



IIAS

International Institute
for Asian Studies

theNewsletter

Encouraging knowledge and enhancing the study of Asia

78
Politics and Society in
Contemporary Cambodia



SINCE THE FALL OF THE KHMER ROUGE REGIME in 1979 Cambodian politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Profits of the widespread marketisation of natural resources, cheap labour and foreign investment are distributed among the elite of Cambodia's patrimonial society, whilst the majority of the population remains bereft of the advantages of economic growth. Taken together, the contributions to *the Focus* of this issue reveal a political modus operandi that has facilitated the CPP's domination, but which now provokes an increasing challenge to this hegemony.

Kul (58) is a farmer and community activist; here she stands on logs that were once the forest where she lived since her childhood. Kul was forcibly evicted from her land by the government, who sold it to foreign companies to grow sugarcane and rubber, ultimately benefitting politicians and military. Photo by David Rengel.

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Politics and Society in Contemporary Cambodia

Introduction 29-31

Since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 Cambodian politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Hun Sen's rise has complemented the emergence of a tight-knit elite who have come to dominate and characterise Cambodia as a patrimonial society. The profits of the widespread marketisation of Cambodia's natural resources, cheap labour and foreign investment are distributed within this elite, whilst the majority of the population remains bereft of the advantages of economic growth. In *the Focus* of this issue guest editors **Michiel Verver** and **Jake Wieczorek** explore the extent and nature of the CPP's fingerprint on different societal spheres. Taken together, the contributions here reveal a political modus operandi, in the context of a politics that has facilitated the CPP's domination, but which now provokes an increasing challenge to this hegemony.



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Championing academic freedom



This summer, two incidents reminded us that academic freedom, which we often take for granted, can be curtailed or overtly restricted. The first incident was the absurd charge of ‘fomenting illegal political assembly’ brought against our colleague Professor Chayan Vaddhanaphuti from Chiang Mai University, along with four very young Thai academics, Chaipong Samnieng (PhD candidate), Teeramon Buangam (MA student), Nontawat Machai (undergraduate student), all from CMU, and Pakavadi Veerapasong, an independent writer and translator.

Philippe Peycam

DR CHAYAN WAS ENTRUSTED by his university to oversee the organization of two major international events in his home city last July: the 13th International Thai Studies Conference (ICTS) and the 10th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS). Both events were unquestionably an astounding success. They were attended by respectively 1000 and 1300 participants, from 37 and 50 countries. The two conferences had been previously approved by the Thai authorities. They brought global centrality and distinction to Chiang Mai and Thailand for the impeccable and professional way in which they were organized. The so-called ‘crime’ of Dr Chayan and his colleagues, in the eyes of the military regime, was that they organized the ICTS conference, and within it open spaces of exchanges between its academic participants, and that they continued to assert their academic freedom despite the ubiquitous and provocative presence at the event of plain-clothed military personnel intent on intimidating people by photographing and filming them while they were engaged in discussions.

The second incident to which I was referring, was the news that the prestigious academic publishing house Cambridge University Press (CUP), under pressure from the Chinese government, and primarily concerned with commercial interests, discreetly agreed to restrict access in China to hundreds of articles and book reviews and thousands of e-books in two of its flagship Chinese and

Asian studies journals, *China Quarterly* and *The Journal of Asian Studies*. The decision triggered considerable international outcry, including among Chinese scholars. As a result, CUP decided to reverse its decision. Meanwhile, in the wake of the Chinese government’s increasing efforts to tighten controls on academics and their institutions, other international publishers conceded to have quietly censored their content in order to gain access to Chinese markets. At least one database company, LexisNexis, pulled two of its products from China after pressure from authorities.

These two unrelated incidents expose blatant policies by states to silence academics or restrict the impact of their work. In the CUP case at least, the academic community, through wide forms of protest succeeded in blocking a disgraceful scheme. The case of Dr Chayan and his colleagues is still pending. The outrage that followed the news of the charges brought against them will hopefully make the Thai authorities realize that an overtly restrictive policy towards academics will bear considerably negative consequences for the future of the country.

IIAS, a proud member of the international academic community, reiterates its commitment to the fundamental value of academic freedom, which should always override considerations of governments’ demands or market access. One initiative Dr Chayan and IIAS specifically undertook when we organized ICAS 10 in Chiang Mai, somewhat anticipated what was to unfold in July. As a response to

discussions one year earlier among a few individual scholars on the opportunity of boycotting ICAS and ICTS because the events would take place in military-run Thailand, we thought, instead, to offer a public platform for individuals whose life-long engagements demonstrated their commitment to uphold intellectual and public freedom in their country. We invited Dr Maria Serena Diokno, Dr Jon Ungpakorn and Dr Son Soubert, from respectively the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia, countries where intellectual and political freedoms have been – and are being increasingly – violated. The speakers’ backgrounds or political inclinations differ; yet all three share the same quest for justice, dignity and democratic rights for their countrymen and women, including academic freedom. The ICAS Keynote Roundtable for which the three speakers were invited, was entitled ‘Upholding Democratic Values in Southeast Asia: Intellectual Freedom and Public Engagement’, and took place in the afternoon of 22 July 2017. It was attended by a large proportion of the ICAS participants.

At the end of the event, the speakers were approached by a delegation of Bunongs – a small ethnic minority with its own language and beliefs located on the mountainous border between Vietnam and Cambodia. The Bunongs’ distress as a community dates from the war period. They are today being expelled from their ancestral lands to give way to commercial ventures such as industrial plantations or mining. The case of this community and the presence of its representatives at the roundtable attests of another form of freedom, less clearly articulated than that of academic freedom, but that nonetheless is linked to the risk of the reduction of freedom of expression. Historians, anthropologists, geographers, linguists and other academics have often become the last spokespersons or advocates for these communities. This is also true for the numerous communities or groups that are being evicted from the many inner-city areas of Asian cities or other marginalized communities like the Rohingyas in Burma.

The current commercialization of higher education, with its logic of increased precariousness of academics, also contributes to the marginalization of these voices. We see how CUP, a beacon of academic excellence turned into a for-profit outlet, was ready to dispose of the secular intellectual trust put into it by thousands of scholars. We also see how the teaching of entire communities’ languages and histories can be suppressed from curricula because these don’t attract enough students or funding, or because, as was the case in Japan a few years ago, these do not stand as ‘useful’ or marketable knowledge worth being supported by the state. As we well know, there are many ways – often discreet – to keep academics from performing their role as public educators and ‘openers of consciousness’.

These questions of intellectual and academic freedom are at the core of IIAS. Since its creation, the institute has always supported and cherished the highest level of freedom of intellectual expression and engagement. In developing its networks and platforms we strive to render audible voices that exist beyond restrictions or imposed hierarchies whether based on geographic, ideological, social, gender, sexual, ethnic, religious or other determinations. Many of the institute’s projects, this Newsletter included, are freely accessible.

There is no populist undertone in these lines. Merely a search for inclusion and a recognition of the diversity of perspectives that can only shape a vibrant public sphere of intellectual exchanges. It is not for nothing that IIAS is located in Leiden, a long-time refuge of universal intelligences like those of Joseph Scaliger, René Descartes or Albert Einstein, and the place where their writings were published free from censorship and restrictions of all kinds.

Philippe Peycam, Director IIAS

Above: Dr Chayan Vaddhanaphuti (left) and Dr Philippe Peycam (right) speaking at the ICAS Keynote Roundtable ‘Upholding Democratic Values in Southeast Asia: Intellectual Freedom and Public Engagement’.

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.

www.iias.asia

IIAS Main Office

International Institute
for Asian Studies
PO Box 9500
2300 RA Leiden
The Netherlands

Visitors

Rapenburg 59
Leiden
T +31 (0) 71-527 2227
iias@iias.nl

Colophon

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Guest editors for The Focus: Michiel Verver & Jake Wieczorek
Regional editors: Terence Chong (ISEAS), Kyuhoon Cho (SNUAC), Lena Scheen (NYU Shanghai), Edwin Jurriëns and Ana Dragojlovic (Asia Institute of The University of Melbourne).
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ICAS10 – A reflection



Keynote speaker
Professor
Aihwa Ong.

ICAS10 in Chiang Mai, Thailand (20-23 July 2017) was an extremely productive and gratifying meeting, which brought together over 1300 Asia scholars from across the globe. These pages give a visual impression of the undeniably successful event, organised by the ICAS Secretariat (at the IAS offices in Leiden, Netherlands) and our local hosts of RCSD at Chiang Mai University (Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development). ICAS10 took place in the Chiang Mai International Convention and Exhibition Center. The imposing venue was the stage for a variety of activities ranging from cultural exhibitions organised by various academic departments, individual scholars and civil society groups; and an outdoor market place with local arts and crafts; to more than 300 panels, roundtables, keynotes, book and dissertation presentations, publisher and institute exhibits and bookstalls, and the multilingual ICAS Book Prize ceremony. Memorable were the Lanna cocktail reception on the opening day, the catchy speech by former Secretary General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan, and the highly impressive on-site skills of Rhinosmith's design and production wizards (www.rhinosmith.com). We would like to thank everyone involved for their unrelenting hard work and dedication; together we made this an event to never forget.

On behalf of the ICAS Team, Paul van der Velde (ICAS Secretary)



Panel discussion
in progress.



Left: A well-attended opening ceremony, which included a number of keynotes, the Book Prize awards and the announcement of Leiden as the location for ICAS11.



Right: Keynote speaker Dr Surin Pitsuwan.

Below: Two participants of ICAS10 survey the extensive selection of panels and events.



Left: Alex McKay (Tibet Scholar and IBP reading committee member) and Chunyan Shu (Brill Publishers, Singapore).

Below: ICAS participant Julia Cassaniti browsing titles at the HKU Press exhibition booth.



The ICAS public plenary round-table 'Upholding Democratic Values in Southeast Asia' (from left to right): Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Son Soubert, Maria Serena I. Diokno, Jon Ungpakorn and Philippe Peycam.



Inset far left: Paul van der Velde, ICAS Secretary, opening the award ceremony and thanking the valued sponsors of the ICAS Book Prize.

Main photo: ICAS Book Prize winners in attendance (from left to right): Seth Jacobowitz, Gauri Bharat, Hans van Ess, Adams Bodomo, Jaehun Jeong, Han Vermeulen, Lui Tai-Lok.



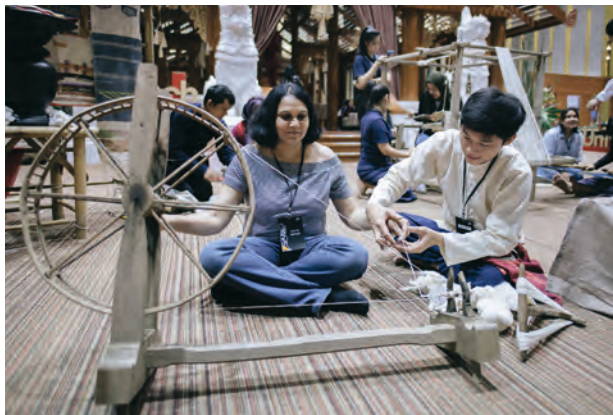
ICAS10 – A reflection continued



Left: Akkanut Wantanasombut, Director of Rhinosmith, and head of the design and production team at ICAS 10.

Right: Just a small group of the many indispensable and wonderful ICAS10 volunteers.

Below: Interactive traditional weaving demonstration.



One of the cultural exhibitions organised by various academic departments, individual scholars and civil society groups.



The collective bookstall: Sonja Zweegers (managing editor of The Newsletter, newbooks.asia, and ICAS exhibitions coordinator) manning the bookstall organised by ICAS especially for those publishers unable to attend the conference themselves.



IBP party 2017: Paul van der Velde hosting a special event for all involved with IBP 2017.



Leiden, the Netherlands
16-19 July 2019
www.icas.asia/icas11

ICAS10 as an experience will be difficult to beat, but as we speak, the ICAS team and Leiden University – together with the city of Leiden – are already working hard to meet the high standards set in Chiang Mai. Only 641 days and counting before we all meet again, at ICAS 11 (16-19 July 2019) in Leiden, with the overarching theme: ‘Asia and Europe, Asia in Europe’. If you have not yet signed up to our mailing list please do so in order stay updated about submissions, registrations and exhibitions (<https://icas.asia/icas-11>). In the meantime, mark the dates in your agendas!

A worldwide hunt for Dutch sources on early-modern India and Sri Lanka

The project title ‘Dutch sources on South Asia’ perhaps evokes an idea of archives and libraries within the Netherlands, but many such sources can actually be found outside the country. In an effort to trace these, Lennart Bes and Gijs Kruijtzter searched collections the world over. The resulting guide adds a new dimension to what we may think of as the Dutch East India Company archive.

Gijs Kruijtzter and Lennart Bes



IN MAY 1698 a worried official of the VOC, or Dutch East India Company, stationed on India's south-western Malabar coast (present-day Kerala) wrote the following about the Company's record administration:

The secretariat has the misfortune that the papers not only must be kept with difficulty from the injuries by the Malabarian air, but, moreover, so many documents of importance have been found damaged or missing among them, that it is a shame [...] because they may often come in useful, even when one least thinks of it. And therefore it is a very bad habit, which also has been in fashion in Malabar for some time, that various papers [...] like extracts from proceedings, memoirs and such [...] have been taken and removed by various people to whom those [papers] relate [...]. And in such a way these papers went missing upon the death or transfer of those people, [while] the office remained devoid and the orders fell into oblivion.¹

These words would prove foretelling in two respects. First, notwithstanding the Dutch official's warning, many VOC documents kept in Malabar and elsewhere in South Asia did eventually vanish. The local climate, pests, neglect, theft, archival transfers and changing record-keeping practices all contributed to the fact that the records of the Dutch settlements in India and Sri Lanka have only partly survived—unlike the Company's archives created in the Dutch Republic itself, of which much has remained. The other prophetic element, of which our VOC official could hardly have been aware, concerns his view that these documents “may often come in useful, even when one least thinks of it.” Interestingly, this statement rather accurately sums up the current position of Dutch sources in the historiography of South Asia: despite these materials' great value, relatively few historians consult them, even though a certain mystique surrounds them among scholarly circles.

South Asian history, Dutch reporters, global collectors

To improve the accessibility of the materials drawn up and collected by people connected to the VOC in the course of their contacts with South Asia, Jos Gommans of Leiden University's Institute for History launched an initiative to produce a series of archival guides. After joining the project, we (Kruijtzter & Bes) started with a guide to the sources that can be found in the National Archives of the Netherlands in the Hague, which cover the period of the VOC and its successors in South Asia (c. 1600 to 1825). That volume appeared in 2001. We compiled a second volume in 2007, based on similar sources found elsewhere in the Netherlands, which added a new dimension to our understanding of the scope of Dutch engagement with South Asia by listing materials created by Dutch people not in the service of the VOC. These included, for instance, missionaries, scholars, and artists. Rembrandt's drawings after Indian miniatures are an example.²

A third and final volume has now also been produced.³ This volume guides you to sources found in the ‘rest of the world’, and traces as it were the VOC ‘archive’ in the broad postmodern sense of the term. It retains the comprehensive scope of the second volume, but also provides a new perspective on the international life of this archive. It includes both the records that were created ‘nearest’ to the Indo-Dutch interaction and materials that have drifted furthest from their original setting.

Where to begin such a global hunt for ‘Dutch sources’ (which we redefined as documents and flat visual materials produced or acquired by Dutchmen as well as other people connected to the VOC and its immediate successors)? Fortunately, the last fifteen years have seen a great effort to inventory much of the actual archives of the VOC that remain in what used to be the radius of the VOC, namely everywhere east of the Cape of Good Hope. Especially important are the voluminous archives still kept in Chennai, Colombo and Jakarta. These remaining administrations of the Company establishments contain many types of documents not found in archives in the Netherlands. The Dutch records in Colombo strayed no more than a few kilometres from where they were created and those in Chennai were moved only a few hundred miles by the British from their places of creation in the Malabar, Gujarat, Bengal and Coromandel regions. Witness to the interactions between the VOC and South Asia, and created on the spot, these records tell us about events of a more local and daily character, ranging from judicial case files and slave lists to plans of Indian dwellings and palm-leaf letters in South Asian languages.

We also found other documents still stored more-or-less locally. First of all a collection of land records relating to the Dutch administration of Chinsura in Bengal, now in the State Archives in Kolkata, and correspondence with local rulers and merchants in and around Cochin, now in the Regional Archives at Ernakulam. We heard reports of VOC documents still in the possession of descendants of people who had conducted business with the Company, but they proved hard to find. Great efforts were, for instance, made by us and local well-wishers to trace a document near Sadras in Tamil Nadu, which had been sighted in the 1990s, but in the end our guide only includes one document held privately in Palakollu in Andhra Pradesh. This contains details of a land grant for the construction of a tank to dye textiles that are interesting from a social history point of view.

Sources contested and neglected

Our findings very much reflect the varying degrees of appreciation accorded in different times and places to sources emanating from the VOC. The history of this appreciation ranges from contestation to neglect. The records that essentially stayed in place largely survived because they were prized by the – in many places British – successors to the VOC, but the ones that strayed often went through extremely complex trajectories. They were requisitioned, sold, stolen, copied and gifted all over the globe.

First of all, there was the struggle for domination of the land and seas of (South) Asia between the various European powers that shaped the operations of the VOC and its European competitors. Many of the ‘Dutch’ materials in Great Britain and France ended up in those countries because they were caught up in a war (such as the Prize Papers in the National Archives in London), or seized from the Dutch on account of their perceived usefulness for the Asian expansion of those countries. The latter is the case especially for some of the VOC materials transferred to Paris during the Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands, as well as the papers of Isaac Titsingh, over whose inheritance several French ministries laid claim. Napoleon himself stepped in to prevent them from being donated to the British Museum, as Titsingh had intended. The French and English competitors of the Dutch also made numerous copies of Dutch archival materials (including maps), which can still be consulted in Colombo, London and Paris.

Above left: A souvenir that came about through the interaction between an Indian painter and a Dutch patron, finding its way to France and now Copenhagen: ‘Van den Bogaerde and entourage in procession’, c. 1687. Courtesy The David Collection (Collection of Islamic Art, no. 42/2008; photo Pernille Klemp).

Above right: Patta or lease of land, in Dutch and Bengali, issued in 1785 by the VOC in Hooghly, Bengal. Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai (Dutch Records, no. 1674).

Furthermore, for Germany and Central Europe, the Dutch Republic and the VOC functioned very much as a portal to the East. This is reflected by the geographical dispersal of many private papers. First, there are the diaries and travelogues left in their home countries by some of the numerous Germans, Swiss, Poles and Danes who took service with the VOC. Second, some ex-VOC personnel ended up as expert advisors to German and Central European rulers, a case in point being Artus Gijssels, whose papers are now in Karlsruhe. Third, in the Age of Discovery in which the VOC played such a crucial role in the transmission of objects from and knowledge about Asia, scholars and nobles in Central Europe were as interested as any in obtaining such curiosities and information and looked to the Dutch Republic for this purpose. The only surviving items (known to us) from among the extensive scientific manuscripts drawn up and kept by *homo universalis* and VOC employee Herbert de Jager have turned up in Giessen in Germany, where a university professor seems to have acquired them from the German soldier who took care of De Jager during his final days in Batavia.

The visual materials procured or produced by the Dutch were often treated as rarities, and therefore moved fastest and furthest. Maria Theresia of Austria had agents seek out Indian miniature paintings in the Netherlands, while the Florentine Medici family collected Vingboons' maps and bird's-eye views. Many of these visual materials have become works of art only in the modern period, such as the Golkonda-style paintings of Cornelis van den Bogaerde in his Indian setting. He probably commissioned them as souvenirs, but the French artist Raymond Subes scooped them up for his collection in the twentieth century and they have lately found a place in the galleries of Islamic art at The David Collection in Copenhagen.

Altogether, the relevant Dutch sources outside the Netherlands comprise a body of information that stands out for both its massive size and its specific contents, and this third archival guide has grown even thicker than its predecessors. Now that the enormous and highly varied body of Dutch sources worldwide on early-modern South Asia has been described in three archival guides, we hope that scholars agree with the VOC official quoted above that these materials “often come in useful”, and that they will finally be used to their full potential.

Gijs Kruijtzter (gijsbertkruijtzter@gmail.com).
Lennart Bes (l.p.j.bes@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

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- 3 Bes, L. & Kruijtzter, G. 2015. *Dutch Sources on South Asia c. 1600-1825. Volume 3: Archival Guide to Repositories outside The Netherlands*. New Delhi: Manohar.

The Robert Hart Photographic Collection at Queen's University Belfast

Sir Robert Hart, the Irish-born Inspector-General of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs between 1863 and 1908, exerted such wide-ranging influence that the historian John Fairbank called him one-third of the “trinity in power” in China in the later nineteenth century.¹ Historians have long recognised the importance of Hart’s personal archive, particularly his diary in seventy-seven volumes held at Queen’s University Belfast, for understanding Sino-Western relations in the late Qing period.² Yet Hart’s collection of several thousand photographs, many of them unique, has not received the same degree of attention. A preliminary selection of these photographs has been published as *China’s Imperial Eye*, and the full collection is now being digitised.³ Hart’s photographic collection shows us not only something of the look of late Qing China, but also helps to reveal how this controversial figure viewed the country he served for forty-nine years.

Emma Reisz and Aglaia De Angeli



Sir Robert Hart: the ‘insignificant Irishman’

In a generally indulgent biography, Hart’s niece Juliet Bredon stated that her uncle was once described as “a small, insignificant Irishman”.⁴ Few of his contemporaries would have recognised that description, however. Sir Robert Hart (1835-1911) was probably the most influential European in late Qing China. His career coincided with the final years of the Chinese empire, ending shortly before the Qing dynasty was overthrown in 1911, the year of Hart’s death. By 1900, the customs service over which Hart presided had a staff of almost twenty thousand and raised the bulk of Qing imperial revenue. Several of Hart’s projects transformed China’s infrastructure, from the postal service to lighthouses, and he also helped to shape foreign relations during the Qing’s last half-century, through close relationships with senior officials of the Chinese government in the Grand Council and in the Zongli Yamen (the Qing court’s Foreign Ministry), and with foreign diplomats alike.

Born in Portadown in County Armagh, Ireland, Hart was a brilliant student. He graduated in 1853, aged only eighteen, from what was then the Queen’s College, Belfast (now Queen’s University Belfast) and continued to graduate studies. The following year, however, Hart abandoned his research when he won a hotly contested position as a trainee interpreter with the British consular service in China. He was attracted both by the generous annual pay of £200 and by the chance to leave Belfast, where — hardly uniquely among students — Hart had acquired a taste for nightlife and sexual encounters. After a brief stay in Hong Kong, the British consular service sent Hart first to Ningbo and then to Guangzhou, where Hart’s unusual facility for languages became rapidly apparent.

In 1859, Hart made the second abrupt career change of his young life when he resigned his British diplomatic post in order to join the new Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs. Though an agency of the Chinese government, the purpose of the Maritime Customs was to tax the foreign trade which Britain and other powers had compelled China to permit. The first foreign-administered customs was established in Shanghai in 1854, and after 1858 the foreign powers insisted this system be extended to the other foreign trade treaty ports. Despite its origins, the Maritime Customs was always a Sino-foreign hybrid institution, and not under the direct control of the foreign powers. In particular, though the new Maritime Customs had an exclusively foreign senior staff in the nineteenth century, it was the Chinese who selected the top Customs officials. Aged only twenty-four, Hart was appointed to establish the Maritime Customs in Guangzhou by the Viceroy of Liangguang, Lao Chongguang.

An early test of the hybrid nature of the Maritime Customs came in 1863, when the first Inspector-General, Horatio Nelson Lay, acquired a small flotilla of steamships in what one British diplomat described as a misconceived attempt “to make China the vassal of England”.⁵ Lay was dismissed, and in 1863, Hart was appointed Inspector General in Lay’s place. Hart in his diary on Christmas Eve of that year felt no need for false modesty, noting “My life has been singularly successful: not yet twenty-nine, and at the head of a service which collects nearly three millions of revenue, in — of all countries in the world! — the exclusive land of China.”⁶

Hart held this position for over forty years until 1908, when he went on what was termed ‘home leave’, generally understood to be his retirement. During his career, Hart never wavered from his conviction that serving the Chinese interest benefited Britain as well, and that the two need

Above:
Robert Hart c. 1867.
MS 15/6/1/B2.

Below:
Hart caricatured
by *Vanity Fair* for
27 Dec. 1894
(original). The
Chinese characters
江海關 [江海關
jiang haiguan,
Shanghai Customs]
appear reversed.
MS 15/6/1/B8.

not be in conflict, though sustaining this opinion required some intellectual gymnastics. In his later years, Hart found himself increasingly powerless to prevent what he considered to be disastrous steps in Sino-Western relations, such as the exorbitant indemnity demanded by the foreign powers after the Boxer Uprising. Though he helped to negotiate the Boxer Protocol settlement, Hart nonetheless wrote privately that “nothing but bad will result from it”.⁷ China’s difficulties in paying the indemnity contributed to the Wuchang Uprising just a few weeks after Hart’s death on 20 September 1911, swiftly followed by the overthrow of the Qing dynasty.

Hart and photography

As Inspector General, Hart was responsible for customs houses across the country. The network under his control expanded hugely throughout the nineteenth century as foreign powers demanded ever-closer trading links with China, rising from two customs houses in 1859 to around fifty by the time Hart left China for the last time in 1908. The foreign-run service was originally responsible only for trade at the maritime treaty ports, but by 1889

the Maritime Customs also collected at a number of landlocked cross-border trading posts. After 1901, the collection of domestic trade tariffs by the largely Chinese-staffed Native Customs came increasingly within Hart’s orbit as well.

Hart found multiple applications for photography within the Customs service, and many staff records included photographs. Customs officers used photography to document new Customs buildings and compounds, allowing Hart to keep a close eye on staff and operations in distant parts of China even after he largely gave up travelling in his later years. The original Chinese Maritime Customs archive in Beijing was destroyed by fire in 1900 during the Boxer Uprising, though a record of the Customs pre-1900 was later reconstituted from files held elsewhere, and some of the photographs held in that Customs archive in Nanjing have now been published.⁸

Hart also acquired a significant personal collection of photography, mostly of China, as well as a few photographs taken in Ireland, Britain and elsewhere. Some photographs were intentionally collected by Hart, but many were sent to him unsolicited by correspondents, friends and staff who were aware of his interest in the medium. Gifts of this sort began at least as early as 1866, when Hart recorded receiving “a lot of Peking photographs” from M. Champion, and continued after his retirement.⁹ Most photographs in Hart’s collection were not publicly available, often taken by amateurs. Hart collected and received multiple images related to the Chinese Maritime Customs, depicting customs staff and their families, customs houses and related activities. While there is no evidence that Hart was himself a photographer, he regularly engaged a professional to photograph events and social functions. A meticulous correspondent, Hart preserved photographs sent by family, friends and colleagues updating him on their personal lives.

Most of Hart’s photography collection was destroyed on the night of 13 June 1900, when all the Customs buildings, including Hart’s house, were burned down in the siege of the Legation Quarter of Beijing during the Boxer Uprising. Hart’s private archive, like the rest of his possessions, was lost in the flames almost in its entirety, though a Customs assistant, Leslie Sandercock, was able to take Hart’s diaries to safety. So complete was the destruction of his belongings that when Hart was finally able to contact the outside world, his first act was to telegraph for four suits from London, noting “I have lost everything but am well”.¹⁰ It has sometimes been asserted that all the pre-1900 photographs were destroyed, but in fact some survive, including several albums and a number of loose images, whether rescued by Sandercock or previously stored elsewhere.¹¹ Nevertheless, the vast bulk of Hart’s photographic collection was lost, and Hart’s distress at losing it was considerable. Months later in May 1902, an 1899 photograph belonging to Hart was found in the street and returned to him, but Hart misplaced the photograph a few days later, to his “great grief”, not least because one of the foreigners in that photograph had died as a result of the Uprising.¹²

The Hart Photographic Collection

Much of Hart’s surviving private archive of diaries, correspondence, photographs and ephemera is now held at Queen’s University Belfast Special Collections (QUBSC). The connection between Hart’s archive and Queen’s University began in 1965, when the eponymous great-grandson of the original Sir Robert Hart willed his ancestor’s diaries to the university, stating they were



“for the use of students concerned with the history of China during the period of my great grandfather’s lifetime”.¹³ The estate of the younger Sir Robert Hart passed the bulk of the collection to Queen’s in 1971. Since Hart’s estate was not in possession of all of Hart’s surviving personal archive, certain items including letters and photographs came to the University of Hong Kong in 1990.

The Hart Photographic Collection at Queen’s comprises over 2,500 images, mostly taken in China between 1860 and 1910. Apparently loaded into two trunks at the time of Hart’s departure from China, the photographic collection now amounts to twenty-three original albums and three boxes of glass slides, as well as loose photographs held in boxes and other containers. The core of the Hart Photographic Collection came to Queen’s with the main Hart bequest in 1971, but items continued to arrive until at least as late as 1974, when the librarian at Queen’s noted that “the photographs will be particularly welcome as we have now been able to assemble a fairly substantial collection of them from a number of sources”.¹⁴ Other parts of Hart’s original photographic collection have been dispersed, as for example an album of 1873 photographs of the Old Summer Palace in Beijing by the Chinese Customs officer Ernst Ohlmer, believed to have been Hart’s and sold by Christie’s in 1987. A further set of images in the Queen’s collection relate to the customs official James Wilcocks Carrall, whose daughter Kathleen Newton was Hart’s god-daughter.¹⁵

The Hart Photographic Collection has been described as the “most delightful” of the materials relating to Hart, and work is now underway at Queen’s to catalogue and digitise it.¹⁶ The collection documents how the foreign-run Customs service reshaped China’s trading infrastructure along Western lines, visible not only in the customs buildings but also in the lighthouses, ports and customs ships. Much of the Hart Photographic Collection is intensely personal, illuminated by scrawled annotations from Hart and his correspondents. The collection also shares many of its themes with similar contemporaneous collections, reflecting the life and preoccupations of a Westerner in China: professional connections to Chinese and foreign contacts, visible in *cartes de visite* and formal group photographs; the Boxer Uprising and its consequences; and the social life of Beijing’s Legation Quarter.

Hart wrote extensively trying to understand this outpouring of violence against Chinese Christians and Westerners during the Boxer Uprising, which he felt to be a kind of betrayal and which left him “horribly hurt”, though physically unharmed.¹⁷ Along with his home and his possessions, Hart lost much of his optimism for future relations between China and the West in the Legation Quarter siege. The complex borders of friendship between Hart and the Chinese are also apparent in the photographs. While a few great Chinese officials are documented affectionately in the collection, perhaps the most intimate image of a Chinese is a photograph of Hart with his butler of many decades Chan Afang (also referred to as Ah Fong). Afang had been in Hart’s employment from at least 1863 and, combining Horace and Virgil,

Hart captioned the 1906 photograph with “Par nobile fratrum Arcades ambo” [A noble pair of brothers, both Arcadians]. By contrast, Hart’s three children with Ayaou, a Chinese woman who lived with him for much of the period from 1857 to 1866, are entirely absent from the photographic collection. Hart sent his children with Ayaou to England and educated them as his wards, and was sent photographs of them on at least one occasion, but he had no wish to make them part of his family, and made two written declarations of their illegitimacy. Though Hart seems to have been faithful to his wife Hessie and was interested in his legitimate children’s welfare, these relationships were also distant. Hessie left China with their three children in 1882, only returning for a visit twenty-four years later in 1906, while Hart never visited Europe after 1879 until he left China for good in 1908.

The Hart Photographic Collection gives a unique sense of Hart’s personal relationships and of how Hart saw the country in which he lived for almost his entire adult life. Though Hart was mindful of the possibility that his letters and diaries would be published, he seems not to have had any expectation that his photographs would ever reach a wider audience. As such, this collection offers new insights into this complex man and his major role in Sino-Western relations.

**Emma Reisz (emma.reisz@qub.ac.uk)
and Aglaia De Angeli (a.deangeli@qub.ac.uk),
Queen’s University Belfast.**

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- 7 Hart to Campbell, 13 July 1902, in Fairbank, J.K., K. Frost Bruner & E. MacLeod Matheson (eds.) 1975. *The I. G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868-1907*. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, vol. 2, p.1319.
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Above:
With his butler
Chan Afang,
9 August 1906.
MS 15/6/8E/14i.

Below:
Opening of the
Yochow [Yueyang]
Customs House,
30 April 1901.
MS 15/6/5/9.

All photos
courtesy of Queen’s
University Belfast
Special Collections
(QUBSC).

Reading, Berkshire: Primary Source Microfilm. Some Customs photographs have been published as *Zhongguo Jiu Haiguan Yu Jindai Shehui Tu Shi* [A Pictorial History of the Former Chinese Maritime Customs and Modern Society]. 2007. 10 vols. Beijing. Many of those images are neither of the Customs nor from the Customs archive.

- 9 Hart Diaries, 6 Aug. 1866. MS 15/1/8 p.65.
- 10 Hart to Campbell, 5 Aug. 1900, in Fairbank et al. *The I. G. in Peking*, vol. 2, p.1238n2.
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- 13 Sir Robert Hart [the younger]. Letter to Queen’s University Special Collections. 22 June 1965. Acquisition Files. QUBSC.
- 14 Letter to the executors of the estate of Sir Robert Hart [the younger]. 18 November 1974. Acquisition Files. QUBSC.
- 15 Some photographs relating to Carrall have been digitised by *Historical Photographs of China* as ca, ca-01, ca-02 and ca-misc and are available via www.hpcbristol.net.
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The sultan's pocket watch: a case of Japanese wartime robbery

In colonial days the Sultanate of Pontianak on the south western coast of Kalimantan was an important state, among other reasons because its Sultan Mohammed Alkadrie (1895-1944) was a staunch supporter of the Allies during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945). Japanese troops came to this town on the Kapuas River early in 1942, and a few months later all of the former Netherlands Indies was occupied. But not everyone meekly accepted their fate, and in the Pontianak area some resistance was organised by local Dayaks, some troops from the Raj, and men of the Indies Civil Service. The Japanese decided to take radical action and the Japanese Navy Secret Police [*Tokkeitai*] hunted down most members of the regional ruling Houses, as well as the social elite in West Kalimantan. The Sultan of Pontianak along with his three eldest sons and 22 other male family members of his House were taken prisoner. The ladies of the House offered the invaders all the treasures they possessed and pleaded for their relatives' lives. To no avail. The old gentleman was tortured, forced to watch the beheading of his dear relatives, and eventually beheaded himself. The Japanese Navy then went on to ransack the Royal Treasury as well as rob all individual citizens of their possessions. No Japanese naval officers have ever faced court martial for these war crimes.

Louis Zweers

FROM ALL MEMBERS of the Pontianak Royal House only Prince Hamid (1913-1978; also known as Max Alkadrie in social circles) survived this full scale murder because he, having been educated at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy, had become a POW and was imprisoned on Java. After the end of the War, the Lieutenant Governor General of the Netherlands East Indies, Dr Hubert van Mook, asked Prince Hamid to accept the Crown, which he did after due deliberation as Sultan Hamid II. The new Sultan was very much involved in the lengthy post-war Independence deliberations of 1945-1949, and supported the Dutch attempts to create a federal United States of Indonesia.

Shortly after the Japanese occupation came to an end, Sultan Hamid II wasted no time in calling upon General Douglas MacArthur to take measures in Japan, to have the stolen jewels returned to their rightful owners. Unfortunately, the documents and photos regarding the treasures had also been destroyed or stolen in 1944. Sultan Hamid II still managed to produce an (incomplete) list of what his family had lost, which included two gold tiaras set with diamonds and other gems; eight ceremonial creeses with golden sheathes and hilts; a gold Sword of State; 21 pairs of gold bracelets set with gems; 60 necklaces of the same; 150 gold rings and 14 pairs of earrings set with gems. General McArthur instructed his *Monuments Men* unit of art experts, to immediately trace the treasures and have them returned. They had some success with a tiara, a gold hanger and brooch, and two gold bracelets.

In May of 2017, however, a surprise find revived the matter of wartime theft, when a gold pocket watch was put up for auction by the Jones & Horan Auction Team in Goffstown (NH, USA), for US\$8,000-12,000. The vintage pocket watch was illustrated in the auction catalogue and came with quite a detailed description. The reverse cover, decorated in multi-coloured enamel inlay, and the diamond-studded crown of Pontianak was prominently featured. The accompanying text mentioned that though no documentary proof was available, the watch may very well have been a gift to the late Sultan Mohammed of Pontianak. Indeed it was! Watches like this one had been gifted to Indonesian rulers who attended the 1938 Jubilee of the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina, among them Sultan Mohammed; the decoration may have been added later.

Sultan Mohammed's only surviving grandchild Max Alkadrie Jr (b.1942) contacted me and others regarding this very unusual development. The auction house

was instructed in writing that the watch could not be auctioned, as it was part of the Pontianak treasure stolen in 1944 by Japanese officers. Thus it was withdrawn from auction and kept safe pending further developments. On several You Tube videos of the Auction House Jones & Horan of May this year the beautifully decorated reverse of the Sultan's pocket watch is visible on the desk and as an image in the background (www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XFHHgpwKNo).

It is normal procedure for properly established auction houses such as Christie's or Sotheby's, to establish contact between the legal and the present owner. However, this was not what Jones & Horan did. They asked Max Alkadrie Jr for proof; not that the watch had been Sultan Mohammed's private property, but that it had actually been stolen in the war. Assuming that the present holder of the watch was innocently unaware of its real origins, Mr. Alkadrie provided documents from Dutch and American archives. He also noted that demanding written proof that an object had been stolen during a war is an unreasonable request. Would indeed the wartime robber have provided a receipt to the person that was robbed? And if proof was demanded of the watch having been presented by the Dutch Queen, would the consignor expect Heads of State to present one another not only an object, but also its receipt?

It would seem that Jones & Horan's client, still unnamed, was neither willing to surrender his possession of the watch nor recognise the fact that he, by law – not to mention General McArthur's order – is obliged to return it to the legal owner. In a move to settle the matter amiably, Mr. Alkadrie offered the symbolic sum of US\$1,000, and was taken aback when Jones & Horan informed him that their client demanded US\$15,000 – in payment for an object that belonged to an old Sultan tortured and beheaded during the Japanese War, and which was now logically being claimed by his grandson.

Inset:
The cloisonné case has a multi-coloured enamel image of the crown of the sultan Mohammed Alkadrie. The crown is in classic Dutch style save for crescent and star at top. Photo Jones & Horan Auction Team, catalogue Horological Collections and Jewelry Auction, New Hampshire, USA, 21 May 2017, lot 117.



Mr. Alkadrie let it be known that he was not prepared to entertain such immoral and preposterous demands, and is now preparing to enter the pocket watch in the National Stolen Art File as kept by the FBI, or perhaps the international Art Loss Register. Maybe, more than 70 years after it was stolen during the Second World War, Sultan Mohammed's cherished watch may one day return, finally, to where it belongs.

With thanks to Max Alkadrie Jr., Robert Egeter van Kuyk and Dutch Culture Amsterdam.

Art-historian Louis Zweers is Research Fellow at KITLV. He received his PhD degree at the Department of History, Culture and Communication of the Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2013. His current research focuses on the robbery and plundering of cultural heritage in the former Dutch East Indies/Indonesia 1942-1957. His book will be published in Spring of 2019 by Boom publishing house, Amsterdam, in conjunction with an exhibition and symposium (louis.zweers@ziggo.nl).

Below:
The yellow golden case of the watch of the sultan Mohammed Alkadrie (1895-1944) of the Pontianak Sultanate of Borneo, established in 1771. This watch was fabricated by the famous French watchmaker Charles Oudin in Paris. Photo Jones & Horan Auction Team, catalogue Horological Collection and Jewelry Auction, New Hampshire, USA, 21 May 2017, lot 117.



Graphically Indian: storying the inauspicious (for now)

The proliferation of Indian graphic narratives that we see today is due mostly to the perfect storm that is proving to be the post-millennial Indian moment. This has entailed the opening up of fiscal markets, the creation of employment opportunities, increased leisure spending, the construction of malls with large bookstore chains, the advent of online selling platforms such as Infibeam and Flipkart and, most crucially, a generation of ‘young’ Indians ready to both consume and create Indian-orientated graphic narratives.

E. Dawson Varughese

ALTHOUGH MOST of the post-millennial Indian graphic novels have been published by established publishing houses such as HarperCollins India, Hachette India and Penguin Random House India, there is an equal determination on the part of lesser-known, independent publishers, story houses and collectives to create and disseminate Indian graphic narratives, whether they be in the graphic novel form or otherwise.¹ In deepening our understanding of the publishing scene in post-millennial India, we can start to recognise that the outcomes of the decisions taken to liberalise the Indian economy have been essential in fostering a conducive environment for established publishers to grow and expand. This has been particularly true for the global publishing houses mentioned above, with expansion activity concentrated chiefly around the late 1990s/early 2000s.

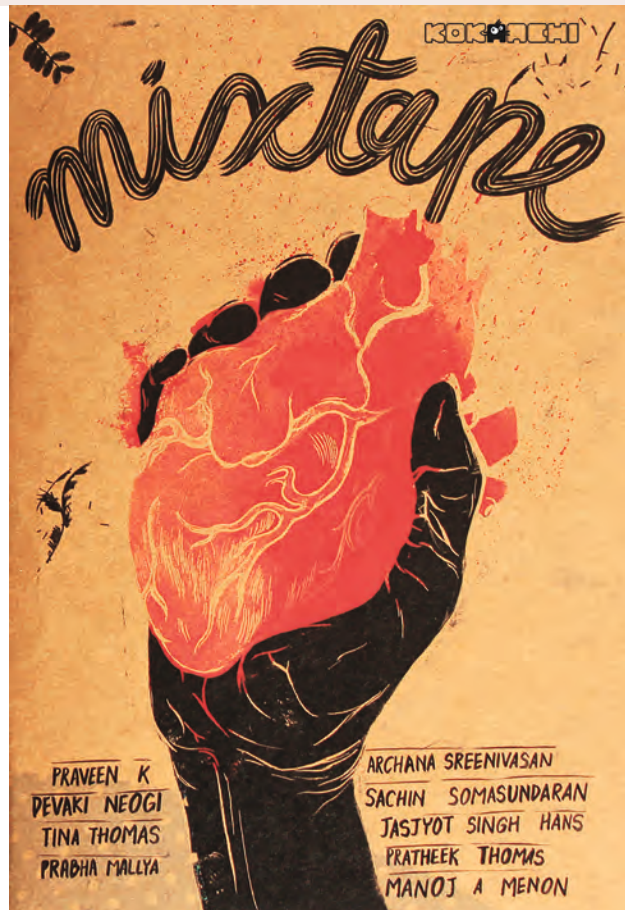
This early post-liberalisation period revealed a more economically minded India, an India which concentrated on its domestic market, on consumption more than investment, on the service industry and on high-tech manufacturing. From the early post-millennial years, the publishing companies began attuning themselves more closely to the domestic market, its mores and its aspirations. From this desire to look inward towards an Indian reading public, it quickly became apparent that domestic, genre fiction in English was becoming an area of activity in which publishers would need to invest.

The interest in publishing graphic narratives was nurtured in this environment. However, publishing texts that went against the orthodoxy of the established Indian literary novel in English proved to be a risky business decision. Notably though, through the leadership of HarperCollins India’s publisher and chief editor, V. K. Karthika, from 2006 to 2016, the company published some of the most reputed Indian graphic novelists to date: Amruta Patil, Sarnath Banerjee, Vishwajyoti Ghosh, Vikram Balagopal and Appupen, as examples. It was not only bold of V. K. Karthika to endorse graphic novels at a point in Indian publishing where little was seen of them, it was also visionary as she went on to consistently publish such works, accruing a catalogue of talented graphic novelists during the ten years she spent at HarperCollins India.²

In all, it is a curious time, post millennium, wherein Indian authors (based in India) interact and negotiate with Indian publishers who are part of large, global publishing houses whilst being located in regional or India-based offices. This negotiation of the local within the global is I suggest, significant when discussing post-millennial Indian graphic narratives, given that I posit the mode of narration invokes and requires new ways of (Indian) ‘seeing’.³ My work is interested in how post-millennial Indian graphic narratives encode a sense of Indian modernity and in doing so, asks what kind of ‘seeing’ is at play when we ‘read’ them.

New ways of (Indian) ‘seeing’

In both appearance and content, the Indian graphic narratives of the post-millennial years have little in common with the famed *Amar Chitra Katha* series of comics, a popular Indian staple of the mid to late 20th century. There is, however, a connection manifest in the material product of the graphic narrative and in the invitation to ‘see’ ideas of Indianness. Freitag reminds us that the visual is almost always “material in nature” and says that “[i]mages – whether framed, viewed as bound objects, or recombined on a wall by owners/viewers [...] involve vision and the gaze”; thus, it is important to remember that “the handling of an object, or interactions of bodies” are equally important aspects to consider when we talk about visuality.⁴ The post-millennial years, however, have seen a sea-change in the way India recognises and defines its comic and graphic narrative production. This shift in recognition from the comics of *Amar Chitra Katha* to the graphic narratives of Banerjee, Ghosh, Patil, Appupen and others, represents an equal shift in the idea of the ‘life-narrative’ of which Chandra writes in her book *The Classic Popular: Amar Chitra Katha 1967-2007*.⁵



Left: *Mixtape Vol 1* (2013) a collection of short graphic stories, produced by Kokaachi, an independent publishing house in Kochi, Kerala (www.store.kokaachi.com).



Left: Panel from ‘Rather Lovely Thing’ by Pratheek Thomas and Archana Sreenivasan in *Mixtape Vol 1* (2013) produced by Kokaachi, an independent publishing house in Kochi, Kerala (www.store.kokaachi.com).

Graphic narratives have systematically critiqued ‘ideas of India’ and Indianness since their debut in the Indian market. Orijit Sen’s *River of Stories* is often hailed as India’s first graphic novel and gained notoriety through its engagement with the environmental, social and political issues of the controversial Narmada Dam project. Following the work of Sen, throughout the post-millennial years to date, Indian graphic narratives have collectively (although not necessarily mindfully) embarked upon problematising erstwhile, safe, settled ideas and projections of Indian society, history and identity. Such problematic and unfavourable depictions of Indianness, both textual and visual, have been crafted through Banerjee’s re-visioning of history; Patil’s portrayal of sexuality in *Kari*; through

Appupen’s critique of celebrity culture in *Legends of Halahala*; Studio Kokaachi’s ‘silent’ graphic short story *HUSH*; Ghosh’s ‘Emergency’ in *Delhi Calm*; through the re-telling of the life of B. R. Ambedkar in *Bhimayana* or Jotiba Phule’s life in *A Gardener in the Wasteland*; to portrayals of the conflict in Kashmir (*Kashmir Pending*); Banerjee’s critique of urban, ‘modern’ society (*The Harappa Files*, *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*); and through representations of gender violence in Zubaan’s edited collection *Drawing The Line: Indian women fight back*.

All these works engage variously in the narration of problematic, difficult and yet timely issues that communicate their immediacy and impact through both form and content. Thinking of the graphic narrative as one which narrates a challenging story, coupled with dark and difficult visuals, is often recognised within western cultures as being of the *graphic narrative mode*. For India, however, where the visual especially has traditionally depicted and represented India (and Indianness) in positive and ‘proper’ ways, the advent of the post-millennial Indian graphic novel (and graphic narratives more broadly) has proved challenging to domestic Indian readerships, because ideas of Indianness have been portrayed in less favourable ways. Rather than bright, sharp, celebratory colourways, bold, clean line drawing and representation, Indian graphic narratives display sketch-like image, employ sepia and muted colour tones, alongside collage and mixed media elements for composition.

As the content narrates the challenging, I suggest that the aesthetic invites ‘a different way of seeing’. Often anchored in issues of New India, post-millennial Indian graphic narratives show how both form and content allow for a critical engagement with issues as varied as corruption, child (sexual) abuse, celebrity culture, casteism and national identity; the image-text medium is particularly suited to the storying of such difficult topics. According to Orijit Sen, “The tension between image and text provides one of the primary dynamics of the language of comics. Image and text are like the warp and weft on which the narrative is woven. The patterns emerge when these threads interplay in various ways: through convergence, divergence, contradiction, intersection, etc. In some ways, image and text must remain incomplete within themselves, each finding its resolution finally in conjunction with the other.”⁶

As comics collectives, online zines, changed visual mores and physical studios continue to establish themselves within India and with new publishing houses as well as established ones growing in presence both domestically and globally, the production of Indian graphic narratives appears to be supported in its infrastructure at least. And yet, as part of a literary scene swamped with genre fiction that celebrates India’s past through ‘mythology-inspired’ fiction, it is questionable how Indian graphic narratives will fare. So, despite the infrastructure, innovation and talent, it remains uncertain as to how feasible it will be for the continued storying of an inauspicious India whereby favourable ideas of Indianness are dismantled through ominous narrative and inauspicious visual depiction.

E. Dawson Varughese is a global cultural studies scholar and her specialism is post-millennial Indian literary and visual cultures. She is the author of *Beyond The Postcolonial* (Palgrave, 2012), *Reading New India* (Bloomsbury, 2013), *Genre Fiction of New India: post-millennial receptions of ‘weird’ narratives* (Routledge 2016), *Visuality and Identity in post-millennial Indian graphic narratives* (Palgrave, forthcoming 2017); and co-author of *Indian Writing in English and Issues of Visual Representation* (Palgrave, 2015). See her work at: www.beyondthepostcolonial.com

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- 1 My work focusses on Indian graphic narratives in English although I readily acknowledge the same in other languages across India (Malayalam – see DC Books recent publications – and in Bengali as examples).
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- 4 Freitag, S. 2014. ‘The Visual Turn: Approaching South Asia across the Disciplines’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 37(3):398–404, see p.399 (original emphases in quote).
- 5 Chandra, N. 2008. *The Classic Popular: Amar Chitra Katha 1967-2007*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, p.5.
- 6 Sabhaney, V. & O. Sen (eds.) 2016. *First Hand – graphic non-fiction from India Vol 1*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, p.8.

News from Australia and the Pacific

For *News from Australia and the Pacific*, we ask contributors to reflect on their own research interests and the broader academic field in Australia and the Pacific 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 and beyond, and 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 the region.

News from Australia and the Pacific is edited by Ana Dragojlovic (ana.dragojlovic@unimelb.edu.au) and Edwin Jurriëns (edwin.jurriens@unimelb.edu.au), with assistance from Andy Fuller (fuller.a@unimelb.edu.au), from the Asia Institute in Melbourne (arts.unimelb.edu.au/asiainstitute). In the current issue, we highlight the topic of *Gender and Mobility Regimes in Asia and its Diaspora*.



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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.

The gendered mobilities of Chinese educational transmigrants

Fran Martin



IN MOST OF THE DEVELOPED western countries that are popular destinations for international students, including the USA, the UK, and Australia, students from the People's Republic of China have for several years been the biggest group, by a wide margin.¹ Partly as a result of the one child policy in force when the current generation was born, meaning that relatively few daughters had brothers to compete with for parental resources, young women make up around sixty percent of Chinese students abroad.² In the case of Australian higher education, female Chinese students account for around 54%,³ despite the sex-ratio skewing of China's youth population toward males.⁴ This apparent feminization of Chinese educational migration to Australia raises some interesting questions, which I am currently investigating as part of a five-year ethnographic study funded by the Australian Research Council. First, why does study abroad seem like a *particularly* attractive option for young women? Second, what impacts will several years spent living away from China have on the way these young women understand their gendered identity and life course?

My interviews with 30 future students and their families, conducted in several eastern Chinese cities in mid-2015, reveal some interesting answers. On one hand, both future students, and (especially) some of their mothers, focussed on gendered risks in China's urban professional job markets that they hoped would be mitigated by increasing female graduates' competitiveness with an international university qualification.⁵ Social scientists have demonstrated that in many respects, gender relations have effectively become re-traditionalized with the end of high socialism in China (after 1979), and gendered inequalities in urban labour markets have significantly increased.⁶ Students' mothers verified this with personal stories: job ads stating directly that preference would be given to male applicants; a female job applicant with an outstanding GPA who lost out on a job to a male ex-classmate with a lower GPA; pregnant white-collar workers either being fired or finding

themselves unable to advance professionally after returning from maternity leave, and so on. Commencing students and their parents hoped that an overseas degree could provide the extra CV embellishment needed to make a female job applicant competitive against less qualified male applicants.

The impact of studying abroad on these young women's understanding of themselves and their gendered life course is still being researched, but data gathered thus far provides some clues. On one hand, even before leaving China, some of my research participants were already highly critical of the currently standard middle-class female life course in China. This was caricatured by many as a strictly sequenced pathway through higher education, finding a boyfriend, working professionally for a few years, marrying and bearing child(ren) between ages 24 and 30, and thenceforth redirecting one's main energies toward the family. Some of the young women I interviewed hoped that time away from China would help them elaborate alternative life pathways, for example through later marriage, non-marriage, a heightened focus on career, or extended periods of overseas travel and work forestalling the standard feminine 'settling down'.

During the two years I have followed my 50 core participants to date, some changes in how they understand themselves in gendered terms are indeed becoming apparent. For some participants, time abroad seems to create a 'zone of suspension' in the sense that the full force of Chinese sex-gender norms *vis-à-vis* both life course and relationships becomes somewhat suspended as a result of geographic distance.⁷ For example, in terms of intimate relationships, many participants have remarked on the commonness of boyfriends and girlfriends living together in Australia; a situation that remains relatively uncommon, and morally 'dangerous', for young women in many areas of China. Living abroad and far from the prying eyes of gossiping neighbours back home, some young women feel freer to explore *de facto* relationships, cohabitation with boyfriends they don't intend to marry, and same-sex attraction.

Interestingly, however, this doesn't remove fears about reputation at home; often, such explorations of alternative forms of intimacy are kept secret from friends and extended family in China. Given the ubiquity of transnational social media connections that allow daily conversations with people back home, this means that these young women are effectively negotiating, day to day, a liminal space in between two contrasting regimes of sex-gender norms. Meanwhile, with regard to students' developing understandings of gendered life course, our conversations to date reveal that for some, an alternative ideal life script seems to be emerging that is characterised not only by the increasing de-linking of sexuality from marriage but also by relative flexibility in the timing of life transitions, self-development rather than family-focus as a core value, and a greater diversity of life pathways for adult women.

The really interesting question, though, is how such transformations in these young women's gendered self-understandings as a result of their educational mobility will play out over years to come, especially for those who ultimately return to China to live.

Fran Martin is Associate Professor and Reader in Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow. Her best known research focuses on television, film, literature, Internet culture and other forms of cultural production in the contemporary transnational Chinese cultural sphere, with a specialization in cultures of gender and queer sexuality (www.mobileselves.org).

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Above:
Two of Martin's study participants photograph The University of Melbourne, soon after their arrival in Australia. Photo by C. Zheng.

Beyond assumptions about the domestic worker and the family in crisis

Monika Winarnita



Left: Indonesian Female Friends enjoying the Australian Indonesian Families Association 2012 Australia Day celebration. Credit: Australia Indonesia Family Association Canberra Branch.

ACCORDING TO the International Labour Organization's 2017 'Trends for Women' report,¹ Indonesia and the Philippines are the top two countries in Southeast Asia from which migrant workers originate. Indonesia recorded 4.5 million migrant workers worldwide, 70% of whom are women. Every year, some 119,000 domestic workers leave Indonesia. In comparison, the Philippines recorded 10.2 million migrant workers worldwide, of whom 80% are women; annually 150,000 domestic workers leave. Philippine and Indonesian migrant women have been the focus of a growing body of literature concerning the feminisation of labour migration from Southeast Asia. These studies have focused on the large numbers of women who migrate out of poor rural areas to undertake domestic work. In addition, the studies typically deal with a 'family in crisis' situation where increasing female mobility is affecting basic family structures, such as: decreases in fertility rates, a rise in divorce rates, a heavier burden on caregivers besides the biological mother, and the effect of long distance parenting on children left behind.²

An international collaborative project in which I am taking part – funded by the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council, and involving researchers from the UK, USA, Canada and Australia – focuses on Southeast Asian women, family and migration in the

global era, and addresses a gap in this literature on the feminisation of labour migration. In particular, we counter the assumptions surrounding Philippine and Indonesian female migrants working as maids and nannies. Our research focuses on the intersection of reproduction and migration beyond the emphasis on low skill migration. We do so to unpack the notion of the family in the transnational flow of people and ideas, the mobility regimes affecting women and their families, as well as a global discourse of the 'good parent'.

A focus of our research is on absent children in the lives of these migrant women.³ Deirdre McKay looks at how Philippine migrant women working in the health care industry in the UK, might bear their children in the UK in order to confer UK citizenship, but subsequently send them back to the Philippines as toddlers to be brought up by their extended family. These women believe that their children will grow up in a better environment in the Philippines. Later, as UK citizens these children could sponsor their parents and extended family as migrants in the UK. In comparison, bearing children in Hong Kong, frequently out of wedlock, has proved enormously difficult for Indonesian and Philippine female migrant domestic workers. Nicole Constable has looked at how these women narrate their decision to give up or not to give up their babies for adoption. In addition to social stigma, the mobility regimes of the host and the originating countries may deny these children citizenship status and birth certificates. In Singapore, as in Hong Kong, where there is also high number of female domestic migrants, a different set of mobility regimes exists for skilled migrants. While similar practices of parenting from a distance and separation from their very young children existed for both domestic and skilled female workers, Leslie Butt found that skilled migrant women experienced multiple migration trajectories whereby Singapore becomes one of several

countries they have resided in to pursue higher tertiary qualifications and professional career aspirations.

My research in Australia, amongst twenty Indonesian professional migrant women working in the health and education sector in Melbourne, found a different narrative of absent children. Childless and divorced Indonesian migrant women working in the education sector are able to informally adopt their siblings' children in Indonesia; which is a culturally sanctioned practice. Thus, these skilled migrant women are able to sponsor their adopted nieces/nephews educational costs as a remitting aunt/transnational mother, as well as practice intensive parenting during their annual return trip to Indonesia.

Unlike the mobility regimes in Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada, Australia has no visa categories available for low-skilled workers or semi-skilled workers in the caregiving industry. Indonesian women in Australia have mainly migrated as either international students or marriage migrants prior to working as professionals or gaining the skilled migration qualification. Women constitute 56% of Indonesian born migrants in Australia with 82% recorded as migrating through the spousal visa category in the family reunion stream.⁴ The heteronormative and gendered ideal of becoming an *Ibu* [mother] and raising a family in Australia, is still a dominant narrative amongst the twenty Indonesian professional migrant women in the study; even if they are childless, they hope to fulfil this mothering role while pursuing their professional careers.

Monika Winarnita is a Postdoctoral Fellow with the University of Victoria, British Columbia and Honorary Associate with LaTrobe University (m.winarnita@latrobe.edu.au).

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Balinese migrant masculinities

Ana Dragojlovic



A TREND OF MALE outmarriage to female and male foreign nationals started in Bali with the rapid expansion of mass tourism in the 1980s. Now, in the 21st century, the practices of male outmarriage continue to increase, raising numerous concerns among Balinese cultural nationalists that "Balinese might become the other people".¹ Such concerns are not surprising in the cultural context where it is predominantly women who, upon marriage, move to the homes of their husbands. Portrayals of Balinese and Indonesian men's intimate encounters with foreign tourists in the beachside resorts in Bali in Amit Virmani's documentary *Cowboys in Paradise* (2010), had brought about heightened concerns about moral order and respectability of manhood and masculinities in Indonesia, leading to police raiding beachside resorts and arresting men profiled as 'beach boys'. The practice in which men mingle with foreign tourists and follow their wives, or male partners, to their countries, constitutes a major transgression to the Balinese gender order.

Marriage migration takes Balinese men to many different parts of the world, from Australia, New Zealand and Japan, to the various Euro-American nation states. My research on Balinese male outmarriage focused on the migration to the Netherlands, the former colonial empire of which Bali was a part, and where the establishment of the largest Balinese diasporic community begun in the late 1960s with the arrival of the prosecuted Indonesian left.² How are migrant masculinities transformed in the context of transnational mobility? What are the ways in which these conjugal unions are changing gender relations and well-established structures of kinship and relatedness?

I began this research with the primary interest to study the transformations of gender relations and family life, by focusing on what constitutes non-normative heterosexual relations both in Bali and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, rhetoric about freedom around ways in which gender and sexualities are lived has been an important part of how the Dutch nation imagines itself,³ yet the still existing expectation that middle-class women form families with men who are of equal if not higher educational and economic standing to them, means that marrying a Balinese man, who will likely come from an impoverished family, constitutes a transgression to the deep-seated heteronormativity that exists in Dutch society. Moreover, a rapid increase in xenophobia and Islamophobia following the 9/11 attacks in the US, and the murders of Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn and Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh (in respectively 2002 and 2004), dramatically increased concerns about migrant men in the Dutch public sphere, and in particular about migrant men's presumed lack of progressive views about gender relations. While such concerns primarily emerged in relation to Islam, over time they became strongly associated with people who are in the Netherlands designated as non-Western foreigners.⁴

The residency of Balinese men in the Netherlands is processed under the family reunification scheme, a form of mobility that has often been portrayed by policy makers and right-wing politicians as the most dangerous, deceitful way to enter the country, and has been referred to as 'backdoor migration'.⁵ Following their arrival in the country, Balinese men, like any other non-Western designated permanent residents, undertake Dutch language and integration courses. The latter are primarily focused on Dutch values with regard to, among other issues, gender relations and family life – in which, for example, both spouses undertake child rearing and are equally involved in domestic labor.

The question of labor, both within the household and the labor force, has emerged in my research as a major factor in the transformation of Balinese migrant masculinities and gender relations in these unions. Qualifications such as middle or high school diplomas from Bali are either not recognized

in the Netherlands, or are valued only by a very limited job market. Thus, most of the men can only find work in low-paid manual labor. In situations where a Dutch spouse has a much higher annual income than the Balinese spouse (one of the main requirements for family reunification with a non-Western national is that the Dutch applicant is able to prove that they can financially support two individuals over a period of five years), Balinese men often take on most of the domestic labor and child rearing duties and often work part-time outside the home. Some of the men take on casual domestic work. Grounded in understandings of ethnicized domestic labor that draws on the Dutch imaginary of colonial servitude and obliging Indonesian workers, Balinese (and other Indonesian) people have easier access to the domestic labor market.⁶ Thus, Balinese men take on domestic and caring work, which in Bali is considered 'women's work'. Such shifts in gender relations leads to an ongoing negotiation of the masculine self.

Dr Ana Dragojlovic is a Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is the author of *Beyond Bali: Subaltern Citizens and Post-Colonial Intimacy*, Amsterdam University Press 2016, and co-author (with Alex Broom) of *Bodies and Suffering: Emotions and Relations of Care*, Routledge 2017. She is currently completing a book manuscript on Balinese migrant masculinities.

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News from Australia and the Pacific *continued*

Accounting for the future: masculinity, sex and work in urban Indonesia

Benjamin Hegarty

IN THE MAINSTREAM Indonesian comedy film *Arisan Brondong*, a group of rich Jakarta women tempt a group of young, innocent adolescents with payment for sexual services. These rich 'aunties' [*tante-tante*] start a racy version of the community lotteries [*arisan*] found at all levels of Indonesian societies. In their *arisan*, they put the money collected each time towards payment for sex with adolescent men [*brondong*]. The young men, who covet consumer goods like mobile phones and new clothes, are naïvely willing to transgress moral boundaries in order to attain superficial wealth. On the other hand, the women are unable to control their bloated consumer and sexual desires, which spill out as a corrupting force on masculine youth. That the adolescents are poor and the women rich suggests how gender and sexuality intersect with class in contemporary Indonesia. In this way *Arisan Brondong* is a moral tale, common in Indonesia, which warns of the corrupting influence of consumer desire on masculinity, contrasted with the danger of wily femininity.

During the course of PhD fieldwork in Jakarta and Yogyakarta in 2014 and 2015, I met many *brondong* similar to those depicted in the film. Certainly not all *brondong* sell sex, but I did understand it as a category used to refer to attractive male-bodied adolescents. The term is not used to describe oneself, like gay or *waria* is, but rather one that is used to describe others. *Brondong* seemed to be an ubiquitous feature of urban life in Indonesia; young men, no older than twenty, always unmarried, sometimes studying, often working in poorly paid jobs in the services and informal sectors. They almost always had migrated from a smaller city to a larger city in order to study and work. I met *brondong* most often in the course of fieldwork with older *waria* (roughly male-to-female transgender or male-bodied femininity).



My interest in *Arisan Brondong* thus stems from the rare insights it offers into markets for transactional sex and forms of intimacy which are often rendered invisible. There are various reasons for this, but the most important one is the way that gender serves as a code for directionality both of desire and, in the case of transactional sex, payment. This unqualified assumption is that masculine individuals buy sex, while feminine individuals sell sex. While I have no doubt that this is certainly one type of exchange that takes place in markets for sex, the presumption that this is the natural order of things upon which all others are based tends to obscure other forms of desire and gender. During my research, I observed complex and variegated modes of economic exchange for sexual services in which the same person might buy sex as often as they sell it.

In *Arisan Brondong*, the sexual aspects of the film are opaque, and the boys are represented as adroitly avoiding having sex. During ethnographic research I found that *brondong* skillfully and willingly engage in transactional sex. They do so not as their sole occupation, but as one mode of making money, among others. Most often, *brondong* I met during fieldwork told me that they started transactional sex in the context of other kinds of work. For example, one *brondong* from Sumatra explained to me that he had moved to Yogyakarta and had started work as a tea seller on a major intersection. There, he met a number of other young men who sold sex to gay men for approximately 300,000 Indonesian rupiah (approximately USD\$30). As a result, he started to concentrate on sex work economics; after all, selling tea only brought in 50,000 Indonesian rupiah a day. He asked me: Which would I choose? Even as he makes this comment, however, it is not enough to see this young man in terms of instrumentalist or rational decision making. As he entered this market, he grew to realise his attractiveness and in turn his relationship to gendered subjectivity and desire shifts with it.

The category *brondong* thus becomes meaningful only when placed into its context with work, migration and ageing. This allows for a perspective that understands that after a particular age, *brondong* are no longer attractive. In line with this, most told me that they were looking forward to the day that they would be able to marry – in many respects, become an adult and a normative citizen in Indonesian society. They called an aspiration to belong to the 'normal world' [*dunia normal*]. However, some *brondong* delayed this occasion in favour of commercialising their attractiveness for "just one more year". As a result, they had become old *brondong*. What was especially poignant about these men was the way that *waria* would care for them; in fact, sometimes older *waria* were the only friends that they found they had. Like *waria*, they had become members of Indonesia's growing underclass, even as they aspired to belong to its middle class.

Benjamin Hegarty is a PhD candidate with the School of Archeology and Anthropology, Australian National University (benjamin.hegarty@anu.edu.au).

Low-wage Chinese migrant men in Singapore

Sylvia Ang



DESPITE THERE BEING a growing body of research focusing on male migration – especially low-wage migrant men – it still shows a certain bias in which work (and economics) is seen as central to the men's lives. Yet migrant men are not just workers, but also fathers, husbands, lovers, boyfriends. A small field of research is now emerging, among it my own work, which is looking at migrant men's various positionalities and specifically, heterosexuality. Focussing on the heterosexuality and sexual desires of migrant men can bring some clarity to how masculinities transform with migration.

Above:
Chinese male migrant workers at their construction work-site. Photo by Jason Tan.

Through migration, masculinities are challenged and transformed by hegemonic ideologies encountered in the host country. A review of the current literature on Chinese masculinity and migration shows two things: firstly, Chinese men's masculinity is highly tied to work, and thus Chinese masculinity cannot be discussed without reference to the (global) economy. Secondly, the link of Chinese masculinity with the global economy has produced hegemonic masculine ideals in which economic power is proof of virility. As such, while many low-wage Chinese migrant men are likely to have already been subordinated to hegemonic ideals of masculinity in China due to their socio-economic status, it is likely many feel their subordinate positions even more intensely in destination countries such as my field site, Singapore.

Low-wage workers are subjected to multiple restrictions while working in Singapore. Their stay in Singapore is transient – up to a maximum of two years – and is subjected to renewal according to the employers' decision. They are not permitted to marry a Singaporean citizen or permanent resident. They are also not allowed to bring their wives or families into Singapore. Loneliness is a recurring theme in interviews with low-wage migrant men. Furthermore, low-wage workers often find themselves in tightly-surveilled environments where they are subordinate to male supervisors who may physically or verbally abuse them. Low-wage workers, especially those in the construction sector, are often forced to live in unsanitary conditions, such as in shipping containers. My informants complained of over-crowded rooms, in which up to sixteen people would sleep in bug-infested beds.

Many low-wage Chinese male migrants live on-site, with imposed curfews and limited free movement. To gain access to them I used the mobile phone application *WeChat* (commonly known in Chinese as *Weixin*). This application is used among friends, but more often by men looking to get to know women; it allows the user to 'find' people in his/her physical proximity and to initiate a 'chat'. Through *WeChat* I was able to have conversations with many Chinese migrants, nearly all of whom were male. My research showed that I was often the first (and only) Singaporean woman most of my low-waged Chinese male respondents had spoken to. This undoubtedly reflects their marginality in Singaporean society.

Since economic status is a key marker of Chinese masculinity, many of the male workers who migrate

to Singapore to take on low-wage jobs are likely to be considered "losers of modernization".¹ Encountering a marginalized economic and social status in Singapore, is then to be associated with "failed masculinity".² To be a Chinese man with a low socio-economic status is perceived as not just falling short of masculinity but also *Chinese* masculinity.

While migration scholars should certainly continue their research on female migrants, as I have done myself,³ scholars in the field of gender and migration will do well not to neglect male migrants – an understudied group relative to female migrants. The literature on Chinese masculinity has been limited and has become dated. Moreover, while work on Chinese masculinity in the field of migration has been emerging, it is small and concentrated on rural-urban migration within China. In 2015, 61% of 978,000 Chinese emigrants were male.⁴ This is a phenomenon research needs to catch up with. I have found that researching low-wage Chinese males contributes not just to an understanding of the gendered subjectivities of the migrant worker, but also of how the intersection of ethnicity and class can work to subordinate him.

Sylvia Ang is a recent PhD graduate from the department of Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Melbourne. She has published in *Gender, Place and Culture* and *Cultural Studies Review*. Her current research interests are international labour migration, intersectionality, ethnicity, gender, class, and local modernities (sylvia.s.ang@gmail.com).

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News from Southeast Asia

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Research. Scholarship. Policy.

The following articles come from the Thailand Studies Programme (TSP) at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. The programme promotes analysis of and scholarship on contemporary Thailand. Its goal is to develop understanding of the country among the full range of parties concerned with its mid-term and long-term future: governments, the media, journalists, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and scholars. The foci of the programme are three-fold – on political dynamics, social change, and cultural trends. In its attention to politics, the concerns of the programme include party and electoral politics, Thailand's place in regional politics and geopolitics, regionalism and decentralization, the state of Thai institutions, constitutionalism and royalism, and the impact of politics on economic competitiveness and the investment climate. Social issues that fall within the programme's purview are migration and demographic change, religion, ethnicity, the Thai education system, the relationship between urban and rural Thailand, the middle classes, and sectorial industries like tourism. In the area of cultural trends, the arts and literature, the media and mass consumption patterns number among topics of interest. The programme seeks to build institutional links to scholars, analysts and centres involved in the study of modern Thailand, not least those in Thailand itself. The co-coordinators of the Thailand Studies Programme are Michael Montesano (michaelmontesano@iseas.edu.sg) and Benjamin Loh (benloh@iseas.edu.sg). Please contact the co-coordinators for further information on the programme.

Reactions to the Thai royal transition

Benjamin Loh

THE PASSING OF THAILAND'S long-ruling and highly revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej signalled the end of an era for Thailand, but also the start of a new one at a time of acute political polarization and instability within the country. What followed was the peaceful ascension of the Crown Prince – despite speculation of a disruption – who is putting an assertive stamp on his rule. From requiring constitutional changes to reshaping the royal household, King Maha Vajiralongkorn has made it clear to the military that he will not just sit in the background as a constitutional figurehead after assuming the throne from a father treated by Thais as semi-divine.

Geopolitically, the royal transition is also occurring at a time of deepening political and economic relations with China and difficult relations with the West. US-born and Swiss-educated Bhumibol was a staunch supporter of strong relations with the US. Chinese President Xi Jinping has been quick in affirming his country's readiness to bolster bilateral relations, and has invited the new king for a state visit. While King Bhumibol has met almost every Chinese leader who visited Thailand since bilateral relations resumed in 1975, the visit would be the first time that a Thai King visits the People's Republic of China in the same period.

Below: Train passenger carrying calendar depicting King Maha Vajiralongkorn; Sale of black clothing at a Bangkok mall. (Source: Benjamin Loh)

On the ground, the king's death triggered an outpouring of grief across the nation. Even the younger generation participated in the national mourning by wearing "I was born in the reign of King Rama IX of Thailand" emblazoned T-shirts and filling their social media pages with selfies of their reverence. Black clothing soon flew off the shelves and dyeing centres popped up across Bangkok as black clothing became too expensive. Demand for commemorative banknotes and coins, stamps, and books bearing the portrait of the late king also soared. And while the prices for Buddhist amulets have been declining over the years, those for medals and amulets – both newly-minted and old – bearing the king's image have risen manifold. At the capital's amulet shops and markets, the efficacy of King Bhumibol amulets are often explained with a laminated reprint of a 2006 news article on how a policeman who was also a Thai Rak Thai Party politician purportedly survived a gun shooting incident by wearing such an amulet.

If the veneration for a king is both expressed and stimulated by the mass production and commodification of his image, it will be small wonder when his successor follows suit. Following the amendment in April of a royal property law to formally give King Maha Vajiralongkorn full control of the Crown Property Bureau, which manages the multi-billion dollar holdings of the monarchy, Siam Commercial Bank – with stakes controlled by the bureau – issued a calendar later that month with the image of the new king on its cover. The bank's customers would have collected the calendar, rolled it up for the journey home for display, perhaps, alongside the multiple pictures of the old monarch hung on their walls. Some other people were seen to be more overt with its display on streets and the metro system.

In a country where relationships between monarchy, army and politicians determine its stability, the authorities will want to avoid any perception of uncertainty and they are expected to continue to use all of the tools at their disposal to orchestrate stability and taper existing fault lines in Thai politics; predictably, these include constitution rewrites, delays to the general election, and an even looser exercise of *lèse majesté*.

Benjamin Loh is Coordinator of the Regional Social Cultural Studies Programme and Co-coordinator of the Thailand Studies Programme at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute (benloh@iseas.edu.sg).



News from Southeast Asia *continued*

Thai media accounts of the accession of Rama X to the throne

Peter A. Jackson

ONE OF THE MOST widely reproduced images in the Thai press in the first days after King Maha Vajiralongkorn ascended the throne was a colour photograph of King Bhumibol's ritual investiture of Prince Vajiralongkorn as Crown Prince, and heir to the throne. This elaborate ceremony took place on 28 December 1972, when the prince had returned to Bangkok during a break in his studies at the Australian Royal Military Academy of Duntroon in Canberra. In this widely reproduced photo, the prince is pictured with head bowed before King Bhumibol, who is sitting on a raised throne. This 40-year-old picture represents the new king in a humble position before the former king, visually indicating King Bhumibol's imprimatur of his son as successor to the Chakri throne and provides an especially powerful image of the authority of the late king in perpetuating the Thai monarchy.

In the early days of the new reign, the Thai press repeatedly emphasised King Maha Vajiralongkorn's close relationship to and approval by his late father, publishing accounts that stressed continuity between father and son, in which the new king is reflected in the charismatic aura of his late father. Much press coverage represented the new monarch as the loyal and grateful son of his father, with King Maha Vajiralongkorn reported as ascending the throne in order to honour King Bhumibol's wishes and to continue his legacy.

The majority of outlets reported that the new king's first words upon accepting the invitation to accede to the throne were, "I accept in order to fulfil His Majesty's wishes". The message that the new king had assumed the throne at the behest of his respected father was further emphasised in a simple two-word page 1 banner headline of the Bangkok Post, "Grateful King", published on 2 December 2016, the morning after King Maha Vajiralongkorn's accession. The English term 'grateful' here translates a Buddhist term from the Thai expression *luk katanyu*, which denotes a child who shows 'respectful gratitude' to his or her parents. The suggestion was that King Maha Vajiralongkorn had become king out of an ethical obligation to his father. The Thai Buddhist notion of 'gratitude' to one's parents differs from the Confucian notion of 'filial piety' in that Thai custom emphasises

respect for one's immediate parents rather than one's patrilineal ancestors. Also, in Thailand the attitude of *katanyu* or respectful gratitude emphasises the honouring of one's mother as well as one's father. Nevertheless, like the Confucian notion, the Thai cultural value implies a profound lifelong moral obligation to one's parents and the description of King Maha Vajiralongkorn as a 'grateful king' yet again represented his reign as being in continuity with that of his father.

The image of the late King Bhumibol as the 'royal father' (*phor luang*) of both the Thai nation and the new king has also been emphasised in the press. There is a long history of Thai kings being represented as the 'fathers' of the nation and its people, and in the final decades of his reign King Bhumibol was increasingly referred to in public discourse simply as *Phor*, or 'Dad' in English. On the occasion of what would have been King Bhumibol's 88th birthday on 5 December 2016, the Thai-language daily *Matichon* headed an article on his legacy, "The Royal Father of all Thais: The Royal Father of King Rama 10". This item used the Thai term 'father' (*phor*) to suggest a common paternity between the new king, Rama X, and the mass of the Thai people. The article represented the late King Bhumibol as the symbolic father of the Thai people and Thai nation just as he was also the biological father of King Maha Vajiralongkorn. This placed both the new king and the people of Thailand in a parallel situation of all being the 'children' of the late king and hence, according to Thai Buddhist custom, as being ethically obliged to demonstrate gratitude (*khwamkatanyu*) and show respect (*khwamnaphue*) for their deceased 'royal father' and his wishes.

When the Thai press represents the new king as his own man, rather than as the son of his father, the overwhelmingly dominant images are of him as a military man. The Thai press has also widely reported the new king's active service in supporting the Royal Thai Army in campaigns against Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) insurgents in the 1970s. These reports represent the new king as a guardian of national security who has undergone a trial by fire in defence of the nation. While the Cold War ended and the CPT ceased activities over two decades ago, images of anti-communist operations from the 1970s still



Front page of Bangkok Post, 3 December 2016.

have political valence, reflecting the continuing role of anti-insurgency thinking against often-unnamed 'enemies' of the nation in the military's approach to politics to this day.

Despite many revisions of the Thai constitution under a succession of military and civilian governments since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in June 1932, the provision that the Thai monarch should be Buddhist remains unchanged. In the days after he ascended the throne, the Thai press stressed King Maha Vajiralongkorn's religious affiliation as a faithful supporter of Buddhism, publishing many photos of him when, in November 1978, he followed Thai custom and ordained for a period as a Buddhist monk. Faithful following of Buddhist ethical and ritual practices

is regarded as the foundation of the charismatic authority of a Thai king's legitimate and righteous rule. In contrast to some international portage that has focused on the new king's private life of several marriages and absences from Thailand on unofficial overseas trips, the Thai press has consistently emphasised his qualities as a man who is qualified, equipped and fit to rule.

If recent media trends persist, we can expect continuing reference to the heritage of King Bhumibol as justification for political actions and policies. We can also expect relations between the monarchy and the military to continue to have a major, if not defining, role in Thai affairs into at least the medium term. However, while monarchy-military relations are likely to remain close, the new king has moved quickly to assert a degree of independence that indicates he is unlikely to accept a subordinate role. He has shown an ability not to follow expected political scripts.

Peter A. Jackson, Emeritus Professor, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, Australia (peter.jackson@anu.edu.au).

What is holding Thailand back from becoming a high-income country?

Nipit Wongpunya

A VARIETY OF FACTORS appear to be holding Thailand back from rising to the next level of economic development. The country's long dependence on natural resources and cheap labour means that growth is negatively impacted when resources diminish or when labour becomes more expensive. The country's lack of skilled labour, particularly in the information technology sector, means that it is unable to climb the value chain to produce and export more technologically advanced products like electronics and automobiles. Instead, the country merely assembles consumer products designed in other countries. In addition, existing government training programmes are not used by the labour market, suggesting that these programmes are out of touch with economic realities. Perhaps more fundamentally, the Thai education system has contributed to the lack of productivity because of its inability to deliver skilled labour to the market, particularly to the information technology sector. Meanwhile, R&D investment is substantially lower than in Asian countries. The number of researchers and technicians in Thailand is much lower than in South Korea and Singapore, for example.

Public and private investments have also contracted markedly. Thai firms have demonstrated poor innovation, while foreign investments in the higher-value sector have been low. The consequences of these realities are seen in the decline in short-run income, which reduces capital accumulation and raises the possibility of excessive foreign debt in the long run. There are also few sound macroeconomic policies in place, as a series of coups have disrupted to government policies in recent years. The country's macroeconomic policy, its fiscal policy in particular, has not encouraged long-term growth. Instead, populist policies enacted to stimulate short-term consumption have led to fiscal deficits.

Countries such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea have shown that innovation and high-value productivity are needed if one is to escape

the middle-income trap. The Thai manufacturing sector, however, has failed to transfer foreign technology to local firms, and to encourage local innovation. By importing practical technical knowledge, local firms could contribute to the local knowledge base. This would encourage imitation and innovation, which play an important role in promoting technological progress.

However, the Thai economy continues to prefer assembling technology to imitating technology. Thai firms have been manufacturing products designed by other countries for more than two decades as Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) and should now endeavour to become Original Design Manufacturers (ODM). The Thai government needs to collaborate with leading local universities or the private sector to imitate, for example, the technology needed for these electric vehicle control devices. It could do this by funding Thai players and seeking technical assistance by hiring Chinese researchers, technicians and scientists. After gaining an understanding of how the electric vehicle control units work, the government could proceed to invest in R&D to spur innovation in that field. More importantly, the Thai government needs also to enact policies or initiate training programmes to ensure that technology is transferred to local firms. Additionally, the government should provide incentives such as tax benefits for firms to invest in R&D.

Human capital accumulation is also important for escaping the middle-income trap. One possible solution is to employ larger numbers of foreign scientists and researchers for technical assistance and R&D. Local researchers and students would then be able to learn from them. This can be encouraged in leading universities or in the private sector. The Thai government should make it mandatory for universities to update their curricula regularly.

We also have the issue of endemic corruption. A study conducted by Transparency International in 2015 found Thailand a highly corrupted country. The National

Anti-Corruption Commission recently discovered former permanent secretaries and politicians to be unusually wealthy, and the courts subsequently ordered the seizure of massive assets. Although Thailand has the necessary legal framework to combat corruption, it has not managed to resolve the issue. Corruption in Thailand is difficult to control for many reasons. The wage level of civil servants is crucial in determining the level of corruption. Low wages make corrupt behaviour much more likely. Furthermore, the presence of time-consuming bureaucratic procedures and the red tape involved for various procedures provide good opportunities for illegal solutions, as do complicated government procurement procedures.

Furthermore, political stability is immensely important for Thailand. It would help ensure the formulation and implementation of effective government economic strategies. Political stability and economic development are obviously related. While economic slowdown could result in political turmoil and instability, an unstable political climate could lower investment and hinder economic growth. Thailand has so far confronted uncertainties associated with the unstable political environment. In recent years, political instability in Thailand has been exacerbated by power-sharing amongst several political parties and by military coups. Ministerial cabinets formed by coalitions of several political parties have led to a significantly low level of stability. From time to time, the Thai Prime Minister has had no choice but to dissolve the parliament due to quarrels among political parties. The recurrence of military coups reflects a very high degree of political instability.

Nipit Wongpunya, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand (nipit.w@chula.ac.th). Visiting Fellow in the Thailand Studies Programme of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute from 16 May 2016-14 August 2016.

Indigenous Peoples' shifting engagements with the Thai state¹

Micah F. Morton

SINCE THE EARLY 2000s a coalition of ethnic minorities in Thailand has promoted a sub-national social movement under the global banner of 'Indigenous Peoples'. Initiated by leaders of the 10 so-called 'hill tribes' in the North, the movement has since expanded to include representatives of an additional 30 ethnic groups from within and beyond the North. Recent estimates place Thailand's populations of 'hill tribes' at 1.2 million people and lowland ethnic groups at 4.9 million people. The expanding Indigenous movement thus has the potential to represent some 6.1 million people, comprising 9 percent of Thailand's total population of roughly 68 million people.

The Indigenous movement in Thailand officially began in August 2007 when a coalition of grassroots organizations representing 24 ethnic groups organized Thailand's first annual 'Festival of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand' on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. At a follow-up event to the festival in the same year, the Network of Indigenous Peoples of Thailand (NIPT) was established. Its goals were to campaign via public demonstrations, media campaigns, and bureaucratic lobbying for legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples by the Thai state in order to gain and protect their basic rights to citizenship, land, and their distinct identities. The Indigenous movement emerged during a period in Thailand when the state, at least rhetorically speaking, was striving to reframe the nation in a multicultural rather than mono-cultural fashion. The movement has been variably supported and obstructed by the Thai state; supported because of the state's new multicultural rhetoric yet obstructed because of the state's top-down approach to multiculturalism.

In recent years the Indigenous movement has shifted its strategies away from public demonstrations towards independent media productions and bureaucratic lobbying. Between 2014-2016, the movement especially worked to establish direct ties with state agencies overseeing the review of national legislation and the constitutional reform process initiated by the current military regime. It has further decided to focus its limited time and resources on lobbying for the passage of a state law governing the 'Council of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand' (CIPT), a new, independent quasi-state organ comprised of Indigenous representatives with the central mandate to advise the state on policies and plans of relevance to Indigenous Peoples.

Since November 2014 the NIPT has lobbied several state agencies, including the Prime Minister's Office, for advice and support in its efforts to have the military-appointed National Legislative Assembly (NLA) review its draft legislation governing the CIPT. The NIPT was eventually successful in having the draft legislation forwarded to the NLA in July 2015. As of early October 2016, however, the NLA had yet to review the legislation due to its concern with other matters deemed more pressing.

Between November 2014 and March 2016, the NIPT further lobbied for, first, official recognition of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand, and, second, legal recognition of the CIPT in each of the two successive constitutional drafts drawn up by different military-appointed Constitutional Drafting Committees. The NIPT eventually gained official recognition of Indigenous Peoples in the first constitutional draft released to the public in April 2015. Its success was, however, short-lived, as just five months later, on 6 September 2015, the military-appointed National Reform Council rejected that first draft. The second and final constitutional draft, which was released to the public in March 2016 and ratified via national referendum on 7 August 2016, did not include any reference to 'Indigenous Peoples' whatsoever. Regardless, the NIPT's success in gaining recognition of Indigenous Peoples in the first draft of the constitution was significant given the Thai state's longstanding stance of non-recognition of Indigenous Peoples.

Despite constitutional and legal setbacks the NIPT has moved forward independently of the state in bringing its vision of the CIPT to fruition. On 9 August 2015, the NIPT publicly declared the CIPT to be fully functioning with 190 representatives from 38 different Indigenous groups (five representatives per group) and two sub-national level Indigenous Councils. As of early November 2016, 40 different Indigenous groups and three sub-national Indigenous Councils were affiliated with the CIPT. The membership has expanded such that the CIPT has administratively divided its constituents into five geographical regions – the upland North, the lowland North, the Northeast, the east and west of Central Thailand, and the South. At present, however, the movement faces the problem of insufficient funding to take these developments forward in an expeditious manner without losing its current momentum.

Official state recognition of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand seems highly unlikely in the near future given both a long history of non-recognition and

the current military regime's renewed focus on nation building in a mono-ethnic fashion, centralizing state power and budgets, and national security issues in relation to which upland Indigenous Peoples have long been held suspect. In this political climate any claims for state recognition as a distinct group within the larger Thai nation are likely to fall on deaf ears at best, and, at worst, evoke suspicions of separatism as in the case of the far South and, more recently, the North and Northeast. Meanwhile, the grassroots Indigenous movement has expanded to become a national movement potentially representing some 6.1 million people. The Thai government has accordingly paid ever greater attention to the movement and provided certain opportunities for its growth, albeit largely on the state's terms.

Micah F. Morton, Associate Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore (morton.micah@gmail.com).

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- For more in-depth analyses of the emerging politics of Indigeneity in contemporary Thailand see Morton, Micah F. 2016. 'The Indigenous Peoples' Movement in Thailand Expands'. *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Perspective* 68:1-12; Baird, Ian G., P. Leepreecha & U. Yangcheepsujarit. 2017. 'Who should be considered "Indigenous"? A survey of ethnic groups in northern Thailand'. *Asian Ethnicity* 18(4):543-62.

Right: In March 2012, several hundred Indigenous Peoples from various parts of Thailand staged a two-day long peaceful demonstration – a form of 'street-lobbying' – in front of Government House in Bangkok in order to call on the then administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra to follow through and expand on two ministerial decrees issued in 2010 by the interim government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. Those decrees call for the 'revitalization' of the 'ways of life' of the ethnic Moken and Karen. The decrees contain sections on issues such as land management, citizenship, culture, and education, and call for the establishment of 'Special Cultural Zones' for each group. In this photo, Indigenous representatives are holding a sign on which the following words are written in Thai: "We declare this area a 'Special Socio-cultural Zone for Ethnic and Indigenous Peoples'." Photograph by the author.



China's 'shame offensive' directed at Thailand?

Pongphisoot Busbarat

SOUTHEAST ASIA has become a major focus of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as it constitutes a significant sea lane for China's maritime trade. Mainland Southeast Asia also offers China alternative routes to seaports for its landlocked provinces; the sub-region is hence included in Beijing's plan to develop transport links and industrial parks. Thailand has realised that situating itself in China's blueprint is economically beneficial and Thai leaders have expressed their support for the BRI since its first launch. Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha, for example, has lauded that this initiative would enhance Thai-Chinese strategic partnership. However, Prayut was not among the heads of government attending the inaugural Belt and Road Initiative Summit during 14-15 May 2017 in Beijing. How can we interpret this event to understand the current stage of Sino-Thai relations and the broader Southeast Asia's relations with China?

The Sino-Thai relationship has been cordial, marked by no major conflicts. Beijing's endorsement of the 2014 military coup in Bangkok has even deepened ties, as the Thai military has favoured China's policy in many aspects. Therefore, the recent lack of an invitation for Thailand's premier to the BRI summit raised eyebrows among policy analysts, the media and members of the public. The Thai leader was the only absent leader from the sub-region,

and the Chinese must have also understood that the omission would cause Thailand to 'lose face'. Small countries in the Pacific that don't lie on the major maritime routes were even invited. So, what were the reasons for Prayut's exclusion from the summit?

There are in fact two possible reasons for that exclusion. The first is the delay in the Sino-Thai high-speed railway project. The project started in 2012, but the political situation in Thailand terminated the earlier deal due to parliamentary disapproval and Yingluck was ousted by the military coup in 2014. Despite Beijing's endorsement of the military government in Bangkok, Thailand renegotiated the deal. It eventually announced it would finance the entire project domestically rather than with credit from China, although it would grant concessions to China for the construction of railways and the operation of trains. Yet there are still a number of unresolved issues on which the Chinese will not give. These include the use of Chinese workers and Chinese materials, which would contravene Thai laws and regulations.

The second reason may be related to Prayut's acceptance of United States President Donald Trump's invitation to visit the White House later this year. Beijing may want to signal Bangkok that it will not tolerate being treated as second choice in Thailand's diplomatic games. Before the BRI summit, United States President Donald Trump made a phone call to three Southeast Asian leaders, including those of the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand with invitations to Washington. While Philippine President Duterte was non-committal, the Thai government accepted the invitation and enthusiastically arranged an official visit, on 3 October 2017. These diplomatic snubs may suggest that China is departing from its 'charm offensive' strategy and that it is now more willing

to exercise political pressure explicitly when its interests are even indirectly affected. Southeast Asia states may need to craft a more careful hedging strategy in order to deal with the dissatisfied rising power.

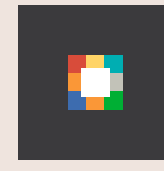
China's charm offensive diplomacy has focused on carrots, but now it is more willing to use its stick. Beijing is not reluctant to adopt shaming and intimidation when its national interests are affected. It looks like minor diplomatic intimidation, but it allowed Beijing to send a message about its unhappiness with the current situation. However, China has still offered Thailand a second chance, as it has invited Prayut to attend the BRICS summit in Xiamen in September 2017.

Furthermore, Beijing's more assertive approach may also develop into a situation in which regional states need to choose sides. In the case of Southeast Asia, China is now pressuring the region to favour China's regional leadership. Singapore's position in both the South China Sea disputes and in supporting the American role clearly does not align with Beijing's objectives. The omission of Singapore's leader from the BRI Summit has also suggested Beijing's unhappiness with the city-state's strategic posture in favour of Washington. In Thailand's case, the likelihood of Thai-American appeasement may also play a role besides the railway issue. Beijing is perhaps sending a signal that it is unsatisfied being treated only as a political cushion and secondary power on which Bangkok can fall back whenever its relations with Washington grow rough.

Pongphisoot (Paul) Busbarat, Visiting Fellow, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore (p_busbarat@iseas.edu.sg).

News from Northeast Asia

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North Korea in the eyes of the Nordic region and China

Kyuhoon CHO

COVERAGE OF NORTH KOREA in the mainstream global media has been overwhelmingly negative, and a standardized understanding of North Korea, strengthened over time and through repetition, has spread and crystallized throughout global society. As a result, alternative approaches or standpoints with regard to North Korea are viewed with doubt and skepticism. In this issue of *News from Northeast Asia*, we depart from this kind of globalized perspective and examine North Korea from the lesser known positions of countries in Northern Europe, which have maintained diplomatic relations with North Korea over a long period of time, and online communities in China, North Korea's strongest ally.

In 'A Nordic inspiration for sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula?', Geir Helgesen of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) presents his belief that the experience of societies in Northern Europe in transforming a long history of conflict into a relationship of peace and cooperation can provide inspiration for peace-building on the Korean peninsula. Gleaning lessons from the case of Northern Europe, he found that cultural differences impede the understanding of the actions of a counterpart and can be very difficult to

overcome. On the other hand, shared values and norms can become the foundation for cooperation. Demonization of North Korea in the past 20 years has made obscure the fact that the way of life of North Koreans is culturally very similar to other East Asian societies.

In the second article, 'North Korea from a Norwegian perspective', Norwegian Ambassador to South Korea Jan Grevstad puts forth Oslo's official position toward the regime in Pyongyang. Having maintained diplomatic relations with North Korea since 1973, Norway has continued to provide humanitarian aid to North Korea regardless of political change. At the same time, the Norwegian government has denounced North Korea over its human rights issues and supported multilateral sanctions on North Korea for defying international law with its nuclear development program. Grevstad argues

that understanding North Korea's situation can be the first step toward valuable discussions on the country.

'Perspectives on North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue in Chinese online media' reveals through an analysis of mainstream Chinese media that there is a diversity of opinions and attitudes to North Korea in Chinese society existing beyond the official stance of Beijing. Jeong-Hoon Lee examines discussions on popular internet forums in China and finds a mix of opinions on North Korea among various social cohorts – the realist perspective of the highly educated middle class, the non-ideological and negative views of the youth, and the idealistic perspective of those who regard North Korea an authentic socialist regime.

Kyuhoon CHO, Research Fellow, Asia Center, Seoul National University (kcho28@snu.ac.kr).



A Nordic inspiration for sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula?

Geir Helgesen

THE NORDIC REGION¹ has been able to turn a long history of conflict into a modern era of cooperation. Our conflicting history has not been hidden, but neither is it used as an ideological tool to fuel present conflicts of interests and general disagreements. *Past is past, let's do it better onwards*, seems to be a Nordic consensus. The five independent countries are bound together into a unified entity, in particular, by our common cultural traits: we share basic values and norms, and have decided to stress the similarities and respect the still existing differences between us. The Nordic region is possibly the best integrated region in the present world, and it is the regional cooperation with the strongest popular support.

What is the potential relevance of this for Korea?

Some facts are quite similar between the Nordic region and the East Asian region: a history of animosities and conflicts between the neighbors, and, at the same time a basically common cultural heritage, with common values and norms. Differences between the two regions are many, with size as an obvious and visible one. The two regions are also dealing with the history of conflict in different ways, and, the division between the four countries in the East Asian region is fortified by different and opposing political and ideological positions.

The similarities and differences between our two regions consists of elements that cannot be changed, but also politically based facts, that that can be altered, if there is political will and popular support. Size and

history cannot be changed, while how these facts are dealt with, how they are invested in political ideologies and visions, is a matter of choice, although often hard choices. They are not free to be made, as culture is a harder fact than most people are able to understand.

What we cherish or dislike, see as true or false, good or bad, right or wrong, is to a certain degree affected by our cultural environment. In the Nordic region, even if we at present are living in a post-Christian era, all of us are colored by Lutheran Protestantism in particular. The moral values and the worldview developed based on this northern European Christian faith affect our societal norms, our political thinking, our Constitution and the laws that govern our societies and societal actions. In the East Asian region other religious, moral, and philosophical thoughts make up the backbone of societal constructs. Confucianism is, in my view, a fundamental basis, but Shamanism, Buddhism, and also Christianity, add to the overall pattern that form the basis of social morality, societal life, politics and world outlook of the people in the East Asian region.

Such a sweeping generalization is necessary in order to relate to and open-mindedly discuss issues informed by our heritage, albeit not easy. I have met Korean friends in the South who have a very difficult time accepting Koreans from another province in their own country, not to speak of people from Japan. Their dislike is not based on personal experiences, but on learned 'truths'. It's not that there are no reasons for animosities; sad and gruesome historical facts often make it difficult to look ahead and move forwards. Nevertheless, moving forward is necessary and to the benefit of all concerned, and should be a common aim.

Years ago, while visiting North Korea, I had a number of serious conversations with people in my proximity, people with whom I had a positive relationship. I wanted to know if they actually saw their country as a totally new entity, a post-war 'Kim Il-Sung-land' with its Juche ideology, untainted by past experiences, including the '5000 years of history', also in the North mentioned with pride. They always said yes, in the first instance. They claimed that their system was totally new and they gave a host of arguments and examples in support of this position. If I expressed a willingness to try and understand this, and respect *their* view, the dialogue would usually continue. Then I would maintain my own position, which was and is, that we all, to some extent, are *cultural constructs*, and that even new ideas and political ideologies are in debt to the past, which moreover is a necessity for the new to be rooted and to grow in the local soil. My North Korean dialogue partners could see this point, but were worried if I stressed it too

much. "It makes sense, what you are saying", was the general reaction, "but please do not overstate the importance of the past, our system is created by our leader and he knows what is best for us, like the father in a family..."

The northern half of the peninsula has made an effort to create a self-reliant entity, and to realize this it has fenced itself in and has kept relations with the outside world at a minimum. During the later years of a military build-up on both sides of the demarcation line, and in particular when nuclear ambitions became a military priority for the North Korean leadership, the USA, followed by its allies and most Western powers and the UN Security Council responded with an ever tightening embargo. To the self-imposed isolation is added an externally imposed one. Who gains, except those who fear change?

Currently it might be difficult to envisage a dialogue as the one described above. A main reason is that the years that have passed since my small and informal survey in Pyongyang have been filled with mutual accusations and hatred, and during the last couple of decades North Korea has been *demonized* to the extent that it is hard to imagine the existence of normal people 'up North'. But they are there, and they are not that different from their country fellowmen in the South, or from Japanese and Chinese fellowmen, for that matter. There is a cultural similarity to build on!

A Nordic inspiration to, and possible intervention for, peace and mutual understanding between the Koreas could be based on experiences with Nordic regional cooperation, and, on the newly acquired knowledge about the impact and importance of cultural affinity among people in neighboring countries for the success of regional cooperation. As there are longstanding diplomatic relations between the two Koreas and the Nordic countries, such a humanitarian and long-term involvement should be possible and within the accepted limits of the ongoing embargo, and an activity that aims at a positive solution for all parties concerned.

Geir Helgesen, Director, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (geir.helgesen@nias.ku.dk).

Reference

- 1 Five independent countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, organized as one cooperative region through the Nordic Council, the parliamentary cooperative body, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, the governmental body of cooperation, as well as several public and private bodies within the fields of economy, culture, sports etc.

Above: Pyongyang, North Korea. Image reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy of Stephan on Flickr.

North Korea from a Norwegian perspective

Jan Grevstad

THE THEME THROUGHOUT this paper is the Norwegian government's strong commitment to uphold and advance international laws and principles, our condemnation of North Korea's human rights situation and their weapons development program, and our support for peaceful, diplomatic and political solutions. The article presents two simple answers as to why Norway is concerned about the Korean peninsula: Our common security. Our common prosperity.

Norway established diplomatic ties with the DPRK at the same time as the other Nordic countries, in 1973. While Norway never had an embassy in Pyongyang, North Korea closed its embassy in Oslo in the 1990s. Since 2004, the Norwegian Ambassador to Seoul has also been accredited as Ambassador to Pyongyang. We continue to maintain a diplomatic relationship with North Korea

as we believe contact is critical to sustain peace and development in any geopolitical situation.

As of today, Norway has virtually zero trade with North Korea. Our engagement is restricted to humanitarian assistance through international organizations, and diplomatic interactions, including at the multilateral arena. The embassy attempts annual visits, mainly to follow up on our humanitarian assistance to the people of North Korea, which we have been giving since the 1990s. Our assistance is based purely on humanitarian needs and therefore we do not withhold aid as and when the political situation changes. On humanitarian assistance, Norway communicates clearly to the North Korean authorities that we expect them to respect and support humanitarian principles. We advocate for the government to do its best to make sure United Nations and other agencies have full access.

When in North Korea we also make it clear that any improvement in our bilateral relations is contingent on two issues: unambiguously positive developments on the human rights and the cessation of nuclear tests. Norway is not a party to the conflict on the peninsula, but global norms, international law, and the security situation of

East Asia matters to us. Continued testing and development runs counter to international norms and resolutions. An unstable peninsula means an unstable region. An unsafe peninsula means an unsafe world. In response, we firmly and faithfully support all multilateral sanctions on North Korea, which we have adopted into Norwegian law.

An unsafe peninsula also represents a risk to our common prosperity. Norway has robust and healthy trade relationships with not only South Korea, but also other countries in the region. This region's role in and impact on the world economy, for merchandise and financial goods and services, is massively important. Finally, however much we disagree with their actions and their attitude, we must accept that North Korea, its leadership and regime, have their own concerns. Understanding Pyongyang's own positions is a first step for any useful discussion on the North Korea issue. Norway stands with the international community in supporting all efforts for a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation on the peninsula.

Jan Grevstad, Ambassador of Norway to Korea
(Jan.Ole.Grevstad@mfa.no)



Ryugyong tower, Pyongyang, North Korea. Image reproduced under a creative commons license courtesy of Jen Morgan on Flickr.

Perspectives on North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue in Chinese online media

LEE Jeong-Hoon

AFTER CHINA OFFICIALLY GAINED access to the World Wide Web in 1994, its internet forums have developed into spaces where a variety of opinions on social issues are expressed, enabling scholars to examine the views of ordinary Chinese people on North Korea. In February 2013, North Korea's third nuclear weapons test sparked controversy in China, with the view of North Korea as a socialist 'brother nation' weakening and some even advancing the idea of severing ties with Pyongyang. In order to understand this critical view of North Korea in contrast with the position of the Chinese government as expressed through the official media, there is a need to investigate the function of the internet as a space for the discussion of issues of public interest and the formation of public opinion in China.

Through internet forums, we can examine the unofficial, internal, and broader and deeper considerations of the different levels of Chinese society with regard to North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue that exist on the flip side of the official and public reactions of the Chinese government. North Korea and the North Korean nuclear weapons program are among the most hotly debated issues in Chinese internet discussion forums, and the variety of perspectives that exist in China with regard to North Korea can be found on the representative discussion sites Tianya Club (tianya.cn), MOP (mop.com), and Utopia (Wuyouzhixiang, wyzxwx.com).

Tianya Club is known as the most influential internet forum in China. Launched in 1999, Tianya developed with a focus on internet literature and discussions on social

issues, initiating the production of contents and exchange of opinions to satisfy the expectations of highly educated and middle-class users. Posts related to North Korea mainly appear in the 'International Watch' section of the site. A majority of them approach North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue from a realist perspective, and some show an impressive depth of knowledge and expertise on China-US relations or the situation in East Asia. Going beyond an emotional or official approach to the North Korean nuclear issue, they examine it through the frames of the internal conditions of North Korea or inter-Korean conflict, with some of them conducting an assessment of the issue in light of China's strategy for East Asia. In other words, Tianya Club discussions demonstrate that Chinese online debates on North Korea are not limited to the emotional reaction of the general public but range vastly to a very high level in which we can see a degree of strategic discernment and knowledge of international affairs far exceeding what one would normally expect. In the closed media environment in China, the reason that this kind of bold discussion is possible is due to the nature of online media that guarantees the anonymity of discussion participants, allowing a freedom of expression unhindered by the control of information, political taboos, or diplomatic considerations that normally come into play in formal venues of discussion on North Korea.

MOP is the largest comprehensive Chinese-language entertainment portal, currently boasting 130 million registered users. As befitting a site that leads the latest internet trends in China, focusing primarily on entertainment, the number of users aged 18 to 32 is relatively high, which makes it a suitable choice to gauge the attitudes of young Chinese people regarding North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue. Characteristic of the younger generations, the discussions on MOP display an amusement-oriented and non-ideological approach with an overall negative view of North Korea. Posts featuring the negative aspects of a declining and unresponsive North Korea such as its closed internet environment,

its lack of credit in international transactions, and the spread of drugs by North Korean defectors, reinforce the negative image of the country. To the average MOP user, North Korea is an object of amusement yet evokes adverse feelings due to its image as a strange and foreign nation with a closed political system and feeble economy. On the other hand, we can find a number of users who make efforts to correct biased perceptions of North Korea by introducing various aspects of the country they have experienced firsthand while traveling there. Their posts neutralize the negative image among Chinese internet users by painting a more detailed picture of the internal circumstances within North Korea than any external media source and relaying their experiences in near real-time.

In contrast to MOP, the discussions about North Korea on the Maoist and liberal site Utopia (Wuyouzhixiang) show a tendency of projecting on North Korea and idealizing the lost socialist past of China. Many of the posts on Utopia argue that North Korea has carried on the authenticity and historical legitimacy of the socialist system, unlike China, which has departed from the traditional socialist line through reformation and the opening of its markets. The socialist welfare system providing free education, free medical care, and free housing maintained in North Korea to the present is used as a basis to criticize the current status of China. In addition, the posts related to North Korea on Utopia frequently emphasize the alliance between the two countries 'cemented in blood' through the Korean War and their historical amity during the Mao era.

In this way, the discussions on North Korea and the North Korean nuclear issue found on internet forums in China more clearly show the unofficial and latent perspectives that exist in society in contrast to the official and public positions of the Chinese government and official media.

LEE Jeong-Hoon, Assistant Professor, Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Seoul National University (luxun@snu.ac.kr).

China Connections

Foreigners in Treaty Port China

"I found the Chinese in Shanghai to be a very jolly people, much like colored folks at home. To tell the truth, I was more afraid of going into the world famous Cathay Hotel than I was of going into any public place in the Chinese quarters. Colored people are not welcomed at the Cathay. But beyond the gates of the International Settlement, color was no barrier. I could go anywhere", Langston Hughes (1902-1967) writes in his autobiography about his visit to Shanghai in 1934.¹ During its Treaty Port era (1843-1943), Shanghai transformed from a trading town of 270,000 residents to a world-renowned metropolis of over 5 million people, attracting fortune-hunters like businessmen, writers, musicians, architects, and refugees from all over the world.

Lena Scheen

THE ARTICLES IN THIS SECTION introduce us to some of these foreigners, such as the African-American Jazz pianist Teddy Weatherford (1903-1945), who Langston Hughes met during his visit: "a big, genial, dark man, something of a clown, Teddy could walk into almost any public place in the Orient and folks would break into applause". In his article, Andrew Field shows how Jazz musicians like Weatherford would have an everlasting impact on the formation of new music genres in the Asia-Pacific region. Likewise, Robert Bickers describes, in his article on the amateur photographer Jack Ephgrave (1914-1979), how the work of the Artists' Department at Capital Lithographers of the British American Tobacco in Shanghai, which Ephgrave headed, deeply influenced China's modern visual culture. Moreover, the articles focus on the importance of the study of material culture to a better understanding of the roles these foreigners played in their new homeland. For this reason, this section highlights the important work of various archival projects, such as the University of Bristol's 'Historical Photographs of China' and the Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA) whose unique collection not only includes written materials, but also art works, trophies, medals, and photographs. It is the objects, songs, diaries, and pictures these foreigners left behind that provide us with a glimpse of the city through the eyes of its outsiders.

Lena Scheen is Assistant Professor of Global China Studies at NYU Shanghai (lms14@nyu.edu).

Reference

- Hughes, L. 1993 (first published in 1964) *I Wonder as I Wander*, The Collected Works of Langston Hughes Series #14. New York: Hill & Wang.



Postcard from the Cathay Hotel and advertisement for the Canidrome Ballroom; both from Lethbridge, H.J. 1934. *All About Shanghai: A Standard Guidebook*.



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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). Through the years, the center is making all the efforts 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.

Asian jazz diasporas: performing jazz in Pacific port cities, 1920-1945

Andrew Field

WHAT CAN THE SPREAD in Asia of the American popular music known as jazz, during its early period of the 1920s-40s, tell us about the dynamics of western colonialism and imperialism in this world region? How does the historian reconstruct and analyze the flow of jazz music as it spread into this part of the world? Who were the musicians who played key roles in spreading jazz in Asia and what were their trajectories? In what sorts of venues was jazz performed and who constituted the audiences for live jazz performances during this era? Finally, what was the overall impact of the jazz diaspora into Asia during this period, and is it really true that these jazz musicians laid the groundwork for the nativization of American popular music and the formation of modern pop music cultures in Asian countries?

While this paper cannot answer all of these questions in exhaustive detail, it constitutes a first attempt by the author to tackle a few and offer some initial answers. Many scholars and popular writers, including this author, have produced comprehensive book-length studies of the initial rise and spread of jazz in specific cities and countries, including Bombay, Shanghai, the Philippines, and Japan. Others have written articles about jazz and

popular music in South and Southeast Asian countries and cities, particularly India, yet until now the vectors and networks by which jazz spread around Asia as a whole have remained somewhat mysterious.

One key observation is that the spread of jazz throughout Asia was carried out mainly through the vehicle of passenger liners that cruised along networks of port cities. The passenger liner was the ideal vehicle for jazz, since it brought the musicians themselves to far flung ports throughout the Asia Pacific. These musicians were sometimes given jobs on the liners entertaining passengers, and they could disembark at any port and explore and sometimes even settle in port cities where they might also find an audience for their music. In this sense, the spread of jazz in this world region is best understood through the oceanic networks of trade, commerce and culture that emerged through the forces of western colonialism and imperialism, but which were far more deeply embedded in the history of oceanic trading networks in Asia. Similarly, jazz was a modern western invention, and yet as it spread across the globe, it took on the trappings of local musical cultures, which often played a mediating role in bringing jazz to 'native' peoples in these countries and cities.



'The Plantation Quartet of Crickett Smith' - Teddy Weatherford, Rudy Jackson, and Roy Butler. © Naresh Fernandes, *Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age*, Roli Books, 2012.

Throughout this period, certain cities served as fundamental nodes in the distribution of jazz throughout Asia. Among those cities were Shanghai, Tokyo, Manila, and Bombay. These cities boasted the largest concentration of spaces that regularly hosted jazz performances, keeping in mind that most if not all performances during that period were accompanied by partnered dancing. Playing key roles among these spaces were international hotels, which invariably featured ballrooms, as well as dedicated jazz cabarets and nightclubs for dancing. Shanghai

The Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA)

Steve Upton



THIS IS AN INTRODUCTION to the Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA), in Concord, New Hampshire, USA, an unusual collection of materials regarding foreigners in late Qing and Republican China. USFA is a private non-institutional archive curated by, and located in the home of R. Stevenson 'Steve' Upton. Upton is presently participating with Professor Wang Min (Institute of History, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) in developing a worldwide network of people (not limited to those who hold academic positions) who each have a serious interest in one or more aspects of the history of foreigners in late Qing and/or Republican China (especially at Shanghai, Tianjin, and/or other treaty ports, major cities, or leased territories). Anyone interested in joining this network should contact either Upton or Professor Wang, and should provide information about his/her background and pertinent interests. Anyone who lived as a foreigner in pre-1950 China is especially encouraged to join the network. One special benefit for members of the network is that they receive preference in obtaining access to USFA.

A high percentage of the materials at USFA is not known to be available in any other archive. Most of the materials are from the period 1790s until 1950s and pertain to foreigners in China or to Sino-Foreign interaction generally. Most of the materials at USFA can be described as photographs, letters, documents, other ephemera, works of art, trophies, medals, and other non-paper objects. In addition, USFA has some extremely rare or unique books and periodicals, as well as more

1: The front of a postcard regarding the 1 August 1908 Swiss National Day celebration at Hankow (part of Wuhan).
 2: Badge for the British celebration at Tianjin of the 1937 coronation of King George VI.
 3: A luggage label from the Majestic Hotel, Shanghai.
 4: A luggage label from the Station Hotel, Shanhaiguan.
 5: A bottle cap from Crystal Ltd., Tianjin, a bottler of aerated water.
 6: A wall plaque which was displayed at St. Giles British School, Qingdao, and which shows an emblem of that school.
 Images courtesy of Upton Sino-Foreign Archive.

common publications. Most of the non-photographic materials include written information which is wholly or partly in a non-Chinese language. Some of the items at USFA formerly belonged to notable people, including Sun Yat-sen, Li Hongzhang, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. USFA has unusually important collections on certain topics. It has the world's largest and most diverse collection on schools in pre-1950 China that were primarily for foreign students, and also has some notable materials regarding some of the schools in pre-1950 China that were primarily for Chinese students. USFA has one of the largest collections on U.S. military forces in China, other than the collections at the U.S. National Archives and at the official archives of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The archive also has unique and important materials regarding other foreign military forces of pre-1950 China. USFA has special collections regarding Jewish communities in China during the first half of the 20th century, and regarding people of Russian Empire/USSR background in pre-1950 China. Some of USFA's collections regarding pre-1950 Shanghai, such as the one on clubs and recreation and the one regarding hotels, are probably the most important that one can find outside Shanghai. USFA has one of the largest diversified collections of materials regarding Masonic organizations in pre-1950 China. USFA's collection regarding pre-1950 Tianjin is among the most significant that can be found outside Tianjin. The archive has rare and unique materials regarding the Chinese Maritime Customs, Chinese Salt Administration, and Imperial

Chinese Navy. USFA also has special materials regarding foreign organizations whose activities in pre-1950 China included intelligence/espionage work, such as the Office of Strategic Services, the Sino-American Cooperative Organization, and the Counter-Intelligence Corps. Many of the materials at USFA have not yet been listed in catalogs, but have been organized into files and boxes on specific places and topics. Many of the catalogs which thus far have been prepared pertain to pre-1950 Shanghai. Examples include (a) Shanghai Clubs & Recreation, (b) Shanghai Hotels & Apartment Buildings, (c) Shanghai Public Utilities, (d) Shanghai Restaurants, Cafes, Bars, Cabarets, Night Clubs, Dance Halls, etc., and (e) Shanghai Cinemas, Theatres, Movies, Plays, Opera, Dance, Concerts, etc. Scholars are welcome to make inquiries regarding whether USFA has any materials about a particular person, entity, or event. Anyone with a serious interest in obtaining an invitation can contact Upton at rsu77@alum.dartmouth.org, and provide a fairly detailed description of his/her background and any particular reasons for his/her interest in visiting USFA. A number of the past visitors to USFA have been professors from major Chinese universities. Because the place where USFA is located is primarily a home, and because of limitations to Upton's availability, usually not more than five or six invitations are issued per year to individuals who have not previously visited USFA.

Steve Upton is the director of the Upton Sino-Foreign Archive (USFA) (uptonrs@gmail.com).

arguably had the highest concentration of such spaces for jazz musicians in Asia between the 1920s and 1940s and was the primary node for the spread of jazz in Asia. Other port cities also served as important nodes for the concentration and distribution of jazz performers throughout Asian port cities. In addition to bringing American jazz artists, arguably the most influential and important of all, to Asia, these establishments also nurtured 'native' jazz movements, even if the musicians themselves were sometimes trained in other countries (as in the case of Japanese musicians learning jazz in Shanghai). Even so, jazz was being performed in a much larger number of cities and countries throughout Asia. In China, jazz bands could be found in Beijing, Qingdao, Weihai, Tianjin, and other treaty port towns. Hong Kong also boasted its own lively jazz scene. In Japan, cities such as Osaka, Kobe, and Yokohama had jazz clubs. In India, Calcutta and Delhi both featured jazz, as did Goa. Jazz could also be heard in clubs and hotels in other Southeast Asian countries. Kuala Lumpur and Penang in present-day Malaysia had jazz bands, as did Batavia and Surabaya in what is now Indonesia.

Wherever there was a steady presence of westerners (i.e., Europeans or Americans), there was an appetite for jazz, which meant that nearly every trading port and capital city in Asia featured at least one hotel with a ballroom and jazz band. Yet because jazz music and its associated dances spread so rapidly and became popularized so quickly, native elites also learned the

dances and became fans of jazz, and in many cases, natives (and in some cases Eurasian or Anglo-Indian musicians) took up the jazz idiom and invested it with local musical cultures and meanings. Because of its tendency to be re-shaped by local cultures, jazz thus plays an ambiguous role as both a prop for western colonial imperialism and as a mode of resistance to colonial authority and power. The fact that jazz was first and foremost an African American cultural form further complicated the dynamics of jazz as a product of western colonialism and imperialism in Asia. In order to flesh out the story of how jazz spread into Asia and what this transmission meant to Asian societies and cultures, it is essential to follow the threads of the stories of those who contributed to that spread. Probably the most important carriers of jazz into Asia, as mentioned above, were African American jazz musicians, who began to arrive in Asian port cities in the 1920s along with the growing craze for jazz music. Some of them were hired directly from the United States, while others came to Asia via Paris. Most of them made their way first to Shanghai, though by the 1930s Bombay became a popular destination as well. While there were some influential white musicians, including both American and Russian jazz artists, the African Americans were by far the most sought after and exerted the greatest influence on local jazz scenes including both fans and musicians. Yet it is important to also acknowledge the vital role that Filipino jazz musicians played in carrying jazz across the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

The single most important figure in the history of the spread of jazz in Asia during this period was unarguably Teddy Weatherford, an African American stride pianist. Between his arrival in Shanghai in 1926 and his death in Calcutta in 1945, Weatherford contributed more than any other jazz musician to the popularization of this form of music in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to playing for many years in the best clubs of Shanghai, he also traveled to many other cities in Asia and performed in hotels and clubs, before settling in India for much of WWII (although he continued to travel then as well). Weatherford was also responsible for recruiting Buck Clayton and his Harlem Gentlemen from the USA to China, which was undoubtedly the best jazz band to perform in Shanghai during the 1930s. Weatherford educated many 'native' musicians in Japan and India as well as (presumably) other countries. Though his story is still fairly obscure, we can trace its outlines, focusing on his travels around Asia via the passenger liners using period newspapers and personal archives left by other musicians such as Buck Clayton and Roy G. Butler.

Andrew Field is Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs at Duke Kunshan University (andrew.field@dukekunshan.edu.cn).

China Connections *continued*

Visions of the 1930s: Jack Ephgrave's Shanghai

Robert Bickers



IN ABOUT 1929, shortly after he began working for the first time, a young man in Shanghai seems to have used his new-earned wealth to buy a camera. With all the fearlessness and curiosity of a neophyte and, it turned out with some natural talent and technical skill, Jack Ephgrave then set about over the next five years documenting the city in which he lived, his workplace, and his family. And then, for over 70 years, the photographs lay carefully preserved but unseen outside his family.

John William Ephgrave (1914-79), always known as Jack, was born in Shanghai in October 1914. His father had arrived in the city in 1912 to work for a department store, and would in time become one of its directors. Jack started off as an apprentice in the printing department of British American Tobacco's China operation (BAT), the British Cigarette Company (BCC), and later worked for its subsidiary Capital Lithographers Ltd. In later life he rose to hold a senior position in the company's global headquarters in London before retirement in 1972.

BAT, as well as being the single biggest tax-payer in republican China, had a profound impact through its marketing and publicity operations on China's modern visual culture. Its advertising hoardings, cigarette packet cards, and calendar posters, were designed by some of China's most influential graphic artists, and Ephgrave by 1941 was head of the Artists' Department at Capital Lithographers. But it is young Jack's experiments with photography that are, for me, the striking thing about his China career.

The two albums that emerged contain 1,000 photographs. There is some able street photography, there are experiments with self-portraits and juxtapositions, snaps of family members, and of the armoured cars of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps (which Jack had joined). There are many grim shots of the blasted ruins of the

city's northern Zhabei district in the aftermath of the ghastly February 1932 Sino-Japanese battle in Shanghai. There are failures amongst the successes, and the mundane and repetitive that marks any unedited raw collection. Ephgrave's life encompassed the insular world of Shanghai's settler community, but they are no less striking in the vignettes they offer of 1930s China's most self-confident and vibrant city. There is even a snapshot of a snowman in the public gardens at the northern end of the Shanghai Bund.

The camera had arrived in China with the British war fleet that sailed on Nanjing in 1842 during the first Opium War. While the daguerreotypes that we know were taken on the banks of the Yangzi River in July 1842 appear not to have survived, the legacy of the photographic enterprise that developed over the course of the next one hundred years in China's treaty ports is extensive. Much of the archive of that century of photography can be found in public archives and libraries internationally. Superb collections can be found in the Getty Research Institute, British Library, Wellcome Library and the Hong Kong Museum of History (which in 2013 acquired on permanent loan what is now known as the Moonchu Collection of Early Chinese Photography, originally developed by Terry Bennett).

Jules Itier, Felix Beato, John Thompson, Lai Afong and other canonical figures are well represented in such collections, but vernacular photography is less readily accessible. Since 2006, the University of Bristol's Historical Photographs of China (HPC) project has been locating, digitizing and placing online some of the hidden archive photography held by families with historic links to China's port cities (www.hpcbristol.net). These are families whose ancestors lived in or visited China, and who commissioned, bought, or like Jack Ephgrave took themselves

(and sometimes stole) the photographs that survive as prints in albums, negatives and slides. The project has been presented in *the Newsletter* before (issue 76, Spring 2017), but as it continues to grow, new collections are offered by members of the public from across the world, and it has embedded within its cross-searchable holdings other publicly-accessible digital archives (most recently 4,700 photographs by Hedda Morrison from Harvard-Yenching Library; www.hpcbristol.net/collections/morrison-hedda).

The latest large set of images, digitized by the project team and unveiled online, contains an extensive set of photographs documenting revolutionary events in Wuhan in 1911 (www.hpcbristol.net/collections/wyatt-smith-stanley), while the most recent collection to arrive in the office covers two years in the (off-duty) life of a British intelligence officer in early Communist Shanghai. The geography of the foreign presence in China certainly shapes the collection, as it also shaped the bodies of work produced by the famous. Chinese Maritime Customs staff, consuls, businessmen and missionaries largely moved on what became familiar circuits of postings from port to port. They also spent vacations in the same resorts, or went on sightseeing trips to the same temples or natural sights. But while there is always something predictable in any set that arrives in the office in Bristol, there is always something new, unusual and exciting, like the fruits of Jack Ephgrave's first flush of love for the camera.

Robert Bickers is Professor of History at the University of Bristol and HPC Project Director (Robert.Bickers@bristol.ac.uk).

The HPC's Jack Ephgrave collection can be found at www.hpcbristol.net/collections/ephgrave-jack.

1: Aerial photograph of the area around the junction of Avenue Edward VII (now Yan'an Dong Lu) and the Bund, Shanghai, 1927 – including the Gutzlaff Tower and the war memorial. Unidentified photographer.

2: Selfie by Jack Ephgrave, taken looking into a mirror, Shanghai, c.1931. Photograph by Jack Ephgrave.

3: Chinese employees at the British Cigarette Company (also known as Yee Tsong Tobacco Co. Ltd.) factory, Shanghai, during a strike, c.1933. Photograph by Jack Ephgrave.

4: Double exposure of a rowing eight on the Whangpoo River, Shanghai, c.1932, along with a man sculling. Photograph by Jack Ephgrave.

5: Chinese graphic artists in the Artists' Department, Capital Lithographers Ltd., Shanghai, 1930s, designing advertising posters, packaging for cigarettes, etc. Photograph attributed to Jack Ephgrave.

All Photographs © 2013 Adrienne Livesey, Elaine Ryder and Irene Brien.



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Inventing the performing arts

The title of Matthew Cohen's book seems, on the face of it, somewhat provocative. Surely, one might suggest, there were always performing arts in Indonesia. Coming to terms with Cohen's thesis here hinges on how the terms 'invention' and 'performance' are defined, for which the subtitle, 'modernity and tradition in colonial Indonesia', points the way. For Cohen, 'performing arts' needs to be conceived of within a paradigm of modernity which emphasizes its consciousness of purpose; and the 'modernity' of which the book speaks is, of course, a colonial modernity, primarily as it was manifested in Java and Bali.

Reviewer: Joost Coté



Reviewed title:
Matthew Isaac Cohen. 2016.
Inventing the Performing Arts: Modernity and Tradition in Colonial Indonesia
 Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press
 ISBN 9780824855567

WITH THE NOTION of 'invention' furthermore, Cohen certainly does not have in mind a 'one off' moment. The reference to colonial in this book, roughly covering the period from the latter 19th century to the end of the Japanese occupation and its immediate aftermath in Indonesia, indicates that Cohen is positing an understanding of 'invention' as a process, something that took place over a time span of almost a century and across a colonial public space constituted by Indonesian (mainly Javanese and Balinese) Chinese, and Eurasian communities. The book, then, details the way the interaction of ideas, practices, and innovations, and of artists and publics, came to create Indonesia's pre-Independence vibrant performing arts world of which today's Indonesian artists, performers and impresarios – and publics – are the inheritors.

Part One, 'Common ground for arts and popular entertainments', opens on the world of 'plezir', the world of public entertainments available to a hybrid colonial urban population in Batavia and other cities on Java in the late 19th century, before proceeding to delineate the different, community-linked genres available to its diverse audiences. Here Cohen creates the atmosphere wonderfully by drawing on contemporary newspaper advertisements and reports. The title of Chapter One signals that what appears from a distance to be a random cacophony in fact represents the 'intersecting art worlds' and traditions of the different communities who inhabit the expanding urban public space. Despite the close proximity induced by the urban environment which blurred and made porous the boundaries of artistic practice, each ethnic group drew from their cultural separateness to experience and stage

these different practices differently. Thus, Eurasian military and school music, Javanese wayang and court-based *tari*, and Chinese opera, co-existed in diverse public spaces. Over time however, as Chapter Two then goes on to demonstrate, increased leisure time, improved economic circumstances and the increased penetration of European goods and ideas that expressed the growing culture of urban modernity, brought with it new forms of entertainment, such as circuses, puppet theatres, Malay language theatres and commercial wayang wong. Detached from their specific local cultural or ethnic traditions, these newer forms began to construct an appetite for the diversification of performances that could be enjoyed 'in common'. They were, in that sense, 'modern'.

Part Two then launches the reader into the more full blown culture of modern performing arts. The first topic (Chapter Three) reprises Cohen earlier ground-breaking work on the world of the European opera-style influenced *Komedi Stamboel*. This popular theatre gradually morphed into forms of modern (Eurasian) theatre, as *Indische toneel*, with scripts by, and reflecting the interests of, the growing European community, and in a somewhat different styling, as *Opera Derma*, or Sino-Malay spoken drama, reflecting Chinese inflections. Chapter Four focuses on the performances of popular music in public locations, such as markets and dance halls and, with the encroachment of modern technology, also within homes as phonograph recordings. In the eclectic world of music, 'hybridisation' too soon become evident. But, contrary to those who might see 'Artistic hybridity ... as a sign of the weakness of indigenous culture', and representing the submission of the local to the foreign incursion, Cohen's argument, articulated here in relation to music, but relevant across the performing arts, is that 'musical innovators of the 1920s and 1930s ... were strongly grounded and confident in the musical idioms of their local cultures ... [while] also quick to respond to market contingencies, curious about exogenous practices and inventive in catering to new modes of patronage' (pp. 100-1). And, indeed, the next two chapters address the growing 'ethnic awakenings' that were inspiring a revival of interest in and the revitalisation of traditions alongside further developments in new theatre forms.

As to be expected, the reader is here introduced to the important contribution of the Java Institute, in its elaboration of a discourse of cultural nationalism and its practical support of local Javanese (and Sundanese) cultural groups, such as Kridha Beksa Wirama in Yogyakarta. This cultural revival, nevertheless, marked another phase of cultural interaction, in this case that between indigenous artists with artists and progressives intellectuals from Europe, such as the architect, Thomas Karsten, in Java, and the artist, Walter Spies, in Bali, inspired by the various new arts movement in Europe. While both sides were concerned to generate greater appreciation of Javanese and Balinese arts by 'tweaking' traditional cultural performances to meet the 'demands' (of taste and comfort) of modernity, they were differently inspired: the one by cultural nationalism, the other by an academic or artistic interest in the conservation of cultural heritage.

Part Two ends with a discussion of the link between the performing arts and rising nationalism of the thirties. It was a period not only of continuing development, such as the rise to popularity *ket(h)oprak*, the staging of Javanese stories, but also of intense debate on culture and modernity. Cohen is not concerned here to close off interpretation with definitive conclusions, but to emphasize that the 'reinvention of tradition occurred in conjunction with the emergence of artistic modernism'. Quoting here an apt observation by Perry Anderson, Cohen concludes that the invention of the performing Arts in Indonesia at this time flourished 'in the space between a still usable classical past, a still indeterminate technical present, and a still unpredictable political future' (p. 172).

Part Three addresses the Japanese interregnum. Long ignored by historians and histories that have been more fascinated by war, Cohen adds his contribution to a number of new histories that see the initiatives of the Japanese civil administration not only as significant in themselves, but as forming an important continuation, if in some ways contrasting, of the history of colonial modernity. The book devotes three relatively brief chapters from the limited detail available for this period, once again drawing heavily on contemporary war-era Indonesian media accounts. Highlights of this period include the founding of a theatre academy, the Sekolah Tonil, with the mission to develop theatre for propaganda purposes, and the 'rebranding', and to some extent standardisation, of existing theatre forms that had become popular during the Dutch period as '*sandiwara*', Javanese and Sundanese drama. Some traditional dance forms were also encouraged.

It was also during this time that, quite naturally, new foreign influences arrived from Japan, including the performance of Japanese folk dances, and the art of *kamishibai*, a form of Japanese mobile street theatre for children, but these were 'perceived as an alien art form, indelibly Japanese' (p. 197) and ceased immediately after the end of the war. On the other hand, performances and artists were also censored during the Japanese occupation where scripts fell foul of Japanese dictates. Although the Japanese established an 'elaborate cultural infrastructure' (p. 233), ultimately their presence had little long-term influence in the performing arts due, Cohen suggests, as much to the brevity of the Japanese presence compared to the earlier Dutch era, as the 'brutalities and deprivations of the occupation' (p. 197).

The book closes with a 'Fast forward', a rapid overview of the immediate post-war period. Independence brought with it a whole new dimension to the themes of modernity, invention and performing arts. This conclusion provides just enough detail to make clear that a second volume is required (if not already in the making).

Matthew Cohen has of course a well-established reputation in this field, not least through his first monograph, *Komedi Stamboel: Popular theatre in Colonial Indonesia 1891-1903* (Matthew Isaac Cohen, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), and this book builds on and extends on this earlier volume. In providing this broader history of the evolution of Indonesia's eclectic and hybrid performing arts, Cohen has provided a benchmark study, much of it the result of an original mining of contemporary colonial era Indonesian and Dutch newspapers and journals. The whole is effectively (if lightly) contextualised in terms of the broader history of the colonial period, sufficient to remind the reader of changing times, a crucial dimension of the thesis as a whole. The discussion also draws on the relevant standard historiographical and more theoretical writing when required to underscore a more general point, without overwhelming the central focus. This is, therefore neither a heavily historical, nor overly theorised text: it is and does what it sets out to do, which is, to provide a detailed picture of a vibrant and evolving popular urban culture centred on the performing arts.

Joost Coté, Senior Research fellow, Monash University. Author of *The Life and Work of Thomas Karsten*, Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 2017 (co-author Hugh O'Neill).

Below: *Kebyar Duduk*, performed here by dancer of the Balinese dance troupe *Sekar Jepun*. Courtesy of Crisco 1492 on Wikimedia Commons.



Bandits and the State

If clothes make the man then we can say that the clothes of bandits came in all shapes and sizes. There was no such thing as the typical bandit, no one size fits all. Some bandits neatly fit Eric Hobsbawm's formula for social bandits who robbed the rich and gave to the poor and who lived among and protected peasant communities. Others, and probably most, simply looked out for themselves, plundering both rich and poor. Some bandits were career professionals, but most were simply amateurs who took up banditry as a part-time job to supplement meagre legitimate earnings. While some bandits formed large permanent gangs, even armies numbering into the thousands, other gangs were ad hoc and small, usually only numbering in the tens or twenties. Most small gangs disbanded after a few heists. Many of the larger, more permanent gangs tended to operate in remote areas far away from the seats of government, but some gangs, usually the smaller impermanent ones, also operated in densely populated core areas. Although some bandits had political ambitions and received recognition and legitimacy from the state, most simply remained thugs and criminals throughout their careers. None of these categories, however, were mutually exclusive, as roles – like clothes – often changed according to circumstances.

Reviewer: Robert Antony, Guangzhou University



Reviewed title:
Bradley Camp Davis. 2017
Imperial Bandits: Outlaws and Rebels in the China-Vietnam Borderland
University of Washington Press
ISBN 9780295742052

BRADLEY CAMP DAVIS'S book is a detailed, well-written study of one type of brigand that he calls 'imperial bandits'. They were, for the most part, large permanent bandit armies referred to as the Black Flags and Yellow Flags who operated in the highlands on the nebulous Sino-Vietnamese borderland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were 'imperial' because they were frequently sanctioned first by the royal Vietnamese or Chinese governments and later by the French colonial government, which in all cases attempted to tame and use the bandits for carrying out their own expansionist agendas. The Vietnamese, Chinese, and French governments bestowed official titles and ranks on bandit leaders in efforts to transform their unruly bands into disciplined armies to fight their enemies and control borderland areas nominally outside the reach of the state. The results were mixed. Under such conditions the categories of bandit and official became quite flexible.

Both the Black Flags and Yellow Flags took advantage of state weaknesses in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. These bandit armies were a motley throng of poor Chinese refugees, Vietnamese peasants, and highland aborigine groups, but their leaders were almost always Chinese. The most famous leader of the Black Flags was Liu Yongfu

who hailed from south China's Qinzhou area in what is now Guangxi province. A charismatic figure and skilful manipulator Liu worked his way up the ranks from common bandit to high ranking official in both the governments of China and Vietnam. Imperial bandits were predatory entrepreneurs of violence, who showed no loyalty to any one party but rather sold their military skills to the highest bidder. In this way, as Davis explains, bandits and officials assured the continuance of a 'culture of violence' in the borderlands for nearly a century.

All sides – Vietnamese, Chinese, and French officials as well as the various bandit groups – remained suspicious of one another. There was constant fighting in the highlands between rival bandit gangs and state armies. The Black Flags and Yellow Flags, in fact, were bitter enemies and each side tried, with varying degrees of success, to ally with one state or another in its bid to overpower its rivals. As for the states themselves, they too played the same game by supporting one or another bandit group. But it was the mountain communities of Hmong, Tai, and Yao who suffered the most from the constant raids, wars, kidnappings, rapes, and murder. In fact, local residents – the victims – made no distinctions between bandits and officials; to them they were all the same and equally bad.

Besides the large-scale bandit armies there were also a large number of petty bandit gangs operating in the borderlands who took advantage of the fighting and chaos. Sometimes as one gang was defeated the survivors joined other gangs and in this way banditry and violence in the area was perpetuated. One small-time bandit was a man named Ong That, who in the wake of the defeat of the Yellow Flags in 1875, recruited his own band to plunder villages on both the Vietnamese and Chinese sides of the border, in areas outside the reach of either state. For the most part, such petty bandits as Ong That

never became imperial bandits, but instead remained outlaws and wanted criminals.

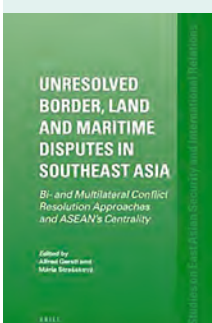
The expansion of the French into Vietnam and southern China at this time greatly complicated the situation in the borderlands. Whereas a number of scholars, such as Lloyd Eastman (*Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino-French Controversy, 1880–1885*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), have depicted the Sino-French War (1883-85) as an outgrowth of the Westphalian system and power struggles in Europe, Davis brings the story back down to the local level, emphasizing the important struggles between bandits, officials, and merchants from China, Vietnam, and France for control of commerce and mining in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. During the war Vietnam and China tried to coax Liu Yongfu and other bandit leaders to help them in the fight against French imperialism. And after the war, unable to defeat the bandits, the French too had to compromise with them by incorporating surrendered bandit leaders into its colonial bureaucracy as commissioned officers. The seemingly endless cycle of imperial bandits continued for several more decades.

In weaving his story Davis skilfully combines Vietnamese, Chinese, and French documentary evidence with the oral traditions of highland aborigines about the Black Flags and Yellow Flags and their conflicts and relationships with Vietnamese, Chinese, and French governments. As the author concludes, we cannot fully understand the interconnected histories of Vietnam, China, and France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries without recognizing the important roles that imperial bandits played in making that history. *Imperial Bandits* is an important, well-argued book that should be essential reading for scholars and students interested in histories of modern Vietnam, China, and Western imperialism.

Unresolved Disputes in Southeast Asia

Unresolved Border, Land and Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia is an edited volume containing 12 chapters including introduction and conclusion. Broadly speaking, this book recounts and analyses three intra-regional and extra-regional land and maritime border conflicts involving Southeast Asia, namely Preah Vihear spat between Thailand and Cambodia, Koh Tral island dispute between Vietnam and Cambodia and row over South China Sea islands, atolls and islets between China and multiple members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Reviewer: Sampa Kundu, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi



Reviewed title:
Alfred Gerstl & Maria Strasakova (eds.) 2016.
Unresolved Border, Land and Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia
Leiden and Boston: Brill
ISBN 9789004312180

MANY OF THE CONTRIBUTING authors of this book agree with one point which says, land and maritime border conflicts in Southeast Asia actually represent the remnants of the colonial legacy. The European masters who ruled most of the present-day Southeast Asia for centuries were not careful about the ethnic and linguistic lineages of the local populace and divided the region based on their own convenience and power sharing agreements and treaties. Throughout the book, it has been argued that before the arrival of the colonial rulers, the concept of border was unknown in the region. The Europeans even divided the seas and oceans which were earlier used freely by the local people for trading and transportation purposes. The chapters by Petra Anđelova, Filip Kraus, Richard

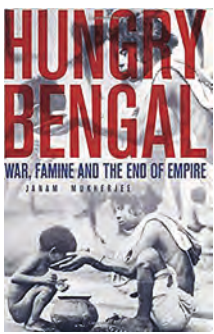
Turcsanyi (and Zdenek Kriz) and Maria Strasakova point out that the creation of artificial borders in the region have resulted in numerous conflicts including the one in Preah Vihear and the Koh Tral dispute. These authors have also spoken about the influences the domestic political situation practise to determine the contemporary characteristics of these conflicts. For instance, the chapter by Maria Strasakova explains how territorial border conflicts are used in Cambodian political scenario to influence the voters during election campaigns. Land is treated as a matter of national prestige in Cambodia, argued Maria Strasakova.

A number of the chapters of this book are contributed to elucidate the severity of the South China Sea dispute,

In Search of the Bengal Famine of 1943

The Bengal famine of 1943 remains a relatively unexplored topic of the modern Indian history. Despite the insightful and thought-provoking works on the Bengal famine by Amartya Sen (*Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement & Deprivation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) and Paul Greenough (*Prosperity & Misery in Modern Bengal: The Famine of 1943-1944*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), both of which were incidentally published in the early eighties, the famine has not been understood in its totality. The teleological nationalist history writing of India has exclusively focused, as Janam Mukherjee rightly notes, 'on the nationalist struggle, negotiations for a transfer of power, the manoeuvring of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League and/or the rise of communal rancor' (p.2). Mukherjee in this work provides a disturbing, yet riveting account of the Bengal famine of 1943, which was, as he aptly pointed out, not limited to the year 1943.

Reviewer: Shubhneet Kaushik, Jawaharlal Nehru University



Reviewed title:
Janam Mukherjee. 2015.
Hungry Bengal War, Famine and the End of Empire
Hurst & Company
ISBN 9781849044318

HE DECLARES IN THE INTRODUCTION of the book that his objective is to demonstrate 'the deep and abiding impacts that both war and famine had on the course of events in India on the verge of independence'. And to a large extent, he succeeded in fulfilling his objective. He gave us a detailed picture of the politico-economic and socio-psychological conditions which prevailed before and after the Bengal famine of 1943. While analysing the historical events that led to the famine, and understanding the socio-political milieu of the late colonial Bengal, Mukherjee also explores the structures of power and gave the Bengal famine its due centrality in the history of the 20th-century India. He emphasised that famine has to be understood as a complex form of human violence. In this context, Sen in his critically acclaimed work on the famines, *Poverty and Famines*, noted that starvation essentially means that people do not have enough food to eat and it is not related to the unavailability of food. In Sen's own words, 'Famine imply starvation, but not vice versa. And starvation implies poverty, but not vice versa.'

Mukherjee argued in this book that the history of the Bengal famine is also the history of power and disempowerment. Exploding the myths around the Bengal famine, Mukherjee shows with great mastery over details, how

during the period of the famine and the war, some powerful capitalists made fortunes and even influenced the negotiations for independence. Though the policies of the colonial rulers were to a large extent responsible for the making of the Bengal famine, the nationalist leadership was also guilty. Although it is true that most of the Congress leaders were behind bars during 1942-1944, when finally out of prison, rather than tackling the issue of the Bengal famine in careful and sensitive manner, the nationalist leadership was quite busy negotiating the transfer of power, with the colonial rule. He also draws our attention towards the fact that the leaders of both the Congress and the Muslim League had close socio-economic and political relationship with the industrialist class of Calcutta, which further led them to overlook the problem of the Bengal famine. Mukherjee rightly noted that as the end days of the Empire was within sight, 'the national leadership circled around the pie of independence, failing even to notice that ... the population in Bengal were beginning to starve' (p. 252). In the post-colonial India, severe repression of the Tebhaga movement (which was led by the sharecroppers) by the Indian state, also shows clearly that which class had the sympathy of national leadership with it, all the while.

The Bengal famine was also the direct consequence of the 'denial policy' of the British government. It essentially means, to confiscate all surplus stocks of rice in the vulnerable coastal districts of Bengal, so that an invading Japanese army could not feed its troops with locally confiscated stocks. And to worsen the situation further, more than 40,000 boats have been destroyed fearing the Japanese invasion, thus ruining the essential water transport system of Bengal. And the ongoing war, hoarding of the middle classes, extortionary intermediaries and the callous attitude of the Indian society towards the problem of famine further made the situation very grim.

Mukherjee treated the famine in a continuum, where it was preceded by malnutrition and succeeded by debilitation and disease. And thus he did not limit himself to one particular year, i.e. 1943, but traces the history of the Bengal famine before and after this period as well. Inspired by the works of James Scott (*Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985) and Ranajit Guha (*Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983) on everyday forms of resistance, Mukherjee forcefully argued that the victims of the Bengal famine did not 'die without a murmur', but in fact, they contested the famine at every stage (p. 12). He provides us an insightful account of the Second World War as it proceeded in South Asia, particularly in the colonial Bengal; the British efforts to save Calcutta, while exposing the countryside to the Japanese invasion and also making the villagers starve, with the so-called 'denial scheme'. Mukherjee also exposes the 'benevolent' nature of colonial rule, by giving the account of the activities of the colonial officials and their 'priorities' in tackling the famine and dealing with wartime shortages.

Japanese invasion, air raid damages and the riots of 1946 (followed by the Muslim League's call for Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946) were aptly dealt with in this book. Linking the Calcutta riot and famine, Mukherjee argued that the Calcutta riots 'ha[d] to be read from within the context of cumulative violence that began with chronic, multi-generational poverty, was compounded by war, and brought to a catastrophic head in devastating famine' (p. 254). This book also draws our attention towards the persistence of famine and starvation in the post-colonial India. The Indian state has failed miserably in addressing the problem of malnutrition, hunger, starvation, and famine.

As far as sources are concerned, Mukherjee relies heavily on the official sources like the famine reports, department files (including Home, Political, Economic and Overseas Department), private papers (e.g., Jadunath Sarkar and Nanavati Papers) and the unavoidable volumes of the *Transfer of Power*. Overreliance on the official sources to tell the story of the Bengal famine is also the major weakness of this book. Though in the bibliography, he mentioned more than a dozen interviews he had taken, he had not incorporated these interviews in his narrative of the Bengal famine. Though Mukherjee talked briefly about the persistence of the famine and continuity of it from the colonial to post-colonial, he neglects the role that the memory of the victims, remembrance of the families affected by the famine played in structuring, shaping, articulating and configuring the experiences and memories of the famine and starvation.

Also, he mentioned about the artists and activists associated with the Indian People's Theatre Association only at the end of the book, and that too inadequately. Though the book began with a quotation of Somnath Hore, it is a pity, that the artists like Chittoprasad, Somnath Hore, Gopen Roy, Ramkinkar, Atul Bose and Zainul Abedin were just mentioned in passing. And their works and the Indian People's Theatre Association's theatrical presentation and songs on the famine were completely ignored in this otherwise insightful and detailed narrative of the Bengal famine of 1943.

divide the ASEAN members on the South China Sea issue and economically weak countries like Cambodia serve the interests of the giant neighbour in doing so. The territorial disputes involving Cambodia on the one hand and other ASEAN members on the other hand further instigate Phnom Penh to accept China's regional actions, even at the cost of a disintegrated ASEAN. Alica Kizekova and Alfred Gerstl pointed out that ASEAN follows the path of multitrack diplomacy and engaging China with the regional institutionalism initiatives to avoid further escalation of tensions in the region. Truong – Minh Vu and Jorg Thiele analyse Vietnam's (and to some extent, Philippines') responses to the South China Sea crisis through multidimensional ways including making friends in the region (including Japan and India), taking the issue to the international forum (such as Permanent Court of Arbitration), provoking popular mandate against China domestically and using strategic restraint by encouraging joint development initiatives.

The advantages of reading this book are manifold. First, it offers wide variety of information both on the intra-ASEAN and extra-ASEAN territorial disputes covering the land borders as well as the maritime ones. Second, it has discussed about the land border disputes that happened to exist in the past; and hence, mostly forgotten by the present generation of students. Therefore, this book should be appreciated as a well-documented fact book containing historical information and analyses. More specifically speaking, this book is cherished as it has explained the impacts of the mentioned conflicts for contemporary Asia-Pacific studies.

This book offers few new arguments. First, besides China, United States is also responsible for the existing divisions within ASEAN as it often indulges itself in the great power rivalries in the region leaving little options for the smaller Southeast Asian countries except to be either with the United States or with China. The role of the United States in the great power game in the region however could have been expounded in a more comprehensive way. Second, in their co-authored chapter on Preah Vihear, Richard Turcsanyi and Zdenek Kriz mentioned that ASEAN countries are coming closer to each other against China. While this logic sounds stimulating and optimistic, the author needs to put more efforts to clarify the reasons behind this particular thinking. Third, Padraig Lysaght, in his chapter, noted that the South China Sea disputes have almost become an anarchical situation, thanks to the roles played by the great powers. However, to add more value to the chapter, the author could have studied the role of the small powers in that anarchy. One striking limitation of this book is the lack of discussions on China's role as the most valued economic partner of ASEAN. Economy plays a pivotal role in dividing ASEAN on the maritime disputes involving China.

However, overall, *Unresolved Border, Land and Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia* is a most welcome new addition to the existing literature on the political history of Southeast Asia, South China Sea issue and the history of border conflicts in the Asia-Pacific. This would be definitely helpful for the students, scholars and experts on the region as it deals with Southeast Asia in a lucid manner which is the centre of contemporary world affairs.



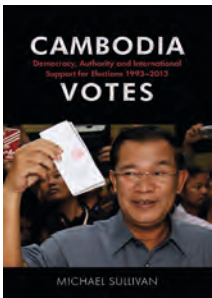
ASEAN's responses to it, perceptions and behaviour of few individual countries like Vietnam, Philippines and Cambodia to the problem and finally, to offer some solutions to the problem which include prospects for joint development programmes. Scattered over various chapters, while reading the book, a reader will discover the past and present and understand the implications of the South China Sea disputes. The narrative offered by Josef Falko Loher clarifies; Chinese government practises a synchronised strategy to enhance its power in the region on the one hand and on the other hand, tries to keep the extra-regional powers at bay. Simultaneously, in an order to ensure dominance over the region, China tries to

Above: One of the disputed Spratly atolls claimed and transformed by China.

Cambodia Votes

After two decades of strife, opposing Cambodian factions in October 1991 concluded several agreements, collectively known as the Paris Peace Accords. One of the agreements called for the United Nations to create a special authority, which became the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), to serve as an interim force to run government ministries, verify disarmament, and organize elections for a national assembly. Another agreement called on the international community to provide economic assistance for the reconstruction of Cambodia.

Reviewer: Ronald Bruce St John, Independent Scholar



Reviewed title:
Michael Sullivan. 2016.
Cambodia Votes: Democracy, Authority and International Support for Elections 1993-2013
NIAS Press
ISBN 9788776941871

IN INTERNATIONAL DONOR CIRCLES, it was widely accepted at the time that competitive multi-party elections were the optimum mechanism to put countries with little or no experience with democracy on the path to peace, prosperity, and democratization. An opposing school of thought held that elections should not be held until the rule of law and democratic institutions had been firmly established and consolidated in a country like Cambodia.

In *Cambodia Votes*, Michael Sullivan, a long-time resident of Cambodia and an advisor to the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Phnom Penh, analyzes the impact the 1993 UNTAC-supported elections had on the subsequent development of electoral politics in the country up to and including 2013. In this period, Cambodia held four sets of parliamentary or national elections and three sets of commune or local elections. With the exception of the

2012 local and the 2013 national elections, all of these polls were conducted with significant international financial and technical support. With the end of the Cold War, the number of states embracing some form of democratic government dramatically increased, and in this milieu, the UNTAC-supported elections conducted in Cambodia in 1993 were celebrated as a unique achievement. Unfortunately, the less-than-democratic outcome of those elections in which Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party (CPP) ran second in the balloting but remained in power began a two-decade period in which internationally assisted elections were manipulated and controlled by Hun Sen and the CPP. Instead of sparking lasting change in the traditional political culture in areas like power-sharing and loyal opposition, the political elite after the 1993 elections largely drew on long familiar aspects of Cambodian political culture to promote modernization within an authoritarian political model.

Over the ensuing two decades, powerful political forces within the Cambodian government and the dominant CPP regularly manipulated the electoral process to ensure the outcomes they desired. This manipulation took a variety of forms with intimidation, coercion, exclusion, violence, and fraud commonplace. Democratic procedures, respect for human rights, and concern for social justice were concepts bandied about but seldom implemented. Instead, the ruling parties returned to the client system prevalent in earlier eras, a system in which access to power and wealth was sought

and achieved through place and position with connections most often determining the level of justice obtained.

As Sullivan emphasizes, the Hun Sen government, even as it subverted the political process, strove to keep the political system credible enough to satisfy the wishes and interests of its international partners and donors. In turn, the international community found itself in the ambivalent position of promoting democracy on the one hand while welcoming the order and stability that a flawed political process contributed to on the other. 'At the same time, as there was a need for political stability – even if that meant glossing over human rights abuses and the rule of law – there was also a need for the international community in Cambodia to at least be seen to be "promoting liberal democratic values"' (p. 110). The result was a situation known as electoral authoritarianism in which opposition parties competed in elections, supported and observed by international bodies, which appeared to be competitive but in which the opposition could win votes and seats but never an outright victory because of authoritarian meddling and manipulation.

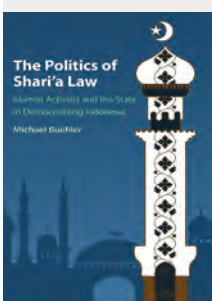
The author concludes on an optimistic note, arguing 'the 2013 election results demonstrated the power of Cambodian elections to challenge the entrenched power of the CPP' (p. 290). Whether or not his optimism is justified remains to be seen, but it certainly will be tested in the upcoming 2017 local and 2018 national elections. In this regard, the abrupt resignation in the face of increasing government pressure of Sam Rainsy, the embattled leader of Cambodia's main opposition party, just four months before the June 2017 local elections is not reassuring. Regardless of the outcome of future elections, the Cambodian experience after 1993 remains a sobering example of the interrelated challenges which must be addressed to nurture democracy in less developed political economies. In *Cambodia Votes*, Sullivan makes a major contribution to the ongoing debate over whether multi-party elections are a path to democratization or whether direct elections should be delayed until the rule of law and democratic institutions are established. In addition to academics and other specialists in Cambodia and Southeast Asia, this book should be read by diplomats and policy-makers faced with similar problems in other countries around the world.

Democracy, State Elites, and Islamist Activists in Indonesia

In this important book, Michael Buehler attempts to explain the cause of Islamization of politics in Indonesia after the fall of Soeharto's New Order military regime in 1998. Between 1998 and 2013, the country witnessed no less than 443 sharia regulations adopted by provincial and district/city governments across the country.

This figure is remarkably high given the marginal status of Islam under Soeharto's New Order. Against this background, Buehler asks what factor drives the proliferation of such regulations and how this factor works under Indonesia's new democratic system.

Reviewer: Sirojuddin Arif, Northern Illinois University



Reviewed title:
Michael Buehler. 2016.
The Politics of Shari'a Law: Islam, Authority and the State in Democratizing Indonesia
Cambridge University Press
ISBN 9781107130227

DRAWING ON A COMPARATIVE historical analysis of sharia policy making in West Java and South Sulawesi, Buehler shows how pressures from Islamist social movements have led many sub-national governments to adopt sharia regulations. He disagrees with the claim that the emergence of Islamist parties was the main force behind the adoption of sharia's regulations. The poor performance of these parties in the Indonesia's electoral system does not support such a claim. Rather than influences of Islamist parties, it is the collaboration between state elites and Islamist activists that drives the proliferation

of sharia regulations in many different parts of the country. While Islamist parties and Islamist social movements share the same agenda of 'Islamizing' the state, differences in the political origins of their development determine the different ways they work under Indonesia's new democratic system. Unlike Islamist parties, which faced fierce political competition from nationalist and religious-nationalist parties, Islamist social movements had a relatively large political space to articulate their demands for Islamization of politics.

One of the main strength of the book lays on its novel theoretical approach to the study of political Islam in contemporary Indonesia. Unlike many previous works on this subject, which mostly focused on the activities of Islamic and Islamist groups and/or institutions,¹ Buehler draws on a state-society relations approach to explain the rise of sharia regulations. According to him, the key to explain the politics of sharia policymaking across different regions in Indonesia is to understand how changes in power dynamics within the state define not only the nature of competition among different political actors but also state – Islam relations.

As laid out in Chapter 2, the relationship between Islam and the state was mostly antagonistic throughout the New Order. Some engagements that Soeharto showed since the early 1990s did not eradicate the prevailing tensions between Islam and the state. At local level, the rise of the New Order implied a couple of things: (1) the creation of new elites consisting of military personnel and state bureaucrats; and (2) maintaining of the old tension between old aristocracy and a new class of social elites consisting of rich Muslim farmers and traders, who often casted their opposition against the old aristocrats as well as the New Order in Islamist terms. Yet the collapse of Soeharto's military regime in 1998 has changed the future trajectory of political relations between these different groups. Rather than being antagonistic, state elites and Islamist activists now often engaged in mutual collaborations, albeit with different purposes, in 'Islamizing' politics at local level.

It is true that the collapse of Soeharto's regime did not necessarily eliminate the influence of the old elites nurtured by the New Order. But unlike in the previous era, in which political appointments were determined by the centralized power of the central government, aspiring leaders now have to gain popular support from voters to be elected as governors, district heads or city mayors. This allowed Islamist activists to capitalize their social capital and networks in the new political terrain created by democracy. Unlike Islamist parties, which struggled hard to expand their influence

among voters, Islamist social movements provided the prospective leaders with large political resources to support their bid for local leadership. The fierce competition created by Indonesia's direct election system for governors, district heads and mayors makes it possible for Islamist activists to use their social capital and vast networks in both rural and urban areas as bargaining power to support aspiring leaders in exchange of sharia regulations.

By tracing the development of sharia policy making since beginning of the New Order, *The Politics of Shari'a Law* offers a fresh look at the evolution of state-Islam relations in Indonesia especially at the local level. Nevertheless, despite its rich data and detailed historical analysis, the book leaves some questions unanswered. First, it is widely known that Islam in Indonesia is not a homogenous entity. Yet it seems to me that the book covers areas dominated by modernist Muslims. In fact, a substantial part of Indonesian Muslims adheres to the traditionalist version of Islamic teaching. It is interesting to know how the collapse of the New Order affects state-Islam relations in areas dominated by traditionalist Muslims. Besides, it is also interesting to know how traditionalist Muslims respond to the demand of Islamization of politics by Islamist activists.

Second, it is also known that nationalism has deeply affected not only the development of state ideology but also political contestation in Indonesia. At the national level, the failure of Islamist parties to promote Islamist causes in the constitution amendment in the early 2000s resulted from the strong resistance of the nationalists in the parliament. It is unfortunate that Buehler's work does not say much about the nationalists' stance on sharia regulations at the local level.

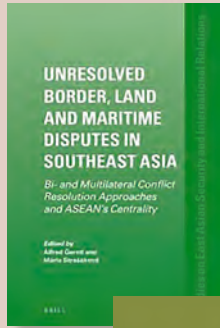
Nevertheless, regardless of the above questions about the respond of the nationalists and traditionalist Muslims to sharia regulations, Buehler has made a significant contribution to the study of Indonesian political Islam. His work clearly shows how social science and comparative method can be applied to enhance our theoretical understanding of democracy and political Islam. Buehler's hypothesis about the effect of power dynamics within the state on the development of political Islam deserves further attention not only from students of comparative politics but also Islamic and Indonesian studies.

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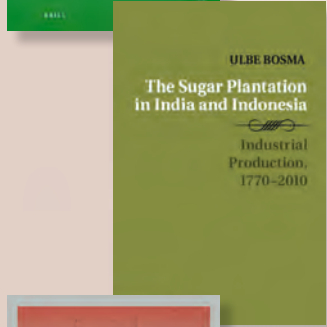
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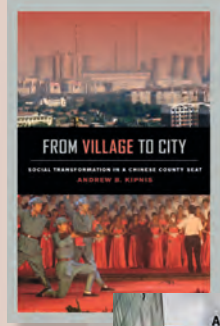
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Unresolved Border, Land and Maritime Disputes in Southeast Asia
Reviewer: Sampa Kundu
 Alfred Gerstl & Maria Strasakova (eds.) 2016.
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 ISBN 9789004312180
<http://newbooks.asia/review/unresolved-disputes>



The Sugar Plantation in India and Indonesia
Reviewer: Ved Baruah
 Ulbe Bosma. 2013.
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<http://www.newbooks.asia/review/sugar-plantation>



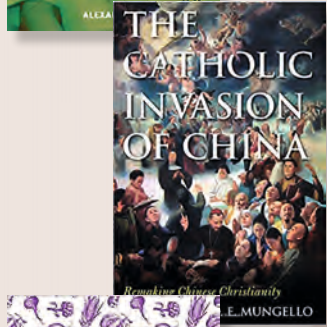
From Village to City
Reviewer: Madlen Kobi
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From Village to City: Social Transformation in a Chinese County Seat
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Reviewer: Fang Xu
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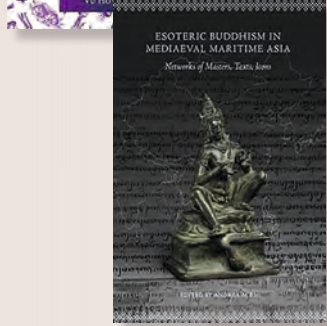
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Reviewer: Ronald Bruce St John
 Alexander Laban Hinton. 2016.
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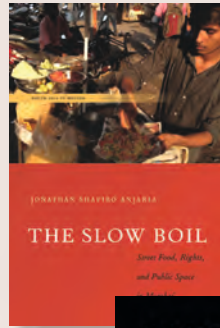
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Reviewer: Zhiqun Zhu
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The Catholic Invasion of China: Remaking Chinese Christianity
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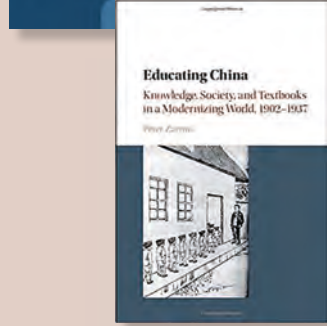
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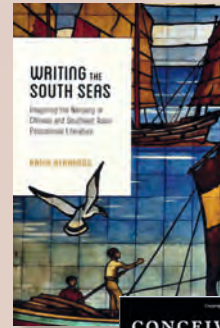
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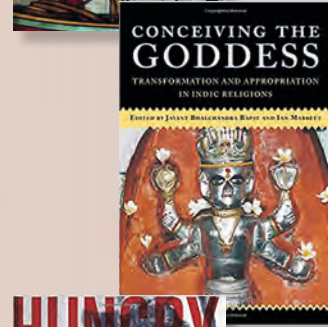
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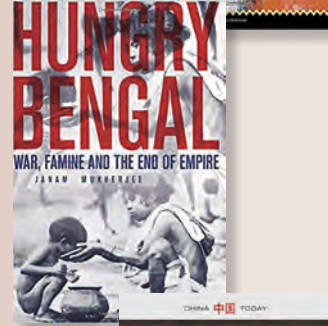
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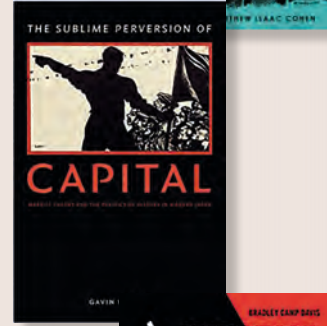
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Hun Sen delivers one of his notoriously lengthy speeches, at Phnom Penh Municipality Hall in 2016. Photo by Heng Chivoan/The Phnom Penh Post.

Politics and society in contemporary Cambodia

Since the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 Cambodian politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Hun Sen's rise has complemented the emergence of a tight-knit elite comprising CPP ministers, lawmakers, local officials, business tycoons, police chiefs and military generals who have come to dominate and characterise Cambodia as a patrimonial society. The profits of the subsequent widespread marketisation of Cambodia's natural resources, cheap labour and foreign investment are distributed within this elite, whilst the majority of the population remains bereft of the advantages of economic growth. In the process of consolidating its power-base and grip over the population, the CPP has extended its influence throughout society, from the commemoration of the Khmer Rouge atrocities to the distribution of television broadcasting licences, and from the designation of land concessions to the relocation of the urban and rural poor. This Focus Section explores the extent and nature of the CPP's fingerprint on different societal spheres, including civil society, natural resources exploitation, urban business, education, agriculture, and the arts. Taken together, the contributions here reveal a political *modus operandi*, with its accompanying intended and unintended consequences for Cambodia. They arrive in the context of a politics that has facilitated the CPP's domination, but now provokes an increasing challenge to this hegemony.

Politics and society in contemporary Cambodia *continued*

The rise of Hun Sen and the CPP

In February of 2017 the CPP amended the Law on Political Parties, thereby barring convicted criminals from political party leadership roles and conferring authority to the Ministry of Interior to dissolve political parties on the basis of making 'serious mistakes', threatening 'national unity', or 'the security of the state'. The human rights office of the United Nations (UN) has protested the vague language and excessive restrictions contained within the amendments, because they provide "considerable discretion" for the Ministry of Interior to control the political process.¹ No one has any doubt that the amendments were designed to debase Sam Rainsy, Hun Sen's political rival who is currently living in exile in France, with the opposition suggesting the amendment "kills democracy in Cambodia".² Rainsy faces several convictions, including a five-year prison sentence over a Facebook post criticising the CPP. In the 2013 elections Rainsy's Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) won 55 seats while the CPP share fell from 90 to 68 seats, its worst performance since 1998. The results were striking considering the CPP's control over the National Election Committee, state media and multiple reported electoral irregularities. Due, in no small part, to the amendments to the Law on Political Parties Sam Rainsy resigned from the CNRP to protect the party from dissolution, transferring the presidency to his former deputy, Kem Sokha. As this Focus Section goes to press, Kem Sokha has just been arrested on charges of treason and faces up to 30 years in prison, with the CPP claiming that Sokha has conspired with the United States to instigate regime change. CNRP representatives refuse to appoint yet another president, and hence Sokha's arrest could spell the dissolution of the opposition party.

The amendments to the Law on Political Parties represent the latest move by the CPP to consolidate their power, part of an ongoing political strategy originating nearly four decades ago when Hun Sen touched down at Phnom Penh Airport on 11 January 1979. Four days earlier, Vietnamese troops had moved into Cambodia's capital and ousted the Khmer Rouge regime, an extreme Maoist regime that led to the death of an estimated 1.5 to 2 million Cambodians and left the country decimated. The Vietnamese installed a regime including Hun Sen, Heng Samrin and Chea Sim. The three men were defected Khmer Rouge commanders who had fled to Vietnam in 1977-78 following a series of violent, paranoia driven internal purges instigated by Pol Pot, the head of the Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese stayed in power for a decade (1979-1989); this allowed the three men, who still featured on CPP billboards together during the latest national elections campaign, to lay down their political roots. Hun Sen proved the most politically shrewd amongst them, and became prime minister in 1985.

Hun Sen has been characterised as a pragmatist, never a devoted communist.³ Since becoming prime minister he has developed his power-base through the exchange of political privileges and backing [*khnorng*] for financial contributions and loyalty to the CPP, which would gradually develop into the patronage network that now cements his position. The CPP elite incites loyalty amongst government officials by distributing opportunities for rent-seeking, and military generals have been allowed to make money from the land, timber and soldiers being put at their disposal. Similarly, business tycoons have been granted public contracts, import monopolies and land concessions in exchange for financial contributions to the CPP coffers and top-officials. As such, Hun Sen has

erected a pyramid-like patronage system, himself the figurehead, whereby power flows down and money flows up. The patronage system rests on informal strings [*khsae*], reinforced at charity events, on the golf course and through strategic marriages between political, military and business elites. These patron-client arrangements produced an extractive elite that has subjugated the formal regulatory political system or, in other words, a weak state ruled by strong men.

Hun Sen first demonstrated the efficacy of his power-base in the 1990s. The departure of the Vietnamese in 1989 urged the involvement of the UN (1991-93), who initiated a peace-building mission to avoid another civil war. The UN aimed for reconciliation between Cambodia's political factions including Hun Sen's, the Royalists and the Khmer Rouge who still controlled Cambodia's western provinces. Hun Sen lost the 1993 elections to the Royalist party headed by Prince Rannaridh. However, he refused to relinquish power and eventually brokered a power-sharing coalition using control over the police and armed forces as leverage. The coalition was fragile and violent clashes broke out on 5-6 July 1997, during which armed forces loyal to Hun Sen gained the upper hand over Rannaridh's forces. This resulted in Hun Sen's *coup de force*, allegedly paid for by allied tycoons,⁴ marking the beginning of CPP hegemony. The CPP won the subsequent elections, elections dubbed a "miracle on the Mekong" by the head of the United States observatory delegation,⁵ increasing its seats in the National Assembly from 64 in 1998 to 73 in 2003 and 90 in 2008 (out of 123 seats).

The CPP blueprint for power was established. Through violence, intimidation and bribery, Hun Sen neutralised or co-opted the threat from political opposition outside and within his ranks. Meanwhile, he elicited votes by populist measures such as having roads, pagodas and so-called 'Hun Sen schools' built by proxy tycoons, and by reminding the largely rural electorate of the security risks involved in political pluralism, and the horrors of what came before. Following the 2003 elections Hun Sen placed loyalists in key positions, cementing his leadership and becoming synonymous with the CPP and, in extension, the Cambodian state. The consolidation of CPP power over the period since has fostered the expansion of state, business and military elites. Well-connected Cambodians have reaped the benefits of stability and growth. The army, for example, now has an estimated 3000 generals (over three times more than the US army),⁶ while the number of *oknha*, an honorary title bestowed upon business tycoons loyal to the CPP, has surged from around 20 in 2004 to more than 700 in 2014.⁷

From miracle to mirage?

The expansion of the CPP and its associated patronage networks has accompanied the systematic exploitation of Cambodia's resources. Forced displacement of citizens in urban areas, with minimal compensation, has cleared the way for commercial real-estate projects that benefit elite stakeholders. In the countryside, over half of Cambodia's arable land has been granted for Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) to local, Chinese or Vietnamese companies who occasionally employ army units to force villagers from the land. These evictions, alongside logging and dam-building in the Mekong River, threaten rural livelihoods dependent on agriculture, forests and fish. Cambodians are increasingly disillusioned by evictions, landlessness and indebtedness causing a rise in political

activism. Patrimonialism remains systemically internalised at all social levels. For example, as healthcare and education services remain poor, teachers and doctors are dependent on side-activities and fees from parents and patients to top up their salaries. Furthermore, those who lived through the Khmer Rouge are ageing, while younger voters are less willing to acquiesce to this status-quo in exchange for political stability. Given the CPP's relatively narrow power-base in the post-conflict period, it may have been necessary to distribute status and largesse to avoid unrest within the state apparatus. However, Hun Sen's strongman position has been unchallenged since the mid-2000s. In principle, the higher echelons of the CPP could have strengthened the formal institutions of society to stimulate broad-based development, but they opted for the expansion of the patrimonial state.⁸ It seems that as excesses continue, and with a changing electorate, the strategy responsible for the consolidation of power under Hun Sen may backfire on the regime.

The CPP has been in a constant, and rhetorical, tug of war with its critics from civil society, including domestic and international human rights groups, and the political opposition. Recently, for example, the chief of the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) claimed he had evidence of corruption by Sam Rainsy, warning that "if he continues to violate the law, we will uncover it", prompting Sam Rainsy to remind him that the duty of the ACU is to expose government corruption and that he is not a member of the government.⁹ The ACU was also deployed to investigate criminal charges raised against Kem Sokha, successor to the exiled Rainsy. The CPP has tolerated a limited degree of opposition, but resorts to violence when opposition swells. The killings of garment sector unionist Chea Vichea in 2004, environmentalist Chut Wutty in 2012 and government critic Kem Ley in 2016 are widely believed to have been politically motivated. The opposition sets forth a pro-poor agenda based on human rights and democratisation, whereas CPP representatives downplay the severity of land evictions or human rights abuses, blaming protests on 'incitement' by the opposition. Notably, in opposition Sam Rainsy aggressively capitalised on populist anti-Vietnamese sentiments, claiming that the CPP is still a 'puppet' of Vietnam that turns a blind eye to Vietnamese 'encroachment' and 'colonisation'. For example, the public holiday on 7 January, the day the Khmer Rouge fell in 1979, generates annual controversy: the CPP dubs it 'Victory Over Genocide Day', whereas the opposition frames it as the start of Vietnamese occupation.

International organisations and Western donors have been scrutinised for their role in the development of Cambodian society. They have facilitated the emergence of thousands of NGOs in the country and introduced a developmentalist discourse of democratisation, rule of law and 'good governance'. Since the UN peace mission of the early 1990s, Phnom Penh has hosted innumerable Joint Technical Working Groups and Government-Donor Coordination Committees aimed at tackling corruption, strengthening the judiciary or decentralising government. Donor reports follow a familiar line of reasoning that in order to further Cambodia's development certain deficiencies are to be resolved via technical or structural reforms. Reports by the World Bank, for instance, consistently feature long lists of recommendations, urging the government to close the human opportunities gap, promote local participation, take steps to ensure

Below:
Boeung Kak Lake in Phnom Penh (left) has been filled in to make way for a CPP senator's real-estate development project (right), which involved controversial evictions of people living along the lake. Images courtesy of Google.





Above left: Prime Minister Hun Sen casts his vote in the 2013 election. Photo by Pha Lina/The Phnom Penh Post.



Above right: CNRP President Kem Sokha, who was arrested on 3 September 2017, at a campaign rally earlier in the year. Photo by Hong Menea/The Phnom Penh Post.

transparency, and build capacity. These recommendations, however, ring hollow. The CPP elite has largely paid lip service to these good governance ideals, formulating concurrent National Strategic Development Plans and Rectangular Strategies alongside cementing networks of loyalists and controlling development assistance. Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, Hun Sen's right-hand man who died earlier this year and whose personal fortune was estimated at \$1 billion, once argued at a donor meeting that "there is no need to plead the case of good governance" because "we are all converts".¹⁰

Publications by good governance converts aside, academic commentary on Cambodia tends to debunk the rhetoric of both the regime and international donors. On the one hand, scholars denounce Hun Sen's discourse of national progress, arguing that his development agenda produces growing poverty, patrimonialism, population displacement and exploitation. An average annual GDP growth of around 7% since 1994 cannot hide the highly exclusive nature of economic development and an over-reliance on vulnerable sectors like tourism and garments, and nominal elections cannot hide the fact of state oppression and high-level corruption. On the other hand, scholars critique the neoliberal reform approach taken by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other Western donors, who, willingly or ignorantly, have become a pillar of Hun Sen's political consolidation. On paper, privatisation and the decentralisation of governance distribute power more broadly in society and enhance accountability. Yet in the Cambodian patrimonial context these reforms are co-opted, producing opportunities to fortify the CPP's position at the district, commune and village levels.¹¹ One thinks of the evictees of Boeung Kak Lake, removed under the auspices of the World Bank's land titling programme. The CPP had created, for a time, a satisfactory illusion of liberal democracy, free markets and progress, which not merely serves to delude international donors, but provided the latter a pretext for extending aid. This maintenance of appearances has been well documented by scholars across various societal spheres resulting in a period of hegemony in Cambodia referred to by Sebastian Strangio as "a mirage on the Mekong".¹²

A critical juncture?

The mirage, however, seems to be fading. It has become harder for donor countries to deny the CPP's attempts to purge the opposition in the aftermath of the 2013 elections, and Hun Sen seems no longer willing to play along. The most recent illustration is the widely condemned silencing of *The Cambodia Daily*, a newspaper often critical of the government that was forced to shut down operations after it was unable to pay an exorbitant \$6.3 million tax bill. Last year, the European Parliament passed a motion calling for aid funding for Cambodia to be made dependent on its human rights record. Hun Sen replied: "You threaten to cut off aid; please cut it and the first person who will suffer will be the people who work with NGOs". He added that "China has never made a threat to Cambodia and has never ordered Cambodia to do something".¹³ Indeed, the CPP has become less dependent on Western donors and more reliant on Chinese investment and aid, which, underneath the 'no strings attached' rhetoric, seems intended to broker access for Chinese companies in Cambodia and enhance

China's political clout in Southeast Asia. Remarkably, in issuing a ten-page paper titled "To Tell The Truth" earlier this year, the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs clarifies the regime's antagonism towards the West.¹⁴ The paper argues that the United States have attempted to destabilise the country and topple the regime using civil society as a tool, distorting facts and amplifying minor problems. Western governments, it continues, chose to support the side that "advocates disorder" and "incites conflict with Vietnam" rather than "the one that pursues development", "treasures peace", "liberated the country and protected its people". The paper points towards the hypocrisy of the West, which enjoys good relations with countries that have a single-party system while "Cambodia adheres to a multi-party system". Coming full circle, "To Tell The Truth" is a direct response to the UN's critique on the earlier mentioned amendments to the Law on Political Parties.

Bringing into focus

This tit for tat between Western international institutions and the CPP, a hardening of CPP politics, changing international relations in the region, changes in the national political mood and the forthcoming 2018 elections, may present a critical juncture with the potential to depart from the miracle/mirage discourse on Cambodian politics. These considerations present us with a moment to bring into focus the dynamics at the convergence of politics and society in contemporary Cambodia. The topics presented are not merely political in nature and will provide a combination of analyses broad and focused in scope and perspective in their examination of this convergence.

To begin with, Sarah Milne will take us to the Areng Valley in the Cardamom Mountains to look at the local political dynamics of resistance to the Areng Dam project, particularly the strategies deployed by the CPP locally to deal with resistance to this kind of development. Moving from the local to the national, Jake Wiczorek examines the state of the law in Cambodia and recent trends in law making that have increased the CPP's ability to intervene and control elements of civil society, including the political process. It places these in the context of the international debate on human rights in Cambodia. Heidi Dahles investigates the impact of politics and marketisation specifically on higher education, reflecting across a range of issues such as commercialisation, competition, employment and funding. Jean-Christophe Diepart charts the changing fortunes of the Cambodian peasant along with Cambodia's modernisation in both lowland and upland regions. He examines geographical movements in Cambodia's agricultural population and analyses peasant security in the wake of the state sponsored ELCs. Alvin Lim uncovers the construction and deconstruction of the Cambodian political subject through the lens of recent political debates and controversies in Cambodia, providing insight into the varied experiences of political subjectivity under CPP rule. Following from this Michiel Verver examines CPP interference within Phnom Penh's private sector, revealing contrasting experiences between well-connected tycoons and a majority of small-scale business owners. There has been growing encouragement for the role of the entrepreneur in developing Cambodia's economy, but there are still many challenges facing entrepreneurs and start-ups. Gea Wijers investigates

the role of state policies in improving prospects for Cambodian entrepreneurs. Finally, Suppya Nut shines a light on the Khmer Dance Project, an institution for the preservation and transmission of knowledge of the traditional Royal Ballet of Cambodia, of which many records were lost during Cambodia's recent history.

Michiel Verver, Assistant Professor, Department of Organization Sciences, VU Amsterdam, the Netherlands (m.j.verver@vu.nl); Jake Wiczorek, International Relations graduate, Leiden University, the Netherlands (j.r.wiczorek@umail.leidenuniv.nl).

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On the perils of resistance



“We won’t be able to fight this unless we unite”, said the activist monk Venerable But Buntenh to a small but significant group of Areng Valley residents, gathered under the hot sun at the local temple.¹ The monk had travelled to the remote valley with like-minded others in 2014, to show solidarity with local indigenous people fighting the proposed Cheay Areng Dam² – one of the many controversial, elite-backed dam projects in Cambodia.³ Together, the villagers and their allies staged various acts of resistance. Large trees in the valley were ordained by monks with saffron cloth to highlight the importance and value of the forest now being threatened by the dam. A blockade of the local access road was also implemented so that trucks associated with the Chinese dam-building company could not enter the area.⁴ Such actions escalated the anti-dam struggle, which soon gained national and international attention. For example, one hundred and fifty thousand Facebook ‘likes’ appeared rapidly on the profile-page of the main NGO involved in the campaign, a local group called Mother Nature [*Meada Tomechiet*]; and countless visitors began arriving in the Areng Valley to show their support, including young middle-class Khmers from Phnom Penh, and even opposition party members.

Sarah Milne

THUS, THE SCENE WAS SET for a struggle between anti-dam campaigners and the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP). How has the CPP ‘dealt’ with the anti-dam movement, emerging from this isolated corner of the Cardamom Mountains? How has life in the Areng valley been affected by the campaign and the CPP’s response to it? What does this tell us about contemporary Cambodian politics, and prospects for grassroots resistance?

Ruling party tactics in the Areng Valley

In responding to these questions, a major recurring theme is that of divisions and divided-ness. First, this emerges in the CPP’s deployment of an intimate, village-level ‘divisive politics’ – a power play in which villagers are forced to take sides on the dam issue, and in which local discussion is remarkably reshaped along party-political lines. Never mind that the dam presents a grave moral and existential threat; such thoughts are shut down in what becomes a narrowly framed fight over villagers’ party allegiances. The second way in which divisions manifest is through the CPP’s use of forced, physical separations, which are often violently implemented. For example, by the end of 2015, two of the key anti-dam campaign leaders – a charismatic Khmer-speaking foreigner and a defiant local indigenous man – had been deported and jailed respectively.⁵ Thus, in the dynamics of the Areng Valley struggle, we can observe the CPP’s multi-pronged strategy of ‘divide and conquer’. This is a proven CPP strategy for maintaining dominance, which is now being applied to contemporary environmental movements, including struggles over water⁶ and land.⁷

To understand how the CPP’s divisive politics could gain traction in the Areng, it is necessary to explain something

of the valley’s geography and people. Indigenous *Chong* people have inhabited this part of the southern Cardamom Mountains for centuries. They were, in many ways, the ideal peasants, as imagined by King Sihanouk in his concept of the *Khmer Leu* or Upland Khmer, and later glorified by the Khmer Rouge in their Maoist-agrarian project that violently overran the valley. With the Vietnamese invasion, however, the valley was emptied of its population, and villagers only began to return to their homelands in the late 1990s or early 2000s. What they returned to was a mêlée of logging, soldier settlers, and other speculators interested in the valley’s natural resources including wildlife traders and international conservation groups.⁸ This history means that, although village life may seem unsullied at the outsider’s first glance, the valley is far from being a socially homogenous rural idyll.

Nevertheless, the heart of the valley is remarkable, and it is from here that the anti-dam campaign emerged – specifically, in the two villages of Chumnoab and Prolay. Although remote, visiting these villages has always been relatively easy. Houses are lined along the road, the population is almost entirely indigenous, people are welcoming, and there used to be a sense of social harmony. It is entirely possible for outsiders to become enchanted with this place, and its inhabitants, who lead a life entirely connected with the river, the surrounding forest, and the valley’s resident spirits. No wonder this area has been the hub of the campaign; and indeed, it is where Alex Gonzalez-Davidson (of Mother Nature) landed in 2011, initially as an intrepid Khmer-speaking visitor, on a bicycle. The place charmed and transformed him, and he in turn changed the village with the campaign against the dam that began slowly in 2012.

Villagers explained to me Alex’s role over the years, during my visit in 2015: “Alex made an impact upon the people here. He helped them to complain. He taught us about the impacts of hydro-power, and so we decided to protest ourselves”. In other words, Alex helped those local residents who silently opposed the dam (estimated by campaigners to be around two or three hundred people) to find their voice, and to discover the power of advocacy.

But not all local commentary was so kind, and not everyone was prepared to protest against the dam. This is because, as I indicated, the Areng is not homogenous, nor is it immune from the tentacles of the CPP apparatus, the party’s extractive interests, and the vagaries of village gossip. For example, at the northern tip of the valley lies an utterly remote indigenous village called Chumna. It was once described to me by an NGO colleague as “divided, like North and South Korea”. A cloud hangs here, of local rivalries never resolved, and of poverty and vulnerability. Villagers are cautious towards outsiders in Chumna, and probably for good reason: if things go wrong, there is no back-up. One’s survival in the face of rice shortages or illness hinges upon local reciprocity, patronage and kinship relationships, and the benevolence of the Village Chief. Indeed, the Chief sees the villagers as his children and grandchildren [*goan, jao*], who should behave accordingly. In this context, it is best not to rock the boat, and ‘advocacy’ [*thorsumatek*] is considered to be a dirty word.

I highlight these traditional Khmer and indigenous norms in the valley, because they have been cleverly captured and manipulated by the CPP. There is a neat overlay between the state and local indigenous leadership, which makes anti-dam resistance contingent upon those who are prepared to rock the boat. This means challenging not just state authority, but also the prevailing social order. Indeed, one of the main problems faced by dissenters is that they are made to feel like naughty children, as though they have crossed a moral line. This dynamic was painfully obvious in Prolay’s neighbouring village of Samraong, where the Village Chief is both a respected indigenous elder and an appointed CPP official (see photo). For this old man, who remembers the French colonial days, the CPP brought peace and stability to Cambodia; and as a loyal public official, he perceives that there is a ‘right way’ to do things in the village. When asked about Mother Nature and the dam, then, his reply was somewhat predictable: he said that the activists had made a grave error in not meeting with him, especially before their first gathering at the Prolay temple in 2013. This criticism of failing to follow protocol was echoed more generally by CPP-compliant others across the valley, in comments like: “They [Mother Nature] don’t relate to the authorities. It’s not good. They take the young people to go and learn, and change their ideas”. For indigenous elders like the village chief, the weight of these conventions made it virtually impossible to consider a deliberative process over the dam. Or, as the old man said with a tragic glint in his eye: “I follow the government. I do what they say”. He chose not to elaborate on the pain of losing his homeland, the place of his birth some eighty years ago.

For the villages of Prolay and Chumnoab, this CPP co-option of traditional leadership has resulted in social divisions that now seem irreparable. For example, the wife of one of the campaign sympathisers in Chumnoab explained to me: “Life here is not like before. It’s complicated now ... It’s like there are two groups in the village ... and people don’t respect the new Commune Chief. This problem comes from the dam. Before we always shared with each other, and people listened to the old Commune Chief”. Others also commented on the unravelling of village life, saying that it was hard to perform ceremonies and marriages in the village now, as the people were so divided. Everyone seemed to lament the loss of understanding between villagers, but there was no obvious solution. Instead there was a crisis in leadership, due to the new Commune Chief’s inability to remain neutral on the dam. As one informant explained to me: “There are two roads, and the Commune Chief must choose: if he helps the people to stop the dam, then he is ‘wrong’ with the government law. If he helps the law, then he is ‘wrong’ with his people. Both ways are wrong”. The result has been a muted Commune Chief, falling into step with the CPP, and failing his people.

Similar dynamics of confusion emerged around NGOs operating in the area at the time, often in association with the dam campaign. Some villagers said that the NGOs came to play political games, and “to do what they wanted, for their own benefit”. These accusations went hand-in-hand with rumours about how Mother Nature was supported by the opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). In fact, Alex and his movement were all ‘painted with that colour’ [*liep poah*]: if you associated with the anti-dam campaign, then you were presumed to be a CNRP supporter. Of course, Mother Nature campaigners denied that they had anything to do with party politics, but the paint stuck. For those tainted by the gossip, this meant subtle exclusion from social and political life in the village.

Above:
Local indigenous
Village Chief (left)
with long-term
NGO worker in
the area. Photo
by Sarah Milne.

Local politics and environmental struggle in Cambodia

For example, campaigners explained to me that they were no longer called by their leaders to attend village meetings: “They don’t call us because they’re scared that we’ll raise the issue of the dam”. Similarly, the dam campaigners were excluded from CPP-sponsored handouts in the village, such as those from the Cambodian Red Cross. Thus, the authorities conveyed a clear message to villagers: disobedience entails isolation and social risk.

While much of the local fall-out from the dam campaign seems like petty bickering, or an accidental crisis in local governance due to some misguided gossip, I was advised otherwise. As we debriefed on the Areng in 2015, my old colleague who had worked in the area for over a decade said: “They [the party] want Khmer people to be like that. It’s their strategy”. Indeed, I was also informed by campaigners in the valley that the local police were instructed by higher authorities to ‘paint’ people with gossip, calling into question their behaviour and party affiliation, in order “to create conflict inside the community, to break them”. And so the workings of the CPP and its divisive politics came into view. It is apparently easy to divide people, especially when they are geographically isolated and vulnerable. Indeed the Venerable But Buntenh, leader of the Independent Monk Network for Social Justice, must have known what was coming when he spoke to the Areng gathering in 2014: “we won’t be able to fight this unless we unite”.

Divide and conquer?

But the CPP’s ability to trigger local divisiveness does not guarantee it victory over the anti-dam campaign. Faced with a very public and emotive struggle against the dam, and still dealing with its 2013 election shock, the CPP employed other strategies too. Primarily, these have involved intimidation, and the physical removal of the anti-dam campaign leaders. As indicated, Alex, the leader of Mother Nature was deported from Cambodia in February 2015 – he has not yet been able to return to the country. Furthermore by late 2015, Ven Vorn, the main local indigenous leader from Chumnoab in the campaign, was arrested and sent

to the provincial gaol in Koh Kong.⁹ The charges against him were trumped up, and related to his use of timber for the construction of a ‘community house’ for meetings and visitors. He has only recently been released. Finally, although for apparently unrelated matters, the activist monk But Buntenh went into hiding in 2016, fearing for his safety.¹⁰ Thus, the ruling party has indicated that it is willing to flex its muscles against dissenters in a very public way.

Nevertheless, the party has also made efforts to appease popular demand, in what may be interpreted as a Polanyian ‘double movement’.¹¹ For example, the day after Alex’s deportation, Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that the Areng dam was to be put on hold until at least 2018; an announcement that came with the additional advice to would-be protesters and commentators: “now I beg you to stop talking about it”.¹² For campaigners against the dam, this was very good news. But contradictory government documents have recently surfaced, suggesting that dam construction will begin in 2018, and a mysterious road from the eastern side of the Cardamom Mountains into the area is currently being built by military engineers.¹³

Secrecy and uncertainty are therefore likely to prevail over the fate of the valley, which must be considered as one of Cambodia’s few remaining natural and cultural treasures. This means that the brave campaigners of the Areng will need to prepare themselves for a long haul, fighting against social and political forces that will relentlessly try to divide and silence them.

Sarah Milne is a Lecturer in the ‘Resources, Environment and Development’ group at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University. She first went to the Cardamom Mountains in 2002, where unexpectedly she got hooked: she worked there with local communities for three years (2002-2005); subsequently completed her PhD on the political ecology of forest conservation in the area (Cambridge University, 2005-2009); and continues to remain engaged with conservation and development issues in the area, and Cambodia more generally (sarah.milne@anu.edu.au).

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Below:
Local people by the Areng river during the dry season. Photo by Sarah Milne.



Ratifications and amendments. A turning point for Cambodia?

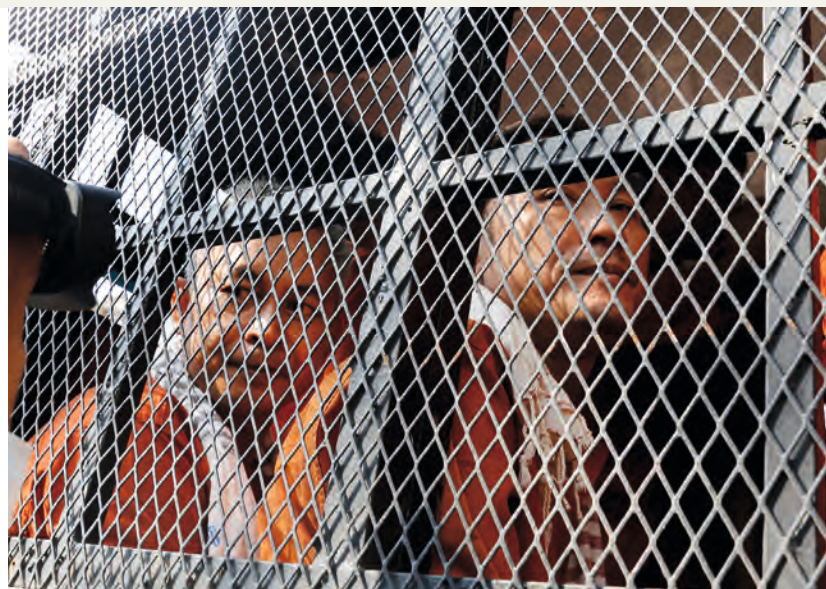
The Cambodian People's Party (CPP), Cambodia's long standing ruling party, has recently adopted a strategy of ratifying laws that increase their legal capability to intervene in civil society beyond what some believe to be amenable to a multi-party democracy. The recent ratification of The Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO) and the amended Law on Political Parties drew intense scrutiny from civil society opponents and the international community, the latter being directly addressed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for its contravention of international treaties safeguarding political rights that the Cambodian constitution is party to. This significant, if not belated, criticism from the mainstream international community warrants interest. However, there is also a domestic avenue of investigation with regard to what further power these laws provide to a party that has proved already capable of pursuing its domestic political interests through an informal patrimonial network within which the judiciary is subjugated.

Jake Wiczorek

LANGO WAS RATIFIED into practice on 1 January 2016. The law provides the state with a legal framework for controls and restrictions over the activities of all domestic and foreign associations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that operate in Cambodia. LANGO provides a legal basis to deny registration, which is required for activities to be legalised, on the basis of any activity that may "jeopardise peace, stability and public order or harm the national security, national unity, culture, and traditions of the Cambodian national society", stipulating political neutrality specifically as a requisite for approval.¹ This puts the legality of many organisations that the Cambodian state may find troublesome at risk. As part of its special consultative status to the 30th UN Human Rights Council, Human Rights Now stated "LANGO is inconsistent with Cambodia's obligations under both international and domestic law, beginning with freedom of association guaranteed by ICCPR Article 22 and the Cambodian constitution Article 42".²

The amendments to the Law on Political Parties provide the state with a legal capacity to dissolve political parties. Of particular interest is Article 6, which deems unlawful any political activity that affects the "security of the state", sabotages the multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy regime, or incites to "break up the national unity"; as well as Article 18, which bars from leadership positions those convicted of a "prison term of a felony or misdemeanour" unless the sentence was pardoned by the King. Furthermore, regulations around the registration criteria for political parties are also introduced. In a similar fashion to LANGO, the Ministry of Interior has discretion to reject the registration of political parties on the basis of diverting from the "vigour" of the laws of the Kingdom of Cambodia.³

To grasp the full implications of these laws, further information around Cambodia's legal system is forthcoming. Formally Cambodia has a continental style legal system with a separation of powers between executive, legislative and judicial branches and legal mandates that stem from a mixture of the 1993 constitution, legislation, government decrees and international treaties. This system, as with all legal systems, exists within a politicised space. The latest Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (2016)⁴ report found that the judicial system is subjugated by the executive and a spate of recent politically motivated legal activity on behalf of the state has highlighted the malleability of the law in Cambodia. In 2016 the CPP arrested numerous prominent opposition politicians and civil society leaders on apparently spurious charges. If one were to pursue this line of enquiry they would find a slew of cases against CPP opponents such as the quagmire-like case against Kem Sokha, the current leader of the opposition, and defamation cases against outspoken civil society critics such as Ou Virak. Over the last two years Cambodia has held 35 political prisoners, 20 of whom remain incarcerated, from a mix of environmental activist groups, human rights organisations, and the main opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP).⁵ Indeed, comments on the inadequacies of judicial independence and capability in Cambodia are not new. For example, in 2009 Kheang Un, with the assistance of anonymous interviews, found that judges and prosecutors generally acquiesce when faced with intervention by high-ranking government officials.⁶ One of their interviewees, an anonymous Cambodian judge, added that officials "send their fixers who are connected



Above: Adhoc officials Ny Sokha (right) and Yi Soksan sit in a police vehicle after their pre-trial detention was extended in April at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court. Photo by Pha Lina/The Phnom Penh Post.

to big people to the court to talk directly with judges and prosecutors". On this arrangement another judge added that "maintaining one's stance is difficult. For example, they used to help our interests. What can we do in such a case?"

The state of the law is of interest; Articles 8 and 31 of LANGO, for example, stipulate that the organisations subject to the law must file appeals through the court system if they are denied registration, suspended or deleted from the register. Concordantly, Articles 19 and 24 of the amended Law on Political Parties give proviso for dissolution or disapproval of registration of political activities by political parties that must also be appealed through the courts. With corruption seemingly immanent in the courts process, it is no wonder civil society organisations are fearful. Global Witness has suggested this enables the CPP to legally "pick and choose which groups can exist and criminalise those deemed to be trouble makers".⁷ Yet, one must also acknowledge that the Cambodian government has been oppressive of opposition in this way for decades by arresting human rights and community activists and running unfair elections. When one considers that the strategy of oppressing civil society has been undertaken effectively through the courts without its formalisation in particularised laws, one could consider these laws as an extension of the CPP's strategy, rather than a true departure, that comes in response to fears of electoral unpopularity ahead of the 2018 elections. The trend from the 2013 elections, including the 2017 commune elections, show a steady decline in support for the CPP and a steady increase in support for the CNRP opposition party.

Case study: the Kem Sokha affair

To understand the nuances these laws bring to bear on Cambodian politics one could assess their impact on one of Cambodia's largest recent political scandals involving the current leader of the opposition CNRP, Kem Sokha. In 2016, Kem Sokha, then deputy leader of the CNRP, was embroiled in a scandal following the leak of audio recordings supposed to contain defamatory remarks by Kem Sokha to an alleged mistress going by the moniker of Mon Srey. The supposed affair subsequently evolved into a larger scandal that saw the court summons of Kem Sokha and the arrest of Cambodian members of the human rights organisation ADHOC, who came to

be known as the ADHOC 5, accused of bribery to conceal evidence, as well as the issuing of an arrest warrant for a OHCHR official on the same charges. These were well known and respected employees, some of whom had been working for ADHOC in Cambodia for over 25 years. The audio recording was first leaked on the alleged mistress Mon Srey's Facebook page; initially Mon Srey denied any association with the recording, claiming her Facebook account had been hacked. Following the leak she was summoned to hear a disinformation case by the Ministry of Interior. Mon Srey sought advice from ADHOC because she was scared by the court summons; the group provided her with a lawyer and an accompanying witness to the court proceedings.⁸ However, there was a twist during the court proceedings when Mon Srey admitted that Kem Sokha was her lover, and that her voice was the one recorded in the leaked audio clip. She then filed a complaint against ADHOC and Kem Sokha for allegedly offering her hush money to keep the affair under wraps.⁹ Following the complaint, the government anti-corruption unit was deployed to question seven members of the human rights community, arresting four of them and a deputy member of the National Election Committee. In the end, Kem Sokha was given a Royal Pardon and was allowed to continue as CNRP leader, for a while. However, at the time of writing (Sept. 2017) Kem Sokha has been arrested once more and formally charged for treason and collusion with the United States to overthrow the government. Under the amendments to the Law on Political Parties this leaves the opposition CNRP with a choice: either their leader resigns or they face the possible dissolution of the party. The ADHOC 5 were released after 427 days of imprisonment. Their imprisonment triggered the Black Monday protests, which were violently oppressed by the authorities, leading to more arrests. Under the auspices of LANGO such a protest may be defined as an unregistered organisation and legally shut down. Of course, Hun Sen himself proclaimed that anyone participating in a 'colour co-ordinated' protest would be immediately arrested; a clue, perhaps, of his receptiveness to the symbolism of popular unrest.

The theatre of law and its players

What is interesting about the Kem Sokha scandal is that one sees the mobilisation of the full neopatrimonial oppressive machinery. Firstly there is the selective application of the court's system, whereby the initial obtaining of audio recordings without Kem Sokha and Mon Srey's permission, which is illegal and inadmissible as evidence, is not considered. We then have the curious case of Kem Sokha and ADHOC staff members being charged for bribing a witness to a non-crime, as not only is the audio tape inadmissible, but adultery is itself not illegal in Cambodia. In fact Kem Sokha has political immunity due to his position in parliament, but has been criminalised due to a clause in Cambodia's legal system, which states that politicians who are caught in the act can be prosecuted. Of course Kem Sokha was not caught in the act of having an affair, as the conversation was an audio recording. However, authorities state he was caught in the act of not arriving to the court proceedings of his non-crime thus constituting a crime itself. There are threatening statements from politicians, including the PM Hun Sen, threats of intimidation, violently oppressed protests, and a subjugated court procedure with dubious evidence. Yet, despite the new legitimisation, or formalisation, of the CPP's approach through these laws, this intersectionality, particularly in this case, seems less co-ordinated and ultimately driven by interpretations of elite interest. Indeed, Kem Sokha was simply arrested for treason some months later. What is created is a broad convergence of forces with varying strategic dynamics that secure state interests against the various forms of resistance that civil society manifests. The different arms of the state mostly create chaos and confusion behind a veil of neopatrimonial informality that is difficult to apprehend or hold accountable. One could speculate on the prudence of the CPP flexing their muscles and providing a symbol of martyrdom for civil society out of a jailed Kem Sokha. Generally speaking, whilst the ratifications and amendments may not signal a fundamental break from the CPP's political strategy, they do provide extra avenues for leverage that can be used to force dissenting actors into making deals with the state to avoid legal punishment. In other words, the CPP are using the law as a theatre to co-opt opponents into the patrimonial network, or arrest those who resist.

It is also worth mentioning the less tangible effects of these ratifications and amendments as deterrents to civil society resistance. The enactment of LANGO has triggered a burst of precautionary action from organisations attempting to resist oppressive land concessions in anticipation of the law's use. For example, in the Areng Valley, one Mother Nature activist stated that while LANGO has not been used directly against the group,

they have acted pre-emptively to avoid “future headaches” by removing operating funds from Cambodian bank accounts: “The reason is simple: this new repressive law obliges all NGOs to share with the [Ministry of Interior] information related to funds [...] which can then be used by the [ministry] to pressure donors into not supporting the NGOs they don’t like”.¹⁰ There have also been reports of over-zealous officials warning off civil society organisations from carrying events with threats to disbar them due to a lack of registration, or for any other reason applicable under the vague wording of these laws. As already discussed, registration must be acquired in writing from the Ministry of Interior. There is no rigid bureaucracy in place to systematically apply the laws. Therefore, for the numerous mid and low level civil society groups operating in Cambodia who may lack the capital to negotiate a settlement with the Ministry, the reality of compliance creates further opportunities for administrative gaps to be exploited through rent-seeking by officials, creating potential for co-optation into the informal system of patrimonial exchange.

A turning point?

International pressure began to accumulate with the enactment of LANGO in late 2015 and 2016, but the Amendments to the Law on Political Parties caused the OHCHR to produce a document, in English, entitled ‘A Human Rights Analysis of the Amended Law on Political Parties’. It provides a litigious article-by-article analysis of the law, including suggestions for how each article could be brought in line with Cambodia’s Human Rights responsibilities. For example, where the law suggests that any persons with criminal convictions be barred from leadership positions in any political party, the OHCHR analysis recommends introducing a penal scale to the law to prevent minor misdemeanours barring a person from such positions for life. It then goes on to highlight and revise the omission that those members of the courts, military or police, who require political neutrality or impartiality to fairly prosecute their civil obligations, are currently free to associate with a political party. There are numerous cases where the OHCHR analysis highlights the difficulties posed by the ambiguous wording of the law, particularly in cases where political activity can be denied at the discretion of the ministry without justification, but with only an interpretation of whether this activity may “break up national unity”, for example. Although it is not possible to discuss every revision, comment or suggestion here, this direct response is somewhat divergent from the approach to Cambodia that was formerly typical of the mainstream international community, which considered Cambodia a relatively successful example of liberal development. In response, the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs produced a document entitled ‘Cambodia, Democracy and Human Rights: To Tell the Truth’. Intended to “set the record

straight” this critical document directly addresses what it perceives to be “the distortion of facts, lies and amplification of minor issues” that represent a supposedly concerted effort by Western Governments, media and NGOs to undermine Cambodian sovereignty. The report addresses a number of historical issues and ongoing controversies that have been levelled at the Cambodian government; it name checks the UN’s own Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, and refuses to back down over the aforementioned arrests of political opponents and human rights activists. In summary it provides a simplified, one sided account of contemporary Cambodian history that justifies the CPP’s record against Western imperialism.

The Cambodian rebuttal borrows from some of the arguments concerning economic growth and legalistic development that mainstream development institutions have been using to defend a strategy of mass donor-led development in Cambodia. Since the UNTAC programme in 1993, Cambodia has been regarded as a partial example of successful liberal development by mainstream institutions such as the UN and the World Bank. Despite ongoing complaints about Cambodia’s human rights record over the last few decades, in particular the oppressive consequences of Cambodia’s Economic Land Concessions programme, the EUs latest round of development assistance, €410 million from 2014-2020,¹¹ and the \$2.2 billion contributed by Japan in 2012,¹² exemplify a consensus that donor-assisted development was on track. Until now, mainstream Western development institutions and their state counterparts have been reluctant to provide a substantial reaction to Cambodia’s increasing authoritarianism. Indeed, the latest Government-Donor Partnership Working Group where Cambodian government officials met with foreign ministers and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Country Director for Cambodia to discuss the 2014-2018 National Strategic Development Goals, took place in March 2016, after LANGO was ratified. However, the minutes of the meeting focus on tracking development trends, reviewing timelines and monitoring the success of administrative system implementation.¹³ The closing remarks made by the UNDP Country Director emphasised the economic growth of 7% per year, but there was no recorded discussion or reference to the implementation of LANGO, the effect it has on partnering institutions or on civil society groups. One thing Hun Sen appears to fear is a challenge from a competing domestic democratic populist narrative, which will require a strong and free domestic civil society. Perhaps the steadfast determination to ignore Cambodia’s long-standing neopatrimonial development has left mainstream development institutions with neither theory nor a practical tool kit with which to approach this particular neopatrimonial state that is drifting further away from the development ideal. The question remains as to how this practical gap can be filled, and who should be filling it.

Jake Wiczorek completed his MA hons at Leiden University, Netherlands, writing about the impact of CPP lawmaking on Cambodian Civil Society. Jake’s research interests lie in a critical analysis of the outcomes of the intersections between ‘Western’ and Cambodian political and economic systems in the contemporary state, as well as Cambodian democratic movements and communities of resistance (j.r.wiczorek@umail.leidenuniv.nl).

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Below: NGO Law protest outside National Assembly in Phnom Penh in 2015. Photo by Heng Chivoan/The Phnom Penh Post.



The politics of higher education in Cambodia

Cambodia is facing major challenges arising from its membership with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the new economic power-house established in 2015. The AEC, in promoting the free flow of financial and human capital within its boundaries, will have far-reaching impacts on the labour markets in and across its member states.¹ To keep pace with other countries in the AEC, the Cambodian government has turned its attention to Higher Education (HE) development to promote economic growth. As higher education is emerging as a sector of national strategic importance, it acquires significant political involvement.

Heidi Dahles

CAMBODIA IS STRUGGLING to establish a feasible tertiary education sector, wearing the scars of the destruction of its entire education system during a decade of civil war in the 1970s.² After the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1991 and the UN-led general elections in 1993, bilateral development assistance from multiple developed countries poured into Cambodia. In the field of education, the bulk of funding from donor countries focused on improving access to, and quality of, basic education. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were heavily reliant on bilateral educational assistance from developed countries, and as a result foreign dominance over higher education soared. France, Cambodia's former colonial ruler, was the first to offer extensive assistance to Cambodian HEIs in a wide range of knowledge areas. However, this support came with conditions attached; for example, recipients such as the Institute of Technology of Cambodia were required to use French as the medium of instruction. Unsurprisingly though, French lost out as the English language enjoys growing popularity among young Cambodians. The story goes that students happily apply for French scholarships only to enrol in English language programs upon receiving the funding. US academic institutions also stepped up their collaboration with Cambodian HEIs, which eagerly adopted the American curriculum and programs of study.³

Commercialisation in higher education

The Americanisation of the HE sector in Cambodia coincided with reforms undertaken by the Ministry of Education in the mid-1990s, which unleashed the privatisation of the sector, allowing public HEIs to charge tuition fees and for private HEIs to operate in the country. Overseas universities, foreign-based religious groups, private investors and international NGOs established themselves in Cambodia to compete for student enrolments.⁴ As a consequence, the Cambodian HE sector soon entered a phase of rapid, largely unregulated, expansion.

Currently, the Cambodian HE sector counts 39 public and 62 private HEIs with over 250,000 enrolments, only 15,000 of which in postgraduate degree programs.⁵ While all Cambodian HEIs deliver undergraduate programs, only a few large HEIs offer postgraduate programs. Consequently, enrolments in undergraduate programs have shown a sharp increase since 2010 while enrolments in postgraduate programs are stagnating. The growth in HE is most pronounced in the private sector where enrolments exceed public university enrolments at all degree levels.⁶ While the increase in the number of HEIs and enrolments appears impressive in view of the 'scorched earth', after decades of civil war and foreign occupation in the 1970s and 1980s, Cambodia – with a HE gross enrolment rate of about 13 per cent – still holds the lowest rate in the AEC.

The low participation rate, while concerning in itself, is a symptom of more severe issues smouldering under the surface of exponential growth of HEIs and HE enrolments. The most pressing issues – chronic lack of government funding, the absence of staff development and trivialisation of curricula – raise the question why Cambodia, while leading in terms of economic growth in the region, persistently fails to adequately nurture its HE sector? Public HEIs are grossly under-funded and hampered by centralized ministerial control.⁷ In 2013, the government's total annual educational expenditure amounted to about 2 per cent of GDP while public higher education expenditure received only 0.1 per cent of GDP.⁸ A large portion of the HE budget is spent on

staff remuneration, leaving hardly any funding for staff development, quality assurance, or improvement of educational infrastructure. For the latter, Cambodian public HEIs still depend on support from international partners and donors such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

Public HEIs have increasingly become dependent on student tuition fees as their major source of income, landing them in direct competition with private institutions.⁹ Consequently, issues of quality and relevance continue to affect the sector. Efforts to raise enrolment numbers outweigh concerns with quality standards, notwithstanding government efforts – such as the establishment of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia in 2003 – to act as an external quality assurance body to ensure and promote HE quality.¹⁰ Most Cambodian public and private universities do not apply admission requirements beyond the results of the final national high school examinations. However, widespread corruption in the school system, where underpaid teachers are susceptible to payments from students in exchange for (passing) grades, does not bode well for high school diplomas as an adequate indicator of academic qualification.

The pressure of increasing student numbers in both public and private HEIs inevitably affects academic staff. Salaries in the public sector are by far the lowest in the region, less than USD 300 per month for a full-time university lecturer, insufficient for a family's basic needs. Therefore, public university lecturers have to take on additional part-time teaching in private institutions to make ends meet. Research is virtually absent from Cambodian universities. Unsurprisingly, few academics hold a PhD in Cambodian universities.¹¹ Those who do, find hardly any incentives to assume leadership positions in academia.

Academic relevance, or the lack thereof, is also detrimental to the HE sector. Curricula are assembled to meet the requirements and preferences of foreign donors or investors or, conversely, are dictated by commercial interests. The knowledge and skills provided in universities do not match the needs of the Cambodian labour market. Unemployment among Cambodian graduates is soaring.¹² Responding to student demand, both public and private HEIs focus on commerce, economics and IT. Business Studies is the most popular program among Cambodian students as their expectation is that a business degree guarantees a well-paid job in an air-conditioned office. However, employment in these areas is saturated, while the labour market is in desperate need of qualified graduates in science, mathematics, agriculture and health.¹³ From a lack of government funding, public universities are unable to increase enrolments in science programs as the required facilities (equipment, laboratories and qualified staff) are insufficient to absorb more students.

Political predicament

Returning to the guiding question of why Cambodia, despite rapid economic growth, remains unable to lift its HE sector out of the vicious circle of underfunding, underperformance and underdevelopment? The short answer is: politics. The HE sector in Cambodia is an arena for the ruling party to bestow favours, honours and lucrative positions on ruling elites. There is no autonomy of HEIs to govern themselves nor academic freedom to push the quality of education. Public academic institutions are under centralised ministerial control, including the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports and 11 other ministries and government agencies. The government has granted the status of Public Administrative Institution (PAI) to a number of public universities, apparently to provide them with greater autonomy in academic and financial issues.¹⁴ However, the political parties and parent ministries are actively involved in making important decisions in the administration of these PAIs, and public HEIs in

general. Promotion to senior academic leadership positions is subject to party membership. There are myriad examples of highly qualified staff who have been demoted because they refused to pledge their allegiance to the ruling party. Furthermore, curricula and course content are scrutinised for subjects related to human rights, social justice, democracy, transparency and good governance, and critical debates are banned in Cambodian HEIs.

Similarly, private HEIs are not exempt from party politics. An estimated 50 per cent of the private institutions are established by returnees from France, the United States, Canada and Australia.¹⁵ The role of returnees in Cambodian public life is controversial because, in the eyes of many Cambodians who lived through the terrors of the Pol Pot regime and the Vietnamese occupation, they either represent conservative forces attempting to re-establish traditional Khmer society or act as catalysts of foreign hegemonic interests.¹⁶ Most importantly, returnees are under suspicion of disloyalty to the ruling party because many support the opposition covertly, or even overtly.

Behind the shimmering façade of Cambodia's sustained GDP growth is a narrowing but persistent gap between the new middle classes and the urban and rural poor, a gap that is sustained by an education system that is in dire need of reform. Higher education, in particular, lags behind. Much of the higher education sector is commercially driven and fails to support the development of a viable domestic economy. For the ASEAN common market to incentivise the Cambodian HEIs to catch up with the standards in the region, the AEC would also have to interfere with Cambodian politics, which, in view of the delicate power balance revolving around the unresolved South China Sea issue, is most unlikely.

Heidi Dahles is Professor and Head at the Department of International Business and Asian Studies at Griffith University, Australia. Prior to moving to Australia, she was Professor in Organisational Anthropology at Vrije University Amsterdam, and coordinator of the integrated research program 'Competing Hegemonies. Foreign-Dominated Processes of Development in Cambodia', funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (h.dahles@griffith.edu.au).

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Above: National Institute of Education graduation ceremony in 2015. Photo by Heng Chivoan/The Phnom Penh Post.

Political subjectivity in Cambodia

Political subjectivation is the process during which an individual goes from being an object of politics to a political subject with his or her own particular orientations toward the sources and foci of power. Cambodian political life provides the perfect lens through which to examine this process, because the dense network of patronage that connects the political and economic elite of Cambodia with the masses offers sharp examples of how political subjects may be formed.

Alvin Cheng-Hin Lim



Subjectivation

Political theorists have long sought to explain subjectivation. I draw on the theory of subjectivation provided by Jacques Rancière, because I find that his account of the engagement of power with the world of experience offers a rich and compelling explanation of how individuals are awakened into political consciousness, and how political subjects orientate themselves in relation to the dominant power structures in society.¹ In Rancière's theory the policing function of the polity goes beyond what we normally understand as the provision of security and serves to enforce what he describes as the "distribution of the sensible", that is, "the general laws distributing lines of sight, forms of speech, and estimations of a body's capacity".² In other words, the police control the phenomenal life of the polity ensuring that its individual members adhere to the norms of speech and behavior, which in turn govern what can be seen, heard and experienced in the community. As he elaborates, the distribution of the sensible that is established by the police is "an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise".³ This establishes "a single direction for the movement of society".⁴

The Cambodian government's restriction of media coverage of the massive funeral procession, in July 2016, for the murdered government critic Kem Ley is a good example of an attempt to police the distribution of the sensible. Kem Ley, a social activist and founder of the Grassroots Democracy Party, had a large following on social media, and just prior to his assassination had participated in interviews with the local media and the watchdog NGO Global Witness' report *Hostile Takeover*,⁵ which revealed the extensive business interests of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's family. The thousands of ordinary Cambodians who chose to pay their respects at Kem Ley's wake and to march in his funeral procession, despite the disapproval of the government, illustrate the next step in Rancière's account of subjectivation: when dissensus breaks the consensus forged by the police function of the polity. As Joseph Tanke explains:

Dissensus fragments the community by making visible what previously went unseen. It operates, first and foremost, on the aesthetics of the community, those implicit decisions about who is included and in what way, as well as those judgments about what counts as voice or noise.⁶

Through their participation in the funeral proceedings, of which the government's escalating threats eventually led some of the funeral committee members to leave Cambodia, the Cambodian participants hence achieved a redistribution of the sensible, making visible what the government had wanted to keep invisible. If they had not already been political subjects their involvement in this act of dissensus served as their subjectivation, transforming them from objects into subjects of politics.

Consensus and dissensus

The mass participation in Kem Ley's funeral proceedings remains an exceptional event of dissensus, however. The consensus that protects the distribution of the sensible in Cambodia continues to be protected by the dense network of patron-client relations in Cambodian

society. As Simon Springer points out, the adoption of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s following the adoption of the Paris Peace Accords saw the ruling regime coopting neoliberalism for the benefit of their patronage networks, in particular through their "ability to influence the monetary channels of investment and privatization in ways that only those embedded within their systems of patronage can receive any direct benefit".⁷ Indeed, the troublesome Global Witness report highlighted by Kem Ley just before his murder exposed Prime Minister Hun Sen and his family's position at the apex of a vast patronage network that has extended its extractive reach across the Cambodian economy. The advantageous position of Cambodia's elite has been further sealed by the "decades of nepotism and carefully arranged marriages among families of the ruling elites", which have "created a web of alliances which many fear, if dismantled, would bring down with it the whole structure of the state".⁸

Given the deep influence of this patronage network in Cambodia's political economy, an attractive option for subjectivation is the decision to join the policed consensus, because alignment with the distribution of the sensible allows the individual to emerge as a political subject with audibility and visibility to the ruling regime, which is a necessary condition for him/her to begin expressing demands *qua* client of his/her patron.⁹ This can be seen in the case of Chhay Thy, an official with the human rights NGO ADHOC and government critic who in January 2017 suddenly joined the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to run for the position of commune chief. As he explained, this move from a position of powerlessness into a position of power would allow him to deliver substantive goods to his community: "I do it to become the commune chief so that the local community will develop, because when working with an NGO, I have no decision-making authority in developing [communities]".¹⁰ As Chhay Thy understood, loyalty to a patron can reap advantages to a hardworking client. The *oknha*, Cambodia's business elite, are good examples of this reciprocal relationship. In exchange for financing the ruling elite's rural patronage projects, including "pagodas, hospitals, roads, bridges, and so-called Hun Sen schools", the *oknha* enjoy "preferential treatment in the form of land concessions, monopolies, and other perquisites".¹¹ Clients with far less means may serve their patrons in other ways. In October 2015, three officers from Hun Sen's bodyguard unit brutally attacked the opposition lawmakers Nhay Chamroeun and Kong Saphea, dragging them from their cars, beating them, and leaving them with "broken bones and teeth and a ruptured eardrum".¹² Despite being sentenced to four years in jail they were suddenly released in November 2016 after serving less than a year of their sentence. Hun Sen would subsequently promote two of them, Mao Hoeun and Suth Vanny, to the rank of colonel in the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, and the third, Chay Sarith, to the rank of brigadier-general.

The part of no part

In Rancière's theory one key source of political change comes from *la part des sans-part* [the part of no part], as in those who have been excluded from society. Political change comes when the part of no part forces a redistribution of the sensible, making themselves visible and audible where before they had been ignored, and asserting their claim to the benefits of social life.¹³

In Cambodia the ethnic Vietnamese minority counts as the part of no part given their exclusion from citizenship under the Cambodian Constitution. This prevents them from accessing the social benefits and services enjoyed by citizens.¹⁴ During the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, following the end of the Khmer Rouge's genocidal revolution, the ethnic Vietnamese minority failed to push for their right to Cambodian citizenship, and today, despite their long residency, they retain the status of illegal aliens. Their situation following the withdrawal of the Vietnamese occupation army quickly deteriorated, and the Cambodian government has even lost its tolerance for their precarious existence in their floating villages on the Tonlé Sap.¹⁵

Rather than being the locus around which the Cambodian people have pushed for political change, the ethnic Vietnamese minority has instead functioned as a scapegoat for xenophobic Cambodian politicians to propagate anti-Vietnamese paranoia, including narratives of the Vietnamese theft of Cambodian land. Indeed, some Cambodian opposition leaders have attracted popular support by highlighting Prime Minister Hun Sen and the CPP's long association with the Vietnamese Communist Party, under whose tutelage during the Vietnamese occupation they ascended to power. Anti-Vietnamese sentiment hence continues to have cultural and political salience in Cambodia today, and the CPP has responded by bowing to public sentiment and cracking down on the ethnic Vietnamese minority. While the long-standing hatred of Vietnam has rallied together Cambodians from across the political spectrum, the consequences for the ethnic Vietnamese minority have been arrests, deportations, and the scuttling of their floating villages.¹⁶ Future political change will thus have to come from some other source, perhaps the demographic changes arising from Cambodia's ongoing encounter with global flows of investment and trade.

Alvin Cheng-Hin Lim is a research fellow with International Public Policy Pte. Ltd., and is the author of *Cambodia and the Politics of Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2013). He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and has taught at Pannasastra University of Cambodia and the American University of Nigeria (alvinlim@ippreview.com).

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Above: The funeral procession of Kem Ley, who was murdered in 2013, makes its way through Takeo province. Photo by Heng Chivoan/The Phnom Penh Post.

Relations between peasantry and state in contemporary Cambodia



In the early eighties, after a decade of civil war and violence, and in the context of post-war reconstruction and international isolation, the Cambodian peasantry and state were faced with the overwhelming task of attaining food security and laying the foundations for agricultural development. Access to land was relatively equitable and smallholder farmers took center stage in these reconstruction efforts. Within a decade, resilient peasants managed to ensure a reasonable degree of food and land tenure security. However, in the nineties the balance of power between the peasantry and the state shifted with the re-emergence and consolidation of large-scale forest and fisheries concessions serving the centralization of power. In the early years of 2000, the modernization of agrarian systems imagined by the government, the advisers of the ruling party and international advisers, triggered dramatic transformations in the rural landscape of Cambodia. The approaches and impacts were furthermore geographically differentiated between the lowland central plain and the upland areas.

Jean-Christophe Diepart

The lowland squeeze

Since the end of the 1990s the agricultural policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) have promoted an increase in rice production. The policies are based on the diagnosis that rice yields had consistently been low due to poor farmer skills, improper water management, and low use of fertilizers.¹ It was furthermore recognized that any increases in production made in the past had been due to the introduction of high-yielding rice varieties. As a result, Cambodian agriculture policies encourage the use of modern, high-yielding varieties that were introduced to Cambodia in the 1990s as part of the Cambodian Agricultural Research Development Institute (CARDI), whose role in the selection, testing and reproduction of improved cultivars was key. CARDI is not the only player, however; a number of companies from other countries in the region are involved in selling hybrid varieties, including from Malaysia and China, and there seems to be fierce competition between these companies to control the export rice markets.² Along with encouraging the use of high-yielding varieties, the government and its development partners upgraded and expanded irrigation infrastructures, enhanced the provision of fertilizers and pesticides to farmers, increased support for agro-business to expand agricultural commercialization services, and improved field extension services.

The agro-business nature of these developments, with an emphasis placed on rice export, was further underlined in the national policy document on the promotion of Paddy Rice Production and Export of Milled Rice, which aims to turn the Cambodian central plains into an export-oriented industrial paddy zone. This document – produced under the auspices of Supreme National Economic Council and not by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) – has become a cornerstone of the RGC's policies for agricultural development. Budgets and extension services are prioritized accordingly. The Public Investment Program (PIP), which indicates the spending target of the government for the period 2014-2016, states that, for the agricultural sector, MAFF requires an investment that primarily focuses on implementing the rice export policy.

Over the last decade the strong alignment between development and policies related to climate change has become obvious. The National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change and the Cambodian Climate

Change Strategic Plan both come to the conclusion that climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts are supportive of the government's development objectives. The emerging policy narrative favours a rebranded green revolution that highlights a climate-smart approach, and indicates that climate resilience efforts by government and donors alike would be best realized through the implementation of the rice intensification and export policy of the government.³ Obviously, this convergence serves the interests of government and development actors in a highly opportunistic way.

In terms of rice production and yield, the success of this neo-green revolution is undeniable. Over the last decade, the increase in total paddy production has been sustained and reached 9 million tonnes in 2012. In this context, however, access to land has become more competitive in the central plains. It has strengthened a process of land commoditization that neo-liberal land reform has exacerbated through the processes of land titling, micro-credit and land markets. The 2001 Land Law adds a legal constraint to agricultural development by limiting legal possession of land to agricultural plots cultivated before 2001. Due to demographic growth and land atomization, the destiny is, inevitably, land concentration. As of 2011, 47 percent of households had less than 1 ha of agricultural land while 12 percent had landholdings larger than 3 ha.⁴ The land squeeze in the central plain is coupled with labour constraints, whereby the secondary and tertiary sectors have a very limited capacity to absorb surplus labour from agriculture.⁵

Population mobility: peasants versus state rationalities

As a result, a large number of people have been leaving their villages to find work elsewhere. Indeed, the increase in the mobility of the rural population has been significant in the recent development of Cambodia. According to the 2008 demographic census, 3,457,228 people were considered to be internal migrants (they had changed their area of residence inside Cambodia) – namely, 29 percent of the total population. In addition to rural-to-urban and cross-border migration – 1 million Cambodians are thought to live and work in Thailand – there is also strong evidence of rural-to-rural migration flows, essentially from the Cambodian central plains (the Tonlé Sap plain and Mekong delta) to the peripheral (forested)

uplands. The phenomenon is not insignificant as it represents nearly twice the rural-to-urban migration rate (representing 51 percent versus 28 percent of the total number of migrants). To a large extent, these migrations can be seen as an expression of the agency of peasant households in responding to rural poverty in the lowland. They are also the expression of an on-going trend on the part of the Cambodian peasant to consider the principle of appropriation 'by the plough' as a legitimate mode of land acquisition, which has been a consistent trend throughout Cambodian agrarian history.⁶

The central state powers have been perfectly aware of this situation and have looked at it favourably. They were probably happy to see spontaneous migration taking place as these movements were helping to solve poverty issues in the central plains that the government was unable or unwilling to tackle. It also seems that migrant smallholder farmers have acted as the territorial spearhead of the state⁷ in helping to stabilize the peripheral margins of the country and consolidate the sovereignty of the state. The state has also relied heavily on smallholders to manage the agrarian expansion across the country and to endorse the responsibility in the production of cash crops that are vulnerable on the global markets (cassava, corn, soybean, etc.).

However, the authorities have not publicized these movements because they have conveyed contradictions. Indeed, insofar as the Land Law forbade the acquisition of forestland (i.e., state public land) after 2001, these lowland-upland migration movements are completely at odds with the legal framework for land that authorities were supposed to implement. This has resulted in a huge population living on land that they appropriated after 2001, meaning they have virtually no land tenure security under the 2001 Land Law institutions.

Tensions in the uplands

In a parallel and uncoordinated process, the government has granted large tracts of land and forest as agro-industrial concessions of up to 10,000 ha, as so-called Economic Land Concessions (ELC). Recent data shows that 280 ELC projects have been granted so far, covering a total area of 2.3 million ha.⁸ This can be compared with the 3.5 million ha of land that is cultivated by smallholder farmers. The large-scale agricultural development model was expected to result in new types of investments in rural Cambodia, to stimulate agro-industrial activities requiring

Above:
Rice cultivation in
lowland Cambodia
(Kampong
Chhnang, 2008).
Photo by Jean-
Christophe Diepart.

A critical journey from lowland to upland regions

a capital investment that the state did not have, and to develop so-called 'underutilized' land. Rooted in a strong assumption that smallholders do not have the financial or technical capacities to engage in small entrepreneurial agricultural development, the leaders and their advisers thought that large-scale investment would increase employment in rural areas, offer new opportunities for labour and employment in the countryside, and encourage local economic diversification through small and large investments up- and downstream of the concession. They would also generate state revenue at national and sub-national levels.

The rhetoric is essentially not very different from what was seen decades earlier in the forest and fisheries concessions model. ELCs represent an opportunity for the government of Cambodia to reinvigorate the very profitable concessions economy after the collapse of the forest and fisheries concessions in the 1990s. The opportunities for foreign investment that ELCs offer have also been seen as a political tool to engage Cambodia in ASEAN integration by allowing neighbouring countries (states and companies) to invest in the Kingdom. In fact, current mechanisms of ELCs are variations of old processes of capitalist penetration associated with the capture of profits by ruling elites. The political economic context in which concessions are granted and monitored was put in place under French rule to serve the interest of the protectorate administration; it was reinvigorated in the post-war reconstruction period to serve the interests of the emerging political elite.⁹

There is a broad consensus in Cambodia among NGOs and researchers that the process of authorizing and implementing ELCs shows clear deviations from the established legal and policy framework. Public consultations and social and environmental impact assessments that should be carefully undertaken before any agreement is signed are rarely conducted properly, if at all.¹⁰ During the implementation of these large-scale agricultural investments, a number of irregularities are routinely reported. In certain instances, ELC contracts are signed to by-pass the 2002 logging ban on timber because ELC implementation pre-supposes the clearing of the land before the establishment of agro-industrial plantations (the sub-decree on ELCs is explicit about this) and is likely tied to new trends in granting ELCs in Protected Areas. Logging operations regularly proceed well beyond the boundaries of the concession area.¹¹

Very often the land granted to concessionaires is already occupied and/or cultivated by people. Basic field visits to these sites would suffice to make this clear. In these cases, logging or land clearing operations have led to land dispossession and forced evictions. Military forces working for the concession companies tend to provide the force to drive people from the land. Human rights violations associated with these evictions have been consistently highlighted in reports and public declarations by successive High Commissioners for Human Rights in Cambodia.¹²

ELCs remake rural contexts in ways that lead to varying degrees of land dispossession of small-scale farmers and exacerbate the recourse to wage labour, which usually does not compensate for the loss of resources that local people depend on.¹³ An even more pernicious effect of the concession system is what some scholars have called neo-patrimonialism. In Cambodia, the elite have used natural resources to serve their private interests and to consolidate their power as part of neo-patrimonialism.¹⁴ It is understood that private investors pay approximately US\$500 in informal fees for each hectare approved in an ELC agreement, an important proportion of which goes as unofficial payments to the ruling party and its officials. This revenue generates resources to fund patronage-based distributive politics via the provision of services and infrastructure in populated rural areas. In return, the people are expected to support the government through the electoral machine, which has secured acceptable levels of domestic and international legitimacy for the Cambodian People's Party (CPP).¹⁵

The decision by the Prime Minister to suspend the granting of ELCs and to issue Order 01 in May 2012 was the result of the convergence of a number of events at play at different scales. There is little doubt that the decision by the Prime Minister to announce Order 01 was motivated politically in a move to lessen social unrest one month before the 2012 commune elections and one year ahead of the legislative election in July 2013. In addition to freezing the granting of ELCs, Order 01 initiated an unprecedented land titling campaign in areas where the land rights of people and companies overlapped with state land, including ELCs, forest concessions, forest land and other types of state land. It also made possible the seizures of ELCs where companies had not complied with the existing legal procedure or with the contract, in particular by engaging in timber logging activities and/or leaving concession land unexploited.

The land titling process has been significant – more than 1 million ha – but has proven to be largely incomplete, and substantial areas claimed by people have been left untitled. This incompleteness of land titling in areas where people live and/or cultivate might give false legitimacy to the efforts of ELCs to evict people from the untitled land. Order 01 conveyed a strong political message to the people of Cambodia in general, and to the smallholder farmers in particular. The campaign was intrinsically associated with the person of the Prime Minister; as if the security of land tenure of smallholder farmers were handled by him personally. Current reforms in the system are responses triggered by political imperatives rather than measures to tackle the exclusionary nature of the system.

Struggles and crisis: concluding remarks

While post-war reconstruction efforts in the agricultural sector were mainly conducted by the strong and resilient peasantry, the balance of power between smallholder farmers, the state and the markets has shifted rapidly. Whereas peasants used to be close allies of the state, they have been abandoned by state policies and a vision that favours a large-scale entrepreneurial and export-market oriented model of development.

In both lowland and upland regions of Cambodia, the modernization of the agrarian system has worked to shackle smallholder farmers to the wheels of domestic regional and global growth through neoliberal technological apparatuses, a political transformation that has turned them into inefficient and backward subjects, under the practices of monopolistic capitalism. The mainstream narrative in the political arenas is that smallholder farmers do not really fit into the vision of modern agrarian landscapes.

The relations between the Cambodian peasantry and the state lie in an institutional crisis. As a matter of fact, most smallholder farmers continue to live and make ends meet, within and without areas impacted by ELCs. They manage to buffer the incomplete and uneven agrarian transition that the leaders want to accelerate. And the inevitable conflicts arising from this race against time are handled in a dynamic process that combines a calculus by authorities to retain social legitimacy to secure votes while reproducing its sovereign power on land. Surely the Cambodian peasantry deserves better than that.

Jean-Christophe Diepart has been based in Cambodia since 2002, where he is involved in research and development cooperation activities. His research examines processes of agrarian change with particular interest in the transformations of smallholder agriculture, land tenure management and labour circulation. Most of his current fieldwork focuses on land control strategies on the agricultural frontier of northwest Cambodia. He is scientific collaborator with Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, University of Liège, Belgium (jc.diepart@gmail.com).

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Below:
Rubber plantation
in upland Cambodia
(Ratanak Kiri, 2010).
Photo by Jean-
Christophe Diepart.



The connected and the bereft, or the politics of business in Phnom Penh

Phnom Penh's private sector comprises a relatively small number of wealthy tycoons, who run large and diversified business conglomerates, and a majority of small-scale shopkeepers and manufacturers. This dividing line between big and small business parallels a dividing line between the politically connected and bereft. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has co-opted the country's most lucrative economic sectors, and provides privileges and protection to tycoons active in these sectors in exchange for loyalty and financial contributions to the CPP. The majority of business owners, meanwhile, are deprived of political backing and instead cope with rent-seeking officials and other impediments to develop their businesses beyond the status of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME). This essay explores the nature of political interference in Phnom Penh's private sector, revealing contrasting experiences between tycoons and SME owners in the context of Hun Sen's highly exclusive development agenda.¹

Michiel Verwer

The politically connected

Mong Reththy is one of Cambodia's foremost celebrity tycoons. His Mong Reththy Group holds a portfolio including rubber, palm oil and sugar cane plantations, a pig farm, a seaport, an import-export company and a construction firm. Although Mong Reththy claims he has never bought favours,² he has been implicated in numerous business activities that suggest otherwise. In 1997, six tonnes of marijuana was found in a container at his port, after which officials affiliated with FUNCINPEC – Prince Ranariddh's party with whom the CPP formed an unstable coalition at the time – planned to arrest Mong Reththy. The tycoon denied the allegations, and Hun Sen recommended anyone trying to arrest Mong Reththy to better wear "steel on your head".³ According to a 2007 report by international watchdog Global Witness, the seaport – also known in Phnom Penh as Cambodia's 'official unofficial port' – has indeed been used for smuggling. The report claims that Brigade 70, an elite military unit that is essentially Hun Sen's private army, exports illegally logged timber via Mong Reththy's port.⁴ In response to the report Mong Reththy lamented: "It's like the other allegations against me. All false. The people who make noise are against development. For me, the schools and the hospitals I leave behind are evidence of the good I have done. [...] They said I was conducting illegal logging through my Koh Kong port. But there are police and customs officials there, so how can I use it for illegal logging?"⁵ Global Witness instead asserts that officials stationed at the port are answerable to Mong Reththy, rather than their head office in Phnom Penh.

Two more arrangements that suggest a tight link between Mong Reththy and the CPP also merit brief attention. He holds numerous Economic Land Concessions (ELCs), which are allocated to business people for a period

of up to 99 years to develop plantations. In addition to many smaller ELCs, Mong Reththy holds a 100,000 hectares concession in northern Cambodia. This is ten times the legal maximum. Even though agriculture minister Chan Sarun signed off the concession after the 2001 Land Law limiting concessions to 10,000 hectares was ratified, so argued the minister, he approved it still because Mong Reththy had asked for it before the law came into effect.⁶ Lastly, Mong Reththy has been involved in numerous land-swaps; he acquires a contract for the construction of a particular government building, builds it on his own land outside Phnom Penh's city centre, and is allowed to swap his land with more valuable property downtown that houses the old government building.

It may come as no surprise that Mong Reththy and Hun Sen spent their teenage years together in Wat Neakavorn, a pagoda in Phnom Penh. Tellingly, the name of Mong Reththy's construction company, Samnang Khmeng Wat, translates into "luck of the pagoda boy". He serves as an advisor of Hun Sen and as senator for the CPP. In 2001, Mong Reththy claimed to have contributed some \$3.8 million to development projects, including the construction of schools and roads.⁷ Especially in the run-up to elections, Hun Sen 'invites' prominent tycoons to finance such projects in his name, thereby aiming to establish his legitimacy in rural areas. Mong Reththy also sits on the board of the Cambodian Red Cross, which is headed by Hun Sen's wife, Bun Rany, and serves a similar function: to round up capital from wealthy locals and foreign investors, and distribute it among the rural population to make it appear as if benevolence flows directly from the Hun family. In 1996, Mong Reththy was one of the first to acquire the title of *oknha*. This honorary title has traditionally been bestowed upon senior mandarins surrounding the King.

In 1994, the title was re-introduced to honour business people making contributions in excess of \$100,000 to development projects. Formally, the King awards the title. In practice, however, the CPP leadership identifies candidates, while the King rubber-stamps the CPP's requests.

There are competing narratives of how the *oknha* went from rags to riches. Asked about their lives, tycoons of Mong Reththy's generation typically argue that the hardship of the 1970s taught them diligence and humbleness. Mong Reththy cherishes his worn-out sandals from the Khmer Rouge era as a reminder of past hardship,⁸ while another *oknha* tycoon recalls: "We were lucky to survive, and when we came to Phnom Penh everyone was the same, we had nothing, so everyone helped each other and worked hard". They claim to have struggled through the 1980s, inhibited by Vietnamese-backed communism, until Hun Sen's 'open sea and open sky' policy of the early 1990s allowed them to develop their businesses in conjunction with the influx of foreign goods, aid and investment. Outside the elite, however, a different narrative circulates. Allegedly, in the 1980s the current-day *oknha* operated casinos at the Thai and Vietnamese borders, ran brothels and smuggled drugs, cigarettes and liquor. According to some, former CPP President Chea Sim made an informal deal with the emerging business elite in the early 1990s, promising them access to Cambodia's riches in exchange for allegiance to the CPP. Ever since, it seems that once the *oknha* have attained a favourable position vis-à-vis the CPP, and especially when they manage to forge a direct link to Hun Sen, they are given *carte blanche* to venture into all kinds of economic sectors. Mong Reththy's company did not skyrocket in the early 1990s because he managed to create a thriving import-export company from a mere \$1000 in savings, as he claims,⁹ but because he acquired public contracts to build government buildings, schools and hospitals, a license to establish a port, and land concessions to develop plantations. This led one critical interviewee, himself a small-scale business owner, to mock Mong Reththy's official biography titled *The Golden Path of Mong Reththy*: "This path was laid by others, he didn't make it golden himself. He may have struggled when he was young, but his struggle is not his business success. The *oknha* are not brilliant business people. Connections are more important for success than any good idea or business plan. It's about business people and politicians together deciding how they are going to make the money".

The *oknha* title has become the most tangible manifestation of the reciprocal "elite pact".¹⁰ The *oknha* receive ELCs, valuable urban property, import monopolies for foreign brands, public contracts and licences to operate Special Economic Zones, all of which require the favour of particular ministers, majors, governors or other CPP officials. Moreover, CPP protection facilitates illicit activities such as logging, sand dredging and tax evasion, and military connections are employed to chase the poor – many of whom do not have land titles because the Khmer Rouge destroyed documents – off concessionary land. In return, the *oknha* bankroll the CPP coffers and provide company shares and under-the-table money to individual top-officials. This collusion of business and state interests and the exclusive regime it has brought about, as the next section suggests, goes hand in hand with impediments for small businesses.

The politically bereft

While the likes of Mong Reththy have amassed wealth by virtue of their CPP patrons, the politically bereft create opportunities outside those niches co-opted by the elite, and hence venture into small-scale production, retail and services. SMEs producing foodstuff or other consumer goods, for example, are relatively free from state interference. One interviewee, who manages a mattress production firm set up by his parents, explains:

Below:
Family members of Sok Kong, a prominent tycoon with long-standing ties to the CPP, hand out monetary donations to police officers, a tradition in the run-up to Chinese New Year. Photo by Heng Chivoan/The Phnom Penh Post.



"In production you don't need connections much. We pay tax and it matters in importing [of raw materials], but we have an agent arrange it, an import-export company. They are huge and have the connections to deal with it". Indeed, import-export is hazardous for entrepreneurs that go at it alone because it involves the Department of Customs and Excise, the Economic Police and the Ministry of Commerce's quality control body, all of which are notorious for their rent-seeking officials. The mattress firm has been expanding and the family is considering re-investing profits in real estate, but they are hampered by their lack of connections: "In real estate you have to have connections, but my parents don't like dealing with the government. If you reach a certain level you will have to, otherwise people keep coming in trying to extort money from you, but my parents haven't reached that level yet. They tell me 'why would I want to know them? They don't do anything for us.' But I'm trying, just in case. In Cambodia everything is so unpredictable, it works if you know at least one guy in the different ministries, if only for licenses and documents. You pay them \$200 and you don't have to deal with anything else. It's easier that way".

While most SME sector entrepreneurs recognise the benefits of political connections, few aspire to be part of the elite, if only because "there is no free lunch". Two younger generation entrepreneurs, who together own and manage a range of businesses in the catering industry, steer clear of politics as much as possible. One of them recalls how *oknha* have approached them in the past, saying, "hey buddy, I have one million dollar. You want to do business? Here it is, a free loan, you can give it back later". However, he continues: "We don't need them. We have our one thousand dollar; we do it ourselves. If you take that money, after you start the business they come in and interfere. We don't like this. Why do we have to make money for someone else?" They similarly aim to keep politicians at arm's length. As his business partner puts it, their decision to "try to be on the legitimate side" has implied that they "struggle sometimes in terms of connections". Yet, they have managed to minimise the damage: "We don't want to be involved in politics. Sometimes things cannot be resolved, and sometimes we have to play soft with them. We have connections with government people, we need to get things from them, but we just do it case by case. When we open a project we do invite the governor to do the ceremony".

The elite patron-client network not only excludes those outside the elite, but also weakens the regulatory state. In the words of Boissevain, the informal nature of patron-client ties undercuts formal state institutions like "a parasitic vine clinging to the trunk of a tree".¹¹ Cambodian law, for example, is phrased ambiguously and enforced arbitrarily. A legal expert explains: "The law is very shallow; specific laws are often absent. Defending business conduct therefore comes down to bending the law to your own benefit, which only those with connections are able to do". Indeed, the average business owner would not even consider filing a lawsuit in case of a dispute. Moreover, laws and regulations are introduced only if these serve or at least do not jeopardise elite interests: "If it has a small effect on powerful people, they will set the new policy. If it has a big effect, they will not". The telecommunications law, for example, was stalled for years, to the frustration of Internet Service Providers (ISPs). ISPs ran into trouble because the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications issued the same operating frequencies to different companies, thereby obstructing their wireless Internet services.¹² One ISP owner, who also met this fate, said that someone made a lot of money issuing the frequencies while pointing to the sky, which Cambodians sometimes do when referring to the highest echelons of government.

An incident that involved gaming centres – Internet cafés that host Cambodian youth playing online games – similarly illustrates how weak regulations in fact provide considerable leverage to state officials looking for ways to extract money from the private sector. Cambodian lexicon does not distinguish between gaming and gambling, both of which are referred to as *tow leng game*. This created confusion when, in 2010, Hun Sen urged authorities to crack down on gambling. Although gambling is illegal for Cambodian citizens and most casinos are located at the border, catering to a Thai and Vietnamese clientele, the law is loosely enforced. Hun Sen lamented the culture of impunity kept in place by rent-seeking senior officials, and said: "I beg everyone to close their gambling operations, even the cockfighting arena of Deputy Prime Minister Sok An".¹³ Local police, however, initiated a crackdown on Internet cafés, even if these offered online gaming and not gambling. One gaming industry insider argued: "The police mixed up gaming and gambling because they call it both 'game', but there is a difference between a video game and gambling. Actually, I don't think they are that stupid. If the owner wants to open again, he has



Above:
Tycoon Mong Reththy shows a rubber plantation at his Economic Land Concession in Sihanoukville. Photo by Heng Chivoan/The Phnom Penh Post.

to pay money to the police". It took three months and a statement by the Ministry of Information exonerating online gaming before the issue was resolved.

The tax system is similarly weak. Most businesses pay a lump sum, meaning that tax officials estimate the appropriate tax, essentially bargaining the amount with business owners when they visit. According to one businessman: "when you pay \$2000, you get a receipt that says \$500. The person who handles your account would get some [of the \$1500 difference], but at least half of it would go to this big guy in the tax department". Attempts by the government to transition from this 'estimated regime' (tax through a lump sum) to a 'real regime' (tax through registered turnover) have not been very successful. While some blame this on non-compliance among SMEs, business owners themselves posit a different argument: "Business people take the most profitable route possible, otherwise someone else does it. I want to pay full tax, it would improve education etcetera, but if my competitor doesn't, I can't". Another one adds: "The government is starting to collect more tax, but companies actually have to pay bribes to pay tax. The official wants some extra if you come to register [for the real regime]. Besides, they don't accept your financial statements; if you lost money, it's not like they are going to exempt you from paying tax. So, a lot of business people moved back [to the estimated regime]".

The underlying problem, of course, is that officials depend on bribes to top up their low salaries. Roughly, while higher-level officials make money via 'proxy' tycoons, who are thereby exempt from interference by lower-level officials, the latter supplement their meagre salaries with informal payments from the lower strata of the private sector. A younger generation entrepreneur relates: "When we opened [our business] and had not even started yet, so many different officials were coming in. 'You need to have this, you need to have that.' Outside the official requirements to start a business, there are a lot of unseen inspections and licences that we had never heard of". According to one interviewee, a business consultant and member of the Council of Ministers, Cambodia's development operates according to a "dis-economy of scale"; business expansion begets greater government intervention and hence higher costs. He gave an example of a pharmacist whose success attracted an increasing number of government officials asking for licences, tax and fees, including 'sanitation fees' and other payments seemingly unrelated to his line of business. Ultimately, the pharmacist created a couple of smaller stores under the names of family members, redirected his customers, and closed his big store. He could now say to officials: "look at my size, I don't have the money to pay you that much".

Exclusive development writ large

There is thus a clear dividing line between big and small business in Phnom Penh, which largely parallels a dividing line between the politically connected and bereft. Big businesses benefit from political connections by way of protection and privileges, and hence are concentrated in those niches that depend on CPP patronage, including

the exploitation of natural resources and land concessions, import monopolies, real estate, public contracts and channelling foreign investment. In contrast, SME owners are hampered by rent-seeking officials, a weak regulatory state and exclusion from the get-rich-quick-schemes of the elite; instead, they safeguard their firms and round up capital via trust-based kinship connections.¹⁴

In its nature, little has changed for economic development in Cambodia since this divide emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War. It remains elite-centric and revolves around extractive practices facilitated through patron-client interdependencies. In the words of one interviewee, who fled the Khmer Rouge to the US and now imports second-hand American cars: "Business in Cambodia is like one pie, and only one person owns it. If you want this piece, you pay me. If you want that piece, you pay me. If you don't pay me, I pick someone else to replace you. That's business in Cambodia". In degree, however, much has changed. To stick with the metaphor, the CPP has gained tighter control over the pie (i.e., land, resources and people), the pie has grown larger as economic liberalisation and regional and global integration further, and more people demand a piece of the pie. Naturally, this has also spurred the larger-scale exploitation of Cambodia's natural resources, land and cheap labour.

The *oknha* tycoons, meanwhile, "enrich themselves through corrupt government concessions and then underwrite charities or schools in the areas impoverished by their corruption".¹⁵ Cambodian elites, including Mong Reththy and Hun Sen, fail or refuse to recognise this bitter irony. Both men responded to figures suggesting that the number of *oknha* had mushroomed from around 20 in 2004 to more than 700 in 2014. While Mong Reththy said that "if there are a lot of *oknhas*, then that should be good for society", Hun Sen asked: "If a country has no millionaires, where can the poor get their money from?"¹⁶ Evidently, inclusive development is a long way off.

Michiel Verver is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Organization Sciences, VU Amsterdam. In 2016 he completed his PhD on the post-Khmer Rouge revitalization of entrepreneurship in Phnom Penh. His interests lie in Cambodia's private sector dynamics as well as the country's ethnic Chinese minority, and more broadly in (immigrant) entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia and beyond (m.j.verver@vu.nl).

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The rise of the Cambodian entrepreneur?



The traditional Cambodian patronage system continues to co-exist with economic modernization. The persistent pervasiveness of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) in all sectors of society makes genuine societal transformation questionable. Current observations even suggest that the reciprocal ties between the state, the private sector and political parties have strengthened. To explore the paradox of CPP-led conservatism as a dynamic entangled with CPP-led modernization, this article discusses the ways in which the Cambodian government facilitates start-up entrepreneurial ventures in the internet sector.

Gea Wijers

Above: WeCreate Cambodia celebrates the official handing over to their local partner, who will continue to develop and expand the Centre's programming for women. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy on flickr.

OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES of reconstruction and transformation, Cambodian society has been labelled, amongst other things, as post-conflict, fragile and dependent. Emphasizing the diverging and converging power systems that govern interactions between the Cambodian government, the Cambodian business elite and international civil society, the state system has been described as a hybrid democracy, a nation under neo-authoritarian rule and an NGO republic. Entering a new development phase, recently, in 2016, the economic emergence of Cambodia has reached a new milestone. The World Bank has awarded Cambodia lower middle-income status, determined by a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of between US\$1,026 and US\$4,035. In 2030, the government aims to reach upper middle-income status (GNI per capita between US\$4,036 and US\$12,475). Cambodia used to be considered an emerging nation but is now surfacing and consolidating while adjusting to the realities of an ASEAN shared market.

Regional indicators of entrepreneurship

Unfortunately, data on entrepreneurship, especially on Cambodian entrepreneurship, is still scarce. This article is based, therefore, on the international monitors that survey the region, recent research on (social) entrepreneurship and literature on the education system, as well as reports by the World Bank and the International Labour Organization.

According to the renowned Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM),¹ Southeast Asia can be considered one of the upcoming entrepreneurial regions in the world. The 2015 GEM surveys entrepreneurial activity across multiple phases of the business process, among them the characteristics, motivations and ambitions of entrepreneurs, the attitudes societies have toward entrepreneurial activities, and the quality of entrepreneurship ecosystems in different economies. Among the 62 economies that participate globally, Southeast Asia was represented by Indonesia,

Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines. Cambodia was not part of the research, but the 'neighbourhood effect' is assumed.

According to the GEM analysis, the rise of Southeast Asia on all these factors is mainly due to relatively young populations, the growth of local markets, continuing urbanization, and an evolving middle class. Regionally, the rise of new entrepreneurial ventures is supported by national governments, international donors and foreign as well as local investors. Portraying Southeast Asia as the world's fastest growing internet region, led by Singapore, seems justified as it is at the avant-garde in creating and innovating digital products such as innovative video games and intricate work on e-commerce as part of social media strategies. Considering the annual economic growth of around 5% in many of the nations that were just mentioned, the growth of prosperity may be considered an important incubator of start-up innovation in Southeast Asia. It is worth noting that entrepreneurship training, capacity building and funding schemes seem mostly inspired by the Western paradigm of the 'heroic' individual entrepreneur instead of the 'family business' that is more traditional to the region.² As the GEM suggests, this has contributed to a change in Southeast Asian societal acceptance of entrepreneurship as a respectable profession.

To illustrate the Cambodian situation, we turn to another monitor. The Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEINDEX)³ is explicitly based on the idea of ranking 'entrepreneurial ecosystems', thus evaluating culture, history and risk averse behaviour as well as rules and institutions. The main difference between the GEM and the GEINDEX is that the latter is aimed to capture the contextual features of entrepreneurship across countries as an instrument to support the formulation of better policies and supportive institutions. The GEM, on the other hand, was originally designed by a consortium of research institutes aimed at understanding the entrepreneurial process and identifying constraints.

In the 2016 GEINDEX, Cambodia is not a top scorer. It is ranked 114th among the 165 participating nations. Relatively speaking, however, Cambodia has managed a 10% rise in its ranking over the last year. This is remarkable as the Cambodian system of governance on innovation and entrepreneurship has been found lacking for the longest time. While Cambodia is not progressing at the same speed as other Southeast Asian nations, this does not make this entrepreneurial success any less respectable. To what extent, however, is this due to profound changes in the institutional infrastructure for new entrepreneurial ventures? A more detailed description of facilitators and constraints to this process will help evaluate if the transformation of Cambodian society in this respect goes beyond what meets the eye and has a more profound nature.

The rise of Cambodian entrepreneurship

The last few years have seen several initiatives to support internet-based entrepreneurial ventures. USAID initiated the *Development Innovations* platform in 2014, the Ministry of Commerce launched the *MOC101 Incubators* in 2015 and, also in 2015, the *Global Network Impact Hub* opened a co-working space and included Phnom Penh in its community. At the foundation of many of these initiatives is the start of Phase III of the Cambodian government's *Rectangular Strategy* for Cambodia's economic development. This integrated strategy again highlights the need for equitable economic growth and partnerships with civil society. This may seem nothing new, considering Cambodia's track record in paying lip-service to an open collaboration

towards decentralization and democratization. Yet, more explicitly than before, it is encouraging entrepreneurship as benefiting the economy. Next to these governmental projects and social organizations, commercial coaching has also found its way to Cambodia. On most weekends there will be start-up events as well as boot camps for aspiring entrepreneurs that are open to those that can pay for participation.

This multiplication of promotion and support structures certainly helps. Of greater importance, however, may have been the vast improvement of the ease of setting up a new business in Cambodia. As a constraint, the growth of both the telecom sector and the financial sector brings another paradox. In many countries, funding for start-ups and venture investments are found in telecom or in special (microfinance) funding at local banks, while in Cambodia this is not the case. While ambitions are abundant, the execution and originality of business ideas pose the main problem in initiating entrepreneurial ventures. Local start-ups with a sustainable business model are lacking. In promoting economic growth and creating jobs, thus, many of the constraints for entrepreneurship are to be found at the more profound levels related to input (skills, funding) as well as finding a return on investments with the output (markets, marketing). Both constraints are related to the education system.

Time and again the secondary and tertiary levels of education have demonstrated a disconnect from the labour market. Research agrees that institutions of higher education need to develop an entrepreneurial orientation and culture to find synergy with other countries in the ASEAN zone. Education needs to transform into a source for high level Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) to serve as a basis for the future of the Cambodian economy. Values encouraging creativity and innovation should become part of the 'economic ecosystem' for new ventures to thrive in the long term.

Even more difficult to embed in the Cambodian education system is the need to build human resources and knowledge to provide new ideas for existing enterprises and enter new markets. The internal Cambodian market for games, e-commerce and technological innovations is small. Sales here will not allow for large-scale company growth and job creation. Looking beyond borders, however, language barriers frustrate an easy jump into international markets and global value chains. For Cambodian start-ups to survive in the longer term, thus, institutional 'gate constructors' need to be set up to build a financing infrastructure as well as the educational resources needed to compete on the global market.⁴

The future

The World Development Report (WDR) 2017 argues that the function of institutions in the development process can only be fulfilled if there is adequate commitment, coordination and cooperation in reaching the planned outcomes. Yet these three functions are shaped in a policy arena ruled by power asymmetries that can facilitate or frustrate their efficient and effective creation and implementation: "Unhealthy power asymmetries can lead to persistent policy failure through exclusion, capture and clientelism".⁵

This argument seems to still hold true for Cambodia. Short-term success has been achieved for the growth of entrepreneurial ventures, but a true transformation has not (yet) taken place. These new entrepreneurial ventures could be so much more important to Cambodia if the government would be able to establish much needed education and financing structures. In recent overviews, unfortunately, instead of moving towards social equality, power asymmetries in Cambodian society only seem to grow.

Gea Wijers is an alumna of the Cambodian Research Group, finishing her PhD on Cambodian remigrant institutional entrepreneurs. Currently she holds a postdoc position at the Wageningen University & Research, Management Studies Group, and runs Wijers Community-based Consulting (more info: <http://geawijers.com>).

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The Khmer Dance Project



In the wake of Cambodia's troubled recent history, the issue of transmitting knowledge in all its forms is vital for the country's reconstruction. In 2008, the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS), which supports research and teaching of the social sciences, arts and humanities of Cambodia, initiated the Khmer Dance Project (KDP) to document court dance traditions. The overall aim is to reach out to both Khmer people and specialised researchers. For this reason, original KDP materials are held at the New York Public Library in the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, and copies of all KDP materials are handed over to the library of the CKS in Siem Reap and Bophana Centre in Phnom Penh, the only free-access institution that holds audiovisual documents on Cambodia (video, audio, photographs).¹

Suppya Helene Nut

Above:
Dancers perform the Ceremony of Paying Homage to the Spirit of Dance at the Chenla Theatre in Phnom Penh. Photo by Anders Jiras.

Past and present

During the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), the country's entire population was sent to the countryside to do hard labour on farms and in forests. It was a ruthless regime; a violent intrusion of a totalitarian state into people's lives. Like all forms of Cambodian culture, the Royal Ballet was banned during that time. The hardship, loss and terror was shared by all the people, but artists of the Royal Ballet were among those particularly hard hit because of their ties to the Royal Court. After the collapse of the regime in 1979, only ten percent of these artists had survived. The trauma to the population as a whole was immense, with more than one million people killed or disappeared, out of a population of eight million.

The sentiment of loss ignited the will of survivors to reconstitute the forms of knowledge and repertoire of court dance. The writer Amitav Ghosh, during a visit to the war-torn country, was struck by "a theater filled beyond its capacity" in spite of the general poverty of the population. He wrote that this first festival held in Phnom Penh after the Khmer Rouge was as "a kind of rebirth, a moment when the grief of survival became indistinguishable from the joy of living".² Finally, the long-lasting and devoted efforts of survivors and the commitment of Princess Norodom Buppha Devi were rewarded by UNESCO, which inscribed the Royal Ballet of Cambodia as a 'Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' in 2003.

Altogether, there are only a few visual archives in Cambodia that date back to colonial times. In light of Cambodia's recent history, almost all visual archives since Independence (1953) were destroyed. For instance, out of the three hundred fiction films, only about thirty were saved from destruction. With the disappearance of the majority of Royal Ballet artists and the advanced age of the survivors, this project is more urgent and significant

than ever. Furthermore, as the journalist and long-time observer of Cambodian performing arts Robert Turnbull wrote, "Cambodia no longer enjoyed the 'protection of international isolation' and the economic 'freedoms' of the 1990s regarded by some as a panacea of better times introduced new social pressures that impacted negatively on the performing arts".³ In 1994, the Suramarit Theater, the only well-equipped performance venue, went up in flames and was later sold to a private company. In 2004, the campus of the Royal University of Fine Arts suffered the same fate, and was moved out of the center of the capital Phnom Penh. Many of its faculty and students have since deserted the far-away facilities, resulting in the slow decay of what was, since 1964, the main government-sponsored program for transmitting the traditions of court dance.

The Khmer Dance Project

I was asked to conduct this project, being myself a former dancer and a scholar working on the subject for many years. The task of reviving the traditions of court dance has advanced remarkably since the 1980s, thanks to the support of the Rockefeller Mentorship program established by the Asian Cultural Council. Nevertheless, the community of artists always remained in the shadows; my intention was to give voice to the entire community, comprising three generations of dancers, musicians, writers, singers, as well as embroiderers. Through interviews, I tried to capture the elusive site of memory, which lies in the body and psyche of every artist. Toni Shapiro, a scholar who spent several years studying this community in the refugee camps and inside Cambodia, pointed out that: "When a culture is destroyed, as it was in Cambodia, dancers and dancing bodies remain as the sole archives of dance tradition".⁴ As a Khmer educated in Khmer culture and trained in classical dance in Paris by exiled teachers,

I was in familiar surroundings. My ability to speak the Khmer language, but also knowledge of the physical attitudes, the language codes, characterized by Bourdieu as "le capital culturel", were particular assets when conducting interviews. To keep a sense of authenticity, the testimonies have been only minimally edited to 'clean' external interruptions, noises, and other irrelevant footage, as they are a 'story-telling' process and as such, involve pauses, repetitions, and a non-linear approach to narration.

The work took place primarily in Cambodia and included three phases (2008, 2009, 2010) of interviews and filming: elderly masters, middle-aged teachers and young dancers. The project was to connect a face to a name, a personality to a voice, a person to a story. The face-to-face allowed each artist to intertwine different narratives, an account of his or her own story, of court life, of Queen Kossamak (King Sihanouk's grandmother) the patron of court dance, and of collective life in the 1950s and 1960s. In an interview, Master Sin Sama Deuk Chho, in her 70s, recalled her life as an artist at court; she was a singer and dresser for the troupe, and the last female to dance the 'monkey role'.⁵ She came from a generation of artists like her mother Deuk Por, a dance teacher who choreographed pieces of ballet. Another interview featured Proeung Chhieng, a lead dancer of the monkey role in the 1960s, who spoke with emotion about his last moments spent with Queen Kossamak in exile in Beijing. These fragments of life, assembled back-to-back, finally provide a vivid picture of a community, of a period, and of a singular place (the palace and its surroundings). In addition to interviews, several hours of film were dedicated to two dance dramas, *Enao Bosseba* and *Sovannahong*, revisited by Princess Norodom Buppha Devi, including their different phases of reconstitution.

All interviews are catalogued, and both films and transcripts are time-coded, making it possible to locate specific passages with minimum effort. The collection is supported by a comprehensive database, which contains an index of the interviews and details of the interviewees and their life stories, thanks to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. In order to offer wide access to this material, especially all of KDP's original interviews, English subtitles have been provided. The database collected during three years of field research is a pioneering achievement due to the sheer scope of media gathered: written documents, videos, photos and music.

To date, the Khmer Dance Project contains 46 interviews, nine performances and rehearsals, including two ritual ceremonies and two on costumes and props. The New York Public Library offers streaming video of all these recordings free of charge through its Digital Collections at digitalcollections.nypl.org/dancevideo. I express my thanks for the splendid photos taken by Anders Jiras, who has been documenting the Cambodian performing arts for more than a decade (www.jiras.se).

Suppya Hélène Nut is a Adjunct Lecturer in Khmer literature and performing arts of Southeast Asia at the Inalco (National Institute for Oriental Languages and Oriental Civilizations) and in the history of Southeast Asia at the Paris Diderot University (Paris 7) and at Cologne University. She continues her research on the court theatre of Cambodia and especially on the recent repertoire choreographed by Princess Norodom Buppha Devi. In parallel she investigates Cambodian elites during the colonial and independence periods with a focus on women's networks (suppya0@gmail.com).

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Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World

IN 2016, IAS announced its new programme 'Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World'. Now that the programme's framework is fully in place and activities have started, we would like to provide you with an update about the developments at various levels of activities on research and education, on programmatic events and tangible outcomes, and at the level of the collaborative network. The programme runs from 2017-2020 and is co-funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the twenty-two partner institutes in Asia, Africa, Europe and the USA.

Titia van der Maas, Programme Coordinator



Bhotiya Tribal Heritage Museum, Munsiri, India; explored as a 'repository of narratives' in the HaB project 'Identity and Mobility along a Trans-Himalayan Trade Route'. Photo courtesy of Surajit Sarkar.

Objectives and method

The objective of the Humanities across Borders (HaB) Programme is to mobilise the development of a global consortium of universities, and their local partners in Asia and Africa, interested in fostering humanities-grounded education. Its epistemological vision is that of an expanded humanities along the Asia-Africa axis of knowledge and collaboration. To this end, the programme

initiates methodological, pedagogical and curricular interventions to surpass narrow disciplinary, institutional, ideological and individualistic agendas in the production of knowledge.

The programme facilitates border-crossing meetings, workshops and other collaborative pedagogical formats, organised by its partners together with their local civil society agents and actors with the objective to shape

Revisiting 'the Workshop Idea' in Mandalay

Aarti Kawlra, Academic Director

THE WORKSHOP *Re-imagining the civic role of the University*, held on 25-26 July 2017 at Mandalay University (Myanmar), was the first attempt at exploring 'the workshop idea' as a space of learning in the context of the Humanities across Borders programme. The account below shares insights into its theoretical background and *in-situ* practical workings.

In an experiment on teaching methods in the social sciences in the mid 1950's, Schenkman wrote in the *Journal of Higher Education*, "... we must get away from the idea that there are experts and non-experts".¹ He was making a case for 'the workshop idea' over 'pure lectures' during a summer session of Dutch universities held in the city of Leiden in 1952. The workshop brought together participants from 16 countries in Asia, Africa and North America to share opinions and experiences on a common platform with regard to the boundaries-crossing topic 'Eastern and Western World'. Sound familiar?

Using 'the workshop' as a site for interrogating and unpacking hardened concepts and pedagogies in the social sciences and humanities is not new. What is special is that curricular experiments took place in Leiden more than sixty years ago in a spirit of collaborative exchange across borders. In this piece, I will share how we, at IAS, have been exploring the idea of the workshop as a space of learning and doing in an open atmosphere, fostering several levels of interaction in an atmosphere of mutual sharing and understanding.

Initiated under the IAS programme *Rethinking Asian Studies* (2013-2016; funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), and now ongoing as *Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World* (2017-2020), our methodological and pedagogical explorations draw upon the university's self-appointed role as a "mid-wife ... of the next generation ..."² to re-imagine its boundaries as being dynamic and porous to wider societal exchange. The global terrain of higher education is uneven. Countries of the South have for long looked towards scholarship and research trends emerging from the West. Prevailing curricula are far removed from local and national realities; and pedagogies within the classroom, seminar and field site, however sensitively designed as spaces of learning, nevertheless spiral down to subtly reproduce pervasive hierarchies and deeply entrenched gender biases in the actual face-to-face encounter. In what ways can we bring the everyday context of our socio-cultural and political lives to the forefront even as we inculcate disciplinary (or trans-disciplinary) thinking in educational practice?

Deploying the workshop idea in Myanmar

The workshop titled *Re-imagining the civic role of the University* held on 25-26 July at Mandalay University, was our first attempt at exploring the workshop idea in the context of the Humanities across Borders programme at IAS. Françoise Vergès, advisor to the HaB programme, and I had already worked together within IAS' existing collaborative pedagogical formats of the Summer School and the *in situ*, interactive multi-stakeholder Roundtable. We were able to not only draw upon IAS' model of the Roundtable but also

upon Françoise's experiments with L'Atelier at the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l' Homme (FMSH) in Paris and my own curricular and co-curricular explorations with young adults at The School of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India in Chennai.

Deploying the workshop idea in Mandalay to a Burmese audience could not have been possible without the anchoring vision of Tharaphi Than of Northern Illinois University and the openness of Thidar Htwe Win of Mandalay University. They grounded us in the realities of present day Myanmar, so that we were all the while conscious of the subtle hierarchies defined by nationality, language, gender, discipline and institution in the course of the two days.

Myanmar universities are now in the throes of re-calibrating their mandate in society to define the public role of members of its faculty. Charged for mechanically reproducing rigid, militarised curricula promoting national values and state development goals disconnected from local realities, universities in Myanmar are experiencing large-scale educational reform. According to Tharaphi, "Universities in Myanmar have undergone a depoliticizing process for more than two generations. Politics has been taken out of textbooks, classroom discussions, lectures and political activities banned on campuses. Physical symbols of students' activism such as union buildings have long been demolished as well. In this context it is an understatement to say that our goal to help re-imagine the civic role of universities in Myanmar is daunting". But we had the wholehearted support of the pro-rector and rector of Mandalay University who co-hosted the event on their campus as part of the new national educational policy in the post-socialist militaristic era, following the election of the National League for Democracy. Indeed, according to anthropologist and workshop participant Gustaaf Houtman, Mandalay University opened its doors to him only last year in 2016, even though he has been working in Burma for the past 40 years.

Aim

The workshop was an occasion for mobilising local initiatives as part of our shared goal of catalysing university-society linkages. We wanted curricula to be infused by ideas and values that are not just impacted by state-driven national policies or by prescriptive 'training' models conducted by visiting faculty from foreign universities. It was the first time that Mandalay University hosted an event at which a diversity of civic agents could sit together with academics to discuss matters of curricula and pedagogies around common concerns pertaining to gender inequality, freedom of expression, land-use and educational reforms in Myanmar. Writers, poets, cartoonists, artists, gender and feminist organizations such as Rainfall, Gender Equality Network (GEN), Myanmar Women's Affair Federation (MWWAF), the YWCA, YMCA minority leaders, human rights defenders (including members of Pen, the largest freedom of expression group of poets and writers in Myanmar), a retired doctor practicing traditional medicine, and

private schools located in conflict areas, not only invigorated the discussions but also helped further problematise our workshop process. The workshop gave space to a diverse range of opinions in an atmosphere of open exchange of ideas at an unlikely venue, i.e., the University.

Setting the stage

Spatial arrangement was a matter of special attention for us if the workshop was to nurture free interaction. We chose the horseshoe setup (chairs only, no desks) to accommodate an expanding number of participants and to consciously shift from the frontal proscenium stage setting more conducive for one-way lectures. A long conversation table in the centre was used as a prop to display a number of familiar household objects and food including bananas and traditional snacks to prompt interactive discussions and to allow the participants to move freely along the aisles created on either side. We were particular about avoiding plastic water bottles, the ubiquitous conference artefact. In this way the workshop also became an occasion to use earthen water pots and rice-based homemade snacks and seasonal fruits that are commonly available but often relegated to the background on account of it being an 'international' workshop.

The workshop process unfolded along a semi-structured agenda. Tharaphi became the chief interpreter, although there were some participants who later helped in maintaining a bi-lingual atmosphere at the workshop. Educators who attended the workshop came, not only from the different departments at Mandalay University and Yadanabon University (outside Mandalay), but also from the remote northern hill provinces. Out of the 120 participants who attended the workshop, 100 were women. The teaching profession is dominated by women, not because space has been carved out for them but because a teacher's work day can stretch to incorporate other part-time occupations.

In addition to low incomes, academics in Myanmar face the burden of standardised curricula and the challenge of introducing change in a milieu where English is the official language of instruction but rarely the language of expression for both students and teachers. Whether or not to include micro, ethnic histories; how to bridge the deep schism between rural and semi-rural communities that reside beyond the boundary walls of their universities? In what ways can curricular interventions be initiated in the first place? We therefore took the time to introduce ourselves to the group using the biographical narrative to present the many ways in which our personal realities and choices had informed and intersected our academic paths. It was important to share our own moments of trial and uncertainty and to provide some very concrete examples of how we had sought to question our pedagogical practices both inside and outside the classroom and to stress the point that it was more than just an issue of out-dated curricula.

a curricular matrix and framework for humanistic education across borders. These activities are carried out in the framework of fourteen projects, focusing on such themes as food, embodied practices, voices of dissent, language, memory and migration, in all their dynamic articulations in the world.

Developing the programme's framework

The lead partner institutes as well as the regional Principal Investigators (PI) were identified in 2016. After that, the programme's framework was set up in close collaboration with the PI's. Between November 2016 and January 2017, four meetings were organised (in Leiden, Amsterdam, Delhi and Yangon) for the PI's to meet their regional colleagues and the HaB Project Team in person, to discuss the blueprint of the grant proposal and to explore working in a cross-border and collaborative setting. These workshop-like meetings helped transform tentative plans on research and education into concrete, workable projects.

Kick-off meeting in Chiang Mai

An intensive four-day assembly was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, organised in close cooperation with and co-funded by Chiang Mai University (CMU). It gathered seventeen Principal Investigators from all involved regions, the programme's advisors Carol Gluck and Françoise Vergès, and the full HaB Project Team.

This meeting was a quintessential step in the eventual cross-border exchange and collaboration between the various individuals and their projects. During this meeting, the PI's presented the first version of their project plans. From the discussions, important common methodological requirements were phrased and comparative themes were identified. An important part of this meeting was a day visit to the CMU 'sites of social engagement', an important requirement for all programmatic research and educational projects. One of the outcomes of this meeting was the insight that in some cases the regional platform structure was not conducive to the programme's objectives. As a result, some of the PI's decided to move forward in a closer collaboration with project teams in other regions, depending on their thematic focus.

'Connected Universities' roundtable

A further meeting was organised in order to get the various institutes actively engaged in the programme. It took place during the tenth International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 10) from 20-23 July in Chiang Mai, Thailand, offering a first opportunity for university officials to meet and develop a shared vision on the Humanities across Borders consortium. The roundtable discussion, entitled 'Connected Universities, Engaged Curricula', was attended by 22 official representatives

of partner universities and 14 research team members. The meeting included break-away sessions on the themes of ranking, internationalisation, social engagement and internal dynamics, and a final plenary discussion resulted in several recommendations. A follow-up gathering to define how the partners in the consortium could concretely contribute to their shared agenda is envisioned for 2018.

The Humanities across Borders Blog

From the onset of the programme, the HaB Project Team and the Principal Investigators have deliberated about ways to facilitate the communication between partners about the developments of their respective projects. In order to share relevant documents and outputs, various means were tested. As a result of this process the HaB team developed an online blog with the support of a newly appointed content manager, who is currently assembling all the information about the people, the projects and the consortium. This blog will include the communication between the PI's as well as an overview of the relevant activities. Initially, this blog will be developed in a closed environment; it will become public when it is fully operational.

www.ias.asia/research/humanities-across-borders-asia-africa-world

Deconstructing meaning

Using a combination of group work and presentations, the first day was an attempt to unlock, unpack and unload received blanket terms and macro concepts and to "make the unfamiliar, familiar and the familiar, unfamiliar".³ The aim was to animate existing tools of social discourse with new meanings by re-situating them in different contexts. Five sub-groups took up five separate words in Burmese to discuss and analyse among themselves and to later share with the rest of the group. Tharaphi had already begun thinking of the many different contexts and meanings of the term 'civic' in everyday and classroom contexts in Myanmar. "I realised the Burmese word we have derived from Pali and all civic duties are considered to have been codified in one of the suttas namely Sigalovada Sutta. Without going down the route of binary between secularism and religion, I thought of just posing questions to workshop participants on how relevant those civic duties were in modern day Myanmar". We weren't able to really take up this question of civic duties in depth but it was a good starting point for interrogation given that "they are etched into the mind of practically every Burmese ..." and often frame and prescribe the day to day relationship between teachers and students in present day Myanmar.

The ordinary banana was the subject of Françoise's example of a familiar point of entry to slowly unravel layers of racism, sex and capitalism in the classroom using unlikely sources of information such as advertisements, films and sports events. My presentation on the 'Stain of Indigo' likewise sought to demonstrate indigo as an entry point and to rethink its popular usage as dye, plant and textile. Reading an original text recounting the day by day unfolding of Gandhi's protest against plantation slavery in Champaran, India in 1917, shifts attention from the dominant heritage and sustainable fashion discourse of indigo towards its entanglement within global techno-capitalism and the anti-colonial struggle for freedom.

Alternative pedagogies

The next day was reserved for some presentations and discussions on alternative pedagogies from local partners and invitees. The 'photo voice' project of the Anthropology department of Mandalay University and Cornell University discussed how to use the photograph as a story telling device in fieldwork among women farmers in Upper Myanmar. The presentation of street photographs from the portfolio of famous photographer Nyein Chan Seine Lann elicited a variety of conflicting opinions particularly from the feminist group Rainfall. The discussion that ensued, we later agreed, was the highlight, indeed, a moment of critical self-reflection for all of us at the workshop.

The feedback (mostly in Burmese) we received was mostly encouraging although some did comment that we had not been able to complete all that we had set out to do or said we would do. This was in fact quite true. I share some of these comments for the benefit of those not present, but also as a way to keep the conversation ongoing.

Feedback #1

Lessons I learnt:

- While doing research, it is more important to observe what is happening rather than on focusing upon the result or the answer.
- Remember to compare from a global rather than a national perspective alone.
- To think of a problem in as many different ways as possible.
- To take an object near (and familiar) to oneself in order to think and teach or learn from the different perspectives it throws up.

Suggestions

Students and teachers are worried about what to do after university life. That is why it would be better to have courses like 'after university life' or do you have any other suggestion?

- There is still a gap of knowledge to fill about gender among teachers (female).

- It would be better if you provide seminars based on gender and leadership.
- Would it be possible to make all the data public to all citizens?

Feedback #2

The workshop [...] changed the way we look at research, from a banal object to a big issue. It persuaded my mind to research about weaving.

Feedback #3

After this workshop I have decided that I will always let my students discuss and think beforehand and then, teach a theory relating to that.

Feedback #4

After seeing the presentations, it is very observable that daily objects have the power to develop a major research. In the future, I will let the students analyse and think over small things that can go to wider and different paths.

Feedback #5

Although we hold dear the banana as it is part of our tradition, we saw that in other parts of the world they have used the banana as a joke or a racist weapon. A single word and object can hold a lot of hidden concepts and meaning.

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Below:
Mandalay
workshop
participants.



SEA Junction



SEA Junction: Our venue to connect on Southeast Asia

Patrick McCormick

THE 'SOUTHEAST ASIA JUNCTION' (or SEA Junction for short) is a 'knowledge venue', an event space, a hub, a gallery, a library with the goal of fostering understanding and appreciation of Southeast Asia, from arts and crafts to the economy, politics or development. As a space, SEA Junction provides knowledge resources and promotes exchanges among students, specialists, and the general public. SEA Junction opened its doors on 15 May 2016 in the Bangkok Arts and Culture Center (BACC) in the Siam area of downtown Bangkok. The BACC holds a strategic location close to major universities with Southeast Asian interests and is easily accessible to the general public and visitors. The physical space is an open library or 'reading room' containing books in English and regional languages; work stations also let visitors use online resources. The space is not all books: arts and crafts from around the region decorate the space and show visitors some of its cultural richness, from papier-mâché figures from the Philippines and Burma to the paintings of emerging regional artists.

Making resources available is the first priority of SEA Junction; an 'intellectual salon' open to all, where people need not pay to visit. Anyone can come have a cup of coffee or tea, take a look at the books, browse art objects, and participate in activities such as lectures and workshops. Staff and volunteers operate the reading room six days a week. So far, the library features more than 1300 books, most of which have been catalogued, in addition to a sizeable e-library including sources in PDF format for downloading. SEA Junction maintains an online presence through its website, www.seajunction.org, which also provides a space for photographic essays and opinion pieces. Through the website, Facebook, and Twitter, SEA Junction gathers and shares information on conferences, courses, and fellowships of interest to academics and practitioners. Underlying SEA Junction is the idea of networking: both for the users and for the people who share their knowledge and experience through lectures, books or other modes of communication. This is a space for all kinds of people to make personal contacts, whether they be artists, intellectuals or representatives of groups and organizations, from the region itself or from elsewhere.

A great priority of SEA Junction is events; from photographic exhibitions to panel discussions, to show the richness of the region and also the challenges it faces. SEA Junction is thus neither wholly about arts and culture, nor about development, politics or economics. Being in Bangkok provides a central location within Southeast Asia for exchanges among people from the region and beyond. Music performances and film showings have profiled emerging artists, intellectuals, and practitioners from the region, while Southeast Asia-related events have featured both ASEAN-wide phenomena, such as migration, medical

tourism and human rights, and country-specific events that would normally be difficult to find outside their home countries. The larger meeting spaces of the BACC also allow SEA Junction to offer more formal programs, including meetings, seminars, lectures and large exhibitions.

In the last year alone, SEA Junction has held public lectures, including 'In Search of Social Justice along the Myanmar and China Oil and Gas Pipeline', 'Chinese Tourism in Southeast Asia: A Blessing for All?', and 'LGBT Rights Under Siege in Indonesia'. Photo exhibitions have included 'Harsh Life on Shore: Migrant Workers in the Thai Fishing Industry', and 'Facing Trance in Indonesia'. For music, there were *angklung* classes and a concert of the Bang Khnai music band. One of the documentary screenings was of 'Pulau Buru: Tanah Air Beta/Buru Island; My Homeland', and involved talks by director Rahung Nasution and producer Whisnu Yonar. Other events include potluck parties, mini book fairs, and book launches, while still others fall under the rubric of 'outreach', such as classes for students. Recently a group from a nursing school in Indonesia came and gave a class on the impact of regional integration on health.

Behind SEA Junction stands the anthropologist and international development specialist, Dr. Rosalia Sciortino, or 'Lia', who has lived and worked in the region for the past twenty-five years. Before starting SEA Junction, Lia worked extensively in the foundation and development world, including as regional director for Asia at the Rockefeller Foundation in Thailand, the International Development Research Centre in Singapore, Senior Advisor to AusAID in Indonesia, and as a Ford Foundation officer in Indonesia and the Philippines. She has held managerial positions for projects through the Canadian and Australian governments, when she worked on issues of health and migration. More recently, she has been teaching as an associate professor at the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) at Mahidol University in Bangkok, and is also a visiting professor for the Master Course in International Development at Chulalongkorn University, also in Bangkok. During her work and decades-long presence in Southeast Asia, Lia has seen the need for a cultural center for the region. She has observed how those centers that *do* exist are inside universities, and so are usually not open to the general public. "Through my years working with the Ford Foundation, IDRC and the Rockefeller Foundation and the many programs to better understand and address emerging challenges in the region, I felt there was a gap between the production of knowledge in academic centers, international and government agencies and civil society groups and the distribution to intended beneficiaries. A lot of Southeast Asia centers are in universities, but they are not accessible to the public. More importantly, the *knowledge* is not shared widely to ensure informed public debates," Lia says. The few open

venues in the region do not have a special focus on Southeast Asia and do not encourage conversations and exchanges on regional concerns between all the people involved in them. After the ASEAN Economic Community was launched in 2015, Lia saw how crucial it was to share knowledge about regional processes and their impact to ensure greater awareness. The emergence of the Economic Community represents a gradual shift among the countries and peoples of the region, who have started thinking about their regional neighbors instead of distant, powerful countries in Europe and North America. The long-term disconnect means that people in any one country often do not have a clear understanding of the realities in the countries next door. Decades of ideology, popular media, textbooks and curricula that emphasize historical grievances, often further distort the picture of one's neighbors.

The vision to create the SEA Junction was not Lia's alone. She shared her passion for the region, its people, and its arts and cultures with her husband O'ong Maryono, an instructor and practitioner of the Indonesian martial art, *pencah silat*. They saw the need to preserve the diversity of cultural expression that was threatened by nationalism and extremism. The two of them had also amassed a sizeable collection of local art and furniture, a reflection of their multicultural vision, and they sought a suitable venue to display it. Then O'ong died of appendix cancer in 2013. Partly to reengage with the world after her loss, but also to commemorate her late husband and their life together, Lia decided to give form to their shared passion for the region with a place where people could experience the richness of Southeast Asia and its arts and crafts, but could also learn about its realities and challenges. "Making the SEA Junction was a crucial part of the grieving process," Lia said recently. "Building it up helped me feel engaged with the world again. I get energy from working with young people and people who are engaged in the arts and lives of Southeast Asia."

Support from like-minded individuals has been crucial; SEA Junction is sustained through a system of 'founding partners' who donated \$2,500 each or pledged \$900 a year for 3 years. They come from different countries and backgrounds, but share a common interest in Southeast Asia and a readiness to share their knowledge, expertise and extensive and varied networks. SEA Junction has also benefitted from the generosity of smaller donations from individuals known as 'Friends of SEA Junction', and grants from Partners Asia, the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, and the Kennedy Foundation of Thailand. The book collection has been built through the donation of books from many people, especially Alan Feinstein, Executive Director of the American Indonesian Exchange Foundation in Jakarta, who is also a former colleague and family friend. Today SEA Junction stands as a symbol of collective efforts and shared values.

Reflecting Lia's own interests and networks, many of the events have focused on Indonesia, providing a rare opportunity for people of Thailand and the rest of Mainland Southeast Asia to be exposed to their Island neighbors. At the same time, Lia is very much interested in expanding coverage of the region in all areas, and is always looking for experts and practitioners both from inside and outside the region for events. Lia, her staff, and all the founding partners of SEA Junction would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone to come and visit, make use of the library and other resources, take part in events, consider holding a lecture or workshop, or contribute to its running and activities. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact SEA Junction directly.

Patrick McCormick has held positions at the University of Zurich and the École française d'Extrême-Orient in Yangon. He is currently an independent researcher and consultant based in Yangon (mccormick.yangon@gmail.com).

SEA Junction can be reached through www.seajunction.org and southeastasiajunction@gmail.com

Above:
SEA Junction space.

Below left:
Rosalia Sciortino, founder and director, receiving donation of art books on Singapore and Southeast Asia from Plural Art of Singapore.

Below right:
Pencak silat demonstration at SEA Junction, 25 June 2016.



Report

Symposium report: Between stories and storytelling in the Indonesian archipelago

Clara Brakel and Tom Hoogervorst



Interpreting the past

Indonesia's past is a fascinatingly diverse yet vexingly imbalanced constellation of fragments. Some of the archipelago's communities can look back to centuries of documented history, but in most regions archaeological and archival research is beset with difficulties. Traditions of storytelling, hence, tend to often be the only instruments available to interpret the historical experiences of local communities beyond the narrow lens of European colonialism.

How can traditional stories provide a better understanding of Indonesia's past and present societies? This was the main question of the second *Symposium on Stories and Storytelling in Indonesia* (12-13 May 2017).¹ Organised by Clara Brakel, Tom Hoogervorst and Nazarudin, this event was generously co-funded by Brill Publishers, the KITLV Learned Society, and the Embassy of Indonesia – the latter through sponsoring a delicious Indonesian lunch on both days. Two particular events prompted the organisation of this symposium: the Leiden Asia Year and the recent publication of a special edition on Indonesian storytelling by *Wacana*.²

The two-day symposium focused on a wide range of Indonesian storytelling traditions – including written stories, oral traditions, music and performances – with the specific aim to bring work on manuscripts in conversation with research on living traditions. The first day centred on an exhibition of archival material belonging to the Leiden University Library. The second day, which was both an academic and an outreach event, featured immersive audio-visual presentations and live performances. Participants were from the Netherlands and several Indonesian and European institutions.

Traditions preserved

Day one was opened by H.E. I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, the Indonesian Ambassador to the Netherlands. Drawing from his childhood in Bali, he highlighted the importance of storytelling traditions for his own life and for the Balinese people in general. Supported in his appeal by Prof. Ir. Bambang Hari Wibisono, Education and Cultural Attaché at the Indonesian Embassy, he called for more academic attention for this incessantly relevant topic.

The following presentation, by Victoria Clara van Groenendael, called attention to a key collection of Central Javanese *wayang* tales and objects, assembled in the early twentieth century by Ir. J.L. Moens and currently kept in Leiden. Garnished by colourful illustrations found in some of these manuscripts, the presentation concluded with a plea to continue and expand the preservation of paper-based archival collections. Juara Ginting provided an insider's view on North Sumatran storytelling – interlaced with sung Karo poetry. Focusing on a unique, square-shaped tree-bark manuscript belonging to the KITLV collection, his presentation dealt with the 1935 inauguration of a local ruler known as Sibayak Lingga. Interestingly, it turned out that the colonial state – rather than an ancient local kingdom – was invoked to authorize his newly acquired position. Marije Plomp, subject librarian for South & Southeast Asian Studies, briefly introduced Leiden's Asia Collections and conducted a tour through the new Asian Library. Several manuscripts relevant to the presentations of the symposium were put on display for the occasion.

Performances and society

The second day, which took place at the Volkenkunde Museum, pivoted around the close links between practices of storytelling and social or political institutions. Aone van Engelenhoven and Nazarudin demonstrated in the context of Kisar (Southwest Maluku) how local narrative histories can be studied in larger historical contexts, moving beyond the study of oral traditions simply for the sake of it. A similar case was made by Joachim Nieß. Focusing on serialized stories in colonial-era newspapers, he argued that – beyond popular entertainment – storytelling in print served to familiarize readers with events and developments in the wider world.

Traditional storytelling practices often shape and renegotiate power relations. This point was eloquently expressed by Johann Angerler in his presentation on founding rituals in Sumatra and Java. In a similar vein, Bernard Arps established that the idea of someone “pulling the strings”, which originated in the traditional *wayang* theatre, is still very much alive in contemporary Indonesian politics. Indeed, theatre plays can profoundly influence perceptions of past and present events. Focusing on a recent performance of popular drama (*kethoprak*)

in Yogyakarta, Els Bogaerts showed in riveting detail how changes in the plot of a story may reflect changing perspectives within society, and how attitudes towards a local hero's personality can diverge across regions.

In Indonesia and elsewhere, storytelling traditions cannot be separated from music. In an audio-visual presentation on a genre of ritual storytelling (*pantun*) in West Java's remote Baduy villages, Wim van Zanten discussed musical aspects of recitation on the basis of his own fieldwork data and a rare wax cylinder recording.³ His talk was followed by an enchanting live performance of classical Sundanese songs played in the Cianjuran style by the group Dangiang Parahiangan, in which he also participated himself. The second musical intermezzo was a lively performance of West Sumatran music and dance by the cultural ensemble Archipelago. Led by the musician Renadi Santoso, various gongs (*talempong*) and percussion instruments accompanied an energetic *rantak* dance performed by Rima and Yanti.

In the final session of day two, Clara Brakel-Papenhuyzen presented some of her own fieldwork data from North Sumatra, with a selection of audio-recordings of male and female storytellers from the Malay-speaking coastal areas. The symposium concluded with a visual presentation based on Clara's earlier work on Dairi stories,⁴ which – as it turned out – had itself inspired new modes of storytelling performances. Marjolijn Groustra and Naomi Ploos van Amstel gave their artistic interpretations of some of these ancient North Sumatran legends, demonstrating first-hand how Indonesian stories continue to navigate between telling, singing, depicting, performing, writing and retelling.

Big in Indonesia ...

The *Symposium on Stories and Storytelling in Indonesia* was organized in the spirit of re-appreciating the wealth of available resources in Leiden and beyond. A remark from a Dutch historian, quoted by Victoria Clara van Groenendael, struck the core of our sentiments on this subject:

Going against the trend that dictates that historians should increasingly prioritize big data and digital research methods, I would like to plea for continuous attention to the treasures of the past that are preserved on paper carriers, carefully stored in acid-free folders in climate-controlled safes. These paper archives, many of which will never be digitized because of the expenses, run the risk of disappearing from sight due to policymakers who encourage quick and efficient research in a dreamed-up digital utopia, in which the answers to research questions can be generated by pressing buttons.⁵

On the one hand, academic interest in Indonesian storytelling traditions is experiencing an unparalleled growth. On the other, knowledge of the relevant research materials, the antiquated languages in which they are written or sung, and ways to interpret them is quickly disappearing. The global academic climate, with its insistence on performative novelty and short-term/high-impact research initiatives, is unlikely to foster any profound change in the near future.

Nevertheless, the enormous interest this event has generated – including from representatives of the Indonesian Embassy, Leiden's diverse community of Indonesianists, numerous volunteers, and a delegation of PhD students from the University of Indonesia led by Dr Pudentia M.P.S.S. – gives room for sincere hope. As a next step, we plan to attract funding for small-scale research projects on Indonesian audio-visual and manuscript collections, of which we are only scraping the surface. We further aim to invite a larger number of Indonesian speakers for the next symposium on this topic.

Clara Brakel, independent scholar
(clara.brakel@gmail.com)
Tom Hoogervorst, KITLV (hoogervorst@kitlv.nl).

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- This recording was made by Snouck Hurgronje around 1905 and is currently kept in the Leiden University Library.
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Above right: First page of the *Babad Wana Bojang Rawe* (Ms Or. 10.891 Moens Collection), a Javanese manuscript discussed by Victoria Clara van Groenendael.

Speaker top: Juara Ginting reciting Karo poetry.

Speaker central: Johann Angerler with Indonesia's first president Sukarno on the screen in the background.

Speaker below: Naomi Ploos van Amstel retelling the Dairi story of *Manuk-manuk Saip Ladang*.

Report



Recalling mass violence and the roads to reconciliation in Nanjing

A report on the 2017-KNAW-'China Exchange Programme'-Summer-School

Eveline Buchheim, Martijn Eickhoff & Aomi Mochida

ON 14 DECEMBER 1937, the Japanese military captured Nanjing – then capital of the Republic of China – and the subsequent six-week long period of killing, raping and looting left a trail of devastation and destruction across the city. This period of extreme violence – also known as the rape of Nanjing – has left its mark on the city unto the present day. Yet, over the decades the memory-landscape of Nanjing has undergone considerable changes. In recent years there has been, for example, an increasing attention to the violent past; this is clearly visible in the public domain in the city. New museums (both state-supported and private) have been established, old museums have undergone thorough restructuring, and memorial sites have been increasingly institutionalized.

This increasing institutionalization does not automatically lead to an overall improved atmosphere for reconciliation. At least, that is the conclusion of an international group of participants of the Summer School 'Practices of Remembrance beyond Memory Politics: Recalling Mass Violence and the Roads to Reconciliation in Asia and Europe', founded by the China Exchange Programme of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (IAS), the Institute for Peace Studies at Nanjing University, and the NIOD Institute for War- Holocaust- and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, organized this Summer School in Nanjing, which took place from 16 to 23 July 2017.

During the Summer School the participants – most of them students of peace studies or war studies – explored and discussed memory practices at historical sites of mass violence in Nanjing, it being a city where one of the major catastrophes of the Asia-Pacific War took place. They analysed how these sites relate to the past, to each other, to internal Chinese developments, and to foreign politics. Particularly relevant in this context is that in the pre-1976 political landscape, Chinese victimhood was not at the centre of attention; only in recent years has there seemed to be burgeoning consideration for the victims inside China. At the same time, part of Japanese society continues to play down or flat-out deny the atrocities committed. Even more complicating is that European attention to the Japanese atrocities generally focuses on the events directly following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The 26 participants of the Summer School came from China, Japan, Belgium and the Netherlands. On the first day the Dean of IAS, professor Zhou Xian, and the curator /director of Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, Zhang Jianjun, welcomed the group. Researchers from Nanjing University, professors Liu Cheng and Der-Ruey Yang, and professor Ribbens, dr. Eickhoff, dr. Futselaar and dr. Buchheim from NIOD delivered the lectures and supervised the analyses of the on-site visits. The faculty aimed to create a secure and productive space for fruitful deliberation. In order to facilitate a smooth interdisciplinary and intercultural collaboration, the group focused on developing a common language for their discussions. It proved crucial to develop sensitivity for the different perspectives and to analyse how the different viewpoints came into being, and how they changed over time.

The participants of the Summer School were divided into six multi-national groups; each of them was assigned one site in Nanjing. Four of these sites were official memorial sites, one was a private enterprise, and paradoxically one location played a role in the Nanjing Massacre and especially in its representations but is not an official memorial site. On the last day each group gave a 20-minute presentation, introducing the site and elaborating on its historical significance in the context of the Summer School.

In preparation for the final presentations, the groups paid visits to the sites, conducted field research, and built on the insights found in literature and lectures. They endeavoured to develop a better understanding of the potential tensions on location between institutionalized cultural memory (archives, museums, official commemorations, etc.) and communicative memory (based on individual, inter-generational exchange). Important questions in this context were: what do people actually do when visiting a site, which representations of the violent events are present at the sites, which narratives can we trace in them and what is their meaning, and which audiences are targeted, and by whom? Although taking different approaches, all of the groups conducted oral history interviews with the visitors and local citizens, looked at popular representations, analysed the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the narratives, tracked the historical transformation of the sites and the interpretations of the Nanjing massacre, and examined the sites from the perspective of peace and reconciliation. Below, we summarize the most important findings of the groups.

The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall (NMMH)

Established in 1985 by the Nanjing municipal government, NMMH is the dominant site in Nanjing and abroad related to the memorialization and commemoration of the Nanjing massacre. The memorial is built on a former mass execution and burial site, and consists of three main parts: an exhibition hall with historical documents and objects; an outdoor exhibition area with multiple sculptures and memorials; and 'The Mass Grave of 10.000 Corpses' where preserved skeletal remains of the victims are displayed. At the time of our visit, the main exhibition hall was undergoing a renovation for the upcoming 80th anniversary of the massacre. We therefore visited the temporary exhibition about the Western witnesses of the massacre and their activities during the event.

The group presentation on NMMH stressed the significance of the massacre in the local, national and global memory cultures. They highlighted how the foundation of the museum and the memorialization of the massacre were closely related to political developments, especially in regard to the diplomatic tensions over the different interpretations of the history by China and Japan. The group noticed that the victims were represented as Chinese individuals, while the aggressors were framed as collective Japanese perpetrators. In addition, the analysis revealed how NMMH tries to integrate the Nanjing massacre into global cultural memories of WWII by mentioning the war in the European theatre and including personal testimonies of Western witnesses in abundance. The final part of the presentation covered the representation techniques used in the outdoor sculptures and physical structures, focusing on such aspects as static/dynamic displays and light environment. The group critically illustrated how memory cultures and politics at different levels affect the representations and commemorations of the massacre at NMMH.

The Presidential Palace

Located in downtown Nanjing, the Presidential Palace is a huge complex of historical buildings and gardens. The site has been a key location for China's modern history. It was a residence of Sun Yat-sen, who became the interim president of the Republic of China in 1912. Fifteen years later, the Nationalist Government led by Chiang Kai-shek established its headquarters there. After the Nationalist Government fled to Taiwan in 1949, the palace was used as government offices. In 2003, the palace was opened as the Museum of Modern Chinese History.

The group presentation on the Presidential Place demonstrated how 'Chinese identity' was constructed and conveyed. In particular, they focused on the representation of the Republic of China era, and argued that the site presents China as a cultural unity and showcases its continuity, despite the political turmoil it has experienced. The group critically asserted that the history after 1937 is under-represented at the site. The central focus of the representations of the Republic of China is instead on Sun Yat-sen. Through their analysis of on-site statues (including Communist and foreign political figures), the group concluded that Sun Yat-sen is represented as a reconciliatory and unifying figure between mainland China and Taiwan, and beyond.

John Rabe and International Safety Zone Memorial Hall

This memorial hall is the former residence of John Rabe, who, as the director of Siemens Nanjing, sheltered more than 600 Chinese refugees during the Nanjing massacre. Fallen into oblivion for decades after the war, a German-Chinese joint initiative turned the residence into a museum in 2006. The museum focuses on the help that John Rabe and other members of the International Safety Zone gave to the citizens of Nanjing during 1937-1938. The group analysed this site with three different lenses: commemoration, peace education and reconciliation. Although Rabe as a figure is remembered in China and Germany through different commemorative activities, the group found out that the local on-site commemorations take place sporadically and are conducted by neighbours, survivors, and small groups of people. However, the site is gaining popularity as a Chinese tourist destination, which might affect the future of commemoration there. In analysing the museum's contents, the group sought to identify information they thought was missing. Their examination revealed that the museum concentrates on Rabe's personal history and on contemporary German-Chinese relations, whereas historical information on the 'bigger' picture, such as the Sino-Japanese War, the Nanjing massacre, and the German-Japanese partnership is missing. The group further concluded that the museum does not contribute to inter-Asian reconciliation because its dominant theme is the German-Chinese relationship.

Above:
'Endless Flow
of Tears' at the
Comfort Women
Museum in Nanjing.
Photo courtesy of
Martijn Eickhoff.

Nanjing Folk Anti-Japanese War Museum

Established in 2006 by the businessman Wu Xianbin, this museum is one of the two private museums in Nanjing dealing with the Nanjing massacre. As well as being a private museum open to the public, it functions as an archive and documentation centre, as the director has collected more than 5,700 objects. His staff has furthermore conducted oral history interviews with up to 1,000 veterans.

The group analysed the content of the museum, including the panels on the massacre, interviews, inscriptions on the wall, veterans' handprints and other exhibited (military) objects. They extracted two main narratives: the national struggle and the honouring of veterans. The history of the massacre and the Sino-Japanese War were framed in themes of civilian victimhood and soldiers' dedication. The group highlighted that the museum builds on a unique mixture of cultural and communicative memories. In one sense, it uses the same sources and pictures that are displayed in other museums, like the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, and follows a similar story line. At the same time, though, the museum actively incorporates oral history testimonies and objects from individual donors, building upon communicative memory. At the end, the group discussed the museum's cooperation with civic associations in Hiroshima, and concluded that in a highly controversial and political event like the Nanjing massacre, it is easier to have reconciliation at the bottom-up, grassroots, civilian level, rather than on the official, top-down, state level.

Comfort Women Museum

The *Comfort Women Museum* is built in the barracks of a former Comfort Station in Nanjing. For decades after the war, the premises were left in decay, but in 2003 a former Korean comfort woman visited and identified the place. The museum opened in 2015, and comprises several buildings and exhibition areas. The main objects displayed are wartime objects used by the Japanese military and personal items of former comfort women they used after the war. One of the main themes of the museum is 'tears'; visitors can spot 'tears' recurrently drawn and represented in sculptures, objects and architecture.

During the presentation, the group emphasized three main narratives constructed and expressed by the museum through the uses of displays and objects: systematic dehumanization and objectification by the Japanese military; suffering and innocence of victims and survivors; and the survivors' struggle for recognition. The group argued that the museum embeds personal testimonies into institutionalized 'big' stories throughout the exhibition. Similar to the private museum, this museum thus builds upon both cultural and communicative memories. At the end of the presentation, the group talked about a sculpture titled 'Endless Flow of Tears'. The sculpture represents a crying former comfort woman and visitors can actually wipe off water coming down from her eyes. The group discussed the different ways that this statue was perceived emotionally among the group members, shedding light on the various reactions and receptions of the visitors.



Zhongshan Gate

Located in the east of Nanjing, Zhongshan gate was one of the sites attacked, bombed and destroyed by the Japanese military during the early phase of the invasion of Nanjing in December 1937. Though restored as a 'heritage of shame' site after 1945, the gate is not included in the official memory landscape of Nanjing. No official memorial or commemoration takes place at the site. However, the gate is a recurrent theme in numerous representations of the Nanjing massacre. Using clips from films made both within and beyond China, the group convincingly illustrated that the gate is used as the symbol of Japanese invasion and cruelty, and on some occasions also as a symbol of Chinese resistance.

To further investigate the role of the gate in the current local memory culture, the group conducted 24 short interviews with Nanjing citizens. The interview results demonstrated the various levels of knowledge and understanding regarding the gate: some interviewees had not heard about the gate before, others emphasized the practical usages of the gate (bus station, entrance of a highway), whereas only one person associated it with the Battle of Nanjing. Based on these results, the group concluded that although the gate is prominently present in cultural memory, it is not part of local communicative memory.

Concluding remarks

The group presentations on different sites drew attention to a range of commemorative practices, messages and appropriations of history taking place in the memory landscape of Nanjing. We came to realize that there is

Above:
Display at the
Nanjing Massacre
Memorial Hall.
Photo courtesy of
Martijn Eickhoff.

a strong coherence between these sites, not only because they commemorate the same events, but especially because they make use of a common pool of sources. One example is the diaries by John Rabe, the German businessman who played a large role in the establishment of the international Nanjing Safety Zone. This source, originally in German, has been translated into Japanese, Chinese and English and is used at different sites. Rabe not only provides a meticulous description of the atrocities committed, he also describes what activities the members of the Nanjing Safety Zone executed and how they negotiated with the Japanese officials. In hindsight, his descriptions have become the basis of important (re)calculations of the numbers of victims and casualties.

Yet, we also realized, the recent growth in the production of cultural memory does not automatically lead to an overall improved atmosphere for reconciliation. The question of how to integrate the mass violence into local, national and global history remains contested. Contemporary Nanjing is, as a result, a site of conflicted history where disagreements about the past continue to pop up at both expected and unexpected moments.

Eveline Buchheim, researcher and coordinator at NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (e.buchheim@niod.knaw.nl);
Martijn Eickhoff, senior researcher at NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (m.eickhoff@niod.knaw.nl);
Aomi Mochida, MA student Radboud University Nijmegen, research intern at NIOD (amshg1w4us@gmail.com).

Below:
Summer School
Participants at the
Nanjing Massacre
Memorial Hall.
Photo courtesy of
Martijn Eickhoff.



Report

Being a slave: Indian Ocean slavery in local context

International workshop held on 29-30 May 2017, Leiden University

Over the last decades, historians have mined French, British, Portuguese and Dutch records for quantitative data on the European slave trade in the Indian Ocean. The information that is often missing, is the qualitative data on the experience of being a slave. The international workshop 'Being a slave: Indian Ocean slavery in local context' held at Leiden University on 29 and 30 May 2017 aimed to study the origin and afterlife of enslavement as well as the imaginaries and representations of slaves rather than the trade in the enslaved.

Doreen van den Boogaart & Harkirat Singh

THE WORKSHOP was organised by Nira Wickramasinghe, Professor of Modern South Asian Studies (Leiden University Institute for Area Studies) and Alicia Schrikker, Lecturer in Colonial and Global History (Leiden University) as part of their project 'Being a slave: Indian Ocean slavery in local context', and was made possible by a grant received from Leiden Global Interactions (LGI), and organised in cooperation with the International Institute for Social History (IISH). The conveners of the workshop brought together scholars from different disciplines and areas of interest to discuss and present their research on the experiences and the meaning of being enslaved. They reflected on the lived experience of slavery in areas like Indonesia, India, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Réunion and the east coast of Africa. The workshop participants took a variety of sources into account, like court records, petitions and private letters. But also the behaviour of (freed) slaves and the display of objects related to slavery were analysed. Attention was also paid to unexplored primary sources such as oral histories, memories and songs.

"Stories of slave experiences are everywhere, once you look for them". Alicia Schrikker started the workshop by stating that references to the lives and experiences of slaves can be found in the archives and literature, and in a great variety of genres. The question, however, is how one can find them and write about them. Elaborating on this, Schrikker used a recent biography of an eighteenth century Dutch Governor, who was famous for his scientific drawings of flora and fauna in the different places in Asia where he was stationed. The voluminous biography turned out to be full of stories of enslavement and life in slavery. It is, she said, embarrassing to see just how much material there is on slave life hidden in the literature and in the archives once you look for it. It is time now to place these stories of enslavement at the forefront and analyse and problematize them. Nira Wickramasinghe continued by arguing that studies on slavery and slaves that have often emphasized the trade in slaves, need a human dimension. She stressed the importance of writing the issue of slavery into mainstream scholarship and how writing history is a process of 'inventing the archive' as Benjamin Zachariah has suggested. This may be achieved by crossing disciplines and looking at the legacies and afterlives of slavery. Besides that, the frames of analysis need to be questioned. The way language is used and the way we look at the archive, structures the way we see the past. For example, by using the word enslaved, which implies an ongoing process, instead of slave. Wickramasinghe concluded that, as the scholar Ann Stoler argues, we are not studying things, but the making of them.

The workshop was divided into panels with the participants presenting their paper and stressing the importance of researching the experience of being a slave in their area of expertise. On the first day the panels provided a methodological framework on slavery in the Indian Ocean and the different approaches to archival sources. On the second day the focus was on the voice and actions of manumitted and emancipated slaves. The panels travelled from the past to the present and back by focusing on the memories and legacies of slavery in the Indian Ocean.

In the first panel 'Testimonies, Letters, Court cases' Herman Tiekens' translation of the letters sent to Nicolaas Jurgen Ondaatje from Ceylon supports the argument made by Schrikker that references to slaves can be found everywhere if you look for them. The former teacher Ondaatje owned a slave and asked his family in Ceylon to buy and send him Ceylonese slaves. This small-scale slave trade between Ceylon and Cape Town from 1728-1737 shed light on the forced travels slaves made and the question of the place of home. Ulbe Bosma (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) discussed the case of Dandajoe,

who was raided and via enslavement became the free spouse of a man living in Dutch territory. Dandajoe and her husband were interviewed by Dutch officials and Bosma questioned the representativeness of this and other colonial sources. According to him further research on oral history is needed in order to find out the amount of truth in colonial sources.

Paul Bijl (Utrecht University) analysed in the next panel 'Stories and Statistics' the text of Wange van Balie, who wrote down his memories as a slave and eventually ended up in the Netherlands. Bijl argued that this unpublished ego-document was a fundamental act, as Wange presented himself as a human with the same equality as any other human. This may be seen as a protest against slavery and inequality. Matthias van Rossum (IISH) contributed to the panel by presenting statistics of enslavement in eighteenth century Cochin, as part of his project on slavery in South and Southeast Asia from 1600-1800. Together with his student-assistant, Merve Tosun, he discussed some of the voices behind the statistics and stated that slaves of the Dutch East India Company had a voice, but never perceived equality and were seen as products rather than humans. Lodewijk Wagenaar (University of Amsterdam) concluded the panel by presenting his research done on the enslaved woman Boenga van Johor on her forced journey from Batavia to the Cape of Good Hope. Wagenaar reconstructed and rewrote her life on the basis of archival sources. He argued that historians have to bring slaves from darkness to light, since they could not write themselves.

The keynote address of the workshop, 'At Sea in the Archive: Slavery, Indenture, and the Indian Ocean', was provided by Yvette Christiansë, poet, novelist and Professor of English and Africana Studies (Barnard College, New York). She discussed the notion of indenture and freedom. What does freedom mean to the enslaved? How did they experience it? She argued that since the self was enslaved, the experience of freedom was complicated for emancipated slaves and coolies. They were traumatized and stripped of their identity, and these traumatic experiences needed to be read through the lines. She illustrated her points through a critical reading of registers of slavery and indenture as physical objects, rather than merely as bureaucratic tools. At the end Christiansë posed the intriguing questions: "Why do I hunger for experiences and what do I want from the voices? How does one acknowledge the archives?"

The second day of the workshop started with the panel 'Trajectories of Emancipation'. Robert Ross (Leiden University) explored the acts of Cape Town's enslaved and freed population concerning their accommodation before and after emancipation. There are hardly any comments of (ex)slaves on their enslavement, however, moving out their former masters' houses and starting to live in crowded accommodation as far as possible from their former accommodation shows that enslaved people made considerable sacrifices for their freedom. Travelling back to eighteenth century Sri Lanka, Kate Ekama (Leiden University) talked about manumission, debt and re-enslavement in Colombo. By using archival sources, she demonstrated different reasons for manumission, the usage of the court by (manumitted) slaves, and the possibility of re-enslavement. She explained that life after slavery was not so different from the experience of being a slave because re-enslavement or having to stay at the former master's house was common.

The following panel was chaired by Guno Jones (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and focused on 'History and Questions of Identity'. He started by stating that studies on transatlantic slavery are dominant, and it is important to break through the silence around East Indian slavery. Françoise Vergès (Fondation Maison

Right: 'Mestice woman going to church in state'. Hand-coloured engraving from Haafner, J. 1808. *Reize in eenen palanquin; of lotgevallen en merkwaardige aanteekeningen op een reize langs de kusten Orixá en Choramandel*, 2 dln, Amsterdam.



des sciences de l'homme) argued that slavery remains silenced and contested in France, one of the few states that still has territories that belong to the colonial empire. There is still no official narrative on slavery in France and abolition did not mean freedom for ex-slaves in French colonial territories. In turn, Anne Marieke van der Wal (Leiden University) discussed Malay slave songs in Colonial Cape Town. Many enslaved and freed people worked as fishermen, and they sang about the sea as a site of memory. The songs functioned as barrier and reminded them of their separation from home, and they still have a prominent place among the Cape Town Malay community.

In the final panel 'Materialities, Memories', Wim Manuhutu (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) talked about traces of slavery in Maluku and the representation of slavery on the Banda Islands. Until recently, the representation had been done by Europeans. Manuhutu argued that people in the Moluccas have discovered heritage as a way of stimulating tourism and therefore developed their own plans and activities in order to construct memory, which includes a new interest in the slave heritage on Banda. The European representation of slavery is also present in museums. Sarah Longair (University of Lincoln) discussed the many issues with recovering the materiality of slavery. She noted how objects carry emotions and show agency of the enslaved people. Also, objects from the museums can be used to fill in the gap in the experiences of the slaves. Wayne Modest (Research Center for Material Culture) elaborated on the issue of collecting and representing the afterlife of slavery. He was able to provide insight into the narratives in the museums with reference to slavery and argued that the museum structures a narrative it wants to tell the public, a narrative that is often political. Modest asked himself and the other participants the question how a political narrative and representation takes form in the museum setting.

During the closing discussion, the workshop participants discussed the possibility of collecting a number of papers and publishing them in a volume co-edited by the organizers of the workshop. While discussing this, keynote speaker Christiansë suggested that the title of the volume could be 'Seeing a slave', as this would capture the achievement of the workshop that was to make invisible actors and voices from the literature and archives present in the mainstream narrative.

Doreen van den Boogaart, research master Colonial and Global History (d.p.van.den.boogaart@umail.leidenuniv.nl) and Harkirat Singh, research master Asian Studies (h.k.singh@hum.leidenuniv.nl) are part of the Research Traineeship of the Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University. They are assisting Nira Wickramasinghe and Alicia Schrikker with their project 'Being a slave: Indian ocean slavery in local context'.

IIAS Research and Projects

IIAS research and other initiatives are carried out within 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. To find out more, visit www.iias.asia.

Global Asia

THE GLOBAL ASIA CLUSTER addresses contemporary issues related to transnational interactions within the Asian region as well as Asia's projection into the world, through the movement of goods, people, ideas, knowledge, ideologies and so forth. Past and present trends 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

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. The next conference, 'Borderland Spaces: Ruins, Revival(s) and Resources', will take place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 23-25 August 2018.

COORDINATOR: Eric de Maaker (maaker@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)
WEBSITE: www.asianborderlands.net

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. Its latest and second joint comparative research programme with the Institute of West Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was 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, the programme analysed 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. The joint programme has led to the publication *Geopolitical Economy of Energy and Environment China and the European Union* (Medhi P. Amineh, Yang Guang, 2017).

COORDINATOR:

M. Amineh (m.p.amineh@uva.nl; m.p.amineh@iias.nl).
WEBSITE: www.iias.asia/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. The conference was organised with the active support of the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) and IIAS.

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).

COORDINATOR: 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.asia/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.

COORDINATOR: Maarten Bode

(m.bode@uva.nl)
WEBSITE: www.iias.asia/indianmedicine

Humanities across Borders: Asia and Africa in the World

A four year programme for global collaboration on humanistic education, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (2017-2020)

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 in Asia and Africa, 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.

The epistemological vision of the Humanities across Borders programme is that of an inclusive and expanded humanities along the Asia-Africa axis of knowledge and collaboration. To this end, it will initiate methodological, pedagogical and curricular interventions to surpass narrow disciplinary, institutional, ideological and individualistic agendas in the production of knowledge. The programme facilitates border-crossing meetings, workshops and other collaborative pedagogical formats, organised by its partners

together with their local civil society partners, agents and actors. These activities will be carried out in the framework of fourteen projects focusing on such themes as food, embodied practices, voices of dissent, language, memory and migration, in all their dynamic articulations in the world. In this way, the programme will help shape a curricular matrix and framework for humanistic education, research and dissemination across disciplinary, national and institutional borders. Also see p46-47 of this issue.

COORDINATION: Dr Philippe Peycam, Programme Director; Dr Aarti Kawlra, Academic Director; Titia van der Maas, Programme Coordinator.
WEBSITE: www.iias.asia/research/humanities-across-borders-asia-africa-world

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

Eva Ambos

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Mehdi Amineh

Coordinator
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Lawrence Chua

Bangkok utopia: modern architecture, urban public space, and the Buddhist spatial imagination in 20th-century Thailand
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A sea of protection: piracy, trade, and regulation in the Indian Ocean
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Kyle Jackson

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Visiting Professor,
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Asian self-representation at World's Fairs
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Paola Maria Antonietta Rossi

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Sebastian Schwecke

Informal monetary markets
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Tarini Shipurkar

Winner IIAS MA Thesis Prize 2016
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Bal Gopal Shrestha

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Cultural heritagization in times of crisis: a Chinese experience
1 Sept 2017 – 30 June 2018

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Eva Ambos

South Asia Institute,
University of Heidelberg, Germany
Heritage politics and dealing with the past

THE PROJECT I am working on while at IIAS has two objectives. First, it seeks to explore post-war heritage politics in Sri Lanka. In order to unravel topics such as the friction between heritage and ritual or the particular reading of the past inscribed in practices framed as heritage, I will draw on ethnographic fieldwork conducted for my PhD project in Sri Lanka. In my doctoral dissertation, I analysed the heritagisation of two ritual healing traditions with a focus on hereditary performers and their positioning vis-à-vis heritagisation. At present, I am working on two papers based on my dissertation, one examining the changing role of possession in one of the healing ritual traditions as indicative of larger socio-political transformations and the other the processes of signification at work in heritage performances. The second objective of the project addresses ways of dealing with the past in post-war Sri Lanka. I am particularly interested in how religious practices and memorialisation efforts shape reflections on the past, talking about the past and engagements with the past.

IIAS offers the ideal environment for my project since it combines a strong rooting in Area Studies with a global outlook that allows developing dialogues beyond fields and across regions. It serves moreover as a hub for Critical Heritage Studies. Another reason prompting me to apply for an IIAS fellowship was my previous experience as a participant in an IIAS summer programme on Asian and European perspectives on heritage (2011), conducted by Professor Nira Wickramasinghe and Professor Michael Herzfeld. The summer programme not only motivated me to analyse my material from a new angle but was also characterised by an intellectually inspiring and extraordinary convivial atmosphere that stimulated future collaboration. One example is a panel at a Critical Heritage Studies conference in 2012 that was organized by five programme alumni with the support of IIAS and Michael Herzfeld (*the Newsletter*, issue 61).

I got to know IIAS as an institution that encourages out-of-the-box thinking and that is also dedicated to engaging stakeholders outside of academia, such as civil society actors and communities. My project greatly benefits from being based at IIAS and the thriving intellectual environment in Leiden to which the people and activities of the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and its Faculty of Humanities add significantly. Last but not least, it is the cordiality and open-mindedness of people here that turns my stay in Leiden into such an enriching and enjoyable experience. While I will continue to work on my project during my remaining stay in Leiden until May 2018, I also hope to expand my network, follow up on the burgeoning ideas for future collaborative activities and to have more equally enriching experiences.

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



ASCL-IIAS Fellowship Programme

A joint fellowship offered by the African Studies Centre Leiden 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:
ias.asia/page/asc-ias-fellowship-application





Lawrence Chua

School of Architecture,
Syracuse University, USA
*Buddhist felicities and modern architecture
in 20th century Bangkok*

SINCE MY IIAS FELLOWSHIP began in June, I have been preparing a book-length manuscript for a university publisher on the historical accommodations between Buddhist felicities and modern architecture in 20th century Bangkok. The manuscript draws on Thai- and Chinese-language textual sources, images, and built forms encountered during archival and field research that I undertook for my doctoral dissertation as well as material that I found during my postdoctoral fellowship. The book's structure reflects my experiences with teaching history in a school of architecture over the last three years, which has deepened my understanding of the ways that architects engage with the tools of representation, building materials and technologies, and infrastructural systems in their work. As a result, the focus, content, and structure of the book are considerably different from the dissertation.

I chose to begin my sabbatical year at IIAS not only because of its reputation as a center for cutting-edge research in Asian studies, but also because of the richness of the collections at the Leiden University library. The fellowship has allowed me to write within close proximity of not only the KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) collections, but also two other collections that have supplemented my archival research in Thailand. The study centre at *Het Nieuwe Instituut* in Rotterdam has been a helpful resource for comparative work on building programs in Indonesia, China, and Europe. Further afield, the British Library's collection of illustrated *Traiphum* and *Phra Malai* manuscripts has been a rich source of material of literary and pictorial representations of Buddhist felicities like *nibbāna* and the Three Worlds cosmology.

Early in my fellowship, I presented a paper on the architecture of Suan Mokkh, the Buddhist monastic complex founded by one of Thailand's most prolific modern intellectuals, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu at a conference organized by the Asian Dynamics Initiative in Copenhagen, which I will develop into a journal article. In October, I will go to Taipei to participate in a workshop at the National Taiwan University convened by the Asia Theories Network on 'Global and Singular Asias: Theory and Practice'. There, I will present from the final chapter in my book manuscript on the influence of systems theory on the Cold War development of Bangkok's infrastructure architecture. I will then return to Bangkok to conduct field research on the funeral pyre of King Rama IX. In November, I will present from the first chapter of my manuscript at a conference on the Tools of the Architect organized by the European Architectural History Network at TU Delft.

IIAS's proximity to Schiphol and its location within the extensive transportation infrastructure of the region has allowed for both new travel experiences and intellectual exploration. Leiden has been an ideal base from which to better understand comparative historical approaches to urban planning in Europe as well as the ways that western Europe has profited from the historic colonial expansion of markets and the uneven geographic development of neoliberal capitalism. For example, the ways that Dutch cities like Utrecht have been able to adopt human-powered transportation as the primary mode of intra-urban circulation in a way that Southeast Asian cities have been unable is both inspiring and thought-provoking. As a historian of the built environment, I hope to explore some of these conditions in the future.

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.



Combined research at IIAS and the Collège d'études mondiales in Paris

A limited number of IIAS/CEM-FMSH joint fellowships are available each year, allowing for a maximum of ten months at IIAS, immediately followed by a stay of two months at the Collège d'études mondiales of the Fondation maison des sciences de l'homme (CEM-FMSH), in Paris, France.

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



Welcome to Art in Myanmar!

In December 2016, Fukuoka and Yangon signed the sister-city affiliation. Commemorating the event, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (FAAM) launched a new exhibition in August 2017, which looks back over the history of Myanmar art from the late 19th century to today.



Top Left:
Min Wae Aung.
Return to Home. 1994.

Top right:
Saya Saw. *Portrait of Royal Family*.
Late 19th - early 20th century.

Below right:
San Minn.
Competition. 2003.

All images
courtesy of the
Fukuoka Asian
Art Museum.

Commemoration of the sister-city relationship between Yangon and Fukuoka. Welcome to Art in Myanmar!

Fukuoka Asian Art Museum
(faam.city.fukuoka.lg.jp)
31 August 2017 - 9 January 2018

MYANMAR ART has been included in the FAAM collections ever since the museum's inception in 1999. FAAM, moreover, contributes to the cultural exchange between Japan and Myanmar by inviting artists from Myanmar to engage in creative activities in Fukuoka. Among its 2900 collections from 23 countries and regions in Asia, 71 works (36 artists) come from Myanmar. This commemorative exhibition presents various artworks including a Western-style painting of the last dynasty of Burma/Myanmar during the British era, a beautiful golden pagoda representing the Buddhist tradition of the nation, and contemporary artworks that critically observe the social issues of the country. The Myanmar artists' works created in Fukuoka are also on display.

Western-style painting during the British Era

The entire country of Burma (present-day Myanmar) was colonized by the British in 1886 as part of the Indian colonial territory, resulting in the end of the Konbaung dynasty. The former court painters started to show their paintings of the royal family at religious ceremonies, such as cremation ceremonies for monks. A typical example of these paintings is *Portrait of Royal Family* by Saya Saw, in which the background is painted in Western style and perspective, with the figures in the foreground resembling traditional Myanmar puppets (top right). The facial expression of the figures became more realistic as the painters were influenced by photography. In the early 20th century, a Western-influenced modern style was developed by U Ba Nyan (1897-1945), U Ba Kyi (1912-2000), and others who had studied in Europe during the time of British influence.



Art after Independence

After Myanmar gained its independence in 1948, art infrastructures were developed through institutions such as the National Art Colleges (in Yangon and Mandalay) and the National Art Gallery in 1952. U Kin Maun, a founder of abstract painting in Myanmar, and Paw Oo Theh, a painter and a cartoonist, are known as the first generation of artists of the post-independence period. In the 2nd Asian Art Show in 1985 (held at the Fukuoka Art Museum), 20 Myanmar artists participated including Naing Win and Thein Lwin who developed an academic style of painting.

Contemporary artists

In 1988, massive demonstrations demanding democratization brought down the socialist system. During the military regime that followed, when freedom of speech or expression could not be fully exercised, the artists continued their activities mainly by opening their own collective galleries to display their work. In 1994, a Myanmar artist came to Fukuoka for the first time to participate in the 4th Asian Art Show at Fukuoka Art Museum. Min Wae Aung, who later became a representative artist in Myanmar developed his famous S-curved composition in Fukuoka (above left).

During the 1980s, a new current of art emerged in Myanmar where traditional style or the realistic and figurative paintings still remained mainstream. The artists started to create works that reflected an urgent sense of the changes in modern society, as well as works that included new trends of expression, like surrealism and abstraction. One of the groups that pursued such a direction was Gangaw Village Art Group (below right). The Gangaw Village Art Group, founded in 1979 by the members of the art club at the Rangoon Arts and Sciences University (the present Yangon University), was the first contemporary artist group. The group ceased its activities after the 1988 democracy movement and resumed their exhibitions only in 2000. In 2017, the 28th Gangaw Village Art Exhibition was held. The FAAM exhibition includes the recent works of four artists from the group (San Minn, Tito, Khin Swe Win,

and Hla Toe), and in 2012 FAAM organized *Contemporary Asian Artist VI: Freedom in Blossom! Gangaw Village and Experimental Art in 1980s Burma*.

Entering the 2000s, young artists of Myanmar moved away from collective structures and started to use their individual networks to reach not only domestic audiences, but also those in neighboring countries, such as Thailand and Singapore. The FAAM-directed Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale contributed to the introduction of the works of these younger generations as well.

Myanmar artists visiting FAAM

Since 1999, FAAM has regularly hosted series of artistic creations, performances, and workshops by Myanmar artists. The current exhibition introduces artists who have visited Fukuoka and shows video footage of performances conducted during their visits. Two artists, Myoe Thant Oung and Aung Myat Htay, and one researcher, Ye Myat Aung (then-Assistant Director, Cultural Museum Mandalay) stayed in Fukuoka through its residency program. Six artists, Po Po, Tun Win Aung, Wah Nu, Phyo Kyi, Aung Ko, and Min Thein Sung participated in the exchange program of the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale. These artists have now become leading figures in Myanmar's contemporary art scene, and have been working actively both nationally and internationally.

Myanmar has been experiencing drastic democratization during the last few years. The lifting of censorship in 2012 has allowed artists to create works with political themes and to organize exhibitions of their own. Myanmar art has also started to receive much attention from international art galleries, which in turn has activated the local art scene. FAAM hopes that this exhibition will provide an opportunity for audiences to encounter the works by Myanmar artists who continuously strived to make and show their art despite prolonged restriction over artistic expression.

Rina Igarashi, curator of the FAAM commemorative exhibition 'Welcome to Art in Myanmar!'