoned with.

Patrick Connor has published about Oriental architecture and art, and is Director of the Martyn Gregory Gallery in London, which specialises in historical paintings related to the China Trade. He has been curator of a number of loan exhibitions exploring the relationships between 'Eastern' and 'Western' cultures, including the exhibition featured in this article. (patrick@martyngregory.com)

Notes

1 Collis, Maurice. 1946. *Foreign Mud: Being an Account of the Opium Imbroglia at Canton in the 1830s and the Anglo-Chinese War that followed*, p.21.



5.

1: *The Praya Grande Macao from the north, with further sketches* Pencil, pen and ink, on two joined pieces of paper, 27.6 x 48 cm Inscribed and dated in the artist's shorthand: 'all these details May 13 [18]40', and (by the upper figure) 'correct. Proportions right'. Mr and Mrs Peter Thompson (no. 58 in catalogue).

2: *Street traders Macau* Oil on canvas, 22.9 x 17.8 cm Illustrated: Tillotson 1987, pl. 43; Conner 1993, col. pl. 75; HKMH 2005, no. C83; Macau 2010, no. 119 HSBC Holdings plc (no. 62 in catalogue).

3: *Marianne Chinnery, the artist's wife ('Miss Vigne')* Pencil and watercolours, 14.6 x 11.4 cm Signed with initials 'GC' and dated 1800 The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (no. 6 in catalogue).

4: *Self-portrait of the artist at his easel* Oil on canvas, 71.1 x 54 cm Provenance: Lancelot Dent, by whom brought from Hong Kong to London in 1845; given by his nephew John Dent to NPC in 1878 National Portrait Gallery, London (779) (no. 92 in catalogue).

5: *A fisherman carrying his net* Pen and ink and watercolour 12.1 x 10.2 cm Mr and Mrs R.J.F. Brothers.



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