



IIAS

International Institute
for Asian Studies

theNewsletter

Encouraging knowledge and enhancing the study of Asia



76
Artistic
Alternatives
in East Asia

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE examines the artistic and creative practices emerging in East Asia and how they are gaining prominent status, not only in the art scene, but in society as a whole. Rather than mirroring social transformations, these groundbreaking practices initiate thought-provoking alternatives for both art and life. They have become instrumental for bringing forward new subjectivities and reshaping the intrinsic values of social and cultural well-being.

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The Focus

Artistic Alternatives in East Asia

29-30 Introduction by Minna Valjakka

This special issue examines the artistic and creative practices emerging in East Asia and how they are gaining prominent status, not only in the art scene, but in society as a whole. Rather than mirroring social transformations, these groundbreaking practices initiate thought-provoking alternatives for both art and life. They have become instrumental for bringing forward new subjectivities and reshaping the intrinsic values of social and cultural well-being.

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Meiqin Wang discusses the work of a number of contemporary Chinese artists who address the problem of waste in relation to the social and environmental downsides brought about by China's rampant urbanization and consumerism.

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By taking the case of the *Dongdaemun Rooftop Paradise*, a community-engaged, collaborative, and collective art practice in Seoul, **Hong Kal** explores how artists seek to intervene in the hegemonic politics of spectacles in urban redevelopment and what kind of space is imagined to become a 'paradise' within the unjust city.

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Xi Jinping's 'China Dream' finds its materialization in Beijing in speedy ring roads, fancy buildings designed by starchitects, and green parks. This dream is quite firmly located within the fifth ring road. As shown in this article by **Jeroen de Kloet and Deng Liwen**, the art of Ma Lijiao intervenes, challenges and interrupts such dreams.

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Bigotry and nationalism are rife in Japan's digital-media dominated landscape. What methods are needed to achieve suitable media literacy in the 21st century? **Shin Mizukoshi** presents the case for 'digital storytelling' as one promising method. This article examines the possibilities of people's story-interweaving activities.

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Even though 'hacking' the urban infrastructure may also cause conflicts, new agencies and strategies of urban creativity have a growing ability to raise awareness of socio-political issues. Two case studies presented by **Minna Valjakka** show how the provocation of contradictory views can initiate new subjectivities and ways to employ the public space.



Wang Jiuliang, one piece from *Beijing Besieged by Waste*, 2009, photography. Courtesy of Wang Jiuliang. See pages 32-33.

Developing sustained collaborations

I was recently asked to reflect on IIAS's collaborative and partnership philosophy. I take the opportunity of this tribune to elaborate on the subject, especially as my attention and that of many of my colleagues is currently focused on two ongoing major initiatives: our new humanistic pedagogical programme 'Humanities Across Borders, Asia and Africa in the World', and the tenth edition of ICAS in Chiang Mai next July.

Philippe Peycam

I SEE ACADEMIC collaborations and partnerships as primarily a civic effort that should be built around intellectual dialogues and interactions, involving different segments of knowledge in society in a closely connected world. Ideally, they should be framed around inclusive institutions and programmes that ought to act as bridges or facilitators with the capacity to focus on open methodological and intellectual perspectives, beyond the mere promotion of narrowly defined disciplinary projects or of individual or institutional trajectories.

The adventure and success of IIAS as a local-global connector has comforted me in the idea that there is a need for a kind of civic-minded institution that is not only capable of countering a trend towards fragmentation and marginalization currently affecting humanistic scholarship (under the prevailing neo-liberal model). The need is also to critically address contemporary-related issues to be framed

in their historical and geographical ecologies, through interdisciplinary, local-global collaborative engagements. Such institutions should ideally draw from trans-regional networks of scholars and organizations from both the South and the North. An inclusive intercultural platform is a good alternative to an academic tradition built on the definition of segmented knowledge 'areas', with the risk of confinement of 'studies' in narrow epistemological boundaries.

IIAS stands as an academic 'public service' born during a still recent era in Europe when notions of public good and solidarity stood above those of outright competition between institutions and people(s). It aims to serve as a bridge between different intellectual and cultural traditions and between what are deemed 'high knowledges' and more 'popular' or 'vernacular' ones. Closely connected to a historic academic institution, the University of Leiden, yet operating autonomously from it, IIAS concomitantly supports research, teaching and social policy engagements in ways that transcend disciplinary, institutionally or geographically segmented 'area studies'.

IIAS operates a number of initiatives under each of its inter-disciplinary thematic clusters ('Heritage and Culture', 'Urbanization', 'Asia in the World'): a double-degree program in critical heritage, the multi-sector platform Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), the facilitation of inclusive Africa-Asia and Latin-America 'axes of knowledge', and the new Mellon-supported trans-regional pedagogical initiative, 'Humanities Across Borders'. Each of these initiatives seeks to experiment with new dialogical forms with outcomes not restricted to the quantifiable delivery of publications or taught courses, but rather, to the incubation of organically framed academic 'deliverables' likely to take shape in consonance with local contexts and needs.

To do so, the Institute supports a range of signature methodological 'services', each aimed at a broadly defined Asia Studies community: the widely (and freely) disseminated resource periodical 'The Newsletter' (50,000 readers); the

International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) with its multi-format activities, its five-language book prizes and its global governance; the Institute's Summer/Winter *in situ* masterclasses – a model also applied to IIAS's local-policy applied events. The synergies built between IIAS's multiple activities contribute to its programmatic coherence. They explain the rather considerable global role IIAS commands in relation to its actual size (16 staff members only).

Beyond the organizational setting, building lasting partnerships and collaborations requires a sense of an overarching purpose. In its operations, the Institute is often asked to facilitate interactions between academic and intellectual communities, particularly in societies where formal higher education is neither as established nor institutionalized as in 'northern' regions, but where unexploited forms of creative intellectual, artistic and pedagogical agencies often thrive outside universities. IIAS's role as a civic academic facilitator allows it to support a collective strategy, for instance for the development of a local museum (Eastern Nusa Tenggara, 2012; Delhi, 2016), or for the revitalization of an urban area (Taipei, 2012; Yangon, Macau, 2014), or a cultural and social tradition (Pingyao, 2015).

Our institute operates *in and beyond* traditional academic circles, involving different actors as co-producers of knowledge: artists, urban planners, architects, craftsmen/women and other practitioners of 'embodied knowledge'. It also seeks a sustained dialogue with hard scientists, policy makers, public intellectuals, civic actors and other 'social educators'. The extended humanistic pedagogy supported by the 'Humanities Across Borders' new programme or the civil society-sensitive ICAS events, in Africa, Latin America and soon at the upcoming ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, are expressions of the Institute's versatility as a truly global platform for Connected Knowledge.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

Distinction for Secretary of the International Convention of Asia Scholars

HIS MAJESTY King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has named Dr Paul van der Velde, Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau. The Commissioner of the King in the Province of Zeeland awarded Van der Velde the decoration during a ceremony on 5 November 2016, in Middelburg.

Van der Velde receives the distinction for his exceptional services during his working life and for his societal side activities benefitting society in general. Amongst other things he actively promoted a better position for historians in society



and was co-founder of the *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, a periodical reporting on history in a journalistic way. He played a major role in the establishment of the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the foundation of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS). He founded the ICAS Book Prize, which over the years has become one of the most prestigious prizes in the field of Asian Studies. At a regional level he was, for more than 25 years, editor-in-chief of the *Zeeuws Tijdschrift*, a periodical sparking debates on many issues relevant to the province of Zeeland. He also founded the Zeeland Book Prize.

ICAS 10 The 10th International Convention of Asia Scholars

20-23 July 2017
Chiang Mai, Thailand

Experts in the field of Asian Studies will meet in the delightful Northern Thai city of Chiang Mai. Events will include: panels and roundtable discussions, keynote speeches, and the first ICAS Asian Studies Book Fair. Enjoy the multitude of networking opportunities, possibilities to share your research and to meet with academic institutes and publishers

www.icas.asia/icas10

Register, reserve your exhibition booth or advertise at ICAS 10
*register before 1 April to benefit from the early bird rate

IIAS International Institute for Asian Studies

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 periodical published 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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Southeast Asian film festivals



The start of this millennium has arguably seen a marked renaissance in the various national cinemas of Southeast Asia. The past few years have even brought a rise in production in the long moribund Cambodian film sector, and the beginnings of a filmmaking community in Laos, which has never had a film industry to speak of. The regionally-oriented film festival has emerged as a crucial factor in this broader resurgence not only of production but of local film cultures – in contexts where, in many instances, State or institutional support for film is lackluster.

Adam Knee

SOUTH KOREA'S Busan International Film Festival, held annually (as are most all of the festivals discussed here) in early October, easily takes the mantle of Asia's premier festival, in terms of its not just regional but global recognition and visibility, the volume and quality of its offerings (in both world cinema and Asian cinema, including many premieres), and the range of its programs to encourage film production in the broader Asian region. The festival often spotlights Southeast Asian films and artists, and such programs as the Festival's Asian Film Academy and Asian Cinema Fund have provided vital mentoring and funding for emerging filmmakers from across Asia who in many instances cannot find such support in their home countries. Late October brings another major Asian festival with a partially regional (including Southeast Asian) emphasis, the Tokyo International Film Festival; although not as large or comprehensive in its programs as Busan, it does aim to support developing

regional filmmakers for example through its 'Asian Future Film Award', given each year to a promising director from the region.

Another important Asian festival in this regard is the Hong Kong International Film Festival, a large-scale event founded in 1977, which usually screens more than 200 films in March to April of each year. The festival has developed a dual focus on world cinema and Asian cinema (mostly from Hong Kong, mainland China, and Japan, but with an occasional program highlighting a Southeast Asian nation); and it also facilitates Hong Kong co-production for films from across the region through its affiliated Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum, an event in which a number of Southeast Asian filmmakers have participated over the years.

Yet while the global exposure (and support) offered through such festivals as these, as well as (for a successful few Southeast Asian filmmakers) such top Western festivals as those in Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam and Toronto, can offer a major career boost, they do not do very much for developing the film culture in the respective filmmakers' home countries, nor, in most cases, is there much targeted support for developing local Southeast Asian production – and it is in these areas that film festivals in and of the region can serve crucial functions. As Singapore International Film Festival Executive Director Yuni Hadi describes it, "We've seen our Southeast Asian filmmakers such as Lav Diaz (Philippines), Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Thailand), and most recently Anthony Chen and Boo Junfeng (Singapore) winning top awards at some of the best festivals in the world which helps put the spotlight on us, but it's also very important to have our own film festivals to lead and not just to follow."

A number of locally based festivals have developed to meet these local needs, while also publicizing local and regional production to a larger international audience, although they vary considerably in scale and robustness, often owing in no small part to a dearth of local funds to sustain them. Examples include the Hanoi International Film Festival (founded in 2010), the World Film Festival of Bangkok (begun in 2003), the Jogja-Netpac Asian Film Festival (in Yogyakarta, from 2006), the Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival (begun in 2005, in Manila), and the Cambodia International Film Festival (which started in Phnom Penh in 2010, but which had its 2016 (7th) edition postponed until March of the following year).

The model: Singapore

The Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF, which had its first edition back in 1987) and the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF, launched in 2010, in Laos) might appear to be at opposite ends of the Southeast Asian film festival spectrum, in terms of not only number of years in operation but also scale and approach, and yet a brief comparative look at the emphases of their 2016 editions (occurring in overlapping periods in late November to early December) highlights many shared central aims for such festivals. Undoubtedly the best known of Southeast Asia's festivals, the SGIFF was long seen as exemplary for its promotion of film in the region and in fact the renowned Busan festival took the SGIFF as a model for its own development. And yet, even so established a festival as SGIFF recently ran into difficulties – a fact which testifies to the precariousness of support for local film cultures in the region, though certainly owing in part to internal struggles unique to itself. After a somewhat uneven 2011 event and a two-year hiatus, the festival came back strongly under new leadership in 2014 and has continued as a significant force in the two years since.¹

Naturally one of the key aims of the SGIFF is to bring a wide array of films that otherwise might not be readily accessible to an audience composed both of local filmgoers and interested tourists and, given the festival's high profile, many international critics and members of the industry as well. That international audience was fostered in 2016 with the SGIFF's scheduling simultaneously with (and technically as a component part of) the Singapore Media Festival, a government sponsored industry event now in its third year with presentations and workshops on various media production and distribution trends within the region, as well as a market for sales of television and film productions. The SGIFF screened upwards of 160 films in this edition, in a variety of venues mostly in the central area of the city-state, including the newly renovated 1930 landmark Capital Theatre, local commercial cinemas, and the theaters of such cultural institutions as the National Museum of Singapore and the recently opened National Gallery Singapore.

This year's screenings included a 'Cinema Today' section with films from across Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific; a program highlighting themes of hybridity in Latin-American cinema; and a special sidebar on Estonian animation. But the overwhelming emphasis was on Asian cinema, starting from the opening night red carpet gala screening (at the Marina

Above: Nighttime screening at Luang Prabang's Handicraft Market. Photo courtesy of LPFF.

Bay Sands) of Malaysian director Dain Said's thriller *Interchange*. As Hadi explains, "The challenge in Southeast Asia is that our independent films often do well at international film festivals and then return home where it can be difficult to find an audience. The irony is that in many cases, the filmmaker is making the film for his or her own people. That's why Asian-based film festivals and other alternative film spaces are important for giving these films exposure and also, where possible, putting them into context through dialogue sessions with the audience." The 2016 SGIFF indeed put this into practice by having filmmakers and actors present at the screenings in many cases, to take questions from audience members immediately afterwards. Asian screening programs (of mostly fiction films, with a smattering of documentaries) included an Asian Feature Film Competition, a Southeast Asian Shorts Competition, a Singapore Panorama, a series of newly restored regional classics, and tributes to Japanese director Naomi Kawase and Hong Kong director Fruit Chan. The screenings emphasized the innovative art films one might expect at a festival, but also featured a healthy sampling of commercially-oriented genre films, in order (as Programme Director Wenjie Zhang explained) to fully reflect the diversity of production from the region.

As important to the festival as giving local exposure for Asian cinema of all varieties is the goal of fostering further, innovative film production within the region. This goal is approached through such programs as short masterclass sessions (open to public registration) with well-known Asian film directors, and panel discussions on such practical topics as (at the 2016 edition) seeking distribution in the present-day environment, working with actors, developing one's screenplay, and using virtual reality tools. The SGIFF also organized two more extended development programs with local educational institutions: the Southeast Asian Film Lab, a week-long intensive workshop with established filmmaking mentors (held at LASALLE College of the Arts) for Southeast Asian filmmakers preparing to shoot their first feature films; and the Youth Jury & Critics Programme, a month-long series of workshops by professionals in the field for a group of developing young critics, mounted in conjunction with Nanyang Technological University.

The new blood: Luang Prabang

Back in 2010, Laos might have seemed a very unlikely place to start a film festival aiming to attract an international audience, given that only the faintest glimmer of a local production scene was evident in the country at that time. But it was precisely because of an evident lack of ways for a local film culture to develop there that it seemed to Gabriel Kuperman – an American with a background in media production and programming – that a film festival in Laos would offer many benefits to the community. Kuperman's aims in founding the film festival in the popular tourist haven of Luang Prabang, therefore, were to provide an outlet to screen and publicize the bit of local production that was being done; to provide a space where Laotian and other Southeast Asian filmmakers and producers could interact, exchange ideas and information, and develop regionally-based projects; and also to provide local Luang Prabang (and tourist) audiences an opportunity to see the latest films coming out of the immediate region.

Some seven editions of the Luang Prabang Film Festival later, Kuperman still serves as its director, and it has developed as a major and much anticipated annual event for the town,



Above: Bitcoin Heist Film Screening. Photo: 27th SGIFF & Fong Sue May.

Below: Simon Yam In Conversation. Photo: 27th SGIFF & Paolo Ty.

gaining support over the years not only from the Lao government but also from a variety of corporate and NGO sponsors. Part of the LPFF's distinctiveness, arising from its regionally specific aims, is in focusing solely on Southeast Asian film (taken to include not only films by Southeast Asian makers, but also films shot in the region); Kuperman indicates that this is the only major annual international-profile film festival that focuses exclusively on the region. Although on a much smaller scale than the SGIFF, in 2016 showing a total of 32 feature films (a slight increase over the past) along with a selection of shorts, the LPFF has its own distinctive challenges owing to its atypical setting. Perhaps most obviously, there has been the problem of a lack of any functioning film theater in the town. This was overcome most significantly by utilizing outdoor projection (appropriately, a Southeast Asian tradition) for the main nighttime screenings, which are free to the public and held in a historic, UNESCO-renovated market in the center of town – a market which has become the LPFF's signature space (and the moveable plastic chairs that are used are now incorporated into the festival's logo). For 2016, daytime screenings and events were held on the grounds of the five-star Sofitel Luang Prabang (a converted colonial governor's residence), with feature screenings in one outbuilding with a maximum capacity of 100 viewers, an on-going selection of short films in another outbuilding, and public forums on film-related topics held on the garden lawn in between the two.

The obvious downside here is that the LPFF naturally does not offer the kind of technologically high-end screening experience some film purists would prefer. But the very significant upside (in addition to the huge public reach of the nighttime screenings, with an estimated 20,000 people present over the course of the week) is the unusually intimate scale

of the daytime events, with filmmakers present at a majority of the screenings and available for extended discussions and interactions with audience members. This level of consistent and direct access to the filmmakers is rare for any film festival, and goes a long way to contributing to the LPFF's goal of fostering connections and synergy among film artists and producers from the region. Thus, although Kuperman was quite pleased with an increase in international attendees in 2016 (evident in part in the need to turn people away from quite a few 'full houses' during the daytime screenings), he is wary of making the festival much larger, lest the intimate scale be lost.

As with the SGIFF, one of the goals, besides providing exposure for local film, is to provide support and assistance for local budding filmmakers. In 2016, this came in part through public forums and discussions with experts on such topics as pitching projects, distribution through 'Video on Demand' platforms, and the work of national film commissions. A selected group of young regional filmmakers were also invited to participate in a 'Talent Lab' led by New York's well-known Tribeca Film Institute, with a top project from the group subsequently invited to participate in the Tribeca Film Institute Network Market in New York in 2017.

As to the feature films screened in 2016, these comprised a lively mix of contemporary and innovative fiction films and documentaries (with quite a few on controversial topics), chosen by a group of 'Motion Picture Ambassadors'—film critics and producers from the region who make the picks for their respective home countries. Each year there is a special focus on one particular Southeast Asian country's industry, and in 2016 the focus was on the Philippines, represented by such impressive films as *Apocalypse Child* (a drama about a surfing instructor rumored to have been fathered by a certain well-known American director when filming in the Philippines), *Haze* (which tells the story of the sad lives of a gang of street kids), and *Ma' Rosa* (again focused on the difficulties faced by the poor, a film from the well-known director Brillante Mendoza).

Mutual aims

While the LPFF and the SGIFF might appear quite different in scale and locale, then, the commonality of their aims is evident. Such events have become vital means for getting the word out about new trends in Southeast Asian production; providing access to local audiences for the broader range of film output; fostering a measure of local film culture; offering training and mentorship opportunities for budding filmmakers; and facilitating dialogue as well as actual collaborations among film artists, producers, and distributors across the region.

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References

- 1 For interested readers, more details of the SGIFF's track record promoting film in the region can be found in a short volume published on the occasion of the festival's 25th anniversary (in 2014): *Histories and Memories of the Singapore International Film Festival*, edited by Ben Slater.



Appropriating hybridized cultures: Recreating Peranakan culture in Jonker Street



Gentrification involves the conversion of dilapidated residences and areas into refurbished units and locales through an influx of residents with a higher earning power. In some cases, gentrified spaces facilitate the local tourism needs and generate income for local proprietors and businesses. Very often, gentrification conforms to a selective interpretation of local history, culture and traditions. It fits the dominant narrative generated by local elites, national policies and political cultures.

Tai Wei LIM

BOTH SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA opted for multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity to characterize their post-independence histories. Ethnicity, or what was known as ethnic chauvinism, was subordinated to the national project of constructing harmonious post-war societies. Therefore, cultural reconstruction, heritage gentrification and recreation of ethnic and racial identities are shaped by the worldview of multiculturalism and the idea of the Malayan Peninsula as a cultural melting pot simultaneous with the indigenization of a hybrid culture.

In Singapore's case, meritocracy and identification with Singapore's value system became more important than ethnic identification in terms of social mobility and community acceptance. In the case of Malaysia, the *bumiputra* policy determined the pre-eminence of Malays in the Malay-dominated societal fabric that accommodates the cultural and religious nuances of its Chinese and Indian minorities. Into this multi-ethnic and multicultural mix, an ambiguous zone emerged that cannot be neatly boxed or categorized into either Malay or Chinese (or Indian) culture. This is the narrative zone that hybrid cultures like the Peranakan cultures inhabit, where they thrive and construct a historical narrative of their origins. Like the historical narrative, contemporary interpretations of Peranakan culture can be found in gentrified shop-houses in Malacca's Jonker Street. Other recreations of Peranakan culture include restaurants, culinary cuisines and museums where both real and imagined images and artefacts of Peranakan culture are housed and curated. The gentrification of Mr Tan Kim Seng's house is complementary to the post-colonial reordering of ethnic identities in Malaysia.

As a form of hybrid culture, Peranakan culture enjoys a high level of acceptability because the culture can be simultaneously identified with Malay, Chinese and Western cultures. In other words, it carries the flavours of all three sources of influences found within Malaysia (Malay, Western and Chinese) and matches the narrative of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Malacca was one of the venues I selected to examine the reconstruction of Peranakan culture. Due to its World Heritage status, acquired in 2008, there are now stricter rules in place to conserve heritage buildings and assets. I also chose this site because, along with Penang and Singapore, they make up the Straits Settlements where large Peranakan communities are found – another term often used to describe this community is the 'Straits Chinese'. The Straits Settlements were originally created by the British colonial authorities for administrative convenience in managing the major port cities and trading centres in the Malayan Peninsula.

Hybridized cultures also complement the idea of revitalization through tourism made possible by the commodification of heritage artefacts. In the case of Malacca's Jonker Street, tourism is a major revenue generator for the World Heritage site and Peranakan culture is one of the main attractions of the town. Peranakan culture in Jonker Street can be divided into tangible and intangible assets. In terms of tangible assets, one can find elaborately decorated shop-houses, museum display pieces and private museums recreating Peranakan culture to attract both local and overseas tourists through colourful and elaborate beadwork, quaint artefacts, beautifully-decorated houses and anecdotal narratives of gilded lifestyles of

days past. The Peranakan museum that I visited was guided by an energetic lady who claims she has partial Peranakan heritage and who was fully-decked out in a Peranakan outfit. She peppered her tour narratives with a strong dose of humour and body language imitating Peranakan household matriarchs. Her narrative is a good example of intangible interpretation of heritage, not found in physical form but equally important for understanding Peranakan culture and community.

In conserving cultures and physical buildings, while complementing the dominant national political narrative and local cultures, it is important to recreate authenticity so that visitors can experience and visualize the hybridized lifestyle of the Peranakan community. Each physical display is carefully calibrated to demonstrate the multicultural components that make up the unique Peranakan culture. A good example is that of a Victorian-style glassware piece displaying Peranakan *kuéh* pieces. The visual impact of a British colonial-era lifestyle product consumed alongside Chinese Hokkien *kuéh*s and Malay coconut-flavoured pastries powerfully portrays the cosmopolitan makeup of Peranakan culture. The material artefacts may be dated back to the pre-modern era in Malacca, but the visual message that they convey is contemporary and conforms to the post-independent narrative of multiculturalism and multiracialism in Malaysia.

Authenticity is also visible when the gentrification process utilizes either restored architectural materials, or accurate replicas, in their construction projects. Common design elements found in Jonker Street shop-houses that reflect authenticity include green Shiwan tiles from China, Japanese-made gaudy Peranakan-style tiles with stylized designs, terracotta tiles for the roofs, gilded lacquered wood work panels from Fujian, etc. One of the private museums in Jonker Street also dresses their staff members in Peranakan outfits to recreate authentic experiences for visitors. The challenge for recreating authenticity of Peranakan culture is the inherent hybridized nature of the culture itself. Peranakan culture is the result of the cross-pollination of cultures found in the Malayan Peninsula and those introduced to the region by migrants from India and China as well as colonial governments. Gentrifiers, restorers, conservationists and other stakeholders in preserving the Peranakan heritage of Jonker Street need to carefully navigate the cosmopolitan nature of this hybridized culture.

Tai Wei LIM, Senior Lecturer, SIM University (UniSIM); Research Fellow adjunct, East Asian Institute (EAI) at National University of Singapore (NUS) (twlim@unisim.edu.sg).

Left: Chee Mansion. The tower of this mansion was once the tallest in Malacca. It was built by Chee Yam Chuan, a prominent Peranakan merchant whose ancestors were amongst those that came to Malacca in the 1700s. The mansion is a fine example of hybridized Dutch, Portuguese, English and Chinese influences.

Top right: A chic restaurant in Malacca refurbished to resemble a Chinese clan association. It now serves gourmet Peranakan food. Pristine preserved architectural spaces such as this can generate enough funds for continued maintenance. The building incorporates Shiwan tiles, Georgian columns and a painted bas-relief.

Below right: Ornate Peranakan-style tiles featuring stylized designs such as English country roses restored on a Peranakan shop-house in Jonker Street.

Islamic ideas versus secularism: The core of political competition in Indonesia

The implementation of sharia law in Indonesia has been increasing ever since democratization in 1998. The country's *Kompas* newspaper reported in August 2015 that there are currently 443 *peraturan daerah* (local regulations) related to Islamic law.¹ This growth of Islamic ideas in Indonesian politics challenges the secular ideology that the nation's foundation was based on, yet this Islamic challenge to secular Indonesia is not a new phenomenon; competition between Islamic and secular ideas has existed during every phase of the republic's development. In reality, this rivalry is at the core of Indonesian politics.

Wendy Andhika Prajuli

Islamic ideas and secularism in Indonesia's pre-independence

Islamic and secular philosophies have developed and competed in Indonesian politics since even before independence. In the pre-independence era, the idea of ruling the society based on Islamic teachings can be traced back to the *Padri* movement in Minangkabau, West Sumatra. This was a movement by Muslim clerics, who had recently returned from Mecca and wanted to impose sharia laws on Minangkabau society. This caused conflict with the nobility and the traditional chiefs who wanted to retain Minangkabau customs. The *Padri* movement was a non-political movement that focused on doctrinal and normative issues, such as *bid'ah* (innovation), polytheism, tomb veneration, correct attire, and the use of products made by non-Muslims.²

The first time that the dispute between Islamic and secular viewpoints turned into a political argument was on the issue of Sarekat Islam's (SI) organizational platform. In its early years, one of the SI's biggest problems was whether to change its organizational platform into an Islamic one or for it to remain open to accommodate the communist faction. This deliberation led to conflict between the leaders of SI Semarang, who were supporters of Communism, and other SI leaders, who were supporters of Islam. This political dispute concluded with the exclusion of all members of SI Semarang from the organization.³

Another disagreement concerned the notion of nationalism as the foundation of the republic. For Islamic leaders, such as Agus Salim, Mohammad Natsir, and Ahmad Hassan, nationalism was considered to be *jahiliyyah*,⁴ it threatened the Islamic concept of *Tawhid*,⁵ and would lead to chauvinism. Salim believed that Sukarno's idea of nationalism was chauvinistic and "enslaves man to the fatherland-idol, leads to competition and rivalry for the acquisition of wealth, honour and pride, to the suppression, enslavement and danger of the fatherland of others without regard to rights and justice."⁶ In contrast, Indonesian leaders such as Sukarno and Cipto Mangunkusumo, appreciated nationalism for its potential to gain independence, and for its ability to bring together in one nation, people from different ethnicities, holding diverse ideologies, with various faiths or religions. By the late 1930s, the Islamic group started to come around to the idea of nationalism as well.

Prior to the declaration of Indonesia's independence in 1945, another debate arose between the Islamic and the secular groups. The Islamic group rejected the then fifth principle of *Pancasila*,⁷ which was 'belief in God'. The reason for this was that "Islam was being treated as if it were no more important than any of Indonesia's other deist religions".⁸ The debate concluded with, firstly, the release of the Jakarta Charter that contained the statement: "belief in God with the obligation for adherents of Islam to carry out Islamic law". However, the Charter was never implemented because it was rejected by areas of Indonesia that were dominated by non-Muslims. Later, in 1968 as well as in the early 2000s, Muslim groups again attempted to apply the Jakarta Charter, but, on both occasions, its implementation failed due to insufficient support from others.⁹ The second and third conclusions of the debate were the change of 'God' into 'God almighty', and the switch of this newly-worded principle to be the first principle of *Pancasila*, rather than the fifth.

Islamic ideas and secularism after Independence

After the Declaration of Independence on 17 August 1945, conflicts between the two ideologies continued. In 1949 Kartosoewirjo, a Javanese Muslim, declared the establishment of a *Darul Islam* - or Islamic State - in West Java. It was his expression of disappointment over the Renville Agreement between Indonesian and Dutch leaders. After his declaration, Kartosoewirjo started to gain support from some local leaders. Amir Fatah of Central Java joined in 1950, while Kahar Muzakkar of South Sulawesi declared his affiliation in 1951. They were followed by Daud Beureuh of Aceh in 1953, and Ibnu Hadjar of South Kalimantan in 1954. In 1962, the government succeeded in crushing the movement.

Also during this era, Islamic and secular ideologies clashed between the nationalist and Islamist groups in the *Konstituante* (Indonesian Constitutional Assembly), with regard to the question of whether Islam or *Pancasila* should be the foundation of Indonesia. This led Sukarno to dissolve

the Assembly and establish guided democracy. In his guided democracy system, Sukarno tried to harmonize the conflict through *Nasakom* (*Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunisme* or Nationalism, Religion, and Communism). Unfortunately, he failed and the conflict between Islamists and secularists intensified, especially between the Indonesian Communist Party and *Nahdlatul Ulama*. The latter then entered into the anti-Communist movement, which culminated in one of Indonesia's biggest human tragedies.¹⁰

In the mid-60s Sukarno's administration fell and Suharto took over the presidency and thus power of the country. Suharto was aware of the political segregation in Indonesia, and decided to divide the Indonesian political parties into two camps, namely secular-nationalist and Islamic. During his administration, Suharto depoliticized Islam and applied pressure on the Islamic political movement. At that time, "any attempt by Muslim groups to attain that public political space was suspected and labelled as an anti-government act".¹¹ He also implemented a policy of *asas tunggal*, which determined that *Pancasila* would be the sole ideology of all organizations in Indonesia. Consequently, Islamic groups turned their focus from political to cultural movement.¹²

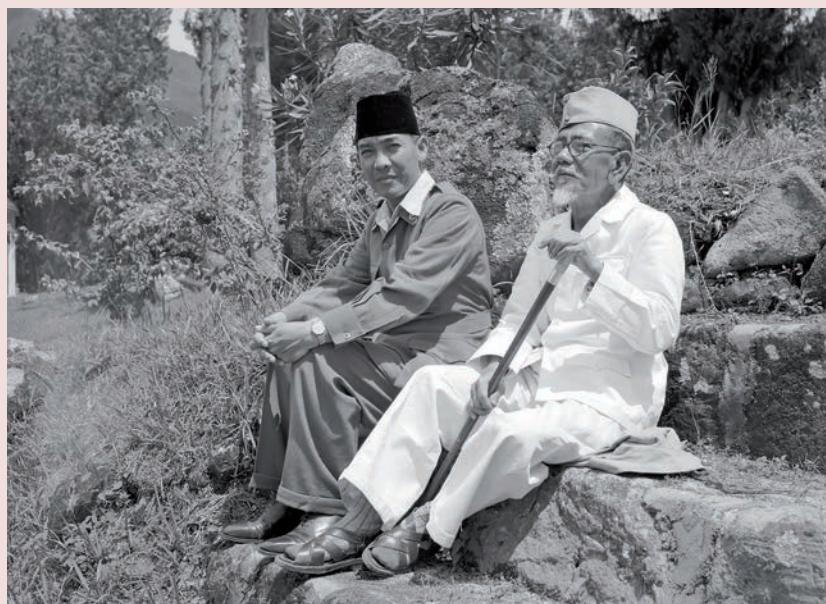
But then, from the early 1990s, Suharto loosened his policies towards Islam. In this period, he allowed more room for Islamic ideas, albeit only in non-political spaces. In addition, he supported the building of many new mosques, and the establishment of *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (ICMI) [Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals] as well as Islamic banking and insurance.¹³

Islamic principles and secularism in post-Suharto's authoritarianism

It was in the post-Suharto New Order period that Islamic ideas found their momentum. In 2002 and 2004, Muslim groups resurrected the Jakarta Charter during constitutional amendments; yet again, a lack of support thwarted their attempts. Despite this setback, the implementation of local sharia law increased. There are 422 local sharia laws in Indonesia; 40% are related to morality, 15% to faith, 9% to finance, 6% to education, 6% to attire, and 10% to various other issues. The province with the highest number of these regulations is West Java (86 regulations), followed by West Sumatra and South Kalimantan, with 54 and 38 regulations respectively.¹⁴

Pragmatist and normative are the characteristics of this current phenomenon. In the past, Indonesian Muslim leaders applied Islamic concepts idealistically, whereas the political elites nowadays use Islamic ideas more pragmatically. For example, they once promoted Islam as the foundation of the State, but now tend more to exploit those ideas to gain political support and power, seeing them as little more than political tools. Research by an Indonesian NGO reveals that Islamic ideas or issues are now used by political elites and government to improve their image and gain public trust, as well as to win elections. The use of Islamic ideology to gain popularity, and voters, has instigated an 'Islamisation race' between Islamic and non-religious parties.¹⁵

Below: President Soekarno and Hadji Agus Salim in 1949. Photo on Wikimedia Commons; from the 'Collectie van de Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen', <http://collectie.wereldculturen.nl>



Most of the Islamic notions that manifest themselves in local sharia law, as listed above, refer to normative issues, such as morality, attire, and faith. Furthermore, these sharia regulations can be grouped into three categories: those that regulate public order and social problems, such as prostitution, gambling, and alcohol consumption; those that are related to religious skills and obligations, such as reading the Qur'an and attending Friday prayer; and those that are related to religious symbolism, such as adhering to Islamic dress codes.¹⁶ This indicates a shift from the early period of the Republic where the dynamics were about 'big issues', for instance, the foundation of the State and nationalism. Sharia law has attracted opposition from some elements of society, such as law makers, human rights defenders and women's groups. They consider it to potentially violate human rights as well as discriminate against minority groups. Public debates between the proponents and opponents of sharia law are frequent and usually controversial.

Conclusion

To conclude, the rivalry between Islamic ideology and secularism in Indonesia has shaped the country's politics since pre-independence. This political struggle will never end and will always be repeated, because it is at the core of Indonesian politics. The government and its society have to be cautious about these political dynamics since they can be an entry point for radical Islam and its beliefs.

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- 4 *Jahiliyyah* is an Islamic concept of 'ignorance of divine law'. The concept refers to the barbaric condition in which Arabs found themselves in the pre-Islamic period in Arabia.
- 5 Tawhid is the fundamental doctrine of absolute monotheism in Islam.
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African jurists in Asia: Premodern Afro-Asian interactions

'The Indian Ocean Muslims' have contributed to the synthesis of Islamic history for over a millennium, but their roles have been continuously downplayed and disregarded in the historiography. Indians [*al-Hindīs*], Malays [*al-Jāwīs*] and Swahilis [*al-Zanjīs*], in South and Southeast Asia and East Africa respectively, interacted across the Indian Ocean highway and all shaped Islam in their own ways. Only a small number of people actually voyaged overseas physically, but they were all influenced by the ideas brought in by those who did. The history of Islamic law in the Indian Ocean world tells us the story of this general pattern of mobility across communities, doctrines, texts, sources, places and periods. In this essay, I explore the Africans who worked in South and Southeast Asia as judges, jurists, scholars and preachers in premodern period.

Mahmood Kooria

THE ARABS AND PERSIANS played an inevitable role in circulating certain basic ideas of Islam, but they did not 'export' Islamic law to 'the peripheries' as many studies of Islam in the Indian Ocean littoral have illustrated by ignoring the African and Asian contributions.¹ The making of Islam in the littoral has always been a rather complex process with active involvement of people with diverse ethnic, linguistic, and regional backgrounds. Once introduced to Islam, the Indian Ocean Muslims formulated their practices in constructive and creative ways and transferred their conceptualizations to other places and people. The stories of several African and Asian scholars working in South, Southeast Asia and East Africa in premodern centuries still remain untold.

This brings us to another gap in the literature: the ways in which Africans in Asia have been discussed. Most studies present them as slaves alone, especially the growing literature on slavery in the Indian Ocean world, and neglect their socio-cultural functions outside the strict contemporary conceptions of 'slavery'.² A few literatures of political-military histories have analysed the military and administrative functions and struggles of many Africans, yet their intellectual contributions have yet to be acknowledged.³ Against this background, I explore the Africans who worked in South and Southeast Asia as judges, jurists, scholars and preachers.

Before moving on, a short note on the period and sources: although my larger project is to explore Islamic legal history in the premodern Indian Ocean world since its formative stages through comparative and connected histories of Arabs, Asians and Africans, this paper focuses on a period between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Before the twelfth century, we rarely have any references on African-Asian intellectual interactions, whereas the situation dramatically changes by the sixteenth century with an unprecedented rise of African political and military elites in Asia, such as the Abyssinian kingdoms of Bengal and Janjira. By the second half of the sixteenth century, their number and influence increased even more through figures like Malik Ambar. In order to analyse their implications on, contributions to, and administration of legal systems, much space and time is needed and I hope to take it up elsewhere. The centuries from the twelfth to the fifteenth century thus provide a small prelude to a larger phenomenon of the African intellectual contributions to the making of Islamic law in South and Southeast Asia. My major sources are travel accounts, *tārīkh* literature, *ṭabaqāt* literature and inscriptions. In terms of geography, I focus on the South and Southeast Asian coasts of the Indian Ocean.

A jurist and an agent

One important but largely neglected community that contributed to the making of Islamic law in the Indian Ocean rim is that of scholars from the Swahili Coast in East Africa. The coast as such has been neglected in the Indian Ocean historiography, despite the ocean once being identified as the African Ocean, the Zanj Ocean and the Abyssinian Ocean [*Baḥr al-Zanj*; *Baḥr al-Ḥabashī*]. Nearly two decades ago Chandra De Silva endeavoured to deconstruct this negligence by demonstrating how and why the African coast was side-lined by early European commentators and later by Eurocentric historians. He also pointed out the contributions of the local East African communities to the oceanic world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁴ This case is not presented differently in Islamic historiography where scholars make blanket generalizations that almost all prominent traders, brokers, and scholars in East Africa were Arabs and Persians. In Islamic legal history in particular, although it is difficult to distinguish local Swahili from premodern sources, some scarce but crucial remarks about geographical or familial affiliations or skin colour do provide us with a stepping stone towards further enquiries about their juridical engagements and the implications. On that basis, it is striking to take note of some Swahilis who worked in South and Southeast Asia between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.

One early reference to a Swahili jurist in South Asia comes from the travel account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, a North African who was appointed judge in Delhi, and who wrote in the mid-fourteenth century that he had met one Faqīh Sa'īd from Mogadishu working at Ezhimala (Hīlī) in northern Malabar (southwest India).⁵ According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, this Somali jurist had travelled from Mogadishu to both Mecca and Medina, had studied there for fourteen years, and had been in touch with many scholars of the Holy Cities as well as their rulers Muḥammad Abū Numayy in Mecca (r. 1254-1301) and Maṣū' bin Jammāz in Medina (r. 1300-1325). Based on the rulers' regnal years, we can assume that Faqīh studied in Mecca sometime between the late-1280s and 1300, and in Medina between 1300 and 1315. After his education in Hijaz, Faqīh Sa'īd travelled to India and China, but we do not know what sort of jobs he took at the places he visited. He settled down finally in Malabar in a port-town called Ezhimala, which was frequented by several Chinese ships and had a very active religious sphere. It had an important congregational mosque, a madrasa, and an imam and both Muslims and infidels respected the mosque for its blessedness (*baraka*); seafarers used to make plenty of offerings to it before they set out on sail. The mosque had a rich treasury, under the supervision of the *khaṭīb* Ḥusayn. Several students studied at the mosque, and they received stipends from its revenue. It also prepared food for travellers and the destitute in its own kitchen. Faqīh Sa'īd must have arrived there from China through the Chinese ships that frequented the port. In the city, he collaborated with Ḥusayn, possibly the author of *Qayd al-Jāmi'*, one of the first known Islamic legal texts from Malabar.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa gives only a short description of this 'other African' who had far outshone his own journeys. This likely indicates that Faqīh Sa'īd was not an exceptional case in his time and that there were many Muslim African scholars like him who found their way to Asian Islamic communities in premodern centuries. Immediately after mentioning Faqīh Sa'īd, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa talks about another Malabar port-town called Jurfattan, three leagues from Ezhimala, and he makes a comparative statement on the practice of inheritance law among the Malabar and Sudanis. The context of comparison in the text is interesting as he makes it with regard to an Arab jurist from Baghdad. He writes:

There [in Jurfattan] I met a jurist from Baghdad of high stature, named al-Ṣarṣarī after Ṣarṣar, a place ten miles away from Baghdad on the way to Kūfa. [...] He had a brother in this town with a lot of money which he had asked to give to his young children by will. The deceased person's property was kept in shipload to Baghdad. The custom (*ādāt*) of the Indians is like the custom (*ādāt*) of the Sudan that they do not interpose in the property of the deceased. Even if the person leaves thousands, his property would remain with the leader of the Muslims until the inheritor takes it according to *shar'*.⁶

The motivations behind his comparison of a regional custom in Malabar with the one in Sudan (or broadly 'black Africa', if we follow H.A.R. Gibb's translation) are very intriguing, especially as he says that the property of the deceased person finally reaches the legal inheritor.⁷ This implies that many parts of the Islamic world, probably including his native place in North Africa, did not follow the '*shar'*' mode of dividing inheritance in the absence of an inheritor. Further research is needed to make a conclusive argument, but for the moment suffice to note down the striking similarity in the legal practices of Muslims in Malabar/India and Sudan/East Africa as remarked by a North African jurist who had travelled extensively in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Another important East African who worked in South Asia was Yāqūt al-Ghiyāthī from fifteenth-century Bengal. He undertook a challenging project of establishing a law college in Mecca on behalf of the Bengali king, Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shah (r. 1390-1411).⁸ We do not have much biographical information on Yāqūt outside the details of his journey from Bengal to Mecca and his incredible activities in the city as

told by the Meccan historians. But certainly he was part of a larger Abyssinian community in Bengal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, similar to many more in the whole of South Asia and across the Indian Ocean rim. Yāqūt was well-versed in navigation, administration and diplomacy – a few matters that became very explicit during his Mecca mission. I have written in detail about this fascinating project of legal connections and circulations of people, ideas and money between the Swahili Coast, Bengal and Mecca.⁹

Only to elaborate briefly on Yāqūt, we do not know what his status was in the Bengali royal court. The florid Arabic nouns like *Lu'lu'* [pearl], *Jawhar* [jewel] and *Yāqūt* [sapphire] were given as distinctive names to the black African slaves sold in the Middle Eastern markets, and many of them sustained those names even after their manumission. From the cognomen Yāqūt it is difficult to identify whether he was a slave, freeman, or an agent of the king. The Meccan historian al-Fāsī gives his full name as Yāqūt al-Sulṭānī al-Ghiyāthī, which clearly indicates his bondage with Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn A'zam Shah.¹⁰ Furthermore, al-Fāsī praises him by calling him 'janāb al-ālī al-iftikhārī' [his excellency and lord], surely for the ideas and money he brought into Mecca. A'zam Shah assigned him with responsibilities to purchase land, to construct appropriate building for madrasa and to take necessary formal steps in making the *waqf* legally valid. Yāqūt went several steps further by gathering support from many Meccan elites, many of whom he eventually appointed as professors in the madrasa, including the historian and judge al-Fāsī. After accomplishing his mission, Yāqūt commenced his return to Bengal, but died on his way at Hormuz.

The larger network

Yāqūt al-Ghiyāthī and Faqīh Sa'īd are two important yet divergent examples of a larger flow of Africans who participated in the making of Islamic law in premodern Asia. If Sa'īd represents the proper jurists and itinerant scholars, Yāqūt stands for the agents who facilitated the intellectual exchanges. There are many more similar Swahilis who worked across South and Southeast Asia during these periods in different roles and positions. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, for example, also talks about one 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Makdashawī who worked as the governor of the

Below: Al-Maḳamat, folio 105. Author: al-Qāsim ibn Alī al-Ḥarīrī al-Basrī. Illuminator: Yahya ben Mahmud al-Wasīti. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In 1021, an enslaved Ethiopian, Najah, seized power in the city of Zabī. This image represents the slave market at Zabī – at the time the capital of Yemen – in 1237. The illustration is part of "Al-Maḳamat" (Assemblies), a genre of rhymed prose narrative. Both the author and the illuminator of this work were born in Iraq.





Left: Al-Maqamat, folio 119v.1237. Author: Abū-Muhammad al-Qāsim ibn Alī al-Harīrī al-Basri. Illuminator: Yahya ben Mahmud al-Wasiti. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

As early as the fifth century Arabs brought Africans to southern Iraq to work their date plantations and salt marshes. During the late ninth century Africans took up arms against the Abbassid slaveholders, taking over several cities. They organized their own state, which had its own standing army, and even minted coins. This 1237 illustration is the work of the Iraqi illuminator Yahya ben Mahmud al-Wasiti.

All images and captions found on the New York Public Library's online exhibitions page: "The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World" (exhibitions.nypl.org/africansindianocean)

island Kannalus the Maldives. During Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's visit to the island, this Muslim administrator from Mogadishu "treated me with honour, offered me hospitality and prepared a *kundara* for me" to meet the queen of the Maldives.

Also in the Maldives, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited the hospice of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Najīb at the extremity of the island of Mahal, the seat of the Sultana and her husband, with the captain and Arab judge Ṭsā al-Yamani.¹¹ Andrew Forbes identifies this hospice as the Habshīgefānu Magān ('Shrine of the African Worthy'), built in memory of Shaykh Najīb from East Africa, together with a mosque. Shaykh Najīb travelled in the Maldives teaching Islam to the islanders and died at Karendu Island in Fadiffolu Atoll. The mosque and hospice were located in the precincts of the Lonu Ziyare ('Salt Shrine'), but they were demolished in the early twentieth century.¹² We can discern from the name of the shrine that the Shaykh was from Abyssinia, but it is difficult to make any conclusions about his origin for the want of solid evidence. The Maldives also had a share of African slaves, and seventy of them were bought in, and brought from, the Hijaz in the mid-fifteenth century by the Maldivian king Sultan Hasan III. In an interesting course of events, one of these slaves killed a local Maldivian and the *qāḍī* [judge] ordered his execution, but the sultan instead burned the judge at the stake, if we are to believe the *Ta'rikh*, one of the early accounts of the history of the Maldives written in the eighteenth century and eventually released in 1821.¹³

We also come across references to some more Abyssinians and Swahilis in the mosque inscriptions of the western and eastern Indian Ocean and one mosque at Calicut is definitely built by a manumitted slave from East Africa. Along with these people, it would be interesting to enquire about the legal affiliations and protections of several other Abyssinian men-at-arms who worked as 'the protectors on this sea' in the Konkan coast and commanders of warships in Barkur who all were Muslims. Together with this, we also need to look at the contributions of several Habashi and Swahili scholars who worked in the Middle East (especially in Yemen and Oman), and who contributed significantly to the analysis and advancement of Islamic law through a potential 'Indian Ocean perspective'.

All these instances demonstrate how mobile these Swahilis were, and that is what makes them a strong part of the Indian Ocean community. As we see in the case of Faqīh Sa'īd and Yāqūt, they all travelled from the East African coasts to faraway

places: from Mogadishu to Mecca and Medina to China to Malabar (as Sa'īd did); from Ethiopia to Bengal to Mecca to Hormuz (as Yāqūt did). The same goes for several other Swahilis in the Maldives. Even if one could argue that Africans like Yāqūt were forced to travel across the seas by their masters or benefactors, and that they did not travel voluntarily, Faqīh Sa'īd, 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Makdashawī, Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Najīb and many more, all travelled for their own interests and benefits. Also, their journeys and stories provide us with a different picture about the Africans in Asia; different from the one we would get in the hitherto literatures portraying them as slaves (with subsequent political or military careers). This picture motivates us to look further into premodern Afro-Asian intellectual contacts across the Indian Ocean world, especially through the contributions by judges, lawyers, teachers, imams, and preachers.

If we discuss African Muslim scholars in premodern Asia, we cannot neglect the North African scholars who transcended the boundaries of the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean world, even though it is difficult to differentiate their contributions from the existing narratives in Islamic legal historiography, for they are very much visible across the Middle East since the early centuries of Islam. Also, the Arab vs. Berber debate is a rather complicated issue, and this only furthers once we look at the self-identification of a Berber like Ibn Baṭṭūṭa as an Arab during his travels.¹⁴ Leaving aside those issues, here I briefly elaborate on two North African scholars who worked in the Indian Ocean world.

The first example is Ibn Baṭṭūṭa himself. He was appointed by the Delhi sultan Muḥammad Tughluq (r. 1324-1351) as the judge of Delhi. There are not many discussions on his execution of law or his verdicts in Delhi, but the scenario changes once he arrived in the Maldives where he worked as the chief judge for one and a half years. There we get plenty of details about his attempts to change local cultures and systems according to his understanding of Islamic law. After his appointment, he asked the ladies there to cover their bodies and heads, which they refused. The execution of his version of Islamic law was met with various direct or indirect acts of resistance, demonstrating an encounter between an African-Berber/self-identified Arab jurist with the cultures and customs of the Indian Ocean world. Due to his harsh judgements and passing verdict against the Queen's husband, he was forced to resign his position and leave the island.

Another noteworthy North African from the Indian Ocean also came from the Maldives; Abū al-Barakāt al-Barbarī al-Maghribī who has been credited with the introduction of Islam and the Mālikī school of law to the island. He is said to have impressed King Shanurāza and the islanders by getting rid of a virgin-ravishing demon [*Ifrit* from *jinn*], which led them to embrace Islam. Maghribī was greatly venerated and even established a mosque. The people adopted his school of law (the school of the Imām Mālik), and "to this day they continue to hold the Maghribīs in high respect because of him."¹⁵

An Indian Ocean Islamic law?

'The Indian Ocean Muslims' provide a different lens with which to look at Islamic legal history, the continuous negligence of the peripheral Muslims' contributions to the making of Islamic law, and an overemphasis on the Arab exclusivity. I focused here on African scholars who worked in the Indian Ocean rim, who were part of larger Afro-Asian interactions in intellectual, religious and legal realms. What does this emphasis on the peripheral Indian-Ocean Islamic legal cultures mean to the larger Islamic historiography, and why are the interactions among them so important?

'The Indian Ocean Islamic law', as practiced from East Africa to East Asia, is not a mere mimicking of Arab versions of law and religion, rather it is a historical phenomenon of constant efforts among the Swahilis, Jawis and Hindis to rearticulate Islam and its law according to their contexts. The legalistic interactions among these communities through the circulation of scholars and texts since premodern centuries helped them advance their understandings in different ways. The matrilineal system is a best example of this, as practiced among Muslims of Malabar, Sumatra and Mozambique (to name but a few), even though it has been constantly brought to the forefront as a classical example of un-Islamic/syncretic practices of the peripheral Muslims.

Laws pertaining to, for example, matrilineal practices provide an emblematic view of a *universality* of the Indian Ocean Islamic law. Multiple contexts defined multiple characters and routes with outright contradictions. Yet, they all belonged to one legal cosmopolis of Islam; in it the Africans, Arabs and Asians created an equilateral triangle. The duty of a historian is not to disregard their jurisprudential contributions or to pass judgments on them as less Islamic or un-Islamic; rather, it is to try to understand Islamic law the way *they* understood it.

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New developments in South Asian archives

The Archivist



The Sikkim Palace Archive Digitisation Project

Alex McKay

THE INDIAN HIMALAYAN STATE of Sikkim, which separates Nepal to the west and Bhutan to the east, emerges into the historical record with the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty in the 1640s. As a Buddhist kingdom Sikkim's closest cultural links were with their northern neighbour Tibet, but during the 19th century they were increasingly drawn into the orbit of their southern neighbour, British India. The colonial government sought to establish diplomatic and trading relations with the Tibetans as well as to ensure the security of their northern frontier from any threat in that direction. Sikkim offered them a 'stepping stone' to Tibet and despite Sikkimese efforts to avoid alienating either of the two powers the British appointed a Political Officer in 1889 who ruled Sikkim under the Princely State system. A series of Political Officers then oversaw the administration of Sikkim down to Indian independence in 1947. In 1975 the 12th and final ruling Chogyal [King/Maharaja], Palden Thondup Namgyal (1923-1982), was deposed by India and Sikkim was merged into India. It exists today simply as a state of India, albeit with certain administrative distinctions.

With few exploitable resources, Sikkim was of little importance to the British during the colonial period, other than as a base for their relations with Tibet. But during the first three decades of British authority there, Sikkimese government and society underwent enormous transformations, with a reorganisation of the tax basis, the development of forestry and mining, and the introduction of Western education and health systems. Sikkim in the mid-19th century had a very small population, and around the late 1860s Sikkimese landlords had begun to employ migrant labour from Nepal in order to develop their land-holdings, despite opposition to this policy by the then Chogyal and sections of the aristocracy and monastic powers. Under British rule the numbers of Nepalese immigrants increased enormously and by the early 20th century if not earlier they outnumbered the Bhutia (Lhopo) and Lepcha (Rong) inhabitants.

In 1918, satisfied with both the security of their northern border and the path of development on which Sikkim was embarked, the British handed internal authority and government back to the Chogyal Tashi (later Sir Tashi) Namgyal (1893-1963). While British India always retained responsibility for Sikkim's defence and external relations, the Political Officers in Gangtok, who were always primarily concerned with Tibetan affairs, henceforth devoted little attention to Sikkim. After Indian Independence, however, the Indian Political Officers who inherited the British positions were increasingly concerned with events in this Himalayan state, and were part of the processes that led to the merger in 1975, an act which still remains controversial.

Scholars wishing to work on the history and culture of Sikkim and its neighbours have, however, faced a number of difficulties. Prior to the merger the state archives of Sikkim were maintained by the Palace secretary's office. As the personal possessions of the royal family the archives remained in the private keeping of that family after 1975 and were not accessible to scholarship. In addition, while the British Library holds a selection of files pertaining to the colonial period in Sikkim, the Indian government files on the region are difficult for scholars, particularly foreign researchers, to access. This is not only due to the controversial nature of the merger, but also to issues connected with India's northern border and its security, as well as to their wide dispersal in the National Archives.

A little over a decade ago a significant part of the royal archives, primarily documents in the Tibetan language concerning the pre-colonial period in Sikkim were deposited at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok by the 13th Chogyal Wangchuk Namgyal. This collection was subsequently catalogued by Saul Mullard and Hissey Wangchuk.¹

More recently, the royal archives for the period around 1875-1975 have been made available for digitisation and dissemination by Chogyal Wangchuk Namgyal. Following an award by the Endangered Archives Programme, funded by Arcadia and administered by the British Library, the Sikkim Palace Archive Digitisation Project began work on this material on 1 September 2016. Project Director Pema Choeden Namgyal Abrahams and a team of young Sikkimese are cataloguing and digitising the material, enabling the transfer of a complete digitised version of the archive to the eventual host organisations. These will be the British Library (eap.bl.uk), the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (tibetology.net/researchprojects), and Project Denjong (www.projectdenjong.com), a new non-profit organisation dedicated to making Sikkim's history and heritage accessible to a wider audience, not least young Sikkimese who are generally unaware of their heritage. Project Denjong's website will house access to the digitised collection, and annotated posts about specific documents and/or files will be made available on its blog/news page.

In addition to digitising the collection, the Endangered Archives Programme will enable greatly improved storage and preservation of the original archive by relocating the material into a climate controlled environment and acid-free archival boxes. This is an important part of the project, given that the documents have been at considerable risk of decay due to the basic office conditions in which they were stored at the palace. Sikkim has one of the highest rainfalls of any region in the world and experiences extremes of summer and

winter temperatures, factors which place paper documents at particular risk unless they are properly stored in a temperature-controlled environment.

The project, which is scheduled to be completed in one year, began with the team being given the necessary archival training and skill-sets by Director G. Sundar and Assistant Director R. Prakash from the Raja Mutiah Research Library (Chennai). Their expertise and knowledge transference skills proved invaluable and equipped the trainee staff for future roles utilizing this or other archival material. In addition, the historical implications of the collection and relevant historical methodology were explained by the Academic Advisor on the project.

The royal archive for the 1875-1975 period comprises approximately 735 files (or approximately 95,000 folios), the overwhelming majority of which are in the English language (with some material in Hindi, Nepali, and Tibetan). Its contents reveal a great deal about the land and people of Sikkim and its complex history at the crossroads of British India and Tibetan Buddhism. They shed light on both secular and religious matters, including law, land-use, taxation, court and inter-state ritual, distinguished visitors, border formation, and domestic affairs. Among the files are such items as handwritten letters from the Viceroys of India to the Sikkimese Chogyal, applications from the burgeoning Christian community to build Sikkim's first church; the planning and implementation of which representative and what gifts to send to Lhasa for the enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1940; prisoner lists and sentences from 1911; State Council Meeting Minute ledgers from the 1890s-1920s; and correspondence in later years with Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi in the lead up to 1975, including the full testimony given by Khatiwara – a key political figure in Sikkim at the time – to India's Prime Minister Desai.

Wider outcomes of the digitisation project will include online and print catalogues, augmented with a biographical database of the key figures involved in this period of Sikkimese history, a workshop for local and regional students and scholars, media coverage in local and domestic Indian media and a series of publications in both popular and academic media. Equally significant is the provision to the local establishment of modern equipment and the training of young Sikkimese in digitisation processes and information technology storage and cataloguing, laying the groundwork for future safe storage and access provision for this and other relevant material, such as the future digitisation of the Palace photographic collection, prints, medium-format and glass-plate negatives. Given that other significant collections of historical material remain in private hands in Sikkim it may be hoped that the successful operation of this project will also encourage the emergence of that material into the public domain.

This hitherto closed archive will thus provide a fundamental primary source for socio-political enquiry into Sikkimese history in the 1875-1975 period, enabling – for the first time – a balanced understanding of the history of this region. The project's digitised material will make historical documents easily accessible to Sikkimese, allowing them as well as the broader research community to finally understand how local taxation, land holdings, political movements, social rituals, and religious milestones were enacted; and how social, cultural, economic, and political developments of the region were perceived in Sikkim. This collection will provide both the details expected from a local archive and an overview of late-19th and 20th century Sikkim, introducing the characters and events that shaped the development of the kingdom and its complex history.

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Above: Project Director Pema Choeden Namgyal Abrahams with consultants Raja Mutiah Library Director G. Sundar and Assistant Director R. Prakash (centre).

Below right: The Sikkim Palace Archives Digitisation project team with consultants from the Raja Mutiah Library (Chennai).

Roja Muthiah Research Library: A repository for Tamil Studies

G. Sundar

THE ORIGIN of Roja Muthiah Research Library dates back to the 1950s. Roja Muthiah, a signboard artist from Kottaiyur, a small town in southern Tamilnadu, began collecting books in the early 1950s as an inspiration for his signboard business known as Roja Arts. Soon he fell in love with the books and became a bibliophile himself. Over the years, Roja Muthiah scoured bookstalls all over Tamil Nadu for treasures until his library outgrew the space in his house. Until his premature death in 1992, Roja Muthiah could be found reading, compiling, and writing amidst heaps of books, clippings, journals, and artworks in his house. With the 'Library for Sale' news coming in from Dr C.S. Lakshmi, a visiting fellow at the University of Chicago then, Mr. James Nye, Prof. A. K. Ramanujan, Prof. Norman Cutler, Prof. Arjun Appadurai, and Prof. Ralph Nicholas from the University of Chicago (UoC) came together and decided to buy the collection. In 1994 the collection was purchased and setup in Chennai in the name of Roja Muthiah Research Library (<http://www.rmrl.in>). In 2004, a public trust named the Roja Muthiah Research Library Trust (RMRL) was formed to manage and take responsibility for the library. Up until early 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding between the two entities governed the collection. Now responsibility lies entirely with the RMRL Trust.

When the Library was moved to Chennai in 1994, it comprised about 100,000 items, which have grown to 350,000 in the past two decades. The collection spans over 200 years, the earliest item being a Tamil book titled *Gnanappattukalin Postakam*, published in 1797. The Library collection covers a wide spectrum of subjects such as classical and modern literature, literary criticism, indigenous medicine, religion and philosophy, folklore, material by and about women, metaphysics, Gandhian studies and numerous publications of historical value. RMRL has a rich collection of research material in popular culture such as cinema, theatre and the related culture of printed works. RMRL has around 2500 cinema song books and 2000 cinema posters. In addition to books and periodicals, the library collection also includes printed ephemera such as invitations of various kinds, cinema posters, clippings. Palm leaf manuscripts and gramophone records also form a part of the collection. Over the years, personal collections of A. K. Ramanujan, Lloyd and Susan Rudolphs, Milton Singer, Robert Hardgrave, Gift Siromoney, Mu. Arunachalam, Iravatham Mahadevan, T. P. Meenakshi Sundaram, Champakalakshmi have been added to the collection.

As a core activity, RMRL systematically started by preserving the collection through archival microfilming and digitization. So far the Library has preserved more than 1,500,000 pages of rare archival material, including both in digital format and in microfilm. RMRL has acquired the necessary equipment and preservation facilities. International best standards are being followed with regard to cataloguing and preservation.

RMRL provides reference services (at the A. K. Ramanujan Reading Room), with facilities such as a spacious reading room, online catalogue, microfilm reader and extensive reference collections, for its users coming from all parts of the world. RMRL contributes catalogue records to the South Asian Union Catalogue and Worldcat. Several books and research articles are being published using RMRL's collection.

A fully fledged conservation studio has been setup at RMRL recently with project funds from Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust for a major paper conservation project. Equipment, such as a nitrogen disinfecting system and leaf casting machine, has been set up to undertake the paper conservation programme. Processes such as disinfection, de-acidification, strengthening, stitching, and binding have been carried out to provide new life to rare and old printed materials.

In 2007, RMRL set up the Indus Research Centre (IRC) with the advice of Padma awardee Shri Iravatham Mahadevan. The IRC is an initiative to undertake scientific investigations into various aspects of Indus Valley civilization and its script. Dr Mahadevan served as the Honorary Consultant of the Centre till December 2011. Currently this position is served by Thiru R. Balakrishnan of the Indian Civil Services. Various workshops, seminars and exhibitions have been organized through this centre. Currently the centre is also involved in a Toponymic study of the Indus places. Several research papers have been published on behalf of the centre, and so too a newsletter called *The Bulletin of the Indus Research Centre*.

Digital restoration is a new area RMRL has ventured into recently. The experimental project carried out by RMRL for the digital restoration of the notebooks of mathematical genius Srinivasa Ramanujan turned out to be a great success. Recently, RMRL brought out a digitally restored reprint of the first edition of *Tirukkural*, a classical Tamil text, which was printed in 1812. As extension activities, RMRL has been holding a series of monthly lectures and organizing exhibitions to showcase various aspects of RMRL's collection on a regular basis with support from philanthropists: 'Gandhi in Tamilnadu', 'Early propagation of Tamil music', 'Nagarathar's contribution to Tamil publishing', 'Indus Civilization', 'High-West: Low-East – Dichotomy of Indus Cities: A Dravidian Paradigm', are some of the exhibitions that have been organized.

RMRL is now planning to archive oral histories by way of interviewing important people who were involved in major movements in India such as the Dravidian movement, Self Respect Movement, Anti Hindi Agitation, the Communist Movement and so on. The Library is also looking for support to undertake this work.

So far, RMRL's main sources of funding have been time-bound projects from institutions such as the Ford Foundation, Wellcome Trust for the History of Understanding Medicine, the British Library, Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust, The Music Academy, India Foundation for the Arts. RMRL is currently working towards raising a financial corpus to secure funds for its future activities. With two more years to hit the 25th Anniversary since it was institutionalized as the Roja Muthiah Research Library Trust, the Library is looking forward to many more things to accomplish.

G. Sundar, Director of the Roja Muthiah Research Library (sundargee@rmrl.in); <http://www.rmrl.in>



Above: Records under review in the National Archives of Bangladesh. Photo by the author.

East India Company Archives in Bangladesh

Rajiv Rai

DURING THE PERIOD of the East India Company's authority in Bengal, the Company stationed a 'Collector' in Rangpur (now in northern Bangladesh). The Collectors, of whom the most famous was Warren Hasting's envoy to Bhutan and Tibet, George Bogle (1746-81), were responsible for the Company's commercial relations across territory that stretched to the borders of Sikkim, Bhutan and Assam. Even though a selection of the Collectors' records were published between 1914 and 1927¹, the collection has apparently never attracted scholars. Rangpur, a local archive in a remote district that has endured floods, famine and civil war, as it passed from the control of British colonial India to independent (East) Pakistan, before becoming part of Bangladesh in 1971, seemed to hold few attractions for scholars.

But browsing the entire collection of the hitherto-neglected Rangpur records promised to be of considerable value to my research on the history of Sikkim, for during the late 18th century the Rangpur Collector was the main source of political and commercial information about Sikkim, as well as Bhutan and Tibet. And Bangladesh is now not only open to scholars but – Islamic fundamentalism aside – increasingly stable and easily accessible, while the scholastic value of such regional archives is now widely recognised.

Thus I recently visited Bangladesh to enquire about this archive, thinking that even if nothing was left besides insect-eaten documents then at least I could inform other researchers of the situation there. In the Bangladesh capital, with assistance from Dhaka University professors, I began by enquiring about any other EIC archives, but the National Museum Library confirmed that all of the primary sources for the nation's history were now held at the National Archives of Bangladesh on Syed Mahbub Morshed Ave. All regional archives for the 1770s-1880s period were originally collected at the National Library in 1985-86 before being transferred to the custodianship of the National Archives in 2006. Among them were the early Rangpur District Records, and as only more recent records are now kept in Rangpur, I had at least discovered that there was little point in my travelling there. And indeed, the National Archives catalogue indicate that Rangpur District records for the period from July 1777 to March 1889 are part of their collection comprising 516 bound volumes of documents, volumes that would surely shed considerable light on many historical processes in the region.

But, Senior Archivist Mr. Elias Miah told me that, "we may not be able to provide all the relevant documents you need because these documents are not properly arranged yet and are in a process of arranging systematically". I had the chance to enter into the record room and what I saw confirmed that without additional manpower and funding there is little prospect of that process being completed in the near future. Scholars probably have some years to wait before the material is available. In the meantime their condition is worrying, the records are not well maintained and are scattered around the record room. I took some photographs and with just a handful of documents relevant to my work I returned to India.

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Right: Drama notice. Aandal Thirukalyanam, Sri Ramanujar Vaibhavam, 1928

Below: Cinema pamphlet. Bhaktha Gowri

Far right: Cover page of Cinema Talkies, March 1936.

Images courtesy of RMRL.



Soaking ecologies: Rethinking Asian urbanism

The Opinion

As the Paris COP21 was taking place in December 2015 the coastal city of Chennai was submerged due to unprecedented flooding, followed by a month-long rainfall. According to official figures, at least 470 people were killed. Inundation is nothing new in coastal areas, although the pace with which it is hitting us is accelerating every day. The floods remind us that we primarily live on amphibious and seasonal territories and we need new frames to understand urbanism in a mobile space.

Debjani Bhattacharyya



CHENNAI, FOR INSTANCE, is a coastal city prone to flooding. Hydraulic engineers point out that there are two kinds of urban floods: one known as urban pluvial (surface water flooding) caused by prolonged rainfall that overwhelm a city's drainage capacity. The other type is river flooding. To put it simply, flooding takes place when the line separating land from water is breached or when water appears in places where it is not supposed to be. These lines of separation are not just conceptual metaphors, but they are also materialized as fortified banks, dykes, embankments and the way we plan and design our landscapes. In a recent rethinking of this relation, Dilip da Cunha and Anuradha Mathur have repeatedly pointed out that the relation between land and water is not that of hard lines of separation, but that of soaking, of gradients, rhythms and times.¹

Taking this as a starting point I want to understand if there is a possibility to rethink the ecology of Asian cities, especially those located in deltas, estuaries and coastal areas. Looking back to our past we realize that cities across the world have been carved out, both technologically and legally, from the amphibious territories that we called swamp, fens, bogs, marshes. Today these watery spaces threaten to claim back our cities. These amphibious territories alert us that cities are spaces where we have cultivated a dry culture of living, building and design by initially draining the swamps to create habitable lands.

Engineering the urban landscape, especially within South Asia, began in an unprecedented way from the late eighteenth century. This was also a period of colonial encounter, where Europeans from temperate climates were confronted with tidal and tropical landscapes, which appeared to them as 'pestilential' and 'miasmatic' spaces of diseases. Initial projects of draining the landscape were as much a response to these epidemiological and sanitary concerns as they were intended for infrastructural expansion roads, canals and ports. For instance, the project of embanking Bombay began in 1784, around the same time Calcutta's shifting and tidal landscape was fortified so that property measurements and taxes could be fixed. This trend of draining to create new lands has continued unabated till the present as we swallow wetlands, swamps, lakes and ponds in our search for firm ground for the real estate market.

Reading the traces of water in the land

In the subcontinent, the repression of the hydrological landscapes of our cities have been further aggravated as infrastructural planning has moved away from elected municipal bodies to parastatal organizations operating through a neo-liberal market agenda. For instance, we see that the World Bank funded the Eri Scheme in Chennai through the 1970s and 1980s, under which *eris*, which the scheme claimed to be 'defunct lakes', were permanently drained to build housing. However *eris*, which are a particular kind of water reservoir,

*And after all this
you tell them about the water
how we have seen it rising
flooding across our cemeteries
gushing over our sea walls
and crashing against our homes
tell them what it's like
to see the entire ocean level with the land
[...]
but most importantly you tell them
that we don't want to leave
we've never wanted to leave
and that we
are nothing without our islands.*

Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, poet and climate activist
from the Marshall Islands, at the Paris COP21

were formed by natural dips in the land, especially in coastal towns of the subcontinent that received all their rainfall at once. These local forms of water management both prevented flooding, while also helping with water shortages.² Today these disappeared waterbodies are coming back to haunt the city as coastal waters and rainfall find no escape routes, but instead flow into our houses, offices and roads in search of their old homes. By turning to the hidden and repressed hydrologies of the cities, we realize there is also a third kind of flooding: one that happens when our visions for designing the landscape is blinkered by short-term profits of real estate.

Perhaps it is time that we try to understand coastal cities not as sites of engineering but as 'soaking ecologies'. This would demand that we imagine building and dwelling through different frames. One of the major tasks would be to read the history of the land's relation to water by learning to read the traces of water in the land. It is within those contours and lines left by the water's seasonal presence on land that we can re-learn how to live in these spaces. Through such a project of learning and un-learning we will be able to reimagine our relations with the soaking ecologies, which can provide the outline for the Asian urbanism of the future.

It must be mentioned that the idea of soaking ecologies is more capacious and slightly different from the idea of 'sponge cities' that Chinese President Xi Jinping announced at the Central Government Conference on Urbanization in 2013. Jinping has made a significant amount of funding available to create cities that can absorb rainwater through wetlands, permeable pavements and rain gardens, to name just a few means of absorption. It is an ambitious project of reengineering the urban landscape according to top down human design. The concept of soaking ecologies, however, begins from the

premise that the landscape is mobile, and that we need to learn how to live in these mobile and temporary landscapes where what is land in December can become a sheet of water during monsoon.

An invitation

The concept is also an invitation for conversation and an opening to learn from the ground how to live on it. Therefore, we need to ask whether cities located in deltas embody specific urban forms, political constellations and modes of habitation. Whenever we think of urban forms we think in terms of a dry culture, where water emerges as floods or water-logging, and the struggle is to keep the water out of these riverine cities. More than two-thirds of the world's largest and highly populated cities are coastal delta cities vulnerable to rising sea levels. The current conversation about these cities remains focused on climate-change adaptation and resilience in a very myopic manner. This conversation fails to move away from the top-down design and planning perspective. Conceptually, soaking ecologies ask what possible relation we might be able to imagine between urban forms and the waterbodies that used to pockmark the surface of our cities. We must first begin by understanding the soil and the various names we use to designate the varieties of soils. How many words do our languages have to define erosion and accretion? In these localized terms we will find a wealth of knowledge about land-water relations that might tell us how to inhabit the soaking ecologies: a lesson on how to not embank ourselves away from water, but to develop skills to live with it.

Watch this space for an announcement for a "Summer School on Soaking Ecologies" in the coming issues of The Newsletter. The idea of the summer school will be an opportunity to problematize the solid grounds that we take for granted in conceptualizing our urban environments, writing the cities' pasts and designing their futures. It will open the ground for new histories, anthropologies, urban planning, architecture and policy-making about the future of coastal cities that can accommodate the seasonal nature of the earth's surface, simultaneously making space for water and amphibious dwellings.

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Intersections: Asia and Australia

Welcome to our first edition of *Intersections: Asia and Australia*, a recurring section in the Newsletter on Asia-related studies in Australia. It is the result of an exciting new collaboration between the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden (the Netherlands), and the Asia Institute of The University of Melbourne (Australia). *Intersections* is edited by Ana Dragojlovic and Edwin Jurriëns, with assistance from Andy Fuller, from the Asia Institute in Melbourne.

Edwin Jurriëns and Ana Dragojlovic

FOR *INTERSECTIONS*, we ask contributors to reflect on their own research interests and the broader academic field in Australia of which it is a part. We focus on current, recent or upcoming projects, books, articles, conferences and teaching, while identifying related interests and activities of fellow academics in the field. Our contributions aim to give a broad overview of Asia-related studies in Australia; after our first general edition, we will focus more specifically on themes such as language, popular culture, gender, urban development, environment and art. *Intersections'* main aim is to highlight exciting intellectual debates on and with Asia in the region. Our preferred style is subjective and conversational. Rather than offering fully-fledged research reports, our contributions give insight into the motivations behind and directions of various types of conversations between Asia and Australia.

Engagement with Asia at the governmental and institutional levels in Australia has been notoriously fragile. Nevertheless, the pragmatic considerations of geopolitical proximity and commercial profitability have also renewed and increased awareness of the unavoidability and positive prospects of a shared future with Asia. Recent examples are the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* of the Gillard government in 2012, and the 'New Colombo Plan' of the Abbott government in 2014. The latter includes scholarships to encourage Australian students to enjoy part of their education in Asia.

The work of Australian academics has undoubtedly been strengthened, influenced or compromised by these and other plans of their governments and institutions. Much of their work, however, builds on ongoing, highly personal and deeply grounded research connections with their Asia(n) counterparts. They often feature 'Asia' not merely in geographical terms, but as a research method in itself. Besides its interdisciplinary and comparative character, this 'Asia as method' offers a complex paradigm of layered knowledge. By layered knowledge we mean in-depth and mutually enriching analyses of various aspects of Asian societies, which are to be distinguished from more casual, in themselves relevant, (inter)disciplinary engagements with Asia. This paradigm encompasses the type of knowledge produced and promoted by the various Asia institutes around the country, but it is not limited to institutions and academics with a professional affiliation or natural affinity with Area Studies.

Intersections presents a snapshot of the breadth and depth of Asia-related expertise in Australia. We are confident, however, that our selected contributions are some of the prime representatives of the field. Moreover, we hope and believe that our examples have the potential to trigger and foster conversations with Asia experts elsewhere in the world.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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The Asia Institute is The University of Melbourne's key centre for studies in Asian languages, cultures and societies. Asia Institute academic staff have an array of research interests and specialisations, and strive to provide leadership in the study of the intellectual, legal, politico-economic, cultural and religious traditions and transformations of Asia and the Islamic world. The Institute is committed to community engagement and offers a dynamic program of academic and community-focused events and cultural exchanges that aim to promote dialogue and debate.

Asian Studies. On disciplines and regions

Vedi Hadiz



THE FIELD OF ASIAN STUDIES is by nature inter-disciplinary; yet it would do well to also become more inter-regional. In my view, the most interesting works in Asian Studies are not only those that are deliberately located at the intersections of disciplines (e.g., politics and sociology or economics and history), rather than positioned within the conventions and orthodoxies of single disciplines, but also those with themes that focus on the intersections between different (sub)regions of Asia. Otherwise, the adjective 'Asian' just gets added on for the purpose of staking a geographical claim to a work, without necessarily producing fresh perspectives. Inter-regional research has the potential to better reveal social processes that could otherwise go by unnoticed. I am keen to encourage those working in the field of Asian Studies, young scholars in particular, to not just think interdisciplinarily, but also inter-regionally.

I hope to have practiced some of what I preach in my own recent book, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 2016). While an interest in bringing together political economy and historical sociology guided the theoretical approach applied in the study,

the comparative work dealt with cases in the Middle East (Turkey and Egypt) and Southeast Asia (Indonesia). I felt that the exercise necessitated immersion into a set of literature pertaining to a region that I had not worked on before, in this case the Middle East. My hope was that by comparing the evolution of Islamic politics in my main country of expertise, Indonesia, with the evolution of Islamic politics well-beyond Southeast Asia, my research might yield different kinds of insights than would a study comparing Indonesia to, say, Malaysia or the Philippines.

In my work,¹ I found that there were many useful comparisons to be made between Indonesian and Middle Eastern experiences, in terms of the evolution of what I call Islamic populism. Apart from the obvious fact that Indonesia, Turkey and Egypt are major Islamic-majority societies, their experiences of state formation and capitalist development, the Cold War, as well as integration into neoliberal globalisation processes, have been important in all three cases. The Cold War was pivotal in the way that Islamic forces were co-opted by secular nationalist elites that held state power in battles against the Left, but were nevertheless

marginalised socially and politically throughout a large part of the economic modernisation process. This meant that Islamic lenses helped to develop new worldviews in relation to the new social dislocations and contradictions that accompanied social change in these societies, especially in the phase of neoliberal globalisation.

In other words, all of these countries have had social problems that can be traced to skewed development processes, to which Islamic populism can be seen as a response. These have included social disparities as expressed in the proliferation of a new urban poor as well as large cohorts of educated youths who are either unemployed or have little prospect of meaningful employment. In spite of the grand promises of modernity, their hopes of social and material advancement do not match their actual life-chances. Islam came to articulate social dissent under such conditions that were furthermore marked by the decline – or in the case of Indonesia, the complete vanquishing – of the Left and the relative weakness of political liberalism.

But the outcomes of these social processes and the struggles of Islamic populism would be vastly different. In Turkey, they came together eventually under the now-ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) that gained power democratically (in spite of its current authoritarian proclivities). In Egypt, until the Arab Spring, a highly suppressed Islamic populism led by the Muslim Brotherhood dominated the political opposition and civil society for decades, but was still unable to gain control of the state. Once it did, that control only lasted briefly and would have disastrous consequences. In Indonesia, yet another distinct trajectory can be identified. This is one of the continual failures of Islamic movements to win state power or dominate political opposition in both the eras of authoritarianism and democracy.

The project of my book was therefore to examine and explain these different trajectories, which I did largely on the basis of the successes or failures of Islamic populism to forge a project underpinned by coherent cross-class alliances. I would suggest that the sort of questions the book asks would not have come about had the comparisons been undertaken with countries that share the sub-region of Southeast Asia with Indonesia.

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- 1 Research on Islamic politics in Indonesia is strongly represented in Australia by scholars such as Greg Barton, Greg Fealy and Richard Robison, among others. The University of Melbourne is well-placed to lead in Islamic studies more generally through its National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies.

Above: Pro-Muslim Brotherhood Rally, Sydney, Australia, 1 September 2013; courtesy of Eye OnRadicals on flickr.

Intersections: Asia and Australia *continued*

De-demonising ‘people smuggling’ between Indonesia and Australia

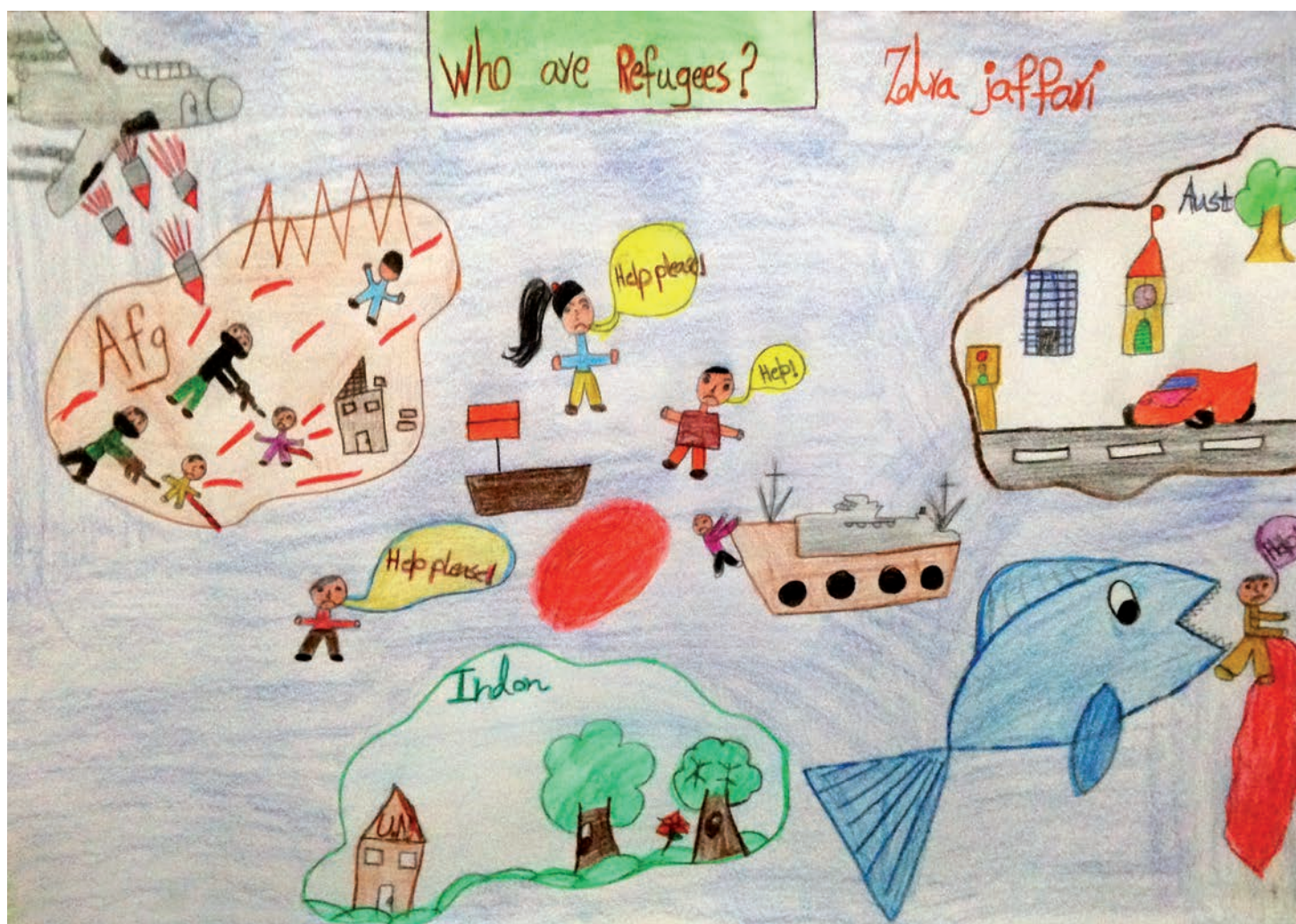
Antje Missbach

FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS, I have studied political, economic and legal aspects of so-called ‘people smuggling’ from Indonesia to Australia. Between 2009 and mid-2013, more than 50,000 asylum seekers made their way to Australia by boat, with the help of Indonesian transporters. Their arrival in Australia not only triggered hyper-politicised debates on migration, refugee protection and national security, but also led to the adoption of more restrictive asylum policies and deterrence strategies by successive Australian governments. Indonesia, as a result of pressure from Australia, has also adopted a number of policies that are detrimental to the free movement of asylum seekers and refugees, although they tend to be ineffective in curbing the activities of smugglers.

Over the last decade, transnational people-smuggling networks have grown substantially as demand among asylum seekers and other migrants has risen. There have always been facilitators who provide services to paying customers wanting to cross international borders, but smugglers have become increasingly indispensable in the present global migration flows, especially for those whose journeys involve difficult passages such as an ocean crossing. Smuggling is now the norm rather than the exception, not least because of increasingly restrictive border regimes around the world. Now, it is often only smugglers who can facilitate (unlawful) movement into and out of countries for those escaping life-threatening situations in their countries of origin.

The politicized debate on people smuggling has thrived on simplistic depictions of smugglers as ‘natural born criminals’ and ‘the scum of the earth’ – as described by former Australian PM Kevin Rudd. People smugglers are blamed as solely responsible for the human disasters along smuggling routes, whether at sea or on land. They are accused of exploiting their clients – considered innocent and helpless victims – financially and sometimes, sexually. Seemingly interested in amassing riches rather than in the well-being of their customers, smugglers are depicted as evil. But the excessively simplistic assumption that, without smugglers, nobody would die when fleeing for their lives is wrong.

The mainstream media and populist politicians alike tend not only to disregard the need for people-smuggling, but also to ignore the multi-layered composition and ever-changing configurations of smuggling networks. To facilitate the journeys of asylum seekers from Indonesia to Australia, a number of services are required, including temporary housing, provision of food, transport, organising boats and crew, collecting and transferring money. The most visible service providers in the operation are the Indonesian fishermen who ferry the asylum seekers and face the consequences of the law both in Australia and Indonesia. My research aims to disturb the ethical dichotomy between ‘bad smugglers’ and ‘good migrants’ by showing that the vilified transporters are often themselves victims of global structural changes.



Above:
Child's drawing;
photo taken
by author.

In my research, I have studied different actors within Indonesian people-smuggling networks, including former (rejected) asylum seekers working as recruiters and organisers, Indonesian fishermen, over-represented among imprisoned people smugglers, and members of Indonesian security forces who provide security for people-smuggling operations. To establish the social backgrounds of convicted smugglers, I have relied mostly on the verdicts of Indonesian courts. To retrace their decision-making and risk-taking strategies, I have held open interviews with smugglers during their imprisonment and after their release.

My work complements a number of recent studies on irregular migration and mobilities of asylum seekers and refugees as well as forced immobility that have been carried out by colleagues at different universities in Australia. Savitri Taylor, Amy Nethery and Brynna Rafferty-Brown have written in great detail about the lack of refugee protection and immigration detention in Indonesia. Linda Briskman and Lucy Fiske have mapped the ‘stuckness’ of asylum seekers rendered immobile in Indonesia by current externalised Australian border policies, and long-term observers of migratory flows, such as the late Graeme Hugo, have studied the politics of limbo in Indonesia. Susan Kneebone has scrutinised the regional mechanisms, such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and related Transnational Crime, which are responsible for immobilising

asylum seekers and refugees. Andreas Schloenhardt and Xavier R. Goffinet have conducted a number of insightful studies on the law enforcement of anti-people-smuggling legislation and the prosecution of Indonesian smugglers both under Australian and Indonesian law.

Convicting hundreds of Indonesian fishermen has had no serious impact on the operational capability of any smuggling network, as willing replacements are readily available in the large pool of impoverished Indonesians. Arresting and punishing recruiters and organisers has not proven sufficient to combat people-smuggling networks more broadly, as it is also relatively easy to replace them with members of the same network or even with competitors. For now the number of asylum seeker boats leaving Indonesia has decreased, as a result of Australia's unilateral approach of forcibly returning boats to Indonesia. The diplomatic and financial sustainability of this approach is highly questionable, as the Indonesian government has protested against it repeatedly. My findings support demands for policy-makers and opinion-leaders to shift their attention away from the facilitators of irregular migration towards the root causes of forced displacement and, thus, to eliminating the need for flight which engenders reliance on people smugglers.

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Celebrating Asian Studies in Australia

Dolly Kikon

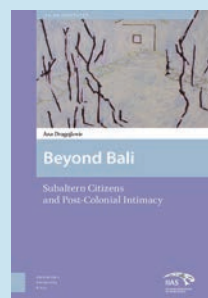
I WORK IN NORTHEAST INDIA as a political anthropologist. Over the last fifteen years, Northeast India has become an important site for an array of scholarship. For security analysts, it is a place to study armed conflict and insurgency; human rights scholars have documented some of India's worst cases of state violence in the region; for new fields like borderland studies the region is an important location to study connections and flows; and policy makers grapple with difficult questions about implementing development programs in militarized places.

My own academic trajectory – from history, law, to anthropology – has enabled me to engage with the region in various ways. Conversations with academics, practitioners, and non-government organizations in the last fifteen years have allowed me to contribute towards debates about citizenship, politics, and resources both inside and outside the academy. Producing theoretically driven and ethnographically rich work means engaging with the eclectic intellectual community of scholars working on Asia and beyond. As a student of law in India, a graduate student in Hong Kong and California, a postdoctoral fellow in Sweden, and university

lecturer in Australia today, I have truly experienced the richness of Asian Studies. And scholars across Australia have offered new concepts, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks to understand the ongoing social, economic, and political developments in Asia.

In 2016, I came across two excellent monographs published by Amsterdam University Press (AUP): *Beyond Bali: Subaltern Citizens and Post-Colonial Intimacy* (Asian Heritage Series) by Ana Dragojlovic, an anthropologist at the University of Melbourne, and *Borderland City in New India: Frontier to Gateway* (Borderland Series) by Duncan McDuie-Ra, Professor of Development Studies at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney. Many exciting works on Asian Studies have been published over the last few years, but these two works stand out for two reasons. Firstly, both scholars not only connect the reader to new concepts about place-making, mobility, and belonging, but also to people and regions in Asia (Bali and Northeast India) that are relatively underused as sites for engaging with critical and important themes in the social sciences. Secondly, the monographs assert the importance of paying attention to interconnections and crossings (both geographically and socially) in order to make original contributions to the academy.

Michael Herzfeld, professor of Anthropology at Harvard University and a member of the editorial board of the Asian Heritage Series at Amsterdam University Press explained the importance of Dr Dragojlovic's work for the Heritage Series: “Our effort is to capture the dynamics of a very large continent, Asia, and the way in which scholarship has emerged here.



Above: Two standout AUP publications.

Europe's presence in Asia has been quite intimate through its history of colonialism. Ana's book is about Balinese migrants in the Netherlands, and the vagaries of the concept of Balinese-ness. Her book describes a group of people who were caught in the conflict between the colonial powers and the local majority.”

Reflecting on her ethnographic journey, Dragojlovic said that the book project evolved from her doctoral dissertation at the Australian National University (ANU). Initially she was intrigued to explore how Balinese people created a particular image of uniqueness as a result of their contact with anthropologists, Euro-American artists, and the Dutch colonial state since the beginning of the twentieth century. Dragojlovic noted that her encounters with Balinese interlocutors in the Netherlands “caused a major puzzle” because they were not critical about Dutch colonialism. However, it was such ethnographic surprises that enabled her to present and meticulously discuss new concepts such as postcolonial intimacy in her monograph.

The variety and breadth of scholars in Australia working on Asia is impressive, and my conversations with graduate students and prospective candidates affirm that the future of Asian Studies is a vibrant and exciting one. My encounters with Dr Dragojlovic and Professor McDuie-Ra's works give me reason to celebrate Asian Studies in Australia.

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Writing identity onto the screen

Claire Maree

QUESTION MARKS appearing above a character's head, text that sparkles and shines, creative subtitling to show the inner voice of a character; the use of text in audiovisual media continues to diversify. An emerging body of cross-disciplinary work examines phenomena such as impact-captions, *telop*, decotitles, fansubs and synchronous commentary; all examples of text-on-screen produced in both professional and amateur contexts at local and transnational levels. Text-on-screen shapes how viewers understand, negotiate and engage with media. As research on impact-captions in Japanese and Korean television has argued, text in audiovisual media commodifies the gaze¹ and is a "locus for the regimentation of languages and discourses".² Text-on-screen, therefore, is a major site where identity is written into contemporary culture.

Contemporary Japanese media is an important case study for understanding global and local flows of language and identities because of its influential position in regional markets. Furthermore, although the use of decotitles and other creative subtitling is only recently being noted in English language

commercial television, the use of text-on-screen has long been a feature of Japanese TV. The history of text-on-screen in Japan is heavily tied to both commercial design and technological innovation. In recent years, digital technologies have enabled a greater variety of fonts to be introduced to the small-screen, and with the introduction of twitter-feeds and digital monitors, the sheer volume of text continues to increase.

Other Melbourne-based scholars with a research focus on screen culture in East Asia include Fran Martin, Audrey Yue and Tessa Dwyer. My own research into the movement of television talk into text on Japanese television involves thinking about how identities constituted in spoken discourse are simultaneously inscribed graphically. Furthermore, understanding titles and subtitling as one example of citational practices in contemporary media enables us to examine how discourse is recontextualised and mitigated in mainstream representations.³ This has implications for how social issues are framed within public discourse.

In November 2016, as part of my ongoing project "Writing identity on the screen: Subtitles and captions in Japanese media" [ARC Discovery Project 150102964], researchers engaged in language and global media, with a focus on audiovisual and emerging multimodal digital produced for mass-consumptions (e.g., television programs), gathered in Melbourne for an international workshop on Language and Global Media. The workshop aimed to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborative work that

examines transnational movements of global media. Looking at how text is used in audiovisual media from this perspective leads us to critically engage with identity and language in the context of wider questions on consumption and translation of media from, into and about the Asia region.

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The study of Asian art in Australia

Michelle Antoinette

STUDIES OF CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART have flourished in Australia over the last few decades alongside the burgeoning contemporary art scene in Asia and growing global interest in contemporary Asian art. I first came to learn about contemporary Asian art in the early 1990s, a time of dynamic cultural relations between Asia and Australia, including the growth of new art partnerships, collaborations, and exchanges – especially through the 'Artists' Regional Exchange' (ARX, formerly Australia and Regions Exchange, 1987-99) exhibitions, the Arts Program at 'Asialink' founded by Alison Carroll focusing on art exhibition exchanges and artist residencies in Asia, the arts organisation 'Multimedia Art Asia-Pacific' (MAAP) (now Media Art Asia-Pacific) led by Kim Machan exploring media art in Asia, and the Queensland Art Gallery's (QAG) ground-breaking 'Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art' (APT) exhibition series beginning in 1993.

Indeed, Asian art scholarship in Australia has prospered in tandem with the development of Australia-based art exhibitions and collections of Asian art. The first three editions of the APT exhibition included major conferences, which were highly influential in shaping longer-term networks, dialogues and debates for the field. The pioneering contemporary Asian art journal then known as *Art and Asia Pacific* was also established in 1993 in Australia and helped stimulate a scholarly presence for the field internationally. Likewise, leading scholars of Asian art came from all corners of the world to gather at the Australian National University in Canberra in 1991 for the momentous conference 'Modernism and Post-Modernism in Asian Art' – convened by eminent historian of Asian art, Professor John Clark – to discuss the differently situated and long-neglected modern and contemporary art histories of Asia.

These were key platforms and conferences that provided an early and developing critical mass of knowledge shaping both Australian and broader international perceptions of the modern and contemporary art of the region. Some of the influential work undertaken in Australia includes the research and teachings of Professor John Clark who has highlighted the distinctive histories of Modern Asian Art and established pioneering courses in Asian art history at the University of Sydney. Dr Caroline Turner – former QAG Deputy Director and foundational Curator of their APT exhibitions – has provided leadership in contemporary Asian art research at the Australian National University (ANU). Dr Turner has given visibility to Asian art through major exhibitions, conferences and publications particularly on themes of politics, ethics and human rights.

Other leading research in Australia includes that by Professor Adrian Vickers, based at the University of Sydney, who researches and publishes on the cultural history of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia. He has been researching modern and contemporary Indonesian art, especially the history of Balinese painting. Also tracking developments in contemporary Indonesian art, and particularly new media art and art collectives, is Dr Edwin Jurriëns based at the University of Melbourne's Asia Institute where he teaches Indonesian Studies. At the ANU, Professor Ken George has developed a unique long-term research collaboration with renowned modern Indonesian artist A.D. Pirous, investigating the artist's life and work from an ethnographic perspective; and Professor Virginia Matheson



Above: publicity advert for OzAsia Festival 2015.

Hooker has pursued important studies exploring Islamic influences in contemporary Indonesian and Malaysian art.

The field of contemporary Southeast Asian art is a strong area of interest in Australia, likely reflective of Australia's proximity to the region. As I argue in my book *Reworlding Art History: Encounters with Contemporary Southeast Asian Art after 1990* (Brill/Rodopi, 2014), far from being peripheral, Southeast Asian art has helped create the very conditions of international contemporary art, compelling us to examine the Euro-American biases of art history. Contemporary Southeast Asian art and artists play a significant part in shaping current global debates regarding the meaning of contemporary art in the world. They also reveal the locally-specific, socio-historical and aesthetic contexts informing contemporary Southeast Asian art, which also imbue it with its own histories of development, different to Western art.

'Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Modern Southeast Asian Art' is an exciting modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art project initiated in 2014 and supported by the Getty Foundation in conjunction with the University of Sydney, supporting a new generation of Southeast Asia-based research by scholars in Asia and Australia. At the ANU, a celebration of Australia-Southeast Asia connections was marked by the 2015 conference and exhibition 'Making Connections: Southeast Asian Art @ ANU'.

With regards to East Asia, Dr Claire Roberts is a well-known historian and curator of Chinese art, currently pursuing an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship project at the University of Melbourne, exploring modern and contemporary Chinese art to think about the challenges of intercultural communication in the twenty-first century. For his recent research with the Australian Centre on China in the World at ANU, Dr Olivier Krischer explored Japan-China relations as a facet of contemporary Asian art developments in the 1980s-1990s; whilst contemporary art curator Dr Sophie McIntyre investigated nationalism and identity in Taiwanese modern and contemporary art for her 2012 PhD thesis at ANU.

The field of 'Asian-Australian art' refers to artists of Asian heritage living in Australia and acknowledges their distinctive contributions to both Asian and Australian art histories and

their intersection. Leading work in the area has been undertaken by the Asian-Australian Research Studies Network and cultural spaces such as 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in Sydney, which internationally-renowned Asian art curator Melissa Chiu helped to establish twenty years ago. Formative work in this area includes that by Professor Jacqueline Lo, Professor Ien Ang, Dr Dean Chan, and Dr Francis Maravillas. Dialogues with North American neighbours with parallel interests in Asian-American art have widened the platform for critical engagement in this field, as evidenced in collaborations around the journal *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas*.

The ANU in Canberra, where I have pursued Asian art research and teaching in the field over the last fifteen years, is another locus for studies of modern and contemporary Asian art. Major conferences include the recent inaugural conference of the Australian Consortium for Asian Art, 'Moving Image Cultures in Asian Art'. Teaching in the area of Asian art at the ANU includes that undertaken in the School of Art by Dr Chaitanya Sambrani (on the modern and contemporary art of India, Indonesia and Japan), and Dr Charlotte Galloway (on Asian Art history with a focus on Myanmar), both located at the Centre for Art History and Art Theory. My own research at the ANU includes the recent Australia Research Council (ARC) project 'The Rise of New Cultural Networks in Asia in the Twenty-First Century' (DP1096041, 2010-13), which I carried out with Dr Caroline Turner. We examined Asian cultural organisations and their new regional and global networking strategies, focusing on contemporary art and art museums as key indicators of cultural change.

Alongside scholarship, art collections and exhibitions of contemporary Asian art in Australia have also strengthened in this time and increased the opportunities for the development of scholarship. This includes the Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art with its APT series and specialist Asian Art research library; the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), National Gallery of Australia and National Museum of Australia in Canberra, which have all held important contemporary Asian art exhibitions such as the NPG's 'Beyond the Self: Contemporary Portraiture from Asia' (2011), curated by Christine Clark; and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Museum of Contemporary Art, Gallery 4A, Sherman Foundation Galleries, and the China-focused White Rabbit Gallery, are among some of the key galleries in Sydney with interest in Asian art. The Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, and the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia have all been host to key exhibitions. Similarly, the Adelaide-based OzAsia Festival, Adelaide Biennale, the new Asia TOPA performing arts festival in Melbourne, and the Sydney Biennale are other important platforms. The effects of exhibitions are highlighted in essays for *Art in the Asia-Pacific: Intimate Publics* (Routledge, 2014), many by Australia-based researchers.

I'm very excited to be embarking on a new ARC-funded research project (DE170100455) from 2017, exploring new public participation in Asian art and museums in Asia, to be hosted by the Centre for Art History & Art Theory at the ANU School of Art. It's certainly a very exciting time to be continuing my research in the region, witnessing firsthand the incredible dynamism in the art and museum sectors and the latest developments newly shaping the field of contemporary Asian art.

Michelle Antoinette, ARC Research Fellow, Centre for Art History and Art Theory, School of Art, ANU (michelle.antoinette@anu.edu.au).

News from Southeast Asia

ISEAS YUSOF ISHAK INSTITUTE

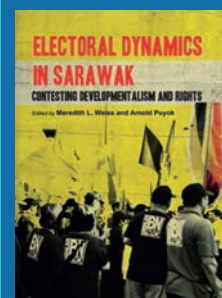
INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Research. Scholarship. Policy.

The following articles come from the Regional Social Cultural Studies Programme (RSCS). The RSCS Programme studies and examines the history, sociology and anthropology of national and transnational processes within Southeast Asia. Specifically, RSCS is concerned with ethnographic practices and theory-building in the areas of contemporary histories, nation-building, ethnicity, religion, class and popular culture in the region. Key research areas are the processes of nation-building, civil society and religion, cultural globalisation and identity-making, contemporary politics, and democratisation and multiculturalism in Southeast Asia.

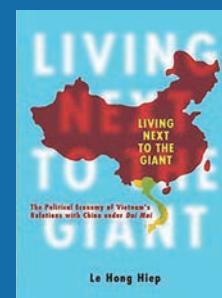
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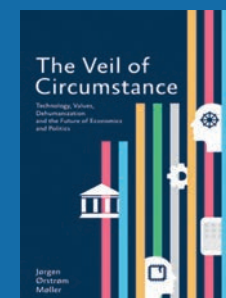
Electoral Dynamics in Sarawak: Contesting Developmentalism and Rights

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China's footprint on its neighbours

Terence Chong and Benjamin Loh



Billboard advertisement for development (Source: Terence Chong)

WE WERE GREETED by the sounds of frantic development as we walked across the border 'friendship' bridge from Hekou into the northern Vietnamese town of Lào Cai. All around us were residential complexes and office buildings under construction. Accompanying these rising buildings were huge advertising boards announcing 'My China Dream'. It became increasingly clear that along with capital, the Chinese were exporting the 'good life' to its periphery.

The articles in this section originate from a project by the Regional Social Cultural Studies programme at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, which aims to better understand the impact of a rising China on its immediate neighbours in Southeast Asia. They are excerpts from a selection of chapters from an edited volume covering Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV), to be published by ISEAS Publications. Collectively, these chapters explore how Chinese capital and labour flows are pouring into these countries, as well as the local responses to these flows. With a strong ethnographic flavour, they attempt to capture the complexities that arise from the inescapable, sometimes undesired, presence of China on the one hand, and on the other hand, the convenient source of growth and development it represents to the CLMV governments.

As China continues to mature economically after reaching almost four decades of market reform and openness, its influence is exerted in different ways. From money, cheap labour and goods, to dreams, China's footprint on its

immediate neighbours is not only large but also ever changing. Fuelled by a complex mix of Chinese government policies, varied interests of private enterprises, and myriad strategies employed by different groups of migrants in adapting and seeking out new opportunities in foreign lands, the narrative of China's rise and critique of modernity is now passé and debates should move on to examine how such an alternative modernity is presented and transferred from China to the region – and, indeed, beyond – and the local reactions.

The different historical and political experiences of these four countries with their giant neighbour ensure a diversity of local responses. While Laos and Cambodia seem to be more sanguine with the increased Chinese presence and influence, Myanmar more neutral and Vietnam more guarded, it is still important to, for example, understand the ways in which cheap Chinese plastic and electronic goods are driving local merchants out of business. Or how Chinese contract labourers do not return to China upon completion of their projects, but instead float between borders. Not to mention the longer-term impact of Mandarin as the most popular foreign language in certain communities. How will these everyday on-the-ground dynamics play out over time?

What is certain is that the China dream will have different meanings for everyone.

Chong is Senior Fellow and Loh is Fellow at the Regional Social Cultural Studies Programme at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

A Chinese Special Economic Zone in Northern Laos

Pinkaew Laungaramsri

LAOS HAS FOLLOWED its Chinese neighbor in creating Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as part of the new economic engine that allows special economic policies and flexible governmental measures conducive to doing business that do not exist elsewhere in the country. Since 2000, SEZs have become the key strategy employed by the Lao government to turn the country's economy towards market-based economic systems and a short cut towards urbanization and infrastructure development through foreign investment. Currently, thirteen SEZs have been granted to foreign investors, four of which are operated by Chinese firms. 19,499 hectares have already been allotted for SEZ development, and the government is planning as many as 40 SEZs in the next 10 years.

But contrary to China's Shenzhen model, the Lao SEZs have witnessed a retreat of the state's role in the process of zone development; full planning and regulatory authority is granted to zone developers. As a result, most zones, especially those operated by Chinese investors, have become single firm zones that are badly designed and misplaced. Failing to create further business development or employment within the zone, many SEZs are unable to generate economic growth. Furthermore, special judicial autonomy given to zone developers has created a 'state of exception' where coercive transformation of local resources and economy has been normalized, and dispossession and displacement depoliticized. In several zones, deprivation of local livelihoods in the name of modernization has been striking, resulting in the relocation of vast numbers of lowland inhabitants and direct confrontations between local communities and government officials.

The Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (GT SEZ) is a case in point. Located at the border between Laos and Thailand (Ton Phueng district, Bokeo province), the zone has been operated by a Chinese firm, Kings Romans company, since 2007. As a border SEZ with a 75 year contract (extendable to 99 years), the aim of the zone development, as put forth by the Chinese investor, is to turn the 3,000 hectares of agricultural land into a top international casino entertainment complex, and to create a new image of a green city at the 'drug border' of the Golden Triangle. Such a plan is, however, not necessarily appreciated by local people and heritage preservation experts, who view the area as part of the ancient archaeological area of Suvannakhomkam that stretches from Bo Keo in Laos to Chiang Rai's Chiang Saen on the Thai side. While GT SEZ has been ranked by the Lao government as a successful model of SEZ, with its fast track development of infrastructure and tourist facilities, and shown off by the Chinese developer as a 'merit making' project to help civilize the poor Lao population, local people regard it as an excruciating process of dispossession. Resettlement of Ban Kwan village took almost four years to settle while 116 households were involuntarily forced to move to a new site. Abrupt de-peasantization has left most villagers jobless while less than 10% of the total population has been offered a job by the company, most of whom are just 15-25 years old. The majority of the working force is instead made up of Burmese migrant laborers, who are willing to endure exploitation under precarious working conditions.

The legal authority granted to the zone has allowed a network of shadow economies to flourish and operate through the euphemism of 'entertainment complex'; they include sex and wildlife trade industries. Interestingly, the wealth generated from this type of economy is concentrated only in the hands of a few Chinese, including the investors, their cronies, and other Chinese entrepreneurs in the zone.

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Reflections of a journey on the Kunming-Hanoi Economic Corridor

Benjamin Loh and Terence Chong

BORDER TOWNS AND CITIES are increasingly becoming important nodes of development with roads and other infrastructure being built to facilitate flows of people and commodities between countries. More than 90 per cent of border trade with China's Yunnan province flows through the border towns of Hekou in China and Lào Cai in Northern Vietnam and both countries are working to establish a 1,208km 'North-South Economic Corridor' from China's Yunnan province to Vietnam's Northern provinces and cities.

In 2014, we travelled from Kunming to Hanoi through this China-Vietnam economic corridor highway to observe how resource and merchant trade, capital and people flows are conducted at an everyday level, and found that only certain stretches of the highway – on the Chinese side of the border and mostly in Vinh Phúc province in Vietnam – were ready. The highway ended abruptly about an hour into our sleeper bus journey to Hanoi, and traffic was diverted to a parallel truck road to Yên Bái. The conditions along the Yên Bái-Hanoi truck road were treacherous. A continuous line of container trucks marked 'China Shipping', cars, motorcycles, and pedestrians navigate a narrow combination of two-lane roadways, paved roads and dirt tracks.

Apart from the question of whether the road infrastructure meets the criteria of being an economic corridor and its ability to generate the purported regional economic development benefits, a closer look at the existing networks of trade – both formal and informal – and their routes reveal specific challenges. Even after the completion of the highway, commercial vehicles transporting goods and travelling from port cities like Hải Phòng may continue to use these truck or parallel roads to avoid toll fees as well as to service commercial or informal transit points along existing routes and towns for both formal and illegal trade.

In addition, Yên Bái continues to be an important transit hub of Northern Vietnam. It lies on a major railway freight corridor between China and Vietnam, and a network of truck roads from Yên Bái connects to the neighbouring provinces of Hà Giang – which shares a remote and mountainous 270 km border with Yunnan province of southern China, and is a known route for the smuggling of rhino horns, elephant tusks, as well as a rare and

valuable timber called *Ngọc Am* – and Sơn La which is a gateway province to Laos. This network of trade routes is expected to compete with the Nội Bài-Lào Cai highway, despite the latter's more direct and time-saving route to Hanoi and Hải Phòng.

Intensified smuggling and illicit trading activities are also rampant in the two border towns. Vietnamese boatmen smuggle local rice and raw materials like rubber and bauxite along the Red River under cover of night across to Yunnan. Conversely, we were informed that other smuggled goods from Yunnan into Vietnam include pesticide and vegetables. Machinery from China is dismantled and their parts smuggled across the border, to be reassembled in Vietnam. We were also informed of larger scale smuggling over the Gulf of Tonkin. Large amounts of coal and bauxite are transported this way.

There were also an array of furniture shops selling wooden furniture and woodcarvings in the border town of Lào Cai along the economic corridor. "The wood is from Laos", the shop assistant reluctantly revealed after some inquiry about a set of throne chairs with intricately-carved panels of dragons and flora set against its back. The craftsmen, however, were from Yunnan. Apparently it is more expensive to transport unfinished or raw wood products directly from Laos to Yunnan than it is from Laos to Vietnam to Yunnan. This is because of the poor road networks between Laos and Yunnan. Teak, mahogany and redwood are, instead, transported from Laos to the Vietnamese province of Bắc Ninh – known for its export-driven handicraft and wood-processing industry – where they are treated, processed, and transported to Yunnan; or made into finished furniture and ornamental craft products before export to China, the United States, Europe, and Japan.

As China's factory powerhouses in its coastal provinces experience rising costs, its hinterland and lower-wage neighbouring countries like Vietnam are taking over its lower value-added production functions. However, unlike the traditional 'flying geese' model of manufacturing based on cheaper labour and greater efficiency that in the 1980s and 1990s saw the migration of factories and production facilities to China and Southeast Asia, the case of wood furniture and the trading of other commodities in the production chain has become more like a spider's web, with components flitting in all directions and goods crossing and re-crossing borders – Lao wood is processed in Vietnam, crafted by Yunnanese labour employed by Bắc Ninh factories, and transported to China as if it were made in a single Chinese factory.

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Chinese life in Myanmar today

Nicholas Farrelly and Stephanie Olinga-Shannon

OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES, while Western democracies sought to limit the range of links that their people had with Myanmar, the Chinese government adopted a proactive policy of engaging with Myanmar and encouraged its own people to do the same. This policy created a position of leadership for some Chinese in the Myanmar economy, and also gave Chinese governments, whether in Yunnan or Beijing, a better chance to exert influence over the military rulers of Myanmar.

Therefore, the idea that Myanmar was 'closed' or 'isolated' during the years from the 1988 crackdown on pro-democracy protestors until the general election of 2010 misses the many significant changes that occurred in Myanmar society during those years. Arguably the most important set of changes centred on the new migrations of Chinese to Myanmar, as many as 2 million may have made the journey. Their impact on Myanmar society has been felt in a number of different areas, most acutely in the economy but also in the creation of newly flexible spaces for the creation of identity, the re-imagination of culture and the public display of wealth.

The prevailing narrative of Myanmar's disconnection from the world during these decades is true merely for the Western democracies that imposed some level of sanction on the Myanmar government and its affiliates. The story of Myanmar's interactions with its neighbours, including Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, are not readily explained by those trends. China, even more strikingly, has played a major role in Myanmar's recent evolution, especially with respect to the number of its citizens and former citizens living in the country. As a group, they require careful consideration during a period when ideas about citizenship and belonging remain heavily contested.

Yet there are limits to Chinese power-projection into Myanmar and there have occasionally been tense relations between the Chinese and other Myanmar residents.

This history is particularly important given the changes that are re-shaping Myanmar and leading to the relative diminution of Chinese influence. Since 2011, any Chinese 'stranglehold' on Myanmar has been loosened by more assertive Myanmar foreign policy efforts, and a deliberate Myanmar strategy of working to embrace a wider range of foreign partners. The ongoing transformation of Myanmar's domestic political and economic conditions will challenge Myanmar's Chinese residents in a number of ways. Without doubt, the 'transitional' period brings new opportunities to the country's more than 2 million ethnically Chinese residents, especially as the economy continues to grow at a healthy rate.

Yet this relatively optimistic tone is not the only aspect of local political life that deserves attention. The Chinese fit uneasily into Myanmar's official categories of national belonging and their Sinopolitan instincts are a potential vulnerability in this regard. With the exception of the Kokang Chinese in northeastern Shan State, who have 'national race' status in Myanmar, there is no obvious and legal pathway for regularising Chinese identity in the country. The Chinese are not considered indigenous to Myanmar, and this is a potential obstacle to their long-term success in Myanmar society.

The challenges for Myanmar's Muslim population, and particularly those who identify as Rohingya, reinforce the need for careful awareness when it comes to the character of belonging in what is supposed to be a determinedly multi-ethnic system. For those Chinese who still feel a strong pull towards those areas of Asia where their Sinopolitanism is an advantage, the door will remain open to future changes of direction. The Chinese in Myanmar have flourished because they have been prepared to move and adapt. Their future success may well require such flexibility and continued adjustment.

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'Old' and 'new' Chinese business in Phnom Penh

Michiel Verver

IN JUNE 2016, warm ties between the Chinese state and Prime Minister Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) were once again reaffirmed. Reportedly, Cambodia demanded ASEAN to tone down its statement on China's disputed claim over the South China Sea, after which China pledged US\$600 million in loans and grants. Political interdependencies have emerged alongside the influx of Chinese investments, businesses and economic migrants in Cambodia since the 1990s. Chinese investors currently hold dozens of Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) allocated for the cultivation of crops like rubber, sugar and cassava, and Cambodia's garment factories, which account for the bulk of Cambodian exports, are largely owned by entrepreneurs from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Petty traders from China sell cheap goods on Cambodia's markets, while infrastructural development is largely undertaken by Chinese state-owned companies and financed by Chinese banks.

In considering the ways in which China's newfound assertiveness affects Cambodian society, the perspective of the domestic private sector is particularly intriguing for at least two reasons. First, Cambodia's private sector, especially in the capital Phnom Penh, reveals an internal division between the politically connected and bereft. An exclusive group of tycoons enjoys privileges and protection from top-CPP officials and own the country's large and diversified business groups, while the majority of the private sector comprises small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that cope without political backing. Second, most entrepreneurs in Phnom Penh, both tycoons and SME owners, are children or grandchildren of Chinese migrants who came to Cambodia especially during the French colonial period. Cambodia's ethnic Chinese, who trace their roots to South China and are mostly of Teochiu descent, have come to dominate trade and commerce over the centuries. Overlaying the two begs the question of how various local entrepreneurs are embedded differently 'in between' Chinese ethnicity and Cambodia's political economy, and how this enables or constrains them from linking up with and benefiting from 'new' Chinese investments and commerce in Cambodia.

Drawing on ethnographic accounts of a variety of business owners, my chapter explores the linkages, collaboration and competition between the 'old' Chinese business community in Phnom Penh and 'new' Chinese traders, investors and economic migrants. The chapter details how, in various economic sectors, the 'old' Chinese play an important role in bridging 'new' Chinese involvement in the Cambodian economy. Newly created links between ethnic Chinese in Cambodia and China have facilitated the burgeoning trade of consumer goods and raw materials, and enabled joint ventures in real-estate, industry and natural resource exploitation. At the same time, under the broad umbrella of 'Chineseness', actual business exchanges among 'old' and 'new' Chinese often rely on family connections (among SME owners) or CPP matchmaking (among tycoons) more than shared Chinese ethnicity per se.

Phnom Penh's business community offers a valuable window into the impacts of 'new' Chinese involvement on Cambodian society. I argue that, although not fundamentally altering Cambodian society, in two ways the 'new' Chinese have further perpetuated the established political economy. Firstly, 'new' Chinese involvement propels the revival of ethnic Chinese culture, language and economic dominance in Cambodia. China has supported Chinese schools, while Chinese investors, white-collar workers and tourists are omnipresent. This has contributed to a newfound cultural confidence that holds sway especially over younger generation Cambodian Chinese, many of who speak Mandarin and who have been spared the discrimination and atrocities of the Cold War period. Second, 'new' Chinese involvement in Cambodia has augmented the divide between the elite and the general population. By channeling aid and investment into Cambodia via politically connected tycoons and in accordance with Hun Sen's development agenda, Chinese private and public investors have provided Hun Sen the resources to oil the patronage system.

Looking ahead, it is unlikely that renewed Chinese commercial dominance and cultural salience will backfire on Cambodia's ethnic Chinese. As before the Khmer Rouge, anti-Chinese sentiments are largely absent. However, the growing divide between chiefly exploitative elites and exploited local communities, who face land evictions, human rights abuses and low wages, is problematic. While the excesses of Hun Sen-style authoritarianism spread across Cambodia, the CPP is gradually losing its constituency, which bodes ill for political stability in the near future.

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News from Northeast Asia

Since 2009, the Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) has been proposing new contents and perspectives on Asia by integrating regional and thematic research across Asia. SNUAC seeks to be the leading institution for research and scholarly exchanges. SNUAC features three regional centers, the Korean Social Science Data Archive (KOSSDA), and seven thematic research programs. By fostering 'expansion' and 'layering' between Asian studies and Korean studies, the Center endeavors to shape new frameworks of Asian studies that go beyond a 'Western-non-Western' dichotomy. SNUAC will continue to support the pursuit of scholarly excellence in the study of Asia by providing opportunities to conduct international collaboration on an array of topics in Asia research.



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Tourism in Korea, China, and Japan

Kyuhoon Cho

FOR MANY, travel is a measure of the quality of life. It is an activity people may engage in to make up for something lacking in everyday life, to find balance with a daily routine revolving around work. Travel acquires a variety of meanings in the lives of people today – from personal to socio-cultural. In addition to being an escape from the ordinary and a respite from their busy schedules, travelling allows them to experience diverse cultures, meet local people, discover new aspects of themselves in unfamiliar surroundings, and explore alternative lifestyles found in different cultural environments. In this way, the actions, impressions, and expectations of tourists reflect their identities, self-perceptions, and social aspirations.

The three essays below describe the signifying practices of East Asian tourists, analyze the diverse objectives and social effects of trips taken by foreign travelers in China, and investigate other related issues. Myungkoo Kang and Eun-Young Nam categorize the meanings attached by Chinese visitors to their travels in Korea into three types of 'gazes': patriotic-developmental, consumerist-cosmopolitan, and analytical-introspective. Ryosuke Okamoto offers a new perspective on 'contents tourism' using the case of the 'Tomb of Christ' (southern Aomori Prefecture, Japan) as a representative example of a tourist site that is obviously unauthentic. Linking tourism with migration, Yucheng Liang examines the differences between tourists from developing and developed countries who visit Guangzhou, China, by looking at their goals and local social networks.

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Chinese tourists. Image reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy of Morten Knutsen on Flickr.

Geographical imaginaries and travel experiences of Chinese youke in Seoul

Myungkoo Kang and Eun-Young Nam

OVERSEAS TRAVEL BY CHINESE TOURISTS, referred to as youke (游客) in Chinese, was liberalized in March 1997. Currently estimated at about 120 million people a year, China's outbound tourism ranks first in the world both in the total number of tourists and the volume of consumption. Going abroad became even easier for the Chinese after their country joined the World Tourism Organization in 2001, and the trend has accelerated into a tourism boom. According to a survey conducted by the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF 2014), when traveling abroad, Chinese tourists are mostly attracted by beautiful scenery (73.6%), unique cultures (68.6%), ancient history (58.1%), delicious food (48.5%), monumental buildings (33.3%), reasonable prices (33.3%), cheap products (29.1%), museums (22.1%), and friendly people (17.1%).

This essay examines the expectations, or, in John Urry's terms, the "tourist gaze", and meanings given to their trips by Chinese tourists visiting Korea, by analyzing results of a survey carried out by Seoul National University Asia Center in 2015 and Chinese travel reviews found online. The activity that the Chinese engaged in most often during their trips

to Korea was shopping (87.1%). This was followed by taking a city tour (35.5%), visiting a royal palace or other historical sites (32%), walking around downtown (29.4%), admiring the natural scenery (27.1%), and enjoying adult and other forms of entertainment (17.4%). The survey demonstrated that their travel purposes ranged from "having fun, resting, and recharging their energy" (37%) and "observing alternative lifestyles in diverse cultures and finding a new self" (30.2%) to "looking for a new meaning in life through encounters with unfamiliar sceneries and cultures" (21.7%) and "escaping the boredom of everyday life" (11.1%). Therefore, the majority of Chinese tourists visiting Korea consider their trips more than a simple escape from their daily routines or a way to relax but as an experience helping them to obtain new meaning in life.

To analyze the signifying practices of Chinese tourists, we divide the 'tourist gaze' into three categories: patriotic-developmental, consumerist-cosmopolitan, and analytical-introspective. It is worth noting that each individual tourist does not view Korea from only one perspective but several types of perspectives combine in layers that together form the tourist's image of the country.

The particular gaze is strongly linked to the tourists' identities. Those who go overseas with an emphasis on their identity as Chinese citizens manifest strong patriotic feelings and developmental attitudes. They think of Korea as a 'model of development' China has to learn from, compare the sizes of cities, history, cultural levels, etc., and look at Korea and its cities from the standpoint of the Chinese. The pride of being Chinese, China-centrism, envy, and an inferiority complex intersect in this gaze, which we call 'patriotic-developmental'.

Secondly, Chinese tourists are highly interested in shopping, consumption, and lifestyle. A penchant for shopping is especially prominent among female Chinese tourists in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. Their focus is on how to express themselves as individuals, and for this reason, they like to observe the lifestyles of Koreans and Seoulites. In this 'consumerist-cosmopolitan gaze', shopping is the main purpose and biggest motivation for traveling; it is the most valuable activity enhancing the joy of a trip. The influence of (the Korean Wave), or fascination with Korea as a brand, constitutes an important factor producing a geographical imaginary and attracting tourists to the country. Those possessing this gaze feel like they are entering the global consumer culture and enhancing their fashion sense and lifestyle through shopping.

There is also the perspective from which tourists critically look into the hidden side of a tourist site and try to explain or interpret the site's features through their own logic. This type of gaze, which we named 'analytical-introspective', leads tourists to focus on experiencing local culture, making special, lifetime memories through travel experiences with their partners, and reflecting upon themselves. Compared to the previous two types, this gaze is composed of more subtle, introspective viewpoints. Overall, this study demonstrates the importance of examining the signifying practices by tourists themselves rather than the stereotypes unilaterally attached to Chinese tourists by the host society.

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Authentic fakes: the case of the Tomb of Christ in Japan¹

Ryosuke Okamoto



AS A REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE of a tourist site that is obviously unauthentic, the case of the Tomb of Christ [*Kirisuto no haka*] in Shingō Village (新郷村) of Sonnahoe District (三戸郡) located in the south of Aomori Prefecture (青森県) in Japan offers a new perspective on 'contents tourism'¹ (also known as media-induced tourism). Positioned roughly 30 km to the west of an important regional center, Hachinohe City (八戸市), Shingō Village stretches along the country road connecting Hachinohe with Lake Towada (十和田湖). Its population has been shrinking since the 1970s, with the current number of residents recorded at 2,679 (March 2016). And in this small village, a peculiar legend of Jesus has been handed down for generations.

The legend has its roots in the Takenouchi Documents (竹内文書), one of the most famous hoaxes in the history of modern Japan. According to the legend, Jesus Christ returned to Judea to teach after spending his youth in Japan; he escaped persecution by fleeing back to Japan, where he lived until his death. The place where, the legend claims, he was buried gained the spotlight as a tourist attraction thanks to the

Kirisuto Matsuri (Christ Festival, キリスト祭), a memorial service for Jesus Christ held on the first Sunday of June every year since 1964. Given that Shingō has fewer than 3,000 residents, it is remarkable that an estimated number of over ten thousand tourists, over 30% of whom are foreigners, visit the village every year. Most of the foreign tourists come to see the tomb, and their contribution to the local economy is significant.

Despite media attention for the tomb and its fame as a B-grade tourist spot, it has never been argued that the place is authentic. On the contrary, the majority of local residents and tourists recognize that the Tomb of Christ in Shingō is a fake. A large number of tourists visiting the tomb do so out of curiosity. They obtain information about the occult practice from the internet or magazines and come to the village to enjoy the forged nature of the tomb or the exoticism of the festival. Many want to experience the unique space created by the festival, regardless of the tomb's authenticity, or lack thereof. There is, of course, a minority of tourists who believe that the legend is true.

Above:
Christ Festival,
photo courtesy of
Ryosuke Okamoto.

In general, the authenticity of a tourist attraction is an important factor directly related to the site's capacity to lure tourists. Because there is 'something real that is worth seeing', tourists flock even to difficult to reach places. Especially in the case of historical sites, to what extent the place has preserved its original appearance is important. Where repairs or maintenance has been performed, the key to preserving a site's value is in meticulous scientific examination of its historical authenticity.

In contrast, the Tomb of Christ in Shingō has its very origins in a forged document, and therefore it could not claim any historical or scientific authenticity even from the very beginning. The fact that both the local residents and tourists are aware of this is particularly intriguing. There are instances where the Tomb of Christ has been mentioned in critical terms, as a suspicious fake tourist site or an evidence of mercantilism. However, this case demonstrates an example of the pursuit of a kind of authenticity distinct from traditionally accepted historical authenticity in the process of developing a tourist destination.

Instances of authenticity deriving from the fake and the consequent formation of the sense of community can be observed in other cases of modern tourist culture as well. Contents tourism, such as visiting movie sets and places appearing in animation films, has become a major object of investigation in tourism studies. Uno Tsunehiro (宇野常寛) defines contents tourism as an infusion of color into an ordinary space or an act of making a familiar living space a special one by fictionalizing a part of reality through the introduction of a forged history. Such a process of sanctifying an ordinary place based on a forged history took place in Shingō Village. In this light, the case of the Tomb of Christ in Japan can be seen as an example of thriving contents tourism and valuable material for the study of a new focus of modern tourism, festival events.

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Reference

- 1 This article is based on Ryosuke Okamoto. 2016. "Authentic Fakes, Diversification of Authenticity in Tourism Culture: The Case of the Tomb of Christ in Japan", *Asia Review* 6(1):293-316, published by Seoul National University Asia Center.

The spatial occurrence of international tourism: China's experience

Yucheng Liang



FEWER FOREIGNERS VISIT CHINA THESE DAYS due to the global economic crisis. According to the China National Tourism Administration, the number of inbound foreign tourists decreased from 27 million people in 2011 to 26 million in 2015. However, if visitors are categorized by nationality into those from developed and developing countries, it becomes clear that the decline applies only to tourists from developed countries whereas the number of visitors from developing countries has actually increased. What is the reason for this phenomenon? Very few of the existing studies have discussed the differences in tourism trends by nationality.

This essay examines the reasons why more and more people feel the need to travel and looks into the factors stimulating the development of tourism through the prism of 'migrant tourism'.¹ Several macro- and micro-factors behind the emergence of migrant tourism have been suggested in existing literature. These include 1) the globalization of the labor market as more people are choosing to live in a foreign country after retirement based on their experiences overseas; 2) instability of the labor market due to the rising mobility of labor; 3) aging populations in developed countries;

4) growing similarities between different countries and regions due to the postmodern tendency to imitate each other in order to satisfy their visitors; 5) more opportunities for tourist migration as many retirees enter the tourism-related businesses or become migrants with the acquisition of severance payments or other assets; 6) re-evaluation of the values of quality of life and job satisfaction, which results in more frequent travel and migration to the countryside as more people in developed societies now appreciate the rural way of life and beautiful scenery; and 7) decreasing differences in production and consumption as well as wider distribution of products due to the development of transportation and communications.

Studies of tourism migration divide migrant tourists into two types: tourist-consumers and tourist-workers. The latter appear in response to the demand in an emerging service industry created by an increase of travelers to a certain tourist site. They may also be filling in the gaps due to labor shortages in an existing tourist industry. The category of tourist-consumers is more diverse in its composition and includes seasonal migrants, lifestyle migrants, retirees, etc.

Above: Tourists
in the Forbidden
City, Beijing. Image
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Mark Nye on Flickr.

We used a survey (Center for Social Surveys of National Management Institute, Sun Yat-sen University, 2016) targeting foreigners who entered China through the immigration offices of Guangzhou and Foshan to analyze the relationship between entry for tourism and entry for other reasons. The results demonstrated a difference between visitors from developed countries and visitors from developing countries. To the former, tourism is the only purpose of entry in the majority of cases, whereas people from developing countries rarely have a singular purpose. The fact is that the respondents from developing countries come to China to travel, to work in a local office of their home company, to work for a Chinese company, or to search for business opportunities, and this shows that they have multiple purposes, most of which are related to economic reasons.

The social networks of migrants serve as a source of information on the travel destination in many ways. They reduce moving costs, alleviate difficulties in adapting to the local culture, and help migrants to find jobs in the new location. In this respect, the social capital of respondents from developing countries grows in China. The multiple purposes they have when entering the country leads them to engage with different kinds of people more actively, and this, in turn, promotes the creation and accumulation of social capital locally. Furthermore, such migrants soon gain the ability and motivation to invite friends and family from their home countries to China. Seen from this perspective, compared to tourists from developed countries, visitors from developing countries make a more important contribution to the steady growth of local social capital, which leads to a cumulative causal effect. Therefore, there is mutual influence between tourism and the economic purposes of entry to China by visitors from developing countries, and after their arrival, we can observe the expansion of local social networks and social capital.

We hope that this study will enrich readers' understanding of foreign tourism in China and, particularly, the behavior of visitors from developing countries.

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Reference

- 1 Migrant tourism refers to the phenomenon of tourists, who just like migrants, are employed or participate in commercial activities beyond the purpose of tourism.

China Connections

India-China Links

Tansen Sen

China's connections to South Asia date back to the first millennium CE, when itinerant Buddhist monks, the circulations of ritual objects and commodities, and the rendition of Indic texts into Chinese led to the creation of unique linkages across the Asian continent. These connections and linkages continued, albeit transformed through commercial expansions and the spread of European colonial domination, during the second millennium. The opium trade and the wars that ensued triggered the formation of new networks of intellectual exchanges and the publication of a wide array of Indian and Chinese writings about each other in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.



THE VISIT OF THE NOBLE LAUREATE Rabindranath Tagore to China in 1924 provided a significant impetus to these writings that were often framed within the context of pan-Asianism. New sites of interactions between Indian and Chinese intellectuals, such as Santiniketan, near Calcutta in India, and Shanghai in China, emerged during this period. It was also at this time that Chinese migrants started settling down in larger numbers in Calcutta and Bombay, and Indian traders expanded their businesses in Shanghai, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

These exchanges persisted into the 1950s with the establishment of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China as two new nation states. The catchphrase 'Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai' [Indians and Chinese are brothers] was created to mark the end of imperialism and celebrate the beginning of decolonized brotherhood. Unfortunately

though, territorial disputes and issues of national integration resulted in the India-China war of 1962, the trauma of which continues to define the contemporary relations between the ROI and the PRC. And it is within this context of unease, that many innovative projects aimed to foster people-to-people connections have been launched, or older programs revived.

This issue of *China Connections* reports on some of these initiatives. They include the visit of the Indian author Amitav Ghosh to China, the establishment of new centers of research, and the training of young scholars from the two countries. These initiatives are examples of new linkages and global connections of the twenty-first century.

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Left: Traveling monk, ca. 851–900, Mogao Grottoes Cave 17, Dunhuang, Gansu Province



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Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai

The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai serves as the hub within the NYU Global Network University system to promote the study of Asian interactions and comparisons, both historical and contemporary. The overall objective of the Center is to provide global societies with information on the contexts for the reemerging connections between the various parts of Asia through research and teaching. Collaborating with institutions across the world, the Center seeks to play a bridging role between existing Asian studies knowledge silos. It will take the lead in drawing connections and comparisons between the existing fields of Asian studies, and stimulating new ways of understanding Asia in a globalized world.

Asia Research Center at Fudan University

Founded in March 2002, the Asia Research Center at Fudan University (ARC-FDU) is one of the achievements of the cooperation of Fudan and the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS). Throughout the years, the center has been working tirelessly to promote Asian Studies, including hosting conferences and supporting research projects. ARC-FDU keeps close connections with the ARCs in mainland China and many institutes abroad.

China-India Academic Programs

The China-India Studies Program at the Harvard-Yenching Institute

THE HARVARD-YENCHING INSTITUTE has recently developed a joint doctoral fellowship program that seeks to bring together and train the next generation of scholars of Indian studies in China and scholars of Chinese Studies in India. This new program, facilitated by the participation of the Institute for Chinese Studies in Delhi and four partner institutions in China (Fudan University, Peking University, Sichuan University, and Yunnan University), is open to those in all fields of the humanities and social sciences.

Chinese Studies in India & Indian Studies in China

Each year a small number of promising doctoral candidates in Chinese Studies at Indian universities will be selected for the joint doctoral fellowship program. In addition to their doctoral studies in India, funded by the Indian side, participants are eligible for two years abroad, funded by the Harvard-Yenching Institute. One year of HYI support will be spent at a host institution in China to receive advanced Chinese language training and interdisciplinary training in Chinese Studies. After the year in China, program participants will be eligible to spend one year in residence at the Harvard-Yenching Institute for dissertation research and writing.

The program's host institutions in China will also be invited to nominate a small number of outstanding doctoral students or younger faculty members in Indian Studies to come to HYI as Visiting Fellows or Visiting Scholars. Selected candidates will join their Indian counterparts at the Harvard-Yenching Institute for a one-year stay. For more information about the program visit the HYI website: <http://www.harvard-yenching.org/china-india-studies-program> and the ICS website: <http://www.icsin.org/ics-hyi-multi-year-doctoral-fellowship-in-china-studies>

For more information contact: Lindsay Strogatz, Program Manager of the Harvard-Yenching Institute (strogatz@fas.harvard.edu).

The Center for Gandhian and Indian Studies at Fudan University

THE CENTER FOR GANDHIAN AND INDIAN STUDIES established at Fudan University in 2015 is a platform for comprehensive and interdisciplinary Gandhian and Indian Studies. It aims to integrate the strength and resources of Gandhian and Indian Studies throughout the university, and communicates with scholars from China and abroad. It focuses on studies about Gandhi's ideology and social practices, Indian economy, politics and foreign relations, as well as Indian language, religion and culture, including studies related to Buddhism and historical contacts between India and China in this context.

The Center for Gandhian and Indian Studies endeavors to establish the discipline of Indian Studies at Fudan, to cultivate talents of Gandhian and Indian Studies, to promote exchange and communication between Chinese and Indian academic circles as well as people from all walks of life to enhance mutual understanding between Chinese and Indian people.

The Center has already commenced publication under the book series entitled *Indologia et Studia Indica*. Recent books include Zheng Weihong's *Studies in Buddhist Logic* and Tang Mingjun's edited volume *Nyāyamukha, Festschrift for Prof. Weihong Zheng*. On 10-11 December 2016, in collaboration with the International Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in India, the Center organized the international conference 'Indo-Chinese Cultural Relations: Through Buddhist Path of Transcendence'. The Center invites global scholars for long and short-term visits to Fudan University.

For more information contact: Zhen LIU 劉震, Director of the Center for Gandhian and Indian studies at Fudan University (liuzhen@fudan.edu.cn).

The India China Institute at The New School

ESTABLISHED IN 2005, the India China Institute (ICI) at The New School supports research, teaching and discussion on India, China and the United States, with special focus on making comparisons and understanding interactions between the three countries as well as their joint impact on the rest of the world. ICI is the hub of an international network of scholars, leaders, and opinion-makers. Through fellowships, courses, public events, publications, and collaboration with a wide range of institutions around the world, ICI promotes academic and public understanding of issues of contemporary relevance to India-China studies.

Sacred landscapes of India and China

For the past three years, the ICI has been conducting research across India, Nepal and China as part of its 'Sacred Landscapes and Sustainable Futures in the Sacred Himalaya Initiative', supported by the Henry Luce Foundation. ICI has been exploring the complex relationships between Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash – two sacred sites in Western Tibet – and the diverse faith communities from across South Asia who undertake pilgrimages to visit and worship these sites. The project has tried to better understand how local communities are adapting to a range of issues, from climate change and new economic pressures brought about by globalization to the changing geopolitical border realities. This new work will be presented later this year at the 'Mountains and Sacred Landscapes Conference' (20-23 April 2017) in New York City.

Fostering scholar-leaders in India and China

Another exciting project ICI is leading is our recently launched 'China India Scholar-Leaders Initiative', which will bring together emerging young scholars from India, China and the US focused on the theme of 'Prosperity and Inequality in China and India'. By combining advanced academic capacity-strengthening with fieldwork and research-mentoring, this new initiative seeks to deepen the field of India-China Studies and provide much-needed academic and organizational support to young scholars. Fellows will spend 18 months developing new research for publication while expanding their professional networks across India, China and the US.

The great urban transformations of China and India

In addition to these two important projects, ICI is also establishing a unique research and policy collaboration on urbanization, 'The Great Urban Transformations of China and India: Implications for Equity and Livelihoods'. In the first three-year phase (2017-2020) of a larger project, ICI and partner institutions in Shenzhen and New Delhi will collaborate to develop a transnational (India, China, and United States) network of urban scholars and practitioners whose research and policy dialogues can evaluate the ways that urban policies and practices in these two metro-regions can address more closely the problems of urban inequities and the proliferation of precarious urban jobs and livelihoods. To learn more about these and other India-China related efforts visit the India China Institute's website: <https://www.indiachinainstitute.org>. You can also follow us on Twitter @india_china.

For more information contact: Ashok Gurung, Senior Director of the India China Institute at The New School (gurunga@newschool.edu)

'Little India' in China

Ka-Kin Cheuk

LOCATED IN EASTERN ZHEJIANG PROVINCE as a district under Shaoxing municipality, Keqiao is not only a global trading hub, but also a 'Little India' in China. Its wholesale market accounts for one-third annual turnover of a bewildering variety of fabrics: the semi-finished, lightweight textiles that are industrially woven, knitted, dyed, and printed in China before being exported to over 180 ports around the world. In the local market, around 5000 Indians have established intermediary trade businesses in Keqiao. Together with other foreign traders, these traders have brokered a large amount of fabric trade for their buyers in different parts of the world, mostly in the Global South.

Drawing on long-term fieldwork in Keqiao (2011-2012; 2016-2017), this ethnographic study explores the everyday work experience of Indian traders in the local fabric market. It unpacks the economic niche that they have created through local market engagements, as well as the transnational trading networks that have sustained this niche in the global value chain of textiles. As such, it aims to explore the significance of Indian-Chinese fabric trade in Keqiao in the global economy.

In 1998, the first Indian came to open a trading office in Keqiao. But Keqiao's fabric market existed long before that. It proliferated in the late 1970s, when a large part of Zhejiang Province was still plagued by poverty and underdevelopment. Many local Chinese peasants and fishermen became peddling traders selling fabrics, while others converted their houses into household factories supplying fabrics to the traders. The local traders organized a fabric bazaar along the main canal area. It later became the central marketplace accommodating over 20,000 wholesale shops and distributing more than 10,000 types of fabrics. The continuous inflow of Chinese migrant traders, particularly those from the rural areas in Wenzhou and Sichuan, has further enhanced the local supply chain, as they have connected Keqiao to a sales network across the whole nation.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, such developmental dynamics from below have received institutional support from the local government, in a time when state's support was not



common in the local market economy. The local government, for instance, played a crucial role in improving the infrastructure of Keqiao, facilitating the robust growth of its fabric trade economy. In recognizing the economic achievement and national importance of Keqiao's fabric industries, in 1992, the central Chinese government named the marketplace area 'The China Light Textile City' (中国轻纺城).

Indian-Chinese connections

In Keqiao, it is well-recognized that the arrival of many Indian traders drastically transformed the local trade landscape. The first wave of Indian migrants to the city coincided with its exponential growth of fabric exports in the early 2000s. Since then, the value of fabric exports has overtaken that of the domestic trade, thereby making international fabric trade indispensable to the economic development of Keqiao. From the perspective of the Indian traders, their relocation to Keqiao was largely a market choice. These Indian traders usually operate their transnational business on limited budgets. Most of them specialize in the intermediary trade of low-grade fabrics for the price-savvy buyers, particularly those frequenting the re-export market in Dubai. Living in Keqiao

Above: Fabric marketplace buildings along the main canal in Keqiao. Photo by author.

enables the Indian traders to establish stronger networks with suppliers. It allows them to negotiate better prices and higher commission fees for the trade orders. In so doing, the Indian traders capitalize on the unique market structure of Keqiao's fabric industries: over 80 per cent of Chinese suppliers are running small and medium-sized enterprises.

In Keqiao, most of these suppliers only manage to supply cheap and low-quality fabrics, which is a crowded market that inevitably faces intense price competition. The local price competition, however, turns out to be a market strength in the low-end export sector, given that the Indian traders are also extremely price-sensitive in their purchases. With both sides being so much strained on the price factor, their everyday encounters in Keqiao tend to be fraught with tension and conflict. Nevertheless, holding to a dual commitment of cutting cost and maintaining partnership, Indian-Chinese trade in Keqiao is a resilient force in sustaining the grassroots connections between China and the Global South, especially so in the time of on-going global economic uncertainties.

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Sanskrit Studies at Peking University

THE ORIGINS OF SANSKRIT STUDIES at Peking University can be traced back to 1921, when the German scholar Alexander von Stael-Holstein created a Sanskrit course for PKU students. After him, Walter Liebenthal, also a German, taught this course in the 1930s. They helped train a number of Chinese students in Sanskrit; this included the noted intellectuals Lin Likouang and Wu Xiaoling. In 1946, after returning from Göttingen, Germany, Ji Xianlin established the Department of Oriental Languages at Peking University, marking the beginning of the discipline of Indology in modern China. Two years later, Jin Kemu joined Peking University and worked together with Ji Xianlin to promote India Studies in China. Due to their reputation in the academic community, and because of their excellence in teaching and scholarship, the 1950s witnessed a rapid development of Sanskrit Studies at Peking University.

The first undergraduates majoring in Sanskrit and Pali were enrolled in 1960, most of whom pursued academic careers after graduation. Among them Jiang Zhongxin and Huang Baosheng, who became celebrated scholars for their contributions to the field. Jiang was among the first scholars who paid attention to the study of Sanskrit manuscripts found in Tibet and he translated the Hindu text *Manusmṛti* (Laws of Manu) into Chinese. Huang played a vital role in completing the translation of the Indian epic *Mahābhārata* and made major contributions to the study of Sanskrit poetics. In 1978, shortly after the Cultural Revolution, Ji Xianlin became the vice president of Peking University and the director of the Institute of South Asian Studies, established jointly by Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Since then BA, MA, and PhD degrees in Sanskrit and Pali have been offered at Peking University. As of now, Peking University remains the only institution where a comprehensive program in Sanskrit and Pali is offered to undergraduate and graduate students. Additionally, minor options are available in Tibetan language and literature. In 2004, the Research Institute of Sanskrit Manuscripts and Buddhist Literature was established at the university. This expanded the disciplinary coverage to new areas, including Tibetan and Sanskrit manuscript studies, and the translation and interpretation of Sanskrit, Kharoṣṭhī and Khotanese documents found in Xinjiang. Three series of publication have been launched to disseminate the research outcome of the Institute, including the series on Sanskrit manuscripts and Buddhist literature and on Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese languages. In 2009, an MoU was signed with Dhammachai Institute in Thailand to jointly translate the Pali Tipitaka into Chinese. The main idea behind this project is to introduce the Pali Buddhist canon to the Chinese audience and to develop an educational program on the Pali Buddhist tradition at Peking University. This effort has resulted in the publication of the Buddhist text *Dīghanikāya* in 2012.

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West Heavens: India-China cultural exchange program

West Heavens is an integrated cross-cultural exchange program. It aims to untangle and compare the different paths of modernity taken by India and China, to facilitate high-level communication between the two countries' intellectual and art circles, and to promote interaction through social thoughts and contemporary art. Since 2010, the program has organized more than 100 events including forums, exhibitions, film screenings and workshops, and published more than ten books.

China has been in the grip of modernization for over a century. From Revolution to Cold War, and now capitalist globalism, China has been unable to shake off paradigms set by the West. Even Chinese discourse about modernity has so far been trapped by dichotomies of 'East/West' or 'China/West'. No wonder that efforts at developmental self-reliance have only led to increasingly Westernized economic and political institutions and lifestyles. Today the West that China emulates as the model of an 'advanced civilization' is no longer suitable for guidance, and yet access to China's own historical resources has been blocked by the framework of these models. To establish a position for itself outside of the two Western Cold War ideological paradigms, to develop historical resources beyond Western ideals, China must make connections elsewhere. Among Asian countries that have struck off on different paths of modernization, but still successful by the parochial standards of 'prosperity', India has much to offer its neighbors. For more than a century, challenges of imperialism and capitalism have forced India and China to develop political strategies that have profoundly transformed both societies. Sharing this experience is valuable for Indians and Chinese alike.

China had experienced one other profound cultural turn long before the seismic cultural shift towards the West. The Buddhist turn did not bring comparable destructive fervor as the past century of revolutions, but its influence was just as far reaching; Buddhist learning took many centuries before it was fully absorbed into Confucian scholarship in the Song dynasty (10-13 C). Today, after a century of revolutions, it is important to remember this history of cultural self-transformation. At this age of global change it is critical for China to remind ourselves that in our imagination of the world there is not just the West, but also the 'West Heavens'.



Amitav Ghosh at the Youth Round Table in Mingfu Library, Shanghai; photo by Zhou Shengjie, provided by West Heavens.

China tour with Amitav Ghosh

In Fall 2016, West Heavens curated a one month visit to China with Indian writer Amitav Ghosh, in collaboration with NYU Shanghai and the publishers of the Chinese editions of *In An Antique Land* and *River of Smoke*. Ghosh's travel covered major cities throughout China – including Kunming, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai – giving talks on the relation between history and writing, the Opium Wars and India-China trade relations. Ghosh also met with local authors, critics, press, and in particular with Chinese readers, and presented at two major book fairs, Beijing Book Fair and Shanghai Book Fair. In addition, West Heavens curated a Youth Round Table on history and writing, in Mingfu Library in Shanghai, with Amitav Ghosh and young writers, artists, and researchers from inside and outside of academia. During his talks and roundtables, Ghosh left the Chinese readers with a vivid impression of a contemporary Indian literature. Indian literature is not sufficiently translated into Chinese, and only those who won major Western literature prizes have so far attracted the attention of Chinese publishers. The question of how and why certain literature should be introduced to readers shall be further discussed among academics, critics, publishers and readers.

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China Connections *continued*The murder of Buddha Singh and the rise of British trans-regional surveillance¹

Yin Cao



IN JANUARY 1924, copies of the newspaper *Hindu Jagawa* were seized by the Shanghai Municipal Police (S.M.P.) at the headquarters of the Hindustan Association in Rue du Consulat, in the French Concession of Shanghai. The editor of this newspaper, Harbaksh Singh – viewed as the ringleader of the Indian nationalist movement in Shanghai – was then charged with publishing ‘seditious’ papers that would result in a breach of public peace. The evidence of this charge lay in an article, entitled, “One who seeks the blood of his brethren for his own personal benefit”. The article blamed a *Jemadar* [Inspector] of the Sikh branch of the S.M.P., Buddha Singh, for using the *Gurdwara*’s [Sikh place of worship] money to buy gifts for his British officers in order to flatter them. It alleged, “outwardly [Buddha Singh] seems to love his people, but inwardly, he is against them and on the side of the government”. Why was Buddha Singh regarded as a traitor by the nationalists? And in what way does Buddha Singh’s personal story shed light on the Indian nationalist struggle as well as the Chinese political landscape of the 1920s?

Buddha Singh was born in the Majha region of the Punjab in the 1870s. He came to Shanghai and joined the S.M.P. as a constable in February 1902. According to the Terms of Service for the Indian Branch of the S.M.P., a constable had to serve for at least five years before he could be promoted to the rank of *Havildar* [Sergeant] and it was nearly impossible for a common constable to obtain the position of *Jemadar*, the highest rank for any Sikh serving in the S.M.P.. Buddha Singh, however, did not want to bow to this fate. Apart from completing his own work in an exemplary way, he also performed as the treasurer of the local Sikh community and was actively involved in organizing religious festivals, such as the Singh Sabha Celebration, which gained him considerable respect among his countrymen. The S.M.P. felt Buddha Singh’s rising influence and was all too ready to utilize him for its own ends. In February 1906, Buddha Singh was made *Havildar* by the S.M.P.; he became the secretary of the Sikh community in Shanghai two years later, and in 1911 he was promoted to *Jemadar* of the S.M.P..

When World War I broke out, Buddha Singh felt the expediency to check anti-British elements. In July 1914, he began to investigate the circulation of the ‘seditious’ *Ghadar* newspaper in Shanghai and found out that they were distributed by seven Ghadar Party members, who were also responsible for recruiting local Sikhs and transporting them to India. Buddha Singh forwarded the details of these men to the S.M.P., adding that those involved should be arrested. Alerted to a possible British crackdown, Ghadarites burned all copies of the newspaper and fled from Shanghai.



To counter the propaganda of the Ghadar Party, Buddha Singh took measures to reinforce Sikh loyalty to the British Empire in Shanghai. On 21 November 1915, he presided over the anniversary of the birthday of Guru Nanak Singh in the North Sichuan Road Gurdwara, in which a resolution was passed that called on all Sikhs in Shanghai to express their loyalty to the British Raj and to devote their energy and means to assist the British government in the war. To strengthen patriotism and to nurture the sense of obedience amongst young Sikhs, Buddha Singh helped to set up the Shanghai Sikh Scout Troop in August 1917. Additionally, he initiated a movement to exhort Sikhs in Shanghai to donate money to the Red Cross in India for the benefit of wounded Sikh soldiers who were loyal to and had fought for the British Empire during the War.

Buddha Singh’s work outweighed the efforts of the Ghadar Party in Shanghai. During the War, not a single case of insubordination was reported and the discipline of the Sikh police unit was judged to be “excellent” by the Annual Report (1917) of the Shanghai Municipal Council. As a reward for his contribution, Buddha Singh was conferred the title of *Sirdar Sahib*, the most honorable title a Sikh had ever been offered in Shanghai. To glorify this achievement, all high-profile British officials in Shanghai attended the ceremony in the British Consulate. A procession, composed of mounted Sikh policemen, European policemen, and Sikh Boy Scouts, was held to greet the titleholder. The British Consul-General, Sir Everard Fraser, presented the insignia to Buddha Singh in person.

The honor, however, was merely one side of the coin. Buddha Singh’s influence and his stubborn attitude toward the Indian nationalists also brought him great troubles. On the morning of 15 July 1914, days after Buddha Singh forwarded the name list of seven ‘seditious’ to the S.M.P., he was assaulted with a heavy stick by an ex-policeman, Lal Singh, an alleged Ghadar member who turned out to be a friend of those on the list. Ten days later, he was attacked again by three alleged Ghadarites who knocked him down and tried to blind him by fiercely attacking his eyes and head. Buddha Singh was so seriously injured that he was unconscious for several days.

Buddha Singh also faced repeated threats against his life. In June 1914, he received a letter from the Ghadar Party that threatened to kill him for his disloyalty to the Indian people. On 3 October 1923, when he was on a ship bound for Hong Kong, four Sikhs informed him that one day, someone would kill him and that the killer was willing to become a martyr for the cause. Buddha Singh understood that these threats were real and told his friends on numerous occasions that he would meet the fate of being assassinated by these revolutionaries; a prophecy that came true.

Above: Sinza Police Station personnel (Shanghai Municipal Police), Shanghai, 1933. St-s003. © 2006 Historical Photographs of China.

Left (inset): Sikh policeman, Shanghai Municipal Police, 1937. Ro-n0266. © 2012 Mei-Fei Elrick and Tess Johnston; Historical Photographs of China.

Below: Chapoo Road Bridge, Shanghai, c.1900-1910. Yo-s21. © 2007 Historical Photographs of China.

Indeed, to create disturbance among Sikh policemen in Shanghai and to support the Chinese nationalist revolution, the Ghadar Party harbored a plan to assassinate Buddha Singh. On the morning of 6 April 1927, a Ghadar Party member, Harbant Singh, shot Buddha Singh dead in front of the gate of the Central Police Station in the International Settlement of Shanghai.

The assassination of Buddha Singh appalled the British authorities; within two months of the assassination almost all important Ghadarites were put into custody. Furthermore, the British decided to improve the salaries and living conditions of the Sikhs in Shanghai. Ironically, this episode bears little significance to modern Chinese national history, or its scholars, yet when interpreted from a transnational approach it can shed light on how Indian nationalist movements, the Ghadar movement in particular, developed in Shanghai from the 1910s to the 1920s and how their anti-British conspiracies were intertwined with the international communist movement and the Chinese nationalist revolution. In effect, the Ghadar movement, and in particular their assassination of Buddha Singh, gave rise in the late 1920s and early 1930s to the formation of the British trans-regional surveillance network, to check the flow of Indian dissidents from North America to India through Southeast and East Asia.

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- 1 For this article, the author made extensive use of the archive of the *North China Herald*. This text is a summary of the author’s 2016 article “Kill Buddha Singh: Indian Nationalist Movement in Shanghai, 1914–27”, *Indian Historical Review* 43(2): 270-288.



Conferences

The Nature of Chinese Modernity: Reflection and Prospect

ACADEMICS MONTHLY, Fudan Journal (Social Sciences Edition) and the International Center for Studies of Chinese Civilization, Fudan, co-organized the international conference ‘The Nature of Chinese Modernity: Reflection and Prospect’ at Fudan University in Shanghai (23-25 September 2016). Around thirty distinguished scholars from, among others, Europe, North America, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, Mainland China were invited to attend this event.

Coming from various areas and disciplinary backgrounds, the participants discussed key concepts such as ‘modern’, ‘modernization’ and ‘modernity’, and explored various dimensions

relating to ‘Chinese Modernity’. The presentations revealed how cutting-edge research in this domain has become more rigorous through a full and thorough investigation of the unique forms of Chinese responses to the common challenges faced in the modern world. To understand ‘Chinese Modernity’, scholars should investigate how these key concepts came into and disseminated in China while they should put emphasis on China’s history and reality. Moreover, Western theory and Chinese tradition are both important frames of reference for this issue. The conference contributors arrived at the powerful conclusion that the most important task currently facing this field is how to develop a truly global perspective. It is on the basis of this increasingly systematic work that scholars can build up a multi-coordinative strategy in order to gain a more objective vantage point capturing the ‘genuine face’ of China in the modern world writ large.

Asia and Intra-Asian Connections

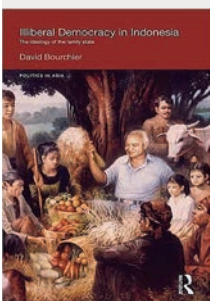
THE CENTER FOR GLOBAL ASIA at NYU Shanghai held its inaugural conference ‘Asia and Intra-Asian Connections’ on 22-24 August 2016, co-organized by the Asia Research Center at Fudan University. The conference aimed to generate new dialogues on China’s place in intra-Asian interactions and China-India connections. It did so by gathering a diverse group of scholars who work on a wide variety of historical and geographical perspectives focusing on China, India and beyond. Over three days, approximately forty scholars from Asia, North America and Europe were joined by NYU Shanghai faculty members to engage in stimulating discussions. Amitav Ghosh gave a keynote speech on China-India connections. The first two days of the conference explored connections between China

and India by analyzing unexplored primary sources that dealt with colonial and postcolonial relations and perceptions. China’s cultural contacts with Southeast Asia and the Islamic world were also examined. The third day of the conference featured a workshop on Asian Studies, with two roundtable sessions. The first session investigated the concepts of Asia that developed during the age of European imperialism, the discourse on the region in the early phases of decolonization, and the incorporation of the continent into the emerging field of Area Studies. The second session examined the dominant approach to the research and teaching of Asian Studies; the shortcomings of sub-regional foci; the importance of bridging specialist research and public policy; and Asian Studies in Asia. The conference provided a forum for scholars to discuss new perspectives on Asian Studies and fostered a scholarly network devoted to reimagining Asian Studies for the 21st century.

Authoritarian collectivism: The origins and course of New Order Ideology

David Bourchier's monograph makes a significant contribution to Indonesian studies by placing the ideological origins of the New Order state in a rigorously historicized transnational context. Organicist conceptions of authoritarian collectivism that inspired Suharto's Pancasila Democracy can ultimately be traced to the Anti-Enlightenment sentiments of European Romanticism. The deep humiliations suffered by German-speaking Central Europe at the hands of the Napoleonic war machine elicited a highly emotive reaction amongst social thinkers who found the primordial bonds of blood and soil to be far superior to the positivist individualism that embodied legal-rationalist discourse.

Mesrob G. Vartavarian



David Bourchier. 2015.
Illiberal Democracy in Indonesia: The Ideology of the Family State
London and New York: Routledge
ISBN 9780415180221

LIBERALISM, WITH ITS EMPHASIS on competitiveness and the protection of individual rights, only created artificial divisions within an organic entity. The class conflicts and inequities that came with liberal ideologies were entirely unnatural. The same was true of socialist solutions to capitalist problems. Component parts could not turn against each other because they were all elements of a unified whole. Instead of perpetuating internal conflict, organicist thinking proposed to depoliticize difference by emphasizing the essential function each component part of the body politic had to play in serving the commonweal.

Bourchier stresses that the unification and growing power of Germany during the second half of the 19th century caused its ideational notions of national community to seep into neighbouring states. The Dutch gradually disregarded their liberal French intellectual heritage and incorporated organicist thinking into elite institutions of higher learning. Law faculties were particularly influenced by notions communal collectivism. These perceptions were only strengthened by colonial knowledge systems. Colonial intellectuals claimed that *adat*, or customary law, was a cultural essence that bound together the far-flung possession of the East Indies. While Dutch officials hoped to use such pronouncements to justify their domination of the entire archipelago, a nascent Indonesian intellectual elite saw it quite differently. The purported commonality of *adat* law shared by all archipelagic peoples would instead be used as the basis for the construction of a single nation. Indigenous elites sent to complete their education in the Netherlands thus immersed themselves in a colonial discourse that lauded the 'primordial' culture of the colonized.

Whatever the merits of these pseudo-historical musings, the debates in question remained highly arcane to the vast majority of colonial subjects across the archipelago. A second, and according to Bourchier far more consequential, stream of organicist thinking came by way of Japan. Japanese political thinkers had themselves been deeply influenced by ethno-nationalist ideologies emanating from German Central Europe. Once Japan embarked on imperial expansion, organicist tracts were readily exported to its colonial possessions. Indonesia proved no exception to this general trend. Wartime mobilization needs prompted Japanese occupation authorities to spread notions of militarized collectivism to broad segments of the general population, particularly on the island of Java. The transposition of Japanese notions of the family state soon triggered mass movements that took on a life of their own. By the time the Dutch attempted to reassert their control over the archipelago, they were faced with a heavily mobilized indigenous population determined to resist a return to colonial rule. As Bourchier admits, all this is very well understood and these sections of his monograph are more a summation of established views than a revision of accepted narratives (Chapter 4). Yet, he emphasizes the fact that most right-wing Indonesian nationalists who embraced organicist ideologies did so because they wanted to join a broad community of authoritarian states. Liberal democracy with its selfish individualism was in retreat across the globe and was being superseded by collectivist notions of social organization. Supomo, the main architect of Indonesia's highly authoritarian 1945 Constitution, essentially viewed the archipelago as a constituent member of the Greater

East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere; hence, it required a political philosophy that would put it in synch with its Japanese benefactors.

1945 was a key point of departure for subsequent developments. Bourchier posits that while the basic divisions between elite Indonesian collaborators and increasingly restless *pemuda* groups were important, fundamental cleavages also began to emerge within the nationalist movement itself. The romantic conservatism best exemplified by the writings of Supomo came to clash with Sukarno's brand of left-wing revolutionary collectivism (Chapter 4). Both types of solidarism found natural constituencies within the wider society. The aristocratic *paramong praja* (civil service) saw in Supomo's ideology an ideal mechanism for deactivating revolutionary radicalism while Sukarno increasingly appealed to younger generations who felt excluded from the fruits of liberation. However, both forms of political organization were left by the wayside as the 1950 Constitution instituted an era of parliamentary democracy. Sukarno was the first to attempt an implementation of his vision with the transition to Guided Democracy. Here, Bourchier misses out on an opportunity to examine linkages between Sukarno and Mao Zedong's own version of revolutionary romanticism. The sharp tilt to the left in 1963 together with the *Dwikora* campaign appear to have been inspired by Chinese precedents. Marxism could be just as emotive as nationalism.

Bourchier's account of the army's gradual empowerment and eventual seizure of control again conforms to standard narratives. Much more interesting is his account of the essential role played by military lawyers in converting political parties into docile functionalist groups. A number of these officials were heavily influenced by Catholic integralist doctrines that emanated from early-20th century papal pronouncements against growing working class radicalism. Others were inspired by corporatist strategies of social demobilization occurring in a Cold War Latin American context. In Indonesia's case, internal conflict had to be circumvented for the sake of national development from which all would benefit. Catholic and *abangan* officials within Suharto's inner circle also shared a common aversion towards political Islam which threatened their privileged positions in the upper reaches of the New Order state.

Suharto utilized a combination of coercion, corruption, and socio-economic investment to neutralize the political opposition. Bourchier stresses that once the economy had been placed on a path of high development, indubitably aided by the oil shocks of the 1970s, Suharto increasingly grew mistrustful of his military colleagues and began to narrow his regime's client base. All the while, he launched intensive ideological campaigns to reconstruct the education system. Schools

inculcated notions of Indonesia as a family state functioning according to the primordial precepts of *gotong royong* (communal work). Students and government employees were compelled to attend lengthy discussions on the centrality of Pancasila Democracy to the Indonesian state.

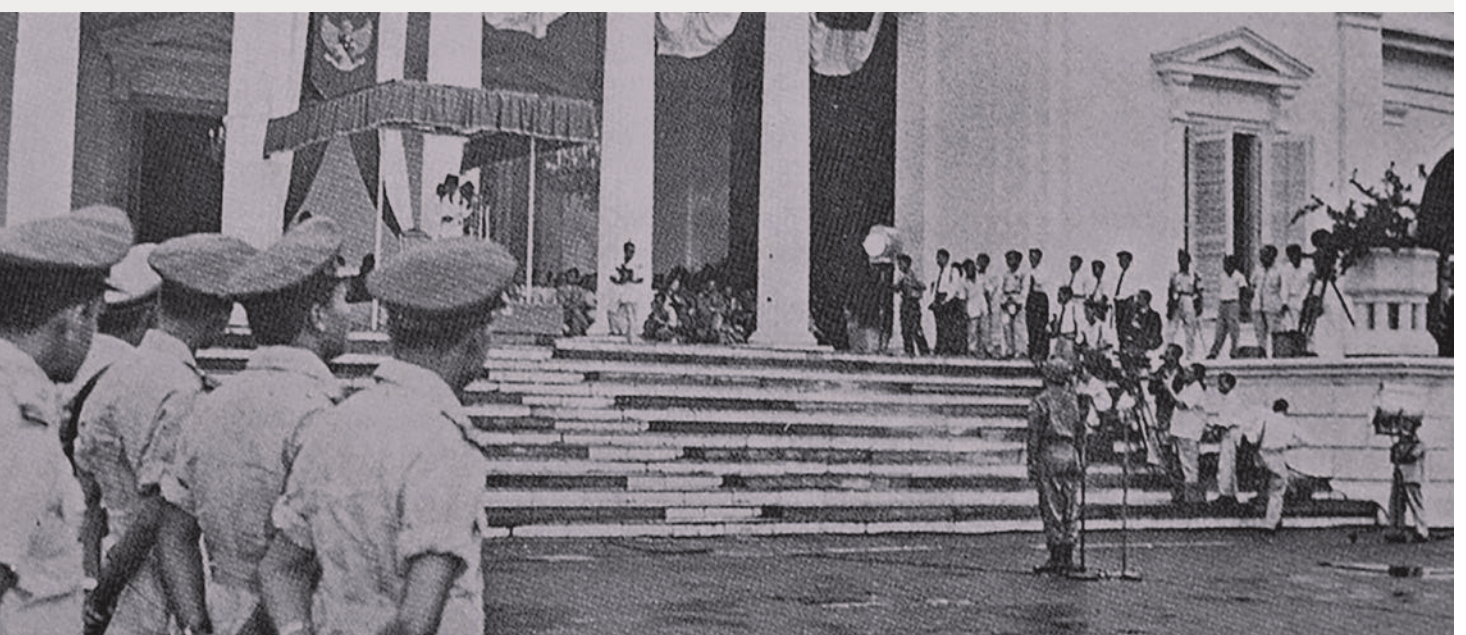
Much had changed by the 1990s. A wave of democratic revolutions across Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia had left the New Order state looking like a Cold War relic. The partial liberalization of public discourse that took place after 1989 only made Suharto more suspicious of disgruntled elites and increasingly reliant upon a small coterie of palace cronies and immediate family. Indonesia had indeed become a family state, but, one in which only Suharto's wife, children, and in-laws seemed to benefit. Such a narrow support base could not possibly control such a vast and increasingly complex society. When the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998 hit, Suharto had few friends left and was thus compelled to step aside.

The most worrying finding in Bourchier's analysis comes in an extensive epilogue which contends that while the New Order may have died politically its organicist ideological tenets have seen a revival in recent years. The callous indifference to socio-economic inequalities that typified Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency generated tremendous resentment among the tens of millions of ordinary Indonesians denied the benefits of growth. This situation was made to order for the oligarchic populism that nearly brought Prabowo Subianto to power (Epilogue). Governments led by technocratic experts who claim to know what is best for people with whom they have little in common have generated understandable anger within electorates across the globe. Hence, the underprivileged search for candidates who will at least give voice to their grievances. Thus, Suharto's most important legacy for the future of Indonesia might be an ideological one. The precepts of authoritarian collectivism he did so much to embed into systems of social thought might long outlast a former First Family now seemingly gone to seed.

New Order modalities of domination

There is no denying that Bourchier has written an important book. By focusing on processes of ideational formation, it is an important counterweight to thoroughly statist /administrative interpretations of the New Order. However, it might have been more interesting if Bourchier had engaged in a deeper discussion of the lineages of Indonesian state power. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras not only established the foundations of modern liberal thought, they were also a time of intensified state-building. Indeed, nearly 20 years of French occupation radically altered administrative modalities within the Netherlands. This had an almost immediate effect on the Dutch imperial sphere. Colonial administrators began to apply concepts of sovereignty over populations and within social spheres that had previously been left to their own devices. The construction of this steel frame of administrative power was long and bloody, with many reverses along the way. Yet, by the 1930s the Dutch had managed to create a formidable coercive-extractive apparatus which proved highly effective at crushing resistance whilst simultaneously enriching multinational corporations. This apparatus was not merely something imposed upon the Indonesian archipelago by outsiders for the sake of more efficient exploitation. It was also set of practices harnessed by Suharto and his cohorts to the New Order project. A more extensive examination of how coercive governmentality intertwined with organicist collectivism to produce an extremely oppressive system would have been well worth the effort.

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Online at newbooks.asia/review/authoritarian-collectivism

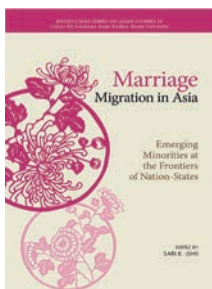


Below: On 5 July 1959, Sukarno reinstated the 1945 constitution by presidential decree. It established a presidential system which he believed would make it easier to implement the principles of guided democracy. Courtesy wikipedia.

Marriage migration in Asia

Studies on marriage migration have traditionally focused on women travelling from less developed countries in the global south to more developed ones in the global north. The focus of studies in the 1990s, on brides moving from the global south to the global north in pursuit of higher economic standing, has nonetheless created a foundation for future studies on marriage migration to build upon. *Marriage Migration in Asia: Emerging Minorities at the Frontiers of Nation-States* exceeds the initial efforts of this tradition in many ways. The 10 essays in this volume provide insights into marriage migration studies and their relationship with nation-states' migration laws. The essays push the field further by calling attention to the multiple directions marriage migration takes, making contributions in at least two domains.

Cristina Lacomba



Sari K. Ishii (ed.). 2016.
Marriage Migration in Asia: Emerging Minorities at the Frontiers of Nation-States
Singapore: NUS Press
ISBN 9789814722100

The second contribution is the focus on the role of migration laws with respect to international marriage, and the strategies that surface as a result of marriage migrants trying to live the lives they long for, which at times have unknowingly detrimental consequences for their children and families. For instance, in Chapter Five, Sari Ishii focuses on the case of Japanese-Thai children whose Japanese nationality works against them when they return to Thailand, following their Thai mothers' decision to raise them there. In Chapter Six, Caesar Dealwis shows how the descendants of mixed marriages between Caucasian men and Malay women give up their ethnicity as Caucasians upon recognising the social, political and economic benefits bestowed by the Malay nation-state on those assuming a Malay identity.

In addition to these contributions, one of this book's most important points is that marriage migration sometimes occurs at the margins of state registration procedures, creating important adverse consequences for the individuals involved. Chapters seven through ten emphasise that marriage migrants without citizenship fall into very vulnerable situations after marriage, and are often unable to achieve their goals in either the sending or the receiving nation-states. This is exemplified in Chapter Seven, where Caroline Grillot writes about Vietnamese women and their children living in the borderlands between Vietnam and China. These women end up living a 'non-existing life' from the perspective of the Chinese state, as in China they are considered illegal economic migrants. Consequently, their marriages to Chinese men and their children's births are not registered. Similarly, in Chapter Eight, Hien Anh Le illustrates how children born in Korea of marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women live in a position of 'de facto statelessness' when their mothers move to Vietnam after divorcing their Korean husbands. In Vietnam, the children lack citizenship and other social rights. Lara Chen (Chapter Nine) and Chatchai Chetsumon (Chapter Ten) further show how states deprive stateless individuals and their children of citizenship rights that would otherwise be accessible to them through marriage.

Theoretically, this book provides clear insights into the multiple dimensions and tensions that arise from the relationship between cross-border marriages and a state's interest in controlling its population. Some authors in the West have seen in universalistic discourses on human rights a decline in the power of nation-state boundaries (Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control?: Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015; Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Although their insights have value in some cases, such as in some aspects of the context of the European Union and in the case of the economic elite, this collection of case studies solidly shows that this

FIRST, THE ESSAYS CONTRIBUTE to elucidating the multiple geographic directions cross-border marriages take beyond the traditional south-to-north path, and the consequences for the migrants, their children and their families. For example, in Chapter One, Masako Kudo shows how Japanese wives married to Pakistani men in Japan choose survival strategies that result in some women migrating from Japan to Pakistan. As a result of difficulties in Pakistan, they often either return to Japan or migrate to another country. In Chapter Two, Chie Sakai focuses on marriages between Japanese women and Chinese men who live in Shanghai, examining two countries with similar socio-economic status. Similarly, in a case of global southern migration, Linda Lumayag shows in Chapter Three how until 2010, in Malaysia, professional migrant women from the Philippines once married to Malaysian men are submitted by law to comply with the gendered division of labour expected of married women in Malaysia. As a result, they lose access to the employment opportunities they enjoyed as single women. Some of the essays look at cross-border marriages in which both men and women from the global north travel to the global south to either marry their partners or follow them and settle there. For instance, against the traditional focus, in Chapter Four, Ikuya Tokoro discusses Japanese men who migrate to the Philippines following their Filipino wives. These men become socially and economically marginalised, both in the Philippines and in Japan, to the extent that they are unable to return to the latter.

is not the case for many marriage migrants in the East and Southeast Asian states. The tensions between nation-states' laws and migrants' lives surface clearly and transversally across the ten essays. They make the reader reflect on how states are dealing with international marriages, and what the consequences are for children and their migrant parents. The consequences vary depending on the type of registration migrants hold (if they are registered at all) with their states of origin and destination, and the migrants' overall goals. The picture that emerges from these essays is one in which states' laws hinder individuals' attempts to better their lives.

The authors prove in each of the ten case studies that despite marriage migrants' acquisition of multiple identities, affiliations and cross-border lifestyles, their experiences are bound to their legal status. Citizenship (or a path to citizenship) for them and their descendants, takes the shape of a package that may include some things (schooling for children or access to welfare) but exclude others (paid labour) in the nation-states under scrutiny. These state laws and their sociocultural, political and economic edges shape the strategies that marriage migrants use. Moreover, the ten case studies depict how the states' laws, under the purview of the volume, freeze states' cultural traditions with respect to marriage and family care. These laws create tensions between the activities that migrants (especially women) are expected to pursue, and those they wish to pursue. The authors portray how family care is viewed as women's work within the discourses of the nation-states involved. This conflicts with the interests of migrant wives, many of whom care for family in the country of origin and need (or wish) to engage in paid labour. Rights afforded by marriage do not include, in some cases, the possibility for women to find paid work outside of the family.

How can the links between marriage migration, the law and the multiple results of their combination be gauged empirically? The authors mostly use in-depth and semi-structured interviews in combination with fieldwork and some questionnaires. These techniques provide this work with a rich amount of detail that clarifies the choices these migrants make on a case-by-case basis. Given the many traps into which marriage migrants fall, the authors argue for the understanding of marriage migrants as part of a 'global diaspora' that is 'multi-marginalised' as an outcome of their relationships with the laws of the nation-states from and to which they migrate. However, as the book notes, some chapters provide more detail than others on how the category of global diaspora contributes to furthering our understanding of the multiple situations in which marriage migrants find themselves, and additional information would provide support to this valuable claim.

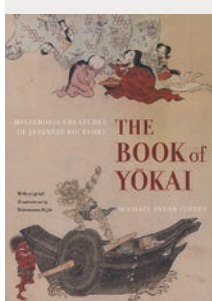
Pundits of marriage migration and citizenship will find in this collection of essays a key piece for the field. Policy experts, migrants and migrants' advocates and their organisations will value these essays for the empirical data they provide, which may be used to advocate among state agents for better policies that will allow marriage migrants to improve their lives. These case studies will also prove useful to scholars invested in researching and teaching the relationship between the law and gender together with migration, citizenship and globalisation.

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Also online at newbooks.asia/review/marriage-migration

The Book of Yōkai

If the current craze is anything to go by, the next big cultural export from Japan after manga and anime, will be Pokémon. As with its predecessors, in the translation to a global world culture, Pokémon's links to a premodern Japanese world may barely be recognized. One suspects that the majority of its global practitioners may never proceed beyond the thrill of chasing after virtual monsters. But for some aficionados, the new pastime may offer an entry into the world of traditional Japanese folklore. In that case, Michael Dylan Foster's *The Book of Yōkai* will be the hard copy *app* of choice!

Natsuko Akagawa



Michael Dylan Foster. 2015
The Book of Yōkai: Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore
Berkeley: University of California Press
ISBN 9780520271029

FOSTER DOES NOT WANT to be too specific in defining *yōkai* for those who have not been brought up in the culture they have traditionally inhabited. Introducing his subject, Foster's response to the inevitable first question the non-initiated may want to ask is:

So what is *yōkai*? For now let us just say that a *yōkai* is a weird or mysterious creature, a monster or fantastic being, a spirit or a sprite. ... [But] *yōkai* are ultimately more complicated and more interesting than these simple characterisations suggest ... [and] take us on a kaleidoscopic journey through history and culture (p. 5).

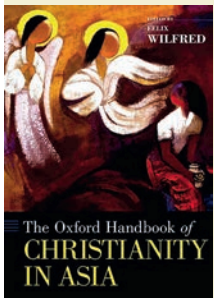
The aim of the book is to lead through that mysterious world. Foster, by his own account, has lived and breathed *yōkai* since graduate days and is the author of a number of publications exploring Japanese folklore, including the celebrated *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai* (University of California Press, 2009), for which he received the Chicago Folklore Prize. This book is a synthesis of the author's long involvement with this genre and aims to provide a convenient overview of the field for the English-speaking newcomer.

The Book of Yōkai is a two-part distillation of scholarship that draws upon an extensive corpus of literature on the subject (testified by 16 pages of references), as well as on interviews

Return to origins: Christianity and Asia

At the Catholic School I attended in Long Island in New York, Jesus was always milky-white. I can still see the full-size version of him hanging on the cross, a streak of bright red blood where the nails pierced that whiteness. I think I also believed he spoke English. Church history seemed to revolve mostly around Europeans, whether decreeing, conquering, or heroically witnessing to their faith. The Church was Europe (and increasingly, America, though the Vatican did not always seem to realize this). Subconsciously, I probably thought Jesus was an English-speaking Milanese or Venetian based on art museum exhibits. When I was in a Catholic Church in San Francisco years later I did a double take at the statues of a noticeably Confucius-like Jesus. Thus, began a slow, but steady reappraisal and fascination with what can be called global Christianity, liberation theology, and intercultural theology – leading to my ongoing work today in interfaith theology.

Peter Admirand



Felix Wilfred (ed.). 2014.
The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia
Oxford: Oxford University Press
ISBN: 9780199329069

JESUS, OF COURSE, did not speak English and was not Italian. Fortunately, the Jewishness of Jesus, born and reared in the Middle East, has been stressed with greater appreciation since the moral failures and horrors of the Holocaust. Yet, the idea of Jesus as Asian or highlighting the Early Church's deep Asian (and North African) roots still remain an underdeveloped and often misunderstood foundation among many Christians (and non-Christians). The future of Christianity, though, is a return in many ways to its original past in Asia, with its billions of (mostly non-Christian) peoples – and a diversity of cultures that would seem to render any book on Christianity in Asia an impossible task.

For those familiar with the Oxford Handbooks, they are generally comprehensive, wide-ranging, and interdisciplinary. They also demand a reader's commitment with their length and girth, averaging around 750 pages per volume. The *Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* (684 pages) is ably edited and structured by Felix Wilfred, a preeminent Catholic Indian theologian and Editor of the important Catholic journal *Concilium*. Wilfred was also capably assisted by a Who's Who of academics involved in research and publication in

Christianity and Asian studies, including Francis X. Clooney, Edmund Tang, and Wong Wai Ching Angela. Wilfred, in particular, is one of those theologians who has his pulse on the global scene of Christianity, and in Asia in particular. The work is a noteworthy and valuable contribution to the Oxford Handbook series and to Asian studies, more broadly. The wide-range of authors manage to be nuanced and localized, but still reflect on the broader geographical, linguistic, and cultural diversity in Asia, and in turn, such repercussions for our globalized world. The handbook is structured into five main parts which each include introductory essays written by key scholars to render the volume of interest for the general reader, too.

What makes Christianity in Asia so fascinating and challenging (from a European or North American perspective) is its generally minority status (outside, principally, the Philippines and South Korea); the deep ongoing structural injustice and poverty in vast parts of the continent; and the rich interfaith cultures and ways of life still extant, even as such have been challenged by various ethnic, cultural, and religious ideologies from Communist China and Vietnam, to Sinhalese Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Hindutva ideology in India, and growing, wide-spread Islamism. While Christians look to a poor, itinerant miracle worker and preacher as their Divine source, Christendom, bulwarked by political and military power (and boots on the ground and people in the pews) generally betrayed its source and foundations. But when Christians are the minority, the themes, language, and theology inevitably shift—there is need for more dialogue, give-and-take interactions, and mutual learning. There is also no hiding poverty in many parts of Asia – and so (as with liberation theology in South America) it demands some kind of response. The reality of deep religious pluralism and more cases of multi-religious belonging can all help to humble and keep Christianity in perspective – for it is a humble Christianity that is the most potent and valuable, morally, spiritually, and theologically.

In this regard, Christianity in Asia is often linked (with Africa) to the future of Christianity. Of crucial import is the role and claimed uniqueness of Jesus, an issue of paramount importance in much of the West, but playing a more expansive and open possibility in Asia, as Michael Amaladoss writes in his interesting and solid contribution, "Asian Theological Trends." The handbook, in fact, produced two

particularly 'wow' passages, one of them by Amaladoss, who ends his essay: "Finally, harmony and nonviolence will find their support and inspiration in an experience of reality that is relational and non-dual, having its roots in the *advaita* of India, the *Dao* with its *yin* and *yang* of China, the 'inter-being' or mutual interdependence of Buddhism, and the Trinity of Christianity (cf. John 17:21-23)" (p. 116). Such a quote is representative of the fruit and limitless potential of Christianity immersed in its roots and future in Asia, one of deep interreligious learning and partnership without sacrificing core principles and identity. There is confluence and overlap but also distinction.

Peter Phan hits a similarly high and deeply laudable passage: "Moreover, because of its intrinsically plural character, Christian spirituality is fundamentally open and receptive to other spiritualities, learning from their distinct emphasis on the divine (e.g., in Hinduism), or on the human (e.g., in Confucianism and Buddhism), or on the cosmos (e.g., Taoism)" (p. 512). Other highlighted works include Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid's careful analysis of the historical and contemporary plight of Christians in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon, while David Mark Neuhaus helpfully examines the history, developments, setbacks, and key themes of Jewish-Christian dialogue in West Asia. Such a context, as he reminds scholars like me, is different than the one happening in Europe and the United States – or in the Arab-Muslim world. He challenges scholars to broaden their conception of Jewish-Christian dialogue in predominantly Buddhist, Hindu and "other Asian religious milieus" (p. 376).

Finally, I also want to highlight Gudrun Löwner's fascinating piece on Christian art and architecture in Asia, which had me seeking out monographs specifically examining the theme. While not every essay will appeal to every reader, the strength of collections like this is to get a sample of the diversity and range of material in various related fields and themes examining Christianity in Asia (such as worship, music, spirituality, migration, evangelizing, gender, peace and conflict, and other interfaith contexts involving, for example, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism) to begin to form a more nuanced and holistic picture while providing opportunities and material for deeper, more focused study or research.

In this regard, the handbook continues my ongoing learning and awareness of global Christianity and interfaith dialogue, perhaps first sparked in that Catholic Church in San Francisco a few decades ago. The Confucian Jesus does not replace the milky-white one in my mind, as they subsist together, sometimes harmoniously, but more importantly, side by side with other images and conceptions. How such multifaceted or interfaith reflections and realities bear on faith journeys, beliefs, and identities remain a key question moving forward. So-called traditional faith may be diminishing or adapting in many parts of the West, but beliefs and a need for believing and belonging endure. Examining *Christianity in Asia* won't give all the answers, but it will provide many of the key questions, which in some contexts, is as important.

Reviewed by Peter Admirand, Dublin City University
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Also online at newbooks.asia/review/christianity-asia

conducted by the author. In Part One of the book, Foster takes readers on a journey through the world of *yōkai*, before providing, in Part Two, a broad sampling of its manifestations. Part One outlines the 'cultural history of *yōkai* folklore and *yōkai* studies'. As well as introducing readers to the world of monsters and spirits, and the nature of the tradition of *yōkai* folktales, Foster introduces the influential writers who have inducted succeeding generations of Japanese into its mysteries. Part Two, a 'Yōkai codex', provides a sampling of some of the ghostly characters and the literary genres in which they appear. Readers are invited to approach the book in any way they choose, and many will no doubt want to begin with Part Two, to find out about the wide variety of good and bad monsters, before moving back to Part One when ready to gain a wider appreciation of the genre's cultural context. A special enticement to do so is provided by the addition of original illustrations by Shinonome Kijin which, even in their small, pencilled format, provide a rich accompaniment to text.

What does the reader learn about *yōkai*? Foster avoids providing too simplistic a definition because as we come to learn, their identities 'are not set in stone: they are contingent on the perspectives of the humans interacting with them' (p. 21). Rather, he prefers to describe the context in which such monsters and spirits are brought to life, their nature, and the scholarly tradition that has further defined and refined the genre over time, as well as sustaining it across generations.

In Chapters 2 and 3 of Part One, Foster examines the contribution of the Japanese *yōkai* scholars and the sources of the tradition since classical times. In large part, the

contemporary popularity of *yōkai* is due to the publications of early 20th century writers, Inoue Enryō (1858–1919) and Englishman Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904) ('one of the most important foreign-language interpreters of Japanese culture' (p. 55)), and more recently, the post-war 'revivalists' Mizuki Shigeru (b. 1922), Miyata Noboru (1936–2000) and Komatsu Kazuhiko (b. 1947). While the latter can be credited for retheorising the *yōkai* tradition for a postwar generation, it was particularly through the work of novelist Kyogoku Natsuhiko (b. 1936), that, according to Foster, *yōkai* has achieved its current popularity, and arguably, influenced the more recent development of the Pokémon boom.

In Chapter 3 of Part One, Foster moves beyond the theory and history of *yōkai*, to focus on its everyday meaning, both in terms of everyday practice and local relevance. This discussion also addresses the question of the commercialisation and (the corruption of) 'authenticity' that has accompanied the popularisation of *yōkai* in Japan. Although Foster is not inclined to use the term 'heritage', in making a case for recognizing *yōkai* as 'a permanent (though ever changing) feature of the cultural landscape [in Japan]' (p. 74), he presents what in another context would amount to a cogent argument for recognizing this story-telling tradition as integral to Japan's intangible cultural heritage, and as such, a heritage to be safeguarded. Foster's response to the current commercialisation of the genre is to argue that 'commercial production is one way in which *yōkai* stay relevant and viable and ever changing' (p. 79), a conclusion that may well be relevant to a consideration of the significance of Pokémon currently.

Apart from avoiding simplistic definitions, throughout the book, Foster also warns against any essentialist or orientalist interpretation of *yōkai*'s cultural significance. In concluding Part One, Foster reiterates the point that Japanese *yōkai* should be regarded as part of a much larger global folkloric tradition, a phenomena that has its counterpart in the folk cultures of many other countries. Inevitably, however, it remains the case that "the particular shapes [that *yōkai*] monsters and spirits assume are anything but universal. They are sculpted by the distinct cultures and societies

in which they emerge, evolving through specific historical moments and with the changing desires and challenges of the people who tell their tales" (p. 33).

Readers will be fascinated (as well as teased) by the kaleidoscope of creatures, malignant and benign, briefly described in Part Two. Many of these are 'humanoid'. They range from figures such as *ono*, a human figure with clawed hands and protruding fangs, the unfortunate *kuchi-sake-ona* (the slit-mouthed woman), the 'example of modern urban-suburban monster', or *mōryō*, the child-like monster that eats body parts, to the more benign human-like creatures associated with good fortune, such as *Azuki-araim* the 'bean-washer', *Ningyo*, a 'real' mermaid, or *Kijimuna*, the unreliable trickster, and traditionally imagined as ugly but now often imagined as 'cute'. Others take on animal or spirit forms, such as *kodama*, the tree spirit or *kappa*, a water spirit, or even manifest themselves as 'an animated rectangular wall', in the case of *nurikabe*.

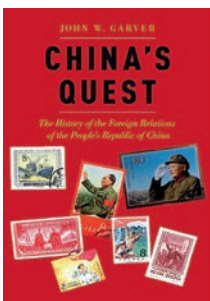
Readers, whose appetites are whetted by these descriptions and illustrations in Foster's book may wish to continue their hunt for *yōkai* via the 'yōkai finder' provided by yokai.com or they might want to consult the colourful collection of paintings in Miyata Noboru's book, *Yōkai no minzokugaku: Nihonno mienai kukan* (Folklore of monsters: Japan's invisible space) (Iwanami Shoten, 1990).

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Also online at newbooks.asia/review/yokai

China's quest

John Garver's *China's Quest* is a major addition to the literature covering the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) diplomatic history. Until now there has been no comprehensive single volume text on the topic in English, and Garver is exceptionally qualified for this project, having published books on China's relations with the United States, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Iran, Taiwan, the Middle East, and India. In this book the focus is on China's relations with the five major Asian powers: the USSR/Russian Federation, Japan, India, Iran, and the United States. His conceptual theme is the connection between domestic and international pressures that drive the PRC's foreign relations. This is one of the most important features of this book; too often analysis of international relations ignores what is happening inside a state, focusing instead on geopolitical concerns. Garver's approach gives equal weight to both, and his history is the stronger for it.

Jonathan Fulton



John W. Garver. 2016.
China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China
Oxford: Oxford University Press
ISBN 9780190261054

Garver's account explains how these traits, combined with tremendous ambition, explain many of the foreign policy decisions during Mao's rule. It also provides an excellent description of vertical authoritarianism in action; in a subsection about the deterioration of relations with both the USSR and India in the early 1960s titled 'The consequences of Mao's multiple rash decisions', Garver writes, "The swift way in which Mao arrived at these judgements suggests that they were not deeply reasoned. Had either or both of those judgements been submitted for consideration of China's more prudent leaders or their professional staffs, those judgements would almost certainly have been discarded or greatly moderated. But Mao's preeminence within the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] elite was such, and the fate of those who questioned his judgement grim enough, that once Mao rendered a judgement, that judgement was unassailable" (p. 161). His description of Mao's ideological and personal leanings also contributes to a fuller analysis of the PRC's foreign policy during the Mao era.

The second section, 'The happy interregnum', examines the period between 1978–89, bookended by Deng Xiaoping's rise to power and the Tiananmen Square massacre. It emphasizes the necessity of squaring the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) ideology with a new approach to economic development before launching the Reform Era; the project remained building socialism in China. In order to accomplish this, the CCP first had to provide an ideological explanation of where the Party had

THE BOOK IS DIVIDED into three chronological sections. The first, 'Forging a revolutionary state', covers the Mao era, from 1949–78. It provides an excellent account of the ideological project of trying to create a new Chinese society, a utopian communist one, and how this influenced the PRC's Cold War relations. The importance of personalities in foreign policy is emphasized, as well as the preferences and perceptions of decision makers. Describing Mao as "an idiosyncratic combination of ideologue and revolutionary realist" (p. 173),

gone wrong under Mao. The consensus decision was that in 1956, when Mao concluded that China still had antagonistic class enemies within, he had made a fundamental error; the problem facing China was not between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but rather between the low level of development and the peasantry's material needs. This ideological explanation drove the early Reform Era, and helps explain the seemingly impossible contradiction of a communist party ruling over the largest capital-driven development in history. This section provides an excellent account of the competing forces within China during this transitional period, with reformer and conservative factions both struggling for the soul of the Party, and Deng trying to strike a balance. In terms of how this shaped China's foreign policy of the period, Garver's analysis is especially relevant when describing the uneasy relationship between China and the USA, with American leadership expecting China's economic reforms to lead to a form of liberal democratic capitalism, and the PRC's determination to focus on economic development without political reform.

The third section, titled 'The CCP Leninist state besieged', covers the years between 1990 to 2015, a period marked by China's deep integration into the liberal order, its incredible rise in global trade, and its perceived rise to great power status. However, it is a period also marked by domestic tension, as Chinese leaders see their continued rule as threatened by this same liberal system, dominated by liberal ideas. In the wake of Tiananmen, "a rapidly globalizing China was ruled by an anachronistic Leninist elite that saw its authority to rule profoundly threatened by the dynamics of globalization" (p. 464). Here again Garver provides a masterful account of the balancing act Chinese leaders must perform in navigating the international system and at the same time meeting myriad domestic pressures, all the while trying to maintain an ideological justification for the continued rule of the CCP.

Rich in detail but never overwhelming, *China's Quest* provides an excellent historical analysis of the PRC's foreign relations that serves historians, political scientists, international relations specialists, China and Asian studies scholars, and the curious non-specialist reader. Garver's analysis of the international and domestic environment that shaped China's foreign policy, as well as his description of elite perceptions and preferences and ideological considerations, give the fullest single-volume account of the PRC's foreign relations published in English to date.

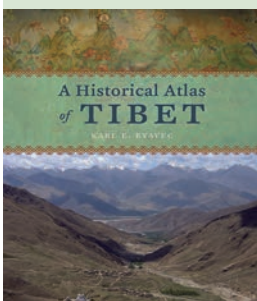
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Also online at newbooks.asia/review/china-quest

A historical atlas of Tibet

Karl Ryavec's book is a remarkable addition to the study of Tibet; more a cartographic history in fact than a historical atlas. For what Ryavec manages to do, far more than simply to present historical information in a series of maps, is to offer a new kind of history of the Tibetan plateau, a new way of understanding the landscape and the people who inhabit it.

Simon Wickhamsmith



Karl E. Ryavec. 2015.
A Historical Atlas of Tibet
University of Chicago Press
ISBN 9780226732442

the shifting sands of affiliation. The Gelukpa control over Tibet, manifested architecturally in the construction of the Potala on the Marpo Ri (in the northeastern quarter of Lhasa) during the second half of the 17th century, also manifested in the building and appropriation of monasteries by the Gelukpa. Thus, even within the environs of Lhasa, we can see for instance that the Rato monastery (seat of the Rato reincarnations) not only switched allegiance from Kadampa to Gelukpa during the Pakmodrupa (1354–1642) period, but is also here listed as a 'new construction'. During the Ganden Phodrang period it is shown as an established monastery. As we see a microhistory of this one monastery, but in the narrative context, we begin to ask questions about the process of such switchings of allegiance, about how the Geluk monastery of Rato itself grew in parallel with the importance of the Rato tulku in the local and religious polities. These questions, of course, are not ones that an atlas will answer, but they come more readily to mind perhaps – or at least come to mind in more explicit shapes – from within a scalar, graphic form, than from within a linear, verbal form.

Answers to such questions can be discovered and interrogated from other sources, and I think that Ryavec's project could have done more to point the reader to scholarship from which more detailed histories might be gleaned. Such scholarship might be familiar to some readers, but the lack of such a bibliography emphasizes how sometimes the target audience for the book is not really made clear. Tibetologists will read the data, I suspect, in very different ways from those who are unfamiliar with Tibetan political and religious history. The texts that accompany the maps provide a clear and elegant historical overview, but they may not present the depth of material required by someone familiar with Tibet. That said, the book's primary focus is of course not to give a written history, but a history through maps, and in this regard it is a most valuable contribution.

RYAVEC'S ACHIEVEMENT is to present a basic factual narrative of Tibetan history in words, while at the same time plotting the implications of this history within an implied three-dimensional geographic and topographic space. In this way, the reader grasps the important developments of Tibetan political and religious history in terms of physical distance as much as of intellectual breadth.

For instance, if we look simply at the expansion of Lhasa (insets of maps 13, 16, 29, and 35), we can see very clearly the dramatic changes that occurred during the Ganden Phodrang period (1642–1951), initiated by the 'Great' Fifth Dalai Lama Lozang Gyatsho (1617–82). Reading these maps as visual intelligence, showing the adaptations to, and relationships between, the political and the religious, we can also observe

Ryavec's specific aim with his atlas is "to map the historical growth and spread of Tibetan civilization across the Tibetan Plateau and bordering hill regions, from prehistorical times to the annexation of the Tibetan state by China in the 1950s" (p. 5). This is a very tall order, and elsewhere in the book he points out that, having spent 20 years on this project, he would have liked another 20 years to go deeper and to produce more maps to show different aspects of Tibetan history. Nonetheless, the enthusiasm with which other Tibetologists have clearly greeted the individual maps as he produced them reveals how very important this book, even in its current form, is.

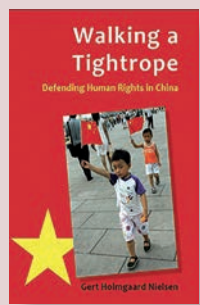
This is clearly an excellent resource for every scholar of Tibet and Inner Asia, and the author is to be congratulated for his focus and determination in producing such a series of elegant and usable maps. I would, however, have liked a gazetteer of every monastery and fortress and town, with Wylie transcription, so that they could be found easily in successive maps. As a Mongolist, notwithstanding that Mongolia is not on the Tibetan Plateau, I would have very much appreciated a more detailed cartographical account of the development of Tibetan Buddhism northwards. In a perfect world, geared to my wishes, Map 43 ('Important Tibeto-Mongol monasteries founded during the Qing period') could have been adapted to show the gradual elimination of Buddhism during the 'Great Repression' of the late 1930s. These are minor concerns, though, and personal ones, and I hope very much that the author does indeed intend to continue editing, and increasing the number of, these maps, perhaps moving them online at some point. Indeed, it can be used very profitably alongside such online resources as the Tibet Himalaya Digital Library (www.thlib.org) and the Tibetan Buddhism Resource Center (www.tbrc.org).

There are so many ways to approach the movement of history, and of the people and landscapes that effect its movement. Karl Ryavec's magnificent atlas, the first to present Tibet as the focus of historical study, encourages us to look at Tibet – and, by extension, the shifting polities of Inner Asia as a whole – in a new way, to formulate new questions and to interrogate and challenge the old answers.

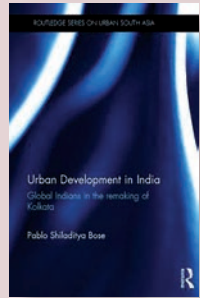
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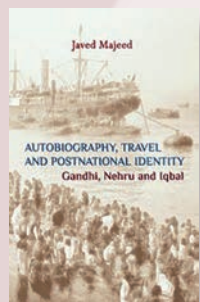
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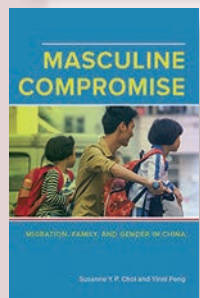
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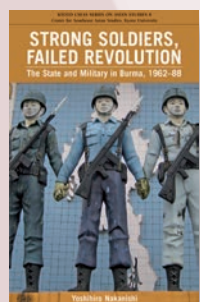
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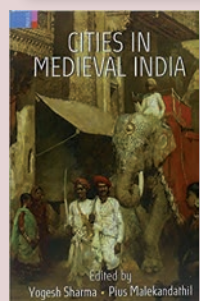
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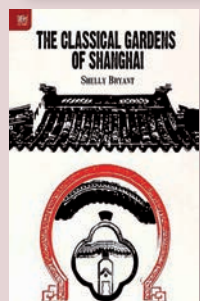
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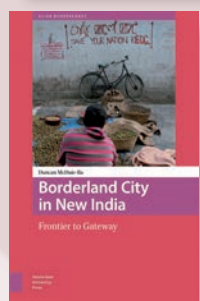
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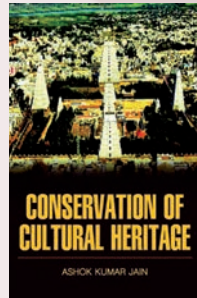
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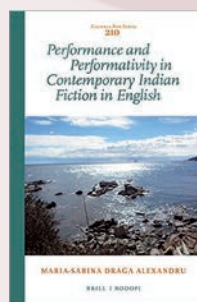
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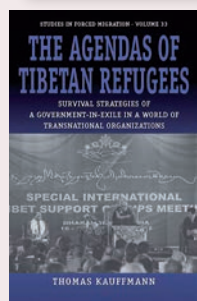
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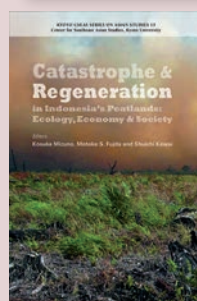
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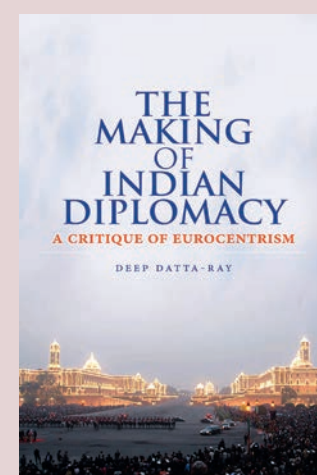
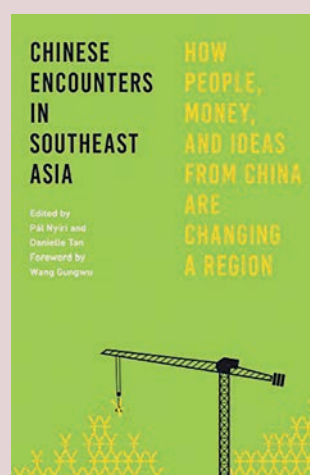
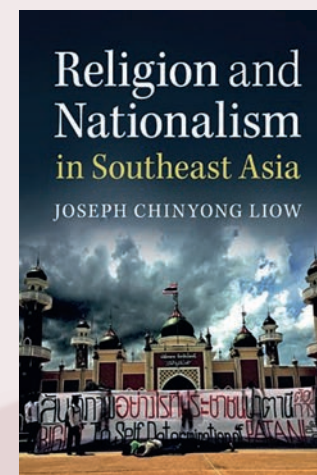
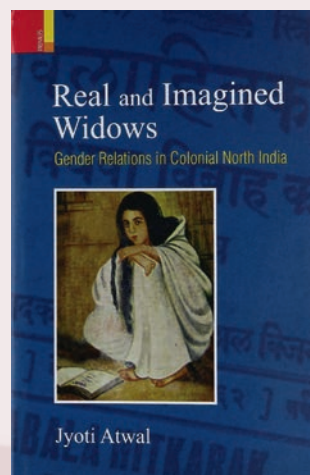
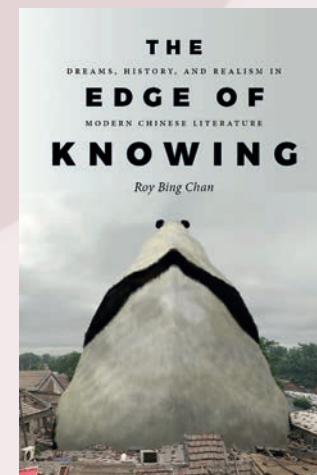
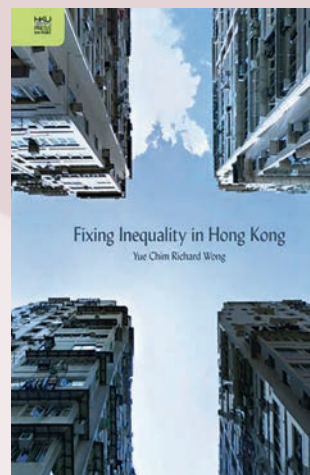
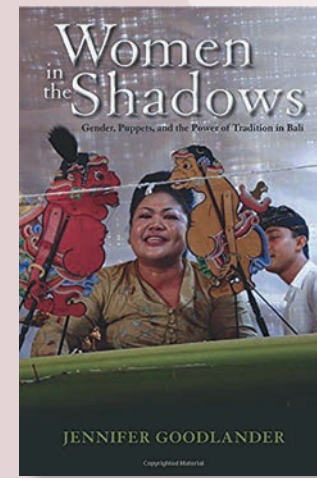
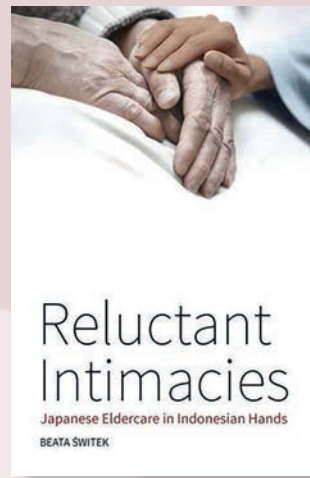
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Local graffiti artist: 'Book Thrower', in Yaumatei, Hong Kng, 2016. Photograph by the author.

The tipping point for artistic alternatives in East Asia

“Would this be the time for a permanent social change?” and “Could alternative artistic and creative practices facilitate the transformation?”, are two questions posed by the spray painted image of a masked protestor pitching a translated copy of Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point* in Yaumatei, Hong Kong.¹ Created by a local graffiti artist during the ‘Fishball Revolution’ in February 2016, this larger-than-life stencil adapts and builds upon the original visual message made by British street artist Banksy in Bethlehem in 2005.² In Banksy’s work, commonly known as the *Flower Thrower*, a protestor is armed with a bouquet of colorful flowers to promote peace, instead of grenades, rocks or Molotov cocktails to be thrown at adversaries.³ However, in Hong Kong’s version, the *Book Thrower*, the protestor is equipped with the knowledge that a sudden

but profound transformation of paradigms, policies and practices is possible when, as Gladwell suggests, “the moment of critical mass”, is reached.

Echoing the queries put forward by the stenciled protestor, this special issue examines the artistic and creative practices emerging in East Asia and how they are gaining prominent status, not only in the art scene, but in society as a whole. Rather than mirroring social transformations, these groundbreaking practices initiate thought-provoking alternatives for both art and life. They have become instrumental for bringing forward new subjectivities and reshaping the intrinsic values of social and cultural well-being.

The tipping point for alternatives in East Asian arts *continued*

“Art needs to be more than a cosmetic intervention, if it is to be a catalyst for cities conducive to well-being.”⁴

AS WITH THE MAJORITY of alternative artistic and creative practices, the significance of *Book Throwing* is interdependent with the temporal, spatial and socio-political dimensions of the creation. Hong Kong’s unlicensed hawkers once were actively present on the city’s streets during Chinese New Year celebrations, whereby the authorities would close their eyes to these unofficial business activities; that was, until regulations were tightened in 2014. Despite local groups demanding tolerance for the hawkers’ rights during the past years, the conflict between different stakeholders escalated in early February 2016. In the evening of 8 February, supporters gathered to defend the hawkers, which led to violent clashes between police and a few hundred protestors. What was at stake was not only the local food culture, but the more profound questions of the overall viability of local culture and the geopolitical status of Hong Kong, which since the civil unrest known best as the Umbrella Movement in autumn 2014, has been a much debated issue, especially between the ‘localists’ and pro-Beijing groups. Nearby, while the rioters’ fires were still burning, a local graffiti artist created his visual statement to aid the cause. The value of his work was not limited to immediate support; it has not been painted over, and now provides a discursive, and even, commemorative site. The desire to reconsider the city’s future was later proclaimed by an unknown person who engaged in visual dialogue with the *Book Throwing* by adding a four-character slogan, “Freedom originates in the mind”, at the tip of the protestor’s pointing left hand.

Besides demonstrating how alternative artistic and creative practices are timely responses to socio-political issues, the *Book Throwing* illuminates four interrelated themes shared by the authors in this special issue – the ground-breaking forms of sites, collaborations, agencies and aesthetics emerging in East Asia; their significance in questioning the current value and power structures in society; building up a sense of belonging; and fostering new subjectivities. Through transdisciplinary research, combining methods and theories from art history, media studies and urban studies, as well as benefitting from close analysis of versatile case studies, the aim is not only to elucidate how alternative artistic and creative practices in East Asia are taking an ever more crucial role both in art and social transformation, but also, to exemplify the tangible and intangible contingencies, challenges and opportunities these practices are facing today.

Amplified alternatives for local needs

Since the 1960s, diversified forms of art activism have reshaped relations between arts and politics around East Asia with varying intensity and results.⁵ Increasingly prominent transformations in economics, geopolitics and the global art scene in the 1990s, further emphasized the active role of contemporary art in the broad area of social justice and change. At the same time, the pre-existing cultural hegemonies and the dominating Euro-American paradigm in arts were challenged, resulting with the “rejection of a hierarchical internationalism in art”, which is one of the main features of Asian contemporary arts today.⁶ As the articles in this special issue illustrate, even if the new forms of alternative artistic and creative practices, at first glance, might seem to mirror their predecessors in the Euro-American art scene, the global discourse and practices are in fact specifically adapted and modified for local needs.

Amidst the growing economic, social, political and cultural disparities in cities in East Asia, informed discourse between different social groups is needed to ensure a more socially just future at the nexus of globalization, digitalization, neoliberal capitalism and environmental crises. Alternative artistic and creative practices, such as workshops, collaborative art projects and creative interventions in the urban public space, are continuously transcending the dichotomies of art and everyday life in East Asia. From alter-native art spaces to one-time interventions in urban public space (e.g., urban knitting, fig. 2), they provide innovative platforms and discursive sites for different stakeholders to engage with each other. While doing so, they respond to sociologist Manuel Castells’ call that the growth of the global civil society depends on spaces “where people come together as citizens and articulate their autonomous views to influence the political institutions of society.”⁷ Aside from the mere beautification of urban public space, alternative artistic and creative practices are instrumental in providing new methods to transform spaces into places, and at the same time, to promote, for instance, community building, belonging and environmental preservation.

Alongside discursive sites, alternative artistic and creative practices support the emergence of new subjectivities and forms of civil participation. Rather than relying on an artist’s aesthetic authority over his or her art work, the practices expand new possibilities for varied agencies to emerge and participate in the creation processes for artists, citizens and other professionals alike. Whether taking the form of a shared breakfast made from local food or digital storytelling workshop encouraging people to share their experiences, the responsibilities of engagement are shifted to participants. Following art historian Grant H. Kester, the shared practices can be regarded as ‘dialogical art’, with an emphasis on exchange and partnership instead of the artist’s authorship and aesthetic autonomy. A more nuanced study of these art practices, as Kester rightfully emphasizes, “can reveal a more complex model of social change and identity, one in which the binary oppositions of divided vs. coherent subjectivity, desiring singularity vs. totalizing collective, liberating distanciation vs. stultifying interdependence, are challenged and complicated.”⁸

The forms of alternative artistic and creative practices today, however, go beyond art practices initiated and led by professional artists. As shown in this special issue, a professional artist might prefer to take up another role, remain anonymous or collaborate as a citizen, activist or protestor, instead of be identified as an artist. In addition, citizens, activists, designers, educators, professors and/or varied institutions can launch artistic and creative initiatives for community building. Based on my own comparative research on urban creativity in East Asia, I posit that instead of focusing on professional artists and their projects, close analysis of more versatile practices are needed in order to transcend the binaries in perceptions as Kester suggests. An understanding of the shifting agencies in the alternative artistic and creative practices will reveal more intricate interrelations of societal changes, citizenship, art and creativity.

Furthermore, in addition to innovative collaborations and agencies, unseen aesthetics are gaining ground and leading to debates on evaluation criteria. To be reductive, the dispute seems to oscillate between two main opposites that value either the affective or aesthetic elements of an art work. Despite the recent desire to revive the importance of aesthetics, the question of the extent to which aesthetic qualities matter, or if they even do at all, is currently under discussion. To emphasize the value of aesthetics and to erase current dichotomies, art historian Claire Bishop draws on philosopher Jacques Rancière’s insights on art’s affective capability to open possibilities for “rupture and ambiguity” and “art as autonomous realm of experience”. For her, aesthetics - and art - always include the ameliorative possibility for social change.⁹

Unexplored horizons

Art researchers, artists, art activists and art organizations are pushed to reconsider the role of aesthetics, arts and creativity in social transformation in East Asia. The locally-adapted but

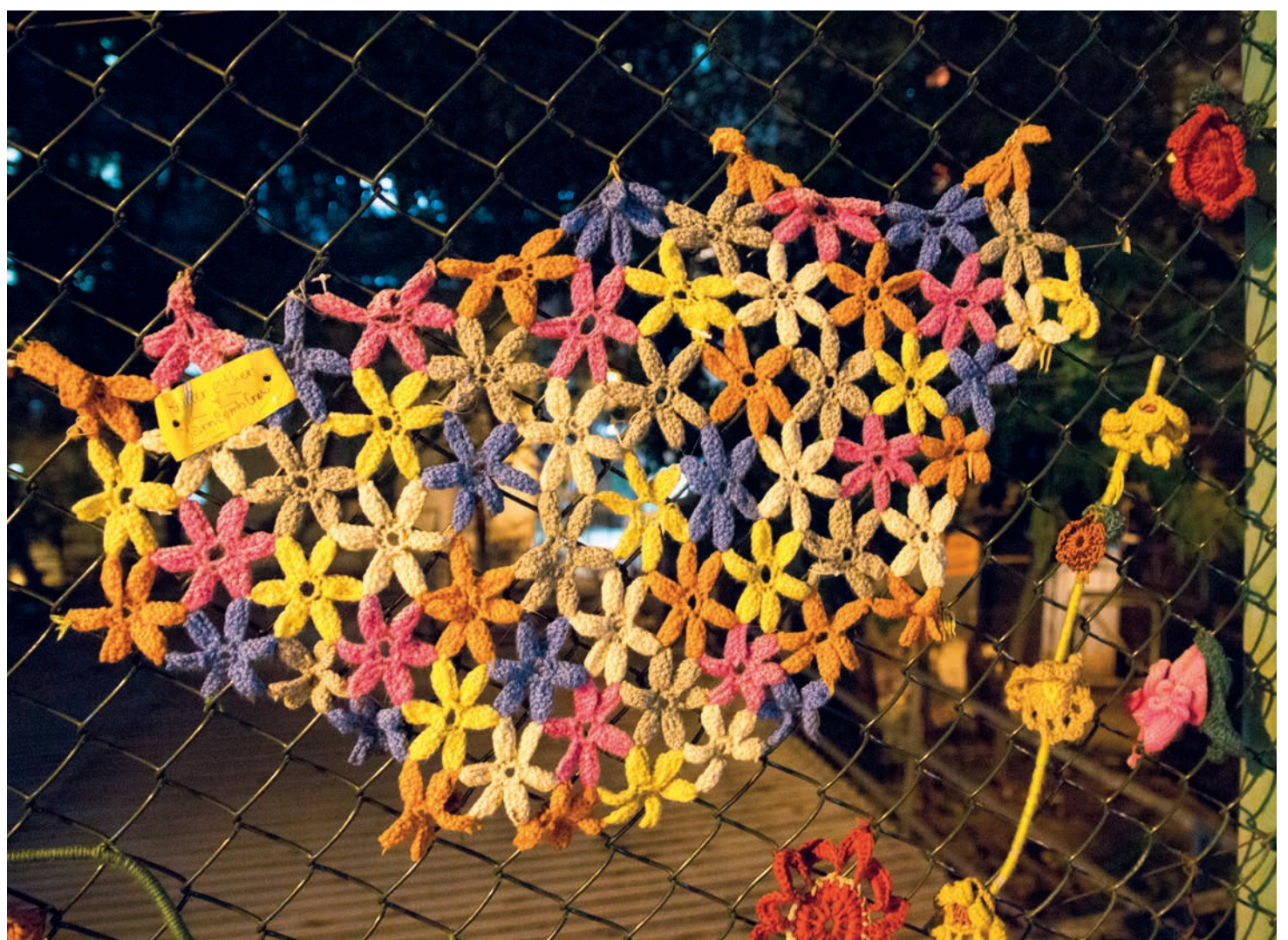
globally-linked alternative artistic and creative practices negotiate regional values interrelated to socio-political and cultural issues along with the hierarchic value structures of the global art scene. The authors of this special issue make explicit some of the most topical contradictions and competing stakes of alternative artistic and creative practices in East Asia today. Together they exemplify how the interdependence of social transformation and alternative artistic and creative practices requires more nuanced research through specific local and regional perspectives. By bringing these authors together, I hope to foster the transdisciplinary discourse on the reciprocal relationship of arts, creativity, design, DIY culture, civil participation, urban planning, cultural policies and governance. The close analysis of alternative artistic and creative practices based on studies crossing the disciplinary boundaries can bring forward new horizons and a better understanding of the significance of social transformations emerging in East Asia today.

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Fig.2: Knitter Esther and Yarn Bomb Crew, a part of installation, Hong Kong, Sept 2016. Photograph by the author.



Art and aesthetic environmental awakening at Plum Tree Creek

Socially engaged art practices, such as those found at *the Plum Tree Creek* project in Taiwan, allow artists, architects and the local community to collaborate in order to revive everyday-life customs, perceptions and representations that are attentive to the environment, whether natural, human, or built. *The Plum Tree Creek* project regenerated environmental aesthetics that both embodied and reflected the specificity of local culture, history and geography, at a time when the community came under threat of systematic urbanization. *The Plum Tree Creek* project offers an example of 'new genre land art', comparable to Joseph Beuys' idea of 'Social Sculpture'; this participatory project has indeed had a sustainable social impact by awakening the local community through environmental aesthetics.

Wei Hsiu TUNG



Above: The curator Wu Mali explaining the ideas behind the project.

Left inset: Map of the project *Art as Environment: A Cultural Action at Plum Tree Creek*.

Images courtesy of the Bamboo Curtain Studio.

The project offers a series of events to open up questions and invite people to contemplate the ways in which their lives relate to the river. There are five subprojects: *Breakfast at Plum Tree Creek*, *Community Theater*, *Local Green Life*, *The Creek in Front of My School* and *The Nomadic Museum*. The project also includes an educational forum through artist-in-residence schemes and workshops whereby school pupils, university students and local residents can interact and discuss with each other. The artist-in-residence scheme, a component of the *Creek in Front of My School* that is hosted by the Bamboo Curtain Studio and local schools, has provided a platform offering a significant participatory potential for educators, young people of different age groups, parents and students alike.

The subproject *Breakfast at Plum Tree Creek*, led by Wu Mali, is another telling example of participatory work, consisting of regular breakfast meetings and gatherings during which participants are invited to cook and eat seasonal foods from local farmers. Sharing a common interest for food allows people to sit and discuss, with local farmers included. The process helps to make participants more aware of their local environment.

The other subproject, *Shaping of a Village: The Nomadic Museum Project*, led by Professor Jui-Mao Huang and his students from the Department of Architecture at Tamkang University, focuses on community lifestyles and tries to revive the practice of 'handicrafts' amongst residents who, for the most part, moved from urban areas to settle in this cheaper area. The idea of a *Handcraft Market* has also been used to foster interactions between craft people, residents, visitors, as well as with the local and natural environments.

Sustainable awakening and the community's cultural action

The *Plum Tree Creek* project has run since 2010 and was awarded the Taishin Contemporary Art award in 2013. The project has fostered discussions and attracted attention from the art scene in Taiwan; it has shown the extent to which art can transform a community for the better and awaken people to environmental issues, such as water pollution, in a sustainable fashion. It has highlighted the importance of eco-wellbeing and its relevance to metropolises such as Taipei as a possible response to serious environmental problems. The *Plum Tree Creek* project's 'new genre land art' has a sustainable social impact through interaction. The project is by nature relational, dialogical, participatory, and, to some extent, comparable to Joseph Beuys' 'social sculpture'⁶ with its environmentally drawn awakening dimension, which invites willing participants and all people concerned to creatively reshape our environment accordingly for a sustainable, better future life.⁷ This participatory project has proved to be more efficient in addressing those issues in a sustainable way than government funded projects such as the 'Taipei Public Art Festival' in the years 2000s, or even the 1990s 'Environmental Art Festival'.

The impacts of globalization and urbanization are obvious in the area of New Taipei City. It is a place where developing that sense of local character and awareness of environmental issues in the community is critical to maintaining the quality of life that allows a healthy balance between human and natural landscapes. *Art as Environment: A Cultural Action at Plum Tree Creek*

project in New Taipei City is a typical example of a successful experiment of 'social sculpture', in Beuys' sense, and of conversation-based participatory practice in the community. The project has gained attention in numerous publications and debates not only in the field of contemporary art, but also amongst community movements and environmental protection groups. Most importantly, the project has managed to address issues at the levels of both the particular and the universal: it highlights the deteriorating state of the local river and waters as well as addresses global issues of pollution in the residential area of an over-developed city. Wu Mali has not only been involved in the Plum Tree Creek Environmental Art Project as a curator and artist; she is also from the local community herself. As such, the project has concretely raised issues of community governance and engagement to allow for sustainability. The project has been conducted in a way that local people have been empowered through environmental awakening, a strong sense of communal reciprocity and mutual trust. Indeed, such civic action and engagement can set the example for many other urban areas and communities.

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Art as environment

The project *Art as Environment: A Cultural Action at Plum Tree Creek* was initiated in 2010 by artists and architects based in the area of Zhuwei in New Taipei City. The project was curated by Wu Mali, an activist and practicing artist, whose work most often reflects socio-cultural issues, such as environmental protection, paternalism, and communities whose histories have been forgotten by mainstream narratives, for example, women factory workers and housewives. Wu Mali was inspired by American artist Susanne Lacy's ideas of 'new genre public art', and community cultural interventions of the 1990s. Ideas of participatory art practices that incorporate conversations – what art theorist Grant Kester calls 'conversation pieces' – also became paramount in her work.¹

Wu's idea to curate a community-based project that addresses environmental issues emerged in relation to a local problem. The environmental issue at stake was a polluted river, providing the title to her curator's statement: *Mending the Broken Land with Water: A Cultural Intervention at the Plum Tree Creek*.² What struck Wu was the degree to which the condition of a river could reflect the urban regeneration and local quality of life. Such was the case with the Plum Tree Creek, a tributary of the Tamsui River. The thought was this: if people accept a polluted creek, if they forget how the creek used to be, and if they have no awareness of the natural environment in which they live, then no vision for a better future quality of life is possible.

In fact, starting in 1994, several environmental art exhibitions went on display along the bank of the Tamsui River, becoming the first 'off-site' art to address environmental issues in Taiwan.³ These exhibitions, however, were designed for the public to see and reflect upon; there were no participatory elements in the making of these works. In addition, many government-funded art exhibitions or events were not programmed to run indefinitely. Local community members and other spectators were not invited to participate in the works; they were not given the chance to actively take part in shaping art projects or places. And although audiences were seeing objects displayed outside, they largely remained unaware of the connections between artwork, land and human landscape.⁴

New genre land art

Similar to Lacy's idea of 'new genre public art', the *Plum Tree Creek* project is presented as a form of 'new genre land art' in order "to be regarded as a practice of artistic ecological rehabilitation."⁵ The project must above all be sustainable within

Waste in contemporary Chinese art



Waste has made a presence in contemporary Chinese art since the beginning of the 21st century, either incorporated into installation artworks, as the content of photographs or paintings, or featured in documentary films. This artistic trend simultaneously reflects and warns of the rapid accumulation of waste brought about by China's embrace of global consumerism and urban-focused development. Analyzing different approaches adopted by a number of artists who deal with waste, this article explores the criticality embodied in their works that help raise awareness of the increasingly severe social and environmental consequences.

Meiqin WANG

Phoenixes rising from the waste

Xu Bing (b. 1955), a leading contemporary Chinese artist, completed a large installation piece entitled *Phoenix Project* in 2010. It consists of two gargantuan sculptures of the legendary phoenix, one 100 feet long and the other 90 feet long (see image on issue cover). The romantic connotations of this creature, however, are contrasted with the hard reality that contributed to their creation, since the two mythical birds are made entirely of building waste and tools that Xu collected from construction sites, which are ubiquitous in contemporary China with its endless process of urban development. These recycled materials include shovels, hard hats, bamboo scaffolding, steel rebar and scrap iron, extinguishers, jackhammers, pipes, tire rims, saws, screwdrivers, pliers, plastic accordion tubing, among other countless items that were painstakingly arranged to form the body, feathers, and talons of the creatures. The industrial construction gives the birds a solid and punitive stance as they rise into the air. Yet as night falls, their mythical quality appears when LED lights laced all over their bodies create an ephemeral and twinkling manifestation.

This work directly engages with the mainstream social discourse in contemporary China, the consumption-oriented urban development. Xu began this work in early 2008 when he was invited to create a piece of public art for the atrium of the World Financial Center in Beijing, which was then under construction. Upon visiting the site he was shocked by the primitive working conditions in which migrant workers labored; they posed a striking contrast with the ultra-modern lifestyle that the extravagant building symbolised.¹ In response, he constructed his public installation with recycled waste materials and tools collected from the very construction site it was to be installed, and he hired migrant workers to assist in his project. This was an unusual time, just a few months before the global financial crisis would take its toll, and also the time when the Beijing government implemented tighter controls over cultural production in the city to insure a 'harmonious' image of Beijing and China for the international audience in anticipation of the upcoming summer Olympics. In accordance, the building's developers withdrew their financial support for the work, due to financial constraints but probably also out of concern towards the potentially controversial meaning that the birds might convey to the Chinese authorities.² Xu continued on his own and completed the Phoenix Project in 2010. The grand scale, the raw appearance, and the process that was modeled upon Beijing's urban redevelopment, won the *Phoenix Project* the reputation of "an artwork almost too vivid in its resemblance to contemporary China."³

In this work, Xu intends to draw attention to both the workers who built the two phoenixes, the demolition of old neighborhoods and the construction of new urban structures such as the World Financial Center that are regarded as more suitable for Beijing's metropolitan image. Demolition and construction are major sources of the skyrocketing accumulation

of waste in the country. This, added by waste produced by an increasingly affluent and rapidly growing urban population, led to China surpassing the U.S. in 2005, becoming the world's largest municipal solid waste generator.⁴ Practically, waste has become an unavoidable sight in and outside of Chinese cities and has caught the attention of many critical-minded contemporary Chinese artists.

Xu Bing's *Phoenix Project* exemplifies a growing trend among contemporary Chinese artists who seek to engage with various problematic byproducts of China's GDP-driven and urban-focused consumerist development strategies. Their works open up various forms of 'civic politics', a term adopted by Chinese art critic Wang Nanming in his discussion of Chinese socially engaged art, thus contributing to the growth of bottom-up civic public space.⁵

Waste as an aesthetic object

Xi'an artist Xing Danwen (b. 1967) might have been one of the first contemporary Chinese artists to turn her attention to the increasing presence of waste in China. Her photographic series *disCONNEXION* (fig. 1), completed in 2002-2003, takes as its subject matter industrial electronic waste, known as 'E-trash', that developed countries have dumped in China. Every year, thousands of tons of electronic trash are transported from America, Japan, Korea, and other developed countries, to southern coastal regions such as Guangdong and Fujian, where they are sorted and recycled. According to a recent United Nations report, China is currently the largest e-waste dumping site in the world.⁶ During her field research in Guangdong Province, one of the most developed regions in China, Xing discovered that thousands of local and migrant workers made a tough living by sorting out mounds of computer and electronic trash in primitive and unprotected working conditions. These waste pickers were exposed to various toxic substances as they tore apart discarded electronic appliances, and during the process they also seriously polluted water and soil in the surrounding areas and beyond, and indirectly contaminated local agricultural produce.⁷

Xing's approach to this distressing reality, which had apparently been going on without much public attention in the shadow of spectacular economic success in this part of China, was aesthetic abstraction. Rather than exposing the abhorred working conditions, she photographed the products of strenuous and long hours of labor: mounds of circuit boards, plastic cords, silicon chips, and

other electronic components. She gave each mound a close-up shot, capturing disparate shapes and colors of fragmented mechanical products. Her aestheticizing of the cold and lifeless scrap turned them into provocative and enticing images. Their semi-abstract and aesthetically intriguing appearance simultaneously draws audiences in and surprises them once they realise what has been photographed. In a twisted way, these images constitute a distinctive portrait of the downside of China's rapid development that, in Xing's words, "conveys the immensity of the problem as well as the unbearable details I witnessed in these e-wastelands."⁸ Titled *disCONNEXION*, ironically relating to electronic products' purpose of facilitating connection, the work reflects the socio-cultural disconnection between different social groups such as producers of electronic goods, consumers of them, and the trash pickers who also deal with them, in an increasingly atomized contemporary society. The aestheticization and abstraction of the otherwise formidably reality becomes Xing's unique way of revealing a dark side of globalization and exposing an ugly truth behind China's rapid development.

Jiangsu-born multimedia artist Han Bing (b. 1974) also used waste as his object of aesthetic contemplation when he made rubbish-ridden rivers, a byproduct of China's consumerist urbanization, the topic of his art.⁹ He was drawn to the appallingly visible contamination of above-ground water throughout China as a result of the mindless and irresponsible disposal of everyday trash, and began his multiple-year photographic series *Urban Amber* in 2005. The photo *Urban Amber-Red Flags Flying on Skylines Cranes* (2006), taken in Beijing, presents a bluish green body of water where one sees water lilies and fallen leaf-like objects floating above a forest of construction cranes with red flags flying overhead, a prevailing sight in China's accelerated urban expansion. At first glance, the image looks exquisite, giving the illusion of an attractive water surface covered by foliage and animated by swimming fish beneath. Looking closely, however, one realises that it is waste such as garbage bags, plastic bottles, and human sewage that make up the water's surface. The bluish-green color itself is the result of the water being heavily polluted by putrid rubbish and masses of algae. In other pieces from the series (fig. 2) we see reflections of various man-made structures, such as glamorous skyscrapers and new residential complexes for the rich, shanty dwellings for the urban poor, migrants and peasants, and commercial establishments and advertising billboards, all indistinguishably shrouded under a body of water infested with filthy rubbish.

In this conceptual work, Han took photos of many heavily polluted bodies of water in Beijing and produced single-exposure images without any modifications other than simply turning them upside down. However, it is with such a witty and perceptive reversal that the rubbish thoughtlessly thrown

Fig. 1 (above): Xing Danwen, selective pieces from *disCONNEXION*, 2002-2003, photograph. Courtesy of Danwen Studio.

Fig. 2: Han Bing, selective pieces from *Urban Amber*, 2005-11, photography. Courtesy of Han Bing.



Byproducts of China's urban development and consumerism

away by people has returned, taking up position in the sky of Han's landscape. In this series, Han brings to the forefront the paradoxical result of industrialization and reveals a prominent downside of Chinese urbanization. Chinese cities have built higher and higher structures to house the dreams of urbanites, as these construction cranes are still doing in Han Bing's photo. Simultaneously, the modernized urban lifestyle that centers on material consumption and convenient living has produced ever dirtier and stinkier rivers, ponds, and lakes. Han's seemingly charming portrayals of the garbage-infested rivers function like amber, which was well put by art critic Maya Kovskyaya: "capturing the sediment of an age, and reflecting the dark side of dreams of modernization."¹⁰

Waste as a component of living space

While some contemporary Chinese artists imbed their social critique in an aestheticizing approach, by presenting the unexpected beauty of waste in their close-up images, others seek to contextualize the presence of waste and directly depict its impact on social space and human existence. Sichuan painter Liu Xintao (b. 1968) captures the invasion of trash in urban public spaces in his *Collapsing Night*, a series of oil paintings that he has concentrated on since 2005.¹¹ In *Collapsing Night-Wild Lily* that Liu completed in 2007 (fig. 3), the canvas confronts the viewer with cluttered trash conspicuously taking up the foreground near a street manhole. Amid the scattered trash of unrecognizable objects, some blossoming white lilies emerge. They, however, are rotting like the trash surrounding them. In the middle ground we see the upper bodies of a hugging couple, one of whom is topless while the other's condition is ambiguous. The love between humans is exposed in the littered street and acquires an incongruous nature.

Behind this all is a wide paved road receding dramatically and submerging into a well-lit area in the distance. This rational and well-ordered section of the cityscape, pushed into a thin slice at the top of the canvas, is in noticeable contrast with the irrational presence of the trash and the hugging pair. Liu describes, as follows, his experience of absurdity in real life that inspired this painting series: "I took a walk at the early evening and what I saw were wild dogs barking, rats scurrying, and stinking garbage piling up here and there. Behind such a messy environment the profile of a thriving city suddenly appeared in distance with its shining and intoxicating neon lights. It was an extremely absurd and even horrific scene."¹²

The dominance of the trash in the composition hints upon the wasteful lifestyle promoted in an increasingly consumption-oriented urban culture. A rising urban middle-class who benefits from China's economic reforms is accustomed to a lifestyle that over-consumes and discards the unwanted with abandon. The composition also points to the way contemporary Chinese urbanites treat or abuse public spaces. Since the 1990s, as art historian Wu Hung has commented, there has been a strong disparity between the care Chinese urbanites attend to their private space and their total disregard for what they consider public space.¹³ This contrast, I argue, reflects a general decline of social conscience and sense of responsibility among the Chinese population. The source of this problem, one may argue, is the rising dominance of self-interested materialism and a consumption-driven culture, which lacks the effect of moral restraints, like the traditional Confucian ethos or Communist ideology used to have on Chinese citizens. Essentially, it is also a reflection of the lack of their active participation in public space, a problem attributable to the authoritarian approach that denies the right of ordinary citizens to participate in the development and transformation of their cities.

The problem with garbage is also what motivated Shandong artist Wang Jiuliang (b. 1976) to initiate his socio-logical survey, which locates and documents landfills used for Beijing's waste.¹⁴ He has taken hundreds of photographs, of often disheartening visual content, which show both the natural environment and human beings negatively impacted by the rapid increase of urban waste production. Dominated by the ideology of consumerism, accompanied by rapid urban expansion and increasing affluence, Chinese cities have generated ever more waste in various forms, such as everyday household garbage, electronic and industrial rubbish, or construction and demolition debris.

In 2011, Wang released his first documentary, entitled *Beijing Besieged by Waste*, which combines photographs and video footage of many large landfill sites on the outskirts of Beijing (fig. 4), and of the scavengers, mostly migrant workers from the countryside, who live near and on the dumps.¹⁵ Wang mapped the locations of more than 500 landfills surrounding Beijing, and this documentary is a striking summary of his discoveries in the hitherto unseen dirty backyard of China's capital.¹⁶ The 72-minute video narrates Beijing's distressing cycle of consumption, the ill-managed and sometimes illegal operation of waste disposal, the appalling destruction of the environment including rivers, soil, and air, the horrific lives lived by scavengers and their children, and government negligence or implicit collaboration.



Fig. 3:
Liu Xintao,
*Collapsing
Night-Wild Lily*,
2007, oil on
canvas. Courtesy
of Liu Xintao.

Fig. 4:
Wang Jiuliang,
still from *Beijing
Besieged by
Waste*, 2011,
documentary.
Courtesy of
Wang Jiuliang.

Wang's film shows how, in order to meet the insatiable demand for construction materials as thousands of new buildings are added to the city's urban landscape, workers dig deep into mountains and rivers to excavate stones and sand. The numerous pits left behind are used as ready-made landfills into which tons of urban waste are poured. Many of these operations are illegal, but continue nevertheless. On the flip side of this rapid urbanization and rising consumerism, is the bleak and liminal existence of thousands of scavengers, who try to thrive at the lowest level of Chinese society by sorting and recycling waste. Wang's film takes us into the everyday lives and mentality of these people who live in shabby shelters built from recycled materials, and whose clothes and sometimes food are sourced from the dumps themselves. There, children find toys that their parents would not be able to afford.

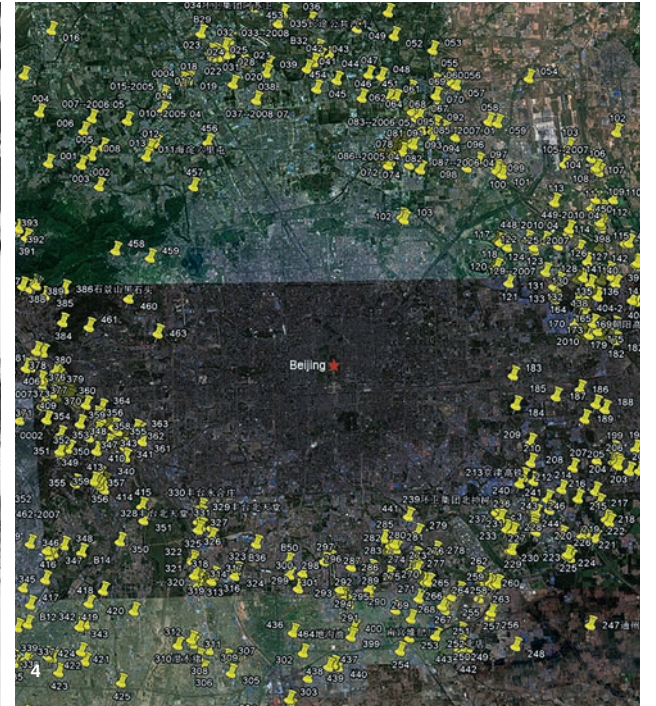
Overall, Wang's photographs and his documentary expose this dark reality existing side-by-side with a world-class city populated by glistering skyscrapers and embellished with iconic architectural projects from internationally famed architects. As his research reveals, the continuous urban expansion, the growing materialism and consumerism, and the negligence from both the municipal government and urban residents seem to have pushed China's capital city to the edge of self-suffocation with the hundreds of landfills forming a thick belt encircling the city proper.

Civic politics

The increasing presence of waste in art speaks to the omnipresence of waste in contemporary urban society. Accompanying apparent prosperities, brought about by China's spectacular economic development and nationwide urbanization in the past two decades, is the astonishing accumulation of garbage. Artists such as those discussed above are keenly aware of this problem and in their art they examine waste in its various forms and conditions; they have developed new concepts, methodologies, and aesthetics surrounding waste. Their creative interpretations and realistic representations of waste endow this lowly material a unique role of criticality and make visible its invasive presence, exposing waste as a phenomenon largely ignored in the state-controlled mainstream media and cultural production until recently. As such, their efforts contribute to the growth of 'green public sphere', a term coined by environmental scholars in their discussions about China's rising environmental activism.¹⁷

Moreover, the works produced by these individual artists could be seen as 'parallel structures', a concept advanced by Vaclav Havel in his call for individuals to engage in small-scale work and politics from below to challenge the totalitarian dictatorship and create a better society.¹⁸ Resonating Havel's political ideas is Chinese art critic Wang Nanming's adoption of 'civic politics' as a useful concept for discussing the work of contemporary Chinese artists who engage with social problems and accentuate the power of artworks to stimulate civic awareness and create new, albeit small-scale, public spheres.¹⁹ Wang argues that 'civic politics' is different from the grand and centralized top-down politics, and defines it as multilateral, thriving on everyday practice.²⁰ He thus recognizes the importance of various individual-based and different approaches adopted by artists who assume a critical attitude towards Chinese urban reality.

In a post-totalitarian but still authoritative regime of China, these 'parallel structures' of artworks challenge the official portrayal of China's economic development and urbanization, which centers on magnificent cities, glittering skyscrapers, and lavish shopping malls. They constitute various forms of 'civic politics' that help to uncover a hidden truth concerning the byproducts of mainstream socioeconomic transform-



ations and open up space for doubt and reflection of the very process. Essentially, the significance of these artworks lies in their potential to contribute to the growth of bottom-up civic consciousness and public space.

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Building the 'Dongdaemun Rooftop Paradise' on the margins of Seoul

Over the last decade in South Korea, contemporary art has been undergoing an important transformation toward more participatory, collaborative and collective practices. By taking the case of the *Dongdaemun Rooftop Paradise*, a community engaged art project that has occupied the rooftop of an old run-down building in Seoul, this essay explores how artists seek to intervene in the urban branding that relies on spectacles, how they unsettle the hegemonic script of 'creative city' and what kind of space is imagined to become a 'paradise' within the unjust city.

Hong KAL



Fig. 1 (above right): The Dongdaemun Shoes Wholesale Building B located in Dongdaemun, seen from across the Cheonggyecheon stream. The rooftop of this building is the site of the DRP.

Fig. 2 (below left): A DRP member discovering objects while cleaning the rooftop in 2014.

CONTEMPORARY ART In South Korea (hereafter Korea) has been undergoing an important transformation toward the reciprocal relationship of artists with people from different backgrounds and the affiliation of art with other areas of cultural production, social knowledge and political practices. Korean art critics have identified the 2000s as an era of community art.¹ The recent proliferation of community art has roots in *Minjung Art*, the political art of the 1980s.² Yet, contemporary community art practices are profoundly different from their predecessor in their use of relatively diverse forms and the ideas of community that are not necessarily subversive, class-conscious, or oriented toward radical activism. They are more closely aligned with the global currency of participatory, socially engaged, and community-based art practices. As Grant Kester, a prominent art historian who advocates dialogical art, observed, the first decade of the 21st century witnessed intellectual and creative tendencies of art practices that involve collaborative, dialogical, and collective modes of production.³ In Korea and elsewhere, community art works are criticized for different reasons, such as for losing the aesthetic specificity, lacking the political criticality, being appropriated by urban regeneration strategies, or becoming complicit with neoliberal agendas. In the art world in Korea, for example, they are often dismissed as "benevolent NGO art".⁴ However, rather than negating them, it would be more productive to analyze complex and contradictory aspects of community art practices. Responding to the suspicion of these art practices as unsophisticated, politically correct, or even religious,⁵ Grant Kester has elaborated that collaborative, collective and dialogical art works are challenging residual modernist notions of aesthetic autonomy, the authorship, and the artist's relation to audience.⁶

This essay explores aesthetically and politically challenging aspects of community art in Korea. It is concerned less with what artists can do in a narrow instrumental sense and more with how they might open up a space from which to reimagine the possibilities to intervene in the city. The case study here is the *Dongdaemun Rooftop Paradise* (hereafter the DRP), a site-specific community engaged art project on the rooftop of an old run-down building in Dongdaemun, a district that is crowded with old markets and new shopping towers and which has been designated as a special tourist zone in Seoul. The DRP is a critical response to the Dongdaemun Design Plaza and Park (hereafter the DDP), an expressive new spectacle (opened in

March 2014) located about 200 meters from the rooftop. The DRP involves the reclamation of urban space against the grain of speculative urban redevelopment that resorts to spectacle and gentrification. It puts emphasis on the reconfiguration of art, artists, and community, and the re-imagination of labor that is not bounded by capitalist concepts of efficiency, speed, profit, and consumption. By taking the case of the DRP, I question how community art projects seek to intervene in the urban branding that relies on spectacles, how they unsettle and complicate the official script of 'creative city' and what kind of space is imagined to become a 'paradise' within the unjust city. I hope to shed some light on the potentials, contradictions, and perils of collaborative and collective art practices. This essay is drawn from my research and involvement with the given site and actors since 2013.

Politics of spectacles in urban redevelopment in Seoul

Seoul's urban redevelopment is heavily influenced by state intervention with close relationships with real estate capital of large conglomerates, causing the displacement of the majority of low-income occupiers. It shows a strong resemblance with gentrification, which incurs capital investment, commodification of space, and various forms of displacement.⁷ In the development of the speculative urban environment, the role of artists is identified as initiating and/or attracting the process of gentrification.⁸ More recently, the invocation of arts and culture for public consumption as a driving force for the urban economic growth has become central to the ambitious cities that seek to enhance their regional position as a global city.⁹ The urban strategies that pivot around arts and culture for economic growth owe much to debates on the relationship between culture, creativity and the city. In Seoul, as elsewhere, the assertion that creativity is a necessary component of economic growth has been taken by policymakers as a key for the successful place-making under the languages of urban renewal, regeneration, and renaissance.¹⁰ Over the past decade, Seoul has eagerly adopted the script of 'creative city', which looks for 'creative' actors and institutions for the makeover of the city.

Seoul's previous Mayor, Oh Se Hoon (2006-2011), took up 'Creative Seoul' as a catchphrase. The word 'creative' became ubiquitous in official communications, such as in 'creative governance', 'creative management' and 'creative economy'. Mayor Oh launched a mega urban redevelopment campaign called *Design Seoul*. It was launched in 2008 to showcase Seoul as the World Design Capital of 2010 appointed by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, an organization that promotes progress made by cities through design. Under *Design Seoul*, the city government carried out a series of urban projects, and the most dramatic one was probably the DDP, which was unveiled in March 2014.¹¹

The DDP is located in Dongdaemun, a district that represents historical and social transformations of urban life in Seoul. This area is well known for the market that was established early in 1905 and which survived the Japanese colonial period. After the Korean War, the market swelled with an inflow of refugees from North Korea. During the high era of developmentalism, based on the export-oriented economy of the 1960s and 1970s, the market was a center for the garment manufacturing industry, clustered with wholesale shops and sewing factories that exploited young cheap laborers from the countryside. From the 1980s onwards, with

a decline in the manufacturing industry, the market gave way to a new economy in which high-rise shopping malls with retail stores dominate. The new mega shopping towers attract large numbers of tourists and were officially designated as a special tourist zone in 2002.

The most dramatic change seen in Dongdaemun was the erection of the DDP, which was built for 460 million USD, funded by the Seoul city government and constructed by Samsung corporations. Designed by globally renowned architect Zaha Hadid (1950-2016), the DDP is a gigantic metallic silver structure in dramatic curved form, whose roof, although inaccessible, is mostly covered with green grass.¹² Apart from its organic form, the DDP stands like a massive piece of modernist sculpture premised on the idea of art autonomy and independence against the surroundings. The DDP is a spectacle as such. As most famously put forward by Guy Debord, 'spectacle' refers to social relations mediated by images, which in turn become the social relation itself.¹³ The building in its expressive and dramatic visual appearance presents the urban strategies that pivot around the staging of the image of 'creative city'. The DDP was celebrated with a promise that it would bring in cultural consumption, urban tourism, investment, and capital accumulation, namely the 'DDP effects'. From its conception, however, it faced numerous criticisms including the destruction of historical sites, the eviction of street vendors,¹⁴ and the selection of a foreign star architect who did not even visit the site for design. The absence of reference to local contexts makes the functioning of the DDP as a public space highly questionable.¹⁵

Dongdaemun Rooftop Paradise (DRP)

While the DDP is criticized for being decontextualized from and destructive of the historically charged local site, a group of eight artists and cultural actors led by senior artist Chan-kook Park conducted an 'action research' in the Dongdaemun area in winter 2013. Two months later in February 2014, they found an abandoned rooftop of an old market building about 200 meters from the colossal DDP, which was at that time under construction.¹⁶ On the rooftop, they established the *Dongdaemun Rooftop Paradise*. The building on which the DRP perches is the Shoes Wholesale Building B, which was built in the modernist inspiration in the 1950s. The building is located between the new high-rise shopping towers and the DDP to the south, and Changsin-dong, a district that has over 3000 small sewing home factories, to the north. The building comprises retail and wholesale shoe shops on the first and second floors, storage units on the third floor, and residential apartments on the fourth and fifth floors. The shops were once famous for selling trendy shoes, but now overall business is in decline. Yet the old market area is still heavily congested. In contrast, rooftops are largely abandoned. For the newcomers, the rooftop was the only available space. For a cheap rent of \$300 a month, they were allowed to use the attics and the 100-meter long roof, from where to reimagine place-making on the margins of the city (fig. 1).

The rooftop was far from empty when the DRP moved in. It was filled with tons of abandoned objects that had piled up for the past 50 years. Merchants and tenants who could not find storage space simply brought merchandise samples, stocked items, broken household appliances, and various personal belongings up to the rooftop. It took a few months to clean almost 18 tons of discarded objects and rubbish. During the process, the DRP members excavated various objects and experimented with them (fig. 2). For example, they turned refrigerators and toilet bowls into flowerpots, and TV frames into beehives, allowing new use values to emerge. Obsolete and unwanted urban junk is often used for artistic creations, yet in the DRP, the overproduced and discarded objects were neither simply transformed into aesthetic commodities nor simply recycled out of general environmental concerns.



2

Through the renewal of the byproducts of capitalism, the DRP calls into question how to reconfigure the ecology of the market area that once enabled its success, but does not guarantee its future anymore. The market has a self-sufficient mechanism in which the processes of planning, design, manufacturing, distribution, and sales are clustered within a radius of one kilometer. Here, about 4000 new items are put on the market daily and sometimes new items, mostly knockoffs, are produced as fast as in three days. This speedy on-the-spot mechanism once made the market successful as a fashion hub in Northeast Asia.¹⁷ However, the elements of an outdated structure, dependent upon closed and vertical relations, the remaining labor intensive industry in poor working conditions, the unethical competition, and the rising rent, keep away new business, making the future of the market uncertain. Also, the market now has to compete with those in Guangzhou and Hanoi where garment industries are growing rapidly. For its survival, the DRP members believe, the market should renew itself with new values other than developmentalist ideas of economic efficiency, speed, and productivity that once enabled the market's success. But the DRP members are also aware of the danger of being coopted by the arts and culture-led redevelopment strategies that are oriented toward tourism, entertainment, and consumption. Their concern is thus how to revive the place and reconfigure the relations without being displaced and appropriated by the 'creative' industries.

The DRP arranged various activities including remaking the attics, beekeeping, gardening, and hosting workshops and events, under the idea of *Lab-tory* that combines knowledge, skills, and art in the interactive exchanges of research, production, and distribution. In *Real Clothes*, the workshops organized in the fall of 2014, they invited sewing experts, designers, merchants, and business owners who are in the same field, but who had rarely met in person before. They discussed problems of how to improve poor working conditions, to reduce the amount of inventory, and to make 'real clothes' other than cheap copies. The meetings led to a collaborative work, in which sewing experts participated in a design process, for the first time in their more than 20 years working experience. The practice of collaborative relations was expanded to the idea of connecting rooftops. In November 2014, the DRP opened the *DRP Sales Presentation*, an event set up like a real estate sales presentation. It advertised an attic (about 300 square feet) as a renovated, multifunctional, live-work structure. It further showcased an attic model as a mobile unit designed to be movable to nearby rooftops. By mocking a sales presentation for speculative investment by real estate developers, the DRP performed possibilities of creatively intervening in the urban branding strategies geared toward the construction of spectacular spaces for consumption, such as the DDP. From a space of urban margins such as the rooftop, the DRP imagines a 'paradise'. What is important for them is a process of becoming rather than what it ought to be.

The rooftop community

The rooftop has been visited by many people in the past three years; its atmosphere is open, casual, temporary and playful (fig. 3). Yet, the DRP is not intended to be an entertainment site for inner-city creatives, art parties, or hipsters' gatherings. While distancing themselves from cultural consumption, the DRP members are also cautious about a romanticized idea of community and an attempt to restore it. The idea of community is at the core of the debate on community art. Some art critics and historians are highly skeptical of any collective form of identification and often unfavorably view community art works as suppressing the unique identity of individual collaborators under the false coherence of a community

and thus reinforcing social stereotypes and generalizations. However, as Grant Kester has aptly pointed out, the community formation is an ongoing process that shifts between moments of relative coherence and incoherence. Simply pointing to the danger of essentializing forms of identification, Kester has argued, is not a sufficient response to complex questions raised by collaborative and collective art practices.¹⁸ It is indeed more important to observe specific and contingent strategies in them. On the rooftop, a space that is displaced, isolated, marginalized and sometimes romanticized in the unjust city,¹⁹ the DRP brings people together as a community that communicates ideas, senses, and imaginations, attending to differences within the group. It envisions the rooftop community through the reassertion of inhabitation, the revalorization of discarded objects, and the exploration of encounter, sociality, playfulness, and ambience in the everyday details.

On the rooftop, new relations have been unfolding during the past three years through the gradual accumulation of interactions between the DRP members, neighbors, merchants, and visitors. The relations are not always feel-good or harmonious, but sometimes even quite antagonistic when it comes to the rights to the space. The DRP's lease of the rooftop attics was arranged with Kim Kang-sik, the building manager, but most details were agreed verbally. After his sudden death in the winter of 2015, the new manager tried to void the lease agreement with the DRP, so that he could rent out the renewed rooftop for a higher rent. The eviction attempt failed due to the complexity of the ownership. The rooftop is officially a common area shared by the 240 owners of the shops, storage units and apartments in the building. Since the majority of them are absentee owners living in more affluent areas, like Gangnam or even abroad, it was very difficult for the new manager to achieve a collective resolution. The rights to the rooftop are further complicated due to the fact that the rooftop attic is not an authorized structure and thus any lease contract involves legal issues. Under such intricate conditions, in which the immediate eviction was avoided but is always pending, the DRP members have been exploring ways to officially claim the rights to the rooftop not only through legal terms but more importantly by inhabiting and using it as a communal space with other building tenants and merchants, such as simply eating and chatting together in the space. In the case of the DRP, what is more interesting than the question of whether artists are victims and/or facilitators of gentrification, is to see how they engage in the urban fabric and create a space from which to critique the hegemonic politics of spectacle that is evident in the nearby DDP.

In and out of the spectacle

The DRP is imbued with the spirit of radical avant-gardism that blurs the institutionalized boundaries of the aesthetics and the social. The merger of art and everyday life is advocated by political and socially engaged artists, which critically rethinks the role of the audience from passive spectators into participants and collaborators. For those artists, the term 'spectacle' refers to what they oppose artistically and politically. The DRP seeks to counter the politics of spectacle as showcased in the DDP, which lacks relations and connections with local sites and people. But, there are some intriguing questions regarding the contemporary working of spectacle. It has been observed that contemporary spectacle is not merely trying to make people passive spectators, but instead it inspires them to participate in playful interactivity and to be part of emotional experiences. Contemporary spectacle now seeks to establish the atmosphere for lived experiences, loaded with user-friendly modes and participations, co-opting the strategies that were previously used to resist spectacle.²⁰

Fig. 3 (below): A DRP event with social workers held on the rooftop in 2016.

All photos courtesy of the DRP.



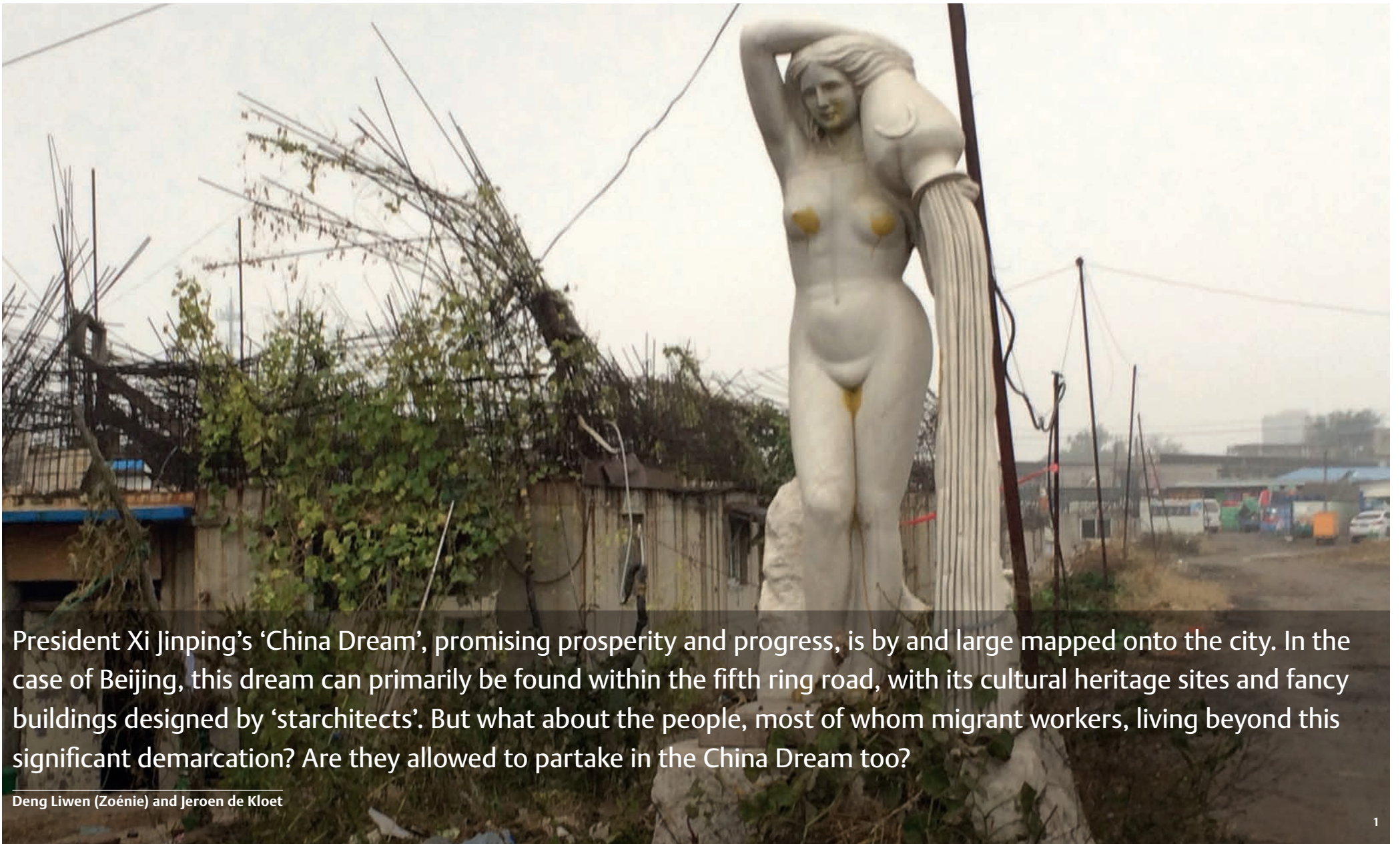
Then, how do we locate the DRP in such a context of the new working of spectacle today? While retaining some contradictions, I would like to recognize a critical sensibility in the DRP's activities that put forward new meanings of time, space, labor, play and relations, away from those of efficiency, speed, productivity, consumption, profit, and speculation. They are urban guerrillas working in and out of spectacle and disturbing its boundaries. There is no guarantee that their experiments with urban spaces and relations will coalesce into the wider politics of the city. Then again, their intervention lies not in a measurable outcome, but in a process in which a space is opened up to unsettle the 'creative city'. In the analysis of community art practices, what is more needed is building a critical framework to understand their potentials, limits and contradictions. This is particularly crucial in the context that the mainstream art institutions and the disciplines of art history are still reluctant to recognize art works that involve communication and collaboration between artists and non-artists in rather dematerialized forms. It gives hope, however, to see more efforts being made to address in a substantial manner the important transformation toward collective practices in contemporary art production in Korea and elsewhere.

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Keep on dreaming: Art in a changing Beijing



President Xi Jinping's 'China Dream', promising prosperity and progress, is by and large mapped onto the city. In the case of Beijing, this dream can primarily be found within the fifth ring road, with its cultural heritage sites and fancy buildings designed by 'starchitects'. But what about the people, most of whom migrant workers, living beyond this significant demarcation? Are they allowed to partake in the China Dream too?

Deng Liwen (Zoënie) and Jeroen de Kloet

— Ah, 5th ring, you have one more ring than 4th Ring.
(...) On the way to and from work, cars are always
in a line. For my life, for dreams, for a holiday.

The 2011 *Song of the Fifth Ring Road* by MC Hotdog, together with comedy actor Yue Yunpeng, has become an unofficial anthem for Beijing. This is not only because of the song's funny lyrics and MTV video, but also because the ring roads really do play a pivotal role in how people perceive and experience the city. Together with landmarks such as Tiananmen square, the CCTV Building and the Olympic Bird's Nest, to name but a few, the ring roads are part of the mental map people have of Beijing: they help us locate where we are in this immense city. In his work *Beijing 2003*, maverick artist Ai Weiwei spent 16 days driving along every street inside Beijing's fourth ring, driving a total of 2400 kilometers.¹ Most of the city's key landmarks are located within and around the fourth ring road, but 51% of its residents live beyond the fifth ring road.² There, we find urban villages, mostly occupied by migrant workers, alongside luxurious villa parks for expats and the new rich. The fifth ring road forms a class boundary; in the words of journalist Jiang,³ "the fifth and sixth ring roads have become the hopeless choice of new immigrants in the city because of the house prices of the core region." It is thus no wonder that MC Hotdog selected this road for his song. What is located beyond it is generally rendered invisible and unknown, despite the number of people living there.

How does art intervene?

Indeed, China's global rise is epitomized by the changing central cityscape of Beijing; Xi Jinping's China Dream finds its materialization in shiny skyscrapers, speedy ring roads, fancy buildings designed by starchitects, and green parks. This dream is quite firmly located within the fifth ring road. As we will show in this article, art intervenes, challenges and interrupts such dreams. The invisibility of life beyond the fifth ring road inspired the 'Second Floor Publishing Institute' in Beijing to launch the project *5+1=6* in September 2014. In their open call for participation, the initiators invited cultural practitioners to "choose one of the villages/towns between the fifth ring road and sixth ring road to conduct an investigative project in an artistic way."⁴ The participants were asked to live in their chosen villages or towns for at least 10 days, and to spend no less than 8 hours per day there to conduct their project, either individually or collaboratively.⁵ Most of the participants were artists and art students; some were designers, architects and other creative practitioners. From September 2014 to August 2015, 40 such investigative projects were conducted in 40 villages and towns in this area. From these, we have selected

the project by artist Ma Lijiao (b.1985), to ponder the question: how does art intervene in the processes of urbanization in China, what does it try to do, but also, what are its limitations?

This question is not new. By now, quite a significant body of work explores the links between art and urbanization in China; for example, the work of Yomi Braester, Robin Visser, Zhang Zhen, Jeroen de Kloet and Lena Scheen, as well as a 2015 special issue in *China Information*, edited by Meiqin Wang and Minna Valjakka.⁶ As the latter two scholars observe, "[t]ransformations of urban space and the phenomena and problems associated with urbanization – such as the construction boom, high mobility, technological innovation, dislocation, social inequality, and environmental deterioration – have been repeatedly addressed in Chinese visual arts since the 1990s."⁷ From this list, Ma Lijiao's work interrogates especially the increased social inequality that accompanies China's economic rise.

In probing into this link between art and social inequality, we are inspired by the invisibility of life beyond the fifth ring road. What are the implications of this invisibility? Following French philosopher Jacques Rancière, what is rendered visible and what not, is part of the *distribution of the sensible*. This is "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it."⁸ It is the system that produces in- and exclusion that renders things visible or invisible, sayable or unsayable, audible or inaudible, through which the status quo in society is maintained. What is rendered insensible is often that which may challenge the status quo. Art, by its practices and forms of visibility, intervenes in the distribution and reconfiguration of the sensible in the social space; its aesthetics, "is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience"⁹. Thus, aesthetics can help to contest naturalness and obviousness.

According to Maurizio Marinelli, the artworks by Zhang Dali, Dai Guangyu and Jin Feng enact such a redistribution of the senses amidst the urban revolution in China, following Rancière's philosophy.¹⁰ In his words, "I contend that these artists contribute to an aesthetic revolution in the making, which can be defined as the redistribution of the visible, the audible, the sayable, and also the tactile and the olfactory. These artists are enacting a total revolution of the senses."¹¹ These three artists treat the urban objects – either the dilapidated walls in the hutongs of Beijing, or the petitioners from the "petitioners' village" in Beijing, as passive objects who silently tell their stories via the artists' compositions and interpretations. As such, "they are making ordinary people assume the importance of the extraordinary."¹²

Fig. 1 (above): Renaissance style marble statue of a nude female stood incongruously next to a 'villa' basement that was inhabited by migrant workers.

We will show how Ma Lijiao is doing something more: he does not render the people silent, nor does he attempt to translate their concerns into an art work. Instead, his artwork consists of an *enactment* of their concerns in which the artist becomes respectively a migrant worker, a journalist and a student. The title of the project, *5+1=6*, could be gesturing towards a redistribution of the sensible and something more; 5 is the 5 ring roads that are part of the regime of the sensible, the +1 points to the intervention, which suggests that it wants to add something – new visions, new sounds, new smells, new words, from the artists and also the people living there who exercise their agency. How does the work of Ma Lijiao do that?

Becoming a migrant worker, journalist and student

Ma Lijiao participated in *5+1=6* in November 2014 for 10 days in the Xiaojiahe East Village (*Xiaojiahe dong cun*), located in North-West Beijing. In his project, Ma Lijiao morphed into different roles; he acted as a migrant worker, a journalist and a student. Through these enactments, he succeeded, in our view, in rendering parts of life in the urban village sensible that remain otherwise insensible. Whereas in global discourse, migrant workers are often represented as a horde of nameless and faceless rural people working in urban areas, Ma Lijiao tries to give them a face, a life and aspirations, by participating in their social media groups. In Ma's words in an interview with us: "social media platforms can gather people from different locations of the real society to internet and make their voices heard together. There are anonymous social apps like Youmi which allows users to hide themselves behind their words. I think this (way of expression) is more real."¹³ For example, he joined Wechat groups of the village such as the 'Xiaojiahe Community Youth Group' on which Chen Yan, a young lady, said: "I've enrolled in a vocational school (...) I have some regrets." Two other members of this Wechat group encouraged her to re-sit the college entrance examination the next year in order to get into a college. It turned out that Chen Yan was not a fresh graduate from high school – she had worked for a year already. The screenshot of this conversation was part of the exhibition. It shows the mundaneness of their conversation on social media, it brings to light the aspirations of the migrant workers, their hopes of moving upwards in the social hierarchy by attaining a higher education, and their mutual encouragement within an online community – it creates a convivial online space. For the *5+1=6* Project exhibition in summer 2015, Ma printed out all the screenshots of chats for the audience to read. In this part of the work, the artist, acting as a migrant worker, saw things and heard voices that would otherwise not be visible or audible to him. Migrant workers emerge as individuals with feelings, and as people with critical voices and ambitions.

In the village Ma discovered a walled compound with unfinished villas, called 'Yuanmingyuan Villa' (*Yuanmingyuan bieshu*). These modern ruins are left-overs from the real estate bubble that still haunts China, and have now become the home and work place of some migrant workers. These unfinished buildings are symbolic of China's alleged urbanization progress. The unfinished buildings and real estate projects in China are mainly due to economic and financial problems, or the overheated real estate industry, which result in the creation of zombie buildings and zombie cities. These unfinished villas were developed and built by the son of the former Beijing mayor Chen Xitong who was later jailed on charges of corruption. As Ma explained, "later, thanks to the 16-year sentence of Chen Xitong, and the lack of proper certification of development and construction, this project was suspended."¹⁴ The land became ungoverned, and contractors now rented out the spaces to the migrant workers.

In images of the area Ma confronts us with the flip side of China's urbanization.¹⁵ Take for example a renaissance style marble statue of a nude female stood incongruously next to a 'villa' basement that was inhabited by migrant workers (fig. 1). The statue connotes conspicuous luxury with a gloss of Europeanness, which has now faded into a ghost; her private parts covered with yellow paint. The statue serves as a marble reference to a dream vanished, overlooking the marginalized lives of migrant workers living next to it. In another image that is part of the work, Ma shows the protruding steel bars of the unfinished villas (fig. 2). The steel bars have been bent by the wind after many years. On the background we see a finished and inhabited district; that is the Beijing that the authorities would like us to see and experience. But in juxtaposing that residential area with the unfinished villas, Ma confronts us with the contradictions, tensions and class inequalities that underpin the real estate boom of Beijing and China. As such, his work resonates with the cinematic oeuvre of Jia Zhangke, in which the lives and struggles of migrant workers are presented as to confront the audience with the flip side of China's alleged economic boom.

After his initial visit in November 2014, Ma returned to the village in the early summer of 2015, this time as 'a journalist' who filmed interviews with the residents. He encountered land renters who complained about a planned demolition, which was scheduled to happen soon. This demolition would tear down the illegal houses on the site, and the occupants, lacking any proper legal land use documentation, would not be compensated for their loss. In the film, a female land renter says: "it's useless to seek help from the government. The government is on the contractors' side. They all know each other." According to her, "when we built these two three years ago, we didn't know that the government planned to demolish here. (...) We are all victims." When asked what they were going to do when the contractors came to tear down their houses, the woman said: "We are not going to leave. Staying means we are going to revolt (*naoshi*)." They showed Ma the demolition notice. They wanted him to cover the forced demolition in the hope that some compensation might result from pressure exerted by the media.

Only by taking on the role of a journalist was Ma able to extract information from the land renters that revealed conflicts in the lives of these people having to deal with the

capitalization of land in the process of China's urbanization. The land renters knew that talking to a journalist could be an opportunity for them to become visible. What is happening in Ma's work is not so much a "revolution of the senses" as Maurizio Marinelli calls it,¹⁶ but more so a making visible of themselves and the space between the 5th and the 6th ring, not by subjugating their agency to the artist, but by taking initiative in front of a camera. This project not only sheds light on the people and the spaces they inhabit, but it also reveals how others capitalize on an apparent ghost town on the fringes of Beijing. The urbanization process is deeply enmeshed with rapid capitalization and even these fringe areas are no exception. This echoes Henri Lefebvre's argument: the process of urbanization creates the conditions for capitalism rather than urbanization being the excrescence of the circulation of capital.¹⁷

Ma's final manifestation during his visit to the village came in the form of a student, but only after he was confronted by security guards, and subsequently the police. A couple of contractors on the site found offence with Ma's filming of them and the buildings. "Do you think you can film me?" they ask, after which Ma replies, "everybody can film in public space." Significantly, at the end of the film, the camera movement loses control, shooting the floor and then sky randomly, and finally ends in the interior of a bag. By retreating to such a private space Ma questions the possibility of public space in China, an inquiry enhanced by the audible argument. To escape the confrontation Ma proclaims to be a student, rather than a journalist. Once the police are called in, Ma tells them he is an art student who finds the ruins interesting and beautiful. Ma told us, "He (the police captain) ordered me to delete the video so that I could go away. (...) So I did. But afterwards I asked someone to recover the video."

In his work, Ma renders visible the confrontations between contractors versus land renters versus journalists, and the conflicting power relations embodied by these three parties. In addition, he raises questions about urbanization – who can use the land illegally with impunity and who cannot, what is public space and who has the right to govern the public space, who profits most from construction and demolition?

No more dreams?

Through his acting as a migrant worker, migrant workers emerge not as an anonymous horde of people, but as individuals with voices, thoughts and feelings. In his acting as a journalist and an art student, he interrogates the legitimacy of the 'right' of land use and exposes the conflicting ideas, if not possibility, of 'public space' in urbanizing Beijing. Ma thus renders visible and audible the contradictions and tensions that come with the rapid growth and urbanization of Beijing. The work is a critical intervention in the narrative of urban growth in Beijing, given that it foregrounds how the top-down, capital driven urban development does not bring the China Dream to those who are rootless in the city. It is not the first work to do so, as we have shown already, but the work strikes us as significant in two aspects. First, in the ways the artist enacts different roles as to allow migrant workers and inhabitants of the urban village to perform their own aspirations and frustrations. They are not denied their agency, they are more than just props in the work of an artist. Second, the work is deeply embedded

in its specific site; it is a case of what Minna Valjakka calls 'site-responsive artwork'. The work unfolds itself in a complex interplay between the specific site, its social relations and the representations of both.¹⁸

But are the villagers really more than just props? While the redistribution of the sensible may stimulate critical questions about urban progress in China, there are also questions left unanswered. The work is primarily exhibited in art spaces, which are usually sanitized spaces in Beijing, quite removed from the everyday lives of most people. What impact can such a work have? Also, by acting in different roles, and not revealing himself to be an artist, ethical questions are raised: who is using whom in this work? And what do the migrant workers gain in the end? Does not the artist benefit the most from their words?¹⁹

While the work challenges an uncritical celebration of urban progress in China, a position that is shared with many artworks in China, these ethical questions about the involvement of migrant workers, and other communities in works of participatory art, remain unanswered. Let us as a way of a more hopeful closure return to MC Hotdog. He sings "Regardless of anything, I just want to drive on the 5th ring". The artists of the 5+1=6 project may respond with "please, look further than the fifth ring road, drive outside, take a detour, walk around, and experience a Beijing that may shatter the China Dream, but that may also allow for other dreams, other futures".

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- 12 See note 10, p.154.
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- 15 In order to avoid attracting attention from patrolling guards in this 'villa' site, Ma could only take photos with his smartphone, and thus the photos are of a relatively low resolution. We encountered the same problem when we tried to document these 'villas' ourselves. Besides, the pursuit of an 'end product with high quality' is rather rare in socially engaged art, since these practices are more process-based and they do not aim at producing the refined artworks that one sees in commercial galleries.
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Fig. 2 (below):
Protruding
steel bars of the
unfinished villas.

Images courtesy
of Ma Lijiao.



Media literacy and digital storytelling in contemporary Japan

For several decades, media literacy has been understood as the critical reading of mass media and its educational possibilities. However, the rapid diffusion of digital technologies has changed the media landscape and it is almost time for us to fundamentally re-examine the terms 'media' and 'literacy'. In this essay, I first provide a short overview of the current situation of media literacy in Japan. Second, I examine digital storytelling (DST) practices and discuss DST as one new method for achieving media literacy in Japan.

Shin MIZUKOSHI



Above: A local resident's self-introduction with her own *ga* (image) and *bun* (poem) in an *A-I-U-E-O Gabun* workshop in Bunkyo Ward Tokyo, 2009. Courtesy of *Media Exprimo* project.

Challenges of media literacy in Japan

Japan is one of the most media-saturated countries in the world. Although a consistent national curriculum in media literacy, such as that offered in the U.K. or Canada, has not yet been introduced, compulsory and higher education involve systematic programs on media and information. In my personal experience, most of today's Japanese undergraduate students exhibit at least the textbook definition of media literacy.

Media literacy has been understood for several decades as the critical reading of *mass media* and its related educational possibilities. "Look carefully, think critically" was the catchphrase. In the late 1990s and into the early 2000s, I revised the definition of media literacy in several ways, because the emergence of *digital media* was turning the general public from being just readers and consumers into writers and creators.¹ One revised definition presents media literacy as a synthesis of three communication activities: technological operation, critical reception, and active expression. These three elements should complement one another; media literacy cannot proceed properly if the balance between them is lost. This provides a more comprehensive understanding than the traditional definition, which focused only on critical reception of media texts, and it has become a standard in understanding media literacy today. However, the rapid spread of *digital media* such as smartphones and SNS (Social Networking Services; examples include sites such as facebook and twitter), paired with the conservative Shinzo Abe administration, has changed the Japanese media landscape once again. It is almost time for yet another fundamental re-examination of the terms 'media' and 'literacy'.

In reviewing the recent media landscape of Japan, three issues cannot be overlooked. First, the Shinzo Abe administration has openly suppressed freedom of speech and journalism in Japanese mass media. Over the past few years, the Abe administration has attacked mass media on various fronts, from introducing right-wing Abe supporters into the management board of public broadcaster NHK, to threatening to revoke the broadcasting licenses of those stations that produce news programs critical of the Abe administration. These troubling occurrences have been, worryingly, accompanied by critical comments on SNS by the general public, who welcomes these changes. The Japanese general public has mixed feelings about mass media; people are attracted by the aesthetically pleasing possibilities of the media, yet appalled by their superficial activities. Many misgivings with regard to mass media journalism arose on SNS, for example, after false reports and misinformation about the 3.11 disaster and the subsequent Fukushima nuclear power plant meltdown. Those suspicions, as a result, became linked to the Abe administration's suppression of mass media. Nowadays, mass media journalism wavers between the suppression of authority and criticisms of the general public.

Second, the era in which mass media alone was responsible for producing national master narratives came to an end around the time that the Internet became widely prevalent in the 1990s. The optimistic dream of rich and diverse free speech born on the net began to spread. However, as smartphones and SNS become ever more commonplace in the 2010s, and with the master narratives of mass media no longer available, extreme and violent narratives are erupting onto the scene to

replace them. Typically, these narratives are loud, racist and nationalist outcries from civilian groups, as well as unusually fierce criticism of the unscrupulous behavior of politicians and entertainers by the general public.

Third, a so-called 'invisible illiteracy' has emerged in Japan.² In recent years, smartphone ownership in Japan has grown, whereas the number of PCs in use has declined sharply. Although this may simply reflect a public preference for newer, more convenient media, there are some undesirable side effects. On a smartphone's small screen, only one application can be selected at a time; as people grow accustomed to performing only simple operations, the probability is high that they will no longer be able to engage in the more complex mental work of utilizing multiple windows across a wide range of software launched on a computer. The invisible illiteracy noted by Lim in studying the mobile communication habits of young people in Singapore has also become a reality, especially among younger people, in Japan. At present, the industrial world of Japan faces a problem with new employees hired straight out of college, who are lacking the technical abilities to operate computers. Ironically, people whose lives are in fact awash with digital media are at risk for this type of illiteracy.

The problem is that most of the people attacking journalism, espousing racism and nationalism on the Internet are media literate in active expression (and possibly technological operation), but clearly not in critical reception. Previously, I mentioned the mutual relationship and importance of a balance between the three elements of media literacy: technological operation, critical reception, and active expression. A lack of balance has occurred within the new media landscape.

Many media and communication studies have found that people are increasingly living in 'island universes'. In the age of mass media, for example, newspapers and television programs managed to develop public communication spheres in which people could get a broad overview of the socially important agendas, and where they encountered different opinions. Within an island universe, people share the same opinions and lifestyles; they receive selective information, commentary and input from their favorite blogs or SNS groups. They don't look beyond their islands, towards other 'cultures'. Even though people may be able to proficiently operate smartphones and SNS, and even though they can actively express their opinions, they are less and less able to critically receive information. Digital media users are increasingly incapable of critically examining social commentary. A new blueprint for media literacy is required; one which will suit a media landscape without mass media at its core.

Digital storytelling in Japan

The most popular path to reach media literacy is through school education. However, school education in Japan is generally highly institutionalized, and there is not much allowance for teachers to incorporate digital media into the classroom. In Japan, where schools are seen as pure learning communities, the administration is reluctant to introduce any kinds of popular media into the classrooms, even though music videos and popular films have proven to be quite good teaching materials for media literacy in Western countries. Regardless of these constraints, we need a new type of media literacy that is applicable not only in school education, but also in the whole of people's everyday lives, because today's

digital technologies have been changing the whole of the media landscape. It is not possible to provide a complete discussion here, so I will focus on one possible direction we could take: digital storytelling activities.

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a grassroots movement and a workshop-based practice that allows people to create short video stories using digital-based files (images, video, audio, etc.). Topics primarily include personal histories or everyday matters of concern to the creators. Stories are created in first-person style and narratives are recorded using the creators' own voices. DST was initiated by artist Dana Atchley in San Francisco, in the early 1990s, and further developed by the Center for DST in California. It has since spread throughout the world as a form of civic education, empowerment, and a source of public history. It has been integrated with diverse fields such as hyper-local journalism, mental health, preschool education, among others. The videos are shared at screenings during community gatherings, through local cable TV stations, and via the websites of local institutions.³

I have been engaged with practical media studies' projects such as *Media Exprimo* and *Storyplacing* since the mid-2000s. *Media Exprimo* is an interdisciplinary-design research and information platform that supports general people's media expressions and digital storytelling.⁴ *Storyplacing* is a bilateral research project (Finland and Japan) with a transdisciplinary and international team specialized in media studies, information design, and community planning. The team has developed workshop programs and online platforms to encourage people's storytelling, and put them into practice both in Finland and in Japan.⁵ My fellow research project members and I have been developing new types of digital storytelling to encourage media literacy in Japan. Since the mid-2000s, we have produced four DST programs that were formulated with the cultural context of Japan in mind, in which people face stringent peer pressure that discourages them from talking about themselves, and where as a result DST is not yet common or widespread. The programs are community-linked media projects intended to encourage general people to (re)weave collaborative storytelling networks via mobile media, such as smartphones or tablets, within local communities.

The four DST programs are the *Comikaruta*, the *A-I-U-E-O Gabun*, the *Media Conte*, and the *Telephonoscope*.⁶ The *Comikaruta* project is a communal card game; the *A-I-U-E-O Gabun* project involves acrostic poetry; the *Media Conte* project is an interactive digital storytelling program with twenty to thirty photographs accompanied by people's voices; and the *Telephonoscope* project is a micro-voice storytelling system using a black rotary telephone and an iPhone application.

To solicit the participation of different generations, the programs intentionally introduced forms of Japanese traditional cultural play, such as *Karuta* (a Japanese card game), *haiku* (a form of Japanese poetry), and *A-I-U-E-O bun* (an acrostic word game; *gabun* is a new term coined by us, consisting of 'ga': image, and 'bun': text). To sustain their impact, the DST programs were not only carried out as workshops at university campuses, but have also been deployed in local schools, among neighborhood municipal bodies, at traditional festivals, to local governments, and through cable television stations.⁷



Collaboration, playfulness and sustainability

The four programs above share three features: collaboration, playfulness and sustainability. In each type of DST, rather than crafting a story alone, participants interact with a facilitator or weave a story as a part of a group. In Western DST practices, the mantra ‘everyone has a story to tell’ is the basis for the primary activity: digitizing complete stories already created by participants. In Japan, however, there are few opportunities to study or practice speech communication in compulsory education programs, and people are not at all familiar with how to tell a story in a public space. Because of this, DST workshops in Japan have to start with a dialogue between facilitators and participants and cooperation among participants. This collaboration discovers people’s dormant ‘story seeds’ (such as pre-stories, small fragments of ideas and experiences, unvoiced complaints, or humor), and these are then brought together to weave a complete story. In particular, *Media Conte* places great emphasis on collaboration. This is the first conversational activity devised specifically with shy Japanese people in mind. Furthermore, regardless of nationality, people do not simply retell a story they have developed individually; this activity successfully presents the option of consistently producing one’s own alternative stories.⁸

Activities to bring out the ‘pre-stories’ or ‘story seeds’ and to develop them are also designed to be playful. Various elements including Japanese traditional card games, short poetry, and a black rotary telephone, are used to allow people to participate in the DST workshops without feeling uncomfortable or awkward; everyone is able to have fun playing games. By using these tools and activities, moments of both laughter and tears arise while people are enabled to work together on storytelling. For example, the *Telephonoscope* activity uses an iPad with pre-installed iOS apps, encouraging people to tell a story using the built-in microphone. However, rather than using the latest digital technology as is, the iOS app was paired with an old-fashioned black telephone. This invited laughter from participants and led to a well-made media art installation.⁹

Conducting DST workshops in communities is almost impossible without the cooperation of universities and media members. However, our DST programs are designed for

Above: A senior local resident was checking his story about the memories during the Pacific War, before inputting his pictures and voice into a PC. Photograph by the author.

Below: A piece of *Comikaruta* with a short poem: “Mom-and-pop candy store by three generations. How happy we are!” From the website of the project which people can freely access to create their own works. *Comikaruta* in Bunkyo Ward Tokyo, 2012. Courtesy of *Comikaruta* project.

relatively easy implementation, even by non-experts. Although we do need to take part the first time a workshop is held, thereafter the workshops can be facilitated and continuously conducted by members of local cable television stations, educational institutions, NPOs, and so forth. For example, *A-I-U-E-O Gabun* and *Comikaruta* have been used for a number of years by a cable TV program in Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo, and have helped the media to gather the stories of local residents.

DST to obtain media literacy

Admittedly, our trials of DST are not perfect. First, there is a discussion concerning the quality of pictures, plots, and editorial works of DST produced by the general public. However, I do not believe that public-produced DST must meet the same quality standards as mass media-produced content. The interactive DST workshops create stories out of the voiceless feelings and thoughts of people. Most topics involve people’s everyday lives, not political or artistic matters. However, when DST is generated in many places, archived in many communities, and networked with other DST projects online, versatile streams of alternative stories will be created, challenging the master narrative in Japan.

Toriumi has described the emergence of people’s media expressions in the digital age as ‘Digital Mingei’ (Digital Folk Art). Mingei, *minshugeijyutu undo*, was a Japanese art movement of the early 20th century that tried to bridge professional artists and everyday people, and to reconsider the beauty in everyday life.¹⁰ Although Mingei was profoundly connected with the European Arts and Crafts movement, and also with laborers’ circle movements after World War II, it has been almost forgotten in contemporary Japan and is considered to produce nothing more than tourist souvenirs. Toriumi reconsidered Mingei in the field of DST. *Media Exprimio* and *Storyplacing* are also based on the idea that DST could be a people’s folk art in the information-saturated but digitally-divided society.

Collaborative DST practices must be an important element of media literacy in the new age. Based on the evidence from our long term research projects, I propose that the community based DST workshops are the ideal sphere for media literacy, introducing new information technologies and accepting parts of traditional media literacy knowledge. Currently, DST makes the following two unique contributions to new media literacy.

First, the DST production process is a comprehensive media literacy experience. As mentioned previously, I coined a definition of media literacy involving the three communication activities of technological operation, critical reception and active expression. These three were suitable components in a *mass media-driven* society. However, to theorize new media literacy in the *digital age*, re-examination is essential. In the DST workshops, both participants and facilitators are involved in a variety of communications and therefore acquire comprehensive media literacy by following the example of others. In theoretical terms, the adjectives ‘technological’, ‘critical’ and ‘active’, and the nouns ‘operation’, ‘reception’ and ‘expression’ can freely interact during the workshops. For example, not only critical reception but critical operation and critical expression take place among participants and facilitators. These syncretic experiences seem more effective than traditional and individual educational programs on media literacy.

Second, DST produces certain mediated communities (*media kyodotai*) through the cyclical process of creation and reception. Mediated communities are not a priori entities, they are communities that are produced through communication activities such as using, watching, enjoying, consuming, exchanging, and chatting via media. In the future media landscape of Japan, we should intentionally design and build up relatively small-scale communities that are generated by community media. In the field of media and communication studies, it has been frequently mentioned that media creates and maintains communities and societies where people can communicate mutually and live together. DST is one of the concrete media practices for mediated communities. As James Carey and Benedict Anderson discuss, journalism of mass media and school text books have created ‘nation states’.¹¹ A series of DSTs can make relatively small mediated communities tightly connected with geographic and cultural communities. For example, we have facilitated DST workshops in many venues of Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo. While people create their own DST pieces in interactive workshops, the neighborhoods enjoy receiving them at community screening events, on local cable TV programs, and also as web content of their local institutions. DST pieces, such as ‘Digital Mingei’, activate neighborhood conversations. Through those conversations, people can become more aware of the differences between unique DST stories and stereotypical narratives from the mass and digital media. This process, as a result, develops abilities to critically receive and express opinions about images and stories of Bunkyo Ward.

‘Mediated communities’ and ‘social communities’ are closely related. The DST-mediated communities could thus be incubation sites for the development of new media literacy. Although they are small, they may serve as people’s gyro-compasses in the media-saturated society. Needless to say, the aforementioned suggestions apply both to Japan and in general. We need the tenacity to develop both individual DST programs and a network of DST-mediated communities with a broad focus.

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Hacking Hong Kong



The competition between Asian cities to become the leading global city in the region reshapes the urban fabric in Hong Kong too. Amidst the urban redevelopment and art market hype, artists and urbanites initiate varied forms of urban creativity for local needs. The new agencies and strategies of urban creativity have a growing ability to raise awareness of socio-political issues, although not always without conflict. Provoking contradictory views is, however, part of the strength of urban creativity to generate new subjectivities.

Minna Valjakka

IN OCTOBER 2007, the local think tank Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre proposed in its policy submission paper that Hong Kong should aim to become a 'creative metropolis' and sought "to establish creativity as a major force in transforming Hong Kong's cultural and socio-economic landscape." 'Urban spaces' were suggested among "the five areas that require substantial improvement and social investment."¹ As Marissa Yiu elucidates, the growing presence of financial power and creative industries has transformed the structure of the city and especially the waterfront of West Kowloon that "anticipates future culture-led growth. Architecture and urbanism in the skyline are celebratory, as companies cultivate new identities and a global urban image."² While the vibrations of art and culture are felt around the city, the redevelopment of West Kowloon Cultural District, and especially the co-operation with Art Basel, are transforming Hong Kong into a hub of the global art scene. At the same time, urbanites from various backgrounds and professional identities (including arts and design) are engaging with urban creativity to voice their concerns. I posit that the new forms of agencies and strategies of urban creativity (such as street art, art interventions, urban gardening, performances, media art, among others) have a growing power to negotiate space for new forms of participatory urbanism.

These new forms of urban creativity also partly resonate with Chantal Mouffe's views on an agonistic approach in critical art that provokes disagreement and "makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate." For the agonistic model, public spaces provide an array of discursive planes for varied forms of articulations to confront hegemonic projects "without any possibility of final reconciliation." Artistic activism that questions the prevailing authorities by, for instance, reclaiming the streets, represents this struggle and may have an essential position "by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities."³

During the past decade, similar tendencies have become ever more prominent among urban creativity in Hong Kong, because of the specific geopolitical circumstances and their reverberation in the society as a whole. Even though a majority of urban creativity has been non-political, vigorous waves of socio-political interventions, oscillating between socially engaged art, political participation and vandalism have gained popularity,⁴ especially in relation to recent social movements, such as 'Occupy Central with Love and Peace' in autumn 2014. Yet, because of opposing opinions and needs, conflicts are unavoidable. The positions taken and effects caused by urban creativity have become ever more complex and require more nuanced, interdisciplinary research.

Even though any forms of unauthorized urban creativity can be understood as 'hacking the city', this paper focuses on two forms of recent and novel interventions, to clarify the growing complexities of artistic and creative practices in urban public space: the freedom of expression, societal and communal responsibilities and proprietorship.

Repainting political banners

Hong Kong's urban fabric is known for its compelling (neon) sign-boards. While the old-fashioned ones add a touch of nostalgia to the city, especially for international tourists, the ever increasing intensity and intrusion of commercial visualization exasperates many locals. In January 2007, São Paulo implemented the Clean City Law, to improve the city's urban landscape by eliminating pollution and environmental degradation, and at the same time to preserve cultural and historical heritage, including visual and sonic spheres. Advertisements were considered to be visual pollution and effectively removed.⁵ A few cities around the globe were inspired by the positive results and have partially or temporarily banned or replaced advertisements (e.g., Paris, Chennai, Tehran, Grenoble). While similar policies have not yet come ashore in Hong Kong, urban public spaces continue to be contested sites between authorized and unauthorized advertisements, art and creativity.

A tangible example of this reconfiguration of visual values is provided by a local graffiti artist, RST2, and his interventions: spray painted banners of political parties. The banners have maintained their popularity as a means of political advertising that started to emerge in the 1980s. However, RST2 is critical of how current banners emphasize not only the personality but even the appearance of the candidates at the expense of any political merits. In the past the banners would indicate the achievements of legislators, but recently banners tend to be limited to a greeting and a portrait, transforming the signs to similar self-aggrandizement used by celebrities of popular culture.⁶

In 2011, RST2 started his experimentation with the seasonal banners of New Year greetings. He took a few banners to his studio, wrote his name on them with colors akin to the original

composition, returned the banners, and waited to see if anyone would notice the modifications. The banners were left unnoticed for a month, leading RST2 to conclude that "Hongkongers are completely ignorant to what happens around them, and therefore I continued to paint them." At first, RST2 chose banners from the parties he politically disagreed with, but gradually he started to target the banners of the better known figures to gain more public attention. For instance, in April 2011 when Hongkongers rallied in support of Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei, RST2 repainted the banner of Paul Tse Wai-chun, "Superman of Law," who was indifferent to Ai's detention (fig. 1). RST2 spray painted a cartoon-like speech balloon below the legislator's face on the banner, which made it appear as if he were asking, "Where is Ai Weiwei," a popular question at the time. This modified banner, which hung on the busy Sai Yeung Choi street in Mongkok, caught the local media's eye too.

In March 2013, RST2 re-used a set of three banners of the Democratic Party and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong. This set illuminates RST2's stylistic shift to cover up the surface with visibly eye-catching elements rich with visual and linguistic puns. Employing visuals from the video game and animated movie *Angry Birds*, and the Cantonese homophone for the game's name, the poignant message depicts the politicians as 'shitheads', the pigs targeted by the 'angry birds' (fig. 2). In RST2's oeuvre, which usually relies on multileveled local references, *Angry Birds* represents a combination of transcultural and local elements, and also clearly illuminates the agonistic notions. RST2's three main dissatisfactions are the inability of people to pay attention to the details of their everyday surroundings, the current political system in Hong Kong and the growing use of public space for political advertising. The modified visual language of the banners questions both the right of the political parties to use the public space, and their aesthetics. At the same time the banners challenge the citizens' (un)awareness of and (dis)engagement with their own environment.

RST2 names New York based artist Brian Donnelly (a.k.a. KAWS, b. 1974), who successfully subverted billboards in the 1990s, as one of his predecessors. The interventions made by both RST2 and other Hong Kong citizens, however, resonate with more international and intricate forms of civil disobedience than mere North-American 'adbusting'. Targeting the political banners reminds us of Eco's call for "semiological guerrilla warfare," "an action to urge the audience to control the message and its multiple possibilities of interpretation."⁷ Along with Eco's ideas of a 'cultural guerrilla', the other highly inspirational predecessor among (especially street) artists and art activists is the 'Situationist International' (SI) and their adaptation of "détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements," as "the integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu."⁸ Hijacking and modifying elements is one of the 'anti-spectacular tactics' developed by the SI and it defamiliarizes "the spectacle's already estranged images in order to bring about unexpected re-appearances. It does this by damaging and polluting given spectacles so as to trigger or re-mediate a different social imaginary based on non-alienated relationships."⁹ *Situationists* valued graffiti as one form of *ultra-détournement*: a constructive strategy contesting the hegemony of public space from below and providing immediate social criticism.¹⁰

Especially in the US, *détournement* motivated resistance to and subversion of the interrelated hegemony of media, politics and consumer culture—usually known as 'culture jamming', a concept first introduced by the experimental music band, *Negativland*, in 1984.¹¹ Similar practices were, nonetheless, already being employed by various international activist and artist groups, for example: *Spassguerilla* [fun guerrilla], *Provo* and *Billboard Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions* (BUGA UP).¹² Originally, the tactics and intentions of the various groups across the borders represented quite a versatile oeuvre,

Fig. 1 (above):
A spray painted banner, *Where is Ai Weiwei?*, April 2011, Hong Kong. Courtesy of RST2.

Fig. 2 (below):
A set of three spray painted banners, *Angry Birds* by RST2, March 2013, Hong Kong. Photograph by the author.



Urban creativity as dissidence and participation

including countering political ideologies and institutional positions through inventive hoaxes. Although culture jamming is not necessarily only against capitalism, after the *Adbusters* magazine (founded in 1989) gained international popularity, for most activists and scholars alike, culture jamming came to stand for 'consumer activism' focusing on defacing advertisements and global brands through 'subvertising'. The limited definition is further emphasized when culture jamming is seen primarily as a Western phenomenon and "situated into a broad tradition of antimaterialism in Western culture, which extends from early Christian asceticism, is sifted through mid-eighteenth-century Romanticism, and persists today in anxiety over contemporary definitions of the 'good life'."¹³ Even though this genealogy could be considered relatively fitting to the most well-known forms of adusting and media hoaxing, the observation appears to be an oversimplification of a rich history with highly varied motivations. This framing becomes especially questionable if we wish to analyze similar practices in Asia today, such as interventions with political banners, or as discussed below, by utilizing media screens as art exhibitions.

Digital hacking

Large scale media screens are mainly used to transform marketing channels into spectacles, although in recent years their adaptation for media art projects has gained popularity. At the same time, aspirations to reinvent contemporary graffiti and street art are voiced and experimented with; projections, reflections and laser tagging are used to spread a message and, at least in theory, to avoid accusations of vandalism. While 'old-school' notice boards and billboards have provided fruitful sites for subverting messages, remote-controlled digital screens push the challenge to a whole new level: how to create digital interventions and hack the screens operated by advertisement companies, global corporate and city officials.

The 77,000 m² LED screen on the International Commerce Centre (ICC) – the highest skyscraper in Hong Kong – is not used for advertising, but it provides an unprecedented site for media art in the city. Initially, the facade was made available to a German musician and artist, Nikolai Carsten (b. 1965) as part of Art Basel in 2014. In the same year the long term collaboration, *Open Sky Gallery*, between City University of Hong Kong's School of Creative Media and the ICC was initiated to exhibit both established artists' and students' works. In spring 2016, the ICC tower was selected as one of the sites for *Human Vibrations*, the 5th Large-Scale Public Media Art Exhibition, funded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC). The screen was also the site for *Open Sky Gallery* ISEA2016, a new partnership with ISEA (International Symposium on Electronic Art).¹⁴ While the official opening of *Human Vibrations* was on 18 May 2016, its media art was already displayed a day earlier during the opening reception of *Open Sky Gallery* ISEA2016.

Sampson Wong Yu-hin and Jason Lam Chi-fai (a.k.a. Add Oil team) submitted a media artwork to *Human Vibrations*, entitled *Our 60-second friendship begins now* (fig. 3). The work is a series of six animations that all refer to counting. According to the original statement, the intertextual reference derives from Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-wai's (b. 1958) film *Days of Being Wild* (1990) and "the artwork invites viewers to celebrate the memorable cinematic moment" and "encourages people to have impromptu interactions with each other." Coincidentally, the opening of the exhibition took place during the Hong Kong visit of the Chinese state leader, Zhang Dejiang. Throughout the visit the city put a large number of high level security measures in place, which not only severely interrupted the daily lives of residents, but which were also believed to function as a veil, obscuring from Zhang any anti-China sentiments expressed by the citizens of Hong Kong. Sampson Wong, as a result, was compelled to consider how he could 'hijack' their own work to make a statement.¹⁵

Consequently, after the first display of Wong's and Lam's work on 17 May, alongside the other 28 nominated works, the title was changed to *Countdown Machine* and a new artistic statement clarified that each night, for one minute, the artwork would display a digital clock counting down towards 1 July 2047.¹⁶ In an interview, Sampson Wong clarified that the adapted artwork referred to another Wong Kar-wai film, *2046* (2004), which is filled with metaphoric use of the number, but also represents the last year of the 'one country, two systems' policy. Significantly though, the 'clock' on the ICC display repeatedly counted down the same minute, showing the same series of numbers every evening, never getting nearer its final time. In fact, its stationary condition questioned the work's main message. On the Add Oil team's website, however, the time was ticking away towards 1 July 2047. The meaning of the work was not only 'hijacked', but also 'hacked' by the virtual addition online.

Unsurprisingly, the recontextualization of the work and its subsequent early elimination from the exhibition on 23 May 2016 launched intense public discussion on censorship, artists' rights and responsibilities, and the future of arts in the city. Statements and clarifications were made by the partakers and opinions supporting both sides were strongly voiced. While some hailed the artists' wittiness, the majority of the art community seemed to feel they had crossed the line and had used the exhibition for self-promotional purposes. And the fact that the artists had accepted the fee from the curator complicated the matter further as it turned the work into a commissioned one. Importantly though, Sampson Wong insisted that the content of the work had not been altered after submission at the end of April, and that the curator and organizers knew beforehand the meaning of the work.¹⁷

Artist and curator Oscar Ho spelled out the major concern of how artistic rights are more than about individual intentions. The moral responsibility to and respect for other stakeholders, such as curators and participating artists, are essential cornerstones of artistic professionalism. Even though subverting the original meaning was not illegal, it shattered the wholeness of the exhibition and was considered inattentive to other participants. The unprofessional behavior, rather than the content of the work, was the primary reason for the curator, Caroline Ha Thuc, to withdraw the work. For her it was not an act of censorship, but a professional sanction.¹⁸ Analyzed from the broader perspective of the art community, the reframing of the work as activism with political implications also put the shared artistic freedom at risk, as Ho maintains: "If an isolated case causes a termination of the sponsorship of the venue, it would be extremely unfair to other artists, including those who are unwilling to talk about politics. We have to protect all kinds of freedom of expression, including the right to talk, and not talk, about politics."¹⁹ Ho's statement was unfortunately somewhat prescient, as the *Open Sky Project* was indeed consequently cancelled later that year.²⁰

The right to hack the city?

While Ho's opinion might seem more supportive of the institutional stance than artistic expression, it also echoes Harvey's understanding of Lefebvre's often reiterated 'right to the city', with an emphasis on the collective aspects of the possibility for social change. It is a "right to change ourselves by changing the city" and therefore, "a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization."²¹ Even in instances of civil disobedience, Harvey's defense of collaborative actions to reshape the city is inevitably valid: long-term social change requires participation and group power. But what he seems to ignore is the possible need of individual agency for an agonistic approach, as the initiative not only raises awareness but builds engagement with(in) the community. An individual like RST2, working anonymously and

alone, or the short lived 'digital hijacking' by the Add Oil team, will unlikely bring about long-term social change, but they will most likely have an impact on public discussion, and on agency active in the urban public space – especially because they launch conflicting opinions, which can provoke people to adopt a critical stance and develop new subjectivities.

Hacking the city through urban creativity can vary from beautification to destruction, and from involvement in urban planning to civil disobedience. Some strategies and interventions are more successful in their engagement with communities, while others may have unexpected and unwanted consequences. What they usually have in common, is the ability to employ urban public spaces as discursive planes for provoking new perceptions. The importance of artistic and creative rights, possibly including 'hacking', cannot be excluded from the discourses of the future cities and their well-being. How these rights are defined and what forms they are allowed to take requires further research with new theoretical and methodological approaches.

The complexities and interrelations of urban creativity in today's Hong Kong cannot be fully grasped if reduced to mere reflections of adusting or cultural jamming with their Western connotations. *Détournement* provides more versatile possibilities for analyzing the varied forms of urban creativity, especially as a form of hijacking and artistic activism, but it too has its limitations; despite the resourceful oeuvre of the *Situationists*, the main theoretical framing emphasizes the targeting of spectacle, caused by neo-liberal capitalism. Similarly, at first glance, many interventions might seem to fulfill Mouffe's emphasis on struggle against neo-liberal hegemony, but as elucidated by both RST2 and the Add Oil team, the great spectrum of personal, communal, societal, political and cultural intentions clearly exceed the myopic focus on anti-capitalism despite the dominant corporal power in and privatization of urban public space. In the case of both RST2 and the Add Oil team, the primary concern is the future of Hong Kong and its current geopolitical position.

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Fig. 3: Sampson Wong and Jason Lam, *Countdown Machine* on the ICC tower, 21 May 2016, Hong Kong. Courtesy of Sampson Wong and Jason Lam.



ICAS Book Prize 2017

The ICAS Book Prize (IBP), established by the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) in 2004, and sponsored by The Asian Library at Leiden University (Netherlands) since 2015, aims to create an international focus for academic publications on Asia.

Paul van der Velde



THE IBP IS THE LARGEST region-, theme-, and discipline-transcending book prize in the field of Asian studies. Jury prizes are awarded to the best books in both the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Colleagues' Choice Award gives the academic community the opportunity to vote for their own favourite publication. Another indispensable component of the IBP is the inclusion of dissertations; Alex McKay, Chair of the ICAS Dissertations Reading Committee, tells us more about this aspect of the Prize in his article below.

The seventh edition of the IBP will take place on 20 July 2017, during ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, Thailand (www.icas.asia). The June issue of The Newsletter (#77) will include the shortlisted titles, and a brochure will become available at the time of ICAS 10, which will include all shortlisted titles, winners, jury citations and the full list of accolades awarded.

The IBP has hitherto always been limited to English-language publications, but the IBP 2017 will for the first time ever also include books in Chinese, Korean, German and French. More than 200 titles were submitted in these 'new' languages, marking a promising start thanks to the support of the sponsors in those language areas. The June issue of The Newsletter (#77) will provide exact details about, and pay well-deserved attention to, these local academic institutions.

The submissions for the English-language IBP

The previous IBP (2015, awarded at ICAS 9 in Adelaide, Australia) saw approximately 50 dissertations and more than 200 books submitted. As we see with each subsequent IBP, the numbers continue to rise. This upcoming edition of the IBP has received 330 English-language books and 126 dissertations!

The number of worldwide publishers taking part increased only somewhat, from 58 to 64; thus generally remaining constant over the past few editions. However, for the first time we could clearly discern a core group of 7 prolific publishers

who submitted more than 15 books. These were Amsterdam University Press, Brill Publishers, Cambridge University Press, Harvard University Asia Center, ISEAS Publishing, NIAS Press, and University of Washington Press. The following 13 publishers submitted 5-15 books: Columbia University Press, Cornell University Press, Hong Kong University Press, Hurst & Company, Lexington Books, NUS Press, Oxford University Press, Peter Lang, Polity Press, Primus Books, Routledge, SUNY Press, and University of Hawai'i Press. The remaining 44 publishers, most of them academic, submitted fewer than 5 books each. If we are permitted to take the IBP as an indication, we could comment that a smaller group of publishers seem to be producing the majority of Asian studies titles. It is certainly an interesting trend to monitor.

Shifting trends

In our summary of the previous IBP we commented on two noteworthy 'shifts'. Firstly, we noticed a clear shift among the submitted titles from traditional humanities to contemporary social sciences: 35% fell into the former category, 65% into the latter. During the very first IBP in 2005 those percentages had been near enough reversed. However, this current IBP has in fact seen each category receive an equal number of titles, and so it might have been a premature conclusion. Nevertheless, the other shift we took note of was one involving the authors' nationalities; and that has again proven to be a trend. Among the submitted English-language publications, the number of authors of Asian descent has over the years risen rapidly, and continues to do so. From 10% in 2005, to 40% of the 500 authors, editors and contributors involved in the publications submitted for the IBP 2017 English edition. More and more, Asian scholars in Asian studies are succeeding in having their work published in English by international publishers. This is one of the reasons we are reaching out to international

academic publishers, encouraging them to personally attend the ICAS Asian Studies Book Fair, so that they can meet face-to-face the vast numbers of young Asian scholars who will be presenting their dissertations during ICAS 10.

Another trend that has become evident over time is an increasing number of studies on 'Global Asia', mirroring the rise of Asia on the world scene. Furthermore, it will come as no surprise that almost 50% of the titles submitted are about East Asia, with 60% of those on China. Whereas Japan was always comfortably in second place it now has strong competition from Korea with nearly the same number of books. South Asia is the region with the fewest studies among the submitted titles. India is by far the most studied country in that region, but mostly by Indian scholars. The number of studies on Southeast Asia is clearly on the rise. While Indonesia is most studied there is a growing number of publications on all countries in that region, with a clear interest by authors from other ASEAN countries. For the first time publications on Central Asia were submitted. We hope for more in the future.

Popular themes

The consistently most popular themes, ever since the first IBP, include arts and culture, diasporas, migration and minorities, East-West relations, gender and identity, language and literature, religion, and society – approached mainly from the academic fields of anthropology and ethnography, history, archaeology, international relations, politics, and philosophy. Increasing in popularity are studies of media and technology, urban culture, natural disasters, war, violence, crime and law, economy, heritage and architecture, in which scholars and practitioners work closely together to uncover new layers of knowledge, the results of which are published in periodicals or edited volumes. This new type of inclusive research has been translated into a considerable surge in the number of edited volumes submitted for the IBP 2017. No less than 50, which is double the amount of the previous IBP.

The 'new' language editions

The June issue of The Newsletter (#77) will include our observations with regard to the French, German, Korean and Chinese IBP editions. It is too early now to comment on the submissions, other than to say that we have been pleasantly surprised with the numbers and interest garnered by the local institutes/universities involved. We look forward to seeing these editions grow steadily and come into their own, as we have seen the English IBP do.

Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretariat (icas@iias.nl).

The IBP 2017 Dissertation Awards: a progress report

Alex McKay

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1998 when the first International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) was held in Leiden (the Netherlands), ICAS has become the largest gathering of its kind in the world. ICAS 10, to be held in Chiang Mai (Thailand) from 20-23 July 2017, is expected to attract approximately 1500 scholars whose presentations will result in 300-350 panel sessions. Among the many academic attractions at ICAS is the ICAS Book Prize (IBP), which rewards not only the 'Best Books', but also the 'Best Dissertations' in Asian studies. The Awards and Accolades are given in the two categories of the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Winners of the two main Awards will receive a cash prize intended to facilitate their attendance at ICAS.

By the 15 October 2016 deadline, a total of 126 submissions from recent doctoral candidates at 95 universities in more than 20 countries had been accepted for the IBP Dissertation Awards (a handful were rejected for various reasons). Of these, there are 59 submissions in the Humanities and 67 in the Social Sciences, all of whose authors were awarded doctorates between June 2014 and June 2016 (with a certain latitude to allow for the processes involved). The Dissertation Judging Committee, overseen by ICAS Secretary Dr Paul van der Velde and myself, are currently compiling a 'long list' of 10 dissertations in each category. From this a 'short list' of three will be chosen, prior to the final selection of an Award Winner in each category. The winners will be announced at ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai.

In addition to the main Awards, the judges will also grant Accolades in both disciplines for (1) Most Accessible and Captivating Work for the Non-specialist Reader; (2) Specialist Dissertation; and (3) Ground-breaking/Innovative Subject Matter. The Accolades draw attention to dissertations that, while not judged the best overall in their discipline, are non-the-less of considerable quality in important areas. Winners of these Accolades will also be announced in Chiang Mai.

The making of a winner

The question of what is an award-winning dissertation is of course a matter of interpretation by the judges. But clearly the

best dissertations will have the primary merit of originality, along with scholastic qualities such as depth (and breadth) of research, evidence of intellectual quality, clear and sophisticated arguments, good organisation and presentation of evidence leading to significant conclusions liable to be of interest to the wider field, a consistent and properly considered theoretical and/or methodological framework, and of course it must include due acknowledgement of sources and proper presentation of bibliography, notes and associated scholastic apparatus. They will also have the minimum of typographical errors and the standard of writing and use of English language will be of a good standard. (Here we should note that just as the IBP Book Awards have been expanded to include languages beyond English, consideration is now being given to similar future expansion in the Dissertation Awards.)

Receiving a Dissertation Award or Accolade, and even to be included on the long and particularly the short lists, is an important career milestone for any young scholar. It gives a significant boost to their resume and perhaps most importantly, alerts academic publishers to the quality of their work. Many major academic publishers will be represented in Chiang Mai, and can be expected to give serious consideration to any publication proposal for which the submitter has received an IBP award/accolade.

The PhD pitch

ICAS 10 will also offer another opportunity for recent PhDs to promote their work. A 'PhD pitch' has been introduced at which they will have the opportunity to briefly describe the significance of their work to an audience of interested scholars, publishers and even potential employers - who may question the candidates on their findings. This is intended to be a relatively informal chance for presenters to meet others interested in their field of enquiry.

Thematic trends

An interesting aspect of the submissions for the IBP Dissertation Awards are the insights they provide into wider trends in Asian studies, in particular the direction in which the field is heading. Of course the sample is comparatively small and there is no doubt

that certain fields must be under-represented. There is, for example, only one submission in the field of language studies and very little in the environmental field. But what of the virtual absence of both grand narratives and grand theories? Does this imply a mistrust of such constructions or suggest increasing specialisation? Certainly it does not imply a lack of wider perspective or indicate insularity, for at least 25% of the submissions concern cross-cultural issues in some sense.

Issues of identity, however, seem more implicit than explicit, while 'the body' as an investigative subject seems less prominent than formerly. Political or organisational histories also seem less popular and, except in regard to early literary figures, there are only a handful of studies that reference the pre-medieval period. Indeed there is a strong historical emphasis on the colonial period. Studies of material culture are prominent and if art history is under-represented there are a number of studies of historical photography, which is clearly an emerging field of interest. Theatre and performance in the widest sense attracts attention, as do educational issues and to a lesser extent music and tourism. There appears to be a tendency towards trans-national rather than national studies, with migration and cultural encounters in various contexts a common field of enquiry. In gender studies there is a clear tendency towards occupationally-based research.

Regional focuses are indicated by the fact that while around 25 submissions may be classified as focussing on more than one country, another 25 are concerned with India and 21 with China. Indonesia, with 10 and Japan with 8 are the next most popular areas, while there is just one thesis in each case relating to Macau, Burma, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Thailand.

Moving with the times

What is also notable is that the form of a doctoral dissertation has lost the traditional boundaries of extensive text and relevant illustration. Many submissions incorporate video and other technological innovations of the last decades, once tentatively but now confidently deployed by a generation that has grown up with new tools of expression. That tendency, like ICAS itself, is likely to only grow.

Alex McKay, Chair of the Dissertation Reading Committee, IBP 2017, ICAS 10 (dungog@hotmail.com).

ICAS Book Prize 2017 Colleagues' Choice Award

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Pictured above: A selection of the books submitted to the IBP 2017. Not all titles had been received at the time of taking the photo.

Conference Report

Ocean of Law II: Islamic Legal Crossings in the Indian Ocean World

Leiden University, 12-14 December 2016

THE SPREAD AND GROWTH OF ISLAMIC LAW across the Indian Ocean world have been largely neglected by scholars of Islamic law, Middle East specialists, and scholars of the Indian Ocean, despite South and Southeast Asia together being home to the largest Muslim population in the world. The international conference 'Ocean of Law II: Islamic Legal Crossings in the Indian Ocean World' held at Leiden University between 12 and 14 December 2016 explored this understudied area, particularly the ways in which Muslim communities from the so-called 'peripheries' of the Islamic world shaped their lives and thoughts within and beyond the juridical frameworks of Islam.

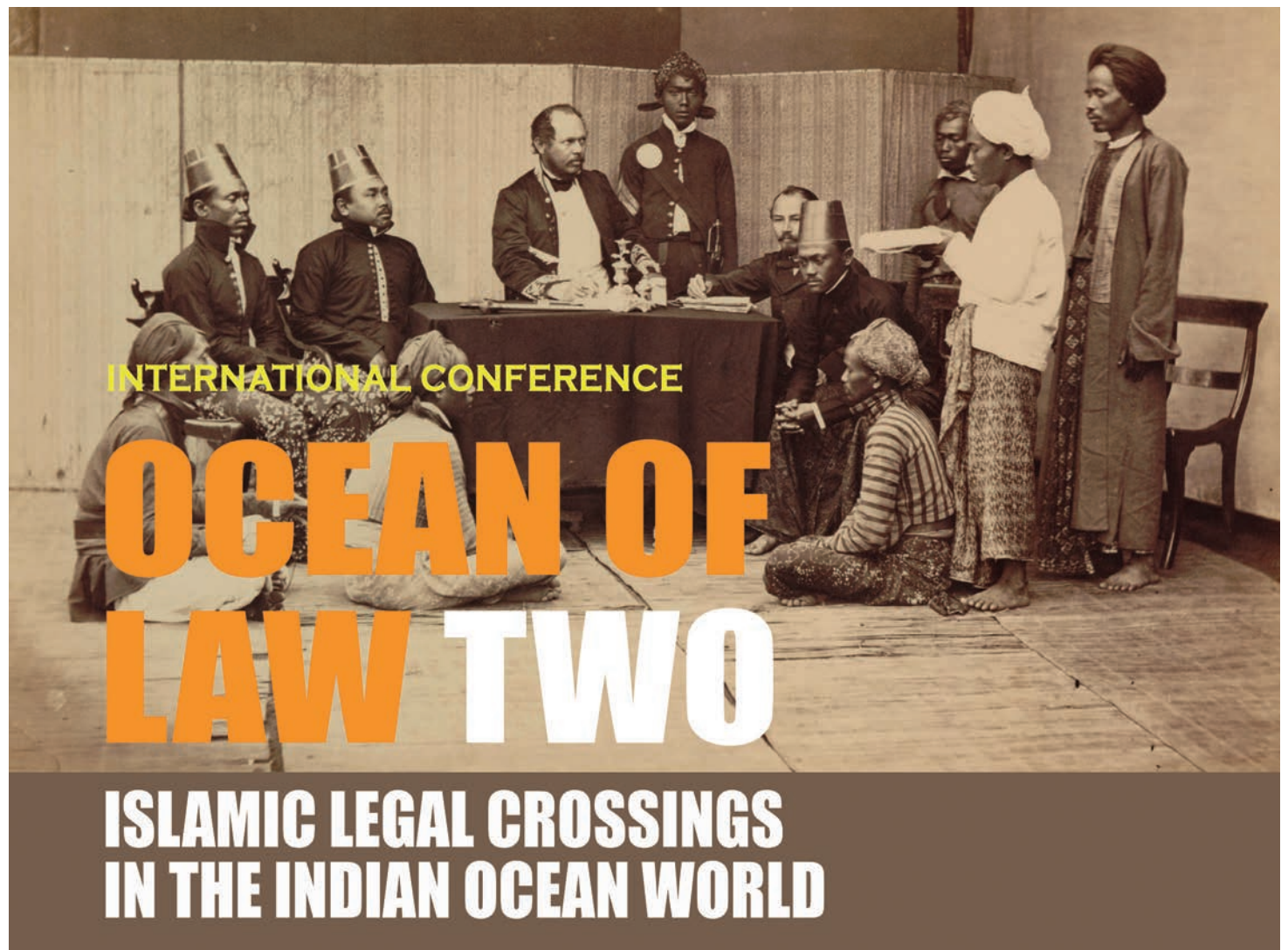
The conference was held in continuation to the conference 'Ocean of Law: Intermixed Legal Systems across the Indian Ocean World' organised in December 2015. It was made possible in part by a major grant from the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS) and the Institute for History. Scholars from various countries, disciplines and expertise came together and presented their research on histories of Islamic law in different regions of the Indian Ocean littoral. They explored how and why Islamic legal ideas and texts travelled across borders; how ideas and texts shaped legal traditions and systems they encountered during their journey; how and why legal cultures negotiated, influenced and contested each other at the moments and sites of their interactions; and how the unique predominance of Shāfi'ī school of Islamic law in this Indian Ocean rim has been a vital phenomenon in shaping many social, cultural, religious and political perspectives of its Muslim communities across centuries. The conference unravelled such nuances in a long-term historical perspective and/or with multi-cited ethnographic approaches.

On the first day, the conference was opened by a keynote speech by Iza Hussin (Cambridge University) who analysed the mobility of two formulations of Islam in law in the nineteenth century: Islam as the religion of the state, and Islam as providing the content of state legislation and policy. Taking the journeys and experiments of Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor across multiple legal realms from Japan to Hawaii to Istanbul and England, she drew attention to the processes of translation, comparison and repetition as useful tools for studying the mobility of law in the Indian Ocean world.

On the second day, Ronit Ricci (Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Australia National University) and Léon Buskens (Leiden University and NIMAR) also delivered keynote speeches on the circulation of Islam, its law, texts and/or people. In her speech, Ricci explored nuances of Islamization, vernacular writing, and frontiers in the histories of Malay Muslims in colonial Sri Lanka. Focusing on a historical narrative written in the Malay *syair* genre titled *Syair Faid al-Abad* by Baba Ounus Saldin, she unravelled how this maritime region stood as a frontier of Southeast Asian Islam and of the Malay language in South Asia. Buskens investigated the life and career of Snouck Hurgronje, the Dutch Arabist and advisor to the Dutch colonial government, with regard to the reinvention of Islamic law and discovery of *adat* law. Based on a number of materials in Arabic, Indonesian and European languages, he demonstrated how Hurgronje's understandings of Islamic law were equally shaped by his extensive fieldworks and interactions with the elite circles of the West and the East. In turn, his conclusions and arguments influenced the Dutch colonial policies as well as Western scholarship on Islamic law.

Apart from the keynote speeches, there were seven panels in total which were chaired by Jatin Dua (University of Michigan), Robert Gleave (University of Exeter), Debjani Bhattacharyya (Drexel University), Carolien Stolte, Alicia Schrikker, Anita van Dissel, and Jos Gommans (all from the Leiden University Institute for History). The panels were not organized thematically as all papers were more or less connected to Islamic legal cultures of the Indian Ocean world.

In the first panel, Elizabeth Lhost (University of Chicago) talked about the *fatwa* literature from South Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth century. She argued that those *fatwas* explicated a persistence of regional affinities and local connections, despite of the boom in modern technologies like printing, telegraphs and steam transportation – which themselves were discussed extensively in the *fatwas*. Travelling to the seventeenth century, Louie Buana (Leiden University) also demonstrated how the regional exchanges among the Southeast Asian *ulamā* had resulted in the production and Islamization of *adat* in West Sulawesi. He took the Mandarese Records called 'Lontar Mandar' as an example to show how the *adats* of the region were influenced by the wider networks of scholars and Islamic law in the Indian Ocean world; from Java and Mecca in particular.



In the following panel, Tom Hoogervorst (KITLV Leiden) took a lexical approach to demonstrate various levels and layers of influences on Island Southeast Asia's legal terminologies and related practices. With several examples of phrases and words in local, Indic and Arabic languages used in the archipelago, he illustrated historico-linguistically that the Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic legal practices and texts were localized in premodern Southeast Asia rather than that the Island was assimilated to external influences. Mahmood Kooria (IIAS-ASC Leiden) discussed cases of several African jurists who worked in South and Southeast Asia before 1500. He drew attention to seeing the history of Islamic law as a product of an Afro-Asia-Arab triangle instead of limiting it to an Arab export (see also this issue, pp.8-9).

In the third panel, Sanne Ravensbergen (Leiden University) articulated the functions of Javanese Penghulu as advisors on Islamic law to the Dutch colonial pluralistic courts. She argued that several stereotypes attributed to them in the popular writings or later studies were only exaggerations, and often the pluralistic court maintained their position for the status quo, the recognition they had in the community and for the effectiveness of the courts. In a similar vein, Omer Aloni (Tel-Aviv University) also presented a case from the Israeli Supreme Court that ruled in favor of bigamy in order to "restore the peace in the village". His paper focused on the dilemma of bigamy and polygamy in early Israeli Law with regard to the existing practices among the Eastern Arab communities.

On the second day, Naveen Kanalu (University of California Los Angeles) talked about the discourses of legalism and sovereignty in the Mughal Empire with reference to the production of the *Fatāwā al-'ālamkīriyyah* compiled during Aurangzeb 'Ālamgīr's reign (r. 1658–1707). He said that the *Fatāwā* reveals the Mughal attempt to assert its legitimacy through this codification and the structural transformations in its imperial domination. Following him, Arfiansyah (Leiden University) also underscored another imperial codification from a different place and time: from Gayo in the Aceh Province of Indonesia. The Gayonese legal code called 45 Articles of Linge Lord was assumedly codified by the Linge Kingdom in the twelfth century CE. He explained how this code has been used by the contemporary local government to police public morality, in spite of questions on the authenticity and legitimacy of the code.

Hassan Khalilieh (University of Haifa) presented in the next panel on how piracy was perceived in Islamic law over several generations. Quoting the foundational scriptures and early classical law, he expounded various restrictive measures Islamic law took to curtail piracy with clear distinctions from maritime jihad. Nicholas W.S. Smith (Northwestern University) presented a concrete case from Somalia in the late nineteenth century with his emphasis on the political and diplomatic career of the self-proclaimed sultan, 'Uthmān Maḥmūd Yūsuf. However, Smith showed that Yūsuf's sovereign-state in north-eastern Somali coast

did not follow any European, indigenous or Islamic legal practices, but rather it took highly malleable and heterogeneous laws as the situations demanded.

On the last day, Philipp Bruckmayr (University of Vienna) opened the penultimate panel by focusing on major Islamic legal debates in Malabar in the early twentieth century. On the basis of *fatwas* of Malay muftis in Mecca and Kelantan and the French colonial documents from the Cambodian National Archives, he highlighted the active engagement of the Cambodian Muslims in the Islamic legal crossings across the Gulf of Siam and the Indian Ocean at large. Similarly, Abbas Panakkal (Griffith University) emphasized the juridical contributions of Malabar to the broader Shāfi'ite legal discussions in its maritime context. He analysed a sixteenth-century legal text, *Fath al-Mu'in* of Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Makhdūm II, to illuminate how its author took a moderate stand in his legal formulations to benefit the particular contexts of his audience.

Nurfadzilah Yahaya (National University of Singapore) elucidated how East India Company (EIC) courts in the Straits of Malacca asserted authority at the expense of Malay sovereignty from the late eighteenth till the mid-nineteenth century. With the help of the British legal identities granted to as many local inhabitants, the EIC courts often used law to declare the local kings as unlawful and to bring them under the imperial sovereignty. Rishad Choudhury (Harvard University) spoke about the journeys of South Asian *ulamā* to the Hijaz and their ramifications on local webs of knowledge in late Mughal India. Concentrating on a Sunni revivalist Muhammad Hāshim (d. 1761) and his Indo-Persian Hajj manual titled *Ḥayāt al-Qulūb fī Ziyārat al-Maḥbūb*, Choudhury argued that the South Asian *ulamā*'s participation in the contemporary intellectual and pilgrim networks reflected the rapid transitions in political and ideological realms of the subcontinent and the Hijaz.

R. Michael Feener (Oxford University) moderated the roundtable at the end of the conference. He emphasized the broad themes that had come up in the presentations, particularly with regard to the very form and structure of law as understood varyingly from the early Islamic heartlands to the later Indian Ocean littoral. He motivated the presenters to think about the potential terminologies and conceptions for comparative and connected analyses of Islamic legal circulations across the Indian Ocean world that would help future researches. In the following discussion, several participants highlighted a few recurrent themes such as the cultures of Muslim encounters, the infrastructure of the Indian Ocean that enabled legal circulations, and constant dialogues within and without the maritime communities. The conference proceedings will be published as a peer-reviewed edited volume in the *Leiden Studies in Islam and Society* series of LUCIS.

Mahmood Kooria, postdoctoral fellow at the School of Middle Eastern Studies, Leiden University Institute for Area Studies; formerly, joint research fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and African Studies Centre (ASC), Leiden (m.kooriadathodi@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

IIAS Reports and Announcements



Dynamic borderlands: livelihoods, communities and flows

Report of the Fifth Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN) held in Kathmandu, Nepal, 12-14 December, 2016.

NOW IN ITS FIFTH YEAR, the Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN) Conference was jointly organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and local host Social Science Baha, Kathmandu, from 12-14 December 2016. IIAS, since its inception in 1993, has been promoting global knowledge exchange and collaboration in the studies of Asia and intra-Asian links. Social Science Baha, a non-profit organization based in Nepal, has been engaged in the production and dissemination of social science research since 2002. The Fifth ABRN Conference was a chock-full affair, occupying all four venues at the grand Hotel Annapurna, and seeing full attendance on the three conference days.

Conference themes and panels

This year, the central theme of the conference was 'Dynamic Borderlands: Livelihoods, Communities and Flows'. Contrary to the general perception of borderlands as remote and static areas, the conference sought to highlight connections across borders that are sustained over time, and contingent processes, social and political, which lend a dynamic character to boundary lines. The conference invited panels to look through the optic of dynamic borderlands and focus on contemporary changes and shifting border alignments that have impacted the lives and livelihoods of diverse border communities, and the tangible and intangible flows across borders.

The various panels were organized around themes that included cross-border trade routes and markets, trans-boundary flows of resources, tourism and environmental products, oral narratives of ethnicity and migration across borders, roads and hydel projects that connect or create conflict between nations, and militarized borderlands. A few of the panel themes ventured into relatively new territories such as towns and cityscapes in border regions, cultures and contact zones in

maritime borders, and natural disasters and infrastructure in borderlands. The organization of three parallel sessions for each time slot ensured that participants had a wide range of choice in panels, while being given the possibility to move out of their comfort zone and be introduced to new topics.

While the conference does not have a stated outcome of publishing panel papers as conference proceedings, it actively supports dialogue that results in publications. For example, the forthcoming June issue of The Newsletter will carry in its Focus section a number of papers presented at the conference, with Duncan McDuie-Ra as guest editor.

Special lectures

The ABRN conferences have always displayed an ability to take on the colours and character of their local setting. In 2014, when the venue was Hong Kong, the conference leaned towards a more East Asian thematic. This time, the limelight fell on Nepal and the Himalayas, and on its immediate cross-border counterpart, the North Eastern region of India.

Besides the panels, the conference included a number of lectures by eminent scholars. In a pre-conference event, David Gellner, professor of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford, gave a talk on 'The Idea of Nepal' as part of the Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture series instituted by Social Science Baha in 2003, in which he outlined different visions of Nepal across the ages – from a sacred geography to a federal, secular republic – while also highlighting new inequalities that have become visible since the recent constitutional make-over in the country.

In the keynote address on the first day of the conference, noted sociologist and chairperson of the Institute of Chinese Studies (Delhi), Patricia Uberoi, spoke on 'Gender, Trade and New Connectivities: Reflections on India's Northeastern Borderlands'. A founder-member of the BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) Forum for Regional Cooperation, a Track II level dialogue focusing on development issues from Northeast India to Southwest China, Uberoi raised the question of inclusion in ideas of cross-border connectivity. By engaging

Fig 1: We followed Williem from Manipur who is working as a hairstylist in a posh suburb of Bangalore. The photo is of two of his co-workers from Northeast India, and the cleaning lady who is a local.

Fig 2: Bangalore is a centre for North-eastern migrants in South India. Here is a photograph of a young migrant from Manipur working as a bartender at the Hardrock Cafe.

Fig 3: We also met a group of young women from Mizoram working in a spa in a five star hotel in Kerala.

Fig 4: We met Phoban in Varkala, Kerala, where he worked in a cafe making juice and washing dishes. Here is a photo of him back in his village in Arunachal Pradesh.

the crucial but hitherto neglected element of gender, Uberoi called attention to the important role of women in trade in both India's North East and in South East Asian countries.

On the third day of the conference Sanjib Baruah, professor of Political Science at Bard College (New York), delivered a special lecture 'Bringing the Frontier Back In: Borderland Studies and Northeast India', where he highlighted the need of the concept of 'frontier', in the sense of expansion, in understanding the North Eastern part of India, a region that has been seen as both a settlement frontier and resource frontier, but is additionally a frontier from a security perspective, because of its associations with danger and disorder.

Additional events

In the spirit of a borderlands conference, the ABRN hosted the 'Wayfinding Exhibition', a photo-ethnography of indigenous migration, by Andrzej Markiewicz, Dolly Kikon and Bengt G. Karlsson (socant.su.se/wayfinding). The theme of this travelling photo exhibition originated from the book *North East Migrants in Delhi: Race, Refuge, and Retail*, by Duncan McDuie-Ra.

The conference also hosted an evening of protest music with singer/songwriter Ronid (Akhu) Chingambam from the militarized Indian state of Manipur. Two events organised exclusively for conference participants – a one-day hiking excursion to Nagarkot-Changu and a two-day trip to the Janakpur border – were added attractions.

The Sixth ABRN Conference

The Sixth ABRN Conference to be held in 2018 has a number of potential hosts in Bangladesh, Malaysia and some other East Asian countries, though the final venue has yet to be decided. The call for papers will be announced in December 2017.

Swargajyoti Gohain, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Anthropology, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur and Ashoka University, India (swargajyoti@gmail.com)

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IIAS Reports and Announcements *continued*



Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET)

A four-year regional research programme (2017-2020)

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN STUDIES has been awarded a four-year grant by the Henry Luce Foundation (New York, NY) for the Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET) program (2017-2020). This new 'urban' initiative of IIAS is about research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge on Asia through the prism of city neighborhoods and urban communities in six selected Southeast Asian Cities (Mawlamyine in Myanmar; Chiang Mai and Bangkok in Thailand; Manila in the Philippines; Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam; and Surabaya in Indonesia).

The program will support the development of contextualized knowledge on the spatio-human environment of neighborhoods in the six selected cities through participative field-research, in situ policy roundtables, local capacity building exercises, academic conferences, publications, documentary films and new syllabi. The aim of this micro-local framework of scholarly and civic engagement is to generate alternative, generalizable paradigms on city neighborhoods. A second ambition of the program is to shape and empower a community of early career scholars and practitioners working on/from Southeast Asia who will contribute to the growing body of humanistically informed knowledge on Asian cities.

The SEANNET program has the ambition to generate an 'alternative' system of knowledge of cities in South-East Asia whose significance goes beyond the region and should also be of interest to scholars and professionals from China, India and the West. This new knowledge is 'alternative' in the sense that it will complement current predominant paradigms about cities in Asia as shaped by conventional urban studies, which still draw heavily from technical disciplines such as urban planning, engineering, economics and architecture, but are limited in their understanding of the social fabric of urban societies in Asia. As set out by the present initiative, it is through the collaboration with local partners engaged in participative research that the involved international scholars can learn from the region's multifarious cases of neighborhoods and explore new standards of locally contextualized city-making pedagogy with implications and applications going beyond Asia.

SEANNET will be connected with the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), a transnational platform of over 100 researchers from 17 Asian, European and North American universities. So far, UKNA has focused on India and China, where urban development is often considered through the meta-perspective of a centralizing state and its technocratically-determined vision of cities, which are primarily perceived as vectors of economic growth, technology and socio-political control. Consequently, knowledge production on cities in these countries – and by extension, among many foreign scholars working on Asia – continues to be dominated by state-sanctioned 'technicians of cities'. In spite of UKNA's ongoing efforts to include institutions from the social sciences and the humanities, as well as from applied education, technocratic epistemologies continue to dominate imaginations of cities among many Asian and Western urban experts.

The realization that the massive transformation currently affecting Chinese and Indian cities has much to do with the process of knowledge-making and dissemination among and by these state-sanctioned city practitioners has led IIAS and some of its UKNA partners to focus on the question of pedagogy. This is where Southeast Asia becomes interesting, as the relative structural weakness of the Southeast Asian state to impose norms on how a city should be read and defined leaves more room for local citizen agency, offering an opportunity for scholars and other urban actors to re-appraise their understanding and actions on cities in Asia.

The cities of this very diverse region have many different phases thanks to the difference in nation-state building processes and differing levels of economic and institutional development. Singapore, for instance, features a high degree of integration 'at the top' between state technocrats and their real estate and financial corporate counterparts. Such a structure, is rarely matched in other Southeast Asian countries, even in large metropolises like Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City or Jakarta, whose growth is only partially determined by the state and its agents. Even in a highly centrally planned Vietnam, the influence of state actors in urban development pales in comparison with their Chinese counterparts. The structural autonomy of these cities makes it difficult for the state, its actors and its state-sanctioned expertise to control their evolution. Large-scale urban transformations are often shaped by the existence of a massive transnational corporate complex with the financial muscle and power to 'shape' these cities, often in collusion with local authorities. This phenomenon has increased considerably in the last twenty years or so. It has, in turn, led to the emergence of new forms of local responses which, in a number of cases, saw citizens' organizations take original modes of action, including in the form of grass-root movements. A number of Southeast Asian cities are experiencing cases of citizen-based resistance movements against mega urban projects, and with them, the beginning of the definition of alternative discourses on city-making processes. This trend is being encountered in the metropolitan areas of Manila, Jakarta and Bangkok, as well as in a number of intermediary cities, especially in highly decentralized countries like Indonesia or the Philippines. These forms of local urban participation are themselves often connected to movements of renewal in the cities' provincial hinterlands. In a number of intermediate cities of Southeast Asia the link between rural hinterlands and city centres remains strong and therefore needs to be further explored.

The SEANNET program not only seeks to document the struggle of neighborhood residents against large developmental interests by underscoring the creative forms of micro-level agency among neighborhood dwellers, it also sets out to frame them into alternative educational and transmittable knowledge. In that sense, the story of Southeast Asian neighborhoods will not only consider resistances and resilience of communities and their residents, but also how bottom-up innovations can impact upon, and effectively change policy strategies at the top.

Organization of the program

The SEANNET program is organized into four phases: (1) methodological framing; (2) field research implementation; (3) interactions, discussions and analysis; (4) dissemination of research and deliberations' outcomes.

The first, critical part of the program is aimed at a methodological framing and field research preparations. It will be officially completed with a day-long final workshop during ICAS 10, in Chiang Mai (July 2017). The conclusion of the ICAS meeting will set in motion the second phase of the program, consisting of case-study research, carried out by local researchers and with a duration of approximately nine months each, in the following six historic neighborhoods: Wua Lai, Chiang Mai (Thailand); Wat Kae Nang Leong, Bangkok (Thailand); Wards 13 and 14, Phú Nhuận district, Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam); Escolta Santa Cruz district, Manila (Philippines); and Kampung Peneleh, Surabaya (Indonesia). The next phase of the program will be aimed at discussion and analysis through various activities, including for each case-study a localized, in situ, roundtable, followed by a workshop for the development of a policy action plan. During the fourth and final phase of the program, the results from the fieldwork and roundtable sessions will be further analyzed and transformed into academic research and pedagogical outputs.

Seeking to emphasize multi- and cross-disciplinary understandings of 'the city', SEANNET explicitly engages local researchers in the process. The resulting pedagogy will likely be experiential, dialogical and ethnographic. These characteristics have been broadly identified through a body of knowledge produced by previous researches and activities carried out by IIAS and its partners. In the process of the SEANNET program, they will be further refined through exchanges that specifically engage new partners out of the selected Southeast Asian case studies.

Network, coordination and management

Organized as a platform of individuals and institutions under the coordination of IIAS and connected with the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), SEANNET is meant to bring together and nurture a collection of early career scholars and urban practitioners, and their institutions, to shape a new community of like-minded city specialists who will share a common engagement linking scholarship and local practice. This network will be shaped by the involved local, regional and international researchers. Each case-study is conducted by local researchers under the direction of both a local and international principal investigator¹. The overall intellectual breadth and direction of the program is led by a Steering Committee consisting of scholars from the following partners: Chiang Mai University – Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD); Gadjah Mada University – Department of Architecture and Planning (DOAP); Harvard University – Asia Center; International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS); National University of Singapore – Asia Research Institute (ARI); Paris-Belleville National School of Architecture (ENSAPB)-IPRAUS/UMR AUSser; Yale University – Council on Southeast Asian Studies; and the University of California, Irvine – Department of Anthropology. As overall program coordinator, IIAS is responsible for the inter-institutional, logistical and fiduciary management of the overall program.

Website: www.ukna.asia/seannet

Program Coordinator: Paul Rabé (IIAS/UKNA Secretariat)
Deputy Coordinator: Lin Xiaolan (IIAS/UKNA Secretariat)
Regional Facilitator: Rita Padawangi (Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore)

SEANNET is funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, New York. The contents of this article are the sole responsibility of IIAS/UKNA and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Henry Luce foundation.

References

- 1 With affiliations with institutions such as the University of Yangon; Chiang Mai University; Thammasat University; Vietnamese-German University; Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya; UMR- AUSser; Harvard University; Yale University; Paris Diderot University; University of the Philippines; National University of Singapore.

Above:
Lampang, Thailand,
(c) Paul Rabé.

Below:
Mawlamyine,
Myanmar. Courtesy
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'Framing Asia' film screenings

Feb-Dec 2017, Leiden, Netherlands

FRAMING ASIA is a monthly film screening and discussion held at Leiden University throughout the LeidenAsiaYear (2017), organised by the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), Leiden University's Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, and IIAS. Screenings are planned from February 2017 onwards, at Leiden University (Lipsius Building, room 0.28, Cleveringaplaats 1, Leiden).

Call for submissions: films & documentaries

Framing Asia is still looking for anthropological films and documentaries with a special focus on Asia. Selected films will be screened and accompanied by a Q&A with the filmmaker and/or discussion with experts on the subject of the film(s). Framing Asia will award the best films of this series at the end of this year.



Filmmakers, both students and professionals, are encouraged to submit. Please send an email with the title, a description (max. 300 words), a still shot and a link to the trailer, to: steijlen@kitlv.nl
lisezurne@gmail.com
www.iias.nl/framing-asia

Reflections on India and China: from civilisation to climate change

Seminar

6-7 April 2017
 Leiden, the Netherlands

Convenor: Prof. Pralay Kanungo, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Chair for the Study of Contemporary India at IIAS and Leiden University, the Netherlands.

THE (RE-)EMERGENCE of India and China as powerful players in the contemporary world, and particularly the miracle of their growth story, remains a puzzle for many. However, the contemporary story may not be adequately understood without reflecting on their civilisational past and knowledge system,

ideas and ideologies, values and norms, which shaped the material, cultural and intellectual contours of the two societies.

This two-day seminar juxtaposes core issues related to contemporary India and China on a common scholarly platform, with presentations from invited researchers and experts from diverse disciplines, who will not only reflect on a specific theme of their own expertise in either or both countries, but who will also offer a useful comparative perspective.

Please contact Martina van den Haak if you would like to observe this seminar: m.c.van.den.haak@iias.nl
 More information: www.iias.asia/event/indiachina

Asian food: history, anthropology, sociology

Summer School

25-29 September 2017
 Leiden, the Netherlands
 Application deadline: 20 March 2017
 Intended audience: MA/PhD students and early career scholars

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY enjoys a worldwide reputation for its expertise on Asia and for its Asian collections. To coincide with the opening of 'The Asian Library' in September 2017, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), LeidenAsiaCentre (LAC) and the Shared Taste Project at Leiden University are hosting a Summer School devoted to the academic study of Asian Food for MA/PhD students and early career scholars.

The aim of this Summer School is to highlight the wide range of resources available in Leiden for the academic study of Asian food and to present advanced methodological approaches and research techniques, together with the hands-on experience necessary for the analysis of historical documents and artefacts. Via a combination of expert lectures, student-led discussions, individual supervision, and local field trips, this Summer School will provide participants with an insight into the growing interdisciplinary field of Asian Food Studies, which will include sessions in history, anthropology, sociology, and material culture studies.

The experts involved will include Nir Avieli (Ben Gurion University, Israel), Anne Murcott (SOAS, University of London), Katarzyna Cwiertka (Leiden University), and Anne Gerritsen (Warwick University/Leiden University).

More information about the Summer School and application procedure: [www.iias.asianfood](http://www.iias.asia/asianfood)



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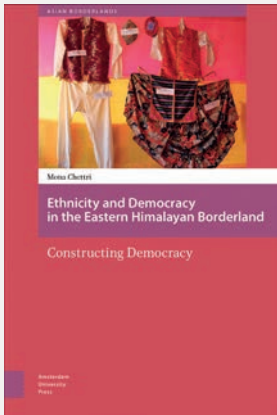
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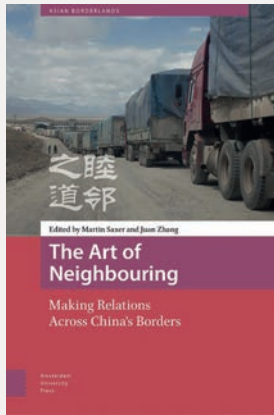
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The series explores the social, cultural, geographic, economic and historical dimensions of border-making by states, local communities and flows of goods, people and ideas.



Mona Chettri. 2017.
Ethnicity and Democracy in the Eastern Himalayan Borderland
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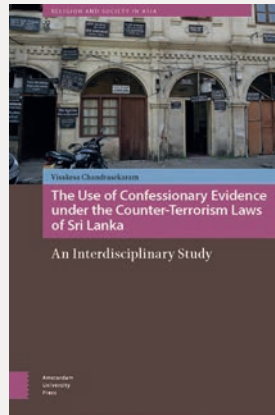


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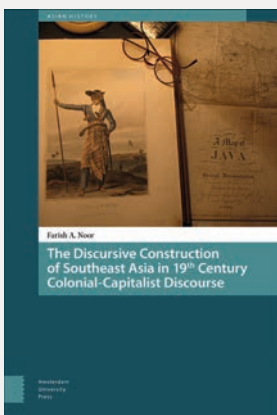


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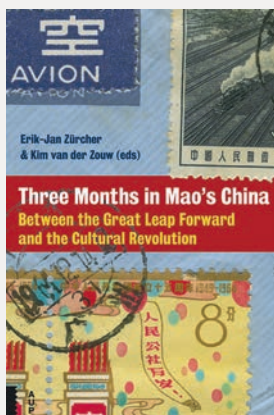
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Farish A. Noor. 2016.
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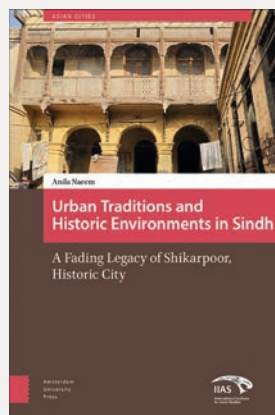


Erik-Jan Zürcher & Kim van der Zouw. 2017.
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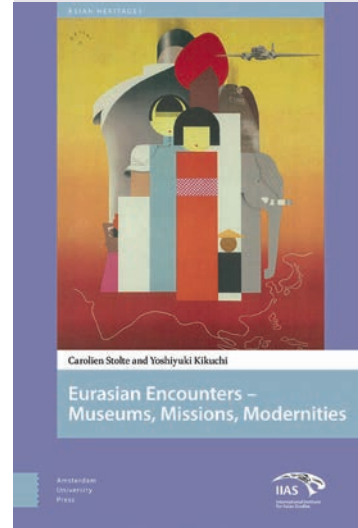


Anila Naeem. 2017.
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Carolien Stolte & Yoshiyuki Kikuchi. 2017.
Eurasian Encounters
ISBN: 9789089648839

Eurasian Encounters: Museums, Missions, Modernities explores the intellectual and cultural flows between Asia and Europe that occurred during – and were formative of – the political and social changes of the first half of the twentieth century. More specifically, this volume situates these flows in a context of increased mobility of people and ideas, of advances in science, of global crisis, and of the unravelling

of an Empire. While cultural and intellectual exchanges between Asia and Europe can be traced back to the earliest days of Eurasian inter-actions, it is in the first half of the twentieth century that they increased in an unprecedented way, resulting in new collocations of ideas and cultural influences. Rather than arresting these flows in a frame of impact and response, this volume brings together chapters that focus on human agencies, interactions and hybridities. Collectively, the contributions to *Eurasian Encounters* investigate how the two ends of Eurasia interacted in artistic, academic, and religious spheres through new cosmopolitanisms that affected both Europe and Asia.

The chapters in this volume all have their origins in a conference jointly organized by IAS (Leiden, Netherlands) and the Nalanda Srivijaya Center at the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore). This conference, held at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore, convened participants from all over the world, and this book reflects that globality. The authors are based in eight different countries on four continents, and cover all corners of Eurasia. The work they present here falls into three themes. The first, 'Artistic Spaces', deals with different concepts of heritage and the role of the museum, and with different meanings that art, artists, and artistic styles acquire as they travel. Deepti Mulgund and Shu-li Wang cover the shifting meanings of heritage in the Indian Princely State of Aundh and East Asia, respectively. Sonal Khullar focuses on the Parisian sojourns of Amrita Sher-Gil and Pan Yuliang, and uses their stories to question universalizing accounts of 'female artists' as well as of 'Asian art'. Helena Čapková closes this section with a chapter on the reciprocal impact of new artistic movements in Central Europe and Japan.

The second part of the book, entitled 'Missions and Education', covers the theme of translatability in religious encounter. Indrani Chatterjee provides an account not of successful translation but of failure twice over: a missionary organization's failure to respond adequately to local protest over a young missionary's inappropriate sexual conduct, and the local expectations of monastic conduct which informed their complaints; and the failure of historians to analyze these dynamics properly. Cindy Yik-yi Chu, though more optimistic in her examination of the Catholic Church in China, likewise shows the difficulty of missionary and local actors to interpret each other in each other's terms.

The third part of the book is entitled 'Shared Trajectories, New Subjectivities', and deals with the myriad ways in which the ebb and flow of empire influenced the emergence of new identity politics, transnational and transcommunal solidarities, and new antagonisms. 'Empire' is here used in its broadest sense. While Anoma Pieris deals with shifting metropolitan subjectivities in Colombo, Boram Shin writes on the localization of Soviet discourses of patriotism in Uzbekistan. Andrea Germer, finally, looks at the intricate links between Japanese and German propaganda journals in the Second World War. Together, this book illuminates a world of cultural and intellectual circulation that cut through the physical borders of empires and the political upheavals of the first half of the twentieth century.

For questions, or to submit a proposal, contact:

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Historical Photographs of China

The redesigned *Historical Photographs of China* web site (www.hpcbristol.net) was formally launched in January 2017, showcasing over 10,500 images, including 1,400 recently added images from nine new collections.

Robert Bickers and Jamie Carstairs



Above: Children grinding grain, at a farm. Wv-s112. © 2014 Alison Brooke.

Far left: Portrait of a careworn, elderly woman, near Shanghai. Ep01-771. © 2013 Adrienne Livesey, Elaine Ryder and Irene Brien.



Left inset: Gas mask information poster, Shanghai. Ro-n0271. © 2012 Mei-Fei Elrick and Tess Johnston.

Below: Two Red Swastika Society nurses, Shanghai. Ro-n0204. © 2012 Mei-Fei Elrick and Tess Johnston.

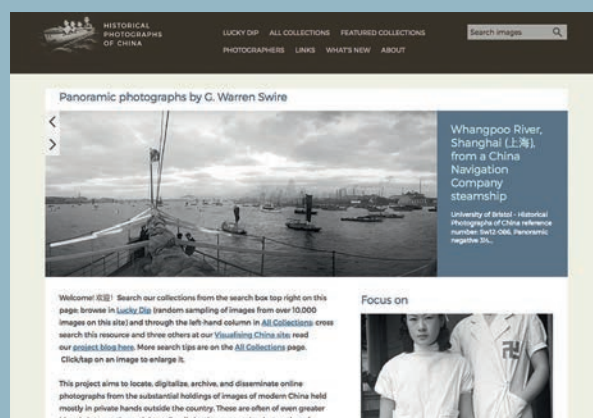
THESE INCLUDE a large and diverse selection of photographs from Shanghai-based news photographer Malcolm Rosholt, the family photographs of Sikh life and work in Shanghai in the Ranjit Singh Sangha collection (see also p.22 of this issue), and some of Felice Beato's photographs of the bloody 1860 North China Campaign. Joining the cast of personalities are Rabindranath Tagore, Mao Zedong, the Tenth Panchen Lama, Felix the Cat, General Sir Robert Napier, Father Jacquinet, and sometime *North-China Daily News* editor R.W. Little.

The new images range from 1860 (with some earlier ones on their way soon), to 1949 (with some later ones on their way in the not too distant future). Images can be downloaded and used under a Creative Commons licence.

On the relaunched HPC web site, we have tried to enhance discoverability and alleviate dependency on keyword/tag searching, by offering several ways to find images, such as a 'Lucky Dip' (a random sampling of images; www.hpcbristol.net/explore), via collection names, via names of photographers (www.hpcbristol.net/photographers) and via some themed collections (www.hpcbristol.net/featured-collections), as well as an advanced search facility. 'Lucky Dip', in which you find yourself with unexpected people in unexpected places, is proving to be an enlightening way to pass the time, procrastinating other work.

Another new feature is a 'Related Photographs' link to other photographs linked in some way to the one displayed. We cannot say that coverage through this is comprehensive, but we are linking photographs where we can (where, for example, they might be split across albums or collections).

Since 2006, the HPC project has located, digitised, archived, and disseminated online photographs from the substantial holdings of images of modern China held in private hands outside the country, as well as in public collections. These photographs are often of even greater historic interest than might ordinarily be the case, as the destruction of materials in China through war and revolution in the twentieth century, and especially during the 1966-69 Cultural Revolution, means that there is a relative dearth today of accessible photographic records in China itself.



We'd be very happy for any general feedback and especially notification of factual/name/location/date errors, typos, glaring omissions, etc. Also, we are always interested to hear how you use the site. Developing the new HPC platform has been supported by awards from the AHRC, British Academy, the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation, and Swire Trust, and with vital support from the University of Bristol's IT Services.

More information

Picturing China: An AHRC 10th Anniversary film
The film highlights the rich variety of our photographs, and gives you a glimpse of how we work, and why we are doing this. Enjoy. www.ahrc.ac.uk/research/readwatchlisten/filmsandpodcasts/picturingchina

Visualising China blog.
We – and Guest bloggers – post on digitisation issues, new collections, discoveries and all things 'old China photo'. visualisingchina.net/blog

Contact Professor Robert Bickers (HPC Project Director) and Jamie Carstairs (HPC Project Manager): hums-chinaphotos@bristol.ac.uk



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- A maturing civil society in China? The role of knowledge and professionalization in the development of NGOs **Jennifer Y. J. Hsu and Reza Hasmath**
- Hong Kong creative workers in mainland China: The aspirational, the precarious, and the ethical **Yiu Fai Chow**
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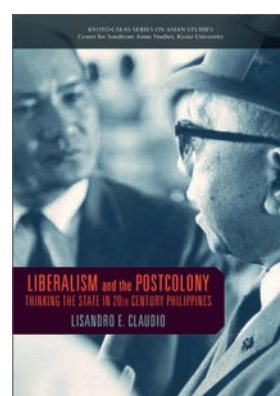
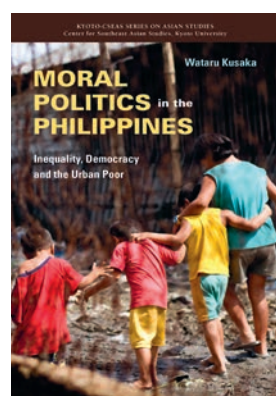
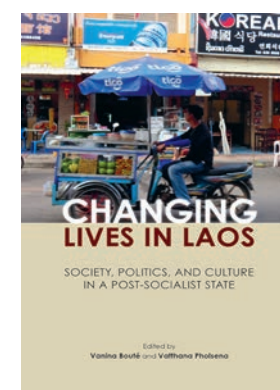
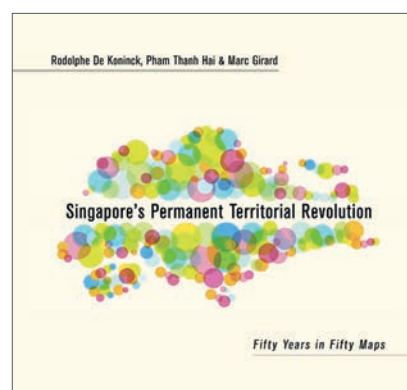
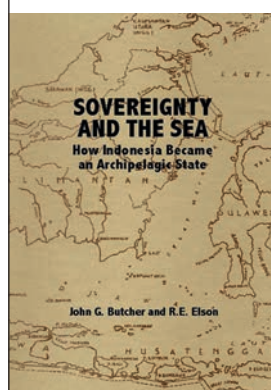
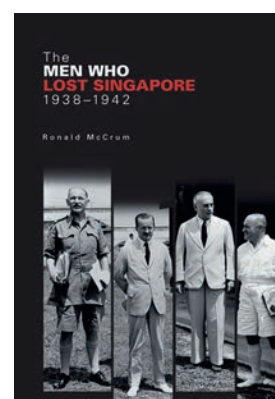
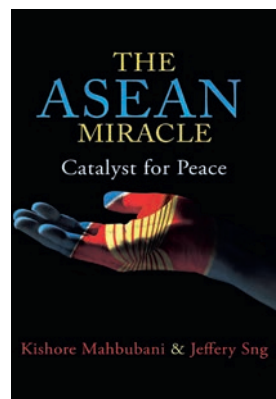
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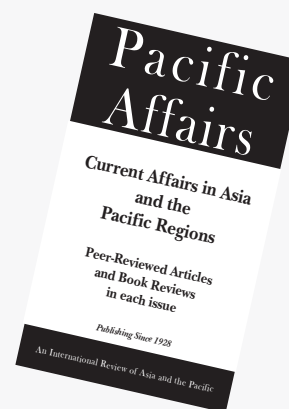
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IIAS Research and Projects

IIAS research and other initiatives are 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. IIAS also welcomes research for the open cluster, so as not to exclude potentially significant and interesting topics. Visit www.iias.nl for more information.

Global Asia

THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER addresses contemporary issues related to trans-national 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 are addressed. The cluster aims to expand the understanding of the processes of globalisation by considering the various ways Asian and other world regions are interconnected within a long-term historical framework. Acknowledging the central role of Asia as an agent of global transformations, it challenges western perspectives that underlie much of the current literature on the subject and explores new forms of non-hegemonic intellectual interactions in the form of 'south-south-north' and 'east-west' dialogue models. In principle, any research dealing with Asian global interactions is of interest.

Asian Borderlands Research Network (www.asianborderlands.net)

The Asian Borderlands Research Network focuses particularly on the border regions between South Asia, Central/East and Southeast Asia. The concerns of the ABRN are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns. The ABRN organises a conference in one of these border regions every two years in co-operation with a local partner. See also page 45 of this issue.

Coordinator: Eric de Maaker (maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Website: www.iias.asia/research/asian-borderlands-research-network

Energy Programme Asia (EPA)

The EPA-research programme is designed to study the effects of global geopolitics of energy security on the one hand, and policy to increase energy efficiency and estimating the prospects for the exploitation of renewable energy resources on the other. EPA's current and second joint comparative research programme with the Institute of West Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is entitled *The Transnationalization of China's Oil Industry: company strategies, embedded projects, and relations with institutions and stakeholders in resource-rich countries (2013-2017)*. Involving various Chinese and Dutch research institutes, this programme will analyse China's increasing involvement with governments, local institutions and local stakeholders in the energy sectors of a number of resource-rich countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, notably Sudan, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, and Brazil. It seeks to determine patterns of interaction between national institutions and Chinese companies, their relationships to foreign investment projects, and the extent to which they are embedded in the local economies. This programme is sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Social Sciences (KNAW), the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and IIAS.

Coordinators: M. Amineh, Programme Director EPA-IIAS (m.p.amineh@uva.nl or m.p.amineh@iias.nl),

Y. Guang, Programme Director EPA-IWAAS/CASS

Website: www.iias.nl/research/energy-programme-asia-epa

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.

Coordinator: Tak-Wing Ngo

Website: www.iias.asia/research/iias-centre-regulation-and-governance

Asian Studies in Africa

Since 2010, IIAS and other partners from Africa, Asia and the USA have been working on an initiative to promote the study of and teaching on Asia at African universities and, equally, to promote African Studies in Asia. The initiative constitutes a first attempt to sustain a humanities-informed South-South knowledge platform with connections between other academic centers in Europe and North America, but also Latin-America and Oceania.

In 2012, a roundtable in Chisamba, Zambia, led to the establishment of the pan-African 'Association of Asian Studies in Africa' (A-ASIA). A-ASIA's development is headed by a steering committee of scholars, mainly from Africa and Asia. In September 2015, A-ASIA held its three-day inaugural conference, in Accra, Ghana, called 'AFRICA-ASIA: A New Axis of Knowledge'. It was the first conference held in Africa to bring together a multidisciplinary ensemble of scholars and institutions from the continent and the rest of the world with a shared focus on Asia and Asia-Africa intellectual interactions.

Website: www.africas.asia

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 aims to create a platform for scholars and urban practitioners focusing on Asian cities 'in context' and beyond traditional western norms of knowledge.

Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA)

Consisting of over 100 researchers with affiliations at 17 institutes in Europe, China, India and the United States, the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA) represents the largest global academic network on Asian cities. UKNA's objective is to nurture contextualised and policy-relevant knowledge on Asian cities, seeking to influence policy by contributing insights that put people at the centre of urban governance and development strategies.

Financed by the EU, extensive research staff exchanges focusing on China and India were carried out between 2012 and 2016. The success of the UKNA synergy has encouraged the network's partners to carry on its activities, among others, expanding its orientation to include urban development in Southeast Asia in the framework of the South East Asian Neighborhoods Network programme (2017-2020).

Coordinator: Paul Rabé (p.e.rabe@iias.nl)

Website: www.ukna.asia

Southeast Asia Neighborhoods Network (SEANNET)

This new 'urban' initiative of IIAS (2017-2020) is about research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge on Asia through the prism of city neighbourhoods and urban communities in six selected Southeast Asian Cities. The aim of this micro-local framework of scholarly and civic engagement is to generate alternative, generalisable paradigms on city neighbourhoods. A second ambition of the programme is to shape and empower a community of early career scholars and practitioners working on/from Southeast Asia who will contribute to the growing body of humanistically informed knowledge on Asian cities. The programme is supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation (New York, USA).

For more information see p.46 of this issue.

Coordinator/UKNA secretariat: Paul Rabé (p.e.rabe@iias.nl)

Website: www.ukna.asia/seannet

Asian Heritages

THE ASIAN HERITAGES CLUSTER focuses on the uses of culture and cultural heritage practices in Asia. In particular, it addresses the variety of definitions associated with heritage and their implications for social agency. Doing so, it explores the notion of heritage as it evolved from an originally European concept primarily associated with architecture and monumental archaeology to incorporate a broader diversity of cultural forms and values. This includes the contested assertions of 'tangible' and 'intangible' heritages, and the importance of cultural heritage in defining one's own identity or identities vis-à-vis those of others. The wide variety of activities carried out in this context, among others, aim to engage with the such concepts of 'authenticity', 'national heritage' and 'shared heritage' and, in general, with issues pertaining to the political economy of heritage.

International Graduate Double Degree Programme in Critical Heritage Studies

Over the last few years, IIAS has been intensively engaged with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and targeted Asian partners, in the development of an international Double Degree programme for graduate students in the field of 'Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe'. To date, the Asian partners involved have been two departments of National Taiwan University and one department of Yonsei University in South Korea; contacts with other possible Asian partner institutes are being explored. The programme offers selected students the opportunity to follow a full year study at one of the partner institutes with full credits and a double degree. The curriculum at Leiden University is supported by the IIAS Asian Heritages research cluster and benefits from the contributions of Prof Michael Herzfeld (Harvard) as a guest teacher and the Senior Advisor to the Critical Heritage Studies Initiative of IIAS.

Contact: Elena Paskaleva (e.g.paskaleva@hum.leidenuniv.nl) or Willem Vogelsang (w.j.vogelsang@iias.nl)

Website: www.iias.nl/critical-heritage-studies

Indian Medical Heritage Research Network

The Indian Medical Heritage Research Network wants to stimulate social-cultural and social-historical research on Indian medical traditions such as Ayurveda, Unanittibb, Siddha, Yoga and Sowa Rigpa. Of special interest is the integration of Indian medicine in Indian public health and its role as second resort for middle class Indians and Europeans. The network offers a virtual space on Facebook (www.facebook.com/IndianMedicalHeritage) for collating research findings and other information about India's medical heritage covering diverse perspectives, interests and backgrounds.

Website: www.iias.nl/indianmedicine

Coordinator: Maarten Bode (m.bode@uva.nl)

Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World

A four year programme supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) at Leiden University has been awarded a four-year grant by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, New York, to facilitate a collaborative platform of over twenty Asian, African, European and North American universities and their local social and cultural partners, for the co-creation of a new humanistic pedagogical model. This follows the successful completion in 2016 of a three-year project (*Rethinking Asian Studies in a Global Context*), supported by the same foundation, to rethink the scholarly practice of area (Asia) studies in today's global postcolonial context. IIAS is grateful to the Mellon Foundation and Leiden University for their continuing support.

The new programme titled 'Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World' calls for expanding the scope of the humanities by mobilizing knowledge-practices that have largely remained unrepresented in contemporary academia. It will connect a global network of individuals and institutions capable of garnering such knowledge in Asia and Africa in order to develop alternative pedagogies for teaching, research, and dissemination across disciplinary, national, and institutional borders. The aim is to contribute to the realignment of the social role and mission of institutions of higher learning with regard to the humanistic values that inspired their establishment in the first place.

The objectives of this four-year initiative are: (1) The establishment of a trans-regional consortium of scholars, educators, and institutions committed to innovations in research and education; (2) methodological interventions through a focus on key sites of knowledge-practices in four regions – Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and West Africa – to benefit from their comparative potential; (3) the encouragement of university-society linkages and, when possible, their institutionalization in the form of trans-disciplinary centres for testing curricula and pedagogies in partner institutions; (4) the development of a curricular matrix responsive to forms of humanistic knowledge-practices across borders.

Dr Philippe Peycam will direct the overall coordination of this programme, Dr Aarti Kawlra will function as its Academic Director and Titia van der Maas will serve as the Programme Coordinator.

We wish to thank all our partners for agreeing to work together with IIAS under this exciting new initiative and look forward to keeping you informed on the progress of this programme through the IIAS Newsletter and website.

IIAS Fellowship Programme

Along with the research fellows who are attached to one of the IIAS research programmes, the Institute yearly hosts a large number of visiting researchers (affiliated fellows) who come to Leiden to work on their own individual research project. In addition, IIAS also facilitates the teaching and research by various professorial fellows as part of agreements with Dutch universities, foreign ministries and funding organisations.

CURRENT FELLOWS

Mehdi Amineh

Coordinator
‘Energy Programme Asia (EPA)’
Domestic and geopolitical challenges to energy security for China and the European Union
1 Sept 2007 – 31 Mar 2017

Alessandro Battistini

The ‘Nepalese Anonymous’: an original (?) commentary to Ānandavardhana’s Devisatoka (edition and translation)
15 Oct 2016 – 15 Apr 2017

Somdev Battistini

Śobhākara’s Logic of Aesthetics
1 Oct 2016 – 31 Mar 2017

Debjani Bhattacharyya

Hydrologics: Property, law and the urban environment in the Bengal Delta
5 Oct 2016 – 31 Mar 2017

Liz Cecil

Mapping the Pāsupata Landscape: Polity, Place, and the Śaiva Imaginary in Northwest India (7th-10th century)
1 Feb – 31 Jul 2017

Lung-hsing Chu

Meeting in Nagasaki: Rethinking Western Influence on Japanese Material Culture in the later Edo Peri
1 Oct 2016 – 31 Jul 2017

Jatin Dua

A Sea of Protection: Piracy, Trade, and Regulation in the Indian Ocean
1 Oct 2016 – 31 Jul 2017

Gregory Goulding

The Cold War poetics of Muktibodh: a study of Hindi internationalism, 1943-1964
1 Sept 2016 – 31 Jul 2017

Anna Grasskamp

Maritime Material Culture in a Global Context
1 Feb – 31 Jul 2017

Jiri Jakl

Alcohol in Pre-Islamic Java (c. 800 – 1500 CE): Cultural, Social, and Ritual Uses of an ‘Unholy’ Brew
1 Feb – 31 Jul 2017

Pralay Kanungo

Visiting Professor,
India Studies Chair (ICCR)
Indian politics
1 Sept 2013 – 30 Jun 2017

Neena Talwar Kanungo

The arrival of digital democracy in India: Social media and political parties
1 Jul 2016 – 30 Jun 2017

Nino Kilarjani

Buddhist philosophy of origination in Vasubandhu’s ‘Lokanirdesha’ (‘Abhidharmakoshaśāstram’, Chapt. III)
27 Feb – 10 May 2017

Adam Knee

Kingdom of the imagination: Thailand in world cinema
1 Sept 2016 – 30 Jun 2017

Radu Leca

Myriad Countries: The Outside World on Historical Maps of Japan
1 Oct 2016 – 31 Jul 2017

Carola Erika Lorea

Folklore, religion and diaspora: the migration of oral traditions across and beyond the East Bengal border
1 Sept 2016 – 30 Jun 2017

Giacomo Mantovan

Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora
1 Sept 2016 – 30 Jun 2017

Sayana Namsaraeva

Nested Subjects on the China - Russia - Mongolia border
1 Jun 2016 – 30 Nov 2016

Steffen Rimner

The Asian origins of global drug control
1 Jul 2016 – 31 May 2017

Bal Gopal Shrestha

Religiosity among the Nepalese Diaspora
1 Jan 2015 – 31 Dec 2017

Sebastian Schwecke

Informal monetary markets
1 Oct 2016 – 31 Jan 2018

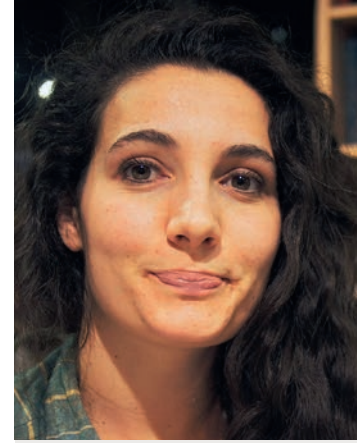
Ady van den Stock

‘Wisdom’ as a category of knowledge and a marker of cultural identity: reinterpretations of Wang Yangming in modern China
26 Sept 2016 – 26 Jul 2017

Shu-li WANG

The Politics of China’s cultural heritage on display: Yin Xu Archaeological Park in the making
1 Sept 2015 – 31 Aug 2017

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Carola Lorea

Italian Institute of Oriental Studies,
University of Rome La Sapienza

Refugees from East Bengal: Performing home away from home

IN 2011, MY ACADEMIC LIFE shifted from Rome, where I worked on Bengali sociolinguistics and lexicography with Bangladeshi diasporic communities in Italy, to West Bengal, where I explored, during a three year field-work, some intersections between Bengali oral literature, folk songs and subversive religious identities. When my doctoral research was completed, and my first research monograph (*Folklore, Religion and the Songs of a Bengali Madman*) was submitted for publication, I decided to bring together those two areas: migration and resettlement of Bengali communities on one hand, and oral traditions and traveling archives of oral literature on the other – an unexplored conjunction that deserves particular attention.

Previous experiences – the participation in ICAS 8 (8th International Convention of Asia Scholars) in Macao among others – showed me that IIAS has been consistently supporting research about migration and movements across borders, about truly transnational and interdisciplinary projects, and about social and political dynamics across and beyond the Indian Ocean. I knew that working at my new project at IIAS would be a perfect match, a sort of lucky arranged marriage, celebrated on an auspicious astrological moment. In fact, my new research follows the consequences of the migration of millions of low class Hindus from East Bengal and their more or less coercive relocation in particular areas of West Bengal as well as on the far away Andaman islands. Numerous families of dislocated practitioners, escaping post-Partition violence and persecution, settled into alien environments bringing along a symbolic baggage of songs, tunes and traditional knowledge. This cross-border exodus had a tremendous impact not only on the political life of the areas of resettlement, but also on their literary and religious culture.

Apart from a great library around the corner, Leiden gave me the chance to dive into this project in good company: as part of my lucky arranged marriage, I found very good in-laws. With the other fellows at IIAS we share our unpublished writings to discuss how to improve our arguments and style, we share some free time to watch and discuss movies in the conference room, and we share delicious dishes through an informally created workshop of ethnic cuisine where we exchange new recipes and all the topics of conversation that go along well with food and friendship.

A further factor of great enjoyment for a scholar who also happens to be an aerial acrobat, is the possibility to teach and practice at the University Sport Center, that happens to be fully equipped for those who like to hang upside-down after a long working day. To conclude, being a research fellow in the Netherlands has so far proven to be a learning experience... in many aspects, from riding a bicycle without hand-breaks without running over the local students, to consulting accessible bibliographic treasures and a thick spiders web of international scholars.

Gonda Fellowships for Indologists

FOR PROMISING YOUNG INDOLOGISTS at the post-doctorate level, it is possible to apply for funding with the J. Gonda Foundation, to spend three to six months doing research at IIAS. Please send your application to the J. Gonda Foundation by the appropriate deadline below. The J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) supports the scholarly study of Sanskrit, other Indian languages and literature, and Indian cultural history. In addition to enabling Indologists to spend time at IIAS, the foundation offers funding for projects or publications in Indology of both researchers and scientific publishers, as well as PhD grants.

Application form: www.knaw.nl/en/awards/subsidies/gonda-fund
Application deadline: 1 April and 1 October every year



ASC-IIAS Fellowship Programme

A joint fellowship offered by the African Studies Centre and the International Institute for Asian Studies

THIS FELLOWSHIP is intended for researchers specialising in Asian-African interactions. It aims to attract researchers whose work is informed by current theoretical debates, in the social sciences and humanities, on global connectivities and who are able to critically engage with shifting paradigms in ‘area studies’ beyond the ways in which these have traditionally been conceived in the West. We are particularly interested in receiving fellowship proposals that go beyond a mere analysis of current issues associated with African-Asian comparative economic developments or Chinese investments in Africa – although none of these themes, if appraised critically and for their societal consequences, will of course be excluded. Our definition of Asia and Africa is broad and inclusive, Asia ranging from the Middle-East to the Pacific Coast, and Africa from North-Africa to the southern tip of the continent.

Application deadline: 15 March and 15 September each year.
For more information and application form, go to: www.iias.nl/page/asc-iias-fellowship-programme





Debjani Bhattacharyya

Drexel University, USA

Hydrologics: Property, law and the urban environment in the Bengal Delta

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE that in a few weeks I will bid goodbye to all the friendships I forged in my short time in Leiden. I arrived in October 2016 hoping to finish my book manuscript *Hydrologics: Property and Law in the Manufacturing of Calcutta*, which rethinks the process of urbanization and the production of hinterlands in a marshy deltaic space surrounding Calcutta. Within the span of the first two months, I managed to finish the manuscript and was able to delve into a second project. Both my book manuscript and my current project seek to connect multiple historiographies – legal, urban, economic with the environment. IIAS, with its robust focus on oceanic histories, legal and urban histories was a perfect place to deepen and develop the questions I have been engaged with in my book.

My book argues that the materiality of colonial landscapes and their ecologies played a decisive role in the making of property laws and shaping the urban land market. The book proceeds by elaborating how – in the indeterminate and shifting landscape of deltaic Bengal – the concept of ‘property-thinking’ became critical in dividing land and water into discrete legal elements, with each being governed by separate arenas: riparian and land laws. At the same time, this delta space then became home to many urban infrastructural and legal experiments from the late eighteenth century that were transferred and transplanted to various parts of the world. *Hydrologics* concluded by illuminating how property-thinking, the revenue-economy and extractive principles have shaped and continue to shape patterns of urbanization in the region and the legal frameworks surrounding the property market. These developments have had devastating consequences, as evidenced in the receding coastline in the Bengal Delta and elsewhere across the world. My second project links the financial port towns of Asia with the maritime world of the Bay of Bengal in order to investigate how climactic and environmental changes from the eighteenth century shaped ideas about risk and the instruments of insurance in the expansion of imperial trade.

Formal conversation with fellows, staff members and faculty at IIAS and Leiden University, as well as informal conversations at various bars (but mainly at De Bonte Koe) and over the Friday film screenings at the Institute have expanded my understandings around questions of political economy, law and history-writing. At IIAS I was also very fortunate to participate in the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UNKA), whose coordinator Paul Rabé opened up a new world of intellectual engagement by introducing me to the work of the Dutch urban planners and their engagements with canals. IIAS is a place where nebulous ideas take a concrete form and, with the encouragement, support and input I received from everyone here, I hope, in the coming years, to help IIAS organize a Summer School (see p.12 of this issue) on the theme of soaking ecologies as a new form of urbanism.

No reflection on my time here would be complete without a mention of the excursions organized by IIAS. Given my keen interest in the relation between land and water, Sandra Dehue kindly drove us to the ‘Neeltje Jans’, the impressive delta water works in Zeeland (province), which was critical for us to appreciate the place of water in Dutch history beyond the quaint canals. By the time this piece goes into print production, I will be busy packing my bags to head back to Drexel University to resume teaching, and wondering when I will again wake up to the cries of seagulls.

IIAS FELLOWSHIPS



Yearly
application
deadlines:
1 March and
1 October

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, invites outstanding researchers to apply for a fellowship to work on a relevant piece of research in the social sciences and humanities.

WE ARE PARTICULARLY interested in researchers focusing on one of the Institute’s three thematic clusters. However, some positions will be reserved for outstanding projects in any area outside of those listed.

Asian Cities

The Asian Cities cluster explores modes of urban development, and deals with cities and urban cultures with related issues of flows and fluxes, ideas and goods, cosmopolitanism and connectivity at their core, framing the existence of vibrant ‘civil societies’ and political micro-cultures. Through an international knowledge network, IIAS aims to create a platform for scholars and urban practitioners focusing on Asian cities ‘in context’ and beyond traditional western norms of knowledge.

Asian Heritages

This cluster focuses on the politics of culture and cultural heritages in Asia. It addresses a variety of definitions associated with cultural heritage and their implications for social agency. In general, the cluster engages with a broad range of concepts and issues related to culture and cultural heritage, and their importance in defining one’s identity vis-à-vis those of others.

Global Asia

The Global Asia cluster 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 are addressed.

Research projects that can contribute to new, historically contextualised, 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 visit our website:

www.iias.nl



Artmandu. The city as a catalyst

Kathmandu Triennale is Nepal's premier platform for global contemporary arts. It is the latest iteration of the pioneering Kathmandu International Art Festival. Like the precursory Festivals, whose 2009 and 2012 editions centered on the themes 'Status of Women' and 'Earth|Body|Mind', the Triennale thematically engages particular social issues while advancing a nuanced approach to promote the pedagogical potential of the arts. Through the Triennale, organizer Siddhartha Arts Foundation (SAF) presents multiple perspectives on edition themes, to educate audiences and engage society in critical dialogue. Kathmandu Triennale's inaugural edition (KT 2017) will be dedicated to the theme of 'The City'.

Kathmandu Triennale | 24 March - 9 April 2017
www.artmandu.org

EXHIBITIONS will be held between 24 March and 9 April 2017, at multiple venues across the Kathmandu Valley. The central exhibition, 'The City: My Studio/The City: My Life' will be directed by curator Philippe Van Caueren. Additional curated showcases will be held alongside the central exhibition to present multiple world-perspectives on the central theme. These showcases are being organized by institutional partners and curators independently with support from KT 2017 as a local partner.

Central exhibition

Philippe Van Caueren is the Artistic Director of the *Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst* (S.M.A.K.) in Ghent, Belgium, a contemporary art museum primarily focused on artists and their practice. It functions as an art laboratory, a place for experimentation, research and innovation. The museum poses questions, stimulates reflection and celebrates doubt.

In the words of Van Caueren, "The title of the exhibition 'The City: My Studio/The City: My Life' clearly articulates the two functions that the city can have for an artist. Kathmandu (or any other city) as a working place, as the mold for artistic thinking and process. The city is also an arena where daily life is 'performed' in its richness and complexity. Invited artists are not to illustrate this definition of the city or urban life, but instead to take the city as a catalyst – as a laboratory to generate artistic forms, gestures, acts, ideas; art works. The city is much like a container in which, through random ways, direct and indirect, history, habits and traditions are preserved. The socio-cultural texture of the place; colors and odors; the past, the present and the future; stories' facts and fiction – all of it activated in the same. The artist thus will aim to be an urban archaeologist who

digs from the city these elements. In this exhibition Kathmandu serves as a unique and marvelous hub where encounters are generated between artists from Nepal and around the world."

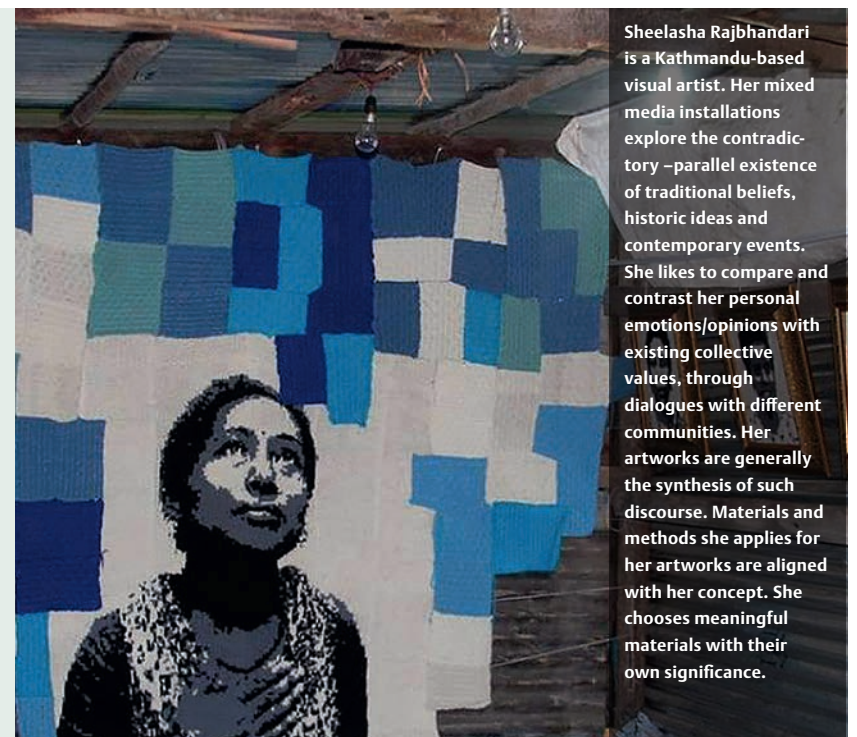
Contributing artists

There are two main components of KT 2017: Exhibitions and Encounters. Exhibitions include all visual content and Encounters encapsulate the educational outreach built on the production and presentation of exhibits. It will also host outreach events in public spaces and incorporate collateral events created by partners in its overall program. KT 2017 Exhibitions will see the participation of over 50 artists from more than 25 countries, with a considerable percentage representing Nepal. The roster has been selected by curator Philippe Van Caueren to represent an inclusive list of established and younger artists covering different media actively used by artists today. International selections have been made on artists' capacity to develop their work in Kathmandu within a limited timeframe prior to the exhibition, and also on their commitment to engage in capacity building for Nepal's art scene. Although not decisive, these two elements – through the dialogue and exchange between the Nepali art community and visiting artists – will contribute to the dynamicity of the exhibition.

Support and sponsorship

For those who would like to support the KT 2017 'Youth, Community and Children Engagement' program, please visit their Indiegogo campaign page for more information: <https://tinyurl.com/kt2017campaign>.

KT 2017 will be sponsoring 12 art reporters from around the world who will gain VIP access during the Triennale. Anyone wishing to apply should get in touch with the organization at info@artmandu.org.



Sheelasha Rajbhandari is a Kathmandu-based visual artist. Her mixed media installations explore the contradictory – parallel existence of traditional beliefs, historic ideas and contemporary events. She likes to compare and contrast her personal emotions/opinions with existing collective values, through dialogues with different communities. Her artworks are generally the synthesis of such discourse. Materials and methods she applies for her artworks are aligned with her concept. She chooses meaningful materials with their own significance.



Tsherin Sherpa (born 1968, in Kathmandu, Nepal) is a Tibetan/Nepalese artist whose works have been shown in major museums around the world. Trained in traditional Tibetan *thangka* painting from a young age, Sherpa borrows from Tibetan iconography to abstract, fragment and reconstruct the traditional image to investigate and explore the diasporic experience as well as the dichotomy found where sacred and secular culture collide. By employing mass culture's ubiquitous noise, Tsherin imports these representations into a heightened dialogue where deities, pop icons, and global affairs can renegotiate into a mirror-like transmutation.



Hit Man Gurung (b.1986) is a Kathmandu based artist. He is deeply concerned with how Nepal's social fabric and individual lifestyle have been affected by the ten year Maoist civil war, mass migration, haphazard urban development and the unstable political situation of Nepal. International migration has increased exponentially since the civil war, leaving a generation gap that affects the sense of community, the passing on of knowledge and economic wellbeing. This series of work highlights both the emotional impact and the dramatic socio-economic changes that such a mass migration has caused in the country.