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IIAS

International Institute for Asian Studies

theNewsletter

Encouraging knowledge and enhancing the study of Asia

Postcolonial **59** dialogues

Dress Up



The question that slowly bubbles up to the surface is: what is being communicated here?

The Focus pages 23-34

Guest editor Michiel Baas offers a selection of examples of the confusing image painted by postcolonial dialogues, in which certain colonial pasts are celebrated, yet simultaneously recognised for the atrocities committed. The discussion brings us to the question of the post in postcolonial, and thus to the present day, because even though structures of inequality were put in place during colonial days, they often see their perpetuation and/or reinvention for many years after Independence.

*What is being told, who is it that is talking?
Who is the audience imagined to be?*

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Michiel Baas Guest Editor



THE REVIEW

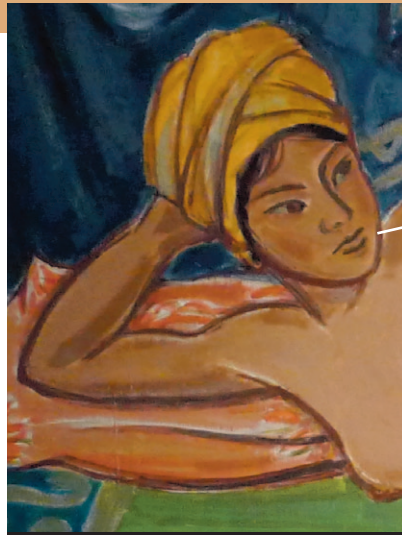
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Page 23-25

Guest editor **Michiel Baas** introduces us to the "postcolonial dialogues", in which a number of authors explore what has been left unsaid, untouched, undocumented, unexplored or maybe even purposely ignored. What should our agenda be the coming years when speaking of 'postcolonialism'?

Page 26-27

Rachel Harrison places question marks to the commonly held perception that Thailand was "very clearly" never colonised. She argues that such power relations continue to manifest themselves, and lays the link to recent political protests in Bangkok.



Postcolonial dialogues

Postcolonial dialogues aim to help us come to terms with how both former coloniser and colonised deal with, understand and portray the past.

Contributing author **Zheng Wang** aptly concludes with the insight that "What individuals and countries remember and what they choose to forget are telling indicators of their current values, perceptions, and even their aspirations."



Page 28-29

Once the "poisonous leftovers of Japanese imperialism", **Lung-chih Chang** and **Min-chin Kay Chiang** look at how the re-evaluation of Japanese colonial sites in post-martial law Taiwan made them essential to a new Taiwanese identity during the burgeoning memory boom.



Page 32-33

Zheng Wang argues that although China is certainly no longer the weak and isolated state it once was, the Chinese have not really moved forward from what he describes as "their past humiliation". Time does not always heal all wounds.



Page 30-31

Marieke Bloembergen and **Martijn Eickhoff's** detailed study of one piece of colonial furniture, shows how such analysis can reveal a vast world of knowledge with regards to how people relate to and reflect on a certain colonial past and postcolonial present.



Page 34

Tharaphi Than's analysis of postcolonial Burma reveals how the country engaged in a project of Burmanization in order to "resurrect" Burmese "lost culture" and by doing so had to distinguish itself from what it considered foreign.

IIAS brings together

The Year of the Dragon is set to be another year rich in activities for IIAS, with the reinforcement of recently launched projects under our three thematic clusters. The last months of 2011 already saw a succession of defining events.

Philippe Peycam

ON 20-21 OCTOBER, IIAS and Nanyang Technology University (NTU), Singapore, organized an experimental roundtable entitled "Science and Nature in Europe and Asia: Scientific Traditions and New Technologies", in which 20 scholars and social practitioners met to discuss scientific knowledge traditions in Europe and Asia with a special focus on science in relation to nature and the environment. The variety of approaches toward issues ranging from food security, natural disasters, to medicine, their implications on the everyday lives of millions, called for a truly intercultural and multidisciplinary exchange. Thematic interactive sessions culminated into the shaping of what will hopefully become a long term collaborative programme. To assist the participants, a "framework document" was developed by PhD researcher Jan van der Ploeg, and coordinated by the two conveners, Prof. Gerard Persoon (Leiden University) and Prof. Lui Hong (NTU) (page 16).

Similarly, on 21-22 November, IIAS and the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS) organized what can best be described as a truly audacious feat: to bring together around the same table, scholars from the West Indies, Latin America, Africa, the Middle-East, Europe, central, southern, eastern and southeast Asia, all working on modes of hegemony, past and present, to openly explore the possibility of formulating a common "post-postcolonial" research agenda. Entitled "Postcolonial Dialogue(s): Crossed and Parallel Identities in Former Colonizing and Colonized Societies", the meeting was symbolically held in the old VOC (Dutch East India Company) Board of Directors' room in Amsterdam. The recent revolutions in the Arab world, the rise of the BRIC countries, and the relative decline of Europe and Northern America framed the discussions. The 26 participants succeeded in overcoming differences by laying out an ambitious research platform capable of mobilizing scholars from all ends of the world. Here too, discussions were facilitated by an excellent background report authored by two young Leiden University PhD students, Ariel Lopez and Yedda Palemeq, under the supervision of Dr Michiel Baas from IIAS (and guest editor for this issue's Focus section).

Finally, on 14-15 December, IIAS and its three EUforAsia consortium partners – the Asia-Europe Foundation, the European Policy Centre and the Singapore Institute for International Affairs – in collaboration with the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, organized what was the final event of our EU-funded programme "EUforAsia". The conference, entitled "Re-engaging Europe with Asia", was held at Clingendael's headquarters in The Hague. The event was planned to take place on the eve of the preparation of the European Commission's "Regional Programming for Asia (2013-2020) Strategy Paper". By exploring topics such as economic integration, regional security, energy, and cooperation in higher education, it aimed to assist the EU in framing its strategy toward Asia. IIAS's contribution was to ensure that a diversity of voices was heard, and especially that social scientists and classical "humanists" were offered a chance to directly engage the often hermetic world of policy makers (page 53).

The inclusive format used for these three interactive events helped us draw new research orientations for a more contextualized, shared, knowledge of Asia, helping "Asianists" of all kinds to claim a sense of ownership over their field. Yet, these efforts can only succeed if they are supported by cohesive networks of individuals and institutions, something IIAS strives to achieve. On that last note, I am pleased to announce that the eighth International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS) will take place in Macao, 24-26 June 2013, in partnership with the University of Macau.

Philippe Peycam, Director of IIAS

The International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) is the premier international gathering in the field of Asian Studies. It attracts participants from over 60 countries to engage in global dialogues on Asia that transcend boundaries between academic disciplines and geographic areas.



Macao: The East-West Crossroads 24-27 June 2013

The more than four century long interaction between Western and Chinese traditions in Macao, the first and last European colony in China, has left the city with a unique blend of cultural diversity, modernity, and cosmopolitanism.

Join us at this world heritage site for ICAS 8, which is hosted by the University of Macau.
Venue: The Venetian Hotel

**Call for Panels and Papers:
Deadline 15 July 2012**

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www.icassecretariat.org



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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Battered Beauties: a study of French colonial markets in Cambodia

Although some Cambodians would rather forget their French history, their towns are still scattered with colonial remnants: broad boulevards, fountains, French buildings. Among these buildings are covered markets, stylishly designed structures, vibrant with life. However, as time has passed, and war and poverty have stricken Cambodia, they have fallen into disrepair, becoming *Battered Beauties*. Something must be done; but why should Cambodia, a country struggling to provide even the most basic needs, be bothered with the preservation of its colonial heritage? And more precisely, which aspects of these old markets should be preserved?

Simone Bijlard

TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, two themes were studied: the market's history – both indigenous and French – and their present-day functioning. Both themes will be discussed here.

Crowds from one end to the other – the indigenous market

The original objectives of the *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine*, a French exploration of the Mekong between 1866 and 1868, were never met, as the Mekong appeared completely inadequate as a trading route between Saigon and the wealthy Chinese province of Yunnan. However, the exploration proved useful in other respects, as local scenes were registered in numerous illustrations and texts, informing us of how markets functioned at that time. The market of Laos' Luang Prabang was described as follows: "The grand avenue of Luang Prabang runs for two kilometres from the city gate to the Nam Hou river. On market days it is filled with crowds from one end to the other. Hawkers and customers come there from early morning, some in the open air, others under large umbrellas or in bamboo boats. Fishermen bring huge fish which they have kept alive in the river. Natives from the mountains, recognisable by their tanned skins, turbans, and striped dress, arrive with baskets full of game, poultry and upland produce. Some Burmese merchants sell cloth, needles and betel boxes. A small number of Chinese sell opium, haberdashery and gemstones."¹

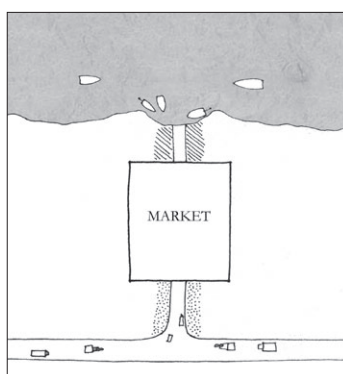
The market of pre-colonial days appears to be an informal meeting of both customers and vendors, conveniently taking place on the busiest road. Simple huts and pieces of cloth on the ground make up the market stall. Architectural elements serve solely as a protection from rain and sun.

In Vietnam's present-day countryside two types of markets can be recognised. The first type is very similar to the markets described by the French explorers; it consists of a collection of small huts made of local material, located along the village's main street (fig. 1). Large trees provide the huts with protection from the elements. The second type consists of a collection of separate stalls at the front and rear of a large hall; a configuration originating from the market's location



1(above): Country-side market in Vietnam: a collection of huts protected from the elements by large trees (source: author's drawing).

2(right): Country-side market in Vietnam: its location in comparison to local infrastructure. Dotted is the area for fruit and vegetables; striped is the area for fish and meat (source: author's drawing).



in comparison to local infrastructure (fig. 2). This market type traditionally appeared at a junction of tracks between villages and a body of water. Farmland products are sold at the entrance of the market, directly where the produce is offloaded. Meat and, above all, fish is sold at the rear of the market, as it is closest to the river. Inside the market solely dry goods are sold, such as clothing, toiletries and household utensils.

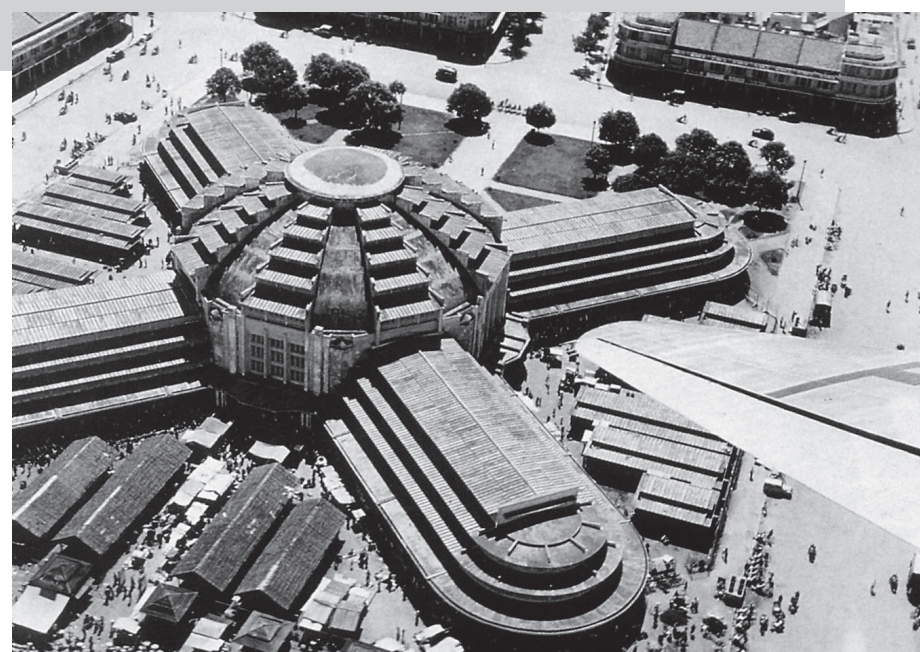
The impact of the region's climate on the market layout is evident, as it is directly influenced by tropical heat and rain. The comparison of the pre-colonial and present-day examples also reveals how even though goods and behaviour have changed over time, the village market has not changed significantly. However, we do see the introduction of the large hall, which can be attributed to French intervention.

Building a France away from France – the French colonial market

With the establishment of the French Protectorate over Cambodia in 1863 a new form of architecture and urban planning was introduced to the region. Preceding French intervention, Phnom Penh was just a string of huts on the bank of the Tonlé Sap River. The *Mission Civilisatrice*, however, obliged France to turn the city into a true *Perle d'Orient*, as it was after all her responsibility to share and spread her superior civilisation. This ambition was to be accomplished by architecture and urban planning. The colonial administration started to build a colonial infrastructure with the realisation of roads, railroads and public works. Covered markets were, just like city halls, prisons, post offices, police stations, schools and hospitals, part of these public works.

At first, French colonial administrations approached their *Mission Civilisatrice* in a manner governed by the principle of *assimilation*, which subjected people to an administration shaped by French values. This approach led to a large number of French public works in Beaux-Arts style, varying from prisons and military barracks to post offices and municipal theatres; all fashioned after the latest style in *Le Métropole*.

After WWI a change in French colonial politics in Indochina appeared; assimilation was replaced by a policy of *association*, which gave more consideration to local tradition and culture. With this change a more context sensitive architecture surfaced, which is best described by the work of the architect Ernest Hébrard, who introduced the *Style Indochinois*. This style derived its detailing and decoration from indigenous architecture and adapted more easily than the Beaux-Arts styled buildings to Cambodia's tropical climate. Local culture became not only an example from which one could learn, but also the face of important public works. However, Hébrard's style still relied on formal principles of the Beaux-Arts tradition; his plans were often symmetrical and consisted of volumes arranged in a classical sequence. His style therefore did not differ essentially from the Beaux-Arts tradition.² The *Style Indochinois* seems to have disappeared from the architectural stage in the early 1930s, whereupon a more abstract style arose. This style continued Hébrard's sensitivity towards local conditions, but it banned his literal citations of indigenous motifs and his formal references towards the Beaux-Arts

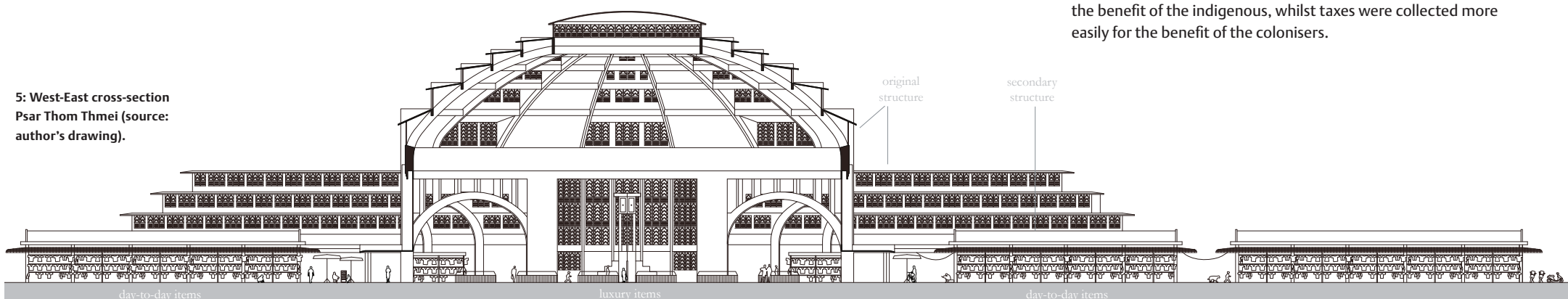


3: Aerial view of Psar Thom Thmei in Phnom Penh in 1952 (source: Heritage Mission, Phnom Penh).

tradition. Plans and sections responded primarily to their urban, social or cultural context; especially to the tropical climate. One could say that this last architectural style was most successful in unifying its French and Indochinese conditions. Cambodia's three still-standing covered markets from the French colonial period – *Psar Thom Thmei* in Phnom Penh (fig. 3), *Psar Nath* in Battambang (fig. 4) and *Psar Thmei* in Kompong Cham – are from this last period and architectural style.

When assessing how French administrations shaped their colonial towns through the years we see a growing indigenous influence as well. An examination of Battambang, Cambodia's second largest city, exemplifies this. Battambang lies on the Stung Sangker, a river originating in the Cardamom Mountains and draining into the Tonlé Sap Lake. Its shores have been inhabited by farmers and fishermen for many centuries. Preceding French rule the town consisted of a string of pagodas and huts along the banks of the river, with an open-air market at the crossing of dirt tracks on the western bank. However, a plan for its expansion was drawn immediately after the arrival of the French in 1907; it was a radical change from the spontaneous growth the town had previously experienced. The plan consisted of a network of roads and blocks of houses standing parallel to the river, with the original open-air market at its centre. In 1926, while the railway between Battambang and Phnom Penh was constructed, a second urban plan was made. The 1907 grid was extended towards the west and a number of diagonal streets were introduced, in an attempt to give the colonial town a more imposing and Parisian metropolitan look. The diagonal boulevards converged at the original open-air market, which was formalised by a covered market in 1937. The building was clearly a French conception; it was styled after the latest Parisian fashion – *Art Déco* – and built from *ferro* concrete, a material European architects extensively experimented with at that time. But, simultaneously, the design responded quite cleverly to its local setting and its tropical environment. It allowed the indigenous market to continue at its original location and a constant stream of fresh air that flowed through the plinth and the many roof openings resulted in a surprisingly pleasant interior climate. Colonial purposes were gracefully served by its erection; the market's hygiene was improved for the benefit of the indigenous, whilst taxes were collected more easily for the benefit of the colonisers.

5: West-East cross-section Psar Thom Thmei (source: author's drawing).



Both the evolution of architectural styles and the growth of the colonial town are indicative of a highly centralised colonial administration that shifted from the self-centred approach of *assimilation* to the more worldly approach of *association*. But even though indigenous influences were more welcomed towards the end, colonial purposes were never abandoned; French administrations clung dearly to their colonial beliefs. It resulted, in the case of the market, in the introduction of the large concrete hall.

A problem with memory – on the relevance of architectural heritage

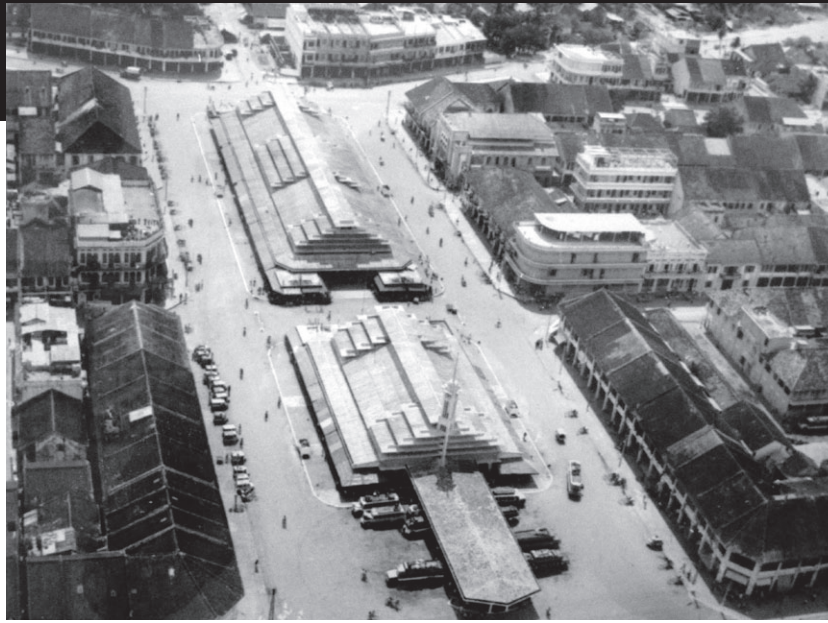
In Cambodia, in Phnom Penh especially, the preservation of built heritage proves to be of a precarious nature. Phnom Penh's real-estate prices inflated during the United Nations Transitional Authority Cambodia (UNTAC) intervention, which took place in 1992-1993. The UNTAC's objective was to ensure honesty and safety during Cambodia's first elections after the Khmer Rouge regime. However, as a side effect the UNTAC's wealth corrupted Phnom Penh's real-estate prices, resulting in land speculation and demolition, which still continues today. Heritage is especially vulnerable as it is often located at primary real-estate locations. The replacing developments are, most of the time, built with the simple objective to make money, sooner rather than later. Heritage law does exist, but its execution is often jeopardised by economic and political interests. One might say that a third-world country has the right to earn its money as quickly as possible, but as these developments are often done by foreign investment companies, the average Cambodian is not likely to benefit from them.

Nevertheless, some buildings are being restored and *Psar Thom Thmei* is one of them. Its original structure has been reinforced and repainted and looks splendid once again. New pavilions have been constructed, replacing the rickety self-built stalls that used to surround the market; new toilets, wash basins and waste facilities have improved hygiene conditions significantly. Nonetheless, the renovation also reveals the delicate question of how to balance aesthetics, preservation and functionality. For example, as the original market is now fully surrounded by new pavilions, the original view of a large, seemingly floating structure, can no longer be enjoyed. Furthermore, goods with a lower revenue, such as fresh produce, have disappeared from the original structure. Nowadays only luxury items are sold from these stalls. So, the future use of the market has been ensured, but the future of its aesthetics remains to be seen.

Although high real-estate prices explain the land speculations in Phnom Penh to some extent, a different kind of argument seems to lie beneath. Theodora Burgeat, communication officer at the Heritage Mission Phnom Penh explains: "Cambodia has a problem with memory; talking about the past is not so easy since the Khmer Rouge. The authorities mostly prefer to focus on the construction of high, new buildings, regarding them as a symbol of the modernisation of the country."³

Dealing with the past has become a painful experience for Cambodian people. Especially young Cambodians prefer to forget the past and deal with the present and future. This mentality results in an unawareness of the historical value of built heritage, French colonial structures included.

Luckily, just a couple hundred kilometres away from Phnom Penh, Battambang Municipality is actively protecting its built heritage. A team from the German Development Service and the Battambang Municipal Administration has had the opportunity to map, research and evaluate the built heritage of Battambang. The involvement of the municipality has proven to be the key to success, as they have the authority to implement laws and regulations. The research has resulted in a Future Land Use Plan for 2020 for Battambang city and district. Centrally located in this plan lies the 'Heritage Protection Area', Battambang's colonial town centre, which consists of about 800 historically relevant buildings. As more and more tourists visit Battambang for its colonial town centre, the preservation of built heritage has become interesting from both a historical and economical point of view, which makes it easier to convince private heritage-owners to preserve their buildings. It illustrates how administrative policy affects the future of heritage and how relatively quickly changes can be made.



4: Aerial view of Psar Nath in Battambang in 1960 (source: Grant Ross, Battambang, Le Bâton Perdu).

Skinned frogs and slithering eels – on the present-day functioning of markets

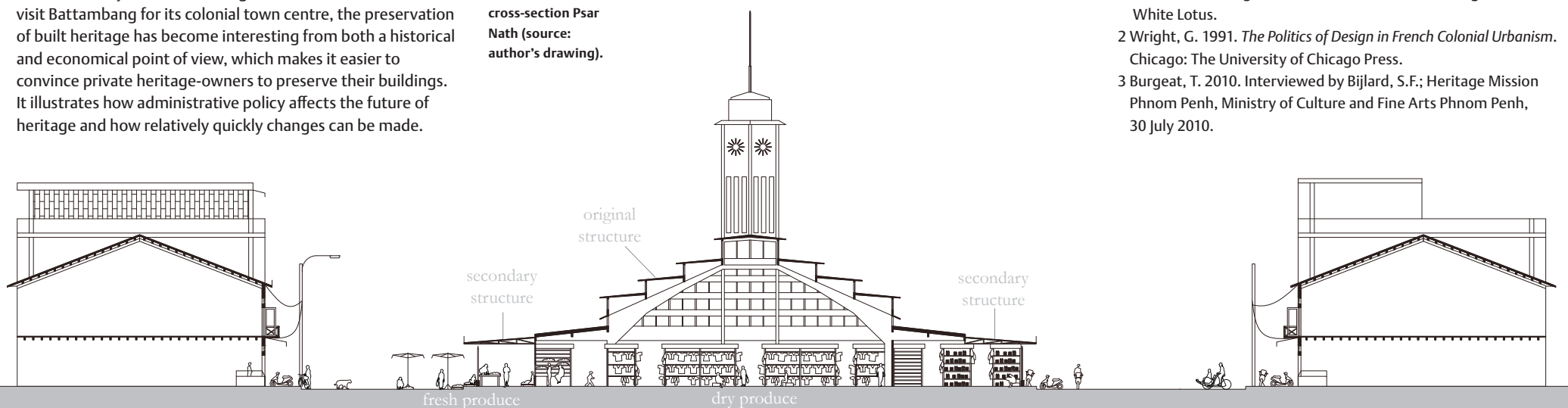
Entering a market in Cambodia reveals a range of stimuli you have probably never experienced before. First of all there are the pungent smells of dried shrimp and squid, of rotten vegetables and freshly grilled meat. But also the shocking sight of live fish being gutted and chopped into pieces, of animal carcasses covered in fat black flies, and of skinned frogs and slithering eels. Vendors, their aprons covered in blood, wield sharp knives and stand in piles of rotting organic waste. Children, barefoot and clothed in rags, pick through the waste in search of anything edible. The heat, already unbearable outside the market, is even denser inside. The aisles are cramped and the kiosks overflow with goods. The markets are clearly as busy as ever, but how do they function today? What is sold inside? Lets take a closer look at the markets of Phnom Penh and Battambang.

Psar Thom Thmei (fig. 5) – 'Big New Market' – lies in the centre of the French commercial area of Phnom Penh and was built between 1935 and 1937. It has always had an up-market quality for Cambodians; it's the grandest and most special Psar. The original structure consists of a 26 meter high dome from which four identical aisles or wings radiate. The main entrance of the market lies to the east, facing the distant Tonlé Sap River. The many grills in the dome and the open plinth provide a constant stream of fresh air. It results in a surprisingly moderate temperature. Daylight is naturally filtered by the grills, casting an ever-changing pattern of shadows on the adjacent walls. Below the large cupola stands a slender column supporting four clocks. Nearest to the column stand shops selling luxury items: watches, gemstones and jewellery. This area is quiet and spacious; vendors leisurely await their customers. In the wings other non-perishable luxurious items are sold: electrical appliances, ready-made clothes, fabrics and tailored clothes. Fresh produce has moved out of the original structure into new large halls, placed at the rear of the original market. The new structures house, in addition to fresh produce, other day-to-day items: shoes, groceries, toiletries, household utensils, clothing and the more ordinary electrical appliances. Temperatures are much less pleasant in these new pavilions than in the original structure; they can rise up to 35 C°, forcing vendors to lie lethargically before well-placed fans, waiting for the intense heat to pass. At primary commercial locations, such as the hall entrances, stalls sell handicrafts and souvenirs. As food is an important part of Cambodian life, snacks and drinks are sold at every location. And equal to the large number of food stalls, is the multitude of shrines; the smell of incense is omnipresent.

The heat, already unbearable outside the market, is even denser inside. The aisles are cramped and the kiosks overflow with goods. The markets are clearly as busy as ever, but how do they function today?

Psar Nath (fig. 6) – 'Meeting Market' – lies in the centre of the French quarter of Battambang and was built in 1937. The market consists of two separate buildings, similar in appearance, but divided from each other by a street. The smaller building lies on the Sangker River and contains the main entrance, marked by a clock tower. In practice,

6: South-North cross-section Psar Nath (source: author's drawing).



however, the entrance that is most commonly used lies at the rear of the market. It is the most active area of the market as it is where the fresh produce is sold; from baskets, buckets, pieces of cloth, banana leaves, and so forth. Vendors sit on stools or squat on the ground for hours at a time. Pieces of cloth and umbrellas provide some shade. At a set of fixed benches – finished with what used to be white tiles – fresh produce is sold for a slightly higher price. Inside the market only non-perishable articles are sold: tinned food, staple food, toiletries, clothing, stationary, shoes, jewellery. There are even hair and nail salons, equipped with Hollywood-style spotlights to provide for both light and some glamour. One would expect a moderate temperature inside the market, as hot air can move out of the roof structure easily. The many stalls, however, seem to block the air current, resulting in a hot and dense interior climate. In the street that separates the two buildings restaurants, which are not much more than a wok burner and some plastic furniture, make food to order. At the foot of the clock tower a small shrine awaits vendors' prayers.

There are many similarities between the two markets. First of all, they are busy as ever. They date from the same period, are made from the same material and share an architectural language. Both markets reveal the difficulties of maintaining the original ventilation system when the market exceeds its original structure. The allocation of goods is similar at both markets; outside at the rear of the original structure is the fresh section, inside only dry goods are sold. *Psar Thom Thmei* is slightly more up-market than the market of Battambang, but in essence both markets cater day-to-day articles to the average Cambodian.

Conclusion

What relevance does architectural heritage have for Cambodia, a country struggling with malnutrition, insufficient health care and inadequate schooling? The answer is obvious and simple: built heritage is a testimony of history and gives a city its identity. Markets reflect Cambodian culture particularly well, as they have been the focal point of society for years and years. So yes, there are clear reasons to preserve the covered markets of Cambodia.

But what has specifically defined the architecture of these markets; what exactly needs to be preserved? To understand the architecture of Cambodia's markets, one has to understand the influence of its tropical climate. Both the pre-colonial and colonial markets reveal its dominance; their architecture would be significantly different were there no torrential rains or stifling temperatures. French colonial rule obviously influenced Cambodia's markets, by formalising the pre-colonial open-air markets with large, concrete halls – a substantial difference from the original makeshift market stalls. They moved the markets away from the river and placed them in the centres of their colonial towns. They adorned them with their architectural ideas. But the French did not have a significant influence upon the functioning of the markets; fresh produce is still sold outside the market, dry inside. Outdoor stalls are still the same as those of the pre-colonial market. Even modern devices such as air-conditioning and refrigeration have made no significant difference. This shows that, in fact, the indigenous market, as an open-air meeting of vendors and customers at an intersection of streets, is what has shaped the markets of today. And it is precisely this odd yet tremendously successful mixture of colonial beliefs and indigenous resilience that makes these markets so unique; that is what should be preserved.

Simone Bijlard is an independent architectural researcher and works for the Urban Knowledge Network Asia at the International Institute for Asian Studies (s.f.bijlard@iias.nl)

Notes

- 1 Garnier, F. 1885. "Luang Prabang's Market". *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong; Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- 2 Wright, G. 1991. *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- 3 Burgeat, T. 2010. Interviewed by Bijlard, S.F.; Heritage Mission Phnom Penh, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts Phnom Penh, 30 July 2010.

Perso-Indica: a critical survey of Persian works on Indian learned traditions

Indo-Islamic rulers often pursued their political claims precisely through gathering knowledge about Indian sciences and literatures. Perhaps the greatest legacy of these projects is a vast cache of Persian texts that examine numerous aspects of South Asia's deep intellectual traditions. Perso-Indica aims to produce a comprehensive survey of these writings that will be the first major reference work of its kind and will advance our understanding of Indian cultural processes across languages and traditions.

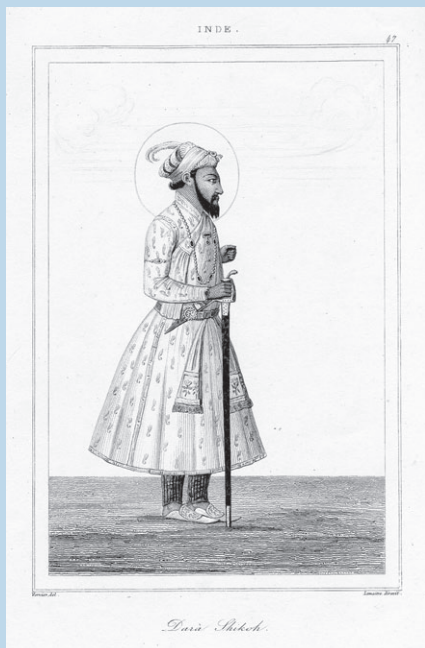
Audrey Truschke

PERSIAN TEXTS that investigate Indian learning constitute one of the most extensive and least studied cross-cultural endeavors in world history. Persian-speakers came to South Asia beginning in the late twelfth century, with successive waves of Muslim dynasties that transformed the political landscape of the subcontinent. Different Muslim groups rose to power during the next seven centuries, and many of these polities patronized Persian as a language of literature and empire. Simultaneously, these rulers engaged with the variety of literary cultures claimed by their subjects, including Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Kashmiri, Tamil, and other tongues.

Scope

The Persian texts addressed in this project include direct translations (frequently of Sanskrit texts), adaptations of Indic knowledge, and original treatises. When completed, the Critical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions will cover as many as three hundred texts produced over the course of seven hundred years, from the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries. The works address an astonishing array of subjects, such as religion, philosophy, mythology, astrology, astronomy, mysticism, history, sciences, arts, geography, flora, fauna, cuisine, etc. Muslim and Hindu scholars alike authored these probing inquiries, both under direct royal patronage and far beyond the confines of the court. Their treatments of Indian ideas are often remarkably sophisticated, in addition to frequently being tied with imperial objectives. Taken altogether, this body of literature enacted the most substantial importation of knowledge systems from a non-Islamic tradition since the adaptation of Greek knowledge into Arabic several centuries earlier. In-depth analyses of such a wide-ranging, long-lived translation movement promise to elucidate the nature of cross-cultural relations in India and the growth of Indo-Persian culture and power.

This literature can be divided into three eras that exhibit discernible intellectual trends and also loosely map onto political developments. The first phase coincides with the Delhi Sultanate, a series of dynasties that ruled parts of northern India from the early thirteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. During this period, intellectuals were largely concerned with the sciences, although poets such as Amir Khusraw participated in an emerging composite culture that fused Indic and Islamic ideas. Next, the advent of Mughal rule in 1526 inaugurated an explosion of Indo-Persian literary output devoted to a greater range of disciplines. During the next two hundred or so years, many authors undertook direct translations of Sanskrit texts under imperial orders, and Muslim authors explored how to incorporate Indian knowledge into their own thought worlds. The third era corresponds with the colonial period when the British elite often sought access to Indian texts through Persian translations and treatises. In these endeavors, the colonialists often employed Indian secretaries to help them locate and understand their desired materials, which added another cross-cultural layer to the transfer of knowledge. Perso-Indica hopes to add greater detail to this broad sketch of epochs and also to articulate the implications of these different stages for how we write the history of pre-modern, early modern, and colonial India.



Above: Sketch of The Imperial Prince Dara Shikuh (1615-1659); privately owned.

Top right: The Demon Host Begins the Battle, illustration from Persian translation of the Ramayana; © Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1907.271.225.

Below right: A Young Prince With Mystics © Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Geneva, AKM00498.

Far right: Rama and Laksmana Confront the Demons Marica and Subahu, illustration from Persian translation of the Ramayana; © Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1907.271.38.





In addition to contributing to our understanding of a largely forgotten aspect of India's past, Perso-Indica is relevant to modern South Asia as well. In many ways, India's present and future is being shaped in the context of debates about its past as people increasingly look to earlier ways of navigating a diverse cultural landscape. Multiethnic dynasties such as the Mughals feature vividly in contemporary historical memory across the subcontinent and are frequently invoked in modern political, aesthetic, and social realms. In particular, Hindu-Muslim tensions over the past few decades have highlighted the need for serious, sustained work on other ways of negotiating cultural and religious differences. Perso-Indica will provide a firm historical basis for further scholarly work on these issues.

Vision and method

The survey is divided into different domains of study (e.g., literature, astrology, music, etc.). The sections then contain multiple entries arranged in ascending chronological order or, in the absence of a clear date, according to approximate time period. Each entry is devoted to an individual text or author/translator and is based on direct examination of primary sources, either published or in manuscript format, along with a review of secondary scholarship. All entries will convey pertinent biographical information about the author, a summary of the text, the Indian sources referenced therein, and printed editions of the work. In order to facilitate further academic work, entries may also list the extant manuscript(s), illustrated copies, and modern translations. Among the fundamental aims of the project is to develop an extensive system for acquiring metadata about texts, authors, translators, dedicatees, patrons, sources (manuscripts and lithographs), etc. This information can then be used to generate indexes and will facilitate quantitative and qualitative analyses. We hope that gathering such data will enable us to ascertain large scale trends and other types of information about this group of texts as a whole.

Despite the importance of these materials, many texts and authors addressed in the survey have been neglected and unstudied for decades. Perso-Indica hopes to renew academic interest by collecting information on these works and articulating each text's particular import. In accordance with its goal of raising the profile of these materials, the project strives to offer the widest possible access to its data, and so the format of the survey is electronic. While our envisioned audience is primarily the academic community, we also wish to serve any public interest in these topics, and all information will be freely available online.

Institutional structure

Perso-Indica is an international research and publishing project that brings together people and institutions from across the globe. The project is based in Paris at the University Sorbonne Nouvelle (Mixed Research Unit 7528 'Mondes iraniens et indiens') and is directed by Fabrizio Speziale (University Sorbonne Nouvelle), Carl W. Ernst (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Svevo D'Onofrio (University of Bologna). A team of international research scholars from Europe, North America, and Asia is editing the survey entries.

In addition to the online survey, Perso-Indica plans to foster direct intellectual exchanges by bringing scholars to Paris through visiting fellowships at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, offered with the support of the Fondation Colette Caillat of the Institut de France. There are two month-long positions available during the 2011-2012 academic year that are open to exceptional scholars from any country currently conducting innovative research on subjects related to *Perso-Indica*. In addition, the project is planning its first international conference 30-31 May 2012 in Paris, that will assemble many of the editors and contributors for the survey in an attempt to foster ongoing conversations about the role played by this movement of texts and knowledge systems from Indian traditions into Persian.

The website for Perso-Indica (www.perso-indica.net) was launched in 2010 with the support of the Institut Français de Recherche en Iran (Tehran) and the Iran Heritage Foundation (London). Additionally, from 2011 to 2016 it will receive support from the research funds of French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) Higher Education Chair in Iranian Studies at the University Sorbonne Nouvelle Mixed Research Unit 7528 'Mondes iraniens et indiens', which comprises scholars from the CNRS, Sorbonne-Nouvelle, École Pratique des Hautes Études, and Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales. The database will be hosted by TGE Adonis (www.tge-adonis.fr), a platform run by the CNRS.

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Stepping forth into the world: the Chinese educational mission and its antecedents

Chinese have been going abroad to study since at least the early 1840s. Some did so with private support, others with government funding. This brief account will concentrate on the second group. The history of Chinese studying abroad with government funding can be divided into five phases.

Edward J. M. Rhoads

WORKING BACKWARD IN TIME, the most recent (or fifth) phase began around 1979 with the initiation of Deng Xiaoping's policy of "reform and opening out" (*gaige kaifang*) and continues into the present. During the past three decades over 1.2 million (!) Chinese students and scholars have gone overseas to study, to teach, or to do research; most of them going to the United States. Of these, perhaps 5-10% were sent by the government.

The fourth phase occurred in the 1950s, when an untold number of Chinese students went to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, at a time when China was cut off from the West. One of them was Li Peng, China's Prime Minister in the 1990s; Li Peng was in Russia from 1948 to 1955 and studied hydro-electric engineering at the Moscow Power Engineering Institute.

The third phase comprised approximately two thousand Boxer Indemnity scholars, sent to the United States from the 1910s to the 1930s. The funding for their scholarships (*Gengzi peikuan jiangxuejin*) came from the remission of a portion of the indemnity that China had been forced to pay to the U.S. for damages and loss of life during the anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion (1898-1900). Among these scholars was Hu Shi, who during the Second World War became the Chinese ambassador to the U.S.; he travelled to Cornell in 1910 where he studied agriculture, and then philosophy at Columbia, earning a Ph.D. in 1917.

The second phase, in the 1900s during the last decade of the Qing dynasty, saw about ten thousand Chinese flocking to Japan to study. They were drawn there by Japan's apparent success at modernization, as demonstrated by its military victory over China in 1895 and then over Russia in 1905. Among this group of students was the future writer, Lu Xun, who was in Japan from 1902 to 1909 and for a while attended a medical school in Sendai.

Finally, we get to the first group of Chinese government-funded students sent abroad; they travelled in the 1870s. By then China had been twice defeated by the British in the two Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60), and the Qing dynasty had been nearly overthrown by the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64). China's rulers realized that if the country and the dynasty were to survive, reforms were unavoidable. The result was the Self-Strengthening (*zhiqiang*) Movement, which began in the 1860s and continued into the mid-1890s. Among the reforms of the Self-Strengthening Movement was the sending abroad of students. Thirty-eight students in three groups were sent to Europe in the mid-1870s to study naval and military matters. Among them was Yan Fu, who later popularized Social Darwinism in China; Yan Fu attended the Greenwich Naval College in England from 1877 to 1879. An earlier – and larger – group of students, totaling 120, were sent to the United States beginning in 1872. This was the Chinese Educational Mission (*Youtong chuyang yiye*), the very first group of Chinese government-funded students studying abroad.

The Chinese Educational Mission (or CEM) was the brainchild of Yung Wing. Born in 1828 to a farming family near Macau, Yung Wing (or, in *Putonghua*: Rong Hong) had attended a missionary school in Macau and Hong Kong. In 1847, the principal of the school, Rev. Samuel Robbins Brown, brought three of his students back with him to the U.S.. One of them was Yung Wing. Yung lived with the Brown family in Monson, Massachusetts, and attended the local academy. In 1850 he enrolled at Yale from which he graduated with a B.A. degree in 1854, becoming the first Chinese college graduate in the West. Yung then returned to China and in 1863 joined the staff of the powerful provincial official Zeng Guofan, who was a vigorous promoter of Self-strengthening. Yung Wing's idea was to replicate his own educational experience on a grand scale and with financial support from the government. He eventually persuaded Zeng Guofan to ask the Qing court to authorize the Chinese Educational Mission. The court did so in 1871 and appointed Yung Wing an associate head of the mission.



The chief responsibility of the host families was to home-school the boys and prepare them for regular American schools. Within a couple of years of their arrival in America many boys were able to enroll in local schools; middle school and then secondary (or high) school. One feature of American schooling at the time helped ease their transition. According to education historian Theodore Sizer, "Recitation was the prevailing method of instruction: the pupil memorized a portion of a text and dutifully repeated it to the teacher." This was a pedagogy with which the Chinese students were quite familiar from their Chinese studies and at which they could excel, as indeed some of them did.

Whilst learning English and attending American schools, the CEM students were expected to keep up with their Chinese studies. When still being home-schooled, they were required to write two pages of Chinese every day and to go to the CEM headquarters in Hartford for additional Chinese lessons every three months (figure 2). Later, when attending school, they were to go to Hartford during their summer vacations for two or more weeks.



By the fall of 1881, half of the CEM students had advanced beyond secondary school into college; indeed, by then, three had even graduated from college. Most went to Yale, Yung Wing's alma mater; the rest, to nine other colleges, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In college, as in high school, the students had to choose between two types of curriculum, the classical and the scientific. The time-honored classical curriculum emphasized Greek and Latin, while the scientific curriculum, a recent innovation, paid more attention to mathematics, sciences and engineering. Most, though not all, of the CEM students in college chose to study science or engineering; for example, the three who had graduated by 1881 had all attended the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale.

Conspicuously missing from the list of colleges that the CEM students attended were the U.S. Military Academy or the Naval Academy. Between 1869 and 1881 a dozen Japanese students were attending the U.S. Naval Academy, and according to the 1868 "Burlingame Treaty" Chinese students should also have been permitted to enroll in U.S. government schools. However, at a time of rising anti-Chinese sentiment, which was to culminate in the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the American government disallowed their attendance.

The American refusal to permit CEM students to go to West Point and Annapolis was one reason why in 1881 the Chinese government decided to recall the students. Another reason was a change of leadership at the CEM headquarters in Hartford. By this time Yung Wing had been transferred from the CEM to the Chinese legation in Washington, and a new commissioner, Wu Zideng, had been appointed. Upon his arrival, Wu Zideng was shocked by how Americanized the CEM students had become. They had cast off their Chinese dress, and though they still wore their hair in a queue they otherwise dressed in American clothes. They participated enthusiastically in American sports, especially baseball. They consorted easily and openly with young women of their own age. They attended church and many converted to Christianity; a group of Chinese students at Williston even founded a missionary society. And they were forgetting their Chinese.

The CEM thus came to a premature end in the fall of 1881 (figure 3). When ordered to go home, two refused; six went home, but then made their way back to the U.S. shortly afterwards. Most of the others, on their return to China, were assigned to various Self-strengthening projects, like the Fuzhou Navy Yard School, the Telegraph Administration, the Kaiping Mines, and the Tianjin Medical School. Some eventually achieved prominence during the decade of reform following the Boxer Rebellion. Several, for example, helped create the Boxer Indemnity scholarship program; one, Tang Shaoyi, became the first prime minister after the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912.

How did the Chinese Educational Mission contrast with the later groups of Chinese going abroad to study? First, they were relatively few in number: only 120. Secondly, they were all men. Thirdly, most strikingly, they were very young. Tang Shaoyi was 12 years old when he left China in 1874. By contrast, Yan Fu was 23 when he went to England in 1877; Lu Xun was 21 when he went to Japan in 1902; Hu Shi was 19 when he went to the U.S. in 1910; and Li Peng was 20 when he went to Russia in 1948. Because of their youth, the CEM students were less set in their ways and more open to new ideas than their later counterparts; at the same time, though, they were more susceptible to the blandishments of foreign life, which is ultimately what led to the termination of this first government-funded effort at study abroad.

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1(top): Six members of the first CEM detachment, on arrival in San Francisco, September 1872. Thomas Houseworth and Co., Pacific Coast Scenery

2(middle): The schoolroom in the CEM headquarters, Hartford. Harper's Weekly, 18 May 1878.

3(below): CEM students – all Yale men – on the eve of their departure from San Francisco, September 1881. Image courtesy of the Mansfield Freeman Center for East Asian Studies, Wesleyan University.



The CEM called for sending 120 boys to live and study in New England for a total of fifteen years. The boys were very young; most were between 13 and 15 years old when they left for America (figure 1). Nearly all of them came from around Guangzhou and Shanghai – the two places in closest contact with the maritime West. Hardly any of the students came from the scholar-official elite of China, for whom a foreign education would have had no appeal. This was, after all, a time when the road to individual and family success still ran through the Confucian-based civil service examination system. On the other hand, few of the students came from among the peasantry either, since the CEM students were required to have had several years of education. Instead, most of the students seem to have come from an in-between group of fairly well-to-do families, whose wealth came not from office-holding but from commerce, especially foreign commerce. Except for what they were able to learn in a few months at a preparatory school in Shanghai, the boys knew little or no English at the time of their departure.

The 120 boys of the CEM went to the United States in four annual "detachments" in 1872-75. They went by steamship from Shanghai to San Francisco via Japan, then by train across the American continent. Once in New England, they were dispersed among a number of American families who had volunteered to take them in, and who were compensated by the Chinese government. As a general rule, each family was assigned only two students, and only one family was selected from each community. Being socially isolated in this way – much as Yung Wing had been when he lived with the Brown family in Monson – would expedite the boys' learning of English.

Evaluating Sino-African relations: new wine in old bottles?



How should we view contemporary Sino-African relations? Although the tendency is to view relations as either a departure from Western models or as continued exploitation of the continent, we suggest that the reality is far murkier.

Timothy S. Rich and Sterling Recker

WHAT ARE THE UNDERLYING MOTIVATIONS for China-Africa relations? Where relations once were based largely on ideological concerns tied to Cold War conditions, today relations appear to increasingly be built on economic foundations. China is now more active in Africa than ever, with trade increasing by 681% between 2001 and 2007, reaching \$73 billion.¹ Whether these relations promote mutual gain or African exploitation remains unclear. Certainly, few economic successes from the decades of Western aid to Africa are apparent, considering peak aid to Africa coexisted with rapid increases in poverty and a decrease in world trade.² In contrast to a literature focusing on negative aspects of growing relations or viewing China as the main actor with Africa playing a more passive role, we view relations³ as a more complex dynamic relationship, with both great gains and negative repercussions. Thus a broader framework intends to shed light on how these interactions can both help and hinder African nations.

Historical interactions

Present-day relations cannot be fully understood outside of the Cold War origins. Striving to be seated in the United Nations (UN) as the legitimate government of all of China (and thus remove the Republic of China on Taiwan from the Security Council), the People's Republic of China (PRC) actively supported independence movements throughout the African continent. In 1959, Mao Zedong framed this as a "struggle against imperialism", implicitly tying recognition to ideology.⁴ The goal was not only to win favor among countries soon to be admitted to the UN in order to assist their own entry, but to position themselves as more than simply the Soviet Union's junior partner in the communist world. As countries could only have diplomatic relations with either the Communists or the Nationalists, Africa became a fertile ground for a communist Chinese government to recruit support and bolster their own sense of sovereignty.

While Taiwan initially held onto many African allies, by the end of the 1960s the tide had turned in favor of China. With African assistance in the United Nations coupled with America's own willingness to warm relations with China, the PRC ascended into the United Nations in 1971. By 1979, forty-four African countries recognized China, compared to only five still recognizing Taiwan.⁵ While China's external sovereignty concerns eroded, Sino-African relations failed to live up to early expectations. Similarly, while China offered assistance to revolutionary movements on the continent to compete with similar efforts by the Soviets,⁶ by the mid 1980s, Chinese interest in the continent declined.

Only with the end of the Cold War and China's rise as a superpower did a broader interest in Africa reemerge. While a few countries maintain relations with Taiwan, Chinese economic and political might has made switching diplomatic recognition increasingly difficult. Similarly, the economic boom in China over the past twenty years has allowed the country to offer grander assistance packages than ever before, while conversely needing greater access to natural resources to maintain such levels of economic growth. Here African nations view a more stable foundation for relations, with China also becoming an important export destination for African goods and indirectly a source for increased public revenues.

The Chinese alternative

In assessing Sino-African relations, it is crucial to disentangle traditional aid packages from other forms of investment and assistance. Observers commonly lump loans, investment

and aid into one category, distorting the image of Chinese influence. For example, Brautigam (2009) points out, the amount of Chinese aid reported is often wildly inaccurate, with a common failure to distinguish between Chinese renminbi (RMB) for US dollars. Within twenty-five years, China moved from the eighth largest bilateral donor to Africa to second; with only the US ahead. In contrast to Western approaches, however, most development packages have been tied to trade instead of foreign aid and subsidized loans.⁸ In addition, unlike Western assistance programs that simply handed over projects to domestic officials with little oversight, China maintains a continued stake in joint projects. The result has been undeniable: discouraging increasing levels of debt among African countries.

Furthermore, while Western assistance seldom covers infrastructure, China views such projects for mutually beneficial economic development. Reisen argues that "there rarely has been such rapid and intense investment in African infrastructure as is going on today".⁹ For example, of the \$5 billion in credit and aid China granted Angola from 2002 to 2006, more than \$2 billion was dedicated solely to infrastructural projects, including roads, railroads, and fiber optic networks.¹⁰ Foreign direct investment (FDI) follows a similar pattern. Whereas three-quarters of US FDI in Africa targets access to oil, nearly two-thirds (64%) of Chinese FDI in Africa has gone towards manufacturing ventures.¹¹ These differences in priorities contribute to a growing view of a unique Chinese model.

More than resources?

China is the largest consumer of oil behind the US, moving from being a net exporter just twenty years ago. Eighty-five percent of African exports now to China originate from five oil-rich countries (Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, and Sudan).¹² Despite this and warnings regarding China's grab of national resources, China's actual holdings remain rather limited, holding roughly two percent of known African oil reserves, and constitute only three percent of all companies invested in African oil.¹³ Even if Chinese companies desired a greater share, they face an uphill battle competing with other foreign companies with greater experience in the region. More broadly, Chinese business interests are geographically diverse and not restricted to oil-producing nations, with over 800 Chinese companies conducting business in 49 African countries as of 2007.¹⁴

The African side of trade cannot be ignored either. From 2006 to 2008 alone, African exports to China increased by 110%, with thirty-two countries exhibiting a net gain in earnings.¹⁵ In addition, China's exports do not simply undercut domestic production; machinery and high-tech products composed nearly half of all exports to the continent in 2005.¹⁶ Overall, more Sub-Saharan African countries gain in more economic sectors than those who lose.¹⁷ Furthermore, many African oil producers are tying foreign investment in the oil industry to broader investment, often with Chinese acquiescence.

The negative side of relations

Growing Sino-African relations do create perverse incentives however. De Soysa argued that resources contribute to a "rentier state" where the production and sale of such resources fuel corruption due to underdeveloped political institutions.¹⁸ The result is the long term entrenchment of corruption centered around the exploitation of natural resources to serve political ambitions, often prolonging

conflict. For example, Sierra Leone's civil war was financed by the production and sale of "blood diamonds"; conflict in the DRC has been facilitated by the presence of mineral resources such as diamonds and coltan; and countries as diverse as Nigeria (oil), the Ivory Coast (cocoa), and Tanzania (a burgeoning fishing industry centered around Lake Victoria) have faced similar resource related problems.

Growing relations does not mean evenly distributed benefits within society. A popular argument among Africans is that when the Chinese enter their country they bring in their own workforce, leaving the domestic African workforce no better off than they were prior to the arrival of the Chinese. While some of this importation may be due to expertise or a lack of trust in African partnerships, as a development strategy it remains short-sighted.

Concluding remarks

Chinese investment generates both opportunities and challenges for African countries. While Chinese ventures grow in scope and depth, African countries are neither passive bystanders nor the recipients of unmitigated benefits. And new developments are no quick fixes for structural weaknesses across the continent. China faces similar constraints to other countries in terms of investing in Africa and as such cannot be naively viewed as purely exploitative or as a cure-all for African ills. The future of Sino-African relations thus requires the acknowledgment of both the agency of African actors and the promotion of long-term mutually beneficial development.

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Above: 2008, Maputo, Mozambique. Local Mozambique workers tell the photographer they are unhappy working with the Chinese as wages are low and hours are long, however, unemployment has forced them to do so. The national stadium for Mozambique is being built by Chinese contractors and paid for, as a gift, by the Chinese government. © DJ Clark.

The formation (and dissolution?) of a democratic politics in the Maldives

As an American Fulbright scholar affiliated with the Faculty of Shari'ah and Law at the only public institution of higher education in the Maldives – the Maldives College of Higher Education, on the capital island Male' – I taught constitutional law and witnessed a society poised on the edge of an electoral revolution and the ouster of a thirty year (1978-2008) developmental autocracy. This article recounts observations, informal interviews (conducted during the 2007-2008 academic year) and local press accounts of events and political factors culminating in a bloodless regime change in 2008.

Scott Morrison

Abbreviated history of the Maldives and the *ancien regime*

The Republic of the Maldives consists of just under 200 inhabited and 1000 uninhabited islands, distributed across 19 coral atolls in the Indian Ocean, southwest of India and Sri Lanka. According to the most recent census, in 2006, the population is under 300,000 with approximately one-third living on the capital island Male'.¹ Probably Buddhist prior to the introduction of Islam by Arab traders,² and the official establishment of Islam in the mid-twelfth century,³ the Maldives was a hereditary sultanate (headed by sultans and at least one sultana) continuously – across interludes of Portuguese, Dutch, and finally British (1887-1965) colonial interventions – until the first Republic was established, governed by President Amin Didi (1953-1954). The 94th and last sultan (Fareed Didi) resumed rule (1954-1967), finally giving way in 1968 to the existing Republic of the Maldives.

The original and all subsequent constitutions of the Republic, including the most recent in 2008,⁴ make the acceptance of Sunni Islam a citizenship requirement (chapter 1 article 9 of current constitution), no law inconsistent with 'any tenet of Islam' may be enacted (chapter 1 article 10a), and Islam is one basis among several for Maldivian law (chapter 1 article 10b). The legislative power resides in a unicameral People's Majlis. However, constitutional and political restraints on the power of the President were weak or non-existent during the single party state of the Dhivehi Nationalist (*Dhivehi Rayyithunge*) Party (the DRP); *Dhivehi* refers to the language and self-ascribed ethnicity of Maldivians. From the coup that brought him to power in 1978, Maumoon Gayoom led the DRP and held the Presidency until 2008.

Geography and a rentier economy helped preserve a pluralized autocratic regime under the single-party state. Foreign tourists were restricted to resort islands (uninhabited by Maldivians, unless they worked there), minimizing their contact with Maldivians, and ensuring a stream of revenue through island leases and a bed tax on tourist accommodation. The Maldives under President Gayoom typified a neo-patrimonial state,⁵ one in which informal patron-client relationships were incorporated into formal political institutions, such as parties, parliament, ministries, the civil service and departments of the state. President Gayoom used such strategies to expand and preserve his patron-client relationships, depending on personal and family networks, treating high offices as rewards for supporters, and shuffling cabinet and ministerial posts to prevent the accumulation of significant power in the hands of any one potential rival. Outside of Male', he constructed a network of clientelism and patronage encompassing atoll chiefs and local island headmen (*khatib*).

The first modest experiment with liberalization and electoralism under President Gayoom occurred in 1988, with an uncontested referendum on his presidency, resulting in a total of four more five-year terms. No opposition candidate ran in the subsequent plebiscites of 1993, 1998, and 2003.

Maldives' democratic revolution

In November 2008, in the first competitive presidential election since 1978, the electorate voted out President Gayoom, and relegated the DRP to the opposition. The triumphant party was the first opposition party formed during the Gayoom era, in 2004: the Maldives Democratic Party (MDP). How did a largely

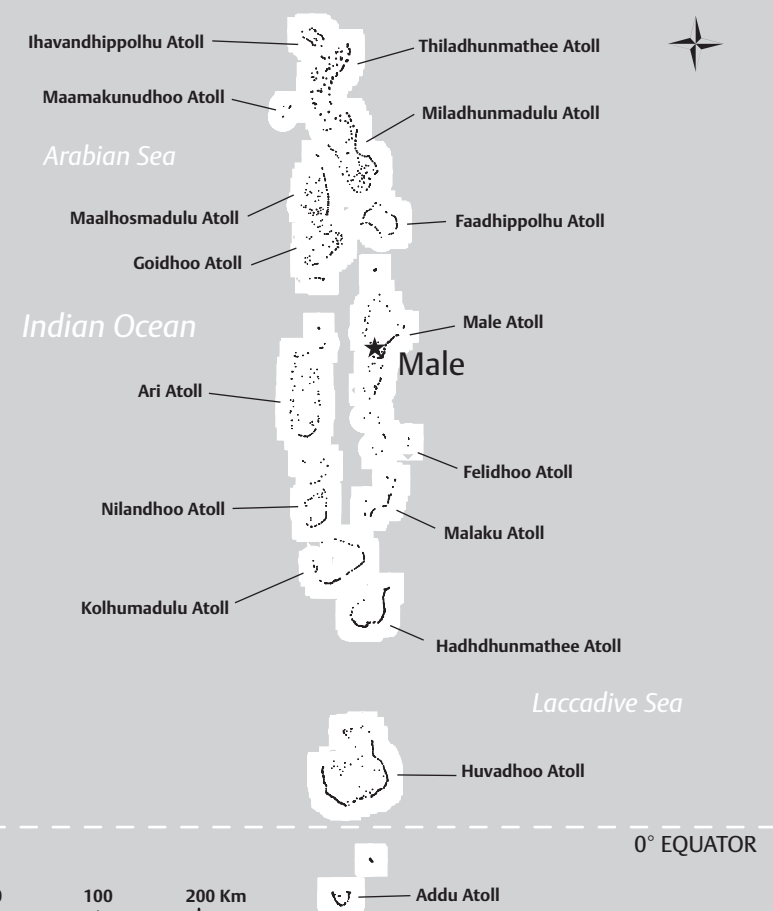
quiescent and apolitical populace produce an opposition movement culminating in a protest party able to wrest power from a highly entrenched regime, the head of which controlled the press and media, presiding over a system of law and security favorable to economic development, without meaningful political reform over several decades?

Although the small-scale and scattered resistance, dealt with by repressive measures, did not begin with the beating to death of Evan Naseem, democratic activists cite this event as a tipping point at which popular acquiescence to autocratic politics diminished, and was swept away by outrage against police abuse and the excessive (and unusually fatal) use of force by the state. Naseem was killed by officers of the National Security Services (the NSS) in Maafushi prison in September 2003; the killing caused a prison riot, which was forcefully suppressed. In August 2004, a large public gathering commemorating Evan Naseem took place in Republic Square, the central plaza on the north side of Male' that is bordered by the police headquarters, the formidable NSS compound, and the National Mosque, and which is in close proximity to the President's Office on the coastal road, *Thakurufaanu Magu*. President Gayoom ordered the police to disperse the crowd. Two hundred demonstrators were arrested and subjected to various forms of mistreatment, including assault, food deprivation and in some cases sexual abuse, while detained. The incident became known as 'Black Friday.'

In December of the same year, the tsunami triggered by a submarine earthquake off the coast of Indonesia, flooded some of the Maldivian islands, including Male', inflicting property damage and a number of deaths. The inability of the government to protect its citizens from the flooding, and the resulting self-reliance – including the theft of sandbags from construction sites by normally law-abiding citizens – purportedly helped to motivate resistance and political opposition.

Six months later, in June 2005, the Gayoom administration lifted the ban on political opposition parties. Mohammad Nasheed (also known as 'Anni') promptly publicly declared the secret MDP, whose main mission had been to criticize and undermine President Gayoom and his regime, from the safety of exile in Salisbury, England, where Nasheed and his colleagues based themselves and established an anti-regime newspaper, *The Dhivehi Observer*. Nasheed revisited Republic Square on the first anniversary of Black Friday, in August 2005; he was arrested and imprisoned, not to be released until a year later in the summer of 2006. The public received him as a hero, and he began to enjoy a career as a populist leader – one who clearly knows how to work a crowd.

Support for the MDP grew, although it remained concentrated in the urban center of Male'. The geography of the Maldives poses a severe test for political organizers, especially for a party with a short history, unlike the decades and resources the DRP had at its disposal. Of the small proportion of islands that are populated, they are sparsely so, and widely dispersed; costly and limited air travel and extremely slow travel by sea between the atolls increases the challenge. And yet the MDP had to penetrate the outer islands, which had been controlled by President Gayoom due to his ability to appoint *khatibs* and atoll chiefs, as Male' constituted at most a third of the national population,



The Gayoom regime was the victim of its own success; high literacy and economic development helped build a growing middle class that displayed a greater interest in politics.

which was obviously not enough to win an election against the incumbent with his historic control over the poorer and less educated populations in the outer atolls.

The Gayoom administration did not grant the MDP any opportunity to rehearse for a campaign or indeed for any form of electoral contestation until August 2007, when the government proposed a referendum on the political system of the Maldives, with a choice offered between the existing presidential form, or conversion to a parliamentary electoral system. The referendum did not expressly admit candidates or political parties. President Gayoom called for this referendum as an item in his own 'roadmap to reform,' which he touted as a path that would guide the Maldives to liberal democracy. Arguably, he also advanced the referendum as an attempt to weaken the opposition and dampen dissent that had emerged in the relative turbulence of the preceding three years. An additional component of this reform package was a Special Majlis to consider revisions to the constitution and ultimately to amend it in its entirety, with the current constitution the result. To this observer, the intent of both constitutional revision and the referendum was to buttress the status quo, and to demoralize or mitigate the popularity of the MDP, as President Gayoom could reasonably have calculated that the electorate would opt for the familiarity of the presidential system.

It was evident from observations at the time that the subtleties of the parliamentary or presidential systems were confusing to, if not lost altogether on, most Maldivians, even in Male'. The pro-Presidential camp consisted, unsurprisingly, of the DRP and the President's Office, although the literature they distributed on the streets was couched as non-partisan and informational only, without any explicit party affiliation. By contrast the only active opposition party, forced into the parliamentary camp (as the only alternative to the President), more openly expressed a party identity, complete with a campaign color (yellow) and insignia in evidence (a thumbs-up sign with the words "barulamanee" – denoting the Parliamentary option – in caption). During the run up to the referendum, the MDP developed an elaborate block to block organization within Male', and began to diffuse among outer islands using traditional Maldivian boats (dhoni) refashioned into campaign/party boats. President Gayoom's calculations were correct in that the presidential system prevailed; an apparent vote for stasis and for President Gayoom personally. Although this was a setback for the MDP, and many in Male' expressed disappointment and frustration, the process was in retrospect a valuable rehearsal that allowed the party personnel and volunteers to gain organizational skills and develop greater contact with the electorate at large, albeit over a compressed time-frame.



Above: The capital of the Maldives, Male'.
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With the opposition losing its effort to exclude, on constitutional grounds, President Gayoom, and the office that he had occupied for nearly three decades, the incumbent mounted his own attempts to rehabilitate himself, complete with the creation of a new campaign symbol: a hand, with palm facing outwards. The meaning of this symbol was highly contested and ridiculed; was it the hand of Fatima, or a hand stopping change? President Gayoom made visits to many islands, adopted a theme song, and held rallies with live music and light shows. On voting day, 28 October 2008, there were some reports of fraud, although international observers were present. The turn-out was a remarkable 85% (with over 209,000 eligible voters). Six parties competed in the first round; only two, with the highest number of votes, would be allowed to proceed to the second round. The results were:

Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party (DRP)	incumbent (40%)
Maldives Democratic Party (MDP)	Mohammad Nasheed (25%)
New Maldives	Hassan Saeed (16%)
Republican Party	Gasim Ibrahim (15%)
Islamic Democratic Party (IDP)	Umar Naseer (1.5%)
Social Liberal Party (SLP)	Ibrahim Ismail (< 1%)

The second round thus involved the DRP and the MDP; it took place early the following month. The MDP entered into an alliance with the SLP, the New Maldives, and the Republican Party; the IDP refused to support any other party and withdrew from the presidential race. The results were a significant victory for the MDP led by Mohammad Nasheed (54%); he and his running mate, Mohammad Waheed, were sworn in on 11 November 2008.

However, at time of press, President Nasheed resigned the Presidency, or was forced out in a coup executed by the police and NSS. The former Vice President Mohammad Waheed replaced him. It is impossible to say whether this development means the thorough dissolution of a democratic politics in the Maldives, or a temporary reversion.

Explanations of the electoral revolution

The traditional indicator of two alternations of power to constitute a change in regime as a transition to democracy was not met in the Maldives. Nevertheless, what does this little known case of electoral revolution add to political science literature? What hypotheses does it generate and what theories may help to explain it? Setting aside issues of scale and locality, which limit the ability to generalize from this single rather unique case, the initial electoral revolution in the Maldives tests several explanatory factors advanced by democratization theorists.

Islamic parties and identity did not play a significant causal role in the revolution; the one explicitly Islam-identified party (the IDP) has at no time been an important political player, as its electoral results reflected. While a constitutionally Islamic state (both before and after the initial change in regime), insofar as Islamic discourse or identity possess any explanatory power with reference to the Maldives' modern political history, it is as an explanation for the durability of the Gayoom regime. Himself an *'alim*, educated at al-Azhar in Cairo, and taking his first teaching position in Kano, Nigeria, President Gayoom made frequent pronouncements on Islamic ethics and theology. He also regulated activities and speech in mosques through a governmental Ministry of Islamic

Affairs. Whether this Islamic dressing aided and sustained his regime is an unknowable counter-factual. However, the regime's eventual defeat and the forms of resistance that it met reveal the oft-noted double-edged character of a religion-based state ideology. For example, President Gayoom was unusually and publicly criticized for supporting the legality of music, and allowing alcohol to be served on resort islands.

Unsurprisingly, following his electoral loss, President Gayoom never explained the motives behind his 'roadmap to reform' or the political liberalization that led to his downfall, beyond asserting the desirability of a style of 'guided' democracy for the Maldives. Was external influence or pressure on the regime a contributing factor? The Maldivian government and the MDP each maintained ties with British MPs, playing host to them during visits; the MDP and the larger democracy movement, of which it was a part, became a subject of discussion in the British Parliament, but the actual impact on the domestic political outcome of this most influential among international players, Britain, appears to have been limited. The U.S. made no public statements against the Gayoom regime and did not publicly promote democracy, nor did it encourage or aid the MDP; U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake stated that he met with both the government and opposition groups in 2007, although he did not publicly lend support to the democracy movement in the Maldives, seeking instead to maintain friendly ties with the current regime. Even though NGO's (e.g., the Open Society Institute, various human rights organizations, the U.N., the Red Cross) maintained a presence in Male' in the run up to the election, they made little impact and generally cooperated with the regime.⁶ President Gayoom did suffer some international pressure and criticism, mainly from foreign media (memorably, the BBC), for his human rights record and his apparent reluctance to hold elections earlier, or to allow spirited opposition and dissent. Whether or not such censure reduced his willingness to continue in government cannot be determined.

One central causal factor explaining the transfer of power in the Maldives is almost certainly that the MDP made a private or tacit bargain with Maumoon Gayoom, allowing him to remain in the Maldives, and to continue his leadership of the DRP in opposition. It is difficult to decipher what Gayoom's own position and intentions were from his public statements. For his part, Nasheed consistently struck a forgiving and conciliatory tone, stating (against the wishes of many Maldivians) that Maumoon Gayoom would stay in the Maldives, and that his treatment was a test of the nascent Maldivian democracy, and that Gayoom could continue to be active in politics. However, the terms of the bargain between the MDP and then President Gayoom are not clear.

The peaceful conduct of the campaign and the transfer of power is consistent with the recent history of the Republic of the Maldives, where the populace has almost without exception avoided resorting to violence, despite suffering a frankly oppressive political and legal order. Although gang and drug-related violence and other low-level street crime is a perennial issue in the press, violence is rare and when it does occur it seldom involves weapons, and almost never firearms. A very rare exception was a bombing in Sultan's Park in September 2007, which injured several foreign tourists. In addition, in December 2007, Gayoom was the

target of an assassination attempt while campaigning at a DRP rally on Hoarafushi; the would-be assassin, concealing a knife under a Maldivian flag, lunged at the President only to be stopped, not by his security detail but by a Boy Scout who was standing nearby and who was subsequently celebrated as a minor celebrity and national hero.

The theorized correlation between a substantial, growing middle class and democracy is a plausible component in the transition's explanation. Relative to the rest of South Asia, the Maldives is comparatively wealthy, although the wealth is not evenly distributed and the prominence of resorts and high-end tourism preserves this status quo – with substantial revenue flowing directly to government rents and foreign companies, but paying low wages to Maldivians and foreign workers. The Gayoom regime was the victim of its own success; high literacy and economic development helped build a growing middle class that displayed a greater interest in politics and a capacity to organize than had been evident in the earlier decades of President Gayoom's administration. For instance, the political organizers of the MDP were disproportionately college educated, i.e., more educated than the average Maldivian, and their educational credentials implied that they were from relatively more prosperous families or beneficiaries of a government or other grant, which had allowed them to study abroad.

The Maldives, a rather obscure country due to its location and geography, is nevertheless known to the outside world, most likely for its tropical beaches and exclusive resorts, and perhaps also for its extreme exposure to rising sea levels and world climatic transformations. However, the politics of the country, while idiosyncratic and evolving with some detachment from the rest of the South Asian region and larger global context are, as the events of the last few years (and days) demonstrate, dynamic, unpredictable, and of not insignificant interest to the study of socio-political and democratic change.

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Notes

- 1 Island and population statistics taken from the Maldives Department of Planning; <http://tinyurl.com/7efq57e> and <http://tinyurl.com/6ryyze> (accessed 15 September 2011).
- 2 Didier, Brian, and Edward Simpson. Fall 2005. 'Islam Along the South Asian Littoral'. *Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World Review*. 16, p. 43.
- 3 According to Ibn Battutah, who lived in the Maldives 1332-1334 and wrote about the institutionalization of Islam in his *Rihlah*.
- 4 Dheena Hussain, transl., *Functional Translation of the Constitution of the Republic of the Maldives: 2008*. Downloaded from the Ministry of Legal Reform, Information, and Arts: <http://tinyurl.com/7wwsu8> (accessed on 25 September 2009)
- 5 cf. Bratton, Michael, and Nicolas Van de Walle, July 2004. 'Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa' *World Politics*. 46: 4, p. 459.
- 6 Public meeting on US-Maldives relations, in October 2007, at Hotel Nasandhura in Male'.

“Like tenderloin in a cow”



At an international conference at a Chinese university in 2011, I sat next to a sixtyish year-old man who could not understand English, but was eager to follow foreign speakers' presentations. He asked me to translate. Looking more like a businessman or retired official than an academic, this man, Shi Anda,² turned out to be a so-called “grassroots scholar” (*minjian xuezhe*); a term applied to the growing number of individuals in China trying to assert themselves as researchers outside the university and academic institutional system.

Nyíri Pál

SIGNALLING THE GROWING FREEDOM of Chinese academic exchanges and/or Mr Shi's favourable credentials or connections, his paper proposal had been accepted by the organisers. Yet they were clearly concerned that he might say something out of line. Before it was Mr Shi's turn to speak, he asked me to translate his talk into English. One of the organisers – hoping that I would understand what particular sensitivities she had in mind – then took me aside and asked me to tune down any sharp comments that he might make.

As it turned out, Mr Shi was indeed both a businessman and a former official, as well as an amateur photographer and cultural activist. He was accompanied by the conference representatives of a China-based Kachin group called Jinghpaw-Land Cultural Exchange Committee (www.jinghpawland.org; accessed September 2011). They did not give a presentation, but distributed to participants a printed text that charged China, which had recently agreed with the Burmese junta to build several large dams in Kachin State, for ignoring the interests of the people. Mr Shi's richly illustrated presentation focused on his past travels in Kachin State and – no doubt to the organisers' relief – it eschewed politics. But he had brought along some of his own unpublished articles, which praise earlier Chinese help for the Kachin and other borderland insurgencies and criticize China's recent marginalisation of these groups (e.g. Shi 1998).

Other articles (e.g. Shi 2006) told the story of Mr Shi's family, a lineage of Chinese-appointed Lahu chiefs (*tusi*) in Lancang County on Yunnan Province's border with Burma. According to these, his father, the last *tusi*, who had been educated in Japan and acceded to the title in 1937, liaised with British

officers stationed in Yunnan on behalf of China's Kuomintang government. After the Kuomintang's defeat, he went to Taiwan, while both of his younger brothers served with the Kuomintang forces that remained in northern Thailand after their retreat from mainland China (see e.g. Chang 2001). Unlike family members of other Kuomintang officers, however, those of the *tusi* who remained on the mainland received privileged treatment as “key subjects of united front work” – until the Cultural Revolution, when they became the target of a struggle campaign directed by the provincial Revolutionary Committee.

In Lancang County, some 2300 households were raided in 1969 by a work team dispatched to root out class enemies and counterrevolutionaries (cf. Schoenhals 2004: 38-39). Mr Wang and his sister, however, had been resettled in Kunming and gone to university. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, Mr Wang joined the Red Guards and travelled to Peking to see Chairman Mao. In his absence he was accused of crossing the border to defect to the enemy, and his Red Guard group declared a reactionary organisation. Later, he was rehabilitated and transferred to a remote area of northern Yunnan. Mr Shi went on to work at the provincial library and the cultural bureau while producing numerous writings on Burma and the Lahu. In the 1990s, he became an advocate of local Chinese governments' cooperation with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) splinter groups and their Kachin allies across the border to eradicate opium production and facilitate Chinese investment in their areas. In 1998, he produced a report for the provincial government praising these efforts, which were seen with ambivalence by the provincial and especially the central government.³ After retiring, Mr Shi remained active in advocating contacts with these special regions even as the

central government shifted away from them. He also founded a number of associations promoting various aspects of “minority culture” and took up the fight to have his father rehabilitated as a patriot who had fought against the Japanese.

“Bad class backgrounds” and overseas connections

Compared to the Korean War, the assistance to the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, or the 1979 war with Vietnam, China's armed intervention on the side of the Burmese People's Army (BPA) between 1968 and 1975 is a relatively marginal, though protracted, instance of the Chinese Communists' military engagements abroad. It is, however, distinctive in that it took place during the decade of the Cultural Revolution and subsequent mass repression, which is generally seen as the most self-isolating period of China's modern history, but which also witnessed large-scale Chinese development projects in Africa (see Snow 1988, Monson 2009). The engagement in Burma was unique during this period, in that it allowed individuals who had not been officially vetted, to leave the Chinese mainland in a way that was officially sanctioned or at least tolerated. The motivations of those volunteers who chose this path showed a complex mix of resentment against and support for the regime and its ideology.

According to a former fighter's possibly inflated estimate, a total of some 30 thousand volunteers from China joined the BPA between 1968 and 1978 (Wang 2011:9). At first, in addition to military advisors from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), Chinese volunteers for the BPA were recruited at special stations in cities like Kunming and Nanning, in the two Chinese provinces nearest to Burma. In 1972, when there was a thaw in China's relations with the Burmese government, official

Above:
Former *zhiqing* BPA volunteers including Wang Xi (author of two volumes of memoirs), Shi Lei (a.k.a. Shi Anding, Shi Anda's younger brother), and Luo Changbao (deputy commander-in-chief of the National Democratic Alliance Army, Special Region 4, Eastern Shan State, Burma) discuss photographs from the 1970s. Courtesy of Shi Anda.

Memoirs of former Communist Party of Burma insurgents in today's China¹

recruitment stopped; but Chinese border guards continued to let young people volunteering for the BPA across the border. The beginning of recruitment coincided with the Chinese government's decision to remove former Red Guards from the cities to be "re-educated" in mostly remote villages as a way to curb the chaos and spontaneous violence of the Cultural Revolution, which, along with the ensuing state violence, was particularly severe in Yunnan (Falkenheim 1969, Solinger 1982, Schoenhals 2004). There were reportedly 800 thousand sent-down urban youths in the province, at least 300 thousand of whom came from outside it (Solinger 1982:643). These "educated youths" (*zhiqing* 知青), to use the term by which these rusticated young urbanites are known in China, accounted for the majority of BPA recruits. They were joined by some young people from the borderland minority groups and by older Han Chinese who had settled in the border region under the *zhibian* (支边, "helping socialist construction in the borderlands") campaign in the 1950s and 1960s.

As memoirs of former volunteers reveal, some of them were driven by the ideals of heroism and international solidarity they had been taught; a remarkably large number among these, however, came from "bad" class backgrounds – their parents labelled as rich peasants, landlords or other class enemies – and were frustrated by being denied admission to the "loyalist" Red Guard units or of being deemed unworthy of revolutionary action. Others wanted to escape the hardships of their forcible rustication (cf. Yang 2009) and/or persecution, which intensified in the post-1968 army crackdown; yet others were fleeing poverty. Although there were also those who simply used the escape to Burma as a springboard to the "free world", such people were, according to the memoirs, generally despised (e.g. Wang 2011:416).

The large number of *zhiqing* with "bad" class backgrounds, as well as of fighters from borderland ethnic minorities, who were being subjected by the Yunnan provincial government to a targeted class-struggle campaign in 1969-70 (Schoenhals 2004:40-44), among the volunteers of a communist guerrilla army beholden to the very powers at whose behest they were being hounded, is at first sight surprising. The CPB faithfully followed the rhetoric and, within its own ranks, the practice of China's political campaigns. Indeed, its work was overseen by Kang Sheng, the CCP's intelligence chief and a central figure both at the outset of the Cultural Revolution and in its ensuing suppression, as well as the architect of Chinese support for the Khmer Rouge (Schoenhals 1996). Yet, as a *zhiqing* from Kunming – whose father had been arrested for his alleged Kuomintang connections – remembers, BPA officers were not interested in the volunteers' class labels: "As long as you fought they didn't bother you." The possibility of getting away from the daily "struggle sessions" and achieve revolutionary "redemption", or at least less harsh treatment, and the alternative possibility of flight, provides a plausible explanation for the preponderance of volunteers who, at first sight, had little reason to sacrifice themselves for the cause of world revolution.

The same logic may help explain another striking feature of volunteer demographics: the presence of many youths who had returned to China from abroad, mostly Indonesia, as children in the 1960s, and were, before the Cultural Revolution, afforded certain privileges – for example, according to *zhiqing* recollections, girls were allowed to wear make-up and miniskirts! – but who became the target of violent struggle in 1966-68 in Kunming (Wang 2010:15-16). Company 2 of Battalion 3033 of the BPA consisted mostly of such returned overseas Chinese *zhiqing*, with fighters born in Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia who largely came from special overseas Chinese secondary schools (*huaqiao buxiao*, 华侨补校). For example, two sisters born in central Burma had been sent back to China by their parents in 1964 to study, when the Burmese junta closed down Chinese schools (Wang 2010:23). Perhaps incidentally, the presence of these youths in the BPA accorded with Kang Sheng's plan to make the CPB's base areas into a springboard of revolution in the rest of Southeast Asia.

Guerrillas into dissidents

The histories of Chinese BPA volunteers have yet to receive scholarly attention both in China, where the topic is more or less off-limits to researchers, and outside it. (The same applies to China's better-known interventions in Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia.) The last few years have witnessed a remarkable number of publications by ex-volunteers, published either online or in Hong Kong with the financial support of former comrades-in-arms. According to these recollections, volunteers from China were far better educated than local "tribal" soldiers and often given the hardest tasks. As one veteran puts it, they were "the best part of the BPA, like tenderloin in a cow" (Wang 2011:422). They had a very high casualty rate, but those who survived often made it up the ranks and, after the BPA collapsed in 1989, came to occupy leading positions

in the administrations of the special regions that succeeded it (Nyiri, forthcoming). Most of the surviving volunteers returned to China either in 1975, when they were officially recalled, or in the early 1980s, when Maoist persecutions ended and China's economy began to develop. Many of these returnees made use of their earlier contacts by becoming traders or business brokers engaging in the lucrative cross-border jade, timber, and presumably drug trade; but those without business acumen often had difficulties adjusting to life in reform-era China and became embittered by the lack of social, political and financial recognition of the services they had rendered to the Chinese Communist Party's former ally.

A forthcoming collection of essays (Toyota, Xiang, and Yeoh) examines the return of the emigrant in the framework of nation-state ideology, showing how return is important as an element of nationalistic discourse, but that there are also many instances in which society and politics have no place for the actual returned migrant. Unwanted returnees, like war veterans, may then become loose cannons, uncontrollable sources of various grievances, some apparently supporting a democratic political transition.

Another participant Mr Shi brought to the conference was a silent, frail-looking Han Chinese man I will call Mr Zhang. During the Cultural Revolution, Mr Zhang's father was imprisoned, so Mr Zhang, a Red Guard, and his sister were sent to the countryside near the Burmese border, from where they crossed into CPB territory. Mr Zhang says he did so "to survive. Surviving can be difficult in two ways: physically and spiritually," he added. Even so, he ended up fighting for the BPA. "There was no choice. Outside CPB territory we would have just been illegal immigrants," while inside it, "there was no point trying to be an ordinary dweller," as that would have meant the same poverty as in China, but without any social support network. In 1981, Mr Zhang followed his sister back to China. He believed Deng Xiaoping's promises, but later grew increasingly disappointed, "particularly that China did not go down the democratic path."

The experience of *zhiqing* returnees from Burma parallels that of veterans of other wars that are now preferred to be forgotten, although the politics of forgetting are rarely as hegemonic as they are in China. China's export of revolution has not been a permitted subject of public discussion since the end of the Mao era. Unlike veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars, who were regular soldiers engaged in international warfare, CPB volunteers have never been recognised in any official account of history.

A sense of having being betrayed by the party whose call for revolution they answered is one that Burma veterans share with other former Red Guards. While literary recollections of the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s focused on its violence and physical hardship, a refiguring of memory took place in the following decade. A spate of books emerged in which former *zhiqing* conjured up, as Guobin Yang (2003:267) puts it, "a past viewed as containing beauty, meaning, and purpose" and contrasted it with "a present increasingly dominated by economic inequality and instrumental rationality." A group of Yunnan ex-*zhiqing* are making efforts to set up a *zhiqing* museum. Yang sees *zhiqing* nostalgia as a platform for civil society organising. Although the current political positions of former *zhiqing* presumably vary, some former *zhiqing*-turned-dissidents, who then participated in the 1979 and 1989 democracy movements, have been increasingly vocal in calling for the recognition of genuinely democratic elements in the first years of the Cultural Revolution (see Liu 1996).

In an interesting rhetorical move, some ex-volunteers now describe their contribution not only in terms of "supporting world revolution," an ideal most portray as misguided if well-intentioned, but in terms of bringing modernity to backward tribal populations. As Zhang Jianzhang writes, "they led the Wa soldiers, who had come out of a primitive tribal society, to become a civilized army" (Wang 2011:8). Such a recasting of the *zhiqing*'s role is in line with the current, state-endorsed rhetoric of Chinese migrants' and investors' engagements in Burma and Laos (Nyiri, forthcoming), which includes the "opium-substitution" schemes Mr Shi continues to advocate. Thus recast, BPA volunteers appear as the forerunners of these Chinese initiatives to "open up" mainland Southeast Asia.

Setting a research agenda

The BPA's *zhiqing* volunteers are not only forgotten by Chinese society, they are also ignored by historians. Soldiers fighting on foreign soil are rarely among the favourite subjects of research. Communist guerrillas in the Cold War, from the Congo to Afghanistan to Malaya, are generally seen as pawns of a greater power game rather than taken seriously either as individuals or as the executors of a historical experiment in their own right. (As a consequence, the Communist experiment with the social transformation in Afghanistan, for example, is completely

ignored, as if post-Taliban Afghanistan had only a "tribal" heritage to build on.) Chinese volunteers in the BPA are seen as doubly "inauthentic": as Communist fighters and as foreigners. Yet their experiences, and their later attempts to transform themselves into brokers of licit and illicit international trade and into pioneers of modernization, attest to a neglected history of human connections between China and its neighbours, even as they tell the story of a changing society in China itself.

Research into the history of CPB volunteers carries a double urgency. First, the former volunteers are now in their sixties. Second, while accessing the special regions of Burma, where much of CPB documentation is still located, is not straightforward, chances are that these documents will not survive the regions' reincorporation into the Burmese state, a scenario now largely accepted as inevitable.

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Notes

- 1 Some of the ethnic Burman former leadership of the Communist Party of Burma also live in China, under a de facto asylum arrangement implemented in the 1980s. This article does not deal with them.
- 2 Mr Shi has asked me to use his real name.
- 3 On the recent changes in China's policies towards Burmese insurgent groups, see Guo (2007), International Crisis Group (2009, 2010). These analyses see the "opium-substitution" subsidies from China – as well as from the United Nations – as a form of investment and trade promotion that did contribute to the economy of the special regions, but not to the eradication of drugs.

Civil war in Sri Lanka

In April 2011, the UN released a report on human rights violations during the last phase of the 26-year-long Sri Lankan civil war, in which 80,000 to 100,000 people were killed. While the document is comprehensive in its summary of the culmination of the war, its understanding would be incomplete without knowing the historical context of the conflict between the nation's two major ethnic groups.

Anshuman Rawat

BASED GENEROUSLY UPON CLASSICAL WORKS such as *Mahavamsa* ('Great Chronicle', a historical poem in the Pali language), the earliest historical accounts of Sri Lanka date back to 5th Century B.C., when Sinhalese, the largest ethnic group of Sri Lanka, are said to have arrived on the island from the present day Indian state of Orissa. Much later, around 3rd Century B.C., Tamils, the nation's second largest ethnic group, started arriving from India's present day state of Tamil Nadu. Over the following centuries, the Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils are said to have fought for domination of the island.

With the arrival of the Portuguese, 1505 marked the onset of western colonial rule on the island. Founding a fort in Colombo in 1517, the Portuguese gradually took control of the entire coastal areas. Their rule continued till 1658, when they were forced out by the Dutch, who established control over the nation, except the central kingdom of Kandy. Finally, in the last chapter of colonial rule, Sri Lanka came under the control of the British Empire in 1796. Though the British annexed Colombo and Jaffna quickly, it was only in 1815 that they were able to gain control over Kandy.

The documentation of the colonial period by western authors is significant because it throws light on the large numbers of kingdoms, of varying linguistic and religious currencies, in Sri Lanka at the time of the arrival of colonial rulers – and by extension, since ancient times. This is often cited by Tamils to counter any claim of solitary right of the Sinhalese on the nation. One of the historical accounts of the period that is used by Tamils and disputed by Sinhalese is the 'Cleghorn Minute'. In June 1799, Sir Hugh Cleghorn, the first British Colonial Secretary of Ceylon, in his letter to the British Government, wrote: "Two different nations, from a very ancient period, have divided between them the possession of the Island: the Sinhalese inhabiting the interior in its Southern and western parts from the river Wallouwe to Chilaw, and the Malabars (Tamils) who possess the Northern and Eastern Districts. These two nations differ entirely in their religion, language and manners."

Another account often cited by the Tamils, is a Dispatch to the British Colonial Secretary of State (1813) on the subject of the standing of Tamil language (and by extension, of Tamils) in Sri Lanka by Sir Robert Brownrigg, Governor of Ceylon: "As to the qualification required in the knowledge of the native languages, the Portuguese and Sinhalese only being mentioned excludes one which is fully necessary in the Northern Districts as the Sinhalese in the South. I mean the Tamil language, commonly called the Malabar language, which with a mixture of Portuguese in use through all the provinces is the proper native tongue of the inhabitants from Puttalam to Batticaloa northward inclusive of both these districts. Your Lordship will therefore, I hope have no objection to my putting Tamil on an equal footing of encouragement with the Sinhalese."

The aforementioned accounts, which are soundly brushed aside by the Sinhalese, illustrate the fact that the history of conflict over languages and the Sinhalese & Tamil identities is many centuries old. And yet, for a brief period, Sinhalese and the Tamilians had buried their differences and joined hands

to form the Ceylon National Congress in 1919. The catalyst was the common desire of winning independence from the British. However, the party was soon divided along ethnic lines. Many historians, K. M. de Silva being one, blamed the refusal of the Ceylon Tamils to accept minority status for the breakup of the party - the case in point being the outright rejection of the Donoughmore Commission's constitution by the Tamil leadership.

Published in June 1928, the Donoughmore constitution was a significant milestone in global history too, as it was the only instance in the British Empire outside the 'white dominions' of Australia, South Africa and Canada that enabled general elections with adult universal suffrage (right to vote) – thereby bestowing to a non-caucasian colony of the Empire the right to undertake one-person, one-vote and the power to shape the local polity. However, All Ceylon Tamil Congress, the first Sri Lankan Tamil political party, strongly opposed the Constitution, by terming it as "death to the minorities", while sticking to the demand for a 50-50 representation (50% for the Sinhalese and 50% for other ethnic groups) in the State Council.

While more welcoming than the Tamils, the Sinhalese too were not happy with the Donoughmore Constitution's stipulation of a committee system of government, which was meant specifically to address the multi-ethnic problems of Sri Lanka, and under which, no one ethnic community could dominate the political arena. Instead, every government department was to be overseen by a committee of parliamentarians drawn from all the ethnic communities. Nevertheless, amidst the discontent, the first State Council of Ceylon, largely run by a Sinhalese-led cabinet, came into effect on 7 July 1931, on the basis of the constitution. It was followed by the second State Council in 1937.

One of the significant milestone events of the 1930s was the first Sinhala-Tamil riots in Navalpitiya in 1939 – said to be centred around G.G. Ponnambalam-led Tamil rejection of not only the Donoughmore constitution, but also of *Mahavamsa* scripture, which the Sinhalese held in high regard. In 1944, a Board of Ministers headed by D.S. Senanayake muted, what they termed as, the 'Ceylonese Vision' for Sri Lanka, which envisaged cooperation and participation of all the various ethnic and religious groups in nation building. It led to the formation of the Soulbury Commission, which eventually ushered in Dominion status and Independence to Sri Lanka in 1948, with Senanayake becoming the first Prime Minister of the country.

One of the major moves of his government, which has significant bearing on the subject of Sinhala-Tamil conflict, was the introduction of the Citizenship Act of December 1948 and the Parliamentary Elections Amendment Act of 1949, which effectively made non-citizens of the Tamil plantation labourers, who then formed about 10% of the national population, and deprived them of their vote. When he died in 1952, his son Dudley Senanayake took his place. However, the Hartal of 1953, which was a massive countrywide protest (primarily) against the abolition of subsidy on rice, forced Dudley to resign from his post. And this political turbulence led to the politics and policies that put oil into the fire of the nation's ethnic conflict.

In 1956, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike led the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) to victory and introduced the 'Sinhala Only Act', which mandated Sinhala, the language of the majority

community, as the sole official language of the nation. At the same time other measures were introduced that sought to bolster the Sinhalese and Buddhist positions. This led to sharp protest from the Tamil community, which, under the leadership of Tamil Federal Party launched a *Satyagrah* (non-violent protest) campaign. It led to Sinhala-Tamil riots, in which more than a hundred Tamils were said to be killed.

In 1957, the government tried to dilute the Act with the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, which would have made Tamil the administrative language in the Tamil-speaking north and east regions. However, it was abandoned because of protests made by Sinhala nationalists and Buddhist monks. The following year, in 1958, another instance of Sinhala-Tamil riots left more than two hundred Tamils dead and scores of Tamils displaced from their homes. In 1959, amidst simmering tension on the issue, Bandaranaike was assassinated by a Buddhist monk.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the widow of the deceased PM then became the world's first woman PM and gave impetus to socialist economic policies and strengthened relations with the then Soviet Union and China. In 1972, the country became a republic and changed its name to Sri Lanka (from Ceylon). It also gave Buddhism the primary place as the nation's religion – thereby antagonizing minority groups, especially Hindu Tamils. Four years later in 1976, and as tensions increased in the Tamil-dominated north and east regions, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was born, setting out to fight a violent campaign to bring about an independent state for Tamil People.

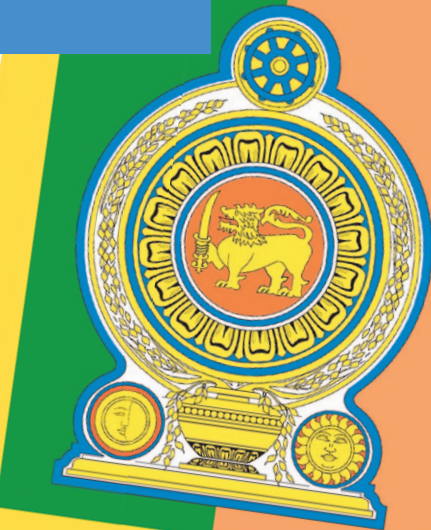
However, it was the separatist Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) party, formed in the same year, but which instead believed in winning an independent Tamil nation without violence, which won all seats in Tamil areas in the 1977 elections. The success of the secessionist party led to anti-Tamil riots, which left hundreds of Tamils dead. But by 1980, and even though the J.R. Jayawardene government had agreed to some autonomy in the northern parts, the LTTE continued to oppose any political solution to the issue. Soon, even non-violent parties like the TULF started to become marginalized. As a result, in 1983, barely 10% of locals voted in government elections due to the LTTE's boycott call.

On 23 July 1983, the LTTE ambushed a Sri Lankan Army Patrol and killed 13 servicemen – leading to the Black July riots against the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, in which over one thousand Tamils were reportedly killed and tens of thousands fled their homes. That period is considered to be the beginning of insurgency in Sri Lanka. The LTTE then set off a guerrilla war and started routinely attacking government targets, while at the same time capturing territory in north and east. The government too then responded with a heavy hand, resulting in major casualties on the Tamil side. Civil war broke out in pockets of the nation - the LTTE dubbed it as the 'First Eelam War'.

After a brief and unsuccessful attempt at peace talks with the LTTE in 1985, the government forces pushed the group into a territory around Jaffna in the north by 1987. In the same year, Sri Lanka initiated steps towards creating new councils for Tamils in the north and east and also signed an agreement with India to have the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) patrol in the Tamil dominated areas. But by 1990, the IPKF, which had already lost over one thousand soldiers in a seemingly bottomless pit of a war, left the country after Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, hoping to pave the way for negotiated settlement, ordered the IPKF to leave and opened negotiations



Genesis, culmination and the UN report



with the Tigers. But the LTTE soon broke away from talks and stepped up the violence by many notches – including the usage of suicide bombs – to capture more territory. The violence peaked with the assassination of PM Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 and Sri Lankan President Premadasa in May 1993.

One more round of peace negotiations took place after the victory of Sri Lanka Freedom Party's (SLFP) Chandrika Kumaratunga on the poll plank of settlement of the insurgency issue. However, in April 1995, the LTTE sank two navy boats. It started a six-year cycle of mayhem in which the government launched a massive military campaign that retook the Jaffna peninsula, while the LTTE responded with widespread attacks on government, army and Sinhala civilian targets. A raw nerve was touched when the LTTE also bombed Sri Lanka's holiest Buddhist site.

In 2002, the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE signed a Norway-brokered ceasefire that saw the decommissioning of weapons and the opening of roads linking the Tamil stronghold of Jaffna with the rest of the nation. More significantly, the government lifted the ban on the LTTE, while the latter dropped its demand for an independent Tamil nation. But, a year later, the LTTE again withdrew from talks, citing a lack of government support – although the military ceasefire stayed in effect. But in March 2004, things became complicated for the government when the LTTE's eastern military commander, Col. Karuna, split from the group. What followed were violent clashes between the two factions. Amidst the LTTE accusation of collusion between the government and Col. Karuna, the ceasefire eventually collapsed when Colombo was hit by a suicide bomb blast, the first such incident since 2001.

Even the grave human tragedy brought by a massive Tsunami in December 2004, which killed over thirty thousand people, could not bring the warring factions together, as a row erupted over the distribution of foreign aid, worth an estimated USD 3bn.

The final phase of the military conflict can be said to be the period when a state of emergency was enforced after the assassination of Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister in August 2005. Then, in November, Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was Prime Minister at the time, won the presidential elections. Amidst failed peace talks in Geneva in 2006, and the pull-out in 2008 of an international panel invited by the government to monitor investigations into human rights, the Mahinda Rajapaksa government carried out a massive military onslaught against the LTTE.

As the war continued, thousands of Tamil civilians were caught between the government army and the LTTE – and were killed by both sides. In 2009, according to United Nations estimates, about twelve hundred non-combatants (Tamils) were being killed each month! Eyewitness accounts talked of the use of cluster bombs, tanks, heavy artillery and even light aircraft across the LTTE stronghold during the last phase of the fight; even as United Nations political organs and bodies, by the UN's own admission, "failed to take actions that might have protected civilians".

In May 2009, government forces declared victory with the killing of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran, thus bringing an end to a 26-year-long insurgency. But the final round of military exercise received widespread global condemnation for alleged human rights violations by both sides. As evidence of serious human rights abuses and massive civilian casualties in the five-month offensive (which ended the war) kept mounting by the minute, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, under tremendous pressure from Human Rights activists and many government quarters,

Coming down equally hard on the LTTE, the report alleges that the militia used civilians as human shields. It states:

"February 2009 onwards, the LTTE started point-blank shooting of civilians who attempted to escape the conflict zone, significantly adding to the death toll in the final stages of the war. It also fired artillery in proximity of large groups of internally displaced people (IDPs) and fired from or stored military equipment near IDP or civilian installations such as hospitals. Throughout the final stages of war, the LTTE continued its policy of suicide attacks outside conflict zone."

The Panel, as stated in the report, found "credible allegations", which if proven, indicate that a wide range of serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law were committed, both by the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, some of which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Here follow the respective indictments of the two warring sides, listed in the report:

Credible allegations that comprise five core categories of potential serious violations committed by the Government of Sri Lanka:

1. Killing of civilians through widespread shelling;
2. Shelling of hospitals and humanitarian objects;
3. Denial of humanitarian assistance;
4. Human rights violations suffered by victims and survivors of the conflict, including both IDPs and suspected LTTE cadre; and
5. Human rights violations outside the conflict zone, including against the media and other critics of the Government.

Credible allegations against the LTTE associated with the final stages of the war reveal six core categories of potential serious violations:

1. Using civilians as a human buffer;
2. Killing civilians attempting to flee LTTE control;
3. Using military equipment in the proximity of civilians;
4. Forced recruitment of children;
5. Forced labour; and
6. Killing of civilians through suicide attacks.

The panel also made some pointed recommendations to all concerned parties – principal aspects that include investigations by an international panel into the alleged war crimes, short and long term accountability measures by the Sri Lankan government and even a comprehensive review of the actions (or the lack of them) of the UN during the war and the aftermath. Significantly, the panel also recommends reconsideration of the Human Rights Council's May 2009 Special Session Resolution (A/HRC/S-11/L.1/Rev.2) that congratulated Sri Lanka for ending the war, rather than calling for an investigation into mass civilian casualties.

While the reaction from Sri Lanka, expectedly, was swift and resounding in its rejection of the report as being "biased and flawed", Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said she hoped that the "disturbing new information (carried in the report) will shock the conscience of the international community into finally taking serious action".

Gordon Weiss, a former UN official in Sri Lanka, who has written a book on the conflict, said the report has exposed a "frontal assault on international law that demanded accountability". Equating it with the globally-condemned violations in the Bosnian war, he asserted that "the UN didn't do enough" and that the report makes the world body culpable of "failing to use the available casualty figures".

With a view of taking the findings ahead, experts suggest that one option for Ban Ki Moon would be to set up a commission of inquiry either at the International Criminal Court or another judicial body – as a possible first step toward a war-crimes prosecution. But with China most certain to exercise its veto power on the matter, this may be unlikely to work. All the same, other experts consider there to be an array of other mechanisms still at Ban's disposal, if he wishes to explore them. Read the complete 214-page UN report at <http://bit.ly/eq3uZb>

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appointed an Advisory Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka Allegations, in 2010. Comprising Marzuki Darusman, a former Indonesian attorney general, Yasmin Sooka, a South African human rights expert, and Steven Ratner, a US lawyer, the panel began its work in September 2010.

Over the next 6 months, the panel's primary task was to stay clear of partisan sources of information on incidents and casualties. An internal group, named the Crisis Operations Group took figures from the Regional Director of Health Services as the baseline. Simultaneously, information from National Staff of the United Nations and NGOs, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other sources, were used to cross-check and verify the baseline. At the end of the process, the panel submitted its findings to UN Secretary General in April 2011 in New York.

In its report, the panel has come down heavily not just on both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, but also on the UN itself, for failing to speak out forcefully enough on civilian casualties during the fighting.

The report mentions:

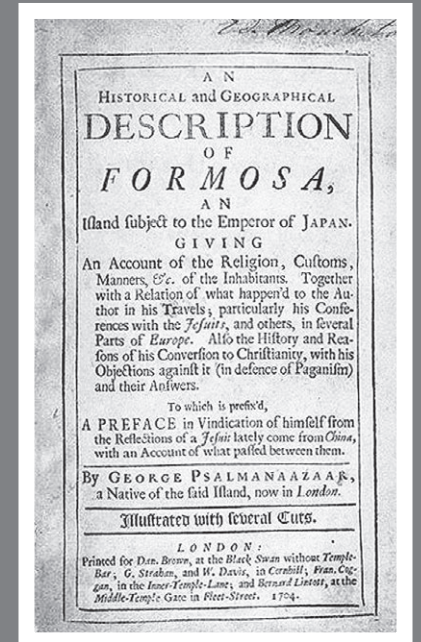
"Between September 2008 and 19 May 2009, the Sri Lanka Army advanced its military campaign into the Vanni using large-scale and widespread shelling in three consecutive No Fire Zones, where it had encouraged the civilian population to concentrate, even after indicating that it would cease the use of heavy weapons. It shelled the United Nations hub, food distribution lines and near the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ships that were coming to pick up the wounded and their relatives from the beaches."

The Government systematically shelled hospitals on the frontlines. All hospitals in the Vanni were hit by mortars and artillery; some of them were hit repeatedly, despite the fact that their locations were well-known to the Government. The Government also systematically deprived people in the conflict zone of humanitarian aid, in the form of food and medical supplies, particularly surgical supplies, adding to their suffering. [...] tens of thousands lost their lives from January to May 2009, many of whom died anonymously in the carnage of the final few days."

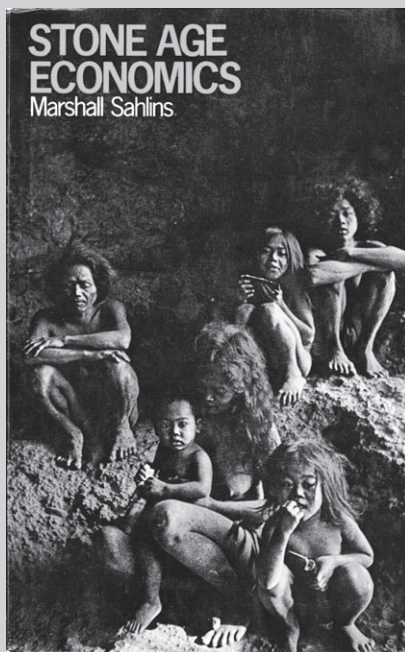
Science in a changing world

In 1703 the Frenchman George Psalmanazar travelled to London and claimed to be a native from Formosa. A year later he published a scientific book entitled *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa, an Island subject to the Emperor of Japan*, in which he gave an account of Formosan customs, language, geography and political economy. In Formosa, according to Psalmanazar, crocodiles and lions were common, and people rode on camels and ate snakes. His book was an enormous success. It went through two English editions and was translated into French and German. He was invited to Oxford University to lecture on his 'native' country. Skeptics occasionally questioned Psalmanazar, for example, on his physical appearance, but he cleverly deflected criticism: his skin was pale because the upper classes of Formosa lived in underground houses. Only in 1706 did Psalmanazar confess his fraud (Keevan 2004).

Gerard A. Persoon & Jan van der Ploeg



The Opinion



IN 1971, EMANUEL ELIZALDE, the head of the Philippine government agency tasked to protect cultural minorities, announced the discovery of a Stone Age culture on the island of Mindanao. Senior anthropologists, linguists and ethno-botanists studied these primitive people and lent credibility to Elizalde's claims. The Tasaday became world news when National Geographic Magazine published pictures of the peaceful, and strictly vegetarian, Tasaday in their caves. These iconic pictures were widely distributed in the popular and scientific literature; Marshall Sahlins famous book *Stone Age Economics* had, for example, a group of Tasaday on its cover for many years. In 1972, the Philippine government declared the land surrounding the Tasaday's caves as an ancestral domain, and closed the preserve to all visitors. After the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, it became clear that the Tasaday were a hoax, revealed by journalists to actually be local farmers, asked by Elizalde to act like Stone Age people. Interestingly there is still much confusion as to whether the Tasaday were a genuine primitive hunter-gatherer people or not. In 1987 the Philippine Congress investigated the case and declared that the Tasaday were 'real' (Headland 1992; Hemley 2003).

Scientific fraud and public distrust of science are obviously not new phenomena. Fiction claimed to be science is as old as science itself, and skepticism is an integral part of science. Nevertheless, scientific fraud has recently shocked the academic world in Asia and Europe. Incidents are certainly not limited to anthropology; recent cases of fraud in disciplines ranging from psychology to genetics seem to have done more damage than the fantasies of Psalmanazar and Elizalde. In some instances staff and students publicly voice their

doubts about the scientific rigor of the methods of their professor. In other cases peers fail to replicate results, or scientists have to retract their papers. The scientific community assures that such cases happen only rarely, and point to the self-healing capacity of scientific institutions and the quality of the peer-review process. But these assurances do not seem to convince the general public. On the contrary. Skepticism over details may undermine solid conclusions or discredit the value of substantial bodies of knowledge in the eyes of many.

Science has provided a phenomenal understanding of nature, and enabled people in Asia and Europe to master and manipulate the world. The benefits have been immeasurable; collectively, we live a longer, happier and healthier life than ever before in history. Technological advances provide economic opportunities, healthcare, food, safety and pleasure for billions of people around the globe. Science and technology have become indispensable and inextricable parts of modern society. However, science can no longer count on the unquestioning public support that it once enjoyed in the past. Citizens in Europe and Asia increasingly question the environmental risks and social impacts of scientific progress (Wynne 2006). Scientific knowledge is now often greeted with skepticism, distrust and sometimes even hostility. This loss of public authority and legitimacy of science poses a major challenge for scientists and policy makers in Europe and Asia.

During a roundtable, jointly organized by IIAS and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in October 2011 within the framework of Europe-Asia Policy Forum, scientists from various Asian and European countries discussed the changing relations between science and society. The discussion was initiated by a number of controversial cases from Asia and Europe that have eroded public trust in science and technology: the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis in the United Kingdom, the melamine milk poisoning scandal in China, and more recently the H1N1 pandemic in Europe and the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. By bringing together Asian and European scholars from different academic disciplines, the roundtable intended to highlight various perspectives on the public mistrust in science problem. Countries in Europe and Asia vary substantially in the degree of autonomy of scientific research, in the need to focus on policy-relevant themes, and in communications with the general public through the media.

Globalization, democratization and information technology are rapidly changing the way societies assess the validity of scientific claims. In the era of Google, YouTube and Facebook, George Psalmanazar and Emanuel Elizalde would perhaps be more easily exposed; but their claims would also find a much bigger audience. Science fails to respond to these fundamental societal changes. Scientific practices and norms are increasingly at odds with the demands of society. The internet makes it possible nowadays to distribute any type of information to large audiences at very low cost, but the world of science is still to a large extent focused on printed material, of which the review and production is time-consuming. The slow process of scientific knowledge construction is more and more in conflict with the urgent demands of decision-makers who want rapid, straightforward and clear answers, especially in cases of man-made or natural hazards.

Societies have multiple ways of assessing the validity of scientific knowledge. This is no longer the exclusive domain of the academia. The media, industry, government and social networks play an important role nowadays in how people perceive and assess the quality of scientific knowledge and science. These changes have important consequences for how society regards and values science and scientists. In the 19th and 20th centuries, scientists were regarded as virtuous people, of a special moral character (Shapin 2008). But in the 21st century scientists are considered ordinary people (at best).

A much better understanding is needed about how different societies assess scientific knowledge, and which roles journalists, politicians and public intellectuals play in shaping what Sheila Jasanoff (2007) has labeled 'civic epistemologies'. Science must take account of the practices, norms and values by which people test knowledge claims, especially when science helps underwrite significant collective choices. An analysis of these civic epistemologies can lead to a better understanding of science-society relations in different cultural contexts and contribute to the restoration of public trust in science.

NTU and IIAS, hopefully in collaboration with other partners, intend to explore this complex field of relations between science, the public, politics and the media, in order to generate a better understanding of how society is informed, understands and ultimately values science.

Gerard Persoon holds the IIAS chair for Environment and Development, in particular in relation to indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia. His research focus is on human-environment interaction in various types of environments but mainly of forest-dwelling peoples in Indonesia and the Philippines (persoonga@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

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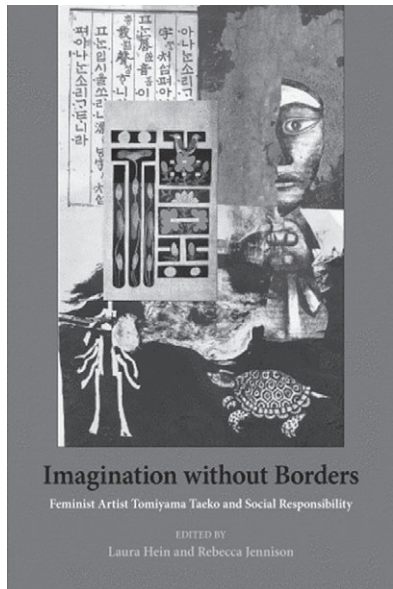
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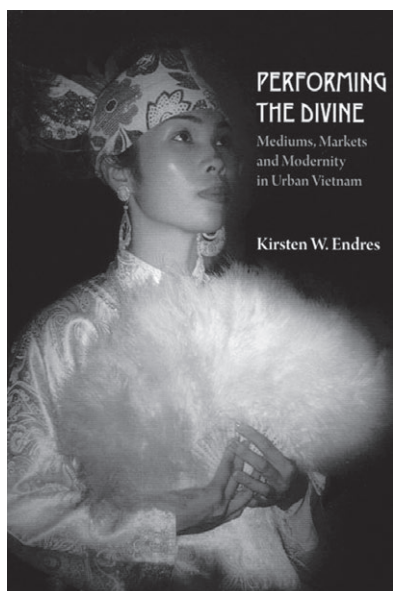
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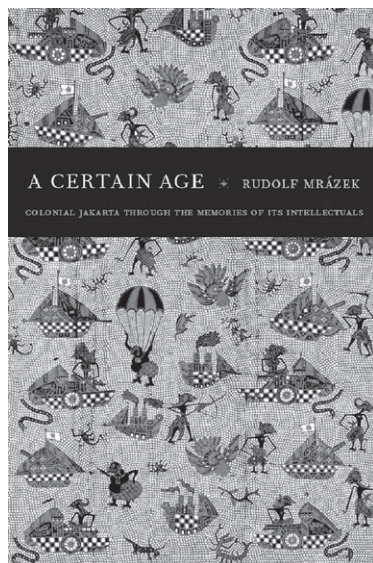
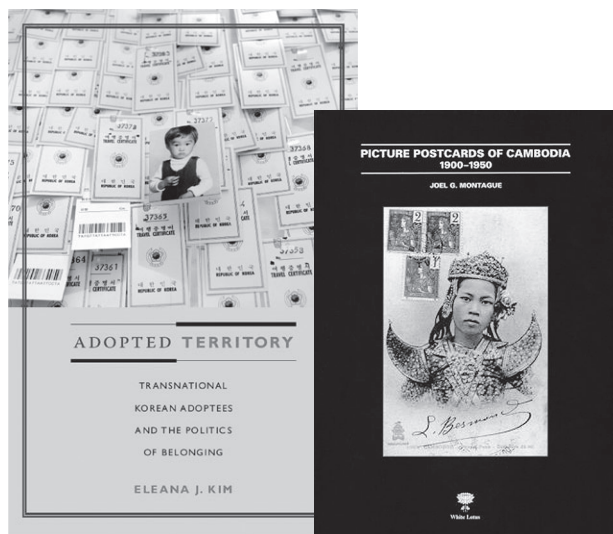
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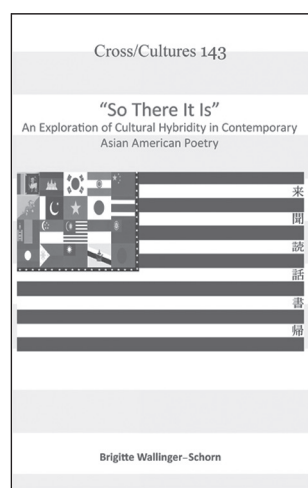
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Hybridity in Contemporary
Asian American Poetry**

Brigitte Wallinger-Schorn



In interpreting contemporary Asian American poetry, it is important to understand the cultural hybridity of Asian America identity, located at the interstices of the fixed identifications 'American', 'Asian American', and 'Asian'. This rootedness in more than one culture exposes the inapplicability of binary concepts (foreigner/national, etc.). Hybridity, opposing essentialism and 'the original', favors multivocality and ambivalence. The exploration of Asian American cultural hybridity is linked both to material realities and poetic manifestations.

Asian American hybrid subjectivity is explored through in-depth interpretations of works from well-established contemporary poets such as Kimiko Hahn, Marilyn Chin, Li-Young Lee, and Arthur Sze, as well as that of many new talents and hitherto neglected writers.

This study examines how language and power interrelate, with translation and linguistic fusion being two approaches adopted by hybrid authors in their creation of alternative discourse. Culturally hybrid subjectivity is independent of and at the same time interconnected with more than one culture, thus enabling innovative political and identitarian positions to be articulated. Also examined are such traditional poetic forms as the *zuihitsu*, the sonnet, and the *ghazal*, which continue to be used, though in modernized and often subversive guise. The formal liminal space is revealed as a source of newness and invention deconstructing eurocentric hierarchy and national myth in American society and expanding or undercutting binary constructs of racial, national, and ethnic identities.

A further question pursued is whether there are particular aesthetic modes and concepts that unite contemporary Asian American poetry when the allegiances of the practitioners are so disparate (ultimate geocultural provenience, poetic schools, regions in the USA, generations, sexual orientation, etc.). Wide-ranging interviews with Kimiko Hahn and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni on identity and roots, language and power, feminism, and the American poetry scene provide illuminating personal yet representative answers to this and other questions.

Amsterdam/New York, NY
2011. VIII, 316 pp.
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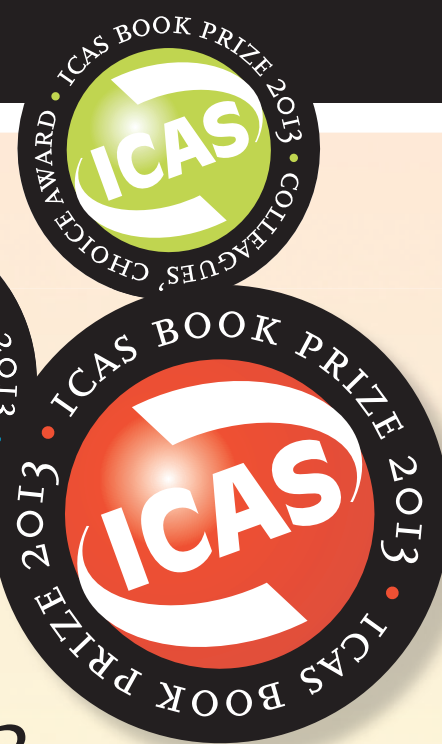
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Dharma

The author, one of the most applauded authorities in the field of Sanskrit literature (particularly the great Hindu epic *Mahābhārata*), explores how the concept of *dharma* developed and was affirmed in South Asia. Alf Hiltebeitel is an authority in the study of *dharma* and this text confirms his erudition. (An encyclopaedic volume titled *Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative* has been announced for publication in 2011 by Oxford University Press.)

Fabrizio M. Ferrari

Hiltebeitel, Alf. 2010.

Dharma.

Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

ISBN: 9780824834869

THE VOLUME IS PART OF A SERIES – ‘Dimensions of Asian Spirituality’ – that targets a non-specialist readership and is therefore an introductory text. However, *Dharma* is not an introductory volume – accurate and well-written as it may be. A good deal of previous knowledge is assumed. Undergraduate students, as well as average readers with an interest in Asian spirituality will struggle reading this book. This is an academic product that requires either the support of an instructor or a certain familiarity with South Asian history, Vedic culture, Hindu and Buddhist scriptures and related philosophical systems. Explanatory notes could have been helpful, but the book lacks an apparatus of notes. Instead Hiltebeitel provides the neophyte with translation of Sanskrit terms, a short glossary, an index, and a carefully selected list of references which – I am sure – will encourage and support readers to deepen their knowledge of *dharma*.

The structure of *Dharma* is carefully explained, but it is questionable. Hiltebeitel, after an extremely useful etymological analysis of the term *dharma* (including its Vedic antecedent, *dharma*) and cognate key-words (*mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*, *yoga*), introduces the reader to primary sources. These are presented as ten ‘scriptures’ (or, one should say, bodies of scriptures) in Sanskrit and Pali, and divided in two clusters. Cluster A includes: 1) early Buddhist texts; 2) *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*; 3) the edicts of Aśoka; 4) Gautama’s *Dharmasūtras*; and 5) *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtras*. Cluster B discusses *dharma* in: 6) the *Mahābhārata*; 7) the *Rāmāyaṇa*; 8) the *Dharmaśāstra* of Manu; 9) *Dharmasūtras* of *Vasiṣṭha*; and 10) the *Buddhacarita* of *Aśvaghoṣa*.

Hiltebeitel justifies such sequence by referring to historical data such as the reign of selected dynasties and war campaigns. Yet most connections are in fact thematic, not chronological. While this may sound obvious (or unavoidable) to the expert reader, the neophyte will find it confusing. For instance, Hiltebeitel begins with an examination of King Aśoka’s famous edicts (260-240 BCE), he goes back to Vedic culture (the *Rig Veda* is dated 1500-1000 BCE circa) and then jumps to the Maurya (circa fourth century BCE) and *Kuṣāṇa* dynasties (second century CE). A chronological table would have been appropriate.

A further problem emerges when one considers the fact that *dharma* is explored only within (certain forms of) Hinduism and Buddhism. Why have other Hindu and Buddhist traditions (e.g. Tantra) not been considered? And what about South Asian indigenous religions such as Jainism and Sikhism and their understanding of *dharma* (or *dharam*)? Overall the book gives the idea that *dharma* is a strictly Hindu and Buddhist concept.

The marginalisation of minority faith communities extends to the exclusion of peripheral regions of South Asia. The book contributes to perpetuate the false equation that ‘India is South Asia’ as the two terms are used interchangeably. Hiltebeitel states that: ‘The *Rigveda* is India’s oldest textual source [...]’ (19) while his geographical notion of South Asia (3) does not include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and – by extension – Myanmar and Tibet. The spirituality, religious practices and scriptures of all these countries have, in one way or the other, absorbed the



Above: Depiction of Viśvakarma – the Mahābhārata describes him as the lord of the arts, executor of a thousand handicrafts, the carpenter of the gods, the most eminent of artisans, the fashioner of all ornaments ... and a great and immortal god.

concept of *dharma* presented by Hiltebeitel, and contributed to its spread in surrounding areas, such as Central and Southeast Asia. In particular, given Hiltebeitel’s interest in *Buddha dhamma*, it is surprising he fails to include contemporary Bangladesh, which together with West Bengal, hosts an important Buddhist tradition and has produced a rich literature in both Sanskrit and vernacular.

Besides the above mentioned problems, I would like to note that most of the central chapters revolve around characters of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. No doubt Hiltebeitel is in his element. The analysis of *dharma* as constructed in the narrative cycles of the great Sanskrit epics is of great value. The author makes a very clear summary of the main episodes of both texts and then engages with an enlightening critical reflection about ways in which *dharma* is lived and interpreted by the characters according to their role, gender, social position, skills and flaws. Hiltebeitel magisterially discusses both scriptures (though very different in nature) as actual manuals of *dharma*. This includes references to one of the most popular Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the dominant *bhakti* (devotional) tradition. It is therefore regretful that he does not feel the urge to mention other cultural contexts. In South Asia *dharma* is a living concept deeply embedded at all level of Indic societies. It insinuated itself across different religious traditions (from tribal cultures to non-indigenous minority faiths like Islam, Judaism and Christianity). Further to that, *dharma* is not confined to Sanskrit/Pali scriptures, as the lay reader may believe. Vernacular literatures and oral narratives across the subcontinent have engaged with localised representations and exegeses of *dharma*. For instance, there is no analysis of gods linked to *dharma* (or deities actually called ‘*Dharma*’), such as Yama, but also folk variants of *Sūrya*, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*. (In Bengali folklore, *Dharmarāj* is one of the most popular gods who is the object of several auspicious poems – the *dharmamaṅgalkāvyā*.)

Hiltebeitel, in his last chapter, does mention the evolution of *dharma* in the twenty-first century, but this fails to meet expectations. He just refers in one short paragraph (164) to Jack Kerouac’s *Dharma Bums*, the US show *Dharma and Greg*, the acclaimed television series *Lost* and the documentary film *Dhamma Brothers*. Colonial and post-colonial discourses on *dharma* are not discussed, as well as its globalisation and affirmation (also exploitation) in the most disparate contexts (e.g., politics, economics, health and support services, entertainment, visual arts, education, the World Wide Web, etc.). Hiltebeitel’s exploration of the ‘*Dharma* for the Twenty-First Century’ is inextricably bound to the Hindu and Buddhist classical scriptural traditions.

This book gives a partial introduction to *dharma* and the spirituality related to it. I am well aware that an introductory text could not possibly address all of the aspects of a multi-faceted founding concept of South Asian culture like *dharma*. Hiltebeitel’s *Dharma* – despite the problems I have highlighted – is an academic work, which wisely summarises important aspects of two Indic religious and cultural traditions. By reading the jacket, the editor’s preface and the introductory material (Ch. 1), one might expect a somewhat different work than *Dharma* happens to be. Although key features are discussed with sufficient clarity, the author never feels the necessity to go beyond the limits established by the Sanskrit and Pali classical traditions. This is, however, a compelling work, rich in instructive narrative and strategic in supporting teachers in their effort to foster the interest of future generations of students of South Asian cultures and religions.

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A Chinese scroll through time

The Night Banquet is a tenth century hand scroll attributed to the painter Gu Hongzhong. A well-known statesman Han Xizai [902-970] is the main character, depicted in a number of scenes on this scroll. Han was famous for his parties, as we can read in an imperial painting catalogue from around 1120: "Rumors circulated inside the court and [Southern Tang Emperor Li Yu] regretted not being able to see Han's famous parties with his own eyes." The emperor found a solution for his problem, and sent the painter Gu Hongzhong to act as his spy.

Lucien van Valen



Lee, De-Nin D. 2010.

The Night Banquet: a Chinese scroll through time.
University of Washington Press,
172 pp. hardcover, ISBN: 9780295990729

THE OBSERVATIONS BY GU resulted in a lively eyewitness depiction of the various ways in which Han and his entourage were seen engaging in the pleasures of music, food and women. The, in total five, scenes show some of these pleasures, but they also suggest that a lot more is going on than meets the eye. For example, in the periphery of the first scene we see a curtained bed with the covers slightly ruffled. On the opposite side of this first scene we see a women partly hidden by a painted screen watching the party. The story behind the implications of these elements are explained in this book as it reaches into the intimate details that are captured in the scenes of the scroll.

Lee starts her book with the question of the authenticity of the scroll. We can follow step by step her examination of textual evidence on the scroll, the external textual evidence and the visual evidence. The first chapter ends with a discussion of one final question: "We must consider whether a lost Southern Tang original is the basis for the extant Night Banquet." Several options follow, some are in favor of the scrolls authenticity while others vote for the possibility that this is a later reproduction of an older original. Each hypothesis is presented with ample proof.

The following chapters almost read like a 'detective' story. The book is a real page turner, as it gives the reader an broad impression of how the painting has been appreciated by different viewers and owners over a long stretch of time. During its existence the scroll has grown in length, as it had several colophons attached. There is an anonymous early addition with a lively description of Han's activities; the text is very clear in its critical view. Lee translates and carefully examines each colophon, to serve as a guide for the opinion or interpretation of the writer about the scenes as a whole, and of the story behind the imagery. A nice touch is the complete print out of these Chinese texts at the end of the book.

The focus in one of the chapters is called "The Confucian gaze", which is mainly concerned with the more or less proper conduct of the people in the scene. This Confucian gaze represents the critical approach of a viewer as he sees the Night Banquet in light of virtue and conduct. Parallel to that is another view: the "voyeuristic gaze". The voyeuristic gaze is equally strong, although now the viewer is attracted to and aroused by the scenes of worldly and sensual pleasure of music, wine and women. In a painting record, written in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, Tang Hou tells us that he had seen two versions of the Night Banquet, by Zhou Wenju and another by Gu Hongzhong, but he condemned the painting "not suitable for a scholars' study". There is one thing we can be sure of – only the high ranking and a well-educated elite was supposed to see, enjoy and understand such a painting.

For yet another point of view speaks a poem added in 1326 by Ban Weizhi. In this poem Ban refers to several well-known historic examples of strange behavior as he expresses a more positive interpretation of the deeds of Han; although Han's deeds look condemnable at first sight they may turn out to be of a very virtuous nature in the end.

In the anonymous colophon that was attached to the scroll in the early fourteenth century, the life of Han Xizai is described in detail, but the question remains how trustworthy this might be. The colophon's author makes clear that Han shamefully wasted his talents. Lee concludes on page 55: "Whatever the viewer's reactions to the Night Banquet may have been, the anonymous colophon effectively changes them." She argues that the addition becomes part of the original work and it is almost impossible to see the painting without this influence.

Lee takes us through the next period in time with new changes in the appreciation of the scroll when we come to the connoisseur who sees the scroll with its additions as a whole. This whole extended scroll is measured in an entirely different way for its historical and cultural value. Aside from the colophons, every owner puts his seal on the scroll – often more than one – therefore ownership by emperors and collectors can be traced through time. This habit of the elite makes the scroll valuable as a historical record as much as it is as a painting.

Above and below:
Details from the
painting on the scroll.

One of the last examples in the book is Zhang Daqian, as he had the scroll for a period of time before it returned to the collection of what is now the Palace Museum in Beijing. Zhang added several seals and two of his friends added colophons and seals. They are in all likelihood the last persons to do so. Since every new era brings a different way of looking at the scroll, this can be recognized in the present time. Today, preservation and conservation of historic art treasures would forbid any further extensions to the scroll.

In the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing the scroll can seldom be seen by the general public. On one of these rare occasions in 2002, I was lucky enough to see it on display. It was part of an exhibition of Early Treasures of Chinese painting in the Shanghai museum, as one of the finest examples of the period. The exhibition was held in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Shanghai Museum with 72 art treasures of the Jin, Tang, Song and Yuan dynasties on display. The exhibition attracted large crowds of Chinese, who jumped at the opportunity to see the paintings they so far only knew from reproductions in books. The dim lighting of the exhibition halls are proof of the precautions that are taken with these precious works. For protection and conservation of the fragile works of art, only 5000 visitors a day were allowed. Hence the total number of people that were able to see this exhibition was around 200.000, among them a couple of hundred foreigners. I think that the limited access to this type of hand scroll places an important task in the hands of the publishers of books and reproductions of such a scroll.

This brings me to the only problem I have with this book, namely the poor quality reproduction of the painting on the scroll. The images are so small that it is hard to see the finer details of what Lee is describing in such a vigorous and lively manner. Not many of the readers are likely to ever see this painting in reality. For that reason alone the book should have given more attention to the visual underlining of the story unveiled. I would argue that if a scroll is worthy of this elaborate observation and meticulous study – which it surely is – one would at least expect a larger and better reproduction for the convenience of the reader.

As Lee followed the painting through time and encountered the various possible interpretations of the theme, she pointed out that without doubt the image represents a sensual situation and was not meant to be seen by the general public. Today this painting, and the other treasures of the past, are known to the general public, an audience never intended for such an intimate image. As the story unfolds in the last chapter, she reminds us that in publications and on the internet we can find reproductions in abundance and many partial images with more (or fewer) details. Overall, the book is more concerned with the historical evidence in the form of seals and colophons that have been added during its long existence. We are treated to an impressive amount of detail and precise observation of every aspect of the additions to the scroll. The question in the first part of the book was: do we now know when and by whom it was painted? In the end we still do not know for sure. The one option that is not brought to the discussion by Lee is the possibility that Zhang Daqian painted it – he was the last owner before the scroll was returned to the Palace Museum collection, and Zhang is widely known to have copied and reproduced old masters; I just can't help but wonder ...

Lucien van Valen holds an MA in Fine Arts from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and an MA in Chinese Languages and Cultures from Leiden University (1997). In 2005 she received her PhD from Leiden University, combining both fields of expertise in her thesis "The Matter of Chinese Painting" (info@lucienvanvalen.nl)



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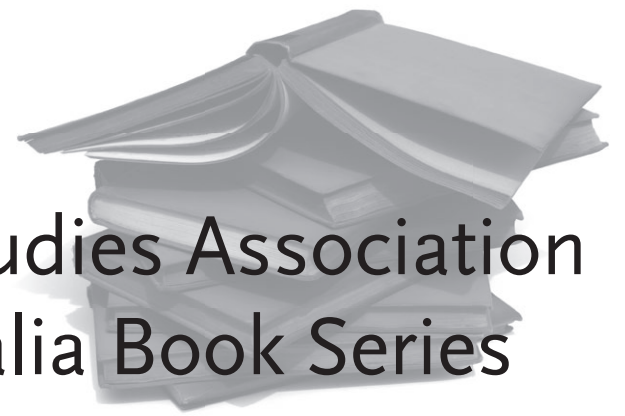
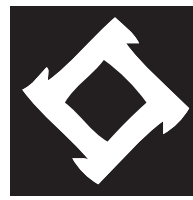
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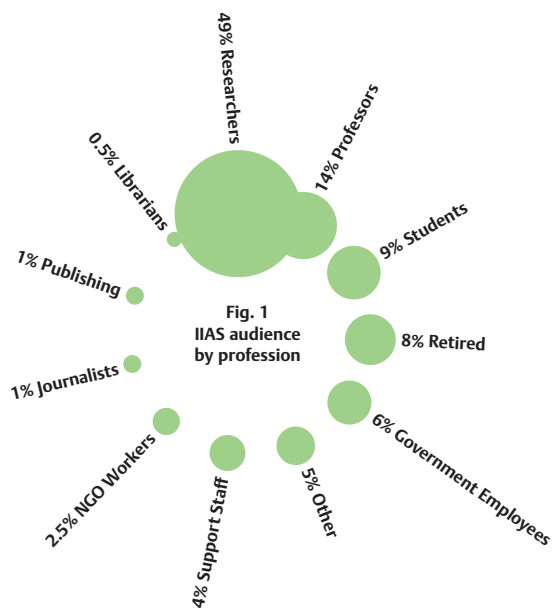
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What is your opinion of IIAS and its activities? What are our strengths? Where could we make improvements? The IIAS survey findings are available in their entirety online at www.iias.nl/survey2011, but here we analyse and respond to some of the key points raised.

Thomas Voorter (Communications Coordinator IIAS)

EARLIER THIS YEAR, we sent out a personalised email invitation to 4,925 randomly selected individuals from our database and asked them to fill in a short questionnaire. Within a month we had received 1,464 high quality responses. A response rate of nearly 30%. We would like to thank everybody who took the time to complete the survey.

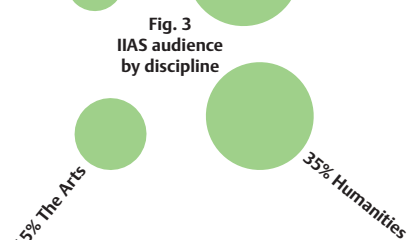
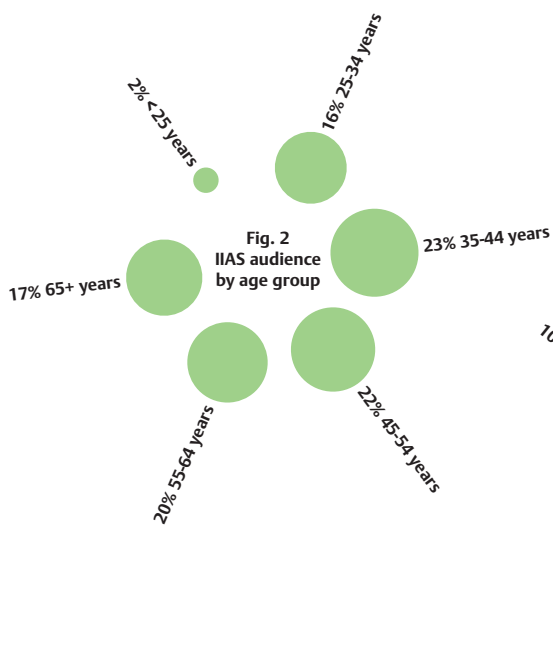


OUR AUDIENCE AND THE WAY THEY SEE US

As you can see in fig. 1, the majority of our audience work in academic circles (researcher, (retired) professor, student) and in the public, non-profit sector (NGOs, government departments). Age groups appear to be evenly distributed (fig. 2), and the division between fields of discipline well-balanced (fig. 3). This is less so for the distribution of men (62.6%) and women (37.4%).

Our audience truly lives all over the world, as shown proportionately in figure 4. Within this circle of global representation we inserted some illustrative comments collected through the survey, and a number of keywords that our audience associates with us. We received suggestions about ways to better divide our attention between different Asian regions and across age groups, ideas about new research ventures and cooperation in Africa and Latin America, requests for strengthening ties with other academic institutes, and many compliments for and comments on The Newsletter, our quarterly publication.

We posed an open question in the survey, asking for images that come to mind when people think of the IIAS. From the approximately 1,200 answers we learned that our audience considers the IIAS to be an open-minded, comprehensive, academic research institute and a supportive network agency. The few negative attributes shared with us deal mostly with being out of reach; keywords used included cliquish, distant, and bureaucratic.



Pull-out supplement

theFocus



The postcolonial often also simply means business. The romantic, slightly intellectual aura clinging to the *good ole' colonial days* is a good money-maker – gin and tonics right before sundown, attracts foreign visitors and Sri Lankans alike.

Postcolonial dialogues

In November 2011 IIAS hosted a two-day roundtable, tentatively titled The Postcolonial Dialogues. The idea was simple, yet we were well aware of the complexities that came with this so-called simplicity. In terms of the colonial experience and postcolonial realities, our task at hand was to explore what has been left unsaid, untouched upon, undocumented, unexplored or maybe even purposely ignored. What, in short, should our agenda be the coming years when speaking of 'postcolonialism'? We were, however, all in agreement of one thing from the start: much has already been said. Another thing we firmly agreed on is that this does not mean there are no more issues to be dealt with.

Michiel Baas

Renewing postcolonial dialogues

RECURRING DEBATES TAKING PLACE IN EUROPE concerning their colonial pasts often paint a confusing image; one that wishes to celebrate a certain colonial legacy yet at the same time also one that demands recognition of the atrocities committed and the structures of inequality that were introduced during colonial days, and which often saw their perpetuation and/or reinvention in the years after Independence. This is nicely illustrated by the French law on “the positive aspects of colonization”, introduced in 2005, or the more than ambiguous celebrations for the 50-year anniversary of independence in a number of sub-Saharan African countries in 2010 and in the former “*métropoles*”.

In line with this, what can we make of the Dutch former prime-minister's call for more ‘VOC mentality’ with regards to the national economy and the success of Dutch companies? Especially when we consider the recent, incredibly late apology on 9 December 2011 by the Dutch ambassador to Indonesia, on behalf of the Dutch government, for the atrocities committed in the village of Rawagede (west Java), where more than four hundred innocent men were murdered by Dutch military in 1947 because the villagers refused to reveal the Indonesian fighter Luka Kustario's hiding place?

And how do we understand recent happenings in the Middle East – the so-called Arab Spring (already a contested term for various reasons) – in light of the various dependencies and power relations that have coloured and shaped regional histories? Has the Occupy movement been influenced and/or inspired by these happenings and how does all this relate to shifting (economic) power relations on the planet in general? In short, there was clearly plenty to explore during the two-day roundtable on Post-Colonial Dialogues, and we very much realized it had to be exactly that: a dialogue; one where scholars could come together to talk, *dialogue*, and work towards an agenda that could set the tone for future research.

The postcolonial (study) agenda

The study of postcolonialism, by definition, does not do ‘firm’ conclusions; its very purpose seems even to avoid reaching them. This may have its roots in the colonial experience itself, which was quintessentially hegemonic, dominating, dividing, and firm in its determination to get its message across. The study of postcolonialism is characterized by a whole plethora of often disagreeing voices giving firm *voice* to issues left unaddressed, unnoticed, swept under the carpet, or simply even blatantly denied. However, it is, in the end, also a field never quite (fully) in agreement. And thus was the roundtable held without a firm agenda, building on the objective that what we were coming together for was actually to determine what the agenda for the coming years should be.

And not just that, the sheer mention of a possible *agenda* already denoted something important and something that we were desperately trying to avoid: *that to have one would be to continue one*. In a sense postcolonialism, in both theory and practice, has always been an agenda of sorts. It has always come with a particular plan to steer ‘things’ in a certain direction; it has always been imbued by and layered with objectives, goals, plans and meanings. And thus did we come together without an agenda, but certainly not without having done our homework.

In a Background Document (available on the IIAS website) a brief history of postcolonialism (as a field of study) was provided, after which a number of more in-depth analyses were made of a number of possible topics for future research and, of course, ‘dialogue’. The final chapter of this document was titled ‘Not Yet a Conclusion’ and took the reader on a ‘postcolonial’ trip, not so much down memory lane, but into the postcolonial realities of the present. Some of these scenes will be reproduced here in this article.

The scenes are based on experiences and observations, no scholarly research was conducted and thus they are somewhat ‘anecdotal’, almost ‘entertaining’, in their description. But this is very much on purpose, as what is hoped to be accomplished by this, is to trigger further thinking in terms of instances, situations, and references; from which a certain (problematic, contested, ‘head-scratching’) postcoloniality emerges that we need to think through and talk about and that could form the basis for a future research agenda.

A Dutch issue: what to do with Jan Pieterszoon Coen?

The statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen (8 January 1587 – 21 September 1629) standing in the small city of Hoorn (the Netherlands) has been contested for decades (fig. 2). Coen was an officer of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), even holding two terms as its Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. Most Dutch have grown up thinking that Coen was a national hero, one that the Dutch should be proud of; a representative of their glorious past *in den vreemde* (‘in strange lands’), bringing home considerable wealth.



However, (local) newspapers have often reported on various protests and initiatives raising awareness as to the tyrannical and abusive ‘qualities’ of this so-called hero. As a young boy myself, having grown up in provincial Netherlands, the VOC (East India Company) and almost all things associated with it were cause for celebration, certainly not commemoration. They were reminiscent of a glorious past, one that would and should instil the Dutch with pride. ‘This business’ with Jan Pieterszoon Coen was mostly understood as a nuisance, something that rather left-wing revolutionary types (Socialists! Communists!) felt the need to bring up, but which nobody else really seemed too bothered about.

Coen's appetite for (rather gruesome) violence is what stands out most in the historic accounts of his Company days, in particular relating to his extremely violent enforcement of Dutch monopoly on the nutmeg and mace trade, leading to the massacre at Banda (Aceh, Indonesia). By the time Coen arrived in, what is now, Indonesia the Dutch had already been trying to enforce such a monopoly for more than twenty years. Although Greater Banda had been coerced into promising to uphold the monopoly, it had been a promise not everybody felt inclined to keep. Local inhabitants had the ‘audacity’ to sell to the British seafarers, and according to some accounts even traded them for canons. Although they had managed to stop Coen from entering Banda in 1621, his second attack was far more ‘successful’ with, as a result, many people fleeing the region. Although the accounts vary somewhat, in the end eight hundred local inhabitants were captured and shipped off as slaves or forced labourers to Batavia. According to a book that was published one year later (*Verhaal van eenighe oorlogen in Indië*, 1622), six Japanese mercenaries were given the task to cut in half, behead and quarter, using sharp swords, the bodies of eight of the leaders of the uprising, after which another 36 ‘convicted’ were also beheaded and quartered. Another account speaks of 5,000 Bandanese living in the region pre-Coen, and only 1,000 alive by 1635.

Coen was definitely no hero, but he is credited for paving the way of VOC dominance in the East Indies. In his own days, however, he was already highly contested and his appetite for bloodshed was too much for many. ‘Publicly’ acknowledging that Coen was no hero, however, that he was in fact a mass murderer, remains, to put it euphemistically ‘complicated’, in the Netherlands. And this becomes all the more apparent when we look at the discussion about his statue in the city of Hoorn that has been ongoing for decades now. The Dutch remain divided on the issue. While papers have frequently reported on historical evidence of his misdeeds in Indonesia, a certain pride concerning his ‘grand deeds’, bringing home wealth to the city, to the country even, percolates through many other accounts. The VOC, and Coen as one of its figure-heads, is something to be proud of, a legacy to be treasured. This also goes for all that is (still) left of the VOC in terms of buildings, paintings and, indeed, other statues. Thus while people will agree that Coen was probably not the kind of national hero he was long revered to be, his statue is part of a history to be treasured, one that deserves to be kept, maintained and to a certain degree, to remain uncontested.

Throughout the years Coen has often been ‘discovered’ by passers-by as having been bedecked or otherwise decorated. Walking down *Het Grote Noord* (Hoorn's main shopping street) one ends up at *De Roode Steen* (‘the red stone’), the square in which, smack in the middle, Coen has taken up position. Here, at night, local activists frequently come together to dress up Coen in one way or another; to cover him in paint, wrap strange pieces of cloth around his waist and hang stuff from his hands. On 16 August 2011, Coen was finally removed from his pedestal, though, admittedly by accident. A heavy crane accidentally made a wrong move and ever so slightly bumped the statue, after which, balance lost, Coen came crashing down (fig. 3). His fall was applauded, and people

2(above left):
Jan Pieterszoon
Coen standing
proudly on his
pedestal in Hoorn.

3(above right):
Jan Pieterszoon Coen
after being knocked
to the ground in
2011. The decision
then had to be made
of whether or not
to put him back.

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immediately wondered whether this would be his ultimate exit. The City Council decided it would not. Coen would return, though this time with a footnote, in the form of a small plaque at the base of the statue, explaining Coen's more than problematic past. Obviously, the final word has not been spoken. Protest groups continue to argue that a country that prides itself on its liberal values, openness and tolerance, should be adult enough to recognize that Coen cannot continue to be honoured in this way.

The case is one of many. The Netherlands continues to celebrate its once colonial might. It has been argued that the Dutch continued celebration of its colonial heyday stands in direct relationship to the rather marginalized role it plays on the world stage nowadays. There is a lingering memory of different times, times when the Dutch were to be reckoned with, and what remains is that highly coloured memory and the very concrete reminders dotting the Dutch landscape. This is also what seems to continue to stand in the way of any real debate on the reality of the Dutch colonial enterprise.

Painted innocence or ‘how to relive those days’

Postcolonialism, however, is certainly not always about such concrete reminders of a problematic past and troublesome ways of dealing with history. Sometimes one simply ends up in a situation where these discussions about (post) colonial histories, oriental representations and changing (economic) power relations come together in one room while the intentions are at first glance so very unproblematic. The recent overview exhibition of Liu Kang (1911-2004) – one of Singapore's most important artists, and accordingly, a guiding figure in the development of Singapore's art scene – at the Singapore Art Museum, opens up such an opportunity.

Liu Kang's work is spectacularly colourful, depicting village/communal life, local traditions, and most importantly, many Balinese women carrying one thing or the other (though mostly pots). At times it is like seeing an anthropologist at work, painting his observations, displaying an almost intimate knowledge of the lives of his subjects. Many of his paintings also communicate a sense of innocence, of times gone by, no longer there, having faced the onslaught of modernity and progress. Liu Kang provides us with a glimpse of the past, although a past coloured and imbued with the painter's perspective (fig. 4)

A critic might ponder the question ‘what if this had been a Western painter, *painting the east*, painting his image of the East?’ But that is not *im Frage* here. This is not an inquisition à la Saïd, unravelling the hidden (self)orientalization in this particular work. No, what the reader is invited to partake in is another question, a question raised on the second floor of the museum by a kind lady who wanted to make sure nobody missed this extraordinary opportunity. *Dress up* it said in bold letters on the white wall; underneath on an equally white table lay a number of attributes one could dress up with – among which straw hats, colourful sarongs and a nice basket to hold ‘something’. Attributes that could have featured in Liu Kang's paintings; symbolizing something ‘ultimate’, something that could stand for the larger whole – a particular feeling, atmosphere, even a certain reality (see front cover photo).

Once dressed up, people could have their picture taken and have it sent home by email. However, if we stop for a minute, and let it sink in what the museum is asking of us, a curious thing begins to occur; something that lets itself best be described in terms of ‘unease’. As mentioned, the colonial is mostly absent in Liu Kang's paintings, yet what is referred to – not so much by Kang but by the way he is celebrated in the museum – is an idealized version of the East; one that in a larger perspective of The Rise of Asia and the popularity of Asian aesthetics/arts takes up an interesting yet problematic position. The question that slowly bubbles up to the surface is: what is being communicated here? What is being told, and who is it that is doing the talking? What is it actually that Singapore is telling its audience here? And who is this audience actually imagined to be?

The post in postcolonial and the future to think of

The Singapore example does not necessarily argue that the Museum should have done things differently. It is not altogether clear if there is a ‘different’, as in ‘alternative’. Liu Kang is undoubtedly a tremendously accomplished and important painter whose work will stand the test of time and will continue to inspire audiences for many years to come. However, when talking about the (post)colonial in/about his work, or at least the museum's engagement with it, his work does raise interesting questions that might allude to other more pressing ones; questions that help us come to terms with how both former colonizer and colonized deal with, understand, depict, portray, even envisage the past and so on. It actually brings us to the question of the *post* in postcolonial.

Exploring a new research agenda



What is this *post* we keep talking about? It is what comes after the colonial, yet it also implies an undefined (endless?) period, in which the past, present and future are inseparably connected. As the case of Jan Pieterszoon Coen clearly illustrates, this *post* continues to represent a struggle – a struggle of coming to terms with – a struggle to understand *what* (what happened, what led us to come to here, what will we do now). It may even represent a struggle of struggles – of having to do *something* with 'it'. Colonialism cannot (ever) simply be put to rest. The influence of colonialism, on both sides of the divide (colonizer vs. colonized), is always there, one way or the other, having shaped our present and influencing that what is yet to come.

Politics and business

Politically it often makes sense to contest colonial remnants simply for what they symbolize or, as is often the case, made to symbolize in current 'daily life'. But the postcolonial often also simply means business. The romantic, slightly intellectual aura that continues to cling to the *good ole'* colonial days continues as a good money-maker. The colonial 'style' is more popular than ever before. A recent visit to Sri Lanka, for example, showed how much the colonial can be celebrated for its infinite imaginary qualities. Gin and tonics at Galle Face Hotel on Sunday afternoon, right before sundown, is something that not only attracts foreign visitors but many Sri Lankan couples and families as well (fig. 1 page 23). The old British guesthouses en route to ancient sites such as Anuradhapura, Sigirya, and Pollonarawu, have all been refurbished, brought back to their illustrious style of days long gone by, and generating a feeling of what it must have been like back then (fig. 5). It left a Sri Lankan friend to ponder openly that perhaps colonialism was not such a big deal for Sri Lanka... Whether or not this is actually so is not why it is worth reproducing this little scene here, on paper; a scene that was characterized by a fine Pekoe tea, served in beautifully decorated fine white porcelain cups, by an impeccably dressed waiter who seemed to have stepped straight off the set of a Merchant Ivory film. It is to draw our attention to the way the colonial – and whatever it is supposed to stand for – is continuously reproduced, often rather unproblematically, because it is what the 'public' wants and thus also what the 'public' is willing to pay for. When we talk about the postcolonial these are things we need to keep in mind; that, for the public, the colonial, what it represents, or is supposed to stand for, often holds a difficult divide between admiration or romanticization – even imbued by a certain longing – and awareness of its incredibly painful dimensions and its ongoing, highly influential, yet problematic legacy.

4(above):
A detail from
a painting by
Liu Kang (1997)
Trying out a
Batik Dress.
5(right): Terrace
with colonial-style
furniture at a
guesthouse.

This focus on postcolonialism

The following articles in this focus section on postcolonialism deal, each in their own way, with the meaning of colonial pasts in current contexts and debates, bringing to the fore new and interesting cases which hitherto have received no, or only marginal, attention. What is striking in their analyses is the continued relevance and importance of the colonial experience to the way the state, in a sense, reflects on itself, and uses and negotiates these experiences to fit a certain economic/political agenda. But the articles also raise awareness for colonial remnants ('cultural heritage') and their continued and shifting meaning to the inhabitants of formerly colonized countries. These articles do not pretend to have the final word on the direction postcolonial studies need to take, but they do provide an interesting insight not just into individual cases, but also into the changing nature of the study of postcolonialism itself. Increasingly, cultural heritage, colonial memories, state projects and transnational relations, shape postcolonial inquiries.

While Lung-chih Chang and Min-chin Kay Chiang focus on Taiwanese postcolonial identity – explored through Japanese colonial/heritage sites – the focus in Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff's article is very simply one object: an opulently carved teakwood room-screen, which was used in the early eighteenth century to furnish the Council Room of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Batavia. In both cases it becomes clear that a detailed analysis of the shifting meaning that is attached to such heritage sites, or even just one object, can reveal a vast world of knowledge with regards to how people relate to and reflect on a certain colonial past and postcolonial present. Even more so, it unveils the changing dimensions of



such relations and reflections bringing a certain dynamics to the postcolonial exploration that studies so far often seemed to lack.

Tharaphi Than's analysis of postcolonial Burma reveals how the country engaged in a project of Burmanization in order to 'resurrect' Burmese 'lost culture' and by doing so had to distinguish itself from what it considered foreign. While even foreign businesses participated in this project, clearly keeping business interests in mind, the goal of the project was to remove that what was considered not-Burmese and thus foreign. Thailand never ventured off into such a project, as it was so 'very clearly' never colonized. However, Rachel Harrison places some very apparent question marks to this commonly held perception in her article. She refers to scholarly work that demonstrates the extent to which Siam was in fact, in several respects, semi-colonial. In addition, she also refers to work that has demonstrated how the assertion of control over peripheral areas of the Siamese state was even strategized towards the Bangkok elite by adopting aspects of colonial policy. Not only does Harrison argue that such power relations continue to manifest themselves in contemporary politico-cultural discourses of the urban elite over rural provinces, but that this also connects to recent political protests in Bangkok.

While a Thai colonial past reads like an oxymoron, China's colonial past is an easily forgotten one in light of the country's recent successes. Zheng Wang's article, however, makes perfectly clear that the notion of time – and perhaps the very recent memories of economic success – healing all wounds, is unfortunately wrong. Wang argues that although China is certainly no longer the weak and isolated state it once was, the Chinese have not really moved forward from what he describes as 'their past humiliation.' He concludes in a way that would have befitted the 2011 roundtable on Postcolonial Dialogues: "What individuals and countries remember and what they choose to forget are telling indicators of their current values, perceptions, and even their aspirations."

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Disturbing Conventions

As we suggested in *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand* (co-edited with Peter A. Jackson, 2010), the study of Siam/Thailand has remained largely isolated from critical analysis inflected by postcolonial theory. Only a handful of Thai scholars have been drawn to this field of inquiry in recent years, among them the late Nopphorn Prachakul, professor of French literature at Bangkok's Thammasat University. Nopphorn warned his readers in an introductory text on postcolonialism for Thai MA students against the standard knee-jerk reaction: "That's not relevant to us. We Thai have never been anyone's colony." (Nopphorn, n.d., 156, quoted in Jackson, 2010, 38).

Rachel V. Harrison

THIS CHARACTERISTIC THAI RESPONSE comes as a result of the stranglehold which traditionalist/conservative discourses have effected on this particular field of area studies, with its steadfast adherence to a representation of Siam/Thailand as *unique*, both in the wider region and on a global scale. While such a perspective is reliant upon a privileging of the nation's alleged valiant and savvy resistance to Western colonial enterprise, historians such as Thongchai Winichakul (1994, 2000a and 2000b) and Benedict Anderson (1978), among others, have questioned the veracity of this position. Taking inspiration from Udom Sisuwan's seminal 1950 text *Thai keung meuang kheun (Thailand, a Semi-colony)*, they instead demonstrate the extent to which the country was in fact semi-colonial in several respects. And more recently, Tamara Loos has located late nineteenth century Siam "at the crossroads of colonized countries and sovereign, imperial powers, sharing some of the traits of both but reducible to neither." (Loos, 2006, 21)

An evaluation of the politico-cultural relations established by the Bangkok ruling elite with the West in the late nineteenth century, and perpetuated in varying ways up to the present time, therefore lays fertile ground for the analysis of contemporary Thai cultural production through the optic of postcolonial critique. One of the several aims of the *Ambiguous Allure* project was, consequently, to clear an intellectual space from which to draw the study of contemporary Thai culture into broader, comparative landscapes and to allow for its interrogation along exciting lines of theoretically driven enquiry. In order to achieve this ambition it has been essential to effect a shift away from the myth of Thai uniqueness that has dominated the field to date, both in local and in international scholarship, even though – or perhaps precisely because – it is the case that such a move poses an inevitable threat to the existing order of things.¹

From my own perspective of engagement with contemporary Thai cultural studies and comparative literature, there are several key projects which suggest themselves as a logical progression from the ground laid by *The Ambiguous Allure of the West*. One is the task, currently near completion, of bringing to the fore new frames of theoretically engaged analysis in the discussion of Thai literature – both traditional and modern. See *Disturbing Conventions: New Frames of Analysis in Thai Literary Studies* (forthcoming). This edited collection draws together the work of a younger generation of Thai scholars, for the most part trained abroad in English or comparative literature, who have returned to work in the Thai academy and to consider Thai literary texts in ways more commonly defined as inflected by "Western" theory. See, for example, Suradech Chotiudomtant on cosmopolitanism and its limits; Janit Feangfu on the negotiation of rural and urban identities; Soison Sakolrak on deconstruction and paratexts; Lakkhana Punwichai's exploration of deliberately subversive feminist analytical perspectives; and Chusak Pattarakulvanit's feminist reading of persecution in a modern literary classic *The Judgement*. Their chapters deliberately "read literature against the grain", to quote a phrase (in Thai, *an mai ao reuang*) made popular by the collection's most acclaimed Thai literary analyst, Chusak Pattarakulvanit, from his book of the same title, published in 2002. These contributions effectively move beyond the traditionalist, conservative concerns of the academy of the sort cautioned against by Nopphorn Prachakul in his promotion of postcolonial analytical frameworks: concerns which have, until relatively recently, foreclosed the use of "Western" theory in the study of Thai literature.

In order to move this argument along, the concept and definition of theory as "Western" requires critical analysis. As with the *Ambiguous Allure* project, *Disturbing Conventions* queries what is fully implied by the term "Western" theory in the cultural studies context. As Homi Bhabha reminds us, "Western" theory is itself neither static nor uncontested. It is also not beyond being able to deconstruct its own premises, as Bhabha's work on the limitations of Western thinkers to engage meaningfully with cultural Otherness keenly communicates in "The Commitment to Theory" (2004, 46). And given the hybrid nature of all cultural identities which postcolonial critics such as Bhabha and Said (1993) highlight so effectively, how can "Western" theory fail to be in some sense relevant to the study of cultural production in Siam/Thailand given the country's semi-colonial relations with the West?

The impact of such cultural hybridities is clearly exemplified by the intense links between the development of modern Thai prose fiction in the early years of the twentieth century and the popularity of Victorian literature among Siamese authors and readers in a context where translation, reproduction and reinvention were intensely and inextricably intertwined in the production of the earliest examples of Thai novels and short stories. Thosaeng Chaochuti's chapter on Siam's literary entanglements with the imperial West in *Disturbing Conventions* discusses this crucial cultural trait,



Left and right: Red Shirt demonstrators, Bangkok, April-May 2010. Photographs courtesy of authors.



Wherefore postcolonial theory in contemporary Thai cultural studies?



as does Thanapol Limapichart's on semi-coloniality, print capitalism and the reconfiguration of cultural authority. And my own contribution draws on Thak Chaloemtiarana's several published articles on the work of early Thai novelist Khru Liam (2007, 2009a and 2009b) to highlight similar features in its discussion of the relationship between Khru Liam's 1916 novel *The Divine Nymphs* (*Nang Neramit*) and Victorian gothic adventure fiction such as that penned by Rider Haggard, Bram Stoker, Arthur Conan Doyle, Marie Corelli and others: a relationship colored by fantasy, desire, anxiety, mimicry and, above all, power.

It is this critical prevalence of power that further makes relevant a deployment of the postcolonial lens through which to scrutinize contemporary Thai cultural studies, beyond that of its intense historical connections with Victoriana. Historians such as Kasian Tejapira (2001), Thongchai (1994, 2000a and 2000b, and 2010) and Loos (2006 and 2010) have demonstrated the extent to which the Bangkok elite adopted and adapted aspects of British and French colonial policy as an effective strategy for the assertion of control over the peripheries of the Siamese state. This project of power continues to manifest itself in the contemporary politico-cultural context via the dominance of urban elite discourses over the rural provinces.

The raw political struggles that have played out in Bangkok's street protests over the past few years reveal how demonstrators from Thailand's rural North and North Eastern regions express their sense of disenfranchisement through distinct cultural forms (as illustrated by the photographs accompanying this article). Local cultural features – often raw, bawdy and sexually provocative – are vigorously deployed as forceful gestures of resistance to mainstream, urban symbols of high-brow consumerism. It was precisely for this reason, in a gesture brimming with “postcolonial” resonance, that the Red Shirt demonstrators set up camp in the heart of Bangkok's shopping district amidst its glitzy malls precincts, at Ratprasong intersection, in April-May 2010.

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Much work remains to be done in subsequent conference papers, articles, and future books (and urgently so) to perform the necessary incisive analysis of Thailand's recent protest movements, from the angle of their engagement with popular cultural forms. Here the theoretical input of Mikhail Bakhtin on carnival, Bhabha on “the location of culture” and the complete edition of Derrida's seminars and lectures, recently made available in English translation by Geoffrey Bennington (2009 and 2011), provide fertile inspiration as a starting point from which to develop deeper understandings of the postcolonial significance of popular protest in contemporary Thailand.

Perhaps this is an intellectual project for which Nopporn Prachakul - to whom the edited collection *Disturbing Conventions* is dedicated – might have had some sympathy. Nopporn's piece in the volume, posthumously translated into English, deals with issues of ethnic culture in the modern novel Luk Isan (A Child of the North East), by Khamphun Buthawi. Nopporn's is a timely reminder of the complexity of the relationship between the Isan (North Eastern) regional identity and its relevant others, be they Chinese, Vietnamese or (Bangkok) Thai.

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Notes

- 1 As veteran Thai historian Charnvit Kasetsiri has recently reminded us, the concept of Thai uniqueness, with its origins in US scholarship of the 1960s, soon gained a strong foothold in all areas of academia in Thailand, from political science to law, sociology, history, linguistics, literature and in the field of Thai Studies in particular, where it has been deployed as an almost foolproof means of preserving the status quo and legitimizing resistance to reform. See Charnvit Kasetsiri, “*Khvam phiset lae neung diaw khong “khvam pen thai” uniqueness of Thailand?*” In *Matchon Online*, 13 December 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/77obk3c> (accessed 5-1-2012).

From colonial site to cultural heritage

The island of Taiwan, formerly known as Formosa, is part of the chain of islands lying along the Asian continent in the Pacific Ocean. Originally inhabited by Austronesian indigenous peoples, Taiwan became a Chinese immigrant frontier in the seventeenth century and has since witnessed different regimes, including the Dutch (1624-61), the Koxinga (1662-83), the Qing (1684-1894) and the Japanese empire (1895-1945). Unlike many former colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Taiwan's decolonization process after the Second World War was first disrupted by the Chinese Civil War and then the Cold War.

Lung-chih Chang & Min-chin Kay Chiang

The past in the present: postcolonial identity politics in contemporary Taiwan

Due to the corruptive takeover practices of the Chinese Nationalist Government (KMT), the island's retrocession to the Republic of China (ROC) resulted in a tragic uprising and suppression in February 1947. Following the debacle in mainland China, the KMT regime led by Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) emigrated to Taiwan in 1949 and decades of authoritarian rule began. The dual political structure under Japanese colonialism persisted with the new Chinese ruling bloc, or the so-called mainlanders (*waishengren*), taking over all major state institutions and inheriting former colonial infrastructure on the island.

As Taiwan became the anti-communist bastion during the Cold War, the island's economy was rebuilt with US aid in the late 1950s and 60s and developed into one of the newly industrialized countries in East Asia (NICs) in the 1980s. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of the Republic of China from the United Nations, and a series of diplomatic setbacks, led to the liberalization of the KMT and the formation of political opposition in the 1970s. With the support from the grassroots and urban middle-class Taiwanese, during local and national elections, the first opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was formed in 1986.

In the face of changing domestic and international situations, Chiang Ching-kuo (1910-88), the son of Chiang Kai-shek and the third ROC president, lifted the martial law and opened cross-strait family visits in 1987. Taiwan's democratization process continued under Lee Teng-hui (1923-), the first Taiwanese who became the KMT Party Chairman and ROC President. The new political trend toward Taiwanization reached its climax in 2000 when oppositional DPP candidate Chen Shuibian (1950-) won the presidential election. In 2008, Taiwan experienced another regime change with the KMT candidate Ma Yingjeou (1950-), who defeated the scandal-ridden DPP Government and became the new President of the ROC.

Controversy over national identity was fuelled in the 1990s, with advocates either for Chinese reunification or Taiwan independence, which split into different political alliances (i.e., Pan-Blue vs. Pan-Green camps). The domestic debate over constitutional reforms and Taiwanese nationalism was complicated by the changing cross-strait relations in the course of the island's growing economic ties with mainland China.

As the result of democratization of knowledge, in post-martial law Taiwan, the trend toward indigenization led to diversification of historical discourse among official, academic and popular histories on Taiwan. The various responses and reactions to the indigenization movement exemplify the complexity of national identity and cross-strait relations in contemporary domestic politics and international diplomacy. To be sure, the mingling of nativism, nationalism and globalization in Taiwan's identity debates testify to the unresolved historical task of decolonization since the end of the Second World War.

This paper aims to revisit this island nation's unique trajectory of postcolonial identity formation with a special focus on the heritagization of former Japanese colonial sites on the island. Taiwan's postcolonial heritage-making provides a unique angle from which to observe vicissitudes of resistance and possibilities of decolonization. The contemporary history controversies in Taiwan testify to the politicization of ethnicity and confrontation between Taiwanese and Chinese nationalisms that has resulted in history controversies regarding Japanese colonialism on the island. By recognizing postcolonialism as an important means of critical reflection and intervention, we discuss the new phenomenon of 'memory boom' in post-martial law Taiwan.

When colonial sites became cultural heritage: democratization and community building in post-martial law Taiwan

Having undergone fifty years of Japanese colonial rule, the landscape of Taiwan not only consisted of modern infrastructure such as railroads, schools and hospitals, but also of imperial symbols, including Shinto shrines and official buildings and police stations. By viewing Japanese colonial sites as the "poisonous leftovers of Japanese imperialism," the Chinese Nationalist government adopted the policy of "De-Japanization" and "Re-Sinicization", after taking control of the island in 1945.

During the martial law period (1949-1987), Chinese language and culture became the new orthodoxy and Japanese sites were excluded from the cultural heritage category. While former Shinto shrines were converted into memorials of national martyrs, numerous colonial sites were either demolished or deserted. Even Taiwanese vernacular architecture struggled to qualify as cultural heritage. It was not until the late 1980s that the tendency of erasure and neglect of colonial sites began to wane.

Following the implementation of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act in 1982, new official and local initiatives gradually transformed the old anti-Japanese rhetoric. In 1991, a Western-style building of a former colonial bank became one of the first Japanese sites to be designated as a national historic monument. In addition, many Japanese heritage sites were renovated in the 2000s echoing the call of "revitalising unused spaces" by the architectural and urban planning specialists.

The re-evaluation of Japanese colonial sites occurred during the trend towards indigenization in the post-martial law era. In 1994, the KMT government under Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui promulgated the Integrated Community-

The politics of memory and the quest for a new identity became the key feature in the era of localism in post-martial law Taiwan. The bond between memory and place indeed inspired grassroots initiatives of conservation and triggered a sense of community.

Making Programme aiming for the creation of a new "living community". This new identity narrative of a "living community" was a strategy to incorporate ethnic groups, particularly the Chinese 1949 immigrants, with the Taiwanese group through accentuating common living experiences and shared future on the land of Taiwan. The programme has been extended by the DPP government since 2000 and a considerable number of Japanese sites have been designated and restored as historic monuments or buildings.

The transformation of Japanese colonial sites into Taiwanese cultural heritage reflects the flourishing localism in which grassroots groups and activists endeavour to evoke civic awareness. Different from the once dominant Japanese colonialist and Chinese nationalist conceptions, many Taiwanese people regard these heritages as intimate sites of memory that offer a new sense of place. The Japanese colonial sites have become an essential ingredient of a new Taiwanese identity and cultural narrative during the burgeoning memory boom.

In Taiwan, a 'memory boom' emerged in the 1990s; the number of museums and heritage sites – the 'sites of memory' as Pierre Nora (1989) named them – increased remarkably, in tandem with the transformation of identity narratives and eco-political changes of Taiwanese society. In the late 1980s the total number of museums in Taiwan was 99, yet increased rapidly to 580 by 2007 (according to the statistics of the Chinese Association of Museums). This phenomenon matched a growing public awareness and official designation of cultural heritage; in 1985, the number of 'historic monuments' (*guji*; an official category defined by the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act) was 221 – by the end of 2008 the number had reached 688, accompanied by 827 'historic buildings' (see *The Almanac of Taiwan Cultural Heritage Conservation 2008*). The rising importance of municipal governments in the heritage designating process, and in using cultural sites for aiding political profile, as well as an emerging Taiwan-centred awareness, have allowed large amounts of local museums, historic monuments and historic buildings to appear and play a major role in the memory boom.

In accordance with the rapid increase of museums and heritage sites, large numbers of local historical writings, oral histories, geographical surveys, archives and local cultural festivals were produced by both public and private sectors in the 1990s and 2000s. Recollection of local memories, language and knowledge, which were once disgraced under the China-centred agenda, was encouraged by the state community-building programme and 'living community' narrative. This state project at the same time appropriated/interacted with former Taiwan-concerned initiatives of the Nativist writers, 'local cultural and historical workers', historical preservationists and grassroots activists. Together, these actors have contributed to the formation of the 'sites of memory' of Taiwan.



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1: An old Japanese mining tunnel in Jinguashi; the renovation of this tunnel was included in a museum project, opened during the memory boom of the 2000s.

2: Qingxiu Yuan Temple in Hualian; the temple was designated as an historic monument in the 1990s and renovated in the 2000s for visiting.

Rethinking postcolonialism and decolonization in Taiwan



3: Taoyuan Martyrs' Shrine in 2010 (originally Taoyuan Shinto Shrine); the shrine was one of a few Japanese Shinto shrines to remain in its original architectural form. Fierce debates took place in the late 1980s about whether to preserve the shrine's original style or to construct a new building, which would function as a KMT martyrs' shrine.

4: Japanese residences in the Meilun riverbank area, Hualian City; these residences were preserved after local community and social groups raised awareness in the early 2000s – they are now awaiting a decision on how to be used.

Between international diplomacy and cultural tourism: situating Taiwan's Japanese heritage in the global sphere

Symbolizing the search for a new collective identity in the post-martial law era, Taiwan's cultural heritage movement reflects the changing state-society dynamics since the 1990s as well as the island's political and cultural struggles in the post-Cold War world. Meanwhile, the lack of international recognition and the impact of the tourist industry offer interesting cases for us to better understand the heritagization of Japanese sites in contemporary Taiwan, from the viewpoint of globalization.

The global order was reconfigured after the dissolution of the Cold War structure in the 1990s. In addition to national schemes, there emerged new regional and local heritage projects. Following UNESCO's emphasis on cultural diversity and universal value, many Asian sites have now been designated as world heritage. Once seen as embarrassing legacies, former colonial sites have been reinterpreted with new terms such as 'shared' heritage and 'common' heritage.

Despite the fact that the Republic of China was one of the founding countries of the United Nations, the KMT government under Chiang Kai-shek withdrew its UN membership before UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention in 1972. Although Taiwan modelled its heritage policies after the UNESCO and ICOMOS, its sites have not been included in the World Heritage List due to its ambiguous diplomatic status. The lack of international recognition thus constitutes one of the key challenges for Taiwan's heritage policy-making. Since early 2000s, the central and local governments have been nominating the 'Potential World Heritage Sites' in Taiwan and taking part in the UN and UNESCO-based international heritage events. These efforts can be seen as the island's search for a new position in the post-Cold War world.

The other international factors in Taiwan's recent memory boom are the Taiwan-Japan cultural and economic relations. As mentioned, Japanese sites gradually ceased to be seen as poisonous residues and became legitimate sites of memory in Taiwan. With the end of the martial law era, Japan started to play an active role in Taiwan's heritage policy and cultural industry. On the one hand, the successful area regeneration projects (*machizukuri*) in post-war Japan were major models for Taiwan's community-building projects in the 1990s and 2000s. More importantly, the increasing Japanese tourist market, especially those so-called 'nostalgia travellers,' has become an important resource for the local economy. As a result, many colonial sites in the metropolitan areas, especially in Taipei, were turned into museums, art centres, café houses, boutiques, in tandem with the fast-rising tourist industry in Taiwan.

From sites of memory to sense of place: re-interpreting Japanese colonial legacy in Taiwan

No longer representing the material imprints of foreignness and discrimination, Japanese colonial sites have become new sites of locality in shaping Taiwanese subjectivity. Despite its contested nature, the process of heritage-making in contemporary Taiwan should not be reduced to an act of colonial nostalgia or the persistence of imperialist domination. It is also different from the 'shared heritage' projects, many of which are initiated by former colonizers. As a result the transformation of former colonial sites involves multiple levels of negotiation and reinterpretation among different grassroots groups in Taiwan.

Reinterpreting the ambiguous, if not often contentious colonial sites, has become a crucial task for policy makers, professionals and local activists, so as to create a new sense of place for civil, political and economic initiatives. There are three layers of ambiguity lying beneath heritage-making activities, namely the gap between the architectural fabric



5: Tongxiao Shinto Shrine in Miaoli County; the shrine was built in 1937, during Japanese colonization, and renovated by the local mayor in 1947, during the post-war KMT governance. During the renovation, the original architectural form was changed dramatically and became a visual hybrid, combining a Japanese gate (torii) and shrine lanterns, the Chinese Min style roof and brick walls, and the ROC (Republic of China) symbol at the top centre. Debates took place in 2000s about whether to renovate the shrine back to its original Japanese style or to its post-war condition.

6: A section of the torii (sacred gate) of the Tongxiao Shinto Shrine; the year inscribed in the stone, indicating when the shrine was built, has been made illegible. This sort of post-war defacing is typical of many contemporary Japanese sites.



and cultural context, the absence of a direct memory owner, and the structural residue of colonialism. Moreover, factors such as property ownership, bureaucratic inflexibility and profit-oriented developmental policy may prohibit wider grassroots participation.

The cases of Jinguashi mineral museum (figure 1) and Qingxiu Yuan Temple (figure 2) offer a nuanced operational model to tackle the conceptual and practical difficulties in representing Japanese colonial sites as Taiwanese heritages. The former used to be an old Japanese mining site in the northern Rueifang mountain area and the latter was located in a former Japanese immigrant village in the eastern Hualian area. Inspired by the awareness of diversity of memories and initiated by grassroots activist groups, these colonial sites went through two stages of transformation.

During the heritage-making process, these sites were first subjected to an open dialogue of multiple memories, through which a recognized representation of the past was gradually generated. This awareness of community then led to the second stage, during which the sites were transformed into sites of locality and commemoration. By means of an active process of reinterpretation and negotiation, the former Japanese sites are no longer legacies of a predatory colonizer, but have been transformed into new symbols of localism and grassroots activism aiming for a better future.

Heritage, memory and identity: rethinking decolonization in postcolonial Taiwan

Taiwan is a distinctive case in the issue of colonial heritage. Instead of being a passive partner in a so-called mutual relationship, the island has been an active actor in the heritagization of former colonial sites. The politics of memory and the quest for a new identity became the key feature in the era of localism in post-martial law Taiwan. The bond between memory and place indeed inspired grassroots initiatives of conservation and triggered a sense of community.

The new collective identity is anchored in the multifaceted locality, which comprises dimensions of civil awareness, social welfare, environmental concern, and economic improvement. The twin issues of 'whose heritage' and 'what does preservation mean to the postcolonial society' have become the major focus in debates on Japanese colonial sites. Mindful of the former colonial hierarchy and the neo-colonial structure, Taiwan's progressive intellectuals and grassroots activists have been playing an active role in digging out historical layers and humanistic values in the conservation activities.

It was by means of active reinterpretation and negotiation that former colonial sites have been transformed into cultural heritage for the local communities. This effort helps to explore and engage the once silenced, and to provide a platform for negotiation and meaning-reformulation. Through a memory approach that works at a deeper and more nuanced level than that of the state and government, and continuously engages multiple actors of a local network, these new cultural heritages also become a field of empowerment.

If heritage can mean more than political games, then its significance may lie in a better, equal platform open for negotiations, within which local autonomies are respected and able to penetrate the power hierarchy to create a better future and locality for them, and for us all. Hence, decolonization does not necessarily mean 'removing all traces of colonial material'. In fact, preserving colonial sites through the recognition of their contested nature, actively exploring and engaging controversial voices, discovering the historical depths of every memory attached to the site, and transforming structural inequality with persistent locality building, would more successfully trigger a decolonizing process. This may be one of the most important contributions made by the Taiwanese experience of postcolonial cultural heritage-making.

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Travelling far on “rather short legs”

This essay focuses on an impressive, almost 3 meter high, opulently carved teakwood room-screen with a human figure (probably Perseus) and two dragons, made by Chinese craftsmen in Java in the early eighteenth century, to furnish the Council Room of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Batavia (fig. 1). We will follow this object’s travels through time and space. The aim is to gain insight into the multiple layers of heritage formation in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Marieke Bloembergen & Martijn Eickhoff



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ANALYSING THE ‘TRAVELS’ OF AN OBJECT is a method of historical research that can help to visualise the networks of empire and capture the dynamic relation between heritage formation on the one hand and political mechanisms of identification, inclusion and exclusion on the other hand. The screen selected for this essay is one of several travelling objects that we followed in our research project on archaeological sites and the dynamics of heritage formation in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia.

In the book we are currently writing we aim to knit these travels together and relate them to the history of sites in Indonesia.¹ We do this in order to understand parallel processes of identification that occur within, but also beyond the framework of states and empires. The specific research area that the Council Room screen opens up for us is the making and reappraisal of the category ‘Company-furniture’ as a Dutch-colonial national style, in reference to the VOC. In this essay we focus on the rise and further use of this style to re-examine one of the influential approaches to identity formation in (post)colonial situations that has been developed during the last two decades, namely the concept of shared heritage.

In 2009, the teakwood screen, once a part of the VOC regalia at the Batavian headquarters (the Castle of Batavia), and later, after the demolition of this castle in 1809, bought by the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences from a local trader called Baas Adji in 1868, made headlines in the Dutch press.² That year the screen was shipped from Indonesia to the United Kingdom; it travelled as a loan from the Museum Fatahillah, the historical museum in Jakarta, to the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) in London, where it was to be one of the masterpieces in the great exhibition *1620-1800 Baroque: Style in the Age of Magnificence* (fig. 5). This did not go by unnoticed in the Netherlands.

At the V&A the screen illustrated, in the first place, that Baroque was a ‘World Style’. For the seventeenth century was, according to the organizers of the exhibition, a time of crossing boundaries and, as a result, Baroque was the first style to appear in both hemispheres. The baroque Council Room screen illustrated this *par excellence* as it had been made in Batavia by Chinese craftsmen, working from a limited number of European pieces imported to provide examples. The catalogue concluded: “Although the screen shows European influences, its form is typically Indonesian.”³ The review in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* briefly mentioned that the screen had been presented as a masterpiece of ‘World Baroque’.⁴ But still, even this might have come as a surprise to a Dutch audience. In the Netherlands this type of furniture is generally known as Company-furniture; furniture that, in the context of the VOC, was also produced in Indonesia, South-Africa and Sri-Lanka, and as such is often considered to be typically Dutch.⁵

This, however, only became the case in the early twentieth century. The fact that the material culture of the VOC-past was of a hybrid character, apparently made it difficult for experts to estimate the historic and artistic value and style, and therefore problematic to connect with. The style could be described as

a mixture of Baroque (in the Netherlands often regarded as an un-Dutch and Catholic style), Portuguese, Chinese and even Hindu influences. Only as late as 1972 did the Rijksmuseum (the Netherlands’ National Museum in Amsterdam that harbours, amongst others, the master works of the Dutch Golden Age) establish a room for the display of Dutch colonial furniture, thereby recognising it as a style of its own. Looking back at this event, one of the Museum’s curators remarked that this late arrival may be explained by the fact that experts, for a long time, did not consider the style of colonial furniture to be pure (*zuiver*).⁶ This perspective was still alive in the Netherlands in 2009, as the reviewer in *de Volkskrant* called the screen on display at the V&A “a strange mixture of styles”.⁷

In the Museum Fatahillah in Jakarta, visitors can see traces of this colonial style. Although the informational text accompanying the screen is mainly factual, it also mentions that the young man depicted on the screen has “rather short legs”. This anatomical assessment originates from an observation provided by the archivist Frederik de Haan, in his book *Oud-Batavia* that celebrated the founding of the city of Batavia by the Dutch in 1619.⁸ De Haan’s negative appraisal of the main figure on the screen may be explained by his conviction that it had been developed by a peripheral and mixed culture that was familiar with European standards only through second hand sources.

From VOC-furniture with primarily a representative function, via Chinese and European influences, to a representation of a World Style; the travels of the VOC Council Room screen show us how one and the same object has taken on different manifestations in time and in space and how it played many roles in relation to processes of identification – and it did so within and outside colonial situations, and before and after decolonisation.

To give this specific case more background we ought to look at the process in which a specific corpus of material culture from early modern time came to be recognised and canonised as typical for the VOC in the Dutch East-Indies and Indonesia. The main elements of this corpus were: forts, country-houses, city centres (especially: houses, churches and gravestones) and furniture. Here we have only space to focus on a few aspects of this corpus. Since the end of the nineteenth century, and through the interaction of connoisseurs in the colony and the mother country, and of external parties, like the specialists from the South Kensington Museum in London and the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Berlin,⁹ the category Company-furniture as a typical Dutch-colonial national style in the Dutch East-Indies came to be defined. In the accompanying processes of identification, we can trace a mix of civic Batavian colonial and wider ‘Indisch’ nationalism, and Dutch imperial nationalism at work.

As stated above, the appropriation of the material culture of the early colonial past was problematic for such a long time in the Netherlands and the Dutch East-Indies, because of its hybridity. The character of this furniture, however, only became an object of discussion from the moment that curators of the

Museum of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in Batavia started to consider collecting the furniture of the Company’s era at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1898, the collector W.J. Oosterhoff published his essay *Iets over Oud Indische Meubelen* (Something about Old-Indies furniture) in the illustrated journal *Elsevier*. He described the style as a mixture of baroque and Portuguese, with Hindu influences, whereas Chinese craftsman often carved the objects. However, so he emphasised: “For the Netherlands and for the Netherlands-Indies this furniture is of national importance”.¹⁰

In subsequent years we see how this furniture transformed into a Dutch artefact. This happened in the process of collecting, publishing catalogues and organising exhibitions. In 1907, in the Dutch East-Indies, the Museum of the Batavian Society opened the ‘Company Room’; and in 1919, in celebration of the founding of Batavia in 1619, it hosted the exhibition of Old-Batavian furniture.¹¹ In the Netherlands, the city of The Hague organised the exhibition *Oud-Indische Meubelen* (Old Indies Furniture) in 1901, and in 1919 the Municipal Museum in Amsterdam exhibited this furniture in a comparable way.¹² The ‘nationalisation’ of this furniture was completed in 1939 when Victor van de Wall published his elaborate *Het Hollandsche Koloniale barokmeubel* (Dutch colonial baroque furniture).¹³

When we compare the categories Oosterhoff used in 1898, with those of Van de Wall in 1939, we see a clear development: ‘oud-Indisch’ (Old-Indies) became ‘Hollandsche-koloniaal’ (Dutch-colonial). This nationalisation of an aspect of the VOC-culture is not exceptional; the first edition of Van de Walls book on country-houses of Batavia, published in 1930, was entitled *Indische Landhuizen en hun Geschiedenis* (Indies’ country houses and their history), whereas the reprint of 1944 had changed to *Oude Hollandsche buitenplaatsen van Batavia* (Old-Dutch country houses of Batavia).¹⁴

We see a similar process with regard to the archaeology of VOC-forts. In 1912 the Dutch art-historian and archival specialist J.C. Overvoorde wrote about his travels through America, Africa and Asia in 1910/11, in order to inventory what he called the ‘*Monumenten van Nederlandschen Stam*’ (Monuments of the Dutch ‘tribe’).¹⁵ Overvoorde concluded that the colonial government of the Dutch East-Indies had strongly neglected ‘the stone archive’ of the VOC-time, and that it had an obligation to rescue this archive. Since the Hindu-monuments were already the object of state supported restorations, the time had now arrived for the government to turn its attention to the monuments of the ‘*Hollandsche stam*’ (the Dutch tribe).¹⁶ To Overvoorde such a VOC-heritage policy was important, because, in his eyes, it could strengthen the ties between the people who for many generations had lived in the Dutch-Indies, with those in the ‘motherland’. Van de Wall, who published his *De Nederlandse oudheden in de Molukken* (Dutch antiquities on the Moluccas) in 1928, would, however, point to another political meaning of the VOC-past: the ‘uncivilized’ or unethical activities of the early colonials on the Moluccan Islands. While he agreed that many people could see this as a sullied page of VOC history, he in the end emphasised that the company also formed the ‘foundation’ of ‘our colonial authority’.¹⁷

1: The Baroque ‘Company Screen’ (early eighteenth century), photographed by the Dutch East-Indies Archaeological Service, 1930. Photographic Collection, Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), Leiden.

2: The screen in the Council Room of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), in the castle in Batavia. Drawing by the Danish architect and draughtsman Johann Wolfgang Heijdt, 1739. Heijdt worked for the VOC from 1737-1741. From: De Haan, 1935.

3: The same screen in one of the exhibition rooms (in the very back) of the Museum of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, ca. 1896. Photographic Collection, Royal Tropical Museum, Amsterdam.

4: Board of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, posing in front of the screen that in the meantime was moved to their library/meeting room, Batavia, 1925. Photographic Collection KITLV, Leiden.

5: Cover of the Exhibition Catalogue *1620-1800 Baroque: Style in the Age of Magnificence* held in the Victoria & Albert Museum, 2009.

Company-furniture on the move and the problem of shared heritage



shared or conflicting interests. In other words, 'shared heritage' glosses over the supra-local and transnational dimensions of heritage, or those processes of identification that go beyond the boundaries of states and empire.

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Notes

- 1 See also Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff 2011, 'Conserving the past, mobilizing the Indonesian future. Archaeological sites, regime change and heritage politics in Indonesia in the 1950s', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (BKI) 167-4 (2011): pp 405-436.
- 2 Notulen Directievergadering Bataviaasch Genootschap 8 maart 1868, 19.
- 3 Michael Snodin and Nigel Llewellyn eds., *1620-1800 Baroque. Style in the Age of Magnificence*, (London 2009) 114-115 and 329-330.
- 4 Bernard Hulsman, 'Barok was de eerste globale stijl voor kunst. Tentoonstelling Victoria & Albertmuseum werpt nieuw licht op de barokke stijl', *NRC*, 24-6-2009.
- 5 J. Terwen-de Loos, *Het Nederlands koloniale meubel. Studie over meubels in de voormalige Nederlandse koloniën Indonesië en Sri Lanka* (Franeker 1985) 8-9.
- 6 T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Stichting Cultuurgeschiedenis van de Nederlanders Overzee 1961-1986. Terugblik en perspectief', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 35-1 (1987) 4-9, there 4 and 7-8.
- 7 Gert-Jan van Teeffelen, 'Overdaad in tijd van soberheid', *De Volkskrant*, 10-4-2009.
- 8 F. De Haan, *Oud Batavia. Platenalbum druk II* (Bandoeng 1935) C23.
- 9 For the specialists and objects in London and Berlin, see: W.J. Oosterhoff, 'Iets over Oud Indische Meubelen', *Elseviers geïllustreerd Maandschrift* 10 (1898) 318-338, there 323-324. Compare with: V.I. van de Wall, *Het Hollandsche koloniale barokmeubel. Bijdrage tot de kennis van het ebbenhouten meubel omstreeks het midden der XVIIIe en het begin der XVIIIe eeuw* (Antwerpen 1939) XVI and 42-62.
- 10 W.J. Oosterhoff, 'Iets over Oud Indische Meubelen', *Elseviers geïllustreerd Maandschrift* 10 (1898) 318-338, there 338.
- 11 M. Serrurier-ten Kate, *De Compagnie's Kamer van het Museum van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Batavia 1907); L. van Vuuren, *Catalogus van de historische tentoonstelling: ter gelegenheid der herdenking van het drie-honderd-jarig bestaan* (Weltevreden 1919)
- 12 G.P. Rouffaer, 'Oost en West'. *Tentoonstelling van Indische Kunstnijverheid. Groep III Oost-Indische Weefsels, Javaansche Batik's en Oud-Indische Meubelen* (Den Haag 1901); J.W. IJzerman, *Catalogus van de tentoonstelling ter herdenking van het 300-jarig bestaan van Batavia, gehouden in het Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Juni-Juli 1919* (Amsterdam 1919).
- 13 V.I. van de Wall, *Het Hollandsche koloniale barokmeubel. Bijdrage tot de kennis van het ebbenhouten meubel omstreeks het midden der XVIIIe en het begin der XVIIIe eeuw* (Antwerpen 1939).
- 14 V.I. van de Wall, *Indische Landhuizen en hun geschiedenis* (Batavia 1932); V.I. van de Wall, *Oude Hollandsche buitenplaatsen van Batavia* (Deventer 1944).
- 15 J.C. Overvoorde, *Verslag van het onderzoek naar de monumenten van Nederlandsen oorsprong of onder Nederlandsen invloed ontstaan in de vroegere Nederzettingen buiten Europa* (Leiden 1912).
- 16 Vincent Kuitenbrouwer has recently argued that 'stam' should be regarded as the Dutch version of Britishness; it can best be translated as 'tribe', as it has a clear ethnic and cultural connotation. J.J.V. Kuitenbrouwer, *A War of Words: Dutch pro-Boer Propaganda and the South African War (1899-1902)* dissertation University of Amsterdam (2010).
- 17 V.I. van de Wall, *De Nederlandsche oudheden in de Molukken* ('s-Gravenhage 1928).
- 18 J. Terwen-de Loos, *Het Nederlands koloniale meubel. Studie over meubels in de voormalige Nederlandse koloniën Indonesië en Sri Lanka* (Franeker 1985) 15.
- 19 W.Ph. Coolhaas, 'Inleiding', *Wonen in de Wijde Wereld, een Tentoonstelling van de Stichting Cultuurgeschiedenis van de Nederlanders Overzee - Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam* (1964) 3-12, there 12.
- 20 See for example: Intan Mardiana Napitupulu, S. Engelsman and E.W. Veen, 'Voorwoord directeuren', in: Endang Sri Hardiati and P. Ter Keurs eds., *De Ontdekking van het Verleden. Indonesia* (Amsterdam 2005) 6.

After decolonisation, the material remains of the VOC-past would gain new meanings, both in the Netherlands and Indonesia. In Indonesia, the *Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia* (Indonesian Culture Council) stored the colonial furniture collection in their depots.¹⁸ This was the former Museum of the Batavian Society, which was handed over to the Indonesian government in 1962, then becoming the Museum Pusat (Central Museum), and subsequently, in 1978, the Museum Nasional (National Museum). But nowadays the VOC-furniture is on display again in Jakarta; most notably in the Museum Fatahillah (located in the former Batavian city hall) that was founded in 1974 and is dedicated to the history of the city region. In the Netherlands, perspectives on Company-furniture also adapted to the new postcolonial circumstances. The activities of the *Stichting Cultuurgeschiedenis Nederlanders Overzee* (Foundation for Cultural History of Dutchmen Overseas) can serve as a good example here. In 1963/4 this foundation organised the exhibition 'Wonen in de Wijde Wereld' (Living in the Wide World) at the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam. It gave a nostalgic overview of the lives of 'our ancestors overseas' with the help of texts, objects and drawings, paintings and photographs, and colonial furniture. Although the exhibition depicted colonial society as multi-ethnic, the focus was still on *Dutchmen* overseas. Nationalism – common in those early Cold War Years – was almost hidden; one of the initiators concluded that "this colonial past makes 'us' more *world citizens* than most of the other Europeans".¹⁹

It is tempting to compare this category of European world citizens to the category of Baroque as a World Style, as brought forward by the V&A in London. The description of the screen from the VOC Head Quarters in Batavia, as an example of Baroque as a World Style, certainly could fit in the self-image of the V&A as a centre of the world. The V&A description differs, however, from the Dutch appropriations of this VOC culture as typical for the Dutch Overseas, and as a specific Dutch way – rooted in VOC-history – of being a world citizen, because it leaves space for alternative ways of regarding the corpus of material culture of the VOC. And it is at this last point where there is a significant link with contemporary discussions on heritage politics towards the material remains of colonial pasts.

In recent years we have seen a shift from the use of the term 'colonial heritage' to 'shared heritage'.²⁰ The intention was to go beyond the colonial hierarchy and surpass (post)colonial sensitivities when heritage organisations in the former colonised and colonising countries collaborated. The hope was for the possibility to manage 'sensitive heritage' on a more equal base. Ironically, however, 'shared heritage' often has the effect of disregarding still-existing hierarchies and inequalities. Our research, for example, when we followed the travels of the VOC screen, made us increasingly aware that the notion is problematic in itself, since it implies that the selected forms of 'shared heritage' can only be estimated, valued, conserved, etc., within the framework of two postcolonial states and their

“Never forget national humiliation”

While the whole world is talking about China’s rise, all focus has been placed on understanding China’s present policies and future orientations. However, very little attention is still devoted to examining China’s colonial past and how the post-colonial consciousness affects present China. For many people, especially those from the countries of China’s “ex-colonial aggressors,” the notion that time heals all wounds is often taken for granted. Many also assume that China’s recent successes have provided healing for its historical wounds. Unfortunately, this assumption is wrong.

Zheng Wang

OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES, it is true that China has undergone a tremendous transformation; no longer weak and isolated, it is now a strong state that has the power to impact global affairs. However, the Chinese have not really moved forward from their past humiliation. Chinese historical consciousness of the so-called *Bainian guochi* (a century of national humiliation) still plays a powerful role, affecting Chinese politics, foreign relations, and national psyche. *Bainian guochi* is a term the Chinese have used to refer to the period from the outbreak of the first Opium War in 1839 until the end of World War II in 1945. In this century, China was attacked, bullied, and torn asunder by imperialists.

In fact, China’s new accomplishments and growing confidence have actually often served to strengthen this historical consciousness. They have, at times, served to activate, not assuage, people’s memory of the past humiliation. This is why it is very important for today’s people to understand the Chinese historical consciousness. China’s rise should not be understood through a single lens like economics or military growth, but rather viewed through a more comprehensive lens which takes national identity and domestic discourse into account. In this article, I will report on Chinese discourse of its colonial past by introducing a sculpture, a textbook and a poem.

Never forget: a sculpture

Museums and public monuments have played very important roles in the formation of a national memory and identity in different societies. Today, the Chinese people are living in a forest of monuments, all of which are used to represent the past to its citizens.

September 18 Historical Museum was built in Shenyang, a city in northeast China, in 1991. 18 September 1931 is an important date in the Chinese collective memory. On this day, the Japanese army, which had been occupying parts of Manchuria since the first Sino-Japanese War, launched a surprise attack on Shenyang and began its full-scale invasion of China. Within a week, the Japanese had conquered most of Manchuria. According to Chinese historical narrative, the fourteen years from 1931 to 1945 under Japanese occupation were the darkest period of Chinese history and the most painful memory for many Chinese.

To commemorate this incident, the Chinese constructed this museum, located on the exact site where the attack occurred in 1931. As depicted in figure 1, the outer appearance of the museum depicts a large, very impressive sculpture designed to look like an open calendar. This calendar is inscribed with the date 18 September, as the Chinese hoped that through this particular construction, future generations would not forget this historic date. The sculpture serves as a permanent reminder of this humiliating piece of history.

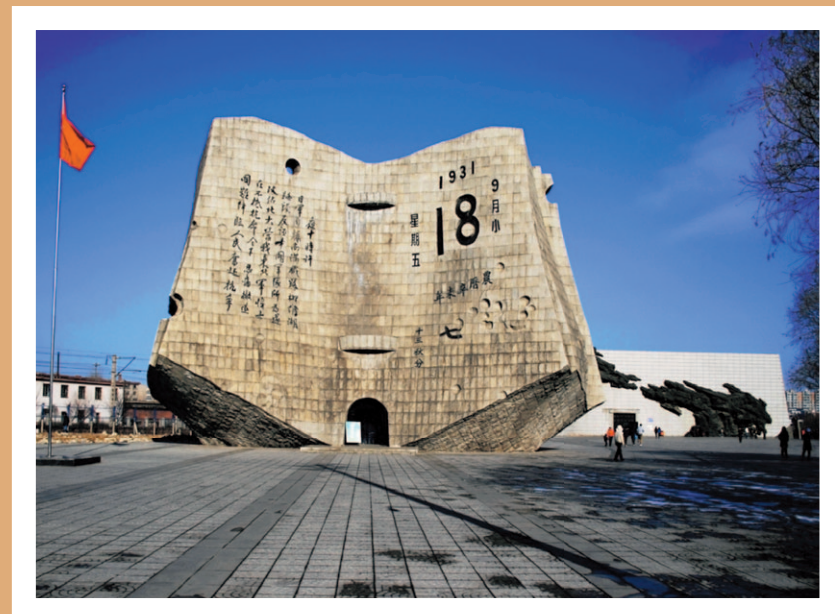
On the other side of the museum, a huge bronze bell engraved with the four Chinese characters *Wuwang Guochi* (勿忘國耻), meaning “Never Forget National Humiliation”, has been erected. In figure 2, a group of students are listening to a senior citizen, a victim of the Japanese invasion, telling her stories. Not far from the bell, there is a huge marble stone inscribed on former Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s dedication “Never forget September 18” (*Wuwang 9-18*).

Although people all over the world cherish their own memorials, the special effort made by the Chinese government to construct memory sites and use them for ideological reeducation is unparalleled. As part of the contents of the “Patriotic Education Campaign” beginning in 1991, Beijing required local governments of all levels to establish “patriotic education bases.” Visiting these memory sites has become a regular part of school curriculum.¹

Although people all over the world cherish their own memorials, the special effort made by the Chinese government to construct memory sites and use them for ideological reeducation is unparalleled.

1 (top right):
The September 18
Historical Museum
in Shenyang.

2 (bottom right):
“Never Forget
National Humiliation”



Postcolonial consciousness and China's rise



Lest you forget: a textbook

On 5 April 2005, the Japanese Education Ministry approved a new junior high school textbook titled *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho* (new history textbook), written by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform. This move ignited immediate outrage among some Asian countries, especially China and South Korea. Critics have charged that this organization has been revising history textbooks to minimize Japan's culpability for its wartime actions.

According to critics, the textbook provides a distorted and self-serving account of Japan's colonial and wartime activities. For example, you will find no mention of the "Nanjing Massacre." Indeed, there is only one sentence that refers to this event: "they [the Japanese troops] occupied that city in December." The editors of the book added a footnote here, which makes the first, and only, direct reference to The Nanjing/Nanking Incident: "At this time, many Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed or wounded by Japanese troops (the Nanking Incident). Documentary evidence has raised doubts about the actual number of victims claimed by the incident. The debate continues even today."²

3 (Top left):
Protesting the new
Japanese textbook.

4 (Middle left):
300,000 victims in
eleven languages –
let there be no
mistake or doubt
about how many
victims there were.



On 9 April 2005, an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 Chinese demonstrators marched to the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, throwing stones at the facility. The next day, 20,000 protesters demonstrated in two cities in southern Guangdong Province (see figure 3), and protesters attacked a Japanese department store in Shenzhen. Two weeks after the approval of the textbook, anti-Japanese protests broke out in more than ten Chinese cities. In each case, protesters chanted slogans and burned Japanese flags. People carried banners with slogans reading: "Japan must apologize to China," "Never forget national humiliation," and "Boycott Japanese goods."

Anybody who has visited the *Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall* will have a better understanding as to why the Chinese are so angry over this Japanese textbook. A huge stone wall at the entrance of the Memorial Hall has the death toll inscribed as "Victims 300,000". The word "victim" is engraved in Chinese, English, and Japanese. The decision to make this figure recognizable in three different languages illustrates the Chinese insistence on the number of casualties. Visitors will also notice that another monument at the memorial depicts the same number of 300,000 casualties, but in eleven different languages (see figure 4). These two monuments are testaments to historical controversy, as they highlight how a group of people chooses to remember their historical narrative.

"Never Forget": national ideas

According to Jeffrey Legro, many societies have "dominant ideas" or "national ideas", which he defined as "the collective beliefs of societies and organizations about how to act."⁵ I believe that Chinese people's historical consciousness of its colonial past and the belief that China must "never forget national humiliation" are the dominant ideas in China's public rhetoric. National ideas are difficult to change, as they become ingrained in public rhetoric and bureaucratic procedures that make them resilient like all traditions that are institutionally entrenched. These ideas often unconsciously but profoundly influence people's perceptions and actions. One cannot understand China's current situation without knowing China's past. Historical memory is the most useful key to unlocking the inner mystery of the Chinese, as it is the prime raw material for constructing China's national identity.

Looking at historical memory is not just a look at the past; instead, uncovering historical memory is a progressive look forward in understanding where China is trying to go. If we want to understand China's intentions we must first understand the building blocks of Chinese intentions. Who we think we are defines what we think we want. Understanding Chinese national identity from this perspective can give insight into who China is seeking to become as it makes its rapid rise. For example, while people in the world are talking about China's rise, the Chinese like to use another word: *rejuvenation* (*faxing*). By choosing the word "rejuvenation" (复兴), the Chinese emphasize their determination to wipe out past humiliations and to restore themselves to their former glory. The word "rejuvenation" is deeply rooted in China's historical memory.

For the purpose of understanding a country, the orthodox research approach focuses on collecting political, socioeconomic, and security data, and then conducting macro-analysis of institutions, policies, and decision-making. Such an approach, however, has critical limitations for understanding the deep structure and dynamics of the country. I would suggest that to understand a country, one should visit the country's memory sites and primary schools, and read their history textbooks. A nation's history is not merely a recounting of its past; what individuals and countries remember and what they choose to forget are telling indicators of their current values, perceptions, and even their aspirations.

Zheng Wang is associate professor at the John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, in New Jersey, United States. His forthcoming book "Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations" will be published by Columbia University Press in 2012.

What do you want from us?
When we were the Sick Man of Asia,
We were called the Yellow Peril.
When we are billed to be the next superpower,
We are called The Threat.
When we closed our doors,
You smuggled drugs to open markets.
When we embrace free trade,
You blame us for taking away your jobs.
When we were falling apart,
You marched in your troops and wanted your fair share.
When we tried to put the broken pieces back together again,
Free Tibet you screamed. It was an Invasion!
When we tried Communism,
You hated us for being Communist.
When we embrace Capitalism,
You hate us for being Capitalist.
When we had a billion people,
You said we were destroying the planet.
When we tried limiting our numbers,
You said we abused human rights.
When we were poor, you thought we were dogs.
When we loan you cash, you blame us for your national debts.
When we build our industries,
You call us Polluters.
When we sell you goods,
You blame us for global warming.
When we buy oil,
You call it exploitation and genocide.
...
What do you really want from us?
Think hard first, then answer ...⁴

One may wonder why history education and history textbooks in particular are important enough to fight over. For countries like China and Korea, while they teach their younger generation to never forget their traumatic past, they cannot accept their "ex-colonial aggressors" hiding this part of history from their own youth. History textbooks thus become a source of conflict in East Asia.

What do you want from us: a poem

In an article in *Forbes Magazine* in 2008, Lee Kuan Yew, the former Premier of Singapore, quoted a Chinese poem³ (see left). Reading this poem, Lee, as one of the few world leaders knowledgeable of both Western and Eastern culture, said that he was sad to see "the gulf in understanding" between Chinese and Westerners. This poem illustrates the obvious Chinese frustration at not being understood, and the great perceptual divide between Chinese and Westerners.

The poem is striking in its simplicity in understanding history. Some statements are also based on myths. For example, the phrase, "Sick Man of East Asia," is actually the Chinese people's imaged humiliation, as it was initially utilized to describe the weak and corrupt condition of the Qing Empire, with no actual reference to the health or physique of the Chinese people.

However, this anonymous Chinese poem represents a typical postcolonial discourse. It has been widely distributed and discussed in Internet chat rooms, and many conclude that this poem aptly reflects Chinese sentiment. Westerners may perceive the incidents listed in this poem as independent and incomparable events that happened over an extended period of time. Many Chinese, however, view these events as current, and feel closely connected with what happened one hundred years ago. The "century of humiliation" has provided the Chinese with plenty of historical analogies to use, and they often draw parallels between current and historical events. The legacy of history has provided the Chinese with the lens that they use to interpret current issues. Without understanding this special postcolonial sentiment, it is impossible for the West to fully understand current Chinese behaviors and its future intentions.

Notes

- 1 Wang, Zheng. "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory." *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2008).
- 2 Kanji, Nishio, et al., eds. *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho*, [New History Textbook]. Tokyo: Fusosha, 2005.49
- 3 Kuan Yew Lee, "Two Images of China," *Forbes*, June 16, 2008.
- 4 The full text of this poem can be read from the *Washington Post*: "What Do You Really Want From Us?" *Washington Post*, May 18, 2008, accessed 15 February 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/4br8eze>
- 5 Legro, Jeffrey W. "What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power." *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (2007). 515.

Commercial Burmanization: two adverts by Burmah Oil Company in postcolonial Burma

Burma gained independence on 4 January 1948. Immediately after independence, Burmese media launched a campaign to ‘resurrect’ the country’s ‘lost’ culture. *Bamakhit* newspaper argued that the building of a new nation must be based upon customs, religion, and traditions that were indigenous.¹ The new Burma needed to be built upon the foundations of Buddhism and cultures unique to the country. Indeed Burma not only had to recover its own customs, but also needed to distinguish, with the aim of discarding, cultures that were foreign to the country. In this article, I discuss how the (British-owned) Burmah Oil Company (BOC) used ‘authentically’ Burmese images in postcolonial Burma to promote their products.

Tharapi Than



MANY NATIONALISTS UNDER THE NU-LED GOVERNMENT appear to have felt that now that the British were gone and resistance against imperialism was over, only the battle against ideologies that threatened the Burmese way of life could unite the different political groups and the people in general. Indeed, public reformers voiced their concern that since the physical enemy, that is the colonial government, was gone, the people would relax and could be taken by surprise by the moral enemy, that is modernity.² The physical challenge that had dominated the struggle against the diminishing British presence in the period 1945-48 was now substituted by an ideological struggle against Western moral influence.

One of Burma’s finest poets and writers, Zawgyi, has argued that during colonialism, some Burmese regarded their culture as the only identity that the British could not steal, and therefore a determination to defend and promote Burma’s cultural distinctiveness inspired nationalist literature.³ Such a determination continues in postcolonial Burma. And the tendency to promote Burmese culture spills over to the commercial world. Many businesses – both local and foreign – began to use ‘uniquely’ Burmese symbols and pictures to represent and promote their goods.

The advertisement (figure 1) promotes different types of oils from Burmah Oil Company, and the advertisement appeared in *Bamakhit*, a Rangoon-based newspaper, in 1953. Using the sketch of a female farmer or ကောကျိထွားယာ wearing a traditional bamboo-woven raincoat (ဟင်္ဂါလာ), the company not only ties its business to the main economic sector of the country, i.e., agriculture, but it also ties its image to the traditional, hardworking and innocent symbol of rural Burma: a farm girl.

The ad reads “Burmese rice industry and our oil distribution industry are always interconnected. As kerosene is used for lighting on the farm, our engine oil and lubricating oil are used by the rice mills and rice cargo ships.” Unlike the rice industry, the oil industry is essentially the preserve of European interests,⁴ and to promote the British company’s interests with an entirely Burmese image, including terms provoking friendship, was a clever promotional tactic of BOC.

1(left): Burmah Oil Company (BOC) Advertisement, *Bamakhit*, 4 Sept. 1953, p.13.
2(right): Burmah Oil Company (BOC) Advertisement, *Bamakhit*, 19 Nov. 1953, p.13.



The wording suggests that the two industries share the same interests – the interests of Burma’s rice industry and therefore the interests of the Burmese themselves. The title of the advertisement, *Burma’s Grace*, is also striking, promoting BOC alongside a happy farm girl as Burma’s grace. Whether the creative idea behind the ad was the imagination of the BOC,⁵ or the artist himself raised another question. The ad seems to have responded to the popular message, at least in the media, to promote Burmese culture and traditions. By using the innocent image of the farm girl as well as linking the company’s interest closely to Burma’s interests, BOC was also able to circumvent a rising tide of economic nationalism in the 1950s, during which foreign owned companies and foreigners were blamed for Burma’s economic woes.

Another advertisement by BOC (figure 2), using a female weaver, also captured the postcolonial imagination, i.e., to reclaim the Burmese culture. The second ad reads: “As Amarapura near Mandalay distributes delicate and beautiful (like formations of clouds) silk fabric, BOC, from centrally located Mandalay, distributes kerosene, petroleum, engine oil and candles nationwide including Chin, Kachin, Pa-lao and Shan.” In this ad, BOC provokes the cultural reminiscence of the last Kingdom of Konbaung – Mandalay – and even included different minority groups in its ad. The title of the ad is the same as the first one: “Burma’s Grace”. These two ads were both part of BOC’s advertising campaign in 1953. More research is needed to ascertain who commissioned the BOC advertisement campaign and what the rationale was behind these ‘Burmanized’ ads.

After independence, a reverse cultural reclamation process started taking shape. During the early colonial days, the Burmese saw the British flag substituting the Burmese King’s peacock banner in official buildings; missionary schools and Anglo-vernacular schools instead of monasteries becoming the centres of learning; Chinese and Indians catering the needs of the Burmese; Indian labourers cleaning the streets of Rangoon and toiling across the agricultural districts – these scenes dominated the Burmese minds from 1824 (the end of the first Anglo-Burman war, after which Arakan and Tennesarim were annexed to India as part of the British Empire) to independence in 1948.

Perhaps the government felt that strong counter-cultural forces were needed to help instil a sense of ownership, not least the cultural ownership, of the country. And many newspapers and magazines rallied around this cause. The commercial world seemed to have joined this cause, as shown by the adverts of the BOC company. Independence also reignited hostility towards foreign culture, and heralded the reconstruction of racial and class barriers.

“No Burmans”-signs were binned at the social clubs; British civilians were encouraged to leave despite the serious lack of local skills in administration; and Chinese and Indian businessmen were branded opportunists and exploiters. A vision was promoted of a society that was economically self-sufficient, with natives enjoying the fruits of their hard work. It was also a vision of a country that was culturally independent, promoted especially by nationalist writers who strove to inculcate the same vision in their readers. To such writers, Western culture was not needed to ‘modernize’ Burma, since the country had its own ways to participate in modernity. A new nationalist movement was embodied in the progress of ‘Burmanization’, undertaken by the state. BOC advertisements clearly showed that foreign businesses participated in this ‘Burmanization’ project, perhaps under the threat of losing sales and revenues if they could not attract state support, and more importantly, Burmese customers.

Dr Tharaphi Than is a Teaching Fellow and Lector in Burmese at SOAS. Her PhD was entitled *Writers, Fighters and Prostitutes: Women and Burma’s Modernity, 1942-1962*. She is currently preparing her first monograph on the social history of Burmese women, and is the co-founder and pro-bono director of Link Emergency and Development (LEAD), a Burmese charity based in Rangoon.

Notes
1 *Bamakhit*, 13 July 1955, p. 3.
2 *Bamakhit*, 13 August 1956, p. 3.
3 Zawgyi. 2004. ရာဇဝင်အဖွဲ့ချုပ် [Introduction to Literature], 2nd edition, Rangoon: Hnin Oo Lwin
4 Ian Brown. 2009. ‘British Firms and the End of Empire in Burma’, *Asian Affairs*, 40: 1, 15-33.
5 In the mid 1950s, the British and Europeans owned only 60% of the company before it was completely nationalized by the Burma Socialist Programme Party Government, led by Ne Win, in 1963.
6 The initials B.K. at the lower right (first ad) and left (second ad) hand corners of the ads, suggest that the artist for the ad series could have been Ba Kyi, one of the well-known artists trained in Paris and Pennsylvania. He was well-known for his paintings of *Jataka* and life histories of Buddha. BOC could not have commissioned a better artist to capture the Burmese culture in arts, again suggesting that the company thought carefully of making ‘Burma’ and ‘Burman’ the overriding message of their ads, promoting their ‘Burmese-friendly’ image more than their products.
7 A columnist of *Bamakhit* argued that every Buddhist Burmese woman should scrutinize her lifestyle closely, and by doing so, pay respect to their own religion, custom and traditions. *Bamakhit*, 10 October 1955, p. 3.

INVITATION

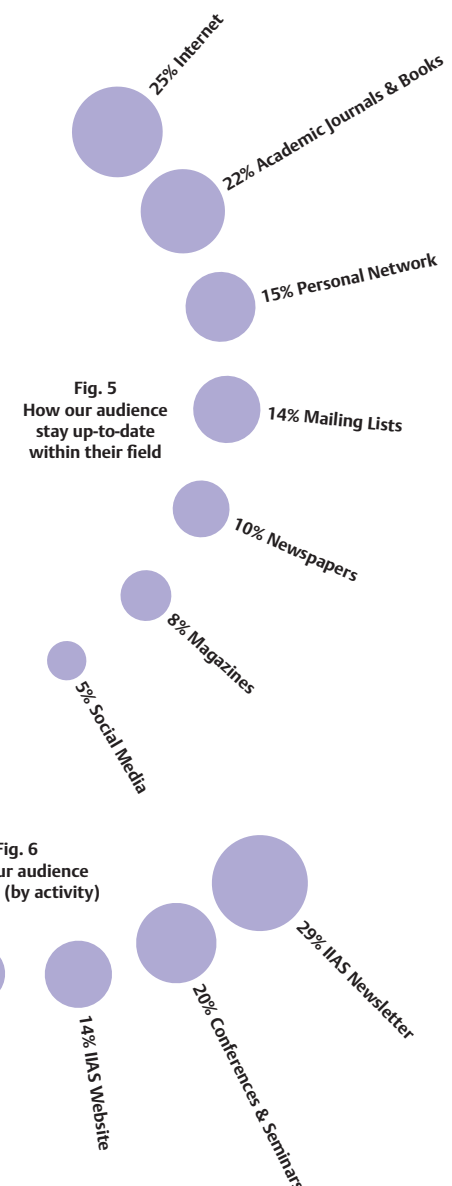
We offer a warm invitation to the 70% who indicated they have not yet had the chance to visit us in Leiden.



NEW MEDIA, OLD MEDIA?

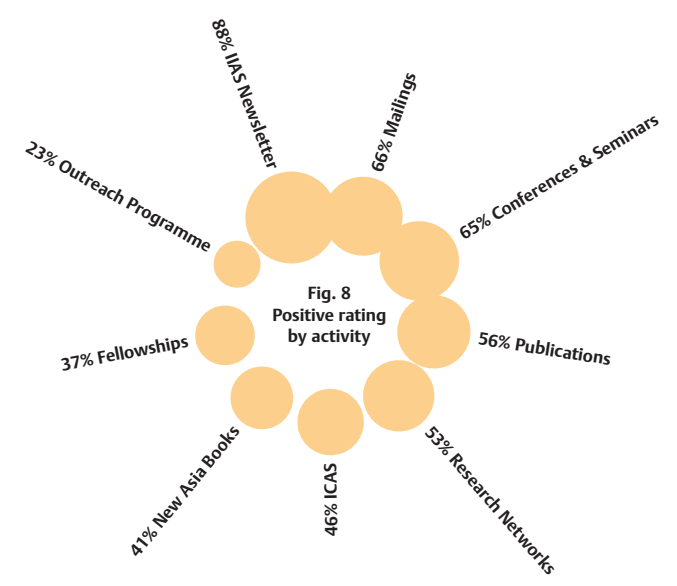
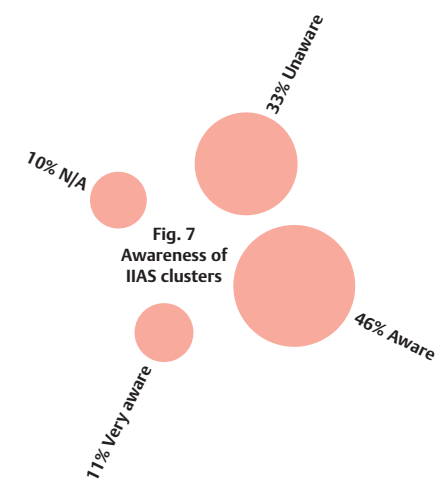
We asked our audience how they stay up-to-date on developments in their fields of expertise (fig. 5), and through which media they know IIAS, by activity (fig. 6). Although the use of social media is not yet widespread amongst Asianists, we envision more use of these platforms in the near future, which is why we also publish all our institutional news through the most popular social media platforms. We have created separate Facebook pages and groups for different IIAS programmes and initiatives, such as News Asia Books, ICAS, our Summer Programmes and research networks.

Interesting fact: most of our Facebook friends live in Indonesia. Please also join us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Not only to read what we have to say, but also to talk to us and our network.



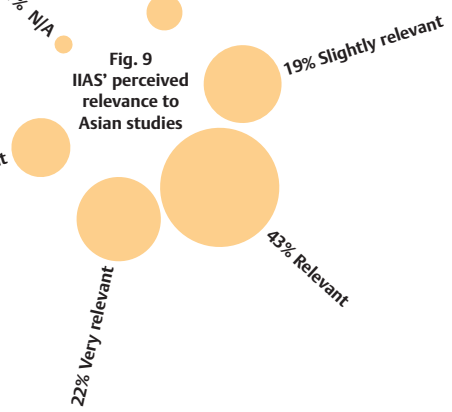
OUR CLUSTERS, OUR STRATEGY

Last year we started channeling all our research activities through three thematic clusters: Asian Cities, Global Asia, and Asian Heritages. While it is still a relatively new development, we were encouraged to see that many of our audience members are aware of our research clusters (fig. 7). Our future communication efforts will nevertheless be geared towards the further branding of these clusters. Find out more at www.iias.nl/research.



RELEVANCE AND RATING

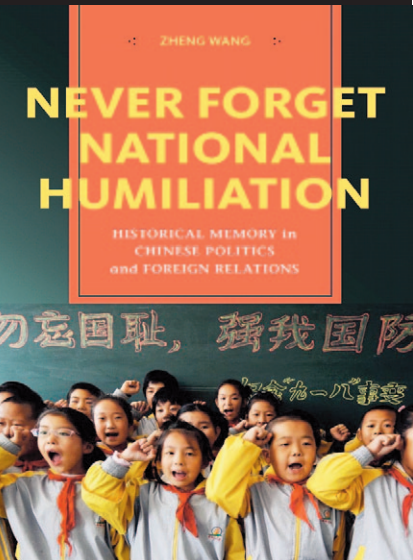
Our perceived relevance to Asian studies is perhaps the most important of gauges (fig. 9). It is our aim and continuous ambition to be relevant for individual scholars and research communities worldwide, not only in Europe. We also asked respondents to rate our academic services. The percentage of our audience that rates us, per activity, as good or excellent gives us a clear indication of where we need to improve (fig. 8).



Overall, IIAS is best known for its quarterly publication, The Newsletter, and for the large number of conferences and seminars it organises. The survey has made it clear that we, however, need to advertise our fellowship programme, research networks, publication series and outreach activities more actively, and to a much wider audience.

Never Forget National Humiliation

Zheng Wang, 2012.
Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations.
 New York: Columbia University Press.
 ISBN: 9780231148900



THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP) has not only survived but thrived in the post-Cold War era, regaining the support of Chinese citizens after the Tiananmen Square crackdown of 1989. Popular sentiment has turned toward anti-Western nationalism despite the internally-driven, anti-dictatorship democratic movements of the 1980s, and China has shown more assertion toward the United States and Japan in matters of foreign policy, while, at the same time, acting relatively conciliatory toward smaller countries in conflict.

Offering an explanation for these unusual events, Zheng Wang follows the communist government's ideological reeducation of the public through the exploitation of China's humiliating modern history. Beginning in the early 1990s, a national "Patriotic Education Campaign" relentlessly portrayed China as the victim of foreign imperialist interference. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, the narrative goes, outside forces have attacked, bullied, and torn China apart, subjecting the once-great nation to "one hundred years of humiliation." Wang tracks the CCP's use of history education to glorify the party, reestablish its legitimacy, consolidate national identity, and justify one-party rule in the post-Tiananmen and post-Cold War era. The result has been the institutionalization of a manipulated historical memory and consciousness now directing political discourse and foreign policy. Wang demonstrates the role historical memory has played in China's rise: its manipulation by political elites, its resonance in the popular imagination, and its ability to constrain and shape China's international relations. By concentrating on the telling and teaching of history in today's China, Wang illuminates the thinking of the young patriots who will lead this rising power in the twenty-first century. He positions historical memory as one of the biggest factors shaping the exercise of Chinese power and the key to understanding Chinese nationalism and intention.



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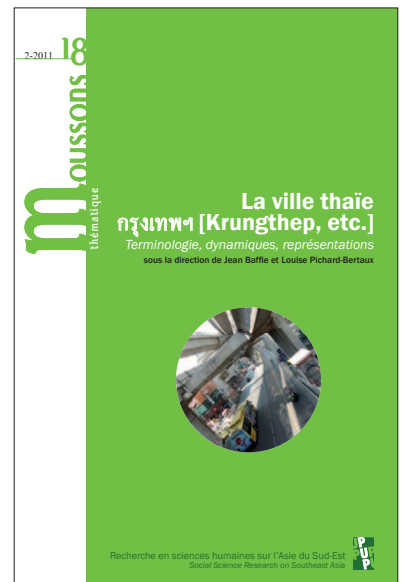
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Rumah Abu Han, a historic ancestral house in Surabaya

More than a decade after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, with the waning of political discriminatory policy and cultural bias against Chinese Indonesians, a number of films dealing with the issue of Chinese Indonesian culture and experience have been publicly released.

Kathleen Azali

Reviewed film: *Rumah Abu Han Documentary*, Directed and produced by Kevin Reinaldo Arffandy, 2011. A documentary film about an ancestral house of the Han family in Surabaya, Indonesia. Downloadable for free from: <http://vimeo.com/24602582> More information at <http://www.facebook.com/rumahabuhandocumentaryfilm>

TO NAME A FEW, we have *Ca Bau Kan* (Nia Dinata, 2002), *Babi Buta yang Ingin Terbang* (Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly, Edwin, 2008), *The Anniversaries* (Ariani Darmawan, 2006), *Anak Naga Beranak Naga* (Dragons Begets Dragons, Ariani Darmawan, 2006), *A Trip to the Wound* (Edwin, 2007), *Sugiharti Halim* (Ariani Darmawan, 2008), and *Cin(T)ja* (Sammaria Simanjutak, 2009). These films tell the continuous (re)negotiation of "Chineseness", the dynamics of Chinese discrimination and assimilation, usually through the narrations of their ideas, experiences, emotions, and ambiguities of being Chinese in Indonesia. Due to the difficulties in screening them through mainstream cinema, most of them are screened in festivals and local communities.

Rumah Abu Han (The Han's Ancestral House) documentary, then, is noteworthy for (re)telling the stories of Chinese assimilation and integration within its surrounding environment and communities by focusing on a physical, tangible heritage, and for its method of distribution through the social video-sharing website, Vimeo. This short, 22-minute documentary was released in 2011, directed by Kevin Reinaldo Arffandy, a recent graduate from Petra Christian University, Surabaya, for his final year assignment, and produced under his independent production house, Ranting Pohon production.

In Surabaya, Indonesia, there are three well-known Chinese ancestral houses, owned by the clans of Han, The and Tjoa (Onghokham, 2005). The Han's ancestral house is perhaps the best known since it is the biggest, the oldest, still well-maintained and is relatively accessible to the public. The documentary attempts to show the integration of Chinese, Dutch and Javanese cultures by tracing the architecture and the interior elements through narrated descriptions and interviews with the owner (Robert Rosihan), the caretaker (Karno), local heritage community (Freddy Istanto) and a lecturer from Petra Christian University specialising in Chinese heritage (Hanny Kwartanti).

The film opens with a general overview of Surabaya as a bustling, modernising city with common urban problems, and here the filmmaker laments how the rapid urban growth has led to the indifference and disregard for their own cultural heritage and history. Through an interview with Freddy Istanto, a well-known media campaigner from the Surabaya Heritage Society, the film attempts to promote the importance of preserving cultural heritage in establishing the city's sense of place and identity – the 'spirit' of the city.

Before focusing on the ancestral house, the film briefly explains how the old town area of Surabaya near the Kalimas river and Jembatan Merah bridge was divided by the Dutch colonial government into three areas based on ethnicity – the *Maleische Camp* for the Malays, the *Chineez Camp* for the Chinese, and *Arab Camp* for the Arabs. This division has contributed in shaping the routines of everyday life, the patterns of settlement, and the physical environment.

The film then turns to the house, highlighting the interior elements and the history of the Han's family through interviews with the owner, Robert Rosihan. Located on Jalan Karet, the Han's ancestral house was the first ancestral house in Surabaya, built circa 18th century by Han Bwee Koo,

the 6th generation of the Han family first arriving in the coastal city Lasem in 1673. Although *rumah abu* literally means a house of ashes, it is not a mausoleum (even though, confusingly, that is the term used in Surabaya for a mausoleum). The family's preservation of its 'authentic' use and elements, despite the lack of governmental and other external support, is highly commended.

The main feature of the house highlighted in this film is its iconic blend of Chinese, Dutch colonial and Javanese architectural and interior elements, reflecting the history, the socio-cultural values, and the tropical location. It is a well-championed – if perhaps slightly romanticised – interpretation of the Han's ancestral house, also proposed by Hedy C. Indrani and Maria Ernawati Prasodjo (2005) in *Tipologi, Organisasi Ruang, dan Elemen Interior Rumah Abu Han di Surabaya*, an article Arffandy most likely called on, when making this documentary.

There are two main areas in the house: the prayer area and the living area. The prayer area is divided into the terrace, the guest hall, the family hall, and the prayer hall, while the living area contains bedrooms, bathrooms and the kitchen. To describe this interior of the house, the film uses 3D floor plan renderings and lingering shots of the interior elements like wooden carvings, floor tiles and window patterns. Hanny Kwartanti is interviewed to elaborate on symbolic interpretations of the Chinese interior elements. The film then scans and briefly describes the rooms, the origins of some architectural elements (pillars imported from Glasgow, decorative carvings from China), the furniture (Dutch-style chairs, Chinese marble tables), as well as the Han's family portraits and their genealogy chart.

A particular attention is given to the prayer hall, which is indeed originally designed as the most important area of the house. This is where the ancestral tablets (*sinci*) are stored, and where the family burns incense at the altar and prays to their ancestors.

The film then describes the current use of the house through interviews with the owner and the one of the caretakers, Karno. The owner elaborates that the house has been opened for public on numerous occasions for educational purposes, including research, school trips, book discussions, and batik *encim* exhibitions. What is sadly missing in this film, however, is the description of the surrounding environment, which has made, thus far, regular public functions and opening hours, impossible.

Fortunately, we had the privilege of organizing a public screening and lecture at C20 Library, supported by a Surabaya historic community called *Surabaya Tempo Dulu*, and the Centre for Chinese Indonesian Studies from Petra Christian University. The panellists were Arffandy himself, Robert Rosihan, and Lukito Kartono, a lecturer specialising in Chinese and Indonesian architecture. This public event prompted questions, dialogues and ideas. Compared to other ancestral houses in Surabaya, the Han's as a privately-owned heritage building is the most publicly accessible and relatively well-maintained, but it is still admittedly in dismal condition on the brink of disuse. The standard idea to turn it into a museum, a café, or other public space is inapplicable due to the surrounding heavy loading and unloading zone, and the questionable security of the area. The owner has also revealed that the ill-defined category of 'heritage building' in Surabaya has, contradictorily, made the maintenance problematic, particularly with its heavy land taxes and complicated renovation procedures. Kartono also supplemented the information from the film with a complex historical and architectural analysis.

With his focus on the interior elements, Arffandy only gives us a relatively superficial overview of the Han's ancestral house. Graduated with a degree in Visual Communication and Design, Arffandy has directed and produced a visually appealing documentary with a particular focus on visual elements and forms of the house, but fails to put it within historical and cultural contexts. The emphasis is placed on obvious symbols such as dragons, lions, ancestral tablets, and the readings of visual elements from the interviews are rather restricted to Chinese symbols, with little effort to link them to various influences. Granted, this lack of exhaustive information perhaps can also be attributed to the paucity of accessible and credible historical information about Surabaya. Indeed, aside from the films by Ariani Darmawan, most films dealing with the issue of 'Chineseness' mentioned above usually remain within ambiguous questions of identities, ideas and experiences. This is where a venue for public screening and forum is necessary for the filmmakers to garner feedback for their works.

Overall, *Rumah Abu Han Documentary* with its attractive visuals and photography serves as an appealing audio-visual introduction, much-needed to promote a relatively obscure heritage building of Surabaya. Even in Surabaya, not too many people know of its existence; a fate that has befallen numerous other old buildings of this city. Hopefully, the creation of this documentary by a young Indonesian filmmaker, with its utilisation of a global, far-reaching video-sharing website, will prompt greater interests in the ancestral house, and other oft-neglected heritage of Surabaya.

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Arffandy has directed and produced a visually appealing documentary with a particular focus on visual elements and forms of the house, but fails to put it within historical and cultural contexts.

Right (from top to bottom): The Family Hall; The Han's Ancestral House, located on Jalan Karet, Surabaya; 3D architectural renderings of the house; Han Bwee Koo, who founded the Han's ancestral house; Ancestral tablets.



Deepening and decentralising the study of politics in Indonesia

Politics, off the agendas of both public life and research in Indonesia for thirty years, has returned with a vengeance in Indonesia since the end of the Suharto regime in 1998. Within Indonesia there is lively debate of politics in the media every day and this has been mirrored internationally by a growing stream of academic studies.¹ Do we need more? Is there anything new or interesting to say? These two recent publications address themes already well-established, but also reflect substantive changes in Indonesia as well as the benefits of a longer-term view of complex processes unfolding over time.

Graeme MacRae



Above and far right: Protesters caught on camera in Jakarta. Images courtesy of Prazz on flickr.

Maribeth Erb & Priyambudi Sulistiyanto (eds). 2009. *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia: direct elections for local leaders (Pilkada)*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies. 392 pages, ISBN: 9789812308405 (paperback)

Coen J.G. Holtzappel & Martin Ramstedt (eds). 2010. *Decentralisation and Regional Autonomy in Indonesia: implementation and challenges*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Leiden: Institute for Asian Studies. 433 pages, ISBN: 9789812308207 (hardback)

ONE OF THE CENTRAL POLITICAL PROJECTS of the Indonesian state, since even before independence, has been the containment and management of its staggering cultural, linguistic and religious diversity into a coherent and unified national form. The first president, Sukarno, was ultimately undone by other factors, but the inherent contradictions of his own way of managing diversity contributed to this. A major factor in the success of his successor Suharto, was his ability to create an illusion of national unity, preferably by ideological means, but if necessary by military ones. Both regimes achieved their aims of national integration at the price of democratic representation, civil liberties and recognition of diversity of local social, cultural and political traditions.

Since Suharto's spectacular slide from grace and then fall from power in 1998, this preoccupation has remained, but with a radical change of direction – essentially a huge experiment in finding a way out of half-a-century of increasingly centralised and authoritarian rule. The foci, and indeed the titles of works already published, reflect these themes in various combinations. Very broadly, the trend of these works has been a gradual movement from national-level perceptions of disorder and “disintegration” and the persistence of

established “oligarchies” of power, to more locally grounded studies that increasingly reflect the diversity of emergent “democratic” forms and processes.

The two major planks of this reversal have been decentralisation (*desentralisasi*) of budgets and government, and democratisation (*demokratisasi*) of political representation, via free elections. The two books reviewed here, both published a decade into the process, represent the state of the art of study of *reformasi*. They begin, as do most of their predecessors, from the fundamental dilemma of the state and its twin projects, but each focuses on one of the two aspects of the process. *Deepening Democracy* focuses closely on the mechanics and dynamics of one of the key mechanisms of both *demokratisasi* and *desentralisasi*: the elections of the heads of local levels of government (*Pilkada*). *Decentralisation and Regional Autonomy* builds on an earlier book by one of its editors in retaining a focus on reform and regionalisation of governance structures.

Both begin with general/theoretical chapters, but at their cores are series of case-studies and these span the length and breadth of the archipelago. There are sixteen chapters in *Deepening Democracy* and fifteen in *Decentralisation and Regional Autonomy*. Together their authors reflect a wide range of viewpoints: Indonesian and foreign, academics and others, from World Bank officials to development advisors to think-tank researchers. Rather than listing and summarising this multitude of chapters, I think it is more useful here to discuss the main themes that run throughout and the directions of thought that emerge from them.

Deepening Democracy

A number of observers have followed, analysed and written about *Pilkada*, mostly in the form of journal articles.² These studies have tended to be at the level of individual elections, or local series of them. Key issues and themes emerging from these discussions include the pervasiveness of “money politics”, the roles of political parties, the personal profiles and reputations of candidates, the influence of the media, the “return” or “re-emergence” of traditional aristocracies and the use of signs, symbols and practices derived from “tradition” into the formal political arena, the survival and regrouping of elites entrenched during the New Order period, and the related practices of “collusion” and the consequent formation of “cartels” and “oligarchies”. The bottom line of most of these studies is the practical concern as to whether the reforms have made a difference at the levels of public participation and representation – whether democracy is, as the title of this book asks, really “deepening” or not.

While there is little explicit consensus in these studies, there is at the same time at least an implicit impression of a national pattern: that the democracy developing is at best shallow and is little more than a front for the continuation of elite oligarchy supported by various combinations of money politics, inter-party collusion and more or less direct control over the media.³

Deepening Democracy provides (to my knowledge) the first detailed account of the history, legislation and technologies of the reformed election system in Indonesia as well as a set of comparative studies of actual elections from all over the archipelago. This combination of overview and comparison, along with the benefit of some hindsight, has enabled the authors and editors to address the issues listed above in a more comprehensive, balanced and systematic way than has occurred previously. The result is a more nuanced picture in which any national-level generalisations are balanced by a growing awareness of the diversity of local variations and the complex interactions of factors that influence these.

The overwhelming message repeated in various ways and from various locations throughout the book is (not surprisingly) that these are local elections, conducted in distinctly local styles and in which the results tend to reflect local factors and influences. These observations are often accompanied by warnings against the analytic dangers of top-down national level generalisations (e.g. by Sulistiyanto on p.191, Lindsey on p.213). However, they also consistently recognise a series of recurrent patterns that intersect in various ways with the national-level themes identified in previous studies.

One such pattern is the role of political parties, which despite significant local variations, is quite different to what we are accustomed to in western democracies. Parties, besides those defined in religious terms, generally do not represent any particular, let alone consistent constituency, point of view or policies. They are instead pragmatic political machines with distinct histories and usually focused around powerful individuals. As such they are, unlike their predecessors in the 1950s, virtually free of consistent policy, let alone philosophy. Pratikno (ch.3) does attempt to map patterns of ideological



and cultural similarity of parties, but even he admits that they mean little in practice, especially when it comes to the pragmatic business of making coalitions or alliances.

As a consequence, parties command little loyalty on the part of members and candidates. Candidates shop around for parties to nominate them, often paying for the privilege, but also hop from party to party in response to internal conflicts and according to what they see as their best interests. Choi (ch.4) argues that this “weakening” of the role of parties in fact results in them being little more than gatekeepers to candidacy, resulting in advantage to existing elites (of which more later). Parties do, however, have distinctive, if changing, local styles that usually reflect existing local formations of power and traditional allegiances. Ironically voters, unlike candidates, do seem to have a degree of allegiance to parties, with some areas being seen as PDI-P or Golkar “strongholds”.

A reflex of this weak and, from a western point of view, inverted role of parties, is that electoral campaigns tend to focus overwhelmingly on the personalities of candidates, sometimes almost to the exclusion of their parties (Choi ch.4, Lindsey ch.10). Perceptions of “personality” are themselves, however, closely linked to a range of factors including the media (Hill ch.11, Choi ch.4), “money politics” (Hidayat ch.6), ethnic, religious and other social divisions (Mietzner ch.12, Subianto ch.15) and the previous public profiles and track records of candidates (Priyambudi ch.9). This last factor brings us back to the dominant theme in the existing literature of the continued political dominance of elites established during the New Order period.

While many of the studies in *Deepening Democracy* provide further evidence of this pattern (Choi ch.4, Mietzner ch.12, Smith ch.14, Subianto ch.15), others equally document counter- or even coexisting movements toward broader participation (Mietzner ch.12), surprising electoral results, new sources of political capital (Buehler ch.5) and, as the title suggests, a generalisable “deepening of democracy”. As mentioned above, much of the value of this book lies in the way it takes us beyond such simplistic arguments for or against “elite oligarchies” to remind us, again and again, that the size, complexity and diversity of Indonesia is reflected in its electoral politics, and that while national-level generalisations have their uses, they are only as useful as the quality of the local-level studies they should be built on.

Decentralisation and Regional Autonomy

This book focuses on the other main aspect of the reform process – the decentralisation of regional governance structures and budgets. It begins with a long introductory chapter in which one of the editors (Holtzappel) reviews, in considerable detail, the reform process which has been rolled out by means of a complex series of laws and regulations since 1999. The remainder of the book is divided into two parts: first a series of national overviews of different aspects of the process followed by a series of local case-studies.

The overview chapters consist of summaries of monitoring reports prepared by various agencies for the Indonesian

government during the early years of reform, as well as other similar reports prepared specially for this volume. They vary considerably in length and depth and the topics covered range from surveys of experiences at different levels (province, district, village), regional parliaments (DPRD), effects on business, small enterprises and economic development, as well as a somewhat misplaced but interesting historical chapter on the development of urban municipalities.

The longest chapter (by Endi Rukmo et al) is a comparative study of the early functioning of new DPRDs (regional parliaments) in five pairs of provinces and districts from across the country. It reveals considerable variation but frequently significant difficulties in getting to grips with the technical and managerial realities involved in the new system. That this is particularly so in the (mainly eastern) regions, more remote from Java, reflects the extent of their marginalisation under, and lack of participation in, the previous regime. Anecdotal evidence that I have heard since suggests that these problems remain in 2011.

Another very important chapter is one on corruption, based on a World Bank report in 2003. Dealing with corruption remains a major challenge for the present Yudhoyono administration and this report, despite being based on evidence several years old, sadly confirms the widespread popular perception that corruption has neither increased nor decreased, but has simply been “democratised” and “decentralised” along with the reform process.

The highly specialised and technical nature of many of these chapters means that they will be of interest largely to specialists or people seeking fairly specific information. Consequently, the only one on which I feel well qualified to comment (by virtue of my own specialist knowledge) is the one on Bali, which happens also to be (besides Holtzappel’s introduction) the longest and most detailed, and written by Martin Ramstedt, the other editor. It is a summary of the first seven years or so of the reform period in Bali. There have been other such summaries, but this is one of the most comprehensive, providing details of the governance reform process of which few Bali specialists would be aware. But most interesting of all are the ways in which Ramstedt links these processes with better-known social changes and public culture, and especially the subtleties of developments in Balinese religion, in which he is particularly expert.

Few of the other chapters are as rich and detailed as Ramstedt’s, but to the various extents in which they approach this, they provide valuable documentation of processes that few of us have the opportunity to study in detail. The spread of case-studies is from (central and south) Sulawesi, West Sumatra, Riau, Java, and Bali and foci on topics ranging from local efforts to annul New Order mining licences, to protection of local minorities, to intellectual property rights. An unfortunate weakness, in a book devoted to the “regional”, is the absence of any studies from eastern Indonesia, let alone the important if marginal case of West Papua. Together, however, they provide a reasonable if not entirely comprehensive overview of the variation across the country.

Major themes emerging through the book are the challenges of resolving contradictions between national laws and local traditions, the persistence of corruption, tensions between regional parliaments and heads of government. Another significant theme, which casts light on the persistence of entrenched elites in electoral politics evident in *Deepening Democracy*, and links the two aspects of the *reformasi* process, is the parallel persistence of senior personnel and the administrative culture they reflect at senior levels in local civil service offices. Taken together with the networks of patronage, which link incumbent district leaders with their senior staff, this goes some way to explaining the resilience of these elites in the face of both top-down reform and bottom-up desire for change.

Together

The formats, analytic strategies and even the conclusions to be drawn from these two books are in many respects similar: the enormity, at a national level, of the task of reform and the formidable obstacles to it at every level. However, what they both provide is a strong counter-narrative of the diversity across the country, local examples that repeatedly question the certainty of national-level generalisations and evidence of methodological value of balancing such generalisations with locally-grounded case-studies.

Taken together, *Deepening Democracy* and *Decentralisation and Regional Autonomy* provide the broadest, richest and most up-to-date picture we have of the political and administrative reform process in Indonesia. Both will undoubtedly become standard references for some years to come. This brings me, however, to a point that struck me while reading both books, but also applies across the academic publishing spectrum – the sheer time delay from the research/writing process to final publication. In the case of works addressing fast-changing contemporary issues, this can result in a sense of things being out-of-date by the time they are published – in these cases by five or even more years. This is nothing new: book publishing has always taken time, and the legitimate priorities of much academic work are depth, accuracy and quality rather than speed. However, the growth of virtually instant formats such as blogs, but also e-publishing, which can cut production times by months while retaining core academic values, raises ever more serious questions about the place of the already beleaguered monograph and edited volume formats in academic discourse.

Finally, standards of publishing and production of both books are very high, with relatively few of the typos and other defects that have plagued some of the more prestigious academic presses in recent years. Singapore has for some time been a centre for quality book production, but its emergence as a major global hub in academic publishing may also give the established presses food for thought.

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Notes

- Major contributions include (in chronological order) C.J.G. Holtzappel, M. Sanders & M. Tilas (eds). 2002. *Riding a Tiger: dilemmas of integration and decentralisation in Indonesia*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg; E. Aspinall & G. Fealy (eds). 2003. *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: decentralisation and democratisation*. Singapore, ISEAS; D. Kingsbury & H. Aveling (eds). 2003. *Autonomy and Disintegration in Indonesia*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon; R. Robison & V. Hadiz. 2004. *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: the politics of oligarchy in an age of markets*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon; H. Antlov & S. Cederroth (eds). 2004. *Elections in Indonesia: the New Order and Beyond*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon; M. Erb, P. Sulistiyanto & C. Faucher (eds). 2005. *Regionalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon; H. Schulte-Nordholt & G. van Klinken (eds). 2007. *Renegotiating Boundaries: local politics in post-Suharto Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV; Thomas Reuter (ed). 2010. *The Return to Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*. Clayton: Monash University Press
- Examples include: M. Buehler. 2007. ‘Local Elite Reconfiguration in post-New Order Indonesia: the 2005 election of district heads in South Sulawesi’, *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 41(1); G. MacRae & N. Darma Putra. 2007. ‘A New Theatre-state in Bali? Aristocracies, the Media and Cultural Revival in the 2005 Local Elections’, *Asian Studies Review* 31:1-18; G. MacRae and N. Darma Putra. 2008. ‘A Peaceful Festival of Democracy: Aristocratic Rivalry and the Media in a local election in Bali’, *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 42(2); Vel, Jacqueline. 2008. *Uma Politics: an ethnography of democratisation in West Sumba, Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV.
- This impression is also reflected in national-level studies such as Robison and Hadiz (2004).

The bottom line of most of these studies is the practical concern as to whether the reforms have made a difference at the levels of public participation and representation – whether democracy is, as the title of this book asks, really “deepening” or not.



Modes of comparison for structures of modernity



John Clark's most recent publication contributes to a growing body of work that responds to the still perplexing issue of how to expand our understanding of modernity as expressed through art and visual culture. In particular, he attempts to complicate the notion of a modernity that has conventionally been presented as a process originating from the West and then transmitted to other parts of the world, most notably those countries that experienced colonialism.

Pamela Nguyen Corey

Lord Buddha Said
"If You See Dhamma,
You See Me".
Installation made of
shredded Thai baht
bank notes, by Kamin
Lertchaiprasert
(2003), standing at
the Singapore Art
Museum. Photo by
Pamela Corey.

Reviewed publication:

John Clark. 2011.

Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai Art Compared, 1980-1999,
Sydney: Power Publications.
272 pages, ISBN: 9780909952389 (paperback).

CLARK'S TEXT IS INDEED A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION, in its comprehensive and dense accumulation of empirical data garnered over an extensive research period of some ten years, and given Clark's in-depth knowledge of the Asian region and its numerous art histories. If one traces Clark's work back to *Modern Asian Art* (University of Hawaii, 1998) and through his other numerous articles and texts, it is evident that he continues to be preoccupied with the project of finding a methodology applicable to studying modern Asian art – one that distinguishes itself from the seemingly universal theoretical tools and paradigms on which the discipline of art history is founded, which is primarily in response to the canon of Euro-American art. It is for this reason that many of his articles and books have focused on comparative studies, and that he has endeavored to establish structural models and specific languages to attempt to characterize the kinds of artistic developments and cultural transactions that have taken place within Asia, and in particular, the various forms of artistic encounters Asian cultures have had with the West. To counter institutionalized conceptions of what constitutes artistic modernity (as something only truly tangible through European and American examples), Clark has spent much of his career attempting to map a type of genealogy or system of interlinked trajectories of modernity in Asian art. This text, comparing developments in Thai and Chinese art between 1980 to 1999, therefore continues his project of establishing comparable systems of mapping modernity and therefore "mapping

a space in the art discourse" (64) in order to find parallel dimensions of the modern. Ultimately this is an effort to disrupt what is commonly perceived as a type of linear developmental model, from which Euro-American modernism is the primary agent of transformation in various Asian artistic contexts.

One principle question that has to be addressed initially is Clark's choice of comparing China and Thailand. This is perhaps an unusual comparison, given the critical and commercial attention Chinese contemporary art has received since the 1990s, and its high demand on the global art circuit, in comparison with Thai art, which – along with its neighboring countries in Southeast Asia – is perhaps only known for a handful of artists who have attained a reputation on the international contemporary art stage. One might question the merit of comparing two such unlike cultural and social systems, which have very little in common in terms of state-social relations, economic political systems, types of institutional apparatuses, and perhaps most obvious of all, sheer scale of population, geography, and economy. To make a compelling argument for comparative study and his particular methodology, Clark argues that Thailand and China "present like sets of phenomena, from unlike historical contexts, with few endogenous links before the year 2000. If similarities exist, they will focus attention on the endogenous reasons for these, and not because China has followed Thailand, or visa versa ..." (21-22).

Here some explication is needed in terms of how Clark has chosen to articulate his methodology and framework for mapping genealogies of modernity in specific contexts and historical junctures. His introduction goes heavily into methodological explanation, and this is where the reader may find it most challenging to follow Clark's argumentation. In this particular text, Clark has taken a slight departure from the language of semiotics that heavily pervaded *Modern Asian Art* and has now borrowed from scientific terminology to describe how "other" modernities come into being, transform, mutate, hybridize, etc. Such language is characteristic of evolutionary theory, species identification, and genetic models – all of which build on the semiotic structuralist analyses of which Clark is so fond. This time he inserts the language of biological and cultural sign systems to explicate – via scientific models of causation – a tale of two art histories.

This usage of scientific vocabulary in an art historical study is not as objectionable as its potential ramifications for a project that attempts to problematize the standard narrative of progress as embodied in the traditional canon of modern art history.

What makes Clark's methodology and argument tendentious is the repeated usage of terms like "other modernity," endogenous/exogenous, two-way "othering" process, hybridity, evolutionary theory, amongst others: "By admittedly very distant analogy we could interpret modernity as a kind of species adaptation to a situation of a rapid and widely distributed series of relativisations. The question arises as to whether these are to be necessarily seen as adaptive traits of a species-like set of cultural forms, or some initial set of conditions for modernity which then takes specific developmental routes within different cultures" (32). Unfortunately, the reiteration of these terms throughout the text only serves to reinforce the sense that what we are grappling with is another study emphasizing a linear developmental model of modernity, which further concretizes the opposition between the West and the rest. The overuse of such dichotomous categories is detrimental to Clark's objective of attempting to render the term "modernity" more open and inclusive, this being the chief objective of his text. At this point, studies of comparative modernities have come quite far, and it is now generally understood that modernity is often the result of an encounter with an "other" (especially in artistic modernism), and is inherently a "hybrid" phenomenon to begin with. It is a shame that the weight of the semiotic rhetoric and scientific vernacular takes away from the compelling nature of the stories, history, and visual material with which Clark can only briefly engage.

However, one can attribute this cursory engagement and the lack, or near absence, of artists' voices in Clark's account to his chief preoccupation with institutional structures and how they shape artistic change as it is entangled with discourses of modernity and progress. As Clark openly states, "Structures and institutions will be our concern here and not binding narratives

of artistic developments, although these will be included where they facilitate illustration. Our theoretical and empirical goal will be to show that there was another modern art in the geographical and cultural field of the two Asian countries examined" (43). Moreover, his focus on institutions and how they shape artistic communities and flows of discourse is highly pertinent when it comes to the imaging of nation and state, and the particular worldviews – in this case, highly disparate cultural perspectives from Thailand and China – that are informed by these engagements through artistic expression. Here Clark argues for a compelling point of contrast between the two countries and the embeddedness of historical or cultural consciousness in shaping their respective art histories: "Above and beyond the state organs that actually secured hermeneutic hegemony, the basic resemblance between China and Thailand was the presumption of a set of values defining the state and nation" (251).

Clark does make a compelling argument for understanding the distinctive differences between Chinese and Southeast Asian worldviews in terms of state-culture models and how these shape the changing concept of the nation. Artistic production in China has always been imbricated in discourses tied to political ideology and historical conditions, with artists highly engaged in sophisticated discourses along with a strong sense of historical consciousness. A key theme in these discourses was the China/West divide, which would appear to have resulted in more concerted efforts to establish distinctive artistic styles to represent China at global exhibitions and events, the most recognizable style likely being political pop or what Clark refers to as "cynical pop mannerisms" (233). On the other hand, Thailand's historical socio-political trajectory as a semi-feudal, semi-colonial state until the mid-twentieth century resulted in a vary different set of cultural and historical discourses compared to China, especially in its relationship to the West, which was more fraught and ambivalent. The mutually-implicated trio of state, king, and Buddhism has governed a set of universal values in Thailand that also manifested itself in artistic production, with



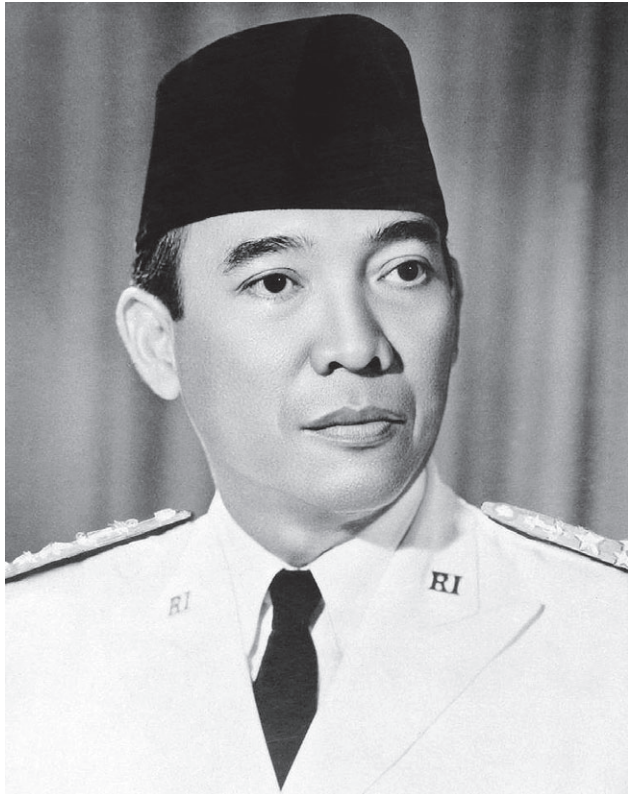
less of a drive for Thai artists to assert themselves in the global arena of contemporary art: "...the distinguishing feature of many Thai artists was their lack of concern with the artistic conquest of the world or even much overseas recognition. Thai artists simply did not have the historically intense wish for acceptance by the West seen in China" (139).

The great contribution of Clark's text is the degree to which he attempts to investigate the various interfaces between institutional artistic formation and the multiple sources of what he terms 'exogenous' or external influence in the late twentieth

century, a period that can generally be understood as the era of globalization in the contemporary period. He maintains throughout the book that "The distinguishing feature of Chinese and Thai modernity was that the propagation of styles was reinforced by what were in different ways highly controlled and motivated social institutions found in art curricula, art schools and art competitions" (168); this is certainly not a phenomena found throughout contemporary art in Asia, especially elsewhere in Southeast Asia. At the same time, these institutionally-driven artistic styles and movements are rendered problematic by the blurring of categories amongst non-official and official (such as in the activities and affiliations of artist-curators, critics, and writers) in both countries. This emphasis on the role of institutional formation, whether it shaped discourses or practices in the spirit of or against the academic and the official, makes his study an important contribution to studies of Asian modern art history, and helps clarify his project of distinguishing trajectories of modernity (in this case, into the period of the contemporary given his focus on the late twentieth century) in situations disparate from the now standardized Euro-American narratives. In addition, his book is valuable in providing highly detailed and empirical case studies, which will be useful for those interested in undertaking research into modern and contemporary Asian art with the goal of problematizing the essentializing notion of an Asian modernity or modernism. Such studies are necessary in order to bring into further relief the extent to which artistic developments and practices throughout the region are highly variegated and complex, thus enriching our understandings of the modern processes of globalization and contemporaneity, and the formation of global artistic networks.

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Trees for the wood



Populism in Asia is a publication of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. It comprises a lucid Introduction by the editors (respectively Director of said Center and the Chair of the Political Economy Centre at Chulalongkorn University), six contributions by Japanese scholars on populism in Latin America, Thailand, the Gorontalo Province of Indonesia, and Northeast Asia (Korea, Taiwan, Japan). The further chapters on populism in the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia have been written by local scholars. The collection closes with a 4-page Afterword by Ben Anderson. Of the 173 pages devoted to country case studies, 70 focus on the Thaksin-Shinawatra phenomenon – and one would have liked to see that saga extended into the present to get a better feel for the populist mobilisation potential.

Niels Mulder

Reviewed title:
Mizuno, Kosuke, Pasuk Phongpaichit (eds). 2009.
Populism in Asia.
 Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto University Press. xii + 228 pages. ISBN 978-9971-69-483-8 pb.

Populism

Whereas the notion of populism has a relatively long history to describe leadership in Latin America, its use to label such in Asia does not predate the 1997 crisis that upset economies and popular expectations. All of a sudden, traditional elites were no longer able to deliver and so created room for doubt, discontent, and leaders who circumvented the established political order.

The newness of the term doesn't mean that populist leadership is new to Asia. If we trace the political career of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, we can only conclude that he was an archetypal populist, speaking in name of the hardworking simple people (*Marhaen*) and listening to their message of suffering (*Ampera*). Their progress was obstructed by foreign

interests, which created room for the indispensable enemy and the spirit of nationalism cum xenophobia. Once in power, he foresaw a corporatist state through organising the so-called functional groups (*golongan karya*) and emasculating the party-based parliament. Gradually, he became the unquestioned, authoritarian leader necessary to streamline diversity as to his whims. Like Quezon of the Philippines in his heyday, Sukarno embodied both nation and state.

It may be surmised that, as a child of his day, he consciously or unconsciously emulated the 20th-century populist *par excellence*, Adolf Hitler, who took his inspiration from, and who manipulated, *die gesunde Volksempfindung*, "the healthy sentiment of the ordinary people". In parallel with Hitler, Sukarno raised national pride and xenophobia, but, in contrast, failed to deliver on his message of the suffering people (*rakyat*).

Listening to and responding to popular sentiments and felt needs, business tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra built a strong rural base of electoral support, especially in the North-East. Through redistributive policies and running the country as his enterprise, he alienated the established oligarchy that, through a military coup, ousted him in the second year of his second term as prime minister. Even so, when elections were held again, his proxy, political survivor Samak Suntaravej won the prime-minister-ship until he too – on a flimsy pretext – was unseated by the reaction under Abhisit ('Privilege' (*sic*)) Vejjajiva. Despite redistributive policies and after two years of confrontation by the red-shirted supporters of Thaksin, the conservatives were solidly defeated in the June 2011 election. It brought another proxy of exiled Thaksin to head the government, his sister and the first Thai lady premier, Yingluck Shinawatra. In other words, whereas the Thaksin discussed in *Populism* was overthrown in 2006 – so confirming the general short-lived-ness of populist leaders – he is still very much alive and kicking.

In various combinations we see the component factors of populism at work in the rise and undoing of politicians as far apart as Mahathir Mohamad (Malaysia), Joseph 'Erap' Estrada (the Philippines), Jun'ichiro Koizumi (Japan), Roo Moo-hyun (South Korea), Chen Shiu-bian (Taiwan), and businessman-politician Fadel Muhammad (Gorontalo, Indonesia). Each of these political personalities is coloured by his own style in variegated environments, resulting in a whole bouquet of populisms. Even so, through stretching the notion to include Estrada is to get beyond the bounds of the idea and unnecessarily obscures the wood for the trees.

Any vote-hungry politician worth his salt will appeal to the crowd. Megawati did it as the daughter of Sukarno; Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was shown listening to fishermen, labourers and farmers; all shake hands, project concern, and cuddle babies. This doesn't make them 'populist'. The only thing that was 'populist' about 'Erap' Estrada was his campaign slogan *Erap sa mga mahirap*, 'Erap for the Poor'. He had little to offer in the form of programmes, policies, plans or ideas. He didn't need these. He banked on his immense popularity as a movie hero with a Robin-Hood image and on the appeal of his macho lifestyle (openly womanising, gambling, boozing) that set him apart from the out-of-reach oligarchs. He was felt to be 'one of us' that people unthinkingly equated with his movie roles. In brief, he was popular, a popularity that flowed from the common man up to him. As far as he himself was concerned, politics was business, first of all for himself, secondly for his cronies. Even after his fall, because of gross abuse of office and blatant incompetence as a president, nine years later he still garnered over 26% of the vote, which is, such as in the enduring appeal of Thaksin as a hero of the underclass, the real thing to explain.

The collection conveys the impression that populism is a quality of certain political personalities who 'commune' with 'the people'. I think the concept to be more encompassing and even less specific than the bouquet of individual trees we are presented with. In the eventful 1970s in Thailand, the internal security people were behind a plethora of gangs and vigilante groups whose ruffianism was sanctified in the defence of

a nation under attack by 'communists'. More respectable were the Village Scouts whose loyalty could be activated through appealing to the mystique of Nation-Religion-King; based on 'the people' as an undifferentiated nation, the Scouts passed over class and political divisions, with the demonised Reds – 'scum of the earth' – as their adversary.

Other, more persistent populist movements may arise in the name of anti-colonial or anti-dictatorial demands that the powers-that-be respond to with suppression. Through annihilating organised class-consciousness and foreclosing its political channels, Suharto, in spite of his distrust of it, mobilised the populist appeal of Islam. In the course of his relative success as the Father of Development, the Islamic petty bourgeoisie felt increasingly marginalised and ambitiously responded. This movement toward Islamic populism – Islam as the palliative to worldly woe – did not centre on overall leaders, in the same way as politicised Islam did not in the days of Islamic political awakening (Sarekat Islam, 1912). And didn't comparable factors – Islamic groundswell temporarily even in coalition with the Leftist underground – spell the undoing of the Shah and currently roll through the whole of the Arab world, from the Maghreb up to Yemen and the Gulf? Consequently, it is fair to talk about the populist mobilisation potential that can be activated through appeals to nationalism, religion, and especially the inequities of power and wealth.

In Asia

On the western tip of the immense Eurasian continent and in America, we find Institutes of Asian Studies. In view of the distance from where their action presumably is, the label is appropriate, even as, generally, the Islamic parts in the southwest of the vast expanse are excluded. Be this as it may, I feel uneasy with the spate of books that relate about abortion, gender, populism, and other things in Asia. Few are the people who will accept my answer as to where I live as 'in Asia'.

When we consider the three examples, the abortion volume is almost entirely concerned with South-East Asia, and so are the gendered inequalities. Granted, both books hold some about the Subcontinent, but does that justify 'in Asia'? The same may be asked about populism, as it is restricted to Latin-American, and South-East and North-East Asian leaders.

In my generation, we developed the idea of South-East Asian Studies and found that there are enough commonalities among the populations along its littoral to roughly consider South-East Asia a culture area next to the sinicised region to its north, the Sub-continental civilisation to its west, and the far-western Islamic Middle East. Even so, since it has become fashionable to frown on area studies, calls have been made to widen the scope of comparison. In itself, there is nothing against that procedure, and with a chapter on Latin-American populism, the book we discussed added a valuable dimension in theorising the subject far beyond Asia!

Everything between the Negev and Kamchatka is Asian, and so the label 'in Asia' does not evoke more than 'boats float' if we want to discuss trans-Atlantic shipping. So, even if the publications originate from Institutes of Asian Studies, I think it reasonable to expect some more specificity as to what is treated where. If Asia is merely justified by adding a loose chapter on the subject in an unrelated place, the reader is put on the wrong foot. On the other hand, if that chapter is explicitly placed in a comparative cultural perspective, we may learn something of interest, and so we might if the comparison deepens our practical or theoretical understanding of the subject under discussion.

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

Notes

1 Referring here to Mulder's reviews of Whittaker, A (ed). 2010. *Abortion in Asia: local dilemmas, global politics*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books; and Rydstrom, H (ed). 2010. *Gendered inequalities in Asia: configuring, contesting and recognizing women and men*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press. These reviews, and more, can be found on www.newasiabooks.org

Above: Indonesia's first president, Sukarno.

Far right: Jun'ichiro Koizumi (Japan).

Below: Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Photo © World economic Forum.



Making sense of the state from its margins

As a child growing up in Australia, I was made aware of the country's frontiers from an early age. The shape of Australia's landmass was printed on the covers of my schoolbooks and as I rubbed out pencil marks, I eroded the coastline of my Australia-shaped eraser. As with many young nation-states, the use of representations of Australia's land-based territory is part of the country's nationalist project that fosters a sense of belonging among its people. At the same time, this naturalising of clearly defined state boundaries disguises the porous nature of those boundaries, their significance for national development and the experience of the people residing along them.

Olivia Swift

Reviewed publication:

Noboru Ishikawa. 2010.

Between Frontiers: Nation and Identity in a Southeast Asian Borderland.

National University of Singapore Press.

275 pages, ISBN: 978877694 0508 (paperback)

WHILE STUDIES of globalisation and transnationalism have attended to the interplay between states, they rarely question the way in which the state's territoriality is recognised and the national space arranged. Instead these processes have tended to be conflated with historical accounts of treaty ratification within global politics. *Between Frontiers: Nation and Identity in a Southeast Asian Borderland* highlights and addresses this neglect. As its title suggests, the book's focus is the 'in-between'; the liminal place where nations join and the domestic encounters the foreign.

The frontier in question is the borderland between Malaysian Sarawak and Indonesian Borneo, where ethnically homogenous and culturally similar communities are divided by different historical, economic and political circumstances on either side of the national border. Using archival and ethnographic research methods, Noboru Ishikawa provides a rich account of how the state actualises and maintains its territory and the kind of national order that emerges in response, as people strategically situate themselves as members of local community, nation and ethnic group simultaneously. In so doing, he brings the study of nationalism 'down to earth', focusing not on the nation-state as something imagined, disseminated or fashioned, but on its concrete reality and presence underfoot.

Ishikawa and his wife, Mayumi, conducted fieldwork in the Sarawak community of Telok Melano, where the village boundary coincides with the national border. The oral histories they collected connect ancestors of present-day residents with events described in the archival documents that cover 140 years of local and national history, which the author draws upon extensively. While scholars have struggled to accurately study processes of transnationalism and globalisation using multi-sited ethnography following flows of people and goods, Ishikawa provides a dynamic account of the dialectic between states using traditional methodologies in a single site, to great effect.

The macro history Ishikawa describes echoes that of the wider Southeast Asian colonial experience. The author begins by describing how the state deliberately incorporated the hinterlands of the Sarawak colony and the subsequent process of boundary making. This he situates within the wider political-economic context of the 1920s rubber boom, related international regulation and illicit trans-border trade, as an example of the imperial enclosing of economic space and the response of people living on state borders. Ishikawa then examines how the Telok Melano peasantry have been

simultaneously drawn into and excluded from the national space from the 1880s, and discusses the issue of ethnic displacement. Using a historical account of the moving boundary, he explores how social identities are formed in relation to local recognition of space by examining the interplay between nationalism and village communalism. In the latter, more ethnographic parts of the book, Ishikawa describes daily interactions and flows of goods, people, diseases, ideas, practices, technologies, institutional and organisational forms, between Telok Melano and an Indonesian migrant community across the border, demonstrating how the structural osmotic pressure between the two changes the value of labour, commodities and personhood as people and goods move across the border. He also chronicles a recent widening of the economic gap between Malaysia and Indonesia that has changed the nature of frontier relations, with the Indonesian side of the border abandoning its own economic community and selling labour, agricultural products and natural resources into Malaysia.

The book's concluding discussion concentrates on the dialectical relationship between transnationalism and the space of the nation-state. Counter the Weberian notion of the nation-state as a fixed territory, Ishikawa demonstrates how the flow of people and goods into and out of national space, and the policies and practices related to these flows, provide the very basis for the construction and evolution of the national space. As state boundaries become more rigid, socio-economic differences (particularly in the value of labour and currency) become more marked, stimulating movement of labour and commodities across them, and making the border significant in the lives of those living within and along it.

The main, early form of transnationalism in the region was mercantile trade between the Malays and Chinese. Under capitalism, transnational flows of labour and natural resources were initially tolerated, given they posed no threat to national interests; but in recent decades, the Malaysian state has increased its control of the borderland niches for developmental purposes, establishing checkpoints and sponsoring improved transportation networks that facilitate timber-related industries and agro-plantation businesses. Such investment marks borderlands as a new site supporting national projects and state-controlled transnationalism – and not only in this region. As states have increasingly mobilised and managed social and natural resources, state-led capitalism is increasing rolling into borderlands in search of economic growth. Ishikawa ponders how residents of borderlands the world over will react to this expansion of controlled transnationalism, noting the potential to learn from borderland populations that entered transnational modernity ahead of the majority of humanity living within single nation-states.

The value of the book is the skill with which Ishikawa entwines thorough archival and ethnographic research into a rich account of the social, economic and political processes in the making and maintaining of national space and societal responses to it. With its clear signposting and systematic

analysis, the book retains the rawness of its origins as a PhD thesis. The choice of field site reflects Ishikawa's fascination with the liminality of borderlands, which he describes in the book's early pages as 'zones in which things are no longer what they were but not yet what they will be' (p.5). Such mystical language promises a more experiential, subjective account of borderland life than the resulting text provides, with its ethnographic material emerging only a hundred pages in. However, without the structural leaning of the book's analysis, Ishikawa would be unable to 'ground' the study of nationalism away from the trend towards treating it as an abstraction, as he admirably sets out to do. Ishikawa's project in this regard is not groundbreaking. Leach's work on highland Burma' comes to mind as an earlier proponent of the porous nature of the nation space. What *Beyond Frontiers* provides, however, is an important counter to the existing literature on the nation-state, state and nationalism – concepts at the heart of many a degree course – that takes fixed territory as a given. In anthropology, much of the classic literature regarding the state stems from African ethnographies. How different the discipline's approach to the state might look if students were taught as much about maritime Southeast Asia, where states have always been 'weak', as they were about *The Nuer or African Political Systems*.² Given that national space on land accounts for a fraction of the earth's surface, with oceans covering its majority in which hundreds and thousands of people live and work, one wonders why anthropology and other disciplines fail to draw more on the approach of French historian Braudel in their explorations of the nation-state. Braudel's epic, *La Mediterranee et le Monde Mediterranee a l'Epoque de Philippe II*,³ charts the creation and development of societies by the sea that connects them and positions seafaring people as the links between shores. Equally, when students are asked to discuss whether the state's power is in decline, they might draw on the likes of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*⁴ to argue that transnational corporations and international governance have usurped the power of all but a 'monarchy' (USA and G8 countries) of individual nation-states. They would do well to also attend to Ishikawa's quiet ethnography of people for whom the question of state power is age old.

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Notes

- 1 For example, Leach. 1960. 'The Frontiers of Burma', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol 3(1), pp. 49-68.
- 2 Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (eds.). 1987. *African Political Systems*. London: KPI in association with the International African Institute. Evans-Pritchard. 1940. *The Nuer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 3 1949, Paris: Librairie Armand Collin.
- 4 2000, Harvard: Harvard University Press.



Inverted state-building and local resource politics in Eastern Indonesia

Compared to Java, Eastern Indonesia (East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku and Papua) is poor. Average per capita income in these three regions is about half of that in Java and is not expected to catch up in the foreseeable future. Levels of life expectancy are even more depressing. Papua stands out as it is richest in terms of natural resources but poorest when it comes to human development and governance. In Papua life expectancy rose only 8.5 years between 1975 and 2002, compared to Java's 20.5. Similar trends are reported for infant mortality. Interestingly if the Jakarta metropolitan region were to be left out of these calculations, life expectancy figures as well as those for education would be about equal to those for Java in the 1980s. What explains these differences, what kind of solutions may be offered, and what are the social and environment trade-offs if poverty is alleviated through facilitating and stimulating natural resource extraction?

Jaap Timmer

Reviewed Publication:

Resosudarmo, BP & Frank Jotzo (eds). 2009.
Working with Nature Against Poverty: Development, Resources and the Environment in Eastern Indonesia.
Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
xii+359 pp. ISBN 9789812309594 (paperback)

Working with Nature against Poverty tackles these questions in a constructive way. The chapters in this volume were presented during a workshop on development and environment in Eastern Indonesia at the Australian National University on 8 April 2006. Assembled they shape a great book that raises important questions and offers good suggestions for averting seemingly imminent despoiling of livelihoods and ecologies. And it is published timely.

What is commonly labelled as the China Effect is also becoming Eastern Indonesia's sword of Damocles now that China appears to be embarking upon a course that will see it become more and more of a force in port financing in resource rich regions. The *Jakarta Post* reported on 20 June 2011 that Sorong is targeted as the site for a main cargo terminal. The interest comes from China's sovereign wealth fund and the State Development & Investment Corp. Known as *Kota Minyak* ('Oil Town') ever since the Dutch period, Sorong continues to be seen as the locus of industrial development and, for Jakarta, the gateway to the Pacific. Now that the nearby Bintuni site is home to the giant British Petroleum-lead Tangguh LNG project, even more investors have eyes for Sorong. The port is intended to become a regional hub for Eastern Indonesia linking Sorong regency with other parts of the archipelago, including Jayapura, Merauke, Bitung, Jakarta and Surabaya, as well as neighbouring countries. The economy in the so-called Papua and Maluku corridor is expected to grow six-fold by 2030 under the plan, in which the development of adequate infrastructure is considered vital. The port would cut Papua's logistics costs by more than fifty percent.

This kind of development concords with the recommendations of the editors of this book, Budy P. Resosudarmo, a Fellow in the Arndt Division of Economics at the Australian National University (ANU), and Frank Jotzo, who is a Research Fellow in the *Resource Management in Asia-Pacific Program* at the same

Above: Signpost telling all fishermen: "Forbidden to Bomb Fish in the Sea". The Kewang Haruku is one of the *negeri* ('village') on Haruku that has recently formulated its local customary regulations for resource management. (photo courtesy of Jaap Timmer)



university. In their introductory chapter, they suggest that "better connections to the global economy would certainly help," and "industrial activity ... to stimulate regional growth ... cannot occur without a good internal transport and communications network" (p. 9). Obviously the next item in their list is good governance and the proper management of natural resources. The subsequent chapters illustrate that it is here where most of the problems occur. The richness of the materials presented in this book is great and it is a worthy successor to Colin Barlow and Joan Hardjono's *Indonesia Assessment 1995: Development in Eastern Indonesia* (published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) and the more anthropological volume entitled *Old World Places, New World Problems* (published by the ANU in 1998).

In line with these two books but with more focus on socio-economic development, mining and health, the contributions to *Working with Nature Against Poverty* show that conserving the natural environment is a formidable undertaking. Some authors conclude that conservation only works in tandem with development if the people themselves, as a community-based activity, do it, preferably within the framework of NGO projects. There is, however, little reflection on situations where there are no projects and where governments or churches may need to work together with people to build awareness about and concretely work on conserving biodiversity.

Government and politics come into the picture more substantially in Hidayat Alhamid, Peter Kanowski, and Chris Ballard's chapter on forest management in the Rendani Protection Forest, which is the main water supply catchment for the town of Manokwari in West Papua. This well-documented and carefully analysed case offers a window into the region-wide conflicts between customary landowners and the state over control and management of the forest. In terms of advice, the authors conclude that what is needed "is a fundamental change in state thinking about resources and their ownership, to develop a partnership of interest between local and state actors for the mutually beneficial and substantial management of those resources" (p. 246). In a situation where the state is often absent and, if present, mostly ineffective in providing good governance (with state actors little focused on proper service delivery), this advice calls for answers to many more issues.

The exemplary study by Chris Ballard and Glenn Banks of the corporate strategy at the Freeport mine in Papua details the series of events since the establishment of the mine in 1967. The Freeport gold and copper mine complex is one of the world's richest mining operations and is of great value to the economy of Papua and Indonesia as a whole. Over the years, Freeport built a reputation for being unable to establish good relations with the communities in the region and for being careless about the natural environment. It became renowned, however, for its effectiveness in managing the political environment at national and international levels. At the same time the government is careful not to allow much criticism of Freeport because of what this might signal to foreign investors in Indonesia.

In a series of chapters on economic development Resosudarmo, Lydia Napitupulu, Richard Manning and Felix Wanggai provide a good overview of the problems of governance in Papua and Maluku. While Papua receives most funding and assistance from the central government it performs less well than neighbouring regions. The grimmest factor here is political instability – the people of Papua have not seen much consistency in Jakarta policies towards their region while many in Papua are involved in conflicts over funds, power, and access to resources. In particular the scheming of new provinces and districts became the story of the day with the advent of the devolution of central state power. On top of that, the faltering implementation of Special Autonomy regulations, which were to give Papua more sovereignty for designing and implementing regulations and programs, has been leading to tensions. Current news on Papua is also heavily coloured by unsettling reports on misappropriation of government funds and state actor involvement in land grabbing and legalizing unsustainable resource extraction.

Maluku is economically not doing well because of less income and almost no assistance from the central government. This is particularly painful for a region that is recovering from a conflict that began in 1999 and killed thousands and demolished much infrastructure. The chapter by Craig Thorburn on this conflict provides a useful scholarly overview of the dynamics of the wars and makes the general point that with decentralisation after the fall of the New Order regime, local politicians were quick to take advantage of rent-seeking opportunities in the management of natural resources and other sources of revenue. The related establishment of new provinces and new district increased tensions over access to resources and formed a major trigger to the conflict.

Thorburn's piece becomes particularly interesting in the section that discusses the post-conflict local government reform (pp. 295-300). These reforms have led to a process that may be labelled as inverted state building. The promulgation of the new regional government laws of 1999 and 2004 that give more power to local communities and regions to govern their communities and manage their natural resources, effectively revoked the infamous Law No. 5 of 1979. Law No. 5 posed difficulties for Maluku's customary communities as traditional institutions (such as *saniri* councils) lost power and control over community affairs and access to and regulation of natural resources. On top of that, top-down development programs for local development often instigated conflict between new village elites and traditional leaders. The possibility of a 180-degree reform and the concurrent revival of custom is offered by the new laws.

Local communities throughout Maluku and a number of NGOs in the region, such as Baileo Maluku, are seeing this as an opportunity to develop local government structures and regulations, which carry the suggestion that they are more in accordance with local social structures and cultural norms. During a recent visit to Ambon and Haruku I observed that the formulation of such structures and regulations stimulates a vast variety of reflections on past ways of doing things and generally enthruses people to make custom read like laws and state regulations. People emulate aspects of the governmentality of the state with which they are remarkably familiar. At the same time modern *negeri* constitution is a process that is poorly guided by the government, while it may increase rather than reduce legal pluralism and does not guarantee that those involved acknowledge the state's ideal of the rule of law or will properly care for the natural environment. It should be interesting to see how this process evolves, also in neighbouring regions.

Working with Nature Against Poverty gives good direction to future debates about development and the management of natural resources in Eastern Indonesia. It is a must-read for policy-makers, NGO activists, and international donors. They should read this book, not to obtain clear-cut answers or advice, but as a guide to further learn about the complexities of local situations and to build ever more awareness about the need for tailor-made solutions and flexible approaches.

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The Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong

The Archivist



One early morning, I flew from Jakarta to Hong Kong expecting it, for some reason, to be similar to Singapore. Yet while the center of Singapore is basically one huge mall, Hong Kong has plenty of exciting small places: cafes, restaurants, antique shops and art galleries. I spent a week walking around and taking buses, trams and metros in this skyscraper city (there are more skyscrapers in Hong Kong than on Manhattan). And as we know, traveling can offer opportunities to meet the unexpected.

Roy Voragen

FOR ME, ART IS A GATEWAY to sheer endless possibilities, and Hong Kong has plentiful art galleries. Many are commercial places, of which Gagorian Gallery is one. This gallery has eleven exhibition spaces around the globe and at their Hong Kong branch there was a show with work by well-known painter Zeng Fanzhi from Mainland China. Extremely skillful, yet not necessarily very interesting an exhibition.

Upper Station and Blindspot photography galleries are better examples of more fascinating art spaces.¹ And then, of course, you have the Asia Art Archive (AAA), where I met researcher Janet Chan for a cup of coffee, a chat and a tour through the hospitable public library and workspace on Hollywood Road;² in a city that was decolonized from the British empire without becoming an independent state, as it is now a Special Administrative Region of China, street names are only one of the few visible reminders of its colonial past.

Urban geographer Carolyn Cartier claims that Hong Kong is displaced from our thinking by an often-repeated cliché that it is in fact a cultural desert.³ Well, AAA has, over the past decade, not only not internalized this 'idea of placism' or 'place othering',⁴ it actually tries to create awareness and appreciation for the richness and diversity of contemporary art practices by collecting, archiving, conserving and disseminating materials, and by instigating research on contemporary art in Hong Kong in particular, and Asia in general. "AAA's collection is a dynamic, growing body of material intended to reflect contemporary artistic practice and developments of Asia within an international context."⁵

AAA was founded in 2000 by Claire Hsu, Johnson Chang and Ronald Arculli. Hsu completed her graduate studies in art history at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies; whilst working on her final thesis she realized how difficult it was to access information on contemporary art in Asia. After graduation, she worked at Hanart TZ Gallery, founded in 1983 and owned by Johnson Chang. He encouraged her to start AAA.⁶

During the first few years, AAA focused on Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China; in more recent years, AAA has expanded its collection with materials from other Asian countries. However, the bulk of AAA's collection is still composed of materials from the first three locations, whilst it encourages further research by collecting raw and primary materials.

The Archive has started to digitize materials and the website functions as a portal to the collection. While AAA's physical

General Collection amounts to 34,000 records, AAA's digital collection includes hundreds of thousands of records.⁷ In addition, there are numerous Special Collections, each comprising thousands of files. Yearly, the Archive's physical space is visited by 2,000 or so people, of whom a third come from abroad. Another 14,000 attend public events organized by AAA; and the website is visited by approximately 200,000 people annually. The website aims at becoming a discursive platform: "we hope to provide a space that makes conversation possible beyond our physical location," explained Claire Hsu. However, language and internet access could be unfortunate barriers. Another way of opening up AAA's collection is through educational programs; since 2009 AAA has been conducting the 'Learning Labs' for high school students and their teachers, to show how contemporary art is not a luxury but that it can be experienced and appreciated in everyday life. "At the core of its mission is AAA's commitment to create a collection belonging to the public."⁸

Artists and researchers also form an essential part of AAA's audience. The Archive has developed a residency program for artists, and, since 2005, offers a biannual research grant of 10,000 US dollars for researchers. Artists-in-residence and researchers not only bring in new material, they also importantly identify gaps in the existing collection, and offer new interpretations of the collection. For artists, the residency program offers an opportunity to work outside their comfort zone. One of the residents, Wong Wai Yin, raised some interesting points during her recent residency: "what is 'Asia'; what criteria should be used to vet materials for the Archive; what unavoidable judgments the Archive must make; the preferences of the researcher [...]"⁹ Claire Hsu added: "AAA's collection is a valuable resource for curators planning their next exhibitions, professors designing courses of study, and students conducting research. It is an independent source of information for collectors and auction houses. And it is a source of inspiration to artists and theorists."

Besides facilitating research, the Archive has had an in-house researcher since 2002, and it has established research posts to map developments and collect materials in the following cities: Taipei (since 2002), Beijing (since 2003), Bangkok (since 2005), Seoul (since 2005), Tokyo (since 2005), Singapore (2005-2006), Yokohama (2007-2008), Manila (since 2007), New Delhi (2007), Mumbai (2008) and Lahore (2007-2008).

AAA also organizes exhibitions, workshops, conferences and publications in collaboration with other organizations in Hong Kong and elsewhere: MoMA, Guggenheim, the Substation

(an independent art space in Singapore), and universities, museums and art spaces in Hong Kong. At the recent art fair Art HK11, AAA had a booth and organized discussions. In collaboration with the Hong Kong Museum of Art, AAA organized a series of lectures on contemporary art in Hong Kong. And in 2007, in collaboration with art space 1a, the Archive organized 'Talkover/Handover – Dialogues on HK Art 10 Years After 1997', which was a research and exhibition project to create criticism of post-1997 art practices in Hong Kong. John Batten, though, claims that "the research intentions of the exhibition [were] problematic. The handover was a political event with social ramifications – and there [was] just not enough politics" at the exhibition, for which he blames the artists and not the curators and organizers from 1a and AAA.¹⁰

The three terms that make up AAA's name – 'Asia', 'Art' and 'Archive' – are actually all complicated terms. For AAA, Asia is not so much a continent, but it concerns artists working in Asia (including non-Asians) and artists from Asia working outside Asia. Claire Hsu writes: "Asia is the location in which AAA is physically situated. [...] However,] AAA is not about individual national agendas, but about creating a platform from which to understand our neighbors and contemporaries."¹¹ How to archive when 'Asia' and 'art' are only loosely – instinctively – defined by AAA? And to archive for whom? Curating an archive on contemporary art requires raising the matter of legitimacy: to collect and disseminate what, from and to whom, in what languages? Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez, curatorial consultant for the Lopez Museum and a faculty member of the University of the Philippines, Department of Art Studies, adds: "Given the attention that Asia is indeed getting, there is no denying the hunger for information on it. Yet this constantly brings up the problem of what kind of information is in fact seeping through."¹²

What (or where) is Asia? Is Asia a geographic location (a continent)? Or is it a shifting, complex amalgam of ideas? Asia can no longer be defined from the outside, i.e., from a European perspective it is merely not-Europe.¹³ Lee Weng Choy, former artistic co-director of the Substation and AAA's Academic Advisor, states that "'Asian' as an adjective often characterizes something as Asian in its essence [...]. Whereas the term 'Asia' [...] signifies a deliberately complex, contested and constructed site."¹⁴ Instead of seeing 'Asia' as an essence – cultural, geographic or otherwise – Lee Weng Choy focuses on the always shifting discursive practices in and on Asia.

If we look at AAA's physical General Collection,¹⁵ we see that most contents are related to China and Hong Kong (8,389 and 7,355 respectively); contents related to other countries

All photos courtesy of AAA



include Japan (3,957), Taiwan (3,458), India (2,048), Korea (1,939), Singapore (1,652), Philippines (1,514), Thailand (1,352), Indonesia (1,090), Vietnam (722), Malaysia (700), Pakistan (416), Macau (382), Myanmar (233), Bangladesh (203), Cambodia (102), Laos (69), Nepal (60) and Bhutan (27). Now it seems as if Singapore is larger than Indonesia, for example. But beside the imbalances in the collection, there are also lacuna: no contents relate to former Soviet Union countries or countries from the Middle East. It is also interesting to note that the most dominant language of the materials is English (20,497 contents), with Chinese languages on distant second and third places (respectively 8,014 and 3,366). Three more European languages are present in the collection: French, German and Portuguese (Indonesian only relates to 267 contents).¹⁶ This more than likely indicates lacuna within these above mentioned country collections as well, as publications published in English are more likely to be collected.

And what is contemporary art? Pose this question to a hundred different curators and art critics from around the globe and we end up with as many different answers.¹⁷ The art journal *e-flux* dedicated a book to this question, and each of the thirteen contributors offered very different answers. German art critic Boris Groys, one of these contributors, claims that contemporary art is characterized by doubt and indecision, because we lost the hopes and dreams of modernism, which he equates with modernity and modernization.¹⁸ If this sounds like German *Angst*, Indian Susanda K. Sanyal concurs in a recent issue of the magazine *Art Etc.*: "Art now responds to a hybrid, dystopian world, where styles, isms, and collective beliefs in the power of art are obsolete."¹⁹ While Indonesian art critic and curator Jim Supangkat claims that anti-modernism is no longer relevant,²⁰ the origin of contemporary art as a category is a widespread dissatisfaction with the universal pretensions of modernism without respecting the otherness of art practiced outside the West.

How much more cosmopolitan is the contemporary compared to the modernist art world? Art from the West is more parochial; an artist living and working in London can without harming her or his career easily ignore whatever happens in Asia, while an artist from Bandung has to familiarize her- or himself with what is happening in London (perhaps not as thoroughly as with what is happening in Bandung, but still). Moreover, for an artist from Bandung it is considered an honor to have her or his work exhibited in London (also for financial reasons), and not the other way around, generally speaking. Worse, art from Asia shown in the West is not shown alongside Western art, but is grouped according to nationality,²¹ supposedly so Westerners can learn something about Asian cultures (which we do not directly demand from, say, Damien Hirst's *For the Love of God*).²²

And why do we hardly ever speak of contemporary Western (or American or Belgium) art, while we do often speak of contemporary Asian (or Chinese or Korean) art? It is a good way to keep non-Western artists in their place: a subcategory for subaltern art.²³ In her discussion of developments in contemporary Chinese art, Carol Yinghua Lu states that "the question how actual contemporary art practice in China is relevant and valuable to that of the Western world remains unanswered."²⁴ But for whom is this a relevant question? This might not be a very relevant question for most Chinese artists.²⁵ Anyway, this question can only be answered in the West. There is no reason, though, to make final judgments of value dependent on the generosity of the West.

Economic and political self-confidence in Asia has increased, and the same can be said of cultural self-confidence. The headquarters of the magazine *Art Asia Pacific* has recently moved from New York to Hong Kong.²⁶ Biennales in Asia increasingly start to look at their own hinterland instead of looking for involvement and re-confirmation from the West. And AAA is another shining example.

What constitutes an archive of contemporary art? A 'living' archive – as AAA collects material on contemporary art – is impossible to complete, and as such it is a rather Sisyphean task.²⁷ Of AAA's collection, 76.29% was published over the past ten years.²⁸ While libraries and archives in the West are connected to major institutions, such as museums or universities, and were often born as an afterthought, AAA is not only unique in the sense that it is independent, it is also distinctive in that it is forward looking.²⁹ This uniqueness comes at a price, Lee Weng Choy claims that AAA "cannot rely on existing models to justify their curation; they have to find their own form of legitimization."³⁰ Collecting inevitably requires selecting some, and not other, materials. The present can be at times rather overwhelming, so the question is then how to decide what is or could become significant. AAA's researchers actively search for new materials, but often materials are donated. The founding collection, for example, was donated by Hanart TZ Gallery, which specializes in Chinese art.³¹

AAA is more than an archive, it is a place to meet and exchange thoughts about contemporary art.³² AAA sees itself as a 'discursive space',³³ which begs the question: what are the relationships between an archive as 'discursive space' and actual art practices across Asia? Or, to put it another way, how does, on the one hand, the intertextuality of materials on contemporary art in Asia relate to, on the other hand, the many different practices of visual arts in Asia? Perhaps the relationship could be viewed as – potentially – supporting processes of validation of contemporary art practices in Hong Kong in particular, and across Asia in general, in the absence of art museums, which traditionally perform that role in the West (such as MoMa in New York). So writes Claire Hsu that AAA "has evolved into a space that offers the tools to enrich and complicate the way in which [...] local and regional [art] histories are told and accessed." And, she continues, AAA "has an important role to play in enriching, complicating, and challenging prevailing global narratives about contemporary Asian art."³⁴

AAA, though, does not have the ambition to have a complete archive on contemporary art in Asia. As indicated above, a 'living' record cannot be completed. But the Archive also has practical reasons for this ambition; firstly, its own spatial constraints (real estate is extremely expensive in Hong Kong); secondly, AAA does not want to duplicate what has been collected elsewhere. AAA, therefore, aims to collaborate with archives elsewhere throughout the region, such as the Indonesian Visual Art Archive in Yogyakarta.³⁵

I left this city I only knew from the cinema – especially the Wong Kar-wai movies, including *Chungking Express* (set in the city's concrete jungle) and *Happy Together* – but now I also know it as the city that can love the arts passionately and ambitiously.

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Notes

- 1 See <http://theupperstation.com> and www.blindspotgallery.com. In the latter gallery I saw RongRong & inri's wonderful retrospective exhibition 'Three Begets Ten Thousand Things'; my review: "Three Begets Ten Thousand Things," *Asia Views/Tempo Magazine*, November 16-22, 2011, 24-6.
- 2 AAA's "current location is generously sponsored by Sino Land and Kerry Properties. As the organization grows, we cannot rely on the eternal support of our current landlords, and as we run out of space, we are seeking a permanent home to meet our long term needs." Claire Hsu, email 9-1-12.
- 3 Carolyn Cartier, "Culture and the City: Hong Kong, 1997-2007," *The China Review* 8, no.1 (2008): 59-83; <http://tinyurl.com/74g9tlu> (accessed 27-12-2011).
- 4 In an email (20-12-2011), Cartier compares 'placism' to racism, perhaps orientalism is a more apt comparison; internalized orientalism is then seeing oneself as the exotic other.
- 5 Claire Hsu, email 9-1-12.
- 6 See www.hanart.com.
- 7 The AAA General Collection is catalogued, indexed and searchable online <http://tinyurl.com/7vgdjm8> (accessed 25-1-2012).
- 8 *Asia Art Archive Ten Years*, 2000-2010 (Hong Kong: Asia Art Archive, 2010), 29.
- 9 See <http://tinyurl.com/7b3t9j6> (accessed 27-12-2011).
- 10 See <http://tinyurl.com/6mt5jdm> and <http://tinyurl.com/7xpowa> (accessed 20-12-2011).
- 11 Claire Hsu, email 9-1-12.
- 12 Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez, "Speakeasy"; <http://tinyurl.com/7hln8w8> (accessed 3-1-2012).
- 13 See for example, Goenawan Mohamad, "Of Borders, Death and Footprints," in *Overlapping Territories, Asian Voices on Culture and Civilization*, Bambang Sugiharto and Roy Voragen (eds.) Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming; <http://tinyurl.com/78loyov> > (accessed 3-1-2012). Goenawan Mohamad is a well-known poet in Indonesia.
- 14 Lee Weng Choy, "Criticism and 'the essence of contemporary Asian art,'" <http://tinyurl.com/6pm2w9k> (accessed on 3-1-2012).
- 15 *Asia Art Archive Ten Years*, 42.

16 *Asia Art Archive Ten Years*, 43.

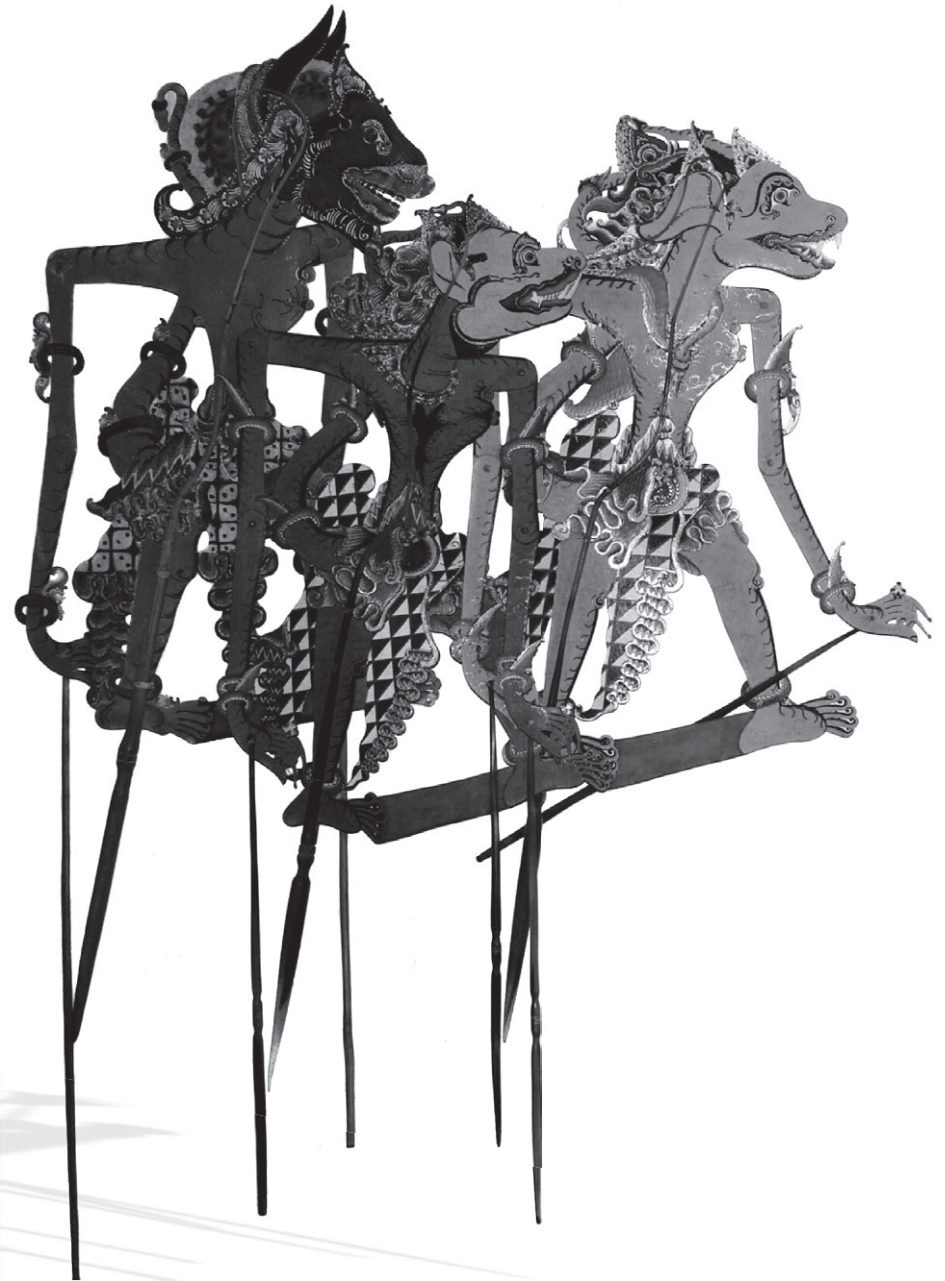
- 17 "AAA believes it is important to stay up to date with the different discussions happening around the definition of the contemporary and is in fact currently conducting a survey with over 200 professionals in the field [...]. The interviews will be published on our new website later this year." Claire Hsu, email 9-1-12.
- 18 Boris Groys, "Comrades of Time," in *What is Contemporary Art?*, Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle (eds.) New York: Sternberg Press/e-flux, 2010. There is actually no consensus among art historians what is and what is not modernism, let alone how it relates to modernity and modernization, postmodernism and postmodernity, and contemporary art.
- 19 Susanda K. Sanyal, "Sex, Culture and Otherness: Two (W)edges in Kolkata's Art," *Art Etc.* 4, no.4 (December 2011), 46. Many curators and art critics in Asia are trained in the West, which could be problematic if they use theories that do not apply to their home societies. For example, many curators and art critics in the West claim that their societies are in crisis, of which flux is an assumed symptom. Artists, curators and art critics in Asia should then be at an advantage, as flux could be considered a normal feature of their societies.
- 20 Jim Supangkat, "Indonesia in Contemporary Art Discourses," in *Contemporaneity, Contemporary Art in Indonesia* (Shanghai: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010), 18.
- 21 The recent 'Indonesian Eye' exhibition at Saatchi Gallery is an example. My review: "Indonesian Eye: New Perspectives," *the Pocket Arts Guide* 24 (October 2001): 22-7; <http://tinyurl.com/6s2sd34> (accessed 4-1-2012).
- 22 Even worse, sometimes contemporary art from Asia is shown in ethnographic museums, which is condescending. For example, Indonesian artists Heri Dono and Oscar Motuloh had exhibitions in the Tropenmuseum recently (ethnographic museum in Amsterdam); <http://tinyurl.com/7zme4qp> and <http://tinyurl.com/7vxho9> (accessed on 23-1-2012). Perhaps this is because many Westerners think they live in post-traditional societies. See Anthony Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in *Reflexive Modernization, Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
- 23 Joan Kee, "A Call for a Normalized Art History," <http://tinyurl.com/7oe4mmn> (accessed 3-1-2012). Joan Kee is AAA's Academic Advisor and an art historian.
- 24 Carol Yinghua Lu, "Back to Contemporary: One Contemporary Ambition, Many Worlds," *e-flux* 11 (December 2009): 1-9; <http://tinyurl.com/7q29s2a> (accessed 3-1-2012).
- 25 To explain this with an analogy: recent news reported that Brazil's GDP is now higher than that of the UK, the news was the comparison and not that Brazil increased its GDP.
- 26 *Art Asia Pacific* chief editor, Elaine Ng, was also mentored by the founder of Hanart TZ Gallery. See www.artasiapacific.com. Susan Acret writes: "to assume that all Chinese, Japanese or Indonesian readers are tuned into, and interested in the 'contemporary Asian' – largely a Western creation – is misleading. [...] magazine's psychological heart is dictated by its physical home [...]." Susan Acret, "Publishing and Contemporary Asian Art," <http://tinyurl.com/73jaqzy> (accessed 8-1-2012). Susan Acret is an art critic and former editor of *Art Asia Pacific*.
- 27 Jane DeBoise, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors, claims: "One of AAA's goals is to develop and maintain the most comprehensive and relevant collection of research materials about contemporary art in Asia. We have largely accomplished that goal." *Asia Art Archive Ten Years*, 2. Claire Hsu explains: "one of our main goals will be to generate new research based on the collection. AAA does not want to be solely about accumulation but also about research, interpretation, and dissemination. [...] While AAA will continue to grow the general collection horizontally, the next decade will see a shift towards a more vertical approach – expanding special collections and building up deeper pockets of material around specific subjects or areas. A road map will be developed to clearly identify these areas of focus based on AAA's current collection strengths and gaps. [...] We will also be allocating resources towards the interpretation of the collection and the production of new readings in the field with the eventual goal of becoming an important research platform for contemporary art from the region." Claire Hsu, email 9-1-12.
- 28 *Asia Art Archive Ten Years*, 43.
- 29 Huang Yin. "The Asia Art Archive: Keeping the Present for the Future," *Orientations* 36, no.5 (2005), 69.
- 30 Lee Weng Choy, "Tomorrow's Local Library: The Asia Art Archive in Context," *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Art* 4, no.4 (2005), 20.
- 31 Even AAA has, as Stuart Hall puts it, a 'pre-history', i.e., "prior conditions of existence." Stuart Hall, "Constituting a Voice," *Third Text* 15, no.54 (Spring 2001), 89.
- 32 Susan Acret, "An Archive Of Visions," *Asian Art News* 13, no.5 (2003), 69.
- 33 *Asia Art Archive Ten Years*, 28. Michel Foucault defines the archive as "the accumulated existence of discourses" or "the system of discursivity."
- 34 *Asia Art Archive Ten Years*, 6 and 8.
- 35 See www.ivaa-online.org. AAA also collaborates with ARTstor, a New York-based digital image library for the arts and sciences; see www.artstor.org.



Floating on water

Indonesia is an interesting country. On the one hand, it tries to maintain its traditional folk culture and arts and is keen on having its cultural assets acknowledged by the international community. It does so by entering proposals to a variety of UNESCO programs and by accepting international funds from donor agencies to preserve its cultural heritage. Its heritage is also an object of keen discussions, especially if Indonesia is convinced that Malaysia is appropriating part of what Indonesia sees as its own national cultural heritage, and not that of Malaysia, despite the large numbers of ethnic Indonesians who have lived in Malaysia for generations.

Dick van der Meij



Felicia Katz-Harris. 2010.
Inside the Puppet Box: A Performance Collection of Wayang Kulit at the Museum of International Folk Art. New Mexico/Seattle and London: Museum of International Folk Art in association with University of Washington Press. 200 p, fully illustrated, ISBN: 9780295990743

ON THE OTHER HAND, groups in the country are keen to do away with traditional culture. The Indonesian and international community in Indonesia was shocked to learn a few months ago that hard line Islamic groups disturbed shadow play theater performances (*wayang*) in the outskirts of the town of Sukoharjo, Central Java. It transpired that performances given by less well-known *dhalang* (puppet players) in off-places were threatened. Apparently, these hard line groups shied away from doing the same with famous players who performed in larger venues, but the trend is threatening enough, as it is, to be a cause for alarm. More recent still was the disturbing news that statues portraying *wayang* puppets in the town of Purwakarta, West Java, were destroyed by the towns inhabitants at the instigation of Muslims who want to do away with these pre-Islamic artifices.

Wayang, or Shadow Play Theater is an iconic Indonesian traditional art form. It is just as Indonesian as the tulip is Dutch and the Eiffel Tower is French. It is inconceivable that this art is threatened as it does in no way contravene Islamic practices. Time and again, scholars and performers point to the fact that the same values are at the basis of both Islam and *wayang* and that, therefore, both are compatible rather than in opposition. As things stand today, the *wayang* art is already under threat by the ongoing onslaught of modernization. Also in Java, many young people – and I have the impression also their parents – seem to be more and more interested in cellular phones and iPods than in night-long *wayang* performances, in difficult and high Javanese at that.

Although *wayang* is apparently under threat in Java itself, it is by no means out of the limelight abroad. Just as there are nowadays more gamelan orchestras in the US than in present-day Java, attention to Javanese *wayang* is probably more to be found in the west than in its region of origin. Just a few years ago, for instance, the Swiss Walter Angst published an amazing book on the various styles of *wayang* puppets and we need

only glance at Victoria Clara van Groenendael's bibliography of *wayang* studies to see that *wayang* has been at the center of scholarly attention for more than 125 years. I hasten to say that right at this moment, also in bookshops in Indonesia a variety of books on *wayang* may be purchased, usually explaining the characters of puppets and presenting their pictures. Nevertheless, this being so, systematic studies of *wayang* puppets, presenting large numbers of photographs of these puppets, has not been done very often. Angst is an exception and *Inside the Puppet Box* is another. While Angst presented puppets stemming from different places and different times, some dating back more than 200 years, this book presents the puppets of one puppet master with only few exceptions from other artists. Interestingly, the author presents modern puppets dating back only 15 years, and sometimes even much less.

The book is beautifully produced (unfortunately not bound) and offers a lot of information that someone not versed in the art needs to know as a start. The descriptions of the puppets, how they are made, performed and staged, is well written and the attention paid to puppeteers and puppet makers interesting. The presentation of the puppets is also novel and apt. During a performance, at the left and right hand side of the puppeteer many puppets are displayed neatly standing in rows from large to big starting at the center (*simpingan*). This approach is very good and earlier works should have been presented like this. Many aspects that are usually overlooked are now clearly explained in lucid language. The book includes much attention to details, such as how the sticks, used by the puppeteer (*dhalang*) to manipulate his puppets, are made. It thus presents most of the range of aspects in connection with *wayang kulit* shadow play.

The museum collection contains about 230 puppets from this collection and some from Ki Enthus Susmono, a very modern *wayang* performer from Tegal on Java's north coast, including puppets of George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein (of which hundreds are rumored to have been made and were eagerly sold to Americans). A few puppets of other famous *dhalang* complete the collection.

It is pity that the author has not used Angst's book to enable her to say something of the quality of the puppets in the collection of the museum. Virtually all of them were collected by or made for one *dhalang*, Ki Purbo Asmoro from Surakarta, Central Java. Ki Purbo is a puppeteer and a teacher at the Surakarta branch of the Arts Institute of Indonesia. In this role, he is instrumental and influential in the sustainability of *wayang* in Central Java.

Reading the book I could not help but wonder why Ki Purbo Asmoro saw fit to sell his collection. Apart from being able to make a new set, he did do away with beautiful old ones and that might have been considered a pity. Moreover, if complete collections are so important for the sustainability of the art one would think that he might have preserved them for his instructional tasks at the institute where he works. Something else that I found increasingly annoying is that from reading the book I got the impression that *wayang* is something that was just recently discovered. This is, of course, entirely not the case. It has been studied for a long time and a library of studies, in a variety of languages, has been published over the years. The list of references is therefore much too short and may give the impression that we are dealing with something very out of the ordinary, which it really isn't.

Some mistakes might have been prevented. Her explanation of *Cikarini* (one particular verse form of the Old Javanese *kakawin* poetic tradition) is completely incomprehensible and wrong. It is not an ancient Javanese song and a *pupuh* (verse form, meter) is not a collection of stanzas from 'song lyrics that form sentences' (whatever that means). The *dhudahan* does not consist of puppets that the puppeteer needs "to have at arms' reach during a performance" (p. 56). If that were the case, we would have very funny performances with strange stories. She corrects herself later and more accurately states that these groups usually contain ogres, clown figures, servants and miscellaneous types (p. 142) and gods, monkey soldiers, animals, armies, weapons (p. 170) and not the ubiquitous heroes almost every story presents during performances, such as *Arjuna* and *Kresna*.

The first two sentences of the Preface I found curious and a bit unnerving. It says: "In the world's eyes, Indonesia is one of the richest countries for artistic and cultural works. In this era of global competition, the arts are one of Indonesia's most important treasures." Undoubtedly, Indonesia has a wealth of cultures, but the way many people in this country deal with their arts is rather the opposite of what she implies in these two sentences. I therefore think that these sentences do not reflect Indonesian daily reality at all, but perhaps more those circles familiar to the author. Many people with an inclination for arts and cultures find themselves in a desert, or perhaps the simile should be, dying of thirst while floating on water.

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Above left: Puppet maker Riyadi Dwi Susanto, one of Felicia Katz-Harris' informants (Photograph by Dick van der Meij, Yogyakarta, 26 September 2011).

Above right: *Wayang* puppets, from private collection Dick van der Meij.

News from Asia

Riverbeds of Sumatra: the latest target of treasure hunters

John N. Miksic

At the Asian Academy for Heritage Management's Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage, held in Manila several months ago, I presented a paper on a new form of looting that is destroying Southeast Asia's archaeological heritage. This involves the looting from beds of rivers that have been important centers of habitation, trade, and industry for centuries.

Shipwreck archaeology in Southeast Asia has experienced major advances in the last 15 years. The archaeology of ports is underdeveloped by comparison. This is especially ironic since much of Southeast Asia's cultural development took place along major rivers. Most major ports in the region were not located on the sea coast, but upstream, sometimes 100 km or more from the river mouths. We know much about the transport of artifacts, but little about their destinations. If we could discover the locations where the consumers of these items lived, we could reconstruct the economic and political situation in the region in much finer detail than is possible at present.

The Musi River in southeast Sumatra has been a major artery of commerce for over 2,000 years. Much of the remaining archaeological evidence of the kingdom of Sriwijaya probably lies beneath the Musi River in modern Palembang. Whereas the nobility of Sriwijaya lived on dry land, much of its population lived either on stilt houses or on rafts. Evidence of their existence as well as port activity, such as warehousing and transshipping of cargo, lies in the mud beneath the river. The head of the archaeological office for South Sumatra has established a website devoted to the development of Wetland Archaeology (<http://nurhadirangkuti.blogspot.com>). This website gives important recognition to the identification of wetlands in Indonesia as a specific focus of archaeological research.

Looting of the Musi riverbed has greatly accelerated in the last few years. Two locations on the Batang Hari, which flows from West Sumatra province to the sea in Jambi, are being subjected to the same treatment. In some areas fishermen use hoses filled with air from compressors to enable them to dive to the river beds, a similar technique to that used to loot shipwrecks in the open sea. They probe the muddy bottom with iron rods, often causing serious damage to, for example, Chinese porcelain. In the upper reaches of the Batang Hari, others use suction devices operated from boats called *dompeng* to scour the riverbed.

A wide range of artifacts is still within easy reach on the riverbed, but the supply is diminishing. Valuable items are probably disposed of through networks leading to Jakarta, where the majority of collectors live. What remain behind for the fishermen to sell on their own are probably the dregs of the treasures lying under 20 metres of water and a metre of river mud, yet even these include objects that hold the potential to clarify many details of early Southeast Asia.

Small gold items include coins, cylindrical amulet containers meant to be suspended from strings hung around the neck, and pieces of jewellery, including types known from central Java and dated to the late first millennium. Also found are large quantities of beads of glass and stone in addition to gold examples. Religious objects included numerous items associated with Buddhism. In addition to bronze statues of Buddha, there are examples of what appear to be stamps used to print Buddhist texts on clay. More research is needed to clarify their significance.



Above: Musi river, Palembang.

Right: Map showing Early Southeast Asian Ports (drawn by Dr. G.Y. Goh).

All Photos courtesy John N. Miksic.



Bronze items include large quantities of Chinese coins of the Tang through Song dynasties, bronze faces of Kala, mirrors, and bells with vajra handles for use in esoteric Buddhist rituals. Rolled sheets of heavy metal appear to be tin or lead votive objects inscribed with mantras. Utilitarian objects include scale weights. Porcelains span a wide range of Chinese export wares, from Tang Yue bowls through to middle Ming cobalt blue wares. Earthenware, both local coarse ware and fine kendis from south Thailand, is also in the assemblage. Probably many more examples lie on the riverbed, but they are not easily sold and thus not often brought to the surface.

Archaeologists rarely undertake excavations in rivers. Such research faces considerable technical and financial challenges. Conventional marine archaeologists would lay out a grid on the riverbed and excavate using an airlift. Whether this would be feasible in the Musi River needs to be investigated. An alternative would be to adopt salvage archaeology methods, using mechanical excavation employing dredging equipment to expedite the recovery of artifacts.

About the Conference

The Inaugural Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage was held by the Asian Academy for Heritage Management, from 8 to 12 November 2011 in Manila, Philippines. The conference was hosted by the National Museum of Philippines. A total of 128 delegates from 35 nations attended the conference.

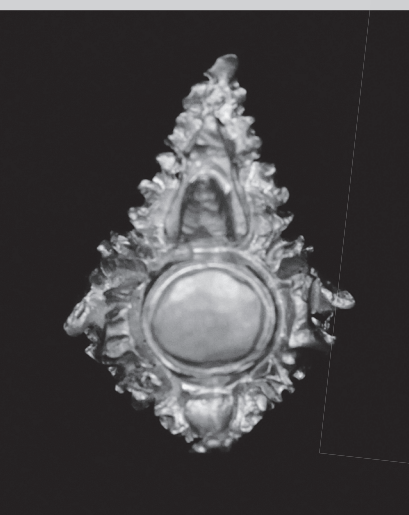
The conference aimed to exchange and disseminate information about underwater cultural heritage in Asia and the countries of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, facilitate professional development for underwater archaeologists and underwater cultural heritage managers in the Asia-Pacific region, provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas about and approaches to underwater cultural heritage and underwater archaeology and to publish the proceedings both online and in print and disseminate to a wide audience. The conference proceedings are available at the Museum of Underwater Archaeology (MUA) Online: www.themua.org/collections/items/browse?collection=2

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Right: Head of Buddhist deity, stone. Height approximately 13 cm.

Below: Gold ear ornament, 2 cm high. Cylindrical amulet containers meant to be suspended from strings hung around the neck.



News from Asia (continued)

Penang Story: a history of connections

Aparajita Basu

CITIES, AS WE KNOW, have their own stories. Some speak of meteoric rises and falls. Others spin sagas of cud-chewing continuity. Penang, the Malaysian port at the northern edge of the Straits of Malacca, has a unique story of consistent vibrancy, from the advent of British colonial rule in the 18th century. Rife with “conjunctures and confluences” or flows of peoples, knowledge and culture between Southeast Asia and the broader worlds of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Penang was at the forefront of economic and cultural contributions to local, regional and global histories. In 2001 Star Publications and the Penang Heritage Trust jointly organized a project entitled “The Penang Story” to create an awareness of the port’s unusual history and cultural identity. In May 2010 the first workshop of the “Penang and the Indian Ocean” project was held by the University of Cambridge. Phase II of that workshop was held from 16 to 18 September 2011 in the form of a conference organized by the Penang Heritage Trust, Think City, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and academics from the University of Cambridge and London University.

From the outset it was clear that the conference was predicated on two objectives. The first was to break the traditional boundaries of area studies between the geographical zones conventionally divided into South and Southeast Asia. The second goal was to emphasize Penang’s significant connections with South Asia, which have been overlooked in favor of links with Chinese maritime networks of commerce and migration. Both objectives were underscored very effectively during the conference. Sir Christopher Bayly’s keynote lecture “Penang and Bombay: Indian Ocean Port Cities in the 19th Century” was a case in point. Presenting Bombay and Penang comparatively as sister cities of colonial cosmopolitan modernity, he argued that both shared a maritime culture of inclusiveness, and mercantile elites (Parsis, Peranakan Babas and Jawi Pekans) in each formed the backbone of colonial civil society.

A subsequent panel on early history compounded the notion that comparisons were vital, establishing the longevity of trade links between South India and the west coast of peninsular Malaysia, stretching back to the first millennium of the Common Era. Mohd Supian bin Sabtu discussed how Indian motifs were adapted in the temple structures of the Bujang Valley. Barbara Andaya presented the ‘knowledge-gathering’ practices of John Adolphus Pope, a fourteen-year-old Third Officer of the English country ship *Princess Royal* who wrote letters about his impressions of port cities. Another paper that brought to the fore an unusual cross-cultural encounter was by Wong Yee Tuan. Contradicting the idea that Chinese merchants formed a homogeneous group, trading only with China, he argued that they also traded with and went to India in the 1820s. The papers of another session worked to establish the multi-directionality of intellectual flows in the Penang region, discussing Malay music, colonial photography, as well as climate ecology and cultivation.

One of the most cohesive panels at the conference discussed the history of Indian diasporas in Penang. Jayati Bhattacharya presented an information-rich account of South Asian commercial networks as did Khoo Salma Nasution, who categorized the range and variety of Tamil Muslim communities working in Penang. Lakshmi Subramaniam provided a sharp analysis of the evolution of the ‘Greater India’ concept in twentieth-century Tamil print-culture, while Rathi Menon spoke on the assimilation and acculturation of Malayali communities in Penang. Together, the papers were useful in bringing home the notion that ethnic diasporas have to be disaggregated. Two separate trajectories of South Asian migrants emerged – one of well-to-do business communities and the other of indentured laborers, with the former more homeland-bound in terms of ideological positioning and the latter more assimilative (marrying into local ethnic groups).

Michael Montesano reversed standard notions of Penang being a docile receptacle of trans-regional influences by positing that it was the active model for changes in real estate development in the Andaman littoral in the 1960s. He also made the illuminating point that Penang is once again becoming a knowledge hub as the demand for Chinese language instruction is growing in southern Thailand. Solvay Gerke highlighted how the India-Penang connection has drastically been strengthened in the last decade through scientific collaborations in universities. While the implications of history on the present situation of Penang could have been spoken to more directly by the final panel, all in all, the conference ended on a high note, establishing Penang’s renewed vigor as a center for intellectual and cultural exchanges in the Indian Ocean.

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(Re)Constructing Nalanda: a twenty-first-century university

Anjana Sharma

THE NAME NALANDA has become an icon for cross-cultural interactions and intra-regional connectivity around the globe. Located in Bihar, India, near the site where the Buddha attained enlightenment, the centre of learning at Nalanda was a major hub for educational and intellectual exchanges among Asian societies from the fifth to the twelfth centuries. It received students from almost all parts of Asia, stimulated intellectual, scientific, and religious dialogues, and dispatched missionaries to the leading Buddhist centres of Asia. Later generations called this centre of learning “Nalanda University” and described it as the world’s first educational institution of higher learning.

Eight hundred years ago, marauding invaders destroyed Nalanda University. Legend has it that the University’s nine-storey library burned for many months. The end of Nalanda came at a time when Oxford and Cambridge were being established in the West. Now, the historic Nalanda University has been recreated by an Act of the Indian Parliament passed in September 2010. It is, by charter, an international and secular institution of national importance.

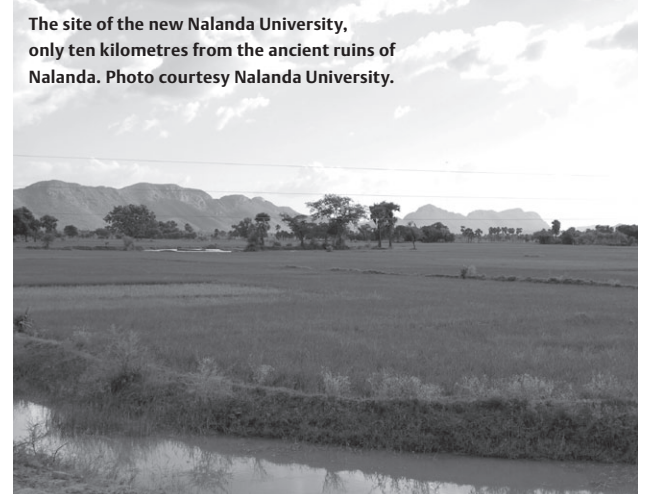
However, the revival of this ancient seat of learning goes beyond the national context. Instead, it represents the shared values and common vision of Asian countries that are coming together under the East Asian Summit forum to forge a region based on the foundations of peace and harmony. An important step toward re-establishing the educational links and intra-regional connectivity that existed at Nalanda was taken at the meeting of the East Asia Summit countries held in Thailand in 2009. During the conclave, the leaders of the member-countries issued a joint press statement that supported the establishment of the Nalanda University as a “non-state, non-profit, secular, and self-governing international institution with a continental focus that will bring together the brightest and most dedicated students from all countries of Asia.”

The Vision Statement of the University, drafted by the Indian government appointed Nalanda Mentor Group (now the Governing Board of the University) chaired by the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, elaborates this outlook in terms of the present and the future: “There is now a perfect opportunity to recreate the hallowed universalism of Nalanda as a centre of knowledge. The second millennium CE ended with a tremendous resurgence of Asia after centuries of stagnation, division and decline. Asia is today synonymous with a dynamic entrepreneurial and innovative culture, based on knowledge and enterprise not forgetful of its past yet not afraid to face the future. Asian countries are coming together to forge a continent based on the foundations of peace and harmony.”

Nalanda’s greatest gift was to liberate knowledge from the narrow confines of geography and religion and seek to share knowledge with the world at large. More than ever the task that lies ahead of universities of the new millennia is to rescue knowledge from the model of either a capitalist economy or of a political imperative that drives higher education globally at the present moment.

What Nalanda seeks to create anew is a model of a University that is transcendent: consensual, free of divisiveness and fundamentally creative. It is this revisionist and revolutionary aspect of the university that underlay the choice of the first two Schools with which the university will begin its academic life: Historical Studies and the School of Environment and Ecology. Given the university’s location – rural, agrarian and in a historically dense area of the ancient Magadha – the two chosen Schools best serve to seamlessly merge the local, the regional, the national and the transnational. Only ten kilometres from the ancient ruins of Nalanda, the site of the new University is located in an area that is archaeologically rich and will provide both students and faculty with an opportunity to engage with history as a lived experience and create new ways of writing, reading or transmitting history.

The School of Environment and Ecology is also premised upon the same principles. The surrounding farmland area of the University is virtually rainfall dependent. Large sections of the populace of the region thus principally rely on an economy that is either driven by the rural setting or, seasonally, by religious tourism. Rajgir, the small town in which Nalanda University is situated, is a critical site that interlinks Buddhism and Jainism, and has a global and pan-Asian footprint. However, this global footfall has had a limited



The site of the new Nalanda University, only ten kilometres from the ancient ruins of Nalanda. Photo courtesy Nalanda University.

relationship with the community and it is the hope that the School of Environment and Ecology will drive the economic and human health of the region and contribute by teaching and practicing the principles of sustainability at both the individual and community levels. Consequently, even before the formal beginning of the University, the aim is to build a totally green and sustainable campus that will integrate the principles of man and nature living in harmony. The idea, of course, is not only to teach “disciplinary” knowledge in the class, but also to firmly ground knowledge into practice.

The exciting task of the revival process at the ground level has already begun. There is an office near the site and one in New Delhi, which is the current hub of activity. The university’s website (nalandauniv.edu.in) has now been established and allows people to express their views and ideas on the university. It has already created a support group that encompasses people from various parts of the world desirous to be part of this uniquely transformative journey. A global competition for the master plan of the University campus will be launched soon, and the recruitment process for the founding faculty is anticipated to begin within a year.

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Meeting the Mummies of the Tarim Basin: the Bronze Age and early Iron Age mummies of Eastern Central Asia

Victor H. Mair

THE MUMMIES OF EASTERN CENTRAL ASIA first entered my consciousness in the summer of 1988. I had vaguely heard about them from the end of the 70s, but until I came face to face with the mummies in the late 80s, I did not have a real sense of their enormous importance for the study of Eurasian prehistory and history. I had been to the regional museum in Urumchi many times before, but when I returned for yet another visit that summer, I was stunned. I was leading a group from the Smithsonian Institution, and was totally unprepared for the newly opened exhibition of Bronze Age and Early Iron Age mummies that we encountered on that occasion.

I should preface my remarks by noting that the human remains I am talking about are not actually mummies, but rather desiccated corpses. Their uncanny state of preservation is due, not to any artificial means, but to the extreme aridity and saline soils of the environment. The severely cold winters also played a significant role in arresting the processes of putrefaction and decomposition of the human remains.

When we first passed through the black curtains that hung from the top of the door, I was somewhat suspicious, because the mummies looked too good to be true. The thought that we were in some sort of Madame Tussauds occurred to me, as though the mummies were part of an elaborate hoax being

Rurbanisation as a vision for the Nalanda campus region: an academic design project by NUS architecture students

Tay Kheng Soon



A model of rurbanisation. Courtesy Tay Kheng Soon.

RUBANISATION re-conceptualizes the urban and the rural as one space not two. It is a compound word coined from the words 'rural' and 'urban'. The Ruban is therefore a form of human settlement that has both rural and urban characteristics in which to work, live, learn, play, farm and heal.

Rurbanisation as a means of rebalancing local production and consumption is not an easy task. The need for huge investments in infrastructure, education, support for small and medium enterprises, and the viability of family-based small-plot agriculture have to be addressed. Clearly the time for a paradigm change has come and a new imagination is needed.

The establishment of Nalanda University gives us an opportunity to address this paradigm shift. The challenge is to move towards defining a new civilizational direction away from the exclusively materialist model of development inherited from the industrial age. Nalanda will be intimately linked to the region which sustains it and will learn from it, while the region will contribute towards defining Nalanda's local and global scholastic mission within a conception of environmental sustainability.

It is in this context that 4th year students of the National University of Singapore Architecture School will spend twelve weeks, starting January 2012, thinking about the issues of networked settlements in the form of the Rubanisation of the region and taking this perspective to the design of the Nalanda Master Plan. Each student will focus on the architectural design of a building or group of buildings within the master plan to express the new paradigm and image of how life would be or should be in the future campus.

Students will make a site visit to Nalanda, meet with relevant university and local officials, and examine the historical and geographical settings. In collaboration with other Singapore institutions, it will select the three best designs for presentation in Singapore and India. Indeed, this project underscores the mission of collaborative educational experiences inherent in the Nalanda initiative under the East Asia Summit forum and demonstrates Singapore's ongoing support for the project.

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perpetrated to drum up tourism. Yet the labels claimed the mummies dated to the first and second millennium B.C. The artifacts accompanying them were also remarkably well-preserved and, in many instances, technologically and culturally advanced for the time. For example, these people had bronze, wheat, and the wheel before these appeared in the Central Plains of China, and their woolen textiles were of extraordinarily fine quality.

The longer I stayed in that room and carefully observed the mummies and their associated artifacts, however, the less doubt I had that they were real. I was particularly struck by one of the mummies who bore a striking resemblance to my second oldest brother (I later called him Ur-David). Consequently, I told my Smithsonian charges that they had free time to go shopping or do whatever they wished for the rest of the day, and I stayed in that hall for the entire afternoon until the museum closed.

Since I was not an archaeologist but a specialist on medieval Buddhist literature at the time, I simply filed what I had seen during that long afternoon in the back of my mind and returned to my customary research on popular Buddhist literature. Nonetheless, the mummies of Eastern Central Asia had a profound impact on me, and my memory of them persisted during the next few years.

Then, in September 1991, an amazing discovery was made on the border between Austria and Italy. Two German hikers traversing the Similaun Glacier chanced upon a body that had been frozen in the ice, but had become partially exposed. As the body and the accessories that accompanied it were



Left and right: Mummy from Xinjiang. Photos by Wang Da Gang.

so well-preserved, it was first thought that these were the remains of a hiker or skier who had died not long before. Upon further investigation, it became apparent that the deceased was a Bronze Age individual. This was Ötzi, the 5300-year-old iceman who got his name from the Ötztal (Ötz Valley) in Austria, at the top of which he was found.

I still remember my reactions as I keenly read the newspaper reports of Ötzi's discovery. I was mesmerized by the account of Ötzi's removal from the ice and transportation to Innsbruck, together with all of his elaborate gear and also struck by how many researchers were involved in all aspects of the investigation of this one Bronze Age person. At some point as I was taking in this flood of astonishing information, this Chinese expostulation burst into my mind: "Bu gong-ping!" (It's not fair!). I instantaneously recalled the mummies I had encountered in the Urumchi Museum three years earlier and reflected that, not only were they virtually unknown to the world outside of Urumchi, there was next to no cutting-edge research being done on them.

That very afternoon, I began to organize an international investigation to undertake research on the mummies of Eastern Central Asia. After two years of planning, fundraising, and organization, I led my first expedition to the Tarim Basin



in the summer of 1993. That initial expedition was focused on ancient DNA studies, but later expeditions would delve into textiles, bronze and iron metallurgy, agriculture, and all other aspects of the existence of the earliest inhabitants of the region. In April 1996, I hosted a major international conference on the mummies at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, which constituted a watershed in research on Eurasian prehistory and history.

To this day, more than two decades after that fateful encounter in the summer of 1988, I am actively engaged in investigations on the Tarim mummies. To use another Chinese expression, the mummies of Eastern Central Asia and I "youyuan" (have an affinity). A deeper level of kinship results from the fact that, as a boy, my father pastured his family's animals high up in the same mountains where Ötzi passed into eternity. These are questions that I will be working on for the rest of my life, but they are not merely matters of personal interest, since they have implications for human relationships in Eurasia from the late Neolithic to the present.

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News from Asia (continued)

The Kusu Pilgrimage: an enduring myth

Lu Caixia



ON A SMALL ISLAND about 5 kilometres south of Singapore, the enduring power of myth manifests itself in the form of an annual pilgrimage, for which tens of thousands of devotees undertake to its shores; a practice possibly dating back centuries. Over time, a fusion of religious practices occurred as believers of different faiths gathered to pray at a Chinese temple and three Malay shrines (*keramat*) on the island, a phenomenon that is none too surprising in a place like Singapore, where people of diverse cultures and religions share the limited physical space of this city-state.

Named for its turtle-like shape, Kusu (Turtle Island in the Hokkien dialect) is one of the most visited of some 60 offshore islands belonging to, and a rare instance of undisturbed sanctity in, development-driven Singapore. Numerous tales surround its origins, the most popular among which is the story of a giant turtle rescuing shipwrecked fishermen by transforming into the island.

The Kusu pilgrimage takes place throughout the ninth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, falling between the months of September and November. This is when Kusu awakes from its slumber as ferry-loads of mainly ethnic Chinese devotees arrive. Many devotees first visit the temple of Tua Pek Kong (Dabogong, 大伯公, literally meaning Grand Uncle), a popular deity among the Southeast Asian Chinese. Also seen as the God of Prosperity, Merchant God and the patron god of seafarers, the origins of this deity remain debatable, with some identifying him as the local representation of the Chinese Earth God (Tudigong, 土地公), and others seeing him as symbolic of early Chinese pioneers in the region.

After praying to Tua Pek Kong, some pilgrims climb 152 steps up a hillock to pray at the shrines of Syed Abdul Rahman, Nenek Ghalib and Puteri Fatimah, three Malay saints who lived in the 19th century. Most accounts generally relate how Syed Abdul Rahman came to the island, while the other two are said to be his mother and sister respectively. This form of saint worship or *keramat* worship – a legacy of early Sufi Islam and pre-Islamic belief – has similarities with Tua Pek Kong worship. As some Southeast Asian Chinese have also adopted the practice, the Malay saints too acquired the Sino-Malay honorific of Datuk Kong, a combination of the Malay title “Datuk” and the Chinese title “Kong”. Syed Abdul Rahman is thus simply referred to as “Datuk Kong”.

No one seems to know with any certainty when or how the Kusu pilgrimage began. With no archival records kept by the Chinese temple or Malay shrines, memories fade as guardianship is passed down from generation to generation. Present caretakers offer hazy accounts of the pilgrimage’s origins as told by their predecessors. Cecilia Seet Lay Choo – a fourth-generation descendent of the first caretaker Bibi (a term of address for older Straits Chinese women) Ooi Chai Hoong – explained that the Tua Pek Kong temple’s founding is unrelated to the legend of the giant turtle. Instead, it was a fairly nondescript story in which some fishermen brought a statue of Tua Pek Kong to a little hut on Kusu to pray for safety on the seas and a good catch; the island was a resting point for them. The simple altar gradually expanded into a proper temple through regular visits and contributions by the devotees. Ishak – a third-generation caretaker of the

Malay shrines – similarly dismissed the turtle legend. His account is that Syed Abdul Rahman vanished while on Kusu with his friends. He later appeared in their dreams to ask for a shrine to be built. Ishak is also skeptical of the claim that the three saints were family.

With no archival records, the only available textual references are the inscriptions listing contributors to the establishment and renovation of the shrines and temple. Much information can also be gleaned from old newspaper reports on the pilgrimage and the popular myths of Kusu. Spanning over a century, these reports shed light on how the accounts have evolved with time, thus showing the malleability of oral history.

According to some local English newspaper articles published in the 1940s and 50s, pilgrimage to Kusu began as early as 1813, the year of Syed Abdul Rahman’s death, before Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles’ arrival in 1819. A petition notice published on 14 August 1875 in the Singapore English daily *The Straits Times* further suggests that it was a fairly established practice by then. Submitted by Cheang Hong Lim, a wealthy Straits Chinese businessman and philanthropist, to J. F. A. McNair, then Colonial General and Surveyor-General of the Straits Settlements, the petition sought to secure the title to Peak Island (as Kusu was known then) and noted that “many of the Chinese and native inhabitants of this Settlement” prayed regularly to the Tua Pek Kong and Datuk Keramat on the island “for upwards of thirty years”. It further reflected their unhappiness over the British colonial authorities’ use of the sacred island as a burial ground for immigrants who died in quarantine on the neighbouring St. John’s Island.

Judging from inscriptions found at the temple and shrines, Straits Chinese devotees seemed to be the main or more active group in sustaining the pilgrimage in its earlier years. At the Chinese temple, Straits Chinese tycoon Ong Sam Leong figures prominently among the top donors for contributing 100 Straits dollars to renovation works in 1909, while inscriptions at the Malay shrines reveal that Nenek Ghalib’s shrine was constructed with donations from Baba (a term of address for Straits Chinese men) Hoe Beng Whatt and others, after she “arrived at the house of” Hoe in 1917. This was taken to mean that she had appeared in Hoe’s dreams and asked for the shrine to be built in exchange for granting the donors success in business. This tale reflects the situation in which *keramat* worship came to depend almost exclusively on local Chinese patronage, despite being Malay in origin, as many Malay-Muslims renounced such practices as they became more orthodox in their faith.

As such, Chinese influences abound in the rituals observed at the shrines, with Malay caretakers chanting blessings in Hokkien and devotees burning joss paper and adding oil to lamps in front of the shrines for a small donation. However, as a gesture of respect to the Malay saints, devotees refrain from consuming pork and bringing food containing pork or lard when they visit. Ritual paraphernalia used here are also different from the ones used at the Chinese temple, with yellow saffron rice, chicken, lamb and Indian incense being offered at the former. Despite these differences, the Chinese temple and Malay shrines serve similar tutelary functions,



1: Tourists pose in front of the cheery “Welcome to Kusu Island” sign at the jetty.

2: The Tua Pek Kong temple has been expanded and refurbished several times with donations from devotees.

3: The Datok Nenek Keramat, one of the three *keramats*, or shrines, on top of a hillock on Kusu.

4: The weekends during the pilgrimage season see the greatest numbers of pilgrims coming to pray.

receiving prayers for peace, health, wealth and prosperity. Both places also offer “fertility trees” on which those wanting children hang stones and other items to make their wishes, while gamblers pray to both Chinese and Malay deities for winning lottery numbers. It is not unusual to see followers of different religions visiting the temple and shrines. Professing to “believe in all gods”, Selvi M., (49, nurse) an Indian Hindu, visited Kusu with her Chinese Taoist colleagues during the pilgrimage season and prayed at both the Chinese temple and the Malay shrines. Both Taoist and Buddhist pilgrims make offerings at Tua Pek Kong temple, which also houses the Guanyin (观音, Goddess of Mercy), revered by followers of both religions.

Given the twin attractions of a mystical origin and idyllic surroundings, Kusu has been marketed as a tourist attraction, with mixed results. Many tourist guidebooks on Singapore include information on Kusu and it is described in official tourism literature as a “holiday resort” with “blue lagoons, pristine beaches and tranquil settings”. Since the 1970s, Singapore tourism authorities have been keen to develop a cluster of islands south of Singapore (Southern Islands) – which Kusu was a part of – into a recreational resort. This spurred an ambitious project for which S\$50 million was spent to beautify these islands. Since then, Kusu has been enlarged to nearly 6 times its original size (from 1.5 hectares

The Legends of Kusu

NUMEROUS LEGENDS about the origins of the Kusu pilgrimage have surfaced over time. An information panel on Kusu lists five of them, though there are more. The most popular tale tells of two shipwrecked fishermen – a Chinese and a Malay – who were saved by a giant turtle that transformed into Kusu. This was likely inspired by the turtle-like shape of Kusu before reclamation took place, when it was made up of two smaller islets joined by a narrow strip of land visible at low tide, with the bigger islet resembling the turtle’s body, and the smaller, the head. In a similar account, it was Syed Abdul Rahman and his family who were shipwrecked and the turtle emerged to tow them ashore.

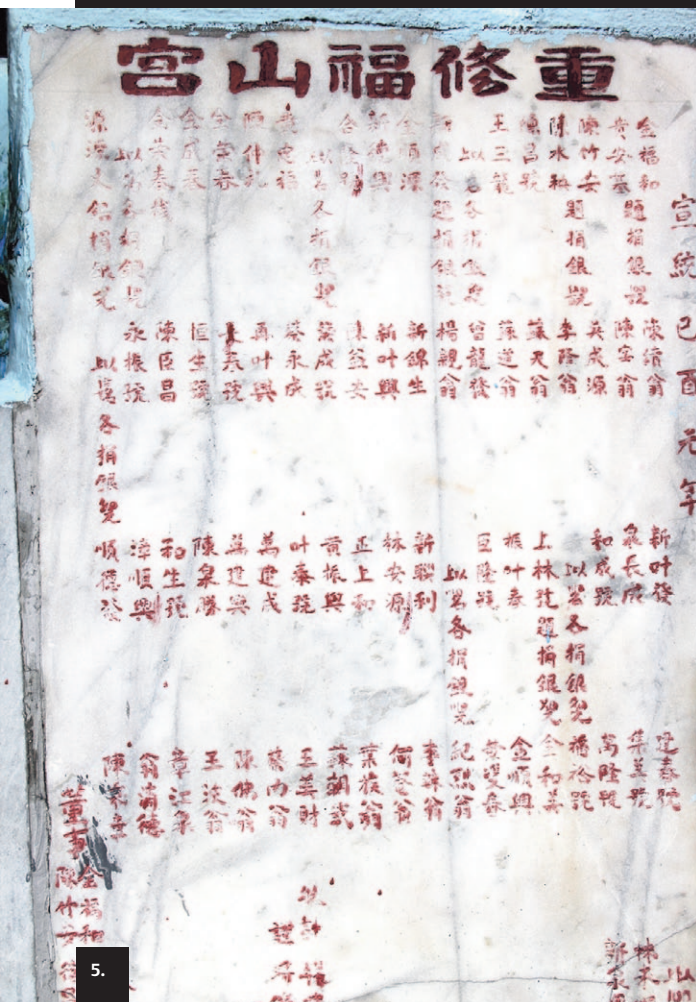
Another legend speaks of two holy men, Syed Rahman (an Arab) and Yam (a Chinese), who meditated and fasted on their pilgrimage to Kusu. Yam fell ill and Syed prayed for him. Their lives were saved when a boat with food and water appeared. Thereafter, the

two men regularly visited Kusu to give thanks. When they died, they were buried next to each other on the island. The Tua Pek Kong temple and the Datuk Kong shrine were subsequently erected to remember them.

A third legend is the retelling of a tale in the *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals, an account of the history of the Malay Sultanate in the 15th and early 16th century), describing schools of *todak* (swordfish) that attacked people on the shore with their sword-like bills. One day, a Malay boy proposed to the king that banana stems be planted along the seashore to bait the *todak*. This idea worked with the fish becoming trapped as their bills pierced the stems. The king later killed the clever boy as he feared a threat to his own rule. Said to be adopted by a Chinese couple living on Kusu, the boy’s spirit lingered on the island to protect his foster parents and they became the saints of Kusu after dying of old age.

1: The “Kusu turtle”. Sculpture erected on the island. ©Creative commons.





to 8.5 hectares) through land reclamation. Pleasure cruises on Chinese junks and island tours were organized. In the 1990s, further plans drawing inspiration from Port Grimaud in the south of France envisioned private waterfront residences, hotels and restaurants in a “canal-laced marine village resort” on the neighbouring Lazarus Island. Kusu, however, was to remain generally undisturbed yet incorporated into its exclusive surroundings. By then, the natural environment of the southern offshore islands had become a concern, with surrounding coral reefs damaged by land reclamation. Calls for the conservation of coral reefs around these islands were made as early as 1991 and awareness of the need to protect marine life has grown since. Ultimately, plans for resort development did not take off. Although resurrected by the Singapore Tourism Board in 2006, they were postponed again in 2007. When asked, a spokesperson from the Urban Redevelopment Authority in Singapore said that the relevant authorities are still working together to review and study possible interim and long-term development plans for the islands, but this excludes Kusu. Past proposals similarly left Kusu largely untouched.

Success in raising tourist numbers aside, an interesting outcome of efforts at tourism promotion is the drawing of Malaysian tourist-pilgrims, who form a significant proportion of foreigners visiting Kusu. Bong Soo Yen – a 43-year-old

female devotee from Penang – joined one such three-day tour of Singapore. For a fee of RM250 (about US\$79), she travelled overnight on a coach, reaching Kusu in the morning by ferry. The itinerary usually includes visiting famous places of worship and tourist attractions. With the opening of Singapore’s new integrated resort on the nearby Sentosa Island, many tour operators have included a casino visit in their programmes.

For many who visit Kusu during the pilgrimage season, the yearly trip is not only a chance to renew vows and prayers, but also a time to seek respite from the hectic pace of city life. For Jessie Han (70, nurse), the peaceful atmosphere on the island is part of the appeal. As a teenager, she had accompanied her grandmother to Kusu on a *sampan* (small wooden boat). As there was no jetty then and the boats could not reach the shore, she recalls having to roll up her pants to walk up the beach. Similarly, Yap Kok Chuan (63, harbour pilot) and his wife began their pilgrimage by accompanying their parents to Kusu and have continued to do so for more than 30 years. In the past, it was also a family outing with their children. Now that the children have grown up, they still make the annual trip on their own. On why they have persisted for so many years, Mr Yap said, “Once you’ve started doing so, you don’t dare to stop. So we come every year without fail.”

Tua Pek Kong’s Cult in the Chinese Diaspora

A FEW YEARS AGO, I wrote a paper on the Tua Pek Kong temple on Kusu in which I argued that the Singapore government’s interest in harnessing the economic potential of this temple since the 1980s had led to the commercialization and touristization of Kusu. My instructor and classmates were amazed by the active and highly dominating role of the state in managing society and developing the economy such that even a small 8.5-hectare island can barely escape its attention. Therefore, at the end of the semester, I brought them to Kusu to see how the larger forces of social change and state management had impacted it in general and the Tua Pek Kong temple in particular. However, during our trip, what struck me most was the simple question of a classmate from Mainland China: Who is Tua Pek Kong? To my surprise, my Chinese friend had neither heard of Tua Pek Kong nor was aware of his popularity among the Southeast Asian Chinese.

So who is Tua Pek Kong? Apparently, there is no agreement among scholars on the origin and identity of this deity. In the history of Malaysia and Singapore, the cult of Tua Pek Kong appeared in three multifaceted forms: a symbol of

sworn brotherhood, a local Sino-Malay deity, and a Sinicized god. As a sworn brotherhood, Tua Pek Kong was both a patron deity and a mutual aid organization to its members. This group even took control of governance, law and order in the diasporic community. After becoming involved in destructive riots with its rival groups, it was outlawed by the colonial government and eventually ceased to exist by the end of the 19th century. Concomitantly, Tua Pek Kong was venerated as a Sino-Malay deity, in several different forms, in the Chinese diaspora. According to an old inscription in Pahang, the local community worshipped him as Bentougong (本頭公). In other parts of Malaysia and Singapore, the Sino-Malay Tua Pek Kong symbolically blended elements of Malay animistic worship with Chinese religious practices. Most interestingly, on Kusu, Tua Pek Kong is a Sino-Malay deity with a Muslim sworn brother. The cult even incorporated Islamic ideas and Datuk Kong worship into its religious practices. Finally, the Sinicized Tua Pek Kong demonstrates how the cult existed in what Robert Hymes calls a “dual model of divinity.” On one hand, he was the spirit of extraordinary Chinese pioneers, god of prosperity,

protector of Overseas Chinese, and even a mediator of conflict. On the other hand, he was absorbed into the Chinese bureaucratic religious hierarchy in the Overseas Chinese annals.

In the absence of a Chinese bureaucratic state structure, Chinese migrants in 19th century Southeast Asia probably appreciated the familial connections and dyadic relationship between themselves and the divine uncle more than a multilevel bureaucratic hierarchy. Furthermore, they were active agents in inventing their religious beliefs. Some were quick to incorporate local Malay animistic worship and popular Islamic ideas into the cult of Tua Pek Kong, making him a Sino-Malay deity. Others deemed him a Sinicized god with efficacious response and a personal touch. Nevertheless, it is not possible to exactly pinpoint who Tua Pek Kong is. Perhaps it was precisely this multifaceted nature of the cult that best serves the complex needs of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia.

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5: An inscription at the Tua Pek Kong temple listing the Chinese donors who contributed to its renovation in 1909.

6: An inscription at the Datuk Nenek Keramat listing the Chinese donors who contributed to its construction. It further reveals that Datuk Nenek “paid a visit” to the main donor Baba Hoe Beng Whatt at his home.

7: An idyllic and peaceful getaway – an image that a revamped Kusu Island seeks to project.

8: Some pilgrims hang stones on fertility trees to pray for children and remove them when their wishes have been granted.

9: The Siong Leng Musical Association stages a musical performance at the Tua Pek Kong Temple every year during the Kusu pilgrimage. Photo Courtesy Siong Leng Musical Association.

10: A group of nurses, both Chinese and Indian, make the Kusu pilgrimage together on their day off from work.

All photos taken by Lu Caixia unless otherwise indicated.

Their example illustrates the changing nature and trend of the Kusu pilgrimage. What was a family affair is now mainly observed by the older generation, in shrinking numbers. According to statistics from the Sentosa Development Corporation – the agency responsible for managing Kusu – pilgrim numbers have decreased yearly since 2001. Compared to more than 136,000 pilgrims who made the trip in 2001, less than half (about 52,000) did so last year. This was in stark contrast to three decades ago when a record number of 23,000 people reportedly visited on a single day in 1976 and Kusu received over 200,000 visitors annually. Now, daily visitorship peaks at about 5,000.

Caretakers and pilgrims who were interviewed attributed the decline to several factors. One reason was that few from the younger generation still follow religious traditions. Other more prosaic reasons given included the shifting of ferry services to a new but relatively inaccessible pier in 2006. Several interviewees opined that this prevented the frail and aged from making the pilgrimage. Although the ferry journey was shortened by half (from 30 minutes to 15 minutes each way), more effort was needed to get to the pier.

Some pilgrims also felt that ferry fares were becoming too costly at S\$15 (about US\$11) for a return trip. For many years prior, pilgrims could choose between taking privately-operated bumboats (water taxis) or a ferry service operated by the former Port of Singapore Authority (PSA). Yap Kok Chuan recalls: “Bumboat rides to the island cost only 30 to 50 cents in the 1960s and 70s. Even during the oil crisis, ticket prices did not go up.” In the late 1970s, the PSA declined to increase fares despite pressure from bumboat operators, stating that it was providing a public service. It relented in 1981, citing heavy losses, and eventually relinquished this responsibility. Today, a single private company provides the ferry service.

Although pilgrim numbers have fallen sharply over the past decade, those interviewed hope that the Kusu pilgrimage will see a revival. The Siong Leng Musical Association – a traditional arts group formed in 1941 to preserve, develop, and promote Nan Yin (literally meaning “The Music of the South”) and Li Yuan opera – stages a musical performance on Kusu every year during pilgrimage season, a practice started by its late chairman Teng Mah Seng in the 1970s. Over the years, this event has garnered more attention and the number of participants and observers has increased from dozens to hundreds.

Cecilia Seet hopes that more people will visit Kusu when a new subway station opens at the pier – next to a new international cruise terminal – in two years’ time. Meanwhile, the pilgrimage is gaining new followers among the migrant community. Sheila Lin (35, from the service industry) – a Chinese Fujian native – went on her first pilgrimage five years ago after hearing about the supposed efficacy of the Kusu deities. Far away from home, her prayers are for safety and good luck, both for herself and her family in Fujian. Continually fuelled by the hopes and wishes of those who reach its shores, the Kusu pilgrimage survives the times.

Lu Caixia, research associate at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre, ISEAS Singapore and regional editor for The Newsletter (iias_iseas@iseas.edu.sg).

IIAS News

Rapenburg 59

Willem Vogelsang, Institute Manager IIAS

In September of last year, during the Open Monuments Weekend, the beautiful and historic building that houses the International Institute for Asian Studies, along the Rapenburg canal in Leiden, was opened to the general public. On a Sunday afternoon, for some three hours, more than 900 people came to have a look inside our premises. Why were people so curious, and what is the story behind the house?

THE HISTORY OF OUR OFFICE BUILDING dates back to at least the late fifteenth century. In those days it formed part of a larger estate that included what are now the houses Rapenburg 61 and 63. In the early seventeenth century Rapenburg 59 became a separate building, and since then it has housed a number of illustrious and famous people. It even provided private offices to Princess Beatrix, now Queen of the Netherlands, who was a student at Leiden University between 1956 and 1961, living nearby at Rapenburg 45.

Not surprisingly, over the years the furnishings have changed a lot. But an inventory dating to the early eighteenth century notes that there was a large wall cabinet in one of the rooms; amazingly, that same cabinet can still be found in my own little office. From later auction inventories, also dating to the eighteenth century, it is made clear that the walls of the house were decorated with many paintings, including a series by the famous Leiden artist, Jan Steen. In fact, one of the Jan Steen paintings from the Rapenburg 59 is now hanging in the Philadelphia Museum in the USA. The auctions also included many statuettes of wood, ivory and marble. Some of these survived and are now housed in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. There was also cut glass of the highest quality, some of which is also still extant. And what to say of the reference that the house included a chimney decoration by another famous painter from Leiden, Rembrandt van Rijn? Alas, the painting is no longer there. But both Jan Steen and Rembrandt van Rijn must have often passed the Rapenburg 59, if only on their way to school, the Latin School that can still be seen standing a few hundred metres from our building.

One of the first to live at Rapenburg 59 was Jean Nicolas (de) Parival. He came from Verdun in France, and bought the house in 1647. He may have come to Leiden as a wine vendor; in the city archives he is described as coming from 'schampagne'. He taught French in Leiden, and made quite a name for himself. But he also made sure that the immortal words of his neighbour, Professor Johannes Polyander, who lived at Rapenburg 61, were published:

–Of all the four continents Europe is the most beautiful; of all European countries, The Netherlands are the most beautiful; of the seventeen Dutch provinces, Holland is the most beautiful; of all towns in Holland, Leiden is the most beautiful; and in Leiden, the Rapenburg is the most beautiful street.

We, of the IIAS, can only, of course, agree.

Rapenburg 59 has always been a very popular address. It has an ideal location; right in the heart of Leiden and very close to all the other main University buildings. The house has been occupied by various families, including of course those of Leiden University professors, but also by clergy of the Dutch Protestant Church. For a while, in the early eighteenth century, it was even used as a home for students, Dutch and foreign. They came from Germany, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Austria, France, Spain, and many other countries. But the majority came from Germany, and so the house was dubbed the "Prince of Brandenburg". Interestingly, although perhaps not surprising, after many years of student occupation, the value of the house dropped from more than 9,000 guilders in 1660, to just 2600 guilders in 1709!

One very promising Dutch student in Leiden in the early nineteenth century was Johan Rudolph Thorbecke, who in later life would write the 1848 Dutch constitution and lay the foundations for the modern state of the Netherlands. Thorbecke visited his supervisor, Professor Johannes van Voorst, at his home on numerous occasions – at least every other day according to one of his letters to his father. And yes, this professor lived at Rapenburg 59.

The last private occupants of the building were general practitioners, namely Johannes Bruining (1906) and Warner Johannes Bruins Slot (1932). The latter was forced to leave the house in 1945 when it was commandeered by the German occupying forces. Regretfully, Bruins Slot was given just a few days to vacate the house, which held not only his own belongings, but also those of Jewish friends. In 1949, after the war, he sold the house to the State and since 1956 it has been in continuous use by Leiden University.

In 1956, the interior of the house was slightly altered to accommodate offices (including for Princess Beatrix), but the basic layout remained unchanged. It still boasts many early-eighteenth century features, such as the beautifully carved stairway. The "Kelderkamer" (Cellar Room), named for the simple reason that it is located above the cellar, is also noteworthy. The wall cabinet noted in the early-eighteenth century inventory still resides in this Cellar Room – which I am now honoured to call my office – and I sometimes wonder how many people over the centuries have had the pleasure to look upon this cabinet with their own eyes. Admirers certainly also included the patients of doctors Bruining and Bruins Slot, who used the Kelderkamer as a waiting room.

I also sometimes wonder about other secrets this house may still be hiding?

A message for all IIAS alumni

Heleen van der Minne

During the past eighteen years, ever since its foundation, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) has enjoyed the attendance of over a thousand fellows and affiliated scholars. The IIAS would like to invite all past and present IIAS fellows and affiliated scholars to join our Alumni Programme, which aims to coordinate the many existing contacts and networks amongst our scholars, facilitating interactions between all its members, past and present, and to strengthen the institute's global visibility so as to help shape a vibrant transnational Asian studies community that reflects the spirit of IIAS.

In the recent IIAS online survey (see page 22) members indicated their wish for more opportunities to become involved with IIAS and its activities, to make better use of IIAS resources and to have higher levels of interaction between IIAS scholars. Our past and present scholars already know the value of the IIAS network, and now welcome new ways of working with others in their field. This is what our Alumni Programme will offer.

The responses we received through the survey indeed reflect the central aim of IIAS: to be a worldwide scientific platform and research network in the field of Asian studies. The IIAS has enjoyed the attendance of over a thousand Asia researchers from all over the world, and has developed into a scientific hub in the field of Asian studies for a multitude of scholars.

IIAS has supported and promoted young and eager researchers just embarking on their careers, as well as the most excellent globally known scientists. The many contacts these scholars developed through their association with IIAS have proven essential for their professional opportunities and advancement, and for their levels of expertise on Asia and Asia studies. IIAS is a true research community, and will soon receive an Alumni Programme to match.

IIAS is currently strengthening the existing networks and investing in new ones, which will act as the tools to keep all IIAS contacts up-to-date, and to offer fellows and alumni a selection of services. The new IIAS Alumni Programme hopes to offer new means and facilities, enabling IIAS relations to operate and interact in a more structured way, more focussed and flexible, such as:

- An online IIAS profile page and directory to find fellow alumni
- An extended use of social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook
- Discussion groups/forums for a diversity of subjects (regionally and thematically), and an opportunity to announce new research and publications
- Special alumni events

Connect!

We cordially invite you to become an (even more) active IIAS community member – become and stay connected with the IIAS Alumni Programme! The network will strengthen our Asia research community and enable you to respond to and discuss all kinds of developments in the field of Asian studies.

We would kindly like to ask you to fill in the online form on www.iias.nl/alumni-form so that we may complete our database with any information we are possibly missing. Thank you very much in advance for your cooperation, and we look forward to receiving you in the IIAS Alumni Programme.

First Alumni Event

IIAS Alumni are invited to attend a drinks reception at the AAS conference in Toronto, to meet old friends and new opportunities. The place and time of the event is yet to be confirmed. We look forward to seeing many of you there!

Heleen van der Minne, IIAS Project manager events & projects (h.m.van.der.minne@iias.nl)



Final Conference of the Europe-Asia Policy Forum

Re-engaging Europe with Asia
(The Hague, 14-15 December 2011)



The Europe-Asia Policy Forum (EUforAsia; <http://www.euforasia.eu>), led by the IIAS, was designed to target relevant stakeholders in Asia-Europe affairs with information on contemporary issues regarding EU-Asia. Co-financed by the European Commission, the EUforAsia consortium consisted of the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS), the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Singapore Institute for International Affairs (SIIA) and the European Policy Centre (EPC). Over the last three years, EUforAsia organised roundtables, briefings and conferences with the aim of enhancing EU-Asia cooperation and awareness, on issues of mutual interest, in areas such as sustainable development, regional integration, and governance.

The final conference of the Europe-Asia Policy Forum, entitled Re-Engaging Europe with Asia, was held at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, The Hague. The conference was attended by more than forty European and Asian experts and opinion leaders, from academia and think tanks, who discussed contemporary global and regional economic, political and security issues of common concern. Four main issues were discussed, namely a) the impact of the financial crises on regional economic integration; b) the relevance of new security dialogues in Asia for the EU; c) cooperation in higher education; d) cooperation in energy policy and sustainability.

The impact of financial crises on regional economic integration: policy options and perspectives

Both Asia and Europe have experienced major financial crises challenging the ability of regional integration frameworks to respond effectively. These crises raise the issue of developing further the processes and institutions of integration in order to respond better to future challenges. Given the differences in the patterns of integration, Europe and Asia are likely to look for different options to shape their integration framework. On the other hand, the challenges facing them, such as the power of global financial markets, the need for economic growth, the role of actors too big to fail, as well as the imperatives of sustainable national budgets, are comparable.

A central factor in developing the processes and institutions of integration is the interdependence between Europe and Asia. Interdependencies are becoming increasingly apparent in a broader range of sectors, e.g., finance, energy, environment and resource security. A holistic multi-sector management approach is therefore required. It also means that economic interdependence is moving beyond just trade and investment relations that characterised Asia-Europe relations in the early post Cold War period of the 1990s. In order to respond adequately to the impact of financial crises on regional economic integration it is imperative to recognise this ever-complex multi-sector interdependence and the need for greater coherence and coordination amongst EU agencies. Furthermore it becomes increasingly necessary to focus on priority areas in EU-Asia relations: namely: energy security; climate change and other environmental issues; food and water security; closing development divides (development capacity-building); social equity and economic justice; resource competition; coping with economic globalization and strengthening regional inter-regional and global governance.

Civil society and business have key stakeholder roles to play in addressing these challenges, not least because non-state actors have valuable sector-specific intelligence and understanding to share with policy-makers. More attention should also be paid to micro-level and sub-regional integration in both Europe and Asia and to the role played by cities in Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) processes generally. The rise of cities in the global system will be a key political, economic and governance trend as the 21st century unfolds.

New security dialogues in Asia: declining relevance or new opportunities for the EU?

The EU is often depicted as a significant economic power, but not an important strategic player in Asia. This is particularly pertinent since security in Asia is still very much seen through the lens of military security and issues concerning territorial integrity and sovereignty. In addition, the role of the EU as a non-traditional security actor, while appreciated by some quarters, has not been prominent. This raises the question whether the EU can become a more active participant in the new emerging security dialogues in Asia: such as the expanded East Asia Summit (EAS) or the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus).

The relevance of Asia's security for the EU and the question how the EU can remain relevant for Asia are interlinked. Asian stability concerns the world and the EU. Both are interdependent and the EU cannot protect its economy globally without being an active participant in global politics. This also means that the EU must be present in Asia as the latter's political and economic influence is rapidly increasing, e.g., in relation to global governance issues. The EU can provide useful experiences from its region-building efforts and management of various non-traditional security issues. With regard to priority areas the EU should focus on engaging Asia in the area of non-traditional security issues. This is where the EU's strength lies, namely in areas like peace-building, peace-keeping and conflict management. The EU should build on its experience from the Aceh Monitoring Mission and develop a more systematic way of engaging Asia in issues of conflict management, conflict resolution and peace building. Dealing effectively with human trafficking, disaster relief and pandemics needs to become part in this endeavour.

As a global trading power the EU has a vital interest in an uninterrupted flow of goods and therefore in ensuring the freedom of navigation and the combating of piracy along Sea Lanes of Communication (SLC). Hence the EU must seek to play a more active role in this area, also building on its experience in combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden. This could be pursued through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEM process.

Cooperation in higher education

The EU's cooperation in higher education with Asia dates back over two decades. On the flow from Europe to Asia, these activities range from the creation of EU Studies Centres in Asian countries to the promotion and finance of joint university cooperation and research. In addition, it encourages scientific dialogue across the two academic communities. European universities are also active in recruiting Asian students from BA through to PhD levels. The traffic in the other direction is more limited, whether the promotion of Asian studies and languages in European universities, or facilitating European students to study there. Given the increased economic interdependence between the two continents, this is as much a missed economic opportunity as it is a missed cultural one.

Strong political will is needed to increase cooperation in higher education. The overall goal is to share knowledge, improve mutual understanding, reduce misperception, and the exchange of culture and values.

Cooperation in energy policy and sustainability

Energy security is one of the major global challenges of the 21st century. Intensified competition for increasingly scarce forms of conventional energy resources is causing significant tensions in the global system. Asia's burgeoning economic growth, spurred on principally by China, has a profound effect on global energy security. Asian newly-industrialized countries increasingly affect the EU's energy security position, especially in terms of "supply security". Asia's growth in energy demand increases pressures on common supplier nations, e.g., from the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caspian region, to simultaneously satisfy the resource needs of both Europe and Asia. Increasingly, shared environmental risks of continued carbon fuel dependence and its global warming effects call for greater EU-Asia cooperation. Furthermore, Asia and Europe are more dependent on foreign energy supplies than other world regions. These shared predicaments, combined with deepening interdependencies in the global energy system generally, and the common need to establish sustainable energy paradigms, are push factors for Asia and Europe to work more closely on energy security affairs, and to share ideas on how to address common energy challenges. Energy sustainability will become a central strategic issue in EU-Asia relations that involves common interests. Asia is highly relevant to the EU because of its development speed and its impact on energy resources. The EU is relevant to Asia because of Asia's need for European know-how and technical cooperation.

This article was compiled by Willem Vogelsang, IIAS Institute Manager – based on, and including extracts from, the final report written by Dr Sebastian Bersick, Associate Professor, Fudan University, Shanghai

Asian Studies in Africa (ASA)

The Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), the African Studies Centre (ASC), the University of Cape Town Institute for Humanities in Africa (HUMA), and the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS) are initiating a pilot programme: Asian Studies in Africa (ASA). This programme will be a triangular transcontinental higher-education capacity building programme involving partners in Africa, Asia and Europe. The African Studies Centre will take on a similar initiative to promote African Studies in Asia.

IIAS, ASC, HUMA, and SEPHIS are proposing to build educational capacities in the field of Asian Studies in a number of African centres of higher-education, through the training of faculty and university administrators, and through curriculum and library development. The objective is to foster an autonomous Asia-focused African academic community that is able to train a critical mass of local experts on Asia and international relationships with Asia.

The present-day forms of intensive relationships of capital investments, commerce, political alliances and cultural transfers of knowledge, urgently call for systematic scholarly engagements with the past and present of Asian and African realities. An essential prerequisite for sustained socio-economic progress in African societies is the development of institutional academic infrastructures capable of delivering foundational knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. The access to knowledge of a world region that is as culturally diverse and economically powerful as Asia, will enable countries and citizens of Africa to embrace this new South-South inter-continental relation and to benefit fully from all it offers.

Informed by years of experience in Asia and Africa, the initiators recognise the need for a solid and critical infrastructure of humanities and social science knowledge dissemination and research, of which a focus on Asian Studies in African institutions is an essential part. Europe and European institutions can play a positive role as the "relay" in a new triangular transcontinental configuration.

IIAS MA Thesis Prize And the Winner is?

Shortlist Nominees

Noëmi Gerber (University of Amsterdam) *The "X's" and "O's" of school attendance in rural Malaysia: Structures, agency and policy responses.* Supervisor: Dr Roy Huysmans. Noëmi Gerber's thesis is a pleasure to read - or even to only look at. Both the written text and the pictures display a vivid interest in the pupils - the subjects of her study - and in their fate, but they also reflect the fun of doing such research. It is this type of qualitative research that is badly needed in the world of development, in particular given the challenges it presently has to face. We sincerely hope that Noëmi Gerber will continue to contribute to this body of knowledge, either as a researcher or as a practitioner.

Herman Colijn (University of Amsterdam) *Protestant death ritual negotiation in Fujian: The effects of protestant conversion on Chinese funerals.* Supervisor: Dr Barak Kalir. Herman Colijn used protestant death rituals as a window through which to observe fundamental changes and concomitant tensions in contemporary Chinese society. Colijn points at the connection between migration, conversion and the desire for modernity. The clarity of his description cum analysis reminds one of Clifford Geertz's famous thick description. By offering a couple of seemingly simple case studies Colijn succeeds to uncover an important cultural concern in present day China.

Yang Yang (University of Amsterdam) *Lost and becoming: A study of contemporary Chinese cultural and artistic products with historical longing.* Supervisors: Professor Kati Roettger and Dr Jeroen de

Kloet. Yang Yang used empirical analysis and a theoretical framework to discuss how China's struggle with modernity is reflected in the cultural field, using examples from a wide array of cultural expressions, including pop music, cinema and contemporary art. Yang Yang skilfully links 'Western' and 'Eastern' philosophy, and ultimately questions the alleged rise of a superpower. The combination of sources, and theoretical framework drawing on the work of, among others, Gilles Deleuze, makes this a truly remarkable thesis.

And the Winner is...

Jurre van der Meer (Leiden University) *In search of a style: From Kusamakura to Shanshiro: the strategic behaviour of Natsume Soseki within the construction of the modern Japanese literary field.* Supervisor: Professor Ivo Smits. Van der Meer's dissertation explores the phenomenon of change in literary style between two major works by Japan's famous novelist from the Meiji Period, Natsume Soseki. By doing so, in true Bourdieusian tradition, Van der Meer is able to uncover the writer's hidden strategy aimed towards securing his position in the socio-literary field, beyond traditional literary and academic circles. This is a remarkable research exercise, on a period rich in nuances and complexities. The research's strength also stems from its comparativeness between literary genres, between micro-periods within the Meiji era, but also between literary and intellectual trends in Japan, China and Europe. This is a complete piece of academic work.

Jurre van der Meer has been awarded the title of Best MA Thesis in Asian Studies, and a three-month fellowship at the IIAS.

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
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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 readings of ‘Japanese contemporary art’ in order to establish various models for transculturality in contemporary art.

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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.

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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
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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
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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
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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
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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
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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:
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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:
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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
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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.



Hikaru Sugawara
The Dutch
Utilitarian

MY MAIN RESEARCH OBJECT has been Nishi Amane (1829-97) who was one of the major philosophers of modern Japan. He and Tsuda Mamichi were the first two Japanese government-financed students to study in a Western country. They studied under Prof. Simon Vissering at Leiden University in the 1860s.

The Netherlands was the only Western country that Japan had formal relations with during the Edo period (1600-1867). All studies of Western science, law, politics and technology in Japan during this period were carried out in the Dutch language. Though the Dutch influence on modern-ization has often been overlooked since 1868, as my IIAS colleague Dr. Ookubo has clarified in his works, the Netherlands is still important for investigating the modernization of Japan.

As an IIAS fellow, I have been examining how Dutch academics influenced the political thought of Nishi Amane. My research has focused on his studies in the Netherlands and the relationship between his studies and his Confucian background. In general, desire and private interest are viewed upon with disdain in Confucianism, yet he emphasized the doctrine of Utilitarianism in his introduction of Western philosophy to Japan. Nishi saw Utilitarianism as the ideal philosophy and introduced it to Japan with zeal. What were his reasons to do so?



Hew Wai Weng
Translocal and
Cosmopolitan Islam

MY CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECT at IIAS, 'Translocal and Cosmopolitan Islam: Chinese-style Mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia', is a comparative study of Chinese-style mosques in Malaysia and Indonesia, set within their political and social contexts. Two main questions that drive this research are: 1) To what extent do Chinese-style mosques promote inclusive and cosmopolitan Islam? 2) What are the translocal connections and local dynamics that make the establishment of Chinese-style mosques possible?

Since the collapse of the Suharto regime, at least five Chinese-style mosques have been built across Indonesia. The first one is the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya; its 'temple-like' architectural design is inspired by an old mosque in Beijing, even

As I clarified in my book, one reason is the influence of Ogyu Sorai, who was the greatest Confucian in seventeenth century Japan. Ogyu thought that Confucianism was a philosophy that told rulers how to govern the country and how to lead people so they could have comfortable lives. Under Ogyu's influence, Nishi came to view Utilitarianism not as a measure of private conduct, but as a public philosophy. Robert E. Goddin wrote *Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy* in 1995 – Nishi already understood Utilitarianism in the same way that Goddin would later come to do. Moreover, I think it is possible that his Utilitarian view was influenced by his studies in Leiden. To examine this, I have investigated the influence of Simon Vissering and C.W. Opzoomer on Nishi Amane. Nishi regarded Opzoomer as the greatest philosopher of late nineteenth century Netherlands and avidly studied his works while in the Netherlands. However, so far, I have been unable to find clear sources to corroborate my hypothesis.

Incidentally, Nishi was a great gourmet. He loved food very much and often organized dinner parties in his home. He especially enjoyed trying rare dishes, and would, with his family, visit newly opened Western restaurants as soon as he could. It was also obvious that he drank beer for the first time on the ship bringing him to the Netherlands – and he loved it. He must have enjoyed Dutch food and Dutch beer during his stay. I too enjoy Dutch food, Dutch beer and Leiden life very much.

as its activities are reconfigured within the local context. With the support of both Chinese and Muslim organizations in Surabaya, the mosque was established to declare that there can be a Chinese way of being Muslim and to reassure people that Indonesian Islam is tolerant of various cultural traditions. Given that Chinese Muslim identities in Indonesia are diverse and fluid, the construction of Chinese-style mosque is important in manifesting and preserving their cultural identities, as the materiality and tangibility of mosques makes Chinese Muslim culture unequivocally 'real' and 'enduring', at least symbolically.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the combination of a state-controlled Islamic bureaucracy and an ethnicized Islam that equates

Malays with Muslims has discouraged the establishment of Chinese-style mosques, and even rejected it in some cases. Yet, recently, there are some positive developments, witnessed by the construction of the Beijing Mosque in Kelantan and the proposal of the MACMA (Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association) Mosque in Kuala Lumpur. The Kelantan state government, led by the Islamist PAS, initiated and funded the establishment of the Beijing Mosque for at least three reasons. First, the mosque fits well with the PAS motto – 'PAS for all' – reflecting how the Islamist party respects different cultural expressions and ethnic identities. Second, it could help to promote tourism in Kelantan, as well as provide the state government a niche to build business networks with mainland China. Third, the mosque is a subtle way of preaching Islam to non-Muslim Chinese, showing that Islam is a universal religion.

My research will also explore two broader issues. First, it examines the discourse and practice of Islamic pluralism in both Malaysia and Indonesia, by examining the recent development of mosque architectures. Second, it investigates the possibility of 'Chinese Muslim diaspora', represented by the cultivation of ties of Chinese Muslims in Southeast Asia to Hui Muslims in China, the promotion of the role of Admiral Zheng He in Islamic propagation, and the building of Chinese-style mosques in both countries.

I greatly appreciate being awarded a five-month postdoctoral fellowship at the IIAS in Leiden, as I now have access to the rich library collections and archival materials of the KILTV and Leiden University, as well as have ample opportunity to discuss my research findings with scholars and students in the Netherlands.
(hewwaiweng@gmail.com)



Saraju Rath
Indian Manuscripts in the Netherlands:
from forgotten treasures to accessible archives

INDIAN AND SOUTH ASIAN MANUSCRIPTS, giving access to knowledge systems that developed over several millennia, are rich reservoirs of idea-diversity. In times of intense cultural, social and scientific transformation such reservoirs are as important as reservoirs of bio-diversity are in times of ecological transformation. On account of the relationship, which the Netherlands and Dutch individuals have maintained with the Indian world (to which we now refer as South Asia), especially since the seventeenth century, a number of these manuscripts found their way to library and museum collections in the Netherlands, such as: the Library of the University of Leiden (including the former Library of the Institute Kern), Library of the University of Utrecht and various private collections in the Netherlands. However, they regrettably never received the attention they deserved, both from the point of view of the Netherlands – India (and South Asia) relationship, and with regards to the scientific and cultural value of these manuscripts.

Because their valuation, appreciation and use depend on rare expertise and because they are relatively small in number and dispersed throughout several institutions, my present study is focused on their history, their original use, and the manner in which they found their way to the Netherlands. The International Institute for Asian Studies provides a suitable research atmosphere,

and facilitates my access to ancient palm-leaf manuscripts collected from India, and several allied documents from special collections of libraries and museums in Leiden and neighbouring cities. Moreover, it is more inspiring to have good interactive discussions and an exchange of innovative research ideas with international visiting scholars and colleagues from different disciplines.

I must admire the cooperation of the staff and colleagues and strongly appreciate my working environment of the past several years during my affiliation at IIAS, because of which I could successfully complete a five-year long manuscript project in 2009 (funded by the J. Gonda foundation), which resulted in the discovery of almost two hundred new texts in the van Manen collection of palm-leaf manuscripts (a complete list is online <http://www.iias.nl/profile/saraju-rath> and a book is in progress). I could also work on a five-month project on "A comparative study of Indian scripts with Zhangzhung script", which was part of the NWO project "The three pillars of Bön: Doctrine, location, and founder" (coordinated by Dr. Henk Blezer). Moreover, as convenor, I could bring out a volume on *Aspects of Manuscript Culture in South India* (ed.), publisher: E.J.Brill (Leiden), as an output of the IIAS seminar on "Production, distribution and collection of Sanskrit manuscripts in Ancient South India 2007". (s.rath@iias.nl)

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.

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.

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.

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

China of bronze and gold: The Dong Bo Zhai collection

The remarkable Dong Bo Zhai Collection, brought together by a Chinese business man from Hong Kong, covers three emblematic fields of the Chinese cultural heritage. Discussed here are the important archaic bronzes reflecting the evolution of these remarkable sumptuary vessels, from the Shang (circa 1550-1050 BC) to the Han dynasty (206 BC-221 AD), and an ensemble of worked gold presenting a panorama of imperial wares and gold jewellery from the 13th to the 18th century. The collection also includes a white marble statue of the Buddha, which still bears traces of coloured paint, exemplifying the heights achieved in Buddhist sculpture in the 6th century.

Monique Crick

The Dong Bo Zhai Collection

Loan exhibition at the Baur Foundation, Geneva
Until 1 April 2012

THREE OF THE TEMPORARY EXHIBITION ROOMS are devoted to the ritual bronzes. Thanks to an abundance of raw materials, a highly original form of bronze casting developed in ancient China, and was to dominate the arts for over a millennium. The worship of the royal ancestors was an important component of the religious and political activities of state, and bronze vessels, as well as jade, were the symbols and attributes of power. Limited to the aristocratic elite, bronze vessels were used to present offerings of food and water as well as libations of alcoholic drinks. The formation of an early state in China and the discovery of bronze metallurgy are traditionally dated to the mythical Xia dynasty (c. 2070-1600 BC), today tentatively identified with the Erlitou culture, located in the north of the country, near Luoyang (Henan). The Shang dynasty (c. 1550-1050 BC), which followed, is divided into two periods, distinguished by the shape and decor of its bronzes: the Erligang culture (c. 1500-1300 BC) and the Yinxu phase, at Anyang (c. 1300-1050 BC). The earliest works of art in the Dong Bo Zhai collection date from the last phase and include vessels for holding or offering alcoholic drinks, *you*, *gu*, *jue*, *jia* (fig. 1) and for offering food, *ding* and *fangding*. The ritual vessels are decorated with relief lines of stylised zoomorphic ornaments, which become denser and more vigorous towards the end of the period. Among these are a mythical beasts known as *taotie*, shown as a frontal animal mask with large, raised eyes, *kui* dragons, cicadas, birds and other animals, often placed on a background of square spirals (*leiwen*). Many of these vessels bear simple inscriptions indicating the clan name of their owner.

Towards the middle of the 11th century BC, the Zhou overthrew the Shang and founded their own dynasty, with its capital located near the present-day city of Xi'an. For a century, the bronze vessels retained the shapes and motifs of their Shang models. Inscriptions now became longer and frequently commemorated non-ritual events such as military campaigns or royal gifts. Important changes are apparent in the bronzes of the middle (975-875 BC) and final (late 9th-early 8th BC) periods, which are more massive, with high relief ornaments. Vessels for offerings of food become more numerous, while the earlier *jiao*, *jia* and *gu* drinking vessels disappear almost completely. Treated in a stylised manner, a variety of animal-based motifs intermingle with geometric designs as the tendency towards increased abstraction gains momentum. The *taotie* mask loses its dominant position and frequently gives way to crested birds and dragons.

In 771, driven from their homeland by a nomadic group sweeping down from the North-Western steppes, the considerably weakened Zhou abandoned their ancestral temples, thus losing their legitimacy among their vassals, and set up a new capital further east, at Luoyang. As the Zhou feudal system broke down, rivalry between clans led to incessant warfare and the formation of a multistate system with increasingly regional ties. Gradually, the larger states annexed their weaker neighbours, even declaring their independence from the Zhou. During this period known as the Spring and Autumn Period, or *Chunqiu* (770-481 BC), bronze vessels slowly lost their previous religious function to become symbols of local aristocratic wealth. Of the ornaments inherited from the Western Zhou, the dragon became a major source of inspiration, and was reinterpreted in a variety of stylised forms, including a complex interlace of serpentine

bodies. From the 7th century on, several distinct regional styles developed. The bronzes often take on extravagant forms, with a richly textured surface effect created by raised decorative elements, characteristic of those regions that fell under the influence of the great state of Chu. Intended mainly for burial purposes, some bronzes were low-quality replicas (*mingqi*) of the vessels used in temples and showed little originality in design as shown by the almost complete contents of a tomb from Southern China, dated to the 6th-5th century BC.

From the middle of the 5th century BC, seven major political centres emerged in China. This marked the beginning of a new era, called the Warring States Period, or *Zhanguo* (481-221 BC), during which conflicts grew in intensity due to the use of iron weapons and crossbows. Despite the political instability, the rival courts made an ostentatious display of their wealth. Bell chimes were played during official banquets or ceremonies held in honour of the ancestors (fig. 2). The southern culture of Chu was to maintain a distinct identity well into the Western Han dynasty (206 BC-9 AD) and was also an important production centre for lacquered wooden sculpture and vessels. These would in turn inspire new designs for bronzes, frequently decorated with inlaid stones and metal – turquoise, malachite, gold, and silver – thus producing new chromatic effects, which lasted all through the Western Han dynasty (206 BC-9 AD). The country's political expansion and the opening of the Silk Roads also stimulated a taste for the exotic, and encouraged the development of a sophisticated and luxurious court art (fig. 3).

The great originality of the Dong Bo Zhai Collection is that it includes exceptional examples of luxury ware and gold adornments, dating from the Southern Song (1127-1279) to the Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, presented in the last exhibition room. In ancient China, gold was mainly used for ornaments before becoming a sign of wealth from 6th century BC onwards. The first gold vessels did not appear until the Warring States period (481-221 BC), and utilitarian objects made of or decorated with gold only became more common in the Eastern Han (25-220 AD), reaching a highpoint in the Tang dynasty (618-907). From the Song dynasty (960-1279) on, the use of gold and silver ware spread both geographically and socially. Gold wares remained the prerogative of the imperial family and high dignitaries. Dishes and bowls took on lobed, floral shapes, and the calligraphic fluidity of the incised or *repoussé* decoration reflects the sophisticated taste of the scholar. Under the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), large quantities of gold and silver ware in a variety of shapes and designs inspired by Song styles were used at court, but these pieces, probably recycled later, have only rarely survived to this day. During the Chinese Ming dynasty (1368-1644), gold became one of the most prestigious materials alongside jade and silk, as well as an important symbol of rank and wealth. Gold was the favourite metal used for the jewellery of the aristocracy (fig. 4). The use of gold vessels was reserved for the emperor and his family (fig. 5). A new taste for rich and colourful decoration encouraged the widespread use of inlaid stones, such as diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, amethysts, and opals, as well as pearls and jade. Several of the pieces of the Dong Bo Zhai collection belonged to the same tomb and bear inscriptions dating to the year 1601, to the reign of Emperor Wanli (1573-1620). Many of these were made in gold filigree (fig. 6), a technique originally intended for the aristocracy but which was also much appreciated by the European courts.



1.

2.

3.

1: *Jia*, cup for alcoholic drink Bronze. H. 25.07 cm. Shang dynasty, end of Anyang period (c. 1300-1050 BC).
2: Nine bells from a twelve bell bianzhong chime. Bronze. Warring States period (481-221 BC).

3: Wine jar Gilt bronze, inlaid with silver and stones H. 39.4 cm. Western Han dynasty (206 av. J.-C.-9 ap. J.-C.).



4.



5.

6.

4: Detail of hairpin decorated with five-clawed dragon Gold and rubies. Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Wanli (1573-1620) period.
5: Ewer Gold, jade and rubies H. 20.5 cm Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Wanli (1573-1620)

mark and period Inscription dated 1601.
6: Detail of flower basket Gold and rubies. Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Wanli (1573-1620) mark and period Inscription dated 1601.

The Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art, is a private museum housed in an elegant late 19th century town house in Geneva. The collections comprise some 9000 Chinese and Japanese art objects. Acquired by the Swiss collector Alfred Baur (1865-1951) over a period of some 45 years, these works of art include Chinese jades, snuff bottles and imperial ceramic ware from the 8th to the 19th centuries, as well as Japanese prints, lacquer, ceramics, netsuke and sword fittings. Since 1995, several donations have further enriched the museum's holdings. (<http://www.fondation-baur.ch>)